

A Dialogue with Linda Nochlin, the Maverick She

Maura Reilly: In 1988, you argued that “feminist art history is there to make trouble, to call into question, to ruffle feathers in the patriarchal dovecotes.”¹ You have spent your entire professional career doing just that, making trouble, embodying the position of the maverick she, using it as a decided advantage. You have continually questioned academic assumptions in/around issues of gender, race and class—and, as such, have transformed not only the discipline of art history, but academic investigations in general. You have examined afresh the work of French painter and provocateur Gustave Courbet; redefined realism as an artistic style, from the 19th century to the present; revised art history to include women artists, and the analysis of representations of women by male canonical artists; have contributed enormously influential thematic essays—most spectacularly, your essay, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?”; and have produced countless monographic texts on women artists, most of which we’ve reproduced here. Among these many scholarly contributions, you have also curated several milestone exhibitions, including the landmark *Women Artists, 1550–1950* in 1976 [Los Angeles County Museum of Art], and, more recently, *Global Feminisms* in 2007 [Brooklyn Museum], among others. You have been unceasingly bold, intrepid, inspiring and influential. Your scholarship has been consistently transgressive, irreverent, and anti-establishment. What I want to know, is where did this all begin? How did you come to be someone with such an intellect, strong opinions, belief in yourself and in your voice—especially as a woman growing up in 30s/40s America, a period marked by overt sexism and strict gender roles. Shall we start with your childhood, growing up in Brooklyn, as an only child within a close-knit Jewish family?

Linda Nochlin: Yes, I grew up in a secular, leftist, intellectual Jewish family, like so many in the neighborhood of Crown Heights in Brooklyn. Intellectual achievement, creation or appreciation of the arts—literature, music, painting, dance—were considered the highest goals, along with social justice. I understood that before I understood anything else. My father worked and my mother stayed home to raise me, but it was hardly “stereotypically patriarchal.” I was an only child and my mother shared all her intellectual and esthetic interests with me: she loved modern dance and we danced together; she was engaged with modern literature and read to me aloud from James Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist* when I was quite young. She listened to and played classical music and I listened with her. In some ways, I grew up in an extended family: my grandparents

and aunts and uncles played a big role in my formation. I was expected to participate in discussions of Gogol and Dostoyevsky when I was in high school, because that was what they found interesting. In no sense was I forced to read anything I didn’t want to. Indeed, the whole idea of the “tiger mother” is repugnant to me. I engaged with art and literature because that was what the people around me were interested in.

MR: As a child, were there women whom you admired? And if so, who, and what was it about them specifically? What were your aspirations as a child/teenager?

LN: Yes, of course there were women whom I loved and admired, like my mother and my grandmother, my father’s mother, who drove a car, did serious gardening, and was a deep-sea fisherwoman. But much as I loved and admired them, I knew quite early that I didn’t want to stay at home and be only a wife and mother. You can love and admire someone without wanting to model your life on theirs: that’s where I think the idea of a “role model” is deceptive. I admired Eleanor Roosevelt, certainly, and Martha Graham, but I don’t think I necessarily wanted to be like them. My aspirations as a teenager were vague: I wanted to be a poet, a writer, an artist, a dancer—something like that. I never thought of being a scholar or an academic.

MR: At what point in your life, or at what age, did you realize that there was such a thing as inequality between the sexes?

LN: I think I realized that there was inequality quite early—and my reaction was outrage. In fact, I remember vividly my first act of proto-feminist critique in the realm of the visual. I must have been about six years old when I performed this act of desecration. Slowly and deliberately, I poked out the eyes of Tinker Bell in an expensively illustrated edition of *Peter Pan*. I still remember my feeling of excitement as the sharp point pierced through those blue, long-lashed orbs. I hoped it hurt, and I was both frightened and triumphant looking at the black holes in the expensive paper. I hated Tinker Bell—her weakness, her sickening sweetness, her helplessness, her wispy, evanescent body—so different from my sturdy plump one—her pale hair, her plea to her audience to approve of her. I was glad I had destroyed her baby blues. I continued my campaign of iconoclasm with my first-grade reader—*Linda and Larry*, it was called, and Larry was about a head taller than Linda and always the leader in whatever banal activity the two were called on to perform. “See Larry run. See Linda run. Run, Larry, run. Run, Linda, run...” etc. I successfully amputated Larry’s head with blunt scissors on one page of the reader and cut off his legs in another: now they were equal and I was satisfied. (Freudians can make of this what they will!) These very deliberate acts of destruction were propelled not so much by rage as by a fierce sense of injustice. Why were women depicted as poofy, pretty, helpless weaklings, men as doughty leaders and doers? I read these stories and fairy tales with some pleasure, but also with a certain annoyance.

MR: Well, there is without doubt too much dependence on male saviors in fairy tales—be it the woodsman in “Red Riding Hood” or the handsome prince who rescues Cinderella or Sleeping Beauty, who are relatively passive figures wholly dependent on their beauty for happiness.

LN: Yeah, I guess I knew that my foot (already large) would never fit into that glass slipper! I liked children’s books with feisty heroines who did interesting things. Do not imagine that I was a precocious man-hater, or boy-hater: far from it. Among my favorite books were Booth Tarkington’s *Penrod* series and the wonderful *Otto of the Silver Hand*, written by Howard Pyle and illustrated by him with shady Dürer-esque engravings. I read Mark Twain’s *Life on the Mississippi*, with its strictly male cast of characters, three times in a row. What I hated was not men—my beloved grandfather was the one who most encouraged me in my intellectual and artistic pursuits—but rather the visual putting down of girls and women vis-à-vis a power situation in both high and popular culture, and I resorted to extreme measures when confronted by it.

MR: Nevertheless, fairy tales have remained a longstanding fascination—that is, you’ve written extensive texts about the tales in the work of Kiki Smith, Miwa Yanagi, and Natalie Frank—all of which are included in this book. Now, moving on in your chronology...from 1947 to 51 you attended Vassar College, which was then an all-girls’ school, where you received a BA in philosophy (with a minor in Greek and art history). What were those undergraduate student years like for you?

LN: Yes, I graduated from Vassar in 1951. I had decided to go to an all-women’s college because all the smart women I knew (who could afford it or get a scholarship) went to Ivy League schools, mainly the so-called “Seven Sisters”: Vassar, Smith, Wellesley, Bryn Mawr, Radcliffe, Barnard, Mount Holyoke. Vassar was an eye-opening experience. The Vassar faculty was comprised of old-time lefties and feminists but, as a whole, my first-year teachers were not very good. But I learned a lot, anyway. I wrote a term paper for my introductory history class on Beatrice Webb and Fabian socialism, which I suppose was the first “feminist” text I ever produced.

MR: Moving from Crown Heights in Brooklyn to a quasi-suburban college campus in Poughkeepsie must have been quite a culture shock, I imagine.

LN: Actually, the big culture shock was some of the girls in my class. They were not Jewish, not “intellectual,” not from New York—and were quite waspy and only interested in dating. They knitted Argyle socks for their boyfriends, played bridge, and went to football games. They all wore gold bobby pins and camel-hair coats and Bermuda shorts. Some of them made debuts. This was truly another world for me. But I made

wonderful, interesting friends, was politically active, supporting Henry Wallace’s presidential campaign with like-minded young women, wrote and published poetry, and met others who did the same. I went to a stimulating conference on the contemporary arts, organized partly by Phyllis Bronfman (later Lambert), where I saw Merce Cunningham perform with John Cage on the prepared piano. (I had seen Merce with Martha Graham in my high-school days, but this was something new and different.) I was asked to design sets for an early (American) performance of Bertolt Brecht’s *The Good Woman of Setzuan*. Gradually, we all sorted ourselves out and I found good, great and inspiring teachers, some of them men but many of them women. The good thing about a women’s college at the time was that women had a chance to do everything. I got onto the editorial board of the liberal newspaper, I participated in the theater, where women did lighting, carpentry and, of course, acting and directing. We were the heads of student government. We were not pushed to the margins because there were no gendered margins, so to speak; we were all there was.

MR: In a way, then, having grown up in a household in which your voice and intellect were encouraged, where you were quite coddled, you would have found the strong and independent women you met at Vassar quite “normal,” right? I recall your telling me that there were no male chairs in the art history department until your husband [in 1975], and that you always thought that women ran the show at Vassar. However, you also said that you were often told that you “think like a man,” as if women couldn’t think, that women were fluttery and emotional. So at what stage did you realize that life outside of Vassar truly was a “man’s world,” that there was a glass ceiling, that there were firm societal expectations set upon most women?

LN: In the 1940s, Vassar was an institution with a serious feminist past and a history of brilliant, creative, and politically activist students like Elizabeth Bishop and Mary McCarthy. But in the late 1940s it succumbed to the postwar demand that women return to “Kinder, Küche, Kirche” [German slogan meaning “children, kitchen, church”]. Then, a well-publicized survey team of sociologists, psychologists and educational authorities known as the Mellon Committee came to Vassar and blighted the ambition of the women students, as well as denigrated women’s potential for achievement, by declaring the college a “homosexual matriarchy” and women who dared to use their minds in competition with men as “overachievers.” Yet here again, contradiction—fortunately—abided. In the classroom, our teachers—the better ones, male and female—encouraged us to strive, to excel, to explore, even if nothing much awaited most of us after graduation but marriage, parenthood, and membership of the Junior League of St. Louis or Scranton. For a term paper in my junior year social psychology course, I wrote a so-called “content analysis” paper about the women’s magazines of the period—*Good Housekeeping*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *The Woman’s Home Companion*—thereby enabling myself to read

in good conscience what I usually felt guilty about as time-wasting. (Parenthetically, I must admit that then, as now, this feminist enjoys the occasional wallow in the slut-tish pleasures of popular culture: *US*, *In Touch*, *OK*, *Star*—I don't buy them, but if they are around, like *Vogue*, or *Elle* or *Allure*, I certainly will flip through them, by no means entirely uncritically but with a certain delicious, clandestine enjoyment.) My analysis uncovered the double message women's magazines of the 40s sent to their readers: on the one hand, there were the serious articles about major women activists and achievers like Eleanor Roosevelt or Dorothy Thompson or Amelia Earhart, presumably calculated to encourage their readership to do likewise. But the fiction they offered up for female consumption told a different story: in all cases, without exception, women who pursued careers, who didn't pay full attention to husbands and children and domestic affairs, were doomed and punished. Career girls who wanted to keep on working, who dared to compete with male partners, were cast into outer darkness—either they remained “old maids,” or lost their mates to more properly domesticated women. The message was clear, and cast in the guise of fiction it appealed more to the emotions or even the unconscious fears and doubts of the female audience at stake. Such fiction, like women's films at the time, reinforced the doxa of the day, and no doubt helped sell more houses, more washing machines and more table linen to the would-be model housewives and helpmeets that these magazines catered to. This project also opened my eyes to my still-hypothetical future. Although not yet a card-carrying feminist—and who was in those days, besides some shapeless, tweedy, old left-over suffragettes among the emeritae?—I knew from that time onward that I was not going to be one of those model domestic women. I despised and pitied them, and vowed inwardly that I would be different. Of course, there were other models for heterosexual women on view at the college—bohemian wives and mothers, or, in rare cases, married female instructors—but their fate was almost too awful to contemplate: women trying to finish their dissertations, write their poetry, or paint their pictures amid a shambles of urine-soaked diapers, unwashed dishes, and uncontrollable children. No, indeed.

MR: No, indeed! Instead, you decided to continue your education, attending Columbia in 1952 [Master's in English literature, 17th century, thesis on poet Richard Crashaw and Baroque imagery] and then, from 1953 to 63, you commuted to the Institute of Fine Arts to pursue your doctorate in art history, while also teaching part-time at Vassar, raising your daughter Jessie as a single mother after your husband, Philip Nochlin, died in 1960. During that time you also had a crucial Fulbright year in Paris, working on your dissertation, and writing a novel titled *Art and Life*, still unpublished, in your spare time. You were doing it all! As to your dissertation topic, why Gustave Courbet? I imagine that his unique combination of stylistic innovation and political engagement must have played a part—combined with, of course, a lifelong love of realism and painting.

LN: I first got involved with Courbet when I wrote a paper on French artists and the 1848 revolution at the Institute of Fine Arts [New York University] in the early 1950s. I had also taught early Netherlandish painting—Jan van Eyck, Rogier van der Weyden—at Vassar. I loved realist styles from the gut, as it were, because they refused the rhetoric of grandeur, the perfection and unity of the High Renaissance, in favor of a different kind of magic, that of the detail, the additive, the allure of the specific. Paradoxically, I also was drawn to Italian art of the 15th century—Fra Angelico, Pollaiuolo, Ghirlandaio, above all Piero—for different but related reasons, Piero because of my modernist proclivities. (What is good about art history is that it can support inconsistencies: you don't have to look down on Jan van Eyck if you love Piero della Francesca, and vice versa.) Then, later, I became interested in contemporary New Realism—Pearlstein, Alice Neel, Sylvia Mangold, Sylvia Sleigh, Rackstraw Downes, and so on—and curated a show of their work at Vassar called *Realism Now*, in 1967. My interest in realism sprang from multiple motivations—political, formal, personal; it culminated in a two-part article I wrote for *Art in America* in 1974: “The Realist Criminal and the Abstract Law.” My interest in realism has never waned. I've taught several seminars on the subject, and have written extensively about women realists, including most recently a text on Ellen Altfest, included in this book.

MR: Tell me a bit about the years from 1963, the year you finished your doctorate, to 1970—which is to say, prior to your writing of “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” I know you married architectural historian Dick Pommer (in 1968), and had your second daughter, Daisy, in 1969, but what were you working on during that stage—in terms of scholarship?

LN: I was, first of all, writing *Mathis at Colmar*, a slim volume about the Isenheim Altarpiece which I subtitled “a visual confrontation,” published by the Red Dust Press in 1963. This was ekphrasis rather than art history. (See my piece on Sophie Calle in this volume for more about ekphrasis and art.) Then I was busy collecting, editing and, in some cases, translating, the material for the “Sources and Documents” series edited by my professor, Peter Janson. I ended up with two volumes of readings on art by such 19th-century writers as Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Fénéon, and many others, including the writings of the artists themselves: *Realism and Tradition in Art, 1848–1900* and *Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, 1874–1904*, both published in 1966. I then went on to write *Realism*, a volume in the Penguin series, “Style and Civilization,” of which I am still proud, if not entirely satisfied. And it was then that I met my inspiring future editor at Thames & Hudson, Nikos Stangos, who was involved in almost all my future publications with that house, to which I still remain faithful.

I also published several articles during that period starting with a controversial review of Joseph C Sloane's *Paul Marc Joseph Chenavard*, which appeared in *The Art Bulletin* in 1964. My study of Courbet's *Burial*, “Innovation and tradition in Courbet's *Burial at*

Ornans,” appeared in *Essays in Honor of Walter Friedlaender* [Marsyas, Supplement II], published by New York University, Institute of Fine Arts, in 1965. In the same year, I published “Camille Pissarro: the unassuming eye” in *ARTnews*, and in 1967, “Gustave Courbet’s *Meeting: A Portrait of the Artist as a Wandering Jew*,” in *The Art Bulletin*; the latter won the Kingsley Porter Prize of 1948 for the best article in that publication by a writer under forty. In 1968, I curated the exhibition *Realism Now* at Vassar, with the help of my undergraduate students, and wrote the catalogue; both got some notice in the New York press, and artists and critics came up to Poughkeepsie to see the show. Finally, I published “The Invention of the Avant-Garde: France, 1830–1880,” in *The Avant-Garde, Art News Annual XXXIV* in 1968, and then went on to do the research, and write, a long historical article about the birth and later vicissitudes of the museum. Titled “The Inhabitable Museum,” it appeared in *ARTnews* in January 1970.

MR: And exactly one year later, in January 1971, you published “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?,” also in *ARTnews*. It was intended for publication in one of the earliest scholarly texts of the feminist movement, *Women in Sexist Society*,² in which it was published under a different title, “Why Are There No Great Women Artists?” But it appeared first as a richly illustrated article in a pioneering and controversial number of *ARTnews* (vol. 69, January 1971), dedicated to women’s issues.

LN: The text was written during the early days of the Women’s Liberation movement, and was at least partially based on research carried out the previous year when I had conducted the first seminar, at Vassar College, on women and art, in 1970.

MR: To put this into context, you taught the first class on women and art at Vassar, as you say, and then taught the course again that same year at Stanford, where you met Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro for the first time. You also saw *Womanhouse* while in California, and, as you make clear in your “Starting from Scratch” essay, included in this volume [p. 188], had mixed feelings about it. On a wider scale, also in 1970, the US underwent drastic political and cultural changes, all in favor of the women’s movement—with events such as the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment) passing in the US House, the 50th Anniversary celebrations of the 19th Amendment, Bella Abzug’s election to the House, and the publication of major feminist texts like Robin Morgan’s *Sisterhood is Powerful*, Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch*, Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex* and *Our Bodies Ourselves*, as well as the founding of the Ad Hoc Women Artists’ Committee, and the Feminist Art Program at Fresno. Again, all of this in 1970. It must have been beyond exhilarating!

LN: Yes, it certainly was...and when I embarked on “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” in 1970, there was no such thing as a feminist art history: like all other

forms of historical discourse, it had to be constructed. New materials had to be sought out, a theoretical basis put in place, a methodology gradually developed.

MR: Your essay “Starting from Scratch” captures beautifully what appeared to be a sense of urgency on the part of liberated women like yourselves, as you sought to intervene in and alter history itself. But was there a specific incident around that time that inspired you to write that essay?

LN: I wrote “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” as the direct result of an incident that took place at a Vassar graduation in 1970. Gloria Steinem was the graduation speaker...she had been invited by my friend Brenda Feigen, who was then a graduating senior. Her brother Richard Feigen was there. He was a famous gallery person, the head of the Richard Feigen Gallery. Anyway, afterwards, Richard turned to me and said, “Linda, I would love to show women artists, but I can’t find any good ones. Why are there no great women artists?” He actually asked me that question. I went home and thought about this issue for days. It haunted me. It made me think, because, first of all, it implied that there were no great women artists. Second, because it assumed this was a natural condition. It just lit up my mind. I am sure it was the catalyst that enabled me to put together a lot of things I had been thinking about, and stimulated me to do a great deal of further research in a variety of fields in order to “answer” the question and its implications, but his initial question started me off.

MR: Prior to this incident, had you ever asked yourself a similar question—as to why there were no “great” women artists—or musicians, or writers, for that matter?

