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Issue 20 (April 2008)

Shared and/or Divided Times: Questions and Answers

Gisela Weimann

Opening Remarks at the Symposium 'Geteilte Zeit: Kunstgeschichte als Internationaler Dialog / Shared Times: Art History as International Dialogue', at the European Academy in Berlin, 25 - 28 March 2008. This conference was organised to launch the book Gisela Weimann (ed.) Geteilte Zeit: Fragen und Antworten *(Edition Eselsweg, 2008).*

Translation: Helen Carter

The book *Geteilte Zeit: Fragen und Antworten* concerns seven Berlin-based women artists, all born between 1940 and 1950, who document and comment on work they have produced since the 1970s in dialogue with other women active in the fields of culture, science and politics. They are: Christa Biederbick, Karin Fleischer, Gisela Genthner, Sarah Haffner, Heide Pawelzik, Regina Roskoden and Gisela Weimann.

The main aim of this book is to feature the work and biography of these seven women artists. Each artist presents typical works or groups of work from various phases in her professional life whether figurative or abstract painting and sculpture, photography and film, installations, conceptual art, sound art, interdisciplinary projects or the use of new media. The pages on each indicate the spectrum of contemporary forms of expression over the last decade and the development of the works in question.

The point of departure for this retrospective inquiry is the time they spent as students at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Berlin, now the Berlin University of the Arts, between 1965 and 1975. Their professors were members of an artistic

circle which included Hermann Bachmann, Alexander Camaro, Alexander Gonda, Hans Jaenisch, Hans Kuhn, Dietmar Lemcke, Ernst Schumacher and Hann Trier, whose influence made itself felt on the cultural scene well beyond Berlin. At that time there were not yet any women professors at the University. This point of departure and the contact they have maintained with one another since then has prompted the artists to reflect on their own development and changes in culture and society.

The title of the book, *Geteilte Zeit,* is intended as a double metaphor, (both shared and divided) as the time each of the artists had at her disposal was used in different ways. Their main areas of life and work developed differently and their individual careers were divided in various stages: starting a family, living abroad, employment outside the studio to ensure financial security, involvement in associations and socio-cultural projects were reflected over many years in the scope, subject and content of the creative work.

Divisions were not only present in the artists' private and professional lives: in postwar Europe upheavals and conflict in economic and social politics led to division of countries and creation of new borders. A divided Germany and the unique conditions within the divided city of Berlin were influential factors in the lives of those Berlin-based artists and intellectuals who took part in this book. The Cold War created a deadlock which brought with it an unnerving sense of insecurity. The process of confronting the repercussions of these repeated, deep-seated divisions, triggered by the fall of the Berlin Wall, is far from being complete.

On the other hand, the student movement and the new feminist movement brought people a new beginning, change and new possibilities. In aesthetic terms, especially in Berlin, this was felt in a revival of realistic tendencies and the search for communicative forms of expression with socio-cultural and socio-political elements and on the public art and culture scene for instance, in the foundation of galleries and museums showing work exclusively by women artists and by major exhibitions and symposia with themes and realms of experience specific to women. The insights gained during this time and the demands which sprang from them led to the introduction of the quota system and thus increased representation of women in all areas of society.

The book's focus revolves around the idea of "shared time" like a spiral:

- In a joint introduction 'Thoughts on Time', women active in Berlin's cultural life describe the contemporary background to the project in terms of their training, their success, results of research and initiatives.

- In 'Seven Questions - 49 Answers', other women, active in a variety of professions, each asked the artists one question emerging from their own personal background. The artists' answers compressed these lines of inquiry into a fabric including reflective memories and political and cultural development within Berlin.

The subjects pursued by these lines of inquiry: were from Dr. Brigitte Hammer,

art historian, curator, author, on the woman artist and children; by Ginka Steinwachs, a poet, on Different experiences of time and how its limitations are overcome; Sabine Zurmühl, journalist, film maker, mediator, on Confronting fascism and feminism; Marianne Pitzen, visual artist, director of the Women's Museum in Bonn, on Solidarity among women; Hannah Kruse, from Goldrausch, the women artists' project, on Ways of public presentation and self-management; Renate Grisebach, art promoter and chairwoman of a private art association, on Artist galleries and private art sponsorship; and Alice Ströver, spokesperson on cultural policy for Bündnis 90/Die Grünen on Options and activities in cultural policy

A third element builds on the perspectives gained by the Berlin experience through 'International Comparisons'. With insights drawn from their own research work done during the same period as the project and their descriptions of their own career paths, women art historians from the US, Mexico and West and East Europe contribute a comparative reference to the situation of the women artists and writers in Berlin.

Contributing authors to the international commentary were: Professor Dr. Eli Bartra, philosopher and author specializing in the female aesthetic, teaches at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (Metropolitan Autonomous University) in Mexico City, Mexico; Katy Deepwell, art critic, editor and publisher of n.paradoxa, who teaches at the University of the Arts in London; Sanne Kofod Olsen, art historian, author and curator, rector of the Fynske Art Academy in Odense, Denmark; Dr. Ramona Novicov, art historian, art critic and curator, teaches at the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Oradea, Romania; Professor Dr. Mercedes Replinger, art historian, author and curator, teaches at the Faculty of Arts at the Complutense University in Madrid, Spain Professor; and Dr. Moira Roth, art historian and author, teaches at Mills Women's College in Oakland, USA

Each of the women artists profiled in this book project Geteilte Zeit has reacted in her own personal way to the events and changes in society; each has still carried on working undeterred. Forty years on, it's time to take stock and analyze.

This text is the start of the book Gisela Weimann (ed) *Geteilte Zeit: Fragen und Antworten* (Edition Eselsweg, 2008) and is available in German.

N.Paradoxa : Issue No. 20, April 2008

Europe in Exile

Gisela Weimann
Translation: Liz Crossley

It is a tremendous pleasure for me to welcome you here to this meeting which has been made possible in this beautiful place. For this I thank the many partners who have cooperated on this venture: The Berlin Senate Department for Business, Technology and Women, The Federal Central Department for Political Education, the Berlin Cultural Furtherance Initiative, the Karl Hofer Society, the Berlin University of the Arts, and all the embassies and cultural institutes of the countries from which our lecturers come. I thank you all once again and especially our hosts here at the European Academy and the friendly staff. To the participants come from 11 European countries, as well as countries further afield - England, Italy, Mexico, Austria, Romania, Switzerland, Spain, Turkey and the USA - a heartfelt welcome to you all.

I have entitled my introduction to this symposium 'Europe in Exile' because there have always been individuals and groups of people in exile in Europe. There were always those who were being chased, robbed, raped and killed in all kinds of ways. Inhabited lands were often considered no-man's-land and whole nations were conquered and regarded as fair game by rulers, generals and power hungry adventurers, whose names were later followed by the words, "The Great". "The Great" and those who became "great" with these rulers, acquired fame, power and riches, mainly through fanaticism, ignorance, oppression and exploitation and very seldom through tolerance, co-existence on equal terms, with equal distribution and fair-shares to all.

That this was not only happening in Europe, as we will gather from, to name but one example, Amaya Ecalera's lecture: she will be telling us how Mexico, which was once brutally subdued by Spaniards, became a haven for refugees fleeing the Spanish Civil War in the 20th century. The irony of history!

Today we are going to present the book, *Geteilte Zeit,* which deals with the history we have personally experienced: from time and experience spent together and apart from one another's simultaneity in various places all over the world, under very different social conditions, caused by the Second World War, which took place mainly in Europe. The starting point for our visual and verbal research is, as explained in the foreword, the fact that we were seven Berlin women artists who studied at the former State High School of the Arts in Berlin, now University of the Arts. In collaboration with contemporaries in Berlin, artist colleagues and theoreticians from eastern, central, western and southern Europe, as well as Mexico and the USA, we questioned each other, recounted of our experiences during the last forty years and reflected on our condition as artists, scientists and women.

