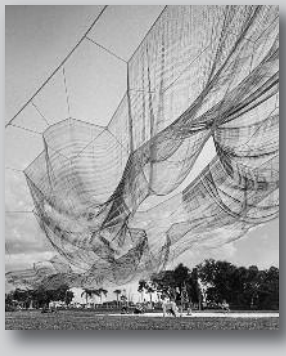
Woman's Art Journal

FALL / WINTER 2020 VOLUME 41, NUMBER 2 $15.00



(Front cover)
Janet Echelman,
Bending Arc (2020),
permanent sculpture
installation on the
St. Pete Pier in St.
Petersburg, FL. Photo by
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Subscriptions Web:
http://www.oldcitypublishing.com/journals/waj-home/

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

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Most appropriate to this difficult time are the works of several women who present enviable science literacy in their art. Re-assessing Western medicine, and taking on a range of scientific inquiries, the artists include Marta de Menezes, Christy Rupp, Lillian Ball, Janet Echelman, Tauba Auerbach, Maria Elena González, Victoria Vesna, and Rachel Sussman. Author Ellen Levy, a multimedia artist herself, whose scholarship explores connections between art, science, and technology, writes: "This text calls attention to a diversity of art by eight women whose content converges with recent scientific discoveries about nature. Without compromising a single category (they identify as ecofeminists, bioartists, and media artists), the artists create works that embody what physicist and feminist Evelyn Fox Keller designated a 'new consciousness of the potentialities lying latent in the scientific project.'"

Their artwork ranges from delicate structures made from bones to the musical possibilities of tree bark to large outdoor projects and experiences. Our cover features one of the latter, Janet Echelman's *Bending Arc* (2020), located at the new Pier District in St. Petersburg, Florida. This brilliant example of Echelman's art is her largest aerial sculpture to date.

This issue of the *Woman's Art Journal* celebrates the work of ten living artists. including two now in their nineties and still working. Their lifetime achievements continue to gain critical recognition for Amaranth Ehrenhalt (b. 1928) and Eunice Golden (b. 1927).

Amaranth Ehrenhalt spent more than thirty years in Europe, and her work is identified with that of the Abstract Expressionists she met in New York, and American expatriates active in Paris. Ehrenhalt's life has been filled with creative endeavors—in addition to her paintings, she has made prints and ceramics and designed scarves and textiles. She continues to astonish new audiences with large-scale paintings, such as her recently completed *Four Seasons,* comprising four panels and measuring 12 by 24 feet. Joan Ullman, a New York-based writer and psychologist, who interviewed the artist for this article, writes that "Ehrenhalt once likened her dazzling, tightly organized color-filled works to 'a symphony on a flat surface.' After a moment's reflection, she added, 'I have one word you can use if anyone asks you what my work is about: Nourishing. My paintings have a certain exuberance that makes for a cheerful day when people see them … They're nourishing for the soul." Ullman agrees: "This seems a perfect word to conjure the joyous spirit one gets from viewing Ehrenhalt's vibrant paintings—not to mention the life to match: one as busy, buoyant, and—yes—brilliantly colorful as the artworks themselves."

Aliza Edelman, our energetic and accomplished Book Review Editor, continues to demonstrate her skills in documenting feminist pioneers. In the current issue she presents Eunice Golden, who has been closely identified with feminism since the earliest years of the feminist art movement. In 1970 Golden joined the Ad Hoc Women Artists' Committee, which was responsible for demonstrations and other practices in response to the discrimination towards women artists by museums and other art institutions. In 1975, she published "On the Censorship of Phallic Imagery" in *Art Workers News*. And the third issue of *WAJ*, in 1982, featured her article, "Sexuality in Art: Two Decades from a Feminist Perspective."

Lately, Golden's exploration of the male nude has been receiving considerable international recognition. In Germany, her series of *Male Landscapes* was shown at the Stadtgalerie Saarbrücken in a major exhibition entitled *In the Cut: The Male Body in Feminist Art*, and her 1973 film *Blue Bananas and Other Meats* was included in an international exhibition in Dusseldorf. We honor Eunice Golden for her decades of participation in the feminist art movement and congratulate her as she is recognized on an international stage.

Writing brilliantly about Golden's art, Edelman notes: "Working in various media, including drawing, painting, film and photography, Golden visualized male nudes as abstracted landscapes, a formal and conceptual approach that brazenly challenged centuries of mythological and allegorical depictions of female nudes by male artists, and likewise navigated histories of landscape painting. Golden's incisive and unsentimental anatomical studies on male corporeality offered an authoritatively feminist position from which to address postwar gesturalism and figurative abstraction…."

In our fourth article, Scottish art historian Naomi Stewart writes on the artist Dora Maar (1907-97)—not as a muse and lover of Pablo Picasso, but highlighting her own work as a "street photographer." In 1932 Maar set up a professional photographic studio in Paris. Although she produced images on commission for fashion magazines and commercial products, her photography became closely identified with surrealism, and Maar was frequently included in surrealist exhibitions. She became actively involved with Contre-Attaque, a radical leftist group founded by André Breton and Georges Bataille in 1935, and signed political manifestoes, including anti-fascist texts. In this spirit, Maar ventured out into areas where women of her ilk seldom were seen, and the subjects discussed in this article appear to be living on the margins of society. As Stewart writes: "In venturing as far as areas such as *la zone* (a wasteland occupied by the poor and immigrants where Maar captured a handful of images of women and children living in poverty on the outer limits of Paris), her photographic movements in the city are ostensibly linked to a critique of existing social and spatial conditions that dictate the areas conventionally (in)accessible to certain individuals/groups based on gender, class, and even indigeneity."

The pandemic has taken a toll on *WAJ*, as on everyone and everything else we know. Business shutdowns caused our Spring/Summer issue to be late going to print and kept potential reviewers from receiving their books. While reviews are fewer in number than usual, they are interesting, wide-ranging, and informative. The topics include a pioneering New York gallerist, the women printmakers of Atelier 17 in the US, the German artist and printmaker Käthe Kollwitz, Shirin Neshat and other Iranian artists, two South American artists—Beatriz González and Loló Soldevilla, and British Arts and Crafts women. We thank Aliza Edelman for bringing these reviews to light.

We give special thanks to Guy Griffiths, Ian Mellanby, and the staff at Old City Publishing for their patience, perseverance, and unwavering support.

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

Nature

New Contexts, New Art by Women

By Ellen K. Levy

Nature, a realm of biochemical and physical forces, has also long been contested territory, subject to shifting theories, histories, policies, stories, myths, and beliefs. To look at art and art history is to see a projection of changing ideas about nature in varying contexts and scales. Over the past thirty years, feminism and science (along with popular culture) have come far in defining what nature now means. This text calls attention to a diversity of art by eight women whose content converges with recent scientific discoveries about nature. Without comprising a single category (they identify as ecofeminists, bioartists, and media artists), the artists create works that embody what physicist and feminist Evelyn Fox Keller designated a "new consciousness of the potentialities lying latent in the scientific project."[1]

Nature Reframed by Feminist Science

The artists explore topics such as self/non-self (Marta de Menezes), the food web (Christy Rupp), cooperation and competition (Lillian Ball), pattern formation and symmetry (Tauba Auerbach), morphogenesis (Janet Echelman), nature and culture interrelationships (María Elena González), the science of self-organization (Victoria Vesna), and origins of life (Rachel Sussman). Their perspectives are informed by new scientific understandings and feminist writings that question traditional Enlightenment distinctions between nature and culture.[2] In addition to Keller, other key scientific influencers include an early environmental pioneer, Rachel Carson, who authored *Silent Spring* (1962), launching the environmental movement.[3] Other feminists include Donna Haraway and Lynn Margulis. Haraway revealed Western science largely as a competition for power and resources among groups with different stakes.[4] Margulis showed the prevalence of symbiosis (mutually beneficial relationships between organisms) throughout the natural world, thereby reformulating ideas of evolution.[5] Feminists have devoted great efforts to dismantling old gender stereotypes, questioning assumptions that science is gender neutral or that women are necessarily defined by gender-related activities.[6] Elizabeth Lloyd stated, "Scientific views about gender differences and the biology of women have been the single most powerful political tool against the women's movements."[7]

What do contemporary science and feminism offer artists? In many instances, contemporary science has become complex, dynamic, and receptive to holistic ideas. Ecofeminists are intrigued by ideas of cooperation in nature.[8] As a whole, feminism speaks of the possibility of a framework for understanding nature that is more directly related to women's lives and experiences and that opens key dimensions of science, particularly ideas of evolution, that have been rejected or ignored.[9] Artists are listening—and responding.

Throughout this text I identify a recent scientific paradigm about nature (shown in bold type as a paragraph heading). The next few lines provide evidence for this belief (noted in italics). I then analyze how work by each of the eight artists challenges its prior, conventional understanding. Each artist has developed a specific material form related to her understanding of how nature works. The artists stress materiality, interwoven systems, and issues of organismic growth and development that link them with ideas originating from D'Arcy Thompson's pivotal 1917 publication, *On Growth and Form*.[10] Crucially, all the artists have invented novel ways to intimate some of the interconnectedness of the world and its interdependencies. The art, whether engaging the organism, species, or ecosystem, gives rise to a collective complexity that provocatively challenges several prominent shibboleths held about nature.[11]

I am a multitude

Scientific research about symbionts (organisms living together) has offered proof from the gut that we are not autonomous entities![12]

The body's ability to distinguish self from other ("non-self") is essentially a definition of immunity.[13] The immune system is traditionally viewed as a defensive network against a hostile exterior world. Haraway notes that military culture has appropriated the language of science; it calls upon discourses of immunity as metaphors for its defense strategies.[14] Some feminist immunologists question whether immunological difference is necessarily a threat; they cite the importance of a variety of symbiotic activities in the gut that are critical to processes in physiology, immunology, and evolution. Today, science acknowledges that an individual's immune system is in part created by the resident microbiome and does not function properly when mutually beneficial microorganisms are absent in the gut.[15] Such organisms disrupt the boundaries that heretofore had characterized the biological individual.

In her art, the Portuguese artist Marta de Menezes grapples with ideas surrounding immunity and the biological self. In *Immortality for Two* (2014; Fig. 1), she and her husband,

Fig. 1. Marta de Menezes and Luis Graça, *ANTI-Marta Luis arm* (2018), from *Immortality for Two* (begun 2014), white blood cells of participants, oncogenes, 2 tissue culture flasks with medium and an injection of CO_2, heat lamp, microscope, table, 2 suspended video projectors connected to computer; displayed on table of variable dimensions, ca. 86 5/8" x 43 1/4" x 31". Photo: Marta de Menezes.

immunologist Luís Graça, explored the self in relationship to the non-self. They assumed the role of scientific subjects and investigated their immunological differences. The spouses exchanged skin grafts, which were rapidly rejected. The outcome was necessarily far from a conventional art form, consisting of the visible residue of transplanted skin grafts in the form of bruises caused by antibody rejection. In art terminology, the marks on the body can be thought of as indexical traces caused by the rejection of the grafts. A video in the installation documents the process involved in creating the work. The live cells were initially exhibited in the absence of any visible lab equipment and accompanied by dynamic projections of the growing cells. De Menezes points out on her website that "Only in the virtual space of their projection can the 'immortal cells' (derived from immune cells from each spouse) interact."[16]

De Menezes recasts issues of identity that in large part stem from defining the boundary between "inner self" and "outer world." The ways she conceives this relationship guide the kinds of forms she develops and technologies she deploys to achieve them. The technology is critical because, as Jan Sapp and his team of scientists state, "We perceive only that part of nature that our technologies permit."[17] The data gleaned from current immunological and genomic tools offer scientifically adventurous artists a way to explore content previously inaccessible. For example, to implement the project *Truly Natural* (2017), de Menezes relied on data obtained from CRISPR, a genetic engineering tool that uses a sequence of DNA and its associated protein to edit DNA sequences and modify gene function. Specifically, she utilized research data from a laboratory that had edited the genome of a spontaneously mutated mouse with CRISPR-Cas9.[18] With this data, de Menezes created a document of the removal of mutations selected by the process of domestication. She explored an undefined boundary between the natural and non-natural by itemizing what is involved in returning the mouse to an earlier state where no genes had been subject to man-made manipulation.

In a related vein, in collaboration with philosopher María Antonia González Valerio, she made art works charting the evolution of corn, including *The Origin of Species – Post Evolution – MAIZ* (2018; Pl. 1 **).** She gathered genomic data about corn and created charts of its development in order to explore once again what would be scientifically involved in re-creating an organism closer to its feral state.[19] De Menezes summarizes, "The silencing of a transgene by CRISPR-Cas9 creates a tension by generating a natural plant by means of genetic intervention, it questions the limits of the natural, where all crops are a consequence of co-evolution with humans.... The question about genetically modified corn is then not just about transgenics, health, agroindustry and transnational companies taking control of a huge variety of seeds. The question is about a complex unity of corn, production, consumption and the spaces in which that is taking place."[20] In a brochure, she states that she selected corn because she considers it to be a bio-artefact that has long undergone domestication, and its ubiquity is intertwined with its cultural meaning.

"We are what we eat" is not a metaphor

In the microbial world (e.g., the organisms in our guts), "you are what you eat" is literally accurate. The acquisition of new genomic material by organisms with single cells or few cells by eating is now considered a fundamental process in evolution.[21]

Christy Rupp is a US activist artist who links systems of consumption, health, and economics and the government's role in regulating these relationships. The food web is comprised of organisms that eat other organisms. Rupp sometimes deploys

stealth tactics to call attention to this web and its attendant sanitation problems, notably trash. Art critic Carlo McCormick's attention was caught early on by Rupp's rat pictures that were pasted near piles of garbage during the 1979 New York City garbage strike. McCormick noted in discussions with the artist that Rupp commented that "as planetary cohabitants our habitats mutually influence one another."[22]

My first encounters with Rupp's work were warnings to potentially be inserted by guerrilla tactics in supermarkets to inform consumers that some of the products were GMOs (she did not actually insert them). Her *Labels for Genetically Engineered Food* (1999) were made in vinyl and applied to deli containers. Her point was that the state has a responsibility to let people know what they eat.

Following her arrival in New York City, Rupp documented how we construct our ideas regarding wildlife and nature. The waste stream became her central focus. She uses a variety of media to make art, including welding, paper, wax, felt, plastics, glass, credit cards, organic bones, twigs, and cloth, and acknowledges that science is the foundation of her work.[23]

Rupp draws attention to the dysfunction of nature. Her weapon is humor, which is effective at eliminating a moralizing tone. Her art is not intended to be "merely" contemplative and to promote reflection but motivational—to change behavior. As such her art ties into questions of anthropogenic environmental change. The food system raises a variety of social justice issues, including global hunger, widespread obesity, numerous health problems, environmental degradation, the exploitation of workers, and the marginalization of farmers. Control of agriculture in the Western world is largely in the hands of corporations. They often turn a blind eye to the mistreatment of animals and offer lax enforcement of dietary and health regulations for confined animals.[24]

Feminist ethics often entail issues of vulnerability, relationality, and dependency faced by subsistence farmers. Maria Mies and Vandava Shiva have been especially vocal about these issues, and many ecofeminists take inspiration from their writings to critique the status quo and visualize a better situation.[25] In her art, Rupp confronts harmful conditions resulting from the food web. Her project, *Extinct birds previously consumed by Humans*, was exhibited at Frederieke Taylor Gallery (2008) in New York City, and included her powerful skeletal portraits of extinct birds made from the bones of chicken we consume. A prime example is *The Great Auk* (2008; Fig. 2).

Fig. 2. Christy Rupp, *The Great Auk* (2008), from the series *Extinct birds previously consumed by Humans*, welded steel, fast food chicken bones, paper, mixed media, 32" x17" x 22". Photo: Christy Rupp.

Rupp draws a critical link between late capitalism and the food web. She critiques the industrialized global food system, calling attention to the politics of health and food and the effects of corporatization. Food-web theory has become recognized as a guide to the care of complex ecosystems, particularly protection of species. Rupp's portrait of the long extinct auk in 2008 drives home this realization. Rupp's ongoing sculpture series, *Moby Debris* (2019–; Pl. 2) is a collection of discarded plastic made into micro-planktonic organisms. On her website she states she wanted to evoke the contents of a whale's stomach thereby invoking the food chain. Her sculptural installation *Catastrophozoic* in 2019 was replete with netting and discarded plastics. It formed a taxonomy comprised of depictions of birds from centuries of art history and captured a sense of the sprawling damage to species that is perhaps best described as rhizomatic devolution. Her

Fig. 3. Lillian Ball, *WATERWASH Bronx River* (2011–present), recycled glass, native plants, vortex sculpture WATERWASH Bronx River RTB apprentices planted 8000 native plants, Photo: Joachim Cotton.

installation may remind us that a more apt metaphor of how life has evolved is now considered not a branching tree but a rhizome.[26] As Margulis and microbiologist Carl Woese elucidated, the evolution of early multicellular organisms was horizontal, through ingestion, as opposed to vertical, through descent.

More than just the fittest survive

To the contrary, in nature cooperative processes frequently occur and enable survival.[27]

Throughout her career New-York-based Lillian Ball has asked us to envision what the world would be like if cooperation and play were basic features of the world. Early on, Ball created a model of cooperative interaction in the form of a game. *GO Doñana* (2008; Pl. 3) was a four-screen interactive video installation that illuminated different land use perspectives regarding the Doñana National and Natural Parks. The parks are UNESCO wetland and dune sites near Seville, Spain, whose biodiversity was threatened by a mining disaster and water shortages. Ball's goal was to use the game to introduce an art audience and members of the public to the complex issues and possible resolution of differences raised by such ecosystems.

Social scientists today elaborate frameworks in which rational decision-making is formulated.[28] Economists and biologists use gaming to simulate complex behavior (e.g., the Prisoner's Dilemma).[29] Participants act out the conflict between social incentives to cooperate and private incentives to defect.

GO Donãna and *GO ECO* are based on the ancient game of Zen Go, which uses strategies to capture territory through balancing tactics. Here is Ball's description of *GO Doñana*: "Digitally manipulated images with sound are projected on three walls . . . to make viewers feel as if they are surrounded by the park. Viewers moving into the central square 'game board' (projected on the fourth wall) activate the video/sound viewpoints of scientists, farmers, environmentalists, landowners, and park guides. When a player stands still for 3 seconds, their 'move' is recorded by a camera sensor transmitting a corresponding one of 70 different video clips through the computer." Ball summarizes that, "The game can only be finished when both sides capture territory, a solution that enables participants to win together by working to maintain a delicate equilibrium."[30]

Another manifestation of the GO project, *GO ECO* (2007), is informed by Ball's participation in the ongoing community preservation of an interdunal swale wetland in Southold, NY. All the GO games encourage teamwork to maintain sensitive areas. The game format allows players of many ages to be empowered and learn about the issues through an art experience that maps paths of action.[31] The most recent iteration, *GO H.O.M.E. Bimini*, is an interactive video game about threatened mangrove wetlands in Bimini, Bahamas. It has a digital camera interface that picks up players' movements and relays them to the computer that triggers the videos. Three different versions of interactive software are used in the GO projects.[32]

Ball's openness to collaborative play is manifest in an ongoing project, *Waterwash ABC* (2011; Fig. 3), for which she designed the wetland, water features, picnic area and grassland, and permeable recycled glass pathway.[33] The artist's concept is based on a prior public storm water management Waterwash project in Mattituck, NY, on Long Island's North Fork.[34] Ball's works embrace the goals of conservation biology to restore biological diversity and achieve success through communities working together.

A respected team of scientists (Scott Gilbert, Jan Sapp, and Alfred Tauber) pointed out that, "Only with the emergence of ecology in the second half of the19th century did organic

systems—comprised of individuals in cooperative and competitive relationships—complement the individual-based conceptions of the life sciences....”[35] Ball’s art is a paradigmatic example of this hard-won realization.

Morphogenesis is considered an important evolutionary process

Morphogenesis contradicts ideas of evolution that are primarily or solely gene based and has resurged as central to explaining how embryonic cells act in coordinated fashion.[36]

The fact that Janet Echelman’s sculpture is initially conceived as a soft material (netting) highlights flexibility as an operative principle. Her work metaphorically enacts a process of morphogenesis. In my conversation with the artist she noted that the works can resemble sea anemones and undergo shape-shifting in real time when acted upon by wind. In *Sculpture* magazine this polymath elaborated on her work, *She Changes* (2005; Pl. 4), designed for the cities of Porto and Matosinhos in Portugal. It is appropriately known locally as *anêmona* (sea anemone). The installation consists of three steel poles, cables, a 20-ton steel ring, and a knotted, braided fiber net of different densities and colors. Echelman’s netting initiates a range of analogies. In a forthcoming anthology about the ongoing influence of D’Arcy Thompson on the arts, I noted that as netting folds and unfolds, it can suggest phases of evolutionary development such as cell and organ differentiation.[37] Echelman’s distorted net also suggests an unforced relationship to a deformed grid that can undergo topological transformations, Thompson’s best-known image. In Echelman’s hands, the netting initiates a scale-free model of gridded networks. They become dynamic systems that change in the models she makes for each sculpture as she adds or subtracts new nodes and links and as she distorts the grids. Echelman taps into a foundation of complexity science; simple manipulations cause complex results.

Fig. 4. Janet Echelman, *1.8* (2016), initially sited in London, colored lighting, WiFi, and interactive computer programming. Fibers are braided with nylon and UHMWPE (Ultra high molecular weight polyethylene), Net: L 100' x W 45' x D 20'; installation: L 180' x W 180' ft. x H 70'. Courtesy of Studio Echelman.

Critic Lilly Wei perceptively noted that *She Changes* is “the not-Serra, not-monument monument.”[38] Echelman agreed that it is very much a feminist work and explained its genesis: “I began with the history of the site, a centuries-old fishing village that became an industrial zone in the last few decades. There are references to smokestacks and their red-and-white striped patterns, the angled masts and cables of Portuguese ships, the patterns and forms of fishing nets and Portuguese lace.” She further explained that she hoped to involve the viewer in creating a sense of a relationship that was “personified” and formed an emotional bond. The reason she cited for including support poles outside the traffic circle was to physically include the drivers within the art.[39]

Echelman’s art responds to a given place, its history and its characteristics, and also to the viewers. She displays an acute sensitivity to nature’s patterns and principles of growth and expresses this through siting and the handling of her materials. She explores complexity and morphogenesis, creating environments and unexpected configurations. Her works respond dynamically to the forces of water and light that surround us. The wind blows and you anticipate a new configuration.

An early work of Echelman appears to have folded back on itself to form a cavity, reminiscent to me of the process of cell differentiation. As I point out in the Thompson anthology, Echelman noted that her works may conjure Pre-Cambrian life forms, before the advent of multicellular life.[40] In conversation she agreed that she had referred to Stephen Jay Gould’s book, *Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History*, which

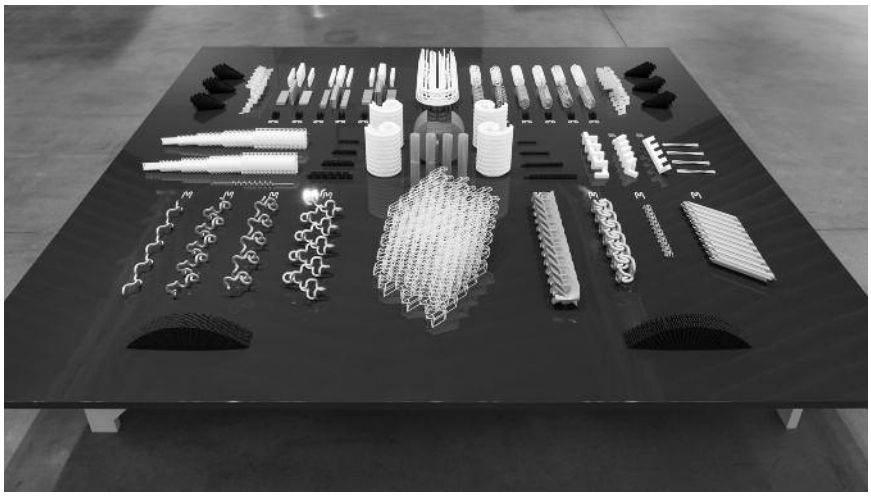

Fig. 5. Tauba Auerbach, *Altar/Engine* (2015), 3D printed nylon and plastic on table of aluminum, wood and paint, an array of 126 elements ranging from 18" x 18" x 10" to 5/8" x 1" x 2". Table: 15" x 108" x 108". Collection: The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photo: Steven Probert.

considers questions of contingency regarding the great diversity of fossils from the Burgess Shale. Gould asks whether and to what extent the same life forms might result if the process were to recur, finding it unlikely.[41] Echelman similarly courts chance in the morphing of her forms; the effects of weather interacting with her structures are unpredictable.

Echelman's *Earthtime* sculpture series (*1.26*, *1.78*, *1.8*) explores the interconnectedness of natural systems.[42] This series of works travels the world and has been installed in over twenty cities to date. In describing *1.8* (2016; Fig. 4), which was initially sited in London, she explains that the title refers to the length of time in microseconds that the earth's day was shortened because of an earthquake that emanated from Japan and redistributed the earth's mass.[43] In the same online description, she states that the form of the work was inspired by data sets of the tsunami's wave heights. The sculpture was said to have surged 180 feet through the air between buildings above Oxford Circus in London before being installed at other major cities, internationally.[44] She works with a range of media professionals and materials, utilizing high-tech fibers in addition to netting. She often invites interaction, empowering spectators to alter the animations projected onto her work. Echelman's art links metaphorically with cellular processes but shown at a scale writ large, which galvanizes public awareness of issues fundamental to nature and growth. A fact sheet points out that the most recent sculpture, *Bending Arc* (2020; front cover), made during the Covid 19 pandemic is impressively composed of 1,662,528 knots and 180 miles of twine; the aerial sculpture spans 424 feet and measures 72 feet at its tallest point. According to the press release, it evokes colonies of nested barnacles. Seen from the ground, as if rising up from the earth, it is imposing, even spectacular.

Patterns found in nature are often generated by material forces

The conventional belief is that genes produce patterns found in biological entities. It is not generally realized that such patterns are often formed from the forces that act in the physical world.[45]

Tauba Auerbach typically creates form by applying simple gestures to a variety of materials. For example, she used broken glass as a model to create images that resemble aerial views of a network; she sprayed and folded fabrics that seemed to mimic geologic formations. Patterns akin to those caused by pressure in rock strata become manifest in the process of crumpling and folding. Referring to geologic shapes, science writer Philip Ball points out that such "structures have an inevitability about them, being driven by the basic physics and chemistry of growth."[46]

The New Ambidextrous Universe, Auerbach's 2014 show at the ICA in London, explored geologic and biologic processes that involve symmetry and handedness. In *Prism Scan II (Cross Polarized Mesosiderite)* (2014; Pl. 5), she repurposed a meteorite image from a book, *Color Atlas of Meteorites in Thin Section,* that had been taken with polarized light.[47] Mesosiderites are meteorites that consist of mixtures of metal and silicates. Auerbach scanned the photograph through a section of corrugated glass and printed it. The waves in the glass subtly re-ordered the image, drawing the viewer's attention to resultant fluctuations. According to Auerbach, "The halftone of the source image is spread out and compressed periodically according to waves in the glass, and the orientation of the image flips backward and forward in each period of the wave."[48]

Auerbach's investigation of "chirality" (handedness) is in keeping with her interest in polarization. Much of Auerbach's art probes permutations of symmetry. Chirality is a configuration that displays an orientation preference and often refers to the handedness of life's molecules.[49] An object or a system is chiral if it is distinguishable from its mirror image. Chirality is a property found in nature, including pinecones, quartz crystals, and snails. It is a feature of life on earth.[50]

The 2014 exhibition included a collection of floor-bound forms, cut by waterjet from plywood and aluminum. They intriguingly appeared unnaturally tilted in a way that defied my expectations of wood. I recall forms in metal and borosilicate glass that were threaded, various three-dimensional structures, and plywood forms that were basically planar. *Square Helix (Z)* (2014) is a long, thin sculpture that explores the chirality of the double helix structure of DNA.[51] *Square Helix (Z)* was mounted on a plinth, consisting of two metal rods in complementary colors, one orange and one blue.

A feature of chiral interactions in biology is that chirality propagates from molecular structures to supramolecular assemblies in different phases that connect to the handedness of the individual helices.[52] By repeating related forms in different contexts and scales, Auerbach playfully captures the sense of the versatility of DNA. For example, she references *Square Helix (Z)* in a book (essentially the show's catalogue) called *Z Helix*, bound with spiral binding coils. "The book developed," she says, "around the manufacturing conventions of coil bindings (which are far more widely available as Z helices)."[53] In an interview with David Riley, Auerbach further discusses chirality in relation to those conventions.[54] In my view, the book binds *Square Helix (Z)* to an alternate existence in the domain of printing. Auerbach's search for variants of related forms in a variety of circumstances is apparent in *Knit Stitch* and *Latch* (both 2014) that place her recurrent form in the context of fabric design. A later work, *Chiral Fret (Meander)/Extrusion/Ghost* (2015) consists of woven canvas on a wooden stretcher that shows Auerbach's roots in drawing and the materiality of canvas.

Color is similarly diversified. In *S. Helix* (2014), she bent a glass rod and placed it on a colored plinth. The viewer could see orange, gold, pink, and yellow hues through the refraction of the glass due to the application of a "chameleon" paint. Iridescent paint creates a prism that refracts light, so the color depends on the angle it is viewed. *A Flexible Fabric of Inflexible Parts* (2015) is comprised of eleven pieces of borosilicate on a chameleon painted table.[55] For me, the optical interventions through paint recall the use of corrugated glass in *Prism Scan II (Cross Polarized Mesosiderite)* that destabilizes the image.[56]

Referring to *Altar/Engine* (2015; Fig. 5) and to other works in her exhibition, *Projective Instrument*, at Paula Cooper Gallery (2016), the press release points out that the forms she uses and re-uses—the wave, the vortex, and the helix—resemble underlying structures in the natural world. It also states that each element begins with the structure of a helix; iterations are distorted; rotationally symmetric patterns are crossed, interlaced, twisted, and then extruded multiple times.[57] This inventive artist typically exploits fundamental but little-known principles of form that result in patterns that mimic the growth and development of living forms in nature.

Trees communicate

The conventional belief is that plants do not meaningfully communicate. To the contrary, they have been shown to communicate through the air, by releasing odorous chemicals called volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and through the soil, by secreting soluble chemicals into the rhizosphere and transporting them along thread-like networks.[58]

María Elena González constructed an ear labyrinth in 1989 using acoustic material that proved prophetic of her later work in its emphasis on touch and sound. Immersed in the woods during an art residency, she found inspiration while walking trails, encountering varieties of trees, and forging connections with the natural world. Like native peoples before her, González saw potential and beauty in bark. Native Americans early recognized its use as a building material and frequently incorporated the outer bark of white (paper) birch, with which they made canoes and wigwam covers.[59] González transmuted the numerous fissures of birch bark into rubbings and drawings that were then turned into "scores" for player pianos. Her art embodies an exquisite "attunement" to nature, itself, in its imaginative exploration of the sounds fissured bark might make.

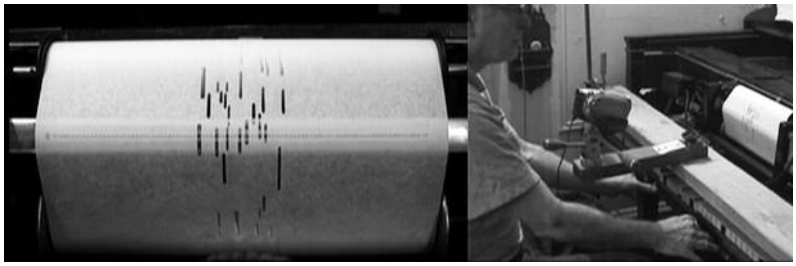

Fig. 6. María Elena González, *Skowhegan Birch #1* (2012), split screen video with sound, running time: 00:06:24. Photo: © María Elena González. Courtesy of the artist and Hirschl & Adler Modern, New York.

A description issued by the Minnesota Historical Society states that birch bark is composed of cellulose and lignin, with small amounts of waxes and oils. The way a tree grows creates the patterns seen in the grain of the wood. The wood thickens and pushes against the surrounding bark. The growth of the inside of the tree outpaces the outside layers that begin to split. Bark textures can be explained as adaptation to the resultant pressure; the fractures of different species produce characteristic patterns.[60]

González endows trees with a voice. Her series *Tree Talk* was inspired by her encounter with a fallen birch tree in the woods of the summer artist colony, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Skowhegan, Maine. After collecting and flattening the bark, for works like *T2 (Bark)* (2015; Pl. 6), González "then scanned its striated patterns to see what kind of sounds would result. I then digitally translated the bark patterns and had them laser cut into a roll for a player piano. When played, the scroll has an unexpected "score": the phrasing, polyphony, and rhythms seem deliberately composed and modern."[61]

Through carrying out this novel process she claims a synesthetic moment in which she foregrounds the interconnectedness of the senses shared by nature and humans. Her work reminds us that nature and music are connected in their origins and permeate each other. Early in history, flutes were made of bone or mammoth ivory. The artist forms a poignant contrast between an old technology (the player piano uses a binary system) and the natural tree markings that inspire the installation. González captures the universality of the project by forming an analogy between physically scoring the birch tree and mentally scoring its music. It reminds me of the analogy made between Leonardo da Vinci's depictions of tree branches and blood vessels. González notes the symmetric relationship of cylindrical tree trunks to the similarly shaped piano roll. The information

González gleans from measuring the bark intervals are transformed into a pattern of holes on rolls of paper, like birch bark, also a tree product. When air is sucked through the hole in the paper, the vacuum lifts a corresponding membrane, which opens a valve, which closes a little bellow in the player piano. Pedals or electrical impulses drive the bellows. The sound ranges from melancholy to rousing as in a John Philip Sousa marching band. The inclusion of the image and sounds of a player piano in her installation via video transforms her project into something akin to a Rube Goldberg machine (2012; Fig. 6). Data about geometry, placement, and intervals passes from the physical world of the trees to the mathematical world of sound. Whereas many artists create records of their art production in the form of data, González also makes recordings, thereby illuminating the process of linking one medium to another. Each tree has a personality that González strives to capture with velum collages and rubbings made from the bark. A subtext of González's art is the evolution of music from its basis in sounds in nature; another is the synesthetic connection between visual and aural senses. Unsurprisingly, González finds affinities with author Richard Powers's novel, *The Overstory*. Powers draws connections between acoustic biology and the communication of trees; trees speak in his masterwork.[62] In related ways, both Powers and González re-invent nature *as* culture.

