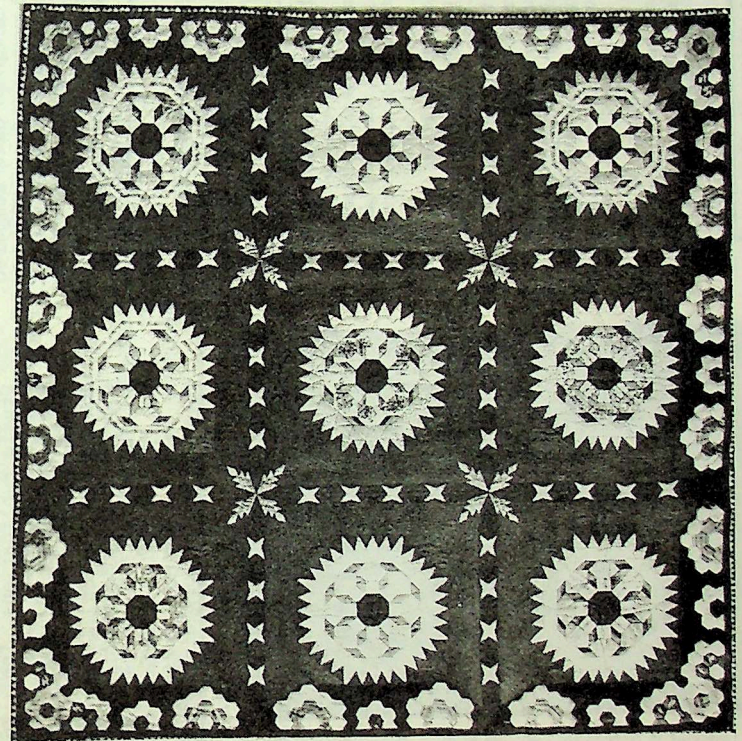


Mawarosa Bellelone

THE FEMINIST ART JOURNAL

50c
WINTER 1973



QUILTS: THE GREAT AMERICAN ART
MEMORIES OF EVA HESSE
WOMEN'S FILM FESTIVAL

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The *Feminist Art Journal* is sold in New York at Rizzoli, Wittenborn, Labyris, 8th St. Bookstore, New Yorker, NYU & Columbia College Bookstore, Community Bookstore (Park Slope) and Max Hutchinson Gallery.

We have had many letters asking if we will consider unsolicited manuscripts for publication. The answer is yes--send to editorial department.

The next issue of *FAJ* will contain an article covering activities of women artists throughout the country. Groups who have not done so, please forward information immediately to Cindy Nemer c/o *Feminist Art Journal*.

There will be 4 sessions on *Women & Art* at the College Art Association Conf. at NYC Americana Hotel: "How the Art World Evaluates Women Artists," 1/26, 9:30 A.M. "Women In Art & Art History, Past, Present, Future," 2:00, "Women Artists in Action," 8:30 P.M.; 1/27, "Women Artists Speak Out," 9:30 A.M.

Artlift 549, a fund-raising sale & event for Women's InterArt Center, 549 W. 52 St., NYC, Feb. 10-Feb. 24.

The Feminist Book Club will sell posters & prints by women artists, 2140 Westwood Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif., 90025.

The Spokeswoman: National monthly newsletter reporting on issues, activities & developments that concern women. Covers various fields--education, law, medicine, culture, politics, etc.

Women & Film: A journal published 3 times yearly similar to *Feminist Art Journal* but with emphasis on Film. \$2 year, 2022 Delaware St., Berkeley, Calif.

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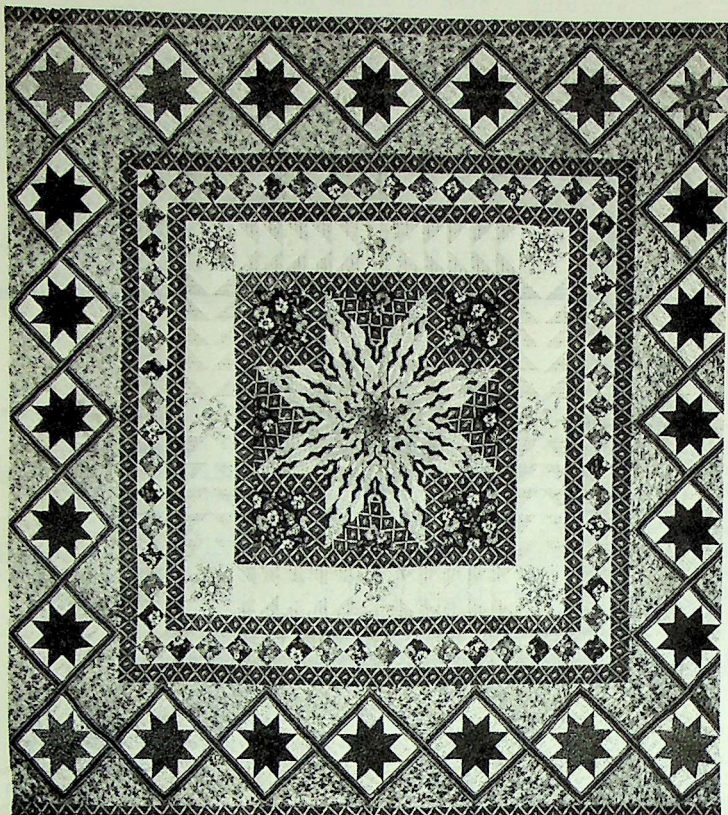
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Flowers, Plants and Fishes
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Skies, Seas, Rivers, Trees
There's nothing near at hand or farthest sought
But with the needle may be wrought

From an old sampler

Women have always made art. But for most women, the arts highest valued by male society have been closed to them for just that reason. They have put their creativity instead into the needlework arts which exist in fantastic variety wherever there are women, and which in fact are a universal female art, transcending race class and national borders. Needlework is the one art in which women controlled the education of their daughters, the production of the art, and were also the audience and critics, and it is so important to women's culture that a study of the various textile and needlework arts should occupy the same position in Women's Studies that African art occupies in Black Studies--it is our cultural heritage. Because quilt making is so indisputably women's art, many of the issues women artists are attempting to clarify now--questions of feminine sensibility, of originality and tradition, of individuality vs. collectivity, of content and values in art can be illuminated by a study of this art form, its relation to the lives of the artists and how it has been dealt with in art history. The contrast between the utilitarian necessity of patching and quilting and the beautiful works of art which women made of it, and the contrast between the traditions of patchwork and quilting as brought to America and the quilts made here from colonial times to the present give ample evidence that quilts are The Great American Art.

Although quilts had a functional purpose as bed coverings, they had another purpose equally important to their makers, and that is display. Early bedrooms frequently possessed only one piece of furniture, namely the bed, and the quilt, displayed on the bed, was the central motif. Women exhibited their quilts and still do, at state and country fairs, churches, and grange halls, much as our contemporary 'fine' art is exhibited in museums and with much the same results. Good quilt-makers were known and envied throughout their area, the exhibition of exceptionally fine craftsmanship and design influenced other women who returned home stimulated to do even finer work, and ideas of color and design were disseminated from one area to another causing recognizable historic and geographic trends.

Moreover, the women who made quilts knew and valued what

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QUILTS: THE GREAT AMERICAN ART

PATRICIA MAINARDI

(Above Left) Sophonisba Anguissola Peale, 'Star Medallion', Philadelphia, 1850. Courtesy Philadelphia Museum of Art
(Below) E. W. Perry, 'The Patchwork Quilt', Harper's Weekly, December 21, 1872, Courtesy of The Brooklyn Museum.



EDITORIAL

Women in all the arts must, at this time, make an all-out effort to rediscover their own history. It is essential that we recognize and credit the first rate achievements of our forebearers which have, for so long, been denied or downgraded by established male authorities. We must no longer allow ourselves to be robbed of our heritage past or present.

Therefore, in this Winter issue of *The Feminist Art Journal* we are bringing to the fore the accomplishments of women in many areas not specifically associated with the fine arts such as quilts, weaving, pottery, etc., which have been relegated to a less prestigious category than the "fine art" objects (paintings and sculptures) made by men. We question the validity of such categories since it is obvious that they have been formed on the basis of sexist and racist prejudice. In film we are also presenting heretofore generally unknown information on women film makers.

Stereotyped attitudes towards women in the arts must be challenged whenever they appear in current criticism as well if our history is to be written accurately. Eva Hesse did not have the saintly character automatically ascribed to female victims of a fatal illness, nor did Diane Arbus possess the compassionate vision usually assumed to be a female trait. On the other hand women who are wives and mothers continue to find it difficult to transcend the traditional sexist image of the "lady painter."

Of course, as we push for female recognition and freedom from clichés in the arts, we are not letting up on our fight against discriminatory male practices in all fields. Those who deny us academic and exhibition opportunities will not find us silent.

We have begun to work on all fronts and the pressure is really starting to build. There is a long way to go, but both women's art and *The Feminist Art Journal* are equal to the task.

EDITORS:

PATRICIA MAINARDI IRENE MOSS CINDY NEMSER

CONTRIBUTORS

Martha Mary Kearns is a feminist poet and silkscreener who was active in the foundation of the Philadelphia Women Artists Center.

Alexis Krasilovsky is a film maker and writer whose film "The End of the Art World," has been shown at the Museum of Modern Art, The Women's Film Festival and is scheduled to be shown at the Whitney.

Patricia Mainardi is a painter who shows at the Green Mountain Gallery and is an editor of *The Feminist Art Journal*. She wrote "Politics of Housework," and has contributed articles to many feminist anthologies and publications.

Irene Moss is a painter and an editor of *The Feminist Art Journal*. She is being represented by the Haller Gallery in New York and the Malvina Miller Gallery in San Francisco.

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Cindy Nemser is an editor of *The Feminist Art Journal* and contributing editor to *Arts Magazine*. She is coordinating three sessions on Women in the Art World at the College Art Association and has been published in all the leading art publications.

Shirley Kassman Richert is a painter and printmaker on the faculty of State University College at Buffalo. She coordinated the two week Buffalo symposium/festival *Women and the Arts* in April, 1972.

Faith Ringgold is a painter who teaches at Goddard College and Wagner College. She is having a retrospective at Rutgers University in March and is chairing the College Art Association program on Black Art.

Kathie Sarachild is a film editor and an editor of *Women's World*, a feminist journal. She has contributed articles to many women's movement publications.

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THE FEMINIST ART JOURNAL Vol.2 No.1

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COVER Zubie Cole Spaulding, *Sunburst & Grandmother's Flower Garden*, 1849, Bloomington, Illinois, Brown & Gray silk, pastel cottons, feather quilting. Courtesy of The Denver Museum of Art.

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LETTERS

Dear Editors,

That was an interesting article by Robin Morgan! There are interesting things to think about beyond even the revelations/accusations re the Plath-Hughes situation. For example, in revealing the workings of a publisher--in saying something about the life she leads as a poet and a creative person--Morgan is practically initiating a new genre. As a poet, I'm so sick of hearing pronouncements by poets on international abuses of justice, while no one cries out about the situations that directly confront us. Perhaps it's because we run little risk of retaliation for doing so--it's safer to make pronouncements about say, Sino-American relations. Some nerve we have. I see the seeds of complaint re the art gallery situation in what Ms. Morgan writes, and I hope you continue to pursue it.

Now I'm going to stick my neck out myself. The fascinating facts of its publishing history notwithstanding, it seems to me that *Arrangement II* (in which the poet begins: "How can I accuse Ted Hughes...") is a much better poem than *Arraignment I* (beginning: "I accuse Ted Hughes...") Why should the ironical, indirect version work better? The difference seems clear to me. In *I*, the poem mainly dramatizes the poet's own anger, taking a romantic stance with regard to a situation which I believe is *in essence* angering, and which merely needs to be reflected with accuracy. To me, in *II* the poet uses her anger better. By understating the case--without omitting one single detail--she allows the reader room to become angry. The reader becomes ready to say, "look, what do you mean 'how can you accuse'--if you don't accuse I will." And so the reader has room to become actively angry.

The effect Morgan gets in *II* might be compared to what happens in the few male political poets who have transcended traditional romantic political rants, succeeding in producing works which are effective both esthetically and politically. Instead of haranguing us in his plays, instead of forcing his sensitivity on us (which would be very insensitive with respect to our having feelings of our own), a Brecht activates us by merely presenting a situation with clarity and cool. This forces us to comment on the situation, if we are to retain anything like a decent humanity.

I think this is an interesting issue to focus on, especially at the beginning of a journal which intends apparently to bring together esthetic and political proprieties, hopefully without detriment to either. It seems to me that the idea that external and inner realities, politics and esthetics, may be identical, is a view worth exploring on every level and in all areas, even in poetry, in a journal devoted to the visual arts.

I wish you well in all that you are doing.

Michael Benedikt

I particularly like Robin Morgan's poem about Sylvia Plath--I also like the combative spirit of the paper. I would like to see a whole issue devoted to past women artists, something like the article "If DeKooning is an Old Master, What is Georgia O'Keeffe?" That was really good.

Monique Ninone
San Francisco

Editors' note. We would love to do an issue like that. Women art historians your work is cut out for you!

Think the "infamous Interview" fantastic. Can you send me another copy? Mine has been read by innumerable people and now has been stolen.

Joan Mitchell
Veuteil, France

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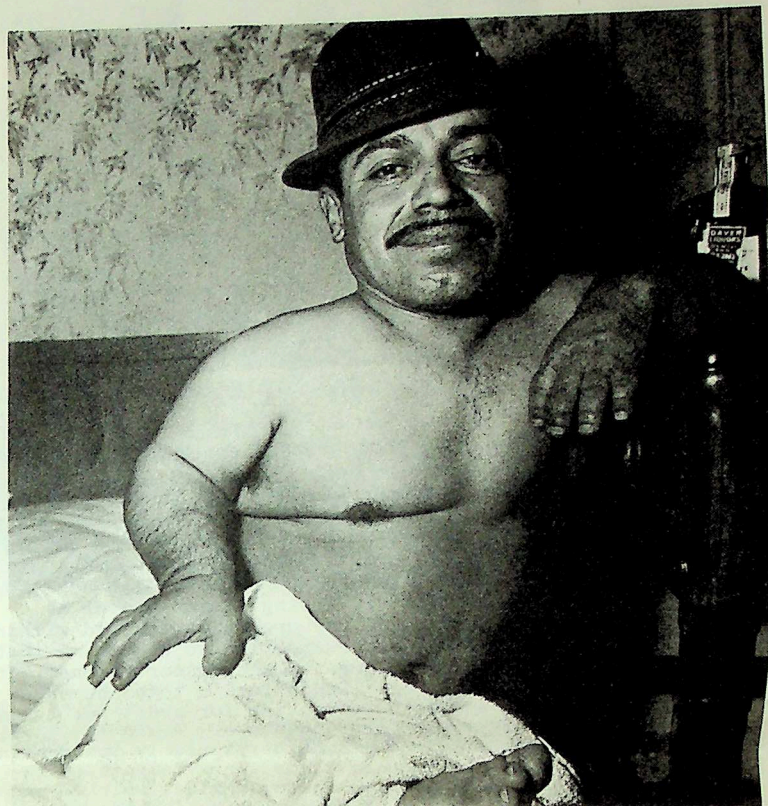
THE DISTURBING VISION OF DIANE ARBUS

CINDY NEMSER

I for one am tired of the sanctimonious hypocrisy that surrounds the photography of Diane Arbus. I am sick of all this talk of Arbus's interiorizing and empathizing with her unfortunate subjects, e.g. John Szarkowski, the exhibition's organizer, says, "her true subject was no less than the unique interior lives of those she photographed." Hilton Kramer states, "Arbus had in such abundance that inner comprehension of and sensitivity for, the hidden mental terrain in which her unusual subjects lived out their 'normal' lives," and Barbara Rose writes, "she identified so closely with her subjects that ultimately she merged with them, feeling their experience and their pain."

I simply don't buy it. I went to the opening of the Diane Arbus exhibition and I looked at the grotesque, the distorted, the forlorn people she chose to capture on film and I did not see either dignified or sympathetic renditions of these subjects. She hit them head on, playing up their eccentricities, their deformities, their foibles, their isolation. Blank eyes, gaping grins or slack stares mark the faces of the retarded when they are not covered with demon masks. Freaks, transvestites and nudists are often caught from the most unflattering angles while ordinary elderly women and men are converted into celebrants of a Witches' Sabbath by means of bizarre bird and flower masks. Even individuals who people one's everyday existence, an "Elderly Couple on a Park Bench," "A Young Man and his Girlfriend with Hot Dogs in the Park," "Two Girls in Matching Bathing Suits," a baby crying, a Puerto Rican woman are all transformed by Arbus's nightmare vision into apparitions simultaneously pitiful and monstrous.

How does she do it? If one looks closely one notes that Arbus uses a variety of methods. Occasionally she will transfix her subject from an angle calculated to bring out her or his worst rather than best features. This is the case in the "Man Dancing with the Large Woman," where emphasis is placed on the woman's overly fleshy back making her all the more gargantuan in comparison to the short, pudgy little man. Even more frequently, the photographer confronts her subjects head on and close up so that all their imperfections are under intimate scrutiny. Then she either places her people in a sordid situation which is guaranteed to transform them into something outlandish such as "The King and Queen of the Senior Citizen's Dance," or "The loser at the Diaper Derby" or she isolates her subjects in such a way as to metamorphosize their ordinary faces into something else, something alien and false. This kind of conversion occurs in her portrayal of a middle-aged "Jewish Couple Dancing," and in a "Man at a Parade on Fifth Avenue," to use only two out of many examples. Nowhere in her work are human beings unself-consciously in touch with each other with any kind of warmth or communal spirit. **continued 4**



Diane Arbus, *Mexican dwarf in his hotel room, NYC 1970*. Lent by Doon Arbus, Museum of Modern Art

(Below) Diane Arbus, *A young Brooklyn family going for a Sunday outing, NYC 1966*, Lent by Doon Arbus, Museum of Modern Art



(Left) Diane Arbus, *A Jewish couple dancing, NYC 1963*, Lent by Doon Arbus, Museum of Modern Art



ARBUS



Diane Arbus, *Untitled (4)*, 1970-1971, Lent by Doon Arbus, Museum of Modern Art.

On viewing many of the photographs, especially those of the freaks, sexual deviates and retarded individuals, one's first impulse is to avert the eyes. It seems almost inhuman to look at people so exposed and defenseless, caught with all their imperfections hanging out. Then it occurred to me, on looking around at the people eyeing the photographs that any one of them could take his or her place on the wall and through the medium of Arbus's disturbing vision appear as pathetic and distorted as any of the creatures trapped within the frames. Yet immediately afterward it also struck me that such a view would be only a fragmented and contorted one. It would certainly not include each individual's total human condition which encompasses the potential for great beauty as well as the propensity toward grotesqueness. Again it is all in the eye of the beholder. What was particularly interesting to me was the reaction of many of the museum visitors to the images before them. Many people looked, smiled, smirked and commented on them in patronizing tones. Arbus's bizarre presentations seemed to imbue them with a sense of their own superiority. Somehow by seeing a series of abnormal physical and psychological human specimens paraded in front of them, they were able to reassure themselves that *they* were different, finer, more beautiful, worthier. Then I was able to fathom the attraction that Arbus exerted on today's tastemakers. Arbus had found a way of exteriorizing all her terrible fears, hostilities, anxieties through her choice of subject matter and her photographic techniques and in doing it for herself, she was doing it for the darker side of all of us.

As I went through the exhibition I realized that the artist's need to examine freaks and misfits had infected her entire vision. Everywhere Arbus looked she found the outlandish and the bizarre. For her a home was just a pasteboard facade; a view of mountains, trees and water was a cheap lobby mural, and a woman was a perverted man. Nothing was real; everything was distorted, cheap and false.