I asked all the artists and authors for a subjective presentation of their experience, because we did not want to create a history book, but a book about the present for contemporary readers, interested in art and for cultural scientists in the future.

In almost all cases the authors are important pioneers from the women artists' movement that started in the beginning of the sixties in the fields of feminist theory and practise. In Moira Roth's lecture we will hear that this feminist revolution is being enthusiastically celebrated in the USA today, where, last year, the influential art critic, Holland Cotter wrote the following about the huge *WACK!* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in Los Angeles in the *New York Times*: 'One thing is certain: Feminist art, which emerged in the 1960s with the women's movement, is the formative art of the last decades'. More on this we will hear from Moira Roth.

The selection of the Berlin women artists as well as of those women from the seven countries, who are lecturing in this symposium and have been published in the book Geteilte Zeit is based on continued friendships on the one hand and the concept of showing the dramatic political coherences, which have divided and bound our countries, on the other.

What a time that was – and still is!

Fascism in Germany till 1945, followed by flight, upheavals, revolts and division of the country - Civil War and dictatorship in Spain until 1975 during which time at least 25,000 Spanish people fled to Mexico - The Basque freedom movement ETA carried out bloody assassinations, the last to date being on 7th March 2008 - In Ireland the IRA fought for independence from the British - In the USA, McCarthyism was followed by the Vietnam War, nuclear armament in a showdown with the USSR - In Romania Ceausescu and a world divided into communist and capitalist camps - In 1989 the fall of the ideological wall, with unforeseen results - Religious wars like in the Middle Ages and Balkan wars right up to this moment! And so on and so on.

It seems that it is very difficult to forget one's experience of injustice and the damage done to what one perceives as one's own right and rightful way of thinking. This lies like a sediment at the base of the emotional life of both nations and individuals, and leads to ever new conflicts. A further continued conflict is that between the genders.

It is based on the traditional conviction that men are superior to women. In this respect, many men from very different cultural backgrounds who would on other issues fight each other to the death, are in agreement. When women present their concepts, as in our symposium, and critically analyse their social status, men do not feel as if this has anything to do with them although they are the ones who are being addressed. This is the jumping off point for the life experience and the resulting efforts at emancipation and demands of the women artists and scientists in the book *Geteilte Zeit* and the symposium 'Art history as Dialogue, 1965-2008'.

Unfortunately there were no means to translate the exciting 'Thoughts on Time' from 1960 to the present by 8 women from public cultural life in Berlin that are gathered in the introduction to the book. Furthermore the personal 49 answers by the 7 Berlin artists in response to questions they were asked by seven contemporary women from different professions are so far only available in German.

As publisher and editor of this book, I have read all the texts a number of times and read them with shock and fascination again and again. In the answers to the questions asked almost all the Berlin artists described unsettling experiences like displacement and flight, fear, a difficult reestablishment in a strange environment and anger at the restorative tendencies in Germany after the war. Again and again, the central conflict is the theme - being a mother, wife and artist.

'What significance have family and being a mother had on your art work and your life?' Here is a glimpse into the answers of the artists to this question formulated by Dr. Brigitte Hammer.

Christa Biederbick - 'There were moments when I had a guilty conscience and asked, 'May I work on my sculpture so intensely. Am I giving my daughter enough of my time?'

Karin Fleischer - 'As an orphan who also lost her home in the east through the murderous and destructive war, I always looked at intact families around me. Having lost my own family, I naturally developed the wish and expectation that I would start a family.'

Gisela Genthner - 'While I was studying, it was common thought that there are enough children in the world who are hungry. If one wants children, then one can adopt them.'

Sarah Haffner - '...in the spring of 1960 I dropped out of college, as I was pregnant - that was like that at the time. My son was born in July 1960. A year later I separated from his father, who was of the opinion that he was a painter and I a mother. From then on I was alone with the child.'

Heide Pawelzik - 'I believe that each woman ripens by being a mother and that this also shows in her artistic development. By taking responsibility, one's viewpoint is changed. The strain of being a mother and an artist is, however, great. I saw myself as a bad mother and a bad artist in the years when I had to be very present for the children.'

Regina Roskoden - 'I have to admit that I had little time for my art in those years. But I refilled my energy reserves that I needed for family life in the studio. Ideas for new sculptures developed while I did the housework. The carrying out of the ideas took place, when there was time and was a pleasure. Due to lack of time, I learned, in my visual work, to concentrate on the essential.'

Gisela Weimann - 'The environment communicated no security. The neighbouring city, Osnabrück was bombed out and my route to school was flanked by ruins. Everything was broken, fragmented. It seemed there was no future. The unconscious memories of the war, the unsettling post-war experiences, later the conscious recognition of the inhuman horror and the escalating threat of the cold war in the sixties all created in me a deep fear of life and of people. How could one bring children in the world at this time!'

Later, you will note that the authors from outside of Germany share many experiences with the Berlin women, complement and extend them and so allow us to deepen the discussion.

Exile makes one strong.

Life in a strange environment, which questions one's own identity makes one uncertain, but at the same time makes us aware of our otherness, strengthens our convictions and motivates us. To hold one's own in an environment of rejection or antagonism requires strength, ideas and subversive action. That is certainly an explanation for women's strength and ability to achieve so much under such difficult conditions.

Energy and strength of character are still required, because when I think about the content of the texts we will be hearing in the next few days, I ask myself what has really changed with regard to equality of opportunity for women artists, apart from politically and economically motivated statements?

I receive the newsletter from the Federal Ministry for Education and Research. In it, on 18 April 2007 Minister Schavan was quoted under the heading 'We must use the potential of women!' At the Berlin conference 'Gender in Research - Innovation through Equality of Opportunity', she demanded that 'promotion of excellence' in science and innovation should be strengthened and that half of the nation's talents should not be neglected. Highly qualified women should be adequately integrated. Schavan exhorted her audience to a change of mentality, in order to make the German scientific system fit for the future... . 'Research which focuses on gender specific questions, is the basis for innovative technologies, products and services for the markets of tomorrow.'

Empirical, innovative and socially critical research by women artists, who have focused on "gender specific questions" for decades and have long been demanding a change of mentality, is not recognised or accepted as serious research. If the involvement of the potential that women have is seen firstly as relating to products and service for the markets of tomorrow, then there remains little room for a change

of heart.

The much quoted 'change of mentality' sounds to me very much like a standard formula in the programs of the institutions in charge and often remains there. I quote a talented young artist colleague with a child:

'Yesterday I went to a preview of films about women with children - mainly from the creative sphere. It was somewhat depressing. 50% are single parents, the others complain about too little help from their partners - all of them want to work creatively and feel very overextended...'

It is as difficult as it was before, for young artists, especially if they have children. Many artists of my generation, whose works do not promise a great profit on investment, experience a constant battle to survive and continue working creatively. The pensions received from the Artists Welfare are low, because most were only able to pay in small contributions over the years. Most competitions, grants and artists' residences are aimed specifically at younger artists, both male and female. And even where it is said that there is no age barrier, there is in fact one. Social assistance programmes, on which most older women artists are dependent, allow for only limited living space and force many artists to give up their studios when they reach the retirement age.

What to do with one's life work? This is another problem shared by many.

Given the present inner political injustices and horrors in the world outside, the question which occupies me among others, is whether a Europe which is claiming to be built on the ideas of fairness, egalitarianism and equality will remain a "Land in Exile" - I look forward to the answers.

This paper was presented at the Symposium Geteilte Zeit: Kunstgeschichte als Internationaler Dialog / Shared Times: Art History as International Dialogue, at the European Academy in Berlin, 25 - 28 March 2008. The book Gisela Weimann (ed) Geteilte Zeit: Fragen und Antworten (Edition Eselsweg, 2008) is available in German.

N.Paradoxa : Issue No. 20, 2008

Shared Times II / Pictures and Sculptures

Opening Speech at the Exhibition and Conference, Europaische Akademie, Berlin.