Feelings are critical to the ability to self-regulate

Older science viewed homeostasis as working mechanically, like a thermostat.[63] *Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio's investigations of the brain show that "feelings" accompany homeostasis, which offer an organism a great advantage in monitoring its internal state.*[64]

Victoria Vesna's 2016 project, *Noise Aquarium* (Fig. 7), aims to heighten our awareness of environmental dysfunction caused by humans, in particular the effects of microplastics and underwater noise upon plankton species that live in the depths of the ocean.[65] Self-organizing systems maintain the system in typically preferred states. In response to imbalance from noise, physiological organisms must restore their internal balance (homeostasis).[66] *Noise Aquarium* establishes a scenario where people may choose to enact and become implicated in a form of organismal disruption. To do this, Vesna creates an installation in which virtual marine organisms projected on a screen respond negatively (e.g., withdraw) in response to the movement of viewers who also cringe at the commotion caused by sounds of fracking, sonar, and other anthropogenic frequencies. One person at a time gets up on the interactive pedestal and tries to center one of the plankton species enlarged many times. If the participant interacting in the work manages to center themselves and be completely still, the plankton comes forward in full enlarged view, the noise recedes and, according to Vesna, "we hear the call of the whale–gratitude to the bottom from the top of the food chain."[67]

By eliciting these responses, she causes humans to re-enact impulses they share with organisms. Her installation points to commonalities and empathy felt among all species. In this way, her installation helps promote human awareness of environmental policies on communities of organisms with which we share related impulses.

Homeostasis was originally viewed (and is still viewed by many) as the efforts of an individual organism striving for a balanced state essential to well-being. Author Siri Hustvedt points out that Damasio recasts homeostasis as far more than an individual activity. It is a social regulator that helps communities of species with nervous systems and therefore some form of affect to survive.[68] The traditional scientific concept of emotion has been turned upside-down in recent decades. Emotion and affect were once regarded as "qualia" that could not be measured and were therefore of mostly speculative value to science (e.g., the difficulty of trying to convey the "hotness" of bath water). As a feminist and artist, her contribution to the scientific research on noise pollution is emotional, intuitive, and empathetic; she imaginatively focuses on an understanding of noise disruption from the point of view of the *invertebrate*.

To me, *Noise Aquarium* is in a see-saw balance with an earlier project of hers, *Nanomandala* (2004; Pl. 7), which linked the visible world, a meditation ritual, and the invisible nanoworld. Vesna collaborated with nanoscientist James Gimzewski to create an installation consisting of a video of a Tibetan sand mandala, the "Chakrasamvara," projected onto a disk of sand. With a nod to *Powers of Ten*, the 1977 video by Charles and Ray Eames, in her own video, Vesna shows the scale of sand increasing from molecular to a large field that comprises the entire 8-foot diameter mandala, with three views: photographic, optical microscopy, and, finally, beyond the visible realm with the Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM).[69] The actual physical sand mandala was made by Tibetan Buddhist monks.[70] Their chanting seemed to foster a calm, meditative state among the viewers. A decade later, in *Noise Aquarium*, Vesna recreates an immersive situation of the *Nanomandala* but with added complexity where the audience has to struggle to find the balance and that shows that we are all implicated in the noise. By staging a simulation of the effect of noise on underwater invertebrates, she helps people to viscerally understand its threat to achieving bodily equilibrium (e.g., homeostasis).

The project as a whole was motivated by research indicating that anthropogenic noise such as sonar is a major global pollutant. Data collected by scientists show that noise negatively impacts the behavior and physiology of individual invertebrates as well as causing disruptions to the community.[71] Noise pollution disrupts food webs; most underwater species are invertebrate and fulfill important functions of pollination, decomposition, and the release of nutrients. The hearing of marine invertebrates is related to the detection of pressure waves through thin membranes (tympana).[72] Acoustic noise can damage flagellar structures like hairs or antennae. In a brochure of the project, Vesna speculates about the impact of noise on plankton, which was not known at the onset of the project but has since attracted more attention.[73]

Life's origins are unknown

Life's origins are still unconfirmed, but recent scientific studies

Fig. 7. Victoria Vesna, *Noise Aquarium* (2016-present), sound system and animated 3D-models obtained with scientific imaging techniques of the extremely diverse plankton spectrum. Team credits: Dr. Alfred Vendl (imaging), Martina Fröschl (animation), Dr. Stephan Handschuh (3D visualization), Glenn Bristol (programming), Ruth Schnell (dynamic projection), Dr. Thomas Schwaha (animal morphology), Paul Geluso (sound recording). Photo: Glenn Bristol.

present several promising hypotheses.[74] *Physicist Jeremy England has developed a formula that indicates that when a group of atoms is driven by an external source of energy (like the sun or chemical fuel) and surrounded by a heat bath (like the ocean or atmosphere), it will often gradually restructure itself in order to dissipate increasingly more energy. This could mean that under certain conditions, matter inexorably acquires the key physical attribute associated with life.*[75]

To understand essential mysteries such as time, photography became a central resource and remains so for Rachel Sussman. Photography enabled Eadweard Muybridge to determine that all four of a racehorse's hooves leave the ground while galloping. It enabled others to document how life ages at regular intervals. Sussman photographs the *Oldest Living Things* (2014) that consist of millennia-old organisms that would resist time-based documentaries of either rapid movements or life cycles.[76] Her subjects are found in extreme environments such as the permafrost and will long outlive most cameras.[77] Certainly the subjects that Sussman portrays raise questions about hardiness and survival, but, most importantly these subjects enable her to probe the beginnings of life.

In 1953, Harold Urey and Stanley Miller showed that organic molecules (in this case amino acids) could be created from inorganic materials by natural environmental conditions, without the mediation of enzymes. This resulted in new thinking about life's origins.[78] Some astrobiologists speculate that microbes able to subsist at extreme conditions (and appropriately called extremophiles or lovers of extremes) might offer answers about how they survive via chemosynthesis. Indeed, many of the shapes Sussman documents arise by chemical and physical principles seemingly related to Urey and Miller's 1952 experiment.

Sussman searches out the fossilized remains of complex marine microbial ecosystems called stromatolites (2014; Pl. 8) in Western Australia. They are communities that are part-algae and part bacteria that are known as autotrophs (self-feeders). To make a living, they survive by harnessing carbon from carbon

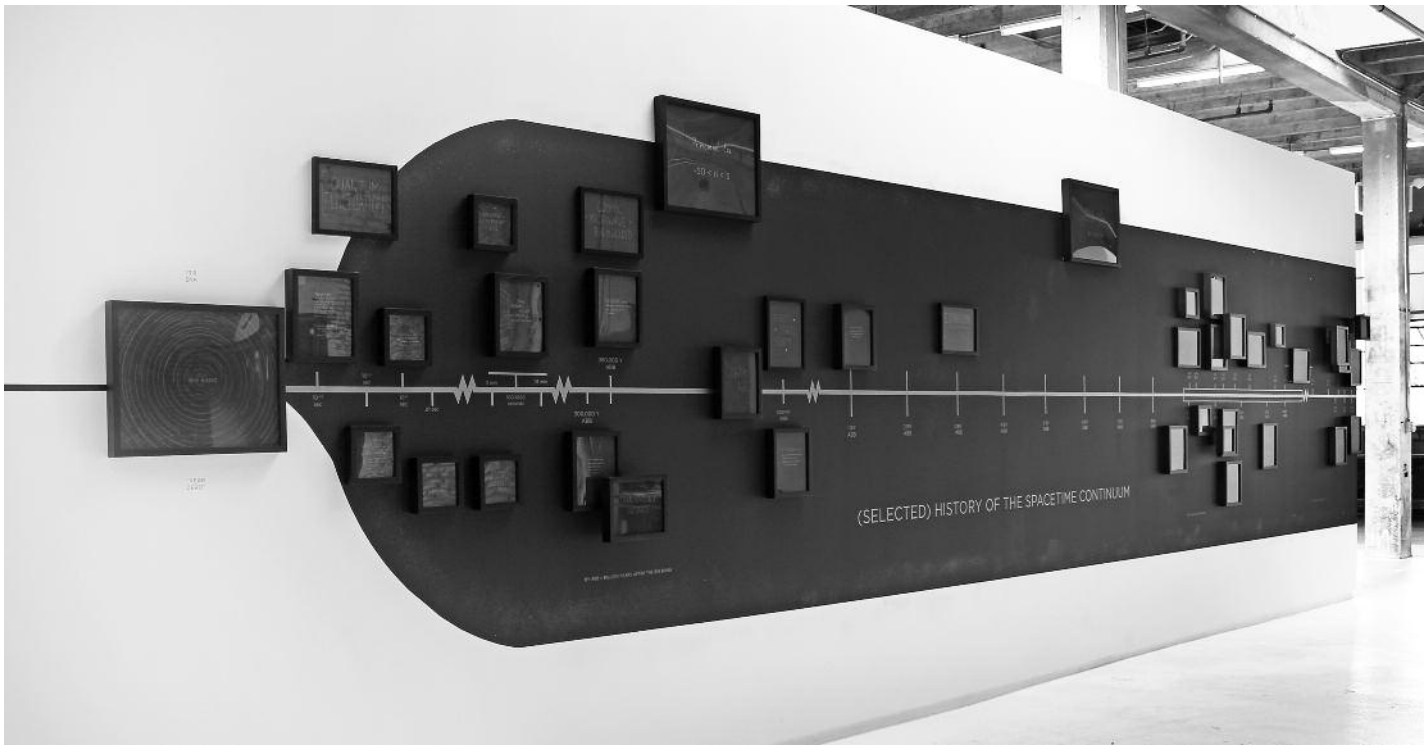

Fig. 8. Rachel Sussman, *A (Selected) History of the Spacetime Continuum* (2016), paint, china marker, paper, glitter, vinyl, L 100' x H 10 '. Photo: Rachel Sussman.

dioxide in the atmosphere.[79] Other feeders known as heterotrophs (this includes you and me) do not photosynthesize, but feed off the autotrophs and consume second-hand organic compounds.[80]

Her quest takes Sussman to Siberia, another extreme location, to photograph a soil sample containing actinobacteria living under the permafrost. These bacteria are between 400,000 and 600,000 years old and are still active; they conduct DNA repair at temperatures below freezing.[81]

Sussman's photographs of 2000-year-old whitish brain coral off the coast of Speyside, Tobago, show a spherical shape that is grooved to capture prey. The coral resembles brains because, for different reasons, both need to increase the proportion of surface-layer to total mass in order to provide more surface area.[82] In her book, Sussman portrays the coral and many other survivors in their environmental niches in such a way that their forms intimate how they came to have their shapes.[83]

Sussman continues an investigation into time, longevity, and the origins of life in the cosmic arena. I am tempted to define this artist as an extremophile, herself, on the evidence not only of her projects, involving the origins of time and space, but due to her sustaining a long art residency at SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence). The program is defined by a quest to find signals of life (biosignatures) in the cosmos and allies Sussman with astrobiology's goals. One such project is a handwritten timeline of the universe in her exhibition, *A (Selected) History of the Spacetime Continuum* (2016; Fig. 8). The timeline starts before the Big Bang and extends billions of years into the future. I saw the work in a 2016 exhibition curated by Denise Markonish, *Explode Every Day: An Inquiry into the Phenomena of Wonder*, at MASS MoCA. Among the entries in Sussman's timeline was a handwritten annotation about a major extinction event "that results in the death of 99% of all species." This was followed by another annotation that states, "Tidal acceleration moves the Moon far enough from Earth that Solar Eclipses are no longer possible." Her work terminated in a "Dark Era" where the universe becomes dead. The timeline's visual focus is on intervals, juxtapositions, configurations, and sequences, all of which interact with the text and the viewer's interpretation.

While each of these artists primarily focuses on one main aspect of nature in any given project, the works point to co-dependencies among multiple systems. For example, the works of de Menezes and Rupp implicate intertwined systems of food, politics, and ecology. They make visible the downsides of mercantile capitalism and industrialization, which are connected intimately to our use of natural resources.[84] Some of the artists (e.g., Rupp and Ball), but not all, would meet a strict definition of ecofeminism throughout their careers with regard to remediation and/or activism. Ecofeminism, itself, offers a significant critique of problematic dualisms and addresses the advantages of cultural diversity to achieve its aims.[85] Many of the works that have been discussed may make us more aware that all life is impacted by the loss of water and food quality, by degraded habitats, and by anthropogenic global warming; all the works encourage environmental reflection and response.[86] González and Vesna explore a powerful

synesthetic, spiritual link between nature and culture that is under threat. Echelman and Auerbach explore the uncanny basis of morphology and form generation based on living systems, and they work with the stuff which comprises these systems. Sussman explores time and the origins of life as a function of an organism's material being but also as a profound mystery that calls for preservation. All artists discussed in this text have brought materialist, ethical, and philosophic concerns into scientific areas previously little-explored through art. Their thinking is in line with feminist materialisms that integrate conceptions of agency and embodiment as explored by Karen Barad, Jane Bennett, Diana Coole, Samantha Frost, and, more recently, Linda Weintraub among others.[87] The artists refute boundaries, borders, and dichotomous views of nature, instead viewing human culture and nature as interwoven.

Current science views evolution itself as far from a fixed entity. Scientists are actively investigating the cellular processes that regulate gene expression and profoundly affect biological properties in the expanding field of epigenetics that studies heritable changes not resulting from alterations in the DNA.[88] The point is that as new understandings of nature based in reality are validated and as shibboleths are cast aside, they raise critical new questions. Keller says, "A healthy science is one that allows for the productive survival of diverse conceptions of mind and nature and of correspondingly diverse strategies. In my vision of science, it is not the taming of nature that is sought, but the taming of hegemony."[89] This is also true of art. In my own view, the different artistic approaches serve collectively to re-examine our place within nature and make a bid to attentively and urgently consider how we can better create a healthy future. Diversity based in knowledge and reflection may help us glimpse the holistic nature of the world and its potentialities. •

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Notes

My profound thanks to members of the EcoArts Listserve and Ecoartspace for pertinent discussions of ecofeminism.

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Eunice Golden's Male Body Landscapes and Feminist Sexuality

By Aliza Edelman

For women to take control of their own image-making processes, they must become aware of the dialectics of eroticism on power and why such imagery is taboo…. It is important for women to reclaim their sexuality, free from male precepts, and find their own imagery, their own awareness of themselves, and not only from an autoerotic or narcissistic point of view. There should be a place in women's art where intimacy can be defined in terms that are very broadly sexual: a prophetic art whose richness of fantasy may unleash a healthy appetite for a greater sense awareness as well as unmask the fallacies of male power.

—Eunice Golden, from an essay in *Heresies*, 1981[1]

During the burgeoning feminist art movement of the late 1960s and 1970s in the United States, Eunice Golden (b. 1927) created erotic and sexual images of male and female bodies and depictions of heterosexual intimacy and erogenous pleasure. Working in various media, including drawing, painting, film, and photography, Golden visualized male nudes as abstracted landscapes, a formal and conceptual approach that brazenly challenged centuries of mythological and allegorical depictions of female nudes by male artists, and likewise navigated histories of landscape painting. Golden's incisive and unsentimental anatomical studies on male corporeality offered an authoritatively feminist position from which to address postwar gesturalism and figurative abstraction; her short films and photographs were equally engaged in the experimental and liberating art practices of this period by women artists who foregrounded the performative dynamics of heterosexual desire, spectatorial control, and the rituals of corporeal embodiment. Yet it was Golden's habitual candor in vocalizing her own heterosexual fantasies—in her published writings and through the painterly expression of her carnal needs via the unflagging representation of the male body, specifically the penis—which fundamentally problematized the critical reception of her works. Even as she repeatedly garnered critical praise and attention in art magazines, both during and after the early decades of second wave feminism, Golden's firsthand experiences of censorship resulted in her exclusion from many institutional exhibitions and spaces, and her inability to secure a tenured teaching position. Raised in Brooklyn, New York, Golden began her undergraduate studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, pursuing psychology, and in 1978 earned her BA in Fine Arts from SUNY, Empire State College, New York, followed by her MFA from Brooklyn College, New York, in 1980. In the mid-1970s and 1980s, she developed her subjects by playfully embellishing the figurative male nude in ornamental settings of textiles and flowers, large planar paintings that inspired dialogues with Realistic and Pattern and Decoration artists. While her later career shifted from the examination of the body to animalistic and naturalistic abstractions, an underlying anthropomorphic composition clearly resonated.

Nevertheless, Golden was in the vanguard of seventies feminist activism and women artists' groups.[2] In 1970, she joined the Ad Hoc Women Artists' Committee, which organized public demonstrations and other responses to discriminatory practices in cultural institutions, driven by the lack of women on view at the Whitney Museum's annual survey of American Art, and at MoMA.[3] In 1973, she was invited by Anita Steckel to join the Fight Censorship group with artists Louise Bourgeois, Martha Edelheit, Joan Glueckman, Juanita McNeely, Joan Semmel, Anne Sharp, and Hannah Wilke.[4] They made public appearances at various colleges and universities and on cable television, debating the nuances of female sexuality and eroticism as opposed to pornography, including a presentation titled "The New Female Sexuality in Art," organized at the New School for Social Research in New York.[5] Reflecting upon their unified commitment, Golden wrote: "We proposed to inform the art world that our 'Erotic Art' was a celebration of sexuality and should not be confused with pornography, which denigrated and exploited women."[6] In 1971, Golden began exhibiting regularly in one-person shows in New York at Westbeth Gallery, which mounted her survey *Three Decades: 1970–2000* (2000), and at SoHo 20, the women artists' cooperative gallery, where she was a co-founding member in 1973.[7] Her short film, *Blue Bananas and Other Meats* of 1973, was presented throughout her career at museums and festivals in the US and

Europe, including the historic *Feministische Kunst Internationaal*, Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, The Netherlands, in 1979.[8]

Golden's article "On the Censorship of Phallic Imagery," published in *Art Workers News* in 1975, was a well-crafted rejoinder to her exclusion, alongside other women, from the Queens Museum show titled *Sons and Others: Women Artists See Men*. The show's proposal to reveal and celebrate "women dealing exclusively with their perceptions of the male" had omitted, ludicrously in her view, representations of a "very basic component of male sexuality—the erect penis," a subject addressed by some contemporaries.[9] The article's accompanying photograph (Fig. 1) by Walter Weissman purposely contrasts the artist's compact stature against her prodigious *Study for a Flag* (1975), a painting on the "scale of a landscape" of an almost six-foot erect penis "in glory," a leaning phallus, "symbolic of the patriarchy," cloaked in haphazard tonal striations of red, blue and white.[10] The male body as site for cultural and political networks is proposed in *Triptych for the Bicentennial* (1975; Fig. 2), a related painting from her series of *Body Landscapes*: cadmium red and black textile patterns, a flag motif, blanket the lightly drawn flesh and contours of the fragmented male torso, a physical suspension across space comparable to Chaim Soutine's butchered animal carcasses. If Steckel's phallic montages of New York City skyscrapers were a retort to men "owning" the metropolis, Golden's masculine embodiments visualized her "frustration of living within a 'male landscape.'"[11] By this point in the early seventies, however, anger directed toward institutional structures and environments had crystallized in her visual series called *Rape*.[12] The grotesque head of *Rape #2* (1973; Fig. 3) captures the artist's vitriol by displacing the female genitalia of Magritte's surrealist painting *Le viol* (1934) with a lizard-like penis for a tongue and razor-sharp spikes for hair.[13] As the artist recently added: "In many ways my work was marginalized, and because it had been so radical it lost visibility. Censorship is a rape of the mind and the soul … an erasure and suppression of a woman's voice."[14]


ART WORKERS NEWS, Page 3

• MAY-JUNE 1975

ART WORKERS NEWS

Eunice Golden with Study for a Flag Photo: Walter Weissman

On the Censorship of Phallic Imagery

By EUNICE GOLDEN

A recent Queens Museum exhibition of work by women artists omitted the works of artists who depict phallic imagery on the grounds that they did not fit into the theme of the show. Yet the introduction to the catalog of the exhibition, "Sons and Others—Women See Men" outlines the theme as being "women dealing exclusively with their perceptions of the male . . . straightforward . . . sensuality . . . postures . . . disclosing the ambiguous nature of human sexuality, vitiating prevailing stereotypes . . . revealing and

Why don't we have X-Rated Museums, which could be a solution to serious problems like censorship: a museum which everyone has been waiting for, like a sealed room in the basement of a church in which the most erotic treasures of the world are buried along with the artists who have created them. Herein would lie a bounty the likes of which would never be seen by anyone after the year 1976: after the year of our Bi-Centennial Celebration, the works would be cremated like the artists who made them. People would come in droves each paying $500 to enter this mausoleum and to have a last benefit supper, as it were, with each other and to do all manner of things—things that happen sometimes in such places as the third floor of a New York Museum. (On the

"The fundamental point at issue is a supposed separation between art and life, to the extent that art is sanctioned to deal with life only in symbolic or otherwise aestheticized terms. The historical refutations of this position run from Callot and Goya to Diego Rivera and Picasso; but a further implicit assumption that such art may be acceptable in itself but not within an art museum is a direct political and social issue. At stake are the very real possibilities of censorship; the reappearance of the pernicious 19th century schism between official and avant-garde art; an artificially maintained "pure" or "high" art, and the narrowing of institutionally supported art to only that which is acceptable to

Fig. 1. Eunice Golden, "On the Censorship of Phallic Imagery," *Art Workers News*, May-June 1975.

Fig. 2. Eunice Golden, *Triptych for the Bicentennial* (1975), acrylic on canvas, 54" x 150". © Eunice Golden.

Fig. 3. Eunice Golden, *Rape #2* (1973), charcoal on paper, 48"x 36". © Eunice Golden.

Despite these challenges, Golden frequently participated in group exhibitions throughout her career, in New York at A.I.R. Gallery, Brooklyn Museum, Bronx Museum, Grey Art Gallery, and Guild Hall Museum, among other domestic and international venues. Mitchell Algus Gallery organized a retrospective of her works in 2003. In 2019, Golden's early production was significantly featured in the major international exhibition *In the Cut: The Male Body in Feminist Art*, organized by Andrea Jahn at the Stadtgalerie Saarbrücken, Germany. Golden's series of large *Male Landsc*apes, including *Purple Sky* (1969; Fig. 4) and *Landscape #160* (1972; Fig. 5), were shown in the vibrant company of New York contemporaries, including Carolee Schneemann, Joan Semmel, Betty Tompkins, and Louise Bourgeois, and artists from the 1980s through the turn of the millennium, such as Susan Silas, Tracey Emin, ORLAN, Herlinde Koelbl, Paula Winkler, and Anna Jermolaewa, among others.[15] *In the Cut* provided a global stage to reassess formative art historical discourses on eroticism and female sexuality, to build upon a history of exhibitions dedicated to sexuality and art, and to analyze censorship's detrimental effects on artist careers in scholarly and commercial contexts.[16] In an interview, Jahn emphasized how her exhibition's provocative theme was not framed by ideas about 'sex,' but rather highlighted "a very distinct discussion … about subjects that have been one of the central works in art history over thousands of years; dealing with the male body is a big problem from a feminist perspective." Acknowledging the visibly positive response to works by artists often marginalized, she further offered, "There's a different focus here in Europe than the US. The whole idea of gender fluidity affects people's everyday life … the way we deal with the body, especially the female body, and how it is sexualized, affects our own ideas about identity, perception of ourselves, and how we react to the Other…. The body in Europe has a different meaning in our culture than in America."[17] In her catalogue essay, Jahn reflects upon the erotic images of men that were produced by women in the 1960s, searching for role models in the history of Western art that imagined desire and "sexual self-determination" from a woman's perspective, and questioning how, if such models exist, do they "differ from the art historical canon of depictions of the male nude?"[18] In a similar vein, Richard Meyer has previously proposed the multifold issues at hand in determining relationships between heterosexual pleasure, feminism, and the "visual desire for the male body," framing a dialogue around "the sexualization of the male body and its suppression."[19] Likewise, Rachel Middleman's exemplary research on the historical and theoretical constructions of sexuality and erotic art in the protofeminist and radical sixties—a broad term covering anything from "explicit sexual imagery to classical female nudes"—has explored "how [women's] negotiation with the sexual body … led toward feminist understandings of art and representation."[20]

In the 1960s, the course of Eunice Golden's career was similarly propelled by a personal need for the "demystification of sexuality," a yearning to "re-define" the social dynamics of male and female sexuality and the mutual experiences of intimacy in terms of a fluid construct open to the heightened agencies of erotic fantasies, even as those dynamics were grievously rooted in systemic sexism. As Golden personally defined feminism in the 1970s: "I attempt to reveal through a dialectic, the structures of roles and relations among people. I am interested in a deeper comprehension of psycho-sexual dimensions: the essential characteristics of our dynamics as people, both individually and collectively. I do not see the sexual dimension as separate from other characteristics. It is integral to our Gestalt."[21] These interests were culturally and scientifically aligned with the shifts in sensibilities and behaviors toward marriage and motherhood that broadly defined women's experiences of the sexual revolution after the more conscripted roles of the postwar Modern Woman of the 1950s.[22] Golden was also resisting the "patriarchal views" of her Jewish upbringing in Brooklyn, where she was raised by a strict immigrant father, who had escaped the Russian pogroms, and an American-born mother also from Russian descent.[23]

Golden's formative investigations began in Provincetown, Massachusetts, inspired by the "freedom of sexuality flourishing [and] people lying about the beach nude and

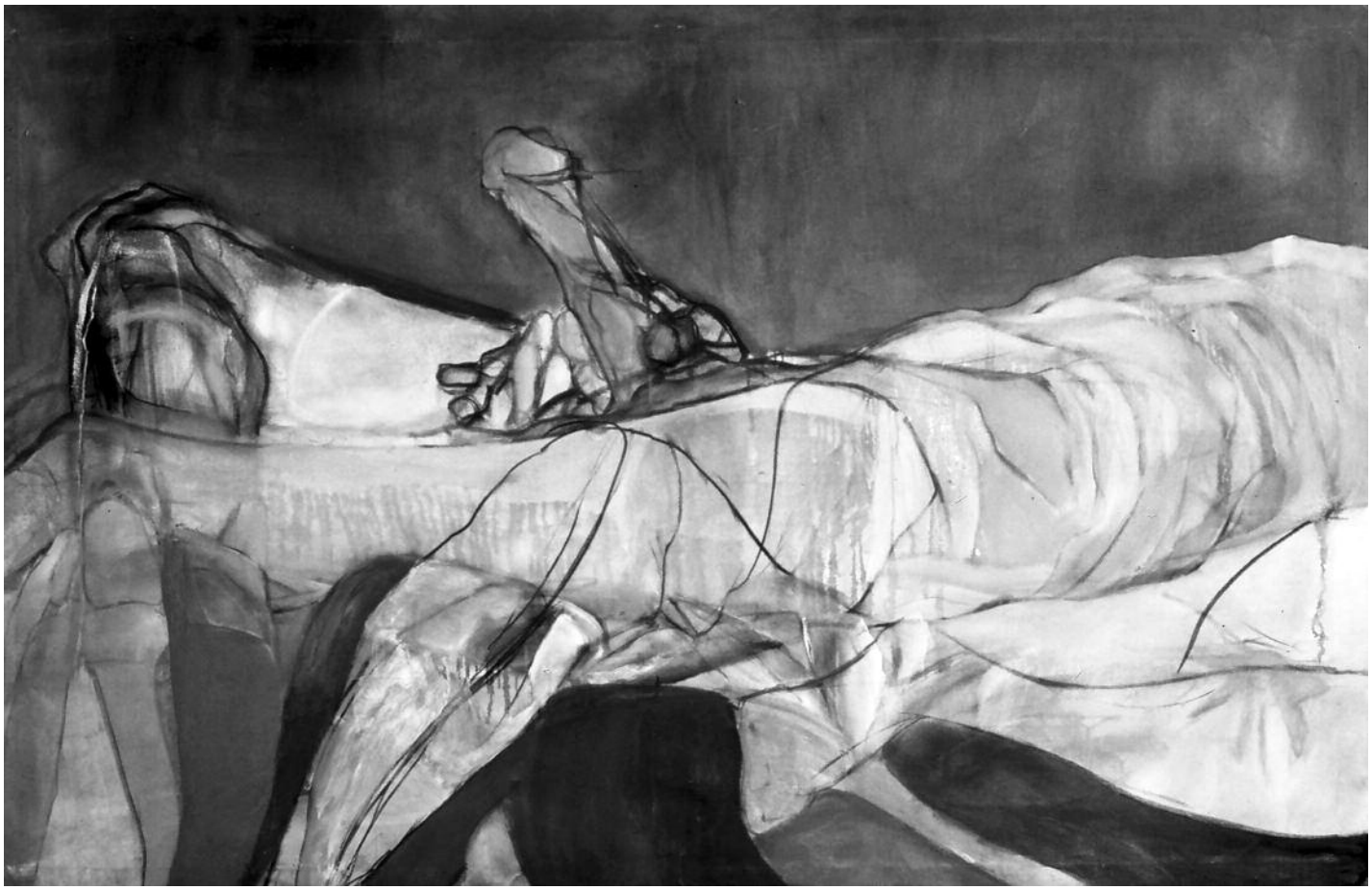

Fig. 4. Eunice Golden, *Purple Sky* (1969), oil on canvas, 48" x 72". © Eunice Golden.

walking around," the artist recalled.[24] Her small rapidly drawn studies of naked couples in charcoal, ink, and wash, such as *Figures in the Labyrinth #2* (Fig. 6**)** and *Figures in the Labyrinth #4* of 1968, express the connective surge of embrace and touch, the bodies' linear contours, faces and heads, smudged briskly.[25] Such concentrated efforts also suggest sexualized gestures beyond the heteronormative gender binaries, resulting in large charcoals of protean androgynous physicality. *Figures in the Labyrinth #7* (1970; Fig. 7) corresponds to the bodies' horizontal protraction toward the surface edge. An interesting comparison may be drawn with the pastel series *Metamorphosis* (Fig. 8) from a few years later, where biomorphic passages—chasms, protrusions, and orifices—are not anatomically resolved but more concerned, Golden offers, with the process of "deconstructing the figure and reconstructing it."[26] Golden also produced a seminal group of small, erotic mixed-media drawings in Provincetown, among them *Yellow Landscape* (Fig. 9) and *Tropical Landscape* of 1968. For these, the transverse plane of the male body near the pelvis splays open to reveal the singular penis in abstract coloristic fields, indulgent topographical studies of models that capture at close range the morphology of the male organ in different orientations.[27] *Green Landscape* (1969; Fig. 10) is an airy field on which rests a disembodied penis, a fragmented anatomical presence whose displacement from the male corporeal schema materializes imaginatively as an abject antidote to phallic attributes of male regenerative prowess—ideas going back to classical antiquity—and access to the phallus as abstract signifier of the Symbolic.[28]

In Freudian terms, the penis's phallic status is a shared "cultural fantasy" determining how and who defines female sexuality and power, according to Elizabeth Grosz's feminist interpretations, a constructed relation of both *desire* and *lack* wherein the child's realization that the mother does not possess one leads ultimately to the castration complex; in Lacanian analysis, the illusory "equation of penis and phallus" manifests access as a signifier to the Symbolic order. On the phallus's function as a sign of sexual difference, Grosz contends: "Only through another's desire for the penis can a man have his possession of the phallus confirmed; and only through another desiring her body can a woman feel as if she is the phallus."[29] Amelia Jones's feminist readings have likewise shown the complexities of conflating the penis and phallus in postmodern discussions of body art and masculine subjectivity in the 1960s and 1970s, an artistic period coinciding with second wave feminism that amplified the performative "ritual display of phallic attributes" by male artists such as Vito Acconci and Robert Morris, among others, whose authorial formulations and installations were at the "expense of female subjectivity." Jones asserted on male

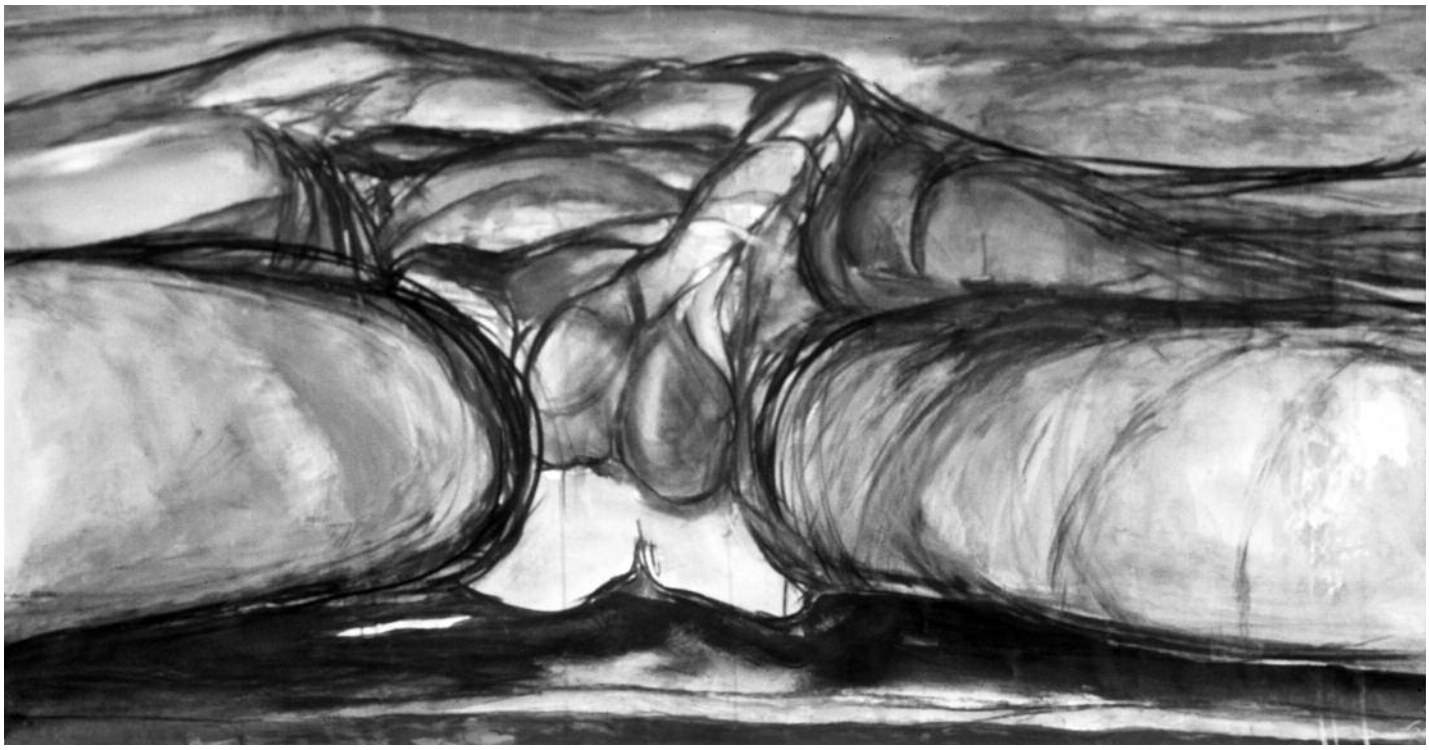

Fig. 5. Eunice Golden, *Landscape #160* (1972), mixed media on paper, 26" x 51". Collection Guild Hall Museum, East Hampton, NY. Gift of Artist, 2009. © Eunice Golden.

artists: "They 'play' the phallus, exploiting its conventional alignment with the male body to reinforce their own artistic authority and/or they 'display' its anatomical corollary, the penis…. Through this exaggerated dis/play, they could be said to complicate the modernist strategy of disguising or occluding the link between the symbolic function of the phallus and the penis: that link that simultaneously obscures and guarantees the privileging of the anatomically male subject within western culture."[30] Undermining "the phallic attributes of masculinity" while critically "wielding" its power was a provocative thesis engaged by women who addressed sexual art, including Lynda Benglis, Louise Bourgeois, Anita Steckel, Martha Edelheit, and Golden, naturally. Benglis's *Artforum* advertisement from 1974 brandishing a massive dildo—an extension of her slick naked body—illustrated the "culturally determined disjunction between being a woman and wielding a phallus," Jones advanced. Louise Bourgeois likewise paraded her two-foot latex phallus *Fillette* (1968) in the late 1960s.[31] That such feminist acts were not readily interpreted in a parodic sense, as they were preemptively for men, but perceived as typically vulgar, exposed for women the "deep prohibitions surrounding artistic subjectivity (the prohibition against women playing the role of artist, and that against unveiling the artificiality of the phallus of artistic authority)."[32]

The development of Golden's radical lexicon of body landscapes may be understood in dialogue with these theoretical discourses and positions of female artistic subjectivity and performativity that transgress the parameters of sexual desire. Her formidable images manifest diametrically

Fig. 6. Eunice Golden, *Figures in the Labyrinth #2* (1968), mixed media on paper, 20" x 26". © Eunice Golden.

as abstract geographies reclaiming male bodily desire and as phallic criticisms of masculinity. In *Purple Sky* of 1969 (Fig. 4), an important transitional painting conceived during her residency at MacDowell, the artist formally unifies the expressive gesturalism of the recumbent male torso and the abstract topography of the landscape, a nocturnal shimmer spatially heightened by the legs' axial rotation and visually anchored by the gently caressed, erect penis. This image's silhouette exposed masculinity's nuanced dialecticism between the intimate and the colossal, the vulnerable and the

Fig. 7. Eunice Golden, *Figures in the Labyrinth #7* (1970), charcoal on paper, 36" x 96". © Eunice Golden.

powerful, and extolled "a monument to power, an erotically charged power." Most revealing is the performative agency articulated in her artistic process: "As I worked on this image I felt myself penetrating the painting's surface and cloaking myself in the skins of the male body landscape, but as a woman, incorporating my body with his, thereby transcending his power and reclaiming my own."[33] Golden's strategic reclamation of the sexed male body as geographical and cultural terrain engendered the spectatorial role of the female gaze and the artistic authority of female bodily experience in the creation of a "new 'abstract power.'"[34] Following Judith Butler, we may interpret Golden's rhetorical possession of the phallus as a "transferable phantasm … [whose] naturalized link to masculine morphology can be called into question through an aggressive reterritorialization."[35] *Landscape #160* (Fig. 5) from this series explores the male body as a cavernous topological repository of flesh and muscular skeins oriented to the high horizon and rising phallus. Painted in the Springs,

Fig. 8. Eunice Golden, *Metamorphosis #10* (1973), pastel on paper, 51" x 85". © Eunice Golden.

