

EMPOWERMENT

Art and Feminisms

Edited by Andreas Beitin, Katharina Koch, and Uta Ruhkamp

"We should all be feminists!" (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie)—In Europe and the United States, feminism has long since become part of popular culture. Yet, despite global movements, demonstrations, and petitions to establish equality, it is still not possible in the twenty-first century to speak of comprehensive gender equality with regard to women and LGBTQIA+ communities—not in any country of the world. In many places, structural relationships of power and inequality prevent equal pay or the remuneration of domestic work and ensure oppression and exploitation up to physical violence or even murder. Countless artists worldwide react to such untenable conditions, as well as to other global challenges, with their feminist-oriented artworks. Activistic, provocative, and direct, but also poetic, humorous, and subtle, these artists strive to achieve equal and forward-looking living conditions for themselves, other marginalized people, and society as a whole.

With 44 texts and interviews by scholars, artists, and curators from across the globe, this publication provides insight into the diversity of feminist theories and practices in the field of art, as well as in the most diverse areas of life and work. Like no other publication before it, *Empowerment: Art and Feminisms* offers a compact overview of cultural, political, and artistic developments of the recent past and the present. The planetary approach underlying the publication offers various ways of thinking about feminist futures.

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*Feminist politics aims to end domination to free us
to be who we are—to live lives where we love justice,
where we can live in peace. Feminism is for everybody.*

— bell hooks

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The arrow system used in this volume (→) refers to the illustrations in the German publication *Empowerment. Kunst und Feminismen* (Art and Feminisms), edited by Andreas Beitin, Katharina Koch, and Uta Ruhkamp, in cooperation with the Federal Agency for Civic Education. Available at www.bpb.de/shop, ordering number 3937, ISBN 978-3-8389-7233-6.

In this publication we are capitalizing Black, Brown, Indigenous, and People of Color when referring to groups in racial, ethnic, or cultural terms. Beyond the notion of oppression and discrimination, the terms reflect a shared sense of identity and community.

In Chinese, the surname is usually given first, followed by the given name. Many people with Chinese names who live outside China adapt to local conventions by reversing their name order and/or adopting Western personal names. We follow the spelling that the respective individuals use in their professional life.

PREFACE

Andreas Beitin

Despite laws that have been in effect for many years, countless worldwide movements, actions, demonstrations, and petitions to establish gender equality, even in the third decade of the twenty-first century it is still not possible to speak of universal equality. Structural inequalities based on sex or gender, sexual orientation, race, and other (social) constructs, as well as the ongoing exclusion of marginalized communities and individuals continue to persist. In some cases, even regressive developments can be observed. Against this background, the project *Empowerment: Art and Feminisms* aims to offer topical and comprehensive insight into how artists in the twenty-first century take action from the standpoint of their respective situations and their own specific practices, into what emancipatory understanding underlies their works, and into how they broaden the perspective on feminist futures. The central thesis of the project is that feminist approaches are a progressive method of analyzing the world through the means of art: social inequality, sexism, racism, et cetera, are critically examined, and (artistic) ways to eliminate them are sought. One concept here is the redefinition of the relationship between bodies, care (in the sense of concern or guardianship), technologies, and the environment, incorporating a planetary perspective as a utopian-artistic question for the future coexistence of humans.

This book is part of the comprehensive exhibition and publication project *Empowerment*, which was initiated in 2018. At that time, I was still director of the Ludwig Forum for International Art in Aachen and realized, together with Eckhart Gillen, a major survey exhibition highlighting the visual arts and their influence on the global experience of the year 1968.¹ Inspired by the success of discussing contemporary history through artistic developments and analyzing the catalytic role of art in terms of visualizing, commenting on, and criticizing social conditions, the idea of telling the story of feminist art as an alternative narrative to the still largely male-dominated history of art came up after a personal conversation with Alice Schwarzer.² After my move to the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg and the formation of the core curatorial team for the project—with Katharina Koch as the external expert and Uta Ruhkamp as the in-house curator—we had initially thought of showing contemporary feminist-oriented art alongside a historical overview. However, various issues affected our exhibition focus: the global situation of women and other marginalized genders, which, in recent years, has become more difficult rather than better in various parts of the world; the current discourses on gender, racism, migration, and climate emergency; and, most recently, the coronavirus pandemic, which has in part led to the resurgence of patriarchal structures. Against this background, it became increasingly clear that a focus in terms of the content and, above all, the time span to be discussed would be unavoidable if *Empowerment* was to offer a rudimentary transnational overview of art and feminisms. For this reason, we ultimately agreed on the year 2000 as a starting point, which not only represents a caesura in chronological terms, but also, at least in the Global North, roughly marks the beginning of the “fourth wave” of feminism, which can be defined by the increasing influences of the Internet and “social media,” as well as by the greater impact of globalization.

As a museum working in a scholarly manner, we see it as our responsibility to participate in the continuation and perhaps also the rewriting of art history and, building on previous exhibitions of feminist-oriented art, to reflect on the latest developments, to contextualize and examine them in depth. Especially since the last two major, transnationally oriented exhibitions on the subject of art and feminisms, which took place in the United States in 2007,³ debates with global-historical and sociopolitical significance have developed. This includes discourse surrounding the Anthropocene⁴ and, above all, climate change or the state of

climate emergency, which have critically questioned and reevaluated the relationship of human beings to their environment. These central questions and developments are also reflected in the artistic productions of the last one and a half decades, which have been selected, examined, and presented within the framework of our project under feminist aspects. Accompanying the exhibition, but also on its own, the publication *Empowerment: Art and Feminisms*, the result of this multiyear process, offers a condensate of our comprehensive research and investigations and brings together a selection of important thematic strands.

It is an ambitious undertaking to offer a worldwide overview of feminist-oriented art, and thus of art and feminisms and the current complex and diverse discourses in theory and practice. The fact that we as curators and editors have ventured into this undertaking can be explained by the fact that we have activated and initiated several transnational networks for the planetary exhibition and publication project *Empowerment*, without whose support this project could not have been realized. A transdisciplinary and international advisory board of scholars, curators, artists, and activists (from Argentina, Brazil, China, India, South Africa, Uganda, the United States, Great Britain, Austria, and Germany, among others) thus met (digitally) several times and in changing constellations during the preparatory phase of the project, critically accompanied various aspects of the conceptual orientation in the discussion rounds, and contributed important new impulses. Our project idea has been disseminated internationally via the Goethe-Institutes operating worldwide and has been reflected back from all continents with valuable suggestions and information. In addition, the network of some fifty international authors and interview partners from the respective countries and regions has provided important information on artists and content-related aspects of their work, as well as on current social issues, so that a maximum of transnationality and collaborative support could be achieved, opening up the most diverse perspectives.

In order to productively expand the curatorial process and artistic exchange and make it more multiperspectival in nature, we invited feminist collectives to present artistic positions selected by them in the exhibition: Njabala Foundation (Uganda), What the hELL she doin! (Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, United Kingdom), AXA projects (China / Germany), Sandbox Collective (India), and Nacional TROVOA (Brazil). The most important impulses and concerns of the collectives are presented here in condensed form in brief interviews. Also through this equitable, nonhierarchical

exchange (of knowledge), further networks were and are being initiated, long-term networking strengthened, and artists empowered in their respective activities. Indeed, it was they who, since the early twentieth century, “more than in any other social field . . . have contributed to questioning patterns of gender-specific perception and conventional gender-specific practices and habits.”⁵

Acknowledgments

Starting from our European perspective, we entered into a “pluralogue” about art and feminisms with artists, authors, and scholars from different cultural contexts and their respective personal, artistic, and professional backgrounds, for which we are very grateful.

Against this backdrop, we extend our thanks to the numerous artists who, with their concepts and works, question the often deadlocked or stereotypical view of society and its diverse individuals, point out alternative narratives, visions, and utopias, and offer us new ways of thinking with their art, thus providing us with rich gifts. We would therefore also like to expressly thank those artists who could not be included in the exhibition and publication, because with their works and perspectives they, too, have contributed—at least indirectly—to the success of the project. In this context, we would also like to thank the involved artists as well as all lenders who provided us with loans or illustrative material. On behalf of the entire team, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Claudia Roth, Minister of State for Culture and the Media, who has taken on the matronage of the *Empowerment* project and thus bestowed recognition on it. I would also like to thank the Stiftung Niedersachsen and the Stiftung Volksbank Brawo for their generous support of our exhibition. Our thanks also go to the Goethe-Instituts in Bangalore, Johannesburg, Nairobi, and Beijing as well as the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa), which also supported the exhibition.

As already mentioned, several transnational networks were initiated for *Empowerment*, which supported us with the greatest commitment. Far beyond our expectations, we have benefited from this diverse and empowering collaboration, for which we are extremely grateful to all involved. In particular, we extend our thanks to the various Goethe-Institutes, who not only helped us with information and contacts, but also partially supported the presentation projects of the invited collectives in the form of subsidies for production costs and honorarium fees, as well as travel grants.

A very special thank you goes to the members of the scholarly advisory board, who accompanied us for roughly two years with their extraordinary expertise and enthusiasm and provided significant impulses, thus contributing to the successful realization of our project. In particular, we would like to thank Nikita Yingqian Cai, Katharina Fink, Andrea Giunta, Çağla İlk, Martha Kazungu, Elke Krasny, Marsha Meskimmon, Catherine Morris, Amruta Nemivant, Maura Reilly, Angelika Richter, Gabriele Schor, Igor Moraes Simões, Margarita Tsomou, Sasha Su-Ling Welland, and Oliver Zybok.

We are also grateful to the many authors of this publication for contributing their texts to this project as colleagues with a strong professional or academic background, thus providing us and the readers with insights into special or little-known spheres and thus helping to broaden our view.

Having ideas and developing scholarly concepts on the basis of sociopolitical analyses is one thing—but implementing them is another. The fact that we were able to realize this comprehensive and transdisciplinary publication is primarily due to the Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpj). We sincerely thank the president of the bpj, Thomas Krüger, the head of the print department, Hans-Georg Golz, and the project manager, Anne Seibring. Included in our thanks is, of course, the staff of Leitwerk. Büro für Kommunikation in Cologne, who, with great enthusiasm and competence, helped to give the German main edition its impressive appearance; we especially thank Anika Takagi and Romana Sekula, as well as the agency owner of Leitwerk Oliver Culmsee. For the design of this English publication we would like to express our sincere thanks to Nando Kukuk. We are also grateful to Yvonne Paris, Silke Leibner, and Dawn Michelle d'Atri for their careful proofreading of the German and English publications. Last but not least, we express our heartfelt thanks to Gérard Goodrow for his excellent translation work.

The publication of this book does not mark the end of a long, inspiring, and also challenging journey, but it does complete a first stage. Although we had a rough idea of the direction we wanted to take at the beginning, it turned out to be useful to keep adjusting the course along the way in order to achieve the best possible results. In this case, however, “best possible” does not mean taking the most direct route, but rather choosing a route in order to see as much as possible, in order to be

able to process and classify what we have seen. The fact that this journey led us to our destination is due to the highly motivated team: first and foremost, the extremely dedicated curators Katharina Koch and Uta Ruhkamp, who, in the years behind us, have decisively shaped and advanced the exhibition and publication project with the utmost competence and a unique team spirit. Without their never-ending enthusiasm for *Empowerment*, it would not have been possible to implement the project on such a qualitative and quantitative scale. I feel deeply indebted to both of them. I would also like to thank our curatorial assistants and research associates Regine Epp and Dino Steinhof, both of whom have also been extremely committed to the project and have ensured that content-related issues and organizational aspects in the background were steered in the right direction. Each of them contributed optimally to the project and its success with their respective knowledge and individual experience. Finally, I warmly thank the entire team of the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, in particular for their proven and reliable cooperation in the final phase of the realization of the exhibition and publication.

Andreas Beitin

We wholeheartedly join in these words of thanks.

Uta Ruhkamp and Katharina Koch

1 *Flashes of the Future: The Art of the 68s or The Power of the Powerless* (curated by Andreas Beitin and Eckhart J. Gillen), Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, April 20 to August 19, 2018. The publication accompanying the exhibition was published as part of the *Zeitbilder* series of the Federal Agency for Civic Education, Bonn.

2 Alice Schwarzer is a German journalist and publicist. She has been involved since the 1970s in the French and German women's movements, is the founder and editor of the women's magazine *Emma*, and is one of the best-known feminists in Europe.

3 Both exhibitions in 2007 attempted to offer a view of feminist-oriented art that went beyond Western art. While *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* succeeded only to a limited extent (curated by Cornelia Butler; The Geffen Contemporary at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, March 4 to July 16, 2007, and other venues), *Global Feminisms* actually succeeded in providing a global perspective (curated by Maura Reilly and Linda Nochlin; Brooklyn Museum / Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, March 23 to July 1, 2007, and other venues). Most recently, the exhibition *New Time: Art and Feminisms in the 21st Century* (curated by Apsara DiQuinzio, Phyllis C. Wattis, and Claire Frost; Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, August 28, 2021, to January 30, 2022) also offered an overview of feminist-oriented art of the twenty-first century (roughly eighty artists were represented) but did not claim to be a globally oriented exhibition. 4 The term “Anthropocene”—for the age in which the influence of humans shapes the history of the Earth—is mentioned here as the best known in this context. In related discourse, there is also talk of the “Capitalocene” or beyond that also of the “Chthuluzän” as a planetary-utopian theory. 5 Gabriele Klein, “Kunstpraxis von Frauen: künstlerische Praxis und genderspezifische Kunstforschung,” in *Handbuch interdisziplinäre Geschlechterforschung*, ed. Beate Kortendiek, Birgit Riegraf, and Katja Sabisch (Wiesbaden, 2019), p. 1360 [translated].

EMPOWERMENT: ART AND FEMINISMS—INTRODUCTION

Andreas Beitin, Katharina Koch, Uta Ruhkamp

Feminism is a movement
to end sexism, sexist exploitation,
and oppression.
— bell hooks, 2021¹

Art is part of humankind's global cultural practice. As a superordinate institution, the art industry—from production to the various possibilities of presentation and distribution, subject to the respective differently structured societies—is a multilayered system in which highly diverse components flow together: aesthetics, knowledge, skill, conventions, power, and money. Societies themselves are complex consortia of individuals living together under specific political, economic, religious, and social conditions. Both systems—societies in their entirety and the art industry as a part of them—are in the rarest cases free of hierarchies and power relations and are mutually interconnected. In both systems, due to centuries-old patriarchal structures and the concomitant power constellations, there exists to varying degrees a relationship based on injustice, marginalization, and oppression between men and women, and thus also between male and female artists—even in the twenty-first century. Despite the fact that the equality of all people is enshrined as a central fundamental right in many societies worldwide, the reality often looks different. “Food, jobs, housing, education, the possibility of travel, community, peace, control of one's body and one's intimacies, health care, usable and woman-friendly contraception, the last word on whether or not a child will be born, joy: these and more are sexual and reproductive rights. Their absence around the world is stunning,” as the science theorist, biologist, and gender scholar Donna Haraway noted in 2016 on the situation of women in general.² Black women and Women of Color are even more affected by this, since they do not have the privilege of “whiteness.”³

In fact, it is hard to believe that after more than 100 years of struggle for equality, the period of oppression, exploitation, and exclusion of women has still not ended. Economic systems, religions, traditions, and other structures that can and often do have a repressive effect, and this in varying degrees of intensity, ensure that women still do not experience complete equality. A system of power and privilege that has developed in the respective societies and depends on social affiliations is largely responsible for these conditions of inequality. To a greater extent, this also affects people in the LGBTQIA+ communities, who, like women, have always had to experience exclusion and oppression. In many countries around the world, women, lesbian, gay, trans*, queer, nonbinary, intersex, and asexual people experience hostility and are marginalized, oppressed, and exploited; sexual assault, violence, rape, and femicide occur daily. Even in purportedly liberal Europe, there are more and more retrograde developments in several increasingly anti-democratic countries, where equality for all genders is neither legally enforced nor apparently ideologically desired, despite being enshrined in the constitution. Not to mention countries such as Afghanistan, where women and girls are currently deprived of almost all rights under the Islamist Taliban and have to do without education, freedom, and self-determination. Around the globe, homosexual relationships are still criminalized in more than seventy nations; and in many

cases, people are threatened with imprisonment or even death sentences, such as in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, and Qatar.⁴ The elimination of this psychological and physical violence is imperative to enable a future on our planet based on full equality. According to the African American literary scholar bell hooks (1952–2021), a central demand of all feminist movements must be “to end all forms of violence.”⁵

Critical Reflection on the Term “Feminism”

The central and future-oriented thesis of the exhibition and publication project *Empowerment* is that feminist approaches are topical and progressive methods of the present and future, aiming to analyze the world in general and, in particular, using the means of art as well. In this sense, we ascribe to feminist approaches the visionary and emancipatory power to point out and transform real alternatives to existing systems of power and exploitation. To these ends, we, on the one hand, consider an intersectional orientation as central in order to understand and fight against structures of inequality based on forms of discrimination against, among others, gender, sexual orientation, race, and social background in their interconnectedness and entirety. On the other hand, we consistently speak of feminisms on a transnational level in order to make clear that there is no *one* feminism, but rather a variety of orientations and characteristics, and that the diversity of feminisms is anchored in the respective protagonists themselves, in their actions and their circumstances.

The plural form “feminisms,” which stands for diversity, also results from historical, spatial, and thematic contexts, whereby the following main directions have developed in the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as summarized, for example, by the sociologist and gender researcher Ilse Lenz: liberal feminism, socialist feminism, care feminism, radical difference feminism, and ecological, intersectional, postcolonial, discourse-theoretical, and queer feminism.⁶ Overall, however, according to Lenz, feminisms are distinct from “both women’s movements and gender studies. . . . In contrast thereto, feminisms are directed toward critical ways of thinking in which individual self-determination is inextricably linked to equality, connectedness, and participation for all.”⁷ The further one looks back in history, the more the various feminist protagonists had to struggle to make themselves heard or even find acceptance

for their demands, and to assert themselves in the patriarchal, white majority societies. To make matters worse, anti-feminist movements and corresponding narratives have steadily developed in parallel to the feminist struggles for equality.

Moreover, there was and is no unity among the various feminist currents, which is due to the diversity of approaches and positions. At the same time, this makes it difficult or even impossible to formulate and implement common goals: “The feminist movement as a political identity movement has always stood on shaky ground. Only a minority within the movement has been able to defend the ‘we women’ unbrokenly. It became clear all too soon that uncritical essentialist argumentation within feminist rhetoric has a stabilizing effect on domination and continually generates practices of exclusion.”⁸

Many threatening developments are impacting our world today, including global challenges on the ecological level, which are connected on an unprecedented scale with the climate emergency, and the far-reaching destruction of the environment and of the basic existence of thousands of animal species or nonhuman living beings. With the exhibition and publication project *Empowerment*, we are thus pursuing a concept of feminism that is not only about the “care of oneself and others,” but also about “the protection of natural resources.”⁹ Accordingly, we endorse the theses expressed by Margarita Tsomou in her essay (see pp. 176–83) and follow her suggestion of a planetary feminism as a comprehensive, inclusive, and future-oriented approach that includes nature with its nonhuman beings and that can make an innovative contribution to the survival of both the human species and the environment. The idea of this planetary feminism can be seen as part of a comprehensive redefinition of the concept of humanity “that replaces extractivist attitudes with care and reproductive relationships toward humans, ‘more-than-humans’ (meant as the interconnections and interdependencies between humans and other life beyond the human/nonhuman dichotomy), and the planet,” as Margarita Tsomou explains (see p. 177).¹⁰

It is thus a central concern of our exhibition and publication project to bring together the emotional, intellectual, activist, and artistic forces of transnational feminisms in order to confront planetary challenges with them. It is necessary to shift hitherto little valorized marginal issues such as ecology and care work into the sociopolitical center, since the goal cannot only be the elimination of

inequalities, oppression, and violence—rather, nothing less than urgent care for the planet is on the agenda.

Critique of the Hegemonic Art Industry and Art Historiography

“While the recent upsurge of feminist activity in this country [the United States] has indeed been a liberating one, its force has been chiefly emotional—personal, psychological, and subjective—centered, like the other radical movements to which it is related, on the present and its immediate needs, rather than on historical analysis of the basic intellectual issues which the feminist attack on the status quo automatically raises.” With these words Linda Nochlin began her famous essay “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” It first appeared in 1971 in the anthology *Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness*.¹¹ What is special about Nochlin’s analysis, which is considered the starting point of feminist art historiography, is—in addition to the question formulated in this way for the first time—its approach, since it does not start from individual reasons for the marginalization of women artists, but rather identifies (historical) institutional, that is, structural, causes for it. Nochlin’s seminal text was written in the context of the liberalizations and upheavals of the late 1960s, when demands for equal rights for women artists and cultural workers of Color were gaining strength in the exhibition and museum context. For example, the Art Workers’ Coalition, founded in New York in 1963 to advocate for the democratization of art, called for museums to “encourage female artists to overcome centuries of damage done to the image of the female as an artist by establishing equal representation of the sexes in exhibitions and museum purchases and on selection committees.”¹²

Until the 1970s, there were only occasional exhibitions that presented works exclusively by women artists, such as *31 Women* (Peggy Guggenheim Gallery, New York, 1943) or *Women Artists of America, 1707–1964* (The Newark Museum of Art, Newark, New Jersey, 1964). An example of an exhibition that featured women artists outside the Global North was *South African Women Artists Visualize Their Fellow-Beings* at the South African National Gallery in Cape Town in 1965.¹³ However, these exhibitions were in an absolute minority in relation to those of male artists. And here we are not even talking about artists with feminist-oriented approaches, which were increasingly developed in close intertwining with the

second women’s movement starting in the 1960s, for example by artists such as Judy Chicago, Ana Mendieta, Senga Nengudi, Miriam Schapiro, Yoko Ono, Nancy Spero, and Nil Yalter, to name only a few from the European–Anglo-American countries. With the appearance of feminist-oriented artists, corresponding innovative exhibition and presentation formats were also realized—at times on their own initiative with little financial means and against often enormous hurdles and resistance from the public.¹⁴ The exhibition *Womanhouse*, organized by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro in 1972 in Los Angeles as the first feminist exhibition, is worth mentioning in this context. Subsequently, the 1970s and 1980s saw an increasing number of exhibitions featuring exclusively women artists, including feminist-oriented positions. Examples include *La Mujer en el Arte: Exposición – Pintura, Escultura, Dibujo, Grabado* (Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, 1974), *Intorno all’ideologia: Art and Feminism* (Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome, 1976), *Künstlerinnen international 1877–1977* (Charlottenburg Palace, Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst et al., Berlin, 1977), *Women Artists: 1550–1950* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art et al., 1977), and *Through the Looking Glass* (Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal, et al., 1987), to name but a few—all of which, to reiterate, were absolute exceptions within the exhibition circuit of the time.

Despite the fact that equality in the arts has been a burning issue for more than half a century, it must be stated that, to quote Maura Reilly, “the fight for equality is far from over.”¹⁵ In her introduction to the publication accompanying the exhibition *Global Feminisms: New Directions in Contemporary Art*, which she curated together with Linda Nochlin in 2007, Reilly continues: “Indeed, the more closely one examines art world statistics, the more glaringly obvious it becomes that, despite the decades of postcolonial, feminist, anti-racist, and queer activism and theorizing, the majority [Reilly refers here to the women artists exhibited and traded on the art market] continues to be defined as white, Euro-American, heterosexual, privileged, and above all, male.”¹⁶ Although this assessment dates back more than fifteen years, and since then equality issues have increasingly entered the field of art, the general situation is still far from equal in terms of the representation of women artists in exhibitions and collections, sales prices, and positions within the art industry. While the art world has become more diverse, and since around the turn of the millennium Black, queer, and art and cultural workers from the Global South have increasingly been invited to exhibit in Europe and

North America, this development is often conditioned by flexible biographies. For example, many artists and cultural workers today are only connected to their home countries through the respective entry in their passports and have been living for many years in the metropolises of contemporary art such as New York, London, Paris, Cape Town, or Berlin.

The biographies of artists have always been marked by a certain nomadism, as the centers of their lives and work often shift several times during their careers. With the advance of globalization, this tendency has become even more pronounced in the last two decades. Just as most of the biographies of artists and cultural workers can be described as transnational, so too are the works themselves, which unite the various interwoven influences, backgrounds, identities, and experiences of their creators. This does not mean, of course, that they do not react with their works to the specific cultural and social situation in their home countries. Of course, border regimes, entry and residence regulations linked to nationalities, and financial backgrounds continue to play a significant role in the globalized art world with regard to the (im)possibilities of moving and settling freely as an artist. But it is above all the advancing digital networking that promotes exchange and collaboration on a transnational level.

It can thus be maintained that the category “nationality” in the exhibition context has only limited significance, especially when an exhibition focuses on questioning the Western patriarchally determined view of art and initiating a reorientation of the perspective to which we wish to contribute with *Empowerment*. In our view, the opposition between the “West” and the rest of the world based on traditional binarity must be overcome, along with the related narratives, in order to give way to a full recognition of differences, since there are no purely nationally categorizable assignments of culture and identity, neither in diverse societies nor in art. The art and cultural studies scholar Alexandra Karentzos is convinced, on the one hand, that Western “art history is closely linked to colonialist patterns of order, valuations, and forms of representation right up to the present,” while, on the other hand, “exhibitions and the institution of the museum . . . have become a field of tension for postcolonial debates.”¹⁷ In this context, documenta 11 (2002), under the artistic direction of Okwui Enwezor, is repeatedly highlighted as exemplary. As never before, the exhibition undermined the Euro-American view of the world’s art and disrupted the

binary opposition in that Enwezor opened the exhibition to many artists from “non-Western” cultural circles, thus enabling a decentralized perspective.

Following the theories of postcolonial studies, in the *Empowerment* project we first approach an examination of the identity construction of “us” and “the others,” investigate how the existing power relations, privileges, hierarchies, discrimination, and exploitation function in the art context, and inquire into the preconditions, possibilities, and strategies to deconstruct and at best overcome them. In other words, and focused on our project, we want to participate in pointing out, analyzing, and finally—ideally—eliminating the mechanisms of exclusion, marginalization, exoticization, and trivialization of feminist-oriented art. In this context, we also want to contribute to challenging and undermining the hegemonic, male-determined art historiography and to strengthening alternative art historiographies based on inclusion and diversity.

Empowerment in the Transnational Context of Art and Feminisms

Just as it is impossible to speak of *the* feminism, it is impossible to speak of *the* women. Difference, multiplicity, and diversity are the defining terms that seem appropriate here; comparability of women’s situations is hardly possible, or at best only to a very limited extent. This is equally true for women artists, whose working conditions are also extremely diverse, especially in restrictively governed countries where they have little or no opportunity to express themselves freely. Based on diverse global feminist endeavors, the exhibition and publication project *Empowerment* aims to provide insight into the practices of artists worldwide and how they deal with the still widespread patriarchal power structures, what emancipatory understanding underlies their actions, and how they broaden the view with regard to planetarily conceived feminist futures. At this point, we would like to emphasize once again the central idea of *Empowerment*—namely, to understand more broadly conceived and thought feminisms as contemporary and progressive methods of the present and future—so as to analyze the world in general, particularly through the means of art. Our project is thus dedicated to the relationship between art and feminisms in their (digital) development, as well as in their interweaving with, among others, postcolonial, anti-racist, migration-political, and ecological perspectives.

Against this backdrop, fundamental questions arise that are negotiated, provided with new impulses, and considered from the respective thematic perspective within the framework of the text and interview contributions by some fifty international authors and discussion partners united in this publication. These questions include: How do we want to live in the future? What measures must be taken in view of climate catastrophe, neocolonialism, armed conflicts, the coronavirus pandemic, increasing femicide, and gender backlash, as well as worsening inequality relations between the Global South and the Global North? What paradigm shift is urgently needed, and what can diverse feminisms contribute to this? In addition, there are questions that relate more concretely to the art context: How are these complex and urgent issues negotiated in the visual arts? What potential do artistic forms of expression have for making themselves heard with regard to future issues and societal fields? How have forms and contents of feminist-oriented art changed? Can approaches to healing and reconciliation be discerned? Is there a point at which feminist perspectives in art transition into an equally analytical or critical commentary on society?

Empowerment is oriented toward fluid thematic fields, the content of which, in the course of research, has emerged from over 600 artistic positions. These fields are based on an intensive engagement with feminist artistic practices and are reflected by their counterparts in society, politics, and activism. The thematic focal points include gender images, roles, attributions, and identities; the body, sexuality, and violence; revolt, anger, protest, and intervention; (care)work and (re)production; (art)historiography and other narratives; global entanglements and challenges; and feminist futures.

With the aid of the transnational project networks and their multipliers, knowledge about artistic positions was compiled and processed so that the best possible selection of pioneering works of feminist-oriented art from all over the world could be obtained. Nevertheless, *Empowerment* can only shed light on individual regions, countries, and continents. Our fundamental concern, however, is to break down the Eurocentric perspective with its traditional habits of seeing and categorizing and to strengthen decolonial positions and non-Western narratives. Both the publication and the exhibition aim to initiate and continue discussions on practices and challenges of current and future feminisms in the field of art and to contribute to feminist knowledge production. The

focus here is on works of art at the interfaces of various globally applicable fields of conflict, works that are dedicated to interrelationships, for example of bodies, technologies, nature, and care work, thus opening up multi-dimensional perspectives and at the same time not only consciously allowing contradictions, but also calling on us to endure them. This perspectivization takes place to a large extent under planetary aspects and is conceived to consciously stand out from the often economically connoted perspective of the global and to include both the environment and nonhuman beings.

A project as comprehensive as *Empowerment* is a challenge, not only for those directly involved in its realization, but also for the recipients. A challenge, first of all, because, on a formal level, it brings together two separate fields that, globally speaking, had or have only selective points of contact: the sociopolitically motivated transnational feminist movements and the cultural practices of art. On the one hand, we are dealing with social movements that fight against sexism and essentially advocate for the equality of all genders, as well as for individual self-determination. On the other hand, visual art is a cultural activity that, in the traditional sense, is focused on the creation of tangible or intangible objects or entities that can fulfill visual and/or conceptual characteristics without having to have a specific function. *Empowerment* operates at the intersection of these two spheres, assembling and examining contemporary feminist-oriented art, or rather art and feminisms. It is explicitly not about art by women, but about art by artists who pursue and express feminist concerns and political goals in their works. We define “artists” in a way that is maximally inclusive, regardless of gender identification.

The artists involved in *Empowerment* are predominantly female, because neither the transnational experts of our various networks nor we as curators have been able to locate—with a few isolated exceptions—a significant number of (male) artists working in a feminist way. The artworks thematized and presented in the context of the exhibition are predominantly, but not exclusively, by artists who explicitly define themselves as feminist. Occasionally, artworks by artists who do not see themselves as feminist-oriented but who, in our view, negotiate feminist content were also included. Furthermore, it was important to us, in the context of *Empowerment*, to consider the artistic treatment of different cultural heritages since, by uncovering and conveying cultural knowledge and practices, relevant information (for example, from In-

digenous societies) is passed on that can be valuable for a future conceived with our planet in mind.

Making a selection, judging artistic quality, and deciding which artworks to exhibit and/or reproduce in the publication is always dependent on numerous different criteria. Ultimately, decisions are often subjective and especially difficult when it comes to artistic positions that originate from little-known sociopolitical and cultural contexts. Here as well, the decision made at the beginning of the project has proven to be the right one—namely, to distribute the curatorial burden of decision-making among as many shoulders as possible, and to involve, as best as possible, the various networks from the different world regions and contexts in order to grant multiperspectivity. These experts, who are very familiar with local artistic production, decided in advance which artists, and in some cases which artworks, they considered relevant to the thematic complexes of our exhibition project. However, as with all exhibition and publication projects, there are spatial and financial limitations. Of course there are many more works that we would have liked to include, but we hope that, with the help of the transnational experts, we have succeeded in “squaring the circle” of offering adequate insight into the feminist artistic diversity after the turn of the millennium. We are aware that our project poses more questions than it answers. We are, however, convinced that, simply by making people aware of the urgent need to change social and ecological conditions through the means of art, a development for the better can be brought about.

Structure of the Publication

Guiding criteria for the selection of topics and authors were the consideration of various region-specific aspects with regard to art and feminisms, as well as focal points, such as postcolonialism and intersectionality, and outlooks on possible planetary futures. The transdisciplinary essays prepared for this publication are complemented by excerpts from individual manifestos that have recently gained significance for the subject area. In addition, interviews with artist and curator collectives, as well as a transnational “pluralogue” in the form of a roundtable discussion with scholars, are intended to provide the most up-to-date insight possible into feminist artistic productions, social challenges, and theoretical debates in a transnational context.

Interspersed between the individual essays are short interviews that we conducted with the feminist collectives and initiatives involved in the exhibition, from Brazil (Nacional TROVOA), China/Germany (AXA projects), India (Sandbox Collective), Kenya / South Africa / Uganda / United Kingdom (What the hELL she doin!), and Uganda (Njabala Foundation).

The sections of illustrations between the individual text blocks are each devoted to specific thematic areas. This has resulted from the analysis of well over 600 artistic positions, which were either suggested by our experts from all over the world, as mentioned above, or are the result of our own research. Many of the positions could have been assigned to more than one thematic area; their location in terms of content was thus ultimately subject to a collective decision by the curatorial team. This classification serves above all the goal of facilitating the reader's access to the artworks and to the comparability (of the content).

This introduction is followed by a “homage,” the starting point of which lies in the genesis of the project: when it became clear that we wanted to focus the exhibition *Empowerment* on art and feminisms from the year 2000 onward, the curatorial team immediately agreed that, despite the temporal caesura, the avant-garde, innovative, and influential women artists to whom feminist-oriented art, but also women's movements as a whole, owe a great deal must be visible. Against this background, we have made a selection of some of the most significant artists from the transnational context. It goes without saying that this homage cannot claim to be complete.

The homage is followed by introductory texts on the history of women's movements and gender studies, on the development of awareness of the various feminisms, on transnational feminisms, and on the connections to art and politics. In addition, a further essay provides a well-founded (historical) overview of feminist-oriented exhibitions in a transnational context.

The contributions in the following section are dedicated to art and feminisms in various countries of Latin America and Africa as well as in New Zealand (Oceania). Here as well, it should be emphasized that the texts can only spotlight certain aspects. They nevertheless provide insight into the respective local and regional artistic practices and their transnational interconnections.

Geographically, the other essays then draw an arc from China via Japan and India to the United States and the Czech Republic with a view to both local and transnational developments of art and feminisms. This section concludes with a historical overview of feminisms in art, highlighting developments in Europe in the second half of the twentieth century.

Whereas, up to this point, the texts have had a certain overview character, the following contributions are dedicated to selected topics that are helpful for a deeper understanding of art and feminisms. For example, these texts analyze the challenges of collectively organized feminist practices, explain the structures of the art market, and take a look at post-migrant perspectives, which are presented on the basis of individual artistic positions.

This is followed by essays that explore social issues such as religion and gender, fashion and feminism, and also introduce queer feminist theories and forms of action.

The last block of texts is dedicated to the central concern of the exhibition and publication project *Empowerment*: namely, feminist futures. From feminist approaches as social reformatory methods to feminist spatial practices and ecofeminist perspectives, the essays gathered here look ahead in time and provide insight into theories and ideas on a future coexistence based on equality. The publication's concluding timeline offers a global overview of the most important contemporary historical events, authoritative exhibitions and performances, and developments in the field of art and feminisms.

1 bell hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* (London, 2000), p. viii. 2 Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC, and London, 2016), p. 6. 3 hooks 2000 (see note 1), p. 55. 4 UNO Flüchtlingshilfe Deutschland, "LGBTQI – wenn sexuelle Orientierung oder geschlechtliche Identität zur Flucht zwingen," <https://www.uno-fluechtlingshilfe.de/hilfe-weltweit/fluechtlingsschutz/lgbtqi> [accessed in June 2022]. 5 bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Boston, 1984), p. 130. 6 Ilse Lenz, "Feminismus: Denkweisen, Differenzen, Debatten," in *Handbuch interdisziplinäre Geschlechterforschung*, ed. Beate Kortendiek, Birgit Riegraf, and Katja Sabisch (Wiesbaden, 2019), pp. 236–38 [translated]. 7 Ibid., p. 232 [translated]. 8 Maria do Mar Castro Varela, "Postkoloniale feministische Theorie und soziale Gerechtigkeit," in *Die Neuverhandlung sozialer Gerechtigkeit: Feministische Analysen und Perspektiven*, ed. Ursula Degener and Beate Rosenzweig (Wiesbaden, 2006), pp. 97–114, esp. p. 98 [translated]. 9 Ines Weller, "Gender & Environment: Geschlechterforschung im Kontext Ökologie, Umwelt, Nachhaltigkeit," in Kortendiek/Riegraf/Sabisch 2019 (see note 6), pp. 873–80, esp. p. 876 [translated]. 10 See also Rosi Braidotti, "Four Theses on Posthuman Feminism," in *Anthropocene Feminism*, ed. Richard Grusin (Minneapolis, 2017), pp. 21–48; Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds* (Minneapolis, 2017); Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, *Material Feminisms* (Bloomington, IN, 2008). 11 Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" in *Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness*, ed. Vivian Gornick (New York, 1971), pp. 344–66, esp. p. 344. 12 The Art Workers' Coalition, "Not a History" [1970], in *Get the Message? A Decade of Art for Social Change*, ed. Lucy Lippard (New York, 1984), pp. 10–19, esp. p. 12. 13 A global overview of exhibitions and activities by women artists is provided by the timeline, see pp. 192–215. 14 For more detailed information, see the essay "Women (and Queers) Only! Attack on the Museum Patriarchy!" by Uta Ruhkamp in the present volume, pp. 36–44. 15 Maura Reilly, "Introduction: Toward Transnational Feminisms," in *Global Feminisms: New Directions in Contemporary Art*, exh. cat. Brooklyn Museum, New York, et al. (London and New York, 2007), pp. 15–45, esp. p. 19. 16 Ibid. 17 Alexandra Karentzos, "Postkoloniale Kunstgeschichte: Revisionen von Musealisierung, Kanonisierungen, Repräsentationen," in *Schlüsselwerke der Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Julia Reuter and Alexandra Karentzos (Wiesbaden, 2012), pp. 249–66, esp. p. 249 [translated].

ON THE WAY TO THE FEMINIST REVOLUTION?

Ingrid Kurz-Scherf

Introduction: Feminism and Art in the Field of Tension between Cultural Diversity and Social Inequality

In October 2021, I began searching for inspiration for this essay and soon came across an announcement on the Internet by the German magazine *Monopol – Magazin für Kunst und Leben*. On its list of the 100 most influential people “in the contemporary art industry,” which is updated every year in autumn, the magazine had assigned first place to the renowned American feminist Donna Haraway.¹ For me as a feminist political scientist—who is generally involved with art “only” privately and not professionally—this news had pleasant novelty value insofar as it seemed to grant feminism—at least in Donna Haraway’s version thereof—a surprisingly high level of attention and recognition in (and for) the art industry. I had noticed the considerable increase in the visibility of women in the art world in recent years, but the fact that a self-confessed and very well-known feminist is now seen as the top art influencer in a rather conventional art magazine that is also oriented toward the art market came as a surprise to me.

Yet Donna Haraway’s prominence is only one moment in the rise of feminism in the art scene. The journal *Feministische Studien*, one of the leading media of feminist scholarship in Germany, took “the observation that feminist art—especially in the field of performing and visual arts—has received increased attention in recent years” as an occasion to publish a special issue dedicated to this topic in November 2020. In their introduction to the issue, the editors emphasized: “Feminist art and artists of the 1970s in particular are becoming increasingly visible in art and cultural institutions, in art history, and in the art world.” At the same time, “a new, younger generation of artists . . . that explicitly sees itself as feminist is establishing itself.”² As a result, the issue concedes feminist contemporary art an impressive “variety and diversity—of themes, aesthetic forms, critical strategies, geographical locations and spaces, of temporalities and persons that cannot be reduced to one common denominator.”³ Nevertheless, in this “variety and diversity,” connections and references in terms of content and form could be recognized—for example, in new “emphases on (feminist) history and (queer) temporality in the form of reenactments and reperformances.” This includes “reenactments and complex citation practices of historical performances, some of which are performed by the same protagonists In part, they are also performed by younger artists.”⁴ Meanwhile, however, “in recent times,” there has also been an “increase in so-called pre-performances,” in which, “starting from the present, . . . future scenarios are developed, future political events are anticipated, or hitherto unknown (physical, emotional, sexual, etc.) relationships are outlined.”⁵

If it is true that a new concept of the present is materializing in feminist contemporary art as an enabling of the future by reconnecting to the past,⁶ then this does indeed seem to suggest a new wave of feminism that absorbs past developments and at the same time leads beyond them. Nevertheless, *Feministische Studien* points to the simultaneity of the upsurge of feminist art and the persistence of asymmetrical gender relations in the art industry: “Gender inequalities, power imbalances, and precarious work and wage systems continue to play a major role in all art forms.”⁷ It would thus seem that

structural change in gender relations in the art scene is lagging behind cultural change in terms of recognition of women artists and feminist art. This observation corresponds with the diagnosis of a deepening social gap in the course of social change parallel to the unfolding of cultural diversity insofar as ever larger parts of the world's population—among them a disproportionately large number of women—have no or only a very precarious share in the “wealth of the world” in its manifold facets and manifestations.

In this context, one of the open questions for the future arises in respect to the system of mediation between art and feminism as to the intersections between its cultural and social dimensions, which can also be observed there. In the following, I will explore the tension between social and cultural concerns in the history of the women's movement and feminism. In doing so, I will address the question of the necessity, the possibility, and the perspectives of a feminist-inspired and -oriented interweaving of “artistic critique and social critique”⁸ and a “global feminism”⁹ anchored in this. Finally, I will address the perhaps surprising thesis that the urgent question of the future of work represents a constructive framework for future encounters between art and feminism that has not yet been fully exhausted.

Metamorphoses of Women's Movements in Struggles over Equality and Difference, Deconstruction and Reconstruction

Beginnings: The Women's Movement and the “Feminist Avant-Garde”

The political profile and culture of women's movements in different times and regions are—just like the theoretical foundations and orientations of different feminisms—shaped by societal conditions and the socially dominant conflicts in and from which a women's movement develops or in which and against which it must assert itself.¹⁰ There is traditionally an asymmetrical relationship between women's movements and other social movements in that the activists and protagonists in the struggle over the “woman question” have often emerged from other social struggles and remain linked to them. Conversely, however, this solidarity is shown to women's movements and feminisms only to a very limited extent and often only half-heartedly; not infrequently, social movements reproduce gender hierarchies and stereo-

types in their ranks, programs, and practice, as well as attitudes toward the gender problem that must be evaluated as decidedly or latently anti-feminist or at least as androcentric.

These asymmetries can be traced back to the beginnings of women's organizations in the nineteenth century. In Germany, Louise Otto-Peters (1819–1895) symbolizes and personifies the close connection between social, cultural, and political dimensions of gender relations. She was one of the most important founders of organized protest against the exclusion of women from human and civil liberties and against their subjection to the paternalism of men. Active herself as a writer and journalist, Otto-Peters wrote treatises on the “woman question” at the intersection of science and politics that are still worth reading today. She was also instrumental in organizing the women's movement in the second half of the nineteenth century. In doing so, she strove for close cooperation between the different currents of the women's movement, as well as for close contact with the workers' movement, which rebelled against the lack of rights and the exploitation of workers under the dominance of capital. However, Otto-Peters failed in these efforts as a result of the factual and ideological priority given to the class conflict over the “woman question” under the conditions of emerging capitalism; other reasons for her failure in this regard include “proletarian anti-feminism” (Werner Thönnessen) and “workers' patriarchy” (Claudia Pinl).¹¹

However, even the beginnings of the women's movement make it clear that its various currents spring not only from women's different life situations and concepts, but also—occasionally even primarily—from their involvement in male-dominated contexts, such as political parties, theoretical traditions, and art schools. Women thus easily become the protagonists of “subsumption politics” that reduce the “woman question” to a particularity of the superordinate general situation defined by men and relegate gender conflicts to the status of a “secondary contradiction.”¹² In Germany, the early women's movements can be exemplified by the drifting apart of their “bourgeois” and “proletarian” currents, showing that conflicts and divisions often did not ignite first and foremost on “women's issues,” but also on conflict situations considered superior *within* the women's movement itself, such as the class question.

From the very beginning, however, currents and groups emerged within the women's movements that saw the "woman question" as a basic social relationship, as a constitutive moment in the history of civilization or in the "transition from ape to human" or "modernity" per se, and that saw themselves as pioneers, and in some cases explicitly as the avant-garde, of a sociopolitically and theoretically highly ambitious, "autonomous," "radical," or "advanced" feminism. For the formative phase of the women's movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the British historian Lucy Delap traced this with regard to the work of "'advanced' feminists" in the United States and Great Britain in her study *The Feminist Avant-Garde*.¹³ With a slight time lag, the "radicals" in Germany also refer to the long tradition of feminist struggles for autonomy and self-will. The radicality of the "radicals" and the headway of the "advanced feminists" resulted not only from more militant forms of action, but also from a broader and more provocative range of topics, in which "the return to one's own strength" was combined with self-confident "interference in general social conditions."¹⁴

Equality and Difference

In the description of the history of women's movements, various phases or even waves are often assigned different leitmotifs. The political scientist Barbara Holland-Cunz, in her study *Die alte neue Frauenfrage* (The Old New Woman Question), for example, distinguishes between "modern feminism" in its infancy, which was primarily based on the modern "promise of equality," and "contemporary feminism," which she characterizes collectively as a "freedom revolt."¹⁵ In fact, the women's movements in Western countries, as well as in the state-socialist sphere of power, can be understood as part of and a corrective to the "project of modernity" under the normative triumvirate of freedom, equality, solidarity, which is still unfinished and highly inadequate in terms of gender politics. The fact that even 150 years ago this was not only about the promise of equality but also about modernity's promise of freedom is exemplified by the motto with which Louise Otto-Peters founded the *Frauen-Zeitung* or "women's newspaper" in 1849: "I am recruiting female citizens for the realm of freedom."¹⁶ Conversely, modernity's unfulfilled promise of equality also had considerable mobilizing power for the "new women's movement" that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Although assigning different leitmotifs to various phases or even currents of women's movements runs the risk of encouraging a reductionist perspective on the past, and thus also of distorting the challenges and options of the future, the succession and differentiation of various movement profiles also mark real differences and shifts in the normative orientation framework between the poles of "equality" and "freedom," "equality" and "difference," and autonomy and integration, as well as between different accentuations of subject and system perspectives, of options for action and structural critique and also for identity and social politics. With the shifts in their normative orientation framework, women's movements not only react to different and changing framework conditions (also under the influence of women's movements); they moreover reflect shifts in power between different currents of women's movements and their respective protagonists. Moreover, they are often the consequence of disappointments, such as those that the early women's movements had to accept with regard to the "promise of equality"¹⁷ after the generally so arduous and painful implementation of women's suffrage.

Against this backdrop, the "freedom revolt" of the new women's movements was aimed above all at resistance against all forms of paternalism, harassment, and, in the worst case, rape of women by men and the system of "male domination," against the exaltation of "man" as the standard of humanity as a whole, and against the devaluation of women as "the other sex." The concept of autonomy encompassed not only the independence of women vis-à-vis men, but also that of the women's movement vis-à-vis established (and generally male-dominated) institutions, parties, and unions, as well as other social movements. The focus of the women's movements was on women's own intrinsic interests, needs, and concerns, which first had to be identified in so-called self-awareness groups, on the right of women to make decisions about their own bodies, on the establishment of women's centers and women's spaces, women's universities, women's bookstores and publishers, et cetera. This tendency was articulated particularly strongly in the concept of *affidamento* propagated by the Italian women's movement, which, with its emphasis on women's support for women, also found favor in Germany.

One of the most important publications on the *affidamento* concept was titled *Non credere di avere dei diritti* (published in English as *Sexual Difference: A Theory of Social-Symbolic Practice*).¹⁸ Under the heading *The*

Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community, the Italian feminist-Marxist activist and theorist Mariarosa Dalla Costa promoted the demand for wages for domestic work.¹⁹ The incipient field of women's studies developed concepts of "female life context" (Ulrike Prokop) and "female labor capacity" (Ilona Ostner). In practice, the so-called women's projects movement gained impressive momentum from the late 1970s and 1980s onward, with offshoots up to the present. In this context, the sociologist and literary scholar Silvia Bovenschen asked very early on: "Is there a female aesthetic?" And she came to the insight: "Most certainly, if the question concerns the *aesthetic sensorium* and *forms of sensual cognition*. Most certainly not if it is understood to mean a distinctive variant of art production or a sophisticated theory of art."²⁰ In her text, Bovenschen argues quite decidedly against an essentialist concept of femininity that ascribes an artistic quality to women's creative activity per se, that is, even when it involves crocheting a potholder. Nevertheless, she recognizes in being a woman not (only) a "gap, loss, effacement, and denial, but [also] opportunity."²¹ This chance, which, from her point of view, definitely also contains the possibility of "art with feminist intent," arises from "the liberation of her imagination," from "an unleashing of female sensuality—not only in its traditional place of eroticism, . . . not within the framework of private contingency, but on the basis of a movement of women for women."²² Somewhat later, Regina Becker-Schmidt extended this analytical perspective by the concept of the "double socialization of women," which was then programmatically translated by Ute Gerhard into the demand for "equality in difference."

Despite the strength that the new women's movements drew not only from themselves but also from the tradition they absorbed, they, too, were not immune to bitter disappointments: the Western freedom revolts in the "capitalist democracies of the West" (CDW) were confronted with their instrumentalization in the hegemony of neoliberalism that had been spreading since the 1980s. Whether and to what extent the feminist freedom revolts unintentionally promoted the formation of this hegemony remains to be seen; in any case, they could not prevent their partial instrumentalization in this context.²³ Moreover, one of the greatest disappointments that the women's movements of the late twentieth century had to cope with was the defenselessness with which, after the self-dissolution of the Eastern bloc, they had to accept the withdrawal of all the gains in formal equality that the Eastern party dictatorships had granted women.²⁴

Gender Studies and Deconstruction

While the Western women's movements of the 1970s and 1980s were characterized by a tendency toward difference in the field of tension between equality and freedom or equality and difference, and the Eastern women's groups and initiatives by a tendency toward equality, the previously dominant currents of so-called equality feminism and so-called freedom or difference feminism both had to cope with profound uncertainties in the late twentieth century. The causes of this development, which was accompanied by a certain paralysis of the women's movements, were discussed quite controversially among feminists. Particular weight was initially given to the criticism of the attachment of both equality and difference feminism to a dualistic and Eurocentric construction of the category "gender." Against this backdrop, it seems obvious that equality and difference feminisms were gradually replaced by various approaches of deconstructing gender dualism and transferring the women's movement, women's studies, women's advancement, et cetera, first to the gender perspective and then to queer-feminist concepts of critique of the "matrix of heteronormativity" and the dominance of a postcolonial, Eurocentric, white middle-class feminism.

In large sectors of the women's movements, the distinction between biological and social gender that accompanied the introduction of the term "gender" was initially perceived as a liberation from their own entanglement in gender stereotypes. Moreover, the research fields of gender studies and gender politics gave more space and weight to the examination of constructions and myths of masculinity than was usual in the context of women's studies, women's empowerment, and so forth. The broad resonance of the gender perspective, especially in academic feminism, however, led relatively quickly to the "gender trouble" orchestrated by the American feminist philosopher Judith Butler to great acclaim and lasting effect, in which even the components of gender that were considered "biological" were exposed as socially constructed.²⁵ The queer-feminist concepts that developed from this have created a broad awareness of gender as a social construction and thus also of the large share of discursive postulates in the components of gender relations that were (and continue to be) widely understood and legitimized as biologically predetermined.

With the critique of the "matrix of heteronormativity," queer-feminist debates shifted from the "women's ques-

tion” to the concerns of the LGBTQIA+ community. In the discourses on this, even the talk of “men” and “women” was partly interpreted (and rejected) as an act of domination toward people who could not or did not want to assign themselves to one or the other category. As a result, the relations of inequality and domination in the life constellations and working conditions of the vast majority of men and women—such as the gender pay gap and the asymmetrical division of labor that can still be observed worldwide, the lack of representation of women in leadership positions, and violence by men against women—were subjected to a de-thematization in a way that at times seemed quite bizarre. Especially the sociopolitical implications of male domination and hegemonic masculinity have been pushed into the background, as have the presence of gender stereotypes and hierarchies in elementary fields of generative reproduction and socialization and in the entire context of natality, vulnerability, and mortality—that is to say, with regard to the basic conditions under which people are given life (Hannah Arendt).

However, the queer-feminist perspective was directed not only against the “matrix of heteronormativity,” but in a second strand also against the Eurocentric tableau of feminist constructions of gender relations. With this opening to the problematic of postcolonialism in feminist critique of domination, academic feminism reacted not only to the rise of so-called Black feminism, but also to the strengthening of women’s movements in the countries of the Global South. In this context, international and transnational networks of women’s movements expanded and deepened both in the context of international and transnational institutions, such as the United Nations, and in the exchange between feminist academics and activists.

In this situation of diverse interests, the concept of intersectionality, which was introduced into the debate by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 with explicit reference to Black feminism, increasingly developed the quality of a double strategy of sorts. It reconstructed a feminism that once again speaks of women and men, whereby “gender” is defined in the sense of axes or spaces of inequality, with manifold manifestations between and beyond the distinction of men and women; and it also takes into account overlaps with other categories of discrimination, such as race and class, religion, sexual identity and orientation, age, disability, et cetera.

Reconstruction: Intersectionality and Frauen*Streiks

In the feminist debate, the concept of intersectionality functions predominantly as a “theoretical analysis perspective” that aims to understand “social categories such as gender, ethnicity, nation, or class not in isolation from each other . . . but in their ‘interconnectedness’ or ‘intersections.’”²⁶ In the words of Kimberlé Crenshaw: “Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It’s not simply that there’s a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there.”²⁷

The establishment of intersectionality as a standard of feminist science results not least of all from the fact that it is theoretically and methodologically compatible with very different research perspectives and theoretical concepts. As such, however, the concept of intersectionality also increasingly acquires the quality of a passe-partout for any form of relativization of gender issues in the context of other phenomena of inequality and oppression, without the concept itself providing criteria or perspectives for their placement in a social context and global perspective. On the individual level, the number of those who are affected by experiences of discrimination of whatever kind is completely irrelevant. However, from the perspective of criticism of society and power, and with regard to the resources of political action, the structural quality of individual experiences of oppression is by no means irrelevant. Among other things, there is a danger here that the mobilization potential of the worldwide women’s movements will be diverted, as it were, into the promotion of interests and concerns that themselves have comparatively little mobilization power—for example, because they affect only a comparatively small number of people or because they are embedded in concepts and strategies that are regarded in public discourse as, for instance, outdated, sectarian, or hawkish. Or even because they promote a more or less open or stealth antifeminism or androcentrism.

The gender asterisk in German-language usage has come to be synonymous with intersectional feminism, which has appropriated queer feminist perspectives at least insofar as it transposes traditional gender dualism into the plurality of options of self-determined gender identity. Intersectional queer feminism in the German-speaking world has spread in the form of the short pause in speech in gender-differentiated designations of

social groups into the official use of language by newscasters. The gender asterisk thus stands for the upsurge of feminist-accented ways of thinking, speaking, and acting, but at the same time also marks a new variant of the Eurocentric and social signature of a feminism oriented primarily to middle-class problem situations in Western affluent societies: “Once upon a time, the [Western] educated elite made itself known through the use of Latin terms. In the future, the use of the gender asterisk and the gender pause might serve the same purpose.”²⁸

For several years now, however, so-called *Frauen*Streiks* (Women’s Strikes) have been causing a sensation, taking up impulses from all currents of feminism and the women’s movement, in this sense also containing the aspect of reenactments and reperformances familiar from the art scene. One of the most popular slogans of the *Frauen*Streiks* consciously ties in with the strike tradition of the workers’ movement founded on class struggle: “When women strike, the world stands still.” The feminization of labor struggles and *Frauen*Streiks* is associated with almost euphoric expectations of a militant revitalization of feminism in the form of a new global women’s* movement. At the same time, this is expected to provide decisive impulses for the fight against both neoliberalism and right-wing populism, as well as for new alliances between different organizations, institutions, and movements.

“The great feminist strike”—according to the political scientist Isabell Lorey²⁹—places “violence against women* in a broad economic and sociopolitical context. At the same time, when women* strike wherever they work and are active, the instrument of the strike goes far beyond the classic trade union understanding of strike. It includes the workers of the informal economy who are not organized in any union, as well as care workers in the economies of private households, and it points to the relations of exploitation and violence inscribed in them. . . . The strike thus responds with an action and a political language to a form of violence against women that aims precisely to negate us politically.”³⁰ The intersectional interweaving of relations of violence and domination is countered by the *Frauen*Streiks* with the intersectional intertwining of resistance and emancipation.

The American social philosopher Nancy Fraser, who is very influential in Germany, also recognizes, together with her colleagues Cinzia Arruzza and Tithi Bhattacharya, a new worldwide upswing of the women’s movement,

which is in the process of “reinventing the strike.”³¹ The “new feminist wave” manifested in the *Frauen*Streiks* “has the potential to overcome the stubborn and divisive opposition between ‘identity politics’ and ‘class politics.’ . . . All told, women’s strike feminism anticipates the possibility of a new, unprecedented phase of class struggle: feminist, internationalist, environmentalist, and anti-racist.”³²

From *Frauen*Streiks* to the Feminist Revolution?

The coronavirus pandemic has significantly slowed down the momentum of the *Frauen*Streiks*. Whether it will be revived or take on other forms is uncertain. It is possible that what Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie said about the #MeToo movement might also apply to the perspective of the *Frauen*Streiks*: “It’s either the beginning of a revolution, or it is going to be a fad.”³³

At the least, the *Frauen*Streiks* have not only inspired fantasies of a “feminist revolution,” but also promoted serious thinking about its necessity and facilitation.³⁴ It seems that “feminism” has become one of the leading ideas in the discourse on the future, and this not only within the art scene. Androcentric constructions of revolution as an act of violence, of the contradiction between reform and revolution, of the *one* revolutionary subject and the *one* contradiction that must be resolved so that everything becomes better, are simply no longer suitable as a model for meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century. Following the political grammar of the *Frauen*Streiks*, the following key points for the facilitation a “feminist revolution” can be defined:

- revolution as a process rather than an event
- revolution as a peaceful rather than violent endeavor
- revolution as a multifaceted rather than “single-minded” liberation in and from different, mutually supporting “structures of oppression” (class, “race,” gender)³⁵
- redefinition of the relationship between utopia and revolution: liberation not only after but already during the revolution; implementation and realization of “utopian” alternatives in the niches and marginal areas of “the existing system,” in the fractures and interstices of its permanent transformation

- revolution is not “the origin but rather the effect of an accumulation of diverse, successful utopian anticipations”; its concern is concretized in the defense of “already existing utopias” and does not blur “in the fog” of abstract societal designs for a completely different future³⁶

From the temporal coincidence of the *Frauen*Streiks* and the upsurge of feminist art, the fourth wave emerging in it could also unfold a new quality insofar as it articulates itself simultaneously as an artists' critique *and* as a social critique of material *and* immaterial aspects of working and living conditions and the gender code effective in them, of exploitation and of alienation and heteronomy, of deficits of the “good life” in the sense of prosperity and well-being as well as with regard to ethics and morality. At the same time, however, this possibility points to the necessity of a political mediation between the social and cultural dimensions of feminism and art. If both do not want to limit themselves to art and feminism by the better-off for the better-off, and if the feminist revolution, which both want to help make possible, is not to peter out as an elite project, then the connection between “fine art” and people's everyday lives requires a practical concretization through an experience that connects the two and at the same time distinguishes them from one another: the question of the future of work.

This issue has receded into the background in parts of feminist discourse under the dominance of so-called postmodernism. At the same time, however, feminist perspectives on a new concept of work have gained social attention and recognition, with which not only care work finds the recognition it deserves, but social work as a whole is viewed more from the aspect of care and provision than from that of exploitation and accumulation (of capital).

However, the still socially dominant concept of work is not only bound to the exploitation logic of the capitalist economy insofar as it cannot integrate the quality and the degree of caring activity that people and nature need. It is also bound, first, to the idea of work as operative, dependent employment and, second, to the concept of productivity. Both concepts of work have long since been overtaken by their reality, but they still reveal practical consequences in this reality—for example, in the form of an increasing precarization of the working and living conditions of more and more people. The “feminist revolution” with regard to the question of the future of work could—in addition to the project of the “care revolution”—provide a further impulse for a fundamental paradigm shift of work from the mediating context between art and feminism, namely, by understanding both work and art not only as useful but also as aesthetic practice (or, conversely, art as not only aesthetic but also useful practice), which unfolds in the overcoming of all “surplus repression” (Herbert Marcuse) in the field of tension between autonomy and recognition.

In her reflections on the question “Is there a female aesthetic?”—still relevant today—Silvia Bovenschen came to an optimistic conclusion in 1976—that is to say, at the time of the emergence of the “new” women's movement—with regard to the overall mood at that time: “Women will know how to defend themselves against the barracking of their imagination into the art ghetto, but not because this would correspond with their ‘aesthetic program’ [inherent to their femininity], but because the fantasies—where concepts are of no help—are a constitutive feature of the movement itself.”³⁷

¹ "Monopol Magazin: Philosophin Donna Haraway ist einflussreichste Persönlichkeit der Kunstwelt 2021," *SWR2 Kultur aktuell*, November 16, 2021, <https://www.ardaudiothek.de/episode/kultur-aktuell/monopol-philosophin-donna-haraway-ist-einflussreichste-persoenelichkeit-der-kunstwelt-2021/swr2/94926436/> [all URLs accessed in July 2022]. ² Jenny Schrödl, Miriam Dreyse, and Tanja Thomas, "Einleitung: Hybride Gestalten, kollektive Aneignungen, queere Strategien; Aktuelle Tendenzen in der feministischen Kunst der Gegenwart," *Feministische Studien: Zeitschrift für interdisziplinäre Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung* 38, no. 2 (2020), pp. 187–200, esp. p. 187 [translated]. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 194. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 192. ⁵ *Ibid.* ⁶ This "model of temporality and history" has its roots in the "unfinished project of modernity" (Jürgen Habermas) but takes up postmodern impulses insofar as it only assumes the possibility, but not the certainty, of progress in the sense of a teleological model of history. It is based on underlying androcentric assumptions and is linked to a model of spatiality and locality to which the postcolonial critique of Eurocentrism refers. ⁷ Schrödl et al. 2020 (see note 2), p. 189. ⁸ For more on the differentiation between "artists' critique and social critique," see Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London, 2017). ⁹ I use the term "global feminism" here and in the following as a counterproposal to Eurocentric foreshortenings and distortions of feminist discourse. ¹⁰ Myra Marx Ferree, *Varieties of Feminism: German Gender Politics in Global Perspective* (Stanford, 2012). ¹¹ Werner Thönnessen, *Frauenemanzipation: Politik und Literatur der deutschen Sozialdemokratie zur Frauenbewegung 1863–1933* (Frankfurt am Main, 1969), published in English as: *Emancipation of Women: The Rise and Decline of the Women's Movement in German Social Democracy, 1863–1933*, trans. Joris de Bres (London, 1973); Claudia Pinl, *Das Arbeitermerkpatriarchat: Die Frauenpolitik der Gewerkschaften* (Cologne, 1977). ¹² Ingrid Kurz-Scherf, "Was ist falsch am Kapitalismus und seiner Kritik? – Oder: Hatte Karl Marx vielleicht doch (nicht) recht?," in *Feminismus und Marxismus*, ed. Alexandra Scheele and Stefanie Wöhl (Weinheim and Basel, 2018), pp. 59–83. For more on the concept of "subsumption politics," see Silvia Kontos, "Modernisierung der Subsumtionspolitik: Die Frauenbewegung in den Theorien neuer sozialer Bewegungen," *Feministische Studien: Zeitschrift für interdisziplinäre Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung* 5, no. 2 (1986), pp. 34–49. ¹³ Lucy Delap, *The Feminist Avant-Garde: Transatlantic Encounters of the Early Twentieth Century*, vol. 84 of *Ideas in Context* (Cambridge and New York, 2007). ¹⁴ Ute Gerhard and Heide Schlüpmann, "Die Radikalen in der alten Frauenbewegung: Einleitung," *Feministische Studien: Zeitschrift für interdisziplinäre Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung* 3, no. 1 (1984), pp. 5–9, esp. p. 5 [translated]. ¹⁵ Barbara Holland-Cunz, *Die alte neue Frauenfrage* (Frankfurt am Main, 2003) [translated]. ¹⁶ Quoted in Patu and Antje Schrupp, *A Brief History of Feminism*, trans. Sophie Lewis (Cambridge, MA, 2017), p. 33. ¹⁷ Holland-Cunz 2003 (see note 15), pp. 116ff. ¹⁸ The Milan Women's Bookstore Collective, *Sexual Difference: A Theory of Social-Symbolic Practice* (Bloomington, IN, 1990). ¹⁹ Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (Bristol, 1975); originally published in Italian as: *Potere femminile e sovversione sociale* (Padua, 1972). ²⁰ Silvia Bovenschen, "Über die Frage: Gibt es eine 'weibliche' Ästhetik," *Ästhetik und Kommunikation: Beiträge zur politischen Erziehung* 7, no. 25 (1976), pp. 60–75, esp. p. 74 [translated]. ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63. ²² *Ibid.*, p. 74. ²³ Nancy Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (London and New York, 2013). ²⁴ Ingrid Kurz-Scherf, "Geschlechterkampf am Arbeitsmarkt: Frauenperspektiven in Deutschland," *WSI-Mitteilungen* 45, no. 4 (1992), pp. 203–16. ²⁵ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London, 1990). ²⁶ Katharina Walgenbach, "Intersektionalität – eine Einführung," *Portal Intersektionalität*, 2012, p. 81 [translated], <http://portal-intersektionalitaet.de/theoriebildung/ueberblickstexte/walgenbach-einfuehrung/>. ²⁷ Columbia Law School, "Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality, More than Two Decades Later," June 8, 2017, <https://www.law.columbia.edu/news/archive/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality-more-two-decades-later>. See also Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1, art. 8 (1989), pp. 139–67, <https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=uclf>. ²⁸ Dieter Czajka, "Geschlechtsneutrales Maskulinum," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, January 12, 2022, p. 6 [translated]. ²⁹ Isabell Lorey, "8M – Der große feministische Streik: Vorwort," in *8M – Der große feministische Streik: Konstellationen des 8. März*, ed. Verónica Gago et al. (Vienna et al., 2018), pp. 9–24, <https://transversal.at/blog/8m-der-groee-feministische-streik>. ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11 [translated]. ³¹ Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya, and Nancy Fraser, *Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto* (London and New York, 2019), p. 6. ³² *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9. ³³ Quoted in Lisa Allardice, "Interview, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: 'This could be the beginning of a revolution,'" *The Guardian*, April 28, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/apr/28/chimamanda-ngozi-adichie-feminism-racism-sexism-gender-metoo>. ³⁴ See, for example, Verónica Gago, *Feminist International: How to Change Everything* (London, 2020); Eva von Redecker, *Praxis und Revolution: A Theory of Social Transformation*, trans. Lucy Duggan (New York, 2021); Eva von Redecker, *Revolution für das Leben: Philosophie der neuen Protestformen*, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt am Main, 2020). ³⁵ Cornelia Klinger, "Für einen Kurswechsel in der Intersektionalitätsdebatte," 2012, <http://portal-intersektionalitaet.de/uploads/media/Klinger.pdf>. ³⁶ Eva von Redecker, "Feministische Strategie und Revolution," in *Philosophie und die Potenziale der Gender Studies: Peripherie und Zentrum im Feld der Theorie*, ed. Hilge Landweer, Christine Kley, Catherine Newmark, and Simone Miller (Bielefeld, 2012), pp. 17–36 [translated]. ³⁷ Bovenschen 1976 (see note 20), p. 74.

SPEAKING BITTERNESS

Amy Tobin

To be heard as complaining is not to be heard. To hear someone as complaining is an effective way of dismissing someone. You do not have to listen to the content of what she is saying if she is *just* complaining or *always* complaining.¹

This is how Sara Ahmed's book *Complaint!* begins. Ahmed describes the act of complaining as a form of resistance, as a biographical mode, and as a way of coming to awareness, but also as a mode of speech that is irritating, a "killjoy genre" that gets in the way of being happy.² It can be dismissed, but it also sticks to the speaker, marking them out. The complainer may come to understand something about power, restriction, or oppression through her complaining, even if it is never formally addressed, but this knowledge can only be shared with an interlocutor primed to listen, someone with, to use Ahmed's phrase, a "feminist ear."³

Complaint! speaks to a particular moment, a recent one in which institutions, universities, are the area of Ahmed's focus, have been engaged in increasingly more public complaints procedures. This is also a moment of social movements in part structured by complaint issued via social media, print, institutional process, and word of mouth. Attached to hashtags, each story contributes to a mosaic of complaint that extends alarmingly across geographies, social strata, professions, and milieu. Each account tells us something more; together they reveal the scale of racialized and sexualized violence across identities. To quote Ahmed again:

There is hope here; when you hear us together, we are louder. Although complaint can be shattering ... to make a complaint is often to fight for something. To refuse what has come to be is to fight to be.⁴

This description of complaint, and of the feminist audience or "collective" that complaint can produce, evokes the process of consciousness raising associated with the women's liberation movements of the mid-twentieth century. Consciousness raising usually took place in small groups, with participants individually sharing stories and then engaging in open, analytic discussion—the aim being to speak the unspoken, to find shared experiences, and then to describe and understand a common terrain. Like Ahmed's complainer, the participants in consciousness raising shared things that would otherwise be ignored, thought too personal perhaps, and in doing so would trace something previously unrendered, what Betty Friedan perceptively called *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963.⁵ Even though Friedan may have named the inequities and oppressions some women faced earlier in the 1960s, and others before her had theorized and struggled against what Simone de Beauvoir described as the condition of being the second sex, women coming together in the 1970s needed to voice it for themselves.⁶ Complaining, speaking up and out, was integral to consciousness raising and therefore to the definition of feminist politics.

“Speaking Bitterness”: Consciousness Raising as Speaking Bitterness

Consciousness raising was not the only means of doing traditional political activism; it was widespread with rules for how to start and run a session published in movement newsletters and publications of all kinds throughout the 1970s. The model of small group organizing was also translated to other forms, from reading and study groups to skills-sharing sessions to letters pages, graphic design, exhibitions, and performances. The group and its motifs—the list, the circle, the interlocked female sign—are visual cues for this way of doing feminism that extend across the movement and into artworks too. While these signs may be tied to a historical moment, carrying with them the limitations and failures as well as the successes of that time, the other emblem of consciousness raising, that of speaking and listening together, remains signally important. To exchange stories, to think them through, to complain, allows us to articulate and rearticulate a feminist politics. This need not take place only in the consciousness-raising circle or be mediated by institutional procedure; it can also take place in the exhibition, or publication, even in the artwork itself, and it could also extend back in time, through reading texts, listening to recordings, or engaging with artworks. In this essay I will retrieve some past voices for the present—the Ad Hoc Committee of Women Artists, Adrian Piper, and Howardena Pindell—before turning to the contemporary work of Sharon Hayes who lends a feminist ear to histories of struggle, and in doing so offers us a means to listen too.

Consciousness raising was not understood as complaint in the 1970s, but the testimonies shared in the circles of small groups depended on similar acts of narration and the exposure of complex stories and raw emotion. In her description of the early years of the women’s liberation movement, the UK-based author Juliet Mitchell portrays consciousness raising “as one of the most important contributions of the movement to a new politics.”⁷ She outlines the emotional effects of “the process of transforming the hidden, individual fears of women into a shared awareness of the meaning of them as social problems, the release of anger, anxiety, the struggle of proclaiming the painful and transforming it into the political.”⁸ And yet, Mitchell makes the point that consciousness raising is not “group therapy” as detractors had dismissively described it, because there is “no ‘impartial therapist’ involved, and all are at stake.”⁹ Not therapeutic perhaps, but Mitchell makes clear that this process con-

nects the psychic, the social, with personal feeling and political stricture. To make the point clearer, she offers a precedent for consciousness raising in the Maoist revolutionary discipline of “speaking bitterness.” She writes:

These peasants, subdued by violent coercion and abject poverty, took a step out of thinking their fate was natural by articulating it . . . “Speaking bitterness” is the bringing to consciousness of the virtually unconscious oppression; one person’s realisation of an injustice brings to mind injustices for the whole group . . . there is relevance which doesn’t insult the plight of the Chinese peasant. In having been given for so long their own sphere, their “other” world, women’s oppression is hidden far from consciousness . . . it is the acceptance of a situation as “natural,” or a misery as “personal” that has first to be overcome. “Consciousness-raising” is speaking the unspoken.¹⁰

Mitchell’s discussion of the Maoist origins of consciousness raising tells us something of the historical moment when Maoism was influential for activists in the New Left, in the Black Power movement, in Third World movements and the women’s liberation movement, who—as Colleen Lye has argued—“drew inspiration from the Chinese communist revolution that [recognized that] subjective work was a primary precondition of wider social transformation.”¹¹ This might also suggest how diverse struggles had a shared investment, even if they couldn’t agree on a common subject. Speaking bitterness also compares with Ahmed’s discussion of “complaint” as a means of knowledge production that must stay with difficulty. Dwelling on bitterness and sharing what might be considered bad feelings demolished polite expectations to either focus on the positive status quo, or to sublimate. To speak bitterness was to surface disturbances that might otherwise be only personal, and to connect them to political struggle. It was a means to understand one’s place in the world, both having been shaped by it and being able to shape it, and so critique might offer the tools for remaking the world.

For the artists and art workers who engaged in consciousness raising, the practice of speaking bitterness provided the means to renegotiate their relationships with the world, the art world, and with other artists from a subjective position. Take the *Rip-off File* (1972), a newspaper-style publication produced by members of the Ad Hoc Committee of Women Artists based in New York,

which collected accounts of gendered discrimination in art schools, galleries, and museums across the United States. Earlier, in 1971, the group had issued an announcement to solicit responses that read:

We are creating a dossier of reports of sexism (rip-offs, put-downs and discrimination) in the Art World and Art Schools—for publication and for exhibition. Please send examples of personal experiences (naming names or remaining anonymous as you will) . . . Deadline: December 10, 1972.¹²

In the resulting publication, report after report describes sexist discrimination at work, or when attempting to find employment or gallery representation. The tenor of the responses evidenced explicit sexism: employers directly commenting that they do not want to employ women, course leaders contesting that there is not enough material to teach a course on women's art, and a gallery director lamenting the possibility of representing a particular woman because he deemed her too beautiful and therefore too "tempting" to pay a studio visit.¹³ In other cases, sexism is reported as an aggregate of repeated experiences: being denied too many roles, or being passed over for multiple exhibitions. Gathered together, these accounts trace the patterns and refrains that kept women away from positions of power, or even gave them access to resources or exposure. The effect was, as the committee described, for women to "discover that the humiliations they'd endured were not unique or personal," and in this way the dossier succeeded in functioning like a "large-scale 'consciousness-raising' session on the topic of sexism in the Art World."¹⁴ The Committee's decision to publish the accounts in the form of a newspaper lent these testimonies authority and gave the personal a public forum. And yet the *Rip-off File* also maintained a tension between the legitimate and the irritant, a dynamic which plays out in the combination of vernacular—"rip-off"—and bureaucratic—"file"—in the title. The exposé form bitterly braided together the intimate and the public, revealing the already-existing imbrication of the psychic, personal, and sexual in the sanctified realm of the professional, forcing a picture of systemic discrimination, inculcating a feminist ear. It revealed, too, the tendency to see gendered identity, and to recognize it as a limit, a theme which many artists explored at this moment and that differed from other feminist paths that took "woman," femininity, or even feminism as their subject.

Consciousness Raising and the Artworks of Adrian Piper and Howardena Pindell

The US philosopher and conceptual artist Adrian Piper (b. 1948) explored the contingencies of identification and recognition in her early performances. Piper was a member of a consciousness-raising group in the early years of the 1970s but had an uneasy relationship with both the women's liberation movement and feminism.¹⁵ The group had one tangible effect on her work in the photographs that the artist Rosemary Mayer, a fellow member, took of her early performances, which allowed for a future public audience. There are other parallels, particularly in the confrontation that consciousness raising articulated between individuals gathered in the group, and in the confrontation that Piper set up in early performances, between herself and her unexpected audience. I've already discussed the evaluative element of consciousness raising, in which the group processes what has been said and comes to recognize a shared social condition. Piper's work steps out of the small group, and into public places, staging a moment of encounter with difference that amplifies the dynamics of belonging and exclusion. These themes continue through Piper's work in the 1970s and beyond; the series *The Mythic Being* (1973–75), in which Piper presents herself as a Black masculine being, is especially important in the context of feminism and gender politics. Nonetheless, it is one of her earliest performances, *Untitled Performance at Max's Kansas City* (1970, → p. 88, fig. 1), that makes the point here most clearly. This performance took place at the famous New York bar called Max's Kansas City, frequented by artists, and was "replete," Piper says, "with Art Consciousness and Self Consciousness about Art Consciousness."¹⁶ Piper walked between the occupied tables and booths with her mouth, eyes, nose, ears, and hands covered, thus blocking out her senses from receiving influence. As both the theorist Fred Moten and the art historian Kobena Mercer have argued, this act seems to run counter with feminist and anti-racist concerns to activate the subject rather than objectify her.¹⁷ Instead, they suggest that Piper's desensitization functions like an objection, which, as Mercer describes, "theatricalized a breakdown in the optical rules of mutual recognition," and which Moten claims as "a refusal of collaboration, a positive resistance."¹⁸

Piper's *Untitled Performance* suggests that this breakdown be situated in the social bubble of the art world, signified by the bar, its clientele not acknowledging

Piper's act as an artwork, but only looking on in confusion. This refusal to see Piper's work stands for her wider exclusion from that milieu, as an artist, as an interlocutor, even while present. As Mercer emphasizes, the brutal cancelling of all sensory responses speaks to the effects of that marginalization.¹⁹ The artist's *Untitled Performance*, and those of the more well-known *Catalysis Series* (1970–73) that followed and extended it, established a racialized and gendered being in the world that makes palpable the dynamics of consciousness raising without statement, which precisely locates the difference between the self-received by the world and the subject who experiences it. While Piper may not put it this way, these performances realize the dynamics of consciousness raising in a different form from the testimonial model, evidencing the felt qualities of recognition and misrecognition, catalyzing a shift in how those relations might play out. Bringing these performances into proximity with consciousness raising also shows up the limitations of the process and its failure to provide a space in which all contributors could be seen and heard.

The US artist Howardena Pindell (b. 1943), in her video work *Free, White and 21* (1980, → p. 89, fig. 2), makes this unhearing, and the racism within feminism it was symptomatic of, a theme. The twelve-minute piece comprises Pindell in dialogue with herself. She performs as versions of herself in different outfits, and then, costumed in white makeup, cat-eye sunglasses, and a blonde wig, as the otherwise unnamed "White Woman."²⁰ The screen flips between Pindell and the White Woman, as the artist recounts episodes of racism from her own and from her mother's personal experiences, gleaned from journals, to which the White Woman responds first silently biting her thumb, then with denial and increasing aggression. These exchanges are punctuated by a series of actions. After describing an incident at school, she wraps her face in bandages—a reference both to the concussion she suffered after a car accident, and to Ralph Ellison's novel *Invisible Man* (1952)—so her face and almost all her hair is covered over. Later, she peels a transparent film from her face, then unrolls the bandages from the previous scene, revealing her face. Finally, the White Woman appears again and covers her head, wig, and sunglasses with a white stocking that homogenizes and criminalizes her, before offering a parting shot that ends with the sign-off "But, of course I'm Free, White and 21."²¹

The verbal exchanges in *Free, White and 21* compare with the Black feminist theorist bell hooks's description

of the persistent marginalization of Women of Color in the women's liberation movement:

Our presence in movement activities did not count, as white women were convinced that "real" blackness meant speaking the patois of poor black people, being uneducated, streetwise, and a variety of other stereotypes. If we dared to criticize the movement or to assume responsibility for reshaping feminist ideas and introducing new ideas, our voices were tuned out, dismissed, silenced. We could be heard only if our statements echoed the sentiments of the dominant discourse.²²

bell hooks's echo resounds in Pindell's video, although it is the White Woman's narcissistic denials that repeat in privileged self-investment, rather than Pindell's capitulation to dominant discourse. This is suggestive of not only a failure to hear or listen to the experiences of Black women, but also a failure to see them. Pindell explores this failure to see in the video, connecting up accounts of racialized sexual harassment, educational disenfranchisement, and professional suppression to the White Woman's sunglasses-shaded reception of artworks. The White Woman announces:

You really must be paranoid. Your art really isn't political either, you know. I hear your experiences and I think, well, it's gotta be in her art, that's the only way we'll validate you. It's gotta be in your art in a way that we consider valid. If it isn't used in a way—if the symbols are not used in a way—that we use them, then we won't acknowledge them. In fact, you don't exist until we validate you. And, you know, if you don't want to do what we tell you to do, then we will find other tokens.²³

In this complex passage, Pindell presents an argumentation riven with non sequiturs that link paranoia to political art, to peer validation, to valid symbols, to threatened exclusion and tokenism. These points volley between "we" and "you," suggesting that the White Woman speaks for a group to which Pindell only partially belongs. The contingency of this belonging is sharpened by the idea of exchangeability—that "other tokens" can be found—and nonexistence—"you don't exist until we validate you." These comments can be read on different levels of interconnected meaning, from professional or political exclusion to a threat to life and a categorical dehumanization.

In *Ain't I a Woman*, published in 1981, a year after *Free, White and 21* was first exhibited, bell hooks argues that anti-Black racism in feminism telescopes from the historic violence of enslavement reproduced in subsequent generations.²⁴ This is a dynamic that Pindell establishes in her video, but she explores it in greater depth in later works, particularly in the paintings of the *Autobiography* series (from 1980), which pull together references to histories of colonization, slavery, and its afterlives in legislation and in bias, alongside portraits of Pindell. I've written elsewhere of how these works bring history to the surface, so as to constitute politics through the personal, while they depart from the scene of the group or even the performance, playing out the idea of speaking bitterness, to plumb the depths, to bring to the surface.²⁵

Since the 1970s and 1980s the practice of consciousness raising, or speaking bitterness, has fallen out of favor, just as the social movements that sought solidarity against systemic oppression lost dynamism. In its place arose the complaints procedure and nondisclosure agreements that are in part the subject of Sara Ahmed's book, and which seek to contain bitterness, to limit its damage, and to preserve reputation, both institutional and individual. Only now do these regimes meet their match in the amplified individual testimonies given out on social media, although they too are hemmed in by the corporations that own and run them. The feminist ear must continue to tune itself to bitterness, listening to new complaints, to those past, and rephrasing past struggles which continue to affect the present.

Sharon Hayes: Speaking Feminist Histories

The artist Sharon Hayes (b. 1970) has explained her own "interest in re-addressing" historical struggles to form "openings as well as" to face "obstacles that are deeply relevant to what we all face today."²⁶ Hayes's work ranges across social movements, but it concentrates on what she calls "publicity," or the manifestation of politics in the world. Her work excavates public speech of the past, but also "respeaks" it in the present.²⁷ Often this entails contemporary readers revoicing historical texts; these encounters retrieve contestations past, but also catalyze new points of solidarity and dissonance between past and present. In her moving image installation *In My Little Corner of the World, Anyone Would Love You* (2016, → p. 91, fig. 3), Hayes brings together excerpts from the letters pages of feminist and lesbian news-

letters from the 1970s into a script voiced by "readers" selected from an open call directed to "queer, gender-queer, gender non-conforming, transmen, transwomen, trans people, lesbians and dykes."²⁸ The readers speak the exchanges, alone in separate rooms of a house, although the videos are projected simultaneously across a large plywood wall that mimics the form of a political bulletin board.

In My Little Corner of The World retrieves what Hayes calls the "first time . . . that a particular individual was speaking to a group of individuals, but also lesbians were speaking to lesbians for the first time." She describes how it "represent[s] a moment of the coalescing of that term [lesbian] as a descriptive identity."²⁹ The historical specificity of these debates plays off against the multiple gender presentations in the video, tracing the distance between the moments of writing and reading, as well as shared concerns to rearticulate and embody gender identification. Hayes notes the "coherences and incoherencies" in the video, which speak to the ways in which contemporary movements have shifted the terms of gender politics away from a heteronormative, cis center, and also the stubborn resistance in conservative feminisms that anachronistically hew to biological essentialism and the gender binary.³⁰ The conflicts that emerge in her work, between correspondents past or in the act of reading, "belie," says Hayes, "the idea that there is some whole or unified construct of lesbian or feminist or even *woman* . . . They speak to the way in which contestation and struggle are constitutive of feminism, of queerness, of politics."³¹ Hayes's acts of respeaking test the feminist ear, requiring the listener to hear past complaint in the present, to take it in and to understand its point, its moment, and its incoherence. It is an invitation to listen to bitterness, to hear contradiction, and to recognize points of recognition, and change—to find solidarity intergenerationally. This is a continuation of Pindell's and Piper's projects to "dramatize" recognition, and expose barriers to exchange, as well as the authorizing of dissent in the *Rip-off File*, all of which demand an ethical, feminist ear to always hear complaint.

1 Sara Ahmed, *Complaint!* (Durham, NC, and London, 2021), p. 1. 2 Ibid., p. 1. The concept of the “feminist killjoy” is Ahmed’s, originally developed on her blog (<https://feministkilljoys.com>) and discussed in her *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, NC, and London, 2017). 3 Ahmed 2021 (see note 1), p. 3. The concept of the “feminist ear” originates in Ahmed’s book *Living a Feminist Life* (see note 2). 4 Ahmed 2021 (see note 1), p. 26. 5 Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963; repr., London, 2010). 6 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley (1973; repr., London, 1997). Originally published in French as: *Le Deuxième Sexe* (Paris, 1949). Notably both Betty Friedan and Simone de Beauvoir gathered testimonies from other women to ground their arguments. 7 Juliet Mitchell, *Women’s Estate* (Harmondsworth, 1971), p. 61. 8 Ibid. 9 Ibid. 10 Ibid., p. 62. 11 Colleen Lye, “Identity, Politics, Criticism and Self-Criticism,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 119, no. 4 (2020), pp. 701–14, esp. p. 708. 12 Reprinted in: Ad Hoc Committee of Women Artists, *Rip-off File*, artists’ publication (New York, [ca. 1973]), p. 2, folder 202, box 5, A.I.R. Gallery Archive, Downtown Collection, Fales, New York University Library. 13 See *ibid.*, contributions by Rosemary Wright, p. 2, Barbara Zucker, p. 3, and Lucy Lippard, p. 8. 14 Ad Hoc Committee of Women Artists (see note 12), p. 2. 15 For a more in-depth discussion of Piper’s relationship to feminism, see John P. Bowles, *Adrian Piper: Race, Gender and Embodiment* (Durham, NC, 2011), particularly the chapter “Acting Like a Man”: The Mythic Being and Black Feminism.” 16 From Adrian Piper’s statement for *Untitled Performance at Max’s Kansas City*, quoted in Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis, 2003), p. 239. 17 Moten 2003 (see note 16), pp. 233–54, and Kobena Mercer, “Contrapositional Becomings: Adrian Piper Performs Questions Of Identity,” in *Adrian Piper: A Reader*, ed. Emily Hall and Sarah Resnick (New York, 2018), pp. 102–31. 18 Mercer 2018 (see note 17), p. 114, and Moten 2003 (see note 16), p. 240. 19 Mercer 2018 (see note 17), p. 114. 20 The 1992 transcript of the video has two protagonists, “Howardena Pindell” and “White Woman”; Howardena Pindell, “Free, White and 21,” *Third Text* 6, no. 19 (1992), pp. 31–40. 21 In fact, Pindell connected the White Woman’s stocking cover as an analogue for the hoods of the Ku Klux Klan; see Pindell 1992 (see note 20), p. 31. 22 bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984; repr., New York and Abingdon, 2014), p. 11. 23 Cited from the video transcript in Pindell 1992 (see note 20), p. 38. 24 bell hooks, *Ain’t I a Woman* (1981; repr., Cambridge, 1987). 25 Amy Tobin, “Surface Tension,” in *Howardena Pindell: A New Language*, ed. Fiona Bradley, exh. cat. Spike Island, Kettle’s Yard, and Fruitmarket Gallery (Bristol, Cambridge, and Edinburgh, 2021), pp. 39–45. 26 Sharon Hayes, “In My Little Corner of the World, Anyone Would Love You,” in *Sharon Hayes: Echo*, ed. Lena Essling, exh. cat. Moderna Museet (Stockholm, 2019), pp. 22–29, esp. p. 28. 27 See Hayes in “Interview: Julia Bryan-Wilson in Conversation with Sharon Hayes,” in *Sharon Hayes*, ed. Julia Bryan-Wilson, Jeannine Tang, and Lanka Tattersall (London, 2018), pp. 7–41, esp. p. 28. 28 Hayes 2019 (see note 26), p. 28. 29 Hayes 2018 (see note 27), p. 11. 30 Hayes 2019 (see note 26), p. 28. 31 Ibid., p. 27.

KNOWING, IMAGINING, AND INHABITING—EARTHWIDE AND OTHERWISE

Marsha Meskimmon

Author's Note

Exhibitions and curation have long been central to feminist art, theory, and activism. More than a mere reflection of feminist critical thinking, or a reaction to radical feminist politics, exhibitions have proven to be a significant site for the production of new feminist knowledges, and their articulation in experimental visual, material, and spatial forms. Feminist exhibitions engender creative conversations at the nexus of art's histories, theories, practices, and institutions, conversations that often reach beyond the space of the museum or gallery to raise challenging questions concerning the role of feminist cultural production within a world marked by exceptional asymmetries of geopolitical power, representation, and access.

Arguably, this is what is at stake in creating a dialogue between transnational feminisms and the arts, both in the spaces of exhibitions and in critical scholarship. It is no longer adequate to envisage feminism, in the singular, through the narrow lens of "Western" Eurocentrism, as a discourse speaking only to and for white, Liberal cisgendered subjects, living in the wake of colonial conquest, genocide, and epistemicide. Transnational feminisms move beyond this logic, bringing decolonial, anti-racist, queer, and more-than-human perspectives together to address pressing issues of social, economic, and ecological justice. My work has long been focused on the ecologies and genealogies, the pluriversal worlds and plurivocal stories, that emerge at the nexus of transnational feminist thought, activism, and the arts. The excerpt that follows argues that these stories are as imaginative as they are transformative, as creative as they are politically effective—and that the arts play a critical role in their realization.

Tracing the genealogies of ecological feminisms, Chris J. Cuomo commented aptly that "Any piece of philosophy is merely part of a conversation."¹ Conversation resides at the very heart of . . . the critical significance of the visual arts to transnational feminist thought and activism, [and . . .] art's particular affective and imaginative potential to articulate ideas and concepts through compelling visual, material, and spatial forms . . .

The myriad conversations opened [here . . .] call for intellectual response and responsibility, for situated and embodied forms of critical and creative engagement that acknowledge epistemic location—a knowing *from* somewhere that has political and ethical effects. They call for dialogues in difference that can create solidarities by forging epistemic communities beyond essence or fixed identity. And for all of their differences of topic, tone, and timbre, they call for connective conversations to be unfolded in their particularity through close reading, attentive looking, and vulnerable listening. They call for the end of epistemic mastery and, in its place, trace a compelling conceptual arc that connects transnational feminisms with the arts through *knowing, imagining, and inhabiting—earthwide and otherwise*.

... (T)he lines of this arc do not describe a singular pathway, but rather make it possible to embark upon a critical journey, mapping any number of ongoing conversations in their connective, and collective, unfolding. *Knowing* is thus understood and engaged here as a practice: active, contingent, material, and creative. Practices of knowing acknowledge the critical entanglement of knowers with the known, subjects and objects emerge through mutual intra-activity. Epistemic location and responsibility thus become more central than categorical mastery of known objects; simply, practices of knowing attend less to *what* is known, than to *how*, *from where*, and to *what ends*. Knowing ... is embodied, situated, perspectival, dialogic, intrinsically multidimensional, intersectional, entangled, and contingent. It does not give the knower all-seeing, yet invisible, oversight of the world from an objective vantage point above and beyond, but rather enworlds knowers, as the very condition of worldmaking.

And in this it meets *imagining*... This is neither a conceit nor a coincidence; knowing and imagining are deeply interwoven with political and ethical agency. Imagining here is connected materially with the possibility to compel action and drive political transformation. Imagining is the motor force of the cultural imaginary, and of the shared, social space of responsive and responsible solidarity, where imagination facilitates real, material bonds between diverse earth others. Knowing and imagining move beyond the categorical limits of essentialist, identity politics, toward building solidarities across differences. Their intimate interconnection also unravels the binary logic that pits the personal and the intimate against the political and the global. Knowing and imagining are not opponents, but partners, working toward new ways to inhabit the world, earthwide and otherwise.

The question of *inhabiting*, of how we might live together with both human and nonhuman earth-others, is of profound significance to transnational feminist thought and activism. It drives campaigns focused on iniquitous geopolitical power dynamics, challenging social, economic, and ecological injustices sustained between wealthy and poor nations, the developed and developing world, and the Global North and South. Likewise, it is a cornerstone of the work undertaken by transnational feminists to end global sex- and gender-based inequality at all levels, along with the extreme forms of violence and abuse that so commonly underpin it. Intellectual explorations of the politics of location and belonging bring geopolitical questions related to citizenship, migration, and borders

into direct contact with ethical issues around hospitality, cosmopolitan responsibility, and care. Inhabiting thus creates a profound imbrication between politics and ethics; and, as transnational feminisms increasingly embrace posthumanist insights (particularly via Indigenous, queer, and trans ecofeminisms), acknowledging that significant others can be more than human raises searching questions for any knowing and imagining that is not earthwide as well as otherwise.

The entanglements and intersections that coalesce through transnational feminisms, transversal politics, and art thus foreground *position*, but challenge the essential authenticity of *origin*; if we all know from somewhere, we are also capable of imagining and inhabiting, with others, elsewhere.² As I draft these lines, I am aware that my position in this project is not transparent, that I am interpellated by the arguments and conversations that weave across these pages: I am written as I write. ... Knowing is never finished and there are no absolute coordinates, but there are conversations to be joined.

... My introduction to transnational feminisms, art, ... entanglements, and intersections is done in the awareness that, like a map of the heavens, some of the stars that I have used to mark out my path may well be gone by the time it is walked by others. But the practices of knowing, imagining, and inhabiting that are materialized through these dialogues ... will remain as an invitation to others to continue this act of wayfaring, creating new tools and forging new epistemic communities in future.

Transnational Feminisms

... "(T)ransnational feminisms" is used both empirically, to describe political practices ranging from the development of radical pedagogies to advocacy networks, activist campaigns, and solidarity-building, and normatively, to refer to decolonizing feminist thought that demonstrates fluid, non-hierarchical, and non-dominative understandings of subjects, politics, ethics, and agency. This dynamic and plural combination of thought and activism (theory and practice) is a key characteristic of transnational feminisms, as is their manifestation across scholarly, intellectual, and activist projects.³ Politically, transnational feminist campaigns facilitate large-scale, cross-border coalitions and galvanize effective grassroots engagement with such major world issues as sexual violence, poverty, ecological devastation, human

rights violations, and gender-based inequalities under the law.⁴ Intellectually, transnational feminist theory describes a multidimensional field of thought that commonly moves across and between disciplines, engaging intersectional, decolonizing, and race-critical analysis, queer, ecological, Indigenous, and “slow” activisms, and, increasingly, a vital materialist move away from solely human-centered understandings of the world.⁵

In using the term, my work reflects a growing consensus across the social sciences and humanities that specific insights mark “transnational feminisms” as distinguishable from, but with strong affinities to, “international,” “global,” “postcolonial,” or “Third World” feminisms.⁶

The first of these is a determined riposte to center-periphery models of geopolitical and cultural exchange. Transnational feminisms focus upon flows and multidimensional connections that profoundly unravel the “hub and spoke” model, and, in so doing, move beyond any binary opposition between the local and the global, the personal and the political. Through the strategic deployment of a “both/and” logic that registers affinities with/in differences, transnational feminisms facilitate the articulation of plural epistemic, political, and ethical positions that are capable of addressing major world issues without resorting to top-down, master discourses. Similarly, in terms of political activism and organizing, transnational feminisms are capable of facilitating large-scale coalition-building *with and through* careful attention to local, concrete conditions, replacing center-periphery hierarchies (e.g., the “West” and the rest) with multidimensional dialogues that take place across transnational feminist networks.⁷

Sensitive to differences at all levels, the premises for transnational feminist solidarity are political, epistemic, and affective, rather than essential or identitarian; epistemic communities and political solidarities emerge in the recognition of heterogeneity and the formation of multidimensional coalitions that are themselves capable of profound reconfiguration. Transnational feminist solidarities are critically informed by the politics of location, but location is mobile and dynamic. This is not a “blood and soil” logic, but a denizen cartography drawn by embodied subjects as they make and re-make worlds from within. Not surprisingly, transnational feminisms are particularly well-aligned with theoretical trajectories characterized by flexible, intersubjective, and intersectional modes of thought that emphasize heterogeneity, self-re-

flexivity, and active positioning, in combination with radical connectivity, multi-axis and horizontal analysis, and a generous criticality that seeks to establish relationships within, rather than mastery over, worlds.

Briefly outlining the intellectual valences that coalesce in and through transnational feminist thought and activism is neither intended to suggest that the term is static, nor to attempt to define it here, once and for all. The parameters of the term and its use remain very open and, indeed, my interest in bringing transnational feminisms into an active dialogue with the arts ... is to further develop the conversations around knowing, imagining, and inhabiting (earthwide and otherwise) with which this introduction began. And here it is important to signal that I do not maintain a distant, disembodied, critical *disinterest* in transnational feminisms or the arts, but am compelled by, and invested in, the conversations their connection makes possible.

There are two particular reasons for this. First, transnational feminisms’ creative configuration of theory, practice, and location (thought, activism, and position) posits radical imagination as a material force for political transformation. The words of bell hooks ring loud and true: “Imagination plays a vital role in the struggle for liberation globally.”⁸ I concur and, more strongly, am convinced that the visual arts *can and do* participate in, and materially extend, the potential of transnational feminisms to transform the way we know, imagine, and inhabit the world.

In addition, if transnational feminist thought is characterized by the brilliance of its creative, imaginative, and transformative politics, so too is it marked by its bravery, audacity, and generosity of spirit. For me, transnational feminisms demonstrate the possibilities offered by “embracing a politics of vision, hope and love,”⁹ a way of inhabiting the world in solidarity and kinship with “other Others,”¹⁰ a way of living that is critical yet hopeful, courageous yet attentive. Embracing the strange encounters of transnational feminisms is an intrinsic part of living a feminist life.¹¹

... and the Arts

In recent years, a “global turn” in art and art history has mirrored the rise of the global art market, and both have tended to occlude feminist theories and practices while

reinstating Eurocentric . . . hierarchies under the homogenizing sign of “globalization.” While disappointing, this kind of “feminist forgetting” is neither new nor very surprising. However, in tandem with the mainstream global turn, a plethora of work has emerged seeking to redress the gendered legacies of Western imperialism by decolonizing *feminist* art, art history, and theory, and with this has come an increased level of interest in feminist and women’s art practices from the “marginal” regions of the developing world / Global South.¹² The movement toward a more inclusive geography of feminist work across the arts is dynamic, innovative, and characterized by an exceptional commitment to feminist politics and global dialogue, but it is as yet uneven in its outcomes.

Some work in the field retains a linear narrative of the histories of feminisms (usually as “waves”), and maintains a typology of feminist art and theory that privileges a Euro-US centrality, a fixation on “national” styles of art, or a “racialized” concept of transnationalism.¹³ Two tendencies typify this work: an additive, multinational survey approach (one from China, one from Brazil, one from France and so on), and the application of the term “transnational” as a description of non-Western or diasporic practitioners and/or their work.¹⁴ The former serves to reinforce the Eurocentric primacy of national styles and schools, the latter relies upon essentialized models of subjectivity and biographical readings of art. . . .

Decolonizing feminisms’ approaches to art history and theory, and integrating the important insights derived from transnational feminist thought and activism, means more than bringing art from a worldwide catchment into the Euro-US marketplace. Engaging with the multidimensional intersections between gender, sexuality, the global, and the local (amongst other differences) requires a profound change of direction in the production of art’s histories and theories. There is work to be done to nuance the terrain of “global art,” such that it does not render gender and sexual difference invisible,¹⁵ and, in addition, to explore the “unmarked” center in ways that can facilitate the unraveling of center-periphery thinking.¹⁶ An increasing body of research emerging in the field deploys close readings of artworks and practices to demonstrate the entangled genealogies that coalesce in every act of art (and world) making, while other interventions consolidate the pivotal role of intersectional, multidimensional, and horizontal histories in telling the stories that comprise art’s migratory narrative pasts.¹⁷ This book [Transnational Feminisms, Transversal Politics and Art]

finds fellowship with these projects and their focus on interdependent ways of knowing, capable of articulating cross-cultural, border concepts and forms of ecological thinking that challenge us to ask what transnational feminisms and the arts can *do*, rather than to seek to define what they *are*. . . .

Entanglements and Intersections

Concepts of entanglement and intersectionality . . . are pivotal not so much for what they *are*, but for what they can *do*. Echoing the words of Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall, intersectionality operates here as a critical approach, or an “analytic sensibility” . . .¹⁸

Intersectional analysis is dynamic, flexible, transdisciplinary, multiscale, and cross-categorical; it challenges normative understandings of the world premised upon iniquitous relationships of power and domination at all levels, and it “runs against the grain of established (and oppressive) imaginaries.”¹⁹ Not surprisingly, given its focus on sameness and difference, intersectionality is central to transnational feminist thought and activism and is widely deployed in decolonizing feminist scholarship and in political campaigns.²⁰ It also overlaps in important ways with the analytic sensibilities of anarchist political theory, especially in its emphasis upon multi-axis analysis designed to ward against both essentialist notions of identity and “hierarchies” of oppressions.²¹ Likewise, the intrinsically connective politics of critical ecofeminisms align strongly with an intersectional analytic sensibility in understanding “isms’ of domination” to be profoundly interwoven and in need of multidimensional analysis, critique, and transformation.²²

I would argue more strongly that intersectionality is a generative theoretical sensibility and particularly, that it creates kin. The power of intersectionality emerges in transversal acts of rooting and shifting that bring sameness and difference into compelling connection.²³ Intersectional analysis fosters the creation of knowledges *from somewhere*, that enable the possibility of forging epistemic communities *elsewhere*.²⁴ As many scholars have pointed out, intersectionality itself comes *from somewhere*—it is rooted in the visionary politics of liberatory Black feminist thought and activism—but significantly, it also *goes elsewhere*, forging conceptual connections and affective coalitions in and through difference.²⁵ As an analytic sensibility, intersectionality builds

bridges, not walls; it critically unravels the naturalized certitudes of the unmarked center,²⁶ through radical acts of plural, collective, and creative interdependence.

And here intersections meet entanglements, as interdependence signals the emergence of subjectivity through visceral encounters with/in a world comprised of vital matter. Again, entanglement is a pivotal concept . . . , most critically as it extends the frame of politics and ethics to include both human and non-human agency, and thus provides possibilities to engage with the material and imaginative agency of the arts and their potential to contribute to transformative acts of worldmaking. . . . Corporeality, embodiment, performativity, agential realism, and feminist explorations of bioscience and quantum physics describe a wonderfully hybrid configuration of ideas and images that profoundly rethink subject-object becomings, situated knowledges, and the embeddedness of knowers within the known.

Our entanglement within vibrant material worlds raises substantive questions concerning the configuration of politics and ethics beyond a human-centered framework. Explorations of corporeal (and transcorporeal) generosity, an ethics of things, and the material and imaginative politics of posthumanism²⁷ are some of the concerns that unfold through this volume around the notion of entanglement and worldmaking. These are not utopian concerns beyond the frame of history, but rather they are grounded in decolonizing,²⁸ race-critical, Indigenous, and queer activisms, as well as in the politics of critical ecofeminisms.²⁹ Importantly here, the material explorations of ethico-political encounters with/in worlds sustain a detailed engagement with the arts as significantly more than a mute mirror onto the “real.” Art’s agency, its material, imaginative, conceptual, and affective power to make worlds, not simply represent them, is understood as generative.³⁰ Corporeal-material feminisms, shot through with the insights of decolonizing, posthuman, queer ecologies, facilitate thinking differently about the agency of art within a transformative, transnational feminist ethico-political project. Thinking differently requires the introduction of new tools, for, as Audre Lorde so eloquently wrote more than three decades ago: “... *the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.*”³¹

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1 Chris J. Cuomo, *Feminism and Ecological Communities: An Ethic of Flourishing* (London and New York, 1998), p. 8. 2 Julietta Singh, *Unthinking Mastery: Dehumanism and Decolonial Entanglements* (Durham, NC, and London, 2018), p. 6. 3 Anneeth Kaur Hundle, Ioana Szeman, and Joanna Pares Hoare, "What Is the *Transnational* in Transnational Feminist Research?" *Feminist Review* 121 (2019), pp. 3–8; ... Janet M Conway, "Troubling Transnational Feminism(s): Theorising Activist Praxis," *Feminist Theory* 18, no. 2 (2017), pp. 205–27. 4 Margaret E. 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Krone, "Navigating Socio-Spatial Difference, Constructing Counter-Space: Insights from Transnational Feminist Praxis," *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 4, no. 3 (2011), pp. 201–20; Cynthia Cockburn notes that "Imagination, then, becomes itself a political practice" in her essay "Transversal Politics: A Practice of Peace," *Pacifist Feminism* 22 (February 2015), n.p. ... 9 Sylvia Falcón, "Transnational Feminism as a Paradigm for Decolonizing the Practice of Research: Identifying Feminist Principles and Methodology Criteria for U.S.-based Scholars," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 37, no. 1 (2016), pp. 174–94, esp. p. 187. 10 Cuomo 1998 (see note 1), p. 4. 11 This sentence is a playful take on Sara Ahmed's wonderful explorations ... of transnational feminisms ..., including *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (London and New York, 2000) and *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, NC, and London, 2017). ... 12 A few very well-known references suffice to demonstrate this point: in 1997, *n.paradoxa*, the international feminist art journal (emphasis mine) was founded by Katy Deepwell; in 2002, the third (revised) edition of Whitney Chadwick's pivotal survey *Women, Art, and Society* was updated with a chapter specifically exploring women, art, and globalization; in 2007, in honor of the opening of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum, the exhibition *Global Feminisms* was co-curated by Maura Reilly and Linda Nochlin and lauded as the "first international exhibition exclusively dedicated to feminist art." 13 Jennifer C. Nash describes the propensity within the Anglophone/US academy to "apply" the term "transnational" to people and geographies of color whilst leaving an unmarked, but normatively "white," center as being out of the reach of its critique and analysis. Suffice to say that this volume does not participate in that project, but that its trace lingers across much mainstream art-historical scholarship. See Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality* (Durham, NC, and London, 2019), pp. 98–103. 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Busia [London and New York, 1993], pp. 228–66), Phoebe Farris-Dufrene (ed. *Voices of Color: Art and Society in the Americas* [Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1997]), and Ella Shohat (ed. *Talking Visions: Multicultural Feminism in a Transnational Age* [Cambridge, MA, 1999])—for introducing me to ideas that directly inspired my own interventions years later: Marsha Meskimmon and Dorothy Rowe, eds., *Women, the Arts and Globalization: Eccentric Experience* (Manchester, 2013); Marion Arnold and Marsha Meskimmon, eds., *Home/Land: Women, Citizenship, Photographies* (Liverpool, 2016). 16 Deborah Cherry's work is exemplary. ... 17 Deborah Cherry and Janice Helland, *Local/Global: Women Artists in the Nineteenth Century* (Middlesex, 2006). Likewise ... Diana Burgess Fuller and Daniela Salvioni, eds., *Art/Women/California 1950–2000: Parallels and Intersections* (Oakland, CA, 2002) and ... Elaine H. 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I would also like to note the work of important scholars such as Claire Farago and Helen Hills ... 18 Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall, "Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis," *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture and Society* 38, no. 4 (2013), pp. 785–810, esp. p. 795. 19 Vivian M. May, *Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries* (London and New York, 2015), p. viii. ... 20 See Nira Yuval-Davis, ... "Dialogical Epistemology: An Intersectional Resistance to the 'Oppression Olympics,'" *Gender and Society* 26, no. 1 (February 2012), pp. 46–54; Sylvanna Falcón and Jennifer C. Nash, "Shifting Analytics and Linking Theories: A Conversation about the 'Meaning-Making' of Intersectionality and Transnational Feminism," *Women's Studies International Forum* 50 (May–June 2015), pp. 1–10. 21 Deric Shannon and J. 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WOMEN (AND QUEERS) ONLY! ATTACK ON THE MUSEUM PATRIARCHY!

A Selection of Groundbreaking Exhibitions—From Local to Transnational

Uta Ruhkamp

But feminism is not a style, or a formal approach. It is a philosophy, an attitude and a political instrument. It is more important than Pop, Minimalism or Conceptual art because it is by its very nature bigger than they are, more far-reaching and life-affecting. In addition feminism is not of itself an aesthetic value. It is an idea that can assume an organic force in some artists' work.¹

Museums around the world are now working on their quota of women artists with the aim of depatriarchalizing and diversifying both exhibition programs and the collections themselves. In this digitalized age marked by pop-cultural feminism, categorizations of all kinds are beginning to break down or become more fluid, for example in terms of binary gender assignments, nationalities (due to increasingly transnational biographies), or dichotomies such as West/non-West and Global North/South. In light of this, women and LGBTQIA+ artists actually no longer want to participate in shows that work with such divisions. However, the abundance of current exhibition projects confirms that there is still a great deal of undiscovered, unprocessed art by women artists that needs to be recognized locally and globally and brought to the public, that art as an instrument of feminist concerns is far from being exhausted, and that—from a global perspective—women artists are not yet able to express themselves through their works on an equal footing. If one puts the centuries of dominance of the male art patriarchy in relation to the fifty years of concentrated resistance and struggle by women artists for art-historical recognition, this state of affairs cannot come as a surprise. To be given the opportunity to show work at all can already be a moment of empowerment, because, in global exhibition practice, the different sociocultural and economic situations, as well as production and exhibition conditions, of women artists are of great importance, especially in countries with little artistic and institutional infrastructure or with state-imposed limits to artistic freedom.

From the multitude of exhibitions since the 1960s and 1970s, four essential formats in the transnational field of feminist-oriented art can be identified: exhibitions of resistance, exhibitions of visibilization, historicizing retrospective exhibitions of recognition, and transnational survey exhibitions.

The Private as Political: Early Exhibitions of Resistance and Visibility

As early as 1971, the American art historian Linda Nochlin drew attention to the structural oppression of women artists in museum exhibitions and collections with the famous question “Why have there been no great women artists?”² In order to find an answer, there was a need for comparative possibilities and curatorial pioneers who made and make the work of women artists visible in qualitatively and quantitatively significant exhibitions. The massive attack on the museum patriarchy took place in the 1970s, when women artists politicized their art and claimed their place in art history with provocative visual politics. Although there had already been exhibitions in the 1950s and 1960s that focused on female positions, especially in the United States and Europe, they took place primarily in women’s, cultural, and “research” institutes, universities, or galleries and had a limited radius of reception. The large-scale, special museum exhibitions, which were conceived as national or international museum surveys of “female” art production, set new standards primarily in the 1970s. These pioneering shows were partly aimed at providing a platform for women artists and expanding art history to include them, but they were also partly emancipatory declarations of struggle in the spirit of the women’s movements. Whether large or small formats, the abundance of exhibitions of the time literally made the designation “women artists” a category, which basically meant a subversion of the concern for egalitarian artistic recognition. Hardly any exhibition title could do without the term “women,” which the American art theorist and curator Lucy Lippard ironically commented on with the title of a small show by the name of *Ten Artists (Who Also Happen to Be Women)*. It was presented in late 1972 and early 1973 at the Kenan Center in Upstate New York and the gallery of the Michael C. Rockefeller Arts Center in New York City. This categorization was the reason why, as early as 1977, the artists Christiane Möbus (b. 1947), Alicia Penalba (1913–1982), Dorothea Tanning (1910–2012), Toyen (1902–1980), and Dorothee von Windheim (b. 1945) did not want to participate in the women-only exhibition *Künstlerinnen international 1877–1977* in Berlin.³

One of the most famous feminist-oriented exhibition projects aimed at politicizing the private was *Womanhouse* (Los Angeles, 1972, → p. 101, fig. 1), founded on the initiative of the artists Judy Chicago (b. 1939) and

Miriam Schapiro (1923–2015) as part of the *Feminist Art Program* (FAP) established by Chicago at Fresno State College in 1970 and continued at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). The choice of private exhibition spaces in a Hollywood mansion politicized the context of the bourgeois private living environment assigned to the feminine. The artistic interventions of the women students integrated into the individual living spaces and the performance program referred to everyday experiences of women, reflected core themes of the women’s movement, and were, at the same time, to be understood as autonomous artistic works, which in spatial and content-related combination resulted in a feminist-oriented overall installation, ultimately also counteracting the “white cube” as a spatial presentation ideal.

In many cases, the women artists themselves took the initiative. Among them was a group of twenty-four women artists who founded the A.I.R. Gallery (Artists in Residence) in New York in 1972, which, to this day, exhibits art exclusively by women, transgender women, and nonbinary individuals. In Poland, it was the artist Natalia LL (1937–2022) who, in 1978, curated *Women’s Art* (Jatki Galeria, Wrocław), the first feminist-influenced exhibition featuring international artists such as Carolee Schneemann (1939–2019, USA) and Suzy Lake (b. 1947, Canada), while in India the video pioneer Nalini Malani (b. 1946) struggled together with the sculptor Pilloo Pochkhanawala (1923–1986) to realize her exhibition project *Through the Looking Glass* (→ p. 102, fig. 2): “It was . . . a real eye-opener when I met Nancy Spero, May Stevens and Ana Mendieta in 1979, at their all-women AIR Gallery in New York. This counterbalance to male dominance inspired me in 1979 to start organizing an Indian women artists’ overview exhibition. . . . It took years of detailed planning and writing applications followed by endless rejections.”⁴ Seven years later, at the suggestion of Arpita Singh (b. 1937), they organized and financed the project primarily themselves, exhibiting together with Madhvi Parekh (b. 1942) and Nilima Sheikh (b. 1945) in Bhopal (Bharat Bhavan, 1987), Bangalore, Mumbai, and twice in New Delhi between 1987 and 1989, thereby gaining increasing recognition.

The first major international museum exhibition, *Women Artists: 1550–1950* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1976–77), was curated by Ann Sutherland and Linda Nochlin.⁵ Featuring 150 works by eighty-four women artists from twelve countries, the exhibition

offered a survey ranging from Sofonisba Anguissola (1532/35–1625), Rosalba Carriera (1675–1757), and Angelika Kauffmann (1741–1807) to Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945), Sonia Delaunay (1885–1979), and Lee Krasner (1908–1984). The great merit of this presentation lay in the elaboration of a coherent history of female art that had existed only sporadically up to that time, and of the evolution of the practicable profession of the woman artist.⁶ Robert Hughes, writing in *Time* magazine at the time, called the exhibition “one of the most significant theme shows to come along in years.”⁷ The critic John Perreault confirmed the expansion of art history: “The history of Western Art will never be the same again. That which was hidden has been exposed. . . . their research has proved that there have been women artists of great accomplishment all along. . . . Clearly there has been a male dictatorship in art, on the part of male artists and art historians.”⁸ In this new history of art, the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo (1907–1954) was the only non-Euro-American artist, for it was not until the 1980s that the hegemony of Western canons was increasingly called into question.⁹

Only three months later, in March 1977, the exhibition *Künstlerinnen international 1877–1977* (Charlottenburg Palace, Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst [NGBK] et al., 1977) opened in West Berlin.¹⁰ After the exhibition idea had initially been firmly rejected by both male and female members of the NGBK in 1973, the working group *Frauen in der Kunst* (Women in Art) was able to assert itself in 1974 through the influence of members who were also part of the women’s movement.¹¹ This open-ended working group included Ursula Bierther, Evelyn Kuwertz, Karin Petersen, Inge Schumacher, Sarah Schuhmann, Ulrike Stelzl, and Petra Zöfel. The result of a selection process from roughly 1,000 positions was an overview of some 182 women artists working in all artistic media. Left out were positions of “female earthiness” with exaggerated metaphors of nature, agitational art without aesthetic transformation, naïve painting, Bauhaus artists, graphic art, arts and crafts, and women artists too closely adapted to their male colleagues.¹² In contrast to the format curated by Nochlin and Sutherland, *Women Artists: 1550–1950*, the exhibition *Künstlerinnen international 1877–1977* explicitly saw itself as an instrument of political struggle. “Rarely has an art exhibition in Berlin caused so much discord, provoked such sharp controversies and protests,” as Werner Rhode summed up in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in 1977.¹³ The crux of the criticism was directed at the “self-empowerment” of a number of expert women, some of them art-

ists themselves, to make a selection of female positions they deemed worthy of presentation. Patriarchal museum structures were undermined both curatorially and artistically, whereby the working group admitted in the preface to the accompanying publication to their own subjectivity in selecting the women artists.¹⁴ However, there was also criticism from the female side; the journalist Margarete von Schwarzkopf thus argued: “Art becomes a mere vehicle of feminism, the artistic ‘concern’ takes a back seat in favor of the political ‘statement.’”¹⁵

What the 1977 Berlin exhibition attempted to implement on a large scale was done in other European countries in medium-sized and small shows. In Italy, the exhibition series *Magma: Rassegna internazionale di donne artiste* (Castello Oldofredi, Brescia, 1975), curated by Romana Loda, toured between 1975 and 1977,¹⁶ whereas in the Netherlands, the traveling exhibition *Feminist Kunst International* (Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, 1979–80), which included more than forty positions, was shown between 1979 and 1981.¹⁷ The Danish counterpart that caused a sensation was the international exhibition *Kvindeudstillingen XX på Charlottenborg* (Charlottenborg Palace, Copenhagen, 1975), organized by several women’s groups, which, with its anarchic, installation-based, and collective-activist character attracted visitors not only from the then left-liberal domestic market but also from other European countries and the United States to the radically transformed Charlottenborg Palace.¹⁸

Comparably groundbreaking in Argentina was the two-part exhibition *Mitominas I and II* (1986 and 1988), organized by the feminist Monique Altschul and a group of artists at the Centro Cultural Recoleta in Buenos Aires. It was one of the first to publicly address gender issues in Argentina, dedicated as it was, with a certain irony, to the deconstruction of the image of women in everyday life and the private sphere. Thirty years later, a new edition paid tribute to this pioneering curatorial achievement (*Mitominas: 30 años después*, Centro Cultural Recoleta, Buenos Aires, 2016).

The Hong Kong-based Asia Art Archive (AAA), dedicated to documenting Asia’s recent art history, records a series of comparable, increasingly larger exhibitions in the Southeast Asian region between 1991 and 2015 that made stops in several Asian countries beginning around 2000.¹⁹ Tellingly, among the thirty-one exhibitions held in countries such as China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Myanmar, and Singapore, only the most recent bore the

term “feminism” in its title: *East Asia Feminism: FANTasia* (Seoul Museum of Art, 2015). In China, the concept of Western feminism took hold only to a limited extent. “I don’t think there is any feminism in China. Mao said that women hold up half the sky but we have not reached that level. . . . In fact I think feminism is from the west,” declared the Chinese artist LIN Tianmiao (b. 1961) as recently as 2016,²⁰ who was a part of *Women’s Approach to Chinese Contemporary Art* (Beijing Art Museum, Beijing, 1995) curated by LIAO Weng, the first museum show featuring twelve women artists in China. Almost as a rebuttal, the exhibition format *Tradisexion: The Work of Art, Sexuality and Tradition* (Concrete House, Bangkok, 1995) was developed in parallel in Thailand on the initiative of women artists, writers, and activists, giving rise to the *Womanifesto Biennale* in 1997 (until 2009). The latter was conceived as a local and global platform of exchange for women, where gender issues were put up for discussion in the form of performances, workshops, seminars, a web project, and a residency program, whereby cross-gender collaborations also took place.²¹

Historicizing Retrospectives: Exhibitions of Recognition

The new millennium saw the beginning of a phase of recognition and historicization of the art of the 1970s and 1980s in museums. Large-scale, thematically structured survey exhibitions brought together what had previously been on view in small group shows focusing on female positions. The reappraisal of these exhibitions led to a kind of stocktaking of important women artists who were placed in connection with contemporary art production.

In 2007, after eight years of preparation, the American curator Cornelia Butler presented *Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution* (The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, Los Angeles)²² as the first museum presentation to comprehensively explore the international roots and legacy of an art that was shaped by activist feminism between 1965 and 1980 with its varying emphases (→ pp. 104–05, fig. 3). *Wack!* was not an acronym but was meant to allude to activist groups and political communities of the 1970s, such as the Women’s Action Coalition (WAC) and the Women Artists in Revolution (WAR). Butler’s multimedia exhibition, which included 500 works by some 120 women artists from twenty-one countries, was intended to confirm the thesis that the influence of feminism on art in the 1970s had produced the strongest movement of the postwar

period, whereby she did not understand this to mean any particular style. Rather, Butler was concerned—following the famous African American feminist bell hooks—with emphasizing the “to move” implicit in the term “movement.”²³ In her analytical “rearview” published in February 2021, Wendy Vogel criticized the exhibition for including two Indian but only six Black women artists, for doing little better for Latin American, First Nations, and Asian positions, for including various queer and lesbian artists, but no trans or nonbinary individuals.²⁴ In *The New York Times*, the art critic Holland Cotter criticized above all the limiting time span that *Wack!* covered, Cornelia Butler’s curatorial solo effort, the lack of pro-feminist male artists, the presentation of artists who did not define themselves as feminists, the exhibition title, which harbored the danger of an ironic “bad-girl” undertone, and, last but not least, the decontextualized book cover, which, in his eyes, degenerated into a “sex-sells pitch.”²⁵ Although Butler was well aware of the global facets of feminisms, the value and focus of *Wack!* lie not in intersectionality and transnationality, but rather in the immense research work of the curator in the face of a—despite advancing digitalization—still difficult material and source situation, as well as in the rediscovery of long-forgotten artistic positions, which is also manifested in the valuable collection of material in the comprehensive publication.

The exhibition *Shared Women* (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, LACE), curated by Eve Fowler, Emily Roysdon, and A. L. Steiner and featuring forty-seven artists from three generations, was the third such survey in the United States in 2007, alongside *Wack!* and *Global Feminisms: New Directions in Contemporary Art* (see pp. 42–43). “If the artists in ‘WACK!’ sought to change the world, then the artists of ‘Shared Women’ seek to make their own,” wrote Helen Molesworth in her comparative review in May 2007.²⁶ According to the provocative press release, the spontaneously developed exhibition *Shared Women* was “dependent on cronyism, feminism and nepotism.” It playfully launched the idea of radical sexuality, even foregrounding the sexual entanglements of the predominantly lesbian artists. Here, the concept of feminism was aggressively expanded to include queer-feminist art-making of the present, some of which cited pioneering works by artists from *Wack!*. As Christopher Russell summed up in *Artillery Magazine*: “‘Shared Women’ presents a utopic vision of post-categorization. It celebrates postmodern pluralism in which numerous perspectives are both represented and respected. The result of this openness is physical as well as intellectual promiscuity.”²⁷

In Berlin, meanwhile, Bettina Knaup and Beatrice E. Stammer created—following extensive research—an online archive of international gender-oriented performance art of the 1960s and 1970s.²⁸ Their project, *react.act.feminism: performancekunst 1960er & 70er jahre heute* (Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 2008–09), consisted of an exhibition, a video archive, live performances, and a conference. While the exhibition itself presented twenty-five women artists from two generations originating from Europe and the United States, the archive gave visitors access to over eighty video performances, performative documentaries, and interviews with women artists. The material gathered by Knaup and Stammer from around the world provides a broad overview not only of the development of feminist-oriented performance art, but also of its significance for contemporary women artists working with restaging strategies. “Through differentiated research, the two curators Beatrice Stammer and Bettina Knaup have liberated feminist art from the archives since the 1960s and elevated it to a genuine art form that has since developed its own tradition,” as Carsten Probst summed up in *Deutschlandfunk* in 2008.²⁹ Between 2011 and 2013, this constantly growing archive toured five European countries as *re.act.feminism #2*.

In France, Camille Morineau drew an international response in 2009 when, with *elles@centrepompidou: Artistes femmes dans les collections du Musée national d'art moderne / Centre de création industrielle* (Paris, 2009–11),³⁰ she exhibited 350 works by 150 women artists from the early twentieth century to the present day from the collections of the Centre Pompidou for a good year and a half. This offensive was preceded by a five-year acquisition phase, during which 40 percent of new acquisitions were works by women artists, increasing their presence in the Centre Pompidou's collections to 17 percent.³¹ The Verbund Collection is doing comparable recognition work with its exhibition series *Feminist Avant-Garde: Art of the 1970s in the Verbund Collection, Vienna*. As the founding director of the collection, which has been in existence since 2004, Gabriele Schor set an acquisition focus on feminist-influenced works from the 1970s, thus permanently bringing together what Cornelia Butler had attempted to achieve, in 2007, with *Wack!* as an exhibition format. The Verbund Collection publication, released in 2016, lists 600 works by forty-eight women artists (born between 1930 and 1958). From this collection, a first exhibition was created back in 2010, called *Donna: Avanguardia Femminista*

negli anni '70, which was presented at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome and curated by Gabriele Schor and Angelandreina Rorro. Over the course of the ten subsequent shows, the number of exhibits also varied as the collection tripled in size.³² From the beginning, Gabriele Schor's declared goal was to draw international attention to the necessary expansion of the canon of art history and “to anchor the connection between the two terms ‘feminism’ and ‘avant-garde’ in our collective consciousness.”³³ In doing so, Schor referred back to Lawrence Alloway, who had already described the women's movement in art as an avant-garde in 1976.³⁴ The internationally positive reception of the exhibition series legitimizes the demand to recognize that the artistic avant-gardes were not purely male.

The exhibition *Women In-Between: Asian Women Artists 1984–2012* (Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan, 2012) took a similarly historicizing approach.³⁵ The project was the initiative of directors and curators at four Japanese museums, with one of the driving forces being Kokatsu Reiko, the chief curator of the Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Fine Arts, who stated in the accompanying publication: “‘Women In-Between’ designates a sort of women who carry out their role to mediate in such areas of confrontation as races, borders, religions or genders, without anchoring fast in a certain fixed value or attitude, standing not in the center but [in] interstices as in-between existences because of the given condition of women as a minority.”³⁶ As the first large-scale project of its kind to be developed collaboratively, the exhibition, with the 130 works presented therein by fifty women artists from sixteen Asian countries, offered a comprehensive look at explorations of themes such as social gender roles, the position of women in everyday life, history, war, and ethnicity, as well as current trends.

Ten years after Cornelia Butler's exhibition *Wack!*, Cecilia Fajardo-Hill and Andrea Giunta opened a groundbreaking Latin American counterpart at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985* (2017).³⁷ As early as 2008, Giunta had written her essay “Género y feminismo: Perspectivas desde América Latina” (Gender and Feminism: Latin American Perspectives), in which she proposed looking at Latin American art from a gender perspective. This text prompted Cecilia Fajardo-Hill to recruit Giunta as co-curator.³⁸ Seven years of research ensued, resulting in an exhibition of 120 women artists and collectives from fifteen countries active between 1960 and 1985, in-

cluding Latinas and Chicanas (women artists who had immigrated to the United States from Latin America and Mexico, respectively). While the art of the latter manifested goals and parallels to Euro-American art with feminist content, Giunta and Fajardo-Hill could not identify a feminist art movement in any Latin American country except Mexico. In some works, a feminist agenda only became apparent to them in curatorial retrospect, but despite numerous trips and due to the weak material situation, it was not possible to elicit women artists in all countries who fit into the exhibition concept. The core themes of *Radical Women* were the female body and the radical upheaval in its iconography, whereby circumstances of origin as well as the pictorial challenge of dominant classifications also came into play. Against a backdrop of formative experiences with dictatorships, imprisonment, exile, torture, violence, censorship, and oppression, the primary goal of the exhibition was to establish a new chapter in twentieth-century art history that paid tribute to the contributions of Latin American and Latina/Chicana women artists.³⁹

The same year, 2017, Catherine Morris and Rujeko Hockley presented the nominally related exhibition *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85* (Brooklyn Museum, New York, 2017), which was a landmark show for the United States (→ pp. 108–09, fig. 4). As part of the program *A Year of Yes: Reimagining Feminism at the Brooklyn Museum*, celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, it addressed the political, social, cultural, and aesthetic priorities of Women of Color during the rise of the second wave of feminism in the United States. For the first time, an exhibition differentiated their voices and experiences from the mainstream feminism of a predominantly white middle class. Works by more than forty women artists, collectives, and activists who lived and worked at the interfaces of avant-garde art worlds, radical political movements, and social upheaval were presented; the exhibition thus highlighted the profound African American contribution to feminism in a multilayered way.⁴⁰

Current initiatives in Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand continue the phase of historicizing recognition. In 2019, for example, the National Gallery of Australia (NGA) in Canberra launched its project *Know My Name: Women Artists of Australia*, a large-scale initiative conceived as a celebration, a commitment, and a call to action aimed at gender equality, reminiscent of the principles—Engage. Reflect. Act.—of the Feminist Art Coalition

(FAC), founded in 2016 in the United States, to which approximately 120 museums belong.⁴¹ Against the backdrop that in the NGA only 25 percent of the collection of Australian art and only 33 percent of the holdings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks are by women artists, the two-part exhibition project *Know My Name: Australian Women Artists 1900 to Now, Part I and Part II* (NGA, 2020–22), curated primarily by Deborah Hart and Elspeth Pitt, aims to celebrate Australian women artists and contribute to the understanding of their part in the country's cultural heritage.

An alternative art historiography and recognition of the importance of Black women artists is also currently being pursued in South Africa by Portia Malatjie and Nontobeko Ntombela with the exhibition *When Rain Clouds Gather: Black South African Women Artists, 1940–2000* (Norval Foundation, Cape Town, 2022–23), the title of which is based on the iconic novel by the South African-born writer Bessie Head (1968, → pp. 108–09, fig. 5). From an explicitly feminist perspective, the exhibition inquires into the visibility of Black women artists in art institutions and how they have organized themselves outside of these contexts. Within the chosen sixty-year period of inquiry, 120 works by 40 Black South African women artists reflect themes such as the impact of the apartheid regime introduced in South Africa in 1948, the state of emergency in the 1980s, and the moment of South Africa's liberation from white supremacy in 1994, with works underscoring the diversity of class and ethnicities as intertwined with gendered experiences.

In New Zealand, Ane Tonga's recent exhibition *Declaration: A Pacific Feminist Agenda* (Auckland Art Gallery, 2022) positions feminism in the Pacific region as an instrument of empowerment, mapping regional feminist facets of contemporary art. Through their works, the twelve participating artists proclaim a new set of principles for a feminist agenda that affirms the existing ways in which Indigenous and Pacific societies have always empowered women. These principles include, in particular, the recognition of matriarchal societies and reciprocal kinship roles, which reinforces a notion of feminism that includes Indigenous forms of identity such as *leitī* (short for *fakaleitī*).⁴²

The Pluralization of the Concept of Feminism: From International to Intersectional, Transnational Exhibitions

Although the phase of reappraising, making visible, and recognizing is far from over, a new type of feminist-oriented exhibition has emerged in the new millennium with one decisive characteristic: the transnational comparison. In early exhibition formats, internationality meant primarily Western, Euro-American diversity, while women artists from other cultural circles were either invited to participate due to their migration to Western countries or were specifically included in presentations tailored to their nationality, such as *An Exhibition of Women Artists from Japan* (1978), *Artists from Israel* (1979), or *Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists in the United States* (1980) in the program of the A. I. R. Gallery in New York and *35 Künstlerinnen aus Mexiko* (35 Women Artists from Mexico) at Künstlerhaus Bethanien in West Berlin (1981).

Despite the fact that a curatorial sensibility for non-Western positions began to emerge in the course of postcolonial discourses and studies as early as the late 1980s and the 1990s (*Magiciens de la terre*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 1989), the decisive inclusive exhibition formats were not realized until after 2000. While Okwui Enwezor, as artistic director of documenta 11 (2002), referred to the necessary dissolution of the structural separation of Western and non-Western art, of “center” and “periphery,” the curators of the 51st Biennale di Venezia in 2005, the Spaniards Rosa Martínez and María de Coral, brought the two fields together by counteracting the male dominance in contemporary art and its exclusive Euro-American profile. Never before had so many women artists participated in the Venice Biennale’s main exhibition (38 percent), and never before had the overall artistic spectrum been so globally oriented. Together, the feminist-oriented positions in the main exhibition, as well as in the country pavilions, presented a broad overview of transnational feminisms in contemporary art.⁴³

Transnational feminisms emerged from the decolonization of feminist perspectives and generated fluid, nonhierarchical, and nondominant approaches.⁴⁴ These dynamic and interdisciplinary ways of thinking are situated at the junction of intersectional, decolonial, and race-critical analyses; queer, ecological, Indigenous, and “slow” activism; and, most recently, an anti-materialist development in favor of an understand-

ing of the world that is not primarily human-centered (planetary feminisms).⁴⁵ This development has resulted in a “de-Westernization” of art history, a pluralization of the concept of feminism as well as of the content and forms of feminist-oriented art.

The first major museum exhibition to attempt to capture this was *Global Feminisms: New Directions in Contemporary Art*, the inaugural exhibition of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum, New York (2007), which took place the same year as *Wack!* and thirty years after *Women Artists: 1550–1950*.⁴⁶ What was not the primary concern of *Wack!* (see p. 39), the intergenerational curatorial duo of Maura Reilly and Linda Nochlin set as their goal: namely, a transnational perspective and a plural concept of feminism to account for “varied, multiple, unstable constructions of female subjects and their predicaments and situations.”⁴⁷ The exhibition was based on the idea of positively understood difference, with the year 1990 defined as an approximate historical moment when questions of race, class, and gender began to inform feminist discourses.⁴⁸ Thus, multimedia works were exhibited by eighty-eight women artists (born after 1960) from sixty-two countries and various continents (Africa, India, Eastern and Western Europe, East and Southeast Asia, Japan, the United States, and Central America).⁴⁹

The *Global Feminisms* exhibition operated with thematic fields that served a comparative methodology, highlighting differences and connections to expand both the concept of “feminism” and the category of “woman” in distinction to Euro-American feminism.⁵⁰ Writing in *The New York Times*, the art critic Roberta Smith described the exhibition as an energetic collection of recent works that nonetheless felt “limited” due to the dominance of photography and video positions, with the high-quality works tending toward the documentary. *Global Feminisms*, she wrote, was more about information, politics, and the fight for equality than satisfying art. In this, she echoed Margarete von Schwarzkopf’s criticism formulated thirty years earlier with regard to the exhibition *Künstlerinnen international 1877–1977* (see p. 38).⁵¹ Smith, however, praised the successful balancing act between “mainstream and margins,” between the art market and the museum, between commercially successful women artists and those who exhibit primarily at biennials. Both Roberta Smith and Carol Armstrong, the latter in her review in *Artforum*, criticized the lack of terminological precision. In both *Wack!* and *Global Fem-*

inisms, for example, Armstrong noted the lack of distinction between the terms “feminist” and “woman” and warned against equating women’s art with feminist art.⁵² In the case of both exhibitions, she felt that the real task should be to pave the way for male feminist artists and for a free choice of subject matter for women artists. In Maura Reilly’s introduction in the accompanying publication, however, there is indeed a differentiated analysis of the concept of feminism, especially with regard to its expansion in content in the late 1980s by scholars such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Gayatri Spivak, Trinh T. Minh-ha, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, and Cherríe Moraga, which led to the conceptual inclusion of culture-specific, non-Western, postcolonial, sociocultural, economic, race-related, anti-racist, sexual, and gender factors.⁵³ The claim of a plurally conceived, transnational feminism was redeemed here in theory, while the exhibition *Global Feminisms* meritoriously attempted to “map” this multiplication of meanings of the concept of feminism on the level of artistic practice.

That fact that the history of female and queer resistance has not yet been told to its end was most recently demonstrated by the interdisciplinary, globally oriented exhibition *Still I Rise: Feminisms, Gender, Resistance, Act 1 and 2* (Nottingham Contemporary, 2018–19),⁵⁴ the title of which derives from Maya Angelou’s famous poem *And Still I Rise* (1978). Curated by Irene Aristizábal, Rosie Cooper, and Cédric Fauq, the show explored resistance movements and alternative lifestyles since the nineteenth century, such as the civil rights movements against dictatorships in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, independence movements in Africa, the crucial role of women in the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement, and the mass protests of the feminist movement *Ni Una Menos* (Not One Less) in Argentina. With 100 exhibits, *Still I Rise* introduced individual and collective forms of resistance by some forty artists, writers, architects, designers, and activists, with the overarching bracket being the idea of collaboration, community, and egalitarianism, which was also reflected in the participatory formats such as the individually variable publication and exhibition architecture.

The most recent global exhibition project in terms of artist selection is *New Time: Art and Feminisms in the 21st Century* (UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, BAMPFA, 2021–22), which was initiated by Apsara DiQuinzio, who, in 2016, immediately after the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States, not only

came up with the exhibition idea but also launched the Feminist Art Coalition (FAC) as a counterinitiative.⁵⁵ Together with Claire Frost (curatorial assistant), she based *New Time*, for one, on Lucy Lippard’s argument postulated in 1980 that feminist art is neither a style nor a movement, but rather a value system, a revolutionary strategy, a lifestyle and, for another, on Griselda Pollock’s conclusion that feminism is a historical project and therefore permanently takes on new forms and configurations.⁵⁶ The exhibition thus aimed to demonstrate that feminism in the twenty-first century is polyphonic, intersectional, and gender-fluid. Titled after the eponymous poem (1999) by the American poet Leslie Scalapino, *New Time* presented some 140 works by 76 women artists and collectives of local, regional, national, and global origin in eight thematic areas, but it did not achieve the transnational approach of *Global Feminisms*. Marcia Tanner called it “a timely, gutsy exhibition. . . . It’s an impressive, consciousness-raising show, crammed with surprising, revelatory works by a starry roster of established and emerging artists, diverse in race, ethnicity, nationality, age, sexuality, and gender identity, as well as in their artistic practices and the issues they address.”⁵⁷ In doing so, she emphasized the central question of the exhibition: How do feminist artists transform the way we see and construct the world?

This is precisely where the potential of feminist-oriented art lies, and this is where the transnational exhibition *Empowerment* at the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg comes in. The field is immense and disparate at the same time—because, while in some countries an intellectualization of gender debates and a gender-appropriate diversification of language are already taking place, elsewhere emancipatory grassroots struggles are being fought out with the means of art. This broad spectrum unites in transnational exhibition formats, which bundle and visualize the power of planetary feminisms in order to point out prospects for the global future by means of art.

1 Roberta Smith, "They Are Artists Who Are Women; Hear Them Roar," *The New York Times*, March 23, 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/23/arts/design/23glob.html> [all URLs accessed in April 2022]. 2 Linda Nochlin, *Why have there been no great women artists?*, 50th anniversary edition (London, 2021), p. 28. 3 "Vorwort," in *Künstlerinnen international 1877–1977*, ed. Arbeitsgruppe Frauen in der Kunst, exh. cat. Charlottenburg Palace (Berlin, 1977), p. 3. 4 Quoted in Sophie Duplaix, "Interview with Nalini Malani: If Humankind Wants to Survive the Twenty-First Century," in *Nalini Malani: The Rebellion of the Dead; Retrospective 1969–2018*, ed. Sophie Duplaix, exh. cat. Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Pompidou, Paris (Berlin, 2017), pp. 13–35, esp. p. 30. 5 Subsequent venues: The University of Texas at Austin; The Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh; Brooklyn Museum, New York. Prior to this, the American art historian William H. Gerdts had organized *Women Artists of America: 1707–1964*, a major domestic survey exhibition (The Newark Museum, New Jersey, 1965). 6 <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/exhibitions/950>. 7 Robert Hughes, "Rediscovered Women Painters," *Time*, no. 2, January 10, 1977, pp. 60–63. 8 John Perreault, "Women Artists," *The Soho Weekly News*, October 13, 1977, p. 40. 9 Maura Reilly, "Introduction: Toward Transnational Feminisms," in *Global Feminisms: New Directions in Contemporary Art*, ed. Linda Nochlin and Maura Reilly, exh. cat. Brooklyn Museum, New York (London and New York, 2007), p. 27. 10 The exhibition was presented in the Orangery of Charlottenburg Palace, in the Charlottenburg City Hall, in the exhibition spaces at Jebensstrasse 2, the NGBK, Hardenbergstrasse 9, and the Arsenal, Welsersstrasse 25. 11 Exh. cat. Charlottenburg Palace 1977 (see note 3), p. 1. 12 Ibid., p. 2. 13 Werner Rhode, in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, March 31, 1977; quoted on the website of the NGBK, Berlin [translated], <https://archiv.ngbk.de/en/projekte/kuenstlerinnen-international-1877-1977/>. 14 Exh. cat. Charlottenburg Palace 1977 (see note 3), pp. 1ff. 15 Margarete von Schwarzkopf, "Kunst, ein lahmes Pferd vor dem Karren des Feminismus," *Die Welt*, no. B, March 24, 1977, n.p.; quoted in Monika Kaiser, *Neubesetzungen des Kunst-Raumes: Feministische Kunstaustellungen und ihre Räume*, vol. 2 of *Edition Museum* (Bielefeld, 2013), p. 148 [translated]. 16 Further venues: Galerie Michaud, Florence; Palazzo dei Diamanti, Ferrara; Museo di Castelvecchio, Verona. 17 Further venues include: De Oosterpoort, Groningen; Noordbrabants Museum, Den Bosch; Vleeshal Middelburg. 18 See the detailed reconstruction in Kaiser 2013 (see note 15), pp. 93ff. 19 "Exhibitions of Women Artists," *Asia Art Archive*, <https://aaa.org.hk/en/collections/themes/exhibitions-of-women-artists>. 20 Quoted in Luise Guest, "No Feminism in China: An Interview with LIN Tianmiao," *culture trip*, October 26, 2016, <https://theculturetrip.com/asia/china/articles/no-feminism-in-china-an-interview-with-lin-tianmiao/>. 21 <http://www.womanifesto.com>. 22 Further venues: National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC; MoMA PS1, New York; Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, BC. 23 Cornelia Butler, "Art and Feminism: An Ideology of Shifting Criteria," in *Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, ed. Cornelia Butler, exh. cat. The Geffen Contemporary at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2007), p. 15. 24 Wendy Vogel, "WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution," *Art Agenda Rearview*, February 8, 2021, <https://www.art-agenda.com/criticism/375476/wack-art-and-the-feminist-revolution>. 25 Holland Cutter, "The Art of Feminism as it First Took Shape," *The New York Times*, March 9, 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/09/arts/design/09wack.html>. 26 Helen Molesworth, "Worlds Apart: On Generations of Feminism," *Artforum* 45, no. 9 (2007), pp. 101–2. 27 Christopher Russell, "Don't look back: Feminist art happens now at LACE," *Artillery Magazine*, May 2007, pp. 17 and 20. 28 <http://www.reactfeminism.org>. 29 Carsten Probst, "Re-act feminism in Berlin," *Deutschlandfunk*, December 15, 2008 [translated], <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/re-act-feminism-in-berlin-100.html>. 30 While the website of the Centre Pompidou mentions 350 works by 150 women artists, various articles mention 500 works. See: <https://www.centrepompidou.fr/fr/programme/agenda/evenement/ccBLAM>. The second venue, showing *Elles: Women Artists from the Centre Pompidou, Paris*, is the Seattle Art Museum. 31 At the Tate in London, it was 13 percent. See Germaine Greer, "Why the world doesn't need an Annie Warhol or a Francine Bacon," *The Guardian*, January 17, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2010/jan/17/germaine-greer-elles-pompidou>. 32 Further venues include: Circulo de Bellas Artes, Madrid; BOZAR, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels; Mjellby Konstmuseum, Halmstad, Sweden. 33 Gabriele Schor, "Zur Identität der Sammlung Verbund, Wien," in *Feministische Avantgarde: Kunst der 1970er-Jahre aus der Sammlung Verbund, Wien*, ed. Gabriele Schor, expanded edition (Munich et al., 2016), p. 13 [translated]. 34 Gabriele Schor, "Die Feministische Avantgarde: Eine radikale Umwertung der Werte," in *ibid.*, p. 19. 35 Further venues in Japan: Mie Prefectural Art Museum, Tsu; Okinawa Prefectural Museum & Art Museum, Naha; Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Fine Arts, Utsunomiya. 36 Kokatsu Reiko, "Women In-Between in Asia: Polyphony by Women," in *Women In-Between: Asian Women Artists 1984–2012*, ed. Mara Heiko, Kokatsu Reiko, Nakao Tomomichi et al., exh. cat. Fukuoka Asian Art Museum (Fukuoka, 2012), pp. 7–21, esp. p. 20. 37 Further venues: Brooklyn Museum, New York; Pinacoteca de São Paulo, São Paulo. With thirty-five women artists from eleven countries, *Latin American Women Artists, 1915–1995* (Milwaukee Art Museum, 1995), curated by Geraldine P. Biller (advising by Edward J. Sullivan and Bélgica Rodríguez), was the only major exhibition to precede *Radical Women*. 38 Cecilia Fajardo-Hill and Andrea Giunta, "Introduction," in *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985*, ed. Cecilia Fajardo-Hill and Andrea Giunta, exh. cat. Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (Munich, London, and New York, 2017), pp. 17–19, esp. p. 17. 39 Ibid., pp. 18–19. 40 Holland Cotter, "To Be Black, Female and Fed Up with the Mainstream," *The New York Times*, April 20, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/20/arts/design/review-we-wanted-a-revolution-black-radical-women-brooklyn-museum.html>. 41 See: <https://knowmyname.nga.gov.au/about/>; and <https://feministartcoalition.org>. 42 In the Pacific archipelago nation of Tonga, *fakaleitī*, or the short form *leitī*, refers to a biological man who identifies socially as a woman. 43 Reilly 2007 (see note 9), p. 37. 44 Marsha Meskimmon, *Transnational Feminisms, Transversal Politics and Art: Entanglements and Intersections* (Abingdon and New York, 2020), p. 5. 45 Ibid., p. 3. See the essay by Margarita Tsomou in this publication, pp. 176–83. 46 Second venue: Davis Museum and Cultural Center Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts. 47 Linda Nochlin and Maura Reilly, "Curator's Preface," in Nochlin/Reilly 2007 (see note 9), pp. 11–13, esp. pp. 11–12. 48 Ibid., p. 11; Reilly 2007 (see note 9), p. 17. 49 Reilly and Nochlin accepted geographic gaps and emphasized their lack of expertise in non-Western regions, for which they consulted experts. See Nochlin/Reilly 2007 (see note 47), p. 13. 50 Reilly 2007 (see note 9), pp. 16–17. 51 Smith 2007 (see note 1). 52 See *ibid.* and also Carol Armstrong, "Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution," *Artforum* 45, no. 5 (2007), <https://www.artforum.com/print/previews/200701/wack-art-and-the-feminist-revolution-12272>. 53 Reilly 2007 (see note 9), p. 28ff. 54 Second venue (*Act II*): De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex. 55 See note 41. 56 Apsara DiQuinzio, "Seeking, Making, and Moving Toward New Time," in *New Time: Art and Feminisms in the 21st Century*, ed. Apsara DiQuinzio, exh. cat. Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (Berkeley, 2021), pp. 11–21, esp. p. 11. 57 Marcia Tanner, "From hysteria to utopia: BAMPFA's gutsy attempt to show the breadth of feminist art," *Berkeleyside*, September 17, 2021, <https://www.berkeleyside.org/2021/09/17/review-bampfa-new-time-art-and-feminisms-in-the-21st-century#>.

LET'S TALK FACTS!

Global Experts on Feminisms in Art and Society

Round Table Discussion

On March 14, 2022, a digital transcontinental discussion moderated by the editors took place in which participants discussed three questions about the situation of art and feminisms in light of their own experiences, their geographical context, and the current global social situation.

Participants were: Nikita Yingqian Cai (Guangdong, China), Andrea Giunta (Buenos Aires, Argentina), Martha Kazungu (Kampala, Uganda), Marsha Meskimmon (Loughborough, UK), Catherine Morris (New York, USA), Amruta Nemivant (Mumbai, India), Maura Reilly (New York, USA), Sasha Su-Ling Welland (Seattle, USA), and Oliver Zybok (Lübeck, Germany).

What are the challenges for current feminist struggles concerning equality and the fight against structural inequality in your region?

Andrea Giunta: The current feminist struggles in the field of art are very involved in the search for parity concerning the visibility of women artists in art collections. In countries like Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, important exhibitions have been held and discussed during the past year. Also, feminist groups in Argentina have developed active awareness campaigns about their unpaid work in a system built on the basis that artists are not perceived as workers, and that art is in general not considered to be work.

Intense activism has promoted not only equal representation but also policies for the acquisition of works by women artists for public collections. These policies contemplate not only women but also feminine alternative identities and intersectional perspectives. The Covid-19 context has had a strong impact on the artistic community and it has forced the professionalization and recognition of fees for artists. In Brazil, a country in which the Black presence was almost nonexistent in art institutions and the art market, exhibitions held since 2017 have mapped Afro-Brazilian art in history, thus making their contemporary presence possible.

The fight for equality is very active. During the last two years, the art scene has improved considerably regarding women rights, women's representation in art, and the conceptualization of women artists not only as artists, but also as workers. Feminist artistic activism has motivated institutions to develop policies to recognize their work. This issue is very much connected with feminism, but at the same time it is transversal in terms of gender.

Humanist positions that question extractive policies and the place of humans on the planet are also very involved in feminist artistic activism in these countries.

Amruta Nemivant: I think it's amazing how Andrea said that during the coronavirus pandemic the situation actually improved in her region, because over here [in India] it was exactly the opposite. We, at this point, have certain elements that are becoming more and more right wing. And there's a very systematic suppression of human rights, including some laws being passed that go against our constitution, which states that we are a secular nation, so it's a big mess. And during the pandemic, when there were different protests happening in the country, the pandemic situation was used to just end all of the protests and take the issues off the table. That was one thing.

And the second thing that happened was that they also cut the budget for the arts down by more than 70 percent, which meant that a lot of our state institutions that support the-

ater, dance, and so forth, were left with absolutely no budgets. So artists were then willing to work for free or to barter works. It was really bad.

And to directly respond to the initial question, what are the feminists struggles? Well, apart from the constitutional issues, the political problems that we have in our region at the moment, it's also important to note that we're a pluralistic society. Most of us don't even speak the same language. English is spoken especially in cities to bridge this gap, which is kind of "funny." And so feminism or any kind of rights movement needs to be involved at different levels. You will have feminism, but you'll also reflect caste feminism. So it's extremely plural and that's where many of the conversations get stuck, because you're always talking to one section of feminism or equality rights as well.

Sasha Su-Ling Welland: Thinking about the opening question was really a challenge in the context of China because, like India, it is a very large country. Similar to what Amruta was saying, China also has many different dialects, as well as languages spoken by ethnic minorities. We also have to think about Hong Kong and Taiwan as part of an increasingly tense greater Sinosphere. The political situation in Hong Kong has become quite fraught under the new 2020 national security law.

Islamophobia has also been intensifying in recent years in China under its "people's war on terror," particularly in the Uyghur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang, which has become a laboratory of sorts for the development of systems of digital enclosure through the surveillance of cell phones and computers that has really infiltrated society. This system is linked to police checkpoints, the collection of biometric data, detention camps, and captive labor.

It has been both exciting and chilling to see how similar technologies can be harnessed in China for feminist activist platforms. There's a whole generation of young feminists who are really savvy in how they use social media and technology. But these channels of discourse can also become increasingly narrow because of digital surveillance, and sometimes crackdowns and arrests happen as a result.

But they persist, and here I think the transhistorical perspective is really important, especially in China, where there have been so many successive waves of women's or feminist movement from the late nineteenth century

on. This history has continually been erased by state patriarchy and other forces. For example, "the woman question," so central to the early twentieth-century New Culture Movement, was eventually labeled as bourgeois by the communist government's focus on class revolution, and many of the cultural producers and thinkers of that era were forgotten.

There was a very strong and important form of socialist feminism, also subsequently erased and forgotten as the rise of market reform advanced new gender ideologies. So the legacy and genealogies of thought and culture that young feminists have to draw upon are tenuous. Their own history of feminist practice has been suppressed and invisibilized. Still, I think enough ground has been laid that even if they don't always understand the deep legacy preceding them and might tend to look to the West instead of within, they are still able to stand on the ground laid by those before them to give voice to a new generation of feminist struggle.

Marsha Meskimmon: I was really excited to listen to others answer this question, and there are some echoes. When I looked at the question initially, my answer was "peace, planet, and plurality," in the sense that these were the issues with which I am most concerned, and thought would be key in my "region." And I was thinking very much along the lines that social and ecological justice or equity would also entail, by necessity, a notion of epistemic justice and equity. And these things are entangled.

And I started to think about that in relation to region, and there are lots of different ways of thinking of what it means to say "in my region." I was born in the United States, but I've been thirty-odd years in the United Kingdom. The UK's current sense of regionalism can tend toward a Brexit-style "little England," suggesting a sense of parochial insularity. But if you straddle the US and the UK, in many respects you stand in the hub of the Anglosphere. And it's really interesting to talk about how these issues are able to be played out there.

Increasingly, I've been working a lot more on the possibility of a kind of decolonial, ecologically just, planetary feminist way of thinking about more than human worlds. There's a lot to be done, especially rethinking the way in which a Eurocentric universalism is actually quite a "small story," rendered very large, and it is not easy within our current forms of knowledge production to make that a smaller story amidst a range of other sorts of stories

and participatory discourses. So, to speak from the Anglosphere as a co-partner in discourse as opposed to taking the lead, with a mastering discourse, seems imperative.

I'm compelled by the sense that doing this work is actually about *listening* more than *talking*, and about trying to find ways in which to have a multitude of voices emerge and be heard. The conversations that have already started to emerge here today have been wonderful in this way. Amruta started out with the idea about these different languages and all these different ways in which feminisms are plural. And Sasha has echoed this, and so we've already said that, effectively, we are dealing with how to hear all of those voices, and how to give them enough space to be heard so that they can begin to set the agenda.

From the "West" or the "Anglosphere," it is easy to find yourself inadvertently producing yet another kind of extractive logic in trying to engage "globally" with feminisms and art by enacting a "multinational" listing exercise—one from here and one from there. We simply line them up and there we go—we've "done the global" in some way.

What I'm interested in instead of that kind of logic is a deep focus on the crossings and connections that link sites, places, and regions with one another, often asymmetrically. In many ways, this changes the terms of the debate, and so the kind of terms that I'm increasingly working with are terms like "terraqueous" in relation to histories and geographies. They enable us to imagine the fluid crossings, connections, and the transhemispheric histories—the archipelagic relations—between and across many worlds.

And if we think of archipelagic relations, oceanic intimacies, and so forth, then we actually have a way of turning that bounded Eurocentric, but also very strongly "Anglospheric," way of seeing the world into a different sort of language—one that's more of a partnership. So I'm interested in porosity and generosity, and attentive listening, as ways to start thinking differently about how we might approach "peace, planet, and plurality" in a wider sense.

Catherine Morris: This is a hard act to follow, and I fear that I'm going to sound reductivist, or should I say essentialist? I think the question is very difficult. And Marsha, I feel like you just sort of laid out a methodological

(*laughs*) framework that could give us all the next ten years of our lives.

When I was reading this question, I did very much get stuck on the notion of "my region" and what that meant as somebody based in New York and in the United States at the current moment. And in relationship to that larger stage, thinking about issues that have always largely driven second-wave feminist agendas in the United States, issues of bodily autonomy, which continue to be a very important part of the conversations. The United States, where we see violence being enacted against women who want to choose abortion or against trans youth, and any other host of all of the ecological and other questions that have been raised in this conversation in relationship to the United States and its histories.

But when I thought about region, what I really thought about was the Boca Museum, and what it represents as a predominantly white institution, and what it means to participate in the kind of conversations that we are having. I agree with Marsha. I think one of the most important things that many of us can do—and I will do in a second—is to stop talking. And the other thing that I feel is very important . . . I keep thinking about my great, admired friend Lorraine O'Grady who talked about her experiences with second-wave, white-stream feminism as perennially being a hostess and guest model in all of her interactions, no matter how well intended. For me, in my little region, Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn, that is at the forefront of my mind. How do I contribute to those conversations?

Martha Kazungu: For me, it's a problem of language. Just like Amruta said, in Uganda we have over eighty languages, and there's no word for feminism in local languages. We find ourselves struggling with a word we don't understand. And that can be said also for people from other parts of Africa, because we kind of inherit a notion that we cannot relate to. And that is a very big problem, because if you cannot name it, then how can you address or approach it?

Another challenge I can speak about is the things we have inherited out of colonialism such as religion for example. The Bible places the woman so low that women today cannot speak up because they have already been rendered voiceless and complacent. This realization became vivid during a recent tour that I made through several media houses in Kampala to speak about the ex-

hibition titled *Njabala This Is Not How* launched by the Njabala Foundation. All the resistance that I received from men and women referenced the Bible. “Accordingly, women must be enduring of their image of God’s creation,” I was told.

So when I speak about challenges that face feminism in Africa or in Uganda, if I can be more exact, it is that we’re dealing with a translation problem. We’re dealing with a religious problem. We’re dealing with a postcolonial problem. The only way we can intervene in this problem is by thinking about how we can translate these words into our own mother tongues, to establish means of actually reverting the situation. Otherwise, it becomes like a dead end.

Nikita Yingqian Cai: I can only speak for our community, which is the contemporary art community. And also from the position of female practitioners, curators, and peers, rather than from the region. The feminist artists we work with are educated and relatively young; most were born after 1980. From my personal observation and engagement, feminist movements are one of the most recognized social movements in China over the past decade. Partly because the younger generation of women that grew up in the one-child-policy generation are a lot more educated and have a stronger feminist consciousness.

But at the same time, they are more informed about global or Western feminism, and also about Western feminist activism, rather than socialist legacy or history from the region, because of the facilitation of social media and the Internet. But at the same time, women have become a strong social force that the state has to please and roll in.

The situation has changed because China has become one of the countries in East Asia with the lowest birth rate. A lot of young curators are not willing to have a child or even get married. So the government now is concerned and has quickly shifted to encouraging women to take on the role of full-time mother again, which means a return to domesticating women against the Maoist revolutionary ideal of emancipating women from their domestic and reproduction obligations.

So this, of course, will create structural inequality for women in general. But on the other hand, censorship of feminist voices has to be loosened a bit from the position of the state, simply because they cannot silence half of the population, and at the same time expect them to

contribute to the reproduction of a younger labor force, needed by the GDP growth of the country.

Feminist art movements have been the side product of the avant-garde movement and also of the ’85 new wave. So we still can see that most of the established artists, museum directors, and critics born in the 1950s or 1960s are dominantly male. Female artists of the same generation of the China avant-garde have quite a different approach regarding their own practice compared with a younger generation of female artists. Female artists that belong to the same generation of the ’85 new wave are more or less detached from the current manifestation of global feminist ideas and younger generations who are educated abroad. There are also more female artists who graduated from art academies compared with the older generation. We witness a lot more female artists in group exhibitions, even if we compare—I’ve worked at Times Museum for ten years—just with five or six years ago. Solo exhibitions that feature female artists are still rare, because they lack infrastructural support and opportunities, simply because the mainstream media has channeled more about women’s representation toward the role of mother, or as individualist consumers.

In the art field or cultural industry, there are far more women at an administrative level. And in academia, there are a lot of female scholars too. In the past five years, when we have had open calls for interns or researchers, 90 percent of the time we’ve received applications from women. But I think the power structure is still patriarchal, and it is challenging for women artists to transform from the state of emerging artists to mid-career or established artists.

Oliver Zybok: I would like to bring up another aspect regarding the current self-referential discussions within feminism. In the context of the exhibition *Do Like Me! Female Interventions on the Net* at the Overbeck-Gesellschaft here in Lübeck, where young feminist artists have been presented, we were able to determine in cross-generational discussions that the representatives of the individual postwar waves knew little about each other. For example, comrades-in-arms from the older generations showed little understanding for the sex-positive attitude of the youngest activists, which they believe tends to strengthen patriarchal structures. Many young feminists, on the other hand, know little about the achievements of their predecessors, which they now take for granted. The disputes between the generations are very manifold and

illustrate a change in feminism on numerous levels. I find these discussions extremely exciting since they show different perspectives of diversity. Feminism can only emerge strengthened from such a debate.

What role can and should art play against this background and, above all, in the future?

Andrea Giunta: Concerning the role of art, I can affirm that the power to create images and symbols of social amplification was extraordinary during human rights struggles in Latin America and also in feminist fights.

Artists have been very much involved in activism, in designing flags, performative objects, and posters as urban interventions in collaboration with other activist groups. These collectives have the power of generating images that also travel through the Internet. It is well known that the Argentinian feminism movement, which began in 2015, known as *Ni Una Menos* (Not One Less), focused on femicide. This movement referred to the Polish feminist movements.

When we talk about waves of feminism, which is a very common periodization, we should be able to see that in Latin America, as well as in many other countries of the world, one central demand in the second wave of feminism—the right to make decisions about your own body and abortion—has still not been achieved. It was broadly obtained in Europe and in the United States, but not in the rest of the world [editors' note: this talk took place before the Supreme Court's overturn of *Roe v. Wade* in June 2022]. The periodization of feminism in waves, and the discussion about what characterizes the present fourth wave, is useful, but at the same time, one wave does not substitute the other. Many demands of previous waves are still unfulfilled in many countries.

Artistic activism has always been involved in feminism or in fights for human rights. They did it through their own visual language by creating symbols and images of community identification.

Amruta Nemivant: To put it very simply, there are certain things that only art can do, right? And that is to create experiences and communicate where language probably fails. I think there are tropes that art can communicate today, especially when words are being suppressed in several regions across the world, as in ours as well. If you

look at the works of artists like Sheba Chhachhi, she did this work series on the large-scale dowry protests that happened in the 1980s, which are quite unknown, or alien in their form and impact, to most of the younger generation. Today you have designated protest sites and it's all very controlled (which is also why the recent protests in Delhi are important). And to see this mass of women protest for equality, I think it creates an experience.

The artist Tejal Shah did this series called *Women Like Us / I AM* in 2010, on gender binaries and stereotypical divisions in society, when being gay was an offense in India. The work creates experience or space for the viewer to start understanding situations and circumstances differently. It opens possibilities. And I think that is what art can do, because, you know, we need it at this point.

Oliver Zybok: Art is always an important tool to raise the voice against discrimination and injustice. It is important to remain oriented to the facts, to keep a nuanced approach, and to not generalize. This has not always been the case in debates in the recent past, which is not least due to the communication structures of digital channels.

Maura Reilly: I just wanted to let everybody know that I'm performing the practice of listening (*laughter*), which I think is critical. I agree with Marsha—that's one of the most important aspects of what we all need to be doing. I actually wanted to talk about the role that curators and scholars can play. I'm a curator, and I think you know that in 2018 I wrote a book called *Curatorial Activism: Towards an Ethics of Curating*. I defined the practice of organizing exhibitions with the principle aim of ensuring that large constituencies of artists are no longer ghettoized or excluded from the master narratives of art. Those that are typically excluded include artists that are female-identified, queer, and/or BIPOC.

I made the distinction that curatorial activists are not practicing affirmative action in curating, but they're instead practicing intelligent curating. It is a practice that's rooted in ethics. Exhibitions that are activist function as curatorial correctives to the exclusion of Other artists from the master narratives.

I want to talk about the role again that curators can play. The goal really is that activist curating becomes normalized. I want to give credit to Cecilia Alemani whose forthcoming Venice Biennale is extraordinary. It's a majority female biennale which is 89 percent women, 11 percent

men. It includes contemporary and historic art. She is doing something really unique by offering up a platform of a global biennial that's giving voice to those who have been historically silenced or rendered insignificant.

Alemaní is offering up a new narrative of art history, a new narrative of contemporary art. But she's also doing something interesting in that she's saying that it is primarily women artists that are offering up possible solutions during dark and confusing times.

I think curators can play one of the most powerful roles in contemporary art.

We see feminisms as the most progressive method to rethink the world. What if feminists ruled the world?

Andrea Giunta: When you create ministries, secretaries of women, it could happen that women go from activism, from the street, to the other side of the desk so to speak, administrating budgets as secretaries. The consequence is demobilization in terms of the activist fights for transformation. *Mujeres creando* (Women Creating), a group from Bolivia, underlines this conflict. This is something to be considered when we talk about utopias, transformative utopias, about how they should constantly be reframed so as to not lose their transformative purpose.

At the same time, there are regressive movements. This is what is happening for example in Argentina and all over the world with the increasement of alt-right groups. Far right-wing people, bloggers, YouTubers are using the Internet to attack and parody feministic discourses, which are classified and mocked as *feminazis*.

In recent years, feminism has become a very important part of artistic practices. The reconceptualization of the notion of family, introducing nonbinary and non-essentialist as well as intersectional perspectives, has an increasing presence in artworks. I am also very interested in a line of research on feminism that explores a new theory and practice of international relations. It is a line that is focused on a perspective that is questioning war as a way to solve international conflicts.

I have problems with the implication that women don't understand war because they are mothers. This is not true, because many women let their children go to war. They do that based on nationalist ideas. I think that these

stereotypes should be questioned. Based on my experience from activist practices, I feel that conversational pedagogy and empathy are very important practices and notions in relation to feminism, which could be the base for a different concept of international relations.

From the Covid scenario, we learned that physical presence is not an exclusive option. Of course, to have the artworks in the space has a specific power. But the art world has been enriched with the online options which have been activated during isolation. What new strategies could be used in the post-Covid art scenario? What new programs could be articulated? I think that all the accumulated experience from the last two years should be incorporated as part of the exhibition display.

New opportunities are arising for something I consider extremely relevant: education. We are not just changing things by showing works from woman artists. We are not just changing things because a law was approved. We need to change things for the future, and education is a key tool for this.

The last thing I want to say is that we are not making feminist exhibitions just for the recognition of women artists. We make feminist exhibitions because we are convinced that society has the right to know more, that citizens have the right to know these works of art, because they have the right to have access to knowledge that directly affects them and allows them to develop the more diverse conceptualizations of life and society that these works propose. To imagine a new society, we need an alternative way of producing knowledge.

Marsha Meskimmon: Andrea has said both words, pedagogies and poetics. And it strikes me that they are very profoundly part of a feminist project in many ways, and of knowledge projects that are intrinsically linked to imagination. So if you know something differently, you can imagine otherwise. And those tend to be very strongly linked to both the idea of producing knowledges in formats that are not so siloed by certain kinds of disciplinary conventions, that are not in any way suggesting purity. I'm really quite interested in the work of scholars like María Lugones and her thinking on purity particularly, for a kind of a decolonial feminist trajectory that rejects the "silo" style of knowledge production and the structure of purified disciplines. The "lover of purity" is not the lover of knowledge or imagination or, indeed, transformation.

So poetics come to the fore very strongly in terms of these sorts of rethinking of politics as feminist politics. I am further astonished by the level of pedagogical work that is all over the world as part and parcel of feminist curating, feminist art-making, feminist historical writing. Almost invariably, every one of these areas has a strong and profound link to education.

So I guess in the end if you were thinking about what feminism would look like ruling the world, I would hope that it would be more generous, it would be more permeable (*laughs*). It would be about taking responsibility for a more entangled relationship with humans and “earth others” with whom we share the planet. But I also think that it would be profoundly about attention, tending, care—about valuing care—something we all learned, I hope, in the pandemic—to value care. Feminist leadership would be based on a very real sense that poetics and pedagogies are radical acts of transformation as well.

I'd just add that I was struck by how many colleagues have referred to bodily autonomy. And I would suggest that there is a link here—how can you have any bodily autonomy without care? If we imagine everybody as kind of a fungible commodity that we can simply distribute as a product, then care goes right out the window. So I would hope for all of those things, if feminism “ruled” the world.

Catherine Morris: When I read this question, the first thing I thought was that these two questions that make up the third question are structured in a very patriarchal way. And, as a result of that, you made me think about systemic problems (*laughs*). And, as we know, in order for feminism to win, we have multiple emancipation movements that need to win along with (as part of) us because we are part of multiple emancipation movements. I think it's very important thinking about the other critical theoretical constructions that inform all of the work we do.

Obviously Native American feminisms have played an instrumental role in much feminist pedagogy in the United States in many ways. But also, very importantly, disability theorizing in relationship to one of what I think of as an incredibly important intersectional issue that we all have to fold into all of the conversations that we are having and all of the ways that disability functions in humanity and all of our cultures and all of our life experiences and in relationship to bodily autonomy and in relationship to care.

Sasha Su-Ling Welland: When I read the question, I couldn't help but laugh a little bit because I have this experience that's part of my research, of when Judy Chicago, the well-known US feminist artist, came to China as part of the Long March. This was a curatorial project that proposed to repeat the communist Red Army's 1934 Long March, its trek through the rural hinterlands of China to a new guerrilla base in the northwest. The Long March curators invited Judy Chicago to lead the “women's site” along the way, and the thematic she chose was: What if women ruled the world?

I was the ethnographer and videographer asked by Chinese artists to accompany them because, at the get-go, they were already very suspicious of the male curators who had invited Judy Chicago to be their organizer and pedagogue in essence. It was kind of a setup. We went to a very rural location in Yunnan province. And it was like a week-long fight ensued (*laughs*). Judy Chicago proposed that they recreate *Womanhouse*, her piece from Los Angeles in the 1970s, and the Chinese women who understood the feminist movement quite differently ended up writing a manifesto against Judy Chicago. Only some of the artists signed on, because the different generations of Chinese women were also not in agreement about what a feminist discursive space or artistic practice should be, or how to work in collaboration with one another.

I also want to remember and heed the words of He-Yin Zhen, an amazing anarcho-feminist thinker from China who was publishing around 1907. She was forgotten from history because she posed such a radical threat to reformers who wanted to control what constituted women's liberation. Everything she wrote was anarchist and feminist and against the state, against all states around the world. She published the earliest translation of *The Communist Manifesto* into Chinese, while living in exile in Japan. She was incredibly cosmopolitan in her critique, launched as much against compromised women's movements in Europe and the United States as against Chinese patriarchy.

I take a lot of my thinking on this question from He-Yin Zhen. Feminism is, from my perspective, a critical and epistemological project rather than a form of rule. One should always be suspicious of what happens when a particular feminist or a particular feminism, or a particular feminist movement, comes to power. We should remember that feminists have long been some of the strongest critics of power and the state, who are also because of that perpetually erased.

Nikita Yingqian Cai: I would like to respond to Sasha since she mentioned the Long March project and Judy Chicago, but she also mentioned another case, which I brought up in my essay, the exhibition at the women's museum in Bonn, titled *Half of the Sky* (1998), which referred to the Maoist revolutionary slogan. But most of the Chinese female artists that were invited to participate in this exhibition were resisting the androgenous suppression from the socialist period, which represented women as half of the labor force by eliminating their femininity. When they were invited to this exhibition in Germany, there was actually a mistranslation and a misunderstanding of feminist drive from very different contexts. A lot of them were interested in freeing their own feminine expression rather than in lining up again for the Maoist slogan of "Half of the Sky."

I think this was another case of how feminism was sometimes misinterpreted in various contexts. Feminists in the future should overcome the fiction of global feminism with multiple histories or even multiple interpretations of feminism. And in the case of China, I think there are also gaps and intersections between socialist legacies, Confucius moral tradition, and the more antagonistic manifestations of Western feminism.

Feminist histories and theories should be de-Westernized, and global feminism should not just advocate progressive ideas that are deemed universal, because the conditions and contexts of this universality should be scrutinized and challenged by the diversity of practices and thoughts. And I think even if feminists ruled the world, then Women of Color, women from the "Third World," women from the lower class, women who do not speak English or do not understand the critical rhetoric that we're using as intellectuals would still struggle to voice their experiences and opinions. So I think we should all be more relational and self-reflective.

Martha Kazungu: I think for me, speaking about feminism alone is not enough, because we are talking about so many issues that affect feminism. We're talking about a social construction of society, economics, politics, tradition, and cultural norms. For us to be able to think about feminism leading, we also have to think about other forms of empowerment. How do we give our women a chance to get education so they can speak for themselves?

I'm speaking from the African context, which can be very diverse. But for Uganda, for example, still today there are so many women struggling to give birth to a male child

because giving birth to only girls is a curse. And there are so many girls who cannot go to school because they're girls. And how do we then begin to speak about feminism alone without just empowering our people to think about the systematic challenges that can accompany such a problem like norms and tradition?

And that's why we introduced the Njabala Foundation; we were thinking about addressing the toxic but popular narratives and customs that shape mindsets wrongly. For a low-income country like Uganda, there's so much to think about beyond just the virtue of feminism, because unless people are equipped with all this mindset, they cannot imagine a life where a woman is valuable, or respectable, or deserving of audience.

Artists have to work much more, because as Amruta said about translation, in the absence of a universal vocabulary, art takes the shape to fill the gaps created within translating feminisms. Art proposes new and diverse interventions which are not limited by translations. By the mere act of being, art visually proposes empowerment to both its maker and its consumer. It cannot be neutral.

In summary, it is imperative to consider the complexity of the context of the postcolonial developing world. As such, we must think about other factors collectively and not just one notion, feminism. We must think about social capital, economics, politics, and popular mindsets altogether, because without them, feminism becomes some kind of noise, you know, that people cannot even listen to because it doesn't make any sense to them.

Oliver Zybok: I think if only feminists ruled the world, we might neglect other "progressive ways" of reflecting about the world. In any case, feminist ideas must be further taken into account in social power structures while prioritizing an open-minded creative drive.

Amruta Nemivant: The question of "what if feminists ruled the world" is kind of tricky. I wouldn't be too complacent about feminists ruling the world, because it kind of shows a certain power. And, you know, it's still one set of people that you're talking about ruling the world. But I think the thought process of feminism, the empathy, the pedagogy, the plurality that it kind of brings in—the sponge-like quality that this idea has, I think if that had a front position in our thought processes about society, that would probably be more interesting for the future. Interesting in a "way" we could bring some change.

FEMINISMS AND ACTIVISMS IN CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICAN ART

Andrea Giunta

In the late 1960s, during the second wave of feminism, Latin American artists established links with this emancipation movement. Since the 1970s, women also developed a leading struggle in relation to human rights: the mothers and grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo held an activism for truth and justice that was expressed in the streets as signs of resistance against the dictatorship in Argentina. Their white scarves were visible signs of identification in the streets of the cities. In Chile, the women of *Desaparecidos* (the disappeared) embroidered *arpilleras* (burlap) narrating life under the repressive system of the Pinochet dictatorship.

In the field of art, feminist agendas were expressed with representations linked to the body, but also to the domestic order, reflecting on overlapping systems of oppression and violence against women and feminized bodies. They also took recourse to an interdisciplinary language that involved performance, video, and photography, as well as embroidery and materials marginalized by the forms of traditional art.

I make a distinction between works made by women artists who represented themselves as feminists, and those whose works can be understood and interpreted from feminist perspectives—even when the artists prefer to identify themselves as artists and not as women artists.

Between the 1960s and 1980s, artistic feminism in Latin America was, as in other parts of the world, predominantly white. This fact powerfully draws attention in a country like Brazil where, as a result of its history linked to slavery, a large part of the population is of African descent. This, as we will see, has begun to change in recent years.

In this essay I focus on expressions of artistic feminism that engage with different forms of activism. The denunciations of harassment and violence, as well as the fight for the right to make decisions about one's own body and the search for an equal representation in the different fields, including art, are central points of the agenda in Latin American art. Let us remember that abortion is illegal in many countries of Latin America, where the Catholic Church is linked to the state, and where the political influence of the Protestant churches is on the rise. The exceptions are Uruguay, Cuba, Mexico City and the states of Hidalgo, Oaxaca, and Veracruz in Mexico, Guyana, French Guyana, Puerto Rico, and, as of December 30, 2020, Argentina. In this context, art has participated in demonstrations held in public space, supporting the common struggles of women and developing strategies for their works to be integrated into the exhibitions and histories of Latin American art and of each country on the continent. The erasure of the work of these women is understood as an expression of the symbolic violence that also results in real violence.

In the movement “feminismo popular,” originating in the 1980s, Black, Indigenous, and female individuals have been questioning white feminism from intersectional perspectives. This has implied a radical transformation of the canon that dominates the expressions of Latin American art. This transformation process took shape from exhibitions (most of them in Brazil), giving

rise to what we could consider a form of curatorial activism that mutated the canon of Brazilian art. In recent years, LGBTQIA+ identities have powerfully intervened in the patriarchal heteronormative canon of art.

Since 2000, exhibitions by women artists linked to feminism have multiplied. The exhibition *Radical Women: Latin American Artists, 1960–1985*, held 2017–18 at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, the Brooklyn Museum in New York, and the Pinacoteca de São Paulo, was part of this strategy of visibility and curatorial activism.

Feminist activism has been rewriting agendas from the 1960s since 2015, when massive demonstrations denouncing violence against women took shape through the movement Ni Una Menos (Not One Less). The demonstrations are linked to the fight for the legalization of abortion and to actions against femicide, and they have also intervened in the revision of gender, race, and class stereotypes. Feminism inscribed a new agenda in political struggles by intervening in the habits of democratic behavior.¹ Artistic feminism became involved with decolonial perspectives, with the visibility of the social stereotypes that limit them, with the devastating relationships of humans toward nature, and with the patriarchal structures of the state. Are we in a fourth wave of feminism? The new environmental and decolonial agendas, which involve nonbinary identities, added to the massive character that it has acquired in recent years, allow us to argue that there has been a shift that differentiates the present movement from previous ones. The differentiation of moments (“waves”) in the historicization of feminism does not mean that previous agendas have been dissolved. It is an expansion that involves unfulfilled agendas, such as the right to equality, to identity, to making decisions about one’s own body and the fight against all forms of violence.

Women artists act alone or in transnational collectives and networks. To what extent has art intervened in feminist struggles since the 1970s? What modifications have taken place in the languages of art and in the forms of intervention in the public scene? In the following, I will present a selection of experiences of intervention in the public sphere guided by the desire to transform the state of the world, to undermine the institutions that regulate it, and, in the case of art, to interrupt consensus through the power of images.

Experiences on Art and Activism in Latin America: 1970s and 1980s

Argentina: Feminist Organizations and Artistic Actions

Feminist groups were activated in Argentina with the creation of the Argentine Feminist Union (UFA) founded in 1969. Highlighted as part of the initial activism was the film that María Luisa Bemberg (1922–1995) made in 1972, *El mundo de la mujer* (Women’s World), a stereotype-debunking parody of a fair that promoted products from the industry dedicated to women (beauty, fashion, home) which the artist projected in high schools as a form of activism. Lugar de Mujer (Woman’s Place), a center for community and culture founded in 1983, involved visual artists such as Bemberg or the Argentinean Alicia D’Amico (1933–2001) and the Argentinean-German experimental filmmaker Narcisa Hirsch (b. 1928). The agenda of Lugar de Mujer included the legalization of abortion, which marked different feminist campaigns in subsequent years, along with activism against violence toward women. It was at this time that emblematic exhibitions were developed, such as *Mitominas I* and *Mitominas II* (1986 and 1987), curated by the artist and active feminist Monique Altschul (b. 1938) at the Centro Cultural Ciudad de Buenos Aires.² In the second exhibition, which was subtitled *The Myths of Blood*, a work by Liliana Maresca (1951–1994) with an image of Christ with a blood streak was included (*Cristo*, 1988). It provoked a protest from the priest of the neighboring church. The first cases of HIV occurred in Argentina in 1982; Maresca learned that she had AIDS in 1987, and she passed away in 1994 at just forty-three years of age. *Cristo* can be interpreted as a metaphorical reference to her state of health. In response to the protest of a priest, the work was not removed but instead placed in a less visible location in the exhibition.

Mexico: The Clothesline and Black Chicken Dust

The First International Conference on Women held in Mexico City, in 1975, acted as a trigger for multiple exhibitions by women artists. In 1978, Mónica Mayer (b. 1954) presented *El Tendedero* (The Clothesline, → pp. 144–45, fig. 1) in the exhibition *Salón 77–78: Nuevas Tendencias* (New Tendencies) at the Museo de Arte Moderno in Mexico City. This was an installation that invited viewers to answer the question: “As a woman, what is it that bothers you the most in Mexico City?” The small pink papers on which they wrote

their answers were hung in a horizontal line with hooks like those used to hang clothes. Thus, the tasks that subject women to domesticity were subverted into a political intervention. The responses predominantly referred to male harassment. What is interesting about this piece is the ability it has shown to hold up over time. It has been mounted in institutional exhibitions, but also in schools, neighborhood institutions, and public scenarios. In the late 1970s, Mayer traveled to be a part of the *Woman-house* project of the Feminist Art Program at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), Los Angeles,³ and was the architect of a workshop for women artists from the United States and Mexico, the results of which were exhibited in LA and Berlin. This is one of the first examples of transcontinental dialogue by feminist artists.

Between 1983 and 1990, Mónica Mayer joined, together with the Mexican artist Maris Bustamante (b. 1949), the feminist collective Polvo de Gallina Negra (Black Chicken Dust). They performed on television and also participated in feminist demonstrations with orthopedic bellies that placed motherhood in a complex critical revision. Early on they installed the question: “Can only women be mothers?” They critically focused on the relationship between motherhood and the biological body and at the same time brought the signs of a fragile femininity to the urban scene of protest.

Chile: A Mile of Crosses and Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis

In 1979, the Chilean action artist Lotty Rosenfeld (1943–2020) created her first intervention, *Una milla de cruces sobre el pavimento* (A Mile of Crosses on the Pavement), on Santiago de Chile’s Avenida Manquehue. The artist pasted white ribbons that crossed the lines dividing the pavement, turning them into crosses or the plus sign (+). Since then, this intervention, repeated in Washington, DC, Havana, and Berlin, among other cities, has represented a visual urban sign against the dictatorship in Chile and against all kinds of authoritarianism.

Gender activism has experienced an intense development in Chile since the late 1980s, with the public actions carried out by the collective Yeguas del Apocalipsis (Mares of the Apocalypse), initiated by Pedro Mardones Lemebel (1952–2015) and Francisco Casas Silva (b. 1959). Emblematic is the 1988 performance in which they appeared naked, on a horse, to refound the University of Chile during the years of the Pinochet dictatorship. They

challenged the masculinity of the heroes on horseback. It is a topic that we will find again in contemporary feminist activism in Chile.

Colombia and Uruguay: Body, Indigenous Presence, and Violence

In 1981, on a square in front of the municipal administrative center in Cali, Colombia, the Colombian performance artist María Evelia Marmolejo (b. 1958) walked on a long piece of paper, with her face and body covered. She sat down, cut her feet, and walked, leaving traces of blood on the paper. Dressed in a white cap, a white tunic, her face covered in adhesive tape, she herself remained anonymous as a person. Marmolejo carried out this first action in public space, *Anonimo 1*, as a tribute to those tortured and made to disappear during the presidential term of Julio César Turbay Ayala in Colombia (1978–82). Individual blood was a powerful gesture that invoked the collective blood produced by violence in this country.⁴

In 1983, Nelbia Romero (1938–2015) created the *Sal-si-puedes* (Get Out If You Can) installation in Uruguay (→ pp. 146–47, fig. 2), in which she reviewed the massacre of the Indigenous Charrúa population in 1831, in a confrontation for the consolidation of national territory. In that massacre, people from Charrúa were captured, as indicated by the wooden boxes in the installation. One of the prisoners was a Charrúa woman called Guyunusa, sold to a Frenchman who exhibited her in Europe (the well-known human zoos). This installation, which was read as a powerful sign of resistance to the dictatorship by Uruguayan intellectuals, linked the violence toward Indigenous communities with the violence of the dictatorship (1973–85)—years in which many citizens were imprisoned and had to leave the country for exile.

With the end of the dictatorships, feminist activism was reorganized. The fight for the legalization of abortion and against femicide, present in the agenda of the second wave, are still valid in contemporary struggles.

The Scene of Artistic Feminism in the 1990s

In 1995, the fourth and last International Conference of Women was held in Beijing. At that time, new debates were introduced that had not yet played a role in the first conference held in Mexico City in 1975. Nonnormative

communities were part of the discussions about feminism, and the theory began to intervene in the essentialist and binary perspectives on sexual differences. Although sexual orientation was an issue during negotiations on the draft “Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action” in 1995, it was not included in the final version. During the 1990s, the formation of the women and gender areas of study began at universities in Latin America. In her 1993 book *Masculino/Femenino* (Male/Female), the Chilean cultural theorist Nelly Richard applies the concept of social construction of sexualities to the analysis of visual productions.⁵ The debate became more complex in theoretical terms during the 1990s, a decade that was also experiencing the impact of AIDS.

In those years, women artists regrouped and held exhibitions as a way of making their presence visible in their present time and in a history of art dominated by male artists. In this sense, in Argentina, exhibitions like *Violaciones domésticas* (Domestic Violations, 1994), *Juego de damas* (Game of Checkers, 1995 and 1996), and *Tajos bajos* (Low Cuts, 1997) stand out.

Although women artists played a central role in the Brazilian art of *Modernismo* (Tarsila do Amaral, Anita Malfatti), and during the 1960s to 1980s (Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, Anna Bella Geiger, Márcia X, Anna Maria Maiolino, and Regina Silveira, to cite just a few), the relationship between art, feminism, and activism was not expressed as in other Latin American countries. Although twentieth-century art was almost exclusively white, in Brazil there is a strong idea that there are no gender, race, or class differences in art. In this sense, as we will see, the presence of groups of Black feminist artists indicates a radical transformation of the art scene in this country.

After 2000: Intensification of Activism in Urban Space

Argentina: Feminism, Artistic Activism, and Mass Demonstrations

In the context of the 2001 economic crisis in Argentina, groups linked to social protest, activism, and feminism emerged. *Mujeres Públicas* (Public Women), founded in 2003 and active to date, focused on actions related to the legalization of abortion, the separation of church and state in Argentina, and the use of the term queer—an English word that they understand as exclusive in relation to age, class, or women’s bodies. Using humor,

the group designed small books compiling the “advantages of being a lesbian” or murals about menopause.

Belleza y Felicidad Fiorito (Beauty and Happiness Fiorito), a feminist-activist collective founded in 2003 in the Argentinian town of Villa Fiorito, claims the right to pleasure, the body, and sexuality—a demand that was present in the massive protests against femicide that took place in 2015. The group set up a center in a poor neighborhood of Villa Fiorito, where exhibitions and artistic and participatory activities took place. They understand creativity as a right that must be developed for everyone, not only for the privileged social classes usually associated with the world of art.⁶

In 2007, the collective *Serigrafistas Queer* (Queer Serigraphists) began to act on the public scene. They began working on the LGBTQIA+ pride marches, but soon they discovered other forms of public expression. Their work consists of meeting to elaborate phrases of political and poetic force—“Struggle loves Victory,” “I love my transvestite mother,” “I’m gay”—which they print with “matrices” or stencils (*yablonos*) in public places. They also work in solidarity alliances with other territorial, community, artistic, feminist, and sex-dissident groups and organizations; and they have organized a queer archive of their activities.⁷

In 2014, the group called *Desesperadas por el ritmo* (Desperate for Rhythm) brought together visual artists and friends to think about the invisibility of women artists older than fifty years. Together they sang lyrics about problems that affect the artistic women’s community. In 2020, in the context of isolation due to the coronavirus pandemic, they started a cooperative to design products for everyday use.

On June 3, 2015, a massive demonstration against femicide in Argentina was organized under the motto “Ni una menos” (Not One Less), words taken from a poem by the Mexican writer Susana Chávez in protest against the femicides of Guanajuato, Mexico. The author of the poem was assassinated in 2011. The call for protest became eponymous with the largest feminist movement in Latin America. Each year demonstrations are repeated in Argentina on June 3, but also on International Women’s Day, March 8.

In 2016, the feminist artist collective *Cromoactivismo* (Chromoactivism) was formed, which has a manifesto

that links the power of color in the formation of thought and existence. They postulated that color is not innocent, that it is linked to social dynamics, emotion, and affection and is an interface between global and collective intelligence. Using color, they intervene in social events, with chromatic handmade banners that they take to the street.⁸

In the context of awareness against sexist violence in art, in December 2017 the collective *Nosotras Proponemos* (We Propose) was created. Their feminist commitment was collectively and spontaneously written on Facebook, gathering artists, historians, and curators to create a document that has been collaboratively translated into several languages and published online.⁹ Through symbolic actions, the artists visualize the low representation of women in art institutions; for example, by turning off the lights of the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Buenos Aires and only highlighting the few installed works of women artists, the museum was kept almost in darkness (→ pp. 148–49, fig. 3).¹⁰

In December 2018, a women's artist collective was formed called *La Lola Mora* (after the Argentinean sculptor of the same name). With a brown apron as a sign of identification, they represented themselves as art workers (*trabajadores de las artes*). The apron (group plot, identification, support), they argue, has a tragic genealogy: it is linked to the 123 women textile workers who were burned to death in a New York factory where they had been locked up, unable to escape the flames. Aprons, commonly used for cooking or as work clothes, allow for a visual and symbolic connection with these women.¹¹

Chile: Yeguada and LASTESIS

In Chile, feminist activism linked to visual urban culture is intense; for example, the *Yeguada* collective, created in 2017 by the artist Cheril Linett (b. 1988) in connection with the legacy of the *Yeguas del Apocalipsis* (p. 55). In their urban performances, to which they invite both women and sexual dissidents to participate, the artists use nudity and a prosthetic ponytail as a symbolic disguise to confront the police forces and thus raise awareness for the relationship between femicide and punishment. In 2019, with the urban rebellion in Chile, they carried out this performance to denounce the police rapes during the urban repression.¹²

In 2019, in the context of these protests, the group *LASTESIS* was formed in Valparaíso.¹³ Their best-known performance is *Un violador en tu camino* (A Rapist on Your Way), which has been performed in fifty-two countries to date (→ pp. 148–49, fig. 4). They confront the organization of justice, the state, and the President of Chile. The lyrics (direct, powerful, and adaptable beyond Chile) were understood and shared in various cities around the world:

The patriarchy is a judge, who judges us to be born,
and our punishment is the violence that you don't see.
It is femicide. Immunity for my killer.
It is the disappearance. It is a violation.
And it wasn't my fault or where she was or how she dressed.
The rapist was you. The rapist is you.
The judges. The President.

Peru: Feminism and a History of Queer Art

In 1999, the Peruvian collective *La perrera*, initiated in 1999 by the artist Natalia Iñiguez (b. 1973) and the sociologist Sandro Venturo, used local commercial aesthetics to design posters denouncing sexism and machismo in the city of Lima. Iñiguez continued to develop a critical body of work that analyzed class relations between women, domesticity, and power, and the forms of representation of women in different cities according to a photographic archive that allowed her to create an urban cartograph.¹⁴

Thinking on interceptions of the patriarchal canon of art in Peru, the *Museo Travesti*, created by the artist and philosopher Giuseppe Campuzano in 2003, proposes a new order of Peruvian visual art. It proposes an interception of canonical discourses both because of the non-auratic objects, images, texts, and documents that it collects and because it introduced a story of parody and queer sensibilities.¹⁵

Brazil: Art, Race, and Feminism

Since the end of the twenty-first century, various exhibitions sought to introduce the work of Afro-descendant artists. In 2004, the *Museu Afro Brasil* was founded in São Paulo.¹⁶ The problem is how to diversify art without reproducing the separation. In this sense, the Afro-Bra-

zilian theorist Denise Ferreira da Silva analyzes participation from the concept of difference as multiplicity and not as separability.¹⁷

Black artistic feminism in Brazil has gained visibility in recent years. The work and pedagogical activity carried out by Rosana Paulino (b. 1967) since the 1990s has been pivotal. It was difficult for her to identify with the feminist agenda, which was linked with white middle-class women. However, she visualized the extent to which Black women stood at the base of the social pyramid. In her work she analyzes the place of Black women and their relationship with violence, slavery, and work (→ pp. 150–51, fig. 5).¹⁸

Several groups demonstrate the impact of a new activism. An example is the intervention of the Brazilian artist Renata Felinto (b. 1978) through education. She leads the research group NZINGA, which stands for *Novos Ziriguiduns (Inter) Nacionais Gerados nas Artes* (New [Inter] National Generated in Art Ziriguiduns), located at the art center of the Universidade Regional do Cariri (URCA) in the state of Ceará. The proposal appropriates the name of the Angolan warrior goddess Nzinga, referring to an area of Africa from which a large part of the Black population originates: the diaspora connected with the “Black Atlantic”¹⁹ that creates the transatlantic culture founded in slavery. They propose giving visibility to the work of Black women artists, absent in official narratives.²⁰

In 2019, the collective Nacional TROVOA (p. 66, → pp. 162–63) was formed, made up of more than 150 artists and curators who seek to make the work of Black and Colored women visible. They propose to give visibility to the plurality of languages and research that they carry out as racialized women. They denounce the violence they suffer and reject the crumbs of the white art circuit, while at the same time pointing out the differences between their poetics: they do not want to be reduced to stereotypes.²¹

The Brazilian performance artist Jota Mombaça (b. 1991), who identifies as nonbinary, works on the construction of memory, intersectionality, and the concept of anticolonial justice. Their performances are inscribed in forms of activism. During a performance they read texts about archives, violence, memory, in the Bogotá cemetery, before the memorial work of Beatriz Gonzalez (for the victims of La Violencia), while they burn the pages according to the order they are read.²²

Conclusion

The feminist artistic activism in Latin America that involves both women and diversities aims to transform the patriarchal structures of art and society. In its articulation, this involves the way groups get involved with political causes, visualizing the structures used by the state to regulate the right to make decisions about bodies. These are poetics that also consider decolonization agendas and strategies.

Collectives and artists who bring art to creative experiences in the streets and at demonstrations develop an intense investigation of visual symbolic processes. What is visible and what is not in a demonstration? What are the relationships between social demands and visual representations? Collective feminist practices investigate processes of social creativity, together with strategies of action, resistance, and survival. We must never forget that urban action entails risks. It requires security measures and quick decisions to preserve life during police repression. Analyzing agendas and making decisions based on action in public space involve forms of knowledge and experience that later rebound in theory.

On the other hand, it is important to highlight the extent to which these actions include the analysis of color, movement, individual or community identity, global and national colonial histories, subalternization strategies, violations of human rights, women's rights, the reconceptualizations of sexual identities. These are aspects that generally overlap and interweave. Feminist artistic activism is a source of knowledge about representation and social and aesthetic transformation that requires the diversification of the instruments of analysis. Feminist artistic activism is central to understanding the transformations that occur in the relationship between institutions and urban space. Maps must be developed because with them we give visibility and access the various agendas and intervention strategies that address the current state of the world with the purpose of transforming it.

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BETWEEN THE SUTURE AND THE ABYSS

Black Women Artists in Brazil: A Brief Introduction

Igor Moraes Simões

I write to speak to the European context, and I do not wish to reject this fact. It will be here, in this text, living with the danger of once again being captured by the matrix and colonial way of reading. This alert that will span over the following writing is also a call to those who read me. What I do here does not lend itself to frameworks which disregard the recognition of contexts that are specific and shared. It is my aim in the following to introduce some productions by Black Brazilian women artists, and to show how this work is directly connected with the asymmetrical and excluding reality of the Brazilian Black population that has lived over centuries in a constant state of danger. As these notes are shared here, when talking about the Brazilian context, they also speak of an experience that starts at the African diaspora perspective.

Brazil was one of the main ports of arrival of the global slave trade, constituting to date the largest contingent of Afro-descendants outside of Africa. Currently, 54 percent of the Brazilian population self-identifies as being non-white. Hence, the Brazilian experience is allied to a transatlantic context which encompasses countless practices and experiences that have their horizons inscribed from the Atlantic and the crossing of this ocean, the bodies that underlie the waters, and the survival strategies that were adopted by individuals who were objectified and transformed into the main engine of the modern global experience. I speak of the experiences inscribed in memory, in souls, and in bodies that supported the alleged narratives of European humanism at the same time that they were dehumanized and exiled, constituting a reality that is not restricted to the borders that delimit territories.

Thus, this text does not intend to exhaust the discussion about the work done by Black Brazilian women in the field of visual arts. This work presents itself as one of the most vibrant in Brazilian art, and there is no way to account for these dimensions in a piece of writing of this size.

Hence, I am showing some of these works, while surrounding them with contexts that allow us to understand each one individually, but also as an arrangement that talks about the history of art in its capacity for visibility and concealment.

Self-Portrait of a Black Woman Artist and Affirmation of Existences

A Black woman paints herself as an artist. She wears a red turban. Her eyes smile and complete the open-lipped expression. She stands before an easel and shows herself at the exact moment of creation. The image of the woman and the act of painting are at the center of the canvas. Around it another frame formed by small flowers surrounds her as if it formed a kind of heart or a path that separates the real from the magical worlds, since there are angels on the outside of the heart of flowers. One of the angels shows her the image that comes to life in her work. In front of him, another angel carries paints and brushes. At the artist's feet, as if holding the support that reveals her, there are two more angels. The woman is Black, while the angels are Black and blond. The entire scene simultaneously summons us to the self-portrait and to yet another of the many representations of the act of creating. The

idea of inspiration that works as some kind of eternal *doxa* (belief) in the field of art appears here. Inspiration is said to be the main difference between the artist and the common man. Black women paint themselves not as ordinary people, but wrapped in all the “historical cloaks” of what it really means to be an artist. This Black Brazilian woman sees herself and her work as something that is neither mundane nor spontaneous. We know that the woman paints herself at the end of her life. The healthy body of the scene is a reflection of what it used to be, before her illness. This Black woman has a name: Maria Auxiliadora da Silva (1935–1974). The self-portrait is a constant in her production; indeed, self-portraits of Brazilian Black women, in the twentieth century, painting themselves as artists are not so recurrent.

Perhaps we can explore the fact that to be an artist you have to be human in the first place. This painting appears in the context of a country that rarely gave the role of a human being to its Black women.

As in the canonical case explored by the American art historian Linda Nochlin in her 1971 essay,¹ and later taken up and expanded by the African American literary scholar Michele Wallace in 1992,² the question about the existence or not of Black women artists is rhetorical. She necessarily points to canons and conditions of emergence of what in postcolonial contexts crystallizes as art. These notions rely on a metropolitan basis and, as such, they are characterized as patriarchal and white. Until the middle of the twentieth century, a period before the debates on minorities in art history, the criteria of Brazilian art followed a notion of insertion in the international scene, importing European codes and beliefs into the local context. The modernist categories of primitive and naïve art were useful tools to incarcerate Black people’s artistic production. Associating the popular with the Black, in Brazil, was an easy operation in a country that built a contingent of Black people relegated to poverty from a post-slavery process that bet on strategies of “whitening” (*branqueamento*) and attempts to make the Black population disappear through physical and social extermination.

Modern poetic productions, such as those by Maria Auxiliadora, were exhibited and presented under the rule of spontaneous and unconscious production that forged the notions of modern primitivism.

Maria Auxiliadora’s painting originated in the 1970s. In that same decade—marked in the country by years of military dictatorship and restriction of political and self-expression rights to the Brazilian population—one of the main voices of Black Latin American feminism was rising: that of Lélia Gonzalez (1935–1994). In 1979, at a symposium held by the Center for Afro-American Studies at the University of California, the social anthropologist warned:

Being black and a woman in Brazil is the object of triple discrimination, since the stereotypes generated by racism and sexism place her at the highest level of oppression. While her man is the object of persecution, repression and police violence . . . she focuses on providing domestic services to middle-class and high-income families in Brazil When not working as a housemaid, we find her also working in the provision of low-paid services in supermarkets, schools or hospitals, under the generic name of servant. In general, black women are seen by the rest of society based on two types of professional qualification: domestic and mulatto.³

Lélia Gonzalez was not speaking of the past. Her words are renewed in the formation of the Brazilian social structure and in the places reserved for Black women. In the case of the art produced in the country, we should ask ourselves: What would be the possibility of other self-representations of Black women as artists in a country that denies them the human identity and the constitution of roles other than those forged by a history of slavery?

Between the 1970s and 1980s, a new generation of Black artists with solid academic training and equal conditions in terms of repertoire, as well as equal discussion with the white intellectual elite of the country, started to stand out. An example of this new generation is the trajectory and production of the artist Maria Lídia Magliani (1946–2012), born in the extreme south of Brazil, in Pelotas, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. Her works, anchored in drawing and expressionist tendencies, are associated with a generation that resumed figurative art, with particular and subjective notes. In 1966, Magliani completed her academic studies with a major in art in Porto Alegre, the capital of the state in which she was born. It was characterized by a European tradition in the form of programs encouraging migration that aimed to “whiten” the country. After finishing

her studies, Magliani worked in the local context, where to this day she is one of the only Black female artists in institutional collections, and she also attained national circulation with individual exhibitions in prestigious venues, such as at Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, which also features works from her career.

Rosana Paulino and the Suture in the History of Black Women in Brazilian Art

Among Brazilian artists at the turn of the twentieth to the twenty-first century, one name remains unchanged as a turning point in Afro-Brazilian art. Rosana Paulino (b. 1967), an artist from São Paulo who studied visual arts and earned a PhD from the University of São Paulo (USP), has one of the most striking productions in Latin American art. Rosana has as one of her basic premises the use of the Black suture line that constitutes what the artist reiterates as *sutura* (Portuguese for “seam”). It is not about embroidery, nor is it about sewing. The suture, in its aspect of an element that holds together wounds, undone parts, parts that are not ready to connect, is one of the images with which the artist works to make visible the asymmetrical and warlike encounters between race, gender, art, and life of the Brazilian Black population, with emphasis on the basic role of Black women in the constitution of the country's societies. The history of images, art, and forms of representation of Blacks in Brazilian society composes a discourse that exposes and invites the healing process of colonial wounds based on the necessary confrontation. Each of Paulino's works invites us to engage in discourse about a situation that requires taking a stand, which in this case involves the ever-postponed debate about the legacy of slavery, and its continuities and updates, in what we call the contemporary world. In this sense, the artist occupies the place of a major interpreter in Brazil and its asymmetries. In her portrait series *Bastidores* (Embroidery Hoops, 1997), the suture line that seals the mouths and eyes in portraits of Black Brazilian women is evident. In her installation *Assentamento* (Settlement, 2013, → pp. 154–55, fig. 1), the image of an enslaved Black woman, captured in three views in one of the many pseudoscience treatises, reappears as the basis of a society that establishes itself from Black bodies as the engine of its invention as a nation. In the installation, the images of the woman go through the humanization process. In a sophisticated operation, Paulino gives the body of this nameless Black woman roots, a heart, and a uterus, which humanizes what was exposed

as merely a piece. Images of the sea, the Black *kalunga*,⁴ are moving on small screens. In the room, there is also a series of pallets with hands and arms sculpted in paper clay together with firewood, sticks that refer to the driving force of colonial exploitation, based on the extraction and use of the Black body as the engine of its undertakings. Note that the work stands both as a document about Brazil and is also connected to a series of artistic productions that are allied not to the geographic limits of a country, but to the Afro-Atlantic context of the African diaspora. Her drawings—combined with the use of suture, a bank of historical images from different origins, and a focus on natural-science discourses that managed to objectify and essentialize the Black existence from the forced crusade across the Atlantic—are repertoires in constant movement in a production established not only as unique, but as one that is profoundly reflected in an entire generation of Black artists. Still, the suture, a central element of her production, can be evoked as a powerful conceptual place to think about the production of artists who have brought together asymmetrical and poorly grouped parts of history in general and the history of art itself in Brazil, where the key to violence and obliteration is just one of its manifestations.

Performing Resistance and Confrontations

Here we can open a space for performance by the artist Priscila Rezende (b. 1985), who is from the state of Minas Gerais. In one of the most emblematic performances of recent artistic production in the country, a Black woman surrounded by pots and pans rubs her hair as if in an act of cleaning and giving shine to objects. The objects, for the most part, are household items. *BomBril* (2010, → pp. 156–57, fig. 2) is the name of the performance, referencing a well-known brand of steel sponges, a very common product in Brazilian homes. *BomBril* is also one of the pejorative terms commonly used in Brazil to refer to the texture of Black hair. In this work with a strong visual and symbolic impact, the artist used her own hair to dry the objects for an hour. The situation of Black women commonly associated with domestic work is at stake, as mentioned by Lélia Gonzalez in 1979. Rezende's proposition deals with the use of Black labor as the primary work force in Brazilian private spaces; she also thematizes the violent association of physical and subjective elements of the Black race with a set of nicknames that reinforce their condition of subordination—based on specific comments, everyday jokes that are perpetuated

over time in cultural elements such as music and painting, thus circumscribing the Black existence, its physical characteristics, and everyday practices to caricatural and objectified conditions.

Today, performance is one of the main tools in the arsenal with which these women artists undertake their poetic movements. The work of the artist, researcher, and university professor Renata Felinto (b. 1978) is exemplary in this regard. In her work *White Face and Blond Hair* (2012), Felinto wears a blonde wig and “performs” a white face, where she puts into play the habit of representations of Blacks by whites and creates tension when showing the places accessible to Black and white bodies when circulating through the streets, stores, and cafés on one of the most expensive streets in São Paulo, commonly associated with the luxury market. Also in this sense, the production of a radical matrix that has been proposed by the artist Musa Michelle Mattiuzzi (b. 1983) plays with beauty and violence in works such as *Merçi Beaucoup, Branco!* (2012), in which the senses of forced subservience of Black bodies are evoked by bringing together images, videos, photographs, and a series of elements that cross her Black body covered in white paint in a debate that encompasses institutional processes and their frameworks. Pay attention to the dates of these performances. In fact, from mid-2010 onward, a young generation of Black women fills in the field of performance in Brazilian contemporary art with works where the belligerence, the body, and the obliteration, “whitening,” and curtailment strategies of societies with a colonial matrix are confronted, scrutinized, and answered in sophisticated elaborations that combine the use of a violent force that rises up as an act of response and resistance.

Aline Motta, Water, and the Time Machine

A água é uma máquina do tempo (Water Is a Time Machine). This is the title of a public speech by the artist Aline Motta (b. 1974) given in 2020 at Instituto Moreira Salles in São Paulo. The phrase also names an essay and a book that the artist has been working on. It echoes much of what crosses the production of an artist who has established herself in the Brazilian visual arts scene at the center of a broad resumption of the Black presence in institutional spaces, criticism, and curatorship, headed mainly by the investigations of Black curators in the country. Her production, although it has become visible in the system from the years 2015–16, is the result

of a profoundly mature process that brings together personal and collective dimensions.

A reference is clearly needed in order to talk about Aline Motta's extensive work; a big part of the artist's career has been in the film industry, where she holds a graduate degree from the New York university The New School. This information is important, since Motta positions herself in terms of her production as a kind of assembler. If film editing allows individual fragments to be reassembled, producing unforeseen meanings, then this can be a coherent key to getting in touch with its poetics.

Aline Motta brings together files including personal documents, items from Brazilian archives, and elements of the history of photography to create a production that permeates installations, videos, writing, photography, and textiles. It is primarily in the video category that her work gains its most eloquent dimensions. In the film and installation trilogy that she produced between 2017 and 2019—*Pontes sobre abismos* (Bridge over the Abyss, 2017, → pp. 156–57, figs. 3, 4), *Se o mar tivesse verandas* (If the Sea Had Balconies, 2017), and *Outros fundamentos* (Other Fundamentals, 2017–19)—the videos show a narrator/assembler skilled in articulating the stories about herself with the stories of the process of miscegenation, “whitening,” and the huge bridge built throughout the centuries over the Atlantic. It is a bridge made of experiences forged in encounters and disagreements with the legacy of slavery and, even beyond that, with the deep rooting of the African mark on the history of Brazilians. The experiences are also the result of the artist's journey through the different dimensions of Brazil, Europe, Africa, and these places' waters, stories, and memories. All of these elements come together in a sophisticated way through the moving images. Motta, as a film editor representing the best legacy of the term, juxtaposes times and narratives to show videos that form an indispensable triptych for thinking about the art produced in Brazil at the end of the modern promises of that time, which we call contemporary.

Pontes sobre abismos is the story of Doralice, who guides Aline Motta's journey to her roots. Doralice is the artist's grandmother, who for years kept the secret of who her father was, Aline's great-grandfather. Behind the secret lie the unequal relations between white men and the Black women, as we have already mentioned, confined to the domains of domestic work in situations that descend from the roles of their enslaved ancestors and that put in tension the false availability of their bodies.

In the last days of her life, Doralice reveals to her granddaughter that her father (Aline's great-grandfather) was the son of her mother's white boss (Aline's great-grandmother). It is at this point that the artist's investigation covers her grandmother's birth certificate, where the term "natural daughter" appears, informing only motherhood and not providing data on fatherhood. Going through public archives, newspaper clippings, and documents from different sources, Aline Motta reveals the existence of Enzo, the white boy who follows his path as a middle-class child, with news of his life being conveyed by notes in newspapers, social invitations, and announcements—a history that is properly recorded. Aline Motta simultaneously exposes what the archives show, which stories are told and recorded, and which inhabit a kind of underground scenario that hides the gears of Brazilian social relations. She brings these small fragments together in images filled with absolute poetic force. "They are no longer alive, but I can evoke their images," says the voice of the artist, who tells us how much reconstruction and fabulation inhabit this story.

Black Trans Women and Their Radical Presence in Contemporary Art

So far, this text has been dedicated to dealing with women who identify themselves as cisgender. However, one of the most radical dimensions of the art produced in Brazil has been gaining ground in the field of disobedience. The production of artists such as Jota Mombaça (b. 1991, → p. 158, figs. 5, 6) and Castiel Vitorino Brasileiro (b. 1996) project themselves beyond borders, whether territorial, based on gender or race. In fact, the crossroads is a powerful location to look at the complex production of Mombaça. In 2020, in an interview with the critic and curator Hans Ulrich Obrist, Jota Mombaça tells us about their intricate production process that runs between writing, performance, and video, while still looking for other developments. "Writing is my first mode of expression, it is definitely a practice and a fundamental performance for my work, for the way I think about my work and how I operate in the world with it. Writing, therefore, is a key to my practice, which translates into performance and other practices that I'm starting to experiment with now."⁵ Mombaça recently published in Brazil the book *Não vão nos matar agora* (They Won't Kill Us Now), in which the complexity of their propositions gains meaning in a writing that does not reveal itself only as a stage in the process of poetic creation, and that im-

poses itself as acute, high-quality literature. The reading manages to lead us to their production, which thematizes disobedience, criticism of the extractivism of art systems, and the still smarting colonial wound.

Another place in contemporary Brazilian art is occupied by Castiel Vitorino Brasileiro, a self-styled trans woman, visual artist, *macumbeira* (Afro-Brazilian-witchcraft follower), and psychologist. Her artistic practice articulates the diasporas of non-cisgender Black corporealities, making use of photography, performances, drawing, and, more recently, installations to address issues of representation, body, and deconstruction of the limits imposed by the confining notion of identity and the trap of their discourses.

A careful look at the production of Black trans women in contemporary Brazilian art leads us to a necessary observation about productions that have allowed us to think about institutional limits, their framing, forms of exposure, and an enormous silence in the collections and archives of the main Brazilian museums. It is also necessary to highlight the exchanges and partnerships undertaken between these artists within their productions. In the case of the two artists mentioned, interactions are varied and comprise documentation ranging from public letters to forms of interaction on social networks.

About Unsubmissive and Complex Presences

Dealing with the artistic production of Black Brazilian women means facing complexity and intersectionality. With this intention in mind, a brief text is not capable of exhausting a production that has forced a review of the very instruments of analysis that local and Latin American art critics have used to think about themselves and their canons. The very attempt to surround this production within Brazilian geographic limits makes it impossible to centralize, for example, the necessary insertion of its poetics in a broad Afro-Atlantic transit. It also means running the risk of enclosing this production within a single and monochord theme related to works that will necessarily face the thematic limits of race. This would be a mistake that accompanied, for example, past definitions of what an Afro-Brazilian art would be, privileging more a set of internal themes than the current understanding of the political character of this category by pointing out the restrictions to which racialized artists such as Black people are submitted. Productions such as that of the

São Paulo artist Juliana dos Santos (b. 1987) have dealt with the limitations affecting Black women artists and their representations as imposed by racialization in the approach to these works.

What this writing has outlined are just a few lines that can be used to introduce a broad and indispensable debate for understanding a very small portion of this artistic production. Writing about the art of Black women in Brazil can be, as described in this text, an attempt to reveal a conversation that spans bridges over the abysses, sutures, portraits, and oceans that make up another unsubmitive history of Brazilian art. It is mainly about demanding the centrality of the existence of Black women as a primordial element in the constitution of what this country truly is, their knowledge, art, and possibilities of reinvention.

¹ Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," 1971, https://www.writing.upenn.edu/library/Nochlin-Linda_Why-Have-There-Been-No-Great-Women-Artists.pdf (accessed in June 2022). ² Michele Wallace, "Why Are There No Great Black Artists? The Problem of Visuality in African American Culture," in *História das mulheres, histórias feministas: antologia*, ed. Adriano Pedrosa, Amanda Carneiro, and André Mesquita (São Paulo, 2019), pp. 223–33. ³ Lélia Gonzalez, "A mulher negra na sociedade brasileira" [1979], in *Lélia Gonzalez: Por um feminismo afro-latino-americano; Ensaios, intervenções e diálogos*, compiled by Flávia Rios and Márcia Lima (Rio de Janeiro, 2020), pp. 58–59. ⁴ *Kalunga* is a word of African origin that refers to the sea and the cosmologies and times associated with it. ⁵ Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Entrevistas brasileiras*, vol. 2 (Rio de Janeiro, 2020), p. 420 [translated].

NACIONAL TROVOA

Interview

Brazil

Nacional TROVOA is a collective of about 150 visual artists and curators of color from Brazil. Founded in 2017 in the city of Rio de Janeiro from the initial concerns of four young women, Nacional TROVOA demands urgency in the discussion about the art system in Brazil, with special attention paid to the visibility and insertion of cis and transgender women artists of color in this circuit. The collective's ambitions are to highlight non-hegemonic productions that derive from color intersections crossing Indigenous, Black, and Asian origins.

1. Which topics do you address and what are the urgent questions?

The themes are diverse as we speak of a wide territory and different trajectories and identities, even if starting from womanhood as a presupposition—this is just the basis for us to understand the structure of the collective. The term “racialized,” which we use to describe ourselves as a whole, although starting from the same form of great diversity, sometimes finds resistance to being understood in a social structure that has not yet owned up to its historical prejudices.

2. What aesthetic means and formats do you use? To what extent can (and should) art intervene in sociopolitical structures?

The aesthetic supports and media researched and employed by the artists are multiple, with a large number of painters and photographers, especially with regard to photography/performance; there are also educator artists, researchers, and teachers.

3. Where do you see the potentials and challenges of working collectively? What makes it a feminist practice?

The power of working collectively is to create a joint force; one artist pulls the other, and together we are a strengthened body. For us, feminist practice is for the existence and formation of this collective body itself. Each individual brings in its history the traces of what we can understand as part of a struggle or feminism, without necessarily making the term the direct subject of our actions.

4. We see feminisms as the most progressive method to rethink the world. What do you think?

I believe that the understanding of our specific context within this idea of womanhood is fundamental for the construction of this rethinking of the world. Gradually, action by action, the seeds of a broader and less patriarchal perspective sprout.

THE ACTIVIST PRACTICES OF BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN ARTISTS

Portia Malatjie

Introduction

It is a well-known fact that the history of South Africa is riddled with the trauma of settler colonialism and apartheid. It is a fact that is often ignored that the legacies of these violent histories permeate contemporary conditions. It is even lesser considered, in the general public imaginary, how these legacies did not only wound the political and quotidian lives of Black South Africans, but how this violence permeated different sectors, including cultural industries such as the arts.

In the past, the history of South African art has mainly been written by white scholars who had the authority and infrastructure to do so. While some historically white universities in South Africa admitted a few Black students to their programs, it was not until the Universities Amendment Act of 1983 that Black students were legally allowed to become students in institutions such as the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Cape Town. This, of course, does not include the historically Black universities, such as the University of Fort Hare, that were exclusively for Black students. The lack of voice from scholars who had the same lived experiences as the Black artists who were being written about precipitated an imbalance in the way Black histories were written, and in how Black artists' practices were represented and documented. In the same way that African arts, written from the West, tended to primitivize Africa—that is, write Africa as backward, and as a continent with artistic practice that lacked nuance and depth—so did art historians of yesteryear in writing the work of Black artists.

With this in mind, the essay at hand seeks to explore women's art in South Africa from a Black woman's perspective. In so doing, it employs intersectional feminism, which considers the intersection of race, gender, sexuality, and class in the ways that roles are assigned and performed in society. It leans toward a Black feminist approach to reading the artworks and artistic practices of Black women. In any discussion about Black women and Blackness as a way of being in the world, it is always prudent to define what one means by Black. In the context of South Africa—as is the case elsewhere in the world—this terminology is very loaded and requires careful consideration and sensitivity. The apartheid government, its ideology predicated on racial differentiation and hierarchy, separated its “citizens”¹ between “whites” and “non-whites.” In the non-white classification could be found Black people (of African descent), Indian people, and Colored people.² Furthermore, there was also a hierarchy amongst Black, Indian, and Colored people that was established and perpetuated by the colonial and apartheid regime.

However, a different school of thought, which can be identified in the ideologies and writings of the Black South African civil rights activist Steve Biko (1946–1977) and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), suggests that Blackness is not only about the color of your skin, but also a political stance and a way of being in the world. Biko considered Black people to be those who were committed to opposing the subjugating nature of the apartheid regime.³ This, in some circles, is described as political Blackness. For the context of this text, the term Black shall refer to Black, Indian, and Colored peo-

ple, thus adopting a Black Consciousness stance about those who opposed and aimed to eradicate a whiteness that inflicted violence. However, the intricacies and nuances of the hierarchy within this political Blackness will always be considered.

It is also critical to consider the fact that the experiences of Black people in South Africa—a country colonized by the Dutch with later interference from the British—differ from those in other African colonies. The administration of the colonies by the Portuguese in Lusophone Africa—including Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau—and Francophone Africa—including Cameroon, Senegal, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo—was specific to the context, bearing in mind the form of colonialism, including settler colonialism, exploitation colonialism, internal colonialism, and surrogate colonialism, that was inflicted. In the same way that different forms of Blackness are taken to account, the different experiences of women are taken into consideration. It is therefore prudent to employ Black Feminist theory to argue for a different lived experience by Black women; and, while some intersections occur, it needs to be considered differently to white feminism. A consideration of what Black feminists such as Christine Quenton, bell hooks, and Patricia Hill Collins have purported, that white feminism is not adequate in understanding the lived experiences of Black women, which include oppression based on race, need to be at the core of thinking about feminist artistic practices in South Africa.⁴ As such, the feminism employed, argued for, and analyzed in this essay is “Third World,” Global South, Black, African, and intersectional.

The text at hand considers political and social engagement during key moments in South Africa’s history, and the overt and invisible roles that Black women played in shaping or reflecting on these moments. This will be argued for through a transgenerational lens, where works by Black modernist women artists, writers, and curators will be discussed as forming part of the same archive of evident and non-ubiquitous forms of activism as more contemporary renditions. The transgenerational approach allows for a signaling to different practices across vast spatiotemporal conditions that are anchored in shared trauma, conditions, and hope. This occurs in different forms, from the ways in which ubiquitous beauty standards that excluded Women of Color are imposed, to the ways in which Black women formed collectives, coming together to counter the structures that subjugated them, and their overt and militant opposition to

and reflection of political ideologies. Ultimately, the act of using mechanisms that subtly, but powerfully, undermine the systems that oppress Black women will be at the center of this consideration.

Navigating a Tempestuous Political Landscape

The 1980s were a time of high political tension in South Africa. Most notably was the 1985 State of Emergency, declared by the apartheid government amidst growing pressure from the international community to eradicate the draconian rule enforced on Black people. The tension among people of different racial groups precipitated several violent retaliations, including the infamous petrol bombs that killed and injured many. In 1988, car bombs were commonplace, including one outside Ellis Park stadium, one outside a residential building in Benoni, and one that went off at a Witbank shopping center. A few African National Congress (ANC) members were injured in a car bomb in Bulawayo in neighboring Zimbabwe that same year. In the late 1980s, the Black woman artist Bongi Dhlomo (b. 1956) produced a series of prints that reflected on this moment. Titled *The State of the 80s*, the series contemplated the conditions of apartheid South Africa. Dhlomo’s overt political activism was made evident in works such as *The State of the 80s: Roadblock* (1988), which lingered on the policed and limited movement of Black people, and *The State of the 80s: Car Bomb* (1988–89), a triptych that bore witness to the last few years of the torturous and tumultuous decade. In earlier years, five pieces by Dhlomo (all from 1982)—*Resettlement*, *From Here...Where To?*, *Against Our Will*, *Bulldoze the Blackspot*, and *Removals* (→ p. 166, fig. 1)—depicted the forced removals that plagued and displaced a huge number of Black people from their homes.

The paintings and drawings of the Black South African woman artist Mmakgabo Mapula Helen Sebidi (b. 1943) echoed the political commentary found in Dhlomo’s work. Sebidi’s practice is characterized by the depiction of Black subjects cramped onto a single picture plane. The pastel drawing *Where Is My Home: Mischief in the Township* (1988) depicts chimeric figures that merge human and animal, offering no distinction between the two. The figures are enmeshed within one another, creating an amalgamation of subjects whose spatial freedom and individuality has been compromised. It is no surprise, then, that this style that Sebidi is known for evokes motions of despair, lack of privacy, and a life characterized by anguish and desolation.

In an interview with the artist, she speaks about her large-scale works, most notably in the seminal *Tears of Africa I* (1987–88, → p. 167, fig. 2), and about the audacity of the scale she used.⁵ In true subjugating form, Black women artists were expected to produce small works that were believed to correlate with their assumed inferior position in society. Sebidi recalls, with pride, her decision to bring together different panels, almost jeopardizing the integrity of the structure of the canvas, with an unrelenting conviction to produce artworks in a size that had not been reserved for her. This seemingly inconsequential act is exemplary of the kinds of deep, powerful, and concealed activism that Black women artists engaged with.

Black Like Me: The Struggle for Affirming Black Women's Beauty

Since antiquity, the nude female has been understood, by and large, as a passive creature. She reclines or poses placidly in a pastoral setting or in a domestic interior for the benefit of an often unseen but variably assumed male viewer. Her eyes are either modestly averted or shyly welcoming, and she offers herself up as a feast for the male gaze. Passive, receptive, and available, she is presented as sexual spectacle—an invitation to voyeurism, lacking individuality, cognition, or the ability to act decisively.⁶

In addition to the representation and reflection of political turmoil and the traumatic landscape of South Africa, Black women artists have concerned themselves with different topics and subject matter. Chief among them was the question of Black womanhood that examined the roles and responsibilities assigned to Black women in a racist and oppressive society. An exploration of Black womanhood leads one to the still present and prominent issue of Black women's appearances and the beauty standards against which they are measured. The struggle for Black women's beauty standards that are modeled on white women's epitome of beauty persists to date. In reflecting on the epitome of beauty in artistic practice that proposed and justified a particular beauty standard, Black women artists have pushed back against this representation. They have found ways to oppose the ubiquity of beauty that is largely modeled on whiteness, while offering alternative, more inclusive ways of depicting femininity. This is done through practices that challenge images of codified, heteronorma-

tive Black women's bodies by employing strategies that aim to decode the subordination of Black women put in place by a white, apartheid patriarchy and its imperialist forebears.

In 2001, the South African artist Berni Searle (b. 1964) produced the video *Snow White* (→ p. 168, fig. 3), which challenged the ideology purported by all-pervading imagery of Disney princesses. The “Snow white” fairy tale, with its origins in Europe, has promoted ubiquitous imagery of an ideal white woman.⁷ These representations, which are made available globally, therefore producing an ideal that permeates different contexts and temporalities, have been used to engender an ideal beauty and body that is possible only for white women. Dorothy L. Hurley notes that in Disney films whiteness is associated with good and beauty, while Blackness, by comparison, is bad and ugly:

The black and white symbolism in the Disney versions is pervasive and powerful. For example, the *Snow White* (Disney, 1937) features a wicked queen dressed in black who lives in a black forest containing black bats and black owls. Moreover, the wicked Queen has a black crow like bird perched in a human skull. In the end, the film implies that the wicked queen is devoured (off screen) by black vultures. Even the poisonous apple turns black to symbolise what lies within before turning red again. On the other hand, Snow White is surrounded by white birds, the Prince appears in a white horse; Snow White is laid to rest (when presumed dead) on white flowers holding a bouquet of white flowers before the Prince returns to rescue her and they ride off on his white horse towards the [sic] his white castle.⁸

It is with this in mind that Searle performs naked, with white flour swiftly poured onto her body, to meditate on these representations that have plagued and controlled Black women for centuries. This strategy of placing importance on whiteness is one of colonialism's insidious strategies. The US author bell hooks observes how Black people have been taught to self-hate, mainly through derogatory, stereotypical imagery of Blackness.⁹ She asserts that everyone living in white supremacist societies (including Black and white people) has been taught to “devalue blackness” while simultaneously “[overvaluing] whiteness.”¹⁰ The result is that Black people undergo dramatic means to attain the ap-

pearances, and by extension, privileges of whiteness, such as using skin-lightening cream to whiten their skin and attain a white aesthetic. It is arguably for reasons of a devalued Blackness that Searle, through an artistic representation, chooses to cover her Black body with a white substance that acts as a surrogate for whiteness as a way of calling attention to the damaging nature of these widespread beliefs of beauty.

A number of oppositions are present in Searle's *Snow White*, including the dual mediums of video and performance. What video enabled for Black South African women was an opportunity to engage in performative work that could then be recorded and disseminated to a wider audience. Through works such as *Snow White*, Searle was able to oversee and control how her body is performed and represented in the work. Here, the long-standing, mutually beneficial relationship between performance and feminism comes to the fore.

Artistic Strategies for Activism: Performance, Self-Determination, and the Dismantling of Stereotypes

Black women artists have also employed a number of artistic strategies, some of which are in line with Black feminist thought, to write themselves into a South African art history that has historically either excluded them, or included them in othering and dubious ways. Some of the tenets of Black feminism is self-insertion and self-determination. Bearing in mind century-long strategies of writing the histories of Black women in problematic, stereotypical, and othering ways, self-insertion and self-determination instead forefront the telling of Black women's stories from their own perspective. This has allowed Black women to choose how their imagery is portrayed and disseminated, which can be in opposition to the stereotypical and archetypal imagery that they were known for. In the video *Ciao Bella* (2001), the South African woman artist Tracey Rose (b. 1974) leans in on the archetype of Black women, such as the Black woman as caregiver (the image of the Mammy) and the African water spirit, Mami Wata. Additionally, Rose includes the image of the former Hungarian-Italian porn star Cicciolina, along with pictures of Queen Elizabeth and Marie Antoinette, as well as the nymphet Lolita (based on Vladimir Nabokov's 1955 eponymous novel) (→ pp. 168–69, fig. 4). Also featured are the South African Sarah Baartman and the African American performer Josephine Baker,

two Black women whose sexualities and bodies were displayed in Europe in the early 1800s and the 1920s respectively. The adoption and performance of these different roles is subversive. Through Cicciolina, Tracey Rose insists on women's ability to be in charge of their sexualities. While the representation of women in the porn industry is misogynistic and performed predominantly for a patriarchal male gaze, Rose insists on the power of women owning their sexuality. Similarly, Josephine Baker leaned in on her Black woman sexuality. Unlike Baartman, who preceded her and whose exhibition in Europe was involuntary, Baker appropriated the perception of the hypersexualized Black woman, arguably using the othering tools to subvert them.

Throughout the video, Tracey Rose performs the identities of the twelve figures who sit around a table in a manner reminiscent of Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* (ca. 1495), a gesture that nods to Rose's Catholic upbringing while banishing universalized Western art histories. By taking up different roles, Rose alludes to the multiple identities that a single woman can experience, thus dismissing the myth of a single mode of being a woman. The US performance artist Martha Wilson (b. 1947) posited that "artmaking [could be] an identity making process."¹¹ Through performance, women could adopt identities that have been refused them by a patriarchal system intent on keeping them "in their place." By taking up varying and sometimes controversial identities—such as that of a porn star in the case of Rose's Cicciolina—in performance art, gendered roles and boundaries of womanhood can be blurred, refused, reimagined, ignored, and ultimately either restructured or eradicated.¹² Through performance, women artists prove that they have the tools to inscribe and reinscribe their subjectivities and agencies as they so wish. This is to say, "performance [uses] disruptive strategies to reveal the multiplicity of selves required of women in daily lives."¹³

Produced for the 49th Venice Biennale, *Ciao Bella* formed part of a new wave of artistic practice in South Africa, one that had surpassed the censorship imposed by the apartheid regime. Prior to the first democratic elections in 1994, it was dangerous for Black South Africans to produce works that overtly critiqued and subverted the white supremacist capitalist patriarchy¹⁴ that was used to govern the country.¹⁵ During this period, artists such as the Black photographer Ernest Cole (1940–1990) had to escape into exile after producing photographs, such as the series *House of Bondage*, that showed the condi-

tions under which Black South Africans lived. Post-1994, Rose and others could more freely parody or oppose the problematic imagery of Black women.

The archetypes portrayed by Rose had been present in different artistic practices. For instance, the mammy figure was eloquently rendered by Betye Saar (b. 1926) in her assemblage *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima* (1972). Saar is a Black American woman whose practice, like her South African contemporaries, centered on the lived experiences of Black people. Saar focused on her own context of the United States, which becomes an interesting point of inquiry about the relationship between Blackness and Black womanhood in South Africa and in the US. Both spaces are characterized by, and have suffered from, similar political and racial oppression. It is no wonder, then, that Rose's work would reference imagery from the US, which is in fact echoed in South Africa.

Black women's activist strategies include coming together to form sister circles that advance a decolonial and Black feminist agenda. Artists in the artist collective iQhiya are a case in point. The group comprises nine Black women artists, mainly previous students from the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town. These women artists—whose performance work was part of Documenta 14 in Kassel and Athens in 2017—joined together as a way of amplifying the otherwise silenced and marginalized voices of Black women artists in South Africa. As a collective, their presence was felt more deeply, and their voices heard more clearly, as they moved and spoke in unison, while maintaining their individual voices and practices. Similarly, Black curators who are interested in Black feminist work have collaborated on a few exhibitions and projects. The Black women curators Nomusa Makhubu and Nkule Maba-so, for instance, have teamed up on a number of exhibitions, including *Fantastic* (2015) and *The Stronger We Become* (2018)—the latter being the main exhibition in the South African Pavilion at the 58th Venice Biennale in 2019. These collective practices are essential in creating a community of practitioners who can support each other as they navigate an art system and ecology that is structured to exclude and subjugate them. Through collaboration, confidence is built and maintained, and the enactment of decolonial methodologies is more easily activated and performed.

Conclusion

Several useful strategies have thus been used by Black women artists, including the inserting of one's own body into one's work as a way of subversion. In so doing, Black women artists were able to dictate the way in which their bodies were viewed. They were also able to return the gaze to the viewer, who, historically, was reserved for the white man. The differentiation between nakedness and nudity—as in the case of Searle's *Snow White*, where the artist performs naked in front of a video camera that documents her body—is investigated and transgressed. Here, nakedness is used as a strategy for reclamation and activism.

While this text has offered a glimpse of Black feminist artistic and curatorial practices in South Africa throughout the ages, there is a lot more that can be discussed by way of a comprehensive account. Many other Black women artists have overtly or unintentionally employed or displayed Black feminist strategies in the execution of their work. This execution exists in a space where politics and the lived experiences of Black women intersect. The production of this work has added to a long history and legacy of Black women's activist work that is rooted in artistic practices of refusal and resistance. What is equally important to acknowledge is that, today, there are a lot more Black women art historians and theorists who are espousing a decolonial theorization and engagement with the work of Black women artists. The long-overdue result is that the activist work of Black South African women artists is documented, celebrated, and theorized as it occurs, while being written into history in less subjugating and more subversive ways.

1 Not all races in South Africa were considered citizens. Based on this hierarchy, white South African enjoyed the benefits of being full citizens of the country, including having the legal right to vote, as well as other benefits experienced under the moniker of citizen. Black South Africans were denied this right. 2 The term "Coloured" is not without its problematics and contestations. 3 Steve Biko, "The Definition of Black Consciousness" (December 1971), *South African History Online*, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/definition-black-consciousness-bantu-stephen-biko-december-1971-south-africa> (accessed in July 2022). 4 Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York and London, 2009); Christine Quata, ed., *Women in Southern Africa* (London, 1987); bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (New York, 1992). 5 Interview with the artist by Portia Malatjie, 2018. 6 Lisa Farrington, "Reinventing Herself: The Black Female Nude," *Women's Art Journal* 24, no. 2 (2004), pp. 15–23, esp. p. 15. 7 See Portia Malatjie, "Framing the Artwork of Tracey Rose and Berni Searle Through Black Feminism" (PhD diss., University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 2011). 8 Dorothy L. Hurley, "Seeing White: Children of Color and the Disney Fairy Tale Princess," *The Journal of Negro Education* 74, no. 3 (2005), pp. 221–52, esp. p. 225. 9 hooks 1992 (see note 4), p. 12. 10 Ibid. 11 Martha Wilson, cited in Jayne Wark, "Conceptual Art and Feminism: Martha Rosler, Adrienne Piper, Eleanor Antin, and Martha Wilson," *Women's Art Journal* 22, no. 1 (2001), pp. 44–50, esp. p. 48. 12 Malatjie 2011 (see note 7), p. 62. 13 Wark 2001 (see note 11), p. 47. 14 The famous phrase "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" is borrowed from the Black feminist bell hooks (see note 9). 15 Malatjie 2011 (see note 7), p. 58.

WHAT THE HELL SHE DOIN!

Interview

Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, United Kingdom

What the hELL she doin! is a collective of four female-identifying artists from different countries of the African continent and its diasporas, founded in June 2019. They wish to thrive in an art world canon where cross-Atlantic, cross-diasporic voices can be experienced with a whole Earth view devoid of marginalization. The collective meets bimonthly to engage in critical discourse about their practice, position themselves in the world, plan and realize next steps in the individual practice of the members themselves, and build an apparatus of support. They have presented their work in various international art contexts and institutions.

1. Which topics do you address and what are the urgent questions?

“What the hell is she doing?” is a response we heard to our practice ten years ago, and it is still a response we hear to date. We have come together as a collective to support each other as we exist in a world which is still largely operating within the accepted norms. In response, we have created an environment that shares advice, resources, knowledge, and care. This is in part because we are dealing with similar urgent questions, and partly because of the lack of spaces of care which support the concerns that women artists of color are confronted with.

Our work is not “topic-based” but rather emanates from our lived experiences as Black and Brown women who encounter the world and have formed research-based practices around issues that can be considered topics.

Some of the urgent questions include: How do we set agendas as opposed to continually responding to those set by other authorities? How can we authentically belong to many places without staking a claim? Most urgent is: How can we ask better questions and how can we shift power from those with the easy answers that include nationalism and fascism? How do we define our practice outside of stereotypical boxes of the “African” and “feminist” discourses, which omit the nuances we face as practitioners?

Our works address a number of urgent questions, including embodiment, reinscribing histories, archival and memory work, and the reexamination of domesticity. Domesticity in the sense of not necessarily examining the notion of home, but instead, using the materiality of the domestic in paradigmatic ways to explain the rest of the world. A colossal reversal of knowledge and meta-text production that is commonly understood as happening outside of the domestic sphere, largely labeled as “periphery.” Charging common objects by claiming work as a site of labor, power, protection, and vulnerability. Just as a mask is both disguise and an articulated revelation, the works disclose as much as they conceal. Contradictions and ambiguities are embraced in an intersectional space where there is neither heroine nor victim.

Our aim as an enduring and powerful collective is to shift narratives and to impact critical situations commonly long thought of as not being critical.

**2. What aesthetic means and formats do you use?
To what extent can (and should) art intervene in
sociopolitical structures?**

We use a variety of means and formats, including intervention, reconfiguration, performance, sculpture, installation, and writing.

Art is not a separate thing that intervenes in a sociopolitical structure; rather, art is embedded in sociopolitical structures that govern how artists get to make and share work. A lot of our work is necessarily around subverting and navigating that. None of us would ever “should” on another artist. That said, it is not a choice open to any of us to not intervene in sociopolitical structures. Simply being a Black/Brown female artist is an audacious contravention of the sociopolitical structures that very often deny us our humanity.

**3. Where do you see the potentials and challenges
of working collectively? What makes it a feminist
practice?**

The potential that we have discovered of collective working is to have a system of support and regular contact, a space for feedback and advice, space to reflect and reconvene emotionally and spiritually. It’s where we can be constructively critical of our own and each other’s work in a respectful way, thus pushing boundaries and supporting personal and professional growth. We share resources and knowledge from our individual experiences. This is huge as we are often confronted with worlds that are less accessible. The creation of an intangible space that is nurturing and collaborative, whilst still being critical, as opposed to competitive, is what we believe makes this a feminist practice. We find ourselves in uncomfortable places, unfamiliar territory, uncontrollable circumstances, and foreign surroundings. How do we navigate this discomfort? By creating a sense of security, familiarity, and comfort, so as to foster a sense of belonging within a hostile environment.

Challenges we face include the different time zones we inhabit, getting to meet in person, and making time for each other and essentially ourselves with busy schedules. Considerations of space-holding, involving all kinds

of invisible labor, unacknowledged and absorbed into the mundaneness of the everyday. Our challenge includes building strategies for how to better protect ourselves from the exhaustion of both perceived and unperceived labor, and how to avoid reaching that point of mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion.

**4. We see feminisms as the most progressive method
to rethink the world. What do you think?**

Rethinking the world can be problematic. In some ways we need to re-emote, not rethink the world. This is an action that would be embedded in our daily lives; thinking time is often a time that is set aside from daily life. Feminisms offer powerful paths but will need to be configured with other paths.

NJABALA

Toward Activating the Pluralities of Womanhood as a Site of Resistance in Uganda— Insights into a Curatorial Project

Martha Kazungu

Introduction

I am always surprised at where I get the optimism to hope that something so small would be lucrative for many people. You need a little bit more courage to write an annual program when you do not have a budget in place. But even worse, you need a higher dosage of brevity to place an online open call for collaborators when you do not have any tangible resources in place to support the collaboration, except for your conviction that someone out there might be drawn to your story. Such radical brevity is what I have been feeding on for the process of building the Njabala Foundation and all its activities. With every calculated move of reaching out, applying for support, I am mostly inspired by the manifestation of our practice as a site of resistance. Njabala Foundation was birthed in August 2021 after a series of events done informally but leading to a deliberate generation of ideas and concepts which resonate with the context of the Ugandan art scene. While recollecting the steps leading to the establishment, I am reminded of two remarkable experiences, the AtWork Workshop (Kampala) and the Àsikò Art School (Addis Ababa and Accra), that worked toward instilling the idea of advocating for safe spaces for women artists.

This essay is about how I have used the past years of “doing what I like”—creating safe spaces for women artists¹—to blossom through a range of actions such as writing, interviews, and exhibitions. I will concentrate this presentation on a chronology, an amounting of related events which altogether form this site of resistance involving women artists’ work in Uganda. In particular, I will elaborate on three events: *Tuwaye* (2018), *Embodiment of Reason* (2019, → p. 176, figs. 1, 2), and *My Mother Is Forgetting My Face* (2020, → pp. 176–77, figs. 3, 4), which demonstrate and track the progress of my endeavor. I will conclude with the *Njabala* project, which I hope to pursue for the next couple of years.

I will start off this essay with a reassurance of womanhood by Maria Naita (1968–2019), a renowned Ugandan artist, given during an interview in 2017. Naita was one of her country’s best known sculptors; she is most famous for her works *The Stride* (2007), the monument in the space between the parliament building and the Serena International Conference Centre in Kampala City, the *Kabamba Hero’s Monument* (Kabamba Army Barracks, Uganda, 2005), and the *Building the Nation* monument in Kigali, Rwanda. In her quest to reach the pinnacle of success as a female sculptor, Naita was confronted with patriarchal sentiments that she had to overcome. In the 2017 interview, Naita noted:

... When I started out doing sculpture, I was told this is a man’s thing and all girls dropped out of class and I was the only girl remaining and I was convinced that although it’s a man’s thing ... I am just going to do what I like. Time came that I really believed in myself and I said I can do that no matter what ...”²

Naita’s ability to ignore her naysayers and instill self-belief turned out to be springboard traits in a career which blossomed throughout her life. By standing her ground to explore her passion for sculpture, Naita’s artistic practice beautifully illustrated the resistance that women artists must embrace to grow their careers.

Tuwaye and the Aftermath

In 2018, together with Maria Brinch, we launched the *Tuwaye* (Let's Talk), convening at the House of Talent in Kampala. The title of the convening was inspired by the *Tuwaye* tapestry by Hellen Nabukenya, a Ugandan woman artist who makes tapestries with the help of unemployed women in her neighborhood. The production process often enables the sharing of personal experiences. The *Tuwaye* intensive seminar also involved speaking with woman artists about their practice and brainstorming ways to intervene in Uganda's male-dominated art scene. Stacey Gillian Abe, Hellen Nabukenya, Sandra Suubi, Pamela Enyonu, and Miriam Watsemba took part in the seminar. It concluded with two visits—one to the home and studio of the Uganda-born sculptor Lilian Nabulime (b. 1963, → p. 178, fig. 5) and finally to the Kampala Art Biennale.

One outcome from the *Tuwaye* intensive seminar was the need to have large-scale exhibitions which represented the opinions of woman artists. It was agreed that we would have our first such exhibition two years later in the summer of 2020, which we anticipated to be the peak season for the Kampala art scene. But since a large-scale exhibition takes a lot of investment, we strategized on mounting a “starter” small-scale exhibition to announce the commencement of our journey, but also to act as a placeholder for what was planned to come. This was how and why we organized the *Embodiment of Reason* exhibition.

Embodiment of Reason took place in July 2019 in the Uganda National Museum garage. The exhibition title was inspired by Katherine Stockmann's character in Henrik Ibsen's 1882 play titled *An Enemy of the People*. In the play, Katherine, unlike her male counterparts, is consistently depicted as practical in responding to her society's challenges. The exhibition brought together the work of both Lilian Nabulime (b. 1963 in Kampala) and Maria Brinch (b. 1984 in Norway). It was meant to explore how meanings are transferred through materiality (textile works by Brinch, works in wood and clay by Nabulime), but also to allow for the exchange between two artists coming from different geographical contexts with differing experiences.

While beautifully surpassing the purpose for which it was mounted, *Embodiment of Reason* in several ways surprisingly turned out to be an expression of resistance. Although the exhibition was envisioned as a microscale

“starter” ahead of the large-scale *Njabala This Is Not How* show, it enacted a tremendous role orchestrated by a last-minute cancellation of the venue (Makerere Art Gallery). Considering the nature of works in the exhibition, a last-minute cancellation was almost equivalent to cancelling the whole event. It was shocking and frustrating, but the willingness to paint the message of the exhibition on the wall overshadowed the venue cancellation setback.

By placing the artworks in the garage of the Uganda National Museum amidst historical vehicles formally belonging to political leaders, presidents, or kings, none of whom are female, the exhibition emerged as a bold intrusion and disruption of a patriarchal space. The cars attenuated the theme of the foreplanned exhibition that was meant to question the role and position of women in male-dominated artistic society. The extraordinary quality that we achieved with *Embodiment of Reason* was that what started as a simple curatorial premise—with Maria Brinch working with fabric, Lilian Nabulime working with wood and clay, and the show being an interesting juxtaposition of the experiential materiality of creativity and how this affects perception and interpretation—ended as a bold intrusion and disruption of a patriarchal space since none of the showcased cars belonged to a woman. All of the cars that formed part of the exhibition were driven by former presidents and kings, none of them a woman. The exhibition therefore did more than its original plan—it disrupted normalcy.

Embodiment of Reason attracted an invitation for me to show at the gallery Entrée in Bergen, Norway, where the 2020 exhibition *My Mother Is Forgetting My Face* presented the work of Bathsheba Okwenje, Miriam Watsemba, Maria Brinch, and Lilian Nabulime. *My Mother Is Forgetting My Face* was a metaphorical title, alluding to the suffocating relationships between nations and their respective citizens. In essence, the exhibition spoke to the unspeakable injustices that some nations render to their citizens.

The exhibition discussed three specific nations in which the exhibiting artists took interest: Myanmar, Uganda, and South Sudan. Maria Brinch's work highlighted the resilience in Myanmar, while Bathsheba Okwenje and Miriam Watsemba spoke about the South Sudanese Civil War and the resulting refugee crisis in Uganda. Most recently, Lilian Nabulime explored the coronavirus pandemic in Uganda, which has sparked a set of policies that are inconsiderate toward the country's citizens in the name of combating the spread of the virus.

Njabala Foundation and the Opening Exhibition

The Njabala Foundation was legally established in August 2021 in Uganda after four years of operating informally. The foundation is named after the popular Ugandan folklore of “Njabala” to facilitate conversations on womanhood as well as to create safe spaces for women artists to blossom. The Njabala story tells of a spoiled sixteen-year-old orphan named Njabala who gets married but is unable to fulfill any domestic duties. This leads to an unfolding of events where Njabala is repeatedly beaten by her husband for failing to do domestic work. After days of abuse, she cries out to her mother’s ghost to come to her aid, as it is her (mother’s) fault that she does not know how to do any chores. The ghost comes to help, and while performing the tasks, she demonstrates to her mortal daughter how things are done, singing:

Njababla Njabala njabala tolinsanza muko Njabala—Njabala, Njabala, Njabala, don’t let your husband find me, Njabala.

Abakazi balima bati, Njabala—This is how women plough, Njabala...

The ghost’s labor goes on for a couple of days to the delight of her unsuspecting husband, who believes his beatings have indeed corrected his faulty wife. Unfortunately, one day, her husband returns early from a hunt to find a ghost doing chores while Njabala looks on. Astonished and afraid, he raises an alarm. Njabala is accused of being a witch and chased away from her marital home in a sad ending positioned as a cautionary tale to women everywhere. Homeless and penniless, nothing is said of what becomes of her inheritance as she is an only child who by all rights should inherit her parents’ wealth.

The Njabala folklore has a handful of lessons and inspirations for present-day feminism. The Njabala Foundation hopes to unfold these lessons in what will become an ongoing project including exhibitions, publications, and gatherings aimed toward creating safe spaces for women artists to thrive. As part of the *Njabala* project, we are currently planning the debut exhibition titled *Njabala This Is Not How* at the Makerere Art Gallery in Kampala, featuring eight Ugandan women artists: Immy Mali, Bathsheba Okwenje, Miriam Watsemba, Sandra Suubi, Pamela Enyonu, Sarah Nansubuga, Lilian Nabulime, and Esteri Tebandeke.

By suggesting the title *Njabala: This Is Not How*, I am looking at a possibility to retell the traditional story from a more flexible, contemporary, and inclusive perspective. In a way where there is not a singular socially acceptable way of doing and living for women, but an accepted diversity of choices and decision-making. The most important objective of this exhibition is to establish an energetic and productive public forum for exploring new possibilities of social deconditioning, especially by encouraging feminine interactions through both verbal and nonverbal dialogue. Each of the featuring artists will be intimately narrating their personal experiences, but all of them will converge to extend the space of femininity in society and assert that women too can be custodians of their own identity.

When I first wrote the concept for the *Njabala* exhibition in the spring of 2019, I was looking to have an ambitious exhibition with several artists from different parts of Africa and abroad. It is still our dream to organize ground-breaking exhibitions and events which can facilitate a fair and respectable consumption of art made by women artists. Just like Njabala’s mother, many people in society have been conditioned to take on patriarchy without questioning or resisting it. By extension, our work at Njabala Foundation might inherently attract criticism, because we are trying to change a system that has been in place for decades, and its longevity is generally used as an argument to justify it. Until the work of women artists in Uganda is collected as much as that of their male contemporaries, until women artists get to flourish in their careers, Njabala, in close collaboration with partners, will still have a lot of work to do.

1 Exhibitions showing only work by women artists include *Embodiment of Reason* (Kampala, 2019), *My Mother Is Forgetting My Face* (Bergen, 2020), *My Granary My Home* (Kampala, 2020), and *Seat At the Table* (online, 2020). I have written about the work of Bisi Silva, Keli Safia, Lilian Nabulime, Theresa Musoke, Na Chainkua Reindorf, Georgina Maxim, and Maria Brinch. I have held several interviews and studio visits with other women artists both in Africa and in Europe, including Maria Naita, Theresa Musoke, Lilian Nabulime, Lotte Konow Lund, and Elin Mark. 2 Maria Naita in conversation with Martha Kazungu, June 14, 2017, Mutundwe, Uganda.

NJABALA FOUNDATION

Interview

Uganda

Njabala is a multifaceted campaign sourcing inspiration from a popular Ugandan folklore of Njabala to facilitate conversations on womanhood and create safe spaces for women artists to blossom. Around the globe, the visibility of women artists in comparison to their male counterparts is worryingly unequal. With major collections and art spaces dominated by male artists and their work, women artists find it a daily challenge to navigate the art scenes. To facilitate the possibility of the work of women artists to be seen, Njabala Foundation in various ways campaigns against gender inequality in the art world by organizing art exhibitions and events exclusively dedicated to highlighting the work of women artists. Njabala Foundation was founded by the curator Martha Kazungu in 2021 after several years of operating informally. Njabala Foundation thinks that the world already has too many spaces; therefore, rather than building our own space, we are interested in collaborating with already existing spaces to champion the agenda of women artists. The Njabala Foundation contributes to the correction of historical gender biases and hence accelerates the showcasing of the richness of women artists' work.

1. Which topics do you address and what are the urgent questions?

Broadly speaking, the topics we explore include gender equality, learning African feminisms, everyday feminism, and the rooting and routing of cultural/Indigenous knowledge systems in contemporary art practice. Locally and regionally, we still have a vast knowledge gap. We are yet to fully understand feminism as it has been translocated to us from the Global North. We grapple with translating it and explaining it amongst ourselves, leading to the misunderstanding and hijacking of crucial messages. We coexist alongside prevailing cultural practices and narratives that still retain a firm grip on our societies, thus making it difficult to have meaningful engagement on feminism or feminist practices. The fear of loss of privilege, political and societal standing, and ostracization continues to influence how we engage with feminism. On the global scale we have the challenge of regressive narratives coming out of far-right groups in the Global North, reaffirming toxic cultural practices and thinking at home. This undermines any gains we have made thus far. Additionally, the tools we use to amplify the message of feminism are also available and accessible to our oppressors, making it a tight competition for voice and attention. The future feminists will have their faith challenged every step of the way. We acknowledge their efforts by holding the space where meaningful conversations around feminism and femininity can be held safely and critically.

**2. What aesthetic means and formats do you use?
To what extent can (and should) art intervene in
sociopolitical structures?**

We are invested in interrogating deeply seated notions of gender-based perceptions, roles, trauma, and violence while employing familiar stories. We want to sensitize our audiences to the possibilities of rethinking our folklores but also of daring to ask the difficult and uncomfortable questions. Our work and art exhibitions embody contemporary responses primarily by women artists. Artistic formats of expression transcend several exclusive layers of information and knowledge distribution, thus accelerating access. Artistic formats include but are not limited to painting, photography, poetry, performance, installation, digital art, weaving, crafts, and collage.

Art should always intervene in sociopolitical structures. Art inspires crucial conversations, which helps to name the issues and explore how to best interrogate them. It creates a vivid parallel space in which to question and deconstruct cultural and intellectual legacies, which in turn inspires alternative thinking in problem solving.

**3. Where do you see the potentials and challenges
of working collectively? What makes it a feminist
practice?**

While the challenges of working together are varied, we believe they can be narrowed to the clashing of egos, inequalities in education, resources, access to time, labor distribution, decision-making and management, distance, and language.

Working collectively helps in sharing and transferring skills and knowledge. It also allows for diverse and multilayered interpretations of overarching narratives on how our (African) stories are seen, translated, and understood.

Our practice is rooted in the shared experiences of womanhood in Uganda and beyond. Our focusing is on how we can balance the scales of gender. Our work is an investigation of what everyday (African) feminism looks (or could look) like through the lens of a multigenerational, cross section of women in the community. While creating space to discuss feminist issues in an affirming, relatable, and accessible manner, we also dismantle the reverence of toxic cultural practices.

**4. We see feminisms as the most progressive method
to rethink the world. What do you think?**

Feminism is an asset in the fight against current challenges, especially inequality. Its expansive way of thinking and problem-solving has led to significant progress in the design and adoption of feminist approaches in leadership, STEM, work culture, management, organization, education, and so forth. Feminism, unlike other systems, targets the wholistic well-being of a person.

THE GAFA THAT BINDS US

Pacific Feminism and Its Connections to the Environment and Ancient Ancestral Lineages

Caroline Vercoe

O le mavaega nai le tai e fetaia'i i i'u a gafa.

The farewell at the seashore with the promise to meet again
in the children.¹

This poignant Samoan saying is attributed to Saveasiule'o, the powerful deity guardian of Puluotu, the afterworld in Samoa. Addressing his brother Ulufanuasese'e, the saying has come to remind us that when a journey is taken with no assurance of return, our bonds to home and place will not be broken, but will live on and connect in our *gafa*, our descendants and lineages. The farewell of Saveasiule'o has become a rich point of departure for Pacific communities living in the diaspora, where these connections and relationships are often sustained through customary cultural practices and Indigenous languages. Contemporary artists across the Pacific engaging with issues of gender and representation often explore connections between the natural world and ancient ancestral lineages, blending them with their contemporary experiences. This Indigenous, holistic translation of the value of reciprocal relationships offers a vital contribution toward more sustainable and inclusive feminist pathways.

Pacific feminism can be defined as championing agency, respect, and empowerment for all genders. Gender can be self-determined, but it is often experienced and mediated within the spectrum of masculinity and femininity, especially when considered in reference to social and cultural understandings of self, place, belonging, and difference, rather than biological traits.² This essay will firstly highlight contrasting priorities of Pacific and Western feminisms, and then tease out how key aspects play out in the work of the artists Ani O'Neill and Leafā Wilson (also known as Olga Hedwig Krause) based in Aotearoa New Zealand, in particular the latter's collaborations with her daughters Faith and Olive Wilson.

Three key issues emerge that highlight tensions between Indigenous and Western feminism. Firstly, the quest or aspiration to a universal "sisterhood," which perpetuates a Western (read white) essentialist, binary position.³ An example of this is the importance of rank within a family through matrilineal lines, which can take precedence over the husband/wife relationship that tends to dominate Western feminist power relations. Whether in relation to a marriage or single parenting, this nexus has formed a crucial point of departure for feminist and gender interrogations of social equity and rights to work. While these dynamics certainly resonate across cultures, Pacific feminism highlights the importance of family lineage and place, which also play key roles in negotiating systems of power, authority, and exchange.

Another critique of Western notions of feminism is the prioritizing of rights to work and aspirations that ultimately end up contributing to capitalist and ironically patriarchal norms and hegemonies. This has often been framed within a privileged Eurocentric lens that has excluded or disregarded issues of race and systems of power that do not coalesce around a male/female binary. While intersectional approaches by Kimberlé Crenshaw, Audre Lorde, and bell hooks, among others, have highlighted the need for a more complex

approach to feminist concerns, they have tended to be positioned in parallel trajectories that often pit one group of women against another. As Audre Lorde says, “Black feminism is not white feminism in blackface.”⁴ Māori and Pacific academics and activists, including Haunani-Kay Trask, Donna Awatere, and Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, have echoed these concerns. Aileen Moreton-Robinson, a Geonpul woman from Quandamooka, Australia, has developed a compelling critique arguing that essentialist Western feminist discourse is complicit in gendered racial oppression. “Indigenous women do not want to be white women,” she writes, “we want to be Indigenous women who exercise and maintain our cultural integrity in our struggle for self-determination as Indigenous people.”⁵ In Hawaii, Haunani-Kay Trask went further, prioritizing collective native self-determination over feminist concerns, in the wake of fraught and pervasive colonial imperialism. Rejecting the binary and essentialist nature of cultural feminism, she warned Indigenous communities not to trust *haole* (white) feminists:

It is imperative to understand that for us, *haole* Americans are the interlopers in Hawai‘i, whether they happen to be feminists or Marxists or capitalists or California New Agers. Before they say a single word, they are already communicating that they are *haole*. . . . At this point in our struggle, race and culture are stronger forces than sex and gender.⁶

In Aotearoa New Zealand, Donna Awatere in her essay “Māori Sovereignty,” published in the feminist magazine *Broadsheet* in 1984, shares Trask’s reservations about the agendas of “white feminism.” “White women sought to set Māori women against Māori men. . . . This loyalty is seen in their rejection of the sovereignty of Māori people and in their acceptance of the imposition of British culture on their Māori.”⁷

Ngahuia Te Awekotuku also contributed to this discourse, highlighting the importance and agency of diverse sexualities, which was uncommon at that time. Addressing a women’s conference in 1978, she called for an intersectional understanding of these issues, linking them to the legacies of colonialism. “Few Māori male leaders,” she contended, “in fact, I cannot think of even one right now—in the current struggle will concede to a female voice, or female counsel, unless she is working within the patriarchal definition of *power over*.”⁸ Unlike Trask and Awatere, Te Awekotuku did not advocate for

Indigenous collective determinism as a means of progressing gender rights for women. In fact, it was quite the opposite. She envisaged an empowering and strong platform that was “beautiful, matriarchal, strong.” “For our brothers,” she cautioned, “Let them tend to their own problems—let the men clean up their own messes for a change. Far away from us.”⁹

A third crucial point of difference between Pacific and Western feminism is the relationship between Indigenous people and the land as an ancestor, often female, and a place of belonging linked by lineage and genealogical connections. This relationship is central to protest and activism championing self-determination and sovereignty combatting the legacies of colonialism, and its associated land loss and desecration. Contemporary artists across the Pacific have also drawn on these ancient relationships and connections, addressing issues of gender and representation, as a means of exploring their diaspora experiences.

Aotearoa New Zealand is a unique Pacific diaspora homeland. Due to New Zealand’s colonial histories, in particular in Niue, the Cook Islands, Tokelau, and Samoa, large communities have settled from the 1940s onward. Strong connections remain given their close geographic proximity. For instance, more Cook Islanders live in Aotearoa New Zealand than in the Cook Islands, and Niuean New Zealanders vastly outnumber those living in Niue. The maintenance of cultural practices and the collaborative nature of their creation form crucial links to heritage island homelands and play formative roles in the development and continuum of cultural identities.

Ani O’Neill’s art practice reflects her experiences growing up in Aotearoa New Zealand as well as a sustained period of time living on the island of Rarotonga. Raised by her Rarotongan grandparents in inner-city Auckland, she grew up with a network of Pacific Mamas, who would teach her to crochet, stitch, knit, plait, and weave. Her installation and collaborative art practices draw on a range of textile-based art forms, including *tivaevae* (decorated quilts), weaving, and crochet. From the mid 1990s, she has also been an active member of the Pacific Sisters, the longest ongoing art collective in Aotearoa New Zealand. Many of her concerns could be deemed feminist—deploying and collapsing the art/craft binary, bringing the domestic space into gallery spaces, and emphasizing everyday actions as part of her artwork. They also embody key Pacific Indigenous practices—working col-

laboratively, often within gendered groups, and creating art forms that function in both domestic and ceremonial contexts. These practices highlight the importance of passing knowledge from person to person, and generation to generation, both in homeland and diaspora settings.

O'Neill's works *Star by Night* (1994, → p. 184, fig. 1) and *Kua Marino Te Tai The Sea Is Calm* (1995) pay homage to ancient Pacific navigators, drawing on the star weaving technique used to make hats worn by Cook Islands women to church. She transformed this technique into large-scale sculptural forms comprising plaited star-shaped shiny florist ribbon stitched together. They became shimmering waves of stars, falling down the wall and across the floor. *Star by Night* in black evokes towering ocean waves and ancient Pacific navigation skills relating to star maps, and *Kua Marino Te Tai* in white recreates gentler currents and patterns. The works pay homage to the profound understanding of the natural environment that the early Pacific navigators possessed, as well as the women who inspired her to draw on and rework their teaching into new art forms.

Beyond dismantling the art/craft binary, the work also speaks to the artist's relationship with her female relatives and community. Pacific art forms not made for gallery contexts include *tivaevae* (decorated quilts), *tapa* (decorated bark cloth), and *tatau* (tattoo). They embody not only their aesthetic dimensions, but also the time taken to make them by hand. They are imbued with memories shared between those working together, and beyond this the continuum of time, histories, ancestors, and the ancient deities who brought them into the world.

As part of a series of eight life-size photographic light-box works, a collaboration with the artist Pati Solomona Tyrell, the Pacific Sisters presented themselves as Indigenous deities and fluid identities (→ pp. 422–23). O'Neill's *Ina Tuitui Ata: Ina Who Stitches Reflections and Shadows* (2021, → p. 185, fig. 2) sees the artist as 'Ina, Atiuan goddess of the moon and other stories. She sits cross-legged on a white crochet mat, upon an expanse of gray sand, evoking a lunar landscape. She holds up a 'ike (tapa beater) ready to beat fine white clouds of tapa. Resplendent as a crocheted *tiputa*, her hair falls down her back to reach the sand, a round shining *kapkap* hangs from her ear, and she is adorned with a shell and beaded waistcoat. Her *tatau*, which covers her thigh, is visible and she wears a woven star-shaped headband of white-

gold pandanus. Meaning is imbued into the natural materials used and the making practices and knowledge, passed down through generations. Her body, partially bound in Tongan *ngatu* (decorated bark cloth), becomes a placemaking site that stretches back toward ancient ancestral lineages and deities responsible for the origins of the land, sea, and sky, but also forward, projecting reflections into the future.

Pacific feminism celebrates ancient and present genealogies with a particular focus on matrilineal lineages and reciprocal relationships. Leafā Wilson, a Samoan artist and curator based in Aotearoa New Zealand, has also been practicing from the 1980s and works across a range of mediums. Best known for her performance and participatory art practices, she has developed a number of works in collaboration with her daughters Faith and Olive like *Fili* (2015, → pp. 186–87, fig. 3 / p. 367). These performances explore the relationships and *gafa* between mother and daughters through the lens of Samoan everyday and customary practices. Sitting on a blue tarpaulin, Leafā's two daughters remove the sheet and sit on either side. Then, she commences to painstakingly cut off her daughters' hair. At some points they lie in her lap as she cuts chunks of hair from their heads with a *sepelu* (machete). Her daughters then take turns cutting off their mother's hair. Audience members were also invited to cut a piece of their hair and take it with them. While these actions have evoked a number of now iconic performance works, they also speak to key Samoan cultural beliefs. In the Pacific, a person's head is considered *tapu* (sacred), and so is one's hair. Human hair features in chiefly headdresses across the region. In Samoa, the *tuiga* headdress features bleached human hair as an integral element. It provides a striking visual effect and symbolizes the *mana* (authority and influence, related to *tapu*) of the wearer as well as their ancestral heritage.

These actions, performed in front of a small gallery audience, became an intimate and emotionally charged encounter. It took on a ritual quality of letting them go and as they transitioned into adults. The action of cutting women's hair, a loaded signifier of femininity, also evokes the precolonial popular short hairstyle known as *tutangi*, worn by young Samoan women. It was the men in Polynesia who preferred to wear their hair long, however these practices quickly changed to conform with Western norms.

In 2017, Leafā and Faith created solo and collaborative performances that further explored the bonds and boundaries of their mother/daughter relationship. *Confessions Let It Burn* (→ p. 186, fig. 4) by Faith Wilson highlights their deep and sometimes fraught connections. The work explores the dynamics of truth within this relationship, and the paradox that we sometimes lie to protect those we love or because we don't want to bring shame to our family. A more playful collaborative work, *Intersectional* (2017, → p. 187, fig. 5), features the artists standing together at a traffic intersection in Otautahi Christchurch, reading extracts from writers known for championing the intersectional.

Understanding gender roles as reciprocal and relational, embodying systems of collective power and authority, as opposed to access to economic status or opportunity, is a key aspect of Indigenous Pacific epistemologies. A Pacific feminist lens offers the possibility of broadening the framework of feminism by drawing on ancient ancestral lineages that stretch into the present, and honoring the agency within matriarchal and gender relationships. O'Neill and Wilson's work reflects a compelling understanding of the importance of family and the distillation of Indigenous Pacific concepts and actions. Their practices activate the sentiment expressed by Saveasiu'leo, in his ancient farewell, that today is often used to convey diaspora connections; a reminder that while we might be separated across time and space, our *gafa* or lineages will live on to connect us in the future. This is the reciprocal and sustainable value of Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of being, which connect the past, present, and future as inextricably linked and understood.

1 E. Schultz, "Proverbial Expressions of the Samoans," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 59, no. 3 (1950). Collected and translated in 1906. Translated into English by Brother Herman in 1945. See: http://www.jps.auckland.ac.nz/document/Volume_59_1950/Volume_59%2C_No_3/Proverbial_expressions_of_the_Samoans%2C_by_E._Schultz%2C_p_207-231/p1 [accessed in May 2022]. 2 I write this essay having just completed a co-authored essay with the Pacific linguist Melenaite Taumoeofolau entitled "Descendants of Pulu: Pacific Feminism in the Expanded Field," for the exhibition *Declaration: A Pacific Feminist Agenda* (2022) curated by Ane Tonga at the Auckland Art Gallery, Aotearoa New Zealand. This essay draws on and develops a number of issues and concerns relating them to the contemporary art practices of Ani O'Neill and Leafā Wilson. 3 Gendered relationships within families include the Fijian *vasu* system, the Samoan *feagaiga* covenant, and the Tongan *fahu* and *mehekitanga* systems. 4 Audre Lorde, "Sexism: An American Disease in Blackface," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* by Audre Lorde (Berkeley, 2007), p. 60. 5 Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism* (Brisbane, 2000), p. 151. 6 Haunani-Kay Trask, "Pacific Island Women and White Feminism," in *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*, rev. ed. (Monroe, ME, 1993), p. 265. 7 Donna Awatere, "Māori Sovereignty," *Broadsheet Magazine* (1984), p. 41. 8 Ngahua Te Awakotuku, "Whakaaro Noa Iho: Some Ideas for Māori Women," in *Mana Wahine Māori* (Auckland, 1991), p. 61. 9 Ibid., p. 64.

THE QUESTION OF FEMINISM IN CHINESE CONTEMPORARY ART

Sasha Su-Ling Welland

As Chinese contemporary art emerged on the international stage during the 1990s and early 2000s, critics persistently noted the relative invisibility of women artists, leading them to ask whether feminist art existed in China. This leap in reasoning often led to a perceived lack that cast Chinese women as belated, bound by “traditional culture,” or in a proto-developmental stage compared to Western counterparts when it came to feminist art production. A more critical and decolonial understanding, however, requires attention to the ways Chinese contemporary art went global, in which curators tried to find art that looked feminist according to activist waves and visual forms already familiar to them. We might ask instead what exactly we mean when we say *feminist art*. Is it a particular object, event, project, or epistemology? And, what does Chinese contemporary art practice contribute to our understanding of this term?

“Feminism”: Translingual Rupture, Multiple Meanings

Within China gender studies, it is widely acknowledged that there is no single, uncontested translation of the seemingly uniform term “feminism” in English. Over the course of the twentieth century, multiple articulations arose: *nüquan zhuyi*, *nüxing zhuyi*, *nannü pingdeng zhuyi*, *nüquan yundong*, *funü yundong*. The rapid succession of epistemic ruptures in modern Chinese history—as the People’s Republic of China emerged from dynastic rule, semicolonialism, and civil war between the Nationalist and Communist Parties, and as it later transitioned from a socialist political economy to integration with global capitalism—led to vociferous debates over and reworking of gender norms. In the linguistic disquiet that ensued, terms signifying women’s power, rights, social role, gendered psyche, relative equality with men, and massification for class revolution entered the lexicon. As the historian Tani Barlow notes, “It is significant that the historical flexibility of colloquial Chinese has allowed for so many ways to phrase the word feminism or the movement to center female subjects.”¹

In thinking about feminist art, this same framework applies. Chinese art that centers women and an ethical obligation to restructure the workings of power in the world has taken many successive forms. Visual practices and gender ideologies have shifted, sometimes radically, across political eras and through Chinese encounters with other cultural formations, such as those of the West or the Soviet Union. Various practices and ideologies have remained latent and open to resignification over time, overlapping and impinging upon one another in unpredictable ways. Looking closely at these layers, as they haunt, query, and provoke, informs the multidirectional citation of feminist movement as necessarily grounded in time and place, but also as relational, transnational, and planetary in scope. And while a focus on queer art remains beyond the purview of this essay, the twentieth-century epistemic ruptures that caused such remarkable shifts in feminine norms and such heated debate over the “woman question” as core to Chinese modernity reveal the inherent instability of gender, as well as sex and sexuality, as discursively produced again and again through a complex social matrix. Consider, for example, the late-twentieth-century Chinese transvaluation of the

term *tongzhi* or “comrade” from one of socialist to queer solidarity. Not only does *tongzhi* refuse the transparent translation of global gayness defined by a Western standard into Chinese; it also brings with it a residual socialist history of consciousness, of the classed conditions of being outside hegemonic norms.²

My encounters with Chinese women artists informed by their consciousness of what it means to be working at the margins of mainstream art practice led me to reframe my understanding of feminist art. Rather than originating in a particular time or place, it has the potential to *world* in another way, to make visible other worlds-in-becoming. It creates new sight lines of knowledge, recognition, affiliation, and alliance in which art takes on an ethical dimension, of reordering the pain and pleasure of being in the world, of memorializing, of taking care.³

Hung LIU: Preserving and Destroying the Image

Following this aesthetic orientation, it seems fitting to begin by remembering the remarkable body of work produced by Hung LIU (1948–2021). Her recent death, just weeks before a career survey was scheduled to open at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC, marks the end of a long artistic journey.⁴ She went from sketching in the countryside as an urban “sent-down youth” during the Cultural Revolution to training in socialist realism as a painting student at the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in Beijing to off-canvas experiments as a graduate student at the University of California, San Diego, in classes taught by the performance artist and Happenings instigator Allan Kaprow. The large-scale paintings for which Liu is now best known bear the traces of all these life turns.

In *Olympia II* (1992), a Chinese courtesan with bound feet and garbed in silk brocade lies in an odalisque-like pose on a flowered chaise longue. She is painted in realist detail in monochromatic red sepia tones. A long, green wooden shelf attached to the wall serves as a display mount for the painting, framed on either side by yellow chinoiserie ceramic vases. A lacquered wooden bowl also rests on the shelf, in front of the painting, and two small jade flower sculptures nestle in the shelf’s hollow cabinetry interior. The woman thus appears as one of several oriental antiquities on display, but the oil paint in which she has been rendered thins at her edges and drips down the surface of the canvas. A historical pho-

tograph by a late nineteenth-century traveler to China served as Liu’s referent for the painting. The photographer posed his subject in the reclining composition of feminine availability made famous by French Orientalist painters like Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres, one that is patently different from the poses that courtesans themselves struck on their own visits to the photo studio—wielding swords, reading books, or riding in automobiles. *Olympia II* expresses what Shu-mei Shih theorizes as a “feminist transnationality,” which registers “the location of the immigrant artist articulating a gendered visual economy deftly negotiating multiple cultural and cross-cultural nodal points of meaning and signification, inflected by transnational crossings through immigration, returns to China, and returns to the United States.”⁵ The painting-cum-installation exerts an antagonism against both Chinese patriarchy and the Western gaze.

Liu has stated, “As a painter, I am interested in subjecting the documentary authority of historical photographs to the more reflective process of painting. I want to both preserve and destroy the image.”⁶ In works such as *Avant-Garde* (1993) and *Resident Alien* (1988), she turns to photographs of herself. While the title of the first suggests an aesthetic doctrine of newness and originality, the painting on canvas stretched over a silhouette-shaped frame reworks a 1973 photograph of Liu as a student in uniform, rifle slung over her shoulder, during military training. Depicted in the broad, blunt brushstrokes of socialist realism, the cut-out figure plays the edge of avant-garde or *xianfeng*, the Chinese term used for young pioneer or proletarian vanguard. The oil painting *Resident Alien* blows up to monumental scale the 1984 identity card issued to Liu by the US Immigration and Naturalization Service. It bears a headshot photograph, her thumbprint, and the parodic pseudonym of Cookie, Fortune. In Shu-mei Shih’s critical language, these two paintings serve as identity fragments of antagonism: against the Maoist state and of a minority subject whose complex historical trajectory has been flattened out or elided altogether.

PAN Yuliang: Trailblazing Feminist Transnationality

Hung LIU’s work attests to multiple border-crossings that complicate and challenge understanding of Chinese-ness beyond the nation-state frame through which museums and exhibitions are so often organized. In this regard, her career harks back to a predecessor,

PAN Yuliang (1895–1977), from another historical moment of feminist transnationality. In the early twentieth century, Chinese art schools offered classes in Western painting and new opportunities for artists like PAN to hone their skills in genres not yet dominated by male tradition in China. Orphaned at a young age, PAN was sent to live with her uncle. He sold her as a teenager into a brothel, where she gained the sympathies of a wealthy customs official. He supported her artistic talent by sending her to school in Shanghai. In 1919, PAN won a government scholarship that enabled her to train in painting and sculpture in Lyon, Paris, and Rome. She studied at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris under the same teacher as her contemporary, the Indian-Hungarian artist Amrita Sher-Gil (1913–1941). As the art historian Sonal Khullar observes, the connections and disjunctions of these two women's artistic lives and careers “illuminate the vexed relationship of nationalism to feminism in China and India and the no less vexed place of Asian women in the twentieth-century art world.”⁷ Breaking from the tradition of academic realism and testing the limits of proper femininity, PAN exhibited sensuous paintings of female nudes at the First National Art Exhibition of 1929 in Shanghai. As the violent clash between the Nationalists and the Communists divided the art world, she left for Paris, where she spent the rest of her life. Popular biographical accounts of Pan's peripatetic life emphasize the conservative moral backlash in China at the time against “modern girls,” especially ones from a background such as hers. Like Liu's *Olympia II*, Pan's *Self-Portrait* (1945) juxtaposes a female figure with a vase of flowers but to strikingly different effect. Although she found herself marginalized in France as an Asian woman and eventually began producing decorative ink paintings that seemingly nod toward Orientalism, in this work in oil PAN cuts an imposing figure. Framed by bright yellow flowers, the daylight window behind her, a patterned wall hanging, and the vividly colored stripes of her shirt, she gazes outward with a fierce almost brooding subjectivity, laying claim to the authorial presence usually reserved for the male European artist in his Parisian studio.

LEI Yan: Querying China's Communist Past

The figures that loom large on the horizon of the works *If the Long March Was a Feminist Movement* (→ p. 318) and *If They Were Women* (2002, → p. 209, fig. 1) by LEI Yan (b. 1957) reference instead early Communist history, as well as the artist's training as a propagandist in a Chinese

military career that spanned three decades. The context of this piece's creation, at the cusp of her retirement from service, was an encounter with the US feminist artist Judy Chicago. In 2002, LEI Yan traveled to a rural corner of Yunnan province to participate in the “women's section” of *The Long March: A Walking Visual Display*, a traveling show that followed the route of the Red Army's original Long March. The curators invited Chicago to join Chinese artists in a feminist action, for which the US artist chose the organizing theme “What If Women Ruled the World.”⁸ The “collaboration” eventually broke down as the Chinese artists questioned the neocolonial influence of Western feminist discourse and the hierarchical role given to Judy Chicago as their organizer and pedagogue. Nonetheless, LEI Yan responded to Chicago's “what if” fantasy with a pair of digitally altered black-and-white photographs, asking linked, retrospective questions: “What if the Long March had been a women's rights movement?” and “What if they had been women?” She shifts the subjunctive mood of Chicago's verbal construction to the past unreal conditional, which roots dreams for future justice in historically specific conditions.

The first photograph (→ p. 318) features prominent women activists, including Kang Keqing, Cai Chang, and Deng Yingchao, who joined the Communist Red Army on its six-thousand-mile, yearlong trek in 1934 to establish a rural guerrilla base for socialist class revolution. In the bottom left corner, LEI Yan superimposed her first question in red script. At the same time that she brings back into sight the collectivized national female subject of Maoist feminism and its language of *nūquan* (female rights or power), in contradistinction to *nūxing* (the post-socialist locution for *woman* that emphasizes female sex), she calls into question whether socialism made good on its promise of women's liberation. The second photograph (→ p. 209, fig. 1) features male party leaders, Mao at the center, standing on the same patch of ground. They are adorned, in a comic, cross-dressing projection, with 1930s women's hairstyles. LEI captions the image this time with her second question. In each photo a regiment of women soldiers marches in the background, but in opposite directions, as if toward the future, as if toward the past. In the bottom right corner of each appears the miniature, camouflage-dressed figure of the artist herself, peering through binoculars at her historical predecessors. The optical metaphor of the binoculars suggests a divided vision, but one that if trained at the right angle might help the viewer combine the two stereoscopic-like images and thus achieve the effect of

greater depth. LEI Yan sights a communist past meant to seem distant in reform-era discourse about linking tracks with the capitalist world, bringing it near as she asks through the specificity of a Chinese “guerrilla girl” what women might have become if not caught by the double binds of Chinese Communist history.

HE Chengyao: Reperforming Revolutionary Outrage

The imprint of the woman soldier on the cultural memory of women of this generation reappears in unexpected ways across their work. Hung LIU, for example, created a series of paintings based on *Daughters of China* (1949), a classic Maoist film in which a group of women join the Communist resistance and eventually drown themselves in a river rather than surrender to Japanese enemy forces. Hung iteratively painted stills from this final scene of martyrdom, as the determined women waded together into the swirling water, but she also subjected the images to her characteristic use of dissolving and dripping paint. HE Chengyao (b. 1964), in a less explicit reference, drew inspiration in her move from painting to performance art from a well-known gesture of outrage performed by a women enlistee in the 1961 film *The Red Detachment of Women*. In this story based on historical events of the 1930s, a runaway maidservant is liberated by a Communist women's militia. When asked why she wants to join the Red Detachment, she rips open her blouse to expose the injuries inflicted upon her body. After HE Chengyao began using her own nude body as a way to connect with her mother's difficult past of shame and resulting mental illness, she wrote:

I am still in the early experimental stages of using feminism as a method for making my own art. . . . It's like the scene in the film *The Red Detachment of Women* when Wu Qionghua, having suffered the extremes of oppression and shame, takes the stage and denounces the vicious landlord Nan Batian. All she can do is tear open her clothing and show everyone her wounds.⁹

HE Chengyao's mother became pregnant with her when she was nineteen years old. As an unmarried woman, she and the father were dismissed from their socialist work unit, a ceramics factory, and suffered economic instability and moral opprobrium. From that time on, HE's mother experienced mental breaks in which she would sometimes strip off her clothes, appear naked in public, and

even run away for months on end. Until HE turned to the medium of performance art some thirty years later, she tried to hide a family history she considered shameful. In 2001, she returned to visit the village in Sichuan where her mother was living and created the photographic series *Mama and Me*. In an article about her evolving work, she recalls:

This summer I returned home. In *Mama and Me*, my mother sits by herself on a stool at the side of a courtyard, playing with a rotten apple, when I quietly approach and stand behind her to document this moment through a series of photographs. This is the first time my mother and I had our picture taken together. With the aid of this medium, I have been able to reaffirm the family and blood connection that links me and my mother, and to partially satisfy a yearning of more than thirty years to support, touch, and embrace her.¹⁰

Through photographic reproduction she gains distance on herself, standing together with her mother for an unconventional family portrait. Her mother wears only a pair of white pants. In the first image, she sits alone, looking down. In the third image, as HE Chengyao takes off her shirt, her mother first seems aware of the audience of cameras outside the frame. In the fifth image, HE's mother looks up, her eyes meeting those of her daughter, whose head still remains beyond the viewer's sight. In the final image, the daughter's head enters the frame, and both women look down, returning doubled to the first. HE Chengyao revivifies, through her performance art, a revolutionary episode of female self-exposure, but she reperforms it at the moment before political training, such as that which follows in *The Red Detachment of Women*, of how to properly serve the socialist revolution. Instead, her gesture condemns the gendered violence and “feudal remnants” of state patriarchy. The mimetic performance of her mother's transgressive behavior embodies the experience of suffering, the traumatic realism of Woman in socialist political art forged into a univalent sign, silenced of subjectivity. She reopens the wound of the sign, in an attempt to heal the broken bond between mother and daughter.

XIAO Lu: Shattering the Narrative

A similar form of sublimated anger emerges in the return of XIAO Lu (b. 1962) to a layered scene of trauma, that

of being repeatedly erased from the history of Chinese contemporary art. In XIAO's photographic series *Fifteen Shots: 1989–2003* (→ pp. 212–13, fig. 2), the woman artist seeks revenge and recognition. Many art historians date the arrival of a new Chinese avant-garde to the year 1989, when the National Art Museum of China in Beijing exhibited *China/Avant-Garde*. Its red and white insignia of a “no U-turn” traffic sign captured the spirit of this survey show. The inclusion of 297 works by 186 contemporary artists represented the culmination of art activities and groups that had emerged under the gradual relaxation of state cultural control in the 1980s. All historical accounts of that seminal 1989 moment mention XIAO Lu's installation *Dialogue* (1989). At the opening, she drew a handgun and fired two shots into the mirror at the center of the installation, causing the exhibit's first closure. Authorities eventually shut it permanently due to works of art in violation of the organizers' contract with the museum, stipulating that they would not exhibit performance art, as well as due to a false bomb threat. Some even retrospectively called XIAO's action “the first shots of Tiananmen.”¹¹ All of these accounts name TANG Song (b. 1960), a classmate present at the time and arrested together with XIAO, as co-creator of the work. This version of history dominated, to the exclusion of a nuanced interpretation of an artwork dealing so obviously with gender relations. Two public telephone booths stand several feet apart. The black-and-white image of a woman's back appears in one, with that of a male counterpart in the other. Receivers pressed to their ears, they seem engaged in dialogue. On a white plinth between the booths rests a red telephone, its receiver dangling from the cord over the side. A mirror the size and shape of the booths is positioned behind the telephone, with the lines of a red cross dividing it like a windowpane. This became the target that XIAO Lu stood before and fired into.

TANG Song never denied the attribution of authorship he was granted, and he and XIAO became a couple after the incident, spending years together in Australia. After their breakup in 2003, and XIAO's return to China, she attempted to reclaim her authorship of *Dialogue*, only to meet with general art world disdain and dismissal. She responded by creating *Fifteen Shots: 1989–2003*, which consists of fifteen panels, one for each of the intervening years. Life-size photographs of her grimly taking aim fade in a progression from dark intensity to washed-out grays. At a Beijing shooting range, she fired through each glass-covered panel. The bullet holes inflicted on her own image mark her presence as an actor on the

scene. XIAO also wrote an autobiographical novel titled *Dialogue*, which provides a different history for this work. She had grown up as the well-connected daughter of respected socialist realist artists. Her father became the president of the China Academy of Art in Zhejiang province. As a teenager, she attended the attached high school of Beijing's Central Academy of Fine Arts. During her senior year, she endured sexual abuse by one of her parents' best friends, a painter her father had studied with in the Soviet Union, into whose care they had entrusted her. XIAO writes that before his final violation, he stood over the bed where she lay and said, “I'd like to paint a nude portrait of you.”¹² Her controversial shots intended to shatter this personal but also institutional art history. Her arrest-worthy offence represented a rebellion not just against academic style, but against patriarchal power perpetuated by the academy system.

Onward

By way of conclusion and opening to the next generation of Chinese feminist artists, whose practices and paths to wider recognition have in part been shaped by those who came before them, I return to Hung LIU and her life's work: painting portraits that place marginalized people—family members, refugees, comfort women,¹³ laborers, and farmers—at the center of her monumentally sized canvases. In her diptych *Mu Nu* (Mother and Daughter, 1997, → p. 215, fig. 3), two women pull a boat along a canal. The rope bound around the waist of the mother in the lead stretches across the two canvases, tethering her efforts to that of the daughter. While the piece draws upon the representational tradition of socialist realism and its commitment to the working class, making visible the central role that women's labor has always played in China, it also conveys the backbreaking struggle to survive. Liu dissolves the heroic image of women who “hold up half the sky,”¹⁴ as the sweat and tears of their push onward flows from their bodies in turpentine drips that preserve and destroy.

Artists like Hung LIU, whose feminist transnationality is prefigured by an artist like PAN Yuliang, have led the way for future generations to experiment formally as a means of confronting questions of survivance in an embattled world. In the durational performances of TONG Wenmin (b. 1989), she inserts herself into “natural” settings of the twenty-first-century Anthropocene to explore contemporary connections between the body and environment.

In the video *Coral* (2019, → pp. 214–15, fig. 4) filmed off Dinawan Island, Malaysia, she follows these instructions for the piece: “Collect plastic bottles scattered throughout the island and string them up to the body. Float with the waves.” Tethered to the scavenged refuse of toxic economies, the woman’s body adrift in the water registers the exhaustion of labor, its implication in and reliance upon an altered environment, and the possibilities of being held afloat in the ongoingness of the world by the sympoiesis of “making with.”

1 Tani Barlow, *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism* (Durham, NC, 2004), p. 14. 2 Petrus Liu, *Queer Marxism in Two Chinas* (Durham, NC, 2015). 3 Sasha Su-Ling Welland, *Experimental Beijing: Gender and Globalization in Chinese Contemporary Art* (Durham, NC, 2018). 4 Dorothy Moss, *Hung Liu: Portraits of Promised Lands*, exh. cat. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution (Washington, DC, 2021). 5 Shu-mei Shih, *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations Across the Pacific* (Berkeley, 2007), p. 62. 6 Hung LIU, “Seven Poses,” *Women in the Arts* (Fall 2008), p. 22. 7 Sonal Khullar, “Parallel Tracks: PAN Yuliang and Amrita Sher-Gil,” in *Eurasian Encounters: Museums, Missions, Modernities*, ed. Carolien Stolte and Yoshiyuki Kikuchi (Amsterdam, 2017), p. 76. 8 Sasha Su-Ling Welland, “Camouflaged Histories: LEI Yan as Chinese Guerrilla Girl,” *positions* 28, no. 1 (2020), pp. 87–119. 9 Welland 2018 (see note 3), p. 224. 10 HE Chengyao, “In the Mirror,” *Chinese Contemporary Art* 4, no. 5 (2001). 11 Gao Minglu, “Foreword,” in XIAO Lu, *Dialogue*, trans. Archibald McKenzie (Hong Kong, 2010), p. viii. The Tiananmen Square massacre took place just four months later, on June 4, 1989. 12 *Ibid.*, p. 42. 13 “Comfort women” is a translation of the Japanese term for women and girls forced into sexual slavery by the Imperial Japanese Army in occupied countries and territories during the Second World War. 14 “Women hold up half the sky” is a quote by Mao Zedong from his call for women to join the public labor force, in which he declared, “Whatever male comrades can accomplish, women comrades can too.” This rallying of women into agricultural and industrial sectors often foisted upon them an unrecognized double burden of productive and domestic labor.

FROM INTERNATIONAL FEMINISM TO THE TRANSNATIONAL FABULATION OF FEMINIST IDENTITIES

Nikita Yingqian Cai

In 1998, *Die Hälfte des Himmels* (Half of the Sky) opened at the Frauenmuseum in Bonn. The exhibition had resulted from a protest by female artists in Germany against the all-men's show *China!* mounted at Kunstmuseum Bonn two years prior. The title "Half of the Sky" referred to Mao Zedong's slogan "Women hold up half the sky," and it manifested the intertwined policies of the socialist revolution and the feminist movement in China. The event nonetheless charted feminist solidarity across borders. However, the Maoist referent is out of context because the exhibition's selection of artists was mainly based on a contested grouping of *nüxing yishu*¹ proposed by some Chinese art critics and curators in China's reform era² as a backlash to the degendering representation of women during the Cultural Revolution.

Following the events on Tiananmen Square of June 4, 1989, and the fall of the Berlin Wall, international attention positioned China as the last stalwart of communism and perceived its emerging contemporary art scene as a domain of political dissidents. Female artists largely excluded from the spotlight of their male counterparts found their work contained in a new domesticating and marginalizing category of *nüxing yishu* that reaffirmed the binary of masculinity and femininity. Entering the early years of the twenty-first century, the female artists who had participated in some of the exhibitions that featured *nüxing yishu* as a distinctive theme in the 1990s eventually disavowed their association with the category and distanced themselves from the critical positionality of *nüxingzhuyi yishu* (a modified translation of Feminist Art that emphasizes femininity). This disavowal has had an enduring impact on younger generations of female artists who hesitate to define and translate their practice and critical voices into the universal currency of global feminism, despite being well informed about Western feminist movements and their latest theoretical developments as well as global social media activism.

More than twenty years later, a big-scale exhibition titled *Duration: Chinese Art in Transformation* opened at the Beijing Minsheng Art Museum in September 2020. The exhibition attempted to showcase the collection acquired by the China Minsheng Banking Corporation by presenting the stretches of Chinese contemporary art from the 1970s to the present. Thematized around six leitmotifs and comprised of paintings, sculptures, installations, videos, and animations, the exhibition includes only nine female artists among a list of ninety-one, and the five appointed curators were all men. The systemic

negligence of feminist attentiveness that still prevails in most art institutions in China overwrites the struggles that generations of female artists have endured. Shuffled by the dominant, patriarchal mentality of the art world, female artists who had received academic training alongside their male cohorts, such as the nine women selected by the Minsheng Art Museum, remain in the shadows cast by the national art system and the international art market.

As a curator and a woman who received higher education in the late 1990s and acquired the transnational experiences of working in the arts following the boom of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, my practice and positionality are informed by marginalized exhibition histories and cultural lineages within and beyond China and Asia. When Xiaoyu Weng and I co-curated the exhibition *Neither Black / Red / Yellow Nor Woman* at Times Art Center Berlin in 2019, we committed to highlighting exceptional stories of women who negotiate their artistic voices with identity-impasse to navigate racial, geographical, and ideological boundaries. Retracing their mental and physical dislocations beyond the colonial histories and wartime ideologies, paradoxes surface when vision, rhetoric, and agenda of Western feminism, in the words of Trinh T. Minh-ha, partake “in the Euro-American system of dualistic reasoning”³ or involuntarily join forces to submerge local histories and complexities that are unspeakable or untranslatable. I’m particularly inspired by three young artists, CHANG Wen-Hsuan (b. 1991), SHEN Xin (b. 1990), and Luka Yuanyuan YANG (b. 1989), who are in search of affective networks and allegorical possibilities of feminist identities that are not recognized by mainstream history. They were born with the multidirectional encounters of globalization and have employed fictionalization as a method to move across temporalities, continents, and contexts. The fabricated voices and intimacies of women diasporas are embedded in their personal experiences of moving in between cultures and communities. The hauntology of these identities summons incommensurable conflicts of universality and singularity, where singularity lies in resistance to abstraction—abstraction into categories such as ethnicity, gender, class, and ideology. Given the complex contexts and interwoven histories of racial and gender oppression, their practices accommodate the liberating aspirations of feminist subjects and their resistance to binary constructions. At the same time, these identities straddle different times and spaces, connect discrete individuals, and speak to us through their experiences and conditions.

Take the example of Siā Soat-hông (1901–1970), featured by CHANG Wen-Hsuan in ___’s *Autobiography* (2016–19, → pp. 218–19, fig. 1). Born and raised in a working-class family and later becoming a founding member of the Taiwanese Communist Party (1928–31) under Japanese colonial rule, Siā Soat-hông was caught up in the political movements that drove apart her male comrades in mainland China from those of Taiwan. For those who intend to interpret her as either a heroine or traitor according to their own political agendas, the biography of Siā Soat-hông’s life events throughout Eurasia and the turbulence of Asia’s modernist and nationalist revolutions have been a battlefield of contested ideologies and histories. CHANG Wen-Hsuan adds more layers of complexity by installing labeled objects related to Siā’s life accompanied by an audio guide in Taiwanese. The *Compendium of Autobiographies* (2016–19) obscures the narrative structure and discipline of museum display, and the audience is invited to become involved as editors, juries, or meeting attendees. When recalling her personal experience of growing up in a family with little affiliation to the fine arts or elite culture, CHANG Wen-Hsuan recognizes that, compared with other forms of artistic expression such as performance and video, the entry threshold of narrative-based creation is much lower: “Despite the fact that language also produces gaps and barriers, writing and storytelling always give me an impact of egalitarianism.”⁴

Contemplating the ontology of our material culture, the latest work of SHEN Xin, a five-channel video installation titled *Brine Lake (A New Body)* (2020, → p. 219, fig. 2), attempts to construct multiple narratives out of the suspension of subjects and the fabulation of elements. The two female protagonists, Asian in their looks and stateless in their status, speak to a ghostly interlocutor against a dark and abstract background. They are speaking about an unknown industry of iodine extraction set in the future and “returning to a place that has no past ties.” Dichotomies such as fatherland/motherland, south/north, and west/east are interspersed with corporate-technological interrogation. SHEN Xin’s suspension and fabulation are rooted in the acknowledgment of distance: distance of languages, geographies, cultures, and distance to our contemporary time, as supported by nation-state structures. To further explore the unlikely stories and the relational perspectives of creating and presenting an artwork, SHEN Xin invited Sungmee Kim, the main actress of *Provocation of the Nightingale* (2017), to unveil a live dialogue preceding the screening of the film in the

Park Nights series at the Serpentine Pavilion (*Half Sung, Half Spoken*, 2017, → p. 220, fig. 3). Surrounded by spectators that remained anonymous, the two of them sat in an open theater to enact a conversation that revealed their personal identifications and political inclinations. The performance points out the opacity of dialogic format: when the interlocutors walk out from behind the screen, we become aware of their resemblance and divergence and our distance to the “real.”

No matter how opaque and remote a subject or a narrative element might be, the audience tends to regard what they consider to be “real” as a criterion for giving meaning to certain voices and stories. If no homology were to exist, people would not be able to understand the intersection of their experiences. When we approach the unspeakable experience of women, we often find recurring elementary structures, such as concubine/prostitute, slut/traitor, and ghost/specter, intersecting with bigger categorizations, such as gender, class, race, and ideology. The domestic dislocation or transnational migration of these women often ends up in their disappearance in mainstream history. As CHANG Wen-Hsuan turned her obsession with the myth of La Malinche—the archetype of concubine-traits-specter—into the creation of *Killing la Malinche* in 2018 Luka Yuanyuan YANG embarked on a journey to New York to produce a series of films about the life stories of women on and off the performance stage across the Pacific Ocean. In *Tales of Chinatown* (2019), Luka Yuanyuan Yang’s camera follows a walking tour of Cynthia Yee through the haunted spots of Chinatown in San Francisco. Having performed on stage most of her life, Cynthia Yee instantly grabbed the audience’s attention with an autobiographical prelude, referring to her grandfather, a Chinese migrant who arrived at the West Coast of the United States before the San Francisco fire and plague outbreak in the nineteenth century. Alternating between archival images collected from the personal circle of Cynthia Yee and footage of Chinatown from Orson Welles’s canonical noir film *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947), Luka Yuanyuan YANG disrupts Hollywood’s gaze from othering the other while offering agency and affective power to the storytellers. Yang’s intergenerational bonding with the lady performers further unfolds in *Theater of Crossed Roads: A Night at Forbidden City Nightclub* (2019, → pp. 220–21, fig. 4), in which she worked closely with the members of the senior dance troupe Grand Avenue Follies to develop a fictional script based on an urban legend of a female ghost. The engaged process of realizing the films and the crowd-funding for the

post-production of *Women’s World* (2018–22, → p. 222, fig. 5) have become actions that not only affirm the transnational friendships of Asian American women and their self-empowering trajectories, but also document the heightening of racialized tension and the precarity of artistic production during the pandemic crisis.

Some of the ghost stories told by Cynthia Yee are accessible online in Luka Yuanyuan Yang’s contribution to the Times Museum’s digital journal *South of the South*.⁵ In proximity to the virtual walk of nineteenth-century Chinatown in San Francisco is Saidiya Hartman’s emblematic essay “Venus in Two Acts,” translated into Chinese by the literary scholar Huang Kun. The latter advocates for the affirmative potential of “critical fabulation” conceptualized by Hartman, which “reorganizes, reimagines, and recombines basic elements of narrative to rehearse actions and words that could have been possible in a particular time and place. It is an effort to push against, at the margin of the archive and the limit of the speakable, the purportedly unobstructed visibility afforded by historical materials and the ‘reality’ of history . . . In this sense, the attempt is not meant to return us to scenes from the past, but to disorder and reorder events so that the past, present, and future may be connected in the current moment.”⁶

1 This term began to appear in China around 1995, the year Beijing hosted the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. It is usually translated as “women’s art” and literally means “feminine art.” 2 The reform era is known as the “Reform and Opening-up,” which was led by Deng Xiaoping and launched on December 18, 1978. After Deng Xiaoping’s southern tour in 1992, unprecedented growth occurred and China became the second largest economy in 2010. 3 Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington, IN, 1989), p. 104. 4 CHANG Wen-Hsuan in an email conversation with the author, June 17, 2021. 5 Nikita Yingqian Cai and Wu Jianru, eds., *Times Museum Journal 1, South of the South* (May 2020), www.timesmuseum.org/en/journal [all URLs accessed in March 2022]. 6 Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Times Museum Journal 1, South of the South* (May 2020), <https://www.timesmuseum.org/en/journal/south-of-the-south/venus-in-two-acts>.

China / Germany

The curatorial collective formed for this exhibition, Antonie Angerer, Anna-Viktoria Eschbach, and Li Xiaotian, has been dedicated for many years to building support structures for artists and establishing open possibilities for long-term dialogues between artistic, curatorial, research, and other modes of knowledge production. The curators, who are based in the independent art space scene in Beijing and Guangzhou, China, have been investigating modes of feminist practice and collaboration, bringing in their experiences working within and in dialogue with the region. Antonie Angerer and Anna-Viktoria Eschbach founded the art space I: project space in 2014, which is operating in a nomadic form at the moment. Li Xiaotian has been working as an independent curator and member of BOLOHO. She has worked at Cantonbon and Video Bureau and HB Station.

1. Which topics do you address and what are the urgent questions?

We examine the interwoven nature of the economic system in Mainland China, a socialist market economy, and the patterns of suppression of females' rights and gender inequalities resulting from this system. Feminism has historically been about eradicating and opposing inequality. Feminism is thus incompatible with any system that compounds and exacerbates inequality. Our selected artists are excavating and highlighting historic and contemporary ways of cooperation that exist or have existed in China and may be seen as potential antidotes.

Within the southern coastal area, female artist collectives have been building alternative structures countering society's homogenization and creating support systems in order to navigate daily life, family responsibilities, and the pressure that comes with existing in a highly controlled environment. The sheer moment of stepping out of the system is a criticism of the status quo and a potential threat to the political agenda and therefore comes with certain risks, making community and networks of solidarity that much more important.

Supply chains can in fact be reconstituted as systems of care, mutual support, and collective participatory decision-making, a mode of production that the artists have situated at the Pearl River Delta. The position of an individual along the production and supply chain ultimately determines their power. Considering industries in informal sectors, a common feature here is the employment of women in the most marginal positions of the supply chains, where they are stripped of negotiating power because of their isolation. The power that lies within one part of the supply chain stepping out can become a representation of initiatives of feminist art collectives deciding to not be a part of this chain anymore, while creating their own.

2. What aesthetic means and formats do you use? To what extent can (and should) art intervene in sociopolitical structures?

Politically engaged artists located in China have tended to use materials that are cheap to manufacture and, if needed, are transported, smuggled, or destroyed. Artists that are not supported by the market or state system lack the financial means to work with expensive materials or rent studios needed to support the production of works of scale. Prudence dictates more temporary, concealed, and mobile modes of production. In the

Chinese contexts, such a method is itself a mechanism for questioning sociopolitical structures and, indeed, is less visible than traditional forms of activism and provides camouflage for feminist discourse.

3. Where do you see the potentials and challenges of working collectively? What makes it a feminist practice?

Feminist practice, for us, is a collective endeavor. The curation is enhanced through a diversity of voices, reflection, discourse, mutual encouragement, and the conscious avoidance of discursive dominance and monopolization. We also consider the wider context in which we work by providing space and time to develop new content, fair pay for work, and prioritizing each other's well-being.

4. We see feminisms as the most progressive method to rethink the world. What do you think?

Feminism now should be considered an intersectional practice. Capitalism structurally oppresses, restricts, and inhibits the access of marginalized individuals, minority communities, and differently abled persons by regulating the opportunities available to them. Patriarchy, sexism, casteism, ableism, racism, and capitalism are intricately linked. It follows that feminism, to be effective, must include postcolonial critique and take on the fight for the equality of all discriminated-against groups, including LGBTQIA+, Disabled, BIPOC, et cetera.

FINDING A PLACE OF THEIR OWN: A GENEALOGY OF WOMEN IN JAPANESE THEATER

Nobuko Anan

In February 2021, the then Tokyo Olympics chief Yoshirō Mori said that women in his committee “knew their place” and did not waste men’s time with lengthy and pointless speeches like women in other committees. The fact that Mori, a former Prime Minister of Japan, could make this comment without censure from the members of his executive committee demonstrates the low gender equality awareness in Japan; in the World Economic Forum’s Gender Gap Report 2021, Japan was ranked 120th out of 156 countries.¹ However, what was unusual this time is that Mori’s comment led to an avalanche of public criticism in social media under the hashtag #wakimae-nai onna, which refers to women who do not know their place. Soon, he was forced to resign and was replaced by a woman. This is an example of recent feminist activism, but Japanese women have a long history of struggle to collectively affirm their place within society. This essay provides an overview of the lineage of these women in theater, focusing on three historical moments: the 1920s to 1940s, the 1980s to 2000, and the 2010s and onward.

In the early twentieth century, Japanese women had few rights: they could not vote, manage their own property, or marry without parental consent. In this climate, inspired by the Blue Stockings Society, a British feminist movement in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the first Japanese feminist group, Bluestocking (Seitō), was formed in 1911. They published a journal titled Bluestocking, which included literary work as well as discussions on controversial issues related to women’s bodies, such as chastity, prostitution, and abortion. Banned several times, the journal was discontinued in 1916, but even after that the members organized other groups and kept working for women’s rights.

After Bluestocking, the most important women’s journal was Nyonin geijutsu or Women’s Arts (1928–32), a literary journal launched by Shigure Hasegawa (1879–1941), Japan’s first woman playwright and a contributor to Bluestocking. She also published a monthly pamphlet called Kagayaku or Shine (1933–41). As an established artist, her goal was to find and train aspiring women artists, but also to create a space for women’s solidarity in order to improve their status. She nurtured several important artists, and her editing teams frequently hosted study groups with contributors and readers. In addition, given the lack of women in the production side of theater, she planned to start a women’s theater company with the contributors to Shine, although this was never completed.

Publications by Shigure² reflected an ideological shift in the intellectual communities of the 1930s. Women's Arts was originally open to women of any political persuasion, but it gradually turned leftist, with many articles arguing that the Soviet Union was an ideal country that had achieved gender equality.³ However, after the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1937, Shigure's political views flipped and she supported the rightist state policy of expanding the Japanese empire within Asia, which was justified as a means to counter the encroachment of Western powers. Like many other feminists of this period, she found within this imperialist state an opportunity to advance women's status and mobilized Shine's contributors and readers into protection of the home front. She and her colleagues also saw themselves as mentors of women in the countries that Japan had controlled (e.g., China and Manchuria), particularly in the area of girls' education.⁴ In 1941, without witnessing Japan's defeat, Shigure died of illness.

Shigure's work remained largely unexamined for several decades in the postwar years, due to a general lack of interest in women's work, but also due to her collaboration with the wartime government. However, it was revisited in the early 1990s by Koharu Kisaragi (1956–2000), an influential playwright. Kisaragi belonged to the first generation of women troupe leaders, who started their careers in the late 1970s. However, like most of them, she was not concerned with gender themes in her early career. Although the women's liberation movement of the early 1970s radically questioned gender roles and sexual norms, its claims did not always reach wider society. Women gained more visibility in the public arena, but it was primarily as consumers within increasingly materialistic society after the end of the leftist student movements in the early 1970s. Femininity was still stereotypically associated with attributes such as uncontrollable emotions or delicate sensibilities, and it is for this reason that Kisaragi rejected a label of "female artist."⁵ Her concern was rather in the fragmentation of human experiences in the capitalist urban landscape.

Nonetheless, in the late 1980s, Kisaragi's gender awareness grew, and she began to study Shigure's life and work.⁶ Kisaragi's attendance at the International Women Playwrights Conference (New York, 1988, and Toronto, 1991) made her realize the relevance of gender in her own work.⁷ At the 1988 meeting, she learned about feminist perspectives on the oppression of women and other minority groups.⁸ However, at the 1991 meeting

three years later, she witnessed how Asian women's experiences were not part of the central concerns of this "international" conference.⁹ Through these experiences, Kisaragi became conscious of her own position not only as an Asian woman but also as a Japanese woman living within the power dynamics in diverse Asia. This motivated her to inaugurate the Conference for Asian Women and Theatre, where women artists in the region learned about each other's work and discussed problems in their respective communities. The first meetings took place in Tokyo and Kyoto in 1992, with participants from nine countries.¹⁰ At the second meeting in the Philippines in 2000, Kisaragi announced her plan to stage a play about Shigure, titled *Kagayaku* or *Shine*. Through the encounter with artists in the region where the legacy of the Japanese empire continued, Kisaragi became concerned about the way in which Shigure and other feminist artists had been seduced by Imperial Japan's war efforts in the modern era.¹¹ However, the plan was not completed because of Kisaragi's sudden death of illness right after the meeting.¹² The conference was held in various places in Asia after this, but it gradually faded away.

Just as Kisaragi reflected on her predecessor, a younger generation was inspired by Kisaragi in turn. About a decade after her death, her projects were taken over by the Asian Women Performing Arts Collective, also known as AJOKAI.¹³ One of the founders, Shirotama Hitsujiya, had been invited by Kisaragi to her conference as a representative of a younger generation before her death in 2000. Hitsujiya recalls Kisaragi's words: "Asia, women, theatre. They are all underrepresented."¹⁴ Isn't it interesting?"¹⁵ Hitsujiya could not take part, but her interest in this question grew. In 2012, together with the dance/theater artist Mikuni Yanaihara, she created AJOKAI to explore women's lives in different ethnicities, classes, and histories in Asia. The members are artists, producers, translators, and researchers, and they organize conferences and launch research-based projects with Asian artists, in particular, on women in the Asian diaspora.¹⁶ For example, as part of 2015 Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale, the collective staged the Malaysian playwright Leow Puay Tin's *Family* (→ pp. 228–29, fig. 1), which is about a working-class woman from China who later became the matriarch of her family-run conglomerate in Singapore. The production posed questions as to ideas about success among Asian diasporic women and the relationship between women's labor and globalization. Leow had attended Kisaragi's conference and is now closely working with AJOKAI. In 2018, the collective held

a workshop in Hue, Vietnam, where participants from various Asian countries discussed different experiences with regard to mobility.

AJOKAI also inherited from Kisaragi her interest in Shigure. It launched the Shigure Hasegawa study group in 2016, where the members read issues of *Shine* to investigate the times and the process of its shift to the right. The study group also conducted the AJOKAI Chronicle Project in 2017 and 2018 (→ p. 229, fig. 2), consisting of international workshops with discussions about early female theater artists in Asia and beyond. Participants were asked to write about these artists and attach this information on a huge world map, visualizing and archiving their experiences and achievements. Through its projects, AJOKAI explores what it means for women to work with other women, how women can build a community

beyond their geographical locations, how theater and the performing arts relate to society, and how they position themselves within a genealogy of women artists.

The women artists in this essay were/are working in their time to create their own place. Out of the closure of the earliest feminist journal, Shigure inaugurated her journal and pamphlet as a place to connect with other women artists and activists. Kisaragi reflected on the way that Shigure and earlier women artists related themselves to society and initiated her conference as a place for Asian women to examine women and other minorities. AJOKAI has extended this further by developing collaborations across Asia to explore how to place themselves within herstories of the region and beyond. Proudly “not knowing their place” in male-dominated society, these women carve out a place of their own.

¹ World Economic Forum, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2021*, March 30, 2021, [weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2021](https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2021) [all URLs accessed in May 2022]. ² In Japan, cultural figures are often referred to by their first names, and Shigure Hasegawa is one of them. ³ Akiko Ogata, *Nyonin geijutsu no sekai: Hasegawa Shigure to sono shūhen* (Tokyo, 1980), pp. 91–113. ⁴ Akiko Ogata, “Kagayaku” no jidai: Hasegawa Shigure to sono shūhen (Tokyo, 1993), pp. 219–27. ⁵ Naomi Tonooka, “Kisaragi Koharu: ‘onna no jidai’ no moratorium kara kindai no kenshō e,” in *Kisaragi Koharu wa hiroba datta: 60 nin ga kataru Kisaragi Koharu*, ed. Kōjin Nishidō, Naomi Tonooka, Hiroshi Watanabe, and Kazuyuki Kajiya (Tokyo, 2001), pp. 152–60, esp. p. 153. ⁶ She first expressed her interest in Shigure in her review of Shigure’s biography, “Hyōden Hasegawa Shigure,” written by Kunie Iwashashi and published in the newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* on November 21, 1993. ⁷ Tonooka 2001 (see note 5), p. 157. ⁸ Naomi Tonooka, “Yawaraka na feminizumu o mezashite,” *Theatre Arts* 7 (1997), p. 85. ⁹ Yasuko Ikeuchi, “Aru ishitsu butsu, mikan no purojekuto: Kisaragi Koharu san kara no okurimono,” in Nishidō et al. 2001 (see note 5), p. 162. ¹⁰ Tonooka 2001 (see note 5), p. 157. ¹¹ Ibid., pp. 151 and 158. ¹² She also planned to write a play about so-called “comfort women,” or women across Asia who were exploited as sex slaves by the Imperial Japanese Army, with Rio Kishida (1946–2003), a member of the conference and an influential playwright. However, it did not materialize either. See Ikeuchi 2001 (see note 9), p. 163. For Kishida’s work, see Nobuko Anan, “The Nation as Family: Motherhood and Love in Japan,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Politics and Performance*, ed. Shirin M. Rai, Milija Giluhovic, Silvija Jestrovic, and Michael Saward (New York, 2021), pp. 623–36. ¹³ The Japanese name of the collective is Ajia josei butai geijutsu kaigi jikkō iinkai. AJOKAI is its abbreviation. ¹⁴ In Japan, theater is not a major form of art. The fact that there are almost no theater departments at Japanese universities testifies to this. ¹⁵ Asian Women Performing Arts Collective, “About Us,” awpacollective.org/about/#aisatsu. ¹⁶ It should be noted that some members do not always identify themselves with feminists. This is because feminism has different meanings and associations in Japan, as in many countries.

IF YOU CAN HEAR ME, ARE YOU LISTENING?

Amruta Nemivant

“Can you hear me?” is a question that repeated itself with slight panic in the digital meetings, and events, that have dominated the online space ever since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020. Why does the mere possibility of not being audible due to technical reasons outside our control make even the most accomplished professionals nervous? Perhaps it is the realization of the value of being “heard” with intent that suddenly takes over.

The animation work *Can You Hear Me?* (2019, → pp. 230–31, figs. 1, 2) by the artist Nalini Malani (b. 1946) is a plea to be heard. It is about a minor girl belonging to a nomadic community in Kashmir whose cries for help when she was violently raped were left unheard. Malani’s work touches upon multiple concerns that plague India—the voice of marginalized communities, the status of women, and the intricacies of caste and communal politics. The viewer is driven to respond to the plight of the victim, while also asking oneself: Who is listening? Or rather: Why is no one listening?

Feminism has adapted itself globally. Proponents of the movement from different parts of the world have been able to contextualize feminism within their own sociopolitical spheres. Indian women received equal rights as citizens at the inception of a newly independent India and its constitution. However, is this change enough to alter a patriarchal mindset honed over centuries? Do the social stigmas attached to being a woman get nullified by the mere passing of a law? Legality is just one aspect in the fight toward genuine equality and self-determination. In order to understand the situation of women in India, one needs to familiarize oneself with the country’s plurality and diversity. The urban–rural divide, the caste system, the reverence to masculinity, and the lack of education are some of the factors that make a conversation regarding equality and genuine emancipation full of hurdles; for example, the Women’s Reservation Bill,¹ which was introduced in the Parliament of India in 1996, is still pending. It is therefore imperative in a country like India to speak about women’s rights and their position in society through multiple cross-disciplinary approaches.

Similar to the rest of the world, it has not been an easy journey for women artists in India, and international success both institutionally and in the market has come only in recent years. Often ignored in predominantly male-centered art histories, modern artist collectives, such as the Bombay Progressive Artists’ Group² or the Chalamandal Artists’ Village,³ had no women members or so few that women were considered an exception. The only woman artist to gain a place in modernist narratives was Amrita Sher-Gil (1913–1941). She is recognized for her distinct style of painting that also influenced later modernist painters like K. K. Hebbar (1911–1996). However, women artists have played a pivotal role in shaping contemporary art history and its surrounding discourse. They have done so through their work and engagements in political, social, and environmental sectors by responding to then prevalent norms either directly through their art practice or through a combination of art, curation, and critical writing.

Unlike in the West, where the struggle to create space and inclusion for women artists in institutions, museums, and history was structured, the lack of an orga-

nized movement in India meant that the position of women in the arts was achieved through individual practices.

Artists like Nalini Malani, Nilima Sheikh (b. 1945), and Sheba Chhachhi (b. 1958) in the late 1970s and 1980s responded to their own situation and immediate surroundings. Educated, informed, and aware of the world around them, they were determined to be heard and acknowledged as artists. Their work tends to have a more intimate quality; their protagonists are not idealized versions of femininity, but instead relatable and flawed by everyday situations, articulated through experimental mediums such as performance, video art, reverse acrylic painting, et cetera. Even today, there is a deficit of institutional spaces in India, which has meant that Indian artists have mostly depended on the West for institutional recognition. Yet, women artists commented on the male-dominated structures, without blindly following Western notions of feminism. For the longest time they refrained from being labeled, by focusing on being recognized as artists who addressed concerns around gender, sexuality, body politics, and identity in a rapidly evolving society. These artists developed artistic languages that were contemporary, but their metaphors and motifs spoke to audiences beyond institutions.

An outspoken feminist, Nalini Malani is a pioneer of media art in India. Malani has on many occasions mentioned⁴ the struggles faced by women artists. In 1985–86, she planned an exhibition with approximately twenty women artists with the intention to give them a voice in the male-dominated art world. However, the project had to be abandoned due to lack of funding and support. Eventually, in 1987, a smaller group of like-minded artists, such as Nalini Malani, Nilima Sheikh, Arpita Singh (b. 1937), and Madhavi Parikh (b. 1942), came together to create the first women-organized exhibition in the country, titled *Through the Looking Glass*. Between 1987 and 1989 the show traveled across India. However, at that time, this exhibition was met with a lackluster response from senior male artists.

Malani's own artistic practice spans over a period of fifty years and epitomizes the role of the artist as an activist. Her oeuvre includes immersive installations, film, photography, wall drawing/erasure performance, theater, animation, video, and also the more traditional medium of painting. She explores themes of violence, gender, politics, and postcolonialism, and her recurring protagonists Cassandra, Medea, Alice, and Sita resonate with

audiences in bringing forth today's realities: "But the other thing about having mythical figures and especially female protagonists like Cassandra, is a lot to do with what I believe is female thought. . . and I think that's what has constantly been a thread for me in my work, female thought, and how it can really heal and help progress happen for us in this world."⁵

In 2019, Malani exhibited *Can You Hear Me?* for the first time, at the Goethe-Institut in Mumbai. The immersive installation consisted of over fifty iPad animations. It has since expanded to eighty-eight animations which can be classified in themes like sociopolitical, philosophical, personal, caste violence, and gender-related issues. It is probably the closest one can get to understanding Malani's multiple points of departure in a single work of art, her thought process, and what she as an artist feels needs to be vocalized to create an impactful and multi-layered experience for her audiences.

Some of the most powerful yet sensitive pieces at documenta 14 in Kassel and Athens (2017) were the installations by Nilima Sheikh. Her works, which are primarily paintings, focus on issues of gender violence, exclusion, and history. In 1984, she created a well-known series of paintings about dowry death, titled *When Champa Grew Up*. For the past two decades, Sheikh has focused on the multicomplex situation of Kashmir.⁶ Her work is situated in the belief that an artist is an observer whose main task is to comment on both the past and the present. Sheikh's documenta work *Terrain: Carrying Across, Leaving Behind* (2016–17, → p. 232, fig. 3) consisted of eight panels—front and verso arranged in a semi-enclosed octagonal space. Sheikh included texts by the fourteenth-century poet Lal Déd of Kashmir (translated by Ranjit Hoskote) along with other writings on Kashmir. The work highlights how we as viewers—including Indian audiences—have not understood and listened to the complex issues related to Kashmir, and have thereby neglected them.

The demolition of Babri Masjid,⁷ and the communal riots that followed in 1992–93, marked the rise of right-wing nationalism in India. This obvious break in secularism resulted in artists creating works that were more political and sought new modes to communicate. One such example of an artist reinventing her practice at this critical juncture is Rummana Hussain (1952–1999).

In the early 1990s, Hussain based her work on two important tropes—being a woman and being a Muslim woman.

Her practice shifted from painting to installations, performances, and activism involving the use of everyday materials such as pigments, whiteners, kitchen tools, et cetera. She was an active member of Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust or SAHMAT, which continues to fight for freedom of expression, religious tolerance, and secularism.

A Space for Healing (1999, → p. 233, fig. 4) was her comment on the state of India. The work was created for the 3rd Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT3) and was installed by the artist Shilpa Gupta (b. 1976) as Hussain died soon after completing the work. This powerful comment on Mumbai and India was exhibited in its city of origin as late as 2015. It was part of the group exhibition *In Order to Join*⁸ at the Goethe-Institut that year, as a critique on the renewed emergence of right-wing nationalism in India and globally.

The work consists of a room in which medical stretchers and IV units made from silver fabrics and painted in gold are laid out in a grid, surrounded by rusted domestic implements hanging on the walls, resembling an Urdu script. The soundscape that layers the work consists of the artist's recordings of everyday sounds of the city of Mumbai. The entire room is bathed in a red glow, connecting reality and the ideal—with the stretchers and medical units pointing at the fractured state of Mumbai post riots, making it simultaneously disturbing and meditative.

In the same exhibition, the artist Pushpamala N. (b. 1956) who approaches her key concerns of nationhood, history, ethnography, and identity by using historical imagery, performance, and popular culture along with elaborate backdrops and costumes, debuted the video work *Good Habits / Hygiene* (2016, → p. 233, fig. 5). With wit and humor that have become her trademark, this video depicts the artist as Mother India, systematically disassembling a human brain,⁹ cleaning it, and putting it back together, before exiting the screen. The work is a comment on the systematic “brainwashing” and cultural appropriation that is carried out by nationalist governments.

Around the same time, the artist Sheba Chhachhi, based in New Delhi, made a work titled *Seven Lives and a Dream 1980–91* (2014), which combines images shot by her during the 1980s anti-dowry protests in Delhi and staged portraits of select women connected to the protests. Chhachhi's activism is reflected in her works as she investigates the sociopolitical and rights struggles of women, the role of an artist, and the ethics of image-making.

It is important to acknowledge not only the contributions of artistic practices toward feminist dialogues or strategies, but also those of curators, writers, et cetera. For example, Anita Dube (b. 1958), as the curator of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale in 2018, stressed: “The need to listen, think, and learn with each other, particularly voices from the margins—of women, of the queer community, the oppressed castes, the whispers and signs of nature—with a spirit of freedom and comradeship is vital.”¹⁰

These artists are some of the most recognized names in contemporary art, and their works have been exhibited in some of the most prestigious art institutions in the world. Nalini Malani is the first Asian artist to win the Joan Miró Prize (2019); she also won the first Contemporary Fellowship, awarded by the National Gallery London (2020), is the only Indian artist to have had a retrospective at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, and participated in documenta 13. Nilima Sheikh had her first museum show at the Art Institute of Chicago (2014) and was a part of documenta 14. Rummana Hussain was the Indian artist to be invited to Art in General, New York, in 1998. They have led the way for women artists in India. Their struggles and successes have inspired future generations, be it a young Shilpa Gupta, who is today one of the most sought-after Indian artists globally, or Tejal Shah (b. 1979), who researched Hussain's archives early on in her career and went on to create her own critically acclaimed performances around gender, queer engagements, and her video installation at documenta 13 *Between the Waves* (2012, → pp. 134–35). Feminist art and design practices have evolved to include new media works, like Padmini Ray Murray's feminist video game *Darshan Diversion* (2016) about the Sabarimala Temple controversy.¹¹

One of the leading feminist voices from India, Kamla Bhasin (1946–2021), compared feminism to water: “Feminism has been and should be like Water”¹²—it adapts and answers to the needs of the moment and situation, a quality that has also been the strength of feminism in artistic discourse in India.

¹ "Women's Reservation Bill," *India Today*, March 7, 2020, <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/gk-current-affairs/story/women-s-reservation-bill-all-you-need-to-know-about-the-bill-which-is-yet-to-be-passed-in-lok-sabha-1653451-2020-03-07> [all URLs accessed in March 2022]. ² The Bombay Progressive Artists' Group was founded in 1947 with an aim to challenge India's existing conservative art establishment. ³ Cholamandal Artists' Village was established by K. C. S. Paniker and is generally credited with bringing modernism to South India. ⁴ Manju Sara Rajan, "Living in Alicetime," *Mint*, October 5, 2007 [updated], <https://www.livemint.com/Leisure/CoJKb6psrfzK9DtBkZz15H/Living-in-Alicetime.html>. ⁵ Podcast interview by Whitechapel Gallery, <https://www.whitechapelgallery.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Hear-Now-Episode-6-Transcript.pdf>. ⁶ Kashmir is a region on the northwestern Indian subcontinent. It has been a conflict zone since the partitioning of India in 1947. ⁷ For a summary of the demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya and its aftereffects, see: "Babri Masjid: The Timeline of a Demolition," *Wire*, September 30, 2020, <https://thewire.in/communalism/babri-masjid-the-timeline-of-a-demolition>. ⁸ *In Order to Join: The Political in a Historical Moment*, curated by Swapnaa Tamhane and Susanne Titz, a collaboration in 2015 between Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS) in Mumbai, and Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Mumbai. ⁹ It is a model of a brain used to study the anatomy of the human body. ¹⁰ "Kochi-Muziris Biennale: First Artists Announced," <https://www.biennialassociation.org/article/kochi-muziris-biennale-first-artists-announced/>. ¹¹ Ramesh Babu, "Sabrimala Explained," *Hindustan Times*, November 13, 2019 [updated], <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/sabarimala-explained-supreme-court-verdict-protests-and-controversy/story-FtwmVlSbfa3tQulOuTEQVP.html>. The ban was lifted by the Supreme Court of India in 2018. ¹² Kamlia Bhasin's keynote speech "What is Feminism?" at the International Seminar Interpreting Feminism vis-à-vis Activism, <https://www.sangatnetwork.org/2019/07/23/what-is-feminism-speech/>.

SANDBOX COLLECTIVE

Interview

India

Founded in 2013 by Nimi Ravindran and Shiva Pathak, Sandbox Collective aims to harness the power of art for a more peaceful, equal, just, and inclusive society. It serves as a free-flowing hub for artists, writers, musicians, curators, designers, and students. With its special focus on gender, gender equality, and sexuality, Sandbox Collective curates and produces performances and festivals, nationally and internationally, works on artistic, research-based projects, and offers both mentorship facilities and residencies to artists. The collective is well known for the annual Gender Bender Festival.

1. Which topics do you address and what are the urgent questions?

We are largely fixated on the gender conundrum and how the arts can help us to understand it as an evolving space and help us to make sense of it. However, we mean gender not in isolation, but with all the complexities that it comes with. Artists—like everyone else—have responsibilities to the world we inhabit and to our fellow citizens. This includes responding to the times we live in through art—not as propaganda, but simply as art. Art that questions. Art that communicates, art that educates, art that heals, art that entertains, and most simply even access to art.

2. What aesthetic means and formats do you use? To what extent can (and should) art intervene in sociopolitical structures?

At Sandbox Collective, we work with different formats on different projects. We work largely with performances—theater, dance, and music—but also with visual arts, literature, and installations. In recent times, we tend to veer toward multidisciplinary collaborative projects.

On art for change, we could debate ad nauseam on the role of art in our societal structures, but to what end? If art could change the world, we would have been living in a vastly different one. That knowledge, however, does not make us cynical. In fact, it only makes our belief stronger that art helps us—as individuals—make sense of a constantly changing world. We don't believe that there is one fixed role for art; we can and must use art in any and every way we can. To effect change, to create a more compassionate and inclusive world, to heal, to come together, and even to simply entertain.

3. Where do you see the potentials and challenges of working collectively? What makes it a feminist practice?

Working collectively is always a challenge since it involves group dynamics, personality clashes, and philosophical differences. Discussions and debates take up huge chunks of time. However, just like how we must learn to listen, accept, and work with diverse voices in a democracy, we must learn to find space for varying and vastly different voices while working collectively. Working collectively is an ideal space that we can all aspire to and work toward.

4. We see feminisms as the most progressive method to rethink the world. What do you think?

Most definitely, but not the feminism of yore; that was a foundation for what has since been built. Today's feminists must advocate a more compassionate, inclusive, and just feminism that includes everyone rather than excludes. A fluid and evolving feminism that adapts to our constantly changing world and our understanding of it would be ideal.

US FEMINISMS AND GROUP EXHIBITION PRACTICE

1970–2022

Jenni Sorkin

Radical feminist activism assertively challenged decades of patriarchy, in order to gain strides for women's social and political participation in US democracy. This consisted of long, drawn-out battles for legislation that would result in legal changes, such as *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 landmark Supreme Court decision that protected a woman's right to choose, legalizing abortion, which was shockingly rescinded this year, in 2022, left instead to individual states, rather than a federal mandate. This new ruling resulted in widespread, but not uniform, condemnation, as the nation remains bitterly divided on this issue, with deep anguish on the part of liberals and progressives who support the right to abortion as an extension of women's health care. More permanent is the lesser known but perhaps more consequential Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA) of 1974, which established the right to be female and open a bank account or obtain a loan or mortgage without a husband or father as a cosigner.

After these earlier victories, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) became the primary targeted legislation, calling for a constitutional amendment securing gender equality as permanent protection. Between 1972 and 1982, supporters of the Equal Rights Amendment lobbied, rallied, petitioned, and even went on hunger strikes; however, the ERA failed to pass, requiring ratification by 75 percent of the states. It has been recently revived in 2021, with the intent to remove the deadline inhibiting its passage, and leaving it open ended for states to continue to join the process of ratification.

Collectively, these legal paths forward resulted in a partial dismantling of the heteronormative family structure of the 1950s, an era in which men were the primary earners and women the caretakers of the home and children, and also the social revolutions of the 1960s, undergirded by Vietnam War protests and overlapping civil rights movements for Black, Chicano/a, and Asian Americans, in which women fought assiduously, but did not have equal social or political standing in relation to their male peers.

Despite the nationwide sweep of women's liberation throughout the United States during the early 1970s, the art world was slow to adapt. Women were encouraged to study fine art, but without the expectation of establishing an identity as a professional artist. That is, they could not rid themselves of the carefully cultivated amateurism permanently associated with their sex and were therefore accorded a secondary class status.

Art school faculties everywhere were predominantly male, making mentorship difficult for young women, and they were fraught with strained power dynamics and sexual impropriety in the decades before harassment statutes. Even with advanced degrees, women lacked access to significant career milestones—inclusion in group shows, commercial gallery representation, and museum purchases. Women artists did not see themselves reflected in art museum collections around the world: that is, museums did not purchase or exhibit their artworks. This was a disheartening experience, as most women had already overcome great odds to become artists at all.

During the 1970s, then, gender equality within the art world became a primary concern associated with cultural, rather than radical, feminism. The historian Alice Echols calls cultural feminism a form of “female counterculture,” in which so-called female values of non-hierarchy, equal participation, volunteerism, and collective decision-making reigned in the journals, organizations, and institutions actively established as feminist spaces.¹

All-women exhibitions were a direct response to the widespread absence of women artists from the museum and public culture at large. Primarily artist-initiated, many groups of women came together for the sole purpose of organizing and creating exhibition opportunities for women. The 1970s were the primary decade for this practice, owing to the social and political feminist movements throughout the Western world.

Within the United States, women exhibiting together on their own terms helped to alleviate the crisis of representation. In creating exhibition opportunities and venues to show their work, the agency of women artists became clear: proving to themselves and others that they had the capability to create favorable conditions for their own artwork, and that of their peers. They could create thematic exhibitions, such as single-media exhibitions. Or, to point out the pioneering impact of women artists over time, they could reenvision history, and reclaim forgotten or overlooked artists from the early modern era—such as Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–1654) and Judith Leyster (1609–1660)—and from the modern era—such as Georgia O’Keeffe (1887–1986) and Florine Stettheimer (1871–1944). The group show was also a way to overcome the historical bias of solo or single artist celebrations that have been a form of cultural patrimony favoring white male artists.

In 2019, the feminist artist and writer Mira Schor asserted that very little had changed over the last thirty plus years, writing, “the ‘success’ of feminism has created amnesia and dissociation, while ‘the facts and statistics for women artists in market share, in museum and gallery showings, are dismaying.’”² This last portion of the quote is taken from Agnes Gund’s assessment of the marketplace. Gund is both a major New York collector and former Museum of Modern Art Trustee Board President. In using Gund’s own language, Schor makes the argument that there is a strong cycle of cultural forgetting and re-discovery in relation to the artistic production of women artists, with various attempts at celebratory resurgences

every decade or so, since the peak of movement politics during the 1970s. This essay will examine the particular strategies that women artists in the United States embarked upon toward their collective self-empowerment throughout the last twenty years. Moreover, the category of “women artists” has grown exponentially since the last century. Nonbinary and trans artists have also become important advocates and producers of feminist cultural content.

Pink Momentum

Much has been written about the election of 2016. Without a doubt, misogyny and anti-feminist sentiment strongly contributed to the triumph of Donald J. Trump over a far more skilled and experienced candidate with true presidential qualifications, Hillary Rodham Clinton, who had a long record of public service, political good will, and deep knowledge about governance and diplomacy through her many political roles.

One of the first grassroots actions to take hold collectively was a mass protest in the name of the Women’s March, held on January 21, 2017, the day after Trump was sworn into office. What began as a national protest spread rapidly into a global condemnation of Trumpian misogyny, demagoguery, and authoritarianism. The hand-knit pink hat with kitten ears, which came to be known as the “pussy hat,” became a symbolic gesture of feminist unity: photogenic, eye-catchingly bright, and slyly genital (→ pp. 240–41, fig. 1). Both handcrafted and utilitarian, the pussy hat was spearheaded by the craftivist artists Jayna Zweiman and Krista Suh, with the pattern itself created by Kat Coyle, who owns The Little Knittery, a Los Angeles yarn shop with strong community-based programming, where the three first came together to develop what came to be known as The Pussyhat Project, with hand-making and dissemination as the primary strategy, and self-empowerment the main intent.

The Pussyhat Project itself was celebrated in the mainstream press as a spirited form of democracy, a widely accessible, populist craft project with a do-it-yourself knitting pattern published online. The Pussyhat came to represent both an unapologetic form of bodily pride, while functioning simultaneously as an homage to women’s handwork, updated for the twenty-first century.

However, as quickly as it rose to prominence, it was soon after decried as essentialist, linked to the idea that womanhood is fully associated with biological anatomies. Though many male and nonbinary supporters also wore the pussy hat, detractors felt that it was an exclusionary symbol: both transphobic and racist, implying that “woman” was a monolithic category, rather than an expression of gender identity, and secondly, that pink genitalia is a color associated strongly with white skin, rather than a darker complexion. It is crucial to emphasize that not all female-identified persons are in possession of a vagina, including transwomen, intersex, or other nonbinary individuals who do not identify strongly with the vagina as either a symbol or an anatomical feature. As co-founder Krista Suh has explained, “I think ‘pussy’ refers to the female anatomical part, but it’s also a word that’s used to shame people who are feminine ... whether they are men, women [or] genderqueer. And I think what it comes down to is that femininity is really disrespected in our society.”³ The color pink is also prominently included as a double stripe that offsets a band of white, and two same-sized bands of baby blue, on the five-stripe transgender flag.

However, pink has also been a constant refrain in feminist artistic practices. In 1973, the Los Angeles graphic artist Sheila de Bretteville, also a cofounder of the Woman’s Building, which is Los Angeles’s longest running feminist cultural space (1972–90), created a 30-inch poster titled *Pink*, in a large, gridded composition. Reminiscent of quilt squares, each individual square was offered to a friend, student, or colleague, providing a plethora of individual reflections on the color pink, often with refreshing candor and critique (“pink is for infants and old ladies with silver hair”). More recently, the R & B artist Janelle Monáe made a video for her single *PYNK* (2018) that utilizes explicit vaginal imagery as a way to celebrate Black lesbian sexuality, clear in her lyrics: “Pink like the inside of your, baby / Pink behind all of the doors, crazy / Pink like the tongue that goes down, maybe.” The dichotomy between these two discourses—pink as docile versus pink as a source of unabashed pride—showcases pluralism as the strongest underpinning and most comprehensive outcome for feminist forms of artistic production.

Group Exhibition Practice, 2017–22

Over the last five years, there have been a number of group exhibitions aimed at canon correction. By no means comprehensive, the remainder of this essay ex-

amines three of them as stellar examples of aesthetic engagement as a primary strategy within US-based feminist art and its activist commitments.

We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85, curated by Catherine Morris and Rujeko Hockley, opened in the fall of 2017 at the Brooklyn Museum in New York (→ pp. 242–43, fig. 2).⁴ It featured nearly forty Black women artists, as well as some Latina and Asian American women artists, and several male collaborators. The exhibition included artwork across a broad range of installation and sculptural practices, video, painting, and performance art documentation. It concentrated upon the intersectionality of Black women artists at both the height of their production, while simultaneously at the crossroads of their exclusion: marginalized by Black men in the Civil Rights movement, and the white women who held power in feminist activism.

This was accomplished through the inclusion of primary source archival material, in the form of ephemera, newspaper clippings, brochures, activist broadsides and posters, and personal correspondence by and about the exhibiting artists, while the wall text charted national milestones, such as the election of Shirley Chisholm to the United States House of Representatives in 1968, the first Black woman to hold a national-level elected office. The exhibition was organized chronologically, beginning with the 1960s generation of women activists who were the only female members of urban collectives like Spiral (Emma Amos) and Weusi Artist Collective (Dindga McCannon) in New York or AfriCOBRA in Chicago (Jae Jarrell). It then proceeded to the 1970s, charting out Black feminism by artist-activists such as Kay Brown, Barbara Chase-Riboud, Maren Hassinger, Howardena Pindell, Faith Ringgold, and Betye Saar, as an often-oppositional strategy to counter the detrimental effects of white feminism, before considering the curatorial interventions in the 1980s, such as Ana Mendieta’s *Dialectics of Isolation*, a 1980 exhibition she curated, including an all-women-of-color roster at the SoHo-based feminist cooperative A.I.R. Gallery. The 1980s section also included postmodern, lens-based practitioners such as Lorraine O’Grady, Lorna Simpson, Carrie Mae Weems, and the choreographer Blondell Cummings.⁵

In the fall of 2018, Denise Murrell’s *Posing Modernity: The Black Model from Manet and Matisse to Today* opened at Columbia University’s Wallach Art Gallery. It was a revelatory exhibition that took as its premise the idea

that the white art-historical establishment had lauded Édouard Manet's *Olympia* (1863) as a primary example of female autonomy, unabashed sexuality, and a watershed moment in modernism, yet the emphasis has always been on two titular Olympia, a Parisian prostitute, rather than the secondary figure in the composition, her Black maid. Murrell's exhibition focused on the racial politics of France in the first fifteen years after 1848, the year slavery was abolished in its colonies. This converted exploited Black labor from an enslaved workforce into a paid one, and the exhibition explores the Black female imaginary in Manet's orbit, from actual figures, such as Laure, the paid model from *Olympia*, and the Haitian-born actress and dancer Jeanne Duval, a mistress of Charles Baudelaire. Murrell argues that racial anxieties and attitudes pervaded the social fabric of Paris's vibrant artistic and cultural life, which also coincided with the widespread popularity of portrait photography, which in turn influenced the portraiture of Manet and his contemporaries. The second part of the exhibition includes a limited selection of twentieth-century Black artist's responses to what Murrell terms "the black muse," found in this earlier, nineteenth-century body of work. This included paintings by Romare Bearden, Aimé Mpane, Faith Ringgold, Larry Rivers, Jean-Pierre Schneider, Mickalene Thomas, and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye; mixed media work by Ellen Gallagher and Lorraine O'Grady; and photography by Renée Cox, Maud Sulter, Carrie Mae Weems, and others.

Designing Motherhood: Things that Make and Break Our Births was an exhibition that originated in the fall of 2021 at a medical museum with many historic exhibitions, the Mütter Museum of The College of Physicians of Philadelphia (→ pp. 242–43, fig. 3). It was organized collectively by two design historians, Michelle Millar Fisher and Amber Winick, who sought input and participation from a wide range of communities: birthing and midwifery experts, lactation consultants, engineers, and feminist health activists, as well as the Maternity Care Coalition, a nonprofit organization with a vested interest in birthing with dignity.⁶

The exhibition is unlike the others in that it is not artist-centered but rather object-forward, backed by a strong commitment to social history and feminist advocacy. Consisting of industrial product design for everything from menstrual cups, to disposable diapers, to the breast pump, the experience and shape of motherhood in the industrialized West is influenced by consumer choices that are often not really a choice—they are what is cur-

rently available, and the products designed have often come to fruition from a combination of need and political will, particularly the ones designed by women.

Women in the United States still have the lowest maternal mortality rates among industrialized countries. Reproduction and design are intertwined subject areas, giving way to larger conversations and ideas about child care, parental leave, breastfeeding, and other topical issues that revolve around pregnancy, birthing, and care-taking. Yet so much is at stake when these needs are not met. Fisher and Winick argue that maternity is important, political, and far too often swept under the rug, or stigmatized as a taboo subject too personal to discuss in the workplace—the very site that is often the most marginalizing to women.

In closing, group exhibitions have provided an important bridge between political and cultural activism, challenging decades of patriarchy. Within the US, intersectionality and trans-inclusionary politics are now the dominant framework employed by fourth-wave feminists. Recent exhibitions have taken identities of gender, as they directly intersect with class, race, age, (dis)ability, and sexuality, as the primary location for thinking through new cultural forms of production, with an unyielding insistence on change.

1 Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America 1967–1975* (1989; repr., Minneapolis, 2009), p. 21. 2 Mira Schor, "Wheels and Waves in the USA," in *A Companion to Feminist Art*, ed. Hilary Robinson and Maria Elena Buszek (London, 2019), p. 142. 3 Julie Compton, "Pink 'Pussyhat' Creator Addresses Criticism Over Name," NBC NEWS, February 7, 2017, <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/pink-pussyhat-creator-addresses-criticism-over-name-n717886> [all URLs accessed in April 2022].

4 After the Brooklyn Museum (April 21 to September 17, 2017), the exhibition traveled to three additional venues: the California African American Museum, Los Angeles (October 13, 2017, to January 14, 2018); Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York (February 17 to May 27, 2018); and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (June 27 to September 30, 2018). 5 For an especially comprehensive exhibition review, see Kim Bobier, review of *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85*, Brooklyn Museum, *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 3, no. 2 (Fall 2017), <https://editions.lib.umn.edu/panorama/article/we-wanted-a-revolution/>. 6 The exhibition at the Mütter Museum is a selection of the 100 objects chosen for a comprehensive volume and sourcebook, by the same name, with many contributing authors. See Michelle Millar Fisher and Amber Winick, eds., *Designing Motherhood: Things that Make and Break Our Births* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2021).

FEMINISM AND THE AVANT-GARDE THROUGH THE MIRROR OF THE (CZECH) HISTORY OF ART

Martina Pachmanová

When the conference “The Feminist Avant-Garde in (Not Only) the Czech and Slovak Context” was held in Brno in 2019 on the occasion of the exhibition *The Feminist Avant-Garde of the 1970s*, questions raised by its organizers included why discussions related to feminism and gender issues have long received only marginal interest in former Czechoslovakia and why these issues have barely been reflected in the arts.¹ I previously attempted to describe some of the reasons for this situation in my text for the catalogue accompanying the 2009–10 exhibition *Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe* in Vienna and Warsaw. Here, I identified these reasons as: a lack of information and real dialogue with the West; a low level of mutual solidarity among women (including women artists) and the lack of a feminist activism that might explore the deep structural inequalities by which women were discriminated against and disadvantaged in various areas of social life; the continued dominance of the modernist tradition and the predominant view of art as a transcendental area that stands apart from life and social and mental processes; skepticism toward “isms,” which were viewed with suspicion and were often condemned as threatening to impose a new totalitarianism; and mistrust of political art, which had been discredited by the official propaganda of the communist regime.² In retrospect, we could add the state-mandated but gender-blind emancipation during communist rule: although by law women had the same rights as men, in reality the traditional gender-based models of behavior and action persevered, and the role of the nuclear family grew stronger. As a result, there was almost no discussion regarding the inequality of women as social subjects. The only exception was a debate about Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, a book that was published in Czech translation in 1966, in which, however, no protagonists of the art scene participated.

Although the situation cannot be generalized, a similar mistrust of feminism likewise existed in other countries of the former Eastern bloc. Nevertheless, in Yugoslavia and Poland at the time there were activities that, despite the different political and cultural setting, could be viewed as an Eastern counterpart to Western feminist art. Many of these activities were initiated by women artists themselves and played out locally, although some even crossed the Iron Curtain. For instance, in 1978 in Wrocław, Natalia LL organized the exhibition *Women’s Art*, which showed not only her works but also those by three Western artists: Suzy Lake, Carolee Schneemann, and Noemi Maidan. Other activities were made possible

thanks to outside efforts. The Polish artist Magdalena Abakanowicz thus came into contact with the feminist art movement in the early 1970s when she was included in *Deliberate Entanglements* (UCLA Art Galleries, Los Angeles, 1971), the groundbreaking exhibition that shed new light on textile art and women's crafts. In 1975, Natalia LL had already participated in *Frauen—Kunst—Neue Tendenzen* (Women—Art—New Tendencies) at Innsbruck's Galerie Krinzinger, although she was the exhibition's only artist from the "other" Europe. Over the following years, her works appeared in several other surveys of women's and feminist art, including *Magma: Rassegna internazionale di donna artiste* (International Review of Women Artists, Castello Oldofredi, Brescia, 1977), *Frauen machen Kunst* (Women Make Art, Galerie Philomene Magers, Bonn, 1976), and *Feministische Kunst International* (Feminist Art International, Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, 1979). Besides Natalie LL, this last exhibition in The Hague also included the Polish artist Maria Pinińska-Bereś.³

Czechoslovak women artists were included in only one such exhibition in the 1970s, *Künstlerinnen International 1877–1977: Gemälde, Grafik, Skulpturen, Objekte, Aktionen* (Women Artists International 1877–1977: Paintings, Graphic Works, Sculptures, Objects, Actions, Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin, 1977). Tellingly, the artists represented there—Růžena Zátková and Toyen (born Marie Čermínová)—were associated with the historical, not the contemporary, avant-garde and had spent years cut off from their homeland. Růžena Zátková (1885–1923) was presented as a representative of Italian Futurism; and Toyen (1902–1980) had spent thirty years in exile in Paris by the time the exhibition was held.

Why did none of these exhibitions include Czech or Slovak postwar women artists such as Adriana Šimotová, Jana Želibská, Zorka Ságlová, Eva Kmentová, and others whose work strongly echoed many of the approaches of feminist art west of our borders? Besides the political situation at the time and a lack of interest among Western curators, another reason was the lack of women's collective (self-)organizing. Also, during the communist era, Czech and Slovak art theorists of both genders showed essentially no interest in questions of feminist art. The only exception was the art critic Jindřich Chalupecký, who had important ties to the foreign art world. Although he was familiar with the work of some Western feminist artists, in his only text that mentions them, "Smysl moderního umění" (The Sense of Modern Art, 1971), he strictly

contrasted their work with Czech women's art and explored it not within the context of women's emancipation but with a view to form or even formalism—in this case postminimalism. Chalupecký even expressly rejected feminist art as a proverbial "nail in the coffin" of artistic autonomy. "Feminism in art," he wrote, "engaged in the same sexism against which it sought to fight."⁴

The fear of being stigmatized as a feminist artist, combined with the bad taste left by a glorified and enforced collectivism that often felt like the antithesis of the free artistic expression that artists yearned for but were mostly denied during the era of one-party rule, helped to maintain the paternalistic system in the Czech art scene and contributed to a sense of indifference toward the feminist movement's calls to action. What is more, women and women artists who existed outside official culture apparently did not want to be marginalized twice—first as women and second as opponents of the political system. They thus usually aimed their resistance at the same target as their male peers, meaning the communist regime, not the patriarchal social structures.

Although the discrimination of women in education and employment was not as burning in Czechoslovakia as it was in the West, even here there existed important issues relating to laws and social mechanisms to which women's bodies were subjected and that were at the center of interest of the political reforms of second-wave feminism (issues such as the sexualization of women's bodies, a lack of access to birth control, lesbian rights, rape, domestic violence). Since, however, questions of inequality were primarily viewed through the lens of social/class status, feminist discourse found itself sidelined, considered a matter of the bourgeois past. The "woman question" was addressed by giving women the right to vote, the right to work, and in many (though not all) countries of the former Eastern bloc, including Czechoslovakia, the right to an abortion. Nobody questioned women's double burden or the traditional patriarchal and heteronormative organization of family and personal relationships. Feminism could thus be presented as something made obsolete by historical developments, something unnecessary in a supposedly classless society.

When it comes to art, in the countries of the former Eastern bloc, feminism and gender politics are usually interpreted outside of historical contexts. I am convinced that we cannot understand their long-term marginalization in the art scene without returning to the past. Keeping our

focus on the former Czechoslovakia, local intellectuals' (male and female) minimal response to second-wave feminism and the feminist avant-garde—both of which shook American and Western European art and society to the core after 1968—grew not only out of the ideologically motivated post-1948 need to erase the emancipatory tendencies of the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–38) and its protagonists from history (or even to physically liquidate them); it also had its roots in the interwar leftist avant-garde's complicated and often intolerant relationship to feminism.

Support for women's emancipation—though not for the feminist movement—was something of a mantra of progressive avant-garde ideology. But the myth of the liberated woman proved to be an instrumental “fetishization of the non-existent.”⁵ Women were poorly represented in the art groups and associations that strongly shaped modern art in interwar Czechoslovakia, and the avant-garde remained a distinctly masculine undertaking. From an ideological point of view, the First Czechoslovak Republic's leftist avant-garde built on a program of emancipation based more on gender parity than on an acceptance of gender differences or even of sexual otherness.

Despite proclaiming its support for gender equality and women's liberation, the avant-garde saw women as the opposite of revolution: in the social sphere, women embodied the traditional values of romantic love, marriage, and motherly care—“institutions” on which the avant-garde had turned its back in disgust. In the artistic sphere, meanwhile, women personified traditional artistic values and genres such as the hung painting and figural sculpture that the avant-garde had condemned as expressions of reactionism (although in reality they never completely abandoned them). Nor should we forget that the Czech women's movement had been a significant force in promoting national self-determination since the nineteenth century, but that, paradoxically, patriotism complicated their emancipation: it let them claim a certain space but it prevented their radicalization, for any clearer attempt at defining themselves in opposition to men would have meant betraying the idea of a Czech nation-state. The avant-garde, for its part, viewed feminism's continued contribution to state-building as a turn away from internationalism, a much-vaunted main pillar of its philosophy. Unlike the subaltern proletariat romanticized by the avant-garde as the main agent of socialist revolution (often without any proper familiarity with its

socioeconomic reality), the interwar women's movement was associated with the establishment, not with political resistance.

And finally, with the onset of the Great Depression and Adolf Hitler's rise to power, the struggle for women's rights was again put on the back burner. In the 1930s, Czechoslovak feminists were repeatedly silenced, and women—faced with the challenges of preserving their family and their nation—often lost their previously hard-earned positions. Although these developments are the reason why many representatives of the local feminist movement viewed the “woman question” as all the more important, the prewar weakening of women's status in Czech society meant that the post-1948 communist regime had little trouble eradicating feminism.

As for the avant-garde, the postwar communist nomenclature based its cultural policies on some of its ideas (especially those founded on the presuppositions of proletarian art or those that applied a militant revolutionary rhetoric), but it felt threatened by others (such as radical and experimental artistic practice, which was the opposite of the communists' proclaimed ideal of a broadly comprehensible art for the socialist citizen). Hence the ambivalent role played by the avant-garde, especially after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. It was glorified, but only in an expedient and ideologically subservient and censored shorthand. Though still associated with proto-totalitarian ideology, it was also identified with political and aesthetic heresy. In fact, this radicalism guaranteed that, in the Eastern bloc during the communist era, the avant-garde represented an important counterweight to the regime and to official cultural policy. None of these “qualities” were associated with the interwar feminist movement that had emphasized care and cooperation instead of militancy and revolt.

Although the interwar avant-garde's relationship to feminism was not black and white, for these and other reasons the concept of a feminist avant-garde was beyond the realm of the imagination in socialist Czechoslovakia, and it remained unimaginable for a long time after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In the Czech art scene, it wasn't until recently that the term “feminism” began to be more comprehensively detabooized (or rehabilitated), although discussion of the subject continues to be accompanied by extreme reactions. For instance, some directors of influential public art institutions still interpret criticism of the unequal representation of women in ex-

hibitions or in gallery collections as echoes of communist practice. (A truly paradoxical statement, considering the fact that the communist regime essentially liquidated the feminist movement.)

Interest in feminism naturally increased after the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia in 1989. Nevertheless, the voices of those who were interested in these developments were often marginalized and sidelined within academic research, which viewed them as products of their time or a mere passing fad. As a result, later generations long remained barely aware of the work of the few determined feminist curators and researchers, myself included. Over the past quarter century, I have personally experienced a number of *déjà vu* moments—the nagging feeling that we are constantly starting over from the beginning.

Yet, none of this can change the fact that feminism is slowly becoming a natural part of artistic discourse in the Czech Republic and that its entreaties are beginning to be understood within the historical context as well.⁶ For

instance, the group Čtvrtá vlna (Fourth Wave), founded in 2016 by four female art school students and graduates with the goal of encouraging discussion of sexism in art education and on the art scene and promoting mutuality instead of dominance, points to an awareness of the discontinuity in Czech feminism and to conscious attempts at following on historical models and existing conditions. In fact, it is no coincidence that two of the group's members—Marie Lukáčová and Martina Smutná (both born around the time of the Velvet Revolution and the collapse of the Soviet empire)—explore the past in their work. Lukáčová's recent public art project *Vagina Fantasy* (→ pp. 248–49, figs. 1, 2) loosely paraphrased the surrealist imagination of the avant-garde artist Toyen to destigmatize female genitals as a site of pleasure, political protest, but also violence;⁷ and three years ago Smutná used the iconography of women's work in a series of paintings and videos to address the paradoxes associated with women's emancipation during the postwar construction of state socialism (→ pp. 248–49, figs. 3, 4).⁸ Feminism and the avant-garde in Czech art are perhaps closer today than ever in the past.

¹ *Feministická avantgarda 70. let, Dům umění města Brna / The Brno House of Arts*, December 12, 2018, to February 24, 2019, curator: Gabriele Schor. This text is an edited and updated version of my presentation at the conference. ² Martina Pachmanová, "In? Out? In Between?: Some Notes on the Invisibility of a Nascent Eastern European Feminist and Gender Discourse in Contemporary Art Theory," in *Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe*, ed. Bojana Pejić, exh. cat. Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna, and Zachęta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, 2009), pp. 241–48. ³ For more, see, for example, Agata Jakubowska, "No Groups but Friendship: All-Women Initiatives in Poland at the Turn of the 1980s," in *All-Women Art Spaces in Europe in the Long 1970s*, ed. Agata Jakubowska and Katy Deepwell (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018), pp. 229–47. ⁴ On Jindřich Chalupecký's ambivalent relationship to "women's art," see Martina Pachmanová, "Silence Surrounding Feminism and Femininity as an Aesthetic Value: Czech Women Artists Through the Eyes of Jindřich Chalupecký," in *The Sešit Reader: The First Ten Years of Notebook for Art, Theory and Related Zones, 2007–2017*, ed. Václav Magid et al. (Prague: Academy of Fine Arts, 2019), pp. 192–202. ⁵ Piotr Piotrowski, *Artysta między rewolucją i reakcją* (Poznań: UAM, 1993), p. 159. ⁶ Among other things, one possible factor behind a significant improvement of this situation has been the newly launched Secondary Archive (<https://secondaryarchive.org>). It presents the work of more than 250 women artists from three generations in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, along with analyses written by young women researchers and curators from those countries. ⁷ Marie Lukáčová, *Vagina Fantasy*, Galerie Artwall, Prague, April 14 to June 30, 2021, <https://www.artwallgallery.cz/cs/vystava/marie-lukacova-vagina-fantasy> [all URLs accessed in June 2022]. ⁸ Martina Smutná, *Společně pokosíme, vymlátíme a odevzdáme (Together We'll Mow, Thresh and Deliver the Harvest)*, Galerie NoD, Prague, February 27 to April 15, 2018, <https://nod.roxy.cz/events/detail/287/martina-smutna-spolecne-pokosime-vymlatime-a-odevzdame>.

NEW SPACES FOR FEMINISM IN ART

Developments in Europe after 1945

Oliver Zybok

From the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, women in Europe came together for the first time to fight for their right to vote, as well as for their right to education and work. In the late 1950s, the second wave of feminism began, which, among other things, drew attention to sexual violence against women and discrimination in the workplace and demanded a right to self-determination. For several years now, there has been talk of a fourth wave, especially with regard to numerous feminist actions on the Internet, which, in its intention, seamlessly follows on from the third—to be located around the mid- to late 1980s until around the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century.

The criticism of this fourth wave is focused on misogynistic rhetoric in all media and in popular culture, which has reached an unprecedented degree of journalistic impact thanks to the manifold digital possibilities. This ranges from misogynistic bashing in music, as can be observed, for example, time and again in the hip-hop scene, to open hostility on social networks, extending to the debates about gender-appropriate language, through which all gender variants are to be made visible.

Digital networks make it possible for artists worldwide to exchange information about their demands and activities, to change the centers of their lives, and thus also to expand their radius of action. Despite the fact that this essay focuses on European positions, it has become clear, at the latest since the establishment of digital communication channels, that—in view of global networking through the Internet, which has an increasing influence on regional and national developments, especially in the cultural field—such a continent-related approach will no longer be adequate in the future.

Thematic Fields of the 1970s

The themes that the second wave of feminism dealt with in the field of art are complex and closely interwoven.¹ In the foreground are socially manifested female role clichés: the woman in marriage, as a mother, and as a housewife, as well as her sexuality, which is subordinate to that of the man, or the focusing of her sexualized body for the male gaze in connection with the beauty ideals of the time. Accordingly, since the 1960s, numerous women artists, in both Europe and the United States, have explored these themes across continents, for example in the following works: *Bügeltraum* (Ironing Dream, 1975) by Karin Mack (b. 1940), *Hauben für eine verheiratete Frau* (Bonnets for a Married Woman, 1970) by Ulrike Rosenbach (b. 1943), and *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) by Martha Rosler (b. 1943).

A common motif is the act of cleaning, in which the woman is presented in a bent-over position. Examples include the drawing *Bodenschrubben* (Scrubbing the Floor, 1975) by Birgit Jürgenssen (1949–2003) and the performances *Hartford Wash: Washing, Tracks, Maintenance* (1973) by Mierle Laderman Ukeles (b. 1939). Marriage sealed her fate of being condemned to the role of housewife. Exemplary for the examination of this theme is a

series of black-and-white photographs and collages created in 1973 by the British artist Penny Slinger (b. 1947, → p. 251, fig. 1). In it, she herself can be seen wearing a white veil and squeezed into a costume—modeled on a wedding cake—that causes her to pose with her legs spread apart. Only the breast and pubic area are covered, whereby even the lower part of the costume can be opened. Contrary to the general feminist attitude of the time not to show one's own body in a sexualized context, Slinger consciously uses the erotic charms of her body for art in order to point out, among other things, the taboos surrounding female desire. The Dutch artist Lydia Schouten (b. 1948) also used her body to expose female experiences of oppression in her performance *Sexobject* (1979). Her head is wrapped in bandages, and she wears a black leather corset, with which she is chained to a metal frame with long rubber bands that restrict her freedom of movement. Against the resistance of the bands, she strikes balloons filled with black ink with a whip, which are hanging on the wall in front of her, above a text that reads “how does it feel to be a sexobject.” The balloons burst, and ink pours over the words. The effort with which the artist attacks the writing on the wall illustrates the emotions, dominated by aggression, that accompany the perceived humiliation.

Another broad thematic field is that of role play. In her eighteen-part photographic series *Strip-tease occasionnel à l'aide des draps du trousseau* (Incidental Strip-Tease Using Sheets from the Trousseau, 1974–75), the French artist ORLAN (b. 1947) accentuates gestures with which she refers to scandals and taboo subjects. In a sequence of images, she gradually transforms from a nun-like figure (the virginal Mary) in a voluminous robe, via a vamp-like, half-naked being with long, flowing hair, to a naked Venus, mimicking the figure of Venus in the famous painting *The Birth of Venus* (1485–86) by Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510). In the last photograph of this series, the artist has finally disappeared, leaving only the garment of which she has divested herself. Here, ORLAN thematizes the reduction of women to a certain social image (equating virginity to abstinence and whore to immoderateness), but at the same time she also refers to the history of art dominated by male artists.

Such references, which refer to source images with a clichéd understanding of female roles, have appeared time and again in feminist art since the 1960s, especially with regard to the painting by Botticelli. The art-historical model is also cited in the montage *Venus* (1975–76) from

Ulrike Rosenbach's three-part photographic series *Female Energy Exchange – Weiblicher Energieaustausch*, in which the artist superimposes full-body portraits with depictions of female mythological figures, and in the photograph *Untitled, Providence, Rhode Island* (1976) by the American photographic artist Francesca Woodman (1958–1981). In this piece, she holds a large conch shell in her right arm, her naked body seemingly peeling out of a fragile, already torn paper sheath. By always staging herself with classical symbols and in similarly connoted poses, Woodman was simultaneously defending herself against associated gender-specific ideals of any kind.

Other feminist artists have exposed the normative thinking in the gender discussion by means of minimalist procedures that arrange the female body in systems of geometric grids. One example of this is the series of *Körperkonfigurationen* (Body Configurations, → pp. 252–53, fig. 2) by the Austrian performance artist VALIE EXPORT (b. 1940), created between 1972 and 1982, in which a female body interacts with architecture that symbolically represents male principles of construction and power structures: stone and body, rigidity and pliability, immutability and vulnerability, hardness and sensitivity thus confront each other—poles that also determine the gender discussion and that are once again intensified in this series through diagrammatic overdrawings and overpaintings. Outside of Europe, such geometric mechanisms have been integrated as well, for example in the work of the Peruvian artist Teresa Burga (1935–2021) and the San Diego-based artist Eleanor Antin (b. 1935).²

The conditioning of the female body by stereotypical role models is also addressed by numerous artists of the younger generations. With her video installation *Destroy She Said* (1998), the Italian artist Monica Bonvicini (b. 1965) presents a montage of images of women from films by Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Jean-Luc Godard, and Roman Polanski, among others. All of the selected sequences, which she has assembled into a new story, depict women in a certain state of hopelessness whose physiognomy can be read, for example, as despair, sadness, or fear. The actresses each seek support from architectural elements. Similar to VALIE EXPORT's *Körperkonfigurationen*, they adapt themselves to their circumstances. Through the rhythmic sequencing, repetition, and sampling of each scene, Bonvicini has established a female stereotype: the weak, help-seeking woman in need of (male) support.

In the context of this confrontation of male principles and purported female needs, the theme of “violence against women” inevitably emerges, which feminist art from the 1960s to the 1980s, at least in the Western world, dealt with across national borders and continents. A striking example of this is *Dialogue with a Rapist* (1978, → p. 253, fig. 3) by the New Zealand artist Alexis Hunter (1948–2014), who lived in London from 1972 until her death. In the ten-part photographic series with textual excerpts from the dialogue with her violent counterpart, she processes a personal experience, an attempted rape by a Black man. She succeeded in convincing her tormentor to abandon his intention, since the act would have provoked racially motivated violence.³ Through double exposures and a handwritten dialogue that she wrote down shortly after the experience, she thematized the confrontation of perpetrator and victim. Hunter, probably in no small part due to her specific, feminist-influenced socialization, averted a dire outcome in that situation. The English artist Tracey Emin (b. 1963), in turn, was raped when she was thirteen. She recounts the crime in her autobiography *Strangeland* (2005). The frightening soberness of her narrative results not least of all from her mother’s indifferent reaction.⁴ Emin describes herself as a feminist: “As long as somewhere in the world a woman is burned for smiling at a man, as long as a teacher has her hand chopped off for teaching young girls to write and read, I am a feminist.”⁵ That experience left its mark on Emin’s entire life and thus also on her artistic work. Pieces such as *My Bed* (1998) relentlessly reveal her trepidation about human closeness, her view of sexuality and desire, and exploitation by herself and others.

Before the step to actual violence, there are stages of escalation, on which feminists of all generations can report. For example, the Swedish net artist Arvida Byström (b. 1991) openly presented her unshaven legs as a model in the context of an advertising campaign, whereupon she was exposed to a shitstorm on the Internet, including threats of rape.⁶ According to the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, “symbolic violence” is revealed in such massive intimidation—something perceived as threatening is ruthlessly ignored, which does not yet have to result in actual “naked violence”; the rigorous aversion already conceals misrecognized violence.⁷ Byström has apparently addressed something that numerous men regard as their sole concern: body hair, as it were, as a representation of masculinity—a presumptive privilege that is resisted by a woman, who thus takes the vi-

sualization of a role system to the point of absurdity. If one follows the trains of thought of the cultural scientist Mithu M. Sanyal, this example reveals society’s inability to speak about the female body. This problem has been passed down through cultural history and has still not been overcome to this day, since women’s sexual characteristics have been branded as rather alienating, if not threatening, in many mythologies.⁸

By addressing the subject of women’s body hair or menstruation, or countering common ideals of beauty, many feminist artists of the youngest generation, such as Byström, break away from the classical thematic fields of feminism by setting new accents: not the representation of male-dominated power structures, not the equality of men and women in the workplace, nor necessarily the criticism of the performance or commodity system are in the foreground, but rather the individual, who is allowed to act freely with regard to his or her own physicality, beyond general trends, as well as an acceptance of individual sensitivities without being condemned for it.

New Channels of Discourse

The current fourth wave of feminism opens up new channels of discourse. It increasingly addresses an intersectionality of problem areas—that is to say, the fact that several forms of discrimination run parallel and are mutually dependent. At the same time, the mechanisms of discrimination vary: for example, a white cis woman from a middle-class background faces different conflicts than a transwoman who has left conventional life behind. While third-wave and especially second-wave feminists focused primarily on issues of gender equality, which were viewed almost exclusively from the perspective of the Western hemisphere, the current development of feminist activities, not least of all due to the enormous reach of digital networks, indicates an impact on a “glocal” scale—that is, a consideration of both global and local phenomena.

In the meantime, however, the key political considerations of feminist activists also differ: while one group agrees on a basic attitude of collectivism and solidarity and tries to fight against states of inequality with an anti-capitalist attitude, other forces represent a strongly individualized perspective, which is interested in power sharing in political and economic areas, but above all demands unrestricted self-determination regarding

one's own body. Here, there are signs of a gap between conventional feminist concerns and those that, for example, break previous "taboos" within the discourse of second-wave feminists. The visual appearance of feminism itself is also addressed, as a brand which is, if not adapted, at least approximated to the conditions of capitalist consumer society, and which advertises certain products and services. Evidence of this can be found in the numerous market-strategy-oriented campaigns in the field of pop culture, such as the feminist commitment of various protagonists like Beyoncé (b. 1981) and Lady Gaga (b. 1986). Meanwhile, streaming services such as Spotify and Apple Music also offer playlists with the "Top Feminist Songs." Feminism has arrived in the mainstream.

The negative attitude of many feminists of older generations toward the activists of the youngest generation is exacerbated by the fact that, from their point of view, the political aspect seems to have been pushed back, as well as by the fact that many of the artists active on the Internet also work successfully as models, such as—in addition to Arvida Byström—Alexandra Marzella (b. 1991), Britta Thie (b. 1987), and John Yuyi (aka Chiang Yu-Yi, b. 1991). Traditional feminists see the fashion industry in particular as a branch of consumer culture that champions an image of women embedded in patriarchal structures. Second- and third-wave feminists such as Luce Irigaray (b. 1930) and Lucy R. Lippard (b. 1937), for example, criticize any adoption of image categories of patriarchy, for whatever purpose: "A commodity—a woman—is divided into two irreconcilable 'bodies': her 'natural' body and her socially valued, exchangeable body, which is a particularly mimetic expression of masculine values."⁹

In contrast to this positioning, to which artists such as Penny Slinger and Hannah Wilke (1940–1993), who both repeatedly emphasized their femininity, have been exposed since the 1970s, the representatives of the fourth wave do not necessarily "completely reject common ideals of beauty, such as those found in magazines, porn films, and art history," as the art theorist Christina Grammatikopoulou writes, for "they understand their importance, but also try to escape their power of definition."¹⁰ Accordingly, Grammatikopoulou's answer to the critical question as to where a line is drawn between feminism and consumer culture in the digital age is that the feminist artists of the fourth wave do not even attempt to make such a differentiation. "Instead of drawing such a line, they intentionally blur it, using their performances

to question the limits between staged performance and reality, empowerment and objectification. The border is marked by its blurring," writes Grammatikopoulou.¹¹ They combine physical and digital realities—creating a "phygital" world.¹²

As a result, many feminist net artists tend to align themselves with a sex-positive orientation, which in the 1980s was already primarily confronted with anti-pornographic feminists.¹³ Representatives of sex-positive feminism reject all resolutions to restrict consensual, sexual activity between adults. The Danish artist Maja Malou Lyse (b. 1993), for example, posts sex-positive self-portraits on Instagram (→ p. 254, fig. 4). At first, these photos are insignificantly different from selfies, which present an idealized self-image in a staged external appearance. However, Lyse counteracts the expectations of these arranged self-portraits by adding comments to her pictures that are directed against rape crimes and capitalism, for example. In doing so, her aesthetic orientation (for instance when she stages herself in erotic underwear, with sex toys and sexualized body poses) goes so far that some viewers tend to classify them as pornography. But Lyse also presents the female body in a way that most tend to distance themselves from, in terms of body hair, menstruation, and instruments of DIY gynecology.

Ultimately, artists such as Arvida Byström and Maja Malou Lyse are concerned with the descriptiveness of the body in their art, in the context of their physical self-determination. The American feminist philosopher Judith Butler (b. 1956) assumes that the latter represents not only matter, "but a continued and ceaseless materialization of possibilities: 'One is not simply a body, but, in some very key sense, one does one's body and, indeed, one does one's body differently from one's contemporaries and from one's embodied predecessors and successors as well.'"¹⁴ Butler thus refers to the fundamental formability of bodies, which as intentionally organized materialities are an "incessant *materializing* of possibilities," but are "necessarily constrained by available historical conventions."¹⁵ Net artists confirm Butler's line of thought with their performances and actions in exploring bodily presences and their possibilities.

Many activists of the fourth wave do not necessarily describe themselves as feminist artists. They emphasize that they deal with feminist issues and take a position on gender issues, but they want to see them considered in a broader context, for example with regard to racially

motivated resentment or fundamental structural discrimination against minorities.¹⁶ Many ask themselves the question: What kind of feminist do I want to be? They resolutely reject historically conditioned definitions of a universally valid feminist code of conduct.

In addition to net artists, there are also numerous colleagues working within the traditional “white cube” with similar approaches, such as Mary-Audrey Ramirez (b. 1990) and Raphaela Vogel (b. 1988). In the case of Ramirez, computer games, among other things, are at the center of her investigation. As an enthusiastic gamer, she traces diverse idiosyncrasies of the corresponding scene, such as different variants of sexism in the games, but also among the players themselves. In her installations, some of which are larger-than-life animal figures or monstrous, alien creatures, Ramirez uses various materials such as nylon or plastic to refer to a certain aesthetic visual language of computer games. She integrates sound collages, performances, and self-developed apps for smartphones into her work complexes, creating an interactive constellation (→ pp. 256–57, fig. 5). Raphaela Vogel's expansive installations also often extend into the realm of the monumental; she, too, makes use of diverse materials, media possibilities, and technologies. In *Uterusland* (2017), a larger-than-life anatomical model of a female breast is connected via a white plastic strand suggesting a milk stream to a life-size horse figure made of polyurethane, the physiognomy of which seems to melt away in an equally white liquid. In an accompanying video, Vogel reenacts her own birth in a swimming pool in Nuremberg, where she was born. With such works, the artist formulates questions regarding gender constructions and emancipated artistic production, which nowadays is always accompanied by explicit self-portrayal.

Development of a New Understanding of Art

Generally speaking, it can be said that the youngest generation of artists is making intensive use of new technologies for their work. In particular, artists active in the field of digital media use the possibilities of social networks—not only to achieve greater reach, but also to demonstrate that art is no longer bound to a physical location or public space. With the appropriate technical equipment, their artistic actions and performances can be accessed from anywhere and distributed live digitally.

Feminist artists in the 1960s, who were largely excluded from the classical, male-dominated media of painting and sculpture, established as their own artistic practice the fields of the then new video technology and nascent performance art, combined with photography, which at the time was still struggling for acceptance as an art form. Net artists at the dawn of the twenty-first century can rightly claim to be among the first to explore the potential of combining physical and digital realities in a “phygital” world. In doing so, they make a decisive contribution to the development of a new understanding of art. In the foreground is a global exchange of artists, which makes the focus on purely country- and continent-related analyses seem outdated.

¹ A comprehensive overview of feminist art, especially from the 1960s and 1970s, is provided by the publication accompanying the eponymous European exhibition tour with venues in various cities, including Rome, Madrid, Brussels, Hamburg, and London: Gabriele Schor, ed., *Feminist Avant-Garde: Art of the 1970s in the VERBUND COLLECTION*, Vienna (Munich, 2015). ² See, for example, the works *Perfil de la Mujer Peruana* (Profile of the Peruvian Woman) and *Objeto-Estructura-Informe Antropométrico* (Object-Structure-Anthropometric Report, 1980) by Teresa Burga and *Carving: A Traditional Sculpture* (1972) by Eleanor Antin. ³ Lynda Morris, ed., *Alexis Hunter: Radical Feminism in the 1970s*, exh. cat. Norwich Gallery (Norwich, 2006). ⁴ Tracey Emin, *Strangeland* (London, 2005), pp. 23–24. ⁵ Quoted in Angelika Hager, “Tracey Emin über Hillary, Schiele und ein Leben ohne Sex,” *profil*, April 22, 2015 [translated], <https://www.profil.at/gesellschaft/kunst-tracey-emin-hillary-schiele-leben-sex-5614566> [all URLs accessed in June 2022]. ⁶ See, among others, the online articles “Adidas-Werbespot: Schwedisches Model zeigt sich unrasiert – und wird mit Vergewaltigung bedroht,” *Stern.de*, October 8, 2017, <https://www.stern.de/lifestyle/mode/adidas-spot-model-arvida-bystroem-zeigt-sich-unrasiert-und-wird-mit-vergewaltigung-bedroht-7652246.html>; and “Model Arvida Byström gets rape threats after an advert featured her hairy legs,” *BBC News*, October 6, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-41522160>. ⁷ For more detailed information, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, 2001). Originally published in French as: *La domination masculine* (Paris, 1998). ⁸ Mithu M. Sanyal, *Vulva: Die Enthüllung des unsichtbaren Geschlechts* (Berlin, 2017), p. 9. ⁹ Luce Irigaray, “Women on the Market,” in *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity*, ed. Alan D. Schrift (New York and London, 1997), pp. 174–89, esp. p. 180; also see Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley et al., 1997), pp. 199–200. ¹⁰ Christina Grammatikopoulou, “Viral Performances of Gender,” in *The Beautiful Warriors: Technofeminist Praxis in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Cornelia Sollfrank (New York, 2020), pp. 89–109, esp. p. 106. ¹¹ *Ibid.* ¹² For more on the artistic activities of the fourth wave, see, among others, Oliver Zybok, “Von biblischen Nackten zu Selfies: Eine Entwicklungsgeschichte des Feminismus im Kontext der Kunst,” *Kunstforum International* 257, ed. Oliver Zybok (November–December 2018), pp. 66–76; and Alfred Weidinger and Anika Meier, eds., *Virtual Normality: The Female Gaze in the Age of the Internet*, exh. cat. Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig (Vienna, 2018). ¹³ See, among others, Gayle Rubin, “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality,” in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carole S. Vance (Boston, 1992), p. 268. ¹⁴ Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988), pp. 519–31, esp. p. 521. ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, emphasis in the original. ¹⁶ See, among others, Zybok 2018 (see note 12).

WE SHOULD ALL BE FEMINISTS

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Introduction

This is a modified version of a talk I delivered in December 2012 at TEDxEuston, a yearly conference focused on Africa. Speakers from diverse fields deliver concise talks aimed at challenging and inspiring Africans and friends of Africa. I had spoken at a different TED conference a few years before, giving a talk titled 'The Danger of the Single Story' about how stereotypes limit and shape our thinking, especially about Africa. It seems to me that the word *feminist*, and the idea of feminism itself, is also limited by stereotypes. When my brother Chuks and best friend Ike, both co-organizers of the TEDxEuston conference, insisted that I speak, I could not say no. I decided to speak about feminism because it is something I feel strongly about. I suspected that it might not be a very popular subject, but I hoped to start a necessary conversation. And so that evening as I stood onstage, I felt as though I was in the presence of family – a kind and attentive audience, but one that might resist the subject of my talk. At the end, their standing ovation gave me hope.

Okoloma was one of my greatest childhood friends. He lived on my street and looked after me like a big brother: if I liked a boy, I would ask Okoloma's opinion. Okoloma was funny and intelligent and wore cowboy boots that were pointy at the tips. In December 2005, in a plane crash in southern Nigeria, Okoloma died. It is still hard for me to put into words how I felt. Okoloma was a person I could argue with, laugh with and truly talk to. He was also the first person to call me a feminist.

I was about fourteen. We were in his house, arguing, both of us bristling with half-baked knowledge from the books we had read. I don't remember what this particular argument was about. But I remember that as I argued and argued, Okoloma looked at me and said, 'You know, you're a feminist.'

It was not a compliment. I could tell from his tone – the same tone with which a person would say, 'You're a supporter of terrorism.'

I did not know exactly what this word *feminist* meant. And I did not want Okoloma to know that I didn't know. So I brushed it aside and continued to argue. The first thing I planned to do when I got home was look up the word in the dictionary.

Now fast-forward to some years later.

In 2003, I wrote a novel called *Purple Hibiscus*, about a man who, among other things, beats his wife, and whose story doesn't end too well. While I was promoting the novel in Nigeria, a journalist, a nice, well-meaning man, told me he wanted to advise me. (Nigerians, as you might know, are very quick to give unsolicited advice.)

He told me that people were saying my novel was feminist, and his advice to me – he was shaking his head sadly as he spoke – was that I should never call myself a feminist, since feminists are women who are unhappy because they cannot find husbands.

So I decided to call myself a Happy Feminist.

Then an academic, a Nigerian woman, told me that feminism was not our culture, that feminism was un-African, and I was only calling myself a feminist because I had been influenced by Western books. (Which amused me, because much of my early reading was decidedly unfeminist: I must have read every single Mills & Boon romance published before I was sixteen. And each time I try to read those books called 'classic feminist texts', I get bored, and I struggle to finish them.)

Anyway, since feminism was un-African, I decided I would now call myself a Happy African Feminist. Then a dear friend told me that calling myself a feminist meant that I hated men. So I decided I would now be a Happy African Feminist Who Does Not Hate Men. At some point I was a Happy African Feminist Who Does Not Hate Men And Who Likes To Wear Lip Gloss And High Heels For Herself And Not For Men.

Of course much of this was tongue-in-cheek, but what it shows is how that word *feminist* is so heavy with baggage, negative baggage: you hate men, you hate bras, you hate African culture, you think women should always be in charge, you don't wear make-up, you don't shave, you're always angry, you don't have a sense of humour, you don't use deodorant.

Now here's a story from my childhood.

When I was in primary school in Nsukka, a university town in south-eastern Nigeria, my teacher said at the beginning of term that she would give the class a test and whoever got the highest score would be the class monitor. Class monitor was a big deal. If you were class monitor, you would write down the names of noise-makers each day, which was heady enough power on its own, but my teacher would also give you a cane to hold in your hand while you walked around and patrolled the class for noise-makers. Of course, you were not allowed to actually *use* the cane. But it was an exciting prospect for the

nine-year-old me. I very much wanted to be class monitor. And I got the highest score on the test.

Then, to my surprise, my teacher said the monitor had to be a boy. She had forgotten to make that clear earlier; she assumed it was obvious. A boy had the second-highest score on the test. And *he* would be monitor.

What was even more interesting is that this boy was a sweet, gentle soul who had no interest in patrolling the class with a stick. While I was full of ambition to do so.

But I was female and he was male and he became class monitor.

I have never forgotten that incident. If we do something over and over again, it becomes normal. If we see the same thing over and over again, it becomes normal. If only boys are made class monitor, then at some point we will all think, even if unconsciously, that the class monitor has to be a boy. If we keep seeing only men as heads of corporations, it starts to seem 'natural' that only men should be heads of corporations.

I often make the mistake of thinking that something that is obvious to me is just as obvious to everyone else. Take my dear friend Louis, who is a brilliant, progressive man. We would have conversations and he would tell me, 'I don't see what you mean by things being different and harder for women. Maybe it was so in the past, but not now. Everything is fine now for women.' I didn't understand how Louis could not see what seemed so evident.

I love being back home in Nigeria, and spend much of my time there in Lagos, the largest city and commercial hub of the country. Sometimes, in the evenings when the heat goes down and the city has a slower pace, I go out with friends and family to restaurants or cafés. On one of those evenings, Louis and I were out with friends.

There is a wonderful fixture in Lagos: a sprinkling of energetic young men who hang around outside certain establishments and very dramatically 'help' you park your car. Lagos is a metropolis of almost twenty million people, with more energy than London, more entrepreneurial spirit than New York, and so people come up with all sorts of ways to make a living. As in most big cities, finding parking in the evenings can be difficult, so these

young men make a business out of finding spots and – even when there are spots available – of guiding you into yours with much gesticulating, and promising to ‘look after’ your car until you get back. I was impressed with the particular theatrics of the man who found us a parking spot that evening. And so as we were leaving, I decided to give him a tip. I opened my bag, put my hand inside my bag to get my money, and I gave it to the man. And he, this man who was happy and grateful, took the money from me, and then looked across at Louis and said, ‘Thank you, sahl!’

Louis looked at me, surprised, and asked, ‘Why is he thanking me? I didn’t give him the money.’ Then I saw realization dawn on Louis’s face. The man believed that whatever money I had ultimately came from Louis. Because Louis is a man.

Men and women are different. We have different hormones and different sexual organs and different biological abilities – women can have babies, men cannot. Men have more testosterone and are, in general, physically stronger than women. There are slightly more women than men in the world – 52 per cent of the world’s population is female but most of the positions of power and prestige are occupied by men. The late Kenyan Nobel peace laureate Wangari Maathai put it simply and well when she said, ‘The higher you go, the fewer women there are.’

In the recent US elections, we kept hearing of the Lilly Ledbetter law, and if we go beyond that nicely alliterative name, it was really about this: in the US, a man and a woman are doing the same job, with the same qualifications, and the man is paid more *because* he is a man.

So in a literal way, men rule the world. This made sense – a thousand years ago. Because human beings lived then in a world in which physical strength was the most important attribute for survival; the physically stronger person was more likely to lead. And men in general are physically stronger. (There are of course many exceptions.) Today, we live in a vastly different world. The person more qualified to lead is *not* the physically stronger person. It is the more intelligent, the more knowledgeable, the more creative, more innovative. And there are no hormones for those attributes. A man is as likely as a woman to be intelligent,

innovative, creative. We have evolved. But our ideas of gender have not evolved very much.

Not long ago, I walked into the lobby of one of the best Nigerian hotels, and a guard at the entrance stopped me and asked me annoying questions – What was the name and room number of the person I was visiting? Did I know this person? Could I prove that I was a hotel guest by showing him my key card? – because the automatic assumption is that a Nigerian female walking into a hotel alone is a sex worker. Because a Nigerian female alone cannot possibly be a guest paying for her own room. A man who walks into the same hotel is not harassed. The assumption is that he is there for something legitimate. (Why, by the way, do those hotels not focus on the *demand* for sex workers instead of on the ostensible *supply*?)

In Lagos, I cannot go alone into many reputable clubs and bars. They just don’t let you in if you are a woman *alone*. You must be accompanied by a man. And so I have male friends who arrive at clubs and end up going in with their arms linked with those of a complete stranger, because that complete stranger, a woman out on her own, had no choice but to ask for ‘help’ to get into the club.

Each time I walk into a Nigerian restaurant with a man, the waiter greets the man and ignores me. The waiters are products of a society that has taught them that men are more important than women, and I know that they don’t intend harm, but it is one thing to know something intellectually and quite another to feel it emotionally. Each time they ignore me, I feel invisible. I feel upset. I want to tell them that I am just as human as the man, just as worthy of acknowledgement. These are little things, but sometimes it is the little things that sting the most.

Not long ago, I wrote an article about being young and female in Lagos. And an acquaintance told me that it was an angry article, and I should not have made it so angry. But I was unapologetic. Of course it was angry. Gender as it functions today is a grave injustice. I am angry. We should all be angry. Anger has a long history of bringing about positive change. But I am also hopeful, because I believe deeply in the ability of human beings to remake themselves for the better.

But back to anger. I heard the caution in the acquaintance's tone, and I knew that the comment was as much about the article as it was about my character. Anger, the tone said, is particularly not good for a woman. If you are a woman, you are not supposed to express anger, because it is threatening. I have a friend, an American woman, who took over a managerial position from a man. Her predecessor had been considered a 'tough go-getter'; he was blunt and hard-charging and was particularly strict about the signing of time sheets. She took on her new job, and imagined herself equally tough, but perhaps a little kinder than him – he didn't always realize that people had families, she said, and she did. Only weeks into her new job, she disciplined an employee about a forgery on a time sheet, just as her predecessor would have done. The employee then complained to top management about her style. She was aggressive and difficult to work with, the employee said. Other employees agreed. One said they had expected that she would bring a 'woman's touch' to her job, but she hadn't.

It didn't occur to any of them that she was doing the same thing for which a man had been praised.

I have another friend, also an American woman, who has a high-paying job in advertising. She is one of two women in her team. Once, at a meeting, she said she had felt slighted by her boss, who had ignored her comments and then praised something similar when it came from a man. She wanted to speak up, to challenge her boss. But she didn't. Instead, after the meeting, she went to the bathroom and cried, then called me to vent about it. She didn't want to speak up because she didn't want to seem aggressive. She let her resentments simmer.

What struck me – with her and with many other female American friends I have – is how invested they are in being 'liked'. How they have been raised to believe that their being likeable is very important and that this 'likeable' trait is a specific thing. And that specific thing does not include showing anger or being aggressive or disagreeing too loudly.

We spend too much time teaching girls to worry about what boys think of them. But the reverse is not the case. We don't teach boys to care about being likeable. We spend too much time telling girls that they cannot be angry or aggressive or tough, which is bad enough, but then we turn around and either praise or excuse men for the same reasons. All over the world, there are so many mag-

azine articles and books telling women what to do, how to be and not to be, in order to attract or please men. There are far fewer guides for men about pleasing women.

I teach a writing workshop in Lagos and one of the participants, a young woman, told me that a friend had told her not to listen to my 'feminist talk'; otherwise she would absorb ideas that would destroy her marriage. This is a threat – the destruction of a marriage, the possibility of not having a marriage at all – that in our society is much more likely to be used against a woman than against a man.

Gender matters everywhere in the world. And I would like today to ask that we should begin to dream about and plan for a different world. A fairer world. A world of happier men and happier women who are truer to themselves. And this is how to start: we must raise our daughters differently. We must also raise our sons differently.

We do a great disservice to boys in how we raise them. We stifle the humanity of boys. We define masculinity in a very narrow way. Masculinity is a hard, small cage, and we put boys inside this cage.

We teach boys to be afraid of fear, of weakness, of vulnerability. We teach them to mask their true selves, because they have to be, in Nigerian-speak, a *hard man*.

In secondary school, a boy and a girl go out, both of them teenagers with meagre pocket money. Yet the boy is expected to pay the bills, always, to prove his masculinity. (And we wonder why boys are more likely to steal money from their parents.)

What if both boys and girls were raised *not* to link masculinity and money? What if their attitude was not 'the boy has to pay', but rather, 'whoever has more should pay'? Of course, because of their historical advantage, it is mostly men who *will* have more today. But if we start raising children differently, then in fifty years, in a hundred years, boys will no longer have the pressure of proving their masculinity by material means.

But by far the worst thing we do to males – by making them feel they have to be hard – is that we leave them with very fragile egos. The *harder* a man feels compelled to be, the weaker his ego is.

And then we do a much greater disservice to girls, because we raise them to cater to the fragile egos of males.

We teach girls to shrink themselves, to make themselves smaller.

We say to girls, 'You can have ambition, but not too much. You should aim to be successful but not too successful, otherwise you will threaten the man. If you are the breadwinner in your relationship with a man, pretend that you are not, especially in public, otherwise you will emasculate him.'

But what if we question the premise itself? Why should a woman's success be a threat to a man? What if we decide to simply dispose of that word – and I don't know if there is an English word I dislike more than this – *emasculation*.

A Nigerian acquaintance once asked me if I was worried that men would be intimidated by me.

I was not worried at all – it had not even occurred to me to be worried, because a man who would be intimidated by me is exactly the kind of man I would have no interest in.

Still, I was struck by this. Because I am female, I'm expected to aspire to marriage. I am expected to make my life choices always keeping in mind that marriage is the most important. Marriage can be a good thing, a source of joy, love and mutual support. But why do we teach girls to aspire to marriage, yet we don't teach boys to do the same?

I know a Nigerian woman who decided to sell her house because she didn't want to intimidate a man who might want to marry her.

I know an unmarried woman in Nigeria who, when she goes to conferences, wears a wedding ring because she wants her colleagues to – according to her – 'give her respect'.

The sadness in this is that a wedding ring will indeed automatically make her seem worthy of respect, while not wearing a wedding ring would make her easily dismissible – and this is in a modern workplace.

I know young women who are under so much pressure – from family, from friends, even from work – to get married that they are pushed to make terrible choices.

Our society teaches a woman at a certain age who is unmarried to see it as a deep personal failure. While a man at a certain age who is unmarried has not quite come around to making his pick.

It is easy to say, 'But women can just say no to all this.' But the reality is more difficult, more complex. We are all social beings. We internalize ideas from our socialization.

Even the language we use illustrates this. The language of marriage is often a language of ownership, not a language of partnership.

We use the word *respect* for something a woman shows a man, but not often for something a man shows a woman.

Both men and women will say, 'I did it for peace in my marriage.'

When men say it, it is usually about something they should not be doing anyway. Something they say to their friends in a fondly exasperated way, something that ultimately proves to them their masculinity – 'Oh, my wife said I can't go to clubs every night, so now, for peace in my marriage, I go only on weekends.'

When women say 'I did it for peace in my marriage,' it is usually because they have given up a job, a career goal, a dream.

We teach females that in relationships, compromise is what a woman is more likely to do.

We raise girls to see each other as competitors – not for jobs or accomplishments, which in my opinion can be a good thing, but for the attention of men.

We teach girls that they cannot be sexual beings in the way boys are. If we have sons, we don't mind knowing about their girlfriends. But our daughters' boyfriends? God forbid. (But we of course expect them to bring home the perfect man for marriage when the time is right.)

We police girls. We praise girls for virginity but we don't praise boys for virginity (and it makes me wonder how exactly this is supposed to work out, since the loss of virginity is a process that usually involves two people of opposite genders).

Recently a young woman was gang-raped in a university in Nigeria, and the response of many young Nigerians, both male and female, was something like this: 'Yes, rape is wrong, but what is a girl doing in a room with four boys?'

Let us, if we can, forget the horrible inhumanity of that response. These Nigerians have been raised to think of women as inherently guilty. And they have been raised to expect so little of men that the idea of men as savage beings with no self-control is somehow acceptable.

We teach girls shame. *Close your legs. Cover yourself.* We make them feel as though by being born female, they are already guilty of something. And so girls grow up to be women who cannot say they have desire. Who silence themselves. Who cannot say what they truly think. Who have turned pretence into an art form.

I know a woman who hates domestic work, but she pretends that she likes it, because she has been taught that to be 'good wife material', she has to be – to use that Nigerian word – *homely*. And then she got married. And her husband's family began to complain that she had changed. Actually, she had not changed. She just got tired of pretending to be what she was not.

The problem with gender is that it prescribes how we *should* be rather than recognizing how we are. Imagine how much happier we would be, how much freer to be our true individual selves, if we didn't have the weight of gender expectations.

Boys and girls are undeniably different biologically, but socialization exaggerates the differences, and then starts a self-fulfilling process. Take cooking, for example. Today, women in general are more likely to do housework than men – cooking and cleaning. But why is that? Is it because women are born with a cooking gene or because over the years they have been socialized to see cooking as their role? I was going to say that perhaps women are born with a cooking gene until I remembered that the majority of famous cooks in the world – who are given the fancy title of 'chef' – are men.

I used to look at my grandmother, a brilliant woman, and wonder what she would have been if she'd had the same opportunities as men during her youth. Today, there are

more opportunities for women than there were during my grandmother's time, because of changes in policy and law, which are very important.

But what matters even more is our attitude, our mindset.

What if, in raising children, we focus on *ability* instead of gender? What if we focus on *interest* instead of gender?

I know a family who has a son and a daughter, a year apart in age, both brilliant at school. When the boy is hungry, the parents say to the girl, 'Go and cook Indomie noodles for your brother.' The girl doesn't like to cook Indomie noodles, but she is a girl and she has to. What if the parents, from the beginning, taught *both* children to cook them? Cooking, by the way, is a useful and practical life skill for a boy to have. I've never thought it made much sense to leave such a crucial thing – the ability to nourish oneself – in the hands of others.

I know a woman who has the same degree and same job as her husband. When they get back from work, she does most of the housework, which is true for many marriages, but what struck me was that whenever he changed the baby's nappy, she said *thank you* to him. What if she saw it as something normal and natural, that he should help care for his child?

I am trying to unlearn many lessons of gender I internalized while growing up. But I sometimes still feel vulnerable in the face of gender expectations.

The first time I taught a writing class in graduate school, I was worried. Not about the teaching material, because I was well prepared and I was teaching what I enjoyed. Instead I was worried about what to wear. I wanted to be taken seriously.

I knew that because I was female, I would automatically have to *prove* my worth. And I was worried that if I looked too feminine, I would not be taken seriously. I really wanted to wear my shiny lip gloss and my girly skirt, but I decided not to. I wore a very serious, very manly and very ugly suit.

The sad truth of the matter is that when it comes to appearance, we start off with men as the standard, as the norm. Many of us think that the less feminine a woman appears, the more likely she is to be taken seriously. A man going to a business meeting doesn't wonder about being taken seriously based on what he is wearing – but a woman does.

I wish I had not worn that ugly suit that day. Had I then the confidence I have now to be myself, my students would have benefited even more from my teaching. Because I would have been more comfortable and more fully and truly myself.

I have chosen to no longer be apologetic for my femininity. And I want to be respected in all my femaleness. Because I deserve to be. I like politics and history and am happiest when having a good argument about ideas. I am girly. I am happily girly. I like high heels and trying on lipsticks. It's nice to be complimented by both men and women (although I have to be honest and say that I prefer the compliments of stylish women), but I often wear clothes that men don't like or don't 'understand'. I wear them because I like them and because I feel good in them. The 'male gaze', as a shaper of my life's choices, is largely incidental.

Gender is not an easy conversation to have. It makes people uncomfortable, sometimes even irritable. Both men and women are resistant to talk about gender, or are quick to dismiss the problems of gender. Because thinking of changing the status quo is always uncomfortable.

Some people ask, 'Why the word *feminist*? Why not just say you are a believer in human rights, or something like that?' Because that would be dishonest. Feminism is, of course, part of human rights in general – but to choose to use the vague expression *human rights* is to deny the specific and particular problem of gender. It would be a way of pretending that it was not women who have, for centuries, been excluded. It would be a way of denying that the problem of gender targets women. That the problem was not about being human, but specifically about being a female human. For centuries, the world divided human beings into two groups and then proceeded to exclude and oppress one group. It is only fair that the solution to the problem should acknowledge that.

Some men feel threatened by the idea of feminism. This comes, I think, from the insecurity triggered by how boys are brought up, how their sense of self-worth is diminished if *they* are not 'naturally' in charge as men.

Other men might respond by saying, 'Okay, this is interesting, but I don't think like that. I don't even think about gender.'

Maybe not.

And that is part of the problem. That many men do not actively *think* about gender or notice gender. That many men say, like my friend Louis did, that things might have been bad in the past but everything is fine now. And that many men do nothing to change it. If you are a man and you walk into a restaurant and the waiter greets just you, does it occur to you to ask the waiter, 'Why have you not greeted her?' Men need to speak out in all of these ostensibly small situations.

Because gender can be uncomfortable, there are easy ways to close this conversation.

Some people will bring up evolutionary biology and apes, how female apes bow to male apes – that sort of thing. But the point is this: we are not apes. Apes also live in trees and eat earthworms. We do not.

Some people will say, 'Well, poor men also have a hard time.' And they do.

But that is not what this conversation is about. Gender and class are different. Poor men still have the privileges of being men, even if they do not have the privileges of being wealthy. I learned a lot about systems of oppression and how they can be blind to one another by talking to black men. I was once talking about gender and a man said to me, 'Why does it have to be you as a woman? Why not you as a human being?' This type of question is a way of silencing a person's specific experiences. Of course I am a human being, but there are particular things that happen to me in the world because I am a woman. This same man, by the way, would often talk about his experience as a black man. (To which I should probably have responded, 'Why not your experiences as a man or as a human being? Why a black man?')

So, no, this conversation is about gender. Some people will say, 'Oh, but women have the real power: bottom power.' (This is a Nigerian expression for a woman who uses her sexuality to get things from men.) But bottom power is not power at all, because the woman with bottom power is actually not powerful; she just has a good route to tap another person's power. And then what happens if the man is in a bad mood or sick or temporarily impotent?

Some people will say a woman is subordinate to men because it's our culture. But culture is constantly changing. I have beautiful twin nieces who are fifteen. If they had been born a hundred years ago, they would have been taken away and killed. Because a hundred years ago, Igbo culture considered the birth of twins to be an evil omen. Today that practice is unimaginable to all Igbo people.

What is the point of culture? Culture functions ultimately to ensure the preservation and continuity of a people. In my family, I am the child who is most interested in the story of who we are, in ancestral lands, in our tradition. My brothers are not as interested as I am. But I cannot participate, because Igbo culture privileges men, and only the male members of the extended family can attend the meetings where major family decisions are taken. So although I am the one who is most interested in these things, I cannot attend the meeting. I cannot have a formal say. Because I am female.

Culture does not make people. People make culture. If it is true that the full humanity of women is not our culture, then we can and must make it our culture.

I think very often of my friend Okoloma. May he and others who passed away in that Sosoliso crash continue to rest in peace. He will always be remembered by those of us who loved him. And he was right, that day, many years ago, when he called me a feminist. I am a feminist.

And when, all those years ago, I looked the word up in the dictionary, it said: *Feminist: a person who believes in the social, political and economic equality of the sexes.*

My great-grandmother, from stories I've heard, was a feminist. She ran away from the house of the man she did not want to marry and married the man of her choice.

She refused, protested, spoke up whenever she felt she was being deprived of land and access because she was female. She did not know that word *feminist*. But it doesn't mean she wasn't one. More of us should reclaim that word. The best feminist I know is my brother Kene, who is also a kind, good-looking and very masculine young man. My own definition of a feminist is a man or a woman who says, 'Yes, there's a problem with gender as it is today and we must fix it, we must do better.'

All of us, women and men, must do better.

We Should All Be Feminists by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was first published by Fourth Estate (London, 2014). The style of the original publication has been maintained in this reprint.

DECLARE! SPEAK OUT! SHOUT! DENOUNCE! DECRY!

About Feminist Art Manifestos

Katy Deepwell

Feminist art manifestos by women artists remain ephemeral documents, neither pamphlets nor advertising. They are not the promises of a feminist political party, nor the mission statements of women artists' groups, organizations, feminist campaigns, or exhibitions. Written individually and collectively, they do address the possibilities of what art—when it is informed by feminisms—might be or could become. More than an expression of one woman's feminist subjectivity who is their author/artist, they repeatedly point to a collective ought, might, could be, as a future becoming of feminist cultural politics in relation to art.¹ They represent feminist voices and imaginaries that are in the process of emerging.

What Is a Feminist Art Manifesto?

A text reproduced, collected, and sometimes anthologized because it is meaningful to artists and to feminists.

A document shared as a photostat, a poster, an image, a letter, an email, or a webpage. Sometimes, it is composed of the words included in an artwork.

A form of speech with sentences that have both pace and brevity.

Neither a poem nor a book, but also not the typical prose of an essay.

A text about art AND about feminism, but not an artwork in and of itself.

A method of embracing both negation and positivity simultaneously because the text offers a view of new kinds of imaginative synthesis: all in one breath.

Something which might be performed, or shouted, but is never just in circulation as the script of performance art or theater production.

A text that inspires because it speaks to the present and refers back to the past but projects a definite sense of moving from time now into a new future.

An explosive force and energy expressed as a strong sense of possibility for giving rise to another form of consciousness than that contained in current conventions, borders, beliefs, and limited ways of doing and thinking about the world.

A statement of belief in feminism as an agent of change, while negating the hate contained in stereotypes and myths about women, who are 51 percent of the human race.

A mode of address reaching beyond the personal into the political, speaking out to unknown readers and future and potential allies. The voice within a feminist manifesto seeks new kinds of alliances and new understandings of who the collective “we” might be, rejecting any notion of “us” or “them” as the only means to conceive of political oppositions in the world.

A herald or paeon calling for a change in behavior or thought which releases women's creativity and indicates the possibility of new feminist subjectivities coming into being.

An appeal to feminist reinvention and renewal that creates shifts in perspective and new understandings about the situation of women artists and their capabilities, demonstrating how women are active agents in cultural production.

What Is Not Automatically a Feminist Art Manifesto?

Women artists' statements prepared as press releases promoting their latest work, or press releases launching an arts company, arts organization, or exhibition by, about, and for women artists.

Social media publicity campaigns using the hashtag *#feministart*, *#womanart*, or *#mymanifesto*.

Mission statements or constitutions for women artists' organizations redressing the balance of collections, exhibition programming, investments, art auctions, or grant-giving agencies as their mandate.

Media announcements declaring that a new kind of feminism has been invented.

A statement about art practice claiming novelty or partisan membership of a feminist avant-garde.

A list of allegiances outlining the ideas of a political party, faction, or group for women, even as artists.

Another list of complaints or grievances, without proposing solutions.

Manuals or toolkits about how to become empowered or be creative as a woman artist.

Leaflets from a political campaign against the (many) injustices or grievances that women and women artists legitimately have.

Expressions of disgust at the failures/disappointments of feminist politics of different kinds.

New kinds of algorithm or pieces of computer code for hacking patriarchal systems in the name of women everywhere which might remove all misogynist content from the Net.

Incitements to acts of disobedience to be conducted against the patriarchy manifest in institutions, organized religions, and state policies and practices and in women's everyday experiences of sexism which continue to curtail women's lives.

A piece of fiction.

All and any artwork by a woman containing a text.

A diary or notebook entry unpublished and waiting to be discovered after you die!

On Negation and the Irrepressible "Illocutionary Force"² of a Feminist Art Manifesto

A feminist negation is not a negative. It is a refusal based on a critique. The rhetorical device of negation can ironically be positive where it leads to a new synthesis or emergent position in language. Consider the space opened by the short list of actions and gestures that are refused in Yvonne Rainer's list of propositions for dance in her "No Manifesto" (1965).³ Mette Ingvartsen's mimicry of this strategy, forty years later, reverses the model, affirming specific actions in her "Yes Manifesto" (2004)^{*} in performance.

Think about the list of "100 anti-theses about Cyberfeminism" (1997)^{*} collectively produced by the Old Boys Network at their cyberfeminist event for documenta 10 (1997): where cyberfeminism is declared to be neither a banana, a fashion fragrance, nor a slogan . . . These refusals confound simple self-definitions, while refusing cyberfeminism as either singular or commodifiable. Xenofeminism (2015) borrows this strategy as it argues that feminism must "INTERRUPT," "TRAP," "ADJUST," and "OVERFLOW." It presents feminism's refusal to accept biology as destiny while affirming its reconsideration of gender as socioeconomic, cultural, and political conditioning: "If nature is unjust, change nature!"⁴

Negation is well known as an aesthetic strategy and brings what is "not-art" (life) into a new kind of relation to "art." This polarization of thought into negative and

positive polarities can provide a useful tool to divide avant-garde male activity as the ultimate form of modernist creativity (fueled by a death drive) from its absolute contrast to female drudgery and reproductive labor of women's lives (confirmed by its life-affirming Eros!). However, these distinctions are only useful as positions when a new inventive synthesis emerges which rejects and redefines both options: as in Mierle Ukeles's "Manifesto For Maintenance Art" (1969, → p. 287, fig. 2):* "I will do maintenance as art."

Feminism has never spoken with one voice, and political disagreements abound across liberal, socialist, Marxist, radical, and cultural feminist positions in the real, socio-economic, psychic, virtual, and analogue worlds. When reading across these manifestos and thinking about their historical production, it is possible to grasp this multiplicity in/across feminisms, but it requires recognizing how language presents and changes feminist visions of the future. The terms of radical, anarchist, and socialist feminisms are encoded into the language that feminist art manifestos use. Consider Valerie Solanas's biting critique of deficient and emotionally limited males and her aspiration for art made only by "conceited, kooky, funky females grooving on each other and everything else in the universe" as a radical lesbian feminist viewpoint.⁵ Consider the socialist vision in Monica Sjöö and Anne Berg's "Images of Womanpower – Arts Manifesto" (1971),* describing women as the "first oppressed" and using a collective "we" to seek identification between women in a new figurative representation by/for women because "WE ARE SUBJECTS and will portray ourselves as such and so at last we will end the ages of pornography-vision of women" as objects. Or the feminist appeal to recognize femininity as a valued part of humanity in Zse Budapest, Ulrike Rosenbach, and Susan B. Anthony Coven's "First Manifesto on the Cultural Revolution of Women" (1978):* "We believe that at a time when we are fighting for the right to control our own bodies, it is also time to fight for the well-being of our souls. . . . we believe that the renewed development of feminine creativity and power will engender new strength for a humane development of our society."

Feminist art manifestos in their language repeatedly offer a critique of the universalization of the avant-garde as solely male and heroic, and women as the Other, the body, the nameless, the anonymous, and the undervalued.⁶ Have we yet reached the stage identified by Carolee Schneemann's hope for "Women in the Year 2000"

(1974),* that young women and men will be taught their i-story (her feminist challenge to a male-dominated history) not as something strange or exceptional but in "courses enriched by the inclusion, discovery, and re-evaluation of works by women artists"?

These art manifestos aim to overturn value systems, whether it is an alliance with the weak, a systematic inversion of power, or a substitution of new values for old and an overturning of stereotypes. The asymmetries of power, the labeling and compartmentalization of thought, are utilized, repeated, but always shifted. In their "Factory of Found Clothes Manifesto" (2002),* Tsaplya and Gluklya (Natalia Pershina-Yakimanskaya and Olga Egorova, → p. 288, fig. 3) declare that the artist must be on the side of the weak, by which they mean both acting in solidarity with the oppressed and against the exploitations produced by power and money. Compassion is pitched against fear or didacticism. Sentimentality is refused, but emotional strength embraced in their words. "Our concept of fragility is related to compassion, because 'fragility' is that sensitivity that an artist needs, in the broadest sense of the word, to perceive people and events. If a person retains a sense of fragility against everything that acts to brutalise their perception of the world, then that person inevitably arrives at the idea of art as compassion."⁷

The feminine is an oppositional force to male culture when radicalized and its meaning subverted. Feminism is not Other (i.e., alien) to the Other that women represents for men; it is a radical difference in view. Radical Otherness remains a force, experienced within both a feminine world and a feminist framework. Maria Klonaris and Katerina Thomadaki, calling for this and "An Other Cinema" (1977),* defined radical femininity as a "double drive—both female and male," holding on to the idea of a feminine culture as a rupture in relation to the dominant culture and a feminist rebellion situated in the body, in female desire, sexuality, the unconscious, whose primary goal is transformation. As Klonaris and Thomadaki argue: "In this culture, woman is near-absent. Unknown. Ignored. Mute. Imprisoned. Despised. Deformed. Enigmatic. Inaccessible," against which "a radical femininity can only be a whole—neither fragment, nor lack, nor deficiency." Their vision refuses the fragmented, partial, or incomplete self in masculine visions of women who exist to complete men, but this statement was their riposte to Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, and the dominant culture, as the starting point for making their own images of the world and themselves!

The paradox and contradictions in women's positions are the starting points for these manifestos, framed by the limited or exaggerated ways that men see women in contrast to how women want to refigure or generate their own new conceptions of the world. Women will use all the tools at their disposal in visual language and media to search both for another language, another form of representation, and other models than those espoused by dominant practices in art, or in new technologies. As VALIE EXPORT argues in her manifesto "Women's Art" (1975),* the time to do this is now, even if we cannot predict the result. If women artists have to work through the contradictions that "THE POSITION OF ART IN THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT IS THE POSITION OF WOMAN IN THE ART'S [sic] MOVEMENT," it is because, as she concludes, we cannot ignore that in cultural terms: "THE HISTORY OF WOMAN IS THE HISTORY OF MAN."

Imagining a new political program or a new political system, which both starts from a reevaluation of the feminine as a feminist value system and develops a critique of both patriarchy and the status quo, has arisen in many cultures and countries. It is affirmed by the collective manifesto "Women Artists from Pakistan,"* facing in 1983 the increased Islamicization and politicization of cultural institutions around them, while building a feminist resistance to this. Or it is found in the thirty-seven proposals by the artist collective *Nosotras Proponemos* for a Permanent Assembly of Women Art Workers set up in Argentina in 2017.*⁸

Violetta Liagatchev argues for a global scale, a worldview, a reckoning of differences in Article 1 of her "CONSTITUTION INTEMPESTIVE DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE INTERNATIONALE DES ARTISTES FEMMES" (Untimely Constitution of the International Republic of Female Artists, 1995).* She contrasts this sharply with the "intimidation" experienced by many in relation to "the frustration of mothers" in Article 2 or the "suffering by tradition" in Article 3 and the "objectification" of women in Article 4. In Article 6, she highlights how rivalry between women is a fundamental component of their submission to patriarchy, and how "knowing that you are free to do anything" requires that you "reactivate art life." There can be no excuses for silencing art activities—even in exceptional circumstances of war, of violence, in the face of the generalized cultural sclerosis.

Martine Syms, considering what could constitute a "Mundane Afro-futurism," encourages people to recognize certain realities about Black people, rejoice in particular strengths, and promise to make certain changes. She ultimately ends with an appeal to "join me in the future of black imagination." This structure of recognizing the contemporary situation, affirming possibilities for a liberation and a "wild imagination," and negating racist imagery/identities and identifications is its feminist message embracing a "both/and" philosophy.

Feminist art manifestos repeatedly name different forms of sex discrimination present in the art world; criticize the lack of action against the inequalities embedded in the status quo; and demand change through new agendas which would include women. "We will move in triangular formations and step on each other's feet" suggests YES! Association (2005), who wrote the "Equal Opportunities Agreement" (#1, 2005)* as a model for how the feminist organization of museums and exhibitions should proceed. Tereza Stejskalová's "Code of Practice for a Feminist (Art) Institution" (2017)*⁹ argues that "feminist thinking" is its primary resource. The organization can only advance through critical, ethical principles in work and in quota systems to solve gender imbalance and discrimination. The quality of its work relationships must be based on mutual respect, irrespective of what position people occupy, as *equal importance* as the quality of the program. By contrast, much earlier, Michelle Wallace's "Manifesto of WSABAL (Women Students and Artists for Black Art Liberation)" (1970)* made the demand for 50 percent women and 50 percent "non-white" representation in every exhibition. Because we need to heed the call of Lily Bea Moor (aka Senga Nengudi) in "Lilies of the World Unite!" (1998)* to recognize that we, women of color / women artists "do in deed E..X..I..S...T." Does it still go without saying that gender quotas are necessary corrective measures against a scandalous exclusion of women artists and Women of Color in programs? What will change, if it is only a question of proportions in representation of male and female: maybe we simply need "MORE QUALITY THROUGH FEMALE QUANTITY," as Silvia Ziranek suggests in her "Manifesta" (2013)*?

The play with words and their meanings in a manifesto to join an audio/visual/text/image poetics where these words become the content of the artwork. There are many forms of this: the posters, electronic billboards, and full-scale installations of Jenny Holzer (1978–ongoing), Ewa Partum's performance script for *CHANGE, MY*

PROBLEM IS A PROBLEM OF A WOMAN (1979),* the poetic sculptural pathway of Agnes Denes's "Manifesto" (1969),* or the graffiti *80/20* (2011, → p. 290, figs. 4, 5)* on the Romanian Pavilion of Lucia Tkáčová and Anetta Mona Chişa outlining, as a Pareto calculation, whether or not they should participate in the Venice Biennale, or the press release turned installation material of Dora García's *100 obras de arte imposibles* (Impossible Art-works, 2001, → p. 291, fig. 6).* This use of language returns not only to voice, but to the body of a woman/women that speaks and to a feminist philosophy of the body that rewrites the masculine preference for mind/body or appearance/substance dichotomies, as in ORLAN's "Manifeste de l'art charnel" (Carnal Art Manifesto, 2002).*

We need to think whose body is at stake (in gender/race/class/able-bodied terms) as the object of scientific enquiry; whose body becomes an instrument, a tool, or a desiring machine at the disposal of consciousness (with accompanying questions of ownership or rights attributed to it by a self or Others). The female body here is far more than a mode of transmission of ideas/expressions from inside to outside, nor is it identifiable as just "a vehicle for the expression of an otherwise sealed and self-contained, incommunicable psyche."¹⁰ These bodies never had that privilege, even as their voices spoke against this vision.

There are many ways of analyzing the politics of the women's art movement in relation to an art informed

by feminism or what might constitute feminist art, but feminist art manifestos offer important insights into art's politics/aesthetics. These manifestos are only one part of the creative work, thought and discussions that feminism has produced in relation to contemporary art.

¹ This essay defining feminist uses of the art manifesto and analyzing their contents draws upon the manifestos collected by the author for a webpage, <https://www.ktpress.co.uk/feminist-art-manifestos.asp>, online since 2010. See the fifty manifestos anthologized in Katy Deepwell, ed., *50 Feminist Art Manifestos* (London, 2022). See also a mass open online course (MOOC) written on this subject by the author in 2020: <https://nparadoxa.com> [all URLs accessed in June 2022]. ² Maria Pia Lara's conception of "illocutionary force" is an "emancipatory narrative" that can "create new forms of power, configuring new ways to fight back against past and present injustices, thus making institutional transformations possible." See Maria Pia Lara, *Moral Textures: Feminist Narratives in the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 5. ³ Yvonne Rainer, *Feelings Are Facts: A Life* (Cambridge, MA, 2006). All texts marked with an asterisk (*) are reproduced in Deepwell 2022 (see note 1). ⁴ Laboria Cuboniks (a collective of six women) wrote the manifesto "Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation" (2015), <https://laboriacuboniks.net>. See also Merray Gerges, "Xenofeminism," *Canadian Art* 33, no. 4 (2017), pp. 116–17, and Lucca Fraser in conversation with Merray Gerges in "Xenofeminism and New Tactics for the Left," *Canadian Art*, February 6, 2017, <https://canadianart.ca/interviews/xenofeminism/>. ⁵ Valerie Solanas, *SCUM manifesto* [self-published, 1967] (Edinburgh, 1996). Where the SCUM are "unhampered by propriety, niceness, discretion, public opinion, 'morals,' the 'respect' of assholes," also known as "cool and relatively cerebral and skirting asexuality" females. Ibid., p. 28. ⁶ This is a view expressed by Tsaplya and Gluklya in 1997* and theorized by Ewa Majewska in "Feminist Art of Failure, Ewa Partum and the Avant-garde of the Weak," in *View: Theories and Practices of Visual Culture* 16 (2016). ⁷ "Marina Vischmidt in conversation with the Factory of Found Clothes," *UNTITLED*, London, November 29, 2009, <http://gluklya.com/publications/interview-with-marina-vischmidt/>. ⁸ Nosotras Proponemos, "Declaration of Commitment to Feminist Practices in Art, Permanent Assembly of Women Art Workers," 2017; <http://nosotrasproponemos.org/we-propose/>. ⁹ Feminist (art) Institution (Tereza Stejskalová), "Code of Practice," 2017; <http://feministinstitution.org/code-of-practice/>. This manifesto arose from a series of seminars at Transit, Prague, Czech Republic, in 2017. ¹⁰ Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington, IN, 1994), p. 9.

IN A COLLECTIVE WAY

Practices and Challenges of (Feminist) Collaboration in the Field of Art

Katharina Koch

Collectives, alliances, collaborations¹—working together in variously defined, temporarily unlimited or limited groups has enjoyed increasing popularity in recent years, especially in the field of art and culture. Committees, juries, and institutions in this field are also increasingly interested in promoting such working groups. This is evidenced not only by the Indonesian collective *ruangrupa* being selected to curate *documenta fifteen* (2022) and, for its part, inviting primarily art collectives to the major show, but also by the Turner Prize, awarded to British artists, nominating collectives for the first time in 2021, and by the *Kunsthalle Wien* being the first institution of this size to be headed by a collective, namely, the feminist curatorial group *WHW* (What, How & for Whom) since mid-2019. Collectives are also increasingly being invited to art biennials.² With the 2021–22 exhibition *Group Dynamics: Collectives of the Modernist Period*, the *Lenbachhaus* in Munich recently dedicated itself to collective work in art between circa 1910 and the 1980s, broadening the previously narrowed European–Anglo–American view of this period by highlighting associations and movements of artists in “non-Western” contexts.

But what is the origin of this trend to form collective alliances as cultural workers, and the origin of the increasing institutional attention paid to such alliances? Does the intensification of economic and social inequality, the climate crisis, and the neoliberal pressure for individualization result in an increased need for solidarity-based alliances and jointly responsible projects in order to face these challenges? Communities of Black individuals and People of Color (PoC), feminist and LGBTQIA+ movements, have been successfully joining forces in activist alliances for a long time now in order to counteract structural racism, sexism, and exclusion in mostly white, heteronormative majority societies.

In the meantime, the need to intervene in the rapid changes of the living environment, accompanied by a simultaneous sense of powerlessness felt by individuals, seems to be omnipresent today, and it also leads many cultural workers to make use of activist formats and themes and to implement them collaboratively or even collectively using aesthetic means. The question is whether this development in the field of art is actually a novelty or has acquired a new quality. The former is certainly not true, as even a cursory glance at art history and its upheavals reveals. I cannot and do not want to judge the latter; in this essay, however, I will discuss approaches from (queer) feminist theory that attempt to identify potentials in collective artistic work for future-oriented forms of collaboration that reduce inequalities of power.

Art Collectives: A Brief Historical Review

Art collectives already existed in the early twentieth century: for example, the Russian avant-garde artists' group *Karo-Bube* (Jack of Diamonds, 1910–17), the Dresden-based, German artists' association *Die Brücke* (The Bridge, 1905–13), and the avant-garde *Grupo dos Cinco* (Group of Five, 1922) in Brazil. Later examples include the *CoBrA* group (1948–51), a collective of Danish, Belgian, and Dutch artists, and the *Lahore Art Circle* in Pakistan (1952–58). Collective work, however, became particularly popular in the 1960s—especially in the Western European and American context in the wake of the civil rights movements and the partial reorientation of the field of art through an “expanded concept of art” (Joseph Beuys). At the time, artists increasingly came together in groups to try out collective forms of production. At around the same time, a considerable number of feminist-oriented women artists also organized themselves collectively due to their continuous experiences of discrimination in the patriarchal art industry. In doing so, they

hoped to lend weight to their demands for more visibility, but above all for a radical transformation of the art industry and, moreover, of the structures of society as a whole, and to support and empower each other.

Several groups explicitly put the transformation of the art industry on their agendas, such as the Ad Hoc Committee of Women Artists in New York in the early 1970s and the activist collective Guerrilla Girls (→ p. 293, fig. 1) founded in the mid-1980s, likewise in New York, which at the time strove to draw attention to the underrepresentation of women artists in museums and collections with actions in the context of an exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. Since then, members of the group, wearing gorilla masks, have been active in various configurations and countries so as to draw attention to the marginalization of women and People of Color in the global art world. In the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the women artists' group called Künstlerinnen-gruppe Erfurt (Women Artists' Group Erfurt, later Exterra XX) was established in 1984 to counter the male-dominated avant-garde with their own aesthetics and themes in the form of humorous performances (→ pp. 294–95, fig. 2). With sarcastic productions pitted against the patriarchal, commercialized art world, Chicks On Speed, a collective of women performers and musicians, first attracted attention in Germany and later internationally from 1997 onward. In the Latin American context as well, feminist collectives have been emerging for decades, using artistic and activist means to fight against discriminatory gender relations that deny women and queer people the right to control their own bodies, and that promote sexualized and other forms of violence. In 1983, the Mexican collective Polvo de Gallina Negra (Powder of the Black Hen) was founded, and they published the *Receta contra el mal de ojo* (Recipe Against the Evil Eye), which stood up against rapists and took its message to the streets. That these same issues continue to lead to the collective association of women and queer people in art and activism today is a staggering yet empowering fact. This is evident in the recent actions of the Chilean group LASTESIS, whose performance *Un violador en tu camino* (A Rapist in Your Path)—presented in public space in many Latin American cities since late 2019 and adapted by groups worldwide—protested against ongoing sexualized violence against women and queer people (→ p. 295, fig. 3).

Collectives such as What the hELL she doin! (ZA, UG, KE, GB), the h.arta group (RO), Pussy Riot (RU), Pacific Sisters (NZ), Nacional TROVOA (BR), #purplenoise (DE),

MATERNAL FANTASIES (DE), and Hyphen-Labs (transnational) are just a few examples of groups that see themselves as (queer) feminist and have been active in recent years with various demands and practices, and against the backdrop of different sociopolitical contexts. In addition to various idealistic reasons, joining together in collectives often seems to be a rational and necessary decision when one takes into consideration how women and queer cultural workers, and especially those from the Black and PoC communities, are continuously marginalized within the art industry.³

Collective Challenges and Feminist Practices

Although generalizations should certainly be avoided, I would like to claim that most contemporary collectives are united by a critical attitude toward the hegemonic art system and the notion of the singular male artist genius that is still anchored in this, which at the same time gives rise to the need to try out new forms of collaborative production and presentation, as well as to resist the process of commercialization and the “commodification” of art.

This often reveals a problematic tendency to idealize collective work as a per se egalitarian congregation of protagonists with the same preconditions, rather than as a constant process of negotiation in which hierarchies, power structures, and inequalities that differentiate themselves on the basis of gender, race, class, and other social categories must be reflected upon.⁴ Not only the conditions of the external environment, but also those internal to the group are shaped by hegemonic structures and privileges and oppose an idealization of collectivity as principally equal, power-free, and emancipatory.

Now I would like to delve deeper into these considerations and ask to what extent collective alliances in the field of art can be made fruitful, especially for feminist concerns. In doing so, I will focus on the *how* of working together.

Since the social contexts in which protagonists come together collectively are characterized by relations of inequality, their constant discussion about the preconditions for collaborative action is indispensable. This includes the common understanding of topics, formats, and the sharing of responsibilities and (care) tasks, agreements on possibilities of nonhierarchical forms of production and shared authorship, but above all the recognition of different privileges, resources, experi-

ences, and available knowledge, the reflection on one's own positioning within this network, and the awareness of being integrated into powerful structures and possibly reproducing them, even if unintentionally. Hence, this collective reflection on the conditions of production is just as essential as the development of emancipatory content and aesthetic formats for its implementation. The focus should be on questions that are based on an intersectional perspective and that have become essential starting points of postcolonial and feminist debates, such as: Who gives whom space to speak? How and under what conditions do processes of (re)presentation take place?⁵ Creating contexts in which these questions are discussed—and “situated knowledge”⁶ and representational practices collaboratively produced—should, I would argue, form the basis for feminist interventions in social structures. Nevertheless, noble claims, including by (queer) feminist or PoC artist and curator collectives, often encounter hurdles and conflicts in everyday work.

Maicyra Teles Leão e Silva, a member of the artist collective MATERNAL FANTASIES, articulates the challenge of oscillating between collective and individual positioning in collaboration: “MATERNAL FANTASIES . . . is a secure space where we can bridge the divide between our children and our profession. But it is also a place for deep negotiations in which we constantly switch between the *I* and the *we*, in which the *I* inevitably contains the *we* and vice versa, but not always in equal proportions. There are crucial differences that separate and attract us. Which part of me is silenced in this collective? In what sense does it expand my boundaries? What holds us together? How do we, artists and mothers, create change together? . . . our cultural constellation, also as a collective, is built on a patchwork that is far from any linear arrangement.”⁷

This quote makes it clear that negotiating positionings and differences that the collective work produces, as well as questioning both the related opportunities and the omissions, is an essential part of the collective practice. MATERNAL FANTASIES has existed since 2018, when a number of international, Berlin-based women artists came together with their children to form the collective (→ pp. 296–97, fig. 4). Through their texts, performances, images, and films, the artists pursue a practice which takes the social invisibility of the parental experience as its point of departure. They understand their work as feminist research on motherhood(s), care work, and representation in art in order to develop new aesthetic vocabularies for these fields and their intercon-

nections.⁸ The fact that motherhood makes a career as an artist difficult is still a distressing reality for many in the second decade of the twenty-first century, and it was one of the reasons for the formation of the collective: not only to specifically mark the art system as discriminatory in this regard, but also to find pragmatic ways to combine parenthood and art production in a future-oriented way. The artists' concern here goes beyond the purely practical compatibility of artistic and care work, insofar as they postulate a practice that actively includes children in collective production and understands intergenerational work as an added value. Such artistic work, permeated by entanglements in which practices of caring for oneself and others are embedded, can be understood, in keeping with the feminist author and scholar Sara Ahmed, as a political statement.⁹ It goes without saying that this practice is accompanied by constant, at times conflictual, processes of negotiation: Who assumes what responsibility? How does one fairly divide the (care) activities that keep the collective capable of acting? Who can provide what time capacities and when? When are moments of individual retreat important?

“Caring for Conflicts”: Daring More Collectivity

The queer scholars Ferdiansyah Thajib, Francis Seeck, and Antke Engel refer to the art historian Amy Tobin when they state that (queer) feminist methods in art, in which antiauthoritarian approaches are embedded, do not lend themselves to consensus building.¹⁰ However, such approaches, which are oriented toward the decentration of power, offer the opportunity—due to their examination of inequalities and exclusions directed both outwardly and inwardly—to understand the conflicts resulting from diversity and the different positioning of the various protagonists as agency, as long as they are thought through together. Thajib, Seeck, and Engel therefore plead for a practice of “caring for conflicts,” which means recognizing different positionings in their incompatibilities and drawing consequences from them—in a positive sense—in order to change discriminating and (self-)exploitative aspects of collaborative or collective projects¹¹ and thus to establish them as sustainable approaches to work. This is based on the thesis that conflicts do not represent a problem in and of themselves, but that it is precisely in the perception of conflictuality that the potential lies to break through power dynamics. The reflected “caring for” conflicts within the framework of collaborative and collective work which

does not aim at simple pacification and harmonization “draws attention to existing power imbalances, as well as to relations of discrimination and violence, until they are actually abolished.”¹² But this can only succeed if all participants have a genuine interest in not only recognizing their own privileges and positions of power, but also in sharing them and opening themselves to possibly unfamiliar forms of the (un)learning of aesthetics and knowledge production. In addition, there must be a willingness to productively use, as a scope of action, the tension between conflictuality (and the accompanying feeling of discomfort) and “caring for,” understood in the sense of a feminist care approach.¹³ Only with the knowledge of one’s own contradictoriness can one also work on the external conditions of “participation in political processes that shape the social order.”¹⁴

I take up the approach of Thajib, Seeck, and Engel when I claim that a negotiation of conflictuality informed by intersectional perspectives should not only form the basis for internal group processes of (artistic) collectives in order to be able to develop and enforce common emancipatory visions, but also provide valuable impulses for structural change within the framework of cooperation in the institutional art industry.

Collective Practices as a Model for the Future?

It cannot be denied that there is currently an increasing effort to establish collaborative (or even collective) work in institutional structures and in (exhibition and event) programs. This development should not be mere token-

ism but needs to be made fruitful in order to dismantle hierarchies in the long term, to become more process-oriented instead of purely result-oriented, and to become more diverse and at the same time more inclusive.

Structural change in the art industry must come from within: essential prerequisites for this are an intersectional awareness of, as well as a reflective approach to, one’s own positioning within the network of powerful mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, because they are ever produced by the art industry—be it through the choice of topics, through invitation politics, and not least of all due to the fact that most teams in institutional settings are still predominantly white and cis-male and generate a corresponding audience.

Ideally, independent artistic and curatorial collectives, especially those pursuing a feminist agenda that is both antiauthoritarian and emancipatory, can serve as role models. If they face up to their own conflictual nature, while simultaneously placing at the center of their work caring and sharing as an ideal and at the same time self-sustaining aspects, then new, sustainable forms of communality can ultimately be derived here, in which values such as care for oneself, for others, and ultimately for the planet are given a central position.

The history/histories and the meaning of the collective in the field of art can still be developed in many ways and will require increased analysis and attention in both art history and the art industry in the future, but also in general, with regard to their possibilities as a future-oriented, social practice.

¹ The terms used here are not to be understood as synonyms. What all three have in common, however, is that they describe associations of several protagonists who work together in a process- and/or result-oriented way. See Maria Lind, “Complications: On Collaboration, Agency and Contemporary Art,” in *New Communities*, ed. Nina Möntmann (Toronto, 2009), p. 54. ² See, for example, the list of participants in the Berlin Biennale (2020), the Mercosul Biennial 12, Porto Alegre (2021), the Helsinki Biennial (2021), and the Hawai‘i Triennial (2022). ³ See, for example, the studies by the Deutscher Kulturrat (German Cultural Council, 2020) and by Vielfalt entscheidet – Diversity Leadership (2019): “Frauen und Männer im Kulturmarkt: Bericht zur wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Lage,” <https://www.kulturrat.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Frauen-und-Maenner-im-Kulturmarkt.pdf> [all URLs accessed in June 2022] and “Vielfalt in Kultureinrichtungen,” <https://vielfaltentscheidet.de/vink-vielfalt-in-kultureinrichtungen/?back=87>. ⁴ Helmut Draxler, “Das Wir-Ideal: Zur Kritik der Kollektivität,” *Texte zur Kunst* 124 (2021), issue *Collectivity*, ed. Isabelle Graw, pp. 43 and 49. ⁵ Iris Rajanayagam, “Weiße Räume öffnen?! – Möglichkeiten und Grenzen,” in *Prekäre Kunst: Protest & Widerstand*, ed. Stacie CC Graham, Katharina Koch, and Marie-Anne Kohl (Berlin, 2015), p. 48. ⁶ Knowledge production and research are never neutral or universal, but rather conditional and relational. If knowledge is fundamentally understood as situated, then the social location and positioning of the researchers themselves come into view, and thus also power relations and epistemic violence. See Donna J. Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York, 1991), pp. 183–201. ⁷ Maicyra Teles Leão e Silva, “Core and Margins: Porous Tools of Feminist Collectivity,” in *Re-Assembling Motherhood(s): On Radical Care and Collective Art as Feminist Practices*, ed. Sascia Bailer, Magdalena Kallenberger, and Maicyra Teles Leão e Silva (Eindhoven, 2021), pp. 124–35, esp. p. 125. ⁸ MATERNAL FANTASIES, <https://www.maternalfantasies.net/about>. ⁹ Sara Ahmed, “Selfcare as Warfare,” *feministkilljoys*, August 25, 2014, <https://feministkilljoys.com/2014/08/25/selfcare-as-warfare/>. ¹⁰ Antke Engel, Francis Seeck, and Ferdiansyah Thajib, “Konflikte umsorgen. Queere Praktiken künstlerischer Kollaboration,” *Feministische Studien* 38, no. 2 (2020), pp. 309–21, esp. p. 311. ¹¹ Ibid., pp. 309 and 318. ¹² Ibid., p. 310 [translated]. ¹³ By this, I mean, on the one hand, the perspective that unpaid and paid care or reproductive work (such as in the household, family, or in nursing and other care activities) is embedded in powerful (dependency) structures that are differentiated on the basis of gender, race, and class and reproduce capitalist mechanisms of exploitation. On the other hand, with the knowledge of the relationality of care, the activities associated with it can be valorized as central, necessary social tasks; and caring for oneself, others, and the planet can be understood as political agency. See, among others: María Puig de la Bellacasa, “Matters of Care in Technoscience: Assembling Neglected Things,” *Social Studies of Science* 41, no. 1 (2011), pp. 85–100; and Joan C. Tronto, *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice* (New York, 2013). ¹⁴ Barbara Paul and Johanna Schaffer, “Introduction: Queer as a Visual Political Practice,” trans. Erika Doucette, in *Mehr(wert) queer – Queer Added (Value): Visuelle Kultur, Kunst und Gender-Politiken / Visual Culture, Art, and Gender Politics*, ed. Barbara Paul and Johanna Schaffer (Bielefeld, 2009), pp. 20–33, esp. p. 22.

FEMMES TALK EMBODIMENT

Rena Onat, Maque Pereyra, and Anisha Gupta Müller in Conversation

In our conversation, we speak about feminist body work, embodied knowledge, and empowerment. We are three Femmes of Color with different backgrounds, and we share an interest in intersectional, queer, and decolonial forms of resistance, as well as booty shaking. We bring our different theoretical, practical, artistic, and personal approaches to the table to learn from each other.

Rena: The idea of embodied knowledge became important to me upon finishing my doctoral thesis, but also because of my personal situation of going through a breakup and grief. With *Yoggaton*¹ and *FemmeFitness*,² with movement practice, performance, and dance, you work with the knowledge of the body in your feminist art and activism. And you do it in a way that also engages others. So, I am curious to know what your own practice has taught you about how things become inscribed in the body. This question is related to other topics, like in the *Yoggaton Mapa* you made, Maque (→ p. 299, fig. 1). We can think about the body and knowledge, but also about art practice, gender, and sexuality, especially Femmeness, as well as healing and health. With Gloria Anzaldúa in mind,³ we can moreover reflect on how to undo the colonial split between the body and the mind. What is embodied knowledge for you?

Maque: Well, embodied knowledge consists of your experiences, of the places you come from, of your relationships, of your connections—not only to people, but also to the Earth, to the context and the historical moment you are living in. Every experience stays in your body if it has touched you. If you constantly go to some class, if you are constantly seeing someone, those experiences will stay with you—that is embodied knowledge. I received years and years of dance training, but the outcome of it is something that it is interconnected with gender studies, with rituals and other elements. Your body is always in connection with something bigger, with a bigger net of people. What is your relationship to the Earth, to the air, to the water, to the rituals you carry out? All of this is embodied knowledge.

Embodied knowledge also means that everyone has their own archives. As you process things in your life, you refer to these archives by asking yourself: “OK, now this knowledge is pertinent to what? How does it apply to what I’m going through?” Your own archive of experiences will be interpreted by yourself. We are not feeling the same; I’m not sensing the same as other people. We always translate experiences to make them our own. They come out as this processed archive of knowledge. This outcome, these body archives, and this body knowledge or embodied knowledge are quite particular to everyone.

Rena: For me, the idea of embodied knowledge, or we could also call it the knowledge of the body, is this idea that the body is smart. This should be so obvious, but I guess it is not. And I think that it has to do with the history of colonialism and the construct of white supremacy which has divided body and mind. Historically, colonized people, but also women, have been constructed as inferior by associating them with nature, with the body as opposed to white men who were constructed as superior by linking them

to culture, to the mind, to rationality. This ideology had the effect that we—not only white European men—have been cutting ourselves off from our bodies.

Anisha: I do not know if I can add any more to that. You said it so beautifully! What I want to say, though, is that “embodied” is a rather academic term that has a lot of currency within academic discourses right now. That makes it difficult to relate to it. What exactly does it mean? But I like what you said, about our bodies having memories; they know things, they have knowledge. Part of the work that I want to do is to learn about the things that my body stores or carries or has processed already or has not processed.

Rena: You are right. In academia this idea of embodied knowledge is not new. Yet, I see a shift in how we think about bodies. Coming from a visual culture studies approach, my own academic research focuses on body images and centers questions of representation. However, until recently I did not make a connection between body images and embodied knowledge. I did not actually center the body itself or ask myself: How can I talk to a smart body? What would it say about all of this? To me, this is new, and I would like to know how do we get access to these archives inside our bodies? In your practice you have created some techniques to access these archives, right?

Anisha: I really like the idea of the archive. Although I must say that my image of an archive is quite structured—it is alphabetized or in folders or in a certain order—and I am not sure if our bodies are like that. Learning how to connect those things is not easy, because a lot of it is subconscious. To make these big concepts—such as embodiment—less abstract, I like to think of specific moments. For instance, when you are nervous and feel it in your stomach—sometimes you do not even know why. Getting in touch with where that comes from can be a way to learn about what is stored in the body. How is it connected to other experiences that my body knows or that it remembers from my childhood? If I acknowledge that my body is telling me things, and that I am one being, then I am pushing against the idea that body and mind are separated.

Maque: There are many different techniques. Dancing itself can be a huge part in becoming more conscious of your body without really intending to do so. Booty shaking can bring about an awakening of sexual energy and is

connected to memories and emotional life that is stored in the sacrum area. This sexual energy is so big, it is so radiant, and it is fiery, and it is water and it is everywhere in your body. In *Yoggaton*, we are awakening it by shaking our booties, by doing this pelvic work—those are ways to access these archives (→ pp. 300–01, fig. 2).

Anisha: The body speaks in its own way and, for me personally, I feel like I cannot analyze it. If I think too much about it—that is usually not the moment when I learn about it. The times when I realize something about the knowledge of my body have been when I was in a body space in my mind. Like when I used to go to intense gym classes, and I trained to such an extent in terms of sweating and reaching my limit that there was nothing else to think about. You can only be in your body.

Rena: I am still thinking about how the body stores certain things and works as an archive. One of the things we store in our bodies is trauma and even intergenerational trauma. That means we may have longer histories inside our bodies that were passed on to us. As queer people or people who experience racism, we are often cut off from our histories and ancestors. I am wondering about stories of resistance that may be inside of us and that would be so valuable to learn more about. But I think often we are scared to look there because it can also be overwhelming or painful. There can be lots of reasons why we do not want to be in our bodies. Is this something you think about?

Maque: Yes, totally. Well, like Anisha was saying, these moments after you work out—they are the best, I really love them. Let's go, let's get sweaty! But at the same time, it is more profound than that. What you are awakening yourself to is related to those things you are mentioning that are a part of our body archives. Why are we doing the things we do? Why are we shaped in certain ways? It is in part because of our history, and of course such histories have a lot of trauma, deceptions, and hardships in them. But at the same time, everything is intertwined with joy and pleasure. So, it is not just about accessing your trauma, but also about accessing these places of regeneration within yourself. We should be doing a dance class now!

Rena: Yes, that would be awesome! How does art factor into all of that for you?

Maque: Art is this medium of expression; it is my tool. I get creative with the things that I have inside and around me, and I would never imagine my life without feeling that I want to sing, want to write. It has been a long time since I have been on stage, and I am feeling that in my body as well.

Anisha: I have had a very conflicted relationship with art. In my classical art history degree, the history of art was made up of the most boring white-Western-from-five-countries-essentially-men. My education was so formal: art had its criteria and its context, and it had a capital A. For me, this capital A is an interesting way to reframe it, because I do not do art with a capital A. Whenever I had to write a bio, I put “artist” in and deleted it about fifty times. With “Artist” with a capital A come expectations, requirements, and a history of who was accepted as artists and who was not.

Recently I did a workshop series for QTIBIPoCs.⁴ I framed it as a community practice through *FemmeFitness* and other creative forms of expression—we had yoga, poetry, and other practices, and I collaborated with different people. I applied for art funding, and after it was already approved, I received a phone call and was asked to explain what a fitness class has to do with artistic practice. It put me on the spot, and I was afraid they might cancel my funding if I gave a “wrong” answer. The attitude they had was very white and German, and I realized that they would not understand me or my project. I knew they wanted me to say “choreography,” “production” of some sort, or that we were going to “create” something. Having a workshop where a group of QTIBIPoCs, as in my series, can come together, dance, and share—if that is not an artistic practice, then I do not care what your definition is. I do not know whether I am an artist or not, but I believe that what I do does in fact facilitate creative expression, which is art. So, whether someone thinks my *FemmeFitness* is art or not does not really matter, but it can be super creative and super artistic (→ p. 301, figs. 3, 4).

Rena: In my research on artwork by queer artists of color, I have witnessed how other marginalized artists struggle with the same issue that you are describing. The only way to be perceived as an artist and be placed in a larger context of art history and art reception is if you can frame your own work in ways that relate it to established definitions of art. Therefore, trying not to work in the same framework or shift the criteria is very difficult. Especially since those gendered exclusions, the racialized exclu-

sions, the geographical exclusions you mentioned are so much ingrained in any art-related issue, be it art history, be it art theory, design, and so on. That is why I am often conflicted about art as well. But at other times, I really appreciate it as this form of expression and knowledge production and as a tool for world-making.⁵ Can I ask you about your visions? Do you have any visions for yourself, your practice, or for liberation? I do not necessarily mean big utopias; they can be very small and personal.

Anisha: My vision for my practice is to have more of a rooted community vibe as opposed to a class where I am at the front. I do not want my practice to get bigger necessarily. The dream for me is having a place that is regular and calm and familiar, because the best empowerment work is repeated. In my classes I share a lot. When you are vulnerable with people, it is like you giving them a gift. I know it makes people coming to my class feel very comfortable. But I wonder how I can do things in a way that feels more like an exchange? If I had a space that was really *my* space, I could just allow people to hang out, or we could have food and experience connectedness afterward. I feel that *FemmeFitness* would really grow from that (→ p. 302, fig. 5).

Rena: What you are saying about vulnerability resonates with me and my identity as a queer femme. To me, being femme is a queer way of relating to femininity. Things that are stereotypically associated with femininity, like being soft or vulnerable, are often viewed as signs of weakness, but I think they can also be a superpower. Not many people can show their vulnerability. But if we learned to be softer with each other in our communities, maybe more people could. For me, it is very inspiring to learn from your practice and the space you create.

Maque: My vision is inspired by the yoga teacher training I am doing right now, which has a social justice and decolonial perspective. There are many amazing teachers. One of them is Mx Puja Singh,⁶ a mixed-race transsexual woman coming from an Indian background, and she was sharing the Kirtan practice with us, which are sacred chants in Sanskrit together with music. They also taught me that you must decolonize yourself the best way you can, but on your own terms. To me, learning more, going deeper into my practice, is working toward decolonizing. We are also discussing how to be responsible about the cultures our practice is coming from and not appropriating it. One way is honoring these cultures by learning more and relating to them honestly instead of profiting

from them. My context has always been Bolivia and the different dances and art expressions there, but they are actually so mixed. How come there are devils dancing for the virgin? There are these dances! I really admire how much empowerment we can get from the acknowledgment that culture is mixed. I am coming from many places and not just from this one root! But I am honoring this root and acknowledging it. Coming from that knowledge, what can I do here, right now, to be more coherent and to enjoy being with myself and who I am more? This will have its influence on *Yoggaton* classes in the future.

¹ *Yoggaton*, developed by Maque Pereyra, is a movement practice that activates physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and sensual levels. It is a combination of asanas and yoga spiritual principles, Andean cosmovision, guided meditation, fitness, and perreo. This practice questions binary ideas by joining opposites like yoga and reggaeton, or ideas such as good/bad, whore/saint, civilized/savage. See: www.yoggaton.com [all URLs accessed in April 2022]. ² *FemmeFitness* is a workout class combining high-intensity fitness workouts, (a)sexual empowerment, and online feminist discussions. The routines are suitable for all "fitness" abilities and are carried out to various kinds of music, including dancehall, hip-hop, reggaeton, neo-perreo, and Desi pop (and more). Important here is a culturally sensitive approach and an appreciation for music by artists who are often neglected by mainstream music genres. *FemmeFitness* is open to all gender identities, but it is particularly meant to be a safe(r) space for Femmes of Color. See: <https://www.facebook.com/femmefitnesss/>. ³ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: The New Mestiza / La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987). Drawing on her experiences growing up as a Chicana in the "borderlands" between the United States and Mexico, Anzaldúa theorizes the border as a wound. The border runs not only between states, but also through the Chicana body due to racist and gendered demarcations, binaries, and dichotomies initiated by colonialism and by the Roman Catholic Church. Anzaldúa explains that, among other things, the construction of European superiority is based on a separation of body and mind. ⁴ QTIBIPoC = Queer, Trans*, Inter*, Black, Indigenous, People of Color. ⁵ José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009). ⁶ Puja Singh Titchkosky, www.mxpujasingh.com.

FEMINIST STRATEGIES IN TRANSCULTURAL CONTEXTS

New Positions and Perspectives in Art and Curatorial Practice

Çağla İlk

It's about Solidarity!

In this essay, I would like to focus on the hegemonic debates around the visibility of women artists. In particular, I am concerned with the following question: How can we give more space to transcultural perspectives that are not or insufficiently represented in mainstream society and thus make them more visible?

The basis of my reflections are feminist struggles that culminate in the current discourse related to analyzing intersectionality, that is to say, the interconnection of different inequalities and discriminations. In particular, I would like to illustrate the interaction of various positions of social inequality—especially the interconnection of patriarchy and racism.

Women artists with transcultural backgrounds¹ are also often overlooked in feminism. For example, the philosopher Julia Kristeva has pointed out that many European feminists mention “other cultures” in their writings only insofar as they are concerned with affirming the authority of Western knowledge and subjectivity.²

For women artists with transcultural positions who wish to carve out a place for themselves within the dominant society, art is one of the most difficult areas. Especially in the art world, which purports to be so progressive, tolerant, and open, the “glass ceiling” is as heavy as lead for them; their works continue to be less exhibited, bought, or collected. In our fast-paced times full of hype, women artists “from other cultures” are still shown in exhibitions curated from a Eurocentric point of view, which serve to self-affirm Western subjectivity. What is needed here are practices that overcome this one-sided vantage point.

“Empowerment” generally refers to actions that lead to self-enablement and self-determination. Cultural institutions, foundations, and competitions can support such processes. In this context, “strategies of empowerment” means, above all, that we seek and apply methods that go beyond helping women artists by focusing on their own resources. In doing so, it is first a matter of “seeing” the women artists at all. The strategies listed below highlight ways in which women artists with transcultural backgrounds can empower themselves within the cultural sector in Germany.

First, the cultural institutions themselves must be “occupied.” They must open themselves or be opened to “new” topics, formats, and protagonists that are not yet represented in the current canon. Ideally, cultural institutions will be able to establish platforms for the formation of theory, as well as for the exchange of resistant activist and artistic practices that counteract exclusion. This means inviting female artists with transcultural backgrounds, as well as developing and funding appropriate formats. These transcultural positions are to be put in relation to each other and brought into an exchange. This will create a “common ground” for solidarity, as well as for engagement with the public. Already thirty years ago, the American lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw described the interaction of different forms of discrimination with the term

“intersectionality,” based on observations in the American legal system and especially community work. In this context, “communities” means different social networks based on similar experiences or origins that mutually inspire each other and develop a sense of belonging.

Second, many women artists with transcultural backgrounds have made their way into art from a precarious situation. Since their social situation, gender, and/or migration history gave them little chance of training at an art academy, they have developed practices to acquire artistic skills in other ways. This path of self-empowerment is characterized by continuous artistic production, reflection, solidarity, and networking to show themselves and make themselves visible.

Third, important strategies for asserting transcultural and postcolonial positions include forging alliances with partners and networking with other artists and cultural institutions, which serve as a starting point for one's own artistic path.

In the following, I would like to describe the work of three women artists who represent transcultural positions, using the structures and strategies mentioned above. My remarks are based on my own experiences as a curator and director of a museum, as well as on my collaboration with these artists.

Transcultural Positions of Contemporary Women Artists: Three Examples

Silvina Der-Meguerditchian (b. 1967, Buenos Aires), who became an artist via a detour, deals intensively with her origins and the history and fate of Armenians in her artistic practice. She herself has Armenian roots. The leitmotif of her art is remembrance work. Thus, in 2015, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, she participated in the exhibition *Armenity* in the National Pavilion of the Republic of Armenia at the Venice Biennale. Part of her installation *Treasures* (→ p. 305, figs. 1, 2), which she realized there, was a handwritten notebook in which her great-grandmother, Hripsime Tobdjian, had described and illustrated some 350 medical remedies. In doing so, the artist interwove her own personal story with the history of the exhibition space, the monastery of San Lazzaro degli Armeni, motherhouse of

the Armenian Mekhitarist Order, located on a small lagoon. The monastery preserves numerous exhibits and writings on Armenian culture and is of great importance, since many cultural assets disappeared as a result of the genocide against Armenians. Silvina Der-Meguerditchian's artistic practice is thus a kind of artistic archaeology, collecting artifacts to reconstruct the knowledge of Armenian life and culture in the Ottoman Empire, which was almost completely lost due to the genocide.

With her work, the artist has repeatedly addressed her own family history, as evidenced by her work *Emptied words* (2009) and her series *The Texture of Identity* (ongoing). Yet her memory work is never essentialist identity politics, not an effort to codify a particular identity either genetically or geographically. Over the years, in individual and collective projects, she has metaphorically reflected Armenian identity from a transnational perspective for the spirit of our time, one example being her work for the Houshamadyan open digital archive.³

Like Silvina Der-Meguerditchian, the artist Grada Kilomba (b. 1968, Lisbon) is an artistic autodidact. As an interdisciplinary artist and writer, she explores with her work themes of memory, trauma, postcolonialism, and the decolonization of knowledge. “Who can speak?,” “What can we speak about?,” and “What happens when we speak?” are three recurring questions in her work. Kilomba is best known for her unconventional artistic practice and subversive writing, which she uses to give body, voice, and image to her own texts. To tell her stories, she works with various art forms including performance, staged reading, photography, film, and installation.

In 2012, Kilomba was a guest professor of gender studies and postcolonial studies at Humboldt University in Berlin. What she talked about in her lectures and how she did it was unique. Her lyrical storytelling, however, did not conform to the academic habitus and was unacceptable for a long-term career in the German academic system.

Trained as a psychologist, Kilomba is also the author of numerous books. In 2008, she published *Plantation Memories: Episodes of Everyday Racism*,⁴ a compilation of episodes that approach racism as a psychological reality. In 2013, she ended her tenure at the university. That same year, she adapted her book *Plantation Memories* for a staged reading at the Ballhaus Naunynstraße theater in Berlin. This is how she came to performative art.

With her video installations *Illusions Vol. I, Narcissus and Echo* (2016), *Illusions Vol. II, Oedipus* (2018), and *Illusions Vol. III, Antigone* (2019), Grada Kilomba has broken new ground. With these works, she questions the way stories are told, as well as why and by whom. Taking Greek tragedy as her point of departure, she explores its symbolism and allegory in terms of social structures of oppression, gradually turning its metaphors into their opposite. She works with her own permanent ensemble of Black actors.

For Grada Kilomba, turning to contemporary art is in a certain sense a strategy by which she makes use of the mechanisms of appropriation to expose repressive, racist, and gendered hierarchies.

Her most recent installation, *O Barco* (The Boat, 2021, → pp. 306–07, fig. 3), is a memorial honoring enslaved people that she realized along the Tagus River in her hometown of Lisbon. The large-scale work consists of 140 charred wooden blocks that recreate the silhouette of one of the ships that transported millions of Africans to the Americas. The installation extends 32 meters along the Tagus River and evokes forgotten histories and identities.

One of the most inspiring aspects of Kilomba's practice is the way she engages with her networks, the public, and the audience. This was particularly evident during the closing performance of *O Barco* at the 2021 Bienal de Artes Contemporâneas (Biennial of Contemporary Arts, BoCA) in Lisbon, which brought the installation to life in a different way. A community emerged, not only of a contemporary art audience, but also of BIPoC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) community participants, supporters, and friends who contribute to, participate in, and live in the realities created by Kilomba's work.⁵

Kilomba's multidisciplinary oeuvre is an impressive example of how empowerment can be achieved through horizontal, organic, and collaborative forms of coming together and open codes of sharing. Moreover, the work also shows that, for Kilomba, as for many women artists, her own community, the history of her own migration, and experiences of discrimination are the starting points of her artistic practice. The particular experiences of being a woman and negotiating femininity can also play a role.

The artist Mehtap Baydu (b. 1972, Bingöl), who studied art in Turkey and Germany, has adopted a strategy in her work that focuses less on her Kurdish origins and more on gender roles. With her performances, in which she mostly uses her own body, she focuses on the social role of women, as well as on sensitive religious and political issues in multicultural contexts. In doing so, she involves the audience and challenges them with the situation and symbolic objects. In addition to performance, she also works with other artistic media such as sculpture, photography, and installation.

Numerous works by Mehtap Baydu are created in cooperation with a network of women from various countries. One recent example is the installation and performance *Wishing Stones – Dilek Taşları* (2021, → pp. 308–09, figs. 4, 5) as part of the 6th Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art in Yekaterinburg. It is connected with fragmentary childhood memories of a traditional Kurdish women's ritual in which Baydu had once participated herself. In this ritual, which was intended to fulfill wishes, the young women went to a place that was mystical to them, to which they could entrust the secrets of their souls. These places were usually located in nature, such as the source of a river, a rock face, or a rocky plain. Time and again, the women would drop a small stone with their wishes on the steeply sloping surface of a large stone, hoping that, against all expectations, their stone would stick to the surface of the other.

In the 1980s, when Baydu participated in this ritual, the very idea and particular way of performing it indicated that it was difficult for the young women to express their true wishes, thoughts, and feelings. They were more willing to confide in a stone than in their families. However, the ritual was also evidence that the society in which they lived was unwilling and unable to fulfill their wishes and hopes. The memory of this ritual awakened in the artist the need to revive it as a tribute to the desires and expectations of women, which today are expressed more openly, but also still remain unfulfilled.

During the biennial in Yekaterinburg, stones were sent in by numerous women from various countries and, in their integrity and in solidarity with the hidden desires they hold, put on display at the local post office. Many local women also participated. The idea of collecting women's wishes "metaphorically" and sealing the sent-in stones with red wax made a very positive impression on many.

It's about Power

Against the backdrop of these experiences, it is of great importance to me as director of a cultural institution in Germany to create a space for solidarity together with various women artists. I have therefore presented here strategies of artistic and curatorial empowerment to make women artists more visible in society and especially in the German cultural sector, to anchor feminist transcultural approaches and perspectives, and to overcome multiple discrimination. To this end, it is important to follow Kimberlé Crenshaw's vision:

It's not about supplication, it's about power. It's not about asking, it's about demanding. It's not about convincing those who are currently in power, it's about changing the very face of power itself.⁶

¹ The term "transcultural women" refers to women with migration experience. ² Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* (London, 1991). ³ Houshamadyan, "Open Digital Archive," <https://www.houshamadyan.org/oda.html> [all URLs accessed in June 2022]. ⁴ Grada Kilomba, *Plantation Memories: Episodes of Everyday Racism*, 6th ed. (2008; repr., Münster, 2018). In the meantime, the book has also been translated into Portuguese and published in both Portugal and Brazil. ⁵ BoCA Bienal, "Grada Kilomba, O Barco / The Boat | BoCA 2021," YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7vSm5DLgDs>. ⁶ Quoted in Gunda Werner Institute in the Heinrich Böll Foundation and the Center for Intersectional Justice, eds., *"Reach Everyone on the Planet ...": Kimberlé Crenshaw and Intersectionality* (Berlin, 2019), p. 30, https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/crenshaw_-_reach_everyone_on_the_planet_en.pdf.

ATTACK TIME

A Feminist Artistic Refusal

Katharina Fink

Time is the most radical political instrument. It permeates all areas of life, structuring both daily routines and spectacles. Feminist artists have recognized, dissected, and attacked this dimension of existence, which is known in science as “chronopolitical.” This essay focuses on three artists and their respective approaches to countering the power apparatus of time: Goldendean, Kitso Lynn Lelliott, and Ndidi Dike. They are united in their rejection—be it radical or gentle—of standardized Western temporality.

Faster, More Efficient: Time and Power

The power regime of time can take many forms. It manifests itself, for example, by describing a country as “backward” or by claiming that a “biological clock” is ticking in women in their mid-thirties. Both assertions are evidence of power disguised as facts. When it is said that certain regions are “lagging behind,” this is based on the ideology of colonialism, which sees “progress” as a linear development toward increased productivity and efficiency. The insistence that women should have children before it is “too late” reinforces an image of family that is based on procreation involving heterosexual couples.¹ Scholars such as Frantz Fanon and Saidiya Hartman have deconstructed both patterns of thought as colonial and “straight” respectively.² Time is power in its purest form, acting literally every second.

To think of time in any other way and nonlinearly is to oppose these patterns with something fundamentally *different*. It is a decolonizing act, as described by Ramón Grosfoguel, for example.³ To stretch, accelerate, overlap, fold, and unfold time is to oppose its power. Art demonstrates possibilities for this: performance and video art are just two examples of dedication to this attack on temporality, which is both revolutionary and unpredictable. This becomes visible in the work of the artists Goldendean, Kitso Lynn Lelliott, and Ndidi Dike.

Goldendean: Attack the Norm

Goldendean is the avatar of the artist Dean Hutton (b. 1976), a performance and media artist born in South Africa. They describe themselves as “genderqueer”⁴ and their artistic tactics as “provoking dialogue about the gaze, queer bodies, love and social justice. . . . Their strategy of simple, often improvised actions by a ‘Fat Queer White Trans body’ share moments of soft courage to affirm the right of all bodies to exist, to be celebrated and protected.”⁵ This “Fat Queer White Trans body” that resists social norms and their inscribed temporality of efficiency and reproduction plays a key role in Goldendean’s work.

The performance *Breathe Goldendean* (2018, → pp. 310–11, fig. 1) invites visitors to perceive time together. The performer is enthroned on a mountain of sand, with soap bubbles swirling around them. The flaunting of their naked body, painted with golden pigments, is an imposition on normative corporeality and the regimes of time inscribed in it. The body hedonistically resists efficiency. *Breathe Goldendean* demands presence.⁶ Devotion to the moment is the ultimate attack on what in theory is called “straight time”:⁷ the time of reproduction and the generations. In South Africa, gold as a resource is a symbol of segregation, upon which the fascist politics of apartheid were founded. Whiteness as a racist system of domination remains largely unaddressed

even after the formal end of apartheid. Goldendean subtly points to the unbroken white hubris: by making their own body a space for decolonial contestations, relentlessly and seductively.

Another work by Goldendean, the installation *#FUCK-WHITEPEOPLE* (→ pp. 312–13, fig. 2), which invites visitors to pose, attracted nationwide attention at the National Art Gallery in Cape Town in 2017 and soon found itself at the center of an Identitarian debate about whiteness.⁸ The installation was understood as a declaration of war against white positioned people and its creator taken to court. The work goes deeper: “Fuck” stands for the break, the sand in the gears. “Fuck White People” says fuck whiteness, and with it their fantasies of racialized hierarchy and linear development. Goldendean say of their approach that they are “sometimes a clown, sometimes a warrior, always vulnerable.” This includes trusting an audience to develop their gentleness in the encounter and “to let our bodies be safe together, to queer space no matter the way we fail each other.”⁹ Critics of the work were disappointed: in 2017, the Equality Court in Cape Town ruled that Goldendean’s installation is not an incitement to hatred but rather, on the contrary, emphasizes art’s role not in hiding social wounds, but in treating them, albeit painfully.

To question the duration and stability of identity is to break the linearity of time, to make it “queer.” Goldendean’s art resists—through the space it takes up, through the rejection of gender stereotypes, through the gentleness and radical, all-encompassing love the works exude, and through the message implicit in them that there is always a moment of breathing together—regardless of how painful and insurmountable the different positions of power that the works refer to seem to be.

Kitso Lynn Lelliott: Attack the Era

Born in Botswana in 1984, Kitso Lynn Lelliott is a time traveler. She describes herself as “a Nomad in time.”¹⁰ She develops poetic video works that attack a division of time into eras. In doing so, the body always plays a role, with which the artist invites the audience to take sensual possession of women’s biographies that are excluded from *Western* historiography.

One of these works was created as part of an exhibition project devoted to the question of the “future” and the temporality inscribed in it.¹¹ With this, Kitso Lynn Lelliott explored the story of “Alzire,” a young woman who was in the service of Margravine Wilhelmine in Bayreuth in the eighteenth century; this was in keeping with the fashion of the time to have people, mostly deported from Africa, work as servants and musicians at European courts.

Hardly any biographical information has survived about the young woman; not even her real name is known—“Alzire” is the name given to her in reference to Voltaire’s eponymous tragedy. Everything we know about her is based on an inscription on her gravestone: according to this, she died in Bayreuth at the age of only twenty-five on May 22, 1751. Her country of birth is stated as Suriname in South America, which, under Dutch colonial rule, was a place of slavery for people deported from West Africa, but also a place of rebellion.

Kitso Lynn Lelliott’s work *Alzire of Bayreuth* (2015, → pp. 312–13, fig. 3) resembles a decolonial séance that follows traces and breaks with the notion of time as a mass that can be divided into easily digestible eras. Through visual means, interwoven with traces of sound, the artist evokes the presence of Alzire and intertwines what monumental memory culture ideologically divides: the interwoven histories of continents. As a speculative version of reality, Kitso Lynn Lelliott’s work imagines the “visions of the future” of a global woman, whose history, like that of millions, has not been recorded.

Kitso Lynn Lelliott attacks eras in a poetic, seductive way. She traverses times and makes them porous. Her work is hauntological: it recognizes and presents the ghosts that are often only translucent paths of the routes of those who should not be remembered. But it also shows the traces of possibility of alternative futures in the present¹² and contemporaneities—for example, with Anton Wilhelm Amo, who was abducted from Africa as a child by slave traders and came to the court of Anton Ulrich, Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg, where he received a comprehensive education before beginning studies in Halle. In 1729, twenty-two years before Alzire’s death, he submitted his dissertation *De iure Maurorum in Europa* (On the Law of the Moors in Europe). The examination of his life and that of Alzire calls for a change of perspective: beyond the myth of the European Enlightenment as progress and reason, it is necessary to look at the fact that the categories of state, racialized world order, and

knowledge were solidified during this period—as well as those of time itself as a measurable mass that can be divided into eras. Kitso Lynn Lelliott's work demonstrates that individuality is impossible, as the American Vietnamese filmmaker and theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha, who is often quoted by the artist, wrote: "In this chain and continuum, I am but one link. The story is me, neither me nor mine."¹³

Ndidi Dike: Attack the Void

In conclusion, I would like to turn the spotlight on the work of Ndidi Dike, a London-born artist working in Lagos, who occupies a special place within African feminist art history. She describes herself and her work as "disruptors" which upset comfortable ideologies. In one of her recent works from 2017–18, the individual components create a tapestry that confronts the unabashed beauty with the enigmatic history of the materials (→ pp. 314–15, fig. 4). As in all of her work, the focus here is on the temporality inscribed in the materiality of the objects. The artist takes a close look at materials. In retrospect, rubber, latex, and gloves seem to be a prophetic choice: since the early 2020s, Covid-19 has had a grip on the globe, enforcing lockdowns and forbidding and forcing physical contact in equal measure. The latex glove and the protective medical mask have become icons of the era.¹⁴

Ndidi Dike's attacks disturb the comfortable complicity with the myth that colonialism is "a thing of the past." She uses aesthetic means to expose the violence of the concluding historical narrative. The latex gloves are her visual-political call for intersectional analysis, for the latex-gloved hands of workers at the EU's external borders also scrutinize, select, and make far-reaching decisions about futures. In her artistic statement, Ndidi Dike points to these traces of coloniality. Through the materials, she connects the enslaved workers of colonial Congo un-

der Belgian rule with the present-day miners, who mine the ore coltan in Congo, which is important above all for cell phones: both represent labor in a capitalist system. Ndidi Dike's works are accessible installations that can be walked through, but never ignored. They are a sensual objection to the power of political voids, which also manifest in the perception of time and its division into eras, and insist on the continuity of colonial power relations.

Art Resists

What the three artists discussed here have in common, and what makes thinking through their works in parallel so fascinating, is their artistic devotion to another, *possible* world. They achieve this through the aesthetic attack on the chronopolitical world order of late capitalism. And in doing so, they appeal to a sensual understanding and knowledge, as described by authors such as Minna Salami, a journalist who grew up in Nigeria, and the American writer Audre Lorde.¹⁵ Indeed, a truly revolutionary way of being in the world can only be shaped through sensual perception and a radically different conception of time/temporality. Art can do this. Every visit to an exhibition or studio is a turn against efficiency and productivity, which are fundamental to the ideology of colonial, patriarchal, "straight" time.

The works of Goldendean, Kitso Lynn Lelliott, and Ndidi Dike attack—in at times gentle, at other times radical ways—that world order which comes across as most innocuous, that of time. They recognize the ghosts, the traces, the ancestors in the present, invite the past to the table, lure the old futures, and create, for a decisive moment, an alternative way of living. As when the gaze, seduced and overwhelmed, cannot be torn away, when comfortable apathy loses its power to attention. And this is profoundly feminist.

1 For more on this topic, see: Sarah Diehl, *Die Uhr, die nicht tickt: Kinderlos glücklich* (Berlin, 2014). In her book, the author gathered the voices of women who tell of their voluntary decision to live without biological children of their own. In doing so, she has made an important contribution to countering the myth that every woman has an inherent desire to bear children. 2 Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York, 2007); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York, 1963). 3 Ramón Grosfoguel, "Subaltern Epistemologies, Decolonial Imaginaries and the Redefinition of Global Capitalism," *Review* 28 (2005), n.p. 4 When describing Goldendean, plural forms are used here. 5 <https://goldendean.art> [all URLs accessed in June 2022]. 6 *Breathe Goldendean* was given another, more political reading in the United States in 2020, the year the African American George Floyd was murdered by a white police officer. 7 José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York, 2009), p. 22. 8 This is documented in Katharina Fink and Nadine Siebert, eds., *Goldendean, Plan B: A Gathering of Strangers (or) This Is Not Working* (Johannesburg and Bayreuth, 2018). 9 Quoted in Dean Hutton, "Keynote for Queer B-cademy," Hamburg, 2018, https://www.kampnagel.de/media/kosmos/files/prod/485_5ac7472fccbcd.pdf. 10 See the artist's website: <https://kitsolynn.wordpress.com>. 11 Katharina Fink, Susanne Gerhard, and Nadine Siebert, *FAVT: Future Africa Visions in Time* (Nairobi and Bayreuth, 2017). 12 Henriette Gunkel, "Alien Time: Being in Vertigo," in *Ghosts, Spectres, Revenants: Hauntology as a Means to Think and Feel Future*, ed. Katharina Fink, Marie-Anne Kohl, and Nadine Siebert (Bayreuth and Johannesburg, 2020); reprinted in Henriette Gunkel and Ayesha Hameed, *Visual Cultures as Time Travel* (New York, 2021), pp. 59–82. 13 Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1989), p. 122. 14 Katharina Fink, "Don't/Do: The Potentiality of Touch in the Works of Ndidi Dike," in *Ndidi Dike: Discomfort Zones* (Lagos, Johannesburg, and Bayreuth, 2021), pp. 83–101. 15 Minna Salami, *Sensuous Knowledge: A Black Feminist Approach for Everyone* (New York, 2020); Audre Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic," in *Sister Outsider* (Berkeley, 2007), pp. 53–60.

FEMINIST AVANT-GARDES OF THE 1970S

Gabriele Schor

The American artist and writer Judy Chicago (b. 1939) started the first feminist art class in the United States at Fresno State College (now California State University) in 1970. In one of those classes, Chicago noticed that all of the women present were wearing lightweight sandals. Just before the session broke up, Chicago told them: “Your next assignment is to get out and get work boots.” The performance artist Suzanne Lacy (b. 1945), who was studying in Fresno at the time, still raved decades later in a conversation with Judith Chicago: “I was so in love with my work boots. They gave me such a sense of power.”¹

It would, of course, be too simplistic to reduce the enormous social and societal transformation brought about by the activists of the women’s movement of the 1970s to their choice of shoes. It is nevertheless striking that, fifty years later, clunky shoes are quite fashionable. Women wear them as a matter of course. These heavy-looking “boots” signal the intended expression of strength, aplomb, and coolness—qualities that seem to evoke the desired attitude toward life in the wearers. An attitude toward life that the women’s movement demanded as an act of emancipation.

The extent to which free choice of clothing can have an emancipatory impetus is also demonstrated by the short, animated film *Doll Clothes* (→ p. 335, fig. 1) from 1975, the “International Year of the Woman.” It was created by the American artist Cindy Sherman (b. 1954) when she was still an art student at the State University of New York at Buffalo. In it, she tells a story with paper dolls, cut out of photographs and brought to life using the stop-motion technique: a young woman in underwear, portrayed by Sherman herself, goes searching in her “closet” of plastic garment bags for a suitable article of clothing to wear. She decides on a dress. In front of the mirror, her eyes check to see if it suits her. Suddenly, something unexpected happens. A large human hand tears the dress off the paper doll and puts it back into the transparent plastic wrapping it was in at the beginning of the story. When asked what the oversized human hand was supposed to mean, Cindy Sherman explained that it stood for the social regimentation of women and the way in which they are paternalized, but also for her own internalization of social norms and values.² Sherman’s short film thus tells the story of a woman’s failure to live out her creativity, self-determination, and individuality due to socially prescribed *dispositifs*. What is fascinating about this is that the artist succeeds in visualizing this serious theme by means of the selection of a piece of clothing and its prohibition. Clothing creates identity. Social norms and values can prevent the desired identity.

The Dictate of Beauty

The economic boom in the Western world following the Second World War was accompanied by emerging mass media such as glossy magazines and television that communicated certain rules of etiquette and dress for women. These media, as well as Hollywood cinema, told women how to appear in the office as secretaries or in the private home as devoted homemakers, mothers, and wives. Whereas before the 1950s it was customary to dress up only for certain weekend occasions such as dances, church visits, or weddings, this was now suggested to women of all social classes in everyday life as well. Feminist artists therefore created numerous works that rebelled against the dictates of beauty. This rebellion was sparked above all by the beauty contests that had been launched since 1950, such as the election of “Miss Universe,” which are still broadcast live on television today. The American activist Jo Freeman harshly criticized these pageants: “Women are paraded around as though in a cattle market, and it is drilled into all wom-

en in a humiliating way that they have to measure themselves against these beauties.”³ In her drawing *Miss Universum 75* (1975), Renate Bertlmann (b. 1943) depicts women who, after their brief appearance in the limelight, visibly fade into anonymity. The competition takes its toll on them psychologically, and they fall, according to the Austrian artist, “into the trap of a false body image.”⁴

In the 1960s, the British model Twiggy and the “Barbie” doll, which was launched in the United States and distributed worldwide, were models for female beauty ideals. The Peruvian artist Teresa Burga (1935–2021)—with *Objeto-Estructura-Informe Antropométrico* (Object-Structure-Anthropometric Report) from her multipart installation series *Perfil de la Mujer Peruana* (Profile of the Peruvian Woman, 1980, → p. 335, fig. 2)—reflected on the relationship between the ideal and real images of the female body. The idealized body measurements of a North American mannequin, tall and slender, which are presented to local women on a daily basis, are juxtaposed with the average proportions of a Peruvian woman. The obvious difference makes psychological conflicts seem preprogrammed. In this way, the artist critically questioned the common Western ideals of beauty. The sculptor Gerda Fassel (b. 1941) offers a counter-design to the mannequin ideal. Her bronze sculptures, voluminous female figures such as *Titti de la Mancha* (1979), burst with strength. The art historian Katharina Sykora explains: “Compact bodies with broad shoulders, plump breasts, and tapered thighs radiate sensual potency.”⁵ Fassel counters slick perfection with fissured vulnerability—and she is not afraid to show the vulva.

Many artists of the Feminist Avant-Garde addressed female sexuality and experiences of oppression with their works. On the one hand, they decried the sexist objectification of the female body: for example, Lydia Schouten (b. 1948) with her radical performance *Sexobject* from 1978.⁶ A pioneering work of feminist action art is the performance *Tapp- und Tastkino* (Tap and Touch Cinema), which VALIE EXPORT (b. 1940) performed several times with her partner Peter Weibel in 1968 (→ p. 336, fig. 3). For this, she wore the world’s smallest “cinema,” a box with two openings, over her bare breasts. Weibel invited passersby on the street via megaphone to put their hands through the openings and feel the artist’s naked breasts. In an ironic and provocative way, she unmasked with this action transgressive male voyeurism.

On the other hand, however, also or perhaps precisely because of this, the artists of the Feminist Avant-Garde demanded a self-confident attitude toward female sexuality. One example is Anita Münz (b. 1957), who examined the taboo of masturbation. Her colorful drawings depict female figures with cheerful, lustful open eyes. While in her drawing *schön brav sein* (Behave) the hand of the female figure is clearly crossed out in red pencil, *mein bestes Stück* (My Best Part) depicts a female figure with eyes brimming over with lust and her index finger pleasuring a pulsating clitoris. Münz describes these drawings from 1981 as “liberation images” and calls on women to live out their sexuality in a self-determined way. A similar appeal emanates from the photo collages of Penny Slinger (b. 1947). In her photo series *ICU, Eye Sea You, I See You* from 1973, she slipped into a wedding cake costume as a naked bride and spread her legs so that her vulva is visible. In one of the pictures, an eye is demonstratively seen in the place of the vulva. Symbolically, together with the ambiguous title, it refers to a female subject who does not close her eyes, who is no longer a passive sexual object: female sexuality is not to be lived in the sense of servile availability and passive exposure, but rather in the sense of an active commitment to one’s own pleasure.

The Private Is Political!

While the first women’s movement successfully demanded universal suffrage for women, the second wave of the women’s movement was primarily concerned with bringing “private” issues out of the silence zone and discussing them in public and, as a result, obtaining legislative changes in family and labor law. Women formed groups and regularly discussed their problems, such as pregnancy and childbirth, abortion, the role of mother, homemaker, and wife, divorce, child-rearing, unpaid reproductive work, female sexuality, experiences of violence, unequally paid gainful employment, and much more. They noticed that their “private” problems were not individual, but rather a consequence of political and social power relations. This was also true for Black women artists who were exposed to the threefold discrimination of gender, class, and race. Impressive works therefore exist by Emma Amos, Elizabeth Catlett, Lorraine O’Grady, Howardena Pindell, and Victoria Santa Cruz, among others. Moreover, pioneering work on the gender pay gap was done in 1981 by Margot Pilz (b. 1936) with her installation *Arbeiterinnenaltar* (Female Workers’ Altar), in which she visualized the wage dif-

ference between women and men for the same work in a coffee-roasting plant in Vienna. The difference was extreme: a woman who had worked as a machine operator for nine years earned 6,500 shillings, while the man who had been doing the same job for only two years earned 9,500 shillings. Moreover, after all these years, the woman continued to be classified as a manual worker, while the man was classified as a salaried employee.

In numerous works of art, feminist artists have ironically lampooned the daily burden of women's housework. One example is the four-part, surreal photographic series titled *Bügeltraum* (Ironing Dream, 1975, → p. 338, fig. 4) by Karin Mack (b. 1940). In the last image, she is lying down on an ironing board wearing black mourning clothes like a corpse, proclaiming the death of the domestic work of the housewife. In the photograph *Ich möchte hier raus!* (I Want Out of Here!, 1976), Birgit Jürgenssen (1949–2003) likewise created a scene that self-deprecatingly visualizes the attempt to break out of the socially assigned role of the homemaker: smartly dressed like a bourgeois housewife, with a lace collar and brooch, she presses her face and hands against a pane of glass on which the cry for help can be read. In the drawing *Der Ehering und seine Folgen* (The Wedding Ring and Its Consequences, 1970), Florentina Pakosta (b. 1933) offers a sobering picture of the institution of marriage: when a woman decides to marry, it is tantamount to decapitation. The Berlin-based Polish artist Ewa Partum (b. 1945) provided a similar analysis in 1980 with her performance *Frauen, die Ehe ist gegen Euch!* (Women, Marriage Is Against You!). Annegret Soltau (b. 1946) made the feeling of constriction visible in a haunting way. For her photographic performance *Selbst* (Self, 1975, → p. 338, fig. 5), she wrapped a black thread around her head so many times that her face was completely constricted. In the photographic sequence *Isolamento* (1972), Renate Eisenegger (b. 1949) also gradually bandaged her face, and finally her head and hands, completely with tape. Despite these similar aesthetic realizations, different solutions are offered: while Soltau cuts the thread at the end of her photographic series as an act of liberation, this step fails to materialize in Eisenegger's work.

The works cited here are examples of how the sensations of feeling trapped, of being at the mercy of others, of oppression and suppression have been visualized in the most diverse ways by feminist artists. In doing so, they have addressed the collective female sensibilities that the second-wave women's movement rebelled against.

The Feminist Avant-Garde and the Art-Historical Canon

What is it, then, that unites the artists of the Feminist Avant-Garde of the 1970s? Their aspiration was to make the aforementioned personal and private themes public. They wanted to be perceived not only as homemakers, mothers, or wives, but also to be recognized as artists. Ignored by the art world, they therefore founded their own galleries and action communities, magazines and publishing houses, curated exhibitions, organized festivals and symposia, wrote manifestos and pamphlets, protested and demonstrated against their exclusion in front of museums. They sought a radical change in the social order, oriented beyond patriarchal structures. Their works are political and poetic, radical and subversive, and transcend prevailing aesthetic norms, not least of all by turning primarily to new forms of media expression such as film, video, photography, and performance to realize their content.

These women artists are pioneers of a groundbreaking development in the visual arts. For the first time in the history of art, they gave the representation of women a completely new "image of women" from a female and feminist perspective. In this respect, I have coined the term "Feminist Avant-Garde" for this movement. Under the title of the same name, up to 600 works by eighty-two women artists from the VERBUND COLLECTION in Vienna have been on view in Europe for ten years as part of a traveling exhibition.⁷ It is to be hoped that the term and the exhibition tour will help to include the achievements of the artists of the Feminist Avant-Garde in the canon of art historiography.

¹ Suzanne Lacy in conversation with Judith Chicago, Otis College of Art and Design and the Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles, March 5, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SfwBD8TOjuk> [accessed in June 2022]. ² For more information, see the conversation between Cindy Sherman and the author in: *Cindy Sherman: The Early Works 1975–1977, Catalogue Raisonné*, ed. Gabriele Schor (Ostfildern and Vienna, 2012), pp. 54ff. ³ Quoted in Lutz Hieber and Paula-Irene Villa, eds., *Images von Gewicht: Soziale Bewegungen, Queer Theory und Kunst in den USA* (Bielefeld, 2007), p. 99 [translated]. ⁴ Renate Bertlmann in conversation with the author, December 12, 2014 [translated]. The Miss Universe beauty pageant was founded in 1952 by an American textile company specializing in swimwear as a rival event to the Miss World pageant, which had been launched a year earlier in England, to make the bikini socially acceptable. ⁵ Katharina Sykora, "Gerda Fassel: Aufbrüche; Figuren des Widersinns," in *Feministische Avantgarde: Kunst der 1970er-Jahre; SAMMLUNG VERBUND*, Wien, exh. cat. Kunstmuseum Linz, ed. Gabriele Schor (Vienna, 2021), pp. 60–65. ⁶ For more on this, see the essay by Oliver Zybok in this publication, pp. 111–15. ⁷ Venues for Feminist Avant-Garde in 2022: Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina, Novi Sad, May 19 – June 21, 2022; Les Rencontres de la Photographie d'Arles, July 4 – September 25, 2022.

SIGNALS, GESTURES, COLLECTIVE BODIES

Uncovering the Dissident Feminism of Gabriele Stötzer's Art

Elske Rosenfeld

In the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the emancipation of women was considered as subsidiary to that of the working class. The equality of the genders was inscribed in the GDR constitution, and so the question was accordingly considered to be resolved in this socialist state. In reality, people socialized as women were, however, rarely present in the higher echelons of state institutions or companies and found themselves confronted with the double burden of full-time employment and reproductive labor at home. But these disparities and contradictions were rarely taken on politically, even in the GDR's dissident scenes. To do so or to call oneself "feminist" was, in fact, frowned upon.¹ Women artists active in these circles felt themselves to be in opposition to the state, more so than men,² and often sought their emancipation in emulating, rather than subverting or resisting, these male-centric ideals of the underground.³ Few practices—like the ones of Annemirl Bauer or Angela Hampel—made explicit reference to gender or "womanhood."

The collaborative performances of the Erfurt artist Gabriele Stötzer (b. 1953 in Emleben, Thuringia) stood out, as they challenged the socialist state's concepts of being collective, of gender, and of art, but they also broke with the self-understanding of the country's dissident and underground artistic scenes that she was a part of. Where the latter espoused the (male) artist's autonomous body as a rare site of refuge from the socialist system's demands, Stötzer's art elaborates a dissident, female, collectively configured body that is at its most liberated when it is maximally decentered, fragmented, and open to the world.

The text at hand is dedicated to the specific feminism of her practice that rests in the forms of being together in embodied vulnerability made possible in her work.

A Profound Physical Experience of Disruption Gives Rise to a Collective Art Practice

Gabriele Stötzer (known by her married name of Kachold at the time) had initially been active in the dissident literary scenes of her hometown of Erfurt. She would develop her unique collaborative and body-centered performative practice after an experience that shattered her perception of her physical and mental self and her place in the world. In 1977, Stötzer had been arrested and sentenced to imprisonment for signing and distributing the infamous open letter against the expatriation of Wolf Biermann, the dissident singer-songwriter. She spent seven months in Hoheneck, the "murderer's fortress," the infamous prison for female felons with convictions for violent or political crimes.⁴ The encounters with her fellow prisoners under the prison's conditions of extreme physical and psychological hardship would profoundly disrupt and alter her perception of herself, of her gender, and of the socialist project in the GDR. Of her imprisonment, Gabriele Stötzer later said: "my whole image of the GDR and of women collapsed at once."⁵

The bodies of her fellow inmates, the women murderers, thieves, and prostitutes, defied two configurations of the female body that not so much competed as overlapped in the GDR: the traditional (petit-)bourgeois female body of the girl “from a decent family”⁶ and the socialist body of the disciplined and productive woman worker which had superimposed itself onto, rather than replaced, the older, bourgeois ideal. Neither of these squared with the behaviors of the women in jail: “women who love each other physically, who tattoo themselves, who swallow spoons to kill themselves, and for whom neither real existing socialism nor her parents had prepared her. The image of the tidy and hard-working mother and worker—embodied by her mother and propagated by the GDR regime as the image of the ‘emancipated’ woman—fell apart.”⁷ In Stötzer’s own words, there were “biographies and qualities that i could not reconcile with my image of women.”⁸

Upon her release, Gabriele Stötzer found that she could not talk about her experience, but that it returned to her in mental images. Unlike other former political prisoners who turned their main focus of activity to politics, Stötzer found herself pushed toward poetry and art. She discovered that the reworking of her (gendered) self after its violent disruption during her imprisonment had to be collective, that it could not be achieved alone. To find the collaborators she needed for her creative process, Stötzer began joining together with others, usually women, who had likewise had negative experiences with state-run organizations. Under constant surveillance by East Germany’s Ministry for State Security (Stasi), and despite its attempts to disrupt their activities, the women met once a week in Stötzer’s private gallery and in squatted condemned buildings that had been converted into photo labs and studios.⁹ They talked about dreams, experimented with singing and sound,¹⁰ and made clothes and props in which—or without which altogether—they filmed and photographed each other. Friendships laid the foundation for a relationship of trust that made it possible for the women to push their limits. Stötzer once described her work with these women as a barter transaction: “offering them nothing but their own bodies back as experience, as feeling, as sensing, as the crossing of a threshold of their own unanswered questions about their female sex.”¹¹

Over time, Stötzer’s invitation drew increasing numbers of women (and even some men) into a “collectivist work and life concept”¹² that became indistinguishable from her art—and that, in doing so, confounded both older

Socialist Realist concepts of the relationship of art and society and the “underground” or “nonconforming” art forms developed in response to the former by her peers.

A Double Escape: Resisting Patriarchal Oppression in the East German State and Its Underground Scenes

For many artists of her generation, escape from the stifling ideological encroachment of the state had meant withdrawing into the hermetic, homogeneous circles of the “underground” and into an explicitly apolitical art. The individual artist body, conceived of as male, was not only the source of (individual) artistic authorship, but also a place of rebellion against and freedom from the demands of the regime. The figure of the wild, “free” male bohemian artist loomed large.¹³

Gabriele Stötzer’s decision to work with women and on the subject of womanhood was, accordingly, a provocation for both the East German state and the oppositional circles in which she moved. In 1984, she founded the GDR’s only existing artist women’s group, known as the Künstlerinnengruppe Erfurt (Erfurt Women Artists’ Group), later Exterra XX. Over the years, Monika Andres, Tely Büchner, Elke Carl, Monique Förster, Gabriele Göbel, Ina Heyner, Verena Kyselka, Bettina Neumann, Ingrid Plöttner, and Harriet Wollert, as well as Ines Lesch, Karina Popp, Birgit Quehl, Jutta Rauchfuß, and Marlies Schmidt, took part in the group’s activities with more persons participating occasionally.¹⁴ Instead of working along a binary opposition between underground and state, the group’s experimentations took on patriarchal forms of repression shared by both. In the safety of the forms of sociability and collaboration fostered within the group, the women explored their own and each others’ bodies outside and against gender and societal norms.

To emancipate themselves from the double assault of the equally patriarchal regime and underground, they could no longer seek shelter in a supposedly liberated male-connnotated individual artist body, experienced as a mode of oppression itself. The bodies in the photographic and filmic experimentations of Stötzer’s group are no longer heroic; they are wounded, fragile, vulnerable, and interpenetrating with the world. In some their photographed interactions, bandages conceal and constrain a body or connect two bodies into one; in others, bodily openings are marked or pulled open with hands, skin is stretched and pulled or painted upon. To liberate oneself means to

be radically collective, open to others, and decentered in these works. By moving beyond given configurations of gender and of political binaries of underground versus state, these bodies sense and try out ways of being that the available languages of that time could not (yet) express. They came to function as anticipations, experimental configurations, of what Gabriele Stötzer calls, in regard to her own bodily sensing, “a new reality,” and of which she says: “this other reality was not the west.”¹⁵

A New Reality: Stötzer’s Feminist Art and Activist Practice Merge into One

The film *signale* (signals) was a project that her group started in the spring of 1989, and that would turn out to be anticipatory, even “divinatory” in this way. “signals was about something obscured, it called on something other, not yet speakable.”¹⁶

A few months later, the “new reality” that their work had signaled toward began to explode into glorious being all around. When the revolution began in the autumn, the women’s experimentations opened out effortlessly into the rapid politicization—the collective rethinking—of all arenas of life. The implicit (or micro)politics of their feminist artistic collaborations was filtered into concrete (macro)political acts. The group *Frauen für Veränderung* (Women for Change) formalized out of Stötzer’s circles and built on the material and immaterial supports the former had put into place: networks, resources, skills, along with mutual knowledge and trust.¹⁷ The group played a significant role in Erfurt’s weekly demonstrations and, for the first time, organized gatherings at the city’s town hall for women only.

On November 8, 1989, Stötzer spoke out in front of the 300 members of the new group:

against men as leaders
against leaders
against roles
against images
against the images of women of the last 40 years¹⁸

In the revolutionary moment, the taking apart of the ideological, political configuration of GDR socialism, of roles and political hierarchies, and the taking apart of its specific configuration of gender, of patriarchy, became addressable as one and the same. The aesthetically medi-

ated forms of collective “self-” and “woman”-hood, which Stötzer’s collaborations had been elaborating for some years, could now also and finally begin to be named—and inhabited outside of her art. On November 8, the bodily signals in Stötzer’s art found their communicability beyond the small circles of her collaborations—at least for a short moment in time. The particular constellation of the political, of art and gender, that Stötzer’s practice had begun to weave out of the contradictions and the increasing porosity of their state-socialist conceptualizations began to gain visibility and entered the realm of the possible.

After 1990: Stötzer’s Art and Its Politic Become Illegible in the Vocabularies of the West

The revolution’s political rerouting toward German national unification in the winter of 1990 made short shrift of these experimentations and dreams. After October 3, 1990, as the East German state and its specific cultures disappeared into an enlarged Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), so did the dissident femininities like those elaborated by Gabriele Stötzer and her group. Both Stötzer’s dissident feminism and her political-aesthetic explorations of new forms of being collective became once more unspeakable—in the now dominant vocabularies of the West.

Feminist languages, too, honed in the particular struggles of the West, have missed the ways in which state socialism’s ostensibly progressive social and gender politics enabled and disabled differently gendered ways of being—and the strategies developed in response. Western understandings of art, likewise, made not only East German art practices disappear from view, but also, and maybe more crucially, the material and discursive contexts in which their aesthetics and politics could be read. Art-historical analyses of the GDR’s artistic underground, often deeply steeped in communist and anti-communist binaries inherited from the Cold War, have tended to reiterate precisely those strongly gendered—male connotated—notions of the liberated, autonomous artist genius that Stötzer’s practice crossed. In consequence, her practice received little attention for many years.

It is good news that interest in the work of Gabriele Stötzer and her group is now on the rise. Decoding and uncovering the knowledge and the possibilities of being differently, dissidently gendered—which their bodies, preserved in film and photos, signal into our present—is

a generous and careful feminist work calling to be done.
The wonderful task of unearthing the treasure of this
feminist heritage is now at hand.

¹ Angelika Richter, *Das Gesetz der Szene: Genderkritik, Performance Art und zweite Öffentlichkeit in der späten DDR* (Bielefeld, 2019), p. 136. ² Ibid., p. 144. ³ Various terms have been used to describe individuals and groups in the GDR (including its art scenes) who saw themselves as critical of the state and its institutions or who were perceived by the state as critics or opponents: oppositional, dissident, nonconformist, underground, and many others. However, none of these terms convey the whole picture, especially when it comes to the protagonists' self-perception. ⁴ Claus Löser, *Strategien der Verweigerung: Untersuchungen zum politisch-ästhetischen Gestus unangepasster filmischer Artikulationen in der Spätphase der DDR* (Berlin, 2011), p. 290. ⁵ "Gabriele Stötzer: Anklagepunkte," n.d., zeitzeugen-portal, Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwGwd6dS-uE> [all URLs accessed in June 2022]. ⁶ Rebecca Hillauer, "Zeit hinter Mauern," *der Freitag*, October 18, 2002, sec. Kultur, <http://www.freitag.de/autoren/der-freitag/zeit-hinter-mauern>. ⁷ Ibid. ⁸ Stötzer quoted in Karin Fritzsche and Claus Löser, *Gegenbilder: Filmische Subversion in der DDR 1976–1989; Texte, Bilder, Daten* (Berlin, 1996), p. 75. ⁹ Stötzer in conversation with the author. ¹⁰ Löser 2011 (see note 4), p. 294. ¹¹ Fritzsche/Löser 1996 (see note 8), p. 76. ¹² Löser 2011 (see note 4), p. 296. ¹³ Richter 2019 (see note 1), p. 108. ¹⁴ Ibid., p. 131. ¹⁵ Fritzsche/Löser 1996 (see note 8), p. 76. ¹⁶ Stötzer in an email exchange with the author, May 2013. ¹⁷ Stötzer and four women from her circles would, for example, launch the first successful occupation of a local Stasi headquarters in the country, soon to be followed by others elsewhere. See Peter Große, Barbara Sengewald, and Matthias Sengewald, "Die Besetzung der Bezirksverwaltung des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit der DDR am 4. Dezember 1989 in Erfurt," *Gesellschaft für Zeitgeschichte*, n.d., www.gesellschaft-zeitgeschichte.de. ¹⁸ From the document "geredet im rathaussitzungssaal vor frauen eingeladen von der bürgerinneninitiative frauen für veränderung am 8.11.89 gegen 22 uhr," private archive of Gabriele Stötzer.

OF LASTING RESONANCES

re.act.feminism—a performing archive

Bettina Knaup

I create a peace/piece
I wipe it out with
my hands, my feet, my body.
It remains in the fabric of time . . .
Remembered and
forgotten a thousand
times over. Yet
there. Seen—not
seen—experienced as
part of the air.
— Senga Nengudi, 1993¹

In everyday understanding, artistic performance is generally perceived as a temporally limited event in physical copresence. In this reading, “liveness”—understood as the time spent together in a specific place and the uniqueness of this event, its unrepeatability as a matter of principle—takes center stage. The exhibition and archive project *re.act.feminism*² sets out to place a different understanding of temporality in the foreground. The prefix “re-”—as in the verbs repeat, reverse, reject, return, reengage, remember, rethink, recombine—points to a complex relationship to time, as well as to the impossibility of severing the connection to a past event. The basic assumption of Beatrice Ellen Stammer and myself—as curators of the project—was that lived feminist performance practice resists a chronologically linear classification into firmly delineated periods of time, into decades or periods,³ and that liveness cannot be reduced to a transient moment of shared time. As many authors have pointed out in the polyphonic debate on the possibility of documenting and archiving performance art, liveness rather emerges in the intervals, gaps, breaks, leaps, and pauses, as well as in the multiple interwoven continuities between touch and its reverberations, an event and its memory, as well as its documentation in writing, image, and sound, and the living encounter with these material documents.⁴

Intra-Inanimations

Such an expanded understanding of the live act goes beyond exclusively human agents of the performative and also includes ostensibly inanimate things. Human and nonhuman bodies, photographs, sculptures, books, affects, dreams, props, spirits, materials—they all act “promiscuously in animacy,”⁵ as the performance theorist Rebecca Schneider writes. She refers to this using the term “intra-inanimation,” as a “weave of call and response-ability” of human and nonhuman beings or matter across spatial and temporal intervals.⁶ By using the prefix “intra-” (rather than “inter-”), Schneider indicates that what is at stake is not a dualistic interaction between detached subjects or objects, but rather a relational becoming:⁷ “If we acknowledge that the ‘live’ is an open category, a contested category, a category most exciting because its limits flow, are sticky, not entirely containable, and are as yet porous and undefined, then . . . [t]he interesting quality of liveness may lie in the efforts we make in passage, between shifting states of being.”⁸

These indefinable interim periods of becoming and affecting were also at the forefront of the project *re.act.feminism*. In terms of content and form, it dealt with methods of repetition, contagion, and superimposition, but also of copying, eavesdropping, and retelling, with “intra-inanimations” in which a singular object of historiography can dissolve into diverse net-

works of relationships and embodied everyday practices, thereby enabling encounters across space and time. As curators, we focused on reenactments, reperformances, and archival projects, but also on thematic resonances that we deepened in exhibitions and in the catalogue and named as follows: “dis/appearing subjects”—“resisting objects”—“body controls and measuring acts”—“extended skins”—“labor of love and care”—“feminine drag and pleasurable acts”—“working in collectives.”⁹ One of these tracks—“extended skins”—followed artists who test an extended, relational understanding of the body that transcends the boundaries of the skin, of the individual, ostensibly self-sufficient human body, be it through perforation and (self-)injury, such as Gina Pane and Boryana Rossa, or through the enmeshment or implication in collective bodies, such as Lygia Clark, Nicola L., and Miriam Sharon. In the following I would like to follow this track further, whereby the medium of the book plays a role, which you as a reader are also currently holding in your hands.

Extended Skins

It begins with an examination of several illustrations in an exhibition catalogue on the work of the American artist Senga Nengudi (b. 1943),¹⁰ who has uniquely combined performance, sculpture, and dance since the 1960s and was also part of the *re.act.feminism* project. The illustrations depict open books with large-format black-and-white photographs of actions by the Japanese artist group Gutai. For Nengudi, her encounter with these photographs, which she discovered while studying art in the 1960s, played such a significant role that she still remembers the moment today.¹¹ The catalogue illustrations depict abstract sculptures made of perishable materials temporarily installed outdoors, such as Sadamasa Motonaga’s *Water* (1956) and a light dress by Atsuko Tanaka worn on her body (*Electric Dress*, 1956, → pp. 348–49, fig. 1).¹² In fact, Nengudi—then in search of dynamic, transformative forms of expression—was so impressed by these illustrations that she embarked on a study trip to Japan a few years later.

Founded in 1954, the Gutai artists’ group radically turned away from an object-centered art tradition. Influenced by the Second World War and the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Gutai artists declared their program to be the liberation of subjects and objects from symbolic regimes and, in particular, the liberation of the (artistic) material and its extension into the performative.¹³

In the 1956 “Gutai Manifesto,” Jirō Yoshihara wrote: “The fact that the ruins receive us warmly and kindly after all, and that they attract us with their cracks and flaking surfaces, could this not really be a sign of the material taking revenge, having recaptured its original life?”¹⁴ The works of Gutai members interweave fragile assemblages and improvisations—for example, light-filled water and paper sculptures hanging from trees or earth and mud paintings—with an awareness of the magnitude of nuclear destruction and the inherent life of ostensibly inanimate matter. In contrast, the human body appears vulnerable and ephemeral. Atsuko Tanaka’s wearable sculpture *Electric Dress*—a dress made of countless cables and light bulbs, which she wore in a performance like a technically saturated, radiant, porous second skin—is an expression of this.¹⁵

Although Nengudi did not know the Gutai artists personally, their materialist-performative approach to art has clearly found an echo in her work.¹⁶ This is evidenced by her numerous assemblages of nylon pantyhose filled with sand, elongated, knotted, or stretched, which take on physical and at the same time abstract forms and invite dance-like interaction, especially the anthropomorphic sculptures in the series *R.S.V.P.* (which stands for *Répondez s’il vous plaît*) which she began developing in 1976. Nengudi also used inexpensive, second-hand, industrially produced but equally natural materials, such as sand and stone, which were ubiquitous, easy to obtain and transport, and ready for use anytime and anywhere. Ruins or neglected urban fringes, such as under inner-city freeways, have often been sites of her actions and performances (*Ceremony for Freeway Fets*, 1978, and *Rapunzel*, 1981). Regarding the material she uses primarily—nylon—Nengudi has said: “I am working with nylon mesh because it relates to the elasticity of the human body. From tender, tight beginnings to sagging end . . . After giving birth to my own son, I thought of black wet-nurses sucking child after child—their own as well as those of others, until their breasts rested on their knees, their energies drained. My works are abstracted reflections of used bodies.”¹⁷ The explicit reference to used female clothing as well as to used and abused Black female bodies is combined in Nengudi’s work with an abstracting and at the same time material reflection on an expanded understanding of the body: Who and what is separated and united by an only ostensibly enclosing, but in reality stretchable, porous skin? Who is moved, limited, encased, or penetrated by whom? What connects human bodies perforated by racisms to the margins of urban infrastructures? What limbs, organs, or particles belong to this body, to this time?

Mesh Mirages

Now I would like to turn to another illustration of Nengudi's work in the above-mentioned exhibition catalogue. It depicts an obviously much-used catalogue with folds and creases, the cover of which renders a person almost completely covered in paper that has also been used and crumpled. It is Nengudi in a paper cloak, with a necklace and a nylon stocking mask that covers the eyes and mouth, leaving only an opening for breathing through the nose: *Study for Mesh Mirage* (→ p. 351, fig. 2).¹⁸ It is distantly reminiscent of Tanaka's radiant "electric dress"—although the materials that Nengudi uses and the associations they evoke are different.¹⁹ Both artists, however, act as beings who are not quite human, who are entangled and interwoven in multiple ways, while their sensory perception and mobility are constricted and at the same time displaced and expanded.

The battered catalogue with Nengudi's *Mesh Mirage* on the cover—that is to say, this multiply touched mirage—evokes yet another association in me. It is reminiscent of a performance series by the Brazilian artist Eleonora Fabião (b. 1968), during which she roamed the streets of Rio de Janeiro (*Stains*, 2013, → p. 351, fig. 3). Completely wrapped and glued in red, black, or white plastic bags, without eye, nose, or mouth openings, Fabião embodied an enigmatic figure in public space that the artist herself described as "an abstract body . . . no gender, no skin color, being in some limit between a body and a corpse, the bagged and wrapped dead ones."²⁰ On the one hand, as the title suggests, the figure activated a stain of dirt

or paint, an irritation, an unidentifiable disturbance to which passersby reacted very differently. On the other hand, however, it embodied more than anything else the fiction of a completely self-sufficient body separated by the plastic skin, a plasticized immunization, a separation of inside and outside, dead and alive, that promised security. At the same time, she took this separation ad absurdum by performing the impossibility of a complete separation and thus openly revealing it.²¹

I did not personally experience this action either, but rather encountered it—mediated through texts and images—in a catalogue that the artist designed less as an inanimate object than as an activating relationship for the creation of a resonance space with the recipients: Fabião thus prohibited the sale of the book; instead, its dissemination took place exclusively through acts of personal gifting and distribution in public places. With this "movement" of the book, she expanded her performative street actions, as she herself said: "*Actions* was made to be given, received, traded, lost, found, purposely lost, donated, lent, passed on. . . . I can affirm that this book enjoys movement immensely. The proposal is to continue the performative movement launched on the streets."²²

The three embodied encounters with used books and images sketched here as examples—these "mesh mirages" of very different and yet related actions of radiant, used, segregated, and interwoven bodies with their "extended skins"—seem to testify to those "intra-inanimations" of which Rebecca Schneider speaks and which the *re.act.feminism* project also means to reinforce.

1 Quoted in Stephanie Weber and Matthias Mühling, eds., *Senga Nengudi: Topologien/Topologies*, exh. cat. Lenbachhaus, Munich, and Museu de Arte de São Paulo et al., 2019–21 (Munich, 2019), pp. 234–35. 2 *re.act.feminism* was a project that took the form of exhibitions, workshops, performances, and conferences, as well as a growing archive in numerous European cities from 2008 to 2014 (curated by Beatrice Ellen Stammer and the author). The focus was on works of international gender-oriented performance practice of the 1960s and 1970s and their "return" in the form of re-performances and archival projects. An important part were mobile work- and archive modules with a temporary collection of videos, films, and photos from approximately 180 feminist and queer performance artists from all over the world, which was continuously supplemented and expanded and served as a starting point for research and performances. See Bettina Knaup and Beatrice Ellen Stammer, eds., *re.act.feminism #2 – a performing archive* (Nuremberg, 2014), and www.reactfeminism.org [accessed in June 2022]. 3 For more on the criticism of such narratives, see, for example, Claire Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (Durham, NC, and London, 2011); Marsha Meskimmon, "Chronology through Cartography: Mapping 1970s Feminist Art Globally," in *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, ed. Connie Butler, exh. cat. The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (Cambridge, MA, 2007), pp. 322–35. 4 See, for example, Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield, eds., *Perform, Repeat, Record* (Bristol, 2012); Rebecca Schneider, "Intra-inanimation," in *Animism in Art and Performance*, ed. Christopher Braddock (Cham, 2017), pp. 153–75. 5 Rebecca Schneider, "New Materialisms and Performance Studies," *The Drama Review (TDR)* 59, no. 4 (2015), pp. 7–17, esp. p. 9. 6 Schneider 2017 (see note 4), p. 165. 7 Schneider refers to the physicist and philosopher Karen Barad, who coined the term "intra-action" (instead of interaction) in her materialistic theory of an "agential realism." 8 Rebecca Schneider, "Dead Hare, Live: The Curate and the Service Economy," *Frakcija* 55 (2010), pp. 62–66, esp. p. 63. 9 Knaup/Stammer 2014 (see note 2), pp. 120–91. 10 Weber/Mühling 2019 (see note 1). 11 Stephanie Weber, "Verwandte Geister: Senga Nengudi und die Künstlergruppe Gutai," in *ibid.*, p. 107. 12 See the illustrations in *ibid.*, pp. 112, 113, 115, 116, and 117. 13 For more detailed information, see Paul Schimmel, "Leap into the Void: Performance and the Object," in *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949–1979*, ed. Paul Schimmel, exh. cat. The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (New York, 1998), pp. 59–63; and Weber 2019 (see note 11). 14 Jirō Yoshihara, "The Gutai Manifesto (1956)," in *100 Artists' Manifestos*, ed. Alex Danchev (London, 2011), pp. 331–35, esp. p. 333. 15 Peggy Phelan, "The Returns of Touch: Feminist Performances, 1960–1980," in *Exh. cat. Los Angeles 2007* (see note 3), pp. 346–61. 16 In addition to Gutai, other influences come into play, including Nengudi's interest in Kabuki and Yoruba rituals; see Weber 2019 (see note 11), p. 46. 17 Statement by the artist from 1977, quoted in Weber/Mühling 2019 (see note 1), pp. 156–57. 18 The catalogue mentioned here was edited by Linda Goode Bryant and Marcy S. Philips to accompany an exhibition of the African American artists' association Studio Z at the Just Above Midtown Gallery, New York, in 1978; see Weber/Mühling 2019 (see note 1), pp. 66–83. 19 Other feminist artists were also influenced by the Gutai group and Tanaka in particular, as Peggy Phelan has shown with the example of Yoko Ono and Yayoi Kusama; for more detailed information, see Phelan 2007 (see note 15), p. 349. 20 Quoted in Felipe Ribeiro, "Intimacy as Thought," in *Actions: Eleonora Fabião*, ed. Eleonora Fabião and André Lepecki (Rio de Janeiro, 2015), pp. 306–17, esp. p. 313. 21 There was thus a visible tension simply due to the restriction of the respiratory tract during the performance; the complete separation from the outside world was actually impossible and could not be maintained for long. In addition, the performance led to extreme reactions of the passersby, so that the performer was in no way separated from her environment and the outside world, and especially not protected. For a detailed description and analysis of the performance, see *ibid.* 22 Quoted in Fabião/Lepecki 2015 (see note 20), p. 1.

“SWEET” FEMINISM ON THE WEB?

Annekathrin Kohout

Butterfly is the title of an object from the series *Enfants Terribles* (2001, → pp. 352–53, fig. 1) by the Austrian artist Renate Bertlmann. The work consists of a metallic turquoise dildo, realistically modeled on the male genitalia, with glittering pink wings protruding from a white tulle skirt. Thanks to this childlike, playful impression, one cannot help but characterize the erect penis as “sweet.”¹ The fact that this object might bring a smile to the faces of many contemporary viewers is due to the fact that the aesthetics of cuteness has gendered connotations right up to the present day: cuteness stands for an aesthetic of childlike girlishness and is still considered an expression of a complicated power relationship between the (male) subject and the (female) object designated as “sweet.”² Birgit Richard has shown how the object character of women who are possessed, controlled, and patriarchally dominated by male subjects is particularly evident in such a characterization: “To identify something as cute means to mark it as powerless and dependent.”³ Moreover, the male subject causes the female object to self-infantilize, to diminish herself physically and linguistically—which in turn maintains the intended asymmetry of the power relationship. By dressing the male penis in a girlishly cute costume and thus reversing the relationship, Bertlmann illustrates this asymmetry of power, which, because it is taken for granted, usually escapes the viewing habits of everyday life.

From *Süßes Mädchen* to Girl

In the field of “cuteness studies,” various manifestations of cuteness are reflected upon. In his book *The Power of Cute*, the philosopher Simon May has identified two poles: the unbroken “cute” on one side and the “uncanny cute” on the other, with gradual variations and overlaps in between. “Cute” is the pure, smooth, commodified cuteness, the effects of which May estimates to be far less than those of the “uncanny cute.” This he describes as an abysmal cuteness in which the real breaks into the pure cuteness as a threat⁴ that by all means triggers all the emotions mentioned—affection, need for protection, et cetera—but “stings” in its simultaneous patency of powerlessness in the face of the effects. These effects of cuteness are, in a weak form, the desire to overcome distance (one wants to hug, caress, kiss the cuteness), and in a stronger form, the desire for empowerment, which can turn into “cuteness aggression” (squeezing, crushing, incorporating). In this, aesthetics is essentially different from the beautiful/sublime and ugly, which are based precisely on distance.

Derived etymologically from the Old High German word *suozī* (eighth century), the meaning of “sweet” already in the Middle Ages oscillated between the Christian use of God’s sweetness in the sense of a non-metaphorical semantics of grace and the devil’s sweetness as seductive world sin.⁵ Around 1900, this ambivalence continued in a new type of woman—in the *süßes Mädchen* (Sweet Girl) of *fin de siècle* Vienna, but also in the American “flapper” of the 1920s and finally in the “girl” still familiar today. The Austrian writer Arthur Schnitzler, through whom the *süßes Mädchen* achieved fame, described the female role model as follows: she “was tarnished but without sin, innocent without virginity, passably honest yet just a little bit deceitful, nearly always

in good spirits yet occasionally with a fleeting frown of anxiety on her forehead, not exactly a success as the daughter of a respectable bourgeois home but as a sweetheart the most respectable and unselfish creature imaginable.”⁶ The passage is interesting because it aptly characterizes the ambiguity of the term sweet/cute as charming, guileless, playful, self-ironic, and free of blame on the one hand and as manipulative on the other.

Attributions such as Schnitzler’s were not only external determinations, but moreover also served women themselves as a means of self-expression, thus distancing—and emancipating—themselves from traditional roles as future housewives or mothers.⁷ The historical framework for this development is the consumer culture that emerged with industrialization, “an ambivalent arena in which participation in society . . . was negotiated in terms of both class and gender.”⁸ New opportunities and freedoms—but also new determinations—emerged for women, as they could participate in the public sphere for the first time (without being considered handmaidens or prostitutes).

Feminists rightly criticized that—even if activists saw shopping as a female right and thus as an emancipatory act—masculinity was discursively linked to the side of production, whereas femininity was linked to the side of consumption.⁹ However, in doing so, they transferred negative characteristics of consumption to women, who were henceforth perceived as both superficial and mindless: “The products of pop culture are superficial and standardized; it is almost always stated disparagingly, their seductive key stimuli aimed at quick, physically perceptible effects. The situation is very similar for girls and young women. . . . As soon as they are no longer confined to their role as emotional, domestic persons and expectant mothers, they are readily regarded as frivolous and willing to have fun,” writes Thomas Hecken in *Girl und Popkultur* about the reception of girl figures since the 1920s.¹⁰ Criticism of consumerism thus carries over to criticism of women who behave in a youthful, cute way. Feminists have also codified and perpetuated the image of the seducible (and seducing) female consumer—and continue to do so today, as evidenced, for example, by the critique of the affirmation of so-called girl culture by contemporary feminist web artists, whose work is often seen as naïve, not sufficiently complex, and superficial.

Cuteness in Web-Feminist Art

In the repertoire of motifs of such “web-native feminism,” popular subjects have already established themselves, which artists use to connect to the tradition of twentieth-century feminist art, but also to complement and update it: body hair that deviates from the norm, menstruation, or the vulva. At the same time, a pictorial aesthetic has established itself that deals with the aesthetics of cuteness and the ambivalence associated with it. With color schemes in pink and rose, soft-focus effects, and motifs such as stickers, glitter, hearts, and flowers, the artists consciously address the figure of the “girl” or “girl culture.” In the process, cuteness is never only affirmed, but also staged in its inscrutability, as “uncanny cute,” and thus dismantled.

The works of Arvida Byström can be seen as an example of such a dismantling affirmation (→ pp. 354–55, figs. 2, 3). Her visual language and self-dramatization flirts with the childish schema, is cute and dreamy and at the same time sexy, seductive, suggestive. She stages neat peaches and cocktail cherries in lace lingerie, uses the digital editing possibilities of online platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat to equip herself with playful filters and masks. But she always lets the slick consumerist side of cuteness tip over into the uncanny and impure, the untouched into the sexual, the girlish into the boyish. For example, when she shows herself in front of a pink background with an open flower—and at the same time stretches her lusciously hairy legs into the camera. Or when a cherry in lace underwear has been nibbled on, signaling that it has been used.

Petra Collins, one of the most influential voices of the web-feminist generation, proceeds in a similar way. She, too, makes extensive use of soft focus, filters, flowers, and lace clothing. In her work, she presents the aesthetic of cuteness as powerful and strong. Cuteness is taken seriously as a medium for dissolving distance—and by no means is it seen exclusively as an “aesthetic of powerlessness,”¹¹ let alone as a means of oppression. Particularly when Collins photographs men or transgender people—as sensually, vulnerably, and “sweetly” as is usually the case for women—the aesthetic of cuteness proves particularly suited to dissolving the boundaries between genders and identities of all kinds. For cuteness creates familiarity in the unfamiliar, coziness in the foreign, harmlessness in dissonance—without one necessarily blotting out the other.

Whether as self-dramatization or external ascription, by motivating forms of cuteness to loving human interaction, they become the object of moral unease. In this context, Simon May has pointed out that cuteness can prompt one to be more humane toward others.¹² On the web, the aesthetics of cuteness often serve to get closer and converge in a positive sense. Here, cute filters, masks, and emojis—according to Joel Gn, a “‘language’ of cuteness”¹³—are no longer just techniques or media used by women: rather, it becomes apparent that they are also important tools for genderfluid modes of representation in particular.

Yet the critique of cuteness lives on. Cuteness is not really trustworthy, but merely “calculated,” writes Birgit Richard, a “happy pill” that is intended to mitigate negative affects.¹⁴ Based on this consumer-critical logic, she attributes to cuteness a quick “habituation effect” and thus a “short half-life”—like the *süßes Mädel*, easy to have and quickly consumed, a mere charm.¹⁵ In fact, the use of cuteness and the rejection of an aesthetic of the ugly, the destructive, the agonizing, et cetera, is also about trying out a new artistic strategy beyond provocation, subversion, or affirmation: it is about empowerment. Whereas

feminist artists such as Louise Bourgeois and Kiki Smith wanted to express their experiences of exclusion and suffering, their discomfort and vulnerability, and thus disrupt the expectations of the viewers, the empowerment of the web feminists is about imagining oneself as autonomous, strong, and powerful in order to encourage and inspire one’s own community.

The work of the web feminists reflects a reality that is still far from being called “mainstream,” but which has already spread widely in the social media: a reality in which aesthetics prevail—especially those of cuteness—which are free of gender attributions. The digital editing options are the same for all users and are also used by everyone—albeit to different extents. Whatever face is behind it, they all get a cute rosy complexion, big eyes, a pointed sweet chin, and so forth. Beauty and makeup trends are spreading in both digital and analogue ways among young men and trans individuals. The Canadian TikTok star Benji Krol, for example, even creates his own filters and masks with little hearts, butterflies, and freckles. How “cute” they are can be seen in the at times perplexed, mostly euphoric comments: “Why are you so cute ❤️” (→ p. 355, fig. 4).

¹ In this essay, the words “sweet” and “cute” are largely used synonymously, although a number of distinctions can be discerned, which, however, play only a subordinate role in aesthetics and will therefore not be explored in depth here. ² Birgit Richard, “‘Felt Cute, Might Delete Later’: Zur polyvalenten Ästhetik des Niedlichen,” in Katja Gunkel, Jana Müller, and Birgit Richard, *#Cute: Eine Ästhetik des Niedlichen zwischen Natur und Kunst* (Frankfurt am Main and New York, 2020), pp. 7–37, esp. p. 11. ³ Ibid., p. 19 [translated]. ⁴ Simon May, *The Power of Cute* (Princeton, 2019), pp. 103ff.; see also Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (London, 1981). ⁵ Friedrich Ohly, *Süße Nägel der Passion: Ein Beitrag zur theologischen Semantik* (Baden-Baden, 1989). ⁶ Arthur Schnitzler, *My Youth in Vienna*, trans. Catherine Hutter (New York, Chicago, and San Francisco, 1970), p. 141. ⁷ Thomas Hecken, *Girl und Popkultur* (Bochum, 2006), p. 141. ⁸ Antonia Wagner, *Feminismus und Konsum* (Heidelberg, 2020), p. 38 [translated]. ⁹ Ibid., p. 376. ¹⁰ Hecken 2006 (see note 7), p. 141 [translated]. ¹¹ Sianne Ngai, “The Cuteness of the Avantgarde,” *Critical Inquiry* 31, no. 4 (Summer 2005), pp. 811–47, esp. p. 842. ¹² May 2019 (see note 4), p. 121. ¹³ Joel Gn, “Emoji as a ‘language’ of cuteness,” *First Monday* 23, no. 9 (2018), <https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/9396/7568> [accessed in June 2022]. ¹⁴ Richard 2020 (see note 2), p. 18. ¹⁵ Ibid., p. 29.

THE DAYS OF PIGEONHOLED AND EXCEPTIONAL WOMEN ARE OVER

Developments on the Art Market

Larissa Kikol

Women should be culture.
Women should celebrate women's culture.
Women should talk about women.
Women should hate.
Women should be openly angry.
Women should be covertly empathetic.
Women should take care of women.
Women should deal with women's issues.
Women should be preoccupied with women's bodies.
Women should be snappish.
Women should represent women.

Women should be and do a lot of things. And, especially often, women should remain pigeonholed. Galleries, art fairs, and institutions can use this for good storytelling. Feminism, women, and women depicting women's bodies can always be sold well as themes. It also gets the funding and the press. But if women only play one role, represent just *one* theme, then there is no need for many of them. After all, there are countless other themes, social and ethnic groups, and role clichés that are represented or occupied by men. In such a case, it is surely enough for a gallery to represent only a few female artists in order to define this one thematic field. The rest is done by men. Thus, if women stick with women's themes, then it is actually good news for the "old white men" who fear for their hitherto self-evident, unchallenged position. These men will even encourage it, charitably give away some space, show their generous support. Women who then go on to portray women as victims, as vulnerable, sensitive beings worthy of protection, will find all the more male patrons. Because in this pigeonholing of women, those men who, in truth, do not want to share their position know one thing very well: women cannot be dangerous to them, and, above all, they will not form a majority.

The Current Situation

Such thematic restrictions could be one of the reasons why, for example, equal opportunities have not yet been achieved in the gallery scene in Germany. I analyzed the permanent artist program of twenty commercial galleries in Germany, including the largest and leading ones, but also medium-sized, younger galleries that are currently very active. The representation of women artists is 24.5 percent on average (as of May 1, 2021), whereby the individual differences were enormous. At the bottom, three places were galleries with a 4 or 7 percent repre-

sentation of women artists. At the top, with a share of women artists of over 40 percent, were galleries such as Contemporary Fine Arts Galerie, Berlin (43 percent) and König Galerie, Berlin (42 percent). The rest lie somewhere in between.

In its 2021 edition, the renowned and annual report *The Art Market* by Art Basel and UBS concludes that galleries with a high percentage of women had the fewest sales losses in 2020, the first year of the coronavirus pandemic.¹ The German gallery scene has something to learn in this respect. Indeed, according to *The Art Market 2021*, things are already looking a little different on the international art market. Here, the proportion of women artists represented in the art trade as a whole (which largely includes galleries) is calculated at 37 percent for the year 2020. On the secondary market, the figure is 24 percent, which is explained by the (well-known) historical conditions.² The low representation of women in the twentieth century and the different situation today can also be seen in the other figures, which break down the career stages of the women artists represented in the art trade as a whole in 2020: 33 percent are considered established, 40 percent are mid-career, and a share of 48 percent is made up of emerging artists.³ This gives rise to the future prediction that the emerging generation will soon produce an increasing number of established women artists.

Whereas *The Art Market* by Art Basel and UBS focuses on the entire international and established art market, the German Federal Statistical Office deals with artists living in Germany, who are among the low earners on the general labor market. In its 2021 report on the visual arts sector, *Spartenbericht Bildende Kunst*, the Federal Statistical Office specifies the general distribution of women and men among students in visual arts subjects for the winter semester of 2018–19. In the field of “fine arts / graphic art,” the report records a 59 percent share of women among students. In the area of “painting” as well, more than half are female, namely 57 percent of the students. The largest proportion of women is found in the area of “applied arts,” where women account for 64 percent among all students.⁴ It could therefore be theoretically assumed that more women earn better after their studies, measured against the smaller number of their male fellow students.

In its *Spartenbericht*, the Federal Statistical Office also presents the results of a 2020 survey conducted by the

Bundesverband Bildender Künstlerinnen und Künstler e. V. (Federal Association of Visual Artists) on artists' annual income from sold works, fees, and other artistic activities. Women most frequently reported annual income of 3,001 to 5,000 euros and 5,001 to 10,000 euros (21 percent each). In contrast, for men, the most frequently reported income bracket was 10,001 to 20,000 euros (18.3 percent).⁵

This ratio is also reflected in the distribution of the average monthly net income of visual artists in 2019. In the case of income below 1,100 euros per month, the proportion of women (60 percent) clearly outweighed that of men (40 percent). For monthly income of 1,100 to 2,000 euros, the proportions were almost equal: 53 percent (men) and 47 percent (women). In the higher income sector, however, the gap widened. In the income group of 2,000 euros or more per month, the ratio was 69 percent (men) versus 31 percent (women).⁶

This gender inequality in income can also be seen in the average annual income of visual artists and designers registered with the Künstlersozialkasse (Artists' Social Security Insurance Fund, KSK). As of January 1, 2020, the KSK reported an average annual income of 21,447 euros for male artists, and of only 15,337 euros for female artists.⁷

From these facts, it can be concluded that women artists are that much more in need of a large, strong gallery as a firm partner at their side to advance their careers. At the same time, a high percentage of women artists also benefits galleries and dealers. Despite the fact that male artists in the upper price segment (still) earn better, the trend in Germany, as well as on the international markets, studied here is changing in the direction of equality.

In the lower income sector, however, women still fare poorly. Like most of the discriminatory inequalities, this occurs more strongly in and through poverty. Thus, not only with regard to the gender issue, but also concerning all other occasions of discrimination and disadvantage, one has to ask whether poverty, as one of the biggest multipliers, should not be tackled first.

Supply and Demand

If women want to increase their share of involvement in the gallery programs, this can only happen through

differentiated and individual positioning that is thematically just as diverse and broadly positioned as that of their male colleagues. However, if women remain deliberately pigeonholed, then individual successful women artists will tend to be the exception. Only when they, like male artists, also deal in terms of content with the most diverse aspects of politics, economics, science, games, humor, ethics, philosophy, or, quite consciously, only pure aesthetics and continue to break away from classic women's themes will a correspondingly large diversity come to light. This is what is necessary to make up half of all the positions. One need only to imagine a gourmet restaurant looking for twenty new chefs. If all the female applicants specialize only in Italian pasta, then the future team would surely consist of two women and eighteen men.

If we take a look at the themes of women artists represented by galleries, especially the galleries with a higher percentage of women artists, we already encounter many heterogeneous positions. For example, the content-related, methodological, and aesthetic approaches of Katharina Grosse, Monica Bonvicini, Alicja Kwade, Claudia Comte, and Camille Henrot, all represented by one gallery, differ essentially. In the next step, however, the problem lies with the museums, institutions, and curators who like to adorn themselves with women's themes. To stay with the comparison of the culinary arts: What good are many excellent female chefs who cover everything from game dishes and méchoui to sushi if gourmet critics are only looking for praiseworthy spaghetti dishes? The fact that gourmet magazines with pasta recipes get the most attention does not help either.

The same principle of discrimination is repeated whenever artists are expected to represent certain groups and themes: that is to say, artists of African descent are expected to deal primarily with Africa and racism, while artists who have fled war zones are expected to deal with war, and graffiti artists are expected to deal with social work or art-for-all concepts. However, those who directly or indirectly expect artists to fit into "their" pigeonholes, because otherwise these artists would have to fear not getting enough attention and exhibition invitations, miss the establishment and diversity of individual personalities that every innovative art system needs.

The essay "Es kann nur eine geben: Überlegungen zur 'Ausnahmefrau'" (There Can Only Be One: Reflections on the "Exceptional Woman") by Isabelle Graw, published

in 2001, also fits into this context. Here, she analyzes the situation at the turn of the millennium and describes the model of the "exceptional woman" whose success is (only) the exception to a continuing rule in a world dominated by men. Consequently, it seems logical, according to Graw, that the exceptional woman is not enough to change anything in the existing system.⁸ Graw's analysis, which was accurate at the time, is now twenty years old and hardly relevant today; there are already too many women stakeholders in the art world for that. But her model sheds light on why a thematic limitation favors the restriction of exceptional women, just like that of "exceptional Africans" or "exceptional refugee artists."

For the Future

The favorable path taken in recent years can also be seen in the figures from *The Art Market* report by Art Basel and UBS. According to this report, as recently as 2017 only 25 percent of the artists exhibited at the world's five largest art fairs were women.⁹ And in 2019, women artists were represented in galleries in Europe with a share of only 26 percent; the lowest share was recorded by galleries in Asia with 24 percent, and in North America they reached the highest share with 34 percent.¹⁰ As mentioned in the above, *The Art Market 2021* already indicates for 2020 an international share of women artists in galleries of 37 percent—a clear increase. This trend can also be seen in the global art market in terms of categorizing the status of women artists: for example, in the period from 1995 to 1999, among young, "emerging" artists, only 35 percent were women represented by commercial galleries; in the "star artist" category, the figure was as low as 20 percent. By contrast, in the period from 2015 to 2019, among emerging artists, 43 percent were already women, and in the "star" category their share rose to 26 percent.¹¹ Here, as well, an unmistakable trend can be discerned.

The prospects are thus good. There is every reason for optimism. The major feminism campaigns by institutions, feminist artist movements, and historians focused on women's issues have accomplished a great deal. Especially in terms of what I have criticized in this essay: a concentrated focus on one thematic field. To be sure, this thematic focus—for instance, thematic limitation—was important for the historical development that took place in the past. It provided decisive impulses. It is, however, counterproductive for the way forward in the twen-

ty-first century. Today, it is no longer only about the first steps toward equality, nor about catching up in the lower percentage range, but rather about the last steps in the direction of final, actual equality. For this, the thematic focus on women must be abandoned, as I have explained above.

It is now and in the future a matter of great breadth; the next step will aim for half of the art world, for a playing field with equal participation. Invitations to “women-only soccer” should now be rejected, and instead the competition with the opposite sex opened everywhere. Women are not a culture of their own, but equal players in all cultural fields. Therefore, a concentration on specific topics is not enough. Areas in which more women artists are needed include, for example, land art projects, art and ar-

chitecture, and urban monumental installations, but also the playful, childlike, and absurd art field. More women artists are needed who celebrate eccentric self-dramatization, adventurousness, machines, and humor, but who also acknowledge their shyness, their timidity, and their complexity. There is also a need for more women among duos and collectives, likewise in the field of graffiti or in computer game art. The beautiful but concomitantly weak mother image must be replaced by a stronger, leading one. Older age must not only look good on men. All terrains are now open. And that is the most important message and task in the coming years: differentiation in all directions. The days of exceptional women are over.

¹ Art Basel and UBS, *The Art Market 2021*, p. 88, <https://www.artbasel.com/about/initiatives/the-art-market> [all URLs accessed in April 2022]. ² Ibid., pp. 86–87. ³ Ibid., pp. 88–89. ⁴ Statistisches Bundesamt, ed., *Bildung und Kultur: Spartenbericht Bildende Kunst 2021*, p. 43, <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bildung-Forschung-Kultur/Kultur/Publikationen/Downloads-Kultur/spartenbericht-bildende-kunst-5216102219004.html>. ⁵ Survey conducted by the Bundesverband Bildender Künstlerinnen und Künstler e. V., 2020, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 48. ⁶ Data from Germany's 2019 microcensus, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 49. ⁷ Ibid., p. 51. ⁸ Isabelle Graw, “Es kann nur eine geben – Überlegungen zur ‘Ausnahmefrau,’” *Texte zur Kunst* 42 (2001), pp. 79–88, esp. pp. 79–80. ⁹ Art Basel and UBS, *The Art Market 2018*, p. 218, <https://www.artbasel.com/about/initiatives/the-art-market>. ¹⁰ Art Basel and UBS, *The Art Market 2020*, p. 106, <https://www.artbasel.com/about/initiatives/the-art-market>. ¹¹ Ibid., p. 108.

NOT GAY AS IN HAPPY, BUT QUEER AS IN FUCK YOU

Queer-Feminist Theories and Forms of Action

Muriel Aichberger

Imagine you are a school kid and just being yourself. For reasons you do not understand, you are suddenly attacked. Someone shouts at you: “Perverted scumbag!” Maybe you do not even know what words like “faggot,” “lesbian,” “tranny,” “hermaphrodite,” or “queer” actually mean, but you understand: something is probably wrong with you, so wrong that others hate you for it.

Imagine experiencing this more often, far too often. You experience violence and exclusion. Your only way out is to fit in; to pretend you are like everyone else. You thus try to change your behavior, to not be so noticeably different, not so queer, not so much you. You hope that *IT*—the stigma—will not be obvious when they look at you, and so you disguise yourself. You do this for many years, constantly in fear that they will beat you up again because they do not like your voice or the way you walk.

In the course of your life, you meet people who feel the same way you do. You realize that it is not your fault, but rather the fault of social norms. You thus join a group to make a change. But time and again, your messages are ignored. Although you all assign yourself to the same identity, the others do not seem to have the same goals as you. Again, you are told to fit in, not be so flashy, and just be more like the majority. You play along with that for a while, but you realize: the others in the group get better jobs, are less marginalized—but somehow that does not apply to you. You are still not let into this society, and so one day you break out and make your voice heard. Not into the oppressive society, but out into the streets.

This experience of being outside of gender and sexual norms and therefore invisible and powerless, the critical examination and dissolution of prevailing norms, and the constant struggle for a minimum of respect and recognition—these elements in all of their facets are building blocks of queer feminism. Or to use the fantastic words of bell hooks: “Queer not as being about who you’re having sex with—that can be a dimension of it; . . . queer as being about the self that is at odds with everything around it and has to invent and create and find a place to speak and thrive and live.”¹

Queer_Story: Definition of the Term and Localizing the Text of a Term

In order for queer people to become conceivable at all, it was necessary to reconsider the hermetic construct of heterosexuality and the two-gender system that left no room for anything else. The highly simplified notions of gender and sexuality had to be countered by more complex and more open concepts.

This essay attempts to give a sense of the developments in queer feminism through several exemplary ideas and concepts. It is oriented toward Anglo-American theory formation. Queer feminist forms of action and queer theory formation are negotiated in parallel, as they are closely intertwined and influence each other.

The meaning of the term “queer” has changed over time. The English word “queer” is a loanword from German, derived from *quer* (athwart, oblique, askew). Initially used as an expression for something foreign, different, peculiar, deviating from the norm, “queer” increasingly developed into a term of demarcation for dubious people and undesirable outsiders. Comparable to the German *per-vers* (perverse, perverted), “queer” was therefore used for a long time primarily as an expletive for gays and lesbians. It was not until the late twentieth century that activist groups reinterpreted the term and henceforth used “queer” as a self-designation and battle cry.

In its current meaning, “queer” is an umbrella term under which people outside the heterosexual norm gather, as do people outside the gay and lesbian mainstream. At the same time, “queer” can also mean questioning and challenging heteronormative ideas of gender and sexuality. It is therefore a very open term with many possible meanings and uses, under which groups of people with a wide variety of gender identities but also political aspirations, theories, and schools of thought gather. The American author Michael Warner, one of the most important representatives of queer theory, sees the all-connecting core of queerness in the resistance against the “regime of the normal,”² that is, against normative expectations not only in relation to gender and sexuality, but more generally also in relation to appearance, habits, and behavior, as well as against the ideal of the norm itself.

Queering Feminism: The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House

Historically, there has always been a certain tension between queer viewpoints and certain feminist currents, as they have dealt with questions of sexuality/sexualities and gender/genders in very different ways. In particular, feminisms that rely heavily on the strict dichotomy of gender into male and female or that consider “masculine” and “feminine” characteristics to be essences of biological makeup are nearly incompatible with queer points of view. For these feminist currents, positions such as the critique expressed by the American feminist theorist Judith Butler that understanding “women” as a unitary and stable identity contributes to the solidification of structures of gender oppression, rather than enabling liberation from them, represent a challenge to their fundamental assumptions and are therefore met with skepticism and rejection. Butler’s thought was, however, not new.³

As early as the 1960s and 1970s, Black feminist thinkers were already criticizing the American civil rights movement (for not taking gender into account) and the women’s liberation movement (for not taking skin color or ethnicity into account). Black women were thus disadvantaged in both groups and recognized that society’s common hierarchies were also reproduced within the movements. The Black lesbian feminist Audre Lorde, for example, pointed out that a category such as “women” is automatically understood as “white women” because of the dominant social position of white people, thus eliminating non-white women from perception.⁴ However, the goals of Black feminists or working-class women were in some cases fundamentally different from those of middle-class white women. Thus, in this case, for multiply oppressed women, their womanhood was not the relevant factor. The realization therefore matured that there was no universal, fixed identity for women, and thus no inevitable common ground based on one. Instead of identity politics, Black feminists focused on analyzing social structures of domination and power, which is why Black feminist thought can be seen as the root of both queer theory and queer activism.

Building on the ideas of Black feminists, the American legal expert Kimberlé Crenshaw, founder of “critical race theory,” developed the concept of intersectionality in the late 1980s.⁵ With this term, Crenshaw names the complex interaction between identities and unequal power relations that structure our experiences in multiple—often contradictory—ways. Accordingly, it makes no sense to consider one category of oppression (ethnicity, class, religion, gender, sexuality, etc.) on its own, when it is constantly interacting with all the others. Nor can these categories be placed in a hierarchy. Also, they do not simply function additively, but rather influence and interpenetrate each other, taking on different forms and nuances depending on the context. Naming these complex relationships of categories of oppression opened up entirely new ways of looking at things and was a milestone on the road to queer theory.

Queer Activism: Respect Existence or Expect Resistance

In the early 1980s, AIDS, an immunodeficiency disease, first spread primarily in the gay community, killing thousands of people. Authorities, governments, and pharmaceutical companies looked on for years. In response to

this inaction, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) was formed, a political group that decided to resort to drastic means to exert political pressure and motivate society to act. They wanted to draw attention to the issue of HIV/AIDS with high-profile actions such as blowing up condoms, occupying offices and public spaces, and staging “die-ins” (→ pp. 400–01, fig. 1).

In the second half of the 1980s, a more radical group that emerged from ACT UP began to articulate “queer” politics, explicitly appropriating this pejorative term as “Queer Nation.” This group distanced itself from the gay and lesbian rights movement, which it believed represented primarily the interests of white, middle-class gays and lesbians. As part of this “queer turn,” they wanted to develop more radical political perspectives and inclusive sexual cultures and communities that would include and support gender-nonconforming and trans individuals and People of Color. This was the result of an intersectional critique of existing hierarchies within sexual liberation movements that excluded individuals within already marginalized groups.

For this development, the American gender researcher Lisa Duggan coined the term “homonormativity” in 2002 to describe the normalization and depoliticization of gays and lesbians through their inclusion in the labor market and middle-class affluent society. Individuals who had previously been stigmatized as “different,” as outsiders, thus gained more participation in social life, but at the expense of and through the continued oppression of queer individuals, such as people with disabilities, those who are trans or non-white, single or nonmonogamous, not of the middle class, or not of Western origin. This realization was followed in the late 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century by a transition from political association based on *one* particular identity to political association among people with different identities and experiences of oppression in different areas of life that are very similar (coalition politics). This represents perhaps the most significant shift in the development of queer-feminist activism.

Queering Theory: Methodical Disambiguation

Although queer theory—just like the term “queer” itself—is always in a state of flux, and although different schools of thought and activist groups use it in different ways, it is precisely this diversity and contradictory nature that

is often seen as its most positive characteristic. Simplistic explanations or universal truths are not answers for queer theorists but rather challenges, and always just the beginning of their activity. The recognition that contradictory perspectives can occur simultaneously and on equal footing leads to a changed way of looking at things. In queer theory, the way of thinking shifts from the tendency of statically understood polarizations (right/wrong, good/bad) to the question of processes and potentials: Which options open up and which close possibilities? What is included and what is excluded? Is it perhaps “both this and that” rather than “either/or”? This shift in consideration, “queering,” opened up new approaches to theory formation.

I’m Not Whatever You Think I Am: Intersectionality Meets Queerness

A queer *and* intersectional perspective combines two “correctives,” each keeping in mind the constant norming and power asymmetry of polarities. Many new fields of queer theory resulting from this, such as “crip theory” and “fat studies,” deconstruct normative and polarizing ideas by combining these perspectives.

For example, crip theory understands disability/disabilities not as a consequence of physical inadequacy, but rather as effects of a society made only for certain bodies: people *are not* disabled, but rather *become* disabled. This approach to theory questions the common notions of corporeality that divide physical fitness or sexual desire into “normal” and “deviant” and challenges common notions of dependence and independence by pointing out that every body is dependent to varying degrees (for example, in relation to food).

Various groups, such as Queers on Wheels in Vienna, take up these very ideas and translate them into activist interventions. They describe themselves as a group of disabled-queer and queer-disabled people who emphasize the pleasurable aspect of the political and want to get both disabled and non-disabled people “rolling.”⁶ The wheelchair, understood as a symbol of disability, is treated by Queers on Wheels as *one* pleasurable means of transportation among many. The self-evident attribution that a person in a wheelchair is a person with a disability is thus to be undermined. They deliberately blur the boundaries of (non-)disability, celebrate their queer desire and their “deviant” bodies: “We want to open up normative, ideal

aesthetics of desire for deviant body aesthetics We celebrate our wonderfully ‘inappropriate’ bodies that deviate from normative, monotonous ideals in all their queer, desirable beauty and with all the pleasure of queer practices of desire!”⁷ *Queers on Wheels* thus draws attention to deviant desire, deviant bodies, and normative notions of disability and how these notions interact with one another; a prime example of anti-normative (queer) and anti-binary (intersectional) activism.

The relatively new research field of fat studies examines the social devaluation of “obesity” from a new perspective. Fat studies focus on the cultural production of “fat-phobia” rather than on fat bodies themselves. Attention is drawn to the social, cultural, historical, and political aspects of representation, as well as to the treatment of the phenomenon of “fatness” and fat bodies. A further point of examination is how high body weight is embedded in dominant discourses of gender, sexuality, “race,” class, and so forth. The findings and theories of fat studies have also been adapted. For example, “fativism” (also known as “fat activism”) advocates for the representation of realistic body images and against discrimination against “fat” people. This includes, among other things, the appropriation and normalization of the term “fat” and the fight against the discrimination and structural disadvantage of fat people.

Queer Diaspora: Transnationalism Meets Queerness

Different cultures, religions, histories of origin, and world-views significantly flank and shape the experiences and communities of queer people around the globe. It is therefore worth taking a look at the transnational turn that took place from the 1990s onward, especially in migration research. Instead of understanding migration as a linear

process, as it had been until then, research began to explore the practices and connections of migrants across borders. The idea of transnationality represented a similar shift for notions of origin, exile, homeland, belonging, or home, as queerness did for notions of normality and uniqueness of gender identities, or intersectionality for perspectives on forms of discrimination and social inequalities. In combining these three perspectives, a new way of thinking queer communities emerged: the “queer diaspora.”

In contrast to the tendency of lesbian and gay theory in the 1970s and 1980s to develop fixed notions of identity and cultural politics, the concept of diaspora points to diversification, dispersion, fragmentation, and separate developments. The idea of a queer diaspora, that is, a queer community defined by interactions of queer people beyond geographical boundaries and in virtual space, represented a turning point for understanding queer spatialization. Inevitably, queer affiliations are determined primarily by their differences, fragmentation, separateness, diversity, and multilocality. The queer diaspora is thus a multiform non-localizable place, a *utopos* (non-place), characterized by global, networked, and intrinsically queer understanding of affiliation, as well as transnational spaces of communication in which queer culture/cultures and community/communities occur. It is now increasingly transforming understanding of geographic factors and physical flows of movement toward a nonbinary and more complex state of reflection.

Queer-feminist theories and forms of action have gradually enabled and expanded the formulation and integration of marginalized worlds of experience. They have become integral parts of contemporary feminist positions that continue to gain relevance for scholarship, art, and politics in light of current megatrends and global contexts.

¹ bell hooks during the panel discussion “Are You Still a Slave? Liberating the Black Female Body” at Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts at The New School, New York, May 6, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJk0hNROvzs> [all URLs accessed in June 2022]. ² Michael Warner, “Introduction,” in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner for the Social Text Collective (Minneapolis, 1993), p. xxvii, <https://uniteyouthdublin.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/michael-warner-ed-fear-of-a-queer-planet-queer-politics-and-social-theory.pdf>. ³ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London, 1990). ⁴ Audre Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference” [1980], in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Freedom, CA, 1984), pp. 114–23, https://www.colorado.edu/odece/sites/default/files/attached-files/rba09-sb4converted_8.pdf. ⁵ Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1, no. 8 (1989), pp. 139–67, <https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=ucif>. ⁶ *Queers on Wheels* in an interview with Elena Barta, *zeitgenossin – Zeitschrift der Österreichischen Hochschüler_innenschaft an der Universität Wien* 4 (2011), n.p., <https://www.oeh.univie.ac.at/zeitgenossin/queers-wheels>. ⁷ Ibid. [translated].

RELIGIONS AND SEX/GENDER

Birgit Heller

Religious traditions, beliefs, symbols, and practices are gendered; and by the same token, gender roles, stereotypes, and ideals are also religiously underpinned or sanctioned.¹ Religion plays a key role in societies for the legitimation of order in general and gender orders in particular.²

Religious Authority and Gender

Throughout the history of religion, women have taken on a variety of roles of religious authority. In many religions of the past, as well as in new religious movements, they function as shamans, priestesses, seers, prophets, teachers, leaders, healers, or mediums. Frequently, members of a so-called third gender are also found in these positions. Although, since ancient times, many cultures have existed that distinguish more than two genders, in the major religions of the present day, men are considered the norm.

Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism have many similarities with regard to the position of women. In the respective formative phases of these religions, women were actively involved and were able to assume various roles. In ancient Israel, for example, there were female judges, prophetesses, and heroines (such as Judith); in the ancient Indian tradition, female seers of divine revelation are known, and women ascetics and teachers are mentioned in isolated instances; from the early Buddhist period, the songs of the enlightened nuns have been preserved; women are considered the first witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and were active as deacons and apostles; according to Muslim tradition, the wives of the Prophet Muhammad played an important role, for example Aisha as a religious authority and transmitter of religious knowledge. As these religions progressed, however, women were relegated to much more subordinate roles. Despite gradual differences with regard to women's access to certain religious roles, such as those of teachers and ritual partners in Tibetan Buddhism or apostolates and leaders in Christian free churches, which can exist both between individual religions and within one religion, the important offices and leadership functions in general were and are predominantly claimed by male followers.

Religions and Patriarchal Social Structures

The major religions of the present day all arose in the context of patriarchally organized societies and have given religious legitimacy to male-dominated social structures. The traditional, normative views of the rights and duties of the sexes are largely based on the model of the polar gender roles of a heterosexually oriented social order. In particular, the important role of the mother in preserving the patrilineality leads to strong male control over women, which is religiously underpinned. In the normative textual traditions, wives are urged to be faithful, obedient, and subordinate to their husbands. In this context, the husband may be given divine status: thus, the faithful Hindu wife is to worship her spouse as if he were a god. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam support male supremacy by various means, such as the biblical narrative of the first creation of man (Genesis 2:18–22) and his preference in the Koran (An-Nisa 4:34).³ The strict control of the woman at every stage of life by her father, husband, son, or brother is intended to ensure the purity of the lineage. The numerous special rules for women are related to this as well, for example in the form of special dress codes or the deliberate restriction of freedom of movement. The high value placed on virginity and the severe punishment of adultery—especially on

the part of the wife—are also connected with this. Adultery on the part of a man with an unmarried woman or a prostitute is occasionally punished more mildly or even tolerated.

Woman: Mother and/or Virgin?

The religious significance of women is largely based on their role as mothers. As the mother of sons, the woman is in some cases revered effusively. According to both Hindu and Muslim tradition, the veneration of the mother exceeds that of the father many times over; in Judaism as well, great respect is shown to the mother. An exception is Buddhism, which does not attach any special importance to the woman as mother, because birth is the central symbol for attachment in the transitory and suffering existence, the cycle of rebirth, and against this background motherhood cannot be positively connoted. In a certain way, Christianity occupies an intermediate position between the accentuation of the role of mother and its relativization. Since early Christian times, religious authorities have in principle valued the virginal lifestyle of women more highly than the role of mother. In the cult of Mary, the ideal of virginity was linked to the veneration of the Mother of God. However, the icon of the Mother of God represents an unattainable ideal for mortal women, because the model of the virgin mother eludes the possibility of imitation. The archetype of woman is sinful Eve, whose (purported) libidinousness can only be conquered by the ideal of the sexually abstinent virgin/nun.

Sexuality and Heteronormativity

Religious sexual morality serves to regulate gender relations, for example through various sexual taboos and prohibitions of premarital and extramarital sexuality or of homosexuality. In the major religions of the present day, sexuality is traditionally placed in the service of procreation.⁴ In Judaism, Islam, and classical Brahman Hinduism, however, sexual pleasure and eroticism also have an intrinsic value. In the ascetic-monastic traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity, which are characterized by sexual renunciation, sexuality is equated with ignorance, lust, attachment to worldly existence, and sin and is considered an obstacle to salvation. Since in these religions women are identified more strongly than men with corporeality, sexuality, and libido, the widely received stereotype of the sexual seductress emerges,

which has been, and in some cases still is, used to justify a variety of discriminations, such as the exclusion of women from acquiring religious knowledge.⁵ In contrast to this rigorous ascetic defense of sexuality is its significance as a religious symbol. For example, in the Christian and Hindu traditions of so-called bridal mysticism, the sexual relationship between man and woman becomes a metaphor for the relationship or union between a male-personified God and a human—regardless of gender—in the role of bride.

In accordance with their patriarchal character, all major religions of the present day elevate the heterosexual gender order to the norm. What distinguishes them from one another is the varying extent to which same-sex behavior is respected or punished, whereby lesbian sexuality is hardly ever discussed.⁶ In Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, sexual acts between persons of the male sex were condemned and, in some cases, punished with the death penalty, for example in ancient Israelite times and in the Christian Middle Ages, as well as currently in some Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan. Even today, a rejectionist attitude prevails, with the exception of the liberal currents in Judaism and Protestantism; in Islamic history, religious-legal views and social practice diverge significantly. From a Hindu and Buddhist perspective, homosexuality is considered misconduct, but it has neither been prosecuted nor severely punished; ambivalent or rather indifferent attitudes have always predominated.

Equality of the Sexes and Its Limits

In the authoritative texts of all major religions of the present day, there are more or less strong impulses for gender equality in the metaphysical realm, especially in the sense of granting men and women the same capacity for salvation. These ideas have occasionally contributed to the elimination of female discrimination (for example, the ban on widow remarriage was lifted in a Hindu religious community, or the killing/exposure of female newborns was forbidden in the Koran), but not to a political-legal equality of the sexes in social coexistence. Neither the concept of the unity of women and men “in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28), nor the Hindu axiom of the genderlessness of the basic spiritual principle in every human being, nor the Buddhist conviction that sexual characteristics are insignificant (“empty”) developed a sustainable social-emancipatory potential for changing female sub-

ordination in gender relations. It was only under the influence of modernity and socially changed gender roles that reform movements in traditionally patriarchal religions drew on gender-egalitarian elements of the respective tradition to initiate more or less successful changes in the status of women. Grounded in feminist theologies and processes of reflection, women, in part with the support of male reformers, have themselves gained access to religious roles endowed with authority and interpretive power in dealing with normative tradition. These are roles such as theologian, teacher, or rabbi.⁷ In a modern Hindu reform movement that draws on an 800-year-old tradition, for the first time a woman even holds the office of Mahājagadguru,⁸ analogous to, for example, the Pope as the highest authority in the Roman Catholic Church. Despite these developments, the leadership functions in the major religions are still predominantly in male hands.

In all religious traditions, ambivalent attitudes can be observed with regard to the demand for equality or equal rights for women.⁹ However, the obstacles to the acceptance or appreciation of gender diversity are even greater, not least of all because the norm of the heterosexual gender order is affected.

¹ Birgit Heller, "Gender und Religion," in *Handbuch Religionswissenschaft*, ed. Johann Figl (Innsbruck, Vienna, and Göttingen, 2003), pp. 758–69; Edith Franke and Verena Maske, "Religionen, Religionswissenschaft und die Kategorie Geschlecht/Gender," in *Religionswissenschaft*, ed. Michael Stausberg (Berlin and Boston, 2012), pp. 125–39. ² Birgit Heller, "'Beste Freunde?': Religionen, Politik und Geschlechterordnung," in *Religion und Politik: Analysen, Kontroversen, Fragen*, ed. Doron Kiesel and Ronald Lutz (Frankfurt am Main and New York, 2015), pp. 303–16. ³ Genesis 2:18–22 and An-Nisa 4:34. ⁴ Edward Geoffrey Parrinder, *Sex in the World's Religions* (London, 1980). ⁵ Birgit Heller, "Der Frauen Weisheit ist nur bei der Spindel": Zur Geschichte weiblicher Interpretationskompetenz im Hinduismus und Judentum," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 51, no. 4 (1999), pp. 289–300. ⁶ Jeffrey S. Siker, ed., *Homosexuality and Religion: An Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT, and London, 2007). ⁷ Gabrielle Girau Pieck, Amira Hafner-Al Jabaji, Rifa'at Lenzin, Eva Pruschy, Heidi Rudolf, Doris Strahm, and Reinhild Traitler, *Rabbinerinnen, Kantorinnen, Imaminnen, Muftis, Pfarrerinnen, Bischöfinnen, Kirchenrätinnen . . . : Leitungsfunktionen von Frauen im Judentum, im Christentum und im Islam; Eine Studie des Interreligiösen Think-Tank* (Basel, 2011), <https://www.interrelthinktank.ch/index.php/texte/texte-des-interreligioesen-think-tank-2/item/21-rabbinerinnen-kantorinnen-imaminnen-muftis-pfarrerinnen-bischoefinnen-kirchenraetinnen> [accessed in June 2022]. ⁸ This title literally means "great world teacher" and is translated by the movement as "pope"; for further elaboration, see Birgit Heller, *Heilige Mutter und Gottesbraut: Frauenemanzipation im modernen Hinduismus* (Vienna, 1999). ⁹ With regard to Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism, see Landon Schnabel, "Religion and Gender Equality Worldwide: A Country-Level Analysis," *Social Indicators Research* 129, no. 2 (2016), pp. 893–907.

ODE TO FAITH.

Reyhan Şahin

1. Believe. Trust. Hope.

So that hope does not die, the sparkle of light does not fade.

Missionize, but also for anger. Stay true to yourself. Water is thicker than blood.

Suspect; don't lose yourself.

Wait for your coup.

Pray, but without hollow words; experience authentically.

Explore, if possible, independently.

With extensive knowledge, because ignorance ends.

Learn, gently and considerately.

Read, to receive good spirit.

Give in a way that you do not empty yourself.

In a way that others may take and reciprocate. Open your heart of mercy.

Live in such a way that it strengthens you.

Hope, but without making demands.

Think freedom, do not just say it.

Question doctrines.

Ask about who taught you?

If you ever complained?

Be guided, but not by patriarchy.

Islam, Judaism, and Christianity are not dependent on long beards.

Doubt in such a way that you coexist critically.

So that you do not simply accept everything; inquire and decide for yourself.

Learn without lingering.

Confess, openheartedly, for yourself,

With hate, charity, and that which keeps you alive.

No agitation; hatred and fear will fade.

Boycott the abuse of religion.

Critical faith does not consist of sins.

(Faith) at the expense of women and LGBTQIs.

No.

Listen to your spirit. The feminist spirit is sacred.

When did you defend yourself in favor of patriarchy and against feminism?

My god. My goddess is nonbinary.

Reactionary? No, thank you.

Cis gender myrmidons everywhere.

Faith can move mountains. Whose legacy?

Faith does not mean cis male dominance.

Spirituality is not a cis rosary.

Wish for yourself that you understand this.

That you do not go along with it. Are not controlled by others.

Justice protects you.

Faith, trust, hate, anger

Heal, pray, if you are looking for you

Find it in your heart,

It comes with pain on earth

Nightingale calls, your thistle hears you

Worries are forgiven. Do not deprive. Love does not forget. Lie honestly.

2. Love in such a way that it spreads,
 That it does not make you dependent; let go when it is time.
 Hate in such a way that it shows your weaknesses, your drives.
 Accept, focus, criticize.
 Cry out when those who are weaker lose.
 Meditate. Masturbate. Celebrate.
 Rage when power is abused.
 Feel when understanding comes.
 Leave as soon as it seems false to you.
 Destroy in order to heal.
 Angry, hurried prayers as mass.
 Criticism does not mean hating religion.
 Forgive when it is time to forgive.
 Believe. Between heaven or hell, saints and whores,
 Show me this sura, where is this sura?
 Bless, but do not play God.
 Differentiate. Specify.
 Criticism disguised as god-bashing.
 Feminism means to also smash the religious patriarchy.
 Reform means revolution. Only a goddess wants your
 emancipation.
 She is in your soul; do you believe in mysticism?
 Sufism? Feminism.
 Only your iman is your imam. Bliss is hak.
 Be aware of your attitude. Fight like Joan of Arc.
 Checkmate.
 My clit. On the vulva.
 It is not under the habit or the burka
 But between the lines. Of course.
 Mea culpa, mea vulva, mea maxima vulva.
 From Iqra to Ave Maria. From the Koran, the Bible, the Buyruk,
 to the Tora.
 Life is finite; eternity is not.
 Cis men want to indoctrinate. Convert. It is not laborious.
 To whom does God speak?
 Religion without racism and patriarchy: feminist avant-garde.
 Confession; speak the Basmala.
 For you. It is *your* relationship with Allah.
 Be blessed, from the heart. The pain of suffering.
 Protect. The weaker and the poor.
 Be vigilant. Endure.
 Maşallah.

 Faith, trust, hate, anger
 Heal, pray, if you are looking for you
 Find it in your heart,
 It comes with pain on earth
 Nightingale calls, your thistle hears you
 Worries are forgiven. Do not deprive. Love does not forget.
 Lie honestly.

3. Fear, in the presence of injustice.
 Show solidarity, in deeds and suffering.
 Show support for those in need.
 Fast, to become full. Traverse this life and the afterlife.
 Integrate in difficult times.
 Do you strive for piety?
 Be inspired by the goddess of justice.
 Sex for huzur.
 Feminist art as mercy.
 Can you bear conflicting values?
 Guiding principles without agitation. Justice as religion.
 Do you support patriarchy, or do you already criticize?
 Party politics mixed with reactionary religious
 denomination.
 Oh no.
 Do not support only the best. Take note of beasts.
 The end is coming. Judgment Day is already upon us.
 Patriarchal fundamentalism. Fanatical about love.
 Fear or fear of the goddess.
 Men who play God and dare to do it again.
 Women who support religious patriarchy.
 Trans, queer, intersex, gender-fluid.
 Outsiders.
 Leila Ahmed, Fatima Mernissi, Asma Barlas, Amina
 Wadud.
 Namedropping. Where is your hudud?
 Everything is fine.
 Do you also participate in the feminist folklore?
 An ode. To depressive episodes.
 The search for love. Lashes.
 The fight against racism and white feminisms.
 The other battle against patriarchies. Isms.
 You are lonely; God/Goddess stands with you.
 Unite, hate, peacefully. Which god loves you?
 Not. Become aware.
 Religion. Art. Reason.
 You have to do it; does someone forbid you to speak?
 Do not be gaslighted. Religion as liberation.
 Induce truthfulness. Veiling.
 Bismillahirrahmanirrahim.
 Gelin canlar bir olalım.
 May justice be with you.
 Amin.

REFORM DRESSES, REVOLUTIONARY SUITS, AND BLUE BRAS

On the Relationship between Art, Fashion, and Feminism

Sonja Eismann

Society demands of the woman that she “make herself an erotic object. The purpose of the fashions to which she is enslaved is not to reveal her as an independent individual, but rather to offer her as prey to male desires The skirt is less convenient than trousers, high-heeled shoes impede walking; the least practical of gowns and dress shoes, the most fragile of hats and stockings, are most elegant; the costume may disguise the body, deform it, or follow its curves; in any case it puts it on display.”¹

This is how Simone de Beauvoir characterized fashion in her epochal feminist work *The Second Sex* in the late 1940s. As a “drudgery” for women, as an instrument of oppression, as evidence of their being taken possession of by a man. The French philosopher was not alone in this pessimistic view. Male thinkers, from Michel de Montaigne to Thorstein Veblen, had been incensed by the “racks”² that women had to endure, as well as by the “wasteful consumption”³ associated with fashion since its emergence in the fourteenth century, when it first appeared as a complex system of cycles and changing styles. Even in the so-called first two waves of the modern women’s movement—from the mid-nineteenth century through the enforcement of women’s suffrage in several European countries and the United States in the early twentieth century, as well as in the 1960s and 1970s—fashion was perceived primarily as a problem: corsets choked women, heavy long skirts restricted their range of motion, bras and nylon stockings pinched and itched. From this point of view, uncomfortable fashion degraded women to objects of the powerful male gaze. Moreover, women were “lulled” into consuming clothing and accessories and thus distracted from more urgent pursuits, such as intellectual or gainful employment or even protesting against existing conditions.

Yet even Simone de Beauvoir admitted that the hard work of “being well-dressed” was a “task that sometimes affords positive joys; in this sphere, as in family marketing, there are possible discoveries of hidden treasures, bargain-hunting, stratagems, schemes, and ingenuities. If she is clever, a woman can even run up sartorial creations for herself. Bargain days are made adventures. A new dress is a celebration. Make-up or hair-do can substitute for creating a work of art.”⁴

While, on the one hand, in the French philosopher’s mind, fashion can only be a “substitute for creating a work of art,” on the other hand, there is a long tradition of artists who engage with fashion in their feminist art practice, as well as fashion designers who understand their work as an artistic feminist intervention. Although official art historiography assumes that one can only speak of feminist art per se from the onset of the so-called second wave of feminism, there were examples of connections between emancipation efforts and artistic expression long before. However, such instances were all too often trivialized or marginalized because the preoccupation with femininity, external appearances, and everyday objects such as clothing was not recognized as an artistic activity to be taken seriously.

Feminine Identities, Exhaustedly Explored through Textile/Fashion

Virginia Oldoini, Countess of Castiglione (1837–1899), for example, was an early master of a powerfully feminine self-staging (→ p. 411, fig. 1). Her encounter with the photographer Pierre-Louis Pierson led to a collaboration that lasted over forty years and produced astonishing works. In some 450 photographs, Oldoini posed at times seductively, at other times as a nun, occasionally in surreal outfits, and sometimes in historical costumes, always dressed in sumptuous creations that were accurately arranged. She dreamed of showing her life's work under the title *The Most Beautiful Woman of the Century* at the 1900 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, but death forestalled her. Much like fashion bloggers and Instagrammers today, Virginia Oldoini made herself her own brand. But it was less about profitable marketing—on the contrary, she spent vast sums of her fortune on her photographs—and more about the artistic representation of herself. She can thus be considered a precursor of artists such as Claude Cahun (1894–1954) and Cindy Sherman (b. 1954), who, by means of constant role changes, exhaustively explore (non)female identities through costumes in self-portraits.

Emilie Flöge (1874–1952) is probably known to many today only as the partner and muse of the painter Gustav Klimt. Yet the Viennese fashion designer was also successful in her own right, together with her two sisters, with the haute couture salon called Schwestern Flöge. Emilie Flöge, a trained dressmaker, belonged to the circle of the Vienna Secession. At the time of the fin de siècle, her creations contributed significantly to the spread of the so-called reform dress, which was propagated by women's rights activists and was intended to free the female sex from the shackles of the corset (→ p. 411, fig. 2). Although her famous partner also designed several reform dresses, the commercial success of this comfortably fitting garment was too small for Flöge to forego the production of more conventional designs.

Several decades later, the Russian artists and designers Lyubov Popova (1889–1924) and Varvara Stepanova (1894–1958) found themselves in a completely different initial situation. As “researchers” in the service of the new Soviet republic, they designed clothing not for an unsteady capitalist market, but rather for the “new human type” in the planned economy. The two women caused a sensation with their practical unisex designs for the First State Textile Factory in Moscow at the *Exposition Internationale des Arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* in Paris in 1925. Stepano-

va distanced herself from the imitation of nature. Instead, she favored more abstract, geometric patterns and bold colors for her textiles. In her programmatic text “Die Mode von heute ist die Arbeitskleidung” (Today's Fashion Is the Worker's Overall),⁵ she elaborated on what was important to her: to design clothing functionally for its respective concrete purpose, such as work or sports. This meant: comfortable, practical, working away from the body—both female and male—rather than exhibiting it in its many shapes. The “secrets of the charm of individual handicraft,”⁶ which is probably also the charm or the aura of the designers, was replaced by a view of the revealed construction of the garment, the seams, which left no room for mystification.

Although legendary fashion designers like Coco Chanel or her then (alleged) “rival” Elsa Schiaparelli are famous today for liberating women's bodies or creating more emancipated images of femininity with sober, at times surrealistic creations, there were far more radical approaches. The American (fashion) artist and Black Power activist Jae Jarrell (b. 1935), for example, saw the body as a vehicle for expressing protest and resistance, as well as identity. Her best-known creation is the two-piece *Revolutionary Suit* from 1969 (→ p. 412, fig. 3), which simultaneously draws attention to the vulnerability and defensibility of the African American community, especially women, with a simple skirt and a jacket with a bandolier. Four years earlier, the artist Yoko Ono (b. 1933) had staged an exactly opposite situation with her controversial performance *Cut Piece* in Kyoto. She asked the audience to cut small pieces out of her clothing with scissors, thus revealing the violence to which the female body is exposed in and under clothing (although Ono herself offered other readings at the time, such as that of a peaceful anti-war protest). Beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, it was the Japanese designer Rei Kawakubo (b. 1942) who deconstructed time-honored notions of fashion, beauty, and femininity with her label *Comme des Garçons* and its minimalist anti-fashion looks. Her designs were and are often asymmetrical, full of holes, unhemmed, and deliberately transcend gender stereotypes. In her famous *Body Meets Dress, Dress Meets Body* collection from 1997, also known as *Lumps and Bumps*, she added padded bulges to unexpected parts of the body, making the wearers' bodies appear monstrous to futuristic and challenging the notion of “erogenous zones.”

When Fashion Becomes Activist

Instead of positioning fashion as “anti,” that is, against something, the British artist Lucy Orta (b. 1966) makes

designs for very specific purposes with her *Refuge Wear* (1992–ongoing) series. The works of this series, with titles such as *Habitent*, *Mobile Cocoon*, and *Ambulatory Survival Sac*, provide vestimentary answers to both existential and political questions: the high-tech creations are hybrids of, for example, functional garments and tents, backpacks, or sleeping bags, in order to offer uncomplicated and multifunctional protection to people in emergency situations, such as refugees in flight. By placing the femininely coded fashion in the service of people who are in danger, the works take on a feminist component.

The street art of Bahia Shehab (b. 1977) has an even more activist component. During the Arab Spring protests in 2011, a young demonstrator on Tahrir Square in Cairo was abused by military government militias and had her clothes ripped off until her blue bra was visible. After this incident, the Egyptian artist sprayed a blue bra and the Arabic “La,” meaning “No,” and other messages such as “No to undressing the people” and “No to undressing veiled women” all over Cairo on walls and the facades of houses using stencils (→ p. 412, fig. 4). Thus, a symbol of female oppression— “second wave” feminists had publicly thrown bras into garbage cans—and shame became a sign of female protest and resistance to violence.

Questions revolving around patriarchy, religion, and self-determination led the Pakistani artist Shehzil Malik (b. 1988) to design a feminist fashion collection that depicts precisely these reflections. After Mahlik had dealt with the unpleasant situation of having to ask herself, as a woman, every time she stepped out in public whether her shirt was long (and thus concealing) enough—and at the same time perceived the burqa ban in France as a similar incursion into women’s freedom of choice—she first put precisely these questions on paper in the form of images and then on fabric. Simple, clear cuts of shirts, tunics, and pants are combined with gaudy graffiti depictions of a wide variety of women—with or without headscarves, with or without tattoos, on motorcycles or on foot—surrounded by quotations from the famous manifesto *We Should All Be Feminists* by the Nigerian writer and feminist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

In 2016, the official collaboration between Adichie and the *Dior* fashion label under the new leadership of the designer

Maria Grazia Chiuri, who repeatedly positions herself as a feminist in her designs and interviews, made even bigger waves in the media than this artistic collection. The white and black T-shirts with the words “We Should All Be Feminists” in the collection designed by Chiuri were a world-wide sensation, since never before had a high-fashion label declared its support for feminism so explicitly. This said, the small Viennese avant-garde label called *__fabrics interseason*, founded in 1998 by the artists Wally Salner and Johannes Schweiger, had already focused on the theme of “feminist dress codes” in its 2001 spring/summer collection under the title *visual noise (FEM)*. This was intended to counter the myth of a feminist dictate of naturalness and, at the same time, to enable a creative treatment of any feminist style archive; the label mentions purple dungarees, blue stockings, and suffragette hairstyles. Instead of putting on a fashion show with a catwalk as usual, *__fabrics interseason* decided to interview feminist protagonists about their clothing preferences as if in a sociological study, photographing them in creations from the collection that they themselves had selected.

Time and again, very current debates revolving around fashion, exploitation, environmental destruction, and overconsumption also find their way into feminist art. For example, the Austrian artist Ines Doujak (b. 1959) has been dealing with the connection between (neo)colonialism and textiles or clothing since 2010 in her long-term project *Loomshuttles/Warpaths*. She is concerned not only with the fabrics she has been collecting for years from the Andes, and thus with the questions of whether textiles can be an entity in the Indigenous sense and what is considered art or craft at what time, but also with the exploitative production conditions of fast fashion in so-called sweatshops. This, however, does not prevent the artist from continuing to maintain a sensual approach to fashion and from selling self-designed pieces in her exhibitions.

Fashion is thus not a “substitute for creating a work of art,” as Simone de Beauvoir considered it, but can itself become the focus of a feminist artistic practice, as demonstrated by the examples given, as well as by the ongoing, animated debates revolving around the fields of art, fashion, and feminism.

¹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, ed. and trans. H. M. Parshley (London, 1956), p. 506. Originally published in French as: *Le deuxième sexe* (Paris, 1949). ² Michel de Montaigne, *The Essays of Montaigne, Complete*, ed. William Carew Hazlitt, trans. Charles Cotton (London, 1877), n.p. ³ Thorstein Veblen, “Dress as an Expression of the Pecuniary Culture,” in *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York, 1918), pp. 167–87, esp. p. 168. ⁴ Beauvoir 1956 (see note 1), p. 511. ⁵ Varvara Stepanova, “Die Mode von heute ist die Arbeitskleidung [1923],” in *absolute fashion*, ed. Sonja Eismann (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2012), pp. 153–55. ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 154 [translated].

“I LIKE WHAT YOU LIKE”

Forms of Dependence in Claudia Weill's *Girlfriends*

Katharina Hausladen

One good thing about the pandemic has been that it compensates for the temporary silencing of the art public by streaming services that do not assign their films to the usual genre-specific sections such as documentaries, feature films, comedy, and horror, but instead offer lineups curated specifically for special themes and people, as is otherwise familiar from art-house cinemas and cinematheques. In addition to classic retrospectives, such thematic focuses allow for time-related features with film-historical connections to the present and make rarely seen films accessible at a relatively low threshold.

In one of these lineups, I recently saw *Girlfriends* (1978, → pp. 414–15, figs. 1, 2), the first feature film by the US director Claudia Weill. Like many of her women colleagues in the early 1970s, Weill began her film career as a camerawoman, initially working exclusively for television (including *Sesame Street*), where she also made her first documentaries. At the time, directing—in film as in theater—was still clearly a male domain. When Weill was inducted into the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Beverly Hills in 1981, she was only the fourth woman to achieve this recognition in the category of directing (after Dorothy Arzner, Ida Lupino, and Elaine May). In a conversation between Weill and Joey Soloway, director of the streaming series *Transparent*, on the occasion of the DVD rerelease of *Girlfriends* in 2020, the two described their own experiences with patriarchal oppression in the workplace: women who make it in the male-dominated film industry are constantly made to feel like grateful girls who are lucky to be in the good graces of influential men who decide whether women succeed or fail.¹

The Politics of Friendship

The autobiographical aspects of Weill's *Girlfriends* are immediately evident, since her film is also about what it means to break with the bourgeois expectations that US society placed on women, especially female artists, in the 1970s, or at least what it means to not meet these expectations consistently. The film's protagonist Susan (Melanie Mayron), a young New Yorker who has set her sights on becoming a photographer, earns her living by taking commissioned photos of weddings and bar mitzvahs. When she approaches photo agencies and galleries, she is told that she is still too young for a career as an artist. Even when she manages to sell her first pictures, the money is not enough to pay for rent and utilities—and the situation becomes even worse when Susan's best friend Anne (Anita Skinner) moves out of their shared apartment to live with her partner and start a family. For Susan, who has no interest in conventional family life and for whom the friendship with Anne is existentially important, this is tantamount to a betrayal: of their shared friendship, but also of a self-determined life as a woman. Her disappointment, which she shows openly to Anne, thus takes on a decidedly feminist component: “You don't need anyone to take care of you,” she exclaims, trying to persuade Anne to stay and at the same time appealing to her autonomy.

Although there is no real split, since the two remain important discussion partners for each other, their friendship increasingly changes, for the life models to which the two women aspire prove to be too different: while Susan pursues her professional career and only gradually finds pleasure in a partnership, Anne is absorbed in her new role as a mother and only rarely has time for her work as an author. When the two see each other, now a rare occurrence, Anne's husband is usually there with their child. This situation forces Susan, from whose perspective the film is told, to take responsibility for herself for the first time—and here this means, above all, no longer being a girl and, in a sense, no

longer being the childlike, communicative companion of the classically feminine and discreet beauty embodied by her friend Anne. In other words: not only does Susan have to ask herself what kind of woman she wants to be, but she must also emancipate herself from her long-established role as a “tomboy” within her friendship with Anne, and therefore also draw political consequences from this role.

It is impressive how Weill succeeds in portraying the specific conflict that defines Susan: between sovereignty and insecurity, emancipation and self-doubt. Weill's main protagonist does not shy away from breaking off conversations or getting up and leaving when a lover bores her, or a man tries to tell her what is good for her. Nevertheless, when she finally hooks up with a gallery and has her first exhibition, she forgets to show up for the hanging of her pictures—almost as if she were afraid to admit to herself how much power she now has as an artist qua author. This ambivalence of self-empowerment and heteronomy is also explicitly verbalized in the film. In an argument with her new boyfriend, during which he suggests that Susan move in with him, she states, more in anger at herself: “I like me when I don't need you.” Susan perceives the sexuality and security she experiences in her relationship, which she thoroughly enjoys, as contradictory to her simultaneous desire for independence. In the course of the second feminist wave, Weill's generation was only just beginning to fight for this independence, which is symbolically represented in the film by the poster of an old advertisement for the cigarette brand Lucky Strike that hangs in Susan's apartment: here, a man and a woman are depicted, both smoking, the woman leaning against the man, with the slogan “I like what you like” seeming to mirror the woman's thoughts. Such a symbolic reference to women's apparent dependence on men overlooks, even undermines, the diverse states of solidarity that women maintain with one another.

Contested Sovereignty

This is also a theme of *Girlfriends*: the friendship of two women is challenged by the fact that men keep intruding into the picture and thus also between Susan and Anne. Weill had a similar experience herself as a director: at the time she began making films, in the era of the so-called New Hollywood, the idea of a strong author-subject in the sense of the *auteur* theory of the 1950s had already been

hemmed in by the culture industry to such an extent that its freedom-promising moments had given way to the exaltation and iconization of a few male director-subjects, such as Francis Ford Coppola and Roman Polanski. For one thing, this overlooked the fact that film work is first and foremost collaborative by nature, meaning it is work in a team in which filmmakers are fundamentally dependent on other people and other things and must also behave in accordance with this dependence. And at the same time, the idea of the *auteur* theory had—and still has—a strong male connotation, expressing, according to Weill, “the myth of the male genius,”² which implies sovereignty and independence. Although Weill's protagonists Susan and Anne are also authors in the strict sense of the word—one takes photographs, the other writes—Weill always thematizes these artistic efforts at sovereignty via the detour of their social impossibility, namely, as highly contested.

This indirectness and ambiguity are among the film's greatest strengths. When conflicts are played out here, they do not dissolve into finalistic gestures. On the contrary, friendships persist even though they change and trigger contradictory feelings, and close relationships are engaged in despite the fact that they are occasionally complicated and painful. In this context, montage has a special function: Weill often does not spell out the conflicting tensions between her protagonists to the end, but rather suggests that the characters know more than they let on. Hence, dialogues are frequently replaced by cuts and are therefore rhetorically structured in a similar way to jokes with punchlines that are the effect of an unexpected realization. In this sense, the faded-in black-and-white photos of Anne's wedding are followed, for example, by a shot in which we see Susan painting a wall red in the former shared apartment. During the viewing of the apartment before moving in, she had already expressed her wish to Anne that she would like to paint it red one day, and now that Anne has moved out and got married, she fulfills this wish, which also makes the differences between the real lives of the two women clear in terms of form: black-and-white still images in one scene, moving images in (red) color in the following one. The obligatory slide show which Susan endures, visibly bored, after Anne's return from her honeymoon—the epitome of the estrangement between the two friends—is ultimately commented on dryly by Weill with Susan's question: “Where's the bathroom?”—followed by a hard cut to the next scene. The montage here consequently functions as a commentary on the implicit, unspoken, and at times aggressive side of Susan and Anne's friendship, which is thus made visible.

Weill's storytelling method is significantly influenced by documentary film, or more precisely by editing, which in documentary film more or less replaces the function of the screenplay in feature films. Indeed, she usually tells the stories of her characters from the end, taking shortcuts on the way toward the resolution of a situation, evident in omissions such as those described above. This creates an impression of incompleteness that has its narrative counterpart in the communicative inadequacy of the characters among themselves. In a similar sense, photographs, here embodied in Susan's work, also evoke an indistinct sense of recognizing someone or something, despite the complete strangeness of the places and subjects depicted. It is this peculiar claim of mirror-image to photography through which seemingly universalistic images such as those of love, mourning, and passing can be reconstructed and produced anew. As an acquaintance of Susan's states laconically in *Girlfriends*, "Well, nothing's permanent, I guess. Except maybe pictures, huh?"

No Images Set in Stone

Girlfriends illustrates the permanence of gender-specific role models as a major structural problem in the lives of women and thus proves to be extremely con-

nectable to the present: to this day, representations of women persist with the claim to show them as "just as they are." Weill counters this patriarchal projection with images that are not absorbed into male-connotated structures of desire, and at the same time with images that women make of themselves, and with those that Weill made of them at a time when this was not yet a matter of course for women in cinema. In this respect, *Girlfriends* resembles recent films such as Céline Sciamma's *Portrait de la jeune fille en feu* (Portrait of a Lady on Fire, 2019, → pp. 416–17, fig. 3), in which two women (one is a painter and is to portray the other for her future fiancé) explore their visibility and desire (especially their mutual desire) in exchanges of gazes that are as tender as they are bold. An arc can also be drawn to current television series such as *We Are Who We Are* (2020) by Luca Guadagnino, in which the identity-creating coding games (music, fashion, sexualization of bodies) of several teenagers and their parents living together on a US military base in the Italian province shatter images of heterosexual role models and families. Weill's film does not present images set in stone, either of women or of men. What is more, the film ultimately leaves us with the insight that identities are formed precisely through experiences resulting from surprise and doubt, from contradiction and uncertainty. Friendships teach us nothing else.

¹ See Claudia Weill in conversation with Jill Soloway on the Blu-ray disc *Girlfriends*, The Criterion Collection (2020). ² Ibid.

CARE AND REGENERATION WORK IN THE PARADIGM OF ECOLOGICAL CATASTROPHES

Attempt at a Planetary Feminism

Margarita Tsomou

“This changes everything,” Naomi Klein remarked in 2014 in reference to the climate crisis, and by now everyone has heard it: the slow catastrophe that has arrived is radically changing the coordinates within which our societies have hitherto thought of political and economic action, progress, or emancipation. According to the postcolonial historian Dipesh Chakrabarty, since the entanglement of human and planetary history in the Anthropocene has been established, every political and social theory, every historiography, every philosophical or economic axiomatics that has been conceived as a “human-political project” from the human side alone has been deprived of its basis. Any humanistic thinking would now have to embed itself in the planetary fabric, rethink the dependent position of humans within the web of life, and connect with the concerns and history of the planet.¹

Feminism is also such a “human-political project,” at least in its mainstreamed versions, which have recently been experiencing a triumph: campaigns for “Women in Leadership” and sophisticated diversity policies promote the participation and representation of WOMAN*² and queer individuals to ensure gender equality—whether in public institutions, at the Federation of German Industries (BDI), at Porsche or BP. Despite all the joy about the successful gradual gender equality, it is nevertheless necessary to ask whether the political-emancipative horizon of feminists today can be oriented toward an imaginary that promises linearly growing prosperity, expansion, and progression, taking the illusion of an inexhaustible planet for granted. Pandering to the modernist-progressivist paradigm in order to gain positions of power in an eroding ecosystem seems anachronistic in today’s world. In the face of the climate crisis, we—feminists in theory and practice—are also forced to resituate ourselves in the context of changing ecologies and to develop perspectives that bring the political project of gender critique and emancipation into a relationship with the planetary, organic cycles or the nonhuman.

Yet such questions are not new. Since the 1980s, ecofeminists have argued that it is not an advance of the feminist cause to be involved in the toxic economy of fossil capitalism. And this is not only because feminized people are more affected by climate disasters or because they initiate (especially in the Global South) the movements against land grabbing and environmental destruction. It is also because, for ecofeminists, there is a structural connection between extractivist and patriarchal mechanisms, that is to say, between the way in

which capitalism exploits the allegedly freely available resource *NATURE* and the way in which the allegedly free resource of female care and reproductive work is appropriated as “natural.”

In this essay, I attempt to pay tribute to these approaches by first discussing in depth the allegation of essentialism that has marked ecofeminism for decades. In doing so, I think further about the nexus between *WOMAN* and *NATURE* by exploring feminist approaches from the philosophical current of New Materialism, which reconceptualize biology, matter, and *NATURE* in relation to gender, the *WOMAN*-subject, and the body, going so far as to conceptualize feminism as a posthuman position.³

All of this has inspired me to several incomplete considerations on rethinking ecofeminist positions for the formulation of a “planetary feminism”—thought as a line of flight for a different image of humanity that replaces extractivist attitudes with care and reproductive relationships between humans, “more-than-humans” (meant as the interconnections and interdependencies between humans and other life beyond the human/nonhuman dichotomy), and the planet.⁴

I understand the term “planetary” here in the sense of Earth system science (ESS)—as a term describing the dynamic interaction of hydrosphere, atmosphere, and biosphere, and thus also the interdependence of nonhumans and humans, including their social and economic organization: an ensemble of gases, (micro)organisms, bacteria, geological layers, agriculture, and economy, including their feedback loops. Similar to the “Gaia hypothesis” developed by the natural scientist James Lovelock and the microbiologist Lynn Margulis⁵ in the mid-1970s, this Earth system, that is, the Earth together with its animate and inanimate matter, constantly recreates the conditions for its preservation in a self-regulating manner by the totality of all organisms behaving symbiotically—in forms that are described in ecological philosophy with the principles of “interrelatedness” or as “entanglements.”

Planetary thinking thus understands the Earth as a structure of reciprocal relations (interrelations)—as an interplay of “naturecultures,”⁶ which sustains itself in symbiotic, reciprocal relations through a principle of regeneration.

In formulating a planetary feminist analysis, this work on the cyclical regeneration of life is thought together with the question of social reproduction in an attempt to politicize and denaturalize such “re-productivity.”⁷

Ecofeminism: Entanglement of Patriarchy, Colonialism, Capitalism, and Extractivism

The term “ecofeminism” has been used since the 1980s to describe movements and theories that focus on the entanglement of gender, ecology, patriarchy, and the relationship to *NATURE*. Ecofeminism emerged during the 1970s and 1980s in the wake of the then nascent *WOMEN*’s and anti-imperialist peace movements, as well as struggles in the face of environmental disasters in both the Global South and the Global North. *WOMEN*-led movements against deforestation and land grabbing in the Global South, such as the Green Belt movement in Kenya founded by Wangari Maathai and the Chipko movement in India, inspired feminists in the Global North, who in turn came together in the antinuclear movement. In this historical confluence, connections were drawn between militarism, globalized industrial capitalism, and “multiple systems of dominance”⁸ over *WOMEN*, *NATURE*, and racialized and Indigenous populations. Despite the different streams of ecofeminism, the common argument is that there is a linkage between social reproduction and our societal relation to *NATURE*: a structural connection between the extractivist logic, by which the productivity of *NATURE* (i.e., all that *NATURE* provides for us through its regenerative mode of reproduction) has been exploited since the time of colonialism and since the emergence of the capitalist mode of production, and the patriarchal logic, developing over the same period, by which female reproductive and care work is appropriated for economic value creation.

This analysis is also related to decolonial critique, as the historical establishment of the capitalist mode of production and imperial way of life was based on the colonization and exploitation of racialized persons. Maria Mies, one of the founders of materialist ecofeminism, speaks in this context of the “subordination of *WOMEN*, *NATURE* and *COLONIES*” in the “civilized” societies of the “European Big Men” of the modern era.⁹ The Australian ecofeminist Val Plumwood has pointed out that white feminists have, however, failed to describe how Indigenous and non-Western people advocated for ecological perspectives and how feminist and anti-colonial struggles are

conceptually interwoven at the intersections of ecology.¹⁰ This entanglement goes back not least of all to the violently enforced binaries of human/nature, woman/man, mind/body, nature/culture established by Western modernity, along which, within a “Master Model” of the human being determined as male, white, and heterosexual, power relations were enforced against “indigenous people, people of colour, animals, and the natural world, as well as women, emotions, and the body.”¹¹

Ecofeminists have thus, from the very beginning, linked the question of colonial dominance with feminist critique of social relations of reproduction and ecological critique and have also sought an alliance with racialized groups and anti-capitalist movements. In my view, this integration of related thematic fields is highly topical in the context of today’s ecocide. If we follow these approaches, then we must conclude that the *WOMEN’S* issue cannot be methodologically addressed without considering the interplay of such complex and intertwined conditions of *WOMEN’S* inequality. Until we address the conceptual underpinnings of these structures of oppression and focus only on their symptoms (as is done in some forms of feminist and ecological activism), these structures of oppression will continue, as the contemporary ecofeminist theorist Greta Gaard argues.¹²

Although the ecofeminists of the 1980s always spoke explicitly of *WOMEN* and tended to see themselves as part of difference feminism, their feminism concerns much more than an “egalitarian equality feminism” that focuses on improving the situation of *WOMEN*. Comparable to decolonial and anti-capitalist feminisms, the ecofeminist approach could rather be understood as a political method or epistemology that reveals the constituent mechanisms of *WOMEN’S* disenfranchisement in the conjunctions/linkages of colonialism, capitalist mode of production, and systematic ecocide. I thus see planetary thinking inherent in ecofeminism in the articulation of the equal-origin exploitation of the labor of social reproduction of feminized people¹³ on the one hand and the natural regenerative services of Planet Earth on the other. Indeed, the history of the patriarchal subjugation of feminized people as reproductive and care workers is at the same time also the history of our handling of planetary cycles of reproduction and not independent thereof.

Essentialism: The Evergreen of Feminism

However, in recent decades, ecofeminists have been largely excluded from discussions around gender and feminism, not least of all because the emphasis on the *WOMAN-NATURE* nexus has been subject to the allegation of essentialism.¹⁴ It is still pending to examine to what degree this allegation is actually justified, or whether the reception of ecofeminist approaches has fallen into a historical context that has allowed for flippant dismissals of difference-feminist positions—whether on the basis of gender theory, which understands gender not as a biological, natural construct, but rather as social, cultural one, or as a result of a general disparagement of feminist approaches as “side contradictions” or “one-point movements.”

Certainly, a number of ecofeminist positions nevertheless provide material for gender critique: for example, the fact that the “Master Model” described above (human = man) is countered by a specific difference of the feminine, such as the ability of *WOMEN* (through their experiences with reproductive activities, as well as through traditional ecological knowledge in dealing with the land) to stand up for a kind of cosmology—as Greta Gaard puts it, following Val Plumwood—in which mutual care for the symbiosis and “interconnectedness” between humans and nonhumans has priority.¹⁵ The closeness between *NATURE* and *WOMAN* implied by this has been emphasized to varying degrees in ecofeminism. Arguments range from a specific connectedness of *WOMAN* to *NATURE*—partly because of the gendered division of labor in social reproduction, and partly because of their corporeality, which is particularly closely tied to the natural rhythms of life cycles—to approaches that draw on Indigenous cosmologies and foster the notion that women practice mutual solidarity and harmonious interaction with “Mother Earth.”

As a response to this, ecofeminist positions have been criticized for suggesting a kind of intrinsic kinship between *NATURE* and *WOMEN*, which has historically been used to legitimize the inferiority of *WOMEN*. This was commonly tied back to female corporeality and the female role in reproduction, for menstruation, pregnancy, and motherhood are “natural cycles” that make the female body ostensibly more “biological” and also more vulnerable (in need of protection or treatment) than the male body.

It is thus understandable that feminist traditions—from Simone de Beauvoir to certain versions of queer feminism—have distanced themselves from such a gendered biologicistic model, postulating the independence of the WOMANsubject vis-à-vis NATURE and aiming to transcend the category of the body by, if not negating, at least relativizing its importance on the path to emancipation. This was advocated by generations of feminists who supported the hypothesis that the real vulnerability of the female body limited their access to rights or to the status of a bourgeois subject. However, this also includes more complex approaches, such as the epistemic paradigm of “gender,” which criticize biologicistic projections and focus more on repetitive repertoires of performative acts¹⁶ and less on biology.¹⁷ Today, queer feminism overcomes the limitation of the body as a (natural) container of a constructed gender identity by undermining the dominant gender order or by affirmatively appropriating reproductive technologies in the pharmapornographic regime in which bodies can socially and sexually remake themselves through new performativities or biotechnologies. Paul B. Preciado cites, for example, the birth control pill or hormone therapies for trans people as examples of the biotechnological production of social and sexual identities.¹⁸

These shifts in queer feminist thinking regarding WOMEN’s bodies, NATURE, and biology also had an impact on ecofeminist currents, which, in the 1990s, rejected the essentialist notion of the connection between WOMEN and NATURE. Representatives of “feminist environmentalism,”¹⁹ such as Bina Agarwal, or of the theoretical thread of Feminist Political Ecology, such as Christine Bauhardt, argue that there is no justification for the assumption that caring and reproductive activities are tied to biological conditions—questioning why, in other words, childbearing capacity must be linked to a gender-hierarchizing assignment of reproductive work to WOMEN and also linked to a particular caring responsibility. According to these arguments, it is not biology that is the problem—not the female body with its alleged vulnerability or its affinity to NATURE and reproduction—but rather the way in which social structures and the capitalist mode of production organize NATURE, biology, WOMEN’s bodies, and reproduction, give them meaning, or else value/devalue them.

Decoupling femininity from NATURE was politically fruitful in recent decades, greatly increasing the autonomy of WOMEN and queer people vis-à-vis the role ascriptions placed upon them. Nevertheless, the question remains

as to whether this unilateral dissolution of the entanglements of WOMEN and NATURE is capable of answering the complex of questions surrounding the specific corporeality and sexual difference of gender. I wonder if stating that a physical constitution may not be tied to specific meanings, role attributions, or divisions of labor saves us the trouble of examining specific corporealities for their potential. The “elephant in the room” is the ecofeminists’ observation that female physicality actually points us to our dependence on organic cycles that cannot be arbitrarily accelerated or made measurable and optimized in the growth race of capitalism. Every discussion about ecofeminism brings these controversial questions back on the agenda. If one really wants to talk about gender and climate and thus about the nexus of WOMAN, NATURE, and reproduction, then one has to acknowledge that the battery of questions around the specific corporeality and sexual difference of genders is virulent and by no means solved but has to be further developed in the context of feminist environmental theories.

NATURE, Bodies, WOMEN, and Posthumanism

In order to rethink the categories of body and NATURE, I consider the positions of feminist representatives of New Materialism as helpful. The editors of *Material Feminisms* (2008), Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, for example, criticize the focus on the cultural construction of the feminized body in the context of gender studies: not only would those kind of constructivist approaches privilege the role of culture and language while avoiding material corporeality as a question, but, in doing so, they would also implicitly affirm the culture/nature dualism for the sake of culture. They would also hide the fact that “essentialism” is itself a mental concept based on this dualism. Feminists should not repeat the NATURE/culture dualism but, according to Alaimo and Hekman, instead reconceptualize the materialities “body,” NATURE, and “WOMAN(subject).”²⁰

In feminism, the body has always been a contested entity between the poles of emphasizing difference on the one hand and desiring its performative-discursive dissolution in nonbinary multiplicity on the other. Basically, all feminisms have wrestled with this: in the approaches of Luce Irigaray, Judith Butler, and Paul B. Preciado, for example, it is not so much about negating the matter of the body. Instead, they inquire into the discursive mediation of corporeality, which, however, in coproduc-

tion with matter, makes the body something we have to deal with. Accordingly, the body would be neither solely culturally nor discursively determined, but rather “bio-social,” as the post-humanist feminist theorist Rosa Braidotti argues. Both the physical dimensions and the social and technological ones must therefore find their place in the renewal of a conception of matter or in the reconceptualization of the body, not as opposites, but as necessary interactions. Theorists of a “corporeal feminism,” such as Elizabeth Grosz, have therefore conceived of the body as a “boundary concept,” as a “threshold category” that hovers “dangerously and indecisively” on the borderlines of “binary pairs,” such as biology versus discourse, *NATURE* versus society.²¹

Equivalent to such conceptualizations of the body is the struggle on the understanding of *NATURE* of the representatives of New Materialism Feminism. In these approaches, *NATURE* is neither the passive other of culture, nor is it to be considered independent. Rather, it is cocreated by culture; at the same time, it also feeds back into culture and coproduces it. According to Stacy Alaimo, representatives of New Materialism Feminism explore the interplay of culture, history, technology, biology, and the “environment.” For me they are thus operating in planetary thinking, which does not tell social/cultural history without the role of matter and *NATURE* as protagonists. In this context, the physicist and feminist science researcher Karen Barad speaks of a non-static, but rather intractable, changing matter: “matter refers to the materiality/materialization of phenomena, not to an inherent fixed property of abstract, independently existing objects of Newtonian physics.”²² This process of materialization is the non-static, active moment in which “naturecultures”—as the feminist biologist and science theorist Donna Haraway has coined the term—condition, intertwine, and symbiotically develop and change the social and the cultural. Karen Barad speaks of intra-acting processes of matter and meaning; materiality emerges in a constant process of entanglement of things. With the concepts of “naturecultures” and the “material-semiotic,” Haraway attempts to express the equal originality of the two categories *NATURE* and culture, which relate to each other not hierarchically, but rather cyclically or reciprocally in “intra-action” (Barad).

Following from this is also a deconstruction of the human which has implications for the question, also discussed in the context of the debates about essentialism and ecofeminism, as to who the *WOMAN*subject, indeed, the subject of feminism, actually is.

Like ecofeminists, Rosi Braidotti, for example, criticizes the Enlightenment notion of the human, imagined as male, white, urban, speaking a standard language, and heterosexually bound in a reproductive context.²³ In line with Paul B. Preciado, Braidotti states: “Feminism is not a humanism”—from this perspective, there is no interest in fitting into the existing human or adapting to it and becoming “equal” to it. In posthumanist feminism, *WOMEN*-(subjects) fight outside the paradigm of the human, together with the constructed “others”—the subalternized, racialized, and nonhuman organisms—for a new idea of the human that is constituted in interactions with technological and biosocial forces, dependent on material and organic processes, and vulnerable to nonhumans and more-than-humans. This planetary approach to understanding oneself as “being interwoven in the web of life” is comparable to ecofeminist notions of “interconnectness with Earth-others.” However, the entity at stake is not *one WOMAN*subject, as the opposite of “man,” but rather, according to Braidotti, a “composite assemblage of human, nonorganic, mechanical, and other elements: a technologically mediated human animal.”²⁴

In a sense, the perspective of posthumanist feminism charts a movement away from the homogeneous and taken-for-granted “*WOMAN*subject” who, imagined as a posthuman assemblage, cannot be subsumed into gender binarity—and this not only as an ideological semiotic function, but also as a material condition of the human. It opposes notions of a *WOMAN*subject who, imagined as a Eurocentric, white, heterosexual, middle-class subject, yearns to become the “standard,” often disregarding the fact that differences of race, class, and oppression exist within the group commonly referred to as “*WOMEN*,” along which the human of the Enlightenment seems violent in various ways. Feminism as posthumanism criticizes the image of a “homogenous, universal” *WOMAN*subject who is uninterested in the colonial conditions of the subalternization of racialized *WOMEN* or in the assumption of a “naturalness” of heterosexual reproduction.

The concepts of *WOMAN* and *NATURE*, which, in ecofeminism, are still negotiated as *a priori* and given, are dissolved in the lens of New Materialism in a web of biotechno-social relations, nonuniversal positionings, but concrete moments of situatedness and practices. Thus, when we understand “body” and *NATURE*, the “human” and the “*WOMAN*subject” as biosocially, discursively, and technologically mediated materializations, we not only abolish the dichotomies of nature/culture, woman/man, hu-

man/nonhuman, but also deconstruct thinking in terms of essentialism. For materializations refer not to any essence, but to processes of becoming within the relations of all these interpenetrating categories. Thus, in my view, we would no longer need to ponder the proximity or nonproximity of the WOMANsubject to NATURE—but rather, in order to ground a planetary feminism, we would need to attend to the relations of concrete corporealities to material assemblages and practices embedded therein.

Planetary Feminism: Reproduction and Regeneration

From a planetary feminist perspective, NATURE, body, and WOMAN would thus not be biological fixations, but rather materialized relations that are evaluated in a historical context. I would therefore like to propose to no longer speak of the problematic nexus of WOMAN and NATURE, but rather, with regard to these relations, to focus on the nexus between social reproduction and planetary regeneration, in order to finally, in several concluding reflections, formulate feminism as a political project that interrelates the question of gender with the planetary.

A planetary feminism follows the “political projects” of ecofeminism, feminist political ecology, and New (Feminist) Materialism, since these projects are fundamentally situated within a planetary assemblage. Accordingly, WOMANsubjects are mediated or even produced by a colonial-extractivist and gendered relation with NATURE; indeed, they are constituted through the very (dominance) relation of the human as “human-man” to the “naturalized other.” In this sense, the feminist project cannot be formulated without the ecological project—and vice versa—since both point to the extractivist dominance relation of the human to the planetary, which devalues reproductive and regenerative relational work alike. The imperative to think planetarily is thus not just another ethical task of feminism but is intrinsic to its foundational questions, which involve engagement with the naturalized WOMANsubject, the WOMAN*body, the gendered relation to NATURE and to social reproduction.

From the perspective of a planetary feminism, we can think beyond the NATURE/human dichotomy and use “planetary” as an alternative to the term “NATURE.” If we understand the planetary as a symbiotic ensemble of interrelations between the social and the organic, then the question arises as to how these relations look in their “relationality,” or interconnectedness, of the planetary in

reference to relations of exploitation, dominance, and dependence. Incidentally, this is a question that is rarely asked in discourses about “entanglement,” which often do not go beyond noting the mere structural category of being connected.

The central relationship that planetary feminism is interested in, and that needs to be restructured or “repaired,” is our relationship to the sphere of reproduction—to social and planetary reproduction, or better, in the words of the political scientist Christine Bauhardt, “re-productivity.”²⁵ With this term and its specific orthography, Bauhardt attempts to express that the activities assigned to the so-called “sphere of reproduction”—physical care, affective care work, maintenance of living things, solidarity or assistance services, work on the metabolism of the social—are not inferior and secondary because they are naturalized services, but because they are instead the genuine production of value, ecotopias, and socialities that manifest themselves concretely as materializations of a production of world. It is this re-productivity—the work of the ever-repeating, cyclical regeneration of life—that planetary forces and the feminized have in common: they share the generative offering of this re-production to sustain life, but they also share the experience of precarization and violent extraction of these values, activities, bodies, and assets of matter.

From an ecofeminist perspective, this re-productivity must be appropriately valorized and taken seriously as a category of political economy. For example, the subsistence approach of the Bielefeld ecofeminists²⁶ calls for replacing the political-economic primacy of commodity production with a primacy for the reproductive maintenance of life. This also means that a space for political action emerges here that does not skim off regeneration services as purportedly automated and naturalized, but intervenes in these processes with an ethical-political intentionality in order to assist them. The sociologist María Puig de la Bellacasa, who, in her publication *Matters of Care*, impressively explains how the concept of care could be extended to “more-than-humans,” speaks here of an “obligation in human-decentered cosmologies”²⁷—not only in the sense of an ethical-political obligation, but also in the sense of a mutual dependency of planetary organisms in the interdependence of the web of life.

Even if, from the point of view of the Indian historian Dipesh Chakrabarty, the planet is characterized by radical alterity (otherness) with respect to human cat-

egories and temporalities and is not guided by any moral-ethical or normative-political principles, the question also arises in Earth system science as to what extent the (political) task of providing for and assisting the planet's self-preservation processes falls to us in a planetary symbiotic dynamic of humans and "more-than-humans." Here, habitability is the category that is brought into the field. According to Chakrabarty, in order to ensure this, humans must "(consciously and collectively) sustain and foster planetary habitability rather than ravage planetary sources."²⁸

María Puig de la Bellacasa, for example, calls for such assistance or care relationships between humans and planetary cultures in relation to the planet's soils, which are now "in need of urgent care"²⁹ due to industrial agriculture and are considered endangered ecologies. Together with Dimitris Papadopoulos, she calls for "reparative justice," which consists in assisting the metabolism of depleted soils, quite possibly using human-made technologies such as bioremediation.³⁰ A "just" coexistence between humans and nonhumans is thus based on the use of technoscientific relations of care toward "more-than-humans," where in these relations humans and their agency are *one* component in a coproducing network of heterogeneous planetary communities. Puig de la Bellacasa and Papadopoulos speak here of "eco-commoning."³¹

What is interesting in our context is that ecological relationality is understood here as a symbiotic care relationship for mutual reproduction or, to use a possible vocabulary of a planetary feminism, for the reciprocal-cyclical and bio-techno-social regeneration of planetary organisms. The categories of "care" and "reproduction" central to feminist theories are thus extended to planetary relations and therefore renewed, politicized, and denaturalized. From the perspective of a planetary feminism, reciprocal-cyclical and bio-techno-social regeneration would be the primacy of the political, not only in the sense of demanding recognition of reproductive activities as producing economic value, but beyond this as vehicles of planetary democracy, justice, and sovereignty. The multiple, intrinsically different, and transversal levels on which regenerative care or reproductive cycles are performed in "more-than-human" networks would have to be placed in both an economic and a legal framework and thus be understood as bearers of sovereignty, of rights or citizenship, and, beyond the market and the state, be placed at the center of all practice or intention

as an organizational principle of collective infrastructures of conviviality.³² How such a quite revolutionary reorganization of resources could look is a topic that is currently being intensively discussed in care discourses—and as a project that, given our current understanding of the primacy of the human, of statehood and the market, of representative democracy, the health sector, or the structure of the nuclear family, holds more questions than answers for the future.³³

From a feminist point of view, this does not eliminate the ambivalence that currently still exists in making feminized people responsible for care and reproductive work: they are still seen as a kind of "natural caregiver" or as environmental saviors, which goes hand in hand with a feminization of responsibility for the preservation of naturecultures. But what if we tried a strategically empowering appropriation of this frame? Could the imposed obligation of feminized people to work on reproductive cycles be affirmatively appropriated—in the sense that there is a situated knowledge tied to it, that would need to be thought of as valuable potential for sustaining relations of care toward humans and nonhumans, as well as for nurturing our relationship to the organic? Is not the fact that the specific materialization of female corporeality reminds us of our dependence on planetary cycles also a gift? Insofar as we are forced to acknowledge that planetary and physical regeneration cannot be measured, accelerated, and exploited without limits, while also functioning as a material boundary to the cumulative principle of capitalism? Here, feminized experience could become the paradigm of the urgent task of our time: for the design of a new human that takes its embeddedness in the planetary seriously. Not only feminized people but everyone would thus have the political responsibility to make regenerative cyclical relationality a social task that opposes linear capitalist progression.

In a world that is now "beyond repair"³⁴ and finds itself in a "thereafter" mode, in which it has to prepare itself to live in the ruins of planetary catastrophes, it will be absolutely essential to rely on the experience of such regenerative relationalities, to care for and assist the self-preservation processes of "Gaia."³⁵

1 Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Planet: An Emergent Humanist Category," *Critical Inquiry* 46, no. 1 (2019), pp. 1–31. 2 The gender asterisk (*) after "WOMAN" follows the meanwhile established gender-appropriate notation, which attempts to make the diversity of all diverse genders typographically visible beyond the designation of the binary categories of woman and man. This also signals that "WOMAN" is not a universal and homogeneous category, but must always be understood as different and diverse in itself—whether in the sense of transwomen, nonbinary women, or in the sense of Women of Color, et cetera. In addition, I write "WOMAN/WOMEN" and "NATURE" in small capitals because my argument revolves around these terms, but I want to think beyond a naturalization and homogenization of the concepts. I put the terms in small caps to produce a kind of "stumbling" in the text that draws attention to the constructed nature of the concepts, does not presuppose them as essentially existent, and at the same time opens them to new associations. 3 New Materialism refers to a heterogeneous philosophical current, first discussed in the 1990s, which focuses on the relations between technology, organic environment, and human beings and the epistemologies that have hitherto accompanied them. In it, for example, anthropocentrism and the separation between "NATURE" and "culture" are criticized, and the significance of materiality in social processes is discussed. 4 Rosi Braidotti, "Four Theses on Posthuman Feminism," in *Anthropocene Feminism*, ed. Richard Grusin (Minneapolis, 2017); María Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds* (Minneapolis, 2017); Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, *Material Feminisms* (Bloomington, IN, 2008). 5 James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (Oxford, 1979); Lynn Margulis, *Symbiotic Planet: A New Look at Evolution* (New York, 1998). 6 With the term "naturecultures," Donna Haraway tries to transcend the binary opposition of "nature" and "culture." In the context of her considerations, the "material" and the "semiotic," the human and nonhuman, or ostensibly organic and symbolic entities are understood as relationally connected and mutually coproducing. On this, see Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago, 2003). 7 Christine Bauhardt, "Feministische Ökonomie, Ökofeminismus und Queer Ecologies – feministisch-materialistische Perspektiven auf gesellschaftliche Naturverhältnisse," *Freie Universität Berlin, Gender Politik Online*, April 2012, https://www.fu-berlin.de/sites/gpo/pol_theorie/Zeitgenossische_ansaetze/Bauhardtfoemoeconomie/index.html [all URLs accessed in June 2022]. 8 Ynestra King, "The Eco-Feminist Perspective," in *Reclaiming the Earth: Women Speak out for Life on Earth*, ed. Léonie Caldecott and Stephanie Leland (London, 1983), p. 10. 9 Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Capital Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*, 3rd ed. (1986; repr., London and Atlantic Heights, NJ, 2014), Chapter 3 "Colonization and Housewifization," <https://libcom.org/library/colonization-housewifization-maria-mies>. 10 Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London and New York, 1993). 11 Greta Gaard, *Critical Ecofeminism* (Lanham, MD, 2017), p. xxiv. 12 Ibid. 13 The term "feminized" is currently becoming established in feminist discourse. It refers to gender as a social construct that assigns people characteristics associated with the "feminine." 14 An essentialist attitude is a way of thinking that conceives of identities as something intrinsic and fixed—rather than as effects of social practice. 15 Gaard 2017 (see note 11). 16 Judith Butler's theory of the performativity of gender/sex, formulated in: *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, 1990). 17 Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington, IN, 1994), pp. 15–19. 18 Paul B. Preciado, *TESTO JUNKIE: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era*, trans. Bruce Benderson (New York, 2013). Preciado uses the term "pharmacopornographic era" based on his idea that the pharmaceutical industry, the pornographic industry, and late capitalism regulate our bodies through reproductive and social control. 19 Bina Argawal uses this alternative term to "ecofeminism" to break away from Western debates and describe women's struggles to preserve living environments in the Global South. 20 Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, *Material Feminisms* (Bloomington, IN, 2008). 21 Grosz 1994 (see note 17), p. 23. 22 Karen Barad, "Agential Realism: Feminist Interventions in Understanding Scientific Practices," in *The Science Studies Reader*, ed. Mario Biagioli (New York and London, 1999), pp. 1–11. 23 Braidotti 2017 (see note 4), pp. 21–48. 24 Rosi Braidotti, "Jenseits des Menschen: Posthumanismus," *ApuZ: Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 37–38 (2016), p. 38 [translated]. 25 Bauhardt 2012 (see note 7) [translated]. 26 Andrea Baier, "Subsistenzansatz: Von der Hausarbeitsdebatte zur 'Bielefelder Subsistenzperspektive,'" in *Handbuch für Frauen und Geschlechterforschung*, ed. Ruth Becker and Beate Kortendiek (Wiesbaden, 2008), pp. 75–80. 27 Puig de la Bellacasa 2017 (see note 4), p. 13. 28 Chakrabarty 2019 (see note 1), p. 26. 29 María Puig de la Bellacasa, "Embracing Breakdown: Soil Ecoethics and the Ambivalences of Remediation," in *Reactivating Elements: Chemistry, Ecology, Practice*, ed. Dimitris Papadopoulos, María Puig de la Bellacasa, and Natasha Myers (Durham, NC, 2021). 30 "Bioremediation" means the biological detoxification of ecosystems through the use of organisms (e.g., fungi), for example in the context of renaturation measures. 31 María Puig de la Bellacasa and Dimitris Papadopoulos, "Eco-Commoning in the Aftermath: Sundews, Mangroves and Swamp Insurgencies," in *Swamps and the New Imagination: On the Future of Cohabitation in Art, Architecture, and Philosophy*, ed. Nomeda Urbonas, Gediminas Urbonas, and Kristupas Sabolius (Cambridge, MA, forthcoming [2023]). 32 Following Ivan Illich's understanding of the term in his book *Tools for Conviviality* (New York, 1973), conviviality is understood today in the context of degrowth and ecological movements as living together in difference and (bio)diversity. Illich's understanding of convivial tools as emancipatory, democratic, and responsive to immediate human needs is in direct contrast to society's current dependence on fossil energy, consumers, and the growth-based capitalist production model. 33 The Care Collective, *The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence* (London, 2021). 34 Puig de la Bellacasa/Papadopoulos 2023 (see note 31). 35 Lovelock 1979 and Margulis 1998 (see note 5).

SCALES OF CONCERN

Feminist Spatial Practices

Elke Krasny

*There is no space without concerns.
Without concern there is no space.*

These two sentences describe the fundamental relationship between space and concerns addressed by this essay in order to reflect upon feminist spatial practices. For the present context, I suggest reading the first sentence as follows: there is no space that does not cause human beings to have concern, that does not fill them with feelings of apprehension or anxiety. These concerns and anxieties can have a wide variety of causes, from financial debt or extreme weather phenomena to domestic violence, to cite just a few examples. I would like to read the second sentence in the context of this essay's reflections as follows: without activities and actions of concern, the space in which people find their existence and livelihood cannot exist. Concerns, the plural of the noun "concern," and to concern, the infinitive of the transitive verb "concern," are assumed in this essay to be the two basic starting points from which relations of existence are thought. Without space for their lives, human beings cannot exist. Space thus determines existence, is existentially decisive. This gives cause for concern. The life of human beings, which is always a living together with other human and nonhuman beings in their environments, takes place in the concern-filled, human-made space of Planet Earth. When concern (caring) is not sufficient, the concerns (fears and deep anxieties) grow.

"There is no space without concerns" and "without concern there is no space" express both the starting point and the permanent situation for feminist spatial practices.

Feminist Spatial Practices in the Relationship between Space and Concern

Concern suffuses the corporeal, spatial, and material world, which is the same world that suffuses thinking and feeling life with concerns. This essay therefore situates feminist spatial practices in the relationships between space and concern and is about the inextricably intertwined, interdependent, interpenetrating connections of the meanings of concern, of expressing care, and of being in state of anxiety.

Theoretical traditions of intersectional Marxist feminism provide the foundations for an understanding of space and concern that is grounded in knowledge of the restoration, reproduction, of space. Space is not, as a Cartesian understanding has suggested, simply there. Space is not only—as Marxist traditions of thought see it, especially those that follow Henri Lefebvre's theory of social space—"produced."¹ Space always requires reproduction as well.² The way in which space can be provided determines what concerns space gives rise to, but also what concerns space is capable of giving to those who live with it.

Concerning, that is, caring, includes many different activities and measures, such as daily cleaning and the long-term maintenance of buildings, but also struggles against demolition, speculation, or resource extraction. Without activities and actions for sufficient concern, people begin to suffer from the space that surrounds them. The lack of concern for the space has existential, life-changing consequences, of which I mention only a few here. People cannot breathe well. People do not have access to adequate water supply. People cannot sleep well. People cannot take good care of themselves and their neighbors. Lack of concern leads to constant concerns. Lack of concern leads to shortened life expectancy. Lack of concern leads to a systemic threat of life.

It Is Not about “Great” Women Architects, but about Survival in Freedom

When we talk about feminist spatial practices, we are essentially talking about existential dimensions of space that must be cared for so that people can care for themselves and others in it. This has nothing to do with a system-conformist and advancement-oriented feminism that seeks success in the existing space and its economic and political orders and regimes of power. In the words of the decolonial feminist thinker Françoise Vergès, these types of feminism are to be understood as “state feminism” or “entrepreneurial feminism” that aim for integration into the capitalist androcentric world.³ Feminist spatial practices, as understood here, are not based on using the tools of architecture, landscape architecture, urban planning, or urban design for the success of individual women architects or planners. It is not about the question of “great” women architects or planners. It is not about individual success as a measure of assertion and recognition in the prevailing social conditions, which, in continuation of the idea of individuality and autonomy as a subject blueprint for career feminists in neoliberal capitalism, at the same time always serves precisely these prevailing conditions, since they are thereby recognized and reproduced.⁴ The feminist political theorist Nancy Fraser has pointed to the structure of this dilemma, that feminist goals, such as the struggle for women’s access to the labor market, have served the development and expansion of capitalism without intending to do so.⁵

This dilemma needs to be fully addressed by researchers working on issues of architecture and space in their investigations and research in order to present differentiating analyses of feminist spatial practices and those that provide for social reproduction of and through space, thereby making them more understandable, especially with regard to the further development of feminist spatial practices themselves. Traditional architectural historiography, oriented toward epistemic models of disciplinary art history, was focused on those specifics that constitute a style, such as a distinct formal language or preferences for certain materials. This style is then assigned its most essential proponents, who have a canon-forming effect. Style speaks through authors. This model, which is also to be criticized on the level that historiography is understood as a sequence of positions of individuals to be canonized, is inadequate for the investigation and analysis of feminist spatial practices. This is true because, on the one hand, it is necessary to explore

how they deal with the fact that there is no space without concerns, and without concern there is no space. On the other hand, it is necessary to find out in which way feminist spatial practices are entangled in such dilemmas, as Nancy Fraser has pointed out, and which possibilities of transformation practitioners and researchers can imagine together. Although decisions for form and material are always specifically situated, feminist spatial practices are, of course, highly relevant from the point of view of the relations between space and concerns, and thus cannot be written as a history of style, nor as a social or environmental history, but rather need new complex procedures of involved and transformative research and historiography as a source of inspiration for future feminist spatial practices.

Feminist spatial practices are multidimensional and multifaceted expressions of thinking and acting, with an aim to build spatial justice and enable better caring in a world defined by ideologies of injustice and regimes of inequity. This does not mean that this world can be left behind to build another, as modernism strove for with its real-world metaphor of the *tabula rasa*. Rather, it means working with the concerns that the human-made, built world presents in such a way that repair and reparation move toward convergence. It also means that freedom, which comes from the capacity to take good care of all the conditions of the possibilities of life and survival and their permanent reproduction, takes place in solidarity with the built and material structures that support this connection. Audre Lorde (1934–1992)—in her self-designation as Black woman, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet—wrote about the causal connections between freedom and survival. Connecting freedom and survival through feminist spatial practices based on spatial concern for human and nonhuman living beings, as well as for so-called inanimate matter, builds on Lorde’s call to work toward a future in which all people in the world are free.⁶ Only when there will have been concern, will there then be freedom and survival in the world. This leads us to Planet Earth as a human-made space.

Planet Earth: Human-Made Space

The term “human-made,” as a synonym of the adjective “anthropogenic” (Greek: *ánthropos* = human; *génesis* = emergence, procreation), is essential in order to understand the relationship between space and concerns. “Anthropogenic” is the term used to describe all direct

or indirect human-made interventions that have radically altered and successively endangered and destroyed Planet Earth and its surrounding atmosphere since the late eighteenth century, since the confluence of the Enlightenment and industrialization. In her 1980 book *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*, the ecofeminist philosopher and environmental historian Carolyn Merchant traces the history of ideas that led to viewing nature as controllable by human knowledge and Planet Earth as a storehouse of raw materials available for exploitation.⁷ The beginning of the human-made geological era has been dated to the last third of the eighteenth century by the atmospheric chemist Paul J. Crutzen and the biologist Eugene F. Stoermer, who introduced the term “Anthropocene” into discourse in 2000 as a designation for this new geological era.⁸ The current climate catastrophes are human-made. The human being is to be understood as a geophysical power, as a geosocial being, and Planet Earth as a human-made space, which, as I would like to put it here, does not exist without concerns, without extreme anxiety, and without responsible care. Understanding Planet Earth as a space of concerns leads us to the question of scales of concern and of changes to be made by human beings to the existing human-made conditions.

Scales of Concern

“Scale” is of interest to feminist spatial practices in the context of the entanglement of space and concerns because it allows us to clarify scientific, spatial, social, and ethical implications. The tool used is a scale to measure space. Scale makes it possible to bring a space to representation in different proportions that have a corresponding relationship to reality. As a tool, scale is exemplary of the history of the scientification and measurement of what has historically been conceived as the “nature” of the planet. Therefore, as a tool, scale is deeply enmeshed in the history that has produced the planet as a human-made space with its systemic and violently eruptive crises. From the perspective of the living environment and the history of ideas, “scale” denotes a guideline, an applicable social norm or standard. What

these levels of meaning of “scale” have in common is that they put into the world possibilities of normalization, normality, and standardization that powerfully and violently transform space. In ethical and moral terms, therefore, scale is as enmeshed in the violent nature of prevailing conditions as the mathematical surveying tool. The memory theorist Michael Rothberg has introduced the notion of the “implicated subject,” who is actively involved or enmeshed in prolonging the legacy of historical violence in the present and perpetuating the structures of inequality that cause suffering in the present.⁹ I propose to also conceptualize the human-made use of physical and intellectual tools, such as scales, as “implicated” in Rothberg’s sense, so as to grasp the enmeshment of human beings in human-made space, on the human-made Planet Earth, through the use of their tools, which are to be critically examined as to their historical implications.

In the context of feminist spatial practices devoted to the relationship between space and concerns, scales are contested. Other scales of concern must be fought for: other scales to organize and pay fairly for reproductive labor that restores space; other scales to halt climate collapse and counter the global “sixth mass extinction”; other scales to counteract land sealing; other scales to realize the fundamental right to housing. It is necessary to continue to fight against scales whose historical legacy is being violently actualized in the present and is thus preventing freedom, which must be based on a redefinition of the relations between space and concern, from continuing in the future.

Precisely because of their significance for the human-made world, scales are key spatial and social tools for changing this very human-made world and for continually redefining and reestablishing the relations between space and concerns. My proposal to think of scales of concern for feminist spatial practices thus assumes that becoming aware of the implications of and the responsibility for the interrelationships of human-made space and concerns is central to understanding the causal conditions for possibilities of existence, survival, and freedom on Planet Earth and to working on transformative, life-enabling, and space-caring changes.

1 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, 1991). Originally published in French as: *La production de l'espace* (Paris, 1974). In German-speaking sociology, Lefebvre's reflections on the social production of space as a counter-model to neutral Cartesian space have been popularized above all by the work of the sociologist Klaus Ronneberger and the spatial sociologist Martina Löw. In urban activism, especially in "Right to the City" movements, the Marxist ideas of Henri Lefebvre, as well as of David Harvey, were central. The realization, based on feminist insights, that the social reproduction of space also needs to be recognized and theorized has been sidelined by the focus on production that characterizes overall the hegemonic androcentric reception of the ideas of Marx and Engels and has not been a central part of these debates. 2 The anthology *The Social (Re)-Production of Architecture* should be cited here as one of the few significant examples of the development of a practice-fed theory of the social reproduction of space: Doina Petrescu and Kim Trogal, eds., *The Social (Re)Production of Architecture: Politics, Values and Actions in Contemporary Practice* (London, 2017). 3 Françoise Vergès, *The Wombs of Women: Race, Capital, Feminism*, trans. Kaiama L. Glover (Durham, NC, 2020). Originally published in French as: *Le Ventre des femmes: Capitalisme, racialisation, féminisme* (Paris, 2017). 4 Picking up on the diction of the 2013 book *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* by Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook and, in 2017, the fourth most powerful woman in the world according to a ranking published by *Forbes* magazine, this type of neoliberal capitalist power feminism is called "Lean In" feminism. The Black feminist theorist bell hooks has called Sandberg's position "faux feminist." 5 Nancy Fraser, "Feminism, Capitalism and the Cunning of History," *New Left Review* 56 (2009), pp. 97–117, <https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii56/articles/nancy-fraser-feminism-capitalism-and-the-cunning-of-history> [accessed in March 2022]. 6 Audre Lorde, "Conference Keynote Address: Sisterhood and Survival," *Black Scholar* 13 (1986), p. 5. 7 Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (New York, 1980). 8 Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, "The 'Anthropocene,'" *Global Change Newsletter* 41 (2000), pp. 17–18. 9 Michael Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators* (Stanford, 2019), p. 1.

ECOFEMINISTS FOR FUTURE

Regine Epp

We are in the beginning of a mass extinction and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you! . . . The eyes of all future generations are upon you. And if you choose to fail us, I say: We will never forgive you.¹

With her Cassandra-like speech at the United Nations Climate Action Summit 2019, the environmental activist Greta Thunberg set the tone for an entire generation of young people who fear for their future in the face of the climate crisis.² Thunberg emphatically holds politicians accountable for inadequate countermeasures and stresses that the unforeseeable consequences of political failure will be borne on the shoulders of young people.

The Canadian activist Naomi Klein finds fitting words for the state of our planet: “Our economic system and our planetary system are now at war . . . What the climate needs to avoid collapse is a contraction in humanity’s use of resources; what our economic model demands to avoid collapse is unfettered expansion. Only one of these sets of rules can be changed, and it’s not the laws of nature.”³ The youngest generation has also recognized this and is fighting back: what Greta Thunberg initiated in 2018 as *SKOLSTREJK FÖR KLIMATET* in Sweden grew within a very short time—not least of all through its dissemination in social media under the hashtag *#FridaysForFuture*—into a global environmental movement (→ pp. 450–51, fig. 1). We are thus observing a new kind of revolutionary movement that has the potential to change the future.

Who Owns the Future?

In *Revolution für das Leben* (Revolution for Life), the feminist philosopher Eva von Redecker takes a look at new forms of protest, among which she counts the environmental movement, in addition to anti-racist mobilizations against police violence and the feminist struggle against the murder of women, to name just a few examples. The novelty of all these movements lies, according to Redecker, in their updated understanding of anti-capitalism: “They lead their struggle not as an uprising of workers against wage labor, but rather as an uprising of the living against the destruction of life.”⁴ With this collective resetting of priorities, a future-changing form of protest can become possible, one that is not merely based on the principle of taking/redistributing, but that actually offers the prospect of a new order. To accomplish this, we must become aware of the systems of domination and ownership that underlie our society, how the control of property as a social and political construct permeates our lives, and why all of this leads to a disparity between humans and nature/nonhumans. We need to ask ourselves: Who owns what, who belongs to whom—and with what justification? Ecofeminists have been asking these pressing questions since the 1970s. Based on Noël Sturgeon’s analysis,⁵ Christine Bauhardt summarizes five currents of ecofeminism that, to varying degrees, address society’s relationship to nature. Common to all is the thesis that the destruction of the environment, like the oppression of women, is intertwined with capitalism.⁶

Where women are oppressed, nature is also dominated and exploited. If it is assumed that the bodies and work of women are an endless resource for society, then it is also assumed that nature can be endlessly used and exploited.⁷

Thus, if a feminist future with a planetary perspective (see Margarita Tsomou, pp. 176–83) is to be achieved, patriarchal structures and environmental exploitation cannot be thought of independently.

The World as “Phantom Property”

A persistent domination symptom of destructive capitalism—anchored in patriarchy and in environmental exploitation—is “phantom property.” According to Re-decker, the term describes historically evolved relations of ownership and domination that, according to law, no longer exist in the here and now but continue to affect the reality of our lives:⁸ “Even after the prohibition of slavery, Black lives are considered expendable; even after the abolition of patriarchal marriage, the female sex is considered prey; despite labor laws and social insurance, work capacity is squeezed out. All of this is phantom property; and capitalism builds on it all—as well as on raw materials, energy, and cattle for slaughter.”⁹ Recent examples of phantom property on a geopolitical level include the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the war of aggression and invasion of the sovereign neighboring state of Ukraine launched by Russia on February 24, 2022. As a former Soviet republic, the independent nation Ukraine becomes the phantom property of the imperialist ruler Vladimir Putin.

Wars are disastrous not only for people and their living environments, but ultimately for the natural environment as well.¹⁰ Financial resources urgently needed for the preservation of livelihoods flow into instruments of destruction: into weapons and military facilities. The (eco)feminist struggle must be directed against the control of property in the logic of capitalism that fuels political oppression, violence, and escalation.

Patriarchy = CO2

The fact that patriarchal power structures and environmental destruction go hand in hand is taken up literally by the feminist artist collective Claire Fontaine in neon

works such as *Patriarchy = CO2* (2020, → pp. 452–53, fig. 2) and *Patriarchy = Climate Emergency* (2020). With these and other feminist messages, Claire Fontaine staged the catwalk of Dior’s fall/winter 2020–21 pret-à-porter show. Although intended as a form of protest, the collaboration with the fashion company also drew criticism. The newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, for example, gave the verdict: “Sorry, That’s Poster Feminism.”¹¹ One could argue against this: the clearer the message of pressing truths, the better. (Eco)feminist theories often reach only parts of society when reproduced within scholarly “bubbles.” Therefore, in order for their society-changing potential to be activated, they must also find platforms outside these spaces of impact.

For Claire Fontaine, feminism is “an epistemology and a form of life, an ethical tool and a way of relating to one’s body and one’s desires.”¹² The artist collective strives to expose patriarchy and capitalism as oppressive systems in which production takes precedence over reproduction, (care) work is underpaid or not paid at all, and individuals are measured according to their economic and political usefulness—all under the guise of material prosperity and social progress.¹³

We clearly see how the operating mechanisms linked to a deregulated system, having only economic profit as a touchstone, cannot take into account the humanitarian and environmental impact and put the mere pursuit of life on Earth in danger.¹⁴

The Re-Subjectification of the World

Claire Fontaine sees one methodical approach to eluding capitalist control of property in “magic materialism,” which is anchored in the ecofeminist perspective. With this term, the artist collective describes the effort to resist objectification in both an animate and inanimate world—in a time when objects receive more attention than what is alive and keeps us alive.¹⁵ Claire Fontaine sees feminism as an opportunity to restore subjectivity where it has been objectified by patriarchy: with women, nonbinary individuals, People of Color, children, and the natural world. “Offering an interpretive framework for the real in which the living, be it micro-organic, plant, animal or human life, takes precedence, seems the only way out of the psycho-pathological apocalypse in which we are caught.”¹⁶ Claire Fontaine’s magic materialism borrows from theories of new material femi-

nism,¹⁷ which in turn draw on Donna Haraway's "naturescultures," a concept that sees humans as part of the world in interdependence with other living beings without dominating them. This concept is taken further in queer ecologies, which help to curb essentialism and the biologization of gender and help to liberate the human-nature relationship from the social construct of heteronormativity.¹⁸

The re-subjectification of the world is also what the lawyer and human rights and environmental activist Yi Yi Prue is calling for at the direct governmental level of the legislature. She belongs to an Indigenous Marma community in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of southeastern Bangladesh. Together with people from her home district of Bandarban, as well as Indigenous communities from Nepal, she filed a lawsuit in 2020 with Germany's Federal Constitutional Court (BVerfG) over the country's inadequate measures addressing the climate crisis, sending a signal to industrialized countries to do more to meet their responsibilities. "For so many generations now, we have experienced consistent exclusion from conversations that directly affect us, as if our lives count for nothing."¹⁹ As an example, Prue cites the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow in 2021, where representatives of Indigenous societies were only able to participate in the cultural program and in performances, but not in the important environmental discussions, so that their experiences of discrimination, struggles for survival, and knowledge of sustainability were not included in decisions and recommendations. For Prue as an activist, it is clear:

Respecting indigenous peoples' rights goes hand in hand with respecting the natural environment; ... Only if indigenous voices are more actively included in decision-making processes can we share both our perspectives on environmental protection and recommendations as to how climate injustice, particularly as it impacts the most marginalised communities, can be addressed.²⁰

Although Indigenous communities are using their cultural knowledge to advocate for nature in a practice of caretaking, they in particular are affected by—and will suffer even more in the future from—the impacts of the climate crisis and the resulting natural disasters. For them, capitalist economic growth and the pursuit of profit by international corporations also means sys-

tematic displacement from their living environments and thus the destruction of their livelihoods, whether through mining or monoculture farming.

Yi Yi Prue and her fellow campaigners were able to win their case before the Federal Constitutional Court. The decision of the court in March 2021 to prevent the 1.5-degree limit from being exceeded is encouraging,²¹ but the planned measures to achieve this are still insufficient, which is also repeatedly emphasized by FRIDAYS FOR FUTURE activists.²² According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), the Geneva-based observatory for internally displaced persons, in 2020 some 30.7 million people already fled their homes due to natural events such as continuous rain, drought, heat waves, and storms. And even more climate refugees are expected in the future.²³

It's Artificial?—Of Course It Is

The Norwegian multimedia artist Ann Lislegaard (b. 1962) draws a picture of a dystopian future in which political measures have already failed. With *Oracles, Owls ... Some Animals Never Sleep (Borealis)* (2012–21, → p. 421 / pp. 454–55, fig. 3), she transports us to the year 2050, to the end of human civilization. The work refers to the 1968 science fiction novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip K. Dick, on which the American film *Blade Runner* (1982) is based. The viewer is confronted with an oversized owl as a 3D animation against a backdrop of northern lights. As an imaginary, adaptable species, it lives in a technological cosmos and has nothing in common with a natural being (except its appearance). As a machine, it claims no gender and suggests a utopian, nonbinary, uncategorized world. Speaking in foreign tongues, the owl assumes the function of an oracle:

Oracle says some animals never sleep / talk of revolution / politics / making politics in an empty habitat ... Do you like our owl? It's artificial? Artificial. Of course it is ... if these words are heard they might not be believed ... the oracle says there are secrets beneath things, within us and in the almost human ... gender on distant planets / echo echo / there is still somewhere one has to go / destroying space stories ... if only you could see what I have seen.

The encrypted narrative seems algorithmic. It is fragmented by pauses, repetitions, and distortions. It is not

clear whether the owl speaks only of the extinction of natural life on Earth, of the extinction of machines in an age of digitalization, or even of the total destruction of the solar system. It is also unclear whether the planet (Saturn) around which the owl claws its foot serves as a lifeline or a toy.

Reality Check

Ann Lislegaard's work encourages us to think about our current lifestyle and the feasibility of our plans for the future. Our capitalist reality of life constantly demands more profit, more growth, more technologies. What is often forgotten in the process: the world is not a mock-up, although many claim it as their "phantom property." And we are not avatars who can press the replay button at the end of a lost battle. Exploitation and subsequent denial are colonialist patterns that we should have overcome long ago. We must work against outdated and harmful ideologies, because "ideologies that authorize injustices based on gender, race, and class are related to the ideologies that sanction the exploitation and degradation of the environment."²⁴ A revolution *for* life must find a

new order in which there is space for healing and reconciliation. An ecofeminist, intersectional, and planetary perspective can be the answer. The art historian Marsha Meskimmon emphasizes the power that lies within this:

As an intersectional mode of engagement, critical ecofeminism ensures that the gendered power politics that connect structures of domination and control are kept in view, but does not engage in single-axis analysis. Rather, the transversal lines of connection drawn by a critical transnational ecofeminism acknowledge the challenges and pleasures of entanglement.²⁵

"We Should All Be Feminists": invoking this motto, the Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie made a plea to fight patriarchy in her famous TEDx Talk in 2012. In order to move from life destruction to life preservation, to turn away from capitalism toward a just human-nature relationship, and to arrive at a future for coming generations, we must extend this appeal:

WE SHOULD ALL BE ECOFEMINISTS.

¹ Excerpt from Greta Thunberg's speech at the United Nations Climate Action Summit in New York on September 23, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/read-greta-thunberg-s-full-speech-united-nations-climate-action-n1057861> [all URLs accessed in June 2022]. ² I reject the term "climate change" because of its instrumentalizing use, for example as dog-whistle rhetoric by critics to question the scientific factuality of environmental damage. ³ Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs the Climate* (New York, 2014), p. 21. ⁴ Eva von Redecker, *Revolution für das Leben: Philosophie der neuen Protestformen* (Frankfurt am Main, 2021), p. 10 [translated]. ⁵ Noël Sturgeon, *Ecofeminist Natures: Race, Gender, Feminist Theory and Political Action* (London and New York, 1997). ⁶ Christine Bauhardt, "Ökofeminismus und Queer Ecologies: Feministische Analyse gesellschaftlicher Naturverhältnisse," in *Handbuch Interdisziplinäre Geschlechterforschung*, ed. Beate Kortendiek, Birgit Riegraf, and Katja Sabisch, vol. 65 of *Geschlecht und Gesellschaft* (Wiesbaden, 2019), pp. 467–77, esp. pp. 468–69. ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 469 [translated]. ⁸ Redecker 2021 (see note 4), pp. 10–15. ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14 [translated]. ¹⁰ Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, "Kriegsfolgen," October 1, 2011, <https://www.bpb.de/themen/medien-journalismus/krieg-in-den-medien/130590/kriegsfolgen/>. ¹¹ Johanna Dürrholz, "Paris Fashion Week: Sorry, das ist Poster-Feminismus," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 2, 2020, <https://www.faz.net/-hs1-9x1e4> [translated]. ¹² The artist collective Claire Fontaine in conversation with Philippe Szechter, O2, n.d. [Spring 2020], <https://www.zerodeux.fr/en/interviews-en/claude-fontaine-2/>. ¹³ *Ibid.* ¹⁴ *Ibid.* ¹⁵ Claire Fontaine, "Towards a Theory of Magic Materialism," *Diaphanes*, December 4, 2019, <https://www.diaphanes.fr/titel/towards-a-theory-of-magic-materialism-6172>. ¹⁶ *Ibid.* ¹⁷ Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, eds., *Material Feminisms* (Bloomington, IN, 2008); as well as the publications by Elizabeth Grosz, Stacy Alaimo, Iris van der Tuin, and Karen Barad in the context of new material feminism. ¹⁸ Bauhardt 2019 (see note 6), pp. 474–75. ¹⁹ "A Written Statement by Yi Yi Prue," *Theaterbremen*, February 4, 2022, https://www.theaterbremen.de/de_DE/a-written-statement-by-yi-yi-prue. ²⁰ *Ibid.* ²¹ BVerfG, Order of the First Senate of Germany's Federal Constitutional Court of March 24, 2021, 1 BvR 2656/18, Rn. 1-270, https://www.bundesverfassungsgericht.de/SharedDocs/Entscheidungen/EN/2021/03/rs20210324_1bvr265618en.html. ²² *Ibid.* ²³ UNO Flüchtlingshilfe Deutschland, "Klimawandel als Fluchtgrund: Was hat der Klimawandel mit Flucht zu tun?," n.d., <https://www.uno-fluechtlingshilfe.de/informieren/fluchtursachen/klimawandel>. ²⁴ Sturgeon 1997 (see note 5), p. 23. ²⁵ Marsha Meskimmon, *Transnational Feminisms, Transversal Politics and Art: Entanglements and Intersections* (London and New York, 2020), p. 72.

TIMELINE 1900–2022

**Feminist Exhibitions, Artworks, and Performances, as well as
Sociopolitical Events and Impulses— Spotlights on Worldwide
Feminist Milestones and Developments**

Dino Steinhof

1908

France
Exposition rétrospective d'art féminin, Hotel de Lyceum, Paris

First Wave of Feminisms: ca. 1850 to 1920

1900

USA
 Founding of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. The union campaigns for better working conditions for women.

1902

Australia
 Introduction of women's suffrage. Until 1962, Aboriginal women had limited suffrage.

1903

Great Britain
 The suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst founds the Women's Social and Political Union.

Sweden
 Marie Curie is the first woman to receive the Nobel Prize in Physics. She shares the award with two male colleagues.

1904

Germany
 The Second International Women's Suffrage Conference is held in Berlin, during which the International Woman Suffrage Alliance is founded.

Great Britain
 The International Woman Suffrage Alliance holds a meeting in London.

1905

Sweden
 The Austrian pacifist Bertha von Suttner becomes the first woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

1906

Finland
 Introduction of women's suffrage.

1908

Great Britain
 In London, suffragettes demonstrate in front of Buckingham Palace for women's suffrage.

1909

Sweden
 Selma Lagerlöf receives the Nobel Prize in Literature. The Swede is the first woman to receive the award.

USA
 In New York, female textile workers strike for higher wages and better working conditions. Further strikes follow in other cities in the USA.

1909–10

Germany
 Women are granted the right to regular enrollment in a university.

1910

Japan
 The influential women's rights activist Fusae Ichikawa publicly rebels against her violent father.

1911

Germany
 Under the slogan "Give us women's suffrage," more than one million women demonstrate for women's suffrage on March 19, the first International Women's Day.

USA

On March 25, a fire at a textile company kills numerous women workers, mainly underage girls from immigrant families.

1912

China
 Foot binding for small girls is banned. The background of the custom was an ideal of beauty, which was to be achieved by the deformation of the feet.

1914–1944

1914

Great Britain

The suffragette Mary Richardson attacks Diego Velázquez's painting *Venus at Her Mirror* (1648–51) with a knife. The attack signifies a protest against the imprisonment of the political activist Emmeline Pankhurst.

First Wave of Feminisms: ca. 1850 to 1920

1914–18

During the First World War, the Federation of German Women's Associations founds the National Women's Service. The women become involved in social welfare and care work.

1915

The Netherlands

The Hague hosts the International Women's Peace Congress from April 28 to 30.

Sweden, Norway, Denmark

Matrimonial and family law is reformed, e.g., divorce in which the principle of fault does not apply is adopted.

1917

Russia

Women's suffrage is introduced. Alexandra Kollontai, a pioneering feminist, becomes one of the first female cabinet members.

USA

Suffragettes of the National Woman's Party gather on the Capitol steps in Washington, DC, to demonstrate for women's suffrage.

1918

Germany, Canada, Latvia, Lithuania, Austria, Poland, Hungary, Belarus

Introduction of women's suffrage.

Russia

Divorce, in which the principle of fault does not apply, is introduced.

1919

Germany

Women's rights activists found the committee International Women's League for Peace and Freedom.

According to Article 109 of the Weimar Constitution, women and men "shall in principle be accorded the same civic rights and duties."

Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Sweden, Ukraine

Introduction of women's suffrage.

1920

Iceland, Slovakia

Introduction of women's suffrage.

Israel

Introduction of limited women's suffrage.

USSR

The USSR is the first country to allow its female population to have free abortions.

USA

Introduction of women's suffrage and founding of the League of Women Voters

1922

Ireland

Introduction of passive women's suffrage.

“It would be a thousand pities if women wrote like men, or lived like men, or looked like men, for if two sexes are quite inadequate, considering the vastness and variety of the world, how should we manage with one only?”

Virginia Woolf

1926

France

Femmes peintures de XVIII siècle, Galerie Charpentier, Paris

1937

France

Les femmes artistes d'Europe exposent au musée du Jeu de Paume, Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris

1943

USA

Exhibition by 31 Women, The Art of This Century, New York; curated by Peggy Guggenheim

1923

Egypt

Introduction of limited women's suffrage—women are actually only allowed to vote for the first time in 1956—and founding of the Egyptian Feminist Union.

Myanmar

Introduction of limited women's suffrage.

1924

Japan

Founding of the Japanese League of Women Voters.

1928

Great Britain

Introduction of women's suffrage.

1929

Finland

Divorce, in which the principle of fault does not apply, is introduced.

Romania

Introduction of limited women's suffrage.

USA

Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* is published.

1930

India

At the All India Women's Conference, participants advocate for legal protection for women and an expansion of women's suffrage.

South Africa

Limited women's suffrage is introduced, but Black women and men do not receive the right to vote until 1994.

1931

Spain

Introduction of women's suffrage.

Sri Lanka

Introduction of passive women's suffrage.

1932

Brazil, Uruguay

Introduction of passive women's suffrage.

Thailand

Introduction of limited women's suffrage.

1933

Germany

The National Socialists seize power and restrict women's rights.

1934

Cuba

Introduction of passive women's suffrage.

Turkey

Introduction of women's suffrage.

1935

Puerto Rico

Introduction of women's suffrage.

1937

Puerto Rico

Sterilization is legalized; the law does not provide alternative forms of contraception. The law is repealed in 1960.

1938

Romania

Introduction of women's suffrage.

1939–45

Germany

After the unconditional surrender on May 8, 1945, and the end of the Second World War, women's suffrage is fully reinstated.

1944

France, Bulgaria

Introduction of women's suffrage.

“On ne naît pas femme: on le devient.” /
“One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.”

Simone de Beauvoir

1945

USA

The Women, The Art of This Century, New York; curated by Peggy Guggenheim

1945

Japan, Slovenia

Introduction of women's suffrage.

Senegal

Introduction of passive women's suffrage.

USA

The United Nations (UN) is founded on October 24. Three women attend the founding conference in San Francisco.

1946

Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, Croatia, North Korea, North Macedonia, Panama, Venezuela

Introduction of women's suffrage.

USA

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women is established in New York.

1946–47

German Democratic Republic

Women are given the right to terminate an unwanted conception during the first three months of pregnancy.

1947

Malta

Introduction of women's suffrage.

1948

Belgium, South Korea

Introduction of women's suffrage.

Israel

The state of Israel is founded. Women have equal rights under the constitution.

Samoa

Introduction of limited women's suffrage.

South Africa

Apartheid is introduced. People classified as non-white experience considerable political, economic, and social discrimination.

USA

The UN adopts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

1949

Federal Republic of Germany, German Democratic Republic

On May 26, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) are founded. The Basic Law of the FRG enshrines equal rights for women and men, while the Constitution of the GDR enshrines the principle of equality between men and women.

Chile, Costa Rica

Introduction of women's suffrage.

France

Le deuxième sexe (The Second Sex) by Simone de Beauvoir is published.

Israel

By law, military service is required for both men and women.

South Africa

The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act prohibits marriage between white and Black people.

Syria

Introduction of limited women's suffrage, which is changed to passive women's suffrage in 1953.

1950

China

Adoption of the Marriage Law, which, among other things, prohibits polygamy.

German Democratic Republic

On September 27, the Law on the Protection of Mother and Child and the Rights of Women is passed.

India

Introduction of women's suffrage.

1953

USA
Women in Art, Contemporary Art Museum, Houston

1954

Brazil
Founding of Grupo Frente, an association of concrete artists from Rio de Janeiro. Lygia Clark and Lygia Pape are considered its most important members.

1951

Nepal
Introduction of women's suffrage.

New Zealand
Founding of the Māori Women's Welfare League, which advocates for the rights of women and children.

1952

Greece
Introduction of women's suffrage.

Lebanon
Introduction of passive women's suffrage.

1953

The UN General Assembly adopts the Convention on the Political Rights of Women.

Mexico
Introduction of women's suffrage.

1954

Ghana, Colombia, Peru
Introduction of women's suffrage.

Paraguay
Unmarried, divorced, and widowed women are granted civil rights.

South Africa
The Federation of South African Women, an anti-apartheid organization, is launched.

1955

USA
Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat at the front of the bus for a white passenger.

1956

Pakistan
Introduction of women's suffrage.

South Africa
On August 9, some 20,000 women protest against the Pass Law at the Women's March in Pretoria.

1957

Federal Republic of Germany
The so-called obedience paragraph is deleted from the Civil Code. It gave husbands the right to make far-reaching decisions about joint marital life.

New Zealand
The Council for Equal Pay and Opportunity for Women is established.

1958

Federal Republic of Germany
The Law on Equal Rights for Men and Women comes into effect.

Iraq
Women's suffrage is introduced, but it does not come into use until 1980.

1960

Cuba
The Federación de Mujeres Cubanas campaigns for women's rights. One of its first tasks is to support sex workers.

South Africa
On March 21, police shoot into the crowd during demonstrations against the Pass Law. 69 people are killed and 180 injured. The incident is remembered as the Sharpville Massacre.

Tonga
Introduction of women's suffrage.

USA
In the USA, the birth control pill is launched on the market.

From February 1 to July 25, Black students stage sit-ins at a Woolworth store in Greensboro, North Carolina.

1961

France
Niki de Saint Phalle, *Tirs* (Shooting Paintings), performance and painting

1964

France
Carolee Schneemann, *Meat Joy*, First Festival of Free Expression, American Center, Paris

Japan
Yoko Ono, *Cut Piece*, performance, Yamaichi Konzerthalle, Kyoto

USA
Women Artists of America: 1707–1964, Newark Museum, New Jersey

1965

South Africa
South African Women Artists Visualize Their Fellow-Beings, South African National Gallery, Cape Town

1966

USA
Founding of Women Artists in Revolution (WAR)

1968

Austria
VALIE EXPORT, *Tap and Touch Cinema*, performance, Vienna

USA
Valerie Solanas commits attempted murder against Andy Warhol. With her manifesto *SCUM – Society for Cutting Up Men*, she advocates the eradication of the male sex.

Founding of the Coalition of Black Revolutionary Artists (COBRA); in 1970, renamed African Commune of Bad Relevant Artists (AfriCOBRA)

Second Wave of Feminisms: 1960s to 1970s

1961

Italy
The European Social Charter of the Council of Europe is adopted in Turin. It establishes, among other things, the right to maternity protection and the right to equal pay for work of equal value.

Paraguay
Introduction of women's suffrage.

USA
The Freedom Ride from Washington, DC, to Alabama takes place for the first time.

1962

Federal Republic of Germany
The birth control pill is launched on the market in West Germany, followed in 1965 by East Germany.

Uganda
Introduction of passive women's suffrage.

1963

Afghanistan
Introduction of women's suffrage.

Iran
Introduction of women's suffrage.

Kenya
Introduction of passive women's suffrage.

USA
At the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, more than 250,000 people listen to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous speech, "I Have a Dream."

Betty Friedan publishes *The Feminine Mystique*.

1964

USA
The Civil Rights Act is passed. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

1965

Guatemala
Introduction of women's suffrage.

Cuba
The abortion policy is toned down: henceforth, women can have free and safe abortions.

USA
The Voting Rights Act is passed.

1966

The UN International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights is adopted. The signatory states commit themselves to equal rights for men and women.

India
Indira Gandhi becomes Prime Minister of India. She remains in office until 1977 and again from 1980 to 1984.

USA
Founding of the National Organization for Women (NOW)

In August, transgender individuals and drag queens resist police harassment at Compton's Cafeteria in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco.

1967

The UN adopts a declaration on the elimination of discrimination against women.

Great Britain
Abortion is legalized.

1968

Federal Republic of Germany
Sigrid R ger throws tomatoes at male members of the Socialist German Students' Union (SDS) because they are ignorant of women's rights. The "tomato throw" is seen as a sign of female protest and a prelude to the second wave of the women's movement in West Germany.

Great Britain
The Equal Pay Act is passed.

South Africa
Founding of the first gay and lesbian resistance organization.

1970

Federal Republic of Germany
Rebecca Horn, *Einhorn*,
performance

Denmark
Damebilleder, Rådskældereren,
Copenhagen; curated by
women artists of the collective
Kanonklubben

Great Britain
Publication of Germaine
Greer's *The Female Eunuch*

USA
X-12: 12 Artists, Women, a
project of Living Artists, Inc.,
New York; curated by Carolyn
Mazzallo and Vernita Nemec

San Francisco Women Artists
43rd Annual Exhibition, San
Francisco Museum of Art, San
Francisco

Founding of the Ad Hoc
Committee of Women Artists

1971

USA
Where We At: Black Women
Artists 1971, Act of Art Gallery,
New York

*“The only way for a woman, as
for a man, to find herself,
to know herself as a person,
is by creative work of her own.”*

Betty Friedan

Linda Nochlin publishes her
essay “Why Have There Been
No Great Women Artists?”

1969

USA
Founding of the Art Workers’
Coalition

1969

Great Britain
The Divorce Reform Act is
passed: henceforth, couples
can divorce “without fault.”

USA
In New York, homosexuals
resist a police raid on the
Stonewall Inn. The riots
are considered the birth of
Christopher Street Day and
the worldwide gay rights
movement.

May 5–11 is Freedom for
Women Week: members of
the National Organization for
Women chant “Rights, not
Roses.”

California introduces divorce
“without fault”; by 1973,
its example is followed by
another 36 US states.

1970

Chile
President Salvador Allende
establishes the Secretaría
de la Mujer to address the
socioeconomic problems of
women.

USA
During the National Chicano
Issues Conference, the
Comisión Femenil Mexicana
Nacional is formed, a group
that advocates for Latino
women.

The Women’s Strike for
Equality takes place in New
York.

1971

Federal Republic of Germany
In the “Aktion 218” campaign
initiated by Alice Schwarzer,
women, including celebrities,
publicly admit to having had
an abortion.

On July 3, the film *It Is Not the
Homosexual Who Is Perverse,
But the Society in Which He
Lives* by Rosa von Praunheim
celebrates its premiere in
Cologne.

Great Britain
The Gay Liberation Front
demonstrates at the Festival
of Light.

New Zealand
Feminists celebrate Suffrage
Day for the first time on
September 19.

Switzerland
Introduction of women’s
suffrage.

Angela Yvonne Davis
publishes *If They Come in
the Morning...: Voices of
Resistance*.

*“What if Picasso had been born a girl?
Would Señor Ruiz have paid
as much attention
or stimulated as much ambition
for achievement in a little Pablita?”*

Linda Nochlin

1972

Federal Republic of Germany
American Women Artist Show, Kunsthaus, Hamburg; curated by Gemeinschaft der Künstlerinnen und Kunstfreunde Hamburg

USA

Womanhouse (art space for installations and performances), Los Angeles; conceived by Paula Harper and organized by Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro

Women: A Historical Survey of Works by Women Artists, Salem Fine Arts Center, Salem, North Carolina / North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh; curated by Benjamin F. Williams and Gay Muhaffy Hertzman

Invisible/visible: 21 Artists, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach; curated by Dextra Frankel

Ten Gallery Artists, A.I.R. Gallery, New York; inaugural exhibition

1973

USA

Ten Artists (Who Also Happen to Be Women), Kenan Center in Lockport, New York / Rockefeller Arts Center Gallery, New York; curated by Lucy R. Lippard

c.7,500, Gallery A-402, California Institute of the Arts, Valencia / Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis / Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, et al.; curated by Lucy R. Lippard

Inauguration of the Women's Building, a center for women's culture and art, in Los Angeles

Adrian Piper, *The Mythic Being*, 1973–75, performance

1974

Australia

A Room of One's Own: Three Women Artists, Ewing Gallery, University of Melbourne; curated by Kiffy Rubbo, Lynne Cooke, and Janine Burke

USA

In Her Own Image, Samuel S. Fleisher Art Memorial, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia; curated by Cindy Nemser

Women's Art Festival, California Institute of the Arts, Valencia; organized by Miriam Shapiro and the Feminist Art Program

1975

Australia

It's Great to be an Australian Woman, Women's House, Brisbane; curated by The Women's Community Aid Association

Chile

La mujer en le arte: Exposición – pintura, escultura, dibujo, grabado, Secreteria Nacional de la Mujer / Museo de Bellas Artes, Santiago de Chile

Denmark

Kvindeudstillingen XX på Charlottenborg, Copenhagen; curated by the Rejsning women's group

Second Wave of Feminisms: 1960s to 1970s

1972

Bangladesh

Introduction of women's suffrage.

German Democratic Republic

Unlike in West Germany, abortion is legalized.

Mexico

More than a hundred women gather in Mexico City to discuss birth control and abortion laws.

New Zealand

In April, the first National Women's Liberation Conference is held in Wellington.

USA

The first issue of the feminist magazine *Ms.* is published. The founder and editor is the famous women's rights activist Gloria Steinem.

1973

USA

The Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade* legalizes abortion.

The first National Conference of Jewish Women is held in New York.

1974

The UN issues a declaration on the protection of women and children in times of emergency and armed conflict.

Costa Rica

The Movimiento Liberación de la Mujer is founded. Among other things, it advocates the legalization of abortion.

Colombia

Women are granted the same rights as men.

Portugal

Introduction of women's suffrage.

1975

The UN General Assembly proclaims the International Year of Women.

Cuba

The Family Code is adopted. The code ensures gender equality in work-related activities.

Mexico

The first World Conference on Women organized by the UN to mark the International Year of Women is held in Mexico City.

USA

A lawsuit is filed on behalf of Latino women who were victims of forced sterilization, leading to a moratorium and the introduction of bilingual consent forms.

Alice Schwarzer publishes *Der kleine Unterschied und seine großen Folgen* (The Small Difference and Its Big Consequences).

Austria

MAGNA: Feminismus: Kunst und Kreativität, Galerie Nächst St. Stephan, Vienna; curated by VALIE EXPORT

USA

The Year of the Woman, The Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York

An Exhibition of Black Women Artists, UCEN Art Gallery, University of California, Santa Barbara

Founding of the Los Angeles League for the Advancement of Lesbianism in the Arts (LALALA)

1975–76

Australia

It's Great to be an Australian Woman, Women's House, Brisbane; curated by The Women's Community Aid Association

1975–77

Italy

Magma: Rassegna internazionale di donne artiste, Castello Oldofredi, Brescia / Galerie Michaud, Florence / Palazza dei Diamanti, Ferrara / Museo di Castelvecchio, Verona; curated by Romana Loda

1976

Federal Republic of Germany

Frauen Machen Kunst, Galerie Magers, Bonn; curated by Philomene Magers

Italy

Intorno all'ideologia: Art and Feminism, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome; curated by Achille Bonito Oliva

Japan

Women Artists in Japanese Paintings, Yamatane Museum of Art, Tokyo

USA

Reflections of Lesbian Culture, The Women's Building, Los Angeles

African Women / African Art: An Exhibition of African Art Illustrating the Different Roles of Women in African Society, The African American Institute, New York; curated by Roslyn A. Walker

1976–77

USA

Women Artists: 1550–1950, Los Angeles County Museum of Art / The Brooklyn Museum, New York, et al.; curated by Anne Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin

1977

Federal Republic of Germany

Künstlerinnen International, 1877–1977: Frauen in der Kunst, NGBK and Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin

Mexico

Exposicion de obras plasticas con motivo del primer simposio mexicano centroamericano de investigacion sobre le mujer, Museo de Arte, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Mexico

Australia

The Women's Show, Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide; curated by The Women's Movement

1976

Federal Republic of Germany

Marital and family law is reformed, the so-called "housewife marriage," in which only the husband is employed and generates the family's income, is abolished, and the first women's shelter opens in Berlin.

Founding of the feminist newspaper *Courage*.

1976–85

The UN proclaims the UN Decade of Women.

1977

March 8 is declared International Women's Day.

Argentina

The Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, an organization of mothers whose children have disappeared, demonstrates weekly in front of the presidential palace.

Brazil, Uruguay

Divorce is legalized.

Federal Republic of Germany

Alice Schwarzer founds the magazine *Emma*.

USA

The Combahee River Collective formed by Black lesbian activists releases a groundbreaking identity politics statement.

Lucre Irigaray's *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un* (The Sex Which Is Not One) is published.

"We believe that sexual politics under patriarchy is as pervasive in Black women's lives as are the politics of class and race. We also often find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously."

Combahee River Collective

1978

Poland
Women's Art, Galeria PSP
 Jatki, Wrocław; curated by
 Natalia LL

1979

USA
 Judy Chicago, *The Dinner
 Party*, San Francisco Museum
 of Modern Art, San Francisco

1979–81

The Netherlands
*Feministische Kunst
 international*, Haags
 Gemeentemuseum Den
 Haag, The Hague / Stichting
 de Appel, Amsterdam

1980

Brazil
*American Women Artists
 1980*, Museu de Arte
 Contemporânea da
 Universidade de São Paulo;
 curated by Glenna Park, Mary
 Dritschel, and Regina Silveira

Great Britain
*Issue: Social Strategies by
 Women Artists*, ICA, London;
 curated by Lucy R. Lippard

New Zealand
Women in Communication,
 The National Art Gallery;
 curated by Louise Upton

USA
*Dialectics of Isolation: An
 Exhibition of Third World
 Women Artists of the
 United States*, A.I.R. Gallery,
 New York; curated by Ana
 Mendieta

1981

Federal Republic of Germany
Typisch Frau, Bonner
 Kunstverein and Galerie
 Magers; curated by
 Margarethe Jochimsen and
 Philomene Magers

35 Künstlerinnen aus Mexiko,
 Künstlerhaus Bethanien,
 Berlin

New Zealand
Mothers, The Wellington
 Women's Gallery, Wellington

1982

Australia
*The NSW Women and
 Arts Festival* takes place
 throughout New South
 Wales—with more than a
 thousand events

Great Britain
*Sense and Sensibility
 in Feminist Art Practice*,
 Midlands Art Group Gallery,
 Nottingham; curated by Carol
 Jones and Tina Keane

Canada
Art et Féminism, Musée d'art
 contemporain de Montréal
 / Ministère des Affaires
 Culturelles; curated by Marie
 Rose Arbour

USA
*The Revolutionary Power of
 Women's Laughter*, Protetch
 McNeill, New York; curated by
 Jo-Anna Isaak

1978

Zimbabwe
 Introduction of women's
 suffrage.

1979

Federal Republic of Germany
 The first Christopher Street
 Day (CSD) takes place in
 Berlin. Some 500 homosexual
 people parade through large
 parts of the city.

China
 The Chinese government
 introduces strict birth control
 measures.

Great Britain
 Margaret Thatcher becomes
 the first woman Prime
 Minister of Great Britain.

The UN General Assembly
 adopts the Convention on
 the Elimination of All Forms
 of Discrimination against
 Women (Women's Rights
 Convention).

1980

Denmark
 The second UN World
 Conference on Women takes
 place in Copenhagen.

Mexico
 The Centro de Apoyo a
 Mujeres Violadas, Asociación
 Civil in Mexico City is founded
 to combat the rape of women.

1981

Federal Republic of Germany
 The Transsexual Act is
 passed.

*Ain't I a Woman: Black Women
 and Feminism* by bell hooks is
 published.

1982

Colombia
 La Casa de la Mujer, a
 feminist group dedicated to
 the investigation of crimes
 against humanity, is founded.

Venezuela
 The Venezuelan Medical
 Association introduces a bill
 in Congress to decriminalize
 abortion. The majority of
 parliamentarians reject the
 proposal.

1985

Great Britain, USA

Difference: On Representation And Sexuality, ICA, London / Renaissance Society, Chicago; curated by Kate Linker

1983

New Zealand

Founding of Haeata, a collective of Māori women

Switzerland

La Femme et l'art, 1ère Triennale Le Landeron '83, Le Landeron

1984

German Democratic Republic

Founding of the feminist collective Exterra XX

Great Britain

Mona Hatoum, *Roadworks*, live action with Dr. Martens boots, performed for the group exhibition *Roadworks*, Brixton Art Gallery, London

Austria

Kunst mit Eigen-Sinn: Aktuelle Kunst von Frauen, Museum des 20. Jahrhunderts, Vienna; curated by Sylvia Eiblmayr, VALIE EXPORT, and Monika Prischl-Maier

USA

Founding of Guerilla Girls in New York

1986–88

Argentina

Mitominas I und II, Centro Cultural Recoleta, Buenos Aires; curated by Monique Altschul

1986–89

India

Through the Looking Glass; the exhibition tours throughout India; initiated by Nalini Malani, Madhavi Parekh, Nilima Sheikh, and Arpita Singh

1987

Australia

Feminist Narratives, George Paton Gallery, Melbourne

1989

Federal Republic of Germany

Art Beyond Barriers: The International Association of Women in the Arts, Frauenmuseum, Bonn

1984

India

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi is assassinated in New Delhi.

Cuba

A new labor regulation protects female workers and enables them to enjoy fair working conditions and maternity benefits.

Liechtenstein

Introduction of women's suffrage.

Venezuela

In order to provide free health care, the Casa de la Mujer is founded in Maracaibo.

Audre Lord's *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* is published.

1985

Federal Republic of Germany

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is ratified.

Brazil

President José Sarney founds the National Council for Women's Rights.

A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century by Donna J. Haraway is published.

1986

Federal Republic of Germany

The federal government establishes the Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs.

Black women found the cultural-political forum ADEFRA – Black Women in Germany.

1987

Argentina

Divorce is legalized.

Federal Republic of Germany

PorNO!—the anti-porn campaign of the magazine *Emma*—creates a furor.

South Korea

Disadvantages in the everyday working life of women are the order of the day despite the law on equality between men and women.

The Korean Women's Association United (KWAU), the umbrella organization of Korean women's organizations, is founded.

USA

The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, better known as ACT UP, is launched in New York City.

1988

South Africa

The Immorality Amendment Act is expanded to henceforth prohibit sex between women.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* is published.

1989

Denmark

Registered civil partnership is introduced.

German Democratic Republic

Women's groups found the Independent Women's Association (UFV).

Kimberlé W. Crenshaw publishes *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics*.

1990

Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic
Mujeres Artistas: Protagonistas de los Ochenta, Museo de Arte Contemporaneo de Puerto Rico, San Juan / Museo de las Casas Reales, Santo Domingo

1991

Australia
Frames of Reference: Aspects of Feminism and Art, Artspace, Sydney; curated by Sally Couacaud

VNS Matrix, *Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century*

China
Art Works of Hong Kong Women Artists '91, Hong Kong Institute for Promotion of Chinese Culture, Hong Kong

Indonesia, Malaysia
Exhibition of Woman Artists / Indonesia – Malaysia, Nuansa: Pameran Senilukis Wanita Indonesia – Malaysia, Gedung Pameran Seni Rupa, Depdikbud, Jakarta / National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur

USA

Six Contemporary Chinese Women Artists, The Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco; curated by Lucy Lim

Publication of the *Riot Grrrl Manifesto*

1992

Australia
Feminisms: An Exhibition of 27 Women Artists, Perth Institute for Contemporary Art, Perth; curated by Nikki Miller

New Zealand
 Founding of the collective *Pacific Sisters*

USA

Women's Laughter Ten Years After, Connecticut Center for the Arts, Middletown, et al.; curated by Jo-Anna Isaak

Founding of the Women's Action Coalition (WAC)

1993

Great Britain
Bad Girls, Institute of Contemporary Art London, London / The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; curated by Marcia Tucker

USA
The Subject of Rape, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, organized by students of the Independent Study Program of the Whitney Museum

1994

Federal Republic of Germany
Oh Boy! It's a Girl! Feminismen in der Kunst, Kunstverein München, Munich

China
Voices from the Edge: Paintings, Installation and Video Art by Ten Chinese Women Artists, Hanart TZ Gallery, Hong Kong; curated by Valerie C. Doran

France
Féminin – Masculin: Le sexe de l'art, Centre Pompidou, Paris

Third Wave of Feminisms: 1990 to 2000

1990

China
 The Chinese Women's Association publishes the results of a study showing that violence is prevalent in approximately one-third of all marriages in China and that 94 percent of the victims are women.

Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* is published.

1991

South Korea
 A reform of the Family Code leads to new regulations to protect women and ensure their equal rights.

Switzerland
 For the first time, women strike for equal rights.

1992

China
 The Women's Rights Protection Act is passed and expanded in 2005 to include the prohibition of sexual harassment.

Great Britain
 The first EuroPride festival takes place in London.

1993

The WHO removes homosexuality from the International List of Diseases.

Austria
 At the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the UN adopts a declaration on the elimination of violence against women.

South Africa
 The Association of Bisexuals, Gays, and Lesbians (ABIGALE) organizes the first Pride demo in Cape Town.

USA

Sense and Sensibility: Women Artists and Minimalism in the Nineties, The Museum of Modern Art, New York; curated by Lynn Zelevansky

Forces of Change: Artists of the Arab World, International Council for Women in the Arts, Lafayette / The National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC, et al.; curated by Salwa Mikdadi Nashashibi

USA, Great Britain

Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of 20th Century Art in, of, and from the Feminine, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston / National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC / White Chapel Gallery, London; curated by Catherine de Zegher

1995

Austria

WWWO : Wollongong World's Women Online, first Australian group exhibition by and with women on the Internet

In the Company of Women: 100 Years of Australian Women's Art from the Cruthers Collection, PICA, Perth; curated by Sarah Miller

Federal Republic of Germany

Cherchez la Femme, Kunsthaus Hamburg; curated by Ursula Panhams-Buhler

Estonia

Estfem. eesti feministliku kunsti näitus, Vaal Galerii, Linnagalerii / Mustpeade Galerii, Tallinn

Great Britain

Inside Out: Contemporary Women Artists of India, Bonington Gallery, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham / Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum, Cheltenham / Huddersfield Art Gallery, Middlesbrough, et al.; curated by Alison Lloyd

Austria

Auf den Leib geschrieben, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna; curated by Brigitte Huck and Monika Faber

Slovenia

The International Festival of Contemporary Arts – City of Women, Ljubljana

Stereo-Tip, Mestna Galerija, Ljubljana; curated by Alexander Bassin

Spain

Heresies: A Critique of Mechanisms, Centro Atlantico de Arte Moderno, Gran Canaria; curated by Jack Ben-Levi, Amelia Jones, and Jorge Luis Marzo

Thailand

Womanifesto I, Bangkok

Tradisexion, Concrete House, Nonthaburi

USA

Latin American Women Artists, 1915–1995, organized by the Milwaukee Art Museum and curated by Geraldine P. Biller

1996

Australia

Women Hold Up Half the Sky: The Orientation of Art in the Post-War Pacific, Monash University Gallery, Melbourne; curated by Roger Butler

Denmark

Dialogue with the Other, Kunsthallen Brandts, Odense; curated by Lene Burkhardt

NowHere, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk; curated by Laura Cottingham

Kroppen som Membran / Body as Membrane, Kunsthallen Brandts, Odense; curated by Kirsten Justesen and VALIE EXPORT

Japan

Gender Beyond Memory: The Works of Contemporary Women Artists, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Tokyo; curated by Michiko Kasahara

1995

China

From September 4 to 15, the fourth UN World Conference on Women is held in Beijing. It is described as a milestone for feminism.

1996

South Africa

Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is prohibited. The prohibition is enshrined in the constitution.

“... *BECAUSE* we are interested in creating non-heirarchical ways of being *AND* making music, friends, and scenes based on communication + understanding, instead of competition + good / bad categorizations ... *BECAUSE* we are angry at a society that tells us *Girl = Dumb, Girl = Bad, Girl = Weak. ...*”

Riot Grrrl Manifesto

1997

Australia

Difficult Territory: A Postfeminist Project, Artspace, Sidney; curated by Kristen Elsby

Federal Republic of Germany

Ein Stuck vom Himmel / Some Kind of Heaven, Kunsthalle Nürnberg, Nuremberg / South London Art Gallery, London

Japan

Floating Images of Women in Art History: From the Birth of Feminism Toward the Dissolution of Gender, Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Fine Arts, Tochigi

Mexico

Femenino Plural: Doce Artistas Valencianas / Femenino Plural: arte de mujeres al borde del tercer milenio, Generalitat Valenciana and Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City

1997–98

Federal Republic of Germany

16 Rippen – Internationale Künstlerinnen im Schwulen Museum, Schwules Museum, Berlin; curated by Barbara Strauss

1998

China

Century · Woman Art Exhibition, Art Gallery of Beijing International Art Palace / Museum of Contemporary Art Beijing / National Art Museum of China, Beijing, et al.

Taiwan

Mind and Spirit: Women's Art in Taiwan, Taipei Museum of Fine Art, Taipei

1999

China

Ma'am's Box, Para/Site Art Space, Hong Kong

Japan

Mito Annual '99: Private Room II: Photographs by a New Generation of Women in Japan, Contemporary Art Center, Art Tower Mito, Mito

Philippines

Women Imaging Women: Home, Body, Memory; Artists from Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, Cultural Center of the Philippines, Manila

2000

Federal Republic of Germany

Cross Female, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin; curated by Barbara Hoffer and Valeria Schulte-Fishedick

Austria

"Hers": Video als weibliches Terrain, Landesmuseum Joanneum Graz (today the Universalmuseum Joanneum); curated by Stella Rolig

Philippines

Who Owns Women's Bodies?, Cultural Center of the Philippines, Manila, et al.; curated by the Creative Collective Center Inc.

Hungary

Women's Art in Hungary 1960–2000, Ernst Museum, Budapest

Third Wave of Feminisms: 1990 to 2000

1997

Federal Republic of Germany

Domestic violence becomes a punishable offense.

1998

South Korea

A special law on intra-family sexual violence against women comes into force.

1999

The EU member states are obliged by the Amsterdam Treaty to promote equality between women and men.

2001

Iran

Dena: 12 Contemporary Iranian Women Artists, Museum of Contemporary Art, Isfahan, et al.; organized by the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Teheran

Macedonia

Capital and Gender, Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje; curated by Suzana Milevska

Austria

A Room of One's Own, Secession, Vienna, et al.; initiated by Carola Dertnig

Portugal

Frist Story: Women Building / New Narratives for the 21st Century, Galeria do Palácio, Porto; curated by Ute Meta Bauer

2002

Great Britain

Female Geographies, Austrian Cultural Forum, London; curated by Rosemarie Reitsamer

Russia

Femme Art: Women Painting in Russia XV–XX Century, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

South Korea

Women's Art Festival: The Second Women's Art Festival; East Asian Women and Herstories, Seoul

USA

Parallels and Intersections: Art/Women/California, 1950–2000, San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose; curated by Diana Burgess Fuller and Daniela Salvioni

2003

Indonesia

Girl Talk, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta; curated by Farah Wardani

Japan

Girl! Girl! Girl!, Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Tokyo

Borderline Cases: Women on the Borderlines, Gallery A.R.T., Tokyo; curated by Kim Sunhee

Austria

Mothers of Invention, mumok – Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna; curated by Carola Dertnig and Stefanie Seibold

Thailand

Procreation/Postcreation, Pridi Banomyong Institute, Bangkok; curated by Preenun Nana and Varsha Nair

Taiwan

From My Fingers: Living in the Technological Age | The First International Women's Art Festival in Taiwan, Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, Kaohsiung

2005

Japan

Life Actually: Museum of Tokyo Annual Exhibition, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; curated by Michiko Kasahara

Japanese Women Artists in Avant-Garde Movements, 1950–1975, Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Fine Arts, Utsunomiya

Spain

La Costilla Maldita / The Accursed Rib, Centro Atlantica de Arte Moderno, Gran Canaria; curated by Margarita Aizpuru, Omar Pascual, and Christina Padura

2006

India

The Female Hero: Amaterasu/Demeter/Isis/Freja/Sedna/Artemis/Coatlucue/Tara/Ishtar/Shakti, Lemongrasshopper, Ahmedabad

Austria

Her Position in Transition: International Women Art Festival, Vienna

Switzerland

Cooling Out: On the Paradox of Feminism, Kunsthaus Baselland, MuttENZ, et al.; curated by René Zechlin, Sabine Schaschl-Cooper, and Bettina Steinbrügge

It's Time for Action (There's No Option): About Feminism, Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich; curated by Heike Munder

2001

Federal Republic of Germany

Introduction of registered civil partnership.

The Netherlands

Legalization of same-sex marriage.

2002

South Africa

South Africa is the first country in Africa to allow homosexual couples to adopt children.

2003

Belgium

Introduction of same-sex marriage.

Mozambique

During an African Union summit in Maputo, the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, known as the Maputo Protocol, is adopted.

2004

South Africa

Passage of a law allowing transsexual people to change their gender.

2005

Federal Republic of Germany

Angela Merkel becomes Federal Chancellor. She is the first woman to hold this office.

Canada

Introduction of same-sex marriage.

Spain

Introduction of same-sex marriage.

2006

Federal Republic of Germany

The General Equal Treatment Act, also known as the Anti-Discrimination Act, comes into force.

India

The Gulabi Gang, an association of Indian women, is founded.

South Africa

Introduction of same-sex marriage through the Civil Union Act.

United Arab Emirates

Elections are held for the first time ever; at the same time, women's suffrage is introduced.

2007

Federal Republic of Germany
normal love / precarious sex. precarious work, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin; curated by Brigitta Kuster and Karin Michalski

Spain

Kiss Kiss Bang Bang: 45 años de arte y feminismo, Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao, Bilbao; curated by Xavier Arakistan

Cyberfem: Feminisms on the Electronic Landscape, Espai d'Art Contemporani de Castelló, Castellón de la Plana; curated by Ana Martínez-Collado

USA

WACK!: Art and the Feminist Revolution, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; curated by Connie Butler

Global Feminisms, Brooklyn Museum, New York; curated by Linda Nochlin and Maura Reilly

The Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art opens.

Shared Women, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles; curated by Eve Fowler, Emily Roysdon, and A. L. Steiner

Tiger by the Tail! Women Artists of India Transforming Culture, Women's Studies Research Center, Brandeis University, Waltham / Arthur Ross Gallery, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, et al.; organized by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations and the Women's Studies Research Center, Brandeis University

2008

Algeria

L'art au féminin, Musée d'Alger, Musée d'art moderne, Algiers

Federal Republic of Germany
HACK.Fem.EAST: Frauen und Technologie in Netzwerken, Kunstraum Kreuzberg / Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin; curated by Tatiana Bazzichelli and Gaia Novati

Female Trouble: Die Kamera als Spiegel und Bühne weiblicher Inszenierungen in Fotografie und Videokunst, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich

Canada

The F Word, Western Front, Vancouver; curated by Alissa Firth-Eagland and Candice Hopkins

New Zealand

We Are Unsuitable for Framing, Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa; curated by Charlotte Huddleston

Romania

Perspective, Anaid Art Gallery, Bucharest; curated by Olivia Nițș

Thailand

The X-Factor, Teo + Namfah Gallery, Bangkok; curated by Steven Pettifor

2008

The Lisbon Treaty commits the European Union to gender mainstreaming.

Federal Republic of Germany

The first issue of *Missy Magazine* is launched.

Wir Alphamädchen (We Alpha-Girls) by Meredith Haaf, Susanne Klingner, and Barbara Streidl is published.

South Africa

The South African soccer player and LGBTQIA+ activist Eudy Simelane is raped and murdered.

*"If gender equality was already a reality in our country,
we would not have to talk about it.
The reality, however, is that we have to keep fighting
for emancipation, in almost all areas of life."*

Meredith Haaf, Susanne Klingner, and Barbara Streidl

2009

Federal Republic of Germany

re.act.feminism: performance art of the 1960s and 1970s today, Akademie der Künste, Berlin; curated by Bettina Knaup and Beatrice E. Stammer

und jetzt: Künstlerinnen aus der GDR, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin; curated by Beatrice E. Stammer and Angelika Richter

France

elles@centrepompidou, Centre Pompidou, Paris; curated by Camille Morineau

The Netherlands

rebelles: kunst en feminisme 1969–2009, Museum voor Moderne Kunst Arnhem, Arnhem; curated by Mirjam Westen

Austria

Gender Check: Rollenbilder in der Kunst Osteuropas, mumok – Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna; curated by Bojana Pejić

Slovakia

Les Femmes Parlent, 1989–2009, Gandy Gallery, Bratislava

2009–10

USA

Reflections on the Electric Mirror: New Feminist Video, Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art in the Brooklyn Museum, New York; curated by Lauren Ross

2010

Australia

A Different Temporality: Aspects of Australian Feminist Art Practice 1975–1985, Monash University, Melbourne; curated by Kyla McFarlane

The View From Here: 19 Perspectives on Feminism, West Space, Melbourne; curated by Clare Rae and Victoria Bennett

Italy

DONNA: AVANGUARDIA FEMMINISTA NEGLI ANNI '70 dalla Sammlung Verbund di Vienna, Galleria nazionale d'arte moderna, Rome; curated by Gabriele Schor and Angelandreina Rorro

Austria

Griot Girlz: Feminist Art and the Black Atlantic, Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen, Innsbruck; curated by Ina Wudtke

USA

Modern Women: Women Artists at The Museum of Modern Art, The Museum of Modern Art, New York; curated by Cornelia Butler and Alexandra Schwartz

2011

Greece

Disquieting Muses, Contemporary Art Center of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki; curated by Syrago Tsiara

Korea

2011 Incheon Women Artists' Biennale: Terra Incognita, Incheon Culture & Arts Center, Incheon; curated by Jane Farver

Russia

The feminist punk rock band Pussy Riot is founded in Moscow. Among other things, it sharply criticizes the imperial policies of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Turkey

Dream and Reality: Modern and Contemporary Women Artists from Turkey, Istanbul Modern, Istanbul; curated by Fatmagül Berktaş, Levent Çalıkoğlu, Zeynep İnankur, and Burcu Pelvanoğlu

Fourth Wave of Feminisms: since 2008

2009

Afghanistan

A law obligates spouses to have conjugal intercourse for the “regulation of family life.”

Mexico, Argentina, Norway, Sweden

Introduction of same-sex marriage.

2010

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, or UN Women, is established.

The EU Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development 2010–2015 is presented.

Iceland, Portugal

Introduction of same-sex marriage.

Uganda

Genital mutilation of girls and women is banned but nevertheless continues in some regions of the country.

2010–11

Tunisia

In the Jasmine Revolution, women play a significant role in the protests against the government.

2011

Federal Republic of Germany

The first Gender Equality Report of the federal government is published: *New Pathways – Equal Opportunities: Gender Equality over Women's and Men's Life Courses*.

2012

Australia

Contemporary Australia: Women, Queensland Art Gallery: Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane; curated by Julie Ewington

Feminage – The Logic of Feminist Collage, The Cross Art Projects, Sydney; curated by Jo Holder

Israel

Matronita: Jewish Feminist Art, Museum of Art, Ein Harod; curated by Dvora Liss and David Sperber

Japan

Women In-Between: Asian Women Artists 1984–2012, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Okinawa / Prefectural Museum & Art Museum, Tochigi, et al.; curated by Reiko Kokatsu, Toshiko Rawanchaikul, and Tomomichi Nakao

Spain

Genealogías feministas en el arte español: 1960–2010, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León, León; curated by Patricia Mayayo and Juan Vicente Aliaga

2013

Argentina

Recuperar la Memoria: Experiencias feministas desde el Arte, Argentina y España, Centro Cultural de España, Buenos Aires; curated by Juan Aliaga and María Laura Rosa

Australia

BACKFLIP: Feminism and Humour in Contemporary Art, Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne; curated by Laura Castagnini

India

Mapping Gender: Bodies and Sexualities in Contemporary Art Across the Global South, School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

The Netherlands

Female Power: Matriarchy, Spirituality & Utopia, Museum voor Moderne Kunst Arnhem, Arnhem; curated by Mirjam Weston

Norway

The Beginning Is Always Today: Scandinavian Feminist Art from the Last 20 Years, SKMU Sørlandets Kunstmuseum, Kristiansand; curated by Karen Hindsbo

Romania

GOOD GIRLS: memory, desire, power, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucharest; curated by Bojana Pejić and Olivia Nițș

Russia

International Women's Day—Feminism: From Avant-Garde to the Present, Manezh Museum and Exhibition Centre, Moscow; curated by Natalya Kamenetskaya

USA

She Who Tells a Story: Women Photographers from Iran and the Arab World, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

2013–14

Federal Republic of Germany

In Order to Join: Politisch in einem historischen Moment, Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach; curated by Swapnaa Tamhane and Susanne Titz

Fourth Wave of Feminisms: since 2008

2012

Bangladesh

A devastating fire occurs in a textile factory, killing more than a hundred workers, mainly women.

Denmark

Introduction of same-sex marriage.

India

The twenty-three-year-old Jyoti Singh Pandey is raped by several men in Delhi; she dies of her injuries. In a wave of protests, demonstrators demand an end to rape and femicide.

Nigeria

The author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie delivers her TEDx Talk: "We Should All Be Feminists."

2013

A joint declaration on combating and preventing violence against women and girls is presented at the 57th session of the UN Commission on Women.

Federal Republic of Germany

The first German Diversity Day takes place.

USA

The Black Lives Matter movement is founded.

2013–14

England, Wales, Scotland

Introduction of same-sex marriage.

2014

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence enters into force.

Brazil

With several million participants, the hitherto largest gay pride parade in the world takes place in São Paulo.

Israel

Shortly after the Gaza War, the Women Wage Peace movement is launched.

2016

2015

Federal Republic of Germany

Feminismen, Nordstern Videokunstzentrum, Gelsenkirchen; curated by Marius Babias and Kathrin Becker

Poland

Love at the Edge, Galeria Arsenal, Białystok; curated by Denise Carvalho and Monika Szweczyk

South Korea

East Asia Feminism: FANTasia, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul

Argentina

Mitominas treinta años después, Recoleta Cultural Art Center, Buenos Aires

Federal Republic of Germany

Anohni—My Truth: James Elaine—Peter Hujar—Kazuo Ohno, Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Bielefeld; curated by Friedrich Meschede

New Zealand

The Dowse Art Museum organizes *Four Waves of Feminism*, a symposium on historical feminist art and research and on historical feminist activism.

2017

USA

Founding of the Feminist Art Coalition (FAC)

We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85, Brooklyn Museum, New York; curated by Catherine Morris and Rujeko Hockley

USA, Brazil

Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles / Pinacoteca de São Paulo, São Paulo, et al.; curated by Cecilia Fajardo-Hill and Andrea Giunta

2015

Argentina

The movement and the associated hashtag *#Niunamernos* are born out of protest against the murder of women.

Federal Republic of Germany

Under the hashtag *#Aufschrei* (Outcry), women write about their experiences with sexism and assault. The hashtag goes viral and triggers numerous controversies.

China

In late October, the Chinese government abolishes the one-child policy and henceforth allows every couple to have two children.

Saudi Arabia

Women are admitted for the first time to local elections.

USA

Same-sex marriage is now introduced in all states.

The United Nations General Assembly in New York presents the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's, and Adolescents' Health 2016–2030.

2016

Argentina

Rally with tens of thousands of demonstrators on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in Buenos Aires.

Poland

Under the slogan *#czarnyprotest* (Black Protest), several thousand demonstrators gather to successfully defeat the bill banning abortion.

South Korea

The murder of a twenty-three-year-old woman by a thirty-four-year-old man triggers a wave of protests.

2017

Federal Republic of Germany, Austria

In late June, the law introducing the right to marry persons of the same sex is passed.

Iran

Vida Movahed takes off her headscarf in public to protest the hijab law.

Turkey

In July, more than seventy feminist organizations take part in the Justice March from Ankara to Istanbul. They protest against the repressive policies of the Turkish government.

USA

#MeToo goes viral. The hashtag was created by the American activist Tarana Burke as early as 2006 to empower Black women who had experienced sexual violence.

At the Women's March in Washington, DC, on January 21, some 500,000 people demonstrate against, among other things, the reactionary and misogynistic policies of US President Donald Trump.

“The feminism we have in mind recognizes that it must respond to a crisis of epochal proportions: plummeting living standards and looming ecological disaster; rampaging wars and intensified dispossession; mass migrations met with barbed wire; emboldened racism and xenophobia; and the reversal of hard-won rights—both social and political.”

Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto

2018

Great Britain

Still I Rise: Feminisms, Gender, Resistance, Act 1, Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham; curated by Irene Aristizábal, Rosie Cooper, and Cédric Fauq in collaboration with Alba Colomo, Phoebe Cripps, Carolina Rito, and Mercè Santos

2019

Australia

New Woman, Museum of Brisbane, Brisbane; curated by Miranda Hine

Brazil

Women's Histories: Artists Before 1900, Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand, São Paulo; curated by Julia Bryan-Wilson, Lilia Schwarcz, and Mariana Leme

Feminist Histories: Artists After 2000, Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand, São Paulo; curated by Isabella Rjeille

Fourth Wave of Feminisms: since 2008

2018

Federal Republic of Germany

Following the example of the Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, students take to the streets on Fridays during school hours to protest for a just and sustainable climate policy. The Fridays For Future movement is born.

The Civil Status Act is amended. “Diverse” can now be selected in the birth register in addition to male and female.

Pakistan

A law to protect transgender people is passed.

Saudi Arabia

The women's rights activist Ludschain al-Hathloul publicly opposes the ban on women driving in Saudi Arabia and is arrested. After more than a thousand days in custody, she is released on parole.

Spain

Approximately 5 million people take part in a nationwide general strike advocating equal rights for women.

South Korea

Against the backdrop of numerous sexual assaults in the workplace, the largest feminist demonstration in the country's history takes place in Seoul.

USA

Democratic congresswomen dress in suffragette white on the occasion of Donald Trump's address to the nation on February 5, commemorating the introduction of women's suffrage 100 years before.

2019

Federal Republic of Germany

Feminist performances take place on Rosa-Luxembourg-Platz in Berlin, with which the artists criticize Paragraph 219a of the German Criminal Code, which bans advertising for abortions, and call for its abolition.

Ecuador

Introduction of same-sex marriage.

India

Almost 5 million women form a Women's Wall in the southern Indian city of Kerala, a human chain stretching 385 miles, thus setting an example for equal rights for women.

A Rainbow Carnival in Kolkata is organized to promote greater acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Pakistan

For the first time, a transgender woman is appointed Minister of Human Rights.

Switzerland

Under the hashtags *#WomenStrike* and *#GrèvedesFemmes*, people demonstrate against unequal pay and unfair working conditions.

Chile

The performance by LASTESIS, *Un violador en tu camino* (A Rapist in Your Path), goes viral and becomes a mass phenomenon.

Switzerland

Producing Futures: An Exhibition on Post-Cyber-Feminisms, Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich; curated by Heike Munder

USA

I Am ... Contemporary Women Artists of Africa, Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington, DC

2019–20

Great Britain

Nothing Less! 100 Years of Women's Suffrage, Austrian Cultural Forum, London; curated by Julia Hartmann and Aline Lara Rezende

2020

Federal Republic of Germany, Denmark

Fantastische Frauen, Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Frankfurt am Main, in cooperation with the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk

Federal Republic of Germany

2020: Blumensprengung; Künstlerinnen der Sammlung Ludwig, Ludwig Forum for International Art, Aachen

USA

Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists, Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; curated by Jill Ahlberg Yohe and Teri Greeves

South Korea

The abortion ban is declared unconstitutional.

"My life is not your porn": with this statement, tens of thousands of women protest against the online dissemination of intimate images through secretly installed mini cameras, including in public toilets.

Nancy Fraser, Tithi Bhattacharya, and Cinzia Arruzza publish *Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto*.

2019–20

In many places around the world, domestic or gender-based violence against women increases significantly during the coronavirus pandemic and associated lockdowns.

2020

Afghanistan

In August, President Ashraf Ghani announces his intention to create a High Council for Women.

Argentina

The Marea Verde movement successfully demonstrates against the country's strict abortion laws. Abortions are legalized.

Belarus

In major cities, such as Minsk, there are mass protests against President Alexander Lukashenko, who has ruled the country dictatorially for twenty-six years. In the course of this, Olga Shparaga publishes *The Face of the Revolution Is Female: The Case of Belarus*.

Costa Rica

Introduction of same-sex marriage.

New Zealand

In New Zealand, abortion had been permitted only on a restricted basis since the 1970s but is now legalized.

The Pink Line: Journeys Across the World's Queer Frontiers by Mark Gevisser is published.

Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto by Legacy Russel is published.

*“For there is always light, if only we’re brave enough to see it.
If only we’re brave enough to be it.”*

Amanda Gorman

2021

Federal Republic of Germany

zwischen system & intuition:
Konkrete Künstlerinnen,
Kunstmuseum Stuttgart,
Stuttgart; curated by Eva-
Marina Froitzheim

“Wir kämpfen” / Nosotras
Luchamos: Aktionen
und Widerstand
lateinamerikanischer
Frauenkollektive gegen
Patriarchat, Ungleichheit und
Gewalt gegen Frauen”, Karne
Kunst, Berlin

New Zealand

Manpower: Myths of
Masculinity, Auckland
Art Gallery, Toi o Tāmaki,
Auckland; curated by Sophie
Matthiesson

South Africa

Feminism Ya Mang–Feminism
Yethu–Feminism Yani,
Goethe-Institut Johannesburg

USA

Born in Flames: Feminist
Futures, The Bronx Museum
of the Arts, New York; curated
by Jasmine Wahi, Holly Block
Curator of Social Justice

New Time: Art and Feminisms
in the 21st Century, University
of California, Berkeley Art
Museum & Pacific Film
Archive, Berkeley; curated by
Apsara DiQuinzio and Claire
Frost

2020–21

Australia

Know My Name: Australian
Women Artists 1900 to Now,
National Gallery of Australia,
Canberra; curated by Deborah
Hart and Elspeth Pitt

Fourth Wave of Feminisms: since 2008

2021

Afghanistan

Following the withdrawal of
US troops, the Taliban gain
control of the country on
August 30. Women's rights are
significantly restricted.

Australia

Some 100,000 people gather
in a total of 40 cities to protest
against sexual violence.

Federal Republic of Germany

The Politician Tessa Ganserer
(Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen)
is the first member of the
German Bundestag to come
out publicly as a transgender
woman.

Turkey

Turkey withdraws from the
Istanbul Convention on the
Protection of Women against
Violence.

USA

At the inauguration of US
President Joe Biden on
January 20, Amanda Gorman
recites her poem “The Hill We
Climb.”

November 25, 2021, is
International Day for the
Elimination of Violence
against Women.

Wider die Grausamkeit:
Für einen feministischen
und dekolonialen Weg by
Rita Segato is published
for the first time in German
translation.

Die Erschöpfung der
Frauen: Wider die weibliche
Verfügbarkeit by Franziska
Schutzbach is published.

2021–22

Federal Republic of Germany
Here We Are! Frauen im Design 1900–heute, Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein; curated by Susanne Graner, Viviane Stappmanns, and Nina Steinmüller

Mutter!. Kunsthalle Mannheim in collaboration with the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk; curated by Marie Laurberg, Kirsten Degel, and Johan Holten

New Zealand
Malcolm Ross, Fiona Clark, Grant Lingard: Looking at Men, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland; curated by Tamsyn Bayliss, Ron Brownson, and Caroline McBride

2022

Denmark
WOMEN AND CHANGE, Arken Museum of Modern Art, Ishøj

Malta
The Ordinary Lives of Women, Spazju Kreattiv, Valletta; curated by Elise Billiard Pisani and Margerita Pulè

New Zealand
Declaration: A Pacific Feminist Agenda, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland; curated by Ane Tonga

Austria
Online festival: *Unruly Thoughts: On Feminisms and Beyond*

Saudi Arabia
The Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale takes place, the first ever biennial in Saudi Arabia in which both men and women artists are intensively involved.

South Africa
When Rain Clouds Gather: Black South African Women Artists, 1940–2000, Norval Foundation, Cape Town; curated by Portia Malatjie and Nontobeko Ntombela

USA
Wo/Manhouse 2022 50th Anniversary, Through the Flower Art Space, Belen; organized by Judy Chicago and Nancy Youdelman

United Arab Emirates
As We Gaze Upon Her, Warehouse421, Abu Dhabi; curated by the Banat Collective

2022

Federal Republic of Germany
The new German government under Chancellor Olaf Scholz announces the rapid abolition of Paragraph 219a of the German Criminal Code.

Demonstrators gather in Berlin to protest sexualized violence perpetrated against women and girls by Russian soldiers in the wake of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

Guatemala
"We decide": in front of the Congress in Guatemala City, numerous demonstrators gather to protest against the tightened legislation against abortion.

Turkey
People demonstrate in large numbers in Istanbul for an impending ban against the leading Turk women's rights organization *We Will Stop Femicide*.

USA
"LEGAL ABORTION ONCE AND FOR ALL": tens of thousands of people demonstrate to preserve the right to abortion and against the Supreme Court's decision to overturn the landmark *Roe v. Wade* ruling.

In June 2022 this ruling was rescinded by the Supreme Court.

AUTHORS

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie anchored feminism in popular culture with her TED Talk “We Should All Be Feminists.” Her publications include *Blue Hibiscus* (2003), *Americanah* (2013), most recently *Dear Ijeawele, or a Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions* (2017), and *Notes On Grief* (2021). She was born in Nigeria in 1977 and now lives in Lagos and the United States.

Muriel Aichberger is a freelance speaker, diversity trainer, and expert on gender and sexual diversity. He works with a wide variety of people, imparting knowledge about diversity and respectful interaction at schools, supporting LGBTQIA+ associations through lectures on queer history and culture, holding seminars at universities, and advising companies on the topics of antidiscrimination and inclusive communication.

Nobuko Anan is a professor in the Faculty of Foreign Language Studies at Kansai University, Japan. She specializes in theater and performance from perspectives of gender and sexuality theories. She is the author of *Contemporary Japanese Women's Theatre and Visual Arts: Performing Girls' Aesthetics* (Palgrave, 2016) and articles in many anthologies and journals such as *TDR* and *Theatre Research International*. She received her PhD in theater and performance at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Andreas Beitin studied art history, applied cultural studies, and modern and contemporary history. After receiving his doctorate, he worked at the ZKM | Museum of Contemporary Art Karlsruhe, which he took over as director in 2010. He conceives internationally exhibitions, publishes scholarly texts, gives lectures, and is a member of various art juries and academic committees. He has received several awards for his curatorial work. From 2016 to 2019, he was director of the Ludwig Forum for International Art in Aachen. Since 2019 he has been director of the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg.

Nikita Yingqian Cai is currently the deputy director and chief curator of Guangdong Times Museum, China. She has curated numerous exhibitions including solo exhibitions with Jiang Zhi (2012), Roman Ondák (2015), and Omer Fast (2018), as well as thematic exhibitions such as *Times Heterotopia Trilogy* (2011, 2014, 2017) and *Neither Black/Red/Yellow Nor Woman* (2019). She was awarded the Asian Cultural Council Fellowship in 2019.

Katy Deepwell is a professor of contemporary art, theory, and criticism at Middlesex University, London. She founded and edited *n.paradoxa: international feminist art journal* (1998–2017, <https://nparadoxa.com>) and KT press (1998–ongoing, <https://www.ktpress.co.uk>). Recent books include *Feminist Art Activisms and Artivisms* (Valiz, 2020), *All-Women Art Spaces in Europe in the Long 1970s* (Liverpool University Press, 2018, with A. Jakubowska), and *50 Feminist Art Manifestos* (KT:press, 2022).

Sonja Eismann is co-founder and editor of *Missy Magazine* and lives in Berlin. She writes, lectures, researches, and teaches on topics related to feminism, fashion, and (pop) culture. She is the author and editor of various books, including *Hot Topic: Popfeminismus heute* (2007), *absolute fashion* (2012), *Ene Mene Missy: Die Superkräfte des Feminismus* (2016), and *Wie siehst du denn aus? Warum es normal nicht gibt* (2020).

Regine Epp studied art history and German language and literature in Bonn, Cologne, and Basel. At the Museum Ludwig, Cologne, she supported the realization of the collection catalogue (2018) and worked in the editorial office of Taschen Verlag. Now at the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, first as a curatorial assistant and then as a junior curator, she has been working on exhibition and publication projects such as *On Everyone's Lips: From Pieter Bruegel to Cindy Sherman* (2020), *Oil: Beauty and Horror of the Petrol Age* (2021), *Power! Light!* (2021), and *Empowerment* (2022).

Katharina Fink is an editor, curator, and writer. Together with Nadine Siegert, she runs iwalewabooks, a publishing house for art and discourse, based in South Africa and in Germany. At Iwalewaha, University of Bayreuth, a space for the production and discussion of contemporary and modern art with a focus on Africa and the diaspora, she heads the areas of programming and education. Furthermore, she is an associate researcher at the Wits Centre for Diversity Studies (WiCDS), Witwatersrand.

Andrea Giunta is a professor of Latin American and modern and contemporary art at Buenos Aires University and a principal researcher at the National Scientific and Technical Research Council of Argentina. She was co-curator of *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1906–1985* (Hammer Museum, Brooklyn Museum, Pinacoteca de São Paulo, 2017–18) and chief curator of *Bienal 12. Feminine(s): Visualities, Actions, Affects* (Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2020). She is the author of *Rethinking Everything* (delpire&co, Paris, 2021) and *The Political Body: Stories on Art, Feminism, and Emancipation in Latin America* (University of California Press, forthcoming).

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Birgit Heller is a professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Vienna (since 1999) and president of the Austrian Society for the Study of Religions. Her main research interests include: topics in systematic-comparative religious studies (such as dying, death, and mourning, conceptions of the afterlife), gender studies, Hindu religions, and practice-oriented religious studies (interreligious and spiritual dimensions of palliative care).

Çağla İlk works in theory and practice at the intersection of architecture, visual art, and performance. Since May 2020 she has co-directed the Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden as academic director together with Misal Adnan Yıldız. İlk has curated numerous exhibitions, most recently serving as co-curator of the 6th Ural Biennial in Yekaterinburg (2021) and chief curator of the Studio Bosphorus Festival. Between 2012 and 2020, İlk was a dramaturge and curator at Maxim Gorki Theater, Berlin, where she was responsible for projects and festivals that combined the performing, performative, and visual arts.

Martha Kazungu is a Ugandan curator and art historian. She holds a Master of Arts in African verbal and visual arts with a focus on curating and media in Africa from the University of Bayreuth. Kazungu is an alumnus of prestigious curatorial and writers' workshops and seminars, among others, in Germany, South Africa, Ethiopia, and Ghana. In 2021, Kazungu founded the Njabala Foundation in Uganda, which works toward creating safe spaces for women artists to interact through dialogue and exhibitions. She is currently living in Hamburg and working at the MARKK Museum am Rothenbaum.

Larissa Kikol studied theater dramaturgy at Weißensee Academy of Art in Berlin and earned her doctorate at Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design (HfG). She is a freelance art critic and art scholar and writes for *Die Zeit*, *art – Das Kunstmagazin*, *Kunstzeitung*, and *Monopol Online*, among others. She is the editor of several thematic volumes of the journal *Kunstforum International* (most recently *Kunst = Spiel! Childlike and Playful as the Engine of Art*, 2021). In 2016, she won the international competition Talents of the C/O Amerikahaus Berlin in the field of art criticism.

Bettina Knaup, freelance curator and author, has curated numerous international festivals and exhibitions, including the archive and performance project *re.act.feminism*, which toured Europe from 2008 to 2013. She regularly publishes, teaches, and works with artists and curators. Based on her PhD dissertation “performing (as) waste” (2021) at the University of Roehampton, London, she is currently developing a collaborative project on waste infrastructures.

Katharina Koch studied European ethnology, cultural studies, and gender studies in Berlin and received her doctorate in 2016. Her main topics are feminisms, intersectionality, contemporary art, and art and activism in public space. Since 2012 she has been the artistic director of alpha nova & galerie futura in Berlin. She has curated numerous art projects. From 2019 to 2023 she is working as co-curator of the international exhibition and publication project *Empowerment* at the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg.

Annekathrin Kohout studied German language and literature at the Technical University of Dresden as well as art history and media theory at Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design (HfG). In addition to her work as a freelance writer, she is the co-publisher and editor of the journal *POP: Kultur und Kritik* and a research assistant at the University of Siegen, where she completed her doctorate on the nerd as a social figure in 2021. She is the co-editor of the book series *Digitale Bildkulturen* (Digital Image Cultures) published by Verlag Klaus Wagenbach.

Elke Krasny is a professor of art and education at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. As a feminist cultural theorist, urban researcher, and curator, she conducts research on issues of ecological and social justice, as well as on the politics of memory in architecture, art, and urbanism. Her exhibition *Hands-On Urbanism: The Right to Green* was shown at the Architekturzentrum Vienna and in 2012 at the Architecture Biennale in Venice. Most recently she published the book *Living with an Infected Planet: Covid-19 Feminism and the Global Frontline of Care*.

Ingrid Kurz-Scherf is professor emeritus (since April 2015) of political science with a focus on “politics and gender relations” in the Institute of Political Science at Philipps University of Marburg and co-editor and author of publications in the book series *Arbeit, Demokratie, Geschlecht* (Work, Democracy, Gender) published by Verlag Westfälisches Dampfboot. She is currently working on feminism as critical theory and resistant practice and is preparing a book publication on the future of labor.

Portia Malatjie is a senior lecturer in visual cultures at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town. She is the adjunct curator of Africa and African Diaspora at Tate Modern and holds a PhD in visual cultures from Goldsmiths, University of London. She is a 2021 American Council of Learned Societies' African Humanities Fellow. Her exhibition *When Rain Clouds Gather: Black South African Women Artists, 1940–2000* (2022, co-curated with Nontobeko Ntombela), brings together works of over forty Black South African women modernists.

Marsha Meskimmon is a professor of transnational art and feminisms, and the director of the Institute of Advanced Studies at Loughborough University. Her research explores recent and contemporary art practices through decolonizing, eco-critical feminist thinking. She has published a number of books and articles in the field, including *Women Making Art: History, Subjectivity, Aesthetics* (2003) and *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination* (2010), and is currently writing a trilogy, *Transnational Feminism and the Arts* for Routledge.

Catherine Morris is Sackler Senior Curator at the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum, New York, where she has (co) curated numerous projects since 2009, including the exhibition series *A Year of Yes: Reimagining Feminism* at the Brooklyn Museum (2016–18) on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Sackler Center. Previously, Morris worked as an independent curator and organized, among other things, the exhibition *Decoys, Complexes, and Triggers: Feminism and Land Art in the 1970s* (SculptureCenter, New York, 2008). Her upcoming projects include the exhibition *Elizabeth Catlett: A Revolutionary Artist and All That It Implies*.

Anisha Gupta Müller, artist and activist, specializes in feminist body practices. She graduated from the Art in Context program at Berlin University of the Arts, during which time she led empowerment workshops and founded the weekly dance fitness class *FemmeFitness*. Her projects question body politics with the aim of creating safe spaces in the spirit of an intersectional agenda. In addition to doing lectures, she organizes workshops, including at the Berlin Feminist Film Week.

Amruta Nemivant completed her MA History of Art from University of York. She began her career in the Research and Archiving Department of Osian's Art Auctions, Mumbai, and later joined Bodhi Art Gallery as a curator. Nemivant also worked as a studio manager for the artists Hema and Chintan Upadhyay and later joined Project 88, a Mumbai-based gallery as their associate director. She is currently working at the cultural department of Goethe-Institut Mumbai focusing on different cultural projects, especially their visual arts program.

Rena Onat is an art and media scholar. She positions herself as a German-Turkish femme of color. She is interested in queer of color critique in art and visual culture. She is currently working on her PhD on the topic "Orientations: Queer Artists of Color and Negotiations of Disidentification, Survival and (Un-)Archiving in the German Context" (University of Oldenburg). One of her main areas of work is anti-discrimination in the context of art and higher education. She is currently working as a women's representative at Weißensee Academy of Art in Berlin.

Martina Pachmanová is an associate professor and the head of the Department of Theory and History of Art at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague (www.umprum.cz). As a researcher, writer, and curator, she specializes in gender, sexual politics, and feminism in modern, postwar, and contemporary art and visual culture. She is an author, editor, and co-editor of numerous books and exhibition catalogues, including monographs of forgotten Czech female modernists related to their retrospective exhibitions.

Maque Pereyra is a Berlin-based multidisciplinary artist, psychologist, and pleasure/spiritual activist. In 2018, she finished the MA SoDA program at the Inter-University Centre for Dance Berlin (HZT). She was a recipient of a DAAD scholarship in the field of performing arts from 2016 to 2018. In her home country, Bolivia, she obtained a BA degree in psychology in 2014. Her artistic work (performances, videos, workshops, etc.) has been awarded and presented internationally on platforms such as *Tanztage Berlin*, *Tanzquartier Wien* in Vienna, and *Haus der Kulturen der Welt* in Berlin. The focus of her work is on healing, empowerment through pleasure and spiritual activism, decolonial practices, and knowledge production/reflection with and from the body.

Maura Reilly, PhD, is the director of the Zimmerli Art Museum. She is the founding curator of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum.

Elske Rosenfeld is an artist, author, and cultural worker researching the history of dissidence in Eastern Europe and the events of 1989–90. Based on historical documents and archives, she creates contexts and constellations in which these histories can become present. In her current artistic research project, *A Vocabulary of Revolutionary Gestures*, she investigates the body as a venue and archive of political events.

Uta Ruhkamp is a senior curator at the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg. She studied art history, Romance philology, and ethnology in Aachen, Florence, and Münster. In 2009, she completed her doctorate on the topic of the representational portrait in painting after 1945 in England and the USA. Since 2010 she has continuously supervised and curated international thematic exhibitions at the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, as well as monographic projects with a special focus on global, political, and female positions. She is the author and editor of numerous texts and publications.

Reyhan Şahin aka “Lady Bitch Ray” is a language, migration, Islam, and racism researcher, educational consultant, rapper, activist, performance artist, fashion designer, and book author. In 2012, she received her doctorate with a semiotic thesis on the system of meanings of the Muslim headscarf and Islamic feminism in Germany, which was honored by the German Studies Award in 2013. She is currently conducting research on the new right, right-wing extremism, racism, anti-Semitism, Muslimophobia, intersectionality, and gender.

Gabriele Schor is the founding director and curator of the SAMMLUNG VERBUND, which was established in 2004 by the energy company VERBUND. She coined the term “Feminist Avant-Garde,” and the exhibition of the same name has been touring Europe since 2010, followed by the catalogue *Feminist Avant-Garde: Art of the 1970s* from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND in 2015. She has published numerous monographs, including on Birgit Jürgenssen (2009), Cindy Sherman (2012), Francesca Woodman (2014), and Louise Lawler (2018).

Igor Moraes Simões is a professor of history, theory, and art criticism, as well as methodology and practice in art teaching, at the Universidade Estadual do Rio Grande do Sul (UERGS) in Porto Alegre. His work explores articulations between histories of art and racialization in Brazilian art. He is a member of the curatorial board at Museu de Arte Contemporânea of the University of São Paulo. He is currently curating the exhibition *Dos Brasis – arte e pensamento negro*.

Jenni Sorkin is a professor of the history of art and architecture at University of California, Santa Barbara. She writes on the intersections between gender, material culture, and contemporary art, working primarily on women artists and underrepresented media. Her books include: *Live Form: Women, Ceramics and Community* (University of Chicago Press, 2016), *Revolution in the Making: Abstract Sculpture by Women Artists, 1947–2016* (Skira, 2016), and *Art in California* (Thames & Hudson, 2021).

Dino Steinhof studied fine arts at the Academy of Fine Arts Münster and the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. He completed the postgraduate master’s program “Art in Context” at Berlin University of the Arts. For many years he worked as an assistant to the artist Ayşe Erkmen. Since 2021 he has been a curatorial assistant at the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, where he is involved in various exhibitions, including *True Pictures? LaToya Ruby Frazier, Checkpoint: Border Views from Korea*, and *Empowerment*.

Amy Tobin is an assistant professor in the Department of History of Art, University of Cambridge, and a curator of Contemporary Programmes at Kettle’s Yard, where she realized the exhibition *Linderism* about the British woman artist Linder in 2020. She has published her research on British and North American art in numerous academic journals and books. In 2021–21, she has a Leverhulme Research Fellowship to work on a new project on art and feminist sisterhood.

Margarita Tsomou is a cultural scientist and professor of contemporary theater practice at the Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences. She is also a curator of theory and discourse at HAU – Hebbel am Ufer in Berlin and is part of the founding and editorial team of the pop feminist journal *Missy Magazine*. Examples of her curatorial work include the series *Burning Futures: On Ecologies of Existence* at HAU – Hebbel am Ufer or the *Apatride Society* event series in Paul B. Preciado’s discursive program at documenta 14.

Caroline Vercoe teaches art history at the University of Auckland. She is the first Pacific woman to graduate with a PhD in art history from the University of Auckland. She specializes in contemporary Pacific art and performance art, with a particular interest in issues of race, gender, and representation, and has been teaching, curating, and researching in these areas for over twenty years. She has published in academic journals and in many other publications, including *In Pursuit of Venus, Gauguin in Polynesia*, *Pacific Art Niu Sila*, *Oxford Bibliographies*, and *One Day Sculpture*.

Sasha Su-Ling Welland is a professor of gender, women, and sexuality studies at the University of Washington in Seattle. She is the author of *A Thousand Miles of Dreams: The Journeys of Two Chinese Sisters* (2006) and *Experimental Beijing: Gender and Globalization in Chinese Contemporary Art* (2018). Her writing has appeared in *Journal of Visual Culture*, *positions: asia critique*, and *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, among other publication venues. She also curated the exhibit *Cruel/Loving Bodies* in Beijing, Shanghai, and Hong Kong.

Oliver Zybok is the director of the Overbeck-Gesellschaft, Lübeck, and since 2022 the administrator of the estate of Hans Rogalla, Karlsruhe, 1917–20. He is a visiting professor at the Kunstakademie Münster, since 2016 chief curator of the St. Petri-Universitätskirche zu Lübeck, and a member of the board of trustees of the Tichy Ocean Foundation in Zurich/Prague. Since 2004 he has been a guest editor for thematic volumes of the magazine *Kunstforum International* (including *Public Image, The fourth wave?! Feminism Today, This is Not a Love Song: On the Relationship between Art and Music*).

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LIN Tianmiao
Wu Tsang
Kawita Vatanajyankur
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with Faith Wilson & Olive Wilson
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Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg
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