Brigitte Hammer

Dear women artists, dear colleagues, dear art lovers, ladies and gentlemen,

In her opening remarks to this symposium, Gisela Weimann thanked many people and institutions who have made this event possible through artistic, organizational and financial means. I join with her in thanking them. I would, however, like to include someone else whom we have to thank for the entire project: Gisela Weimann herself. It was she who developed the idea for the book, who worked tirelessly on it, who secured the funding, collected the material, wrote countless letters and emails and carried out the "Shared Times" project with such verve and spirit, arranging and preparing the material for printing, liaising with the publishers and designer in order to bring her vision of the book in line with the requirements of reality.

Once all this had been set in motion, the Shared Times were still not finished: then there was the book to be publicized, the symposium to be organized, more financing for this, a suitable space to be found and schedules to be sorted out, travel and dates to coordinate and arrangements to be made with the participating artists, and, and...only someone who has worked on such a mammoth project themselves can probably imagine what it means in terms of work to see something like this through to completion. It requires the whole woman and her UNDIVIDED time! - over many months and years.

I checked my own contribution again. In my case, I sent my question to the artists to Gisela in July 2006, by this time several conversations about the goals and plans for the project had already taken place. Initially, with such a project, one gives birth to an idea, discusses it and outlines it with others, gives it a base with feedback from many other countries then of course other everyday events get mixed up in the work,

but the more material arrives and the more results land on one's desk, the more energy and reserves the project consumes.

When I now open the olive green covers of this book, I am fascinated by the compacted intensity of the creation as it weaves in and out of time. This work can be read straight through from cover to cover or each chapter can be focused on individually, or it can be leafed through like a picture book just for the photos, letting the individual traces of text and image weave themselves into a complex compendium of contemporary female art history.

It simultaneously becomes a book of memories during this process, one which I am not unmoved by when reading, because I can compare the statements and opinions of the women with my own and discover myself among these female contemporaries. I, too, have shared this time. Some of the women who express themselves through this book have been known to me for many years, some I am friends with, others I have worked with or approached their artistic and scientific work without any personal connection to them.

Whenever I read it, though, I feel like a contemporary and this pleases me because I thereby feel increasingly familiar with the contemporary historical context and know (and can know about) exactly what is being discussed.

Knowing some of the women artists and art historians personally is something I find immensely enriching in terms of the experience and increase in available evaluation criteria: I can only appreciate a woman artist and her work in their contemporary context. I studied under art historians who confronted the then current art scene and the burgeoning boom of young art ("junge Kunst") with total incomprehension and over a beer after excursions to see monuments in art history would come out with remarks such as "the only good artist is a dead one". They took the view that to meet the living creator of a work of art could contaminate not only reverence of it but also the purity of academic judgment. When, as a young art historian, I enthusiastically discovered contemporary art and my joy in the simultaneous study of both creator and creation as an exciting opportunity for research, I risked serious conflict with my teachers, something which was to profoundly influence by future professional career.

That's why reading this book gives me such a unique thrill, because my own recollections of living through that time are awakened, and yet in looking back fill me with a singular sense of sobriety which astonishes me. The sometimes unconventional and often poisonous arguments about (cultural) politics and the then new aspects of art history teaching methods, the fierce conflicts and painful (life) decisions, the hurtful struggles and the victories, sometimes triumphant, sometimes pitiful, appear in this retrospective, orally condensed form as realities of one's own and others' lives, which the writers here in their statements treat with mildness and leniency.

Over the next few days, the new questions generated by the book will be given new slants and multifaceted answers by the guest speakers, but central to the 'Shared Times' project will be the seven women artists who, through their joint experience studying at the HfbK in Berlin (now the Berlin University of the Arts) have now known one another for over forty years and whose biographies and life's work are reflected in the context of art history as contemporary history. These painters and sculptors work in very different ways and in the work section the book documents very convincingly with examples how the individual themes and work periods have developed over the course of the years, how they have remained faithful in the face of change, or suddenly taken new directions.

Of course it's not possible to display all this in the space we have (in the Europaische Akademie), however desirable that would be. But where artists and art lovers meet to exchange ideas, real art should also be present. And so the Academy is showing examples from the artists' life work: in the foyer you are welcomed by *Self portrait with 62 eyes* and current, small format collages by Gisela Weimann and sculpture of a woman by Christa Biederbick, in the conference room on the left two paintings by Sarah Haffner, in the large conference room two photographic works by Heide Pawelzik and a series of silkscreen prints by Gisela Genthner, in the fireplace room again Biederbick and Weimann, in the dining room selected early etchings by Karin Fleischer, in the hall several new, pastel drawings by Fleischer and small format reliefs by Biederbick and in the garden several *Kings pillars* and *Watchman pillars* by Regina Roskoden.

All the works seem very much at home on display in the various locations and give the European Academy a well-arranged and lively atmosphere. To mention a few examples, *Still life after Cézanne* by Christa Biederbick occupies its place in the fireplace room as if it had never been anywhere else, the dynamic woman driver in Sarah Haffner's picture *Unterwegs / Travelling* seems to infuse the conference room with its energy and the lifelike tabletop in Karin Fleischer's etching make one wonder during one's meal about what is hidden under the white cloths. So the artists' work is with us during the symposium and draws our gaze while we meet in the fireplace room for the coffee break or eat in the dining room or spend time in the other areas of the building.

This speech was presented at the Symposium Geteilte Zeit: Kunstgeschichte als Internationaler Dialog / Shared Times: Art History as International Dialogue, at the European Academy in Berlin, 25 - 28 March 2008. The book Gisela Weimann (ed) Geteilte Zeit: Fragen und Antworten (Edition Eselsweg, 2008) is available in German.

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Widening the Spiral: Musings and Readings in a Berkeley cafe, California, March - April 2007

Moira Roth

[Moira Roth's paper began with a 5 minute screening of an excerpt from Lynn Hershmann's video *Women, Art and Revolution*]

Part 1: March 20, 2007: Shared Times

I sit here by the window in this small Berkeley café in Northern California, where I come every morning to have coffee, read and write. Today I sit musing about the 'Shared Times' project initiated by Gisela Weimann, a German artist I have known since 1981.

Since first hearing about it, I have been fascinated by the potential of 'Shared Times' to inspire and record fresh insights and questions about feminist art practice, history and current directions-through the originality of its shape and structure: an ever-widening spiral that pulls together thoughts and experiences from a circle of seven Berlin women artists (who have known one another since 1968 and recently showed together in Bonn), to a second circle of seven Berlin-based women (ranging from a poet and politician to an art historian and museum director), and finally to a third outer circle, that of a group of seven women critics, theorists and historians based outside Germany. I am planning, on my part, to create a further widening of this "Shared Times" spiral by contacting seven U.S. women, involved in various ways in the arts, to contribute to these "musings" of mine.

I myself am a London-born (1933) writer and scholar, but have lived in the U.S. since my early twenties, mainly based in California. In 1968 I was in graduate school at the University of California, Berkeley, campus, a site of many demonstrations

about civil rights and the Vietnam War. By 1970 I had become ardently immersed in the early feminist art movement in California-writing extensively on it, and attending many early art and activist events, an experience that profoundly shaped me as a feminist (1). From the 1980s onward, I have worked increasingly cross-culturally and internationally (beginning in Berlin in an earlier international project, also initiated by Weimann), and currently I am writing fiction, poetry and plays as much as I am art history and criticism.