Fig. 9. Eunice Golden, *Yellow Landscape* (1968), mixed media on paper, 18" x 18". © Eunice Golden.

Long Island, the body's subtle undulations in marine tones complement the coastal environment. Carter Ratcliff's critical review of this painting, on view in *Nothing But Nudes* at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1977, underscored Golden's "expressionist distortion" of the male anatomy and conflation with geology as an inverse of landscape's equation with the female body.[36] Catherine Nash's feminist proposals at the intersection of geography and contemporary art similarly invite "multiple and mobile identifications with and ways of seeing landscape," advancing an alternative approach to women's images of the male body as landscape that destabilize strict gender identifications conforming to either oppressive or receptive dynamics of the 'gaze' and sexual pleasure.[37] In light of the long tradition of landscape painting, Nash theorizes a dynamic spatial field or multi-positionality for gender mobility accessed through the subversion of 'feminized' associations of "women's bodies as terrain" and the masculine "field of vision": "In contrast to the conditions of distance, objectification and control within classical landscape art, acknowledging emotion and celebrating landscapes of intimacy … may offer a means to reconcile feminist critiques with personal investment in landscapes."[38] Golden's creative breakthroughs were likewise mitigated through her constructed surfaces by furiously "capturing the moment," granting herself *and* her male models "permission to act without inhibition or self-censorship," and to embody extemporaneously a mutually liberating eroticism that could also be perceived as stand-ins for sexual intercourse and consummation.[39] Envisioning the phallus's idealized morphology, Butler conceded, "In a

Fig. 10. Eunice Golden, *Green Landscape* (1969), mixed media on paper, 20" x 26". © Eunice Golden.

sense, what is unveiled or exposed is a desire that is produced through a prohibition," in other words, a taboo strategically unmasked by Golden.[40]

At the same time, a strenuous sexual tension is explored in her painting *Crucifixion #1* of 1969, a singular representation by the artist of a foreshortened female torso with electrified breasts suspended crosswise and penetrated viscerally on her side by an anamorphic phallus. Andrea Jahn wrote that the phallic form "doubles as a vagina," a Freudian-based sexual association between the vagina as a site for male anxieties due to the female genitalia's castrating capabilities as a source of violent dismemberment.[41] Indeed, Golden acknowledged the fears of castration for male viewers elicited by her subjects, but ultimately imagined her landscape's pleasurable potential for "rupturing" phallic masculinities, not merely hegemonic modalities of female possession and displacement of power, but rather representations sympathetic with male vulnerabilities

Fig. 11. Eunice Golden, film still from *Blue Bananas and Other Meats* (1973), episode three, 16 mm, 7:35 minutes, © Eunice Golden.

Fig. 12. Eunice Golden, *Reorientation of the Human Figure at Scheduled Intervals* (1973), photograph, 20" x 30". © Eunice Golden.

and confluent gendered identities.[42] Equally instructive is Lucy Lippard's characterization of the organic distortion and "sexual anthropomorphism" embedded in *Crucifixion #1* and *Landscape #160*. Turning to the popular *Man in the Landscape: A Historic View of the Esthetics of Nature*, a 1972 book by philosopher Paul Shepard, Lippard connected Golden's images to the archetypal contingencies between nature's generative forces and mankind's ego, and cited Shepard's broad views on contemporary art as a "last defense against naïve reductionism and pseudo materialism of the [male] technological society which confers death and uniformity upon the landscape."[43] In so doing, Lippard expressly aligned Golden's sexual landscapes to emerging ecofeminist discourses on women's sacred knowledge of the earth's life and death cycles.

In her pioneering article of 1981 written for the "Sex" issue of *Heresies*, Golden forcefully argued for a language of art and sexuality that countered "ways of seeing rooted in male experience" by introducing a feminist iconography "through the use of the male image."[44] Golden provocatively opened her essay by amending Linda Nochlin's infamous question proposed in *ARTnews* in 1971, "Why have there been no great women artists?" to read, pointedly, "Why have there been no great women artists working with the male image?"[45] The urgency with which Golden capitalized on Nochlin's interrogation was certainly informed by the art historian's pedagogical exploration of women's inaccessibility to the nude model (male or female) in art academies and otherwise. Golden experienced similar challenges during life drawing classes at the Art Students League where drapery cloaked the genitals of male models; but the artist was further motivated to probe the visually acceptable techniques, parameters, and tropes of contemporary women painting men erotically. Likewise, Nochlin's "Eroticism and Female Imagery in Nineteenth-Century Art," published in 1972, the year that they met, concluded that there was an almost nonexistent production of contemporary images by women suited to their "erotic needs."[46] In this essay and in her later "Some Women Realists: Part 2" of 1974, Nochlin favorably distinguished the nude paintings of Alice Neel, Sylvia Sleigh, and even Martha Edelheit, whose interest in portraiture willfully resisted the male sitter's

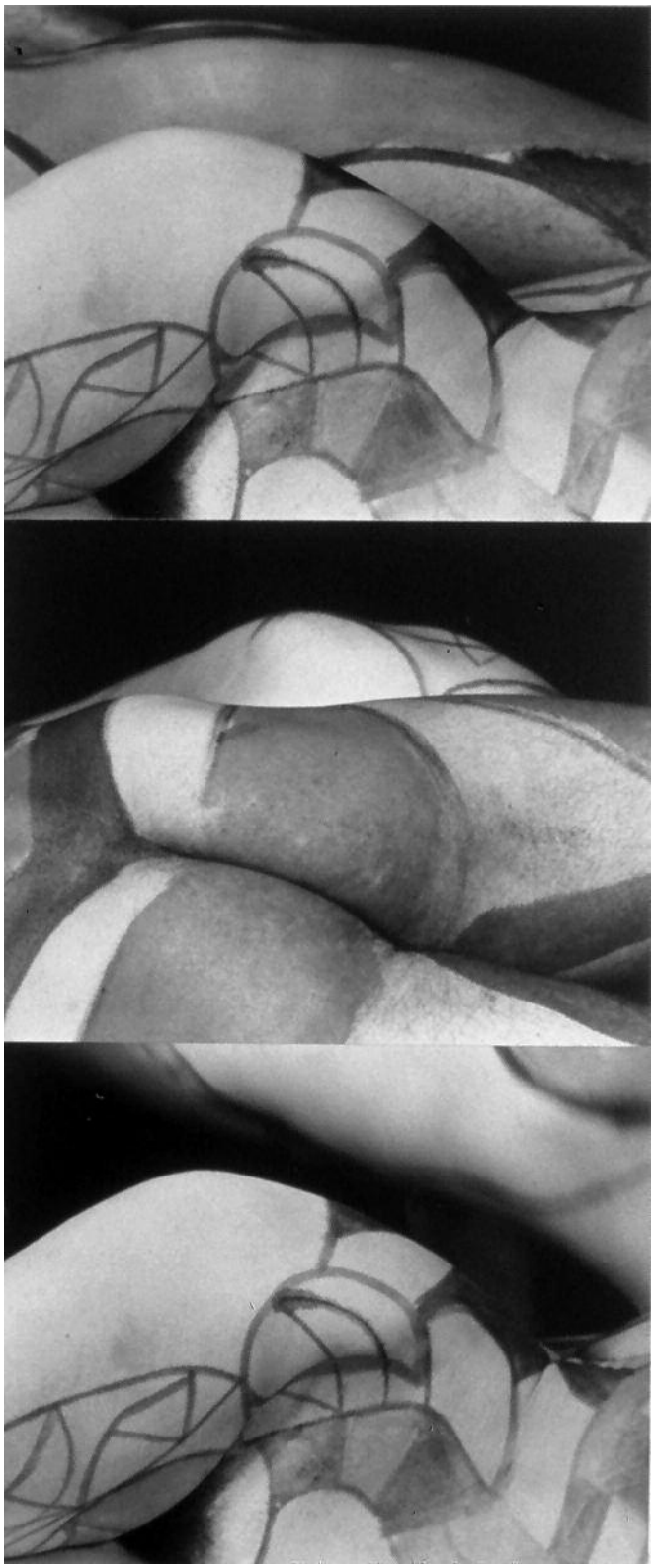

Fig. 13. Eunice Golden, *Bodyworks II #4* (1976), photograph, 30" x 20". © Eunice Golden.

anonymity and depersonalization, ideas conflated with "the pornographic imagination" vis-à-vis Susan Sontag. However, even as Golden's paintings were categorically not portraits, Nochlin specifically voiced her objection to the artist's portrayal of male nudes without heads, presumably averse to her navigation of sexed bodies that were incapable of materializing or transcending into consciousness or heroic intellectualism.[47]

Golden's transgressive approach continued in her films and photographic series from 1973–76, many produced outdoors and along the beaches in Montauk, Long Island, and distinguished from her paintings by a cinematic choreography and ritualistic decoration of bodies and genitalia. Her seven minute, 16mm color film, *Blue Bananas and Other Meats* of 1973 (Fig. 11), serves up the penis as a delectable feast whereby the artist is figuratively "eating her palette": in three segments, the camera focuses on a woman's nimble hands ornamenting the penis in a veritable mélange of vegetables and fruits, cottage cheese and yogurt, chocolate syrup and bananas, their various textures and layered shapes aesthetically framed by the reclining male torso. Golden's multi-sensorial combination of food and sex, juxtaposed with the male nude's arrangement, wittingly appropriates the surrealistic performance *Spring Feast* (1959) by Meret Oppenheim, which served a banquet on a nude woman, and coincided with Linda Nochlin's rousing photograph *Buy Some Bananas*, the scholar's parody of a naked man invitingly selling his "wares," from her 1972 essay on eroticism. More than anything, *Blue Bananas and Other Meats* may be viewed as a salient metaphor of the artist's hedonistic ambition. In contrast to the orgiastic sexual encounters in Carolee Schneemann's early filmic works, such as *Fuses* (1964–67), Golden explores a nuanced anthropomorphism of the priapus, and the feminist pleasure not only of seeing but of performatively embellishing the male body that resulted in her "climax of an Abstract Expressionist painting."[48] Relatedly, many of her photographs from 1973 cinematically mapped the ever-shifting "schematized penis," a mechanical clockwork presented as a series of task-oriented positions in separate quadrants, for example, *Reorientation of the Human Figure at Scheduled Intervals* (Fig. 12) and *Clocking: Positional Attitudes One Through Five*.[49] As Richard Meyer astutely observed, "In contrast to contemporaneous male artists (e.g., Chris Burden, Bruce Nauman, Vito Acconci) who tested the limits and measure of their own bodies, Golden orchestrated a situation in which the male body is 'reoriented,' 'scheduled,' 'positioned,' and 'clocked' by a female artist."[50] Moreover, in these works and others from this period, there is undoubtedly a shift in aesthetic sensibility enhanced by the photographic medium, not only evidenced in the subject's natural immersion in the environment, but rather a prioritization of ritualistic costuming and compositional patterning. This is expressed in the stylized representation of male and female bodies mounting driftwood and rocks on the beach, in the close focus on faces heaped with shells, seaweed, and cords, and in the staged elements of her later series *Bodyworks* and *Wrappings* of 1976 (Figs. 13, 14), for which delineated bodies, somewhat indistinguishable in sex, are painted with shapes, stripes, or words, enveloped in plastic, and posed acrobatically.

Golden's abiding interest in photography influenced the serial presentation of the male form in her large-scale painting series, *Dreamscapes* and *Garden of Delights*, from late 1970 and early 1980. For example, this influence was readily discerned

Fig. 14. Eunice Golden, *Wrappings #1* (1976), photograph, 15" x 20". © Eunice Golden.

in *Dreamscape Diptych* (1979; Pl. 9)—the doubling of the male body's languorous physique bisects the canvas for a tightly woven "interior landscape," a flat spatial terrain of vibrant surface patterns. For these works, the pictorial layers of abstracted kilns and textiles assume a decorative armature to the supine male, subtly integrating the body's skin with a colorful dense patchwork. While Golden was, on some level, responding to the "post-abstract" realism of Philip Pearlstein, it makes more sense to consider her utilization of embellishment in dialogue with the broader aims of Pattern and Decoration that strategically employed pattern's complexities through a "conceptual richness … fully realized only through the juxtaposition of related patterns," as put forth by the movement's foremost critic, Amy Goldin.[51] The hydrangea blossoms veiling the face and flaccid genitals in *Garden of Delights #1* (1980; Pl. 10) confine the boundaries of male visibility to a domestic habitable landscape, consumed by ritual adornment and dressing, and where, as Golden further offered, the viewer is drawn "visually and intrapsychically ... into participating in the seduction."[52] In some works from this period, the hypnotic patterning disembodies the figure altogether, and like her photography's compositional structures, underscores the body's fragmentation.

In the late 1970s and thereafter, Golden sought new directions in portraiture and in her satirical series *Primal Creatures* (1982–83), featuring collage and assemblage, and *The Swimmers* (1992–99), some exploring loss and grief after the sudden death of her son. In a recent painting, *Metamorphosis #20* (Pl. 11), from her series appropriately titled *Metamorphosis* (2003-07), woody roots grow in dendroid patterns to echo the pelvic bifurcation of her earlier male landscapes, and appear like bodily presences caught in a metallic web (Fig. 15). Using a subdued restricted palette, such earthly entanglements

Fig. 15. Eunice Golden in her East Hampton studio with paintings *Metamorphosis #18* (on left) and *Metamorphosis #20* (on right). © 2007 Walter Weissman.

metaphorically express a collective nostalgia or pathos, one portrayed by Golden "as [a] meltdown, or an unusual outgrowth of memories or things seen peripherally … fused, or fragmented."[53] By contrast, her *Birds of Paradise* (2008; Pl. 12) from the later series *Flora* evokes botany's playfulness in the tropical plant's crane-like orange and yellow flowers suspended regally among an azure expanse. Moreover, in these late works, we find traces of the conceptual frameworks from psychoanalysis and geography on which her art was grounded and disseminated, and from which she produced enduring feminist abstractions of the male body landscape, corporeal embodiment, and sexual intimacy. Throughout her long career as an abstractionist and expressionist, Golden re-oriented the landscape of human morphology and visceral bodily experiences, and in the process ignited women's erotic agency and pleasure in order to unmask the "phallucy" of male power. ●

Aliza Edelman recently published, with Alison Poe, "Eva Hesse's *Laocoon*: Mitigated Antiquity and Specters in Space" in *WAJ* (Spring/Summer 2020).

Notes

1. Eunice Golden, "The Male Nude in Women's Art: Dialectics of a Feminist Iconography," in *Heresies*: *A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics* 3, no. 4 (May 1981), 40–42; rpt. in *In the Cut: The Male Body in Feminist Art*, ed. Andrea Jahn (Bielefeld and Berlin: Kerber Verlag, 2019), 273–80. Courtesy Heresies Collective. (Hereafter, references to this essay are to page numbers of *In the Cut*.)
2. Golden participated in the "Speak Out" portion of the National Organization for Women (NOW), "Women's Sexuality Conference," held in New York, June 9–10, 1973.
3. Lucy Lippard hosted the Ad Hoc meetings at her SoHo loft, where Golden was introduced to a network of feminist artists, including Nancy Spero, Joyce Kozloff, and Joan Semmel. Eunice Golden, "Sexuality in Art: Two Decades from a Feminist Perspective," in *Woman's Art Journal* 3, no. 1 (1982): 14–15; Lippard, "Sexual Politics: Art Style [1971]," in *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1976), 28–37. In 1977, Golden contributed to the landmark publication, *An Anti-Catalog*, in protest of the Whitney Museum of American Art's bicentennial exhibition, "Three Centuries of American Art," which showed only one woman and one Black artist.
4. Golden and Anita Steckel met in the Westbeth Artist Housing complex, where they both lived. As Golden recalled: "Steckel was the first one who came to me and said, 'I heard you do penises?' I said, 'No, I don't, I do male landscapes.'" Golden, interview with the author, Nov. 22, 2019.
5. See "Sexualism: Women Lead New Art Movement," *New York News Service* 1:5, Oct. 29, 1973; and Jane Perlez, "Review: Pornography Uncovered, Eroticism Exposed," *New York Post*, Oct. 18, 1973, 32, Eunice Golden Papers, New York. Anita Steckel formed Fight Censorship in response to controversies elicited by her solo show, *The Feminist Art of Sexual Politics*, at Rockland Community College, Suffern, NY, in February 1972. Golden made various appearances with this group in 1973, including the panel "Pornography vs. Eroticism" moderated by Nancy Spero in 1975. See Rachel Middleman, *Radical Eroticism: Women, Art, and Sex in the 1960s* (Oakland: Univ. of California Press, 2018), 175–76; and Maryse Holder, "Another Cuntree: At Last, a Mainstream Female Art Movement [1973]," in *Feminist Art Criticism: An Anthology*, eds. Arlene Raven, Cassandra Langer, and Joanna Frueh (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1988).
6. Golden, "Sexuality in Art," 14.
7. Not surprisingly, some early reviews dismiss or lessen Golden's eroticism in favor of formal relationships, i.e., Judith Van Baron, "Review: Solo Exhibition, Eunice Golden, SoHo 20," *Arts Magazine* 48, no. 6 (March 1974): 56. Another offers, Golden's "search for the root forms, the subconscious symbols, of human eroticism, permits distancing from realistic depictions," in Susan Heinemann, "Review: Solo Exhibition, Eunice Golden, SoHo 20 Gallery, *Artforum* (March 1974): 80.
8. In 2019, Golden's *Blue Bananas and Other Meats* (1973) was shown in the international exhibition *Maskulinitäten*, organized by the Bonner Kunstverein, Kölnischer Kunstverein, and Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf.
9. Eunice Golden, "On the Censorship of Phallic Imagery," *Art Workers News* (May-June 1975): 3. The exhibition *Sons and Others: Women Artists See Men* was organized by Janet Schneider at The Queens Museum, NYCity Building, Flushing, NY, 15 March-27 April 1975.
10. Golden, "The Male Nude in Women's Art: Dialectics of a Feminist Iconography," in Jahn, ed., *In the Cut*, 277 and fig. 4.
11. On Steckel, see Richard Meyer, "Hard Targets: Male Bodies, Feminist Art, and the Force of Censorship in the 1970s," in *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, ed. Lisa Gabrielle Mark (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2007), 365; and Golden, "The Male Nude in Women's Art," 279.
12. Golden, "The Male Nude in Women's Art," 279 and fig. 6.
13. Dorothy Seiberling wrote that Golden "perpetrates a visual rape by twisting male genitals into grotesque heads," in "The Female View of Erotica," *New York Magazine* 7, no. 6 (Feb. 11, 1974): 55. Carol Jacobsen later noted that the magazine would not reproduce Golden's images of rape, in her seminal article, "Redefining Censorship: A Feminist View," *Art Journal* 50, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 49, and fig. 7.
14. Golden, interview with the author, Nov. 22, 2019. See Heinemann, "Review," *Artforum* (March 1974): 80. In his *New York Times* review (April 11, 2003), Holland Cotter wrote that her paintings "perform exploratory surgery on artists from Courbet to Magritte."
15. Jahn, ed., *In the Cut: The Male Body in Feminist Art.*
16. For an excellent summary of notable exhibitions and texts, see Tanya Augsburg, "Introduction: Some Starting Points, Theories, and Themes," in *Man As Object: Reversing the Gaze*, ed. Tanya Augsburg (New York: Women's Caucus for Art, 2011), 13–31.
17. On Golden, Andrea Jahn said, "Her early paintings and photoworks cannot be compared to anything at that time, as they were really exceptional and strong." Andrea Jahn, phone interview with the author, July 8, 2020. Jahn first learned of Golden's work in Richard Meyer's important catalogue essay, "Hard Targets: Male Bodies, Feminist Art, and the Force of Censorship in the 1970s," in *WACK!*, rpt. and rev., in *In the Cut*, 104–26. Golden was not included in the exhibition *WACK!*
18. Jahn, "A Feminist Desire: From the Male Nude to the Erotic Body," in *In the Cut*, 52–53. Jahn traces the historical male nude, patronage, and homoeroticism in Western art. Seminal texts include, Margaret Walters, *The Nude Male: A New Perspective* (New York: Paddington, 1978); and Sarah Kent and Jacqueline Morreau, eds., *Women's Images of Men* (London: Writers and Readers, 1985).
19. Meyer, "Hard Targets," in *WACK!*, 363.
20. Middleman, *Radical Eroticism*, 9, 15; and "Making Love: Erotic Art and Feminism in the 1960s," in *In the Cut*, 87–102.
21. Eunice Golden, "What Feminist Art Means to Me," unpublished essay dated Nov. 1, 1976, Eunice Golden Papers, New York.
22. On women's changing attitudes toward sex, see Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess, and Gloria Jacobs, *Re-making Love: The Feminization of Sex* (New York: Anchor Books, 1986).

23. Gail Levin, "Censorship, Politics and Sexual Imagery in the Work of Jewish-American Feminist Artists," in *NASHIM: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues* 14, no. 1 (Oct. 2007): 75–76.

24. Eunice Golden, interview with the author, Nov. 22, 2019, New York.

25. Golden's early canvases, omitting these seminal studies from Provincetown, were described in an exhibition review as "powerful nudes … as strong as granite or as elastic and taut as a sapling …. striving for a monumental statement," an auspicious prediction of a major career shift. Noah Frackman, "Outposts of Art: Review," Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, NY, Feb. 27, 1969.

26. Golden, interview with the author, Nov. 22, 2019. *Metamorphosis #10* (1973) was exhibited in *Painting and Sculpture Today, 1974*, organized by Richard L. Warrum for the Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, IN, and the Taft Museum, Cincinnati, OH.

27. In their essay "Sexual Imagery in Women's Art," published in the first issue of *Woman's Art Journal* 1, no. 1 (Spring–Summer 1980), Joan Semmel and April Kingsley wrote, "Her [Golden's] early drawings only departed from traditional figuration in their deliberate 'exposure' of excited male organs. Later the male pelvic region became a landscape extending from edge to canvas edge as though it were a total world," 4.

28. Golden recalled, anecdotally, that in the early 1970s the influential curator Henry Geldzahler closely followed her career and was impressed by the eroticism of her early drawings, including her installation and performance, *White Labyrinth* (1970). This attention waned after the artist's inclusion in *Ms.* magazine's Jan. 1975 issue on "Erotica," for which Jamaica Kincaid wrote an article that reproduced *Purple Sky* (1969) and clarified Golden's deepening affiliation with second wave feminism.

29. Elizabeth Grosz, "Phallus: Feminist Implications," in *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary*, ed. Elizabeth Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 320–22. See Sigmund Freud, "Some psychical consequences of the anatomical distinction between the sexes [1925]," *S.E.* 19, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953–73), 243–60; and Jacques Lacan, "The meaning of the phallus [1958]," trans. Jacqueline Rose, *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne,* eds. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (London: Macmillan), 74–85.

30. Amelia Jones, "Dis/playing the phallus: male artists perform their masculinities," in *Art History* 17, no. 4 (Dec. 1994): 547; and Amelia Jones, "Seeing Men," in *In the Cut*, 78–85.

31. Louise Bourgeois brought *Fillette* (1968) to the Fight Censorship appearance at the New School for Social Research, New York City, Oct. 1973. See Middleman, *Radical Eroticism*, 176.

32. Jones, "Dis/playing the phallus," 556–57; and Leslie C. Jones, "Transgressive Femininity: Art and Gender in the Sixties and Seventies," in Jack Ben-Levi et al., eds., *Abject Art: Repulsion and Desire in American Art* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1993), 33–58.

33. Golden, "The Male Nude in Women's Art," 277. Margaret Walters wrote: "The painting is coolly impersonal, but it is also a genuine attempt to identify with the way a man experiences his body, his erection." In Walters, *The Nude Male: A New Perspective*, 317–18.

34. See Naomi Salaman, ed. "Regarding Male Objects," in *What She Wants: Women Artists Look at Men* (London: Verso), 23–24.

35. Judith Butler, "The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary," in *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 86.

36. Carter Ratcliff, "Remarks on the Nude [*Nothing But Nudes*, Whitney Museum of American Art Downtown]," *Art International* (March/April 1977): 60–62. In 2002, Golden's *Landscape #160* was shown in *Personal & Political: The Women's Art Movement, 1969–1975*, organized by Simon Taylor and Natalie Ng, Guild Hall Museum, East Hampton, NY.

37. See Catherine Nash, "Reclaiming Vision: Looking at Landscape and the Body," in *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 3, no. 2 (July 2010), 154, 156. As Tanya Augsburg concurs, "Gazes can be multiple, hybrid, overlapping, ambiguous, ambivalent, and even paradoxical as they reflect the viewer's positions(s) at any given point of time." In Augsburg, "Man As Object: Reversing the Gaze," 21.

38. Nash, "Reclaiming Vision: Looking at Landscape and the Body," 156.

39. Golden, "The Male Nude in Women's Art," 275.

40. Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 86.

41. Jahn, "Eunice Golden," in *In the Cut*, 143. See also, Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

42. See Judith Kegan Gardiner, "Female Masculinity and Phallic Women—Unruly Concepts," in *Feminist Studies* 38, no. 3 (Fall 2012), 604–05.

43. See Lucy R. Lippard, "Fragments [1976]," in *The Pink Glass: Selected Feminist Essays on Art* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 74–75. See Paul Shepard, *Man in the Landscape: A Historic View of the Esthetics of Nature* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1972), 96.

44. Golden, "The Male Nude in Women's Art: Dialectics of a Feminist Iconography," 274. With over ninety contributions on "sex" and female desire in personal, theoretical, and reproductive frameworks, the *Heresies* editors prefaced the issue's rare harmonious currents.

45. Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," *ARTnews* 69, no. 9 (Jan. 1971): 22–39, 67–71.

46. Nochlin, "Eroticism and Female Imagery in Nineteenth-Century Art," in *Woman as Sex Object: Studies in Erotic Art, 1730–1970*, eds. Thomas B. Hess and Linda Nochlin (New York: Newsweek, 1972), 9–15. Golden and Nochlin first met in 1972 in East Hampton, NY. By Golden's account, Nochlin was shocked to learn that she had been working on the male nude, subsequently sending a student to study her work from Vassar College, where she was a professor of art history, and which contributed in some form to her development of seminars on women artists. Golden, interview with the author, Nov. 22, 2019.

47. Golden, interview with the author, Nov. 22, 2019. See Nochlin, "Some Women Realists: Part 2," *Arts Magazine* 48, no. 8 (May 1974); rpr. in *Women Artists: The Linda Nochlin Reader*, ed. Maura Reilly (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2015), 91; and Meyer, 374.

48. Golden, text on *Blue Bananas and Other Meats*, July 10, 2019, Eunice Golden Papers, New York. On Schneemann, see Middleman, *Radical Women*, 52–55.

49. See Alan Moore, "Review: Eunice Golden, SoHo 20," *Artforum* (March 1975): 73.

50. Meyer, "Hard Targets," 374. Holland Cotter called them "'made-for-the-camera' performances" that treated the male nude as "manipulable raw material," in the *New York Times* (April 11, 2003).

51. Amy Goldin, "Patterns, Grid, and Painting [1975]," in Anna Katz, ed., *With Pleasure: Pattern and Decoration in American Art 1972–1985* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2019), 269. See also, Barnaby Ruhe, "Review: Eunice Golden, SoHo 20," *Art World* (Jan.-Feb. 1981).

52. Golden, "The Male Nude in Women's Art," 278.

53. Golden, "Statement," 2006, Eunice Golden Papers, New York.

Amaranth Ehrenhalt

A Life In Full Bloom

By Joan Ullman

Fig. 1. Amaranth Ehrenhalt, *Tumble 1* (1989), oil on canvas, 13" x 16 1/2". Photo: Courtesy of Anita Shapolsky Gallery, New York.

Amaranth Ehrenhalt is technically an Abstract Expressionist of the New York School, but she lived for decades in Europe. And while she has exhibited in numerous solo and group shows, from France and Italy to New York and California, is included in many private collections, and has received rave reviews of her dynamic and dazzling works, such as *Tumble* (1989; Fig. 1) and *Aderet* (1990; Pl. 13), she has remained under the radar—relatively unknown.[1] As a young painter in a 1962 show in Paris featuring artists from various countries, Ehrenhalt was singled out by the poet John Ashbery for special praise, writing about her work: "It is both an excellent example of New York School abstraction (lush colors, fluent brush work, bustling composition) and an attempt at a new, possibly eerie form of figuration…. The large flat areas, juxtaposed with smaller, detailed ones, seem always on the point of resolving themselves into landscape or a portrait."[2]

Born in Newark, New Jersey, in 1928, Ehrenhalt grew up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Teachers in her public school spotted her artistic flair, and at age twelve she was enrolled in a Saturday morning program at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Although the class ended at noon, Ehrenhalt led her parents to believe it ended when the museum closed, at 6:00 p.m., so that she could spend long afternoons alone, exploring the museum. "When I'm grown up, I'm going to make big, beautiful works of art like these," she told herself. A scholarship to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA) followed, and there, Ehrenhalt received the school's rigorous academic training in figurative art. Little by little she began to switch to the then dominant Abstract Expressionist genre. But, she says, "I never entirely abandoned the figure."

Fig. 2. Photograph of Amaranth Ehrenhalt, *Vogue* (ca. 1950s), photographer unknown.