It seems to this author that all of Arbus's work has the tinge of schizophrenic malingering over it. Omnipresent is the sense of non-reality, the lack of human feeling and commitment. Contrary to what has been mouthed by establishment critics about Arbus, there is no human empathy extended from her to her subjects. Indeed, her much quoted personal notations bear witness to her feelings of isolated detachment from all genuine positive human contacts. She states in one place, "I was confirmed in a sense of reality which I could only feel as unreality. The world seemed to me to belong to the world. I could learn things but they never seemed to be my own experience." And again her frequent declarations of her adoration of freaks, her sense of exhilaration when she was around them, her need for the tragic and deformed as a stimulus, her feeling of superiority in the midst of handicapped people, her use of the camera as protection ("I'd have my eyes glued to the finder and it wasn't like I was really vulnerable.") and her final tortured admission that "What I'm trying to describe is that it's impossible to get out of your skin into somebody else's. That somebody else's tragedy is not the same as your own" are all duly jotted down in her notebooks for anyone to read. It is painfully clear that Arbus ultimately understood how alone she really was even though she tried to buoy herself up by focusing on everyone else's misery. Yet in the end there was no escape from the inner conviction that it was *she* who was the real freak.

In this assessment of Arbus's art, I am not trying to intimate that she had nothing of value to offer us any more than one could say that Bosch or Dix or Acconci have nothing to offer us. However, it is wrong to pretend that Arbus gives us more than what she gives. She presents us with the dark side of the human condition, the vision of sickness, perversion, ugliness, horror, schizophrenia. She makes us squirm, twist, avert our eyes, sneak a look back, giggle and ultimately convince ourselves that our state is infinitely superior to the one that confronts us in the black and white two dimensional image before us. Too caught up in her own pain, Arbus had little left over compassion for the human needs of her subjects. She was unable to see through to the other side of their humanity, to their essentially beautiful and dignified spiritual nature.

Arbus is precisely so appealing today to so many because we have lost our belief in the humanity of humankind. It has become very fashionable these days to sneer at just this kind of essential beauty and nobility and to exalt the ugly and the perverted. The vision of a meaningful universe with human beings integrally woven into its fabric was not only denied to Diane Arbus; it haunts us all though we are loathe to admit it. It is easier therefore when we meet our own dark fears in the work of another simply to pretend that work is something else, the very thing we want it to be, the opposite of what it is. The more we recognize it the less we wish to call it by its proper name. It is particularly offensive to the less secure among us that these kind of merciless images are the products of a woman's vision. After all, the sexual clichés have told us that woman's innate view of the world is gentle and compassionate. Therefore our tastemakers, our critics and our conveyers of culture tend to lie. They prefer to call the alienated, empathic, the false, real, the antihuman, humanistic; the grotesque, noble. But it won't work. No matter how many times they fearfully insist on the human dignity and sympathetic interpretation of a Diane Arbus portrayal, one has simply to glance at her images and one still wants to look the other way. But where to look? That may well be the meaning behind her genius. She, along with the other profoundly lost souls of her generation, ultimately force us to seek a better place than the territory that they discovered. However, we cannot deceive ourselves about Arbus. Her photographs are a jumping off point for a journey that inevitably leads to hell. ■

LETTERS

Congratulations on doing the Robin Morgan poem(s) and her essay. And thank you for having the nerve . . . must admit in my naivete I was surprised to see how skittish Ms and Random House were.

Patricia Hampe

The second issue of *Feminist Art Journal* arrived this week. I thought most of it was terrific! I didn't like the lead story interview--mostly because I didn't like most of what Nevelson had to say--though there are some gems in it. And the *Journal* didn't make clear its stand in relation to what she said, which always bothers me. I'm really impressed with the way you name names. The enemy does, after all, have a name, whether it's 'men' or 'Rubin.'

Carol Hanish
Gainesville, Fla.

Congratulations on your really excellent interview article with Louise Nevelson in the current issue of *The Feminist Art Journal*. It is really an outstanding, highly informative piece of art literature which should, and I'm sure will be, widely read.

Howard Conant
Chairman, Division of Creative Arts
New York University

I just loved every article in your magazine. It's great. It made me feel damn proud of women. You are on the right track. Right on.

Ronnie Elliott
New York, New York

I was stopped in my tracks by your article by Robin Morgan on Sylvia Plath's relationship with Ted Hughes.

Joan Nixon
Bloomington, Indiana

You need us--we need you. It's a fine journal and a welcome confirmation of the problems and feelings of women in art (my students are in a state of shock). For years I have been angry at the oppression of women in general--after reading the two *FAJ*'s I am intractably *enraged*. Carry it on.

Hadley Smith
University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia

Hooray for your existence!

C.A. Blake
South Pasadena, Calif. ■

THE WOMAN ARTIST:

**Butcher, baker, candlestick maker
Mother, housewife, sculptor, painter**

IRENE MOSS

One of our subscribers, Ms. Pat Proctor, of Westboro, Mass., asked the question recently: "Have you ever written an article on how hard it is for a woman (especially a housewife and mother) to get started seriously in the art world?" As a mature woman artist who has gone through that road, I feel qualified to answer.

I searched my thoughts and tried to evaluate my career in terms of the combination of being a wife and mother with that of being an artist.

As a girl all my thoughts and ambitions were directed toward art but for financial reasons I had to work in an office and attend art classes after work. I went through the usual growing pains of art classes stressing life studies and still lifes and endured the constant conflict that existed between my desire to become a serious artist and the frustrations of pressure from my home environment. In my middle class environment the goal of a girl was to get married, which I did. My career became dormant for a few ensuing years in which I acted out the role of mother to two sons and wife, but I still studied art every possible moment I could give to it. I can't say that my family did not cooperate and I don't think they stopped me in any way. But thinking of myself in terms of being housewife and part time artist, I kept out of art circles and led an isolated existence. The idea that marriage and children came first was part of my up-bringing and everything else had to take a back seat.

But being serious about my work, my drive wouldn't let me sit still. I kept entering my work in competitions, and encountering some successes gave me the confidence I needed to go further. The crux of the matter is that I, who have gone through years of training and working, have been made to feel that because I was also a wife and mother, I was less of a serious artist than a man who has to work at carpentry or framing, but who pursues his career whenever his time permits him to do so.

I've had to fight the artworld's image of me all my life. Top quality galleries do not consider me a serious contender because of my middle class image, and when personal contact becomes necessary, obstacles appear. Just recently a gallery owner after seeing photographs of my paintings wanted to see more of my work, but because I have heard that he doesn't like older women artists, I went to see him reluctantly. Another gallery owner, this one a woman, after seeing photographs of my work year after year, remarked to a friend of mine that she was surprised to see my capacity for so much growth and that she really liked my work but she always thought of me as a "lady painter" who paints for a hobby. When you consider that I've had a number of one-woman shows this attitude is hard to understand.

In reality I think of myself as being successful, as my feeling about art is and has been one of reaching out and



Irene Moss, Cyclorama # 3, 1972 50 x 60

creating work that gives others pleasure. I had a number of shows in colleges and universities in order to reach the younger generation and found their response very fulfilling. If you have a driving desire and the talent to keep working and improving your work to your own satisfaction, nothing can stop you.

The answer to the question "how hard it is for a woman (especially a housewife and mother) to get started seriously in the art world" should be the same as for a father whose prime motive is art but who has to work at a supplementary job to exist. The thing to do is to make the art world acknowledge that you can function on both levels of existence, as a person with the same family responsibilities as a man, and as a serious artist. That's what the Women's Liberation Movement is all about. ■

The **IMPORTANCE** of **BEING SEEN** on the **SCENE**

IRENE MOSS

You are always seen, but you haven't been seen until you have been seen at the Whitney Museum Opening scene.

You can be seen at home, in your studio, in galleries, on the street, but although you are being looked at, you are not being seen.

To see who counts, you must be on the scene.

The chauvinistic pasha gallery owner, with a sweet young thing hanging on his hands and words, is on the scene being seen.

Young, vulnerable, aspiring artists are on the scene not being seen.

Collectors are on the scene being seen, but artists who want to be seen by them are not being seen.

Some critics sure to be seen by those who want to be seen, are not there to be seen.



There's what's his name . . . I don't want to be seen by him . . . Oh, Hi! nice to see you.

There's what's her name, I wonder has she seen me? No, definitely, I haven't been seen.

There's . . . Oh, Hi! nice to see you! (I mean to be seen).

I am looking for what's her name, where is she? Is it possible she doesn't want to be seen? Everyone here wants her here, to be seen by her, on the scene.

How to dress to be seen is important. Can anything be done to look outstanding to be seen? Yes, there is that girl in black tights, short tailored jacket, no pants, sequined multi-colored platform shoes, velvet hat, the height of successful exhibitionism, being seen.

The exhibition? Briefly being seen. But let's hurry, here it's the work that's being seen . . . let's go to the bar, that's the scene where you can be seen. ■

WOMEN'S FILMS: THE ARTISTIC IS POLITICAL

KATHIE SARACHILD

In June the First International Festival of Women's Films ran for 2 1/2 weeks at the Fifth Avenue Cinema in New York City. It was a significant step in the deepening radicalization of the feminist movement's onslaught against male supremacy in the film art and the film industry. Movies are the world's major culture purveyors, and in every country film is still a bastion of male employment and a powerful propaganda medium for male supremacy.

In the 75 year history of the cinema, this was the first festival called for the purpose of exhibiting the work of women film-directors. By looking at their work collectively it brought women film-makers into clear public view for the first time.

Although "women's films" has been a term used to mean any number of things--from films about women to the Hollywood idea of special films for women--the organizers of The Festival meant only one thing when they used the term and that was: a film directed by a woman. This definition was particularly important because it focused attention on the importance of the demand that positions of out and out power be open to women in film-making.*

The actual films that the Festival assembled showed how important was the entrance of women into film in a way that no amount of theorizing about discrimination against women or appeals to justice could. The effect was to bypass the liberal rhetoric emphasizing women's "potential" which is now holding back feminist progress and go straight to an understanding of women's abilities NOW. Not only did it become clear at the Festival that women film-makers exist, but so many of the films the Festival exhibited--films virtually buried from public knowledge--were unquestionably films which were developing and deepening the range of human consciousness with new subject matter and new understandings of old. By revealing this in concrete form with all its political implications, the Festival also pushed theoretical understanding about women in film in a far more radical direction than before. It "raised" political consciousness in the profoundest sense.

Before the Festival my usual premonition was that the films would be fully equal to the run of the mill films by men, and--while I supported women's equal rights to be zippy-zappy, arty-farty, emotionally alienated, fashionably vague and ambiguous or meaninglessly wham-bam, I knew I would have trouble sitting through three weeks of this.

There were 110 films shown over this period, of which I managed to see all but about 20. What turned out to be so amazing and exciting was that, in fact, so few of the ones I did see were linked to prevailing trends in films in both subject matter and style. Rather, they represented approaches to technique and subject matter that I had again "somehow" missed seeing before, approaches that appealed to me far more than the prevailing trends in film showings both above and below ground.

In my experience, one's feminist consciousness progresses from liberal to radical, from vague to clear, and from a feeling of ambivalent discomfit to furious inspiration and commitment at the point one realizes that women's intelligence and accomplishments are for the most part invisible and unknown, not because they have been kept from "developing" their abilities--but because what women want, what women have to say, what they are very much able to do, is, in one way or another a threat to male supremacy and this happened for me once again at the Film Festival.

* (I do not wish to get into a discussion here of the question of whether directors really have power in the making of films nowadays. I will state simply, however, that whether they do or they don't, I think they should. I know from personal experience that film is one of the most collective of art forms--in some sense making a film is like an assembly line, factory operation, putting various arts together. I know how tremendously important is the contribution of each artist craftsman to the making of a good film--from the actors to the editor, not to mention the costume designer, etc., etc. Yet it is these very things that require a person who will lead, coordinate, and make final decisions concerning all the efforts and elements, a person who begins with the impulse for the film and carries it through to completion. That person should have the power to work as effectively as possible and that person should be recognized as the director. Ironically, perhaps, it is in the very nature of collective work that it needs a leader, whereas individual and smaller scale actions don't. It is a symphony orchestra, after all, which needs a conductor whereas a chamber music quartet doesn't. Feminist revolutionaries, take heed.)



Michei Bouquet & Sheila White in Nelly Kaplan's Film *Poppa the Little Boats*. Venus 'Cookie' de Palma assumes leadership of the gangster band that has kidnapped her.

I wonder whether even the organizers knew beforehand how inflammatory were the elements they were putting together, particularly in the films they selected.

While some professionals feared that there were not yet enough "good" films by women, there were also movement groups which insisted that it was "too soon." In their version there were not yet enough "radical" or "feminist" films by women to have a festival--at this time, this year, etc.

Shirley Clarke, one of the few women directors whose films ("The Connection," "The Cool World," "Jason," to name a few) have received considerable attention from the critics and fairly widespread independent distribution, was one of these. "I felt that this was not the appropriate time for a women's film festival, not now when you have to scrounge around for worthwhile films," she told Marjorie Rosen in an interview for the *Saturday Review*.

Annette Michelson, a well-known writer of film criticism, wanted the festival to be a "retrospective" only, which would have in effect guaranteed that only pictures safely okayed in the past by men, already rated on the critical record, would have been shown. This would have deflected encouragement, support and recognition away from the film-makers who most need their work shown and known--women who are living and working now. It also would have presented less of a competitive--artistic and political--threat to the men who are working now.

Interestingly enough, the Festival demonstrated that those women who have been able to get into film-making have all along tended to make feminist and radical films. Germaine Dulac, one of the earliest pioneers of the French cinema, whose film about a woman's fantasies of revenge on her tyrannical husband was shown at the Festival (*The Smiling Madame Beudet*, 1922) even spent years putting out a French feminist publication called *La Fronde*, in addition to her work in films.

There were also attacks on the Festival's methods--specifically on the founder and director Kristina Nordstrom--even for bad manners. All seemed like familiar patterns to this particular feminist, yours truly, whereby those women who, for whatever reasons want to go more slowly, try to hold back the women who want to go faster without letting anybody know that's what's happening.

The question of "policies" for the Festival was really a simple one: whether a Women's Film Festival--a film festival designed for the simple but profound purpose of showing the best of the full range of style and subject matter in films by women, rather than whatever the prevailing fashion was in politics (feminist radical chic or otherwise) or style (artistic, commercial or otherwise)--should be held at all.

The quality in Nordstrom which was at the heart of the conflict was really her very political understanding of the tremendous importance of this simple idea of a women's film festival, and the courage with which she stood her ground in its support.

CONTINUED

Whitney Film Festival . . . or Rip-off?

ALEXIS KRASILOVSKY

The Whitney Museum is preparing "a special month long women's film festival," and a week devoted to retrospectives of women's films, one woman shows, etc., chosen by two men: David Bienstock, Curator of Films; and Bruce Rubin, his assistant. No acknowledgements have been made to its antecedents, especially the Festival of Women's Films organized in New York by Kristina Nordstrom six months ago. Although the Whitney Museum has already doubled its usual week's budget in order to provide for its special week of programs, no woman filmmaker will be receiving the museum's usual rental rate of \$5-\$7.50 per minute or \$400 for a full week's projection (such as Mailer's *Maidstone* had last spring). Normally, the museum screens each film for a week to ten days, giving the public time to read reviews, hear friends' reactions, and decide to go see for themselves what the filmmaker has accomplished. Claiming that there are too many films to be shown, the Whitney's solution is to give a woman with a fifty minute film \$25 instead of the usual rental fee of \$250-\$375, and to limit her film to one screening, so that all the women's films can be covered in a month. Nor have any plans been made concerning the sex ratio of other months' screenings, or the possibility of adding a woman to the film curatorial staff before the women's festival. Mr. Bienstock has agreed to sign a letter acknowledging that the women's festival is taking place under his institution's auspices if we women would like to undertake the research and secretarial duties of finding a foundation which would up the rental fees to normal; but his office "just doesn't have the time."

FILMS continued

Associated with male supremacy in art have been limited subject matter and stylistic limitations and artificialities--style meaning technical display rather than style to capture the essence of a feeling or observation--style as a means of expression, a means of genuine expression rather than a means of deceit.

The impact of feminism on film and on all art will be to put people in touch with their feelings, experience and observation in new ways and with greater and greater understanding. With the rise of feminism and the emergence of truths that have never before been expressed in art, the prevailing modes of art will have to change. Art will either become feminist, i.e. remain good or get better, i.e. stay open and honest to the ever-widening range of one's feelings and understanding of truth and human reality--women's reality as well as men's--or it will remain bad or get worse, reacting to the new understanding and feelings with hysteria (hence the frantic backlash with all the stupid films of violence and rape) or just endless confusion (hence will be boring). We can see this happening in film. And it is interesting to note that Andy Warhol--the put-on master of the graphic arts--has in recent years shifted his efforts to making the very kinds of films I have just described.

In feminist consciousness-raising, discussions, honest expression with feeling and clarity of the way things are--showing a little more than has been shown before--is what seems to lead most directly to ideas and feelings for what things might be. This is what happens with good films too and what happens with good art. Art can be the ground work for feminist theory in much the same way that consciousness raising is.

This is what happened at the Women's Film Festival.

Many of the films at the Festival were exploring human lives--male and female--with a depth--levels of both simplicity and complexity rarely seen in film, and often with a clarity of feeling that made you catch your breath. So many seemed to be involved in the investigation of feelings and human relations rather than merely the playing out of them or the false attempt at just recording them. Sometimes this was done by a simple, stark realism that nevertheless captured the subject from the inner layer as well as the outer layer and which made it often hard to tell a fiction film from a documentary. Other times the films explored what was going on with feelings and human relations by blowing these up larger than life size--with bold caricature and high stylization. Most were done brilliantly within the confines of very limited budgets. And the very best, some made decades ago, were obviously cinema pioneers of human consciousness. It was both inspiring and shocking to learn about these films--made by women.

The film *Together* was an example. When I saw this film early in the Festival--a fifty-minute feature made in 1956 by a 21-year-old Italian living in England, Lorenza Mazzetti, a woman who has never gotten a chance to make another film, becoming a novelist and sociologist instead--it was so good it was hard to deal with.

It was a simple story, combining a bare documentary-like quality with rich emotional detail, about two men who live and work (in a factory) together in London's poor East End section. The men are deaf and with no dialogue, the film captures the need and comradeship between them, their alien relationship with the other people in their boarding house, the children in the street who tease them and play tricks on them, taking advantage of their deafness, and the

longing of one man to make contact with a woman (the love scene which he fantasizes with a girl who accidentally sits next to him in a pub practically wiped me out--and that hasn't happened to me in the movies for a long time)

The film reminded me of the best of the Italian realist films like *The Bicycle Thief* and *Umberto Di* in its general style and subject matter. And yet those films, as well as others in that genre by Italian men I had heard of and seen. This one by a woman I had not. Their directors went on to make many more films. And Mazetti, as she told the audience at the Festival that day when she left England to return to Italy, to that supposedly kindred film community, with all those supposedly radical, some even communist (male) directors to welcome her home, made no more films.

The first work I saw by Lotte Reiniger (German) at the Festival, *Snow White and Rose Red* was highly stylized fantasy, on the other hand a fairy tale rendered in old-fashioned, dainty black and white silhouettes. But it was a similarly exciting discovery. What was so powerful in this film again was the amazing subtlety of feeling, the emotional detail Reiniger was able to capture with her characters. This film-maker was one of the early pioneers in the development of the animated cartoon, drawing her figures from live shadow plays she designed and directed. I had taken a course in animation in college in which her work had not been shown, had not even been mentioned. And yet I learned at the Festival that she--a woman--made the first full length animated feature in film history in 1926.

A large number of the films at the Festival were exploring the lives one rarely sees as the subjects of films, poor and old people, working men, women--"ordinary" people, and they did this without a patronizing sense of distance from their subjects--the near voyeurism that passes for objectivity in so many of the so-called "cinema verite" documentaries that one usually sees. The directors succeeded in creating a feeling of direct communication and connection with the heart of their subjects, even personal identification.

Most interesting at the Festival was the work that women film-makers had been doing on the lives of women. From the point of view of a special contribution to film art, and political action, it became clear that, at the very least, increasing the number of jobs for women as film directors would increase the number of films ABOUT women. This in itself is no small achievement. As a glance at the newspapers on any random Sunday in New York will tell you, women as main characters are rarely seen in movies, a form of male supremacist distortion at the most powerful level and one that happens to hit actresses very hard also. Eliminating women completely is even worse than showing women badly. Putting a woman in a movie as the protagonist is, at least, raising the image of women from the invisible to the visible. It is getting the truth out and onto celluloid that women are actually there in the world existing as the subjects--the main characters--of their own lives. And this, it would seem, most women directors--those few that there have been--have been doing from the beginning of films.