Part 2: March 21, 2007: A Visit to West Berlin, 1981

Today I sit in Nabalom's remembering my first visit to Berlin. It was eight years before the fall of the Wall, and I had been invited to talk on U.S. feminist performance art in a small West Berlin art gallery in the context of a series of exchanges between women artists in Berlin, Mexico City and San Francisco. I began my presentation with Carolee Schneemann's famous Interior Scroll, a performance I had never seen, but had often imagined in my mind's eye. In it, Schneemann draws out a thin scroll from her vagina and reads from it a list of criticisms given her by a male filmmaker to explain why her films were never taken seriously:

'Don't ask us/to look at your films/we cannot/ there are certain films/ we cannot look at/ the personal clutter/ the persistence of feelings/the hand-touch sensibility/ the diaristic indulgence/ the painterly mess/the dense gestalt/ the primitive techniques..." The filmmaker ends reassuring Schneemann condescendingly that though not "a film-makeress...we [do] think of you as a dancer.' (2)

Clearly the Berlin audience of passionate and imaginative German feminist activists-artists understood the ironic bravado of this 1975 performance with its insistence on the validity of "personal clutter." After the presentation, most of us sat together for several hours at a nearby café-bar, talking intensely about feminist art in Europe and the U.S., and comparing the two. What were, we demanded of ourselves, our next steps? As I recall, we talked much about art practice and activism, and very little about art history.

Now, far away from that 1981 intimate evening, I sit here thinking about the history(ies) of women artists and of the various feminist art movements (both here and abroad), arenas of study that are increasingly sprawling, fractured and constantly changing. Already more and more difficult to follow and keep up with each year, these histories are even more overwhelming for me currently in the context of the dramatic surge of activity and interest in women's art in the U.S.witness the enormous amount of critical attention and publicity in response to two major 2007 exhibitions: WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Los Angeles and Global Feminisms: New Directions in Contemporary Art at the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art in the Brooklyn Museum. Many other exhibitions are also being organized in different parts of the U.S.-some small, some large, some devoted to a single woman artist, a theme, a single generation, an intermingling of

generations. Some include only U.S. women artists while others are global in their coverage (as is true of both the MOCA and Brooklyn shows) (3).

Part 3: March 22, 2007: A Visit to Los Angeles

I sit here reflecting on a recent visit to this Southern Californian city. At the beginning of this month, I flew there to attend the opening of *WACK!* (where I met so many old friends, including Schneemann). The exhibition consists of some 500 works of 119 artists from 21 countries and focuses on art from the later 1960s and the 1970s.(4)

Amidst the rich array of works were a sequential series of photos of Schneemann's *Interior Scroll* performance and, exquisitely displayed nearby on a wall in a long thin elegant Plexiglas box, a neatly twisted pristine paper scroll (borrowed from the Peter Norton and Eileen Harris Norton Collection). Neither, however, was accompanied by an explanation of the piece, nor citations from Schneemann's text - only a minimal label with the artist's name and the title of the performance was provided.

I brood generally about the omission in so many of these current exhibitions, including WACK!, of what I consider essential wall labels about details concerning a specific work, and more generally, material in the exhibition itself (not its catalog) that will educate the audience about the historical and political framings of the period.

In 'The Art of Feminism As It First Took Shape', Holland Cotter's singularly thoughtful *New York Times* review of the MOCA exhibition, he warmly praises it ("the show is a thrill, rich and sustained") and states categorically that 'one thing is certain: Feminist art, which emerged in the 1960s with the women's movement, is the formative art of the last decades.'(5)

Yet Cotter also stresses that 'because that history is endlessly complicated and comprehensive accounts of it few, this show is still a rough draft.' He wonders if 'the curator model is out of date for a global project of this kind?' and he advises, 'in addition to wall labels, there should be many more historical documents.' He notes the exhibition's lack of black voices, and in the photographs that accompany his review, he includes one of the documentation of Lorraine O'Grady's *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire*.(6)

Part 4: April 9, 2007, The Voice of *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire*

My email today includes an announcement that the text and images of Lorraine O'Grady's 1981 performance have just been added to the already lively *WACK!* website. I sit here with printouts of the material, thinking this is exactly what should happen in the revisions of feminist art history in this advanced age of technology.

In the *WACK!* installation, we could see the documentary photographs, together with a mannequin displaying the evening gown composed of 180 white dinner gloves in which O'Grady, in her persona of *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire*, glamorously and confrontationally attended a New York art opening in 1981. Wearing this costume, a sash proclaiming her "persona" name draped around her and a tiara on her head,

and accompanied by a tuxedo-attired black escort and photographer, she made her dramatic appearance at the all-white Persona exhibition, put on by New York's New Museum. I have "seen" this work for years in photographs, but it is only today that I finally have the opportunity to read ("hear") O'Grady's text, the one she shouted out at the 1981 Persona exhibition:

WAIT
wait in your alternate/alternate spaces
spitted on fish hooks of hope
be polite wait to be discovered ...
Don't you know sleeping beauty needs
more than a kiss to awake
now is the time for an INVASION! (7)

O'Grady performed this in New York in September of 1981, the same month that I was lecturing in Berlin. If I had known at the time about *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire* I would certainly have concluded with it in my presentation, juxtaposing the images and the performance text with those of Schneemann's *Interior Scroll.*

Part 5: April 10, 2007: Reading at the Café

In the café I have covered the small table, at which I customarily sit, with books, catalogs, journals and newspaper cuttings. I look at the cover of the February 2007 *ARTnews*, which announces 'Feminist Art: The Next Wave' (8) and turn the glossy pages of the April 2, 2007, *Time* until I find the two-page spread on 'What Women Have Done to Art.'

I look again at the large exhibition catalog of *Global Feminisms: New Directions in Contemporary Art,* which focuses on women artists mostly under age forty; the curators (Maury Reilly and Linda Nochlin) have divided their work into four categories: life cycles, identities, politics and emotions (9). In a recent *New York Times*, Roberta Smith described it as 'a sprawling, sometimes energetic assembly of recent work by nearly 90 women from nearly 50 countries.' (10) And in the April 9, 2007, *New Yorker*, Peter Schjeldahl stresses that 'considering the varied national backgrounds of the participants, the ensemble looks and feels remarkably homogeneous,' something that he ascribes to contemporary art school training, regardless of geography. (11)

The exhibition is housed in the newly opened Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, which is also the permanent home for Judy Chicago's 1970s installation, *The Dinner Party* (both these exhibitions opened last month). The Center is housed in the Brooklyn Museum, a museum that thirty years ago showed the travelling exhibition *Women Artists: 1550-1950*, curated by Linda Nochlin and Ann Sutherland Harris. In her catalogue introduction Maura Reilly explains that from the start the intent of *Global Feminisms* was to be in counterpoint to this pioneering exhibition: 'Unlike Women Artists ... which ended its examination with the year 1950-prior to

the Women's Liberation Movement in the U.S. and the development of feminism as an artistic practice-the present exhibition looks at contemporary work by artists for whom the heritage of feminism has long been part of the cultural fabric.' (12)

For all the pleasure of seeing, hearing and reading about so much work (often new to me) by women artists, I find myself consumed by questions and concerns about the present situation in the U.S. Constantly, I speculate about what might be new structures (such as this Shared Times) and fresh modes of meeting (private as well as in public outside those of symposia, websites and email exchanges), in which we could collectively exchange ideas and thoughts, and slowly reflect. How could feminist scholars, curators and educators consistently consult more widely and collaborate more in exchange of research materials? I am concerned about the effect of the current interest in global feminisms on the widening of the scope of U.S. feminist art history, especially in relation to race. One pursuit should not mean abandoning another (13). Equally, with an emphasis on global feminisms, there should surely be more equality between U.S. and non-U.S. curators and writers choosing and writing on the work.

I find myself often, almost obsessively, writing about such matters in the notebooks that I always carry with me, and discussing them with friends and colleagues in private meetings and endless emailing. Thus it was logical a few days ago, when I finally decided to contact a group of seven U.S.-based women artists and art historians, to ask for their brief thoughts about all this. They live around the country so I did this by email and phone, although they are all longtime friends and I often meet them individually in person.

Part 6: April 11, 2007: Reading at the Café

I sit at Nabalom's reading with great affection as well as interest the first six responses of Whitney Chadwick, Lucy R. Lippard, Margo Machida, Linda Nochlin, Praba Pilar, and Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie. For a moment I feel that it is the extension of the intense exchanges I have had with them individually, privately and publicly, over the years.