Ehrenhalt began studies at the University of Pennsylvania, taking courses in French, science, and psychology. She completed her undergraduate degree while also enrolled in a two-year weekly art course at the Barnes Foundation in nearby Merion, Pennsylvania. The Barnes Foundation, founded by Dr. Albert C, Barnes, housed his private, world-class collection of art and artifacts. During this post-World War II period—when, by many accounts, the art world capital had moved to New York City, Ehrenhalt had a different goal. Her time at the Barnes Foundation, with its large and unique collection of Henri Matisse, Paul Cézanne, and other great French painters, had instilled in her a yearning to see Paris. "I met a lot of artists, older than me, who raved about Paris," including her teacher there, Violetta de Mazia, and Dr. Barnes himself. She still speaks with warmth of both, and she stayed in touch with them for many years.

Initially relocating to New York City following her studies, Ehrenhalt would meet many of the artists soon to be identified as Abstract Expressionists. She herself became—and remains to this day—a colorist. Ehrenhalt also remains, as critic Beatrice Compte observed in 2007, "a creator accustomed to endlessly enrich and exceed her own limits."[3] "I've always been intensely involved in color, color relationships, design, pattern," Ehrenhalt says, giving as an example her strong reactions to particular colors and patterns she would see on the street. "If I saw people wearing an outfit I thought ugly, I would cross the street not to look at it.... [but] if I saw two women in beautifully colored saris in India, I could have followed them for blocks."

Restless in New York, in 1951, Ehrenhalt embarked for Paris, using money she had been saving for years—babysitting since age fourteen and working part time through her college years. Initially, Paris would prove a launching point for Ehrenhalt, who soon left with some women friends for a trip to North Africa. En route, she met a young Austrian painter, Friedrich Hundertwasser, and the two proceeded to hitchhike through North Africa. The relationship ended when Hundertwasser's mother met them in Paris and talked "Freddy" into returning home with her to Vienna. Unfazed, Ehrenhalt continued her travels alone, to Rome. "I've always cared most about my art," she said, of this distressing situation. In Rome she met the Italian 'polymaterialist' painter Alberto Burri.[4] When his American dealer, Martha Jackson, came to meet with him, Ehrenhalt worked for Burri as his translator.

Throughout the 1950s, Ehrenhalt traveled back and forth between Paris and New York. "I didn't think of myself as an American artist or a French artist or a woman artist —just an artist," she says. In New York she often stayed with women friends in their Greenwich Village apartments, and sometimes she rented a small place of her own. At one residence, which was so small that she painted on the floor, artist friends Al Held and Ronald Bladen carried a door up four steep flights of stairs to her apartment, where they placed the door across the bathtub, creating a new work place for Ehrenhalt. In more spacious quarters, she painted on easels or tacked canvases onto the walls. Ehrenhalt always worked in many mediums—oil, watercolor, mosaic, etching, sculpture, and in each of these, she says, she worked improvidently, foregoing sketches, starting with a dab of paint or a line or cut and then propelled forward by the force of her vision.

During these heady years in New York, Ehrenhalt frequented the Cedar Bar, then a major meeting place for a group of soon to be famous Abstract Expressionist artists. Although few women other than Elaine de Kooning or Grace Hartigan found a welcome in this setting, Ehrenhalt seems not

Fig. 3. Amaranth Ehrenhalt, *Parcours 1* (1959-60), oil on canvas, 36" x 24". Photo: Courtesy of Anita Shapolsky Gallery, New York.

to have noticed. She befriended Al Held, Franz Kline, and some of the other artists, including Willem de Kooning, who invited her to dinner. But the dinner never happened as she was heading back to Europe.

That time, what Ehrenhalt expected to be another brief stay in Paris lasted more than thirty years. She met and married another American painter with whom she had a son and a daughter. (Asked his name, Ehrenhalt fell silent. "It's not important," she said finally. "I've cut him out of my life.") She remains close to her children, neither of whom inherited her artistic talent. "They both have a good eye," she said. "I can't imagine my life without children," she added.

During the Paris years (which ended in 2008, when she returned to the US to be near family), while she and her husband were barely eking out an existence, Ehrenhalt met Sonia Delaunay (1885–1979), the artist and designer who, with her husband Robert, was known for Orphism, which featured harmonious juxtapositions of areas of pure color. Delaunay became an immediate fan of Ehrenhalt's work, and despite their age difference, the two struck up a friendship. Delaunay, known for her versatility, which included working in textiles, doubtless found an affinity with Ehrenhalt, who also worked in a variety of mediums including tapestries and textiles. Delaunay at one point sent the family a complete turkey dinner with presents for the children, a generous gift that Ehrenhalt repaid with a beautifully bow-tied avocado plant she had grown. An even greater benefit that Delaunay bestowed was an invitation to Ehrenhalt to charge her paints, at Delaunay's expense, at the high-quality supplier where she and other top European artists bought their pigments. After this, said Ehrenhalt, "I didn't have money, but I always had paint."

During these years of struggle, more than one artist painted a portrait of the then dark-haired beauty (ca. 1950s; Fig. 2), and she was befriended by artists and collectors. After a visit to Ehrenhalt's frigid studio, the wealthy collector Alix de Rothschild[5] sent her a stove along with the men to install it, so that Ehrenhalt and her family would have heat in their home. Another supportive friend was the sculptor Alberto Giacometti. "He loved to place his hands around my face and feel my cheekbones. He liked my cheekbones." says Ehrenhalt. As a token of his appreciation of her unique beauty, Giacometti one day took Ehrenhalt into a store and bought her a beautiful black stole, which he draped around her shoulders. Years later, in 2012, Ehrenhalt found a way to thank Giacometti. "I called *Vogue* magazine cold," she said, "and talked them into letting me write an article about him."[6]

During what turned out to be her thirty-eight years abroad, Ehrenhalt found a warmer welcome than she believes would

have been the case had she remained in the US. Even in the male-dominated art world of mid-century Paris, she socialized with numerous established artists at the Le Select Café. Two paintings from 1954, *Alouette #3* (Pl. 14) and *Jump #3* (Pl. 15), exemplify her dazzling array of brightly colored abstractions from this early period. These paintings comprise a rich mosaic of blue, pink, yellow, green, and white tangled together in a joyous dance.

She found many opportunities to exhibit, with Yves Klein, Sonia Delaunay, and other European artists, as well as with American expatriate artists such as Shirley Jaffe, Sam Francis, Beauford Delaney and others, including Joan Mitchell. (We were casual friends," Ehrenhalt says about Mitchell. "She grew up very privileged. She didn't need to depend on men like most women in those years. I didn't have anything like that.") These were peripatetic years for Ehrenhalt, living in Paris and Rome and Pietrasanta, Italy—"They just flew by," she says. But her painting style continued to evolve. Her Abstract Expressionist works grew less dense, as she was "no longer afraid to say just enough and no more" as one reviewer noted.[7] Works from the late 1950s and the 1960s include brilliant and dynamic compositions such as *Parcours I* (1959–60; Fig. 3), and *Splash 4* (1958; Pl. 16). She recalls that during the traumatic year of 1968, when, like many Parisians, she was affected by the turmoil of the French student uprisings that her densely painted canvases reflected the upheaval. She had early solo exhibitions at the Galerie Zunini in Paris (1962), at the Galerie Murs Blancs in Ostende, Belgium (1966–67 and 1969),[8] and at the Cultural Center in Bagneaux, France (1975).

Fig. 4. Amaranth Ehrenhalt, *Aubrieta*, 2008, tapestry, 38" x 32". Courtesy of Anita Shapolsky Gallery, New York.

Celebrated for her proficiency in various media, Ehrenhalt's works in mosaic, tapestry, ceramics and sculpture were chosen for many group exhibitions, including at the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles and Museum of the Grand Palais, Paris (1990–93). She won public commissions, including a ceramic mural for Bagneaux in 1975, and in 2007 the Maison des arts de Bagneaux organized a retrospective exhibition: *Amaranth Ehrenhalt: Au Rythme des Saisons*.

Beatrice Comte wrote in the catalogue:

> Amaranth Ehrenhalt has created a rich body of work with aesthetic value and emotional charge. To bring the artist close to the American abstract expressionists who worked in Paris does not render justice to the richness of invention of a painter both original and free, where one immediately recognizes the style and palette, though it is through internal contradictions that she arrives at a fiery harmony. From paintings to monotypes, from diptychs to tondo, from watercolors to mosaics, the artist succeeds with a disconcerting ease to re-enchant and energize the world: one feels joyful after encountering the work. Her art seizes the gaze, providing a waterfall of surprises.... The mere essence of energy is captured in a net by the artist with her brushes.[9]

As one of the few living Abstract Expressionist of the 1950s, Amaranth Ehrenhalt continues to work, and participate in solo and group exhibitions both in the United States and abroad.

Since returning to New York City, Ehrenhalt has continued her productive life, and recent exhibitions in New York and California have attracted new audiences and new admirers. In *Aubrieta* (2008; Fig. 4), a tapestry, the interlocking forms create the same movement and dynamism seen in her paintings. She has also created decorative scarves for sale in art galleries

(Fig. 5). In 2010, she had a solo exhibition at the Maximillian Gallery in Hollywood, and in 2014 *Colorimetry* was shown at Galerie 102 in Ojai, California. In New York City, *Amaranth Ehrenhalt: A Hidden Treasure* was held at the Anita Shapolsky Gallery in 2012, and *Shifting Ecologies*, curated by Marianne Van Lent, was shown at The Painting Center in 2014. All told, Ehrenhalt has been honored with at least sixteen solo exhibitions, and has been included in thirty seven group exhibitions.[10] Her work is in the collection of Bibliotheque National de Paris, the Fondation de l' Art Contemporain, Paris, and the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D. C. She has many works in private collections. A major work completed in 2015, *Four Seasons* (Pl. 17) is a mural-sized abstraction of brilliant, bold colors and energetic forms suggesting the changing seasons of the year. This heroic four-paneled acrylic on canvas, measuring 24 feet in length, was created by the artist at age 87.

Today, in her apartment in a converted schoolhouse in East Harlem, Amaranth Ehrenhalt continues to produce her amazing variety of gorgeously hued, densely painted art works. Although she does so presently from a wheelchair, having broken her leg a few years ago, this limitation has not slowed her down. She still lives for her art, and like many of her Abstract Expressionist peers, she continues to paint as she always has, listening to music. "I listen to classic music, jazz, all the time," she says. "I get so involved," she said, "I lose all track of time. I tell myself I'll work on a painting for a couple of minutes and the next thing, it's four in the morning— hours later." When she is not painting, Ehrenhalt pursues another life-long calling: writing, People who have read her little sketches and essays have compared her writing to that of the autobiographical humorist David Sedaris, she says.

Ehrenhalt once likened her dazzling, tightly organized color-filled works to "a symphony on a flat surface." After a moment's reflection, she added, "I have one word you can use if anyone asks you what my work is about: Nourishing. My paintings have a certain exuberance that makes for a cheerful day when people see them," she explained. "They're nourishing for the soul." This seems a perfect word to conjure the joyous spirit one gets from viewing Ehrenhalt's vibrant paintings—not to mention the life to match: one as busy, buoyant, and—yes— brilliantly colorful as the artworks themselves. As one of the last surviving Abstract Expressionist painters from the 1950s her energetic forms, and gestural strokes of vivid hues deserve to be celebrated. •

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Fig. 5. Amaranth Ehrenhalt wearing one of her scarves (undated photograph)

Notes

1. This essay is based on an interview with Amaranth Ehrenhalt, conducted on April 2, 2020. All quotes from the artist are taken from this interview. My sincere thanks to the artist for sharing so many details about her life. Anita Shapolsky Gallery has supplied images for this article, and we thank Anita Shapolsky for her assistance.
2. John Ashbery, "One has small shocks in front of the ardent and animated abstractions of Amaranth Ehrenhalt," *International Herald Tribune*, Paris (Oct. 3, 1962).
3. Beatrice Comte, "Weaving Time," in *As the Seasons Evolve*, exh. cat. (Bagneaux, France: Maison des arts de Bagneaux, 2007).
4. Alberto Burri was a great innovator, who started exhibiting in the US in the mid-1950s. Before being taken a prisoner of war, he was a doctor in the Italian army. His materials and approach were chosen to suggest the carnage of war. He would rip the canvas, use stitching, introduce holes and charred wood. His work was intended to contrast with the decorative nature of post-war abstraction.
5. Alix de Rothschild, the first wife of Guy de Rothschild of the French banking family, was an avid art collector and patron of the arts.
6. See the article at https://anitashapolskygallery.com/newsite/fall-2012-news/ (accessed Aug. 14, 2020).
7. Mark Herisse, "Amaranth Ehrenhalt," *La Gazette de l'Hotel Drouot*, Paris (Oct. 24, 1997).
8. "Amaranth Ehrenhalt," Galerie Murs Blancs, Ostende, Belgium (1966-67; 1969).
9. Comte, "Weaving Time."
10. Among the solo exhibitions for Amaranth Ehrenhalt, there were several on college campuses: Albany Art Gallery, State University of New York (before 1970); School of Architecture, City College of New York (1971); Anderson Gallery, Virginia Commonwealth University (1971); Schiller International University, Paris (1995).

Ragpicking the City

Dora Maar as Street Photographer

By Naomi Stewart

Street photography constitutes a substantial portion of the photographic oeuvre of French artist Dora Maar (1907–97). The images were mainly created in Paris (her home throughout the 1930s), as well as on two rare trips abroad: one to Barcelona in 1933 and another to London in 1934.[1] Many of them feature figures who exist on the margins of society: the poor, the blind, the unemployed, the aged, the orphaned. This aspect of the photographs—their tendency to focus on specific individuals who represent a 'down-and-out' section of society—makes it tempting to read them as documentary (an interpretation which might also take into account Maar's strikingly active role in various political groups throughout the early and mid-1930s).[2] Indeed, Maar declared in a 1995 interview with Victoria Combalía that she had been "very left-wing" when she was younger and that she saw her images as betraying a "concern for the underprivileged class."[3] This consciousness of her own political attitudes seems to suggest that, in her street photographs, Maar was concerned to fulfill an activist goal. Yet, although a suite of images from her trip to London was displayed at the Galerie van den Berghe in Paris during the summer of 1934, her street photography was not otherwise widely circulated or popularly exhibited.[4]

Born in Paris in November 1907, Henriette Theodora Markovitch moved with her parents to Argentina when she was a young child (her architect father undertook several high-profile commissions there). In the mid-1920s, she returned to Paris, where she received artistic instruction at several institutions: the Union central des arts décoratifs, the Ecole technique de photographie et de cinématographie de la Ville de Paris, and the Académie Julian.[5] It was during these years that she changed her name to the pithier Dora Maar. In 1932, she established a professional photographic studio with the set designer Pierre Kéfer, producing work on commission for fashion magazines, popular reviews, and commercial brands throughout the 1930s. By 1933, she had become involved in surrealist circles and her work was included in no less than nine surrealism-oriented exhibitions during the decade, including in Tenerife (1935), Paris (1936), London (1936), Tokyo (1937) and Amsterdam (1938). Maar was close friends with Jacqueline Lamba (1910–93, a painter and then wife of André Breton, the founder and foremost theorist of surrealism), the poet Paul Éluard and his wife Nusch (1906–46, an artist and model), and the writer Lise Deharme (1898–1980) , as well as having romantic relationships with the filmmaker Louis Chavance, the artist Georges Hugnet, and the intellectual Georges Bataille.[6] In 1936, she was introduced to Picasso, with whom she subsequently had a nine-year relationship, the collapse of which resulted in her nervous breakdown. She lived in reclusion for much of the latter decades of her life and concentrated her artistic efforts on painting, although she did return to the photographic medium in the 1980s, experimenting with camera-less photography to produce surreal, abstract compositions.

Given Maar's surrealist affinities, perhaps a more obvious explanation for her interest in photographing the urban environment and its inhabitants can be found, then, in her artistic and intellectual association with surrealism. Breton's *Nadja* (1928) and Louis Aragon's *Le Paysan de Paris* (1926) are crucial texts that underline the importance to surrealism of the street, the city, and unrestricted passage throughout, guided by subjective intent.[7] It is little surprise that the surrealists saw an affinity between their pursuits and the work of Brassaï, whose urban photographs (frequently taken at night) seem to reflect this desire to map the city according to desire and impulse.[8] Maar has, however, been excluded from the discourse on the street's significance to surrealism, and I want to suggest that it is perhaps because, as a woman walking the streets of the modern city in order to create these images, she plays with conventional conceptions of the urban observer (exemplified by the coded figure of the flâneur) and therefore disrupts—in ways both active and passive —the subjective, aleatory, and often specifically masculine nature of surrealist urban encounters.[9]

Maar, in the role of female street photographer, demonstrates a certain level of conscious determinedness to access the places and the subjects that she does. As the journalist Paul Gilson wrote in a July 1934 review of the exhibition of Maar's London photographs: "One must know how to lose oneself in a city which conceals, under its apparent uniformity, so many secrets **...** The absence of premeditation on the part of our photographers happily prepares them for all surprises."[10] While to some extent this suggests a want of purpose on the part of the photographer, the idea of *knowing how to* lose oneself in a city in order to reveal its secrets implies that there is a level of consciousness to that endeavor. Moreover, as Gilson states, the lack of predetermined route 'prepares' the photographer to

Fig. 1. Dora Maar, *Untitled (Ragpicker)* (c.1934), gelatin silver print, 15 3/4" × 11 5/8". Horace W. Goldsmith Fund through Robert B. Menschel, Museum of Modern Art, New York. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2020. Digital image © 2020, The Museum of Modern Art/Scala, Florence.

capture the city's surprises. In other words, Maar goes out into the city with an aim to document the sites (and sights) that strike her in such a way that she feels compelled to photograph them. There is a deliberateness, therefore, to the way she pursues her street photography, which nuances the introspective, chance-driven nature of surrealist urban peregrinations.

Indeed, since it is possible—though perhaps not necessary—to read Maar's prominent focus on 'down-and-out' subjects as displaying a social-documentary intention, it becomes clear that her movement throughout the city is not merely dictated by unconscious desire and chance maneuvers (and thus is unlike the journeys taken in *Nadja* and *Le Paysan de Paris*). In venturing as far as areas such as *la zone* ("a wasteland occupied by the poor and immigrants," [11] where Maar captured a handful of images of women and children living in poverty on the outer limits of Paris), her photographic movements in the city are ostensibly linked to a critique of existing social and spatial conditions that dictate the areas conventionally (in)accessible to certain individuals/groups based on gender, class, and even indigeneity.

In one particular photograph from Maar's London trip (1934; Fig. 1), the viewer is confronted with the image of an older woman, positioned in the immediate foreground to the right of the compositional frame. Dressed in a fur-trimmed coat and feathered hat, the figure's outward appearance to some extent belies the hardship ingrained in her lined face and grimacing mouth. In her hands, she clutches a large bundle of assorted rags, some trailing down to the pavement in an indistinguishable mass, indicating that she is a *chiffonière* (or ragpicker) by trade. She eyes the camera with a look that sits somewhere between hostility and resignation, in marked contrast to the well-turned-out man positioned slightly behind her, to the far left of the image, who shows no signs of having noticed her peddling her wares beside him or the photographer stopping to capture a shot. The resulting photograph has a number of interesting resonances in terms of how gender and class can be understood (both separately and relatedly) to inform the way that Maar navigates the city and thus also how her images might be read.

The ragpicker was something of an emblematic figure in the modern city. As Elizabeth Wilson argues, ragpickers were "one of the most abject and notorious groups in Parisian society … and of all the bizarre kinds of work that the growing urban scene produced in this period of early industrial capitalism, none was more symbolic than theirs." [12] Ragpickers' significance hinges upon the circumstances of their existence in both a spatial and temporal sense: they are denizens of the modern city in the era of modernity. The material excesses and concordant socio-economic divides brought about by capitalist industrial production fuel their existence. Itinerant, they wander the city collecting scraps to resell, their livelihood enabled by the commodification of waste. Wilson characterizes the ragpicker as representative of the Parisian 'Other,' a marginal figure whose reality stands in contradiction to the pleasurable façade the city presented to the world.[13] This marginality is central to the ragpicker's symbolic currency. Indeed, as Deborah Parsons notes, Walter Benjamin concluded that the observational mode most representative of "the modern urban consciousness" was, in fact, "more analogous to this marginal rather than authoritative urban observer." [14] Benjamin consequently foregrounded the figure of the ragpicker as "the dominant walker of the city in the later stages of modernity." [15] Such privileging of the marginal decenters the traditional narrative of the flâneur as archetypal modern urban observer and makes room from other modes and means of visual experience in the city. This marginal figure therefore provides a rubric for urban observation in the era of modernity, one that can be applied to the activities of those observers who are not middle-class, white, and male (as the modern flâneur is implicitly understood to be).

Maar is one such observer. As previously suggested, the lack of predetermination displayed in her street photography implies that there is an extent to which she was in search of something without knowing precisely where she would find it. Similar to the ragpicker's collecting of disparate material fragments from locations around the city, Maar too collects

disparate fragments, but visually, in the form of photographs. The resulting collection is a heterogeneous mixture of views, taken in three different but equally metropolitan cities. Amidst her street photographs, we encounter mannequins in shop windows, blind musicians playing in the streets, suggestive views from Parisian bridges, Pearly Kings and Queens, fairground amusements, groups of workers, covered statues, men wearing tags declaring them 'medically unfit,' an evangelist with a sign declaring "Repent for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand"—all existing alongside each other in surprising juxtaposition. While it is possible to trace the recurrence of certain tropes across the images that she captured in London, Paris, and Barcelona (groups of children; beggars; blind people; shopfronts; sculptural forms), the overwhelming impression is one of variety. Unlike Brassaï's images of Paris at night, for instance, which tend to focus on the city's seedier side, there is no overarching emphasis on a particular mood or time of day in Maar's street photographs. She instead stitches together a wider and more objective view of the city, further aligning her enterprise with that of the ragpicker.

In proposing Maar's street-photographic activity as conceptually comparable to the mode of urban observation signified by the ragpicker, Maar's marginal status is necessarily emphasized. This marginality may be entirely contingent upon the fact that she is a woman (versus the ragpicker's multiple marginalities), but acknowledging the fact of its existence is important because it allows for a productive, feminist reading of her activity as street photographer. As Parsons argues: "Feminist critics need to move away from a focus on the urban observer as leisured *flâneur* to recognize the alternative metaphor for the urban observer more connected to the twentieth century city of modernity and to the influence of surrealism, and its possibilities of female urban expression."[16] It is not enough, therefore, to see someone like Maar—a woman moving through, observing, and recording the city—as a kind of female version of the flâneur (even though she is a middle-class, leisured individual) because the act of flânerie is theoretically loaded, its relationship with masculine experience too ingrained to be useful to an analysis of female urban experience.

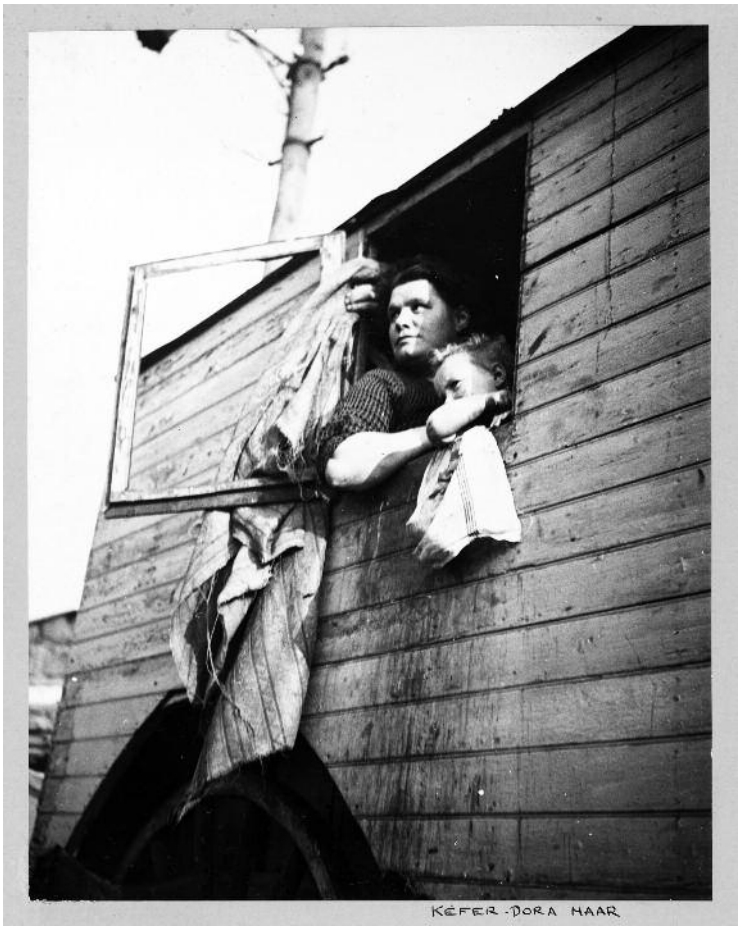


Fig. 2. Dora Maar, *Sans titre (Femme à la fenêtre)* (1935), gelatin silver print, 15 3/4" × 11 7/8". Centre Pompidou - Musée national d'art moderne - Centre de création industrielle, Paris. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2020. Photo © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Philippe Migeat.

The potential for female flânerie has been a burgeoning topic of debate in texts seeking to explore the relationship between women, modernity, and urban space. In her 2017 book, *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice and London,* Lauren Elkin notes a tendency among scholars engaging with these issues to deny the possibility of a female equivalent to the male flâneur:

> "'There is no question of inventing the *flâneuse*,' wrote Janet Wolff in an oft-quoted essay on the subject; 'such a character was rendered impossible by the sexual divisions of the 19th century.' The great feminist art historian Griselda Pollock agreed, 'There is no female equivalent of the quintessential masculine figure, the *flâneur*: there is not and could not be a female *flâneuse*.'"[17]

These arguments for the impossibility of female flânerie seem to hinge overwhelmingly upon the restrictive social context of the nineteenth century and the concurrent problem of visibility. Anke Gleber has, in fact, argued that a specifically female form of flânerie was impossible in the modern city because, where the flâneur was "neither restricted by insecurity, convention, modesty, anxiety, or assault, nor by restrictions erected through the controlling or commodifying presence of an other," a woman walking the streets of the metropolis was limited by all of these things.[18] To be a woman in the streets was to put oneself on show, to succumb to the gendered (and often desiring) gaze, to risk judgment and even physical harm; so, in order to counteract this visibility, strategies of deflection were required to facilitate unobserved, unfettered, and uncriticized movement throughout urban spaces. As Gleber has argued, it was only when "chaperoned by companions, disguised in men's clothes, or covered by other means of subterfuge," that women's entrance into the new spaces of flânerie was "even partially and tentatively possible, as a trial and exception."[19]

Of course, as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, the restrictions upon women began to lessen, but

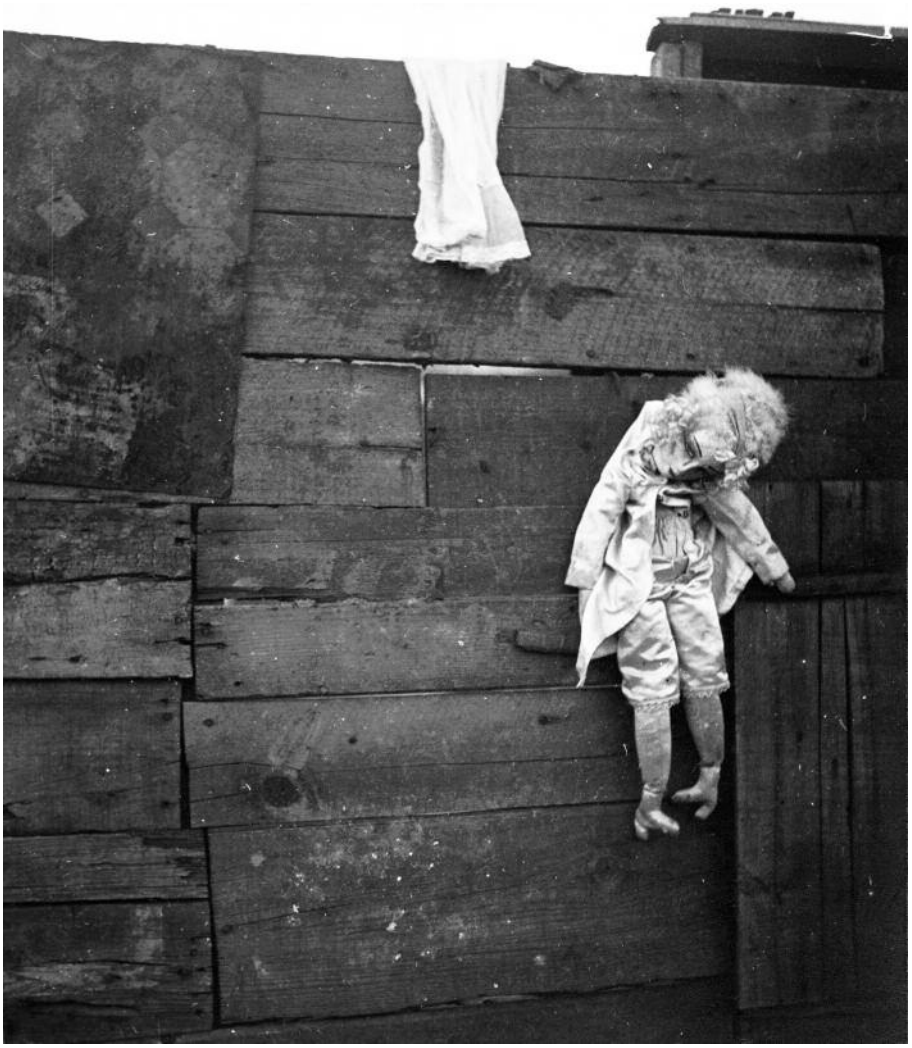


Fig. 3. Dora Maar, *Untitled (Puppet hooked on a fence*) (c.1934), gelatin silver print mounted on brown paperboard, 10 3/8" x 9 1/16". R. K. Mellon Family Foundation, National Gallery of Art, Washington 2005.68.1. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2020.

not to the extent that her unaccompanied presence on the street went without comment or consequence. As Julian Stallabrass argues, the method of image-making in the urban environment pursued by Germaine Krull (1897–1985), a contemporary of Maar's, has something to say about why women street photographers were few and far between: she worked with an assistant, often her partner Eli Lotar.[20] In other words, Krull employed one of the deflection strategies that Gleber identifies. This is an interesting point about the safety and practicality of being a female photographer out in the streets unaccompanied and makes it all the more obvious how independent and determined Maar was in pursuing these views. As Marsha Meskimmon suggests in her book *Engendering the City*, the "'safe' areas of home and local community tend to be fewer and more sharply defined for women than they are for men. Women are 'safe' in more limited spaces and more vulnerable in public areas."[21] There is, therefore, an element of perceived danger in moving beyond the boundaries of safety and into spaces of potential vulnerability. But there is something empowering and emboldened about it too. Maar's position as a lone woman photographer seems not to have precluded her from (and indeed may have helped her gain) access to the most squalid areas of the city, where the potential to make revelatory photographs in both a surreal and social sense was particularly strong.

The site that seems to most powerfully indicate Maar's determination as a street photographer and to visibly demonstrate a moral imperative at work in her images is *la zone*. This area of former wasteland skirting the periphery of Paris had been the location of military fortifications erected in the mid-1800s, which had subsequently been demolished to make way for public housing projects. As James Cannon observes in his cultural history of *la zone*, the area was occupied by a "diverse but largely impoverished population" during the interwar period, with an increasing number of immigrants arriving from Eastern Europe and North Africa during these years.[22] It was, moreover, comprised of a startling miscellany of buildings and landscapes, with much of the space taken up by makeshift slum accommodation.[23] Only a handful of images in Maar's extant body of street photography are identifiably taken in *la zone*, but they are significant in terms of what they suggest about her documentary intentions. One particular image (1935; Fig. 2) stands out because it is among the very few examples of Maar's street photography currently held in public collections that exists as an original print, mounted on cardboard, with "Kéfer-Dora Maar" written by hand beneath.

The "Kéfer-Dora Maar" attribution warrants some explanation here. Maar and Pierre Kéfer (who was renowned as a set designer and art director in the late 1920s and early 1930s) had established a working photographic studio together, housed in the garden of his parents' villa in Neuilly-sur-Seine. Officially incorporated in May 1932, according to the *Archives commerciales de la France*, they registered their venture at 45 bis Boulevard Richard Wallace as "a society in their collective names for the execution of all works of photography, retouching, design, the creation or acquisition of all facilities relating to the corporate objective."[24] In his review of Maar's suite of London photographs, exhibited at Galerie van den Berghe, Gilson talks of photographers (plural), presumably on the assumption that, as partners in business, Maar and Kéfer always collaborated on the work that the studio turned out.[25] However, while the work produced there bears the stamp "Kéfer-Dora Maar," it is most likely that Maar

was solely responsible for the execution of these photographs, due to the fact that Kéfer had no formal training in photography (as Combalía has pointed out)—although he would almost certainly have acted as her assistant and perhaps also contributed his design expertise to the process.[26] Therefore, while the double-credit suggests that the photographs were a collaborative effort between the two, the partnership was principally nominal. Moreover, as Mary Ann Caws states emphatically in her 2000 biography of the artist, Maar travelled to Spain alone.[27] There is no indication that her trip to London was any different. In fact, Germaine Beaumont, reviewing the Galerie van den Berghe exhibition in an article in *Les Nouvelles littéraires,* credits only Maar, asking provocatively at the end of the article: "And Soho? Aren't you going to Soho, Dora Maar?"[28] It can therefore be reasonably assumed that her Paris photographs were also a solo effort.

To return to the image at hand (Fig. 2), the fact of its having been printed, mounted, and given the double-credit on its front side suggests that it was destined for display or sale (the size of the print—40 x 30.3 cm [15 3/4 x 11 7/8 inches] including the mount—also implies this intention). There is, however, no record of where it might have appeared, so it is difficult to confirm whether the work was intended for public consumption or not. It represents a mother and young child, elbows resting on the open 'window' of their wooden caravan, one of its large wheels visible at the bottom left of the image. A length of fabric tumbles out of the window, perhaps a makeshift curtain intended to exclude drafts. The lack of a glass windowpane within the open frame emphasizes the poverty of the scene. The two figures look into the distance off-frame, not engaging with either the photographer or viewer. Their positioning above the center line of the composition and the low angle at which the shot has been taken give expression to the idea that Maar is 'looking up to' them; they are elevated, visually. They are also presented as liminal, their lower bodies existing within the interior of the dwelling, their upper bodies extending outwards and looking beyond. This suggests both circumstantial confinement and, simultaneously, a desire to broaden their horizons, particularly because their gazes are turned toward a space beyond the pictorial frame that the viewer cannot see.

