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Women Artists Newsletter

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# Women Artists NEWSLETTER

50 cents

Vol. 1 No. 8

January 1976

## GENDER IN ART - AN ONGOING DIALOGUE

THOUGHTS PROVOKED BY A "GENDER-IN-ART" PANEL

by Joan Semmel

The impetus for the woman's movement in the art world was blatant discrimination, exclusion and isolation. It was important for many of us in the early years to have the opportunity to see each other's work, and to gain the confidence to further develop and expand our own work. We then returned to our private worlds to work intensively, gradually gaining exposure, first in women's shows, then in wider contexts.

The profusion of women's panels this season is a signal that we are once again seeking nurturance from each other, and that the movement is readying itself for the next stage in its development. Unfortunately many of the panels have failed to deal with the substantive issues and have left us with an aftertaste of frustration and negation.

A panel that calls itself "Gender In Art-An Ongoing Dialogue" and then refuses to deal with content or sources, or gender itself except in terms of careerism, does a disservice to us all.

Because women's work has been discriminated against for years, many women are paranoid about having their art described as distinctively female, feminist, or feminine. Some think women's art should be accepted because it is the same, or as good as, men's. I want it to be accepted because it is different. Therein lie its power and its possibilities.

Has art made by women been excluded from the cultural mainstream simply because of the prevalence of discriminatory practices against women? Or because it also often validates an experience, a female experience, one from which the male world feels excluded? Is it not from this very validation that women's art derives its special authenticity? Is it not time that the female

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Panel - A.I.R. - Dec. 15

Nancy Spero, Mod.; Nancy Kitchel, Laurace James, Lucy Lippard, Mary Miss, Rosemary Mayer, Elizabeth Weatherford, Panelists.

by Sophie Rivera

A group of women artists decided to express their growing disenchantment with the women's movement. "Gender in Art - An Ongoing Dialogue," was a title just vague enough to attract a large turnout of artists at the AIR gallery.

Following a brief slide presentation, moderator/artist Nancy Spero set the tone with an opening statement full of vague references to a meeting the artists had held several years ago. Spero mentioned neither the topics discussed nor the conclusions formulated, just that they had discussed "a common bond between women."

The panel, in trying to redefine "feminist," "feminine," and "female," were unable to agree, but initially opted for "female." According to artist Rosemary Mayer "a feminist esthetic is a very precise thing; a feminine esthetic is a lousy term; and a female esthetic could possibly have meaning."

Before Mayer could elaborate on the "possibility of meaning," artist/anthropologist Elizabeth Weatherford challenged the choice of "female." She preferred "feminist" to describe women artists' work but conceded that "certain stylistic choices are made."

Critic Lucy Lippard said, "If a woman is thinking about her work as by a woman she is probably pre-feminist, post-feminist, or something-or-other-feminist."

Artist Nancy Kitchel said, "so little imagery is left to be applied to female, feminine, and feminist art." After using the panel's terms, Kitchel bemoaned the fact that "art has been separated by its terminology out of the stream of human activity" so far as to become a "separate category alien to the artists' intentions."

Spero pointed out that Rosemary Mayer's sculptures were titled with the names of great and powerful women. Yet Mayer claimed her intention was not really feminist.

"My work was feminist to the extent that I thought people should be aware of the lives and activity of those women. It was not feminist to the extent that I thought those forms were female," answered Mayer. She elaborated on the stereotypes associated with art done with stitching and fabric. There was no general agreement about the relevance of techniques learned by wom-

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## ART OFFENDS AT DOUGLASS

by Anne Marie Rousseau

Bibi Lencek, 41st in the Women Artists Series at Mabel Douglass College Library, showed, thru Nov. 21, paintings of a young couple (modelled by Lencek and companion) in various positions of lovemaking. Done in a cool realistic style, the paintings used such "banal" details as patterned sheets, tissue box, wall plug, and potted plant to give a "sense of place." Ms. Lencek says that although the figures are prominent, she considers them "merely a part of an indoor landscape."

In a letter to *Targum*, the Rutgers newspaper, Douglass Student Barbara Ambler protested the show. It was, she said, distracting, "undermining the quality of my life" as a Christian. She wished to lead a life "pleasing to God," but sex "in the wrong situation...can destroy us." Another letter from a more worldly student protested the portrait of Alexander in the Alexander Library, because "each time I see it I begin to fantasize about sex."

Although most students seemed neutral or unconcerned, the distress of the minority was so acute that an open forum was held, Nov. 11. Protestors included Ms. Ambler and other members of the Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. Espousing a "Christian Ethic," they objected to public display of work which aroused sexual fantasy. Sex is "a beautiful gift from God," they said, but belongs only within the bonds of "Holy Matrimony." One student read from the Bible of Adam and Eve's recognition of their nakedness and covering themselves, from which he inferred the sinfulness of the naked body. Turning to Ms. Lencek, he said, "The Devil speaks to us in many ways."

A more lenient faculty and administration noted that artists have for centuries depicted male and female nudes in secular and religious paintings, mentioning Titian, Rubens and Ingres. One faculty member observed, "These are lovely paintings," noting that no genitalia were portrayed. Reviewer Lynn Bershak said, "Lencek alters the positions of the lovers, as one would re-position flowers or fruit in a bowl...lovemaking is a subject for genre painting" like nursing mothers or children at play. Robert Tanksley, Co-ordinator for Religious Affairs, noted that spiritual asceticism is achieved by confrontation and transcendence, not avoidance.

Assistant Professor Gloria Orenstein said that after her trip each

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Photo: Dottie Attie

AIR Invitational, opened Jan. 3

Some other same day Soho openings: Kate Millet at Noho, Cynthia Mailman at Soho 20, Harmony Hammond at Lamagna. Also: 4 women at O.K.Harris.

4/19/76

## EDITORIALS

### A Philadelphia Story

The Philadelphia Museum of Art sent a form letter to galleries (picked up by a WAN correspondent at a SoHo Co-op) inviting entries for an American Family show in '76. The letter specified conditions of submission in detail--photos and slides to be returned, Xeroxes not, etc.

Taking this at face value, WAN reprinted the information for its readers (Nov.). But the museum was annoyed to receive such entries, even those including return envelope. Tara Glass Robinson, Co-ordinator of Exhibitions, wrote us that this was not an open show, and that it was, in fact, already selected (reported in Dec. WAN).

Please tell us--when is an invitation not an invitation? What is an open show?

### Alternatives

Quote #1: A December Visual Dialog article on alternative spaces quotes Trude Grace writing in Art Journal: Artists Space in NYC... avoids the ... 'system in which decision making is by critics, curators, committees and dealers.'

Quote #2: A recent letter from the Committee for the Visual Arts names a "possible panel" to select work for Artists Space in '76--Linda Cathecarte, Curator...Albright Knox...Whitney Museum/Douglas Crimp...past curatorial staff Guggenheim Museum/ Edit de Ak...Art Rite...Art in America/Peter Frank...Art News, Art in America.../Linda Shearer, Assistant curator Guggenheim Museum/Roberta Smith...Art Forum Museum of Modern Art, Paula Cooper Gallery.

The letter requests suggestions of additional critics, curators and gallery people as well as suggestions of artists.

What is happening to the "Alternative"? Is it becoming "The System"?

## PAINTERLY REPRESENTATION

### ARTISTS TALK ON ART Nov. 21.

Louis Finkelstein, Mod.; Rosemarie Beck, Paul Georges, Wolf Kahn, Raoul Middleman, Paul Resika, Panelists.

I loved this panel for its warmth and camaraderie, even or especially for its practiced passions: Resika rhapsodizing on a tear duct; Georges in a funny and fiery attack on the Met, the French show, the academic mind and "naked representation"; Kahn in a confessional mood; Middleman in two hilarious anecdotes on the clues to likeness or how we recognize each other; Beck more reserved and thoughtful; moderator Finkelstein saying affectionately, but probably meaning it, that if Georges were any more successful, he'd be unbearable.

I loved the panel's intimacy with the works which concerned it. Though I knew they'd fought these fights before, I could even empathize with their delight in landing a few blows on the dead horse of abstraction. Lastly, Georges on Leslie's second O'Hara: "I was so happy to see the improvement--he finally got that big foot out. The trouble is, that painting needed a big foot!"

-- Pat Passloff

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## Art Workers News and the Council

Is it naive to expect a government body, such as the New York State Council on the Arts, to fund a group criticizing it, in this case the Foundation for the Community of Artists?

The grounds originally given by the Council for de-funding the Community were that it and its publication, Art Workers News, are no longer needed. Given the present legal, economic and tax status of artists, that statement is absurd.

Art Workers News can be dull and unfocused, but no more so than a lot of art funded by the Council. AWN investigations of dangers of art materials, workings of art bureaucracies, studies of legislation, and programs of insurance for artists may not make titillating reading, but they benefit all artists. If some of AWN's advocacies have been unrealistic, their reports on applications of art moneys are indeed real, and their protests led the council to establish appeals procedures where none had existed, and, for the first time, to promulgate a set of guidelines.

There should be open guidelines, publicly accounted for--a necessary antidote to bureaucratic whim. For instance: funds should go to projects the private sector can't or doesn't provide, should deliver for artists, not administrators, and be allocated according to a merit system more impersonal than the presently operative one.

One thinks of NYSCA projects that are the cosy fiefdoms of a few and their cronies. The Community of Artists operates in the general interest, as advocates of all artists. It should have the funds to do a proper job.

## COLOR, LIGHT & IMAGE,

### Work and Statements

An International Invitational, curated by Alice Baber. Women's Interart Center, NYC, thru Jan. 30.

Excerpts from an interview, Constance Kane with Alice Baber:

KANE: You have the makings of a book as well as a record of works in the exhibition.

BABER: ...Some artists sent in a poem. Others wrote a biographical statement, sent photos of themselves, or works in the show, or other works. There are four volumes on display. Of course the ideal situation would have included more space, more time, and many more countries.

KANE: ...Current trends are recognizable. For instance, collage elements...in the work of Mimi Schapiro and the sculpture of Eugenie Gershey. Patterns in Joyce Kozloff's paintings have echoes of the American Indian, as well as quilt-like pattern that recalls Appalachian handiwork...

...Joan Semmel's work has more to do with the current interest in erotic art. Alice Neel has always done her own thing in those penetrating, uncomfortable portraits. She has always held up a taut psychological mirror. But, I can't say that it's particularly female. Perhaps Sylvia Sleigh's interest in subject matter is feminine, but the work itself is not... I think Elise Asher's work has always been crisply feminine, in a very pretty and poetic way--rather like a self-portrait in calligraphy.

## Letters To The Editor

Dear Editors,

A propos of Phoebe Hellman's remarks reported in Women Artists Newsletter Nov. 1975: the tampaxes distributed at the Whitney Museum five years ago in the Ad Hoc protests were nice clean ones, marked, as I recall, "50% women" (referring to the Annual), not, in any case, tainted by the "dirt" some well-conditioned people still associate with menstruation!

There have been so many inaccurate accounts of the early days of the women artists' movement that I guess the time has come to start correcting the basic facts, even as minor as this one.

And, incidentally, while my view of what happens at these panels doesn't always coincide with that of your writers, I think it's a terrific idea to cover them so thoroughly. Many thanks.

-- Lucy R. Lippard, New York

Dear Ms.

My entry form for the Marietta Art Show has arrived and I notice it is an all man selection jury--I enclose their aims (see below). I am not entering this show.

—Carolyn Berry, Monterey, CA.

Mainstreams '76 will promote the concept that the qualities in art to which man personally reacts are those that are symbols of man's existence and his involuntary quest for beauty. These qualities bridge all centuries, all art styles, and are, apparently, very close to the essence of man's communication with man. Our purpose is to bring, insofar as possible, the best examples of painting and sculpture to our college and community.

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### Sleigh Letter Corrected

WAN has shot its proofreader at dawn. Sylvia Sleigh's letter last month was intended to clarify, not further confuse. A WAN quote, "It's time for a major museum to do a major show of women, not one started and paid for by women," might in the context have been taken to refer to the Women Choose Women show at the NY Cultural Center. In that show, as Sleigh wrote, "The only obligation on exhibiting artists was to deliver their work, and the catalog was funded."

But many, like Louise Nevelson, Betty Parsons, Ruth Frankin, Hedda Sterne, and Addie Herder simply seem to be doing their own thing and always have.

Did you have trouble getting work from such countries as Turkey, Iran and India?

BABER: Luckily I was able to borrow those from the Grey Gallery at NYU. It was important to show that women all over the world from many diverse backgrounds are working in the arts. Yes, many countries don't allow paintings to be sent out of the country, or, in some cases, to return. Getting work through customs can be a serious problem.

KANE: ...I know how much time a project like this can take. What satisfactions did it give?

BABER: ...Showing some of these artists for the first time in NY was gratifying, especially in international women's year...It was an exciting experience...

## CALENDAR

ELISE ASHER--Large glass 1972-75, U. of Va. Jan 11--mens Art Center, D.C. Feb 8 thru Mar. Art--Standing Plexures--Fendrick Gallery Jan 9-Feb 8.

HELENE AYLON--Painting, San Francisco Gallery, Cambridge, Mass. April 9.

ANNE BELL--Abstract, 93 Prince St. Miriam Brumer--Abstract, Lotus Gallery, 81 E. 10th St. Feb 13.

SIGRID BURTON--Painting, 155 Wooster St. Space, 155 Wooster St. Jan 28.

DIANE CHURCHILL--Painting, SoHo 20, 9th St. Jan 28.

LOIS DODD--Painting, 112 Greene St. Mt. Gallery, 135 E. 10th St. Jan 22.

CHRISTINE DOLINICH--Drawings, Middlesex St. N.J. thru January.

LAUREN EWING--Video, 155 Wooster, NYC, HARRIET FEIGENBAUM--Configurations of things. CUNY Grad Ctr. NYC, Jan 21-Feb 2.

ANN FREILICH--Works, 90 E 10th St. EUNICE GOLDEN--Book Paintings & Photos, 20, 99 Spring, NYC.

JANE GREER--Diary I, 112 Greene St. G. Jan 15.

DOROTHY HELLER--Recollections, Betty Parsons Gallery, Feb. 3-21.

HARMONY HAMMOND--Abstract, Lamagna Gallery, thru Jan 27.

SUZANNE HODES--Abstract, Phoenix, 939 Madison St. Jan 23.

GILLIAN JAGGER--Impressions, Lerner-Heller Gallery, NYC, thru Jan 17.

STEPHANIE BRODY--Leaves, Central Hall, Main St., Port Washington, Jan 25.

SUSAN LEITES--Painting, 155 Wooster St. Inverna Lockpez--Works, 155 Wooster St. ETHEL MAGAFAN--Mounting, 11 E 57, NYC.

JEAN MAGGRET--Marble, Books Plus, 3910 2nd Ave. thru Feb 13.

CYNTHIA MAILMAN--Landscapes, the automobile. Sc. NYC, thru Jan 28.

JUANITA MCNEELY--Niagara, 106 E. 10th St. Jan 23-Feb 11.

SUSAN MIDDLEMAN--Paintings, Wolfe St. Georgetown, Alexandria.

KATE MILLETT--Small Sculptures of figures, NoHo Gallery, 542 E. 10th St. thru Jan 21.

CONSTANCE MORRIS--Painting, 103 Waverly St. RENE MURRAY--Recent work, House Pottery, thru Jan 31.

KATHRYN PERRY--Seascapes, abstract painting, NYC, thru Jan 24.

ELLEN PHELAN--Fans, 155 Wooster, NYC, Jan 24.

PERLE FINE--Grid painting, 20 E 69 St, NYC. Jan. 20.

Merle

# Marsicano

ANNOUNCES

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Elise Asher

Paintings on Plexiglass 1972 - 1975

UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND - MARSH GALLERY  
Richmond, Virginia

January 11 through January 31, 1976

and

WASHINGTON WOMENS ARTS CENTER  
Washington, D.C.

February 8 through March 28, 1976

The Book As Art—Standing Bookstructures - Painted Plexiglass

FENDRICK GALLERY - Washington, D.C.  
January 9 through February 8, 1976

### ART - TO - HEART TALK

#### Panel-HUMANIZING THE ART WORLD-12/13

Joellen Bard, Mod; Diane Burko, Richard Karp, Cindy Nemser, Jonathan Price, Jacqueline Skiles, Panelists.

The seemingly well-fed, well-dressed, well-educated "humanists" on this panel about "Humanizing the Art World" are outraged at a system which has allowed them this much, but, to date denied them the fame, wealth or power they see elsewhere.

Their talk mixed truth impartially with nonsense. The salient truth was Jackie Skiles' observation that the moneys going into Art Councils across the land have created thousands of middle class jobs with fringe benefits for arts administrators, but have moved scarcely an artist into the middle class.

On balance, though, the foolishness bothered me more than the truths roused me, and, wincing at the howlers, I began to apply a kind of "Yeah, Like" clause in my mind, as antidote to the effects of blither on my pre-holiday psyche.

Here, more or less verbatim, are some of their sillier assertions and my irritated replies:

THEM: It is content that infuses art with vitality.

ME: Yeah, like the painting of the most beautiful object in the world is the most beautiful painting in the world.

THEM: Corporations promote abstract art because aesthetics are safe. Stripes, circles, etc. won't propagate revolutionary ideas.

ME: Yeah, like the Constructivists

and Futurists did abstract art to support monarchy.

THEM: The artistic object today often has nothing to do with the world beyond it.

ME: Yeah, like what is art, anyway?

THEM: Artists start with warm and spiritual, rather than pragmatic things.

ME: Yeah, like crucifixions, flagellations, battle scenes and grids.

THEM: Humanism means warmth, tenderness, kindness to neighbors and sharing.

ME: Yeah, like rage and aggression are purely aesthetic.

THEM: What's wrong with being refused [from a co-op]? Rejection is humanistic, too.

ME: Yeah, like "warmth, tenderness, kindness to neighbors and sharing."

If "humanizing the art world" is a code phrase to mean wrenching power from the fallible humans who now possess it, I'm interested, but the pious cant is distracting.

Any extension of human thinking, from Fibonacci to the Pyramids, is "humanistic." Limiting art to "pictures," so-called "explorations of self" and a few other minor genres, curbs art and intellect as much as "inevitable progression" ever did. Who needs a know-nothing backlash in the name of "humanism"? -- Judy Seigel

#### DID YOU OR DIDN'T YOU?

Maybe you think you did but you didn't. Subscribe to WAN, that is. Some of our friends were so sure they'd subscribed that they were

### WOMEN LOOK AT WOMEN

"Women Look at Women," the work of 30 women photographers from the permanent files of the Library of Congress closed Dec. 31 in Washington. 150 pieces selected from the show, from the 1890's through the present, will tour the country beginning in January.

The exhibitors deserve credit for the vision and patience necessary to sift through the Library's vast collection of Imogen Cunningham, Laura Gilpin, Marion Post Wolcott, Gertrude Käsebier, Toni Frissell, Dorothea Lange, Diane Arbus and others. But the imposed subtitles--"As Women Alone," "As Modern Women," "On the Farm," "As Wives," "As Mothers," etc.--are often distracting and irrelevant. Simple chronology might have better paralleled the changes in the women, their medium and subject matter.

But the show is well worth seeing--for the glory of these important artists grouped together--another reminder of our collective wealth.

--Gail Singer

very surprised to get a "last courtesy copy" notice. Check the name label on your newsletter. If there's a number after your name (eg, 975, meaning you subscribed Sept '75) you're a subscriber. If there's no number and you know you subscribed, send us a card. We could goof too. If you're still on the "courtesy" list, won't you please subscribe now? We need the subscriptions. We need your support.

## INFORMATION ROUNDUP

NY State Artists not associated with commercial or co-op galleries: Send resume & 2-20 slides to Un-affiliated Artists File, Artist-space, 155 Wooster St., NYC 10012. Series of exhibitions to be chosen by rotating panels, beginning Feb. Material, held permanently, may be updated or removed by artist.

**Outreach: Celebrate Women-3 hr. TV** WNET/13, Sunday, Feb. 1, 1PM-Panel discussions with authorities in fields of art, education, finance, politics, women and work.

**Kaleidoscope One-Special issue by Quest-seeks contributions of ideas, insights & inspirations. 2000-5000 words, & graphics. Deadline Feb. 15. Enclose SASE marked "For Kaleidoscope"; graphic specifications from Alexa Freeman. Box 8843, Wash., D.C. 20003.**

**Environmental Piece-at Women's Art Center, 400 Brannan, San Francisco, CA 94107-to include all media-from painting to cake decorating; open to all women; equal space allotted to all-one square foot. Send or bring work thru May 31. Include return postage.**

**Goddard College-MFA Writing Program-Prose, Poetry & Drama. 12 day residencies. Feb. 8-20, Aug 3-5 & 6 month projects; distinguished faculty. Ellen Voigt, Dir., Box 400, Plainfield, Vt. 05667.**

**Woman's Work- Works by 18 women composers from 1587 to present on 2-record set dist'd by Gemini Hall Records, 808 West End Ave, NYC 10025. By mail-\$10.75.**

**Womens Work-Magazine of Performance Scores by 15 cont. women artists. Anna Lockwood, Music Dept. Hunter College, 695 Park Ave, NYC 10021 \$5**

### PROTEST CIRCULATED:

A letter from Artists Meeting for Cultural Change protesting a scheduled Whitney Museum show entitled *Three Centuries of American Art* "entirely culled from the collection of John Rockefeller III" because it "includes no Black artists and only one woman artist" and is "a blatant example of a large cultural institution writing the history of American art as though the last decade of cultural & social reassessment had never taken place." They "strongly object to the...museums & Rockefeller...using a private collection of art, with its discriminatory omissions, to promote upper class values and a socially reactionary view of American art history." Jan. 3 protest at the Whitney, plus plans to protest nationally. Box 728, Canal St. Sta., NYC 10013

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Jan. 22 5:30 PM-Seminar: Bias Free Illustration. AIGA Gallery, 2059 Third Ave. \$2.50

Jan. 28 8:30 PM-New Art Publications-Annette Michelson (October), Joseph Kothuth (The Fox), Mike Robinson (Artrite), Joyce Nureaux (Scan). Artists Space, 155 Wooster. \$1

**College Art Assoc. Annual Meeting, Hilton Hotel, Chicago**

Feb. 1 2-5PM-Art Periodicals Today  
3:30-5:30-Women's Caucus: Workshop: Changing the Art World Structure



Lenček paints from photos made with a delayed shutter release. Above: From an Interior Landscape, oil on canvas, 48x50".

Rousseau - continued

day through the New Jersey oil fields, scenes of love were a relief and reminder of good in humanity. Other staff members agreed that the art was a joyous distraction from grim reality, and that painting gas stations was more truly pornographic.

Several students admitted they hadn't really looked at the paintings. Thinking they had learned something about art, they agreed to try again. (One said that although he came to the library often, he hadn't noticed the art until he read about it in the paper.) Lynn Miller, librarian, and director of the series, apologized to those whom the show had offended, but announced it would remain up.

Now in its fifth year, the Women Artists Series began as an informal effort to fly the flag for women artists at a woman's college with primarily male art professors. Artist Joan Snyder had approached Daisy Brightenback, head librarian in 1971, with the idea of using the library walls as an alternative space for showing women's work. Although many women were working, painting and producing at the time, few had opportunities to show. Sympathetic, Brightenback turned the project over to Lynn Miller, then a new librarian eager to make the library exciting. She and Snyder got a little money from the library budget, scrambled for transportation, hitched trailers to Miller's station wagon, rented trucks, got parking tickets, argued with policemen, and working with the artists, put together the early shows. From the first mimeographed announcement to the present professional catalog, media coverage, impressive roster of participating artists, and, as Ms. Miller says, "everyone in the WORLD sending in slides," has been a long road and a major achievement.

Feb. 2 9:30-12Noon-Artists Speak with Critics  
12-2PM-Women's Caucus for Art Business Meeting  
4:30-6-Women Scholars in the Arts: Progress Report  
8:30-11-Women Artists Speak on Women Artists  
Feb. 3 12-2PM-Panel: Androgynous Aspects of Art  
2-4:30-Chicago: The Gold Lady  
4:30-6-Panel: Women in Museums: How To Succeed  
7-8:30-Convocation: Of Men, Women and Art, Linda Nochlin Pommer.

### Gender In Art

continued - Rivera

en growing up and their application to a feminist consciousness in art.

The discussion had little to do with the stated subject. Some of the panelists commented on the male dominance of the art world--a theme which surfaced early, got lost, then re-surfaced in response to sharp audience questioning. The audience expressed feelings of powerlessness in a male dominated society. Artist Joan Semmel answered that women are our audience, that women have a gut response to art, and that her own art came out of a sense of powerlessness (although Semmel no longer feels powerless). Spero strongly disagreed. One could not help get the feeling that we were listening to an economic theory, that many of the women were interested only in the marketing and marketability of feminist art.

The heart of the dilemma seems to be the intrinsic value versus the extrinsic commodity value of art. As to whether there is a specific female art form--a panelist asserted that the traditional female approach has been to reach out, while the male approach has been to look into himself in order to create. This was directly contradicted by statements of at least half a dozen women about their own creativity.

The confusion deepened when someone mentioned that she had been reading a book claiming that people were pushed, because of education, away from the visual toward the verbal. This led to the speculation that female and male spatial perceptions are different--a useful statement, if true, but taken wholly out of context.

The discussion might more appropriately have been titled: "Disgruntled Artists Lower Consciousness." Despite claims of innovation, the ground had been gone over before.

[Next month: Nancy Spero]

Semmel - continued

experience became part of the making of our collective history, of our supposedly collective culture, where it may serve to modify some of the anti-humanistic tendencies of that culture?

Do we as women artists consciously seek the sources of our work? Some women are afraid that the seeking of those sources will be ideologically coercive. I disagree. Self-knowledge stimulates self-definition.

If women's art encompasses a wide range of styles, are there similarities in content? What in our relationship to our space, to time, to materials, to our sexual roles, is different from men's and how does this affect our work? Why does so much of women's art deal with sexual motifs, organic form, autobiography, process and craft materials, highly personal and non-hierarchical form? How does this overlap with tendencies in women's writing?

The questions are endless. It is time for an ongoing dialogue.

DALIA RAMANAUSKAS-New Drawings. Hundred Acres Gallery, 456 W. Bway, thru Jan 24.

JEANNE REYNAL-Mosaics of People. Bodley Gallery, 1063 Madison, NYC

MARGOT ROBINSON-Abstract Paintings. NoHo Gallery, 542 LaGuardia Pl., NYC, thru Jan 21.

JUDITH ROTHSCCHILD-Relief Paintings, Annely Juda Gallery, London, Eng., thru Feb 12.

ETHEL SCHWABACHER-Pastel Portraits. Bodley Gallery, 1063 Madison, NYC.

HAZEL SIEGEL-Geometric Paintings & Constructions. Arras Gallery, 29 W 57, NYC, thru Jan 10.

SYLVIA SLEIGH-Paintings. AIR Gallery, 97 Wooster, NYC, Jan 31-Feb 25.

LOIS SMILEY-Abstract Landscapes. Carlton, 127 E 69, NYC, thru Jan 31.

MIMI SMITH-Drawings with Recordings. 112 Greene St. Gallery, NYC, thru Dec 31.

ANITA STECKEL-Paintings & Collages-Erotic Fantasies. SoHo Center for Visual Arts, 114 Prince, NYC, thru Feb 7.

SARAH SUPPLEE-Realistic Landscapes. Lamagna, 380 W. Bway NYC, thru Jan 27.

SELINA TRIEFF-Figure paintings. Prince St. Gallery, 106 Prince, NYC, thru Jan 21.

RUTH VOLLMER-Sculpture/Drawing. Neuberger Museum, Purchase, NY to March 14.

BARBARA ZUCKER-Sculpture. 112 Greene St. Gallery, NYC thru Jan 15.

Zuka-Collage portraits-historical, Parsons, 24 W 57, NYC, thru Jan 24.

## GROUP SHOWS

AIR Invitational-AIR, 97 Wooster, NYC, thru Jan 28. 17 women artists, each chosen by an AIR member.

19th Century American Women Artists-Downtown Branch Whitney Museum, 55 Water St. NYC, Jan 14-Feb 25.

7 American Women: The Depression Decade-Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY, opening reception Jan 18 2-5 pm thru March 3. Lucienne Bloch, Rosalyn Bengelsdorg Browne, Minna Citron, Marion Greenwood, Doris Lee, Elizabeth Olds, Concetta Scaravaglione; curated by Karal Ann Marling & Helen Harrison.

Three Women Painters-Springfield Art Asso. Gallery, Springfield, Ill. Jan 15-Feb 27. Judith Kingsley, Jan Miller, Linda Nyman.

40 Years of American Collage-Buecker & Harpsichords, 465 W. Bway NYC, thru Feb 28.

4 Artists-Women in the Arts Gallery, 435 Broome, NYC, Jan 17-Feb 14.

Sanda Aronson, Barbara Asch, Sally Friedman, Sophie Newman.

25 American Artists-Andre Zarre Gallery, 20 E. 69, NYC, thru Jan 17, Jo Baer, Lynda Benglis, Ronnie Elliott, Perle Fine, Marisol, Pat Lipsky, etc.

Black and White/Drawings & Prints-York College Library, 150-14 Jamacia Ave., Jamacia, NY, thru Feb 27.

Margorie Apter-McKevitt, Carol Crawford, Hope de Felice, Jacqueline Freedman, Carole McCully, Florence Siegel, etc.

American Painters in Paris-New Convention Center, Paris, France. Celebrating America's Bicentennial. Thru Jan 15. Elena Urbaitis, etc.

The Woman's Studio-Members Show-1643 E. Genesee St., Syracuse, NY, thru Jan.

Two Printmakers-Graphic Eye Gallery, 111 Main St., Port Washington, NY, thru Jan 25. Sara Amatriek & Cass Shaw

Four Person Show-Ward-Nasse Gallery, 131 Prince, NYC, thru Jan 30.

New Works-Babcock, 805 Madison, NYC, thru Jan 28. Margit Beck, Helen Hole, etc.

Women on the Waterfront-South Street Seaport Museum, 9 Fulton, NYC. Pomo-

na Hallenbeck, Victoria Lomaugh, Leslie Flanders.

Four Women/1 Man-O.K. Harris Gallery 383 W Bway, NYC, thru Jan 24. Sharon Gold, Mary Gregoriades, Beth Horowitz, Marilyn Gelfman-Pereira.

Masters Thesis-C.W. Post Gallery, Hillwood Commons, Greenvale, NY. Reception Feb 8, 2-5pm, thru Feb 13.

Noelle Brosch, Ann Chapman, Marilyn Hockhauser, Margaret Miller.

From Women's Eyes: Women Painters in Canada-Agnes Etherington Art Center, Queens University, Kingston, Can. thru Jan 30. Historical survey from 17th Century to present.

## BOOK REVIEW

Who's Who In Female Art

A History of Women Artists, by Hugo Munsterberg, N.Y., Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1975; 150 pp., \$12.95.

A History of Women Artists by Hugo Munsterberg is a quick read. In 147 pages Munsterberg undertakes a global survey of female artists from Neolithic times to the present, including the so-called crafts and devoting more than half the book to the twentieth century. He is very selective.

Artists are included if their age or posterity has found them 'significant,' but what Munsterberg himself thinks is not apparent. Rarely has a book, even in the survey genre, displayed so little point of view. Instead of a critical stance, Munsterberg keeps score. Of Rosa Bonheur:

"Certainly the praises heaped upon her during her lifetime were much too extravagant, and there is no doubt that several of her male contemporaries, who were less successful at the time, have emerged as far greater artists. [Also]... she is surpassed by at least two women painters of the period, Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt. However, it may be that as the emphasis upon formal values declines... the narrative and naturalistic qualities of her work will be again appreciated."

The excerpt is representative, and while this survey of women artists is a sympathetic one (forget his use of 'one-man' show), its scorekeeping is silly and unnecessarily defensive. Joan Mitchell isn't Picasso but neither is DeKooning. Anyway, who cares: we are not buying stocks.

Attempting to rank the sexes would involve, moreover, examining under what conditions art is produced and Munsterberg doesn't do this. Instead, there are capsule summaries of each artist's life and work, including over 100 reproductions of rather poor quality. These summaries, particularly the anecdotal material, make one want to hear more. One is struck, for ex-

## RECOMMENDED READING

Visual Dialog - California quarterly special issue "Women in the Visual Arts" includes an introduction by Cindy Nemser, interview with Joyce Kozloff by Judy Seigel, visual arts sources bibliography by DeRenne Coerr, analysis of prevailing statistics on sex discrimination in the arts by Eleanor Dickinson & Roberta Loach - and more. \$3 each. from Box 1438, Los Altos, CA 94022

La Mamelie - West Coast quarterly of contemporary art activity; \$7/year, P.O. Box 3123, San Francisco, CA 94199. Also functions as an information & support network for

## Women's Photography Journal

Calendar

Nineteen Hundred and Seventy-Six.

Jo Ann Frank, Jill Freedman, Dorothy Gloster, Betty Hahn, Deborah McCreedy, Mary Ellen Mark, Barbara Morgan, Lilo Raymond, Sophie Rivera, Eva Rubinstein, Naomi Savage, Ming Smith

Five dollars and ninety-five cents, plus eight percent New York City/State sales tax and seventy-five cents postage. Allow two weeks for delivery.

Deduct one dollar and fifty cents from the calendar price when subscribing to "Women's Photography Journal" for seven dollars a year, which is a two dollar saving from the newsstand price of seventy-five cents per issue.

Send money to "Women's Photography Journal," Post Office Box 118, Manhattanville Station, New York City 10027

advertisement

ample, by how frequently fathers (and husbands) figure in the artists' development and one wonders where the mothers were keeping themselves. We're also curious about the personal history of such artists as Angelica Kauffmann and Lily Martin whose husbands devoted themselves to their wives' careers, or Labille-Guiard's insistence on the right of women to teach art and the speculation about what being raped meant to Artemisia Gentilesche's art.

Whichever figures strike one, there isn't any doubt that much more can be said, and in this connection, it's a pity that Munsterberg did not include a bibliography. He's also evasive about gender descriptions of art, telling us for example that Laurencin's work is usually seen as "feminine, meaning that it is gentle and poetic rather than bold and expressive." And his views about stature and influence can be questioned along with the odd suggestion that "for some reason, women are more gifted verbally than visually." But the book's limits make our questions, or complaints about the omission of (say) American quiltmakers, or Grace Hartigan, beside the point. However, Munsterberg does whet the appetite and his work should encourage others to go further.

-- Susan Manso

artists with exhibition space, book store specializing in art periodicals & publications by artists, videotape series of artists' projects. Also grant funds.

Midwest Art - Articles, reviews & most comprehensive show calendar for Ill., Wisc., Missouri, Ind., Mich., Ohio. \$5/year-10 issues. Box 07419, Milwaukee, WI 53207.

Art magazine/24 - Issue in celebration of Women's Year in Canada - Women's Year Roundup (exhibitions, publications), profiles, photographs & articles on women artists-the breadth of Canada. \$2.50. 234 Eglinton Ave. E., Toronto, Ont. M4P1K5

# BOOK REVIEWS

ISABEL BISHOP  
by Karl Lunde

Harry N. Abrams, Inc. NYC 1975 \$37  
171 illustrations, including  
50 plates in full color

"No painting ever seems 'finished,' even after many months of work: there is simply a time when she can do no more with it. She tries to express in a painting the unfinished quality of life." So writes Karl Lunde of the work of Isabel Bishop in his introductory essay to the recent volume reproducing paintings, drawings, and etchings. Isabel Bishop has been captivated primarily by one subject --the men and women who live and work in the vicinity of her Union Square studio. She depicts their everyday gestures and momentary, unconscious actions, making us see the monumental in the commonplace and transitory.

This book does justice to Isabel Bishop's work. The reproductions are excellent, the etchings full scale in most cases. Bishop first does studies, then etchings and aquatints, which prepare for the paintings. This process is described with great sensitivity. Isabel Bishop is a truly beautiful book; it gives the feeling of possessing the works of the artist.

-- Susan Schwalb

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"The Nude in Photography," by  
Arthur Goldsmith. Ridge and Playboy  
Press, 1975. \$19.95

This lap-sized, pseudo-intellectual presentation of the mostly female nude as seen by fine-art and commercial photographers would have fared better as two books.

In the chapter called "Scandalous Beginnings," we are drawn to the strength of Muybridge's still-photo action sequences of the male and female model, to the delicacy and great charm of the French picture postcards, to Bellocq's keen and sympathetic portrayal of a New Orleans prostitute, and to the unique visions of Weston, Lange and Morgan. The Playboy-style pictures done by Look, Life and SatEvePost photographers appeal to other sensibilities. The final chapters are an unhomogeneous mix of commercial, semi-pornographic, fine-art (the primal nudes of D. Niccolini) and experimental work. The text should have been set apart from the pictures--not placed on most of the pages as small bits of chatty prose.

However, if you received this book for Christmas, it is fun--if you are a woman, to compare your body with the great variety of nudes here, and, if you are male, to pick and choose and daydream over all the girls.

--Helen Burr

Art on the Edge - Harold Rosenberg.  
Macmillan Publishing Company, 1975  
\$12.95

Rosenberg's tall figure stalking the art world or sitting back, stiff leg out, observing the events to which the professional art watcher must attend--developments of the past fifteen years have forced him to an ironical distance. The ideals, however, of the early years as poet, Marxist and friend of the artist remain the standard against which all else is measured.

Seen from Rosenberg's distance, the busy-ness of the art world takes on a faint Swiftian tint--is silhouetted and flattened. For example: his use of the word, "Moffetters" to refer to those who agree with curator Kenworth Moffett's assessment of Olitski. With this one mild word, Rosenberg dwarfs the actors on the stage; they grow down, quaint and squat, the "preeminence" of Olitski with them.

These "Moffetters" are to be found astride the first segment of Rosenberg's new book, "Art on the Edge," in which 28 essays in three sections called Creators, Reflections and Situations are assembled and directed to a point. The book's title derives from one of the concluding chapters, "On the Edge," in which the Broddingnagian feats of "Documenta 5" are discussed. In the foreword Rosenberg states:

"...this prolific support of art and hyperanimation of the art scene themselves carry the danger of propelling painting and sculpture over the edge that separates them from the crafts, commercial design and the mass media."

We know that the significance of "Documenta 5" was inflated precisely by the sum of two million dollars but can this be seen as "prolific support of art"--an extravaganza which includes a token few paintings & sculptures under the banner "Art is Superfluous"? If official salons are accurate indexes of the direction art is taking, then art is heading "over the edge."

-- Pat Passlof



Paula Modersohn-Becker

Next month: Modersohn-Becker & Kollwitz

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