Linda Nochlin: 'I'm not good at predicting or dictating "futures". I'm pragmatic; when something comes up that interests me, I get involved in it. Right now I'm interested in old age (I've just written a text on Louise Bourgeois for the Tate Gallery), and in women and Realism - going from Mary Cassatt to how the Japanese photographer Miwa Yanagi (we showed her work in Global Feminisms) uses real people for her 2004 photographic Fairy Tale series. Then, just to be contrary, I am writing on Renoir's representation of men! That is what's on my mind right now!' (14)

Lucy R. Lippard: 'In the discussion period at *WACK!* after my lecture there, young women kept asking to be told what to do next, etc. and I just said get together and brainstorm. Your issues won't be the same as ours, though I hope equal pay and

equal opportunity are still on top of the list. I emphasized mutual support and respect and told them to have fun.' (15)

Whitney Chadwick: 'Feminism/feminisms and feminist art have been much in the public eye in recent exhibitions, conferences and symposia. While preparing a fourth revised edition of my book Women, Art, and Society this past year, I found myself returning again and again to the role that contemporary women's movements have played in the real politics of the art world. And to the ways that their practices have invaded visual culture worldwide, and have themselves been transformed in the process. Yet despite much recent talk about 'feminisms,' 'traditions,' 'legacies,' 'third' and 'fourth generations' and 'reconfigurations of difference,' current debates often feel trapped in developmental and evolutionary paradigms, and in notions of generational legacy. Is it language that fails us here? Is it a failure of imagination in the face of the profound uncertainties we face? Have we lost a sense of how the pieces of our histories fit together? Or have we merely lost our ability to wait and see? And does it matter?' (16)

Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie: 'My concern would be that everyone starts to believe that the playing field has been leveled and becomes complacent once they have stepped on the field-not looking back to see if they are alone. And to recognize that what we are all working towards, justice, equality, etc. are perhaps the same words, but definitely, worlds apart culturally in the end.' (17)

Praba Pilar: 'I think a lot about problems of insularity as the defining and exclusionary caracteristica of three feminist art groups that I currently move through. Shifting from my Latina feminista grupo, to my eco artist feminist collective, to my techno savvy feminist group, I find no significant connections between them. There is no deeply felt interest in each other, no overlapping dialogo, no mutually informing interconnections. Turbulencia. I want to see a profound disturbance to these comfortable worlds. I want to shred the emerging historical narrative that has prevented difference from intermingling and coevolving. I want, in short, to shake things up and create a potent and diverse feminist cocktail with all the ingredients present.' (18)

Margo Machida: 'Given the variant sensibilities, standpoints, and cultural, intellectual, and political positions that inform contemporary women artists, I don't think that a hunt for the 'next thing' or the promulgation of overarching narratives to embrace work across difference is what is now required. Rather, recalling the many intense exchanges and subversive plans hatched over dinner at your home with an ever-changing cast of characters, we should give over more respectful attention and time to one another with the purpose of mutually realizing the many ways we can understand our lives, enact our commitments, and create meaning through acts of art making. These memories have long remained a form of personal sustenance, and point to the need to develop new communicative spaces, both public and private, for sustained conversation, face-to-face dialogue,

and intercultural negotiation-frames that remain palpably necessary and yet have become increasingly rare.' (19)

Part 7: April 14, 2007: Reading at the Café

I read the last response, from Faith Ringgold: 'Dear Moira, I am sorry to be so late in my response, but I am just getting back from Iowa and Chicago. But what is really the problem is that I don't have a strong impression of what is happening in this 2007 Feminist 'Feminisms' that I can share. I went to the Judy Chicago opening at the Brooklyn Museum and I must say it continues to be a beautiful and exciting event in women's history and culture. Chicago should be applauded for her perseverance and vision, and Elizabeth Sackler for having made it all possible; we all owe an enormous debt of thanks to her. Where this all will go and whether The Women will in the end extend the realm of 'feminisms' to a diversity of black women feminists and other women of color past, present and future in a meaningful way is still to be determined. I am looking, but not sure what all I am seeing.' (20)

I sit in the café, echoing to myself Ringgold's conclusions, or rather lack of them - I, too, 'am looking, but not sure what all I am seeing'. I sit remembering my long friendship with her (we met in 1980) and our traveling together and talking in so many places-walking in the streets and markets of Tangiers, sitting in Paris cafés and visiting one another on the East and West Coast. We often discussed women's history and feminism(s) and how to build and maintain alliances.

Berkeley of 2007 seems far away from West Berlin of 1981, and yet there is something so fitting that these contributions from my U.S. feminist friends, plus my musings, should be part of the widening spiral that has begun in Berlin, part of the spiraling 'Shared Times' exchange between women of different geographical locations, ethnicities, ages and classes.

Notes

(1) I taught for many years on various campuses of the University of California (first at Irvine, then Santa Cruz, and finally San Diego) and continue to teach now at a women's college near Berkeley (Mills College). This text is dedicated to the intelligence, energy and ardor of the many Mills College women students, including those in my two current classes, with whom I have worked over the years on research projects about women artists and feminism.

(2) I cited this statement by Carolee Schneemann at the beginning of my introduction (based on this Berlin slide presentation) to a book I edited: *The Amazing Decade: Women and Performance Art in America: A Source Book, 1970-1980* (Los Angeles: Astro Artz, 1983), 14. The illustrations that accompany this text begin with Schneemann's Interior Scroll and end with an antinuclear 1981 demonstration in Bonn with a woman holding up a placard that reads "Wir Wollen Kein Euroshima."

(3) One can get a sense of the richness of current activities in the U.S. from the Feminist Art Project (FAP) website that is constantly being updated. This is a national collaborative initiative under the umbrella of Rutger's Institute for Women and Art, the latest of the many feminist organizations and activities on the campus that include the Mary H. Dana Women Artists exhibition series, and the

collection of primary documents related to the feminist art movement and the personal papers of women artists at the Margery Somers Foster Center/Rutgers University Libraries. Rutgers also now publishes The *Woman's Art Journal* and houses the national administrative offices of the Women's Caucus for Art.

(4) Lisa Gabrielle Mark, ed., *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass./London: MIT Press, 2007). This catalogue contains a number of essays on varying topics, including 'Art and Feminism: An Ideology of Shifting Criteria' by Cornelia Butler (the exhibition's curator) and a most useful long section of 'Artists Biographies,' plus a 'Selected Chronology of All-Women Group Shows, 1943-1983.'

(5) Holland Cotter, 'The Art of Feminism As It First Took Shape,' *New York Times*, March 9, 2007, B27, B 31. Ibid.

(6) Holland Cotter had already singled out this omission of black voices in his 'Snubbed for So Long, Feminist Art Takes Center Stage,' *New York Times*, January 29, 2007, B1, B 4. There, in this review of The Feminist Future: Theory and Practice in the Visual Arts a symposium at the Museum of Modern Art, at which Lucy R. Lippard and Linda Nochlin were the two key note speakers, Cotter notes that 'only one panelist, the young Kenya-born artist Wangechi Mutu, was black' (B4).

(7) See http://www.moca.org/wack/?p=230 (Mlle Bourgeoise Noire performance synopsis) and and http://www.moca.org/wack/?p=203 (O'Grady's March 22, 2007 MOCA gallery talk notes)

(8) It was *ARTnews* that in its January 1971 issue, devoted to 'Women's Liberation, Woman Artists and Art History,' published Linda Nochlin's essay, 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?' In October 1980 the *ARTnews* cover showed a portrait group of women artists (all white except for Faith Ringgold) with the caption 'Where Are All the Great Men Artists?'

(9) Maura Reilly and Linda Nochlin, eds., *Global Feminisms: New Directions in Contemporary Art* (New York/Brooklyn: Merrell Publishers Ltd. and Brooklyn Museum, 2007). This catalogue includes essays by Maura Reilly, Linda Nochlin, N'Goné Fall, Geeta Kapur, Michiko Kasahara, Joan Kee, Virginia Pérez-Ratton, Elisabeth Lebovici and Charlotta Kotik.