The Wild Party by Dorothy Arzner (1929) which the Festival showed was Paramount Pictures' first "talkie" and made by one of the few female directors in Hollywood's history. It was also the sharp and zany story of a spirited student in a women's college who leads her friends into various adventures. Although the women in the film aren't challenging any other system than the college rules, this movie, nevertheless, captures a real feeling of the oppressed sex's camaraderie in action that is largely unrecognized in the cultural record. *Maedchen in Uniform* by Leontine Sagan, a widely recognized film classic made in Germany in 1931 not only has women as the protagonists--a pupil and a teacher whose friendship challenges the authoritarian ideals and practices of a boarding school for the daughters of Prussian army officers--but it had an all female cast. Sagan was another woman director who never got another chance to make a film again. In this case, her work was banned when Hitler came into power. And I have already mentioned the work of cinema pioneer Germaine Dulac. All and all, about 40% of the films at the Festival were about women, either as individuals or a group, and it was clear that only women directors have been and are still, making films with female protagonists in any number that comes close to approximating the actual percentage of females in the human population.

Just with a woman as the subject matter of a film, with any clarity and areas of honesty at all, it is inevitable that some insight about women's lives can be gleaned from the film, some new understanding. And this was true of even the most vague and timid and protectively contradictory of the films about women shown at the Festival.

But the best films at the Festival were those that did get close to the truths of women's lives, moving away from the false idealized forms that have been used as barriers to women's freedom to be their real selves on the screen as well as in their lives. They were the films that captured on the screen the inner strengths and outer realities of women that male supremacy disguises and distorts and feminist consciousness reveals. Most often these were the short films at the Festival, especially the documentaries about real women. Fewer of the full length features went beyond conventional themes or, if they did, they held themselves back, stayed on the familiar and false surfaces or just settled at fogging the surfaces. In these documentaries with a format, which film-maker after film-maker at the Festival without any

FILMS continued

apparent connection with each other seemed to use, of women talking straight and naturally about their lives, feelings, and opinions, the female directors were clearly recognizing and utilizing for their artistic material the strength and spirit of "ordinary" women that is also emerging everywhere in feminist consciousness raising.

This was true in the films clearly done for deliberate political effect, and in which the film's characters are women with some degree of political involvement in their lives like *I Am Somebody* made by Madeline Anderson, a black woman film-maker, in 1970 (in it many black women hospital workers talk about a strike they are involved in); *The Woman's Film* done in 1971 by Judith Smith, Louise Alaimo and Ellen Sorin of San Francisco Newsreel (working class women--mostly white--talking); *Three Lives* by Kate Millet, 1971 (more highly educated women talking); *Janie's Janie* by Geri Asher in 1971 (one working class white welfare mother talks); *It Happens To Us* by Amalie Rothschild in 1972 (women tell about their abortions).

This was also true in many of the studies of real women's lives in which there was no direct or apparent connection between the film and a political movement, feminist or otherwise although, of course, of these films many were, in fact, made after the women's liberation movement had already begun to raise general consciousness. In *Diane* by Mary Feldhouse-Weber (1969) a struggling actress in New York City talks about her life (with occasional scenes from the South Dakota farm town where she grew up) and her running commentary is a goldmine of feminist insight. *Woo, Who? Mae Wilson*, made by Amalie Rothschild in 1970 before she became actively involved in the women's movement, does pretty much the same thing with a sixty-three year old woman who had moved to NYC to live alone when her husband left her after she became a serious sculptor. *Mosori Monika* by Chick Strand (1970) juxtaposes the voice over thoughts of a Catholic nun in a South American mission with those of a poor Indian woman whom she is "civilizing."

In these films, the women were expressing very similar kinds of insights, sharp connections and perceptions that were expressed in the one documentary shown at the Festival about a famous woman, the writer Gertrude Stein, in voice over readings from her writings and interviews (*Gertrude Stein. When This You See Remember Me*) directed by Perry Miller Adato for NET, 1970.

Of the documentaries about women at the Festival, somehow it was only the ones about pregnant women and childbirth which generally rang false and weak--with something strained and dishonest about them. They were almost painful to watch, as a matter of fact, not so much because the birth process looked so painful as because of a feeling that the women were all forcing themselves to be cheerful. There was that tremor in their smiles, the fear and pain that never got expressed and seemed so much worse because nobody was expressing any of it. Women seemed to talk much more freely and honestly about their abortions.

Most of the full length features did not fare as well in terms of pushing back the frontiers of feminist consciousness (or even, and maybe, therefore, in producing absorbing and dramatically effective films). Too many that did get into the subject matter of women's lives seemed to be pulling their punches at whatever they were trying to do. This was not true of the two brilliant features by Nelly Kaplan of France shown at the Festival which I will discuss; or of Agnes Varda's "Cleo From Five To Seven (France, 1961); or the Italian Liliana Cavani's futuristic rendition of the Antigone legend "The Year of the Cannibals."

Even on the strictly dramatic level--the female main characters being alive and real and understandable enough to earn the right to be the main character of the film--the (real) women of the documentaries usually outshone the (fictional) women of the features. In so many of the theatrical features, like *The Girl* by Marta Meszaros (Hungary 1970), *The Lady from Constantinople* by Judit Elek (Hungary, 1969), *Something Different* by Vera Chytilova (Czechoslovakia, 1963) and *The Girls* by Mai Zetterling (Sweden, 1969) *Wanda* by Barbara Loden (American, 1970) the women were all bored, listless, and incapable of real action. In the documentaries which, after all, were about real women, none of the women had this quality even when they were complaining it was with involvement and insight.

These features never seemed to get beneath the masks women wear. They didn't even seem conscious--or didn't let on, anyway--that women wear masks. The women in these features, in fact, seemed like a different species from the women in the documentaries. It was as if these features were only dealing with the surfaces of women, accepting that how women often present themselves to others is what they really are, not daring to go beneath the surface and tell the truth for fear of being called "unrealistic" (by men). And the truly realistic women of the documentaries were showing things about women that had not been shown before and that men would dismiss as unrealistic and not recognize.

This was unfortunate because the documentaries, although powerful just because they were so undeniably about real women, also had limitations because of this. A good feature can actually capture the reality of people more deeply because it has greater control over its elements, more room in which to move and create and use humor. It can also ex-

periment with reality and recreate the past. And it can make connections and explore possibilities for women that a documentary can't. It can set up a goal and proceed to accomplish it in the most convincing way.

The film-maker at the Festival whose work did make daring and brilliant use of the possibilities of feature films for putting the power of the film medium to militant feminist artistic use and creating commercially viable movies for changing the heads of people about women on a mass scale, was Nelly Kaplan of France. Both of the Kaplan features screened at the Festival *A Very Curious Girl* (1969) and *Poppa, Little Boats* (1971) are about women who turn the tables on the men who oppress them.

In *A Very Curious Girl*, a poor young woman in a French provincial village takes revenge on the townspeople who treat her with contempt by becoming a prostitute and then exposing all her customers. *Poppa, Little Boats* is a movie in which the beautiful young girl saves herself from her kidnappers and manages to assume leadership of the gangster band herself. Both films are rich with slapstick humor and irony. Both reveal the bitterness and brilliance lurking behind the female "stereotypes." Their heroines are fantastically powerful, yet they look like ordinary women. The films are obvious farces and yet you leave the theater with a feeling of strength you didn't have before. These women are fighting for themselves at breakneck speed.

A Very Curious Girl was a commercial success in Europe and France's selection for the Venice Film Festival of 1969. But it has been virtually locked up in the vaults and kept out of circulation since Universal Pictures bought the world rights a short while ago.

Universal Pictures has agreed to release *A Very Curious Girl* again for theatrical 35mm distribution as a result of the Women's Film Festival. For months now it has been scheduled to open at New York's Fifth Avenue . . . as soon as *The Sorrow and the Pity* finished its run there. The delay of course is having the effect of cutting the film off from the publicity it received as a result of the Women's Film Festival. Universal may have really decided to try to bury the film again, by giving it no promotion at all. So people will have to WATCH FOR THIS FILM and spread the word.

Poppa, Little Boats has not yet been sold to a distributor. One reason it is reported to be having some trouble is that some potential buyers have thought the heroine grinned too much and too widely. And yet it is just films like these--that capture what women really are when they have taken the phoney, goody-goody layers of veils off--that are in fact exciting and entertaining. If given free reign, they would be as "commercial" as the current wave of black films are proving themselves to be with whites as well as blacks.

If the Women's Film Festival demonstrated anything, it demonstrated that the fight of women film-makers is as much a fight to get their work distributed and seen, as it is to get their work made, that the two go hand in hand, in fact. If the good work of women film-makers is going to get distributed despite the obstacles, other people have to have a sense that they want the films seen. They will have to support it the way you support a work of art or a piece of writing, or a moving political or feminist statement which you want seen and heard and gotten around, even if you yourself didn't make it or do it because it is important, because it has shown you something and you think it will also do that for others.

It was this very thing that Nordstrom was doing by holding the Festival. It is very different from the idea of supporting something, anything, just because it is by a woman, which is tantamount actually to the idea of pushing your own thing simply because it is yours rather than pushing something because it is good or some mutually beneficial sort of trade union idea where you all agree to push each others work no matter what it's like because the group has invested in it.

That women and their work are not getting this kind of support from either men or other women is a real problem that the movement has made only the barest minimum step toward solving.

It takes almost superhuman commitment to keep going on the strength of one's own insight.

Only a few women have been able to do it in the face of the obstacles to their work as well as the lack of recognition because they are women. If economic circumstances (and husbands) permitted, this has been done by individual women painters and writers, sometimes with support, sometimes by a very few with only the barest encouragement, in almost complete isolation (Emily Dickenson). But my guess is that in cinema this is virtually impossible because of the tremendous capital investment necessary to make a film. Women film-makers who are doing good work, work that should get seen, must get encouragement and support, and people must go to see these films (and pay to see them!) or they will not get made. In film, a person will only be able to push her own good work so much--and then she will either stop working completely or knuckle under to (male) fashions.

The films at the Festival were largely ignored by the Press. Many of the most impressive of all were not even reviewed by the critics on the mass circulation newspapers, although the critics will review short film after short at the Whitney Film screenings and Festivals.

BOOK REVIEW: Kaethe Kollwitz Life in Art

MARTHA MARY KEARNS

Kaethe Kollwitz, Life in Art by Mina C. and H. Arthur Klein, published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, Limited, 1972. Juvenile, 12th Grade and up.

Kaethe Kollwitz (1867-1945) was the finest graphic artist of the Twentieth Century. She drew, engraved, lithographed and sculpted poor women, their children and husbands as suffering victims of poverty and war. Most of her work represents women as grief-stricken, joyous, shielding mothers; as hapless, pregnant teenagers; tender, chatty friends; stooped, resting field-workers; forlorn widows; revolutionaries leading and aiding rallies, marches, and strikes; hysterical prostitutes; and unabashedly open and full-faced--themselves. Her women stoically brave war, desperate poverty, homelessness, their husband's unemployment, and their children's hunger, yet endure. Her women are not the glamour types Madison Avenue tries to sell us we are, but stalwart, strong-backed creators, keepers and protectors of life. Her women endure life's pain, cruelty, and destruction, and stand resolutely, often alone, but sometimes together with other women, against the life-taking forces of poverty and war. Her women are heroic in the epic of every day.

The most recent English biography of her, *Kaethe Kollwitz, Life in Art* by Mina C. and H. Arthur Klein, uncovers valuable new information about her. Especially nice is a rare family-relations portrait, taken in the 1870's, when Kaethe was 8 and her grandfather still alive. Prints of her work accompany the text, and this greatly helps the reader understand how her artistic and spiritual progress evolved. Thus the entire book is printed on glossy paper, which makes it a beautiful, somewhat expensive (\$8.95) treasure of her work and life. The writing, though sometimes stilted and unimaginative, is good, and teenagers on up will enjoy the book.

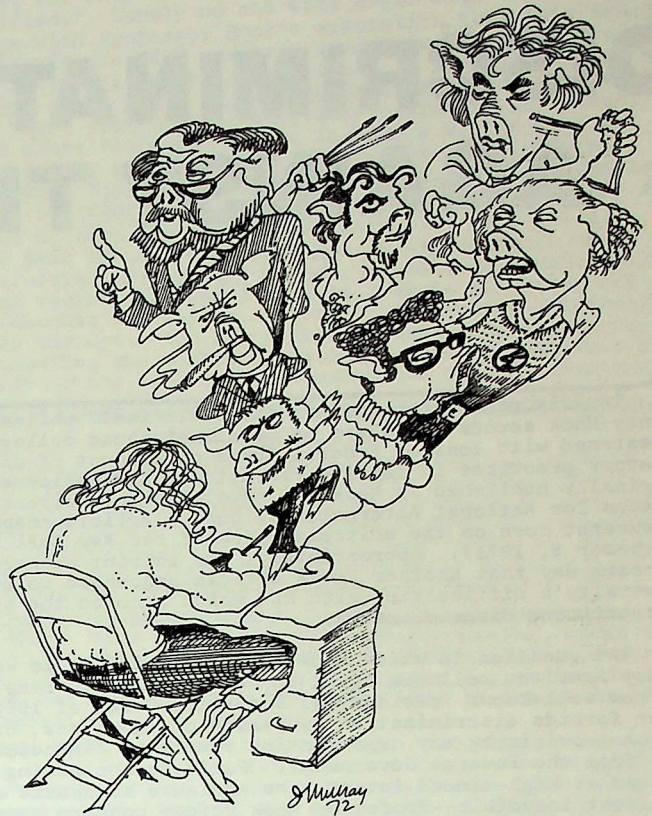
However, there remains one basic problem with Kaethe Kollwitz, and neither her English or German biographer (*Kaethe Kollwitz* by Otto Nagel, VEB Verlag der Kunst Dresden, 1963) have solved it. It is this: no one knows her. We know significant dates, events, and people in her life, but we do not, as we read along with her life, live, smell, feel, breathe and touch as she did. We don't know what she was like, or what it was like to feel like her within her time.

Why not? To me, there are two explanations. One, and probably the biggest reason to date, is that Kaethe herself believed, like her grandfather, who had this inscribed on his gravestone, that life itself was not important but to fulfill one's duty. Both biographers have respected this belief of Kaethe's, and have told us what she was, a great artist, but not who she was, a great woman. The deeper, more psychological reason we don't know her is because no woman has written her story yet. The husband-wife team sometime remember that

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Kaethe Kollwitz, *Self Portrait*, 1934, Lithograph, Courtesy Kennedy Galleries, Inc.



I've Got a Little List

CINDY NEMSER with a feminist nod to Gilbert and Sullivan

As some day it may happen that a piggy must be found,
I've got a little list--I've got a little list
of male chauvinist offenders who might well be underground,
And who never would be missed--who never would be missed!

There's the Kramers and the Canadays who write for the newspapers--
All the silly sexist journalists who gloat about their capers--
All the gallery dealers who are male and want to pinch your thigh,
All curators who visit you but are looking for a guy--
And all collectors who on men's work insist--
They'd none of 'em be missed--they'd none of 'em be missed!
There's the pompous abstract expressionist, and others of his race,
And the artist socialist--I've got him on the list!
And dealer Karp who smokes cigars and puffs them in your face,
They never would be missed--they never would be missed!
Then Castelli who promotes, with hypocritic glow,
And the puerile "Pop Art" artists who hate the women so!
And the woman critic from *New York*, who thinks like a guy,
And says, "women are all infantile," except when she says, "I";
And that pitiful monstrosity, the body artist,
I don't think he'd be missed--I'm sure he'd not be missed!
And that pesty little nuisance, who just now is rather rife,
The pseudo feminist--I've got him on the list!
All liberals, advice givers, and men who help "the wife"
They'd none of 'em be missed--they'd none of 'em be missed!
There's the male art instructor who says you paint just like a man,
And the female art historian who says you never can--
All critics who go on about the way that men see females--
All women gallery dealers who can really only see males
I've got them on the list--they never would be missed!
Then the women's group organizers who shriek and cry and moan,
Against every kind of leadership unless it is their own;
And apologetic editors of namby pamby mind
Such as O__ and F__ and C__
And others of their kind,
And Larry R__ and Andre E__ and Henry You-know-who
The task of filling up the blanks, I'd rather leave to you.
But it really doesn't matter which chauvinist you put upon the list--
For they'd none of 'em be missed--they'd none of 'em be missed! ■

DISCRIMINATION

AGAINST THE QUALIFIED ?

COME OFF IT SIDNEY HOOK

Patricia Sloane

In "Discrimination Against the Qualified?" philosopher Sidney Hook sounds the alarm on behalf of those colleges threatened with loss of federal funds on account of discriminatory practices in faculty recruitment and employment. Originally published in *Measure*, newsletter of University Centers for Rational Alternatives, Hook's article reappeared in excerpt form on the editorial page of *The New York Times* (November 5, 1971). Appropriately, the reprint appeared on the same day that another *Times* article announced Columbia University's difficulties with HEW which accused the school of practicing discrimination.

The question to which Hook addresses himself is whether or not American colleges ought to be compelled to comply with the now well-known Presidential Executive Order of 1965. The order forbids discrimination by reason of race, sex, or national origin by any organization receiving financial support from the Federal Government. Politely applauding what he sees as high-minded intent--the applause so gentle as to be almost inaudible--Professor Hook voices concern over "the difficulties of enforcing this order." If indeed there are "difficulties" of any magnitude then perhaps the rest of us should join Professor Hook in his worrying. Presidential orders, after all, are supposed to solve more difficulties than they cause, not make more troubles than they resolve. For hundreds of women artists the 1965 order raised the hope that women might at last be allowed to teach in art schools and college art departments in New York City.

And so before writing off as well-meaning bumbling this particular Presidential Order (or HEW's enforcement of it) some of us might want to take issue with Sidney Hook's notion of where the "difficulties" lie:

In Professor Hook's estimation, "there is, unfortunately, evidence that some foolish and unperceptive persons in the office of civil rights of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare are mechanically inferring from the actual figures of academic employment in institutions of higher learning the existence of discriminatory practices. What is worse, they are threatening to cancel Federal financial support, without which many universities cannot survive, unless within a certain period of time, the proportion of members of minorities on the teaching and research staffs of universities approximate the proportion in the general population.

"In the light of this evidence, a persuasive case can be made that those who have issued these guidelines and ultimatums to universities . . . are unqualified for the offices they hold and therefore unable properly to enforce the Presidential Executive Order . . . the effect of the ultimatums to universities to hire blacks and women under threat of losing crucial financial support is to compel them to hire unqualified Negroes and women and to discriminate against qualified non-blacks and men."

Really? Perhaps an equally "persuasive case" can be made that Professor Hook, on account of these remarks, shows himself to be unqualified to teach, and unfit to take a place among his colleagues in what we still like to imagine is a community of scholars and artists. Were I to share Sidney Hook's suspicion that American colleges cannot function without engaging in racism and sexism, then I would be amenable to the disbanding of American colleges. A democratic society has no room for institutions--including colleges--which refuse, or don't know how to be democratic. The hour is late for excuse-making on behalf of malingering institutions. And there is no longer room for those like Professor Hook who prefer to function as apologists.

So much for Professor Hook's intentions, which I find deplorable. Of the structuring of his argument, based primarily on *non sequitur*, I say only that it makes mockery of the notion that what philosophers have to tell us has something to do with "reasoned discourse." Professor Hook, besides being malevolent, is also illogical and unreasonable.

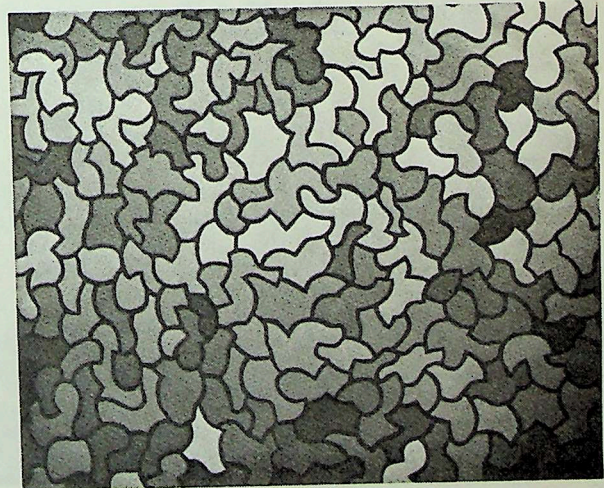
Professor Hook is disturbed over the criteria employed by HEW, which draws its conclusions about the employment practices of colleges from "the actual figures of academic employment in institutions of higher learning." Apparently finding the use of "actual figures" to be repugnant, Profes-

sor Hook fails to suggest what other type of data he considers more reliable.

I fear that when a university art department has no women on its faculty, this indeed *does* demonstrate that the art department of the university in question does not hire women. Similarly, when women faculty are discovered holding only part-time status, or earning less than male colleagues who do the same work, this *does* demonstrate that the college in question hires women only part-time or pays them at a lower rate than men. In conjunction with his distress over any pointing to "actual figures," what is one to make of Professor Hook's bandying about of the word "inference"? Discovering that a particular university has a faculty consisting entirely of white males, the viewer does not merely "infer" that the school employs neither black nor white women. Indeed she *observes* this to be the case, which is quite another matter.

This bit of sophistry (i.e., "infers" versus "observes") probably meant a great deal to Professor Hook when he constructed his tendentiously spaghetti-like argument. His playing with words--alas!--may have been sufficiently subtle to escape many *New York Times* readers, who tend to be less than a subtle lot. But recall that good philosophers like Professor Hook are known for their professional mistrust of *inferences*. Hook's claim that HEW is acting on inference amounts to saying--in philosopher argot--that HEW jumps to unjustified conclusions. Hook's claim in this regard is way off base. HEW, EEOC, and those of the rest of us who are concerned, are not talking about what we have "inferred." Instead we are talking about what we have *observed* and about what anyone can see for herself. It has been known to me for fifteen years that certain departments of Columbia University (including of course, the art department in the School of the Arts) neither hired nor interviewed women for faculty positions. Similarly I have known since I was ten years old that Columbia Medical School once had a quota limiting the number of Jewish students admitted. Everyone knows these things, which have been no secret for decades. Professor Hook alone is innocent of knowledge about such hanky-pank, then perhaps he spends too much time with his head in the sand and his foot in his mouth.

I knew in 1955, after Vernon Porter took the trouble to carefully explain it to me (I was rather slow-witted as a young person) that no art school or college in New York had ever hired a woman to teach studio courses. I knew nothing had changed ten years later when I asked Joe Steffanelli to recommend me for a college teaching job and he begged off with much panicky embarrassment and some mutterings about how he'd like to help but the time for *that* sort of thing really hadn't come yet. I am less than wholly sanguine about the situation even today: in reply to a letter sent to my alma mater inquiring about the dearth of women on the faculty of the painting department, the president of the Rhode Island



Patricia Sloane, *Taurus Torus*, 1969.

School of Design informs me that although he favors equal employment opportunities, his department chairmen insist on thwarting his noble efforts. Poor man!

Why don't all these people write to Sidney Hook and bring him up to date about what's been going on? Does anyone seriously believe that two women were recently hired in Columbia's art department on account of anything other than HEW pressure? Does anyone think women will teach painting and sculpture in the twenty-odd branches of the City University of New York without a good stiff fight? I doubt that anything other than a sustained battle will solve the present disgrace of college-level art education: in no field other than art does so great a disparity exist between the number of women awarded degrees in the field and the number of women permitted to teach in the colleges.

Sidney Hook fears that HEW's actions will force the universities "to hire unqualified Negroes and women and to discriminate against qualified non-blacks and men." Yet a second option exists for the universities which Professor Hook overlooks: in lieu of hiring black and white women who are not qualified, the universities might focus their recruiting efforts on those black and white women who are qualified. Any department chairman still gifted with the common sense he was born with ought to be able to figure that one out for himself. As for Professor Hook's apparent assumption that black and white women as a group are by definition relatively unqualified, this interesting proposition calls for further expostulation. Among the perennial crowd of holders of brand new Doctoral degrees, the greater number of the white males are found worthy of entering the teaching profession, as are large numbers of young white male artists who complete MFA degrees. If Professor Hook is suggesting that female PhD's tend to be inherently less "qualified" than white male PhD's--or that black or white female artists are inherently less qualified than white male artists--then one looks forward to his further explanation of what he takes "qualified" to mean.

I, for one, have come to the boiling point in regard to questions about whether women can be found who are "Qualified" as college teachers. I have not yet held a full-time college teaching job for which I was not absurdly over-qualified by comparison with the men who taught in my department. I am accustomed to being out-ranked by (and paid less than) male colleagues with less qualifications than I, whether these qualifications are measured in terms of degrees, number of one-man shows, number of books and articles published, years of teaching experience or what-not. Obviously I do not mean I am over-qualified for any teaching job, but only for those colleges which thus far have been willing to hire me. I take this condition of over-qualification to be the norm for women rather than the exception. Georgia O'Keeffe, when she wanted to teach, found work as an art instructor in the public schools of Texas. What male artists were teaching in the art department of the University of Texas during that period, and what have they ever amounted to? By what criterion was it decided that they were competent to teach in a college while O'Keeffe belonged in the public schools?

The major drift of Professor Hook's argument is not hard to understand. Sidney Hook argues in the role of a white man speaking on behalf of his own special interest group, which in this case is white men, or white male college teachers. One cannot fault him for painting in lurid hues a heartrending picture in which white men--Professor Hook's own "minority"--are most unjustly put upon. If the spiel of this well-known liberal of the right--and I read it as nothing but a partisan spiel--leaves any dry eyes in the audience, these are doubtless among those who recall that white men in America, although a numerical minority, traditionally have been an over-privileged group. White men retain their special status at the expense of those who are not male and not white. Professor Hook seems to believe the universities have an inalienable right to Federal funds, and no obligation to account for their use. But these funds were collected by taxing all our people. No justification exists for using them to support institutions which employ one group only. Why should black and white women pay taxes for the support of colleges where they cannot teach? Professor Hook seems to fear that "special privilege" is to be given black and white women; most of us would be content merely to see white men (Professor Hook, for example) deprived of the special privilege in employment and advancement which as a group they have so long and so unfairly enjoyed.

What does this mean in practical terms? Will it become more difficult, as Professor Hook fears, for competent white men--and competent white male artists--to find jobs in college teaching?

Certainly!

And why should it be otherwise? If competent black and white women have difficulty in the labor market, by what rationale should competent white men expect their own paths to be made easier? I find it grossly unjust to know that my own professional life will be more difficult than Sidney Hook's and that I shall have to work harder for promotion and tenure . . . to say nothing of the difficulties faced by women artists in showing their work in museums and galleries. Why shouldn't Sidney Hook have to work as hard as I do? Why should I be impressed to hear that he is competent, when I am competent too?

In an elegant piece of double-speak Professor Hook proposes an antidote for the ills he foresees: "No matter how many applicants there are for a post, whether they are male

or female, the only relevant criterion is whether or not they are qualified." Surely no one will argue with this. But I take issue with Professor Hook's assumption that this truly noble criterion in fact has been used by colleges in evaluating applicants for teaching positions. I say it has not, and this is the whole point. Numerous departments in innumerable colleges boast faculties of admirably competent white men. I fail to share Professor Hook's ingenuous willingness to suppose that the existence of these departments is prima facie evidence that competence is the criterion employed in hiring. I say that three criteria are used in assembling a department of that type: (1) competence, (2) race and (3) sex. The last two criteria have got to go, which is what HEW's activities are about. Either Columbia University will stop being racist and sexist or else America is better off without Columbia University. A racist and sexist university is morally corrupt. And one cannot explain away the corruption by counting the number of journal articles published by the faculty or the number of one-man shows held by teachers in the art department.

MORE BACKLASH

Sidney Hook is at it again. He has now organized over 500 "scholars" into a "Committee on Academic Non-discrimination and Integrity," in an attempt to keep our college faculties all white and male. His cohorts include Bruno Bettelheim of Chicago, Nathan Glazer of Harvard, Eugene Rostow of Yale and Paul Seabury of U. California & Charles Frankel of Columbia, among others. See *Newsweek*, Dec. 4, 1972, p. 127.

I believe that if HEW and EEOC are successful, competence will become the sole criterion used in hiring college teachers. I disagree with Professor Hook's outrageous suggestion that competence has been the sole criterion used in the past. I say it emphatically has not been.

In New York, where so many artists live, the number who wanted to teach has always far exceeded the number of available teaching positions in the city's colleges. For years it was the general attitude of art department chairmen that no woman could expect to be considered until all of the men had been accommodated. By what authority was this queue created, and by what criterion were we told to wait our place at the end of it? I am tired of hearing the explanation that women were never hired in New York City art departments because so many men wanted jobs; I am tired of hearing this tired explanation from people who don't listen to what they're saying.

I am willing to humor Professor Hook by imagining for a moment that his worst fears might come to pass: Adrift in a world mysteriously devoid of black and white women who are qualified, our much put-upon universities are forced by cruel HEW to hire the only black and white women available: those who are unqualified. Is this, then, such a disaster?

I think not since--again--I see for the universities an option which Professor Hook overlooks. In order to understand this option we need to ask the meaning of the slogan word "qualified" (as in "qualified for college teaching"). Operationally two characteristics distinguish the "qualified" college teacher: (1) he has a doctorate and (2) he publishes. (Somewhat different and more ambiguous standards are used in the art department, which is why there are more abuses in that department than in others). I pass over the question of whether publishing and PhD's are relevant with the comment that--relevant or not--these are the main criteria for competence presently in use in a majority of colleges. In defending academic criteria presently in use for gauging the quality of being "qualified," it is these two criteria Professor Hook is defending.

But back to our hypothetical college forced to hire a hypothetical "unqualified" black or white woman who has neither a PhD nor a record of publications. What is our college to do?

They can do what colleges have always done. They can hold this "unqualified" person in an untenured or probationary status for a period of from one to five years. If during that period of time she neither acquires a Doctorate nor a record of publications, her contract can be allowed to lapse. And the school can then seek out yet another "unqualified" black or white woman in the hope that their second probationer will show a little more willingness to produce. Publish or perish. The Doctorate or be dropped. Shape up or ship out. The colleges, in fact, are full of less than fully "qualified" faculty who know that retention of their jobs depends on publishing and/or completing graduate work. Has Professor Hook reason to suspect that white male assistant professors are more likely to publish articles or exhibit paintings than those who are female? If so, he should explain himself further.

Contrary to Sidney Hook's presumptions, HEW and EEOC deserve our support for their interest in abolishing the disgraceful double standard so long used in hiring faculty for the universities.

To HEW: Right on!

To Columbia University: Shape up or ship out!

To Sidney Hook: Go soak your head!

MY MEMORIES OF EVA HESSE

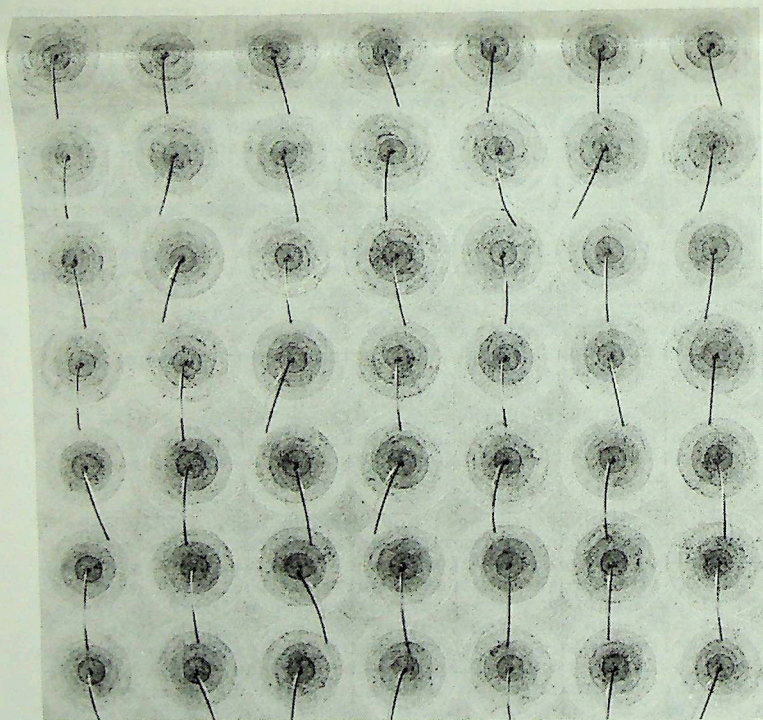
CINDY NEMSER

Eva Hesse was born in 1936 and died in June 1970 of a brain tumor. Categorized as a sculptor, she was actually a pioneer foraging into new forms and imagery rendered in fiberglass, latex and various other rubber products. However her probing did not solely concern itself with exploring and processing materials heretofore unassociated with fine art forms. Her search went deeper, striving to unearth the mysterious creative impulses behind existence itself. At the height of her power as an artist, spurred on by the impetus of irremediable illness, Hesse's pace accelerated with dizzying speed. The end result was a series of monumental works uniquely melding intimacy with grandeur.

In January, 1970 I began an interview with Eva Hesse. I had gone to see her about a year and a half before--before she became ill. At that time, I hadn't understood her work right off, but we talked a while and I liked her. I saw her layers of rubberized cheese cloth, her multiple rows of latex half circles and her tangled ropes reaching out towards me from their cord encased frames and I recoiled, not comprehending. I stared at a black and white wash drawing consisting of rows of systematically repeated small circles each pin pricked with a dot of darkness in its center and I experienced a slight stir of feeling but still confusion.

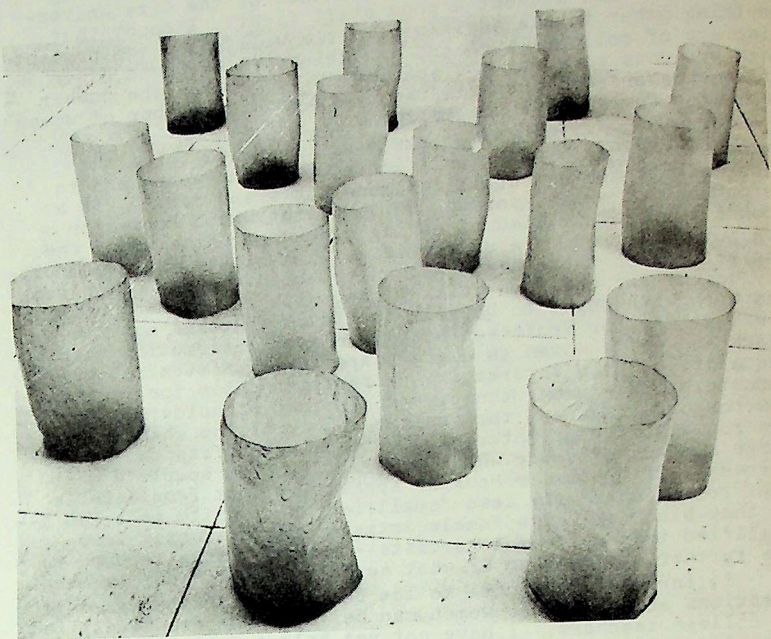
She wasn't very helpful, or so it seemed to me at the time, in articulating about her work. I was interested in the tactile, sensual suggestiveness of the materials and the shapes that she used; I saw sexual references in her work. Eva said that she never thought about those things consciously. I asked about the nature of the process that she used to create the pieces. Was she primarily focusing on the activity of manipulating material? No, she answered, but she needed to be free--free to explore--to discover in the process of the work all the things that she didn't know about the work, about art, about herself.

I took my confusion home with me, but I couldn't get her work out of my mind. That drawing with the circles kept nagging at me. There was something soft, sensuous, tough, tender pulling me back to those dark centers. Some endlessly



Eva Hesse, *Untitled*, 1967, Wash on Paperboard & Plastic
Courtesy Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

repeated, unfathomable pulsating message was beating an unforgettable rhythm somewhere in the back of my consciousness. I sought some explanation for my intense response to a work I didn't understand. Then I happened on a passage from an article called the "Dematerialization of Art," by John Chandler and Lucy Lippard which unlocked the mystery for me. It stated that "like Darboven and Andre and like Eva Hesse in her infinitely repeated identical shapes or rows of curiously exotic but understated forms, many ultra conceptual artists seem to saturate their outwardly sane and didactic



Eva Hesse, *Repetition 19, III*, Fiberglass, 1968
Courtesy Fischbach Gallery.

premises with a poetic and condensatory intensity that almost amounts to insanity." *Exotic, poetic, intense, insane*, yet all the while outwardly *sane* and *didactic*--those words opened up Eva's art for me. All of a sudden I knew why her simple shaded circular shapes could hold my eye and my mind's eye in a way that was almost hypnotic. Here was the essence of a personality outwardly controlled, inwardly seething to an intensity that always threatened to break its bounds. All this concentration of a force somehow tough yet tender, bitter yet bittersweet, carefully shielded yet pitifully vulnerable, penetrated to my inner core and made me long for that exquisite visual statement of that tortured human being. I wanted that drawing. I asked Eva to sell it to me, but she refused, saying that she couldn't bear to part with it as it was the last of a series. Though she wasn't working that way any longer, she promised to make another drawing like it for me. She never did.

The next time I saw Eva, she was in a wheelchair. She was attending an opening which included her work and her head was bandaged up. I learned that she had just had a brain tumor removed and she was weak but optimistic, grateful to be alive. Again, she promised me a drawing as soon as she was stronger.

Eva's pieces kept turning up in various important shows that year. She was in the influential *Anti Illusion: Procedure Materials* exhibition at the Whitney and then she was represented in the *Plastic Presence* exhibition at the Jewish Museum. Her reputation was growing rapidly now. I, however, didn't meet her again that year until the night of the opening of *Art in Process IV* at the Finch College museum. I was deeply shocked when I saw how she had changed. The slender, girlish form was puffed out from huge dosages of cortisone. Her sweet baby face was almost a caricature of itself. However, there was a new intensity and determination about her, especially in her greeting to me. Looking directly into my eyes, she told me that she had had another tumor removed and then she said that she was going to die. I remember standing there not believing my ears, somehow convinced that the whole conversation was totally unreal, denying the actuality of it, and unable to comprehend the full meaning of what she was saying. The large sheets of rubberized cloth, reinforced with fiberglass were suspended above us, fragile yet resistant, ragged and irregular at their edges yet beautifully lucid at their conceptual center. What had such works, I wondered to do with this tragic, doomed girl who stood before me calmly pronouncing her own death sentence?

Soon after the exhibition, I knew it was time for me to do an interview with Eva Hesse.

It was not easy for her to give me appointments for the taping sessions but I was determined to see her and she wanted it badly too. Though she was feeling very ill most of the time and was going to the hospital frequently, she thought of her work always. Our meetings, of which there were three, took place at the beautiful loft of Al Held and Sylvia Stone.

Eva was petrified of the tape recorder. The first time that I recorded her voice, I had to turn the instrument on while she wasn't looking although she suspected immediately that I was taping her. I had to get into the session as painlessly as possible, so the first topic I started to discuss with her was the problem of being a woman artist in today's artworld. She knew I was working on an article about that subject and I felt that something outside the immediate discussion of her work itself would reduce her anxieties. Although she admitted that there was prejudice against women in the artworld ("If I were a man I would be showing at Castelli"), she insisted that "you have got to do art as an artist and not as a woman or a black." For her, art was "an essence, soul, a center, and if it was art it didn't matter if a man or a woman or a cockroach did it. That center or presence would be there and couldn't be solved as male or female." Adamantly she declared that "When art will rule out, sex will disappear." On one hand, she couldn't see how she as an artist had been held back in any way because she was a woman, yet the other side of her, the inconsistent, insecure, always doubting side challenged her own adamance. Her voice hesitated and she mused, "I wonder if men are more intelligent, more capable of abstract thinking, more able to be intellectual?" With these words she sounded the note that was to be played throughout her interview; she articulated the doubts and desires that made her refer to herself from time to time as either the cockroach or the queen, someone debased and inferior, yet ultimately stronger and more superior than anyone else. Eva was proud of the fact that Richard Serra had come to talk to her as soon as he saw her work and before he started his own "process" pieces; she felt that she had shown him the way. Yet, she resented, and at the same time, was overwhelmed by his pedantic theoretical approach. She scorned the intellectual, the didactic, the calculated, yet was awed by it, cowed by it, intimidated. Impatiently, she asked, "What makes a tight circle or a tight little square box more intellectual than something that's done emotionally?" Never did she completely accept how lucid, how structured, how intelligent her work really was. She confided to me that she was waiting for the critics to tell her what she was all about. How ironic that statement was, since Eva's interview proved that she knew more than anyone could ever tell her about the inner workings of her art. The long analytical pieces that she longed for came, unfortunately, too late but I believe the emphasis the authors' placed on the emotional side of her work would have distressed her as much as it would have pleased her.

Eva never got to read the interview as it appeared in *Artforum* but it was constantly by her hospital bedside with its cover reproduction of her work. After swallowing twenty pills at a time she would proudly point to flowers from some famous collector and demand the news of the artworld. She was indomitable. Though tormented by constant pain, her

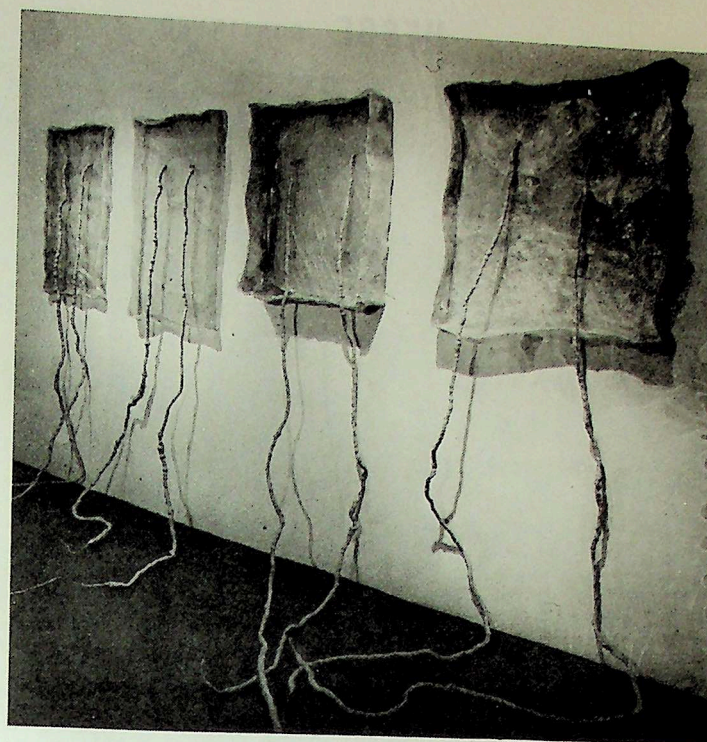


Photo: Chuck Nemeser

Eva Hesse, *Untitled*, 1970, Fiberglass

pride in her work and her concern for her artistic identity were with her until she lost consciousness.

During the last days of her life, I reviewed an exhibition of her works, along with those of Frank Gallo and Tony Delap, which was held at the Owens'-Corning Center. There again were the bandaged forms, now presented as polyethylene fibreglass entities suspended by wire from the ceiling. There again were the irregular fibreglass squares, now supporting hairy fibrous centers out of which long tendrils reached out to encircle, enfold, envelop all those who came within their radius. This time I understood their urgency. I ceased to resist.

Eva reaches out to us from her need to our need, and pain and joy are caught in the process of being born. Can an artist ever really die? ■

HER LIFE

INTERVIEW WITH CINDY NEMSER

Eva Hesse is now being given a retrospective exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum from December 8 to February 11, 1973. At this time I felt it would be appropriate to present certain unpublished excerpts from a tape I did with her a few months before her death. Some of the material on this tape was originally printed in the May 1970 issue of *Artforum*. Hopefully, the entire tape will be made available to the public at a future date.

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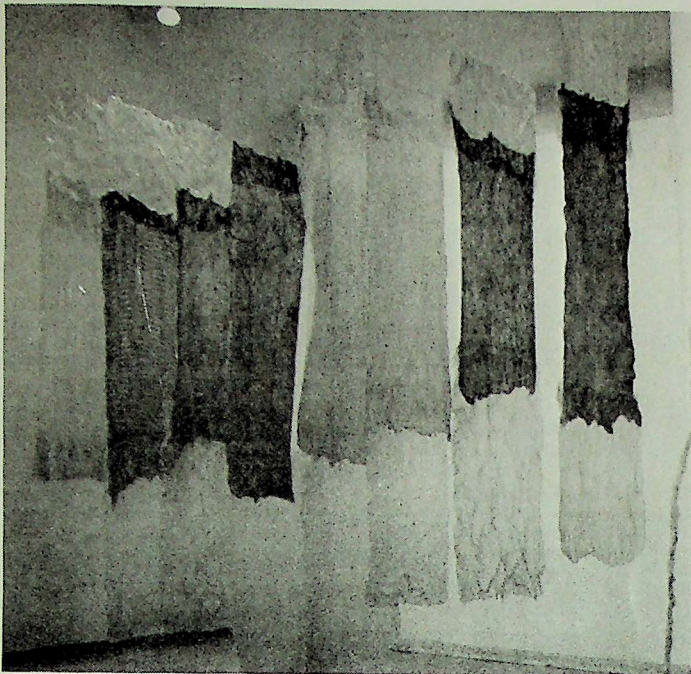
C.N.: Tell me about your family background.

E.H.: You won't believe it. I was told by the doctor that I have the most incredible life he ever heard. Have you got tissues? It's not a little thing to have a brain tumor at 33. Well my whole life has been like that. I was born in Hamburg Germany. My father was a criminal lawyer. He had just finished his two doctorates and I had the most beautiful mother in the world. She looked like Ingrid Bergman and she was manic depressive. She studied art in Hamburg. My sister was born in 1933 and I was born in 1936. Then in 1938 there was a children's pogrom. I was put on a train with my sister. We went to Holland where we were supposed to be picked up by my father's brother and his wife in Amsterdam but he couldn't do it, so we were put in a Catholic children's home and I was always sick. So I was put in a hospital and I wasn't with my sister. My parents were hidden somewhere in Germany and then they came to Amsterdam and had trouble getting us out. Somehow they got us to England. My father's brother and his wife ended up in concentration camps. No one else in my family made it. But we did. We got from England to America via one of my father's cousins who had an import-export firm, one in England and one in America. He got us in very very late. We came in in the summer of 1939. It was

the last chance. And when we first came here we lived across from the Nazi party on 86th Street until our cousin could get us a place to live. My father got trained as an insurance broker and my mother was sick all the time. Then we lived in different homes because my mother was in and out of hospitals and my father was studying to be an insurance broker. So I used to be alone at night and I used to be terrified. My mother was there but not there--there, but not there. I was shifted from home to home. I was raised in different places and so was my sister. My mother was in and out of sanitoriums. She had a psychiatrist who told her to divorce my father and fell in love with her. The last time I saw my mother she was living with a doctor and his wife. My father remarried a bitch whose name was Eva (she became Eva Hesse) who had a brain tumor two years to the day before I did. Sounds incredible? Let me finish the story. She got out of the hospital two years to the day I went in--Same hospital, same doctor. In three years, two people not related but had the same name. Well, the story goes on. It doesn't end there. My father was sick for 15 years. He died three years after his 65th birthday but he was sick the 15 years. I think my family is half like the Kennedys. I don't mean we have that extreme of wealth or fortune but it's all been extremes. I have no one. No one in my family has lived. I have one healthy sister. There's not been one normal thing in my life --not one--not even my art. I never tried to get into a show. Art's the easiest thing in my life and that's ironic. It doesn't mean I've worked little on it, but it's the only thing I never had to--that's why I think I might be so good. I have no fear. I could take risks. I have the most openness about my art. My attitude is most open. It's totally unconservative. It's total freedom and willingness to work. I'm willing really to walk on the edge and if I haven't achieved it, that's where I want to go. But in my life--maybe because my life has been so traumatic, so absurd--there hasn't been one normal, happy, even happy--I'm the easiest person to

continued p14

HESSE CONTINUED



Eva Hesse, *Contingent*, 1969, Fiberglass

Photo: Chuck Nemeser

make happy and the easiest person to make sad because I've gone through so much. And it's never stopped. I can go on--that's just the beginning.

Then I lived with a stepmother whom I just couldn't stand and I love people. I have no trouble with people, but I hated her and she was terrible to me. My father was terribly sick. He had his first attack when I was 13--like Eisenhower, a terrible coronary attack. And my stepmother used to say, "you can't tell him anything or you'll make him die." And he loved me with a thing that was almost incestuous. So I had a lot of trouble with men too because my father and I were very close but it was very quiet. It wasn't talked about because he was constantly ill and he was getting crippled and they had to operate on his spine and there was the danger of the heart. My stepmother who was a thorough unadulterated Bitch did one thing in her life. She loved my father--she really cared. They went to Europe and he died like that (snapping her fingers) which was good. She brought his body back and put herself in the hospital. She said for the last three years that he was alive she didn't want to go in but she knew something was wrong. First they couldn't find anything wrong. Then finally it came out she had a brain tumor. My sister and I really took care of her and unfortunately, when I got mine (laughter) she'd come to the hospital to stay with me and I can't stand her. I had to cope with that. And she still calls me. When I'm sick she's very good to me but if she thinks I'm better she's not.

In between it was pretty much hell. I used to feel a fraud all my life. The world thought I was a cute, smart kid and I kidded them. But at home I was called a terror. I was miserable. I had trouble--tremendous fear--incredible fear. I had my father tuck my blankets in tight into my German bed which had bars on the bottom which I would hold at night and he would have to tell me that we wouldn't be poor, and we wouldn't be robbed, and he'd be there to take care of me in the morning. As a child it was a ritual every night. There wasn't one day of security and then it never really got any better.

So that gave me whatever strength I have. I've been a giant in my strength and my work's been strong and my whole character has it inside. But somewhere I'm a terribly frightened person. There was a whole abandonment syndrome because my father had to leave us all the time and I was left without my sister and I went from home to home. And my marriage split up which created another terrible abandonment problem. Then my father died. I think I had two relatively happy years. But as bad as things that have happened are, and maybe because of that, I can have tremendous happiness. Even this year (I mean it's a miracle I lived through this first operation, I had a few hours left to live--there was so much pressure--the whole brain tipped over and all the intelligence in the front) I had good things.

BREAK

C.N.: Where did you study art?

E.H.: When I was 16 I went to Pratt Institute and I didn't like it very much at all. The only painting I knew and that was very little was abstract expressionism and at Pratt they didn't stress painting at all. When you started painting class you had to do a lemon still-life and you graduated to a lemon and bread still-life and you graduated to a lemon,

egg, bread still-life and this was not my idea of painting. The rest of the classes were two dimensional and three dimensional design. I was also much younger, at least emotionally, and chronologically too, than everybody else. I was 16, an immature 16, and I didn't like it. I waited until I was getting "A's" instead of "C's" and declared I was quitting. I had to know that it wasn't because I wasn't doing well.

C.N.: What happened after that?

E.H.: I quit in the middle of the year and I had lived away from home so I had to go home. As soon as I got there my stepmother said, "Get a job." So where do you go at 16 1/2 knowing very little, but having an interest in art? I took myself to *Seventeen Magazine* and for some strange reason they hired me. I think it was just because of the "gall" of coming up there. So I got the job at *Seventeen Magazine* part-time and afterwards I went a few times a week to the Art Students' League just to draw in a class without a teacher--just from the model. And the days I didn't do that I went to the Museum of Modern Art and went to the movies. They changed them almost every day and I saw a lot of movies. Then I took the middle of the year test for Cooper Union. I was very frightened of the examination and that was the only plan I made. I never made more than one plan. I always counted on whatever I tried. I had to make it. I got in and the following September I went to Cooper Union which I loved from the very start. I moved out on my own again, went to Judson. Then I finished at Cooper Union doing very well and I went to Yale. I didn't like it, but because of the combination of being afraid to get out of school because that was frightening and not being defeated, I stayed. In retrospect I don't think I should have stayed. I did well there but schools depend on both faculty and students and the faculty was poor. It was a bad time and the students respond to the tension and friction and uninterest in this thing that was going on. There was Albers who was being forced into retirement, but they let him stay because they had no one to replace him, and Bernard Chait and Rico Lebrun. It was ridiculous clashes of personality and they fought each other through us and the result was that the work wasn't very good there.

C.N.: Were any of your fellow students the people you now know in New York?

E.H.: No. The irony is that as I was leaving there a lot of people who are now in New York, Bob Mangold, Sylvia Mangold, Bruce Marden, Richard Serra and Frank Lincoln Viner were all there immediately after I left.

C.N.: Do you feel any of your teachers influenced you?

E.H.: I don't think so. I loved Albers' color course but I had had it at Cooper. I did very well in it. I was Albers' little color student--everybody always called me that, and every time he walked into the classroom he would ask, "What did Eva do?" I loved those problems but I didn't do them out of need or necessity. But Albers couldn't stand my painting and, of course, I was much more serious about the painting. I had the abstract expressionist student approach and that was not Albers, not really Rico Lebrun's nor Bernard Chait's approach either. And if you didn't follow their idea it wasn't an idea. And in color you had to. You were given coloring papers and your choices were less and you had to work within certain confines.

C.N.: Since you didn't feel any strong influence at Yale were there people in New York who influenced you when you came back and started working on your own?

E.H.: I think at the time I met the man I married, I should not say I went backwards, but I did because he was a more mature and developed artist. He would push me in his direction and I would be unconsciously somewhat influenced by him. Yet when I met him I had already had a drawing show which was much more me. I had a drawing show in 1961 at the John Heller Gallery which became the Amel Gallery. It was called "Three Young Americans." The drawings then were incredibly related to what I'm doing now. Then I went back one summer again to an abstract expressionist kind of tone--that was really an outside influence. Then I went right back.

I think that struggle between student and finding one's self is, even at the beginning level of maturity, something that cannot be avoided. I don't know anyone who has avoided it. And my struggle was very difficult and very frustrating. I was conscious of it all the time and if I ever had any worry in my development it was then in finding myself. I used to worry am I just staying with a "father figure" and where is my development and is there a consistency and am I going through a stage and will I reach there? I was very cognizant of that and it was a very frustrating, difficult time. But I worked. I never had the trouble of not being able to work although there would be, say, three months where I would work all the time and then maybe there would be a break and that would be very frustrating. But after a while I could always get back. It is true, there were stages, but in retrospect--the steps--Oh it's so clear. ■

EDWARD MUNCH: M.C.P.

Once he showed me some flower pictures his sister Inger had painted, and I was interested in buying one of them.

"No, please don't buy any. Inger is so excitable. Right now she does nothing but paint. I don't know how it would be if she were able to sell."

Edward Munch by Rolf Steversen "Close up of a Genius," 1944-1945 Norway From Howardena Pindell

DOCUMENTA

FAITH RINGGOLD

DOCUMENTA, an international art exhibition, is held every four years in Kassel, Germany. This event defines art--art-ists and trends which are not included have little signifi-cance in the international artworld, and Documenta receives extensive coverage in the world art press. I visited Docu-menta this summer, and afterwards spoke with Lil Picard, artist, American correspondent for several German magazines and newspapers and one of the few women whose work has been included in Documenta. Lil left Germany during the Hitler period and now resides in New York.

Faith: Could you tell us how Documenta began and whether you agree that it is the most prestigious and important art event in the world?

Lil: Well I don't want to say it is the most important one in the world because the Venice Biennale is very important too. Documenta started after the War. Between 1933 and 1945 Hitler and the German Nazis declared all modern art degenerate and forbade artists to work. Hitler even held in the Munich Academy a big exhibition of "Degenerate Art" including Picasso and Chagall to show how terrible all these artists were and that the German people rejected this art. After the war was over, the German people wanted to know what had been going on in art during those years 1933-1945 because during the whole Nazi period they were not allowed to see anything. So Professor Arnold Bode who is considered the founder of Docu-menta, and some other citizens of Kassel, a town that was com-pletely destroyed during the War, got together the first Docu-menta, in 1954 as an international documentation of art of that period. The first Documenta was the smallest and con-sisted mostly of artists from France and England. From the second Documenta on, it became one of the most important in-ternational documentation and information shows of art.

Faith: Both the Documenta and the Venice Biennale attract the people with the money who can buy. Is it so important because it gathers together the most important collectors in the world and therefore exposes artists internationally and gets them reputations?

Lil: The Venice Biennale was much more important in a commer-cial way because it was every two years instead of every four. Every gallery owner went there. Whenever art is bought and sold, it is a commercial thing. Art may be idealistic, but it is treated in a very business-like way. But Documenta was founded for idealistic reasons. We must always think about what happens to a country that is from one day to another de-privileged of freedom and whose art works are either burned or put away. The people become very hungry to know everything that has gone on in the whole world. They are really open for everything, even for what we call establishment art. For them it wasn't establishment art. For them it was revolution-ary.

Faith: But now it's commercial, and the art world money is all going to Germany and not to Venice any more.

Lil: That is because of the student riots and demonstrations at the Venice Biennale in 1968 and 1970. The Documenta is quieter because it is every 4 years, but there was a student protest in 1968 at Documenta 4. The students organized a Counter-Documenta, protesting that the exhibition is complet-ely in the hands of the commercial galleries and is just a commercial show. Last summer, at Documenta 5, the students held a revolutionary Documenta in a separate building where they showed their own work and what they thought was good by others. They held happenings and all kinds of performances too, but of course that is not in the catalogue.

Faith: Was this the first time you were included in Documenta, and how did you get in?

Lil: I didn't really get in, not as an artist. Harold Szeeman, the director, visited me two years ago in New York because he was arranging a show called "Fluxus and Happening" in Frankfurt at the Kunstleheim. He had seen a happening I staged filmed by Andy Warhol in 1967--a political event, against the war in Vietnam, and he wanted to include that in the film department of this show, which he did. So last year I wrote to him that I had done a new performance event called "Messages" and I would like him to look at the slides--48 of them. He wrote back to send him two sets of slides, one to Bern and one to Kassel. It cost a lot to have two extra sets made but I sent them. Just before I left for Documenta--I was going as a German reporter--I got a letter saying that they could not accept my work, they are very sorry but the financial and inner political situation has changed and he likes my work but unfortunately he has to send it back. Then, a week later I got another letter from a Professor Blase of Documenta in which he wrote me "Dear Miss Picard we would like to invite you for our audio-visual television room as Kunst Vermittler," that means somebody who brings art to the public. So, the day before the opening, Herr Professor Blase and I made a video tape for Documenta. In it I told the whole story about how my work had been rejected, and I also said

there were very few women in Documenta. I just spoke my mind, and while I was telling him, I said 'You see I am a woman and that's my story. Here I have long hair, I am not a young woman, I am an old woman with long hair, but I can be another woman, and I took off my wig and then I took off another wig. I did a whole wig performance, changing wigs while I told him the truth about being a woman, about there not being any women in Documenta, about being refused and then getting to be in Documenta anyway.'

LIL PICARD



Lil Picard, Videotape Still, Documenta 5, 1972, telling her story and doing her Wig Performance

Faith: How many women were there in Documenta?

Lil: I went through all the catalogues to find out. In 1959 there were ten women including three American women. In 1964, Documenta 3, there were six women including 2 Americans. In Documenta 4 (1968), there were 3 women including 2 Americans, and in 1972, Documenta 5, there were 14 women, 8 Americans including myself. There was no black woman in any Documenta, and only two black men, Eugene die Kalmadek and Tellimark. I also counted up the people who wrote in the catalogue because I consider the Documenta catalogue a work of art--you buy it in a plastic cover and it costs \$28.50. It weighs about ten pounds. In this time of conceptual art, the professors and artists and philosophers who write in the catalogue are very important--out of 25 writers in the '72 catalogue, two are women. Now Mr. Szeeman and Mr. Amond who did the last Docu-menta came from outside Germany both are Swiss. Before, Documenta was done differently than this last one. There were more painters, sculptors and graphics. But Szeeman's idea was that art isn't painting, sculpture and graphics any more. Art is everything. Art is how we eat. Art is how we tele- phone. Art is what we write out, like our letters. Szeeman is very, very modern.

Faith: Very good. He is modern in a lot of ways except he hasn't caught on that part of the world is black, most is non-white and half is female. It's not just him either. The total art world thinks in terms of all artists being white middle class males. What really annoyed me so much at Docu-menta is that in every other art field people are beginning to begrudgingly realize that there are all kinds of people in the world, and we are being included in the Cannes Festival, the Tony awards and so on. Why is the art and image of black people being included in every area except the visual arts?

Lil: Because these people are the academicians of art. Art historians. They haven't seen that black faces and women faces are all over. This is still a very little 'in' place. They have this strange idea women are not as good as men in the visual arts. A gallery owner in Switzerland told me that this summer--and he considers himself most avant-garde.

Faith: Establishing images and reporting history are very powerful Western art establishment priorities, and that's exactly why all non-white people and all women are excluded and denied the power to set images. In the event that this exclusion does stop, can you imagine how art would change?

Lil: It will certainly change, but it might change different-ly than we both think. We can never predict exactly how art will change, but as a new generation of people come along who are freer, they will do much more daring things, much different things than what we think today, because we are in a revolution, struggling to change, and getting more money too.

Faith: Do you think there is a correlation between the kind of thing that black men and women will bring into art and the kind of thing that women in general will bring into art?

Lil: I think we will have to see what the women in the move-ment do. We haven't had many women's shows yet--there have been more black art shows than women's shows. The Gedok Show

DOCUMENTA continued



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Walter Olbrich

documenta 5 GmbH 35 Kassel Schöne Aussicht 2

Kassel, 30.8.1972

I did with Sybille Neister for American women was only one year ago. Things are just starting to change. In 1965, for example, we didn't even have the woman question in art, we only knew women don't get shows. At that time I did a big three week long environmental performance show in a small gallery called the Smolin Gallery--a whole show on lipsticks and cosmetics. The artworld saw this show and I even got a write up in *The New York Times*, but it was considered very unusual to use a feminine thing like cosmetics. That was long before Mr. Oldenburg made his big tremendous lipstick that is so famous. He did it much later, five years later. *Faith*: Men have the power to be taste-makers and so they are always being thought of as doing something new or something different. What women do is generally speaking not taken seriously. That is the reason why your art could just be fluffed over and copied by somebody else without ever giving you the credit, and theirs could be illuminated into a big thing, a movement. But if women and all non-white people had the confidence to know that they could really do their own thing, like you did it, but *get the recognition for doing it*, do you think that women would continue and black people would continue to be honest about what they are doing?

Lil: There is always the danger of becoming a nationalist. I am against super-nationalism in everything. I think we should have everything, we should have men and we should have women and we should have children and we should have art. We should have white art, green art, black art, red art, all art. *Faith*: But right now we only have white male art. That's what you call supernationalist art. Visual arts are the last vestige of absolute male domination in the arts.

Lil: Maybe the visual arts are really in a decline because we have film and television.

Faith: Nobody is participating in art today except Western white men so they don't have the right to say that it is on the decline. Maybe theirs is declining, but all the rest of us are just ready to go. It is just like the cinema. It was losing money and then the black films came in. Now say what you want to about them, they livened everything up. Now if women and non-whites become taste-makers, this could enliven all of art and it could have a whole regeneration, just like the movies. The men who say art is dead, want it to be dead for everybody. They don't want another group to come along and say hey it is alive.

Lil: You sound very hopeful. When I go to the conceptual exhibitions I see a little name printed on a big white page--I can't even see it without strong glasses--and there is nothing else there. I want to know what it is all about. I begin to get the idea that the artists want to kill art. Western man wants to kill art because he feels that our situation in the world is in despair.

Faith: That is why I was so interested in what you said about the history of Documenta and how during Hitler's reign he wanted art out, he wanted it suppressed. Here in this country now they talk about art being dead and we have artists doing all these very negative things. Do you see a parallel between Hitler's Germany and America now in the feelings about art--both countries wanted the artists shut up when they were involved in mass murder and genocide, Hitler against the Jews and America against Vietnam. You know there has been as much killing in Vietnam as in Hitler's Germany and in a shorter time.

Lil: But Hitler killed almost all the Jews in Germany.

Faith: It is not without precedent. Here in America, we killed almost all the Indians.

Lil: The German people have learned though. They didn't get a Nixon, they got a Brandt again. They don't want fascism. But here we are at the moment very much in danger of becoming fascist, a police state. We haven't felt here what fascism really is. I sometimes think that our wars take on a new form--the drug scene in America is also a kind of Civil War because these people are killing themselves off. There is a kind of mass killing, mass destruction going on, mass despair, without calling it what it is. Here we are talking about a lousy show in Germany and we can't even protect our lives, we can't even stop the men from dropping bombs.

Faith: No, no I don't agree. I think that actually in the final analysis the only thing that's really important that people do and leave behind them is art. We need that. It's all we have that's good. I think this is probably the reason Germany's last Documenta was politically oriented. In Germany today they don't want art to die.

Lil: I thought Documenta 5 was a very important show, but not strong enough.

Faith: How could it be strong enough when they kept out the most political people in the world who are the non-white people and women? There was a whole political pavilion and exhibitions on political themes--about world oppression and Vietnam, but nothing about women. I sent a letter and package to six members of Documenta staff saying, "Please accept the enclosed posters and Feminist newspapers as Documenta of what is happening in America among the women of all races and the blacks of all sexes." I sent them the *Feminist Art Journal*, *Woman's World*, my United States of Attica poster and others. I got back a letter from Szeemann saying "Many thanks for your documentation. Unfortunately I was only one day in Kassel on August 18th and the whole day from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. busy with a financial meeting." There was a whole pavilion that was set up with newspapers and literature so I went and put *Feminist Art Journal* and *Women's World* right in there--that was the only place women were dealt with in

Dear Faith Ringgold,

Many thanks for your documentation. Unfortunately I was only one day in Kassel on August 18th and the whole day from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. busy with a financial meeting.

Perhaps we meet someday under better conditions than this

All the best

(Harald Szeemann)

i.A.

(Ela Spornitz)

Documenta. Do you think there will be another Documenta?

Lil: They hope so. The next should be in '76--the year America will be celebrating her bi-centennial.

Faith: Maybe there will be a woman's pavilion in that one.

Lil: That would be a good idea! You know we are representing here I feel a very interesting thing. We are two women, you are black and I am white. We get along fine. Let's hope that the future will be like this all over the world. ■

KOLLWITZ continued

their subject is a woman, not a man artist, and include a few minor hints of feminist consciousness and analysis, but this is all. Otto Nagel leaves the fact that she is a woman completely out of his chronology. On one level, he may argue, as a fellow artist, that it is not necessary to discuss how being a woman affected her, for she was a great artist, and as such, does not fall into a special "woman" category, just because she happened to be one.

He's wrong. He's say that because he's not a woman. He was also not a young girl growing up in Victorian times, when the female body was designed to be corsetted, girdled and stiffly cloaked from head to toe. Nor did he experience art training denied him because he was a girl. Or was confused and hurt because his father didn't think he'd ever do anything because he married.

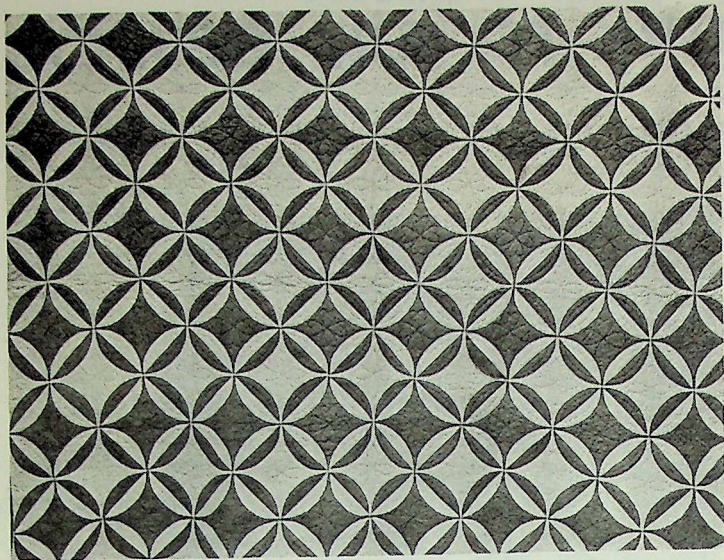
No man could have drawn the pictures of women that Kaethe Kollwitz did, but neither biographer discusses this. After all, sexism isn't a Sunday painter sketching trees and leaves for a few hour's enjoyment. Kaethe Kollwitz's women are too pure, too tender, too whole and full of woman's soul for a man to have produced them. Indeed, Kaethe Kollwitz was the first well-known artist to represent women other than man was used to seeing them--that is, women as either lustful, voluptuous objects of sexual desire, or as romanticized, angelic mystical creations. Kaethe Kollwitz's women are real. They wear plain dark dresses of ageless fashion. They live, give birth to children, suffer, know joy, fight against death in any form, then welcome death, and die. All women, whether they bear children or not, know Kaethe Kollwitz's women as themselves.

Nor do either of the biographies discuss her struggles and conflicts, and how she did or did not resolve them. Her tension with Lise, her younger sister, centered around jealous rivalry. Lise was equally as talented as Kaethe, but this threatened Kaethe, for she alone wanted to be the artist in the family, even though she did want Lise to be happy, and be an artist, for she loved Lise more than anyone else. If Lise had received art training, the world might have had two Kaethe Kollwitzes, or maybe none at all, but, luckily for Kaethe's ambition, Lise never developed her art talent, because she chose to get married early. Lise went the usual path most young women take, and Kaethe did not. Both biographies miss this determination and unconventional, almost rebelliousness in young Kaethe.

Her conflict between marriage and art was a great one, and lasted throughout her long engagement, which was six years. At that time, near the turn of the century, it took great courage for a woman to be an artist. All her friends advocated marriage to art, not to a man. Her father disapproved too. At her wedding he told her flatly, "Now be wholly what you are, a wife." Both biographies touch on this, but do not discuss it fully, and thus take the man's view of marriage, not their subject's, who was a young woman, trained to be a professional artist at the time of her marriage.

These are two of the most glaring, factual errors that the most recent biographies make. They miss other forces in her life, too. That is not to say it is a bad book. It is not, it is a good book, and done to the best of the authors' ability and headset. It is just regretful that, though Kaethe Kollwitz's work makes any woman feel deeply and poetically her own knowledgeable soul, no words about her or her work, in book form at least, have accomplished this same sense of appreciation and pride. Thankfully, though, we are in luck, for The Feminist Press, of Baltimore and New York, plans to publish an adult biography of Kaethe Kollwitz within the next year. If their Kollwitz biography compares to the other adult biographies they've published, it will be a welcome addition to woman's growing knowledge of her story. ■

QUILTS



Unknown Woman, *Robbing Peter to Pay Paul*, Pieced, 19th Century, Red & White, Quilting: Hearts & Ellipses. Design also called *Orange Peel*. Courtesy of The Brooklyn Museum

they were doing: frequently quilts were signed and dated by the maker, listed in her will with specific instructions as to who should inherit them and treated with all the care that a fine piece of art deserves. Women reserved their 'best' quilt for guests of honor or special occasions, and when it was on the bed, drew the curtains to prevent fading. Many of the most beautiful quilts were actually used so infrequently that they have come down to us without ever having been laundered--women even made special 'quilt cases' to store them in. Even in their choice of material women quilt-makers behaved similarly to other artists--they wanted to use only the most permanent materials, and the popularity of two colors, indigo and turkey red (an alizarin dye) was the result of their ability to withstand much use without fading.

In sharp contradiction to the truth about these women artists is the fabric of lies that has been spread over their work--the distortion of the purpose of the 'quilting bee' into the false idea that quilts were 'collective art' instead of the work of individual women, and even more importantly, the lies about their anonymity. For example, the catalogue for the "American Pieced Quilts" exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., bears a cover reproduction of a quilt signed "E.S. Reitz" in large letters, clearly visible. The quilt is identified in the catalogue as to title, place, date, material and size *but the artist's name is not given*. Jonathan Holstein then dedicates the catalogue to "those anonymous women whose skilled hands and eyes created the American pieced quilt."² These women did not choose anonymity. Rather it has been *forced* on them. The great pains taken by art historians to identify all work of male artists, even if only by conjecture, coupled with the intentional omission of the names of those women artists, *even when they signed their work*, makes mockery of all pretensions that male 'scholarship' is anything but a tool of sexist oppression.

Although women made quilts of wool and silk, the first for warmth, the second for beauty, most quilts were made of launderable fabrics called 'wash goods,' primarily chintz and calico. Too much has been made of the fact that the fashions of a period were used in quilts implying that women were the passive agents between fashions and quilts. Aside from the fact that this is not the whole truth (women also dyed and traded fabric), no such interpretation has been given to the work of male painters, whose art has also been influenced by the mediums and pigments 'in style' during that period. Quilts were made in three ways: pieced, appliqué or by the use of quilting stitches alone on a solid color background. The majority of them were 'pieced,' for economic reasons--that is, the small pieces of fabric were joined edge to edge to make up a top of a single layer of fabric. The process of piecing makes curved designs very difficult as the fabric has to be joined on the bias and tends to pucker, so most pieced quilts have straight edge designs, founded on squares, triangles or diamonds. Appliqué quilts are actually called 'patchwork,' but since this word has also been used as a general term for quilts, I'll use the more specific word 'appliqué.' They were designed by laying the cut out shapes of fabric on a base of new fabric and hemming them down, thus making a double layer of fabric--a clear extravagance and one which accounted for the fact that appliqué didn't come into wide use for quilts until approximately 1750 when fabric wasn't so scarce although pieced quilts were made by the first female immigrants. Women quilt makers preferred their appliqué quilts to their pieced ones because hemming down allowed them greater freedom of



Unknown Woman, All White Quilt, 19th Century. The Raised portions are stuffed from behind.

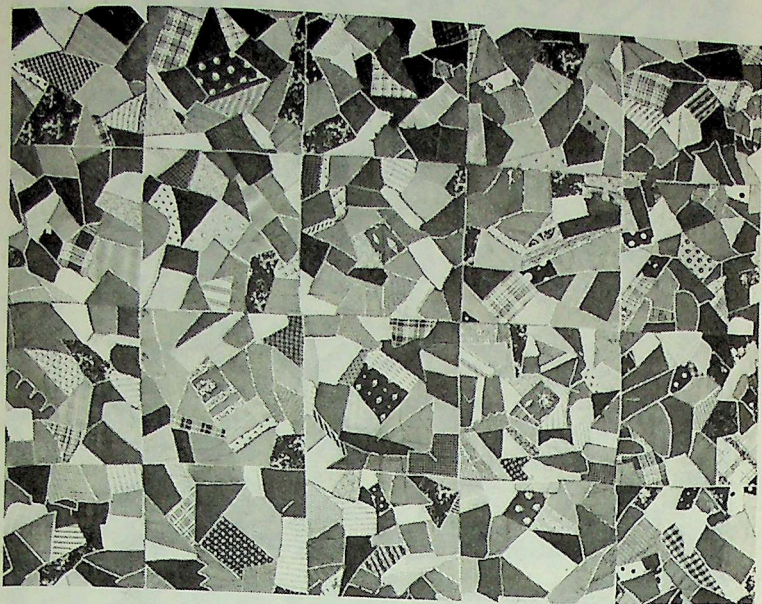
design than piecing, and because the additional expense of the extra fabric for appliqué called for their very best needlework and design--these are the ones that women considered their 'best' quilts, and which although many fewer of them were made, have survived in larger numbers because of their 'show' rather than 'everyday' use. Because of the greater freedom of the appliqué technique, women created hundreds of new designs, most based on natural forms, especially the flowers they loved. Solid color quilts, usually white, were designed only in stitchery, called quilting, the beauty coming from the bas relief of the top, created by thousands of tiny stitches, stuffing some areas, flattening down others.

Besides the top designed layer, quilts have two other layers--the padding for warmth and the backing. All three layers are held together by the quilting, that is, the tiny stitches which go through all three layers and contribute the lights and rhythms of their own design to the quilt.

Quilts as they were first made in America were the product of necessity as well as tradition. Factory made blankets were unavailable until the mid-nineteenth century, fabric was scarce and expensive and winters were cold. Women had to reuse every available scrap from worn out clothing in their quilts, lining them with worn out homespun blankets, wool, cotton or rags and backing them with muslin or homespun. Before 1750, quilting was the universal form of needlework in America, practiced in all households, by all females old enough to hold a needle. Even after economic circumstances eased somewhat, girls were still taught to sew even before they were taught to read--there are many beautiful quilts made by girls younger than ten years old.

Although American women, including slave women, made quilts from colonial times at least until the Centennial (1876) and many still do, that was merely one of their duties and their accomplishments should be seen against the sum total of their work. For most of the Colonial period, and in rural areas up to and even after the Civil War, women were responsible for an amount of work hardly to be believed: besides the cooking and cleaning and raising and educating children, they spun, wove and dyed cloth, made the clothing and bedding, curtains and rugs for the entire family, canned the food, milked cows, tended garden and chickens and made soap and candles. With the rise of industrialization in the Northeast it is not surprising that single women in large numbers left the farms for the relatively easy life of a 12 hour day in the factories. Making quilts, though a necessity, was virtually the one area in which women could express themselves creatively--a woman worked on her quilt in the evenings after she had done the day's chores. The importance of quilts in women's lives is best expressed in the statement of one 19th century farm woman who is quoted as saying, "I would have lost my mind if I had not had my quilts to do."³

All three arts, piecing, appliqué and quilting are extremely ancient and can be traced to Syria, Egypt, India and China. Flags are piecework (remember Betsy Ross?) and quilted bed coverings were made by Chinese and East Indian women in the seventeenth century as well as by the women of Europe.⁴ The tradition as well as quilts themselves came to America with the first women immigrants, and several early designs exist which are identical to those done in England. Gradually however, women began to redesign their quilts, and create new patterns so that eventually more quilt designs were created in America than in all of Europe put together. In particular, the repeat patterns of the appliqué quilts became peculiarly American, as well as the institution of the



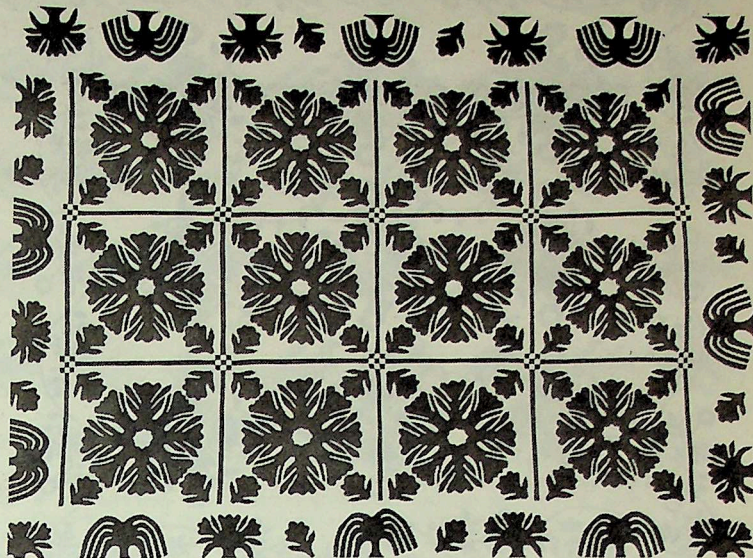
Elizabeth Ann Cline, *Crazy Quilt*, 1875, Courtesy of The Denver Art Museum

quilting bee and the custom of creating quilts for special occasions. Although most writers on quilts remark on the change in design from Europe to America, no one has pursued it further than to attribute it to some mystical 'spirit of freedom' in the new land.⁵ I think a more down-to-earth explanation exists--the same explanation that has accounted for every change in all of art history, namely, that when there is contact with new design traditions, art changes.

Early American immigrants came from England, Ireland, Germany, and the Netherlands and mingled the needlework traditions of those countries. In America, they met with new design traditions from the various American Indian tribes whose influence is obvious in the many quilts named for them: "Indian Meadow," "Indian Hatchet," "Indian Trails" to name a few. The familiar saw tooth pattern, for example, seen in both pieced and appliqué quilts, is strikingly similar to Indian women's weaving. Furthermore, intermarriage between Indian women and white men was fairly common and the Indian women and their female descendants' quilts would bring to bear design influences from both cultures.⁶ The other unacknowledged (for much the same reasons) design influence on American quilts I feel came from African women, who actually made many of the Southern quilts, particularly at the large plantations where many bedrooms necessitated many quilts. It is too great a coincidence that the South was the 'home' of appliqué quilts, while many of the quilt-makers in the South were from Dahomey where much beautiful appliqué was made.⁷ I think it should be acknowledged that some of that 'spirit of freedom' which enriched quilt design actually came from the very women for whom the new land provided not a spirit of freedom, but of tragedy.

The earliest quilts made were known as 'Crazy Quilts.' Women sewed odd shaped scraps of fabric together with no attempt at design, and the result tended to resemble a jigsaw puzzle. Since they were utilitarian, they mostly wore out and few have survived. This 'Crazy Quilt' was the basic quilt design. Whenever times were lean and fabric scarce, especially in rural communities far from stores, women made crazy quilts. Years later, in the late 19th century, after the Civil War and the Centennial celebration, there again came a vogue for them, but made not of the crude scraps and patches of earlier days, but of velvets and silks, scraps from 'best' clothing, and of a size meant not for a bed, but for a parlor throw. By a change of fabric and size, the content of the quilt as art changed from the hardship and poverty of the earlier period to a more relaxed evocation of the past--a poetic reminiscence.

It is interesting to note that there are few quilts, even among the crazy quilts totally lacking in a sense of design, for virtually immediately women began the process of making their quilts beautiful as well as useful--with the same poverty of means, but the addition of a sense of design, women began to cut their scraps into patches of uniform size and shape (the 'Hit an' Miss' pattern), or to sew all the light colored ones into one strip, the dark ones into another and alternate the stripes (the 'Roman Stripe' pattern). These are 'one patch' patterns, i.e. there was no organization into a series of blocks to form the design--the 'Mosaic' pattern, another early design brought from England, later called 'Honeycomb' or 'Grandmothers' Flower Garden,' consisted in cutting the points off a square to form a hexagon. Pieced quilts evolved from the 'one patch' through two, three and four patch and then nine-patch, depending on how many pieces the original square was divided into. As the quilt designs evolved, women went to greater pains to have their quilts fulfill their conceptions--they traded



'The Grandmother of Virginia Kearney,' *Willow Oak Quilt*, Boston, before 1861, appliqué, navy blue and white, Courtesy Shelburne Museum, Vt.

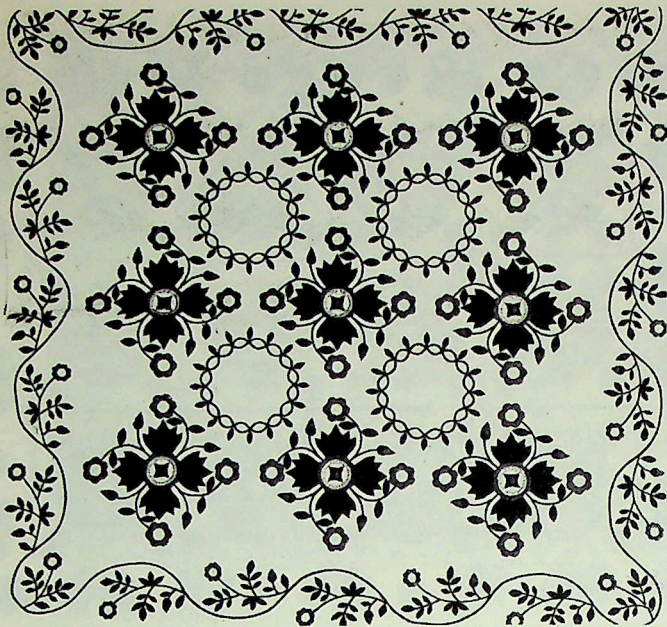
fabric scraps with other quilt makers, dyed some to obtain the shades they wanted, and embroidered on the plain homespun if that was all they had. Women became the artists in a society in which their efforts were likely to be the only art that most of the populace saw, certainly the only art most of them possessed. Although these quilts didn't look anything like the European influenced painting done in America at the time, a period of over 200 years of exposure to this women's art, on permanent exhibition in most households of America, finally influenced the male artists of today to work in a similar style.

Although pieced quilts are primarily geometric in design and as such could be considered only in formalist terms, that would be only half the story. All quilt designs were named by the maker. If other women liked the name and used it, it became traditional. The names of the quilts give rich insights into the lives of the women who made them, and their lives give insight into the content that the design elements held for them--a repeat pattern of cubes in space for example was known as 'Baby's Blocks.' The fact that it is more common for contemporary male artists to call this type of design by a scientific or mathematical name merely points up the different content this visual symbol evokes in different lives. There are hundreds of names for quilt designs and often women changed the names, discarding the old ones as the visual image it evoked became irrelevant to their lives. In this way, they gradually transformed both the names and designs of the European tradition until they had built a new American one.

For example, a design known in England as 'Prince's Feather' (after the Prince of Wales) became 'Princess Feather' on arrival in America and afterwards became 'Ostrich Plume' or 'California Plume.' A pattern called 'Jacob's Ladder' before the American Revolution was later called 'Stepping Stones' in New England and Virginia, 'The Tail of Benjamin's [Franklin] Kite' in Philadelphia, the 'Underground Railroad' in Western Reserve, 'The Trail of the Covered Wagon' in Mississippi, and after the first commercial railroad (1830) an unknown woman included a striped railroad symbol and called it 'Railroad Crossing.'

It must be understood that quilt names were generic rather than specific, that is, although the image was recognizable within the visual vocabulary of women, it was rarely if ever exactly the same as to size, style and color. When the additional design elements which make up the quilt are considered, such as borders, choice of fabric (color, pattern, weave) and the quilting itself, it is clear that two identical quilts would be even rarer than two identical paintings.

In designing their quilts, women not only made beautiful and functional objects, but expressed their own convictions on a wide variety of subjects in a language for the most part comprehensible only to other women. In a sense, this was a 'secret language' among women, for as the story goes, there was more than one man of Tory political persuasion who slept unknowingly under his wife's 'Whig Rose' quilt. Women named quilts for their religious beliefs, such as 'Star of Bethlehem' or 'Job's Tears' or their politics--and a time when women were not allowed to vote. The 'Radical Rose' design, which women made during the Civil War, had a black center for each rose and was an expression of sympathy with the slaves. Other political quilts had names such as 'Lincoln's Platform,' 'Clay's Choice,' 'The W.C.T.U.' or 'Union Star.' In fact a quarrel broke out between the Whigs and the Democrats in Pennsylvania in 1845 as to a certain



Charlotte Jane Whitehill, 'Spice Pink', also called 'Whig Rose' 1932, Applique, feather and diamond quilting.

Rose design claimed by both parties. Other quilt names expressed the farm lives of their makers, such as 'Corn & Beans,' 'Toad in the Puddle' or 'Flying Bats' or their urban lives as in 'Philadelphia Pavement' or 'Court House Square.' In fact, from their social life ('Swing in the Center') to their flower gardens ('Rose of Sharon' or 'North Carolina Lily') to occupations ('Churn Dash,' 'Chips & Whetstones') or themselves ('Fanny's Fan,' 'My Mother's Star') there is virtually nothing in the lives of these women that did not get expressed in quilts, but most popular motifs always remained Sun, Rose and Star designs.

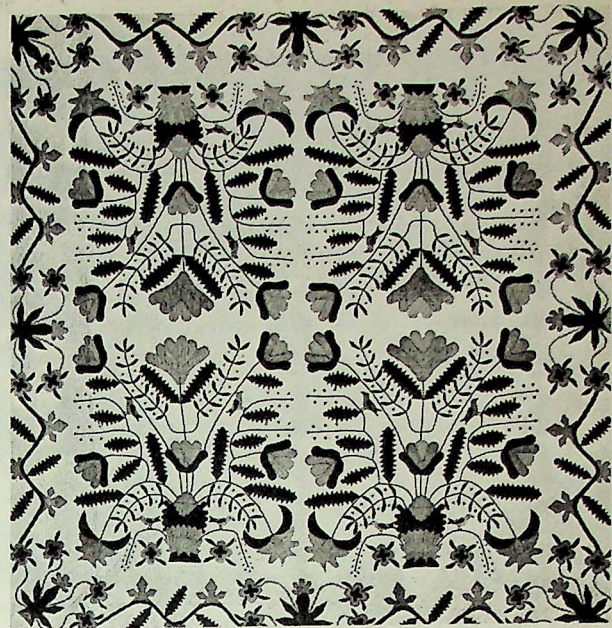
There are several categories of quilts, each of which was made for specific occasions and in a definite way.

There was the *Bridal Quilt*, begun after a young woman's engagement had been announced. By the time she was engaged a woman had customarily completed twelve quilt tops which were then quilted up before her marriage, since the expense of padding and backing would only be undertaken when a new household was in preparation. The thirteenth, the *Bridal Quilt* was the equivalent of the male custom of the 'master-piece,' particularly when one considers that marriage was virtually the only employment available to women at that time. This quilt was made of the best materials she could afford, her most skilled and intricate needlework, with the most carefully planned design. The Rose of Sharon was the most favored design for the *Bridal Quilt* because of these lines from the *Song of Solomon* (2:1) which every woman knew and which seemed to them particularly appropriate for brides:

I am the Rose of Sharon, And the Lily
of the Vallies.
As the lily among thorns, so is my
love among the daughters.
As the apple tree among the trees of
the wood, so is my beloved among
the sons.

Bridal quilts were used after the wedding only on special occasions or for honored guests and have frequently come down to us without ever having been laundered. They were virtually always appliqué, and it was customary to incorporate hearts either into the appliqué or in the quilting. But it was considered bad luck for a woman to use hearts in a quilt before her engagement had been announced.

Freedom, Friendship Medley and Presentation Quilts were the only quilts made by more than one woman and accounted for a small percentage of quilts made, although they have become quite well known. The *Freedom Quilt* was made for a young man on his 21st birthday by all his female friends at a party arranged by his mother and sisters--a custom popular until approximately 1825. Each woman would bring fabric scraps from her own dresses, and at the party make and sign a block of her own design. By the end of the day, all the blocks had been made and set together into the 'top'--it would take another all day event, the 'quilting bee' to quilt it. The significance of the 21st birthday was that a young man was legally free at that age whereas previously his labor and wages legally belonged to his father. There was no *Freedom Quilt* for women since their labor legally belonged to their father until marriage and afterwards to their husband. The term *Freedom Quilt* acquired another meaning around the time of the Centennial when the nation celebrated the survival of the nation through the Civil War, an end to slavery, and an end to the troubles and uncertainties of the first hundred years. These later *Freedom Quilts* made by individual women,



Courtesy of The Denver Art Museum

Courtesy of The Shelburne Museum, Vt.

Unknown Woman, 'Little Birds', Ohio 1830. Yellow, brown, green applique on homespun linen. Variation of 'Tree of Life'.

were another example of political quilts and incorporated symbols such as eagles, flags, stars and liberty bells into the designs.

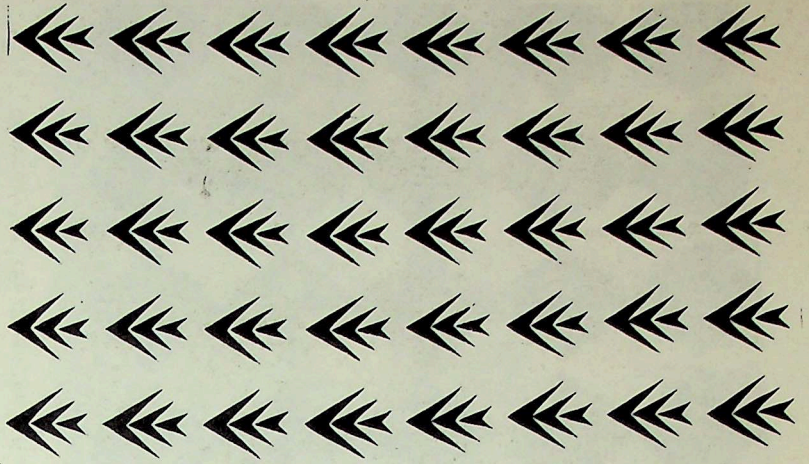
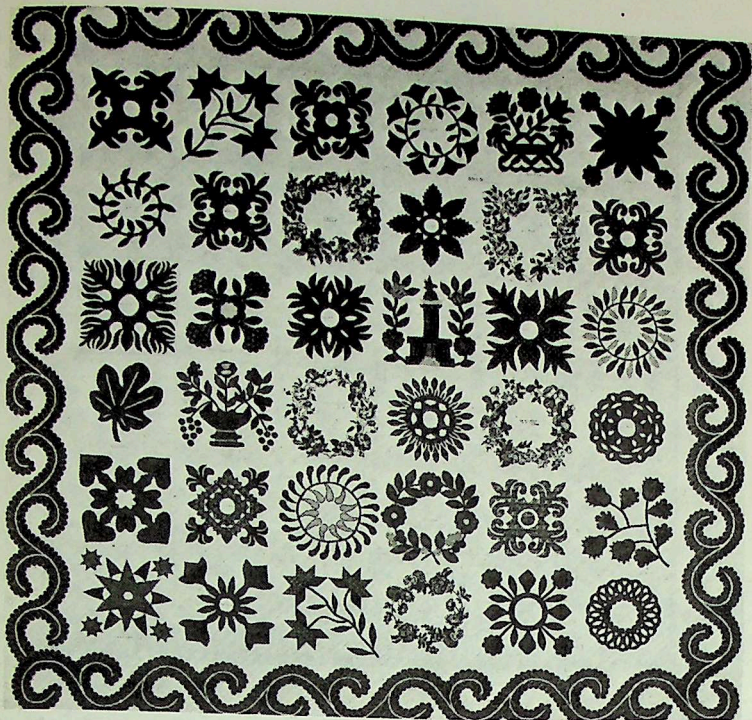
Friendship Medley Quilts and *Presentation Quilts* were made in the same way as *Freedom Quilts*, and became popular around 1840. When a woman became engaged to marry a friend usually gave a party at which all her friends brought fabric from one of their dresses and made her a *Friendship Medley* top. Custom dictated that the young woman's mother invite all the participants to a return party at which the actual quilting was done. *Friendship Medley* quilts were also made for neighbors in distress, and for neighbors moving away. When it was made to honor a respected personage of the community, it was called a *Presentation Quilt*.

Album Quilts were similar to the various kinds of *Presentation* quilts in that each block was different. *Album* quilts were made by individual women, however, and had a theme--birds or flowers, for example. The *Friendship Quilt* (different from the *Friendship Medley*), was a type of *album* quilt, each block being made of the dress material of a female friend, although all the blocks had the same design and maker. Quilts were also made that recorded the family history (*Family Record Quilts*) with blocks showing family members, pets, their home, weddings, etc.

Finally there were the sombre *Memory or Mourning Quilts* pieced from the dresses of a friend or relative who died. In the center of these quilts the woman-maker would cross-stitch an inscription with the name, date of death and perhaps a poem. The period during and after the Civil War is characterized by a great number of mourning quilts, in blacks, grays and browns, with the quilting done in the design of a weeping willow tree.

From the above descriptions of quilts, it should be obvious that the use of material having an emotional significance in addition to the formal characteristics of color shape and design added a spiritual and emotional dimension to the quilts as art which is missing from most art today and which modern formalist criticism attempts to define as 'non-art.' But to the early quilt makers, this dimension was an essential part of the art. Aunt Jane of Kentucky expressed this feeling when she said, "There is a heap of comfort in making quilts, just to sit and sort over the pieces and call to mind that this piece or that is of the dress of a loved friend."⁸

The 'Quilting Bee' as an American institution, is well known but most Americans have a false idea of its nature. An examination of myths usually reveals, not the reality of the situation, but what the society feels the reality should have been (witness the Noble American Cowboy myth). In view of the male lie that women lack individuality, creativity and initiative, it is not surprising that the quilting bee has become in the popular mind the place at which women all collaborated on the making of the quilt. In actuality, quilting bees were called for the purpose of assisting an individual quilt-maker in the tedious work of quilting the top, which she had already made. Even the design of the quilting stitches was chosen in advance by the maker of the quilt. The various kinds of *Presentation* quilts which were a composite of individually produced, designed and signed blocks were the only exception to the individual nature of quilt making, and the number of quilts so produced was a tiny percentage of all the quilts made. Interestingly enough, male



Unknown Woman, *Widow's Quilt*, New Jersey, 19th Century, Pieced, Black and White. The black motifs signify the 'Darts of Death,' quilting in shapes of lyres. Note single bed size. This is a variation on mourning quilt as it is for a man's death. Courtesy of American Museum in Britain.
 (Left) Mary Everist, *Friendship Medley Quilt*, 1849-1850, Appliqué Cecil County, Maryland. The signatures are visible in the center of each block. Courtesy The Baltimore Museum of Art.

artists who have had assistants for the more routine aspects of their creativity (and whose numbers stretch throughout art history) have never been popularly stereotyped as lacking in individual creativity because of it. For the American quilt-makers, even the choice of assistants was an individual choice, made on the basis of craftswomanship--invitations to quilting bees only went out to expert needlewomen and it was common knowledge that those who were not expert with their needles had little access to the major institution of women's social life. Moreover, there are many stories of women whose stitches were uneven being sent to help in the kitchen, or of the quilt-maker herself, ripping out poorly done work and re-doing it. In other words, the part played by collectivity in the quilt-making art had more in common with traditional methods of art-making than with mythological interpretations of women by nature being prone to collective art production.

The quilting bee was an all-day affair, lasting from dawn to late in the evening. It was second only to Church in social importance to women, and they probably enjoyed it more. In a time of bad roads and poor transportation, women frequently went for long periods without seeing each other, each isolated into her own house. A letter from a woman in Ohio dated February 7, 1841, says:

We have had a deep snow. No teams passed for over three weeks, but as soon as the drifts could be broken through, Mary Scott sent her boy Frank around to say she was going to have a quilting. Everybody turned out. Hugh drove on to the Center where he and several other men stayed at the Tavern until it was time to come back to the Scotts for the big supper and the evening . . . One of Mary's quilts she called "The Star and Crescent." I had never seen it before. She got the pattern from a Mrs. Lefferts, one of the new Pennsylvania Dutch families, and pieced it this winter. . . . Her other quilt was just an old fashioned "Nine Patch." . . .

It was customary to work all day, usually on two quilts, and then have husbands, brothers and friends in for supper and dancing. Although most of the records claim that women at the quilting bees 'exchanged gossip and recipes,' it should be obvious to women that that was not all that was going on. The fact that Susan B. Anthony made her first speech in Cleveland to women at a church quilting bee gives an indication that then as always, women had important things to say to each other that could best be said out of earshot of men. I don't think it was coincidental that the Seneca Falls Conference of 1848 which marked the beginning of an organized American Women's Liberation Movement came at the virtual height of the quilt-making period, nor is it coincidental that the size of the quilting party--eight to 16 women--coincides exactly with the size of modern consciousness raising groups.

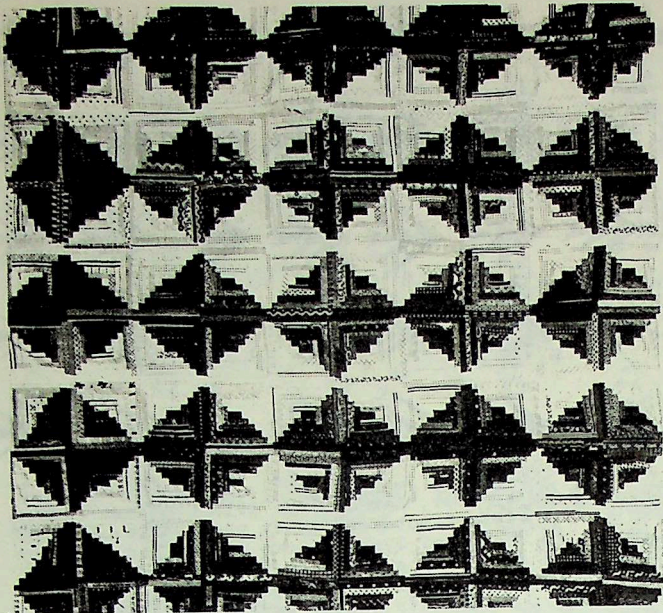
Quilting itself was done by stretching the lining, padding and top on a horizontal wooden frame. The design was marked with chalk or pencil after which 8 women, 2 to each side of the frame would stitch along the chalked outline of the motif, through all three layers. Besides the functional purpose of holding the lining in place, the stitching has the aesthetic function of throwing the top of the fabric into low relief through the manipulation of lights and shadows by the thousands of tiny stitches. Thick quilts called comforters or winter quilts were tied with little snips of yarn at intervals as the padding was too thick to be closely quilted, whereas counterpanes, particularly in the South were not lined or quilted at all and served only an

aesthetic function, like the modern bedspread. A comparison between quilts and counterpanes, however, makes it obvious that the quilting changed more than the function of the quilt, but changed the character of the object as art besides. Quilts are more sculptural, 'heavier,' both actually and visually, and are visually more complex. The interaction of the patchwork design with the chiaroscuro of the quilting was of great concern to quilt-makers and the choice of quilting stitch every bit as important as the patchwork design. Frequently there were several quilting designs in one quilt, one for the patches, one between the patches and one for the border. The quilt-makers strove for balance, that is opulent floral and arabesque designs usually had severe quilting, while simple designs had elaborate quilting. Quilting served to enhance and complement the design, not to overpower it. Quilting was generally of two varieties: plain--that is straight lines, either diamond shaped, diagonal or parallel, or fancy quilting--which could be either block or running. The block designs were clam shells, wreaths, eagles, weeping pillows, etc. and the running included vines, ropes, feathers. Quilting designs could be traced from patterns or invented by the maker. In any case the combination and disposition of the quilting, as well as the quality, was one of the important design elements in the quilt.

Because quilts are women's art, the literature and history concerning them has been written in the peculiar way familiar to all women artists. Which is to say that they are omitted from all general reference within the history of art, and they have no 'place' in art history. They are not included in books on American Art, and they have even been excluded in works that supposedly deal with decorative and folk art.¹⁰ 'Professional' art historians have not written about them, as art, but to do endless chronicling of the history of English and American textiles--somewhat akin to a work on Rembrandt which focuses on his paints and mediums quickly passing over the paintings themselves. Of the authoritative books on quilts, all except one, are written by women with a sincere love of needlework and an appreciation of the value of the quilts as art, but without the art-historical background to place these women's accomplishments in an art-historical context--for example, I found not a single reference to the painting going on in America at the time the quilt-making art was at its highest--an illuminating comparison and one which would show that the quilt-makers anticipated modern painting by at least 150 years. William Dutton, the only male 'authority' runs true to form and characterizes quilts as the work of 'nervous ladies.'¹¹ (Another man in the history of quilt making who runs to type is one Charles Pratt who came to America in 1886 from England, promptly declared himself quilt-making champion of the world, having in his possession, he said, over two hundred letters of testimony proclaiming his (male) supremacy in this field.)

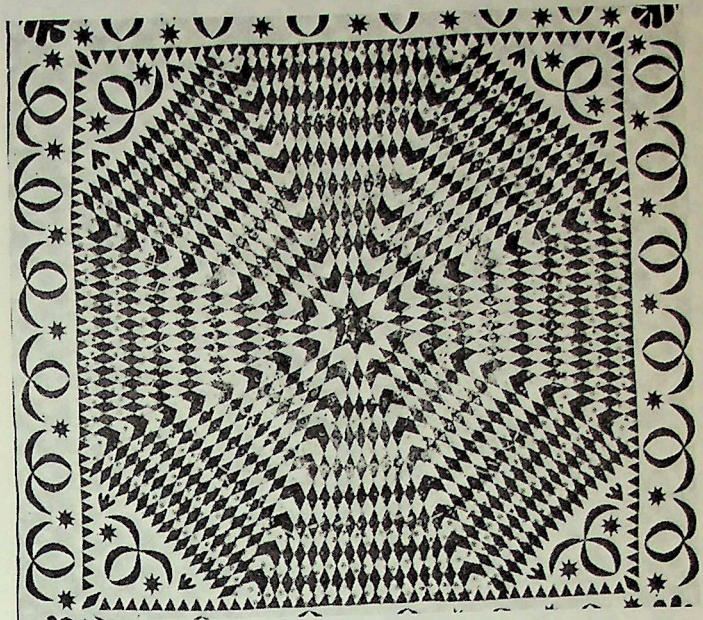
Writers on quilts seem to feel the need to tell us that not all quilts were beautiful works of art, although God knows the same could be said for any of the arts--if all the bad paintings made were held against that art, it would be immediately outlawed.

Although virtually every museum and historical society in America has a collection of quilts, most do not keep them on permanent exhibition, but in permanent storage. The official explanation for this is that quilts cannot be displayed without damaging them, but this seems more like a rationalization than the truth when one reflects on the crumbling manuscripts, peeling paintings and other 'man-made' artifacts museums manage to exhibit. Mrs. H.N. Muller of the Shelburne Museum in Vermont, one of the few museums in the country to



Courtesy of The Brooklyn Museum

Unknown Woman, *Log Cabin*, Pieced Quilt, 19th Century



Unknown Woman, *Sunburst*, Pieced & Appliqué. Early 19th Century

display a large permanent exhibition of quilts, acknowledged in a letter to me the problems in displaying quilts, but added, "In our view, they do not serve anyone's purposes in continual storage--better to be seen and enjoyed."¹² Feminists desirous of ending this suppression of a female art form should make appointments with their museums, for themselves, their groups or classes to view the collection (and complain vigorously to the Public Relations Director if such appointments are not forthcoming)--the pressure will eventually force the museums to put quilts on permanent exhibition.

The recent 'revival' of interest in quilts by the Whitney and Smithsonian, which resulted in exhibitions of piecework quilts at both museums, on closer investigation reveals another phenomenon of which modern women artists are all too well aware. That is, that although the sexist and racist artworld will, if forced, include token artists, they will never allow them to expand the definitions of art, but will include only those whose work can be used to rubber-stamp already established white male art styles. Because our female ancestors' pieced quilts bear a superficial resemblance to the work of contemporary formalist artists such as Stella, Noland and Newman, although the quilts are richer in color, fabric, design and content, modern male curators and critics are now capable of 'seeing' the art in them. But the appliqué quilts, which current male artists have not chosen to imitate are therefore just written off as inferior art. Throughout his catalogue essays for both exhibitions, Jonathan Holstein praises pieced quilts with the words 'strong,' 'bold,' 'vigorous,' 'bravado,' and 'toughness,' while he dismisses the appliqué quilts as 'pretty,' 'elegant,' 'beautiful' but 'decorative.'¹³ This is exactly the kind of phallic criticism women artists are sick of hearing and is made all the more ridiculous by the fact that women actually made both types of quilts. The purpose in exhibiting *only* the pieced quilts becomes further apparent with the following statement from the Smithsonian catalogue:

The finely realized geometry of the pieced quilt, coupled with this sophisticated sense for the possibilities of color and form, produced such works which mirror in startling way contemporary painting trends. We can see in many such phenomena as "op" effects, serial images, use of "color fields," a deep understanding of negative space, mannerisms of formal abstraction and the like. Too much can of course be made of these resemblances, to the confusion of the intrinsic merits of both the paintings and the quilts. They were not made as paintings, nor did the people who made them think of themselves as "artists."¹⁴

What Holstein has done here, with the blessings of both the Whitney and the Smithsonian is to turn history upside down and backwards. He has turned the innovators into the followers, used the quilts to 'legitimate' contemporary formalist painting, while managing to dismiss these women as artists at the same time. It is an historic impossibility for art to 'mirror' (note the passivity of the word) *forward* into time--when male artists are ahead of their time, they are called the 'avant-garde.' Similarly it is impossible for art to have the 'mannerisms of formal abstraction' before formal abstraction was developed, let alone before its current descent into mannerism. This shabby motive for exhibiting only a certain style of quilts--distorting our heritage to prop up the sagging reputations of the modern formalist school of painting--is shown again in the Whitney catalogue, entitled "Abstract Design in American Quilts," and dedicated to none other than Barnett Newman.¹⁵

Quilts have been under-rated precisely for the same reasons that jazz, the great American music, was also for so long under-rated--because the 'wrong' people were making it, and because those people, for sexist and racist reasons, have not been allowed to represent or define American culture. The definitive institutions of American culture, museums, art history, and schools, are all under the control of a small class of people, namely white males, who have used their power to gerrymander the very definition of art around the accomplishments of all those who are not white and male. Their terms 'primitive art,' 'folk art' and 'decorative art' reveal more about the prejudices of the art historians than about the art itself. Just as the old joke has New Yorkers drawing a map of America composed mostly of a huge Manhattan Island with the rest of the country being squeezed down to miniscule size, so have white male art historians distorted the history of art to the point where the painting and sculpture done by white males over a 500 year period in a small section of the world--namely Western Europe--is the subject of intense and nauseating analysis and reanalysis while the entire rest of the world is lucky to get a chapter in their books or a course in their schools. The textile and needlework arts of the world, primarily because they have been the work of women have been especially written out of art history. It is a male idea that to be 'high' and 'fine' both women and art should be beautiful but not useful or functional. The truth is that 'high' art has always fed off the vigor of the 'lower' 'folk' and 'primitive' arts and not the other way around. The African sculptors needed Picasso as little as the Japanese print-makers needed the impressionists or the American quilt-makers need the minimalists. In music it became an open scandal that while black jazz and blues musicians were ignored, their second rate white imitators became famous and rich. Feminists must force a similar consciousness in art, for one of the revolutionary aims of the women's cultural movement is to rewrite art history in order to acknowledge the fact that art has been made by all races and classes of women, and that art in fact is a human impulse and not the attribute of a particular sex, race or class.

What an unbiased study of American quilts shows is that when women artists were allowed to follow their own creative impulses, their work ranged over an enormous area--their sense of color went from the palest pastels and all white quilts, to the boldest most vibrant colors, to muted earths and sombre blacks. Not knowing women were supposed to favor delicate lyrical design, they were free to do that when they so desired, but also to work out the most precisely mathematical geometrics or strongly rhythmic natural forms. They made political, personal, religious, abstract and every other kind of art, having in common only a respect for craft. Women quilt-makers enjoyed this freedom only because their work was not even considered art, and so they were exempt from the harassment experienced by most women artists. Left in peace, women succeeded on their own in building a design tradition so strong that its influence has extended almost 400 years, and which must today be acknowledged as The Great American Art.

Priscilla Halton's Work
1849

Life looks beyond the hands of time
Where what we now deplore
Shall rise in full immortal flower
And bloom to fade no more.

--inscription on a Friendship
Quilt, Fulton, Lancaster County, Pa.

Footnotes

1. Carrie Hall and Rose Kretsinger, *Romance of the Patchwork Quilt in America* (Idaho, 1935), p. 107.
2. Smithsonian Institution, *American Pieced Quilts* (Washington, D.C., 1972), p. 5.
3. Denver Art Museum, *Denver Art Museum Quilt Collection*, p. 7.
4. It is outside the scope of this article to deal with the history of these forms of needlework, but for an excellent account read Marie Webster's *Quilts--Their Story and How to Make Them* (New York, 1915), pp. 3-60.
5. For a typical example of this 'mystical' explanation see Marguerite Ickis, *Standard Book of Quilt Making and Collecting* (New York, 1959), p. 260.
6. Confirmation of this theory came from New York printmaker Eleanor Magid, the great-grand-daughter of a Miami Indian woman who has in her family many quilts made by her female ancestors.
7. See Judith Wragg Chase, *Afro-American Art and Craft* (New York, 1971), pp. 88-90 for a discussion of quilts and weaving done by slave women on Southern plantations. Many examples of their needlework are in the Old Slave Mart Museum, Charleston, South Carolina. I am grateful to Faith Ringgold, artist and lecturer on Black Art for informing me of the fact that many Southern quilts were made by slave women (including her great-grandmother Betsy Bingham) and helping me to find the documentation for this fact which is omitted from all the works on quilts. Although Dahomey appliqué was made by men, nonetheless the technique and visual vocabulary was part of the culture, and it was slave women who did needlework in America.
8. Hall & Kresinger, p. 17.
9. Ruth E. Finley, *Old Patchwork Quilts and The Women Who Made Them* (Philadelphia, 1929), p. 37.
10. See the book *Art in America--Nineteenth Century* by Garrett Norton, Gowans and Butler (New York, 1969) for a horrible example, in which painting, sculpture, glass, silver, pottery, furniture, etc., are covered, but not a word about quilts.
11. William Rush Dunton, *Old Quilts* (Maryland, 1946), pp. 1, 3 and 4.
12. From an unpublished letter to the author, December 12, 1972.
13. Smithsonian, *American Pieced Quilts*, p. 13 and Whitney Museum, *Abstract Design in American Quilts* (New York, 1971), p. 10. For a thorough analysis of how women's art is stereotyped see Cindy Nemser's "Stereotypes and Women Artists," *The Feminist Art Journal*, April, 1972. To that I would like to add from my experience in researching this article, that sentence structure can be sexist--the constant use of the passive tense in reference to quilts "Quilts were made," "Quilting was done," "Names changed," never "Women made quilts," "Women changed the names," and the subtle sexism in the constant use of the word 'pattern' instead of 'design.'
14. Smithsonian, *Pieced Quilts*, p. 13.
15. Another example of how art history can be twisted to uphold male supremacy in art is that when great numbers of blankets woven by Navajo women were recently revealed to be in the collections of male artists, not one critic commented on the obvious derivation of the men's work. Their comments rather were on the same order as Holstein's--that the Navajo women really looked quite up to date compared to the 'real' artists (the men), but of course no one should confuse them because the women of course were not 'real' artists. See Hilton Kramer, NY Times, October 8, 1972, "How Primitive is the Folk Art of the Navajos?"
16. Florence Peto, *American Quilts and Coverlets* (New York, 1949), p. 32.

FILMS continued

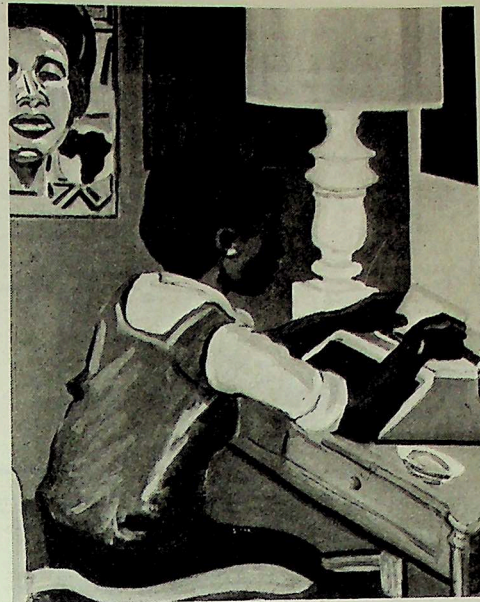
The women's movement has already created an audience for women's films, as it has created some of the films themselves. More people now want to see films by women and more women now want to make films. In addition, people are also more interested in films about women than they used to be, and in films about women--and men--from a new point of view.

The First International Festival of Women's Films stimulated this effect. Further it has done much to create renewed interest in the work of women film-makers and, judging by the discussions and talk of the many people who met each other at the festival, has already created more women film-makers.

There should be more festivals like this. It is something that both women's liberation groups and film societies and art societies in smaller cities can do. Sixteen millimeter film distribution networks are not really an alternative to the major 35mm distributors or television networks in having mass and immediate impact. But 16mm distribution can have a powerful effect. As Perry Miller Adato said on one of the Festival panels, "16mm distribution of a film can go on for fifteen or twenty years and reach millions of people, whereas theatrical distribution is very short-lived."

We can have our separate festivals and showings of women's films. But we must begin to force the major channels of mass distribution to show this work also, if we are going to stop the lies and get good stuff out to people instead--so that they will learn that it exists.

For a full listing of all the films shown at the Festival and how to get them, send \$1.00 to Kristina Nordstrom, Director, Festival of Women's Films, 1582 York Avenue, New York, N.Y., 10028.



Patricia Mainardi,
Michele Wallace
1972.

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Shirley Kassman Richert
Third Ghostly Lover,
Collage
Photo: Jerry Seguin,

Mawar & Bellotti

THE FEMINIST ART JOURNAL

50¢
WINTER 1973

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The *Feminist Art Journal* is sold in New York at Rizzoli, Wittenborn, Labyris, 8th St. Bookstore, New Yorker, NYU & Columbia College Bookstore, Community Bookstore (Park Slope) and Max Hutchinson Gallery.

We have had many letters asking if we will consider unsolicited manuscripts for publication. The answer is yes--send to editorial department.

The next issue of *FAJ* will contain an article covering activities of women artists throughout the country. Groups who have not done so, please forward information immediately to Cindy Nemer c/o *Feminist Art Journal*.

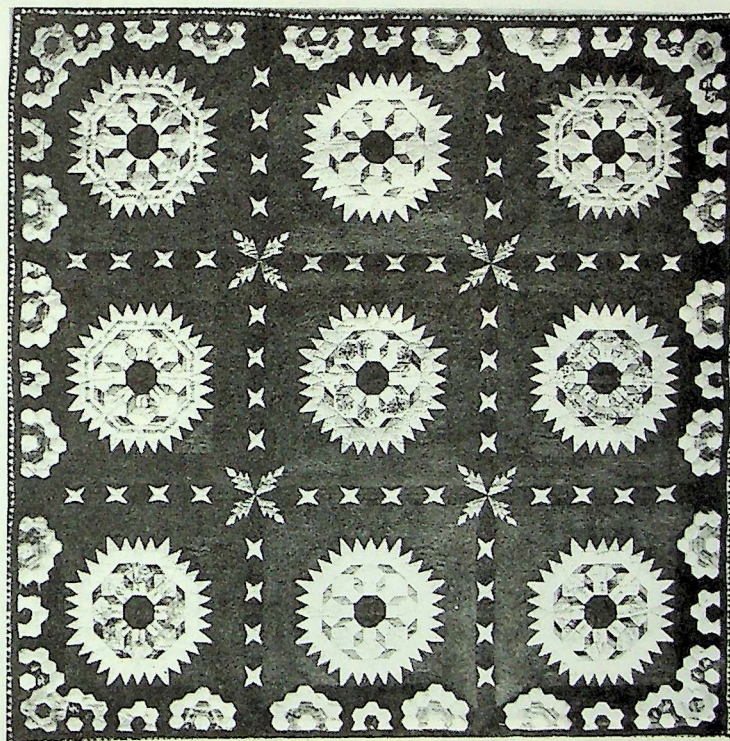
There will be 4 sessions on *Women & Art* at the College Art Association Conf. at NYC Americana Hotel: "How the Art World Evaluates Women Artists," 1/26, 9:30 A.M. "Women In Art & Art History, Past, Present, Future," 2:00, "Women Artists in Action," 8:30 P.M.; 1/27, "Women Artists Speak Out," 9:30 A.M.

Artlift 549, a fund-raising sale & event for Women's InterArt Center, 549 W. 52 St., NYC, Feb. 10-Feb. 24.

The Feminist Book Club will sell posters & prints by women artists, 2140 Westwood Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif., 90025.

The Spokeswoman: National monthly newsletter reporting on issues, activities & developments that concern women. Covers various fields--education, law, medicine, culture, politics, etc.

Women & Film: A journal published 3 times yearly similar to *Feminist Art Journal* but with emphasis on Film. \$2 year, 2022 Delaware St., Berkeley, Calif.



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