LN: No, I hadn’t. The thing about Vassar was that we’d always known there were women artists. Works by Georgia O’Keeffe, Kay Sage, Florine Stettheimer, Veira da Silva, Agnes Martin, and Joan Mitchell hung in the gallery. There were also women artists like Rosemary Beck teaching painting at Vassar; our sculpture teacher, Concetta Scaravaglione, who had been active in New Deal projects, was a woman, and a lot of contemporary women artists were invited to campus for lectures. I remember attending gallery talks by Loren MacIver, Irene Rice Pereira, and Grace Hartigan in the early 1950s, and they were memorable. As a sophomore I had thrust a poem into the hands of MacIver, and as a young teacher I remember being bowled over not just by Hartigan’s work, but also by her tough, bohemian, unconventional persona. Even earlier, though, in my teens, my mother had shared with me her enthusiasm for women writers like Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, Rebecca West, and Elinor Wylie. So I certainly knew that there were women artists. But I wasn’t thinking in terms of men or women; I just included women in the group of people who made art. I just thought, there they were.

MR: So ultimately, then, it was the word “great” in Richard’s sentence that started you thinking about the historical circumstances of women as artists, prompting you to ask that intentionally provocative question. Did you have any idea at the time that the essay would ring down like a clarion call, or that it would challenge each new generation to assess changes and improvements in the conditions under which women artists work?

LN: I knew I had done something important. I wrote it under a kind of heady inspiration that was based on a great deal of previous thinking and knowledge, all of which surfaced as I wrote; each new element led me on to further investigation in a wide variety of fields; each discovery demanded further research. I hesitate to use the term “dialectical thinking” loosely, but I think of it as such; it was a truly exciting experience. I might tone down the rhetoric a little if I were writing a similar piece today, but somehow, at the time, it was necessary to the project.

MR: Around the same time that you were writing “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” in the early 1970s, you were also writing about Miriam Schapiro, Sylvia Sleigh, Dorothea Tanning, as well as thematic texts like “Some Women Realists” [p. 76], and “How Feminism in the Arts can Implement Cultural Change.”³ You also participated in a controversial forum titled “What is female imagery?,” in *Ms. Magazine* in 1975, along with Lucy Lippard, Arlene Raven, Joan Snyder, Eleanor Antin, and others—in which you were asked if women’s art was different from men’s. To which you argued against the concept of a “feminine sensibility,” postulating that women’s art was no more alike than men’s art, and that we should speak instead “of female styles, always in the plural”⁴—a position you have maintained till today. Simultaneously, you were organizing with Ann Sutherland Harris one of the most important exhibitions in the history of feminism, that is, *Women Artists: 1550–1950*, which was the first large-scale museum exhibition in the US dedicated exclusively to women artists from a historical perspective. The exhibition presented more than 150 works by eighty-four painters, from 16th-century miniatures to modern abstractions. In Ann Sutherland Harris’ acknowledgments in the catalogue, she describes the genesis of the show, explaining that the initial impetus came from a group of women artists in California. The process, as she describes it, is well worth repeating:

The idea for this exhibition emerged during the course of some informal after-dinner speeches following the symposium organized in connection with another exhibition, “Caravaggio and His Followers,” held at the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1971. Kenneth Donahue told the story of women artists who came to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art demanding gallery space and exhibition time for women equal to that being given to male artists. During the course of subsequent meetings, when the work of distinguished women artists of the past

was discussed, they proposed a comprehensive exhibition devoted to Artemisia Gentileschi, a suggestion that Mr. Donahue greeted with enthusiasm. Athena Tacha...urged me to respond. I rose and welcomed the suggestion too, but noted that there were many other neglected women artists worthy of exhibition. The audience responded warmly to both our statements, and Mr. Donahue came over immediately to ask me if I would be interested in being a Guest Curator for such a show. Of course, I said yes...and in the course of the conversation the idea of a historical survey of major women artists emerged. ...As soon as it became a serious possibility, I urged Mr. Donahue and his coordinator of exhibitions, Jeanne D’Andrea, to invite Professor Linda Nochlin and they quickly agreed with this suggestion. Her participation was crucial for she is the only scholar who has been working for a long time on this subject.⁵

LN: Yes—this, in succinct form, tells how I got involved in the show. The research began shortly after that time. Needless to say, it took a long time, a great deal of work, and a lot of traveling. It was certainly difficult, but at the same time, very exciting: we were, to quote the title of my article included in this volume about the early days of the women’s art movement, “Starting from Scratch.” Of course, we had a single important museum, Los Angeles County, that really wanted the show, right from the start, so that was encouraging, and other museums in this country took it on, including the University Art Museum of Austin, Texas, the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, and, most important

Women Artists exhibition, 1977, Brooklyn Museum



for me, since I was born and brought up in Brooklyn, the Brooklyn Museum. Some museums were receptive to the idea of the show, but many were not. Some curators and directors in Europe thought we were wasting our time, as they reluctantly dragged women's works out of storage; some even laughed. But then again, other curators, like the wonderful Richard Morphet at the Tate, were extremely enthusiastic and helpful, providing much-needed information and revealing works by major women artists that were eventually lent to the show.

MR: The exhibition had a considerable and immediate impact on the art-historical paradigm against which it was working. It was then, and continues to be, regarded as a landmark event in the history of feminism and art. Art critic John Perrault, writing in 1977, declared in his review of the exhibition, "The history of Western art will never be the same again."⁶ After an exhibition such as this, Perrault continued, the occlusion of women from art history "can never happen again, for their research has proved that there have been women artists of great accomplishment all along." And Robert Hughes, writing for *Time* magazine, called *Women Artists* "one of the most significant theme shows to come along in years."⁷ Quite the compliments!

LN: Yes, the exhibition was very well received. Perhaps more indicative of its impact at the time is the fact that museums lending to the exhibition began exhibiting their works by women artists more regularly once they had returned from the tour. It also spawned countless articles, monographs, and dialogue about the importance of women's artistic production as a whole.

MR: At the time, you explained to Grace Glueck in a *New York Times* review that *Women Artists* was "like doing the whole history of art with a feminist cast."⁸ What a remarkable feeling that must have been! When I teach this exhibition in my museum studies courses, I present it as the most significant curatorial corrective in the 1970s to the occlusion of women as cultural contributors from the larger historical record—insofar as its central aim was the reclamation of women artists and their insertion back into the traditional canon of art history from which they had been lost, or forgotten, or simply dismissed as insignificant, because female. It was unprecedented in the historiography of exhibitions. I also explain that the strategy of discovery and analysis employed in *Women Artists* was part and parcel of a larger project of "reclamation" employed by feminists at this time—as is perhaps most visible in an installation like Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party*, which commemorates 1,038 women from history. Or one could also mention exhibitions like *Old Mistresses: Women Artists of the Past* (Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, 1972) and *Women Artists of America, 1707–1964* (Newark Museum, 1965), or the first survey texts of women artists from that time period by Eleanor Tufts, Germaine Greer, and Elsa Honig Fine.⁹ Clearly, reclamation and excavation were important

feminist strategies at the time—and your involvement in *Women Artists* testifies to your belief in this. Therefore, I must broach a difficult subject. In "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" [pp. 42–68], written five years prior to the opening of the exhibition, you were critical of feminists whose first reactions were "to swallow the bait, hook, line and sinker, and to attempt to answer the question as it is put: i.e., to dig up examples of worthy or insufficiently appreciated women artists throughout history; to rehabilitate rather modest, if interesting and productive careers; to 're-discover' forgotten flower-painters or David-followers and make out a case for them..."¹⁰ You argued that while such attempts were certainly worth the effort, they did nothing "to question the assumption behind the question, 'Why have there been no great women artists?'" On the contrary, by attempting to answer it, they tacitly reinforce its negative implications."¹¹ You continued: "The fact of the matter is that there have been no supremely great women artists, as far as we know, although there have been many interesting and very good ones who remain insufficiently investigated or appreciated...The fact, dear sisters, is that there are no women equivalents for Michelangelo or Rembrandt, Delacroix or Cézanne, Picasso or Matisse, or even, in very recent times, for de Kooning or Warhol, any more than there are Black American equivalents for the same."¹² It was statements such as these that precipitated a maelstrom of criticism from feminists. I know that you later modified these statements. But can you explain how you worked through this contradiction at the time?

LN: Yes, I did later modify these statements. On the one hand, I knew I was taking a position that directly contradicted my stance in "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" Yet it seemed to me that, after digging around in the basements and reserves of great European museums and provincial art galleries, there had indeed been many wonderfully inventive, extremely competent, and, above all, unquestionably interesting women artists; some of these artists had been cherished and admired on their own native turf, even if they could not be considered so-called international superstars. This work and its historical import, without question, deserved to be shown and, even more important, deserved to be thought about and seriously analyzed within the discourse of high art. In other words, in "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" I said that I thought that simply looking into women artists of the past would not really change our estimation of their value. The whole point of the first big *Women Artists: 1550–1950* exhibition, however, was precisely to see what women as artists had done over the years despite prejudice, marginalization, and stereotyping. We weren't claiming to find some neglected Michelangelos. For a variety of socially constructed reasons, there had really never been a female equivalent for Michelangelo or Van Eyck, or Poussin, for that matter. Our goal for this enterprise was not primarily to prove that women really had an art history as successful as that of the men, despite overwhelming odds, a history silenced by male conspiracies. Rather, I was interested to see what women had achieved

and not achieved within specific historical circumstances and particular sorts of social refusal and permission. In “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” I said that I thought that simply looking into women artists of the past would not really change our estimation of their value. Nevertheless, I went on to look into some women artists of the past and I found that my own estimations and values had in fact changed.

MR: *Women Artists* ended in 1950—which is to say, prior to the women’s movement in the US and the development of feminism as an artistic practice. It is interesting to contemplate whom you might have included had you brought the exhibition to the present. I know you had a particular aversion to the concept of a female esthetic or central core imagery, and that you were writing about Sleigh and Schapiro, but what other sorts of work by women were you drawn to in the 1970s?

LN: Well, there was other equally memorable if less overtly political women’s work on view in the early 1970s that I really liked. I am thinking particularly of pieces by Lynda Benglis that I encountered in the innovative 1971 exhibition at Vassar College, where I was teaching. Titled *26 × 26*, the show itself, curated by a brilliant former student, Mary Delahoyd, was intrepid in its choices: it included, besides the Benglis pieces, poured work by Marjorie Strider, and a “performance” piece by Gordon Matta-Clark, which involved living suspended in a net in the trees for several days. Dazzling! I would really like to go into the Lynda Benglis contribution in some detail, because for me it extended the whole notion of what a feminist intervention into the contemporary art doxa—Minimalism, for the most part—might be, both in terms of structure and medium. At the same time, it made me revise the very notion of what sculpture itself might be. It was the total rejection of sculptural work as permanent, stable, firmly based on the ground, and monumental, that was at stake in Benglis’ pieces for the show, as it was in the concurrent work by Marjorie Strider in the Vassar show. This innovation had, of course, been vital to the creative output of Eva Hesse, as well: Hesse’s *Contingent* (1969), made of impermanent materials, poured or extruded from the wall (in Strider’s case, poured down the stairs or even out the window!) rather than standing on the ground or a traditional base; Benglis’ “pours” engaged with space and temporality more boldly than any sculptor since Bernini, and his off-balance, metamorphosing *Daphne* in the 17th century.

MR: Yes, absolutely, Benglis, Strider, Hesse (and Hannah Wilke, as well) were doing something entirely new, and irrevocably connected with contemporary feminism in its refusal of the general standards of sculptural decorum.

LN: Benglis herself remembers the Vassar piece, *For and Against (For Klaus)*, as crucial. In a recent letter to me, Benglis affirms that the Vassar piece was of particular importance in the development of her early oeuvre. Although it was the second in the series of



Lynda Benglis, *For and Against (For Klaus)*, 1971.
Pigmented (iron oxide black) polyurethane, 11 × 32 × 11 ft (33.5 × 107.2 × 33.5 m) (destroyed).
Installed at Vassar College Art Gallery, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY in the exhibition *26 × 26*, May 1–June 6, 1971

large-scale polyurethane pour pieces that she made over the course of eight months in 1971, it was the first in which she realized that the form could emerge solely from the wall and float in space without touching the ground for support. It was in making the Vassar work that she first understood that she could produce a deep cantilever of up to a dozen feet or more. She also informed me that a new wall had recently been constructed in the Poughkeepsie space just prior to Lynda’s arrival, and she recalls that she was very careful to include elements of both the old and new walls as she was pouring. At the same time, Benglis was very clear that she was not interested in responding to the architecture of the space, as did Marjorie Strider in the staircase and window pieces in the same exhibition. On the contrary, she felt she was choosing in a formal and structural way, recognizing the development of form within a chosen context that did not have to do with allusions to specific architectural elements.¹³ Yet if the dynamic thrusts and drips extruded from the wall with sinister bravado made a mockery of traditional art itself, desecrating the building in which traditional art was taught and presumably sanctified, nevertheless, contradictorily, the dripping folds of polyurethane themselves recalled past traditions, like Bernini’s swirling, dynamic, dramatic drapery folds, themselves so different from both classical placidity and the contemporary Minimalist doxa.

MR: In the context of the early 1970s, this inventive and independent rejection of Minimalism constituted a forceful feminist gesture.

LN: Yes, and it reminds us that art assumes social or political meaning only within a context: to create this drippy, dynamic, extrusive, “impure” “sculpture” in an art world

that supported Minimalist purity, clarity and control had political meaning. It stood, to us who were participants in what was called the “women’s movement in art,” for the rejection of a kind of intellectual oppression that we felt neither accepted us nor gave us a chance to express ourselves. At a crucial moment within the burgeoning feminist movement, these solidified “pours,” as they came to be called, literally flowed with the sheer energy of women’s liberation.

Now I must make a personal confession. My husband and I walked off with a small fragment of one of the polyurethane pieces, a precious relic of the pieces on view, when it was broken off after the show was over and just lying around. Were we stealing art? Nobody raised the question. Somebody probably just said, “Do you want to take this?”, and we said, “Sure!”, and took it and put it on our back porch; it looked good out there. Of course, it disintegrated within about a year: I mean, rain, snow, dog...all those things... time, erosion. It vanished, got smaller and smaller, less and less, until finally it was just a little blackish nub and we put it in the garbage. We were very sad, of course, but we accepted it, the way you have to accept death after life: I mean that’s what happens—why shouldn’t art die? Does all art have to last? Does it have to be permanent and monumental—and valuable? This is something the work of certain women artists, like Hesse, Benglis, Bourgeois and others, makes us think about. Benglis made many varieties of “pours,” many in brilliant intermingled colors, some suspended from walls, flowing down or just spreading out freely on the floor, all of them implying free movement of molten material, rejecting stasis as a necessary condition of the sculptural process.

Of course, it wasn’t just women who were rejecting traditional modernist and post-modernist form at the time. Willem de Kooning also vehemently opposed sculptural traditions old and new in the series of thirty-three bronzes he created in the early 1970s. In *Clam-Digger* or *Cross-Legged Figure* of 1972, de Kooning, unlike Benglis or Hesse, or Bourgeois at times, retains the human figure, rendering it grotesque by melting and twisting it out of shape, certainly, but still keeping it perfectly recognizable as a human figure. And it’s a large-scale human figure, formless and un-sculptural though it may be, a human figure cast in the traditionally noble and enduring material of bronze. De Kooning wasn’t fooling around; he wasn’t making stuff in polyurethane or beeswax or wire mesh, he was making sure it was cast in bronze and that it was going to be there a long, long time (and, parenthetically, be worth more and more over time), drippy, formless and grotesque though it might be.

I don’t want to dwell only on innovative work from the beginning of the women’s movement, in my continual quest for imagery that changed my ideas about what art could be. Sometimes, as recently as last year, it could be a piece that so thoroughly deconstructs/reconstructs a traditional theme like “motherhood” that I can never look at a Madonna-and-child image in the same way again. I am thinking of a work I encountered recently in a show of women’s art in Buffalo at the Albright-Knox Gallery, a large color photograph. Janine Antoni’s *2038* (2000)¹⁴ is a startling variation on the

time-honored theme of motherhood: a parodic but deep reversion to the topos of the nursing mother. The basic animality of this act of nurturance, an act which nevertheless can be sublimated into the highest virtue of which the female body is capable, is literally inscribed in *fin-de-siècle* artist Giovanni Segantini’s ever-popular *Le Due Madri* (The Two Mothers, 1889), with its sentimental juxtaposition of two pairs of nursing mothers: cow and calf and peasant woman and baby in the shadowy interior of a barn.

MR: And Christian art—as exemplified by Artemisia Gentileschi’s 17th-century version of the Madonna and Christ-child theme—had elevated this act of nursing into the most sacred function of the female body, almost but not quite making up for the original sin of Eve. Mary Cassatt also brought the theme up to date, and in doing so secularized it to the point that it became a theme of that everyday life so central to Impressionist iconography.

LN: Antoni’s abject mother, lying in a rusty trough with an anonymous milk-giver of a different species at her breast is certainly not a scene of “daily life.” Surrealist in its uncanny revision of who gives milk for whom, it is in some sense an updated Madonna of Humility, a popular theme in the Renaissance and before, where the Virgin sits humbly on the ground instead of being elevated on a chair or throne. I would like, however, to turn from the history or meaning of the theme to an exploration of the actual, immediate experience of Antoni’s photograph itself, for it is the immediate experience that is so memorable, for a variety of reasons. As an image, it appeals not only to sight but to the haptic sense, the sense of touch so often disdained by artists and theorists as a lower sense. Sight and hearing were traditionally considered the higher and more rational senses, as opposed to those of touch, smell and taste, which were considered gross, primitive, and childish. Here though, it is touch that conveys



Janine Antoni,
2038, 2000.
C-print,
20 × 20 in.
(50.8 × 50.8 cm)

the mystery of the flesh: the preternatural softness of the cow's muzzle against the soft, female breast; the contrastingly rougher, emergent texture of its dark coat against her delicate arms; the urgent sheen of its slanted eye against her peacefully closed ones. The murky fluid of the bathwater plays against the rough, rusty surface of the trough (not a proper bathtub) in which the woman, Antoni, is half submerged. It is the haptic sense, then, that both constructs and responds to the mysterious *tendresse* of the image, its shocking yet oddly soothing provocation.

MR: Of course, Antoni's *2038* is not merely an investigation of motherhood and its limits, but also of cows!

LN: Yes, an investigation into what one might call, tongue-in-cheek "bovinity!" Poetic but straightforward, the image recalls the text of one of our major young prose writers, Lydia Davis, in a long, elegiac, exhaustive, deadpan piece, "The cows": "They are a deep, inky black. It is a black that swallows light. Their bodies are entirely black, but they have white on their faces. On the faces of two of them, there are large patches of white, like a mask. On the face of the third, there is only a small patch on the forehead, the size of a silver dollar..."¹⁵ And, of course, when I think of women and cows, I think of women and camels and I am back in 1971 again and mingling with the entirely original work of Nancy Graves, the first camel-bone pieces, which again made me revise my notions of what a work of art might be. The camel-bone pieces (the "bones" completely constructed by Graves herself) hung in a remarkable installation in the early 70s at Vassar. There is a picture of me kneeling in their midst with my little daughter, as though in a jungle. Graves' film about the camel market in Isy Boukir of 1971, filmed in the Sahara in the course of eighteen days—just camels, camels moving, writhing, looking, bending, running—so enchanted me that I wrote a piece that was simply all that I saw and could grasp in writing as I watched the movie. I was not the only admirer of *Isy Boukir*. Roger Greenspun, the critic of the *New York Times* said: "...Ms. Graves' film is precise and wonderfully particular, and as appreciative of its camels as of the controlled rhythms of their surges across the screen, the slight shifting of their legs, the curves of their extended necks. It is altogether beautiful, rich, assured, tactful and intensive filmmaking."¹⁶

MR: In your catalogue essay for that Vassar exhibition, you compare Graves' "Camel series" (1968–69) to the radical gestures of Duchamp's readymade: as re-creations of found objects re-presented anew. Her innovation and difference, of course, is that, if she'd wanted to pull a Duchampian gesture, she would have, as you state, "bought a stuffed camel from a taxidermist, signed it, and wheeled it into an art gallery."¹⁷

LN: One could never mistake one of Graves' camels for a "real" camel! Rather, they exist as compelling simulacra.



Linda Nochlin and daughter, Daisy Pommer, Vassar College Art Gallery, Poughkeepsie, NY, Nancy Graves exhibition, October 17–November 7, 1971

MR: Do you happen to know if Graves identified as a feminist? Is her work "feminist"? How important is intentionality when discussing feminist art? I'm thinking, I suppose, of an artist like Lee Bontecou, who became a feminist icon in the 1970s, despite her own opinion to the contrary, as a result of Chicago and Schapiro's famous article, "Female imagery," written in 1973 (*Womanspace Journal*), in which one of her sculptures was used to illustrate a central core image. Or Frankenthaler, who one hesitates to call feminist because she was opposed to any suggestion of her sex or feminism being an issue in her work. Or Joan Mitchell, Elaine de Kooning...This brings us, yet again, to the question of "What is feminist art?" And who can be called a feminist artist?

LN: The question is a complicated one, and is harder to answer than it was in the 1970s, when a group of women artists set out, passionately motivated by the Women's Liberation movement, to create a new feminist art, a project that would engage with politics, including the politics of the art world, and at the same time innovate in the realm of style and iconography. It was by no means a question of simply painting images of The Great Goddess or feisty females knocking out their male opponents. Abstract artists like Miriam Schapiro and Joyce Kozloff understood the importance of stylistic context in the invention of a feminist imagery. At a time when 'reduction', 'cool', 'simplification' were the watchwords of the vanguard Minimalists, pattern and decoration could be understood as feminist protest, among other things. Some women artists felt that painting itself had a patriarchal heritage and abandoned it for conceptual art, performance, installation, video or photography-based forms of expression.

MR: While others held on to the tradition of painting quite steadfastly, producing “space” within it, forging alternatives, often in a quest for a female esthetic, many women artists in the US were working with abstract vocabularies, exploring the geometric schema of the grid, revisiting this modernist, Minimalist emblem with a vengeance, while others were parodying the signature abstract expressionist “drip.” An artist like Joan Snyder was slicing through her canvases with large vaginal slits; Louise Fishman was cutting up her Minimalist paintings and stitching them back together; and Mary Heilmann was teasing out the formal esthetics of color-field painting by deliberately integrating what she called “girly” colors, much like Chicago had done with *Rainbow Pickett*, or Benglis with her *Blatt*. These were all consciously feminist strategies. But what you’re saying, I think, is that in the 1970s there were divisions and differences among women artists purporting to support feminism in their work. Weren’t those the same sort of issues that (male) artists had already been dealing with vis-à-vis the place of utilitarian political “messages” in high art or its equivalent?

LN: Yes, the prime exemplar is, of course, the case of Ad Reinhardt, a committed radical in politics, but totally, and self-consciously, non- or even anti-political in his work. In his black paintings, totally abstract, he sought for purity, reduction, “art-as-art,” as he put it. In his cartoons, widely published in leftist periodicals like *PM*, he openly, and with considerable wit, expressed his political beliefs, including his beliefs about art itself, in series like “How to look at art,” about modern art and its viewers. For Reinhardt,

Lynda Benglis creating
Blatt, 1969



art—high art—and politics were separate realms, and to make art into a utilitarian weapon, no matter how important the cause, was to besmirch it, to misunderstand what art was about. Reinhardt is, of course, an extreme case, but one can certainly imagine that there might be a feminist artist who was a feminist in her political engagement, who joined feminist demonstrations for larger representation of women artists in museums, who fought for more women curators, who demanded more shows for women artists, and yet in her work rejected all visible signs of feminist (i.e. political) engagement.

MR: Yet, there is another aspect of feminist art/feminist artists. There are some women artists whose work is imbued with the issues promulgated by feminism, yet who don’t necessarily refer to feminist issues directly.

LN: Yes, and in some instances, the feminist “agenda” is simply, sometimes subtly, sometimes blatantly, there. Feminism is, in other words, a necessary but not a sufficient condition for their creative innovations, an ever-present substratum of their art. I am thinking specifically of three major artists of our time who happen to be women: Louise Bourgeois, Cindy Sherman, and Kara Walker. Louise Bourgeois joined in some of the earliest mass meetings of Women’s Liberation; I know because I was there with her at one of them, I think in Washington. But aside from this, her burning antagonism to patriarchy underlay her constructive and deconstructive strategies in much of her most powerful work. It is most apparent, of course, in such overtly named major works as *The Destruction of the Father* of 1974, but it underpins both style and iconography in many others. She herself, in her many autobiographical writings, attributes this to her specific relationship to her own father, her life-long resentment of his betrayal of her mother and herself in an affair with her governess, and no doubt there is some truth in this personal account. It also makes a good heart-rending story to account for her decided antipathy to male authority in the realm of art. But the larger issue suggested by works like *The Destruction of the Father*, the series of giant (female) spiders, the late works in cloth, and many others, is the feminist one of ensuring parity for women, of refusing to bow to centuries of male-dominated tradition. One might go so far as to say that the whole floppy, horizontal, multipartite, irregular, suggestively but ambiguously erotic totality of *The Destruction of the Father* is the Other of traditional sculpture, which was, until recently, vertical, tightly controlled, unambiguously gendered male or female, wrought of some permanent, noble material like stone or bronze. Bourgeois’ piece is, in some sense, the anti-David by Michelangelo, with its beautiful marble surface and overwhelming masculine power; the anti-Greek god with his carefully balanced contraposto; the anti-Matisse *Back* with its formalist perfection (and calculated imperfections). And it is a denial of the unstated assumption of masculine authority, which each of these works presumes and projects, which is the very basis of their aura, in the Benjaminian sense of the term.

MR: Agreed. Bourgeois' late works, crudely sewn out of coarse fabric, again undermine millennia of male-dominated tradition. Turning deliberately to ignoble, impermanent material and debased subject matter—sexual but not sensual in the usual sense of the term—they reject both skill and the requirements of high art in favor of the *matière* of children's toys or cheap bathrobes. Dangling or splayed out rather than standing, incorporating real elements like leg braces or sharp knives, they mingle the innocent and the vicious with startling grotesquerie.

LN: And the fact that they are stuffed and sewn, rather than modeled or carved, again calls attention to aspects of feminist demands for respect for the “low” arts of stitchery, for women's traditional crafts, but with a difference. For Louise Bourgeois in her old age rejects all the niceties associated with female craftsmanship, with children's dolls, with the cloth arts, and transforms them into something more virulent, more aggressive, more, paradoxically, anti-patriarchal than even some of her own previous work; she turns the materials of women's craft toward more brutal, destructive ends, even parodying some her earlier pieces like *Arch of Hysteria* (1993) by creating a clumsy, dangling, ill-sewn cloth version. Can one say that the late Louise turns against all authority, even her own, because once a move is accepted, becomes part of the doxa, it is, by definition, patriarchal? In the case of Cindy Sherman, one of the outstanding artists of today, male or female, I would say that all her representations of female subjects are underlain by feminist rejection of woman's position in the world, and in consciousness itself. Take the early film stills of seductive “starlets” in come-hither poses. It doesn't take more than a minute to realize that these black-and-white self-images are parodies, subtle or blatant, of everything Hollywood has imposed upon its young women would-be actresses. Far from being “seductive” or “hot,” they are as cold as ice, lacking in overt sexual appeal. It is impossible to imagine any tinseltown publicity agent in his/her right mind using these “film stills” to publicize a client. In other words, they deliberately “don't work,” and in so doing lose their apparent reason for being and assume another position, very different from their obvious one. That is to say, they reveal to the viewer the whole oppressive, time-worn, debasing apparatus of female seductiveness, forced not only on Hollywood starlets but on women in general: one thinks of Simone de Beauvoir's time-honored assertion, “One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one.” There is not a single photographic series by Sherman that is conceivable without the impact of feminism. By this, I do not at all mean to imply that they are based on some specific doctrine or are instruments of propaganda—far from it. I am saying the series only becomes meaningful within a social context, a psychoanalytic field that feminism has infiltrated, whether this be the images of horror and violence toward women—whether self-wrought or done by others, replete with vomit, garbage, and nameless revolting substances: a fantasy on a bulimic theme, or dismembered body parts chaotically installed on a horizontal field in token of innumerable, highly publicized images of



Cindy Sherman,
Untitled #465, 2008.
Chromogenic color
print, 64% × 58 in.
(163.8 × 147.3 cm),
edition of 6

the savage violation of the female body in the press or on screen; or the horrifically grotesque figures with weird and enlarged sex-prostheses displaying their monstrosity to the public, porn so far over the top that it becomes something worse. But most of all, we are made aware of the feminist consciousness underpinning the gut-wrenching pathos of Sherman's series that highlight the coming of age and women's desperate attempts to nullify it, to stave off the inevitable traces of time on flesh.

In *Untitled #465* (2008), signs of both class and age collaborate in the construction of the parodic role-playing involved. The “subject,” played, as always, by Sherman herself, turns her haughty glance at us, over her shoulder, in a time-honored pose of upper-class condescension. The ill-concealed wrinkles, sags and scratches etched into her skin below the cheek bone (a good dermatologist never uses Botox on the lower part of the face!) are echoed by the uneven double strand of pearls about her throat and contrasted with the perfection of the glowing pearl globe in her earlobe. Our attention is carried upward by the noble flight of steps behind her and the indications of poshness in the classical motifs at the sides of the flight. The implications are clear: this babe, despite her age-reddened eyes, her unevenly applied eyebrows, her unconvincingly matte black hair, and the non-coincidence of her lips and lipstick, has class—or thinks she does. And she is trying to stave off that time-honored class enemy—old age—as hard as she can. Naturally, she is failing: that's where the pathos comes in. Though we may dislike her, even envy her, we can't help feeling sorry for her at the same time; or, if we are a certain age ourselves, empathizing. And of course, on another level, we can't help admiring the brilliance of Sherman's (not totally successful) masquerade itself. There are many other variations in Sherman's work on the coming-of-age theme, all different



Cindy Sherman,
Untitled #474, 2008.
 Chromogenic color
 print, 90% × 60 in.
 (230.5 × 152.4 cm),
 edition of 6

and carefully individuated: the aging art collector surrounded by examples of her booty, her face a painted, lifted mask hovering between arrogance and despair (*Untitled #474*, 2008); the pathetic, mink-caped creature clutching her arms about herself protectively, standing before a luxury apartment, expensively ill-clad, her sad face puffed, asymmetrical and line-incised; and many others. All bear witness to the fact that there is no winning the contest with death. Sherman, in her many disguises makes this as clear as any medieval dance-of-death of Renaissance *memento mori*. Indeed, these works shift toward the allegorical.

MR: Sherman's whole project eloquently testifies that "feminist" art is not necessarily an invigorating call-to-arms but, on the contrary, may be a more complex revelation of specific identities that are part of a broader set of issues involving femininity and its representations. And all of these are implicated in the position—commercial, physical, psychological—of the masquerade of femininity in the contemporary world. Since, in Sherman's work, it is always the same woman who plays all the roles, the undeniable implication is that femininity (or "womanliness," as it used to be called) is itself a masquerade imposed on women, as Joan Riviere pointed out so many years ago.¹⁸

LN: Cindy Sherman's entire output literally embodies "womanliness as masquerade," since it is always the artist herself that plays the widely differing roles. And it is a masquerade maintained with increasing difficulty with the passage of time, hence the

pathos of the revelatory images of the later stages of women's lives, when the masquerade, despite all the holding efforts and the expense, begins to fail, leaving only the grotesque evidence of that failure behind. No wonder old women have traditionally been shunned or demeaned as hags, crones or witches, or even as face-lifted, supermaquilled society dames: they all predict, dangerously, and for men as well as women, loss of potency, enfeeblement, and, ultimately, the threat of the grand finale, the end of both masquerade and its failure: death.

MR: In regards to your contention that there are some women artists whose work is imbued with feminist issues yet don't necessarily refer to the issues directly, you had referred earlier to Kara Walker. Can you explain what you mean by that?

LN: Yes, but what interests me about Kara Walker's work is that the issue of race unequivocally constitutes the manifest content. This imagery, wrought in a newly sophisticated version of the archaic, popular medium of the silhouette (I have one of my mother as a teenager created when she visited Atlantic City in the first quarter of the 20th century), clearly represents the evils imposed upon people of color by slavery, imperialism, colonialism, and, more recently, by bias and prejudice. Yet such a representation equally depends, for its language and power, on the issues of gender imbricated in the racial ones. Sexual domination, the white male's privileged access to the black woman, rings out as a reiterated theme, in the muted, ironically black medium of the silhouette. Daring in its blatant outrageousness yet delicate in its manipulation of elegant contours, a major, large-scale silhouette installation like *Gone: An Historical Romance of a Civil War as it Occurred b'tween the Dusky Thighs of One Young Negress and Her Heart*, created in 1994, depends on the representation of gender exploitation to make its point. An acerbic riff on the romanticized stereotypes of race relations in the pre-Civil War South, as set forth by popular favorites like Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, and still current today, *Gone* begins and ends with male and female coupled figures. To the left, a perky, hoop-skirted young lady tilts forward on tiptoes to kiss an elegantly booted and jacketed young army officer, his sword pricking up behind him, their hands intertwined in stereotypical Hollywood fashion. But look again, and you see that this romantic encounter is enabled by the skinny legs of a little black girl, peeking out beneath the ruffled border at the rear of the young lady's voluminous skirt. These legs perhaps belong to the little girl gripping a drowned goose in the next element of the installation, a folkloric interval featuring the old folksong, "Aunt Rhody."¹⁹ To the far right, the same "white master" carries off the wonderfully detailed figure of an old mammy, complete with pipe, broom, spindly legs, and ragged skirt that completely envelops his head and shoulders. What is the white guy up to? Nothing good. And gender exploitation begins young in Walker's incisive iconography: in the middle of the composition, raised to prominence on an island hill, the little black girl, in profile,



Kara Walker, *Gone: An Historical Romance of a Civil War as it Occurred b'tween the Dusky Thighs of One Young Negress and Her Heart*, 1994. Cut paper on wall, approximately 156 × 600 in. (396.2 × 1524 cm)

sucks off a little white boy in a sailor suit as he raises his hands in triumphant ecstasy. The whole composition is a marvel of exquisite detail and decorative elegance, featuring a graceful pitcher, strands of vegetation, and a kind of pseudo-Rococo perkiness throughout. It is blatant, ugly exploitation of black women that lies at the heart of the darkness pilloried here.

MR: Her cut-paper silhouettes harness genteel 19th-century imagery to highlight the vestiges of sexual and physical exploitation bred by slavery—as do her animations, which equally portray views of the antebellum South, offering up scenes of defecation, rape, decapitation, among other atrocities. However, she is also interested in issues of class, as another form of injustice. I’m thinking in particular of her most recent work from 2014, produced for Creative Time at the Domino’s Sugar Factory in Brooklyn, a storage shed in Brooklyn built in 1927 to house the mountains of raw sugar due for whitening. Walker’s work, in response to this setting, is an oversized sphinx wearing a mammie’s kerchief, titled *A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby* [...]. The work pays homage to the passing of blue-collar America, at the same time that it criticizes the process of turning brown into white sugar, as if the former were “impure” to start with. What’s interesting to me, of course, is that, at first glance, one might not view this work as “feminist” *per se*. And yet, like many of the works in our *Global Feminisms* exhibition, it is a less subtle, or, as I like to call it, “subterranean” feminism.

LN: Yes, it is. That’s why I believe that much of the most interesting feminist art is being created by women from non-Western settings. This has nothing to do with primitivism or nature, but rather with specific situations: women artists in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Australia, in touch with the most contemporary media, sophisticated theory, and international art production, are creating new kinds of visual languages to embody new meanings, new interpretations of the situation of women in different

cultures—complex, acerbic, vivid, contrarian, and often—dare I use the word?—beautiful. In a way, one might say that for many women artists worldwide today, their situation as women simply cannot be avoided: one might almost speak of a feminist unconscious in the work of some of the most brilliant contemporary women artists: a critical force that has nothing to do with the woman/nature nexus or vaginal imagery, but with ambiguity, androgyny, contrarianism, rejection of the clichéd categories of womanhood, experimentation with the body and its metamorphoses and exploitation of all the various media of contemporary art-making.

MR: I’m really proud of *Global Feminisms*. It was the largest exhibition of international feminist art to date, and included works by eighty-eight women artists from sixty-six countries. It was an unwieldy number, for sure, but I think our enthusiasm for the subject precluded us from eliminating any of the women. The critical reception of *Global Feminisms* interests me greatly. While smart feminist scholars and curators like Helena Reckitt, Eleanor Heartney, Michele Kort, and Dena Muller understood the curatorial mission behind *Global Feminisms*, others seemed to miss the point altogether. In her *New York Times* review of *Global Feminisms*, for instance, Roberta Smith wrote that the exhibition was “like a false idea, wrapped in confusion,” and questioned whether there is, in fact, such a thing as “feminist art.” Is this criticism justifiable, in your opinion?

Kara Walker, *A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby, an Homage to the unpaid and overworked Artisans who have refined our Sweet tastes from the cane fields to the Kitchens of the New World on the Occasion of the demolition of the Domino Sugar Refining Plant* (installation view). A project of Creative Time Domino Sugar Refinery, Brooklyn, NY, May 10–July 6, 2014



LN: No. I think Roberta, whose criticism I often admire and agree with, was totally mistaken about *Global Feminisms*. Because it was organized for the opening of the Elizabeth A Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum, we had to include not just art by women, but art by women that conveyed a sense of political or social critique. I think that was what some critics and viewers didn't understand. The artists had to be critical of a certain status quo, whatever or wherever it was, and this had to manifest itself in some way. For instance, I don't think Ghada Amer is like Shahzia Sikander, or Sarah Lucas is like Tracey Moffatt. It wasn't as if just one kind of art and one kind of critique were represented in the show. Some of it was humorous, some of it was savagely serious, and some of it was estheticized. So I don't think it was confused, I think it was varied, according to the situations in the different cultures from which the women came, representing a wide range of styles and esthetic positions.

MR: Yes, *Global Feminisms* was certainly not a feminist-lite exhibition—it wasn't meant to be. It was not a “boiled-down” or consumable version of feminism. Either way, some of the reactions were downright angry. Retrospectively, I think that was a good thing. Successful exhibitions should push people's assumptions as to what constitutes “good” art, and in this case feminist art. Our exhibition was one of many major feminist events in 2007, including the founding of The Feminist Art Project, *Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution* (MOCA, Los Angeles), the “Feminist Futures” symposium at MoMA, and so forth. Indeed, the year 2007 in the United States has been hailed by many in the art world as the Year of the Feminist. All of this activity bore witness to the fact that feminism in the visual arts appeared to be alive and flourishing, despite rumors to the contrary, and that all this should be a cause for unmitigated rejoicing among feminist art historians and critics like ourselves. What was your feeling at the time?

LN: Yes and no. Or rather, that the rejoicing should be mixed with a certain amount of skepticism, or at least a problematizing of the situation of women artists and feminist criticism. Such was the position of Carol Armstrong, in her *Artforum* preview of *Global Feminisms* and *Wack!*:

I applaud their focus on art by women and recognize that the MOCA show's self-prescribed targeting of “second wave” feminism is historically justified in this regard. But I am leery of a correspondence that may be set up between women's art and feminist art, for it suggests, first, that only women can be feminists, and second, that women artists must be concerned with feminist themes, which must in turn be women's themes. That would be a double disservice both to women and feminists, a proclamation that feminism is only of interest to women and that women are a class apart from the human. Surely the feminist revolution has shown us the fallacy of both ideas. So we hope that

“Wack!” and “Global Feminisms” will provide openings toward a future in which male artists may be feminists and female artists may concern themselves with whatever engages them.²⁰

Certainly, one hopes for a future in which male artists can be feminists—so far, however, I have not seen too much evidence of “male feminism,” despite the fact that feminist art practice has had, and continues to have, a profound influence on the shape of art since the 1970s. Nor do I think that most women artists engaged with feminism by any means think that “women are a class apart from the human”—on the contrary, it is the misogynists of the world who propagate such a belief. And certainly, women artists should be and are free to explore whatever dimensions of art and experience they wish. Often, in my opinion, the most interesting feminist practice is not consciously or intentionally “political” but speaks out, subtly, humorously, originally, sardonically, of critical gender issues from different frames of reference. I cannot imagine forcing some clichéd, boring politically correct agenda on a woman artist, any more than on a male one.

MR: Agreed. Our lack of inclusion of males in our *Global Feminisms* show irked several critics, Armstrong among them. I recall that at the beginning we did consider the inclusion of male artists. But, in the end, it was a numbers game. If the exhibition included eighty-eight artists and twenty of them were men, then that would have been twenty fewer women we could represent! Now, feminist critics like Armstrong are certainly entitled to their opinions. And, of course, feminists should be free to criticize and make judgments about women artists and writers rather than condescending to them by refraining from value judgments. Unconditional praise is always suspect.

LN: More worrisome to me than criticism of specific feminist projects is the institutionalization of feminist practice and theory within the museum and the university. A triumph to be sure, but, like many triumphs, a mixed blessing. What does the institutionalization of feminist practice and theory imply? What does the substitution of “gender studies” for “feminist studies” imply? Is it the neutralization of feminist critique into a kind of even-handed study of chosen artists, like the analysis of 19th-century “great” male painters in books such as Charles Harrison's intelligent but infuriatingly revisionist *Painting the Difference: Sex and Spectator in Modern Art* (2005)?—actually an excuse to rescue certain exceptional works by exceptional male artists from the putative clutches of feminist critique. Of course, feminist art historians have, for the most part, never totally rejected Manet, Degas or Cézanne, as Harrison implies. On the contrary, they have revived them and the study of 19th-century art in general by showing them in a new light, revealing formal and expressive qualities, and theoretical models, good and bad, which were never considered before feminist art history brought them to light.

MR: True. And on a related note, what happens when feminism becomes a course rather than a cause? When gender studies are institutionalized as simply another item in the curriculum? And what happens, on the contrary, within institutional settings, either museums or universities, when feminist critique is abandoned in favor of an uncritical celebration of women artists and their work in shows or courses devoted to the subject? Or when token women are inserted into the world art canon?

LN: Yes. Or when essentialism creeps into what I profoundly believe must always be considered the social construction of the entity “woman”? “One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one,” declared Simone de Beauvoir, still the mother of us all, theoretically speaking. The socially constructed entity, woman, if she is an artist, faces a different world of experience and challenge than a male artist does. Difference, if always different and changing, exists. The forms that difference takes in art are obviously multiple, uncharted and, in the future, unchartable.

MR: And it is for that reason that shows of women artists, courses disseminating the feminist critique of art, and understanding and appreciation of the many directions, kinds of imagination, creative invention, and critical intelligence of women, need to be encouraged and rewarded. However, I do worry that such single-sexed exhibitions and spaces run the risk of ghettoization, and that they are unwittingly reproducing the segregation they aim to challenge. While women-only shows and spaces should be celebrated—as much as, say, the Jewish Museum, the Studio Museum in Harlem, El Museo del Barrio—I worry that, to the extreme, they can be separatist, and that perhaps the programming at these spaces is preaching only to the converted? In other words, who is receiving this information, and therefore how impactful is it, ultimately? Are these types of exhibitions still necessary?

LN: I don’t think we should worry about the “impact.” I think it is still important that various groups and sub-groups should be accorded their place in the sun. And even more important, that women artists, like those of other categories, should be seen in shows that are intelligently curated, bringing out new ideas even in connection with familiar work. I am thinking of the recent Cassatt/Degas exhibition in Washington (National Gallery of Art, 2014) as an example, where Cassatt and Degas are presented, with evidence, as creative partners rather than as leader and disciple. So, do I think that women-only and specialized spaces are still necessary today? Not in the same way, I suppose. I think at times it makes for an interesting show, if other aspects are specified, such as geographic or historical contexts. A show about women muralists of the New Deal, or Mexican women artists, or 19th-century women photographers, can always be made interesting and revealing, and not just to women. Other kinds of shows can also be invigorating and good for our morale, like *Women Choose Women* (New York Cultural Center, 1973).

What I feel is even more important today is to make sure women make an appearance and an impact in whatever context they are shown: this is not always the case. When it happens, it is an important occasion and should be noted. I just saw a terrific modern Latin-American photography exhibition at the Fondation Cartier in Paris (*América Latina 1960–2013*, 2014). It was a revelation because of the innovative quality of the works, the often-subtle political undercurrents, and for the fact that a large proportion of the work was by women photographers. In case one didn’t realize the fact, there was an excellent film accompanying the work where many women spoke out about their experience.

MR: There is certainly more work to be done in this regard; however, for me, one of the most pressing issues today is how best to address the canon of art history, as it still needs to be radically re-conceptualized. It’s one thing to “add” neglected or excluded artists to the traditional canon of art history; but it’s an entirely different project to completely overhaul it, to challenge the entire notion of canonicity itself as a problematic and antiquated paradigm. In 1990 you chaired a session at CAA [College Art Association] called “Firing the Canon: Feminism, Art History, and the Status of the Canonical,” which addressed these issues, asking questions such as: “Should feminist art historians and critics reject the canon and focus instead on ‘minor’ and ‘marginal’ figures? Should they attempt to add women artists to the canon? Or should feminist art historians and critics call into question the very notion of the canon itself by demonstrating how it works to maintain existing relations of power between men and women?”²¹ It’s amazing to me how relevant and prescient these questions are twenty-five years later. Where are we with all of this today? What are our options vis-à-vis the canon of art history? Throughout your career, for instance, you have often employed a revisionist approach, paying homage to canonical works, often by major male artists, but with a difference: critically rather than reverentially, or with the intention of pointing out gendered significations in works previously understood to be universal in their significance. In an essay from 1974, titled “How Feminism in the Arts Can Implement Cultural Change,” you asserted that feminists needed to develop a revisionist art history that could “bring about re-evaluation, making us look again at pictures which have been cast aside and really rethink the implications of this rejection, making us ask what elements exist within the work of art that one might look at from a feminist viewpoint.”²² Revisionism: this is one option. If the canon of art history cannot be abolished altogether, then what sorts of counter-hegemonic tactics besides revisionism can we employ against and within it? Of course, I’m referring to the historical canon, not the current art system.

LN: One can start with the premise that any canon, narrowly construed, is an obstruction both to complex thought and to open examination of the historical situation itself. Certainly, the closer we get to the present, the more the dead weight of the

“canonical” obstructs objective examination of art and the art world more broadly conceived. Certainly, one is entitled to believe, and demonstrate, that some works of art are richer and more interesting than others. But to go from there to constructing a canon is counterproductive.

MR: Throughout your scholarship of the 1970s, you maintained that, in addition to the development of a revisionist art history, there were several fundamental issues that needed to be addressed before feminism in the arts could truly implement cultural change. The first, of course, was the notion of “greatness,” which itself must be redefined as something other than white, Western, and unmistakably male. Have we achieved this?

LN: I think the whole idea of “greatness” is out of date, as far as contemporary art is concerned, and rightly so. And so are single standards, as far as I am concerned. Was there ever a single standard? Michelangelo thought Jan van Eyck was a painter for old ladies and nuns, and Roger Fry and Clement Greenberg shared this opinion, although they stated it more elegantly. Blake thought Rembrandt and Sir Joshua Reynolds were negligible daubers, and many 19th-century critics, as we all know, were scathing about the work of Manet and the Impressionists. I happen to think that women are doing the most interesting and innovative work at present; and it is all quite different! No sign of a “female style”; no centralized imagery or necessary pattern and decoration, as some essentialist feminist art critics believed at the beginning of the women’s movement. A wide range of media, genres and styles marks women’s work today. To me, this is what is important. Women can do what they want, the way they want.

MR: Since “genius has no sex” (according to Madame de Staël!), then the “problem,” you’ve earlier argued, lies not in our hormones, as women, but in our institutions and education. How much have these two things in particular changed since the 1970s?

LN: I think it is undeniable that both institutions and education have changed a great deal. MFA programs are now comprised of sixty per cent women students. There are courses on feminism and art, contemporary women artists, etc., at major institutions of learning. This would have been unheard of in my day. And yet it is perhaps arguable that, even today, women have to struggle harder to get to the top, whatever the top is. Certainly, there are more shows by women artists in museums, especially university museums, than there used to be. But men still command the top prices at auctions and in general. But do I think top prices are the equivalent of important, interesting art? Jeff Koons costs more than Courbet; what does that tell us about relative value? But I have a feeling the art market is going to be biased for a long time, despite the heartening progress that 20th- and 21st-century women artists have made. The art market is in

many ways still a boys’ club, with men competing with other rich men to see who can pay the highest prices. Can we really judge the value of art, by men or women, by the crazy logic of the market? Is some of the stuff that goes for millions really “worth” that amount? This is a complicated question.

MR: Yes, the art market is certainly an arena where gender inequality is thrown into high relief—and certainly begs the question of value versus worth. As of this year (2014), for instance, the highest price paid to date for a living woman artist is \$6.6 million, for a Cady Noland sculpture, in comparison with an editioned one by Jeff Koons, which sold for \$58.4 million. Likewise, the most ever paid to date for a dead woman artist is \$11.9 million for a gorgeous Joan Mitchell, versus \$142.4 million for a Francis Bacon triptych. These are enormous discrepancies! It’s not looking so great elsewhere either. The recent Association of Art Museum Directors’ 2014 Gender Gap Report testifies to continued inequity, concluding that female museum directors earn seventy-nine cents for every dollar earned by male museum directors; and the wonderful, continuously expanding art project called Gallery Talley, spearheaded by artist Micol Hebron, makes evident that, as of 2014, women artists make up only 30% of the gallery stables in the US. Solo exhibition histories and permanent exhibition displays at places like MoMA and LACMA (Los Angeles County Museum of Art) reveal abysmal figures, and the ratio of male to female artists at major biennials, like Documenta and Venice, is consistently low. (The last Venice Biennale, curated by art star Massimiliano Gioni, was 73% male.) Now, to put the latter in perspective, it helps knowing that the 1995 edition featured male artists 92% of the time. So, we have witnessed a marked improvement over the last few decades, but we still have quite a battle ahead of us.

LN: I don’t think that battling is the only thing. How would you battle the art market and how would you force collectors to buy women’s work? I, for one, would stop focusing so heavily on the art market and prices of works, which tell you little or nothing about the quality of the work in question, only about the state of the market itself. If a Picasso goes for less than a Jeff Koons, does that immediately signify that the Koons is the “better” work? No, it means that some rich and powerful people are competing to see who can spend more on a Koons. Yes, it’s a screwy situation, but let’s just look at it as the grotesque economic situation it is; I don’t see what can be done about it directly. I think that \$11.9 million is a good price for a splendid work of art: it’s not a grotesquely inflated price, to be sure. Certainly press coverage and textbook representation could be enlarged, but I don’t see this as a “battle” as much as an intellectual project.

MR: How so? Are you arguing, as you did in 1974, that the most effective way to combat injustice is “through thought, through the pursuit of truth, and through the constant questioning and piercing through of our so-called ‘natural’ assumptions”?²³ In other

words, I think you're saying that the only way to effect real change is not to "fight" it directly, but rather to "attack" it intellectually?

LN: Yes. What I don't mean is throwing tomatoes at a Sotheby's auction, much as one might like to! Regarding the term "fight," remember William Blake's wise words: "I shall not cease from mental fight/Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand." All metaphorical, of course, except the mental fight – that's real.

MR: On several occasions throughout your career, you've cautioned feminists about getting too excited about certain advances, like by the fact that feminist critique (and allied critiques such as colonialist studies, queer theory) has entered into mainstream discourse itself (albeit perfunctorily), and as an integral part of a new, more theoretically grounded and socially contextualized art historical practice. You warned us that while it might seem, at times, as though feminism is "safely ensconced in the bosom" of one of the most conservative of the intellectual disciplines, this is far from being the case.

There is still considerable resistance to the more radical varieties of the feminist critique in the visual arts, and its practitioners are accused of such sins as neglecting the issue of quality, destroying the canon, scanting the innate visual dimension of the art work, reducing art to the circumstances of its production—in other words, of undermining the ideological and, above all, esthetic, biases of the discipline. All of this is to the good: feminist art history is there to make trouble, to call into question, to ruffle feathers in the patriarchal dove-cotes. It should not be mistaken for just another variant of or supplement to mainstream art history. At its strongest, a feminist art history is a transgressive and anti-establishment practice, meant to call many of the major precepts of the discipline into question.²⁴

Your scholarship has certainly succeeded in doing just this, and has inspired generations of scholars to follow in your wake. In addition to these words of wisdom, as a closing statement, what can you leave us with?

LN: At a time when certain patriarchal values are making a comeback—as they always do during times of war and stress—it is well to think of women as refusing their time-honored role as victims or supporters. It is time to rethink the bases of our position and strengthen them for the fight ahead. As a feminist, I fear this moment's overt reversion to the most blatant forms of patriarchy—a great moment for so-called "real men," like football players and politicians, to assert their sinister dominance over "others": women and people of color, primarily: the return of the barely repressed. Masculine dominance in the art world fits into this structure, and we need to be aware of it. But I think this

is a critical moment for feminism and women's place in the art world. Now, more than ever, we must be aware of the dangers lying ahead, as well as the achievements of the past. We need to deploy all our intelligence and energy in order to ensure that women's art is seen, women's voices heard, women's excellence rewarded. And we must work to create an art world in which high qualities, rather than high prices, are the touchstones of success, for men and women equally.

Notes

- 1 "[F]eminist art history is there to make trouble, to call into question, to ruffle feathers in the patriarchal dove-cotes. It should not be mistaken for just another variant of or supplement to mainstream art history. At its strongest, a feminist art history is a transgressive and anti-establishment practice, meant to call many of the major precepts of the discipline into question." Linda Nochlin (1988), "Introduction," in *Women, Art and Power*, New York, NY: Harper & Row, p. xii, and quoted in Nochlin (2006), "Why have there been no great women artists? Thirty years after," see p. 320 in this volume.
- 2 Vivian Gornick and Barbara Moran, eds (1971), *Women in Sexist Society*, New York: Basic Books.
- 3 "How Feminism in the Arts can Implement Cultural Change (1974), *Arts in Society* 2, nos 1–2, Spring–Summer, pp. 80–89.
- 4 "What is Female Imagery?" (1975), *Ms. Magazine*, no. 11, May, pp. 81–82.
- 5 Ann Sutherland Harris (1976), "Acknowledgments," *Women Artists: 1550–1950*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, p. 8.
- 6 John Perrault (1977), "Women Artists," *The SoHo Weekly News*, October 13, p. 40.
- 7 Robert Hughes (1977), "Rediscovered—Women Painters," *Time*, January 10.
- 8 Grace Glueck (1977), "The Woman as Artist: Rediscovering 400 Years of Masterworks," *New York Times Magazine*, September 25, p. 50.
- 9 Eleanor Tufts (1974), *Our Hidden Heritage: Five Centuries of Women Artists*, New York, NY: Paddington Press; Elsa Honig Fine (1978), *Women and Art: A History of Women Painters and Sculptors from the Renaissance to the Present Day*, G. Prior; Germaine Greer (1979), *The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work*, London: Secker and Warburg.
- 10 Linda Nochlin (1971), "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," *ARTnews*, January; see p. 43 in this volume.
- 11 *Ibid.*, see p. 44 in this volume.
- 12 *Ibid.*, see pp. 45–46 in this volume.
- 13 Lynda Benglis and Sarita Dubin, Letter to Linda Nochlin, August 2014.
- 14 The title comes from the ear-tag identifying the cow in the image.
- 15 From Lydia Davis (2014), "The Cows," *Can't and Won't: Stories*, New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Loc. 906 ff.
- 16 Roger Greenspun (1972), "Screen: Palette of Art," *New York Times*, April 14.
- 17 Linda Nochlin (1986), "Nancy Graves: the Subversiveness of Sculpture," *Nancy Graves: Painting, Sculpture, Drawing, 1980–1985*, Poughkeepsie, NY: Vassar College Art Gallery.
- 18 See Joan Riviere (1929), "Womanliness as a Masquerade," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 10, pp. 303–13.
- 19 "Go tell Aunt Rhody, Go tell Aunt Rhody/Go tell Aunt Rhody, the Old Grey Goose is dead/ She died in the mill pond, she died in the mill pond/She died in the mill pond, a-standin on her head." This song is not associated with black cultural history and probably originated among white people during colonial days.
- 20 Carol Armstrong (2007), "Global Feminisms," *Artforum*, January, p. 87.
- 21 "Firing the Canon: Feminism, Art History, and the Status of the Canonical," College Art Association, annual conference, 1990.
- 22 Linda Nochlin (1974), "How Feminism in the Arts Can Implement Cultural Change," p. 85.
- 23 Nochlin, "How Feminism in the Arts Can Implement Cultural Change," p. 89
- 24 Nochlin, *Women, Art and Power*, p. xii, see p. 320 in this volume.