(10) Roberta Smith, 'They Are Artists Who Are Women; Hear Them Roar,' *New York Times*, March 23, 2007, B25, B 33.

(11) Peter Schjeldahl, 'Women's Work: Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum,' *New Yorker*, April 9, 2007, 73.

(12) Maura Reilly, 'Introduction: Toward Transnational Feminisms,' *Global Feminisms*, 15.

(13) For example, there is only one reference to Native American women artists in *WACK!*, that of the Spiderwoman Theater collective.

(14) Telephone conversation between Linda Nochlin and myself, April 6, 2007. Linda Nochlin is an art historian and poet, the author of 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?' (1971) and the co-curator of *Global Feminisms* . Her publications include *Women, Art and Power; The Politics of Vision and Bathers*, *Bodies*, *Beauty*.

(15) Lucy Lippard, email, April 3, 2007. Lucy R. Lippard is a writer-activist whose books include *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art*, *Got the Message: A Decade of Art for Social Change*, *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America* and *The Pink Swan: Selected Essays on Feminist Art*.

(16) Whitney Chadwick, email, April 7, 2007. Whitney Chadwick is an art historian and curator whose books include *Women, Art, and Society* and *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*; she is the co-

editor of *Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnership* and *The Modern Woman Revisited: Paris Between the Wars.*

(17) Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, email, April 4, 2007. Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie is a photographer, curator and writer. She is the director of the C. N. Gorman Museum and teaches in the Native American Studies Department, University of California, Davis.

(18) Praba Pilar, email, April 7, 2007. Praba Pilar is an artist, activist and cultural critic whose recent work includes a study of the trafficking of women over the Internet and a multimedia project, *Computers Are a Girl's Best Friend.*

(19) Margo Machida, email, April 9, 2007. Margo Machida is a scholar and curator. Among her publications are *Asia America: Identities in Contemporary Asian American Art* and a future book, *Art, Asian America, and the Social Imaginary: A Poetics of Positionality.*

(20) Faith Ringgold, email, April 14, 2007. Faith Ringgold is an artist, activist and writer. Her storyquilts include Who's Afraid of Aunt Jemima, and the French and American Collection series. She is the author of many children's books, as well as *We Flew Over the Bridge: The Memoirs of Faith Ringgold.*

This paper was presented at the Symposium Geteilte Zeit: Kunstgeschichte als Internationaler Dialog / Shared Times: Art History as International Dialogue, at the European Academy in Berlin, 25 - 28 March 2008. The book Gisela Weimann (ed) *Geteilte Zeit: Fragen und Antworten* (Edition Eselsweg, 2008) is available in German.

N.Paradoxa : Issue No. 20, 2008

More than Seven Urgent Questions for Feminism

Katy Deepwell

What role does feminist art criticism play in transforming ideas about women artists?

In 1996, after I had been writing art criticism about women artists for nearly a decade, I set up the online journal *n.paradoxa. N.paradoxa*'s purpose was to create a space for international discussion about the varieties of feminism(s) - known collectively as feminist theory – in relationship to the feminist art practices of contemporary women artists. I chose the web initially with the idea that it could be a place for this kind of exchange in ideas. The journal developed into a print form in 1998 - as this is the lingua franca of the art world - and is still going today. The purpose of creating a platform for an international dialogue in which feminist art produced by women artists from different parts of the world could be discussed was to challenge certain – apparently fixed – lines of enquiry in Anglo-American discourse about the recent history of feminist art.

In spite of the growth of women artists in numbers and strength in the last three decades, the lack of serious critical attention to their work remains a major problem and their invisibility or neglect as artists is secured by the lack of scholarly writing about their projects. The journal publishes in-depth articles and interviews as well as book reviews and artist's projects from all corners of the world in order to provide not just visibility but much greater analysis of contemporary women artists' works internationally.

The contribution of women artists to transforming art's aesthetic and political discourses remains an under-researched area - in spite of the volume of work the feminist art movement and feminist art historians have produced in the last three

decades. If one looks for a "history" of the feminist art movement in Germany, one can find very few articles and in spite of some fantastic major exhibition catalogues there is no book which offers an overall picture. By contrast, the US has produced many books outlining East coast versus West coast histories of feminism, often laying claim to a central role in the development of a feminist art movement and ignoring or refusing to comment on art made in Europe at the same time.

Should the nation state serve as a model for how we understand the different histories and forms of feminist engagement in the visual arts in the last 3 decades?

What role does art criticism play in this picture? Art criticism has and can transform perceptions about women artists, when it is not engaging with gossip about the artist's personality, looks or family/sexual problems, but with the content and aesthetic strategies of the work itself and thereby the contribution these make to art itself. While too often today art criticism appears to be an extension of marketing or promotional tools, its contribution in framing how contemporary art is understood, how exhibitions are seen, how knowledge(s) and assumptions are disseminated beyond the small communities who created or saw the works or a show and into much larger patterns of national/international cultural exchange should not be underestimated.

While art criticism is generally thought of as reviews of exhibitions in newspapers, this is not the only form of critical discourse: the scholarly texts found in books, monographs and catalogues, TV programmes, radio broadcasts, copy from web and print art journals all contribute. n.paradoxa was initiated with the idea that it would continue the work - in terms of an engagement with what constitutes feminism - already begun in several feminist art journals like Heresies (USA); LIP (Australia); Women's Art Magazine (UK); Ruimte (Netherlands) - all of whom had discontinued by the time it began publishing. Many of the women who were behind these journals' foundation and greatest successes are from the generation born between 1940-1950. Their work and the examples they offered were very important to me as I conceived my own model for n.paradoxa.

What and where are the legacies of feminist art from the 1970s?

Increasingly today, any writer who wants to engage with feminist art or art criticism it seems must reference American/Anglo-Saxon models first. The imbalance in literature towards America and the numbers of publications on American feminist art encourages this - as does the dominance of the US in the art market internationally. There have been valiant attempts by many feminist scholars and curators around the world to demonstrate the emergence of Indian, Mexican, Taiwanese, Australian, Canadian, Hungarian, Japanese, Russian, Slovenian, Austrian, Spanish and Swedish forms of feminist art and to offer the specific political

debates which inform the work and record their different histories. N.paradoxa has been tracking and making visible this work for 10 years now. This work goes largely unheeded by most American scholars, even when published in English and widely disseminated. These presentations count as significant interventions in the development of local and nationally-based art histories, even when they do not succeed in transforming or producing a more internationally focused understanding of feminism. Even in tendencies which express the desire to have a "global" feminism, a critical regionalism emerges where the 5 continents of the world are treated as a new framework. How is this any different from First /Second/Third World dynamics or the tendency to celebrate the North over the South? As much as feminists scholars seek to align themselves within certain legacies, there is a need to avoid reproducing their faults and blindspots, for example, accepting and repeating the same key examples of individual artists and works.

How does feminism - specifically feminist art practice, theory and criticism - renegotiate the constant framing of feminism in terms of a local/national politics and take account of the significant transnational/ international dimensions to these questions?

What the legacy of feminist enquiry has been and how it might continue to develop in the future is part of this question about what feminism itself is as a history, a politics, a set of questions or methods and approaches. The feminist project is far from over. It transmutes and changes constantly with each new contribution to the field from intellectuals all over the world. I see feminism and feminist thought as an ongoing continuum which was always and will continue to be fractured by real disputes, different political camps, different interest groups and different forms of social and cultural methods of engagement both intellectual and activist. Difference here between feminist perspectives is a strength and not a weakness, the arguments ultimately provide a means to make progress and potentially to find new solutions. Conformism to a single, depoliticised, primarily liberal view of what feminism represents may present the biggest danger to any healthy feminist debate. Put another way, this view of feminism may represent a stagnation and the "acceptability" of one form of feminism as a series of uncontested and ill-conceived but easily digested set of formulations.

Can feminism be understood only in terms of generational groups? Or does any model of a particular generation dissolve when it is really questions about feminist politics which count?