While this image seems to have the intention of highlighting the plight of those living in poverty (further marginalized here by their gender and age), others created in comparable settings can be understood to evince a more overtly surrealist sensibility—albeit with the characteristic elements of nuance that Maar brings to her engagement with surrealism. Take, for instance, her photograph of a forlorn-looking doll nailed to a wooden fence in a similar (if not the same) rundown neighborhood (1934; Fig. 3). The doll itself, with its high heels and painted face, has a surreal quality. By being pinned at the neck to the wooden board, it has become a morbid fixation on lifelessness rather than an object of amusement for children. Alyce Mahon links the mannequin, as archetypal surrealist found object, to fetishism and the uncanny, concepts that "typified the experience of the city—in spatial terms, the uncanny is often triggered by a sense of fear and alienation in a dwelling or in a crowd."[29] Like the shop-window mannequin, this doll has an estranged quality, hung out to dry as it is.

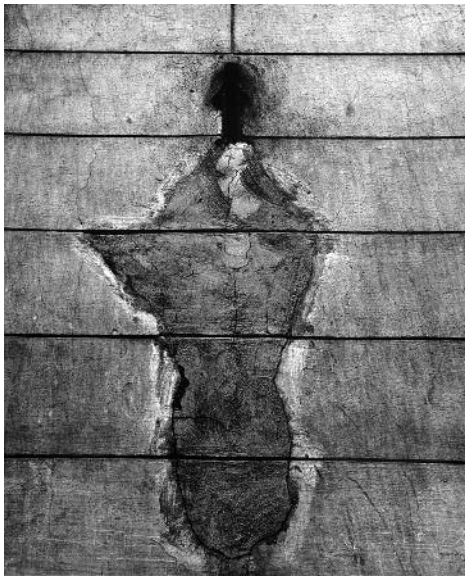


Fig. 4 (left). Toyen, *Relâche* (1943), oil on canvas, 43 1/4" x 20 7/8". Alšova jihočeská galerie, Czech Republic. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2020.

Fig. 5 (right). Emila Medková, *Torso* (1965), gelatin silver print (dimensions unknown). © Artist's estate.

Maar's photograph is one that finds echoes in the work of two Czech women surrealists. Toyen's (1902–80) painting *Relâche* (1943; Fig. 4) similarly displays an unsettling fetishistic quality, the pose of the doll in Maar's image echoed here in reverse. It portrays a disturbing scene in which a girl hangs upside-down from a wall-mounted bar, in a move redolent of school gymnastics, her face concealed and her feet dissolving into the forbidding backdrop, which is streaked with grime. The girl's body is strangely disjointed but is still presented to the viewer as an object of erotic intent, as connotations of innocence, childhood, and virginity (suggested by her pristine white underwear) are juxtaposed with the sinister, sadomasochist implications carried by the empty bag and riding crop beside her. Here, then, we are confronted with a representation of the theme of desire as particularly perverse, symbolized by this tension between purity and profanity.

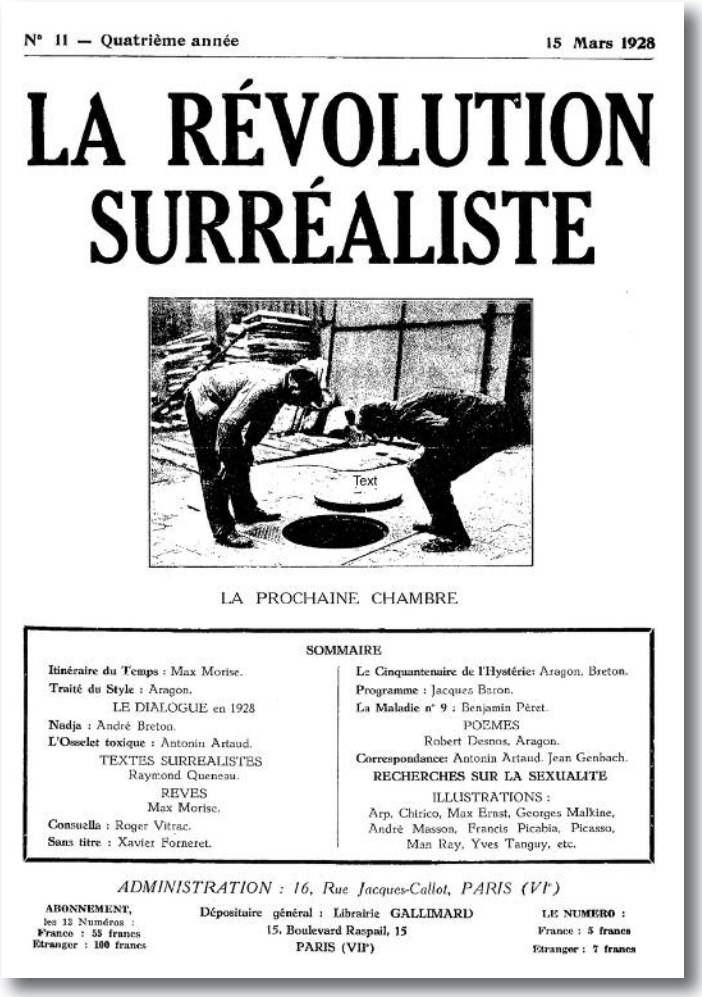
In a much later work, *Torso* (1965; Fig. 5), Emila Medková (1928–85) alludes to the same disquieting imagery of tense

Fig. 6. Dora Maar, *Untitled (Man with his head in a manhole cover)* (c.1935), gelatin silver print, 11 3/4" × 9 3/16". Robert and Joyce Menschel Fund, Museum of Modern Art, New York. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2020. Digital image © 2020, The Museum of Modern Art/Scala, Florence.

ambiguity between innocence and experience, animate and inanimate, presence and absence. Her photograph does not show a torso in its conventional bodily sense, but rather a ghostly shadow of form created by discoloration on a wooden wall (again recalling Maar's image)—the shape is given concrete form only by the title. The shared imagery in the work of these women surrealists seems revealing of a particular feminine psyche relating to ghostliness, of the haunting of the image by covert powers, of things not present but whose presence is implied by other means. The phenomenon of ghostliness is indeed central to the surrealist visual imaginary (as explored adeptly by Katharine Conley in her book *Surrealist Ghostliness*) and, as in these images, is often manifested through the holding in tension of contradictory terms: presence and absence, animate and inanimate, real and imaginary.[30]

United by their deprived settings but separated by their subjects, the two photographs—figures 2 and 3 above—by Maar thus demonstrate that surrealism and social concern can be seen to coexist in nuanced ways across her body of street photography. Important to note, here, is the fact that the majority of the street photographs associated with the surrealist movement were only mobilized as 'surrealist images' *per se* within the context of its journals and other literary publications.[31] Text contextualizes images, but it also re-contextualizes them. As Linda Steer astutely observes: "By tearing a photograph from its 'original' discursive frame and forcing it into another, surrealist appropriation de-naturalized the discursive frame and struck the foundations of traditional notions of representation."[32] This is one of the key reasons why the image/text relationship is so important for the surrealists—it activates different discursive frames than those to which the image might otherwise have belonged. It is surely significant, then, that though many of the images that Maar produced demonstrate an affinity with the kinds of images (by Brassaï, Cartier-Bresson, Jacques-André Boiffard, Eli Lotar, *et al*) that the surrealists were appropriating into these textual situations, her images are never forced into an alternate discursive frame but remain free-floating, the full potential of their polysemy still intact. They can, in this sense, be both political and personal, surreal and real, documentary and revelatory.

To stress the idea that these contradictions in terms exist within singular photographs, as well as across the wider body of Maar's street photography, it is interesting to focus on an image that she made of a well-dressed man in a black suit, crouched in the middle of the pavement with his head sticking down beneath an open manhole cover (1935; Fig. 6). Combalía observes the image's relationship to Henri Cartier-Bresson's "decisive moment," the chance encounter with a scene that compels the photographer to click the shutter at just the right moment to achieve a successful image.[33] As Cartier-Bresson notes: "To me, photography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organization of forms which give that event its proper expression."[34] Nothing seems planned about Maar's shot, there is only her awareness of its significance as an uncanny image, one that finds an interesting parallel in the form of the anonymous photograph, captioned "La prochaine chambre" (The next room), on the front cover of the March 1928 edition of *La Révolution surréaliste* (Fig. 7). As in Maar's image, there is a human figure (or in this case figures) and a manhole; the difference lies in the fact that on the magazine cover the men only stare into the darkness beneath street level, 'the next room'—removed from the world of conscious reality—which symbolizes the unconscious realm that the surrealists desired to access.[35] In Maar's image, however, the man is pictured between worlds (metaphorically speaking)— half in reality, half in fantasy—in the process of transition between this room and the next. It can thus be seen as a kind of continuation of the earlier image, a *pas de deux* acknowledging Maar's awareness of the role that photography played in the surrealists' creative maneuverings. Moreover, in demonstrating a plethora of juxtapositions—of above and below, light and dark, seen and unseen, civilization and underworld, real and imaginary, conscious and



N° 11 — Quatrième année 15 Mars 1928

LA RÉVOLUTION SURRÉALISTE

Text

LA PROCHAINE CHAMBRE

SOMMAIRE

Itinéraire du Temps : Max Morise.
Traité du Style : Aragon.
LE DIALOGUE en 1928
Nadja : André Breton.
L'Osselet toxique : Antonin Artaud.
TEXTES SURREALISTES
Raymond Queneau.
REVES
Max Morise.
Consuella : Roger Vitrac.
Sans titre : Xavier Forneret.

Le Cinquantenaire de l'Hystérie: Aragon, Breton.
Programme : Jacques Baron.
La Maladie n° 9 : Benjamin Péret.
POEMES
Robert Desnos, Aragon.
Correspondance: Antonin Artaud. Jean Genbach.
RECHERCHES SUR LA SEXUALITE
ILLUSTRATIONS :
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ADMINISTRATION : 16, Rue Jacques-Callot, PARIS (VI^e)

ABONNEMENT, les 12 Numéros : France : 55 francs Etranger : 100 francs

Dépositaire général : Librairie GALLIMARD 15, Boulevard Raspail, 15 PARIS (VII^e)

LE NUMERO : France : 5 francs Etranger : 7 francs

Fig. 7. Front cover, *La Révolution surréaliste*, no. 11 (March 15, 1928).

unconscious—this image brings Maar's street photography more closely in line with the pursuit of the surreal.

The preceding arguments have thus demonstrated that Maar's street photography is difficult to pin down. To develop the analysis further, one might foreground the documentary realism of these images, linking it to her political beliefs and, consequently, a desire to draw attention to the struggles of marginalized groups and individuals. The political angle could equally be pushed in another direction, one related, again, to surrealism and specifically to Breton's notion of *désenchaînement* (a conceptual 'unchaining'). Nevertheless, it remains essential to consider Maar's position as a female photographer, traversing urban space alone and seemingly unrestrained. As demonstrated here, taking this crucial aspect of Maar's artistic and social being into consideration illuminates important avenues of interpretation for her street photography, demonstrating how her work challenges traditional perceptions of flânerie (which has long been considered an exclusively masculine activity) as she both engages with and simultaneously deviates from characteristic (read: unconscious, subjective) surrealist encounters with the city streets. ●

Naomi Stewart is an independent art historian; she received her PhD from the University of Edinburgh in 2019. Her primary research interests constellate around women artists, the interwar avant-gardes, and the history of photography. She serves on the committee of the Scottish Society for the History of Photography.

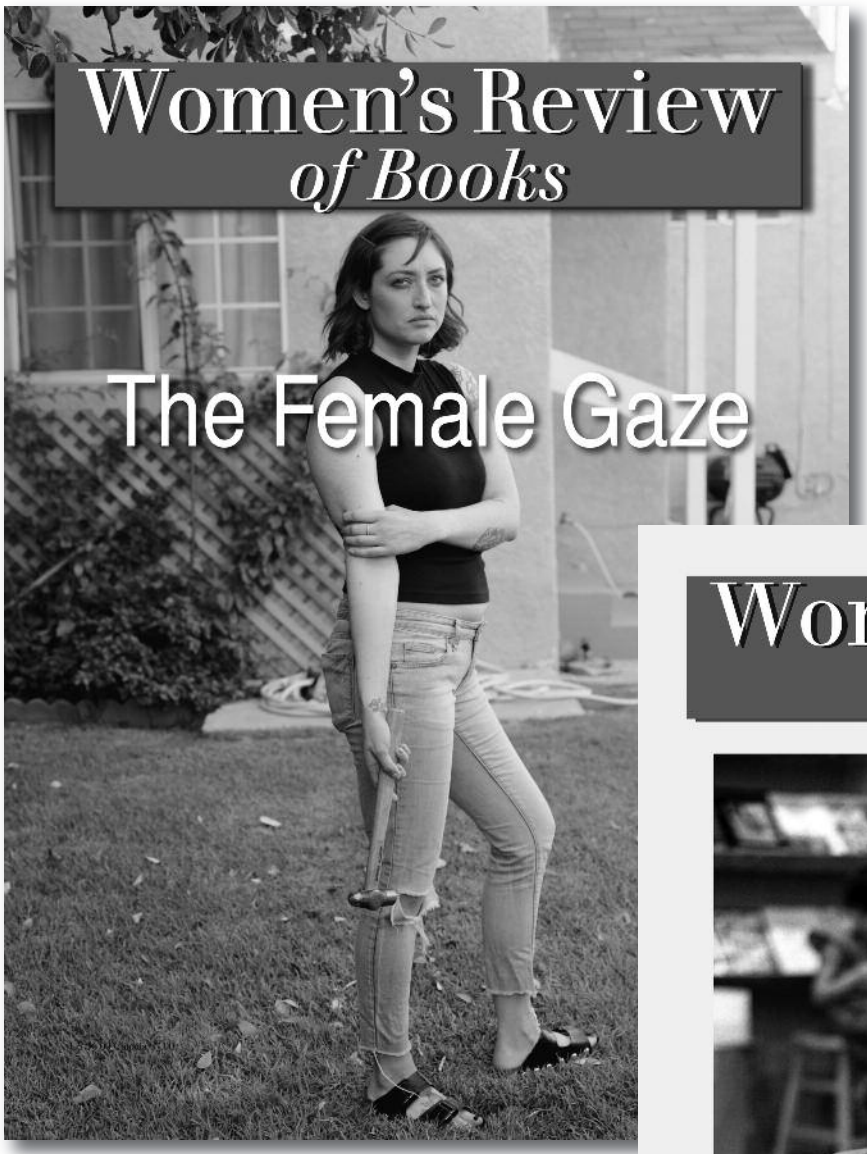
Notes

I am grateful to the Wolfson Foundation for funding my doctoral research, from which this article derives.

1. Victoria Combalía, *Dora Maar, más allá de Picasso* (Barcelona: Circe, 2013), 111, points out that the timing of Maar's trip to Spain is notable in that Henri Cartier-Bresson and Bill Brandt travelled there a year earlier to photograph and, in 1933, Marianne Breslauer and Man Ray did the same, so it was a popular destination for avant-garde photographers at that time.
2. Maar was an active member of the radical leftist group *Contre-Attaque*, founded by André Breton and Georges Bataille in 1935, and she signed various political manifestoes, notably *Appel à la lutte* (a manifesto calling for a general strike following riots in 1934), the anti-fascist tract *Enquête sur l'unité d'action*, and the collective surrealist declaration, *Du temps que les surréalistes avaient raison*.
3. Victoria Combalía, "Dora Maar, Photographe," *Art Press* 199 (Feb. 1995): 56. All translations my own, unless otherwise stated.
4. Short reviews of the Galerie van den Berghe exhibition, which was ostensibly entitled *Un Jour á Londres*, appeared in *L'Instantané* (June 1934), *L'Intransigeant* (June 27, 1934), and *Les Nouvelles littéraires* (July 7, 1934). Another important point to bear in mind here is that—although she undertook commissions abroad at this time (e.g., photographing the seaside town of Tossa de Mar to illustrate an article in the October 13, 1933 issue of the journal *Beaux-Arts*)—none of Maar's street photography was produced on commission.
5. Maar also studied, more informally, at the atelier of the Cubist painter André Lhote, where she met fellow photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson.
6. In particular, Lamba, Deharme, and Nusch Éluard were frequent photographic subjects of Maar's; there are numerous portraits and snapshots of the three women to be found in Maar's archive at the Centre Pompidou, Paris. She also captured formal studio portraits of Chavance and Hugnet.
7. André Breton, *Nadja* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1928); Louis Aragon, *Le Paysan de Paris* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard: 1926). Both novels foreground walking the city as a critical practice but emphatically from a masculine perspective. See Alyce Mahon, "Displaying the Body: Surrealism's Geography of Pleasure," in *Surreal Things: Surrealism and Design*, ed. Ghislaine Wood (London: V&A Publications, 2007), 119–21, for a provocative discussion of male surrealists' engagement with urban space. While Mahon suggests that Aragon and Breton "feminised their urbanist discourse by searching for the *flâneuse* in the city's streets" (p. 120), female urban experience is never given voice in their writings. Mahon's argument for a feminization of 'urbanist discourse' is therefore problematic, rather than productive, because that feminization is presented as a male construct.
8. Much has been written about Brassaï's centrality to surrealist photographic practice. See, for example: Marja Warehime, *Brassaï: Images of Culture and the Surrealist Observer* (Baton Rouge; London: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1996); Richard Stamelman, "Photography: The Marvelous Precipitate of Desire," *Yale French Studies* 109 (2006): 67–81; and Rosalind Krauss, "Nightwalkers," *Art Journal* 41, no. 1 (Spring 1981): 33–38.

9. Maar does not feature at all in Ian Walker's *City Gorged with Dreams: Surrealism and Documentary Photography in Interwar Paris* (Manchester, UK; New York: Univ. of Manchester Press, 2002) or in Clive Scott's study of early twentieth-century street photography, which focuses extensively on surrealism, *Street Photography: From Atget to Cartier-Bresson* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007). No extant journal articles address Maar's street photography within the context of surrealism. In an unpublished Master's thesis, Jessica Flores devotes a chapter to Maar's photographs of the 'disadvantaged,' reading them through the lens of Maar's own political views, while attempting to align them with the spirit of surrealism too —but the chapter does not offer a nuanced view on how Maar engages with the city beyond the parameters of surrealism: Jessica Robin Anastasia Flores, "Through the Lens of the Muse: The Photography of Dora Maar, 1931-1936" (MA thesis, Univ.of Cincinnati, 2003), 32–50. Flânerie is the act of strolling throughout the urban environment, observing modern city life; one who participates in this act is a flâneur (masculine) or, occasionally, a flâneuse (feminine).
10. Paul Gilson, "Les Arts: L'art photographique: Un jour à Londres," *L'Intransigeant* (June 27, 1934): 6.
11. Michel Frizot, *Germaine Krull* (Paris: Hazan; Jeu de Paume, 2015), 69, describes *la zone* as quoted here.
12. Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women* (London: Virago Press, 1991), 54.
13. Ibid.
14. Deborah L. Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity* (London; New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 36.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., 6.
17. Lauren Elkin, *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice and London* (London: Vintage, 2017), 8. The majority of scholars rule out the possibility of a female flâneur as long as flânerie is understood in the terms defined by (and after) Baudelaire. See, for example, Janet Wolff, "Gender and the Haunting of Cities (or, the Retirement of the *Flâneur*)," in *The Invisible Flâneuse? Gender, Public Space, and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, eds. Aruna D'Souza and Tom McDonough (Manchester, UK; New York: Manchester Univ. Press, 2006), 18–31.
18. Anke Gleber, *The Art of Taking a Walk: Flânerie, Literature, and Film in Weimar Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1999), 171.
19. Ibid., 173.
20. Julian Stallabrass, *Paris Pictured* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2002), 7.
21. Marsha Meskimmon, *Engendering the City: Women Artists and Urban Space* (London: Scarlet Press, 1997), 4.
22. James Cannon, *The Paris Zone: A Cultural History, 1840–1940* (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 4.
23. Ibid., 5.
24. Entry 17.048, *Archives commerciales de la France: Journal officiel d'annonces judicaires et légales* 59, nos. 58–59 (May 16–18,1932): 2110.
25. As well as appearing in *L'Intransigeant* (June 27, 1934), Gilson's review was also reprinted in *L'Instantané: journal mensuel de tout amateur photographe* (July 1934).
26. Victoria Combalía, *Dora Maar: Bataille, Picasso et les surréalistes* (Marseille: Musées de Marseille, 2002), 41. Louise Baring, *Dora Maar: Paris in the Time of Man Ray, Jean Cocteau, Picasso* (New York: Rizzoli, 2017), 54, makes a similar observation in her book, stating that Maar later told the gallerist Marcel Fleiss that, despite the double-credit stamp, the images were entirely her own work.
27. Mary Ann Caws, *Dora Maar: with and without Picasso: A Biography* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 40. This is corroborated by what Maar told Combalía in "Dora Maar, Photographe," the interview published in *Art Press* (p. 55).
28. Germaine Beaumont, "Cette Semaine … Un jour à Londres," *Les Nouvelles littéraires* (July 7, 1934): 4.
29. Alyce Mahon, "The Assembly Line Goddess: Modern Art and the Mannequin," in *Silent Partners: Artist and Mannequin from Function to Fetish*, ed. Jane Munro (Cambridge, UK; New Haven: Fitzwilliam Museum and Yale Univ. Press, 2014), 193.
30. Katharine Conley, *Surrealist Ghostliness* (Lincoln; London: Univ, of Nebraska, 2013). See, particularly, Conley's discussion of doubling (one of the four identifiers of surrealist ghostliness that she outlines) and its relationship to the Freudian 'uncanny' (18–19).
31. Some key examples include: the use of Eugène Atget's photograph *L'Eclipse, avril 1912* as the cover illustration for *La Révolution surréaliste* no. 7 (June 1926), with other photographs of his also appearing inside the issue; the inclusion of Brassaï's 'Nuits parisiennes' series in *Minotaure,* no. 7 (1935); the illustration of Breton's *Nadja* with street photographs by Jacques-André Boiffard.
32. Linda M. Steer, "Photographic Appropriation, Ethnography, and the Surrealist Other," *The Comparatist* 32 (2008): 70.
33. Victoria Combalía, *Dora Maar: Fotógrafa* (Valencia: Bancaja, 1995), 190.
34. Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Mind's Eye*: *Writings on Photography and Photographers* (New York: Aperture, 1999), 32.
35. See David Bate, *Photography and Surrealism: Sexuality, Colonialism and Social Dissent* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 34–35, for a concise analysis of the way this image figures 'the unconscious.'

A woman's work is never done . . .



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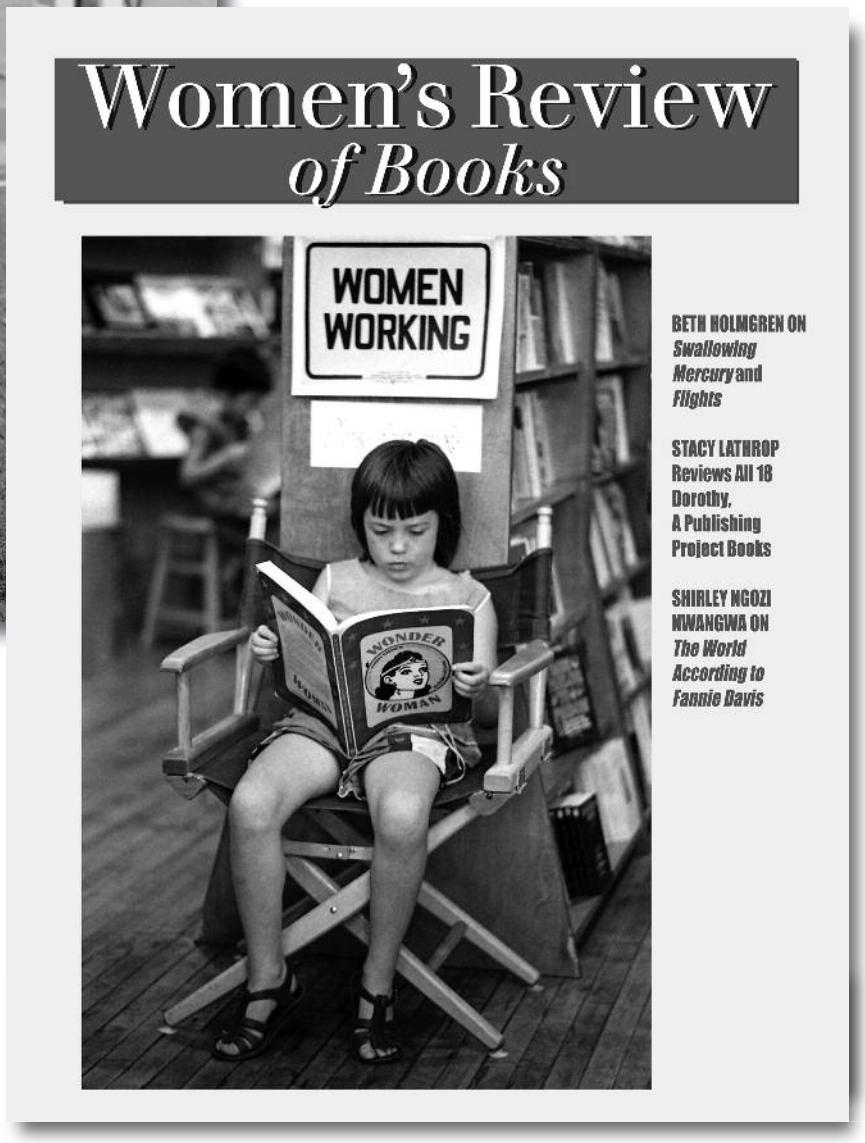

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The Women of Atelier 17: Modernist Printmaking in Midcentury New York

By Christina Weyl
Yale University Press, 2019

Reviewed by Helen Langa

Recent feminist scholarship has greatly deepened our knowledge about women's contributions to the dramatic rise of modernist abstract art in the postwar decades. Christina Weyl's deeply researched feminist study reminds us that some women also specialized as printmakers, and many of them developed their skills at Atelier 17, the innovative printmaking workshop in New York City that encouraged both technical expertise and abstract expressive imagery. Weyl's book offers a persuasive historical analysis centered on women artists' exploration of abstract stylistic options and new printmaking techniques, as well as the continuing gendered challenges they faced in becoming respected professionals. She also outlines some of their later strategies for building careers and creating supportive networks, which she suggests prefigured feminist organizing in the 1970s. Weyl deftly examines numerous ways in which women's participation in Atelier 17's studio environment defied contemporary expectations of female propriety and elicited critical responses to their work that often remained mired in gendered prejudices.

English artist Stanley Hayter opened the first Atelier 17 workshop in Paris in the late 1920s to encourage experimental surrealism and abstraction in contemporary prints. In 1940, he relocated Atelier 17 to New York City, first at the New School for Social Research, and then to two sequential locations on East Eighth Street. Although Hayter returned to Paris in 1950, the New York studio remained open until 1955 under other directors. Over 250 artists took advantage of the training and inspiration offered at Atelier 17, including more than ninety women.

Weyl's study weaves together numerous aspects of the workshop's influential history as they specifically affected women participants: Hayter's teaching concepts and treatment of students, their relationships within the studio environment, attitudes towards women's idiosyncratic modifications of experimental techniques, challenges posed by changing artistic standards as abstract modernist goals transformed critical expectations, and finally women's subsequent professional trajectories. Into this matrix of intersecting factors, Weyl intersperses the exemplary experiences of eight individuals: Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010), Minna Citron (1986–1991), Worden Day (1912–86), Dorothy Dehner (1901–94), Sue Fuller (1914–2006), Alice Trumbull Mason (1904–71), Louise Nevelson (1899–1988), and Anne Ryan (1889–1954), garnered through extensive research into archival daybooks, journals, letters, news clippings, and exhibition records.

Weyl's text further integrates art history and material description with gender and cultural history to set women's workshop participation into an analytically complex framework. She explains details of technical and aesthetic experimentation, showing how women both submitted to and resisted gendered limits on "feminine" involvement in the "messy" business of creating and printing intaglio plates. She relates women's experiences to contemporary cultural analyses of acceptable female social roles and career options in the decades after World War II, and explores the complex intersections of artistic modernism and psychological theories about human identity and universalized aesthetic expression. Weyl refocuses extant feminist scholarship towards the specific conditions of printmaking, showing that gendered assumptions penetrated every aspect of workshop activity, from technical processes of creating and producing prints, to women's interactions with male peers, to contemporary critics' unsympathetic interpretations of women's thematic choices, titles, and artistic techniques, and finally to women's abilities to build successful professional careers through their workshop membership, and later their innovative self-promotional strategies and efforts to claim new exhibition opportunities.

The Women of Atelier 17 has seven parts: an Introduction, five Chapters, and a Conclusion. The chapters focus on specific aspects of American printmaking's postwar efflorescence—the history of Atelier 17, new concepts of abstract design and technical mastery pioneered by Hayter and participating artists, and new opportunities for the exhibition of prints in the postwar decades—while remaining centered on how women's experiences and aesthetic choices were shaped by the tensions of often inescapable gendered values. Weyl includes vivid highlights of individual women's experiences at the workshop, both amusing and infuriating, and provides numerous illustrations of exemplary works and illuminating archival photographs.

In the Introduction, Weyl outlines the breadth of her project, saying it "will map previously unrecognized intersections among women active at the studio in New York, networks of postwar modernism, histories of midcentury American craft, and proto-feminist activity … merging attention to Atelier 17 members' experimentation in the graphic arts and in-depth scrutiny of the period's cultural norms and gender relations" (2). Introducing the history of Atelier 17, she refutes prevailing myths about Hayter as a womanizer and chauvinist, arguing that he "respected women's intellectual and creative capabilities" and was supportive of women students' career-building efforts. Misogynistic views expressed at the workshop, she asserts, resulted from contemporary social values rather than Hayter's personal attitudes. "From its foundation in Paris," she insists, "Atelier 17 was an egalitarian and coeducational facility," but situated within a culture that privileged masculinist art-making, the workshop environment suffered from "the unconscious bias that both male and female members carried into the studio from their outside lives" (19).

Chapter One, "The Cell of a Revolution," explains Atelier 17's reputation as an incubator of abstract modernist innovation and vanguard printmaking practices, while also offering egalitarian access to technical instruction and design advice from professional peers. Artists of varied experience, age, and national identity (but little racial diversity) worked there for variable periods of time, enjoying "unfettered access to facilities and equipment and casual camaraderie" (26). Weyl outlines the history of Atelier 17 in more detail, highlights Hayter's instructional priorities, and argues that, for women especially, participation certified a level of professionalism that supported further career development.

In Chapter Two, "Inky Fingers: Digging into Printmaking," Weyl describes the innovative technical skills that artists pioneered at Atelier 17, along with new thinking about abstract modernist compositional options. Hayter expected women to assert physical strength and master varied printmaking techniques. Moreover, unlike workshops that hired professional printers, at Atelier 17 all artists were expected to print their own works, which involved turning the heavy wheel that pushed intaglio prints through the press bed or creating woodcuts whose technical requirements, like burin-engraved prints, also demanded physical force. Yet despite women's participation in these processes, Weyl argues, it was clear that the workshop, typically cluttered with materials, tools, inky rags (and ashtrays), was "visualized as a male space" in which women were held to normative standards of masculinist artistic prowess (59, 63).

Chapter Three, "Material Matters," turns to the tensions that developed around Hayter's emphasis on brute force and warlike metaphors in explaining printmaking techniques, or his advocacy of substituting power tools for more traditional engraving methods (98). By contrast, women's experiments with non-traditional tools were often derided by association with kitchen equipment and female domesticity. For example, In *Majesty* (ca. 1952-54; Fig. 1), Nevelson substituted a can-opener for the burin, and Sue Fuller turned to Karo Syrup to resuscitate an older technique called "sugar-lift etching" (101). Similarly, both male and female artists began to collage textiles such as netting, silk stockings, and crushed paper onto their printing plates to create textural background effects. However, when Anne Ryan used sections of lace in a largely abstract design, her innovation drew some negative critical comments. Sue Fuller's experiments with string collage were also viewed as questionable and received unsympathetic notices (129). Weyl explores multiple examples of women's innovative efforts to develop new technical and expressive possibilities that often met with gendered disdain.

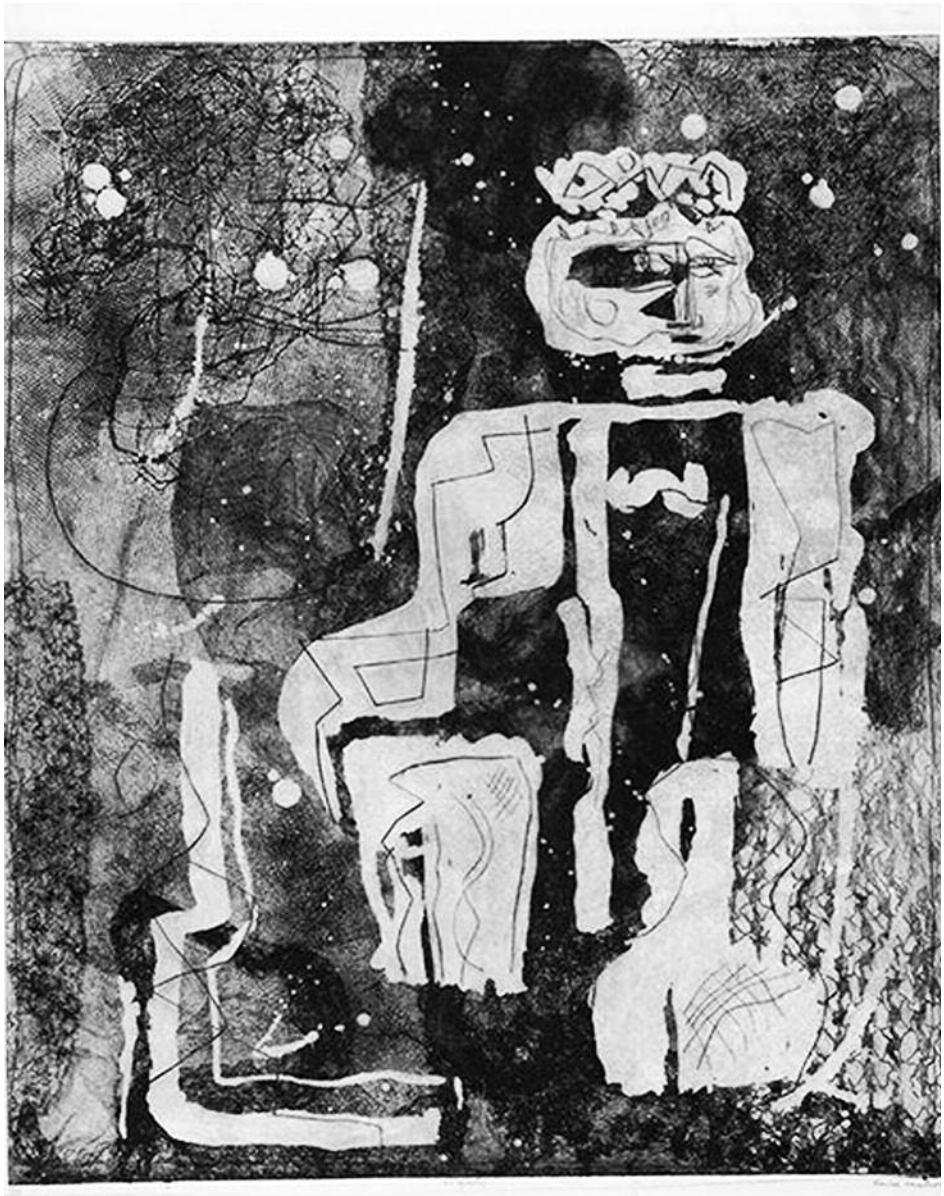

Fig. 1. Louise Nevelson, *Majesty*, ca. 1952–54, etching and aquatint, 21 13/16" x 17 1/16". Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Cambridge, Mass. Margaret Fisher Fund, M23288.

In Chapter Four, "The Epic Print," Weyl addresses problems that ensued for printmakers as modernist art transitioned to increasingly large works characterized by spontaneity and dynamic colorism. Creating larger scale prints posed specific challenges due to limitations in standard paper sizes, press bed measurement constraints, and the higher cost of large copper or zinc plates (163). Some artists, such as Worden Day, created

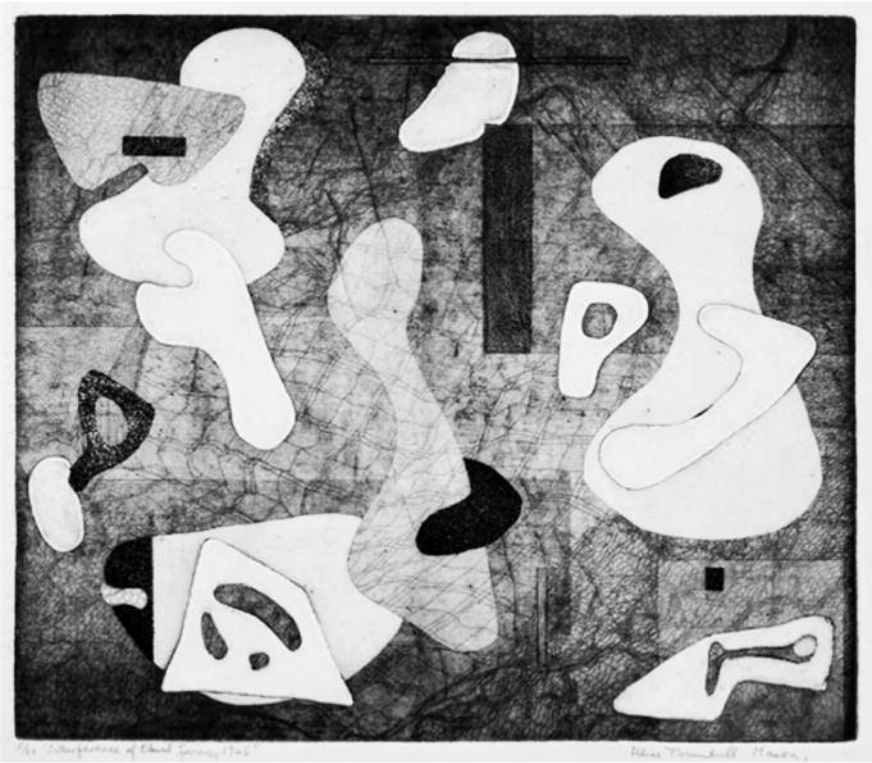

Fig. 2. Alice Trumbull Mason, *Interference of Closed Forms* (1945), soft ground etching and engraving with gouging, 11 3/8" x 13 1/4". Print Club of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA. Permanent Collection 1946-38-1.

large woodcuts to resolve these problems, but this was not a solution for those committed to intaglio techniques. Demands for effects of spontaneity and greater color intensity also provoked difficulties. The shift from technical skill to spontaneous gesturalism and from thematic originality to self-expressivity also evidenced cultural constraints for women printmakers, as critical standards shifted from expectations of technical mastery to notions of intuitive genius, a universalizing yet masculinist ideal seen as excluding female creativity. These issues are thoughtfully laid out by Weyl as she details the effects of changing aesthetic, cultural, and gendered discourses on individual women's abstract imagery, as well as their self-evaluation and the critical reception of their work.

Chapter Five, "Circulating Modernist Prints," adds yet another dimension to this complex study, as Weyl explores the roles played by women printmakers, gallerists, and curators in developing new national and international options for exhibiting and selling prints. Her discussion reiterates recent studies of the expansion of postwar support for modernist visual art (including prints) all over the United States, promoted by touring shows organized by the American Federation of Arts and major museums, as well as various institutions that hosted regional print exhibitions. Alice Trumbull Mason contributed her print *Interference of Closed Forms* (1945; Fig. 2), for example, to various exhibitions; like other vanguard abstract prints, it was identified by supportive critics as an aesthetic expression of postwar American political and social freedoms (171). Weyl's research demonstrates that numerous women who developed their skills at Atelier 17 later supported each other professionally by showing together and sharing information about other group exhibitions and sales opportunities.

The scholarly prioritizing of masculinist values, Weyl argues, has led printmaking historians to trace the importance of Atelier 17 primarily through the influence of its most famous male participants, who carried on Hayter's ideals when they became the first generation of university printmaking professors. This conception ignores the professional trajectories of women printmakers, whose ambitions had to be realized in other ways. The innovative modernist prints by women in Weyl's text surely belie this historical silencing. Indeed, the book includes two informative appendices: a list of the ninety-seven women who worked at Atelier 17 between 1940 and 1955, and a selection of the most prominent women's biographies (a complete set of biographies for all the artists is available online at http://atelier17.christinaweyl.com).

In addition to her deep research into both published and archival materials, two other elements in Weyl's study make this book a pleasure to read. Her nuanced and well-informed explanations of thematic and technical details help readers to understand both components of illustrated prints. Additionally, her conjoining of historical narrative with a persuasive feminist analysis reminds readers of the complex intersections of aesthetics with gendered cultural politics in every aspect of artists' lives and works. Although at times this insistence seems a bit repetitive, it reinforces the necessity of understanding women's activities and art-making in their larger historical and cultural contexts. Weyl's study highlights the benefits women gained from their work at Atelier 17—avant-garde training, professional camaraderie, and opportunities for experimental art-making—in an environment that fostered creativity despite the underlying tensions produced by deeply embedded cultural codes of gender difference. •

Helen Langa is Associate Professor Emerita at American University. With Paula Wisotzki, she co-edited the anthology *American Women Artists 1935-1970. Gender, Culture, and Politics* (Ashgate 2016, now Routledge and in paper). Her current research focuses on lesbian artists in America between 1890 and 1970.

Edith Halpert, the Downtown Gallery, and the Rise of American Art

By Rebecca Shaykin
The Jewish Museum, New York and
Yale University Press, New Haven, 2019

Reviewed by Diane Tepfer

Fig. 1. Peggy Bacon, *Portrait of Edith Halpert*, undated, pastel on canvas, 20" x 16". Hecksher Museum of Art, Huntington, New York. Gift of the Baker / Pisano Collection.

Edith Gregor Halpert (1900–70) and her Downtown Gallery are best known for introducing Jacob Lawrence and his now iconic *Migration Series* (1941) to a crossover audience. Lawrence and his aesthetics appealed intensely to Halpert because, like Lawrence, she was an American original. Halpert's formative years reveal similarities with Lawrence's. Both came to New York City's Harlem as children with their mothers and a sibling, both were precocious, hard-working, and idealistic; and both became extremely successful. Halpert's success came from her savvy sensibility to expand and popularize American art with endless promotional schemes.

Edith Halpert, the Downtown Gallery, and the Rise of American Art is now a necessary resource for studying the reception of American art during the mid-twentieth century, the art market, entrepreneurial women, immigrants, and more. Author Rebecca Shaykin, Jewish Museum associate curator, curated the notable exhibition of the same name, and presents Halpert's life and the history of the forty-two years of the Downtown Gallery's noteworthy existence in five richly illustrated chapters.[1]

Halpert's Downtown Gallery name referred to its original location in bohemian Greenwich Village, where many artists worked and away from the intimidating atmosphere of most uptown galleries. When it opened in 1926, most New York galleries specialized in European art or eighteenth and nineteenth century American art. The Whitney Museum of American Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Guggenheim Museum did not yet exist, and the Metropolitan Museum did not yet collect or show twentieth century art. The Downtown Gallery's mission—nontraditional for that time—was to make contemporary American art visible and available to all at reasonable prices.

Twenty years earlier, in 1906, Edith Gregoryevna Fivoosiovitch immigrated to New York from Odessa (then Russia, now Ukraine). The family settled in Harlem, then a center of middle-class immigrant Jewish life. Her widowed mother opened a shop, where Edith first learned merchandising.[2] An aspiring artist, Edith enrolled at the age of fourteen in the National Academy of Design; by seventeen she was supporting herself by working in advertising at department stores and as an efficiency expert. Frequenting John Weichsel's People's Art Guild, she met many artists, and in 1918 she married the early American modernist painter Samuel Halpert. Combining her marketing skills from department stores with the entrée into the art world gained from her artist friends, she opened her art gallery, hoping to provide a place for local artists to gather while selling art to the middle and working class. By the end of the vibrant first season, Halpert had learned and would incorporate two principles: that a market for contemporary art existed beyond New

Fig. 2. Marguerite Thompson Zorach, *Edith Halpert in Her Downtown Gallery* (1930), oil on canvas, 22 1/4" x 29 1/4". National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, © The Zorach Collection, LLC.

York, and the best way to make art accessible to the masses was to place it in the museums that were opening or expanding in New York and across the country.

From the outset Halpert astutely made connections with influential people and devised ways to involve them in her efforts to promote American art. Selling on the installment plan, like at the department stores where she had worked, and specially priced Christmas shows were the Gallery's most successful schemes. She devised municipal and other group exhibitions and marshalled other galleries to participate. One early significant and successful strategy was to use nineteenth century folk art, including Edward Hicks's *Peaceable Kingdom* (1830–32), and popular objects including weathervanes and ship's figureheads, both to make the case for the roots and breadth of American art as well as to help finance the work of living artists. Noting the influence of African sculpture on Picasso and other European artists, Halpert identified a variety of nineteenth century paintings and vernacular objects as "American Ancestors," most notably Raphaelle Peale's 1822 *Venus Rising from the Sea – a Deception*, and the trompe l'oeil still life paintings by William Harnett and John Frederick Peto, all now American icons.

During the forty-two years of its active existence, the Downtown Gallery championed many living artists, including Peggy Bacon, Georgia O'Keeffe, Marguerite Zorach and William Zorach, Stuart Davis, Arthur Dove, O. Louis Guglielmi, Pop Hart, Marsden Hartley, Jack Levine, John Marin, Elie Nadelman, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Robert Laurent, Horace Pippin, Abraham Rattner, Ben Shahn, Charles Sheeler, Niles Spencer, and Max Weber.

Halpert was no feminist, but she did not seem to treat female and male artists differently. The Downtown Gallery artists were like her children, she sacrificed for them and demanded adoration and obedience. Halpert enjoyed being surrounded by men; many were enamored by her eyes and the overall beauty of this diminutive woman. Friends like Peggy Bacon, saw hard-drinking, cigarette smoking Edith as brash and tough (Fig. 1). She served as art advisor to a succession of influential civic leaders and often wealthy women throughout the United States, from Abby Aldrich Rockefeller in New York and others in Los Angeles, Detroit, San Francisco, Wichita, Boston, Atlanta, Dallas, and elsewhere. The role and accomplishments of Edith Gregor Halpert become inseparable from those of the Downtown Gallery. Marguerite Zorach's c.1930 painting of *Edith Halpert in Her Downtown Gallery* (ca. 1930; Fig. 2) shows Halpert at right, and a debonair male client holding a painting of a female nude. They are seated on red art deco swivel chairs, with a three-tiered table, all designed by Donald Deskey for the newly opened Daylight Gallery, which Halpert had planned and opened in the garden space behind the original townhouse. Marguerite Zorach also designed the multi-colored, abstract patterned concrete floor for the new modern space.[3]

Having survived the Depression, in the post-World War II period when abstract expressionism was becoming ascendant among the cognoscenti, the Gallery moved to Midtown New York, and following the death of Alfred Stieglitz in 1946, Halpert added Arthur

Dove, John Marin, Georgia O'Keeffe, and a new generation of artists and client friends, while continuing new campaigns. Halpert's sense of history combined with her efficiency—her expert record-keeping practice, including maintaining carbon copies of correspondence and loose-leaf notebooks for each artist with biographies and annotated photographs of artworks (but, sadly, few installation images)—made the Downtown Gallery records a prime collection to microfilm for then Detroit-based nascent Archives of American Art.[4]

A very useful resource, this 232-page volume contains much important information as well as 271 color illustrations of art works that went through the gallery, many of which were not able to be in the exhibition, plus numerous black and white images of prints, people, places, brochures, and installations, as well as a helpful index. This large format, casewrap publication stands alone as an independent scholarly book.[5] Not only a record of the exhibition, this companion volume expands on the contents of the exhibition.[6] Among the rich array of illustrations of art works are five by Marguerite Zorach, a special treat (25, 26, 32, 47, and 69). Two (32 and 69) show Zorach's rarely seen tapestry paintings, for which she specially dyed the wool embroidery yarn.[7]

I did have a few minor issues with this otherwise excellent publication, beginning with the title—she signed her voluminous correspondence "Edith Gregor Halpert," not "Edith Halpert," as in the title. Also, the title of Chapter One, "Married to American Art," would have displeased Halpert, who was offended by the idea that her older established artist husband brought art into her life.[8] The notion that Halpert's "contributions have been forgotten … even among art scholars" (17) may be more of a marketing notion (as Halpert might have employed) than an actuality. This notion, introduced by Lindsay Pollock(x),[9] was repeated in many of the reviews it received, although just in the years since my 1989 dissertation, exhibitions and publications have featured the art she showed and acknowledged the Gallery's contribution. Even today, museums, galleries, and collectors revere the white and blue Downtown Gallery label, which in its various iterations, was affixed to the back of artworks the Gallery sold.[10] The Archives of American Art selected the voluminous Downtown Gallery Records as one of the first collections to scan and put online, and it is their most consulted collection.

Shaykin concludes with twenty-one superb pages of "Selections for the Collection of Edith Halpert" (182–201). "In the course of a career spanning more than forty years, Edith Halpert amassed a spectacular personal collection of American art … Striking in its range, eclecticism, range, and diversity, Halpert's collection was, in some sense, the fullest expression of her singular personality" (181). ●

Diane Tepfer has curated exhibitions of American art globally and taught art history to adult military and civilians. Her research concerns art patronage for wide-ranging publics. The patronage of New York City's Columbus Monument and its shifting perspectives is the subject of her ongoing research.

NOTES

1. Other recent significant publications on important art dealers (also accompanying major exhibitions) include Rebecca A. Rabinow ed., *Cézanne to Picasso: Ambroise Vollard, Patron of the Avant-Garde* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art), 2006; Joseph Rishel and Jennifer A. Thompson, *Discovering the Impressionists: Paul Durand-Ruel and the New Painting*, (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art), 2015, and James Meyer, with contributions by Virginia Dwan and Paige Rozanski, *Dwan Gallery: Los Angeles to New York, 1959–1971* (University of Chicago Press and National Gallery of Art) 2016.
2. Edith Gregor Halpert related this and related personal anecdotes in an extensive Oral History Interview conducted by Harlan Phillips for the Archives of American Art between 1962 and 1965, and now available online at https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-edith-gregor-halpert-13220#transcript
3. Two questions occur about Zorach's painting of Edith at work: who is the debonair male client, and why did she portray her stylish friend and dealer with her slip showing?
4. In 1970 the Archives of American Art became a bureau of the Smithsonian Institution; the headquarters are in Washington, DC. Many of the Downtown Gallery Records are now available online; see https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/downtown-gallery-records-6293 for the Finding Aid.
5. In her acknowledgments Shaykin graciously notes "the pioneering research of Lindsay Pollock and myself." Lindsay Pollock, *The Girl with the Gallery: Edith Gregor Halpert and the Making of the New York Art Market* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007), and Diane Tepfer, "Edith Gregor Halpert and the Downtown Gallery Downtown, 1926-1940: A Study in American Art Patronage," (PhD diss, University of Michigan 1989).
6. The Jewish Museum is maintaining many additional useful related visual, auditory, and cinematic resources on their website for adults and children. https://thejewishmuseum.org/index.php/exhibitions/edith-halpert-and-the-rise-of-american-art#about
7. However, Shaykin's description of *The Picnic*, 1928 (25) misidentifies some of the friends in the painting. Wendy Jeffers, biographer of Holger Cahill and Dorothy Miller, emailed me December 15, 2019, "…first of all, Dorothy wasn't in Ogunquit with Cahill. Cahill was Icelandic and blond, not dark haired and Dorothy wore her hair in a french twist, never down around her shoulders." Roberta Tarbell, scholar of Marguerite Zorach and William Zorach, agrees that the woman in the red dress is the artist, but William Zorach did not have a moustache, and "The standing man in the foreground does not look like any photograph of William Zorach I have seen," email to the author, December 15, 2019. Previously, in my 2001 monograph, *Samuel Halpert: Art and Life, 1884-1930*. New York: Millennium Partners, (14), I had suggested that the unknown male was William Zorach.
8. In the transcript of her extensive 1962-1963 Oral History, Halpert declared, "I knew all the artists long before I met Sam, and I knew them through Weichsel way back in those days. That's where I met Sam. He did not introduce me to the artists. I had met them through others. That has always been something that irritated me you know, that he brought art into my life." https://www.aaa.si.edu/ collections/interviews/oral-historyinterview-edith-gregor-halpert-13220# transcript May 1, 1962. In addition, The Jewish Museum and Yale University Press used the color pink on the spine of this tome, the cover lettering of the name "Edith Halpert," some inside accents, as well as on the invitations and advertisements for this exhibition. While the Downtown Gallery may have highlighted one of its many exhibition invitations and brochures with the color pink, the sexual connotation that pink bears, is

inappropriate and misleading especially in the era of the #MeToo movement.

9. Pollock, *The Girl with the Gallery: Edith Gregor Halpert and the Making of the New York Art Market.*

10. The only example I was able to locate online is carefully preserved on the back of an Arthur Dove painting, which passed through the Gallery's final location in the Ritz Towers at 465 Park Avenue. https://www.invaluable.com/auction-lot/arthur-garfield-dove-american-1880-1946-centerpor-602-c-e4a19e1a75# "Arthur Garfield Dove (American, 1880-1946), Centerport XIII, 1942, Unsigned, identified on a label from The Downtown Gallery, New York".

Persia Reframed: Iranian Visions of Modern and Contemporary Art

By Fereshteh Daftari
I.B. Tauris, 2019

Reviewed by Maryam Ekhtiar

Fig. 1. Tala Madani, *The Shadow* (2018), oil on linen, 80" x 80". Courtesy of the artist and 303 Gallery, New York.

Fereshteh Daftari's latest book is a well crafted, critical study of Iranian modernism. *Persia Reframed* is not a survey but an attempt to remap the history of an often misunderstood period in Iranian art history that covers a chronological span from the late nineteenth century to today. The book highlights the catalytic role of art in expressing political, social, and personal concerns, and issues of gender and identity, and foregrounds pluralism, hybridity, and the individual voices of artists living in Iran and those in diaspora. In fact, Daftari's own voice as an Iranian woman, a scholar, and a curator resonates throughout her narrative.

In her text, women are prominently featured as artists, patrons, collectors, curators, and critics. Discussions underscoring the subversive and dissident side of Iranian modern and contemporary art revolve around the artworks themselves rather than their socio-political, historical, or theoretical contexts. Media rarely considered elsewhere, such as installation art, video, and performance art round out her account.

The book collects six thematic essays or chapters. Chapter 1 provides a detailed overview of Iranian modernism and proposes a periodization for this field. It addresses the shifting meaning of the term "modernism" and questions its applicability to non-Western art, contending that as "an art-historical discourse, it was conceived in the West, exclusively about the West, and for the westerner as ultimate reader, spectator and consumer" (3). Daftari favors the term "modernisms" as a more inclusive term that reflects local variations that have eventually emerged around the globe (19).

Chapter 2 is devoted to the Saqqakhaneh movement of the late 1950s and 1960s, a watershed in Iranian art (21).[1] Envisioned by a group of men born in the 1930s, it gave rise to a visual language drawn from popular and street culture.[2] It celebrated the underprivileged and neglected segments of Iranian society and called for a return to the local and authentic (21). Chapter 3 examines the practice of one of the Saqqakhaneh movement's principal founders and champions, the acclaimed artist, scholar, and collector, Parviz Tanavoli (b. 1937). Its greatest supporter was an American woman, Abby Weed Grey of Minnesota (1902–83), who had traveled to the Middle East and Asia and collected over two hundred works, which she donated to the Grey Art Gallery at New York University in 1974. Another influential patron was Queen Farah Pahlavi (b. 1938), whose

vigorous efforts culminated in the creation of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in 1977.

Chapter 4 is an overview of the history of abstraction in Iran, which predates the dialectic of Western modernism by centuries. This discussion opens with the work of two female artists, Monir Farmanfarmaian (1924–2019) and Behjat Sadr (1924–2009), who were trailblazers of modern abstraction in Iran.[3] The remainder of the chapter presents abstraction as a safe venue for voicing dissent and political and social discontent after the 1979 Revolution, and as an antidote to figurative propaganda art promoted by the regime and the Left (113).

Chapter 5 explores the term "contemporary" in relation to Iranian art. Daftari contends that for art to be contemporary, it must present issues that are still relevant today (115). Although she uses the 1979 Revolution as a benchmark, she focuses primarily on art produced from the 1990s onwards—a period that she believes marks a gradual shift to subversive art inside Iran along with the emergence of a new group of artists in diaspora (115). The chapter teases out the main themes of Iranian contemporary art and challenges the validity of using "Iranian-ness" as a lens for "reading" the art produced by artists of Iranian origin. Balancing global connectivity and regional specificity, Daftari emphasizes the individual voices of male and female artists who speak to a broad range of universal concerns, including psychological trauma, isolation, and alienation, and to the anguish and frustrations experienced by middle-class youth living in a dizzying metropolis like Tehran. A painting by the diasporic artist, Tala Madani (b. 1981), titled *The Shadow* (2018; Fig. 1) and featured in the postscript of the book, is an example of the universal, existential and, at times, unsettling messages expressed in the works of Iranian contemporary artists.

Although discussions of gender identity are raised throughout the book, several pages in this section are allocated to the subject. Daftari tackles the controversial topic of veiling (*hijab*) and its role in articulating Iranian women's ongoing struggle for acknowledgment, justice, and equality. She credits Sonia Balassanian (b. 1942), an Armenian-Iranian, with being the first artist to address the subject in post-revolutionary Iran, in a series of self-portraits including *Portrait #14* (1982; Fig. 2), and applauds Shirin Neshat's (b. 1957) two-screen video installation, *Turbulent* (1998), as a powerful musical metaphor for gender segregation and the asymmetry of power in contemporary Iranian society (133, 148). Artworks that speak to other pressing gender-related issues, such as sexuality in a repressive society, motherhood, rebellion against codes of dress and conduct, and the emergence of new standards of beauty, are also examined (132–48).[4]

The intriguing notion of artistic appropriation and tampering with traditional aesthetics as a strategy for concealment is explored through the work of a multi-generational group of women artists living both in Iran and in diaspora.[5] These artists mask political, social, and ideological commentary in the sanctioned visual language of manuscript illustration, carpets, drawings, calligraphy, and architectural decoration. The chapter ends with a

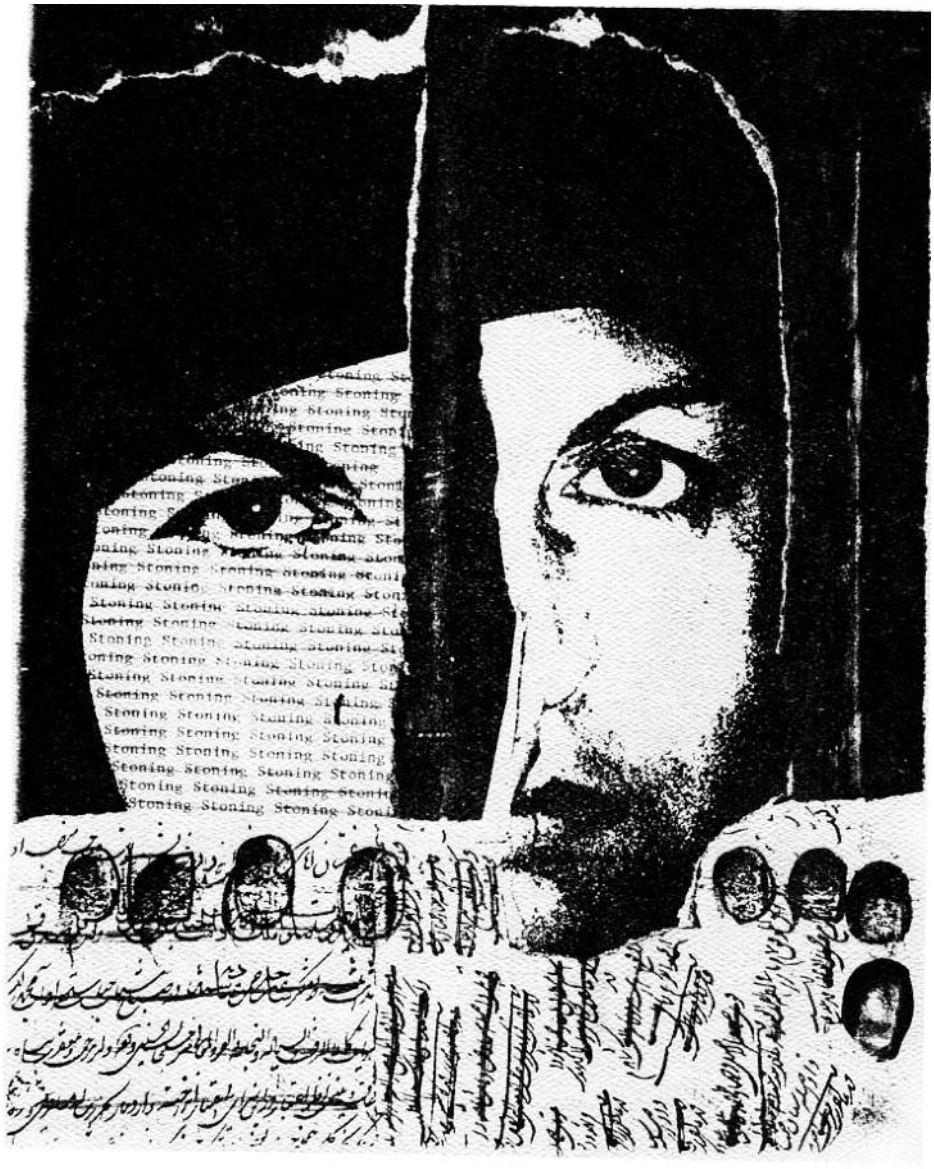

Fig. 2. Sonia Balsassanian, *Portrait #14* (1982), digital reproduction of a collage on paper in Portraits by Sonia Balassanian, (New York, Sonia Balassanian, 1983), n.p.

discussion of Sufism (Islamic mysticism) and spirituality in Iranian contemporary art, which is represented by the work of Y.Z. Kami (b. 1956), a Tehran-born painter now living in New York, and Shirazeh Houshiary (b. 1955), an Iranian artist based in London who uses the language of abstraction in her monochromatic fugitive compositions to visualize a spiritual quest and articulate the most basic human rhythms, such as a simple breath or a heartbeat (181).

Chapter 6, the final essay, is an autobiographical account of Daftari's experience as a curator, scholar, and art historian. Through the years, she has watched the field grow from obscurity in the 1960s and 1970s to one with a robust presence in museums, academia, and commercial arenas. She was one of the first curators to organize an exhibition on Iranian modernism outside of Iran and has since mounted several shows of Middle Eastern and Iranian modern and contemporary art (199–201).[6] Throughout her career, she has persistently fought to humanize and individualize the idiosyncratic messages articulated in the artworks rather than consider them as expressions of a national art (204).

In this section, she also problematizes the usage of the term "contemporary Islamic Art" and takes issue with Islamic art historians who use it to imply continuity rather than a rupture with tradition and overlook its inapplicability to the work of Iranian diasporic artists. Although her criticism is well taken, it neglects to acknowledge that many curators and scholars of Islamic art are just as uncomfortable with the term and find it just as inadequate. In fact, the term "Islamic Art" has been under intense scrutiny in the past few decades.[7] However, by oversimplifying the vast and at times unwieldy field of Islamic Art, one runs the risk of rendering it monolithic, static, and insular. One could argue that historic objects that fall within its fold are as multi-faceted and represent as many diverse voices, layered narratives, and socio-political contexts as their modern and contemporary counterparts. Reducing the scope of Islamic Art to clichéd references to calligraphy and miniature painting thus diminishes its complexity and inherent pluralistic constitution. Moreover, why is it not possible for a contemporary artwork to simultaneously resonate with an "Islamic" object and convey a subversive message? Future dialogues between scholars on both sides of this debate may reveal more commonalities than previously believed.[8]

This book is an illuminating study of Iranian modern and contemporary art, reflecting the author's cutting-edge research and the current state of the field. It offers an insightful analysis of individual artworks, as well as a holistic view of the subject. In Daftari's own words, this art always "has a story to tell, a message smuggled in, a pain to share, a battle to win, a transcendence to fulfill" (191). Lavishly illustrated, this book will serve as a valuable reference for scholars, curators, students, and art enthusiasts for many years to come. •

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Notes

1. In 1963, the art critic and journalist Karim Emami proffered the name "Saqqakhaneh" to describe a cluster of artists who had exhibited works with national and folkloric themes at the Third Tehran Biennial in 1962. The name was derived from the public water fountains throughout Iran that commemorated the thirst and agonies suffered by Hussein, the third Shi'ite Imam, and his family before their brutal massacre by the forces of the Umayyad Caliph Yazid at the Battle of Karbala in 680 AD. The battle solidified the schism between Sunnism and Shi'ism, and commemorating the event is a crucial component of Shi'i piety.
2. They include: Hossein Charles Zendehroudi (b. 1937), Parviz Tanavoli (b. 1937), Mansour Ghandriz (1936–66), Faramarz Pilaram (1937–82), and later Nasser Oveissi (b. 1934), Massoud Arabshahi (1935–2019) and Jazeh Tabataba'i (1931–2008).
3. Farmanfarmaian became the first Iranian woman to have a retrospective in an American museum. *Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian: Infinite Possibility. Mirror Works and Drawings 1974–2014*, organized by the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art in Porto, Portugal, traveled to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2015. See also Donna Stein, "Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian: Empowered by American Art: An Artist's Journey," *WAJ* 33, no. 2 (Spring-Summer 2012): 3–9.
4. As seen in the works of young women artists such as Shirin Aliabadi (b. 1973), Bita Fayyazi (b. 1962), Jinoos Taghizadeh (b. 1971), and Parastou Forouhar (b. 1962).
5. The painters Farah Ossouli (b. 1953) and Shiva Ahmadi (b. 1975), multidisciplinary artist Nazgol Ansarinia (b. 1979), and sculptor Afruz Amighi (b. 1974) are featured.
6. Her impressive resume includes: *Without Boundary: 17 Ways of Seeing at MOMA* (2006); *Iran Modern*, co-curated with Layla S. Diba at the Asia Society (2013); *Safar/Voyage: Contemporary Works by Iranian, Arab and Turkish Artists* at the University of British Columbia, Museum of Anthropology (2013); and *Rebel, Jester, Mystic, Poet: Contemporary Persians–The Mohammad Afkhami Collection*, which premiered at the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto (2017), before it traveled to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (2017).
7. For a helpful overview of the debate, see Finbarr Barry Flood and Gulrü Necipoglu, "Frameworks of Islamic Art and Architectural History, Concepts, Approaches and Historiographies," in *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture*, ed. Finbarr Barry Flood and Gulrü Necipoğlu (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 2017), 2–56. After discussions with the late Oleg Grabar, a leading authority and professor in the field of Islamic Art, Daftari defines Islamic Art as "art made in and/or for areas and times domininated by Muslim rulers and populations" (208). Related questions were explored at a panel discussion at the Brooklyn Museum in April 2018 entitled "Situating Contemporary Art from Asia and the Middle East: Best Museum Practices." As such, should Asian modern and contemporary art be exhibited with historic Asian art, with international contemporary art, or both? How can contemporary art enhance the representation of historic works of art? How can it detract from that representation?
8. By this I mean art historians, scholars, and curators of Islamic art and those in the field of Modern and Contemporary art of the Middle East and North Africa.

Shirin Neshat: I Will Greet the Sun Again

Edited by Ed Schad, with essays by Farzaneh Milani, Staci Gem Scheiwiller and Layla Diba
The Broad and DelMonico Prestel, 2019

Reviewed by Mahsa Farhadikia

This catalogue, published in conjunction with Shirin Neshat's retrospective exhibition at The Broad, Los Angeles (Oct 19 – Feb 16, 2020), was organized by the curator and publications manager Ed Schad, and consists of four scholarly essays of varying lengths and an interview with the artist. The conceptual thread among the essays is the interpretation of Neshat's work through her challenging personal and biographical Iranian lineage, in dialogue with the equally problematic and somewhat reductive backdrop of broader Iranian "cultural heritage" and "political affairs." As the authors develop their respective essays, there seems to be an abrupt shift in emphasis from "local" characteristics to the proclamation of "universality," a shift that all the authors mention in their essays by using Neshat's own terminology. Such a shift may also reflect the artist's shift of medium from photography to video and film around 1995, as well as a shift in the subject matter (21). Schad reflects upon this strategic conceptual and global shift—from Iran to an elusive Iranian culture—when he quotes Neshat's '"Iranian point of view," looking outward from personal experiences onto the world, to a sense of universals" (23). While delving into the controversy over the Neo-Orientalist and 'exotic' representations in the work of contemporary Iranian artists, especially an artist as established internationally as Neshat, is beyond the scope of this review, I will attempt to demonstrate some of the interpretive and rhetorical issues in the catalogue essays, which I hope will shed light on the omnipresent problematic reception of art from (or about) the Middle East.[1]

In his introductory essay, "Thousands and thousands of branches: Shirin Neshat's journey from Iran to Persia," Ed Schad's arguments on Neshat's body of work shares important characteristics with Neo-Orientalist strategies in approaching Middle Eastern Art in a Western context. These strategies are in line with a Neo-Orientalist investment in "the post 9/11 craving of the general public in the United States for 'authentic' and 'expert' information about Islam and Middle East," according to scholar Ali Behdad.[2] As the essay's title shows, his account of Neshat's work is heavily based on interpreting her work against the historical backdrop of the artist's home country, and specifically the problematic binary of "Iran" vs. "Persia." Similarly, in her foreword to the catalogue, Joanne Heyler, the founding director of the Broad, welcomes the audience to the museum as a place where "through the eyes and experience of Shirin Neshat, visitors may gain an understanding of not only recent events in Iran, but also a deep history of Persia" (8).

Fig. 1. Shirin Neshat, *Malaksima* (2015), from the series *The Home of My Eyes*, ink on LE silver gelatin print, 60" x 40" x 2". Photo: David Jiménez.

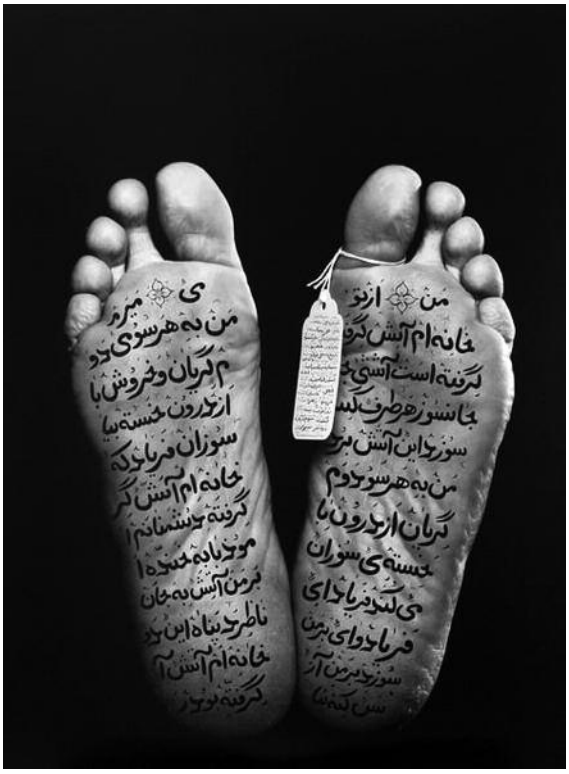


Fig. 2. Shirin Neshat, *Rahim* (2015), from the series *Our House Is on Fire*, ink on digital chromogenic print, 60" x 48". Photo: Larry Barns. © Shirin Neshat. Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.

As with the exhibition's wall labels, Schad allocates excess attention to historical context by emphasizing the artist's biography (mostly utilizing Neshat's own words), heavily interpreting culturally-specific notions like martyrdom, and engaging with "Persia" as a concept that, in his view, exists as an "expansive expression" within an Iranian person's mind that "predates Iran," rather than as a physical place, all in order to make her work comprehensible for a Western audience (23–24).

Such an approach raises the controversial issue of agency when speaking about the political history of a Middle Eastern country like Iran. Hence, there are many conceptual challenges for a Western audience interpreting Neshat's work, issues Schad must negotiate, including the 'low' academic bar for articles written in English on Iranian art and culture, as well as the biased accounts of the key resources which have been primarily written by scholars of the Iranian diaspora. Overall, Schad seems to be primarily reliant on Neshat's interpretative authority as a "native informant,"[3] which takes shape through the autobiographical narratives of her life as an immigrant in the United States, and closely connects to what he considers Iran's "current affairs." At the same time, he proclaims her works' universalization via the "elasticity of Neshat's Persian heritage" (24).

Farzaneh Milani, a feminist scholar of Persian literature, presents a poetic interpretation of Neshat's work in her essay, "Shirin Neshat: The Rainbow Catcher." Like Schad, Milani strongly stresses the cultural context—in this case the rich history of poetry in Iran and its ubiquity in popular culture—which in her view contributes to the formation of Neshat's poetic visual language. Milani strives to read Neshat's work from a totalizing, monolithic point of view located within a Persian culture of poeticism and romanticizes these connections without exploring in further depth its significant complexities. Evoking the local origins of Neshat's works and the "definitions of home and homeland," Milani writes: "Iran, where Neshat comes from, is a country where art matters; where people grow up kissing books; where women, men and children go on pilgrimage not only to the shrines of their holy saints, but also to the mausoleums of the quasi-sacred poets; where the very first word revealed to their prophet, who could actually not read, is a short command, 'Read' (Surah 96) and a whole chapter of their holy book is titled 'The Pen' (Surah 98)" (172).

The perpetual deployment of poetry, executed in Arabic-style Persian calligraphy on the foreground layers of many of Neshat's photographs, is more a formal decorative element rather than a conceptual one. On the one hand, Persian calligraphy turns into the visual element of texture in Neshat's work, functioning as an exotic, intriguing visual element for Western viewers who are unable to read it. On the other hand, even for those who are familiar with Farsi and can read the poetry, these elements may become void of their conceptual significations as a result of its visual execution in the form of textural patterns and by their repetition throughout her different series. In this regard, Staci Gem Scheiwiller, a scholar of contemporary Iranian art, has contemplated the global pitfalls of exhibiting and collecting Iranian artists: "This colonial identification and desire for Arabic and Persian calligraphy—specific markers that are in contrast to European and North American sign systems—become sought-after aesthetic commodities on their own."[4] Similarly, Iranian scholars in diaspora, like Milani, consider Neshat's deployment of "feminist" content and symbolism through Forough Farrokhzad's poems—used in the former's photograph and film series—as sign of similar feminist characteristics. However, the function of those very poems in Neshat's works has been fiercely criticized by postcolonial scholars, who analyze these linguistic symbols (Farsi and Arabic handwritings) not as poems but rather as "market oriented" elements that capitalize on cultural differences, an investment that has resulted in new forms of Othering.

Also like Schad, Milani shifts her argument from the works' local "roots" to their "universality" by quoting Neshat and explaining her position, in her own words, of being a "nomadic artist" (173). Milani asserts: "Just as a search for home and homeland characterizes Neshat's work, so does a sense of movement and mobility distinguish her art. It is a refreshing journeying between countries, languages, religions and cultures" (173–74). What Milani might also entertain, on both aesthetic and conceptual levels, is that despite some so-called international aspects in her work, Neshat's body of work may, arguably, seem more of a homogeneous entity, which repeatedly manipulates what is considered to be a local cultural and political heritage. Such a homogenous approach is also alive and present in those photographic series that deal directly with different geopolitical themes, such as the series *The Home of*

My Eyes and *Our House Is on Fire*, which include *Malaksima* (Fig. 1) and *Rahim* (Fig. 2), both 2015, respectively. Even though those series are assumed to present a shift in her practice, as they depart from her focus on Iran to address other cultures (in this case Azerbaijani and Arab), the shift in subject matter doesn't seem to result necessarily in a nuanced formal or conceptual approach. Hence, her choices like frontal portraiture and covering bodies with calligraphy create a formal and, consequently, ideological space that becomes homogeneous and doesn't seem to reflect complexities and delve into various cultures. In this sense, despite the differences between the subject-matter and geographical place, there is an apparent repetition and ideological uniformity identifiable in many of her series.

Layla S. Diba, an Iranian-American independent scholar and curator, approaches the works from a different perspective. Despite the former writers' stress on the "local" contexts as the main sources of inspiration for the artist, Diba explores Neshat's diasporic career of over forty-years in New York and her formative experiences as co-director of Storefront for Art and Architecture, and questions what she calls the "Irano-Islamic" interpretations applied to her work. Alternatively, she considers Neshat to be an "American, specifically a New York artist," whose body of work has been informed by her multicultural background. To support her thesis, Diba alludes to the appropriation aesthetic of the Pictures Generation artists and finds correlations with artists such as Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger, and Lorna Simpson in terms of the juxtaposition of text and image in their works.

While Diba's literal interpretation seems to be applicable to Neshat's formal strategies, it makes a broad statement to demonstrate the shared origin and effect between these two different types of artworks: one stemming from a conceptual art background rooted in language, the other from a long tradition of text-image juxtaposition in Persian manuscripts with a direct, self-Orientalizing approach. Diba further defines Neshat's feminism based on what she observes as "the use of a female perspective, the female body as a subject, and celebrating female intellectual and emotional power" (125). It goes without saying that considering an artist's body of work through the framework of feminism requires that various criteria be met; however, the representation of female power in Iran, as demonstrated in Neshat's work, is a more complex discussion than Diba's description of the celebration of "female intellectual and emotional power." Neshat has been fiercely criticized by many Iranian critics who find her portrayal of Iranian women in line with "self-victimization" trends in Neo-Orientalist discourse, which refers to the misrepresentation of Middle Eastern women as "oppressed" creatures for the consumption of Western audiences—with little agency, an approach that neglects the fact that these women are powerful citizens who have earned many achievements despite the socio-political environment since the Islamic Revolution.

While there has been much controversy among various Iranian critics over Shirin Neshat's reductionist representation of Iran's situation, the reception of her work has been quite positive, not only by the writers of this catalogue but also by most critics who have reviewed her recent show in the press throughout the United States. Neshat's work has been praised in the US in the name of multiculturalism, with limited critical examination of its Neo-Orientalism, a characteristic that might be hard to recognize because of the politically charged content of the works as well as the fascinating nature of the "Middle Eastern" elements for the Western audience. What is required is further research about the binary logic behind these works, a vigilance about the oversimplification of social traumas and sufferings in politically charged work. Other helpful questions worth asking are: Does the artist present a deep understanding of her social dilemmas? Are her formal choices the best means of representing those ideas? Do the visual choices address the subject matter too directly or do they create a nuanced understanding? Thinking about such questions will open the door to new conversations about the controversial intersection of political views, contemporary art making, aesthetics, representation, and the Other narratives in contemporary art, particularly those that address the Middle East.[5] ●

Mahsa Farhadikia is an independent art critic and curator based in Los Angeles. She is a member of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA-USA). Her areas of expertise are gender and postcolonial studies. In 2019, she co-curated the critically acclaimed exhibition, *What if not exotic? Critical Perspectives in Contemporary Iranian Art*, at the Building Bridges Art Exchange.

Notes

1. In their important essay titled "Neo-Orientalism," Ali Behdad and Juliet William define this term as a "mode of representation that, while indebted to classical orientalism, engenders new tropes of othering," in *Globalizing American Studies*, eds. Brian T. Edwards and Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2010), 284. See also, Donna Stein, review of *What if Not Exotic? Critical Perspectives in Contemporary Iranian Art*, ed. Mahsa Farhadikia, *Woman's Art Journal* 41, no. 2 (Spring-Summer 2020): 63–64.
2. Ali Behdad, "The Orientalist Photography," in *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation*, eds. Ali Behdad and Luke Gartlan (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2013), 289.
3. I borrowed this term from Hamid Dabashi, "Native Informers and the Making of the American Empire," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, June 1, 2006, https://www.meforum.org/campus-watch/10542/native-informers-and-the-making-of-the-american (accessed Aug. 31, 2020).
4. Staci Gem Scheiwiller, "(Neo)Orientalism: Alive and Well in American Academia: A Case Study of Contemporary Iranian Art," in *Middle East Studies after September 11: Neo-Orientalism, American Hegemony and Academia*, ed. Tugrul Keskin (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), 205. Quote from C. Mousavi Aghdam and A. Mahmoudian,, "The artist-ethnographer in Contemporary Iranian Art," *Honer-e-Farda* ˆ(Art Tomorrow) 6: (2011), 114–21.
5. See Mahsa Farhadikia, "A Critical Review of Neo-Orientalism in Contemporary Iranian Art," in *What if Not Exotic? Critical Perspectives in Contemporary Iranian Art*, ed. M. Farhadikia, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Building Bridges Art Exchange), 10–25.

The Politics of Taste: Beatriz González and Cold War Aesthetics

By Ana María Reyes
Duke University Press, 2019

Beatriz González: A Retrospective

Edited by Tobias Ostrander and Mari Carmen Ramírez
DelMonico + Prestel and Pérez Art Museum, 2019

Reviewed by Elizabeth Frasco

Fig. 1. Beatriz González, *Los suicidias del Sisga* (1965), oil on canvas, 47 1/4" x 39 3/8".

Like her Latin American peers Marisol (1930–2016), Marta Minujín (b. 1943), and Antonio Berni, Beatriz González (b. 1938) can be considered a "Pop" artist as long as she is also considered a political one. Through colorful enamel and metal paintings, screenprint fabric hangings, and other assemblages of mundane materials, González touches on the turmoil in her native country of Colombia throughout the twentieth century. To call her art purely Pop, however, would in fact be misleading, as many of the titles of the artworks can only be understood by researching the historical context of major events in the history of Colombia and South America. The authors of the recent monographs *Beatriz González: A Retrospective* (hereafter BG), published on the occasion of the exhibition at the Pérez Art Museum, Miami, and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and *The Politics of Taste: Beatriz González and Cold War Aesthetics* (hereafter PT), understand the unique circumstances surrounding the artist's work and refuse a straightforward aesthetic interpretation of her career. Neither survey of González's art takes a traditional approach to discussing Pop, and both situate the artist within wider considerations of social class, "taste," and the cultural elite.

Despite visual similarities with artists like Andy Warhol and Richard Hamilton, one will never see brand-name or household products in the work of González. Her use of the bright, flattened aesthetic of Pop Art was originally tied to her rejection of geometric abstraction, which had dominated Latin American art since the 1930s and was largely Eurocentric. In her 1994 retrospective, González claimed that hers was a "provincial art that cannot circulate universally" (BG, 20). Such a claim was meant to counter any claims by art critics that abstraction was universally understood. Though González acknowledges having seen Pop Art and the work of Robert Indiana during a visit to the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1966, she wrote in 2015 that the style was "unrelated and extraneous to my painting."[1] Unlike many Pop artists, González eschews images taken straight from consumerism in favor of historical images, images of European paintings, and images from the popular press. There are, of course, other ways to describe González's art besides using the term Pop. In the retrospective monograph by Ostrander and Ramírez, González's output is described alternately as a "distinct mode of figuration," an "art of contradiction," a "critical painting practice," a "confabulation of elements," a "mediated, meditated painting," "meta-representation," and "image as sheer presence."

Framed by persistent political unrest caused by the decade-long civil war, "La Violencia" (1948–1958), the Colombia

that González knew was a place of overt contradictions. Efforts to modernize the country were continually undermined by an elite class that policed culture through national salons, canonized art critics, and a rhetoric of universal progressivism. Some of the themes that Reyes assigns to Colombia's art world during the Cold War include: "legitimate" versus "illegitimate" culture; religion during the rising secularism of the 1960s; neo-colonial political and social fragmentation; US cultural imperialism in Latin America; the influence of petroleum on the emerging public cultural sphere; and the rise of television and new media. As Reyes writes, González created "artistic interventions with taste" that "parodied trends in the growing international art circuits in order to resist them" (PT, 10). In rejecting internationalism in favor of regional styles, González was focused on creating a national discourse that addressed the country's history of trauma. According to Ostrander, though González certainly interrogated traditional notions of taste, she did so in a way that was tied to "local popular taste, to its regional character and cultural 'marginality'" (BG, 17).

A major framework for Reyes' in-depth historical discussion of the Colombian art world during the National Front government involves the dialogue and friendship between González and the Argentine-born art critic Marta Traba (1930–83), who taught González at the University of Los Andes (Uniandes). Both Traba and González were featured frequently on television, with González shown exploring crowded street markets on the show *Correo Especial*, while Traba discussed art on nightly programs, including *El museo imaginario*, *El ABC del arte*, *Curso de Historia del Arte*, and *Una visita a los museos*. Though Traba herself had helped to popularize geometric abstraction after returning to Bogotá from Europe in 1953, she remained fond of her student and mentee. When Traba wrote about González's career, she praised the artist's style of "*pop nacional*" (national pop) as exemplary "artistic defiance" (PT, 12). In turn, González admired Traba's use of television to champion fine art, later recalling that Traba "came on television for *all* Colombians to see" and that due to her series, even people from the provinces "could now participate in culture" (PT, 13).

Fig. 2. Beatriz González, *Mutis por el foro* (Exit stage rear) (1973), enamel on metal plate assembled on a bed, 47 1/4" x 80 3/4" x 35 7/16". Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

At the same time, González did not use popular images to mock middle-class consumption but rather to "interrogate why these images had such broad national appeal" (BG, 18). By placing popular images within the context of the salons and galleries, she questioned the very status of those institutions as "superior" and highbrow. In one such example called *Los Suicidas del Sisga* (The Sisga Suicides) (1965; Fig. 1), González reproduced a decade-old photograph of a couple who had committed suicide rather than sin and consummate their love. Painted in a bright and abstracted style, *Los Suicidas* elevates the *cursi* or "tacky" in Colombian society to the level of fine art in a comical manner, with Traba referring to the work in terms of "black humor" (BG, 94). Despite the tragic story of a misguided couple from the provinces, *Suicidas* was received as "farce" due to the unusual combination of "avant-garde strategies [with] localized, kitsch-like imagery," as Ostrander writes (PT, 23). For her part, González admired the blocky compositions of commercially printed photographs, which undermines her seeming rejection of Pop Art.[2] As Reyes writes, González knew that the intrigue surrounding *Suicidas* stemmed from "amusement at the lower classes and their perceived poor taste," and as such, the artist brilliantly indexed the audience's "own class condescension" as part of the artwork (PT, 75).

Slightly later in her career, González also began crafting *mobiliario* (furniture assemblages), which were often pieces of metal or wooden furniture that she painted with enamel designs. Both monographs make it clear that the artist repeatedly emphasized the ties in her work to traditional painting. At one point, González even declared to Traba that she considers her "technique connected to the most rigorous oil painting tradition" (PT, 79). At the same time, by rejecting oil painting and its connections to Western art history in favor of enamel on metal, González related her work to "industrial production as another nod to anti-refinement" (BG, 18). In the case of the *mobiliario*, this process produced conceptually complicated works that challenge what Reyes calls the "politics of taste," or the notion that certain styles or mediums are acceptable while others are not (PT, 26). In the artwork *Mutis por el foro* (Exit Stage Rear) (1973; Fig. 2), the artist painted a version of the famous oil painting *El Libertador Muerto* (1930) by Pedro Alcántara Quijano, which depicted the death of national hero Simón Bolívar and was reproduced on lottery tickets in 1972, in a bright blue and green palette on a metal bedframe. As Ramírez writes, for González, the "representation of grief" is "mediated

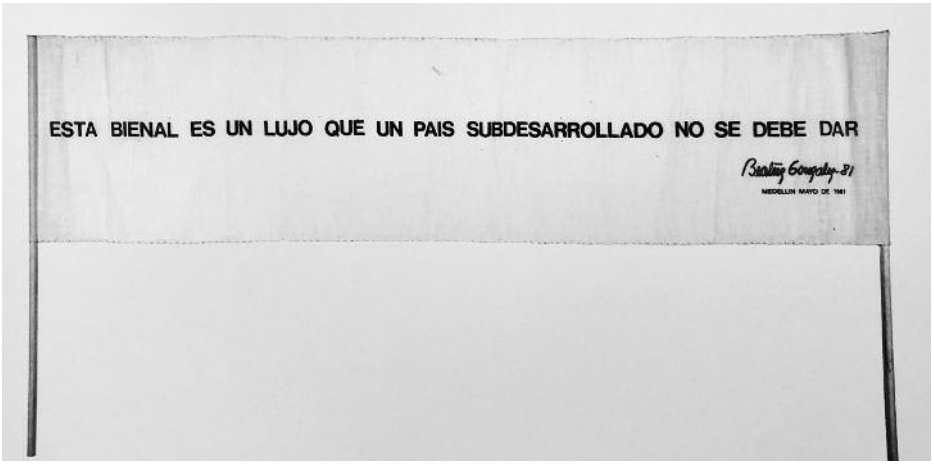


Fig. 3. Beatriz González, *Esta bienal es un lujo que un pais subdesarrollado no se debe dar* (This Biennial is a luxury in which an underdeveloped country should not indulge) (1981), serigraph.

by both the mass-media images and the collage of image fragments" (BG, 33).

When González first exhibited her *mobiliario* at the Medellín Biennial in 1970, critics dismissed her work as a "derivative and belated example of U.S. Pop art while commending Latin American geometric abstraction as an organic continuation of European constructivism" (PT, 181).[3] This biased, Eurocentric approach was part of the reason González so intensely rejected any association of her work with international art movements. González was so dissatisfied with the reaction of such critics that she submitted a precocious artwork to the 1981 Medellín Biennial in the form of a banner that read, "This Biennial Is a Luxury in Which an Underdeveloped Country Should Not Indulge" (Fig. 3). In her essay, Ramírez discusses this change in the artist's work in the 1980s, where she shifted from "appropriating icons and images from art historical sources or the daily yellow press" to "representing the actual players, hopeless victims, and events of the decades-long national conflict of havoc, loss, and ruin" (BG, 26). The most overt signal of this transformation in her work was through a transition in color, in Ramirez's view, away from "happy" colors like pinks and oranges to somber tones such as intense greens, blues, yellows, purples, and blacks (BG, 36). Unlike her peers, however, González continued to work in the medium of painting—preferring the historical associations of this type of art to the conceptual mediums of installation or performance art.

One of the benefits of the retrospective format of the volume by Ostrander and Ramírez is the visual illustration through full-scale color photographs of how González's approach to painting transformed with the times. With influences as diverse as Greek Mythology, the Italian Renaissance, and popular revolutionary figures, González's painting is revealed as layered and historically informed. As Ramírez adds, González's unique style of painting "allowed for a multi-temporal and multi-spatial approach to representation that has nothing to do with a literal transcription of reality" (BG, 33). As Ostrander affirms, González's desire for "originality" in her work ironically "involved copying the old," particularly in her re-working of famous European paintings by artists like Diego Velázquez, Johannes Vermeer, Jean-François Millet, and Paul Gauguin. The translated essays at the end of the book provide additional context for her output, in particular the interviews conducted with Traba in the 1970s.

Reyes's book, while equally concerned with Traba's role as critic, provides a nuanced socio-historical approach and reveals useful information on the Colombian art world during the New Front and its major key players. Significantly, Reyes successfully assists contemporary audiences in understanding the immense stakes surrounding González's challenge to high culture in the 1970s, since the "found-object" style she used is now largely recognized as legitimate and critically renowned. Reyes also hints at percolating tension between Traba and González as the former became increasingly skeptical of her one-time student's use of the *cursi* and attempted to ameliorate this approach by relating it to the concept of "kitsch," popularized by Susan Sontag in 1964. In 1971, Traba wrote that González's popular forms underwent an "arduous and premeditated transformation that goes beyond just bad taste" because they "express broad and complex human concepts" (PT, 215). As Reyes points out, it was González's provocative move to challenge what is exhibited, rather than the straightforward elevation of images of the *cursi*, that was acceptable to Traba, who could not risk losing her own acceptance by the art world by unilaterally rejecting "the politics of taste." As such, within the discourse created between González the artist and Traba the critic, "Tropicália also trafficked in bad taste as a form of rebelliousness" (PT, 2015).

The stakes for creating an outsider aesthetic that undermined "good taste" during this period in Colombia were more than just artistic—they were also counter-cultural. While Reyes passionately argues that González's preference for provocation was a type of institutional critique, the author neglects to fully interrogate her subject's motives. Perhaps González simply wanted to buck international trends rather than to reiterate them, and in this sense she was more of an avant-garde than a true *provocateur*. Regardless, González attracted critical acclaim for her painted *mobiliario*, which in turn led her to stop making such artworks altogether. In fact, when Reyes asked González why she stopped working with furniture, the artist responded that it was "because people started to like it" (23). In 1994, González elaborated on this notion by stating, "I realized that I was fighting for contradiction, as a way to attack this refined, provincial girl who had come

to the capital to test her talent" (BG, 17). As Ostrander elaborates, this "avant-gardist statement reveals her desire not only to confront a prescribed sense of taste but also its relationship to propriety and traditional societal expectations" (BG, 17). In a certain sense, provoking Colombia's cultural elite stemmed more from her quest to become a respected artist than from a true rejection of aesthetics, and through this process González created her own brand of "taste." •

Elizabeth Frasco is an independent scholar and art critic who writes on women artists, Latin American Art, and American identity. She holds a doctorate from New York University and taught "American Art, Revolution to the Present" at Seton Hall University from 2017 to 2019. Her dissertation is entitled "American Women Artists of the New Deal and Mexico, 1934–1943."

Notes

1. Elsa Coustou, *The World Goes Pop* (New Haven: Yale University, 2015), 156.
2. Pop artists like Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein were also fascinated with the processes of mass-production, and Lichtenstein even painstakingly reproduced 'Ben- Day' dots from commercial printing in his oil paintings.
3. As Reyes notes, the Colombian art critics on the jury at the 1970 Medellín Biennial were particularly exclusive, and even rejected the work of artists now prized, including Jesús Rafael Soto, Carlos Cruz-Diez, Lygia Clark, and Julio Le Parc (197).

Loló Soldevilla: Constructing her Universe

Edited by Jeffrey Grove, with essays by Rafael DiazCasas and Olga Viso
Hatje Cantz Verlag and Sean Kelly Gallery, 2019

Reviewed by Abigail McEwen

Seventy-five years after the lauded exhibition *Modern Cuban Painters* opened at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1944, the exhibition *Loló Soldevilla: Constructing her Universe* and its accompanying catalogue crowned a decade-long revision of Cuba's historical *vanguardia* and its fated ends in abstraction. If the intertwining of Cuban art and US policy, from Good Neighbor cultural diplomacy to Obama-era sanctions relief, has at times overweighted the historiography of Cuban modernism, attention has lately turned toward the aesthetic and the archival, a salutary direction taken here. Amid ongoing critical (and market) interests in geometric abstraction across the Americas, from Mexico to the Southern Cone, the restoration of Cuban concretism within emerging, hemispheric narratives of modernism has discerned a number of significant yet neglected artists, Loló Soldevilla (1901–71) and Sandú Darié notably among them. *Loló Soldevilla* follows in the wake of the period exhibition, *Concrete Cuba* (David Zwirner, 2015), and adds to a number of pioneering monographic catalogues—*Carmen Herrera: Lines of Sight* (Whitney Museum of American Art, 2016); *Zilia*

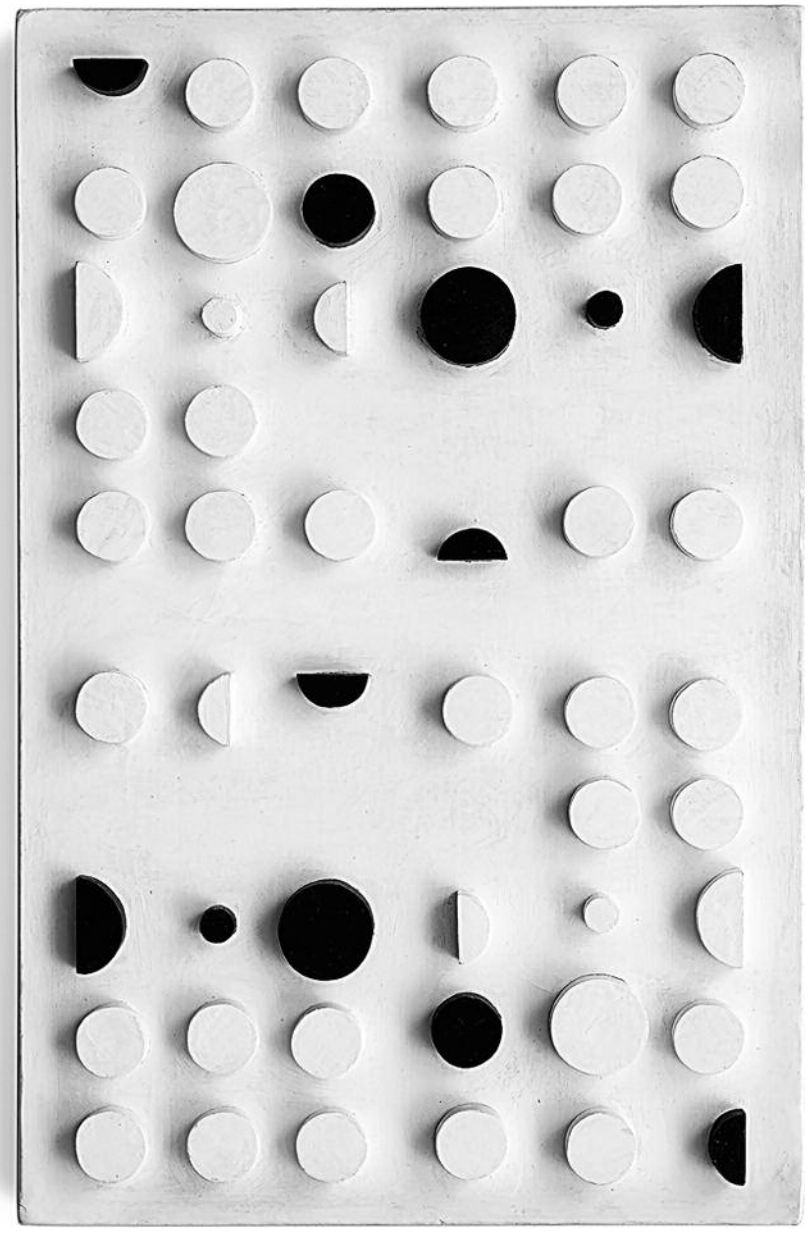


Fig. 1. Loló Soldevilla, *Sin título* (1960), oil on wood, 19 11/16" x 23 5/8". © Martha Flora Carranza Barba, universal heir of the work of Loló Soldevilla. Photo: Jason Wyche. Courtesy Sean Kelly, New York.

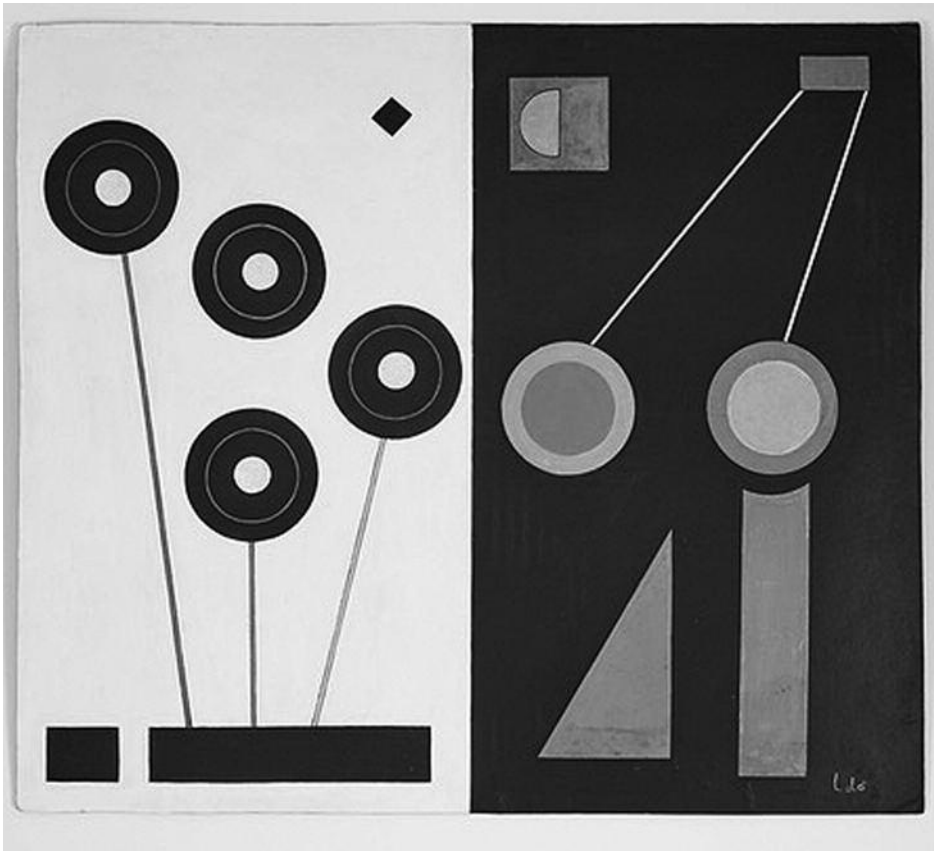


Fig. 2. Loló Soldevilla, *Sin título* (n.d.), oil on masonite, artwork: 22 3/16" x 25 3/16"; framed: 25 1/2" x 28 11/16" x 2 1/4". © Martha Flora Carranza Barba, universal heir of the work of Loló Soldevilla. Courtesy Sean Kelly, New York.

Sánchez: Soy Isla (The Phillips Collection, 2019)—that not only recuperate these (women) artists but also, and authoritatively, document their historical record.[1]

Loló Soldevilla marks the artist's first major monographic exhibition outside of Cuba and consolidates her stature as a leading artist and staunch champion of Cuban abstraction. Soldevilla slipped into obscurity following her death in 1971, and not until Elsa Vega's exhibition, *Loló: un mundo imaginario*, at Havana's Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in 2006, did she return to national consciousness. Her work has since appeared in numerous group shows in Cuba and abroad and in national, regional, and generational contexts of abstraction; Tresart Gallery (Miami) held her first solo exhibition in the US in 2011. As galleries and collectors—no less, art historians—have increasingly sought her work, the publication of *Loló Soldevilla* serves a practical, as well as a scholarly, purpose. Drawing upon considerable research and primary sources, among them Soldevilla's personal diaries, curator Rafael DiazCasas chronicles the artist's life and work in the catalogue's main text, situating her in broadly national and international contexts during the critical decade of the 1950s. Olga Viso, who oversaw the installation of *Adiós Utopia: Dreams and Deceptions in Cuban Art Since 1950*—which incorporated works by Soldevilla—at the Walker Art Center (2017), contributes a concise, critical accounting of the artist's exhibition history and legacy. The catalogue includes an extensive chronology, compiled by DiazCasas, that provides a fine foundation for future scholarship.

In his lengthy essay, "Loló Soldevilla: Constructing her Universe," DiazCasas knits biographical and socio-historical details around a chronology of Soldevilla's evolution as an artist. Her long political career is surveyed briefly—the first fifty years of her life, from her early musical training to her work with the Auténtico party, remain enigmatic—as a prologue to her move to Paris, in 1949, and subsequent artistic career. The congregation of Latin American artists in postwar Paris and their affinities for geometric abstraction are well established, and DiazCases traces Soldevilla's movements within these familiar circles, enhancing her narrative with new details, many drawn from unpublished journals and correspondence. Illustrations of her lesser-known portraits and the inclusion of numerous period photographs, also on display at Sean Kelly, are of particular interest. Still, the essential formal innovation of Soldevilla's practice, apart from her facilitating role in the rise of Cuban abstraction, is somewhat elided. DiazCasas concludes that her "forms of expression … are able to construct an atonal, homogeneous voice in which a sculptural tendency seems to emerge," but the nuances of musicality and medium are not fully resolved (43). A review of Soldevilla's return to Havana in 1956, her cultivation of artists around her short-lived but influential Galería de Arte Color-Luz, and her limited production of the 1960s conclude the text. Precise explanations of her "political connections" and elevated class status are left conventionally unattempted, a point of criticism hardly unique to this publication (60).

Following some seventy pages of color illustrations, Viso's essay, "Loló Soldevilla: Visionary Artist and Advocate of Cuba's Mid-Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde," appraises the artist's latter-day ascendance. Combing through her recent exhibition history and considering the broad contemporaneity of her work in the 1950s, Viso centers Soldevilla within "a confluence of generative forces," from the Pan-American Union to Brazilian Neo-Concretism, that made abstraction possible in mid-century Cuba (159). "Loló Soldevilla: Life and Times" enumerates the artist's career year by year, supplementing personal and exhibition details with notations of relevant events in and beyond Cuban modernism. Its scope and accompanying documentation, including archival photographs and catalogues,

form an enduring and valuable resource for the field.

The best available sourcebook for Soldevilla, this catalogue constitutes a meaningful contribution to the histories of Cuban modernism and transatlantic abstraction. A lack of access to primary sources, artworks and otherwise, has long frustrated advances in Cuban studies, and publications of this kind helpfully redress this historical impasse. Yet while the newfound commercial viability of Cuban abstraction has surely enabled scholarship, it has also stimulated the circulation of fakes and forgeries, whose presence confounds any scholarly enterprise. (I make no claim against the works here included but must acknowledge this general concern.) *Loló Soldevilla* directs itself to general readers and collectors with consistently clear, accessible writing with little theoretical discourse. Lavishly illustrated, its cover designed apropos with geometric cut-outs (Fig. 1), the catalogue is both elegant and substantive.

As a fuller history of Cuba's renascent vanguardia of the 1950s continues to unfold and, even, reshape our understanding of modernist canon and geography, Soldevilla appears a pivotal, if at once improbable, protagonist of abstraction. *Loló Soldevilla* signals the artist's arrival onto a global stage, her work increasingly—and profitably—positioned within myriad trajectories of monochrome painting, kinetic and op art, and concretism (Fig. 2). More than a record of the eponymous exhibition, the catalogue represents a commendable achievement in the study of Soldevilla and her generation and will doubtless inform future directions in research. •

Abigail McEwen is associate professor of Latin American art history at the University of Maryland, College Park. Recent publications include *Revolutionary Horizons: Art and Polemics in 1950s Cuba* (2016), *Concrete Cuba: Cuban Geometric Abstraction from the 1950s* (2016), and catalogue essays on Agustín Cárdenas, Zilia Sánchez, and Joaquín Torres-García.

Notes

1. The author contributed essays to *Concrete Cuba: Cuban Geometric Abstraction from the 1950s* (New York: David Zwirner Books, 2016) and *Zilia Sánchez: Soy Isla* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2019).

Käthe Kollwitz: Prints, Process, Politics

Edited by Louis Marchesano, with essays by Natascha Kirchner and Jay A. Clarke
Getty Research Institute, 2020

Reviewed by Christina Weyl

This exhibition catalogue accompanying the Getty Research Institute's (GRI) *Käthe Kollwitz: Prints, Process, Politics* (December 3, 2019 – March 13, 2020), reconsiders the artist's prints and drawings through the lens of Dr. Richard A. Simms's impressive collection. A partial gift and purchase acquired by the GRI in 2016, the enviable group is comprised of 654 works on paper (and still counting), with 286 by Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945)—including forty-seven drawings—and the remainder by the artist's contemporaries, among them Max Klinger, Karl Stauffer-Bern, Ernst Barlach, George Grosz, and Otto Greiner.[1]

Simms, a nonagenarian retired dentist based in Southern California, began collecting during the 1960s and made a major investment in Kollwitz's work in 1979, buying a large cache of prints and two drawings from the artist's granddaughter.[2] Over the next

Fig. 1 Käthe Kollwitz, *Sharpening the Scythe* (ca. 1905), The Getty Research Institute, 2016.PR.34

Fig. 2. Käthe Kollwitz, *Inspiration* (1904 or 1905), The Getty Research Institute, 2016.PR.34.

forty years, he amassed an unparalleled resource that showcases Kollwitz's deliberate (and deliberative) approach to crafting her prints. The Simms collection's rich holdings feature Kollwitz's working drawings for her prints alongside a progression of state proofs and final editions for her stand-alone prints, cycles, and series.

An artist's printmaking career is so often evaluated based on their oeuvre of published editions, which is what predominantly circulates in the art market and can be found in public collections. The Simms collection at the GRI offers the rarest opportunity to retrace Kollwitz's decision process as she worked towards these final, editioned versions. Quite often Kollwitz executed elaborate revisions to her woodcuts, lithographs, and etchings by altering her compositions and figures' poses or deepening the atmospheric effects. Other times, she would begin a subject in one process and scrap that initial effort completely in favor of a different one. Sometimes, she would even combine two techniques—an uncommon tactic among her contemporaries (62).

Louis Marchesano, the GRI's former curator of prints and drawings who has since relocated to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the catalogue's two other contributors marshal these resources to advance a central argument—that Kollwitz's method and her message were intricately and strongly intertwined. Kollwitz is best known, of course, for her exquisitely crafted and powerfully empathetic images of downtrodden workers, labor uprisings, and mothers mourning deceased children. Laying out a robust historiography of Kollwitz scholarship, the catalogue's authors demonstrate that, for reasons specific to time and place, period and posthumous critics overwhelmingly assessed the artist's charged subject matter and her technical expertise in completely separate spheres. At one end of the spectrum, some critics read Kollwitz's images as evidence of her commitment to socialist causes, and at the other, a different group sought to depoliticize her work's content and focus instead on the aesthetic purity of her compositions.

In the catalogue's introduction, Marchesano sets the tone for the exhibition's goals and provides the uninitiated reader with important details about Kollwitz's biography, her political views, and her historical moment. In broad strokes, he notes the extent of critical attention paid to Kollwitz, both in her lifetime and beyond, and some of the attendant biases of this scholarship—for example, the effort to depoliticize Kollwitz's leftist views in the United States and in

West Germany during the 1950s and 1960s. The GRI's project builds on efforts by scholars since Kollwitz's last major museum retrospective, held in 1992 at The National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, to challenge these polarized reading of the artist's work. He specifically flags Elizabeth Prelinger, Alexandra von dem Knesebeck, and Annette Seeler, who have set aside conventional binaries and enumerated the artist's "double-barreled commitment to content and what [Kollwitz] called 'artistic quality'" (1).

A joint essay by Marchesano and Natascha Kirchner, a Kollwitz specialist and former GRI intern, centers around the tension between two well-established poles in critics' reception of the artist's imagery: artistic purity versus political content. The authors carefully trace the historiography of Kollwitz literature to explain the conditions that enabled this binary to develop during the artist's lifetime and overshadow decades of her critical reception. Buttressed on nineteenth-century formalist critics' preference for art-for-art's-sake, some of Kollwitz's earliest interlocutors willingly ignored the political or social themes in her images and read them only for their aesthetic value. On the other extreme was *Tendenz* or *Tendenzkunst*, which the authors translate as "art with a clear political message in the service of revolution" (16). (As a side note, the catalogue's authors employ German terms throughout but helpfully provide in-depth explanations of their complexity.) The era's formalist critics and bourgeois viewers employed *Tendenz* pejoratively to disparage art with overtly political intentions, which could have threatened their privileged status in Germany's established political and social order. Only with the ideological and aesthetic shifts fomented by the advent of twentieth-century modernism were critics able to thread the needle and find common ground between these extremes.

Describing preparatory drawings and state proofs from the Simms collection and other loaned objects, Marchesano and Kirchner illustrate how Kollwitz did not subscribe to such artificial distinctions and instead labored to make images that simultaneously communicated to a range of viewers and showcased technical excellence in printmaking. A particularly powerful example is Kollwitz's etching *Sharpening the Scythe* (ca. 1905; Fig. 1) from *Peasants' War*, a seven-print cycle capturing the uprising of German peasants in the early sixteenth century. From the image's earliest iteration, titled *Inspiration* (1904 or 1905; Fig. 2), to its final editioned state, Kollwitz enacted careful formal changes—such as cropping the scene and building dramatic tone in the background—in order to convey this peasant woman's self-actualization toward armed revolt. For Marchesano and Kirchner, the most compelling aspect of images such as *Sharpening the Scythe* is their ability to resonate with diverse audiences across time and place, something, they argue, the artist would have appreciated.

In the next essay, Jay A. Clarke provides a compelling analysis of the role gender and biography have played in reading Kollwitz's images. Clarke, who first examined the Simms collection for her dissertation (Brown University, 1999), curated a coordinating Kollwitz exhibition for the Art Institute of Chicago, where she is Rothman Family Curator of Prints and Drawings (unfortunately this show, titled "Käthe Kollwitz and the Art of Resistance," has been postponed due to COVID-19). Her central question, rooted in a reevaluation of Roland Barthes's claims in "The Death of the Author" (1967), is whether art historians can leverage biography non-reductively and, in the case of Kollwitz, who Clarke notes has been the subject of nine biographies in the last twenty years, dissociate gender from evaluations of her career accomplishments and social activism. Clarke is quick to mention that Kollwitz specialists are at once fortunate to have access to many primary documents—the artist's correspondence and diaries—and yet have the difficult task of examining these sources critically (Kollwitz herself described her diaries as a "half-truth" [41]). Overlaying the story of Kollwitz's life with nuanced understandings of the political climate in Germany and gender norms expected of turn-of-the-century women artists, Clark advocates, will yield a richer view of Kollwitz's activity and deeper appreciation of her pictures.

While advancing the idea that Kollwitz was not on the extremes—she was never labeled a *Mannweib* (man-woman) or *Das dritte Geschlecht* (The third sex)—Clarke enumerates several examples of the artist pushing established boundaries of masculinity and femininity and enduring gender-based backlash. One particularly noteworthy example in Clarke's essay is her discussion of the so-called "happy" Kollwitz—which refers to the artist's prints of smiling mothers and children—and these images' conspicuous absence from scholarship on the artist (and the Simms collection). Yet, these images were wildly popular in the artist's lifetime, issued as photomechanical copies in many collector's albums and found hanging in many German households. Kollwitz's biographies nearly always portray her as an anguished mother and social activist, and Clarke asks how accounting for these "happy" images and their popularity might inflect conventional narratives about of Kollwitz.

The final essay by Natascha Kirchner discusses Kollwitz's approaches to printmaking, advancing through etching, lithography, and woodcut. Kirchner carefully documents moments of Kollwitz's technical prowess, whether in the rich and varied textures she achieved through soft ground etching, the effects she achieved by varying paper or ink colors, or her trailblazing combinations of two graphic processes—for example, mixing etching and lithography. Supported with a fully illustrated catalogue, Kirchner's technical survey drives home the exhibition's overarching thesis—that Kollwitz painstakingly matched printmaking techniques and compositional strategies she felt would best convey her politically and socially driven content. The exhibition, as a whole, also benefits from two short videos the GRI produced about the artist's intaglio techniques and its technical analysis of objects in the Simms collection. These video

spotlights are a welcome addition, as they demystify some of the behind-the-scenes activities that take place in a printmaking studio.[3]

While celebrating the remarkable Simms collection, *Käthe Kollwitz: Prints, Process, Politics* remains a very accessible publication, offering smart and well-researched texts for general readership. Even Clarke's essay, the catalogue's most theoretically driven, is quite readable, a testament to the clarity of her jargon-free writing. •

Christina Weyl is an independent scholar and curator based in New York City. Her book *The Women of Atelier 17: Modernist Printmaking in Midcentury New York* (2019) is reviewed here on page 42.

Notes

1. For more about the Simms collection at the GRI, see the collection dashboard, <https://www.getty.edu/research/special_collections/notable/simms.html>, and a press release dated August 4, 2016: <http://news.getty.edu/gettyresearchinstitute-acquires-kathy-kollwitz-collection.htm> (accessed July 13, 2020).
2. For further background about Simms as a collector, see Jori Finkel, "How a Vast Käthe Kollwitz Collection Ended up at the Getty," *The Art Newspaper*, 9 January 2020: https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/getty-show-champions-the-german-artist-kaethe-kollwitz (accessed July 13, 2020).
3. The GRI videos are viewable online at the exhibition's landing page:https://www.getty.edu/research/exhibitions_events/exhibitions/kollwitz/ (accessed July 13, 2020).

Women Art Workers and the Arts and Crafts Movement

By Zoë Thomas
Manchester University Press, 2020

Reviewed by Anna Dumont

In 1908, the Arts and Crafts architect and designer C.R. Ashbee wrote sneeringly of a female figure generically labeled 'dear Emily':

> She is very modest and does not profess to any high standard, nor does she compete in any lines of work where physique or great experience are desired, but she is perpetually tingling to sell her work before she half knows how to make it, and she does compete because her name is legion and because, being supported by her parents she is prepared to sell her labour for 2d. an hour, where the skilled workman has to sell his for 1s. in order to keep up standard and support his family (155).

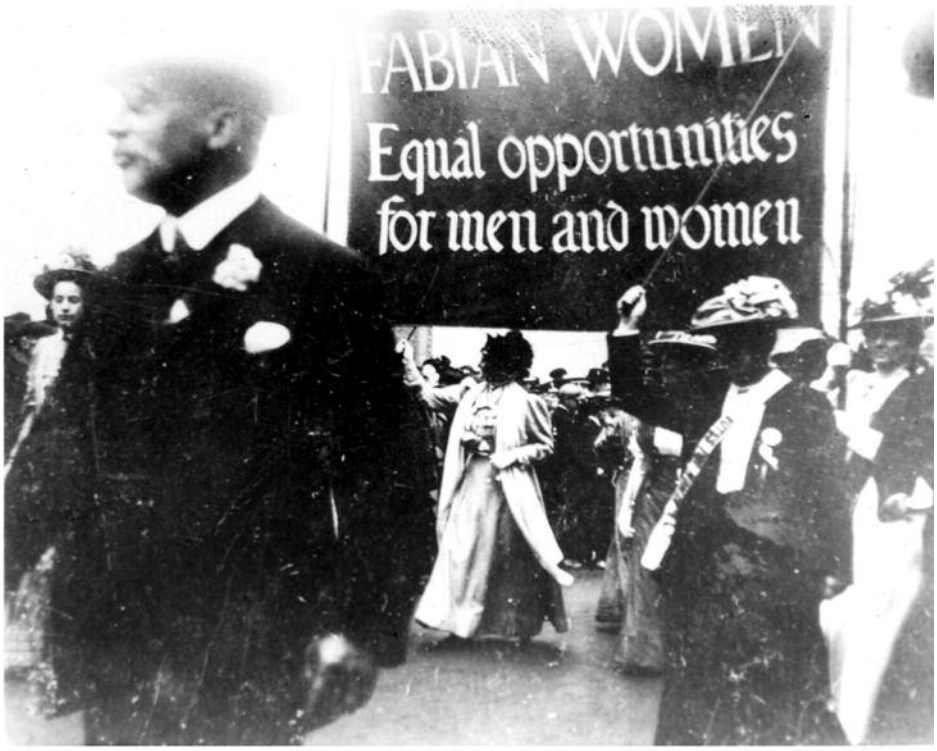


Fig. 1. Photograph showing 'Fabian Women, Equal Opportunities for Men and Women' banner (c. 1908), designed by May Morris.

Ashbee's tropes—dilettante, amateur, housebound lady of means—have long conspired against the women of the Arts and Crafts in England. As Zoë Thomas details in *Women Art Workers and the Arts and Crafts Movement*, even the most sympathetic chroniclers of the movement's female practitioners have often adopted these terms in describing the ways their work was proscribed by their gender. Thomas offers a rousing corrective by presenting the diverse strategies utilized by women like Pamela Coleman Smith (1878–1951), Feodora Gleichen (1861–1922), Mary Lowndes (1857–1929, May Morris (1862–1968), and Edith Dawson (1862–1928), as they built lives as art workers. Thomas's study draws on the newly available papers of the Women's Guild of Arts (WGA), a guild for women that functioned as a counterpart to the all-male Art Workers' Guild. At the heart of this archival project is attention to the process by which artistic identities were gendered in Victorian Britain, challenging the underlying categories used by Ashbee and his inheritors.

Histories of the Arts and Crafts have largely been told through the biographies of the prominent men—William Morris, C.R. Ashbee, and Philip Webb—who were the faces of the movement. These narratives, coupled with subsidiary fascinations with the rivalries and

friendships among them, and the disinterest verging on hostility with which women factored into the writing of that history (E.P. Thompson's nastiness about embroiderer Janey Morris comes to mind as a prime example), has skewed our understanding of the world in which these figures lived and the new forms of living they sought to create. This biographical writing of a heroic, masculinist art history is a destructive habit that has proven hard to kick for our field of study, and it is particularly ill-suited to understanding a moment in which collective making and the restructuring of social life were the stakes of aesthetic reform.

Recently, the women of the Victorian avant-gardes have been the focus of a spate of gallery exhibitions and catalogues, including the William Morris Gallery's May Morris retrospective in 2017, and the recent National Portrait Gallery *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters* exhibition, which presented the multivalent participation of women like Fanny Eaton (1835–1924), Evelyn de Morgan (1855–1919), Janey Morris (1839–1914), and Georgiana Burne-Jones (1840–1920) as artists, models, and intellectual interlocutors.[1] With this attention have come new models of artistic authorship that account for the labor of the women who made possible the radical artistic and political upheaval of the late nineteenth century.

In this vein, rather than attempting to merely recover a history of "professional" female artists, Thomas helpfully directs attention back at the historical formation of the categories of "professional" and "amateur," terminology that was entrenched just before this period. She points out that the male amateur had been a figure of prestige and gentlemanly status, and it wasn't until women had access to the moniker that it came to be derisive. Professionalism in the arts was the subject, she shows, of raging contemporary debates, as the men of the Arts and Crafts signaled a return to authenticity by rejecting artistic institutions and telegraphing their affinities with working-class makers. Yet, when women attempted to do the same, they were tarred as unserious dilettantes, or as threats to the livelihoods of working men.

Even so, Arts and Crafts women sought to demonstrate the seriousness of their professional commitments across a number of spaces. Thomas has organized *Women Art Workers* according to the loci of artistic life, effectively shifting the discussion from the chronology of individual biography towards a more structural analysis of identity formation. Over five chapters, Thomas explores how exhibition halls, artistic homes, workshops, and the increasingly fraught political terrain of urban public space all functioned as "spaces of artistic self-actualization," in which women actively demonstrated the seriousness of their artistic production (22). While these spaces were difficult for women makers in a way they were not for their male counterparts, Thomas considers the ways in which women's strategies for negotiating the gendered expectations of these sites could also be sources of cultural power. For example, "at-home" artistic gatherings emerge in the writings of women like the painters Estella Canziani (1887–1964) and Rose Barton (1856–1929), not solely as products of feminine domestic confinement (as they have long been understood by scholars), but also as potentially rich opportunities for artistic exchange in congenial surroundings that provided access to other artists and clients, both male and female. Unable to access the exclusive institutions that often kept male fine artists isolated from other cultural spheres, many women instead leapt into the melee of popular culture, producing illustrations, posters, and exhibitions that attracted wide audiences.

If the first four chapters offer a detailed accounting of the ways in which women constructed their artistic identities in given spaces, the last chapter takes up the issue of how such public identities changed over time in reaction to the social upheavals of war and the struggle for women's suffrage. The WGA's founding in 1907 coincided with the height of the British suffrage movement. While Mary Lowndes, the stained-glass artist who founded the Artists' Suffrage League was a WGA member, as was May Morris, who designed a sober banner carried by the Fabien Society in a 1908 march (Fig. 1), other members expressed horror at the "thought of suffrage sex wars brought into it" (196). By 1913, honorary male members were permitted, leading to the resignations of the leadership committee members most opposed. A fascinating section also tracks the contributions of female craftswomen to the First World War effort, and includes the delightful scene of Queen Mary sitting down to "workshop tea" with Mary Lowndes around a packing case in E.C. Woodward's wartime oxyacetylene welding workshop. Proponents of women art workers increasingly used the language of nationalism, wedding their gendered labor to a larger patriotic project. But throughout these years, divisions over the politics of women's work started with women art workers themselves, who remained constantly at odds as they variously rejected gender politics in the interest of class consciousness, or abandoned artistic work altogether in favor of full-time suffrage activism (e.g., Sylvia Pankhurst), or insisted on the irrelevance of their gender as they strove for equal footing with their male counterparts.

Thomas's approach is that of a social and cultural historian, and objects rest uneasily in her account. She is clear-eyed about the problems of object survival and access in the study of women's artistic production. Many of the jewels, textiles, and illustrated books that have been "lost, are behind closed doors in private households, or are inaccessible at museums and galleries, institutions which face considerable funding cuts and often prioritise artworks by men" (19). Art historians may lament the absence of the close visual readings that such a rich artistic output might have yielded, but from the surviving works we can begin to understand how the network of these women's relationships translated into visual and material form. Craft is always the product of provisional and relational processes, a lifetime of skill translated into durable form, transmitted from one set of hands to another. As art history increasingly finds a place for methods

that account for embodiment and duration, social histories like Thomas's *Women Art Workers* are invaluable.

Beyond histories of the Arts and Crafts, Thomas's book is also a model text for other researchers trying to understand ideologies of identity through printed texts and public pronouncements. She is careful to delimit what it is possible to know from the self-presentation of individuals who are negotiating unconventional lives, whereby any move they make runs the risk of being dismissed for reasons of gender or sexuality. Hers is a study of women art workers in their complexity and variation, attuned to the ways in which women's absence from the archival record is a feature, not a bug, of conventional historical methods.

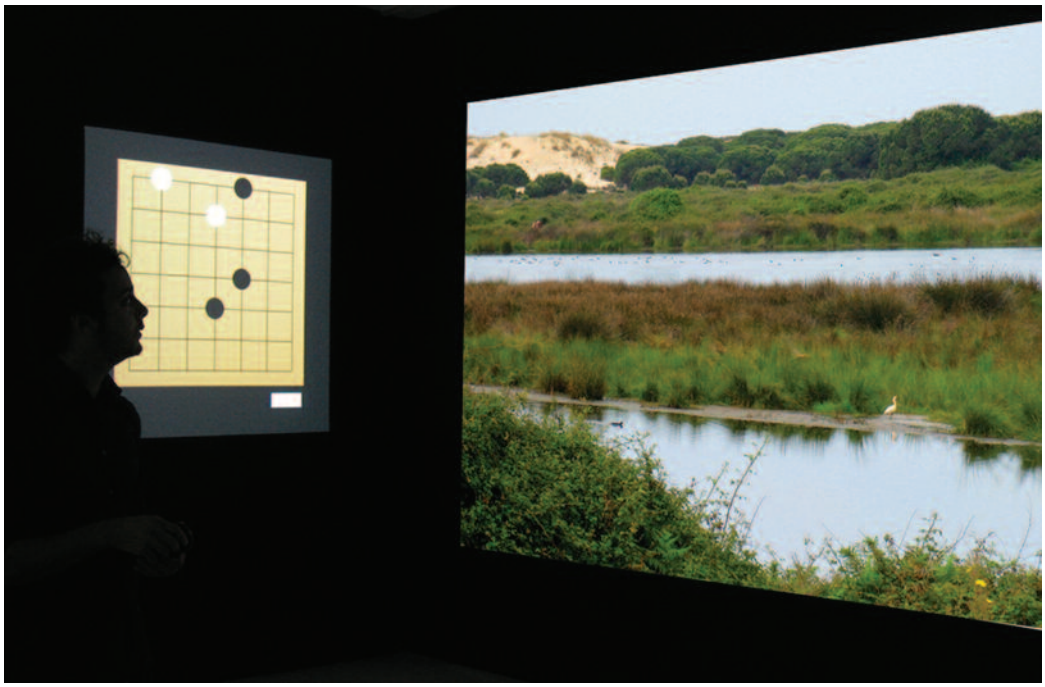
Anna Dumont is a Ph.D. candidate at Northwestern University in Evanston, IL, and a 2020–21 fellow of the American Academy in Rome. She is writing a dissertation on gendered textile labor in Italian art from the 19th-century craft revival to the Fascist period. •

Notes

1. See May Morris: *Arts & Crafts Designer*, eds. Jenny Lister, Jan Marsh, and Anna Mason (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2017); and *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters*, eds. Jan Marsh and Peter Funnell (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2019).

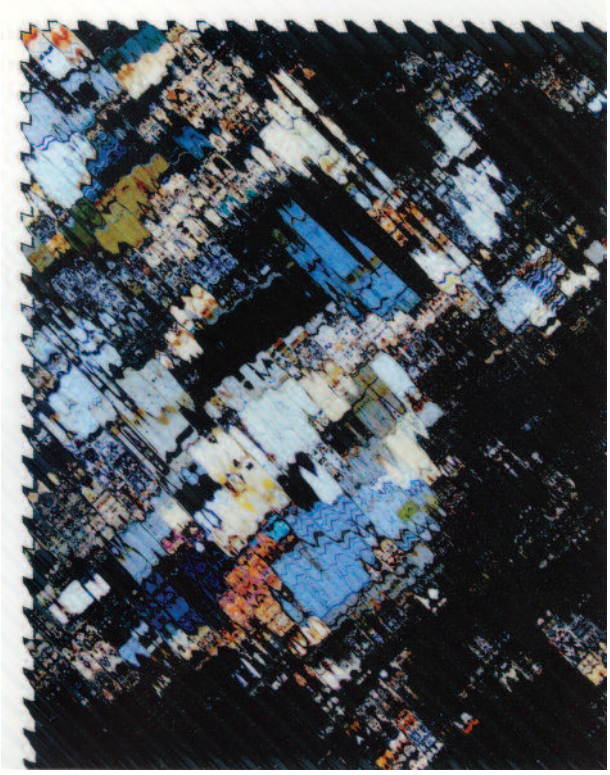
Pl. 1. Marta de Menezes and Maria Antonia González Valerio, *Phylogenetic Tree of MAIZ from Origin of Species - Post-Evolution - MAIZ* (2018), CRISPR-Cas9 data from Saibo Laboratory, wall chart of variable dimensions. Credits: Dr. Nelson Saibo, Principal Investigator at Plant Gene Regulation Laboratory, ITQB, Portugal. Photo: Marta de Menezes.

Pl. 2. Christy Rupp, *Moby Debris* (2019), detail of 5 of series of 20, plastic, welded steel, each about 14" x10" x 4" wall mounted. Photo: Christy Rupp.



Pl. 3. Lillian Ball, *GO Donãna* (2008), multimedia interactive installation with projectors, dimensions variable, ideally shown in 236" x 314" room. Photo: Lillian Ball. Courtesy of the artist and Fundacion Biacs.

Pl. 4. Janet Echelman, *She Changes* (2005), Waterfront, Cidade Salvador Plaza, Porto and Matosinhos, Portugal, painted galvanized steel and knotted, braided fiber, dimensions of net: L 150′ x W 150′ x D 80′; installation: L300′ x W 240′ x H 160′. Credits: Studio Echelman Team— Philip Speranza (Design Support), Engineering: AFA Consult (Porto), Aeronautical Engineering: Peter Heppel Associates (Paris), Architect: Eduardo Souto Moura (Porto). Photos: Joao Ferrand, David Feldman, Daniel Coulon.



Pl. 5. Tauba Auerbach, *Prism Scan II (Cross Polarized Mesosiderite)* (2015), C-print, 55″ x 44″. Photo: Steven Probert. ©Tauba Auerbach. Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

Pl. 6. María Elena González, *T2 (Bark)* (2015), birch bark, tape and permanent marker on cardboard, 57″ x 483″. Photo: ©Jaka Babnik. Courtesy of the artist and Hirschl & Adler Modern, New York / MGLC Archive, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Pl. 7. Victoria Vesna in collaboration with James Gimzewski, *Nanomandala* (2004), Video, sand mandala, optical microscopy and a scanning electron microscope, 8' diameter table, 8" depth for sand, raised 18" (speakers go under) for the projector. Size depends on the height of the ceiling, display computer, projector, color surveillance camera, Photo: Victoria Vesna.

Pl. 8. Rachel Sussman, *The Oldest Living Things in the World* (2014), Stromatolites #1211-0512 (2,000-3,000 years old, Carbla Station, Western Australia), Photo: Rachel Sussman.

Pl. 9. Eunice Golden, *Dreamscape Diptych* (1979), acrylic on canvas, 60" x 50". © Eunice Golden.

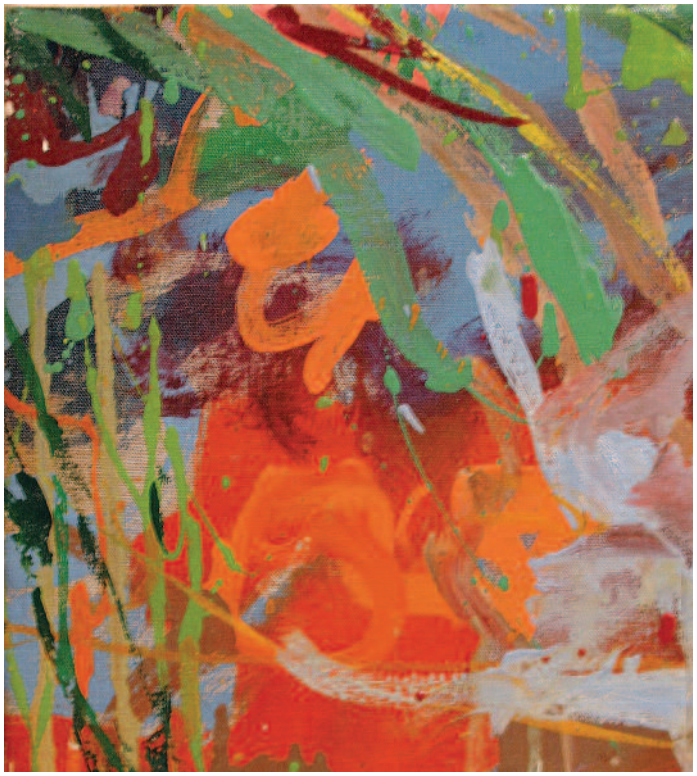
Pl. 10. Eunice Golden, *Garden of Delights #1* (1980), acrylic on canvas, 60" x 86". © Eunice Golden.

Pl. 11. Eunice Golden, *Metamorphosis #20* (2007), acrylic on canvas, 75 3/8" x 82 1/4". © Eunice Golden.

Pl. 12. Eunice Golden,
Birds of Paradise,
acrylic on canvas, 72" x 84".
© Eunice Golden

Pl. 13. Amaranth Ehrenhalt, *Aderet* (1990), oil on canvas, 35" x 46". Photo: Courtesy of Anita Shapolsky Gallery, New York.

Pl. 14. Amaranth Ehrenhalt, *Alouette #3* (1954), oil on canvas, 34 1/2" x 22". Photo: Courtesy of Anita Shapolsky Gallery, New York.



Pl. 15. Amaranth Ehrenhalt, *Jump #3,* 1954, oil on canvas, 11 1/2" x 9". Photo: Courtesy of Anita Shapolsky Gallery, New York.

Pl. 16. Amaranth Ehrenhalt, *Splash 4* (1958), oil on canvas, 30" x 38". Photo: Courtesy of Anita Shapolsky Gallery, New York.

Pl. 17. Amaranth Ehrenhalt, *Four Seasons* (2015), acrylic on canvas, four panels, 12' x 24'. Photo: Courtesy of Anita Shapolsky Gallery, New York.

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