

Womanart

Summer 1976

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GERTRUDE STEIN
and the Making of Modern Art

X¹² : Feminist artists
first show together

Erasing Sexism
from MOMA

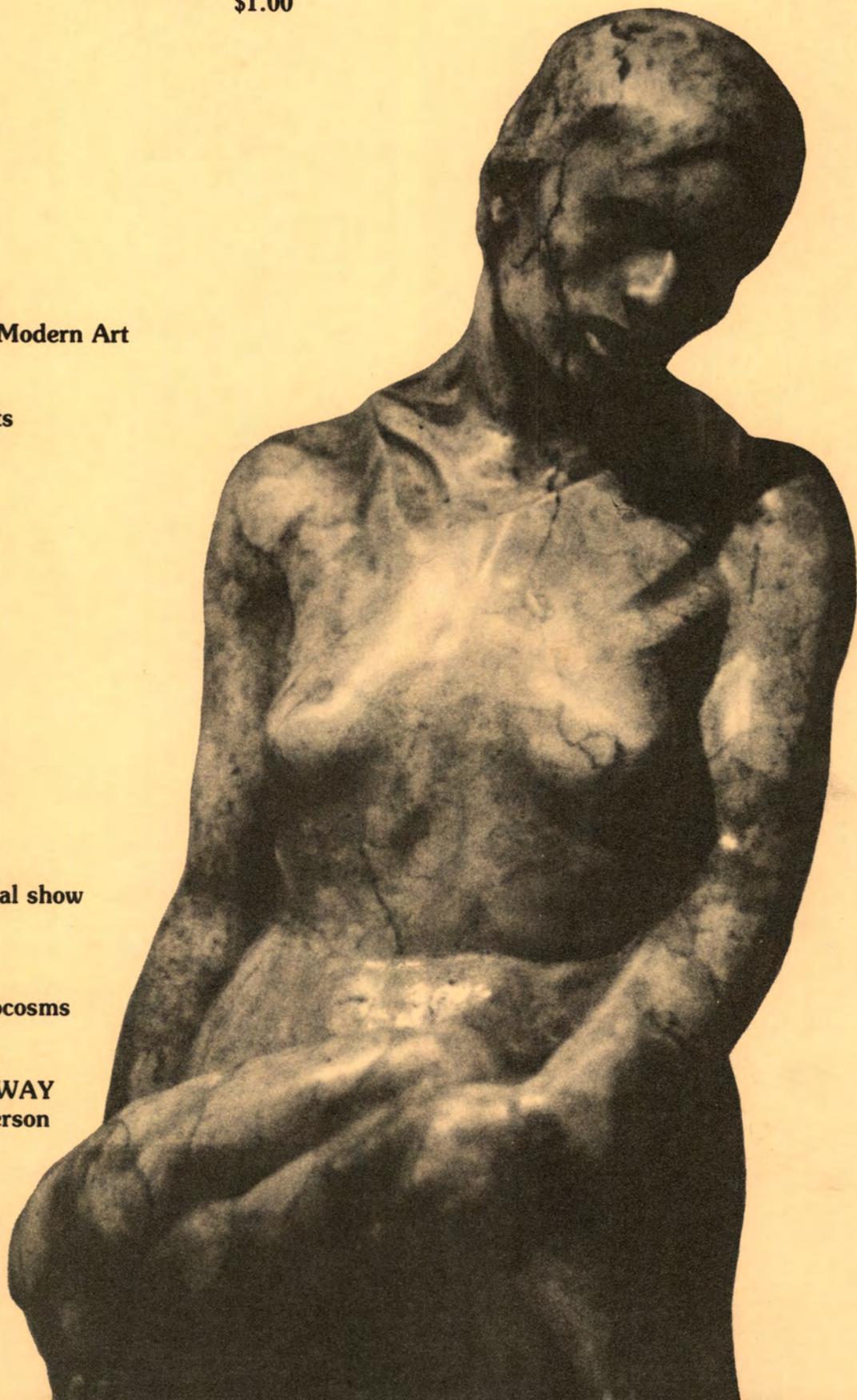
SOHO 20
women's co-op

Early American
Memorial Painting

Artists protest
Whitney Bicentennial show

PAT ADAMS'
contemplative microcosms

LAWRENCE ALLOWAY
Notes in the first person



There are currently too few publications which provide literary discussion of the work of women artists. The public's unawareness of the scope and diversity of this half of the art world has robbed it of the aesthetic contribution of women to our cultural heritage.

Womanart Magazine is an effort directed at correcting this situation, through reportage and analysis of the work of contemporary women artists and discussion of women's art in history. This will include feature articles and interviews, gallery reviews, and reports on events of particular interest, such as lectures, panels, and special projects.

Womanart would like to aid the development of ideas regarding art by women, their dissemination, and their exchange among women artists and between artists and critics. We welcome contributions and wish to encourage writing by women artists, in order to obtain most directly their thoughts on current aesthetic questions, as imagery, symbolism, and media, as well as on current problems, as feminism, discrimination, separatism, and alternatives to the gallery system.

This is our first issue. We ask for comments, criticism, suggestions--feedback, to help us determine our future, and for support to help us reach it.

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Cover photograph: Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, *Mother and Child*, 1935. Marble, 34" h. Courtesy The Whitney Museum of American Art. One of the works in the 200 Years of American Sculpture Bicentennial exhibit at the museum. The announcement of another Bicentennial show, scheduled for later this year, led to demonstrations by artists. See page 8.

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One of the first off-shoots of the contemporary women's art movement was an exhibit by 12 women artists at Museum, A Project for Living Artists, in February, 1970:

X¹²



by Vernita Nemeč

It's so hard to remember that time, so painful. Cindy Nemser called X¹² the first openly feminist exhibition. Well, she came to a few of the meetings to hear us rap, cry, confess, argue, share, bitch, question, so maybe from her point of view it's true. When artist Carolyn Mazello and I first conceived the idea for having an all women's show, we were not consciously making a political, feminist gesture. We wanted to show our work, and the idea of having a show of only women artists was to make the point that making art is not a sex-linked characteristic, but a matter of individual ability.

The climate of the late sixties was one of much political fervor and protest. We were horrified at the atrocities of the Viet Nam war. It was a time of consciousness raising, and the beginning of the feminist movement. We were angry enough to speak up and to stand up against authorities to whom we had previously acquiesced. Artists were meeting, pro-

Vernita Nemeč is a sculptor living and working in New York City. She is currently writing the fourth volume of her journal.

testing, and structuring their own alternatives to the existing museum/gallery structure. Protest groups such as Art Workers Coalition, Women Artists in Revolution, and the Ad Hoc Women's Committee formed to take action against political injustices in both the art world and society at large. Alternative structures such as Museum, A Project for Living Artists, were created to provide meeting and exhibition space, as well as to publish writings in periodicals like *Magazine*.

We used to go to AWC meetings and share our own frustrations and fears with other artists, until we came to the realization that it was doing us no good to commiserate with other women artists about how we had been ignored, overlooked, put down, reassured and patronized if we were not willing to take some action. Our decision to organize an all women's group show, a phenomenon that we had not witnessed in our professional art lives, came very much out of the same spirit that created AWC, WAR, Ad Hoc, and Museum.

Today in researching information about the history of the women's art

movement, I discover that in the U.S., the last all women's exhibition up to that time was in 1965, entitled *Women Artists of America 1707-1964*, at the Newark Museum, and before that, in 1962, *Mount Holyoke Celebrating the Coming of Age of Women as Creative Artists*, and the *Women's International*. I wish I had seen those shows, but I was in Ohio then, trying to get my painting teacher to really look into my work, not knowing how to defend myself when he accused me of being too serious about my art. Little did I or my art history professors know that women had been having exhibitions excluding men since 1893: women's only means of compensating for their exclusions. Maybe if our art history (or history, in general) had included more about women artists, we would have been more conscious of our political and feminist motivations, but that had not been part of our education. No, Carolyn and I were really concerned at the time with showing our work and thought that the idea of women banding together, rather than hiding behind an initial and trying to be one of the boys, made a strong theme for

a group show. We wanted to tip the scales in our favor and hence excluded men for that reason. In fact, when we were deciding how to select artists, we made sex the only criterion for inclusion. It seemed to us that those women artists who were willing to take the chance of showing with other female artists, as well as letting the public know that they were women, were very serious and determined, or just plain naive.

The night that I announced the show and said that we would take the first 10 women who committed themselves is foggy in my memory. I didn't expect such a strong response; we turned away those who hesitated, and the days following, our phones buzzed with calls from more women artists, such as Agnes Denes, who had thought it over and wanted to risk coming out with us.

The meetings were terrible and wonderful. They became consciousness raising sessions where we not only talked about our problems related to making and showing art, but our men problems, our children problems. For some of us, our lives began to revolve around those meetings.

Now, rereading the press release Silvianna, maybe the most political of us, wrote, I feel that it says very well what we felt, what I felt then about being both a woman and an artist.

We are 12 women artists who come together to show: our logo is X¹²

X is the unknown quantity in an equation yet to be resolved.

X is exploration.

X is crossed out, disposed of, as we have been for so many centuries.

X marks the spot. This is where it is at.

We are on the threshold of the unknown quantity in us, of the equation yet to be discovered like Einstein's $E=mc^2$ that split the atom and changed everything.

We do not deny our true femininity whatever it may be. We accept it, we will rejoice in it. We affirm all the vital values, Health, Beauty, Creativity, Courage, Sensitivity, Strength, Feeling, Energy. Between the fully liberated man and woman there will be no difference but biology.

The old game is dead. We begin again.

We are here. This is what we do. We paint. We sculpt. We present a new form, an art event in mixed media: bodies, materials, time, space. We come together as artists to exhibit. We have paid our dues in today's art world first as artists, doubly as women.

X is the unknown quantity in an equation yet to be resolved.

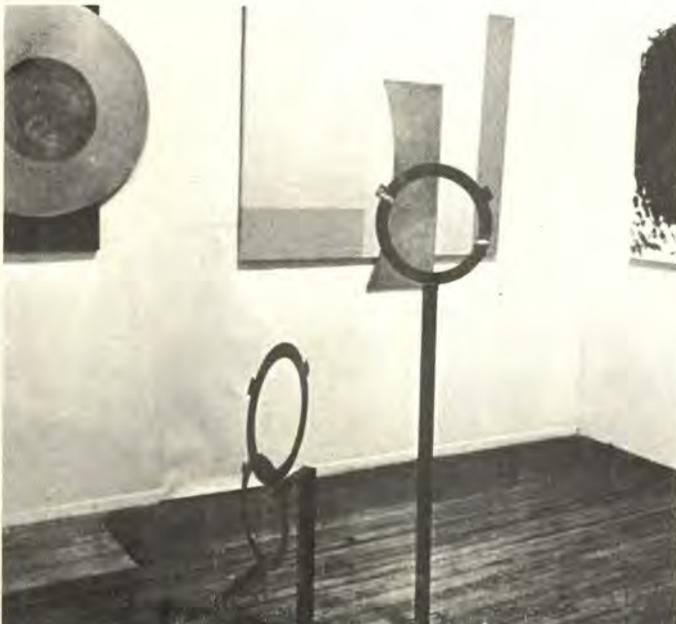
I think I still feel that way.

Lil Picard, in the *East Village Other*, called the opening of the show "the first coming out party of WAR." Cindy Nemser, writing in *Arts Magazine*, called the show a "potpourri of excitement. The diversity of technique, style, and subject matter decided for this reviewer that the case for masculine as opposed to feminine art is closed." Lawrence Alloway, in a review in *Nation*, said, "intensity of assertion is art's function for most of these artists...compared to the technology of the establishment, convulsively hand-crafted objects acquire an expressive function. A naive sense of the sacred, of the conviction of mission insists that this work is more passionate and more

effective than well-made sophisticated art." In the *New York Post*, Emily Genauer asked, "who'd criticize artists for facing a hostile milieu together? Who wouldn't be pleased when an exhibition presents, as in the present instance, some very promising talents?"

We received a great deal of press and media coverage, and the press release (in many ways more than the art) created a great deal of controversy for its boldness and assertiveness. Bob Levin in *Changes* wrote, "The artists' gender unannounced, audiences would have come anticipating a collection of work by men. The work... has few peculiarly 'feminine' characteristics and has, I think, considerable weight by any criteria...To discover after viewing the show that it was authored by women would, I thought, create the desired turn of consciousness far more effectively." He went on to say, with greater understanding than anyone who wrote about the show in terms of us as artists and in terms of our purpose, that "but if the style of the press release was ostensibly intended to alert the public to an emergent feminine force in the art world...the...declaration had a more immediate purpose...writing it was an act of self-assertion, of achieving leverage, in preparation for their entrance into a reality of being artists and fully acknowledging themselves as artists. A self-conscious feminism, moreover, was the psychic dynamism which could give them the trust to transcend the limitations of possibility which social conditions had pre-imposed upon their aesthetic ambitions."

Nanette Ranone of WBAI's "Woman-kind" program did an interview with four of the 12 entitled "Redefining the Roles". It was an appropriate title for the times. Previously, we had listened to our fathers, our husbands, potential dealers, male art



Installation view. Sculpture and paintings by Mary Ann Gillies. Photo courtesy of the artist.



Mirrored relief sculpture installed in bathroom, by Alida Walsh. Photo courtesy Mary Ann Gillies.

teachers, critics, and other male artists. Now we were unconsciously setting the precedent of doing something for ourselves.

We were positive and supportive of each other until the hanging of the show. The pressure of exposure was incredible. The very needs, pressures, and emotions that had brought us together almost blew us apart when we were faced with the need for compromise in order to hang a cohesive show. There were five sculptors, five painters, and two performance artists. For some of us, who had not shown professionally in New York before, the decision to go public affected our work a great deal.

Today, I find it very difficult to talk about the art itself, to even remember it clearly. I think that the art was not as important as our need to show, the fact of showing with other women and publicly identifying ourselves as artists who are women.

The 12 women in the show were Lois di Cosola, Iris Crump, Mary Ann Gillies, Helene Gross, Doloris Holmes, Inverna Lockpez, Arline Lederman, Carolyn Mazzello, myself, Doris O'Kane, Silvianna, and Alida Walsh. Rather than give my description of the work, I'd like to quote further from the critics who saw the show. Emily Genauer called Alida Walsh, Silvianna, Inverna Lockpez, and Iris Crump "promising talents". Cindy Nem-

ser, more specifically, described and categorized the art. She said of Lois di Cosola's paintings, "fields of color studded with stunning insets of brilliantly pigmented plexiglass." She also spoke of "Carolyn Mazzello's poetic, ever-shifting conglomerations of homosote and chip-board", and "Helene Gross' delicately textured fiberglass rods". She goes on: "Iris Crump presents a broad gentle view of human beings engaged in communal activities. She incorporates lights and mirrors into her contemporary settings. D. Holmes has conceived of a medieval environment, complete with dance and song, that is designed to remind the viewer of the human qualities that have been sifted out of today's surroundings." "Inverna Lockpez delineates primitive gods and feverish lovers by means of Munchlike rhythmic lines, while Alida Walsh, with the aid of mirrors, music cabinets, polyester, and resin produces demonic delights." Lil Picard described my work as "doll puppets hanging from the ceiling in grotesque pillow shapes covered with fine line drawings and backed by metallic shimmering icons attached to the wall."

At the time of the show, many of the critics' reactions sounded angry to us and in turn, they regarded us as angry. Today, the reviews and all the writing and quotes about the show, the art, the artists, the act, sound much calmer to me, and more

neutral. Being a female artist is easier and more acceptable today. What was a stigma in 1969 is a distinction today. We have come a long way with two women's cooperatives that are highly selective in their memberships, at least two women artists' groups with open membership, and a slide registry for women artists. There are so many women's group shows that it is becoming difficult to find *enough* good women artists.

We had chosen the first 10 women who were willing to extend themselves, to take the chance of doing it themselves, of showing their work without the aid of outside judgments. We had not looked at slides, there was no curator to tell us if the art was good. We had only the trust and belief that an artist, whether male or female, must judge him/herself and know when his/her art is ready to be public. That was our challenge. We had to trust each other: letting the group down was letting ourselves down. The togetherness and closeness we felt during our meetings, the anger and hostility during the hanging of the show, seen in the crying, screaming and threats of quitting, and finally the surprise of the fine appearance of the show, I think was a measure of the fear we felt and the unconscious realization of the precedent we were setting.

What has happened to the X¹² artists? Silvianna has moved from her early destruction happenings to filmmaking.



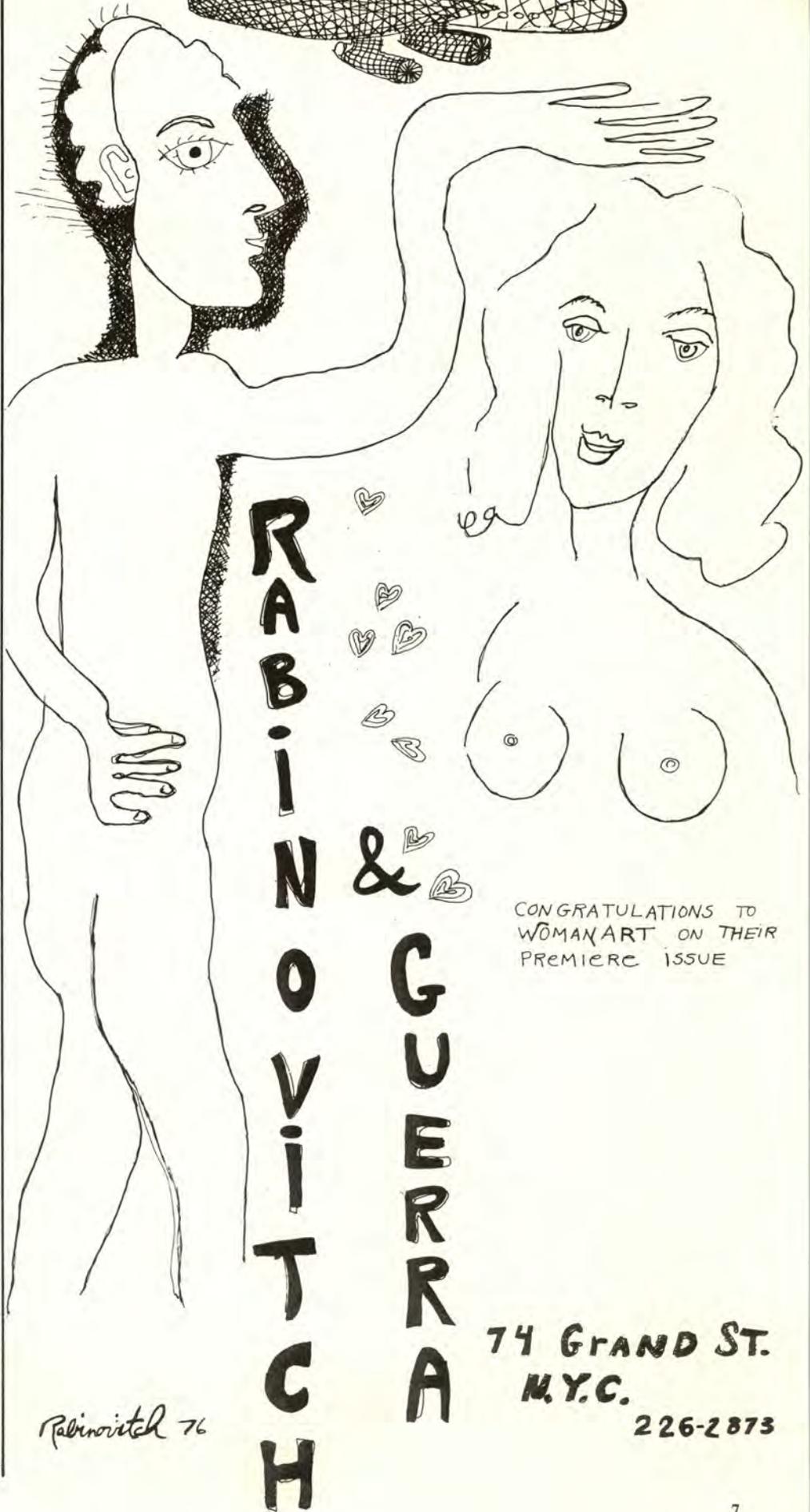
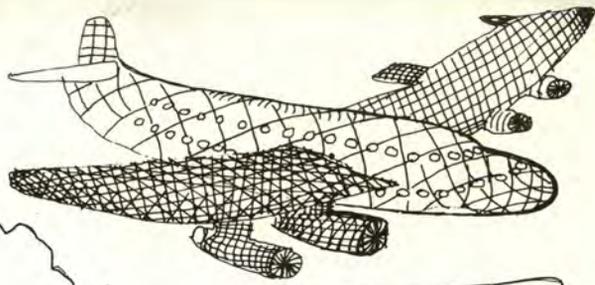
X¹² artists. Left to right: Carolyn Mazzello, Arline Lederman, Lois di Cosola, Silvianna Goldsmith, Vernita Nemeč, Inverna Lockpez, Iris Crump, Alida Walsh, Helene Gross, Doloris Holmes, Mary Ann Gillies. Missing: Doris O'Kane. Photo courtesy of the author.

Her films have been shown international-ly at the Graz Museum in Austria, the Museum of Modern Art in Paris, and the Cultural Center in New York. Alida Walsh has moved from sculpture into filmmaking and has shown her films internationally. She received a CAPS grant in 1974. Doloris Holmes has moved from creating environments into an interest in art as process. She has performed and presented her plays and films at the SoHo 20 and Second Story Spring Street Society galleries. In addition, she is the director of the White Mask Theater, a rehearsal and performance space for artists, dancers, playwrights. Inverna Lockpez recently had a show at Artists Space gallery. Her work has evolved into delicate pencil drawings made directly on the wall.

I found myself hesitating to contact the other 11 members of the 12. Since the show ended we've all gone in many directions and though we occasionally cross paths, the intensity of that experience I think still weighs heavily among us. I find it painful sometimes to meet someone again from my past. A certain awkwardness has emerged with the distance that has grown between us with the time passed, with the divergences of our lives since then, with our successes and failures. We were brought together by accident and shared an experience that took its toll or left its mark on us in different ways. Some remember it as a turning point, a beginning, and others as an ending. Some of us, I think, want to forget the experience, in part because it reminds us of a profound struggle, and others want to hold onto the dream that was engendered.

Personally, I feel that for the time being the need for open group shows limited to only female artists has diminished considerably in New York. Opportunities exist on all levels for women's art to be seen and there are enough of us who have had exposure, who have demanded that their work be taken seriously, that we can now risk being very selective and competitive. The important thing is to maintain the ground we have gained. We must be persistently conscious of the proportion of existing professional female artists to those who have opportunities for recognition and be sure that it matches the opportunities that male artists enjoy.

The so-called alternative structures we have created, such as co-op galleries, are no longer alternative structures. We have, by standing up for ourselves, created our place in the art world and must hold onto it until it feels so natural and is so secure that we can let go of that struggle and concentrate on doing our art. We have participated in a necessary stage which has allowed women to come into prominence in a basically male world. Let us now move on to merging art history and art herstory into an art past.



CONGRATULATIONS TO
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WHITNEY PROTESTS:

Where is Edmonia Lewis? Where is Henry O. Tanner?

by May Stevens

On January 3, 1976, 60 artists picketed the Whitney Museum of American Art to protest the scheduled exhibition of the John D. Rockefeller collection under the title *Three Centuries of American Art* as one of its major Bicentennial exhibitions. A letter signed by Benny Andrews (Black Emergency Cultural Coalition), Rudolf Baranik (Artists and Writers Protest), and Lucy Lippard (W.E.B. and Women's Slide Registry) had asked for a meeting with Thomas N. Armstrong, the museum's director, to discuss the strong objections felt by many artists. The meeting was held, views expressed and an impasse reached. Armstrong saw no reason to meet again. A second picket was

held on February 26 both at the Whitney and at Rockefeller Center. Artists Meeting for Cultural Change, sponsor of the two pickets, is now discussing counter shows and counter catalogs.

The artists object to the Whitney's use of a private collection as a major part of its Bicentennial celebration and to the ceding of control indicated by the acceptance of a packaged show that represents one woman (Susan MacDowell Eakins) and no blacks. Where are Edmonia Lewis and Henry O. Tanner? Where is Horace Pippin, Augusta Savage and Jacob Lawrence? Why are there no Peale sisters, no Cecelia Beaux, no Mary Cassatt, Georgia O'Keeffe, Romaine

Brooks or Florine Stettheimer in this survey of American art? The John D. Rockefeller collection perpetuates the stereotype of an all-white and an all-male American art. Many of those who marched on the picket line have worked hard over the past few years to bring to consciousness the excluded artists, both current and historical. The Whitney's plans continue a view that is neither American nor historical, nor, any longer, safe. The financial dilemma of museums does explain the wooing of wealthy patrons; it does not excuse inadequate responses to the disciplines of art history and museology. We need museum directors and curators with the courage and vision of Linda Nochlin and Ann Sutherland Harris who are ransacking Europe's provincial museums to put together a survey of women artists from 1550 to 1950 for a December 1976 opening at the Los Angeles County Museum.

Artists Meeting for Cultural Change is a large, loose, open coalition of marxists of many stripes including Art and Language people (many of whom write for and/or edit *The Fox*), feminists, anarchists and others. The differences are raging, but discontent with museums, galleries, and current art world practice provide common ground. Meetings are divided between plans for action, like the Whitney protest, and theoretical discussion.

May Stevens is a New York painter who is represented in the permanent collection of the Whitney Museum.



Artists picketing Whitney Museum. Both photos by Mary Ellen Andrews.

At a recent meeting, papers on feminism were read. Only women were allowed to respond for the first half-hour. The paper prepared by Ginny Reath and Elizabeth Hess proposed that the group examine its own practice and face the fact that many members have a sense of powerful male voices vying for dominance; that nearly all women and most men are excluded from the discussions. Someone said that men were the most damaged by sexist modes of behavior. Someone else asked why change could only be validated by emphasizing that men have a stake in that change.

Throughout the discussion, a young woman sat cross-legged on a chair, embroidering a denim jacket. An extra needle was stuck in her jersey in the timeless fashion of women. On the floor next to her lay a plastic bag full of bright thread. Her face under a mass of curls registered deep involvement in whatever was said; she smiled and nodded approval during the reading of the papers. When she spoke it was about the value of starting from the personal and evolving new forms based on the specific character of the group. When she said she was a writer, or at least she was writing something at the moment, that she had divorced her husband two weeks after joining the women's movement, that she had a seven-year-old son and that she loved a man who didn't love her, that she wanted to make coffee for him and that she was trying to put all these things together--the whole room laughed, was touched and applauded a show of courage and honesty rarely found in mixed male and female meetings.

The next evening I went to A.I.R. Gallery to hear Helen Harrison talk about *7 American Women: The Depression Decade*, an exhibition at Vassar curated by Harrison and Karal Ann Marling. Harrison spoke of the seven women as typical of the artists of the thirties in that they looked out at the world and were not content to record their inner world only. She quoted Elizabeth McCausland writing in 1937 on Elizabeth Olds whose lithograph of chorus girls and their bald-headed admirers is the show's fiercest image:

That the artist has appreciated not only the poetry, romance and beauty of these themes but also their dynamic social implications is indeed good news for art, ...Here is a person (the sex, one believes, is more incidental than esoteric critics have led us to think) looking outward at life and recording what she sees, with a fine sense of design and a simple, direct objectivity.

For me, and for many other women, the sex, unfortunately, is not yet incidental, but the looking outward is important.

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The American Memorial Picture

—A 'FEMININE' ART

by LaVerne Muto



A medium which American women folk artists made exclusively their own was the memorial picture. At no place and at no time before did women in art work at art in such great numbers as in the late eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century in the eastern and southern states of America in producing these pictures. The majority of these amateur artists were young girls learning to paint as one of the requirements of a genteel education. A typical portfolio of their works might include pencil sketches, watercolors and embroideries of landscapes, and biblical scenes or still lifes, but it was the memorial picture which the young women artists adopted as their own.

Private schools in the early nineteenth century taught, in addition to reading, writing, arithmetic, natural history and moral philosophy, "extras" such as fancy work, drawing, watercolor painting, and painting on glass and velvet. These extras were considered essential elements of a young lady's refined education. It is interesting to note that despite breaking her ties with England politically, America continued to emulate her mother country in other ways. In England in this same period it was *de rigueur* for a young lady to be accomplished in needlework and painting. Miss Sophia Wackles advertised these as several duties of instruction at her "Ladies Seminary" in Charles Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop*.

LaVerne Muto is an artist and a writer.

During the period in which memorial picture-making flourished, these "family mortuary pieces" hung on almost every parlor or bedroom wall. The conventional composition of this commemoration of the dead consisted basically of a mourning figure standing over a tombstone in a tree-filled landscape. The visual representation of mourners at the tombstone of the dead can be traced back into the history of art to scenes like those of women and children depicted at the grave on the Lekythoi Tomb of the fifth century B.C. in Greece.

The nineteenth century feeling towards death reflected in these paintings is that of a relatively realistic acceptance of death. Because of the high mortality rate of young children at this time, some interpreters feel that the memorials reflect an all-pervasive nineteenth century preoccupation with the thought of death.

American memorials were directly based on eighteenth century English and French prototypes. The iconographic models from these imported sources contain the standard elements of the composition. By 1800 the amount of individuality that finally came to be expressed as definitively American was accomplished by means of selecting and combining these conventional elements and adding a number of other motifs, all rendered in an essentially two-dimensional style.

The series of selected motifs which accounts for the individuality of the American memorial picture includes the

church, the withering or flowering oak tree, pine trees, villages, seas, ships, angels in the sky, flowers and garlands and occasionally birds. A balance is usually achieved between the placement of the church and the tree and monument. There appears to be a basic feeling for design and symmetry in all of these organizations. The various components of the representations are taken from a stock repertory, and symbolic meanings can be attached to them. In the culture of the period the interpretations most readily assigned to these symbols are the following: the willow identified with sadness, the church with faith and hope, the withering oak tree with transitory life, the house with the earthly home, the pine tree with everlasting life, the sea with tears, and the ship with departure.

The characters represented in the picture are female or male and either adult or child. There is no representation of old age and the person is idealized rather than individually characterized. Most often a woman appears alone. Sometimes there are pairs or groups of women, women and men, or women, men and children. A man never appears alone. The vestment worn is either classic or of the period. Men and boys always appear in black, while women appear in black, white, and light colors. Handkerchiefs are commonly carried in one hand or held in front of the face. The gesture of sorrow

A slightly different version of this article will appear in the summer '76 College Art Journal.



French prototype. Artist unknown. Watercolor on paper.



Washington Memoriam Embroidery Picture. Artist unknown. 24½x30".
Courtesy Sotheby Parke Bernet Inc., New York.

performed by the characters comes down from antiquity as a classic expression of mourning. The posture of grief is expressed most often by the mourner leaning one elbow on the monument, hand to face. Another typical pose, assumed mostly by men, is that of facing front, and looking straight out of the picture.

In the young ladies' academies the curriculum in art instruction was dedicated to copying from examples. Copying was the accepted method in many areas of learning in the nineteenth century. The average person was not encouraged to paint "from nature". Bits and pieces of former compositions were selectively combined to build new ones. The examples or patterns used by the schoolgirl artists followed two basic forms—stencils and engravings. The use of patterns resulted in a close integration between the technical process and the repetitive motifs of the mourning picture.

Various media were employed in the making of the memorial picture. Although in some years several media were being used simultaneously, one can detect a chronological development of the different media used. Needlework had been considered a desirable accomplishment for young ladies from the earliest days of this country. It is difficult to date the earliest memorial embroidery pictures in America but the vogue appears to occur toward the end of the eighteenth century. Though needlework persisted in the nineteenth century, painting in watercolor became increasingly fashionable. For a while embroidery and painting on silk were often combined. The scenes were done in needlework with the sky and face often painted in watercolor. The increasing popularity of watercolor painting was due largely to the convenience of working with the newly developed watercolors in solid form. These solid watercolors in small boxes contained an increase in the range of colors and were easier to use than the hand ground pigments that needed to be mixed with water or the

liquid colors in bottles that were previously available.

Eventually watercolor painting began to replace needlework, but needlework remained the inspiration for the painter who continued to imitate embroidery stitches with short precise brushstrokes. Many watercolor paintings also simulated needlework by a roughened surface of the paper accomplished by a technique of pricking holes with a pin. The schoolgirl watercolorist painted in a direct manner. She used a stencil or engraving to outline her design and then filled it in with bold colors in even washes. In the transitional period when the young ladies used the watercolor medium on silk the favored size of the memorial painting was, as when done in needlework, approximately 19"x23". However, as more and more memorials were painted on paper, the sizes varied from those done as small as 6"x10" to those as large as 22"x29".

There were several factors that played a part in the demise of the mourning picture's popularity as a schoolgirl accomplishment. By the end of the 1830's the private academies that survived

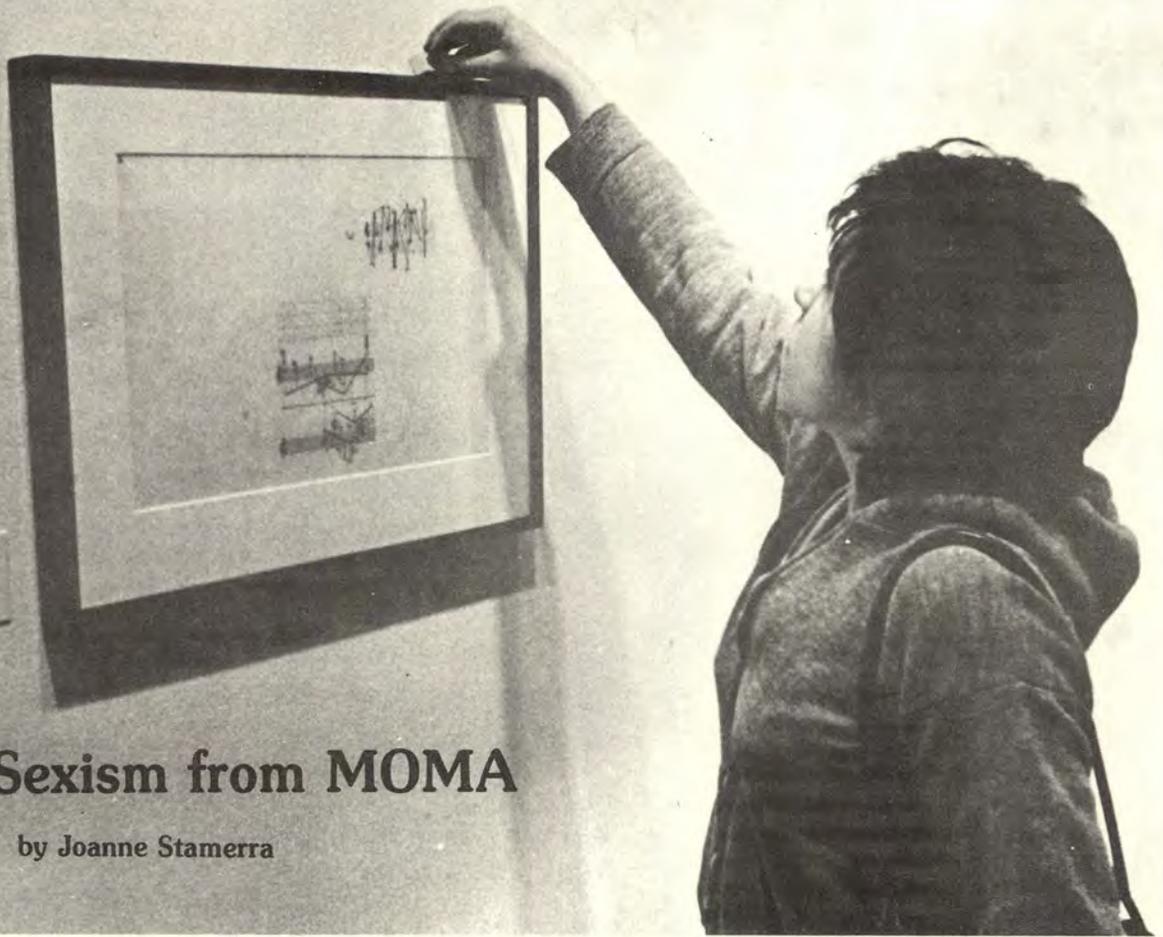
gradually became town supported as the general population began to take more interest in the education of their children and supported greater school taxation. Many of the private schools formed the nucleus of the high school movement. Simultaneously with the birth of the public school system the products of photography and lithography provided inexpensive substitutes for the earlier handiwork. Many versions of the conventional mourning scene were published by several lithography firms. Two of the most popular firms issuing these inexpensive prints were Currier & Ives and D.W. Kellogg & Co.. Sometimes these lithographs were used as a design source by a young lady who continued to paint her own memorial. Eventually they were purchased merely to replace the hand-worked memorial completely. The curriculum in the public schools responded to this shift to mechanical processes and the art of "free expression" declined and died.

When one examines the actual person who is mourned, it begins to appear that it was the Romantic movement in literature with its extravagances of feelings and utterances—so foreign to our present modes of thought and expression—that was the greatest inspiration to the young American schoolgirl in adopting the memorial picture. George Washington, Goethe's Werther (from *The Suffering of Young Werther*), and other sentimental subjects inspired many memorials.

Perhaps the most significant reason for the crumbling of the tradition of the mourning picture was the ending of the Romantic movement itself. Romanticism in literature reached its peak during the early years of the nineteenth century, and the 1830's and the death of Byron saw a reaction set in. As so much of the sensibility of schoolgirl art seems clearly related to this movement, it inevitably followed that the memorial picture's favor drew to a close.



Rebecca Gookin, *Sacred to the Memory of Richard Gookin*, 1826. Watercolor. 20x14½".
Courtesy Kennedy Galleries, Inc., New York.



Erasing Sexism from MOMA

by Joanne Stamerra

Joanne Stamerra tops work in MOMA's Drawing Now with eraser stamped "Erase sexism from MOMA" during protest. Photo: Jan Van Raay.

I always read *The SoHo Weekly News* and *The Village Voice* in the toilet, and in a particular January issue I noticed a review of "The Drawing Now" show at MOMA and the "20th Century American Drawing" show at the Guggenheim. Since the newspapers only come out once a week I was able to read the articles more than once. It was probably the second time I went through the newspaper that I noticed no women were mentioned in either show. Shit, and shit upon. I

thought we had decided to stop playing those silly male sexist, elitist, Bicentennial games. And Bicentennial is another thing—with all these American people doing cultural American things, they are bound to end up in a museum or two and come out thinking that all "draw"ers are men, and that the Georgia on the label was misspelled and should have been George. Well as a woman artist, I didn't want America thinking this. There are women artists and their work should be

represented. There is a Judith, and a Vivian, and a Mary Beth and a Blythe and a Laurace and an Agnes and more, and their work should be presented in these important shows.

While I was getting hot and bothered, Nancy Spero was organizing the MOMA and Guggenheim Ad Hoc Protest Committee, composed of women artists also concerned with this issue. At a strategy meeting a unanimous vote was passed, calling for demonstrations outside the two museums. On February 27 and the following Thursday, a group of about 15 women artists and two male artists carried signs and shouted out our objections. Grace Glueck of *The New York Times* and Mary Alice Williams of NBC/TV news covered the demonstrations.

While the demonstrators were picketing, I paid the admission fee to MOMA, and with the photographer Jan Van Raay documenting my actions, I proceeded to place pink erasers stamped "erase sexism from MOMA" throughout the museum. Joanne Stamerra erasing sexism from MOMA erasing Rauschenberg erasing DeKooning.

In our press release, handed to passers-by outside the museum and mailed to museum trustees, our objections were stated:



Artists picketing in front of museum. Photo: Mary Ellen Andrews.

Joanne Stamerra is an artist active in the women's movement and is currently working on a photographic essay on New York architecture.

1. *Blatant sexism in overlooking both black and white women artists.*
2. *Insensitivity in selecting from a limited number of powerful galleries.*
3. *By billing these exhibitions "Drawing Now" and "20th Century American Drawing", which represent work well established during the sixties and misrepresent drawing now, these museums are guilty of overlooking the community of artists and of playing an obsolete game of elitism.*

We demand that:

1. *We be given concrete assurances of the planning and execution of a second "Drawing Now" exhibition and a second "20th Century American Drawing" exhibition that will include 50% women and be responsive to the art community as a whole.*
2. *The title for the second drawing show be: Drawings We Have Not Seen".*
3. *These two museums meet with us to discuss the above issues and plans.*

As quoted by Grace Glueck in *The Times*, Bernice Rose, curator of drawings and organizer of the show said, "When I do an art exhibition I can't plan it on the basis of quotas, and I can't consider work on the basis of whether it was done by a man or a woman. I just have to look at the work as work."

But Bernice, face facts and don't make excuses for your selection. You obviously hadn't looked hard enough if you only came up with five women artists out of 46. If you were looking for a particular style of work, I am sure that half of your selections could have been by women artists doing that sort of work, of equal quality and originality. Your main problem, Ms. Rose, may arise from the fact that your selection of drawings came from galleries such as Castelli and Marlborough which present work primarily by male artists. If one gallery dealer shows you only the blue drawings how are you going to know about the pink drawings? It is your responsibility as a curator to find other galleries which do show and support women artists, and to look at women's art in the studios. There is a tremendous amount of art work contributed by women which cannot be overlooked. As women it is our responsibility to make museums and powerful galleries aware of our work, whether it is drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, performance or any other kind of art.



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Pat Adams

by April Kingsley

Immersing oneself in one of Pat Adams' paintings is a richly complex optical, tactile, and kinesthetic experience. She is a miniaturist at heart, condensing vast territories into microcosms for you to explore. She gives you parts, rarely whole entities, and you must fill them out imaginatively in all dimensions. You weigh densities and readjust focus from area to area while your eye is repeatedly being led out of the field only to be caught again by some exquisite detail you'd failed to notice before and brought back inside. The artist said it very well herself some years ago when she wrote, "One stares into these paintings as into a face one loves, watching close up intently details at unaccustomed range, so close as to nearly mix, merge, and beyond the intimacy to wonder how it holds, by what one is held."

Pat Adams has been painting for forty years; she started when she was eight years old. After her B.A. at Berkeley she took up residence in Florence for a few years, and by 1956 she'd been in New York long enough to have her first one-person exhibition at the Zabriskie Gallery, where she's been showing regularly ever since. She's had two marriages, raised two children, and has held down a full-time teaching job at Bennington in Vermont where she's been living since 1964. In all her many years of active involvement as a painter, she's never been part of a movement or group, never received much critical attention, and has never been at the forefront of the art scene. Why? Her work has evolved slowly with no great leaps or major

Microcosms for Contemplating the Universe



Pat Adams, *Sun and Beginnings*, 1960. 4x10". Destroyed.

changes for critics to grab onto. She's always been sort of an outsider, it's true, and she's had a lot of non-art concerns draining her energies. But I think the basic reason is the intense intimacy of her painting style. Paul Klee and Mark Tobey, each in his different way, shared her problem. One might, of course, blame the situation on the plight of the "feminine style" (if there is such a definable thing) being invisible to eyes trained in looking at male art and therefore going unappreciated. I don't, though, see it that way.

Though her paintings are often small, opulently, obviously beautiful, and perfectly legible, they are difficult. They resist intellectual comprehension and demand instead a physical and emotional involvement on the part of the viewer. Her motifs imply specificity but are actually coded formal messages that successfully elude deciphering. A device in the Lindesfarne Gospels or an Islamic tile may have triggered her mind originally, but by the time she's distilled it and transformed it into her own property

we can no longer recognize it. We can only sense it allusively, the way you sense a woman's been in the room after she's gone by the faint scent of her perfume left lingering in the air.

Her influences have been many and varied, from nature to the Book of Kells--wave patterns in sand, splatters of rain drops on a dry surface, plain stones and variegated-color rocks, crystals, milk-weed seeds, connective tissue, rainbows, the edge of the sea on a moonlit night, sand dunes, constellations of myriad stars. She has studied pre-historic rock engravings, Irish illuminated manuscripts, Persian miniatures, architecture and scripts, and Jackson Pollock for ideas about line. She may find inspiration for the all-over, jewelled spotting of her surface in Seurat as much as in Flemish painting (Bosch and Breughel in particular), but her sumptuous color seems to be equally at home in the worlds of Rothko, Turner, Renoir and mid-sixties Olitski. Recent emphasis on geometry can be traced to her interest in Burgoyne Diller, Stuart Davis and Suprematism in the same generalized way that the halo-effects in her early work can be attributed to her involvement with Arthur Dove's paintings.

Intention's Eye of 1956 is fairly typical of her early mid-fifties style. In it, soft globules of color shuffle across the canvas enveloped in thick atmospheric haze. The forms in the early work remind one of lights in a heavy fog, cellular tissue, or micro-organisms viewed through a microscope. Weights and transparencies were subtly adjusted for maximum ambiguity. As the fifties progressed, her edges hardened and the backgrounds, or the interstices between forms, began to be



Pat Adams, *Surface to Occupy*, 1966. Gouache, 8 3/8x17".

April Kingsley has a weekly column in the SoHo Weekly News and teaches art history at the School of Visual Arts.

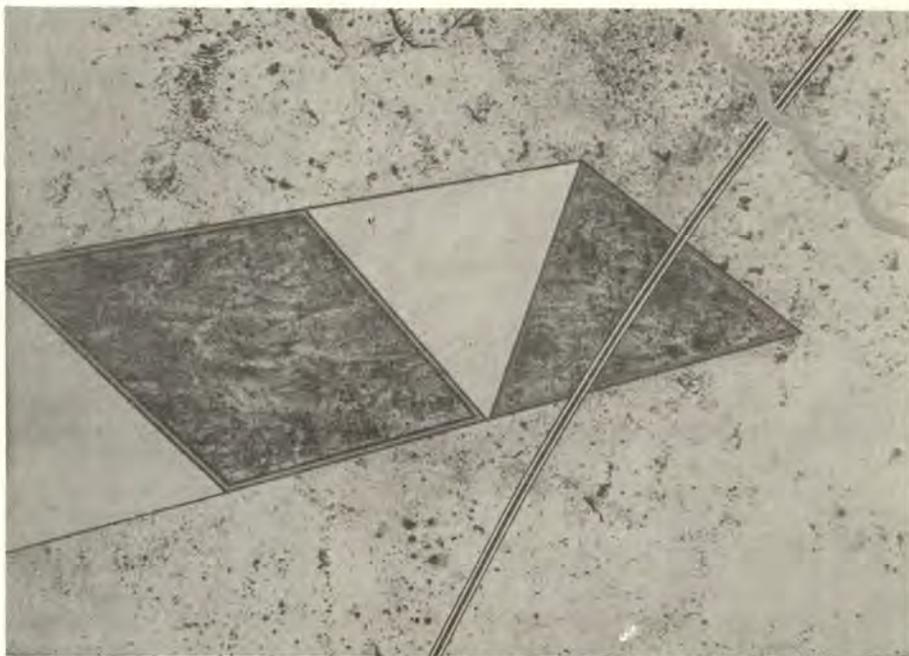
more gesturally articulated. This created more of an all-over situation which was usually halted short of at least one side by an edge of some sort, setting as a plane. (Jules Olitski's corners are a somewhat similar device.)

During the early sixties in paintings like *Sun and Beginnings* (1960), a few globular units were selected for enlargement and emphasis. The feeling is that we're looking at the same forms as before but under a higher-power microscope. The linear activity of the interstices became stronger in direction and rhythmic flow, cutting now completely across the field. A few years later a single furry circular form might predominate. She developed a way of working with monoprinting techniques to achieve greater distance from the image. By 1965 the softness of these watery-looking surfaces began to be decisively cut by the sharp outlines of forms that resembled geodes seen in section. Only parts of a section, though, for by now we seem to have zoomed in so closely to the subject/object that we nearly lose sight of its *gestalt*. We have begun to have to complete the shapes in our minds' eyes.

In the late sixties the object is gone. Lines pass through, implying they are the edges of things, but neither color nor texture gives a clue to what those things might be. Sometimes scalloping, arches, or uprights create the impression that the inspiration was architectural; sometimes the patterns of the various textures imply something organic, but we cannot be sure. *Surface to Occupy* (1966), as the title suggests, is a place for us to fill with ideas of our own--the edge of the earth as seen from the moon, a tree trunk in section, fields cut by a two-lane highway, the edge of the sea, perhaps.

At this point Adams had a wide range of techniques at her disposal for getting pigment down automatically, yet with a clear precise look to it. She utilizes many different media--acrylic, gouache, watercolor, pencil, ball-point pen--and layers them in a given work. She began to manipulate focus more and more deliberately so that the eye had to adjust, as if to real distances, when crossing boundaries between areas. The bands comprising those crossover points began to take on the character of planes or objects with their own focus or location in space.

Linear activity in the early seventies was either ornamental, calligraphic, geometric, or a combination. It was read against a dense, amorphous ground. Even when there were strong vertical accents to give a painting a sense of orientation to the wall, there was still a dizzying, gyroscopic effect. To get an idea of what I mean, think of spinning around in place somewhere inside the Alhambra while staring at a single decorative floor tile or at a spot where a multi-lobed (scalloped) archway cuts out an area of mosaiced wall behind it or the pierced stonework of the dome above.



Pat Adams, *Rose*, 1976. Gouache and mixed media. 14x15 1/4".

Pat Adams' working method is accretive. She will work on 20 or more small paintings on paper over a period of one or two years. Starting perhaps with a few scribbles or geometric doodlings, a few blots or washes of watered-down acrylic, rubbings or a monoprint-type of non-handmade looking pictorial element, she explores what she's got, picking out implied geometries, outlining planes, adding layers of color to cover some areas and stress others. She seems to work from all sides with a peripheral vision that scatters or spins out from the center. She'll echo a geometric shape in a calligraphic facsimile, then perhaps, echo it again softly in a vague, cloudy passage in the colored ground. In *Sweet Lowering* (1976), for example, one side of the triangular unit moving in from (or off and out of) the left is paralleled by the strongest linear element in the picture, a multiple-stripe band running straight across the picture from lower left to upper

middle right. Below its juncture with the left edge, three kinds of lines spring forth. A blue-edged wavy white line arcs like a stretched spring all the way to the top edge. It passes beneath a taut yellow line moving right, and a supple bit of looped calligraphy in red and white heading in the same direction. But it passes over the strong diagonal, pushing it back in space. All this happens on a warm white surface speckled unevenly with blottings of red, blue and brown that looks like an aerial view of sparse desert topography.

Adams usually incorporates the ground itself, or a color or texture similar to the ground within her bands, thereby canceling their absolute readings as figure on ground. The device parallels figure-ground alternations in oriental rugs and decoration. She tends to link most of her forms to an edge, as if for support, but also to indicate their theoretical extension outside the limits of the picture in the Neo-plastic manner. A marvellous natural colorist, she establishes a strong hue to hold the field together as a plane and then plays brilliantly colored lines or incident against it to make it vibrate optically. Though a few of her new paintings have open, whitish or pale grounds, most of her work is still characterized by rich, densely-packed surfaces that seem worked up in many layers. *For the Moment* is the brightest-colored new painting, with its saturated turquoise ground contrasting with the warm dark brown and blue blobs in the lower half. (This particular painting is unusual in the context of the rest of the new work because it contains these large furry-edged forms reminiscent of earlier work.) The device used here, of swinging the outermost band of a right-angle unit off to become an autonomous line going its own way, is a recurrent one in many of the new paintings.



Pat Adams, *Some Comes Later*, 1975. Gouache, 18 5/8x15 3/4". All photos courtesy Zabriskie Gallery.

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SoHo 20, a New York women artists' cooperative gallery, opened in October 1973 with two one-artist shows by Sylvia Sleigh and Maureen Connor. Though the gallery since then has had arguably some of the best shows in SoHo, it remains relatively obscure, a name but not a place to the media and most gallery go-ers.

As a reviewer for *Arts Magazine*, I have written often about the exhibitions at the gallery since its inception, and have gotten to know many of the members. The women, currently 21 in number, are warm and supportive, turning out in full force for each other's openings, and transmit a firm sense of unity, despite the wide diversity of their work.

Two of the members, Mary Ann Gillies and Joan Glueckman, are responsible for SoHo 20's formation. They had met at meetings of Women Artists in Revolution, at which they also met Agnes Denes, who in August of 1972 told them of the plans for the soon-to-open A.I.R. co-op gallery. Denes suggested formation of another co-op, citing "much need for women's galleries", and also suggested they maintain a loose structure for flexibility. In March, 1973, Glueckman, Gillies, and Marilyn Raymond, a busi-

nesswoman and friend of Glueckman's, got together to form the new gallery. They chose the co-op structure, new at that time, as they did not have the financial means for any other structure, and it afforded the opportunity for the women to achieve something for themselves and to spread knowledge and information to other women. Raymond was given the business end, while the other two women were responsible for gathering the art. She relieved the artists of financial and practical tasks, by finding the gallery space, arranging for electricians, etc..

Meanwhile, Glueckman and Gillies, working on the feminist theory that women are able to fend for themselves without becoming "victims of commercial galleries like men", were searching for women artists to join them. Denes gave them names of likely prospects. In May-June they advertised in *The Village Voice* for women who were "financially able and had time" to join the "feminist co-op gallery." In addition, the two artists searched through the Women's Slide Registry. By July, 1973, Sylvia Sleigh, May Stevens, Marge Helenchild, Rachel Rolon de Clet, Maureen Connor, Lucy Sallick, and Rosalind Shaffer had

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joined, and the search for a suitable loft space began. Halina Rusak, Marion Ranyak, Elena Borstein, Barbara Coleman, Eileen Spikol, Sharon Wybrants, Suzanne Weisberg, Morgan Sanders, and Eunice Golden joined, and formed the gallery's initial membership. Cynthia Mailman and Tania joined during the first season; Shirley Gorelick, Kate Resek, and Susan Hoeltzel joined in 1974. Vernita Nemeck, Carol Peck, Diane Churchill, and Noreen Bumby joined at the beginning of the current season. Of these women, Sleigh, Stevens, Helenchild, Weisberg, Coleman, and Tania have since left the gallery. Raymond remained "president" of the co-op until 1974.

The criterion for membership was and

Sylvia Sleigh, *SoHo 20 Gallery, 1974*. Oil on canvas, diptych, each 72x96". Left panel: standing, left to right: Rachel Rolon de Clet, Halina Rusak, Mary Ann Gillies, Suzanne Weisberg. Seated: Marilyn Raymond, Barbara Coleman, Eileen Spikol, Sharon Wybrants, Elena Borstein, Joan Glueckman.



20

Within this women's co-op gallery
 thrive in today's art system...

ell

is quality work. The initial core group chose the new work, and as they joined, the newer members became part of the selection process. In order to show enough of the artists in a season, two solo shows at a time became the exhibition format. There are now no directors or leaders; committees execute the various tasks. Slides of other artists are viewed continuously during the season. A studio committee visits promising applicants and chooses new members for the group.

The committee looks for work that would add to the diversity of the group, in addition to quality. Aesthetically, the group is wide-ranging, with a common denominator in an emphasis of the

objective, i.e., an intensification of the qualities of the particular objects the artists produce. One has the impression that the artists work very hard at the crafts of making paintings and sculptures; they command a strong physical presence.

The work can be divided into three broad categories: painting, sculpture, and work in various media displayed in the formats of painting and sculpture. Ten of the 12 painters are involved in representational images. Whether painting figures, places, or objects, they are concerned with the content of their images, and strive as hard for the descriptive/narrative aspects of the images as for the formal aspects.

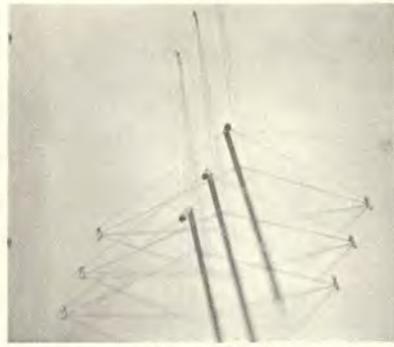
Many of the subject images are based on transformations of the observed. Elena Borstein's paintings isolate portions of Mediterranean structures and spaces; she keeps their feel but alters their appearance to increase the expressiveness (of a particular aspect) of the scene. Cynthia Mailman's landscapes, seen through car windows, are comprised of flat areas of color in which the descriptiveness is provided by the color and the silhouette outline of their shapes. The space and the mood of the sites are

heightened by the views in the automobile mirrors, generally included in the compositions, that reflect the scene behind the point of view of the unseen onlooker. Present and passed are combined. Morgan Sanders combines painting and photo-collage to create portraits of old buildings on Manhattan's Upper West Side. One sees a combination of details large and small, and though lacking an overall view, receives an almost impressionistic report of the ambience and era of each particular building. Susan Hoeltzel isolates small, everyday objects on canvases with pale gray-brown washes. Her subjects are the only sites of intense color and activity in each work. They appear singly, or, if combined in one composition, are compartmentalized and separated. The objects grow in intensity and three-dimensionality through her treatment, which includes writing, notes referring to the painting or to her environment at the time of the painting. Lucy Sallick's approach to her still lifes also results in their intensification. She places her colorful studio objects on white floors: no horizon line and no other colors compete for attention. Her approach also forces our attention on to

Right panel: top row: Sylvia Sleigh, Maureen Connor, Marge Helenchild, Lucy Sallick, May Stevens. Bottom row: Eunice Golden, Cynthia Mailman, Rosalind Shaffer, Marion Ranyak. Founding member Sleigh first displayed this painting at her inaugural exhibition on joining A.I.R. Gallery in 1974. Courtesy A.I.R. Gallery.



Elena Borstein



Noreen Bumby



Maureen Connor



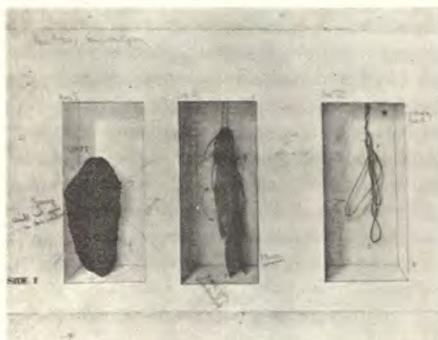
Diane Churchill



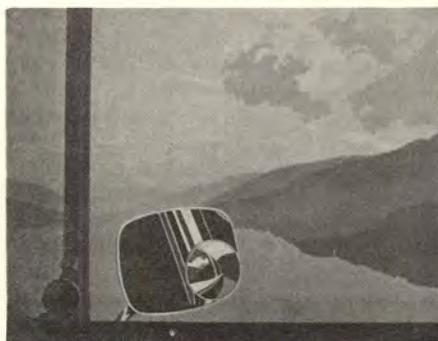
Joan Glueckman



Eunice Golden



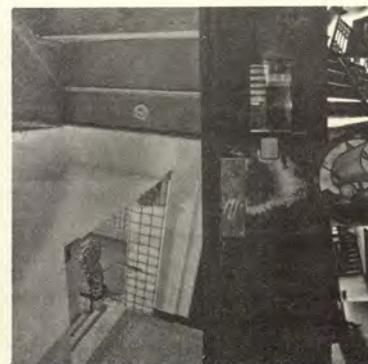
Susan Hoeltzel



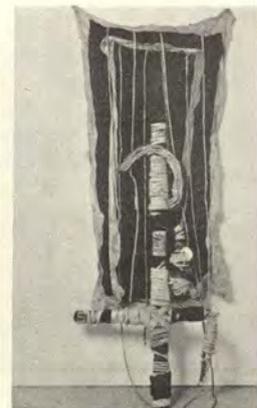
Cynthia Mailman



Kate Resek



Morgan Sanders



Eileen Spikol

the compositions of the sketches and watercolors that are parts of the larger still life compositions. We see two aspects of the art and artist at once, and see subject matter serve doubly as object.

Eunice Golden, Shirley Gorelick, and Sharon Wybrants create figurative paintings that zero in on their subjects through framing and color. Golden paints only the lower torso of her male subjects, focusing on the genitals, her subject for many years. Gorelick's larger-than-life portraits tell little about the subjects, but much about composing and painting the figure. Wybrants' analytical use of intense color and expressionistic use of detail adds an almost fierce dynamism to her subjects.

Two of the realist painters use their recognizable images to create fantastic scenes. Rachel Rolon de Clet places nudes against backgrounds that are amalgams of thoughts, time, and space, creating scenes of inchoate remembrances. Halina Rusak's paintings border on the abstract. Her patterns combine to form what would be called flowers, land, sun/moon, but are none that could have been observed. The remaining two painters show abstract compositions. Diane Churchill's canvases are shaped like an Earth flattened at the poles. Her rectangular paintings contain the same shape. The compositions experiment with stripings, shadings, color, and texture. Kate Resek's canvases of crushed chalk and acrylic stain are fields of gestures and markings combined with irregular grids that compete for dominance. Rosalind Shaffer's work

straddles painting and sculpture. It consists of standing wooden cut-outs of groups of figures, conceived and painted flatly, like paintings. A large painting serves as backdrop for the scene created by the figures.

The six sculptors are a widely divergent group. Noreen Bumby's sculptures feature groupings of monofilaments, thin, almost transparent threads. In her debut show at the gallery, she created a single large sculpture of the filaments that occupied the entire space, and transformed it with new spaces and shadows created by the threads. Maureen Connor's sculptures, of netting and ribbons bunched and suspended high overhead near the walls, are about the drawings on the walls created by the shadows of the elements. The sculptures are the means. Mary Ann Gillies' work combines fiber with welded metal rods (not always seen), and take the form of wall hangings as well as of free-standing pieces. The fibers are often connected using such "feminine" methods as knitting, crocheting, and knotting. Vernita Nemeč also uses materials and methods traditionally classed as those belonging to women. Her sculptures are of sewn and stuffed pieces of satin, tafetta, and lace: Whether combined into hanging landscape compositions, or combined into abstract wall pieces, the works transcend the frilly and feminine connotations of the materials, which remain lush and expressive. Marion Ranyak's cement sandcastings are reliefs formed by the impressions of various



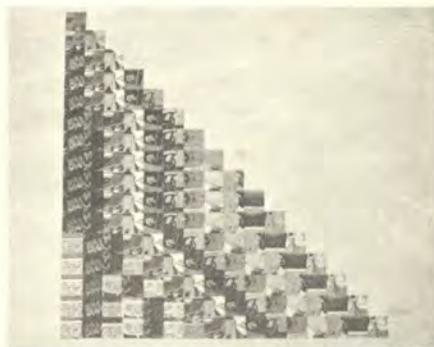
Mary Ann Gillies



Shirley Gorelick



Vernita Nemeč



Carol Peck

objects, and are hung on the wall, like sculptural paintings. Eileen Spikol's mixed media sculptures, including both wall and leaning pieces, are like transformed anthropological finds. The casts of man- and ape-like faces, with other rough, pseudo-artifacts create the look of unearthed relics.

The remaining two members, Joan Glueckman and Carol Peck, create neither paintings nor sculpture, but different kinds of work presented as framed and hung on the walls. Glueckman's needlepoint compositions extend for us the possibilities of the medium beyond the homey and the cute; she displays a mastery of texture and color achieved through the manipulation of the stitches. Peck makes color copier reproductions of small pieces of printed matter, most often comic strips, and combines the square-shaped originals and copies in gridded compositions. She uses color, image, and repetition to turn the component "real" images into abstract totals.

I have saved the description of the women of SoHo 20 for last. Prior to writing this piece I distributed a questionnaire to the members of the gallery in order to get a direct, personal relation of why they had joined and where they had come from. The answers were in some ways unexpected, and in others, demonstrative of the value of a cooperative gallery in general as well as of SoHo 20. Before joining the gallery, the member artists reported they ranged in status from

"no shows and a closet full of paintings" to having 20 years of exhibitions behind them. The norm was a history of less than 10 years of exhibitions in group shows outside of New York City. In response to the question, "Why did you join SoHo 20?" several women mentioned their need to escape their isolated circumstances. One reported she had been "discouraged and isolated in the suburbs with three little kids" while another suburbanite felt "isolation from the mainstream" of the art world (though she already belonged to a women's co-op and had been painting for 20 years). All felt SoHo 20 was an opportunity to become part of the art world and to simultaneously gain the support of the group of women. A number of artists expressed dissatisfaction with commercial galleries. An artist who had previously been represented by four commercial galleries found most of them "stultifying and unreliable", while another artist did not want to show her slides to these galleries. Of course, there were many women who joined simply because the opportunity afforded itself, but most preferred the women's co-op structure.

When questioned about the advantages and disadvantages of membership in a women's co-op, most of the artists complained of the amounts of time and money required of them, the difficulties of group decision-making, and the lack of sales and publicity representation. The advantages described, however, seemed to

continued on page 30



Marion Ranyak



Rachel Rolon de Clet



Halina Rusak



Lucy Sallick



Rosalind Shaffer



Sharon Wybrants



Pablo Picasso, *Gertrude Stein*, 1906. Oil on canvas, 39¼x32". Courtesy The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Gertrude Stein, 1946.

Gertrude Stein

and the Making of Modern Art

by Corinne Robins

"Each of us in our own way are bound to express what the world in which we are living is doing," she said. And Gertrude Stein, unlike Proust and Joyce, occupies two of our worlds, the world of plastic arts and the world of writing. I remember reading the *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, 20 years ago now, and gobbling up Stein's wonderful fairytale of when the century was young and 20th century giants Picasso, Matisse and Gris all had their beginnings. The *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* is a series of stories, anecdotes about artists and writers in Paris with Gertrude Stein at the center and Gertrude telling all about it in the voice of Alice. A cat can look at a king and Alice via Gertrude saw all the art kings and sympathized with their mistresses and wives who were a great deal less than queens in that time and place. The voice is that of a tough-minded lady who can characterize via idiosyncrasies. The Paris art world of the thirties didn't like Gertrude Stein's way of discussing their youth and didn't like the book. It substituted her myth for theirs, tarnishing godheads in the process. Matisse and a number of other French painters made a move toward suing Stein for her libelous

Corinne Robins is an art critic and a fiction writer who has been interested in Gertrude Stein for many years.

portraits of them. There were many good writers also, some of them Stein's ex-friends, who didn't like it either. After all, she called Hemingway "yellow", and described Pound as "a village explainer." Her point of view was omnipresent. With Alice as narrator, Gertrude could and did objectively present herself as her own heroine. For me, the book was first an introduction to Gertrude Stein's work, and, second, a glittering tale that wove together all the paintings that hung on the third floor of the Museum of Modern Art. The Heroic age of cubism, Rousseau's *Sleeping Gypsy*, *Les Demoiselles D'Avignon* and Matisse's *Music Lesson* could never afterwards become the province of art scholars, could never go dry. It wasn't, though, until four years ago that we--everybody--saw part of Gertrude Stein's own personal collection resurrected in the show at New York's Museum of Modern Art. And of course she would have liked that--because she always wanted to be historical. And here again, Gertrude Stein was spanning her two worlds.

"You can be a museum or you can be modern, but you can't be both," Stein once told a former Modern Museum director. John Hightower quotes this remark in his foreword to the catalog that accompanied the Stein show, as if the fact

of the show had finally proved Gertrude wrong. The fact of the show and the paintings themselves rather bear witness to the truth of Stein's remark. Gertrude Stein and her artists have long ceased to be modern. They are classics. "And what is the characteristic quality of a classic," she once asked, and answered, "The quality of a classic is that it is beautiful. Those who are creating the modern composition authentically are naturally only of importance when they are dead," she wrote, "because by that time the modern composition having become past is classified and the description of it is classical." And now her artists are classics, Gertrude Stein herself is historical and the classification of her own works will begin.

If you can learn about art outside of looking at it--in the afterwards, thinking and talking and reading about it, Gertrude Stein is one of the few writers I have ever found who can be trusted to tell you more than just the history of when a painting was made and bought. "Everybody has to like something..someone is almost sure to really like something outside of their real occupation..The only thing funnily enough that I never get tired of doing is looking at pictures," she begins a lecture entitled "Pictures" that she gave on a tour to America after the

success of the *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. Stein was 58 years old with a lifetime of buying and looking at art behind her when she began talking about art. Before this, she had used artists as subject matter for her own kind of writing, and we have her portraits of Matisse, Gris, and Picasso from this period. The last 15 years of her life, however, she was concerned with the problem of narration, of telling about things rather than presenting or creating them. And it is during this period she produces *Lectures in America, Narration, What are Master-pieces, Picasso, and Paris, France*--her writings about art and literature. At long last, Gertrude Stein has an American audience and, more important, an American publisher. She no longer has to sell off a painting to underwrite the cost of publishing her books. The American audience wants to hear about her, wants to hear about art. Gertrude Stein writes out her lectures and reads them "because talking has nothing to do with creation." Each lecture is an essay, meditated upon and thought about before it is written and every one of them is a record of Stein's thinking, of her discoveries arrived at by beginning at the beginning and beginning again with each new idea.

She doesn't know why looking at pictures holds her attention, but it is something she likes to do. Her criteria: "Anything once it is made has its own existence and it is because of that that anything holds somebody's attention. The question always is about that anything, how much vitality has it and do you like to look at it." This stance sweeps away a lot, leaves the viewer and the picture in a one-to-one relationship which Stein is careful to maintain, bringing in art history--her own experience with looking at pictures and especially 19th century French painting--when she sees correspondences and differences that highlight the problems of her own painters. And they were hers in the sense that she maintained the triple role of collector, friend and fellow-artist with many of them over a 20 year period. "I naturally did not talk to painters about what they painted in their oil paintings," she explains, "but I told about how every picture affected me. And in a way that is what I can say." It is also the first and the last thing any person looking (including critics and fellow-artists) must deal with. A fashionable style of art criticism during the 1960's was to disguise one's immediate and personal reactions under the guise of describing what the artist was doing on the canvas, the size of his stretcher bars, etc.. Criticism of intention, of performance via comparison, interpretations omitting the lament of the person seeing the work, led to a curious kind of pseudo-art language remote from Stein's simple-seeming repetitions which never lose sight either of the subject or of the person doing the looking. Gertrude Stein



Marie Laurencin, *Group of Artists*, 1908. Oil on canvas, 24¼x31¼. Photo courtesy of The Baltimore Museum of Art. Gertrude Stein is seated at center.

always keeps a careful check on herself when dealing with abstractions about paintings, abstractions which in many cases add up to her own personal discoveries. Listen: "A painter's literary idea always consists not in the action but in the distortion of the form. That could never be a writer's literary idea. Then a painter's idea of action always has to do with something moving rather than the center of the picture. This is just the opposite of the writer's idea, everything else can be quiet except the central thing which has to move. All this is very important," she concludes, "it is important not for the painter or for the writer but for those who like to look at paintings and who like to know what an oil painting is and who like to know what bothers them in what an oil painting is." Here, from the lecture "Pictures", Stein is

talking of herself as an audience to painting to her young college student audience. She is speaking about knowing and appreciating a work. And she is far too canny to presume to tell other writers and painters how to go about the job of making their art.

In 1938, four years later, she publishes her book on Picasso, which places the artist and the cubist movement squarely in relation to the outside world. There were three reasons for the making of cubism, she explains. "First. The composition, because the way of living had changed the composition of living had extended and each thing was as important as any other thing. Secondly, the faith in what the eyes were seeing, that is to say the belief in the reality of science, commenced to diminish. To be sure science has discovered many things, she would continue to discover things, but the principle of all this was completely understood, the joy of discovery was almost over." Finally: "Thirdly, the framing of life, the need that a picture exist in its frame, remain in its frame, was over. A picture remaining in its frame was a thing that always had existed and now pictures commenced to want to leave their frames and this also created the necessity for cubism." Gertrude Stein here is approaching art from a philosophical stance, searching for underlying causes. In this approach, she was almost unique, and art writers (including myself, Barbara Rose in her distinguished essay "ABC Art" and many others) have been living off her work ever since. Stein, the genius of the pertinent generalization, has now become the mother of contemporary art criticism as well as the grandmother of 20th century art.



Jo Davidson, *Gertrude Stein*, 1920, cast in 1954. Bronze, 31¼" h. Courtesy The Whitney Museum of American Art.

(Part II of this article will appear in the second issue of *womanart*, October, 1976.)

NOTES IN THE FIRST PERSON...



LAWRENCE ALLOWAY traces his involvement with women's art through his writings.

I seem to have felt less resistance to the Feminist Movement than, say, Max Kozloff and to have found it more interesting than Carter Ratcliff, to judge from a panel at the A.I.R. co-op gallery last year at which we all discussed the matter. There is probably more than one reason for this. One, which may not be understood at first, is my leaning towards a Dada aesthetic. This did not show itself in the study of any particular Dadaists, though I like Picabia a great deal, but in a lack of qualms about what can be considered art. Hollywood movies, comic books, science fiction have taken a lot of my time and I have always supposed they were art. In London, before I came to the U.S., I arranged an exhibition of art by monkeys, one British, one American,

Lawrence Alloway is an art critic and professor of art history at S.U.N.Y. Stony Brook. His book Topics in American Art Since 1945 has just been published by W. W. Norton.

which was interesting to me as it raised the question: is it art? (The question incidentally was settled by H. W. Janson who has pointed out that the keeper who chooses when to pull the drawings from the cage, is the artist.) As a result of all this I can say that I was not much attached to the theories of high art which inhibit some critics. The notion of women's art was part of a situation that I could respond to with "why not?" However my first encounter with a specifically feminist show was not a tribute to my permissiveness or insight. It was *X to the Twelfth Power*, and I rejected it unconditionally. So the question arises: what led me to the support of feminism in my subsequent criticism?

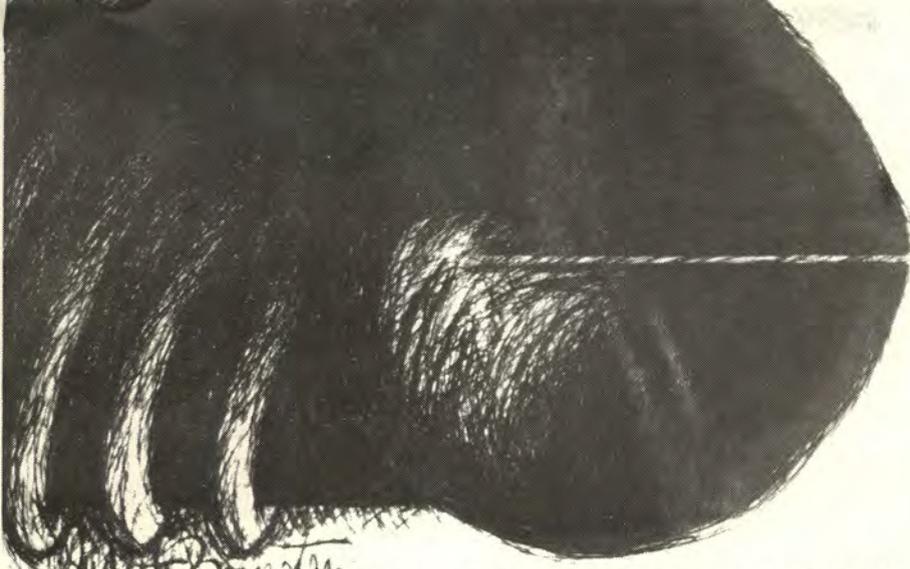
Sylvia Sleight, my wife, was influential in two ways (of course, in writing it all sounds much more neat and tidy than it really was). On one hand she was a premature feminist and although it took me a long time to respond, the values and

the argument were there; and on the other hand, she was a realist painter which made it impossible for me to adopt a "modernist" aesthetic which would have excluded her art. Living with a realist, combined with my tendency to a Dadaist anti-exclusiveness, led me to an aesthetic of diversity, of multiple styles. The idea of diversity originally functioned to preserve realism as an option in the pro-Abstract milieu in which I lived. As the women's movement developed in the '70s and as I had contact with it through Sylvia Sleight, diversity became a political as well as a stylistic principle. This is roughly the background to the art criticism that I began to write in 1972.

I reviewed *13 Women Artists*, a cooperative group formed for the purpose of putting on a single show (*The Nation*, March 27, 1972). At the time, I knew none of the artists. As the art critic who had shown most interest in the show, the group invited me to write a catalogue for its successor at the State University of New York at Albany, *New York Women Artists*. During the summer, I visited most of the artists' studios. At the time, I recognized that such writing on women artists was part of an increasing interest in the politics of art. This took the form not of indignation but of analytical and descriptive pieces of a skeptical nature. The women's movement was the positive aspect of an increased ideological awareness.

In 1973 I wrote an essay for the catalogue of Suzanne Delehanty's Agnes Martin exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, Philadelphia, reprinted in a revised form in *Artforum* (April, 1973). This was not a specifically feminist piece, but I did venture to suggest that Martin's grids, with Lucy Lippard as a relay station, may have influenced some of the numerous women who used grids. Letters from artists Loretta Dunkelman, Brenda Miller, Mary Miss, Michelle Stuart, and Paula Tavins refuted this speculation (*Artforum*, September, 1973). Still, the fact that I was into such detail indicates the deep interest I now had in women's art.

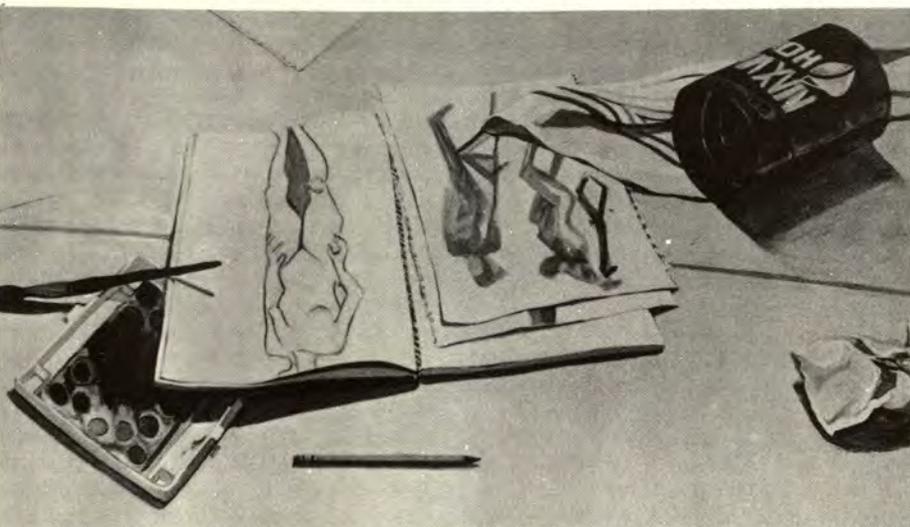
An early project of mine that did not get published, at least in a form that I worked on, confirms my involvement. I had proposed to *Artforum* that I prepare a bibliography on women artists. John Coplans, the editor, accepted the idea and Sylvia Sleight announced the project at meetings of the Women's Ad Hoc Committee and Women in the Arts and asked women with rare or ephemeral documents to contact me. Lucy Lippard of Ad Hoc offered her cooperation at once, but the idea was opposed in the WIA: why should a man do a women's bibliography? Actually I was taken with the idea of doing it because it was a reversal of all those catalogues in which male curators are serviced by female bibliographers, but the irony was lost on



Judith Bernstein, *Horizontal*, 1973. Charcoal/paper, 108x150". "The sexual metaphor is certainly present in Bernstein, but so are other things: those who saw her show at A.I.R. in 1974 will remember its robust architectural character no less than its allusions." *The Nation*, April 20, 1974.



Helene Aylon, *Four Times*, 1974. Bleach and oil stained through paper under plexiglass, 100"x24". "These images are part of the universal repertoire of morphology, but it would be a mistake to think of Aylon's art simply as an evocative kind of abstract painting. The physical process by which the painting is formed, its evident structure, is her prime concern." Helene Aylon, exhibition catalogue at Susan Caldwell/Betty Parsons Galleries, 1975.



Lucy Sallick, *Studio Floor Still Life #6*, 1975. Oil on canvas, 46x59". "The tilting of the picture plane has the effect of making a partial parallelism between the surface of the picture and the space of the world which gives an allusive materiality to the empty passages around the objects." Lucy Sallick exhibition catalogue at Edward Williams College, Fairleigh Dickinson University, 1975.

the WIA. (The bibliography, done by a woman, appeared in *Artforum*, June, 1972.)

From 1972 on, women's art was a recurrent topic of much more than occasional interest to me. This is not the place for a bibliography, but there is some reason to mention a few pieces. I wrote twice about the Philadelphia *Focus on Women* exhibition (*The Nation*, April 20, May 18, 1974), the first regarding the censorship of artist Judith Bernstein's drawing, the second reviewing the exhibitions. Joan Vita Miller invited me to write the catalogue of *New York Eleven* at the C. W. Post Center Art Gallery; it was an all-woman show and I sketched a chronology of developing self-awareness among women artists. In addition, I wrote two articles for *Artforum* (January, May, 1974) in a format designed by Coplans to accommodate newer artists. I wrote on Michelle Stuart and Cecile Abish (and again on Stuart in 1975 for the State University of New York at Oneonta when Jerry Clapsaddle was director of the gallery). Other pieces in this format are on Nancy Spero (May, 1976) and Rosemary Mayer (June, 1976). I wrote catalogues on Lucy Sallick (Edward Williams College at Fairleigh Dickinson University) and Helene Aylon (Betty Parsons Gallery), both in 1975. Although none of these pieces is outwardly programmatic they are like parts of a mosaic. They are the result of a decision to write about women artists when the opportunity presented itself and in some cases the projects originated with me. I felt that women artists were under-discussed by male critics and inadequately discussed by many women critics. What I wanted to do was apply the same techniques of argument and evidence to women artists that could be found in monographic articles on anybody else.

Most of the articles listed so far have been monographic. I felt that I should concentrate on the discussion of individual artists and leave broader-based articles to women writers. The response to my Martin-Lippard influence suggestion indicates the problem. However, I remained aware of a disparity between the range and intensity of women's art and the comparative poverty of the theoretical response. The prompting of Donald Kuspit, who insisted that I could not hide behind the monograph forever, led me to write a more general article. This is "Women's Art of the 1970s" (*Art in America*, May/June, 1976) which attempts a synoptic view of the art and theory generated by the women's movement. I see the article as in some degree a complement to Gloria Orenstein's review essay on Art History in *Signs* (1, 2, 1975). We both feel, I think, the necessity to make a record of recent events before they are blurred and while the origins of various ideas are still easily consultable.

Lil Picard Works: 1943-1976

(Goethe House, Mar. 10-Apr. 2) The Lil Picard retrospective was a bombastic review of this high-spirited, multi-talented artist-writer, now 76 years old, but still brand new. It wouldn't be hard to fill a lengthy book with lively anecdotes from the life of this volatile German-born woman, but her multi-media works by themselves are palpable evidence of her persistent vigor and venturesome sense of humor. It should be pointed out that her innovative performance pieces of the past decade constitute a major part of her work which cannot be retained for a gallery wall.

But regarding what can be, Goethe House provided a difficult layout for effective display and forced some regrettable overcrowding. However once one got over the rack of brochures on Germany, the fireplaces, elaborate architectural elements, and, most of all, the mint green drapes, the energetic power and exciting mobility of the art took over.

The title is a bit misleading; the main body of work starts in the late fifties. Only a couple of landscapes of the forties appeared, although Picard executed many more at the time and found them to have much saleability; they are easily overlooked, but important in showing her beginnings. A number of painted collages making extensive use of corrugated paper and heavily expressionistic paint were present; some like *Collage on White* (1959) leave large white areas and express more concentrated motion through space. *Breaking Through* (1959) suggests the color and imagery of Miro, though they are in no way derivative. Paintings of this time include a series called "Large Strasbourg Cathedral Window Paint-

ings", three boldly colored panels, each a single, sweeping circle whose V-shaped washes of paint suggest the corners of paper which protrude in *Window into Space*, a collage of 1960 whose thick and rich whites look forward to the magical tactility of the relief tablets of the next few years. The materiality of the surface of the canvas worked its way into these works in a mixture of clay, plastic medium, acrylic paint, glue, and marble dust which she invented. Using the point of an awl, she digs into the coarse surface, inscribing words, poetry, or sometimes quotations: a great one from Garcia Lorca, for instance, others of a more cryptic and personal origin. In *Under the Balcony* (1962), a smaller tablet hangs beneath that hung on the wall carrying the message: *Are we safe under the balcony? The wall embraces the light above a dream furor storm and ambush are imprisoned The crystal white canopy above the shelter cradle a haven Lovers are waiting and time passes.* The brittle stacked-up layers of the medium are fragile; they appear about to crumble; Picard related that the substance was a serious risk to her health, producing symptoms like swollen eyelids and crying. This factor may have added to the lure of the material which produced some of her most awesome works. *A Song*, a seven-part mural of 1961, is among the strongest in the exhibition; figures like primitive effigies stand taughly, lie prone, hover askew, while every second panel incorporates key words like song, living, dead. The sixth panel suggests the purpose of the ritual with its scratched out message: *To poets artists writers dreamers dancers lovers seers seekers To all the children of this earth a hymn an elegy a dedication.* The hazardous nature of this expressive medium has unfortunately forced Picard to give it up.

During the early to mid-sixties, she created her cosmetic assemblages in a lighter mood. *SuperMag Dance II* is a witty mixture of items such as Revlon liquid rouge, lipstick tube, hair net, barrette, tooth brush, soap dish, and curious plastic toy figures, all sort of dancing around and playfully protruding from the painted surface. In *Cosmetic Tower* (1965), phallic lipsticks stand like guards over nine heavily painted white bottles lined up in three tight rows, raising their dispensers like long-necked flamingos.

Five inventive tent, tower, temple, house objects (1960-1971) rest as part of an ensemble on a large collage of newspaper and magazine clippings, and front-center is a stiffly crinkled gown made of similar literature. The word "Messages" is scrawled around at random in red ink; on closer examination (it would take a whole day to read), one

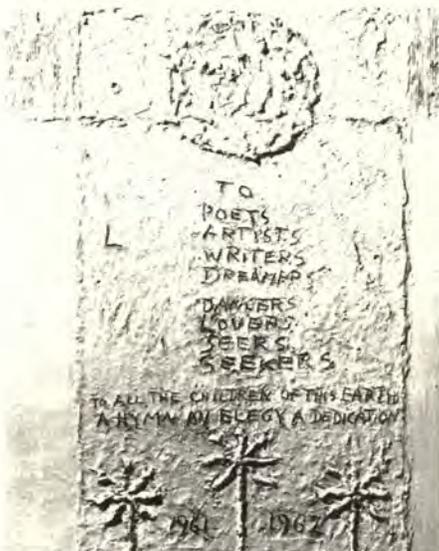
finds that the mass-media tidbits contain a wealth of personal data on the artist woven into the fabric of colorful news scraps. A red ink inscription in one corner asks who remembers *Nude Descending a Staircase*, making the Duchampian reference explicit.

Interesting textures, biting shades of brown, and overtones of destruction coalesce in *Burnt Silk Neckties* (1968), one of three related works hung on the way up the winding staircase. Five of these symbols of male convention are singed, scorched and scalded in varying degrees to produce rather disturbing yet beautiful imagery. The works of the seventies have become more overtly political; there are some photo-collages of Warhol and of a number of women artists. An ink sketch relates to work in one of her concurrently-held shows, disposable "Napkinian Portraits" at Holly Solomon Gallery. Picard's "Political Dematerializations" of Watergate figures were exhibited at Feldman Gallery at the same time; they start with a photo and reduce it in a step by step negation of the image using fewer and fewer dots in the process. These gutsy portraits of the inequities of life constitute a central portion of her expansive involvements. Revelatory in a more traditional aspect are her sketches, in Pelikan ink and fountain pen (as she points out readily), reminding the by-now-bemused viewer of a less obvious fact. She has proclaimed that the secret of her whole life from 1939 until the present lies in her continual habit of sketching her observations, in Spain, France, wherever she travels, renewing her contacts with the world. Lil Picard has proven herself to be more than a phenomenal personality; her art speaks for itself.

—Barbara Cavaliere

American Impressionism

(Hirschl and Adler, Mar. 9-27) The recent view of American Impressionism at Hirschl and Adler, though understandably far from comprehensive, was a worthwhile and enlightening experience. There were, however, some problems; the decorative hanging, for instance, often interfered with the opportunity for a more cohesive look at each artist's works, and the distractingly oversized Chase titled *The Tenth Street Studio* was out of place, appearing deceptively "modern" in its unfinished state. Works by such outstanding and often underrated painters as J. Alden Weir, Theodore Robinson, Childe Hassam, William Merritt Chase, and John Singer Sargent (regrettably only one tiny gem) were a pleasure to see. Dispersed among these, was a sampling of the art of three women of the group whose inclusion offered a tempting



Lil Picard, *Part two of seven part mural, The Song*, 1961-62. Relief paintings, mixed media. Photo courtesy the artist.

chance for further commentary and for assessment of their contributions alongside those of their more familiar male contemporaries.

Mary Cassatt is by far the most familiar, having received her due amount of recognition in recent years; four portraits represent her on the first floor of the plush gallery. Although far from her most outstanding, they do adequately demonstrate her consistently fine skill and singular abilities for successful portraiture. The best among them is an oil called *La Lecture* depicting two intense young women thoughtfully sharing one book; masterful color and finish combine with comprehension of mood in this typical example of Cassatt's remarkable insight into the personalities of her subjects.

On the second floor, there were two lovely painterly landscapes by Jane Peterson whose pictures of daily life in the United States were highly acclaimed about 50 years ago, but almost forgotten by 1965 when she was still working at the age of 88. *Harbor at Gloucester, Massachusetts* employs her rich palette of light, but vivid, flesh-pinks, yellow-greens and tan-whites and retains a freshness of vision within a structured and well-planned composition. Her lively brushstrokes have an expressionist intensity and an almost Fauve color. She was born in Illinois in 1876, trained at the Art Students' League, travelled extensively abroad for further study, and returned to New York to teach at the Art Students' League and various other schools outside the city. She was also an influential member of a number of art organizations and worked with Hassam, Sloan, and Luks during the first World War. Hirschl and Adler gave her a much deserved retrospective in 1970, and the catalogue contains more pertinent information and a more thorough look at the work for those who wish further data.

Five paintings illustrative of the oeuvre of Lilla Cabot Perry are also incorporated

in this exhibition. Tucked away on the ground floor was *La Petite Angele*, a Dutch genre-type portrait painted at Giverny in 1889, the year Perry met Monet, an artist who was to become an important influence on her art. Two floors up, one found her *Normandy Landscape* (undated like many of her works), an admirable display of plein-airism in dotty textures of impressionist colored shadows. But it was the three remaining paintings which made the strongest impression; they transmit a certain poignant quality which reveals a personal sympathy between artist and model and an inherent capacity to capture that particular state of emotion. Difficult to see, but worth the effort, was a 1911 portrait of one of Perry's favorite Bostonian models, Hildegard, called *Cherry Blossoms*; even with the gallery secretary's desk in-between, the elegant simplicity and fine finish of the work was noticeable. It is a profile view of the pouting little girl of fair complexion dressed in pastel hues of pink and warm white tones. She peers reflectively at a sprig of blossoms in a lovingly rendered Japanese vase resting on an oval mahogany table. The background is an unobtrusive yet strikingly contrasting chiaroscuro of rich brown textures.

Perry's near brushes with sweetness avoid excess through her powers of selectivity and painterly finesse. In *The Tea Party*, Hildegard is engaged in a tete-a-tete with a ruddy complexioned friend whose piled up hair is an innocent effort at sophistication. *Marie at the Window, Autumn*, of 1921 portrays a more mature and stately woman, Perry's housekeeper, seated in front of a brightly patterned drape. To the left is a window; the full play of autumn color outside sharpens the delicacy of the pale pastels and whites in the subject's dress and apron. Marie's hands are busy with mending, but her eyes reveal more profound thoughts. With her dark hair

pushed back in a severe knot, she is a figure of repose and dignity. As in the case of Peterson, Hirschl and Adler participated in a retrospective of Perry's work (1969), a significant step towards the recognition of this painter-poet.

—Barbara Cavaliere

Marjorie Strider

(*The Clocktower and City University Center Mall, March*) In Marjorie Strider's work, control is a central theme. She plays highly defined and explicitly referential images against ones which are extremely open-ended. Her sensibility is cool, as opposed to a more expressionist intensity, and it refers directly to pop imagery. She is immersed in the female experience as the thrust of her art. For some other women artists, expressionist *angst* is brought home in terms of feminist consciousness. Instead of immersing us in this particular female brand of internal suffering, Strider presents us with a detached overview of the spectacle of our modern feminine experience, replete with all the icons of consumerism. Her two concurrent exhibitions in March added up to a truly virtuoso performance.

I read the exhibition at the Clocktower as one piece reflecting the artist's current interests, whereas the exhibition at the City University Center Mall was more of a retrospective, offering a glimpse of her artistic origins. At The Clocktower, she controlled that very ethereal, temple-like space, keeping it hushed and awesome, and yet injecting it with a decidedly temporal dose of sensuality. Her *Sky Piece*, of urethane foam, can at first be seen as a feminine nightmare: the washing machine overflows with soapsuds spilling tumultuously down the spiral staircase, in a crescendo of multi-hued blue waves. Watching it, however, the tide began to slow, and instead of rushing, the effect was of an oozing mass, still completely



L.C. Perry, *Cherry Blossoms*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 31½x25½". Photo courtesy Hirschl & Adler Galleries.



Marjorie Strider, *Sky Piece*, 1976. Urethane foam. Photo courtesy the artist.

out of control, knowing no boundaries, not confined in any integral way, completely free to seek its own form. The only containment imposed upon this slow-moving mass was the relatively delicate structure of the support, the staircase itself, which certainly looked impotent in its formal timidity, in its rigidity and structural predictability. The staircase seemed in fact embarrassed to be forced into the position of supporting such an outlandish gesture. *Sky Piece* reads as the essence of unbridled sensuality, of an unbounded pouring forth.

At City University Center Mall, Strider showed a great number of pieces from different periods in her work. *Red On Blue*, from 1965, is a wall piece in high relief of beets, whose bulbous forms protrude aggressively into our space, with spiny points poking out of them. *Spilled Berries*, of 1975, is much more whimsical than the beets, but has the same pop color. This piece, consisting of three-dimensional strawberries falling out of a box anchored to the wall, offers a gentle spilling out, quite different from the beets' spiny thrusting out. *Spilled Berries* is self-assured and comfortable with its own sensuality, its own delicacy, less needy of proving its assertiveness than the beets.

Reviewing Strider's seemingly shotgun approach to motif, it becomes clear that she is indeed describing the trappings of the modern woman's role as consumer. Her subjects include flowershop flowers, supermarket fruit, a washing machine's overflow, clouds and moon as seen through a window, domesticated, sectioned into chunks, as if to be sold by the pound, and containerized for our consumption.

—Sharon Wybrants

Beverly Buchanan-City Walls

(Montclair Art Museum, Apr. 18-June 20)



Beverly Buchanan, *Washington Street Wall Part Two*, 1975-76. Acrylic on canvas, 80x70". Photo courtesy of the author.

Walls have been with us forever. Symbolizing a city, showing a boundary, and staking a claim for civilization are among the duties of the wall. These walls have stirred painter Beverly Buchanan's imagination, and the result is her *Torn Wall* series.

Buchanan's work is part of a two-woman show called *City Walls*, on exhibition at the Montclair Art Museum in New Jersey. Joining the painter is Mary Ann Reppa, a Metropolitan Opera Company scene designer who has designed *Cityscape*, a series of sculptures.

In a palette pleasing to the eye, Buchanan paints a statement about our cities that shows a powerhouse of talent. It demands the viewer's concentration.

Buchanan claims there's a lot of anger inside her, but the viewer would never know it. Her paintings are filled with lyrical color. Oranges and pinks don't fight with one another—they play in *North* with black outlines to sharpen their images. Subdued reds in *North* ease into pink. Even in the murky grays and oranges of *Afterglow*, which some have called her most serious or solemn work, there's light shining through.

A color impressionist by her own description, Buchanan works in acrylics on wall-size canvases to capture the city as she sees it. In choosing her tools she picks the more demanding—the brush, not the pen, brushes, not rollers. The result is beautiful.

Although at first one might question how these painterly works could represent a wall, the more one looks at them, the more it becomes apparent they "are" walls. The consistent imagery of ragged forms are the fragments of a demolished building, or the light and shadows on a wall at sunset. It's something we've all seen, but she forces us to really look at it.

Born in Orangeburg, South Carolina, Buchanan now lives and works in East Orange, New Jersey, the home of the subjects for *Brick Church* and *Lincoln*

Street Wall, part two. Buchanan, who studied with Norman Lewis at the Art Students League, says she finished her training there with more determination to paint. Now she calls the viewer to look at her surroundings with more determination and a new perspective.

—Donna Lee Goldberg

Judy Joa

(Green Mountain Gallery, Mar. 5 — 25)

Judy Joa paints intimate scenes of people, objects, and bits of northern landscape. She compresses her vision into a narrow range of color and tone, and by this technique her work gains admirable intensity. It all seems to have been painted, wiped, scraped, and then redone in some order of the above. This produces a softness of vision and form in which the artist freely operates.

Among the many paintings and drawings that make up this show there are a number of compelling pictures. Most of the work exhibited is under 9x12" and there seemed to be as many drawings as paintings on view.

There are no great contrasts in the paintings, but what is accomplished quite often is an interior light that seems to glow from the pictures. In *Roses*, this is most evident. A small vase of roses sits inside an amber twilight which turns the bright red roses a somber deep shade. In *Empty House*, hosts of evergreen trees march in and out of a grey northern mist that is settling about a small deserted house. Joa captures the poetry of the situation and delivers it with accuracy. *Steven Painting* is a picture of an artist before his easel. Beyond him, the picture opens out into planes of softly modulated color that imply a scale much beyond the small canvas itself.

The soft renderings of the paintings are left behind in the drawings. Here, a sharp



Judy Joa, *Empty House*, 1974. Oil on board, 7½x10". Photo courtesy of Green Mountain Gallery.

classical pencil clearly defines funky sidewalk scenes, drawing room romance, and exacting portraits. While she is not on target every moment, Judy Joa is an artist who uses reduced means to produce an art that is special in its expression of the fragile, poetic nature of life.

—Robert Sievert

Martin Ramirez

(Phyllis Kind Gallery, Feb.14-Mar.13)
Martin Ramirez's huge collage-drawings offered an excursion into our collective subconscious. He was a paranoid schizophrenic, institutionalized for the last 25 years of his life, mute as well, and his drawings illustrate the severe effect of extreme isolation on an artist. Although produced by a male, this work may come from many of the same psychological sources as the women's art that focuses directly on the female experience. He operated in a cultural void painfully similar to the isolation of so many women artists in our society. The compulsiveness which drove him into literally piecing together the fragments of his fragile world, is reminiscent of the autobiographical nature of much of the art of women that is now surfacing.

There is no machismo in Ramirez's statement or approach. He was groping to articulate his pain, his alienation, and in the process created a profoundly personal iconography. We see his pictorial space representing his inner space, with womb-tunnels, and stage-like boxes, and paths or arteries or channels. He constructed his collage-drawings from scraps of trash, glueing the bits together with an invented adhesive, and hiding these fragile extensions of his soul for safety from the world. Understandably, he built his own alternative reality with great care and precision, so his images have the feel of patiently worked pieces of crocheting.



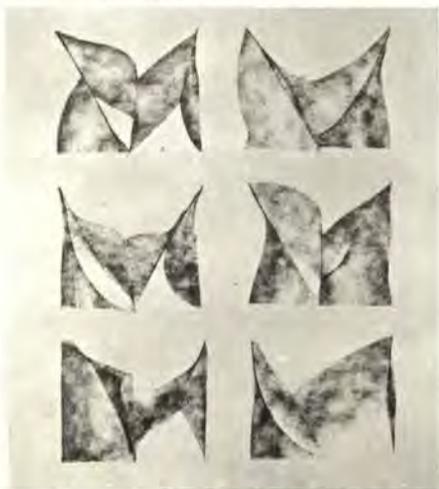
Martin Ramirez, *Untitled (Immaculate Conception)*, ca.1953. Mixed media on paper, 44x32". Photo courtesy Phyllis Kind Gallery.

Female sexual symbols abound in his motifs. There are many powerful goddesses. Containers and cauldrons of every size and description appear. His animals have female genitalia. Consistently his compositions center around caves or other womb-like enclosures. Uniting all these evocative elements are voluptuous rhythmic folds created of repeated linear patterns, with each line etched as though in his own skin with a tattoo needle, and each ridge threatening to burst its path of confinement. Ramirez created a highly sophisticated form for examining his pain and articulating his anger. It has successfully thwarted the determination of society to isolate and confine one whom it considered deviant.

—Sharon Wybrants

Blythe Bohnen

(A.I.R. Gallery, March 27-April 21)
Holding a graphite stick on its side and moving it sometimes to the left, sometimes to the right, sometimes twisting it about, moving on and finding a new formal position from which to try one of these moves again is the way in which Blythe Bohnen produces her drawings, actually records of her movements. Her work on view at A.I.R. was a series of drawings made with graphite on large sheets of white drawing paper. Each drawing is a series of manipulations that are placed on the page in very formal positions. Series of movements are seen overlapping in the center of the page, or individual movements are done one next to and above another. She entitles these drawings by the manipulations she has gone through in order to produce them—*One Movement Left*, etc. The resultant images are of overlapping gossamer planes that have a silk stocking elegance. The shapes formed by her almost mechanical activity take on a sensuous-



Blythe Bohnen, *Motion Touching Five Points*, 1974. Graphite stick on paper, 22x28". Photo courtesy A.I.R. Gallery.

ness and create tactile illusions. There is something very literary in the experience of relating the titles to the drawings themselves. The drawings as visual art are very low key. Confronted with a whole room of them, one must recognize the seriousness and intent of the artist, but one can only assume that the strict limitations this artist imposes upon her work serves an aesthetic that values performance and formal intellect above visual impact.

—Robert Sievert

Gretna Campbell

(Ingber Gallery, Mar.9-27)
Gretna Campbell continually proves that painting directly from nature can still produce strong and vital results. In her personal encounters with the uncultivated landscapes of the Maine shore and the New Jersey woods, she perceives the corporality of place, and out of this raw material, she extracts the essence and transforms it into a visual metaphor with aplomb and daring. The sense of the rhythms and patterns of the wilderness blends with relish with the materiality of paint, paint laid on in broad, swashbuckling strokes and worked up into dense textures of brilliant color. A certain river in Maine, a specific valley in state of thaw, the burst of spring blossoms in a meadow, the state of her surroundings at such moments of beauty; Campbell manages to draw out of such romantic subject matter convincing works which both represent and abstract. Viewed close-up, they reveal a tussle with surface; farther back the tension and pull of the elements in various directions becomes more evident; finally, at a substantial distance, the scraped and bruised paint and the impact of directional strain in relationships separate into stream, tree, rock, foliage. Often one finds the incorporation of some slight evidence of humanity—a simple boat,



Gretna Campbell, *Stream Autumn*, 1975. Oil on canvas, 52x50". Photo courtesy Ingber Gallery.

small footbridge or country cottage. Every corner of the canvas (which has recently become larger and more squarish) is full of activity, implying the possibilities of expansion beyond the immediate periphery of the working field.

Stream Autumn is an outstanding picture in a more limited palette than most; it bears an affinity with Cezanne's vision of like scenes as well as a certain recollection of some of Courbet's densely painted countrysides. In essence, however, Campbell's distillations of nature remain independently personal in feeling and reveal unusual productivity with no loss of refinement.

—Barbara Cavaliere

Art Guerra

(*Rabinovitch & Guerra Gallery, Apr. 9-May 1*) Guerra's paintings were of women alone and in groups, posed very naturally (loose and relaxed), or in athletic, dance-like positions. The women's eyes were ringed by color, in an extreme exaggeration of cosmetics, but little else about them was exaggerated. The artist kept his colors—usually blacks, blues, reds—at the same intensity within a single composition, bringing all areas of the same colors to the same distance from the picture plane, flattening and distorting the representational aspects of the compositions. In *Four Dancers*, the woman closest to the viewer holds half of her dance skirt up, revealing her nude body beneath. The flesh and black areas of her body, and the two opposing quadrants of her blue skirt formed a diamond pattern, creating an abstract dynamism in a somewhat dynamic figure. *Dead Woman* was a large, black, unstretched canvas tacked directly to the wall. Near the bottom, positioned horizontally, was the translucent top half of the reclining corpse. The mask-like quality of the face, and its translucence



Art Guerra, *Las Hermanitas*, 1975-76. Mixed media, 7x4½". Photo courtesy Rabinovitch & Guerra Gallery.

and halfness created a ghost-like, very eerie, ethereal feeling.

Guerra seems to like women, and appreciates them in a friendly way on canvas. His paintings, with the exception of the latter, appear to be composed of friends, painted from life and fantasy, and are accessible, spacious, and warm.

—Barbara Cavaliere

Jean Cohen

(*Landmark Gallery, Mar. 13 — Apr. 1*) Jean Cohen's paintings are large abstractions which all have simplicity at heart. The pictures are made up of less than a dozen elements, each one seen singularly and separately. Four or five ovoid shapes bounce and cavort through a very simple pictorial space that is little more than a ground and sky. Each shape is painted flatly with no modeling or interior activity. In several pictures, these simple shapes are broken into, but there are never more than one or two simple divisions interrupting each. The color is also very simple. Bright primary reds, yellows, and blues are set against blacks. Fiery pinks and oranges balance each other out.

A large triptych, *Cloudy Sky*, dominates the show. In this work, the shape takes on an animation and the picture achieves a scale that is quite impressive.

One is reminded of Miro's late murals in the playfulness and inventiveness that seem to pulsate through the work. In *East of the Sun*, a sense of landscape is developed by the piling up of flat shapes, and by the architecture in the top half of the painting. This removes the work from the abstract and takes it into the realm of fantastic landscape. Cohen's work seems to be reaching in several different directions, but it is all held in place by a firm painting style.

—Robert Sievert



Jean Cohen, *Cloudy Sky Triptych*, detail-center panel. Oil on canvas, 72x72". Photo courtesy Landmark Gallery.

Recent Portraits of Sari Dienes

(*Buecker and Harpsichords, Mar. 6 — Apr. 24*) Sari Dienes is an artist whose experience touches just about every corner of the art world. Born in Europe, she was acquainted with the modern masters and was a student of Ozenfant. During the turmoil of the late thirties, she came to America, where she has been an art world figure for the last 35 years. She has had many shows and professional honors. Now she is the subject of a group show at Buecker and Harpsichords, in which many artists have contributed portraits of her in a great variety of media.

Among the painters, perhaps the most accurate in her observations is Alice Neel. Her painting shows Sari seated in the now familiar striped chair, dressed in a long polka-dotted dress. There is a clown-like quality to the figure, but the face radiates openness and warmth.

Robert DeNiro shows one large painting and three charcoal drawings. None of this work is very descriptive, but there is the feeling the DeNiro is matching the life force he senses in Dienes with his open, lively style. Lil Picard's *Dematerialization of Sari Dienes* is a presentation of drawings, xeroxes, and colored photographs in a unified piece of work. Surrounding a large color photo is a series of 5x6" cards on which an accurate characterization is slowly, card by card, disintegrated into an abstract design. This is taken further into collage and narrative realms.

Marcia Marcus shows a subdued, elegant painting, while Diana Kurz exhibits a picture exceptional for its flair and color. Pat Mainardi contributes a moody violet watercolor with Sari seen in profile against a window. Roy Moyer presents Sari Dienes as the oriental goddess Kali in traditional mandala form; Edward Power Jones' paper sculpture is a



Edward Power Jones, *Sari Dienes*, 1976. Mixed media, 35" h. Photo courtesy Buecker & Harpsichords Gallery.

witty and inventive likeness.

This show was organized when Dienes mentioned to gallery director Robert Buecker that she was sitting for a number of artists. Buecker picked up on the information and put the show together.

While the exhibit as a whole is a tribute to Sari Dienes, it must be mentioned that most of the works are also individual tributes. She is always represented as a spirited and generous woman.

—Robert Sievert

Joan Snyder

(Carl Solway Gallery, Feb. 7 — Mar. 13)

"The politics are at once separated and integrated. If there is a female sensibility, language, art emerging, how can an all-male faculty at Douglass choose-select-judge women artists who apply? They can't, they didn't, they only chose 4 in 20 in two years. They would protest—of course." With this statement scrawled on a three-panel painting called *Small Symphony for Women*, Snyder opens her case. What follows is the evidence, as presented in her recent exhibition of paintings at Carl Solway. With this body of work, she goes way beyond attacking sexism in academia to prove the very existence and power of the female sensibility in art. In the most recent painting in this group, *Untitled Triptych*, she has written that "The painting hauntingly precedes the life - - And follows it." This is why her work is so powerful. The struggles, the pain, the self-awareness, the awakened consciousness of her life as a woman are enmeshed in the grid of her structure as a painter. I see this as the major contribution of the female sensibility to the art of our time. *Untitled Triptych* presents us with a key to employ in our decodification of the political/emotional/perceptual symbolism throughout her work: "Yellow = rage, red = passion (girl's color), blue =

cool (boy's color), white = anxiety."

Mom's Just Out There Tryin' to Break That Grid, the largest work in the show (6x12'), is an allegory of the confrontation of the female sensibility with the male, or main-line art historical sensibility. A large white mass ("white = anxiety") with bandaleros stuck into it, comes crashing down diagonally from the upper left to the center, spewing bridal lace and gold finery in all directions and culminating in a huge, erotically charged opening with explicit female references. This form is wounded at the tip, where it explodes in a chaotic tumble of quasi-geometric shapes of color—the remnants of the grid that got all broken up. It seems that the rigid structure of the grid could not hold its own against the overwhelming force of that driving white wedge of female sexuality. The painting also opens itself to less politicized readings, as for example, of passion's assault on reason. This makes it accessible to a broader interest group, but I do not think it is presumptuous, in light of this entire body of work, to assume that Snyder is directing her statement primarily to women.

Snyder's is a particularly brutal and raw form of Abstract Expressionism, but her savage slashes into the canvas, wild dripping and smearing of paint, rampant use of impure collage elements, and other seemingly primitive and haphazard gestures, are repeated ritualistically to create a personal iconography which can be clearly read. This high degree of control of the seemingly automatic gesture is further informed by a sophisticated conceptualist integration of the written sign into the visual symbol.

—Sharon Wybrants

HERA at SoHo 20

(SoHo 20 Gallery, Apr. 24-May 19) Hera is a women's cooperative gallery founded

in 1974 and situated in Wakefield, Rhode Island. The two co-ops arranged exchange shows of the galleries' works; SoHo 20's show opened at Hera during the course of the show in New York. The 17 women from Rhode Island were represented by work in many media: paintings, drawings, sculpture, box works, constructions, photographs, and wall-hangings.

Two artists were examples of the diversity of the group. Donna Croteau's sculpture was about enclosures. Small wooden picket fences formed three sides of concentric squares. The fences grow in height as they approach the center; an open side of each faces a closed side, creating a simple maze. The outer fence was the lowest, but the only complete enclosure. The sensibility forming this sculpture was totally different than that governing the sculptures by Patsy Norvell seen in her most recent show at A.I.R., in which fences were made of materials alien to those composing "real" boundaries. Croteau's was rather simple, and reminded one of graveyards, or churches.

One of Martha Cooper Guthrie's black and white photographs of a tattooist and his subjects was of a kneeling Oriental woman, clothing around waist, whose back was covered with a tattoo of an Oriental woman kneeling, with flowers in hand. The soft roundness of the woman, soft window light, and graceful design produced a visually quiet moment.

Though there is not enough room to discuss all of the work, it is interesting to note that the entire body of work looked different somehow, raising, perhaps, the question of a "New York sensibility". How the work differed is hard to pinpoint; there was a relaxed quality to it, and an air of experimentation that revealed a confidence in the taking of the chance, regardless of the outcome.

Exchanges of New York work with that of other out-of-town galleries and groups of women artists might prove very revealing. Just as exposure to the whole body of women's work was needed, now perhaps we need to examine different parts of it more closely, and discover the variety of sensibilities at work.

—Barbara Cavaliere

Bonnie Sklarski

(Robert Schoelkopf Gallery, Feb. 17—Mar. 13). Bonnie Sklarski's first one-woman show in New York included carefully observed and meticulously painted landscapes of southern Indiana and several large, primeval outdoor scenes inhabited by male and female nudes. Working with equal precision and delicacy in watercolors and in oils, Sklarski realistically paints serene, expansive visions of specific canyons, creeks, and



Joan Snyder, *Mom's Just Out There Tryin' to Break that Grid*, 1975. Mixed media on canvas, 6x12'. Photo courtesy Carl Solway Gallery.

continued from preceding page

waterfalls which recall the romantic, pastoral works of the nineteenth century Hudson River school. The artist focuses on rugged motifs, but the mood they evoke is gentle and benevolent. In contrast to this idyllic calm, the atmosphere in the ambitious compositions that incorporate archetypal figures—for example, *Earth, Air, Water* (1976)—is more dramatic and harsher. The mythical nudes may seem stiff and unnatural in these landscape settings where soft outdoor light and warm tones have yielded to stronger studio contrasts. Sklarski's characteristically fine, controlled draftsmanship is preeminent throughout the show, which includes works dating from 1969 to the present. In addition to the extensive timeless landscapes, there are very careful and accurate plant studies and two sanguine figure drawings, as well as several small oil sketches. The latter are pastel-like sky studies executed in a looser and softer technique.

—Judith Tannenbaum

Helen Quat

(Alonzo Gallery, Mar. 9-Apr. 3) The first one-woman exhibition of Helen Quat's work in Manhattan reveals this artist's polished draughtsmanship and technical virtuosity within the etching medium. Her method is color viscosity, a means, she explains in her demonstrations, by which intaglio and surface colors can be printed on one plate and in a single printing without blending. The results achieved by her skillful manipulation of color and surface on the deftly-worked plate are rather stunning and almost science-fiction like evocations of the metamorphosis of organic forms—rocks, shells, coral glide and roll in space like luminaries on an astral plane. These are in part derived from such natural objects which she brings to the surface during scuba diving excursions on vacation.

In a surreal vein, she is obsessed with the swirling motion of a large flower-coral form which seems affected by wind, water, fire in its nomadic wanderings. Her imagery is suggestive of the associations of many levels of nature from the flight of a bird to intimate parts of feminine anatomy. Titles such as *Cosmic Encounter*, *Fire Dance*, *Peaks and Valleys* conjure up such symbolic overtones which accord well with her complex working of the etching medium.

Although the etchings are the most inventive and successful, the show also includes a number of delicate and accomplished silverpoint drawings rendered with great finesse. Paintings continue similar imagery; the tondos are strikingly like planetarium views of the twisted surface of some strange planet. But they are rather more of an extension

SOHO 20 cont'd from pg. 19

outweigh these disadvantages. The gallery's pursuit of self-criticism and quality work was generally praised, as was the sense of SoHo 20 as a source of information with which other shows and projects could be obtained. In addition, many expressed, in one way or another, a feeling of self-confidence achieved by running an art gallery for and by themselves, one of the aims of the founders.

After reading the questionnaire responses, one feels that many of these women "came out" into the art world with SoHo 20. As exhibiting members of a New York gallery, their attitudes and careers seem to have taken on new definitions and goals, as if the rigors and realities of their memberships have made them aware of what they are able to do, as artists and as women. Over the past three years, I have watched the gallery as a whole improve in physical appearance and in functioning. More importantly, I have seen the work of the individual members undergo changes which have almost always been for the better. I have seen styles change, compositions tighten, ideas clarified in the work of most, if not all, of the artists. It is a gratifying, wonderful aesthetic experience to watch "young" artists develop and progress with the gallery.

The detailing of the SoHo 20 experience by its members leads me to conclude that women's cooperatives are vitally needed, as both alternatives to the male-dominated commercial gallery system, and as sources of communication and support for women "out of the mainstream" who require exposure and education in order to establish themselves in the art world. SoHo 20 has served, and continues to serve, these functions, providing a strong image to follow, and showing the art world that one need not be a victim of the system in order to be successful within it.

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than a primary concern so far. For the present, it is her astuteness in the print shop which stands out.

—Barbara Cavaliere

PAT ADAMS cont'd from pg. 15

According to the Day is a smashing little painting. A blue/gray ground, that looks a bit like marbled end papers, is interrupted by a red scalloped right angle, a brilliant rainbow of green, yellow and blue bands, and a solid triangular slab of pinkish tan cutting off the left side. Beneath this element is another corner device filled with small geometric forms in brilliant colors. (These right angles remind me of picture frame samples the framer puts around the corners of a picture to see what it will look like.) Shiny spots sparkle unevenly over the whole surface. The increasing size, firmness, and unitary quality of her geometric shapes is epitomized by *Rose* with its huge plane of connected triangles and a rhombus. She floats complete squares, circle segments, rectangles, and triangles with less and less temerity all the time. Her lines seem tauter, more like spring steel, less malleable and calligraphic over all.

The recent emphasis on the geometric brings a new clarity to Adams' content. It's a break with the more hermetic attitude that seemed to dominate before. The new paintings look less like enlarged details and more like enormities contracted to manageable size. They have so much built-in scale and formality they could be any size. She has always known that she needed to keep the handmade look out of her pictures to separate them from the beautifully designed, well crafted appearance of manuscript illumination or Oriental miniatures. That's why she developed her arsenal of automatic techniques for applying paint. On the other hand, she has studiously avoided the gesture or the calligraphic line as a "seismograph of the soul" the way Mark Tobey used it, for instance. She's not interested in the obsessive repeat, the tiny mark or the emotional line. She gives even her looping lines, the most easy-going part of any of her paintings, the snap of being intended and of having some definite place to go. Their meanderings never seem purposeless or accidental, but carefully planned instead.

It is a narrow path she treads between these two essentially contradictory modes. A similar duality occurs in her surfaces, which she wants to be supple and malleable but not soft or penetrable. She needs to make them exert maximal optical and haptic pressure (to feel full) without becoming closed or jewel-like. It is a desire for the deeply intimate experience of miniature painting without its smallness of ambition. As she says, "What I want for most of my work is a ranging accuracy, yet a locus where everything is brought to bear; it has to do with a close hugging of the contour of reality. And by reality I mean a very complex experiential density. Painting, then, is my report on that reality."

Sister Chapel

The *Sister Chapel*, a traveling exhibition in celebration of the emergence of a new womanspirit in art, is now being elaborated by eleven feminist painters and one environmental sculptor. The chapel, composed of eleven panels and a ceiling, will be a collapsible, transportable pavilion intended to tour the country. It was Ilise Greenstein's vision of a female response to the Sistine Chapel. The artists involved in the project, June Blum, Maureen Connor, Martha Edelheit, Elsa Goldsmith, Ilise Greenstein, Shirley Gorelick, Betty Holiday, Cynthia Mailman, Alice Neel, Sylvia Sleigh, May Stevens, and Sharon Wybrants, will each contribute a 5'x9' painting that will float against a panel backdrop, suspended by a thin metal frame. The architectural form of the chapel, whose eleven panels will compose a space of twenty-five feet in diameter, is now being designed by Maureen Connor, the group's environmental artist. The chapel will be constructed of aluminum tubing covered with canvas and will have a lighting system incorporated into its basic structural components. The ceiling by Ilise Greenstein will be a large, round abstract painting with a mirror embedded in the center so that women visiting the exhibit will find their images reflected in the chapel's dome.

Each of the eleven panels will portray a female heroine, either real or archetypal, conveying a spiritual rather than religious conception of woman's identity and a sense of her unique creative destiny. Projected panels of historical and artistic heroines include June Blum's portrait of *Betty Friedan*, Elsa Goldsmith's *Joan of Arc*, May Steven's *Artemesia Gentileschi*, and Shirley Gorelick's *Frida Kahlo*. A variety of new images created specifically to reenergize the positive aspects of the Archetypal Feminine are Sylvia Sleigh's *Lilith as a Male/Female Figure*, Cynthia Mailman's *God as Female*, Sharon Wybrants' *Self-Portrait as Superwoman*, Betty Holiday's *Middle-Aged Nurse* and Alice Neel's *Pregnant Woman with Child*.

With International Woman's Year and the American Bicentennial marking its conception, the spirit of the *Sister Chapel* is dedicated to the realization of the heroic female principle in art and life. Each portrayal of woman included in the show is an individual tribute to an enlarged collective ideal that embraces a multiplicity of aesthetic and visionary definitions of womanhood within a non-hierarchical, non-doctrinaire iconographic framework.

Artists participating in the creation of the *Sister Chapel* will make a presentation of their ideas and plans at the May

meeting of the *Woman's Salon* in New York. The salon, a literary forum for women writers, co-founded by writers Marilyn Coffey, Erika Duncan, Karen Malpede, Gloria Orenstein and Carole Rosenthal, celebrated the successful conclusion of its first season's events on May 8th with readings and talks by poet Adrienne Rich, critics Catharine Stimpson and Gloria Orenstein, and writer Barbara Deming. This gathering together of women in the visual and literary arts in a concerted effort to mobilize their talents towards the launching of a new image of womankind past, present, and future, lends additional momentum to the ongoing manifestation of the strength of the women's movement in the contemporary arts.

—Gloria Feman Orenstein

Women Artists of the '70s

—A lecture by Lawrence Alloway, given March 21, 1976 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Offering an "introduction to the density, diversity, and excellence of women's art," Alloway discussed and displayed via slides the works of approximately 30 women artists. He noted the production of "such a convincing body of work" that has brought a new level of recognition about the work from the women themselves as well as from others. The critic, noted for his involvement (in print as well as behind-the-scenes) in women's art, gave a brief history of women's art in terms of earlier periods of recognition, and subsequent patronage and distribution.

The artists discussed were drawn primarily from the A.I.R. and SoHo 20 cooperative galleries. Their work was divided into five categories based on type of work and subject, arranged so that they led to an exploration of self-images of the artists and their positions and attitudes regarding their subject matter.

Each of the examples within the sections was shown to make a specific point, providing a dense, informative lecture. Starting with artists involved in large, often environmental works, Alloway discussed the scale of, and the encompassing and use of large spaces. Athena Tacha's plans for altering a portion of the banks of the Charles River (*Charles River Step Sculpture*) was one of the grandest works in scope, while an A.I.R. installation of Judith Bernstein's enormous drawings, and Anne Healy's *Lion Gate* sculpture, installed outdoors at Hammarckjold Plaza, illustrated other aspects of the use of large spaces and the creation of environments.

The second category treated was that of modules and fields in abstract works. Many of his examples here were of works

with strong, physical bases or elements. Among these were one of Michelle Stuart's long graphite drawings, a field full of markings and gestures (#4), two drawings by Blythe Bohnen, records of body gestures, and two monochrome paintings by Barbara Coleman, in which her aggressive surfaces are aided by the mixture of gravel with the paint.

Though the sexual themes of the artists shown in the third category, subject matter, were pointed out, there was virtually no outright, genital imagery. Perhaps the strongest images here were Juanita McNeely's, her nude female figure displaying a "clit athleticism" in flying poses not really possible. These highly energized images of release were used by Alloway to illustrate the "revision" of what subject matter women could not formerly (due to societal disapproval), but could now paint and display.

Realism, the next topic, encompassed portraiture, still lifes, landscapes. Lucy Sallick's *Studio Floor Still Life* and Audrey Flack's *Jolie Madame* were used to illustrate the personalization of the still life currently evident in the work of many artists. Sallick's compositions of paints, brushes, cans, and sketches were looks at how her paintings came into being, while Flack's dressing table composition, named for her favorite perfume, showed a different side, "symbolizing an aspect of women's life via possessions."

Women's viewpoint was the final subject, in which the points of view were shown to encompass a variety of subjects. Jane Kogan's *Interiorized Self-Portrait* and Tomar Levine's *In My Studio* were specialized self-portraits. Two of Joan Semmel's paintings were examples of overt eroticism, Levine's *Night Bedroom* a depiction of a man in terms of desire, and Sylvia Sleigh's *Double Image (Paul Rosano)* an example of a man painted from an attitude of love and admiration, without overt eroticism. Nancy Spero's *The Hours of the Night* was noted for, among other things, its implicit political references.

Alloway concluded by pointing out that there is a lot of women's art, and that it meets any standard of excellence. He also noted an abatement in women's feeling that the art world is run by men—not because the men have abdicated, but because of the "energizing effect" of the recognition, mentioned earlier, of the quality and diversity of the work they have produced. The lecture was a personalized sampling, omitting, for example, many of the more prominent women artists. As a sampling, it provided a rather concentrated look at the work of artists who represent a number of aspects of women's work, and who also represent a determination to make their presence in the art world felt, and permanent.

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