I am 10-20 years younger than most of the artists in this book, born in 1962 at the moment of the cold war Cuban missile crisis. What 1968 and the 1970s means to me is both lived experience (as a child/teenager) but also, in fact, a history recovered through the publications and knowledge gained through conversations about a group

one or two generations removed from my own "peer" group. I have been and still am both interested and inspired by their collective and individual work. I recognise their energy and effort in transforming and changing what art itself might be, what could be spoken about and what could be made - with all the irreverence, sense of enquiry and imagination it contained and how this clearly offered another point of view to what I saw or perceived was the mainstream in which sexism just is the way business operates "as usual".

So, which generation of feminism am I?

In American terms, I'm second-wave - not part of the 1970s and not part of the emergence after the mid-1990s of a self-defined third-wave. My encounter with feminism historically in the early 1980s coincides with the emergence of post-colonial theory, with post-structuralist thought and with French feminist thought at a time when many feminists were arguing about what constituted essentialist and anti-essentalist approaches in feminist art strategies but it follows the sustained critique of racism and sexism (women's oppression) which the 1970s provided. My intellectual inheritance becomes ever more apparent to me as a form of locating my "generation" in "pro-theory" terms. However, from the point of view of social history or even a sociology of art, I would question if a generation can be seen in any simple homogenous terms. People from the same generational groups do not always have the same history of ideas or intellectual resources, nor do they have the same political, spiritual or social beliefs, their experience of marriages, births or deaths do not happen at the same time, they do not always share lifestyle choices nor do they experiment with sex, drugs or rock'n'roll in the same way, nor do they have the same value systems for assessing their achievements or failures.

Would a reformulation of family politics serve us any better?

Art history is littered with examples of father / son models, of successions handed from one generation to another. It looks convenient at first but it has a crazy logic when used to link the emergence of work produced in quite disparate European capitals and amongst different generational or peer groups. Or is the question of generational models really a means to create avant-gardes and followers and to establish pioneers and followers in the field of art history?

Perhaps, sibling rivalry - as much as peer group pressure - would be a better model. It has a large part to play in differentiating women from each other. How do siblings fit into generations? Any simple decade-based view of a generation is constantly fractured by the differences between women within family groups. Teenagers and adolescents thrive on being misunderstood, rebellious and "different".

Some versions of feminism have promoted feminists of the 1968 generation as making a cut - an absolute separation from their mothers, specifically their values and ideals where it was accepted that a woman should subjugate her own identity to

the needs of her family. This rejection by the daughter of their mother could lead us into some classic Freudian territory in which the result, an identification with their father and a downgrading of their mother, is an attempt to secure their place in society/ history. I remain unconvinced by the value of these models as a means to explain feminism's emergence. For me, this is often how patriarchy reproduces itself, securing the invisibility of the mother and the relative weakness of the daughter - especially when she herself became a mother. For me, feminism has to be about a realignment of the mother and daughter relationship and a re-evaluation of the difficulties of this relationship in and against patriarchy. Women have to reassess and learn again to respect and value their mothers and grandmothers, finding out what they have contributed to society, especially given several generations of women post-war whose lives have been dedicated to both work and family. I see myself as having many intellectual "mothers" and my learning curve within feminism (in the early 1980s) coincided with feminist explorations of its 150 year legacy of political struggle across Europe and in the US. However this is not without tensions, the ambivalence of some feminist mothers to their "daughters" continues and if feminism is not about redefining the mother-daughter relationship into a more positive equation in/against patriarchy, how can we expect our "daughters" in the future to continue the legacy of feminism and not reproduce the same cut by establishing a distance or separation from our work. It seems imperative that a new cross-generational perspective based on political alliances about feminist politics is vital if feminism wishes to avoid being identified solely with one generational group. A renegotiation of the mother-daughter relationship across generations is also necessary alongside a greater respect for the incredible contradictions and difficulties of combining a working life with family and caring commitments to others.

Is feminism better described an idea of perpetual revolution and political activism?

The idea of perpetual revolution (a Marxist-anarchist legacy) and what it might mean to be a "student" activist certainly appealed to me as I went to art college, went on marches to stop nuclear weapons, joined campaigns against racism and fascism in the UK and visited Greenham Common, organised my first conference on 'Feminism and Art' and took an active part in the student union by helping organise student actions (work-ins which deliberately echoed the Hornsey art school protests). I did not see feminism could be "solved" and made redundant by bureaucratic remedies to change women's economic or social status even though I recognise how some of these attempts have succeeded in changing women's lives and opportunities – in spite of the social backlashes against them and verbal hypocrisy used to resist any change.

When I began speaking and writing about feminism in art in Thatcher's Britain in the mid-1980s, I was frequently asked when the need for feminism would be over, hadn't equality been achieved? So, I would reply (to art students), where was the equal

pay for women artists' works, the volume of women artists' one-person shows in kunsthalles, the selection of women artists in equal numbers as men to represent their country in international biennales, and the constant cover stories about the "great undiscovered woman artist genius"? It's still relatively straightforward to demonstrate that equality has not been achieved by any simple statistical measure – even though the figures have substantially changed for the better and women artists are not only more visible but more visible in greater numbers in the international art mainstream than ever before.

I was also told that women could do anything now we had elected one woman prime minister – you had only to be tough, ruthless and better than the competition – so what did we need feminism for? Feminism (or any collective model of political action) was seen as a sign of weakness in the midst of a selfish and aggressive individualism fostered by an entrepreneurial spirit (and Thatcher's trade union bashing) - a politics for those who could not succeed in the "real" world. This is the exact opposite of any idea of collective political action – demonstrated so forcibly post-1988 by the fall of so many regimes in Eastern Europe – but it is worth remembering that it was used very successfully in the UK in the mid-1980s to defeat the left, undermine trade unionism and diminish or curtail the impact of any collective political protest on the streets. Forms of collective political action have again re-emerged in email campaigns, on internet sites, and in mass street protests against globalisation, destruction of the environment, capitalism, and war. It might seem as though in 2007, the legacy of 1968 is remembered but in 1988 the same questions were also asked in a very different cultural climate. More recently, in certain debates, activism has been set against theory. It seems a false distinction, as protest is never just a praxis, it is always theoretically informed and theories are always used to justify political positions and spread their influence.

As a "pro-theory" feminist I ask myself constantly at what level of political activism am I really engaged in transforming feminism for the future?

This paper was presented at the Symposium Geteilte Zeit: Kunstgeschichte als Internationaler Dialog / Shared Times: Art History as International Dialogue, at the European Academy in Berlin, 25 - 28 March 2008. This text is available in German in the book Gisela Weimann (ed) Geteilte Zeit: Fragen und Antworten (Edition Eselsweg, 2008).

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Feminist art in Denmark a short introductory history and an interview with Kirsten Justesen, (artist, born 1943)

Sanne Kofod Olsen

Since the late 1960s feminist art appeared on the Danish art scene, there were a number of significant events that outline a short history of feminist art in Denmark. The feminist art activities centered around Copenhagen and Århus. In Copenhagen the feminist art movement came out of the Royal Danish Art Academy, where a group of students worked with contemporary aesthetics and experimental art. Some of the first feminists belonged to the male/female collective Kanonklubben and some worked independently.

In 1970 a collective of female artists realised the project *Damebilleder (Womens' images).* It was a series of seven works and actions/ events that took place at different locations in Copenhagen. All tableaux dealt with the woman's role in society from the beauty parlor to dish washing. The group consisted of Lene Bille, Marie Bille, Rikke Diemer, Kirsten Dufour, Kirsten Justesen, Jytte Keller, Jytte Rex and Gitte Skjoldjensen. The first of the seven images produced was *The Hooker.* This scenic event lasted 2-3 days. A woman sat in a window (similar to Dutch style prostitution) and was in this way "framed". The second image was called *Dish Washing.* For this, the artists collected their dirty dishes and brought them all to the exhibition space in the Danish Art Academy. The third image was entitled *The Beauty* and a make-up company was invited to give lectures in beauty care. The fourth image was *The Wedding Cake.* In this installation an outdoor building was decorated like a wedding cake. The fifth image was given the title *The Defense* and consisted of a self-defense course for the group and the visitors of the exhibition. In the sixth image, with the title *The Garments*, the exhibition space was changed into a sewing factory, where

the group produced red dresses that they were going to use in the final image number 7, called *The Camp*. The group lived together for four days and discussed the themes of the exhibition with the visitors. The exhibition project ended in a big party in red!

A lot of feminist art works were produced during the early 1970s. Kirsten Justesen, Jytte Rex, Ursula Reuter Christiansen and Lene Adler Petersen, and group oriented projects by Kirsten Dufour among others, did very significant works during these first years of the feminist art movement in Denmark. Lene Adler Petersen had done provocative collective performances with her husband Bjørn Nørgaard, for example, where she wandered through the Copenhagen stock exchange stark naked. In the early 1970s she did a number of works, dealing with women's liberation and at the same time their cultural attachment to the domestic sphere. In 1977 she did the installation *Liberty leading the people* in which she had appropriated the well known Delacroix painting and turned it into a socialist feminist scenery, in which a woman's figure and a stove are the central elements. The focus on the liberation of the domesticated woman was a central theme. Kirsten Justesen (see interview below) did several works on her life as a woman, mother and artist, in which these various elements coalesced. Some works dealt with the experience of the revolution of liberation seen through the kitchen window and others dealt with the female body as a vehicle of significance.

The works of Ursula Reuter Christiansen also specifically took its point of departure in domestic life and how to be a mother, a wife and a professional working artist at the same time. The film *Skarpretteren* from 1971 is a psychological drama about a pregnant woman, a wounded soldier and an executioner (as well as several other figures). The story ends with the decapitation of the woman. In this way, as many of the other works, the film deals with the complications and frustrations of being a woman, a wife, a mother, etc and at the same time how to act as a professional artist.

The domestic theme is also the central theme of the film in three acts *Three girls and a pig* from 1971 in which Ursula Reuter Christiansen, Lene Adler Petersen and Elisabeth Terkelsen are the three leading female characters. It was conceived as a vampire movie with Dracula as the main character. However Dracula became the invisible factor and the film shows instead the domesticated women's fear - expressed by both knitting and gossiping - of the invisible dangers outside. The women are all dressed in Victorian dresses in the first part. However, they do overcome their fear at some point. In the last part of the film, the women have become soldiers in a "field kitchen", cleaning potatoes and singing German soldier songs. In the room is a small male pig, which in the end is castrated by the three women. The man or the male element obviously plays a significant part in the film but he is finally overcome.

Among some of the most significant events in Denmark during the 1970s was the women's exhibition at Charlottenborg I in December1975/January 1976, shown in the Women's galleries in Århus and Copenhagen, the publication of the feminist

journal *Land og By* and the opening of the Women's Museum in Århus, just to mention some of the highlights. The period is still poorly documented, and if documented at all, this has been done by artists who have made a major effort to keep a record of this period.

During the 1980s, feminism was more or less taboo in Denmark. By the early 1990s, everything of this early history seemed to have been forgotten. However, a new interest in feminist practices arose, especially among the young generation of women artists and curators but also in the established museums, various exhibitions on deceased women artists were also produced. Most significant, however, were the major feminist exhibitions at Kunsthallen Brandts Klaedefabrik, curated by Lene Burkard, one partly in collaboration with Kirsten Justesen. The first exhibition *Dialogue with the Other,* which took place in 1995, combined past feminist art with the present and showed a lot of impressive works by older and younger women artists. In 1996 the second exhibition (with Kirsten Justesen) called *Body as Membrane* focused on the aspect of the body in feminist art.

Together with the two visual artists, Susan Hinnum and Malene Landgreen, who had initiated the project in the first place, I took part in the first publication on Danish women artists in 1990. Because of difficulties of finding sponsors, the publication ended up as a internet publication in 1997 entitled *Inserts - 69 Women Artists in Denmark* (website 1997-2007 has now closed). At the time we wanted to publish the book, but we had already tried and failed to find financial support since 1995. A lot of young women artists participated and others declined. It seemed still to be the most prevailing opinion, that feminism was a closed chapter and women's liberation was something we didn't have to talk about anymore. Our opinion was somewhat different. The *Inserts* project developed into an exhibition in 1998 called *Boomerang* with more or less the same intention: to focus on women artists and the unequal opportunities in the art world. The whole project was initiated on the basic question: where do the women artists go after their academy graduation? Despite an equality in the number of male and female students at the academies, the art scene seemed still to be dominated by male artists and professors. The same feminist agenda was shared by some students at the academy in Copenhagen, who arranged study groups and lectures in an open school project named *Aircondition.* They invited several feminist art historians and feminists to teach or give lectures at the academy, an act that emphasized the implementation of feminist strategies in art and theory.(1)

The domination of male artists was proved in the same year (1998), when the Agency of Cultural Heritage published a report on gender representation in museum collections. This report revealed the terrifying fact, that only 6% of the artists represented in public collections were of female gender. These hard figures were little noticed at the time. Five years later they came to attention in a seminar called Before Invisibility, which addressed this very problematic. Sadly enough nothing had really changed during these five years, but it came into focus in the seminar,

which was arranged and supported by women artists who are quite influential in the art world - among others Kirsten Justesen, Elisabeth Toubro, Dorte Jelstrup and Susan Hinnum - most of whom had works in the museums.

So where are we now? Most recently a new seminar was arranged by the Visual Artists' Association (BKF) called *The Blind Spot*. This seminar addressed the same complex of themes and examined what had changed during the past years. A slight improvement is recognizable, but there is still a long way to go.

Interview with Kirsten Justesen, June 2007.

Kirsten Justesen belonged to the feminist art movement in Denmark during the 1970s to which she has contributed richly. During the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s she has played an important role in the contemporary Danish art scene by being almost the only continuous representative of performance art seen from a visual art perspective. This gives her a very unique position in Danish art history.

I decided to ask her the following questions in order to get a taste of what was going on and which topics were discussed during the 1970s in Denmark.

You were one of the pioneers in Danish feminist art in the late 60s and early 70s. Which feminist art projects do you consider the most significant in feminist art in an attempt to give a short historical overview?

If you mean a work from my own production I will point out CIRCUMSTANCES.(2) A super 8 recording of my pregnant torso [at a specific moment during pregnancy] and a plaster cast from which I made several epoxy prints. These torsos contain both the facts and the conception of that kind of female adventure which is taking place during pregnancy. Only women artists have that possibility of being inside their own work! It is a very challenging exercise, a consciousness that leads to a clearly feminist gaze, which is fulfilled by that process.

As a trained classic sculpture(ress!) confronted with art history through education, reviews, museum visits, [I have the experience of that] my generation is brought up with a male gaze. A gaze that still seems to be synonymous with defining the history of art.

I understand feminist aesthetics as a visual attempt to investigate the female gaze to be then developed on the canvasses, on the plinths and as actions in space. That was not easy back in the 1960-70s. (1)

We want our gaze back in history, to secure diversity and in order not be so ashamed to show our grandsons the heritage of the visual arts, and this goes for everyone, not just for the Western heterosexual welfare women.

[Kirsten Justesen now mentions feminist events that impressed and/or influenced her or in which she took part.]

I saw Niki de St.Phalle's *SHE - a Cathedral*, at Moderna Museet in Stockholm, 1966. In the same year Siri Deckert carved the names of women artists throughout history as a mural in a subway station in Stockholm to secure that they will not be forgotten.

Our project *DAMEBILLEDER*, Copenhagen 1970. We were a small group of art students who installed a series of tableaux, uncovering female roles over a period of time in the available exhibition spaces.

Valie Export's organisation of the exhibition: *MAGNA FEMINISMUS* 1975 in Vienna including the catalogue in which a huge number of questions to Meret Oppenheim were answered. The same year *LA MOITIE DU CIEL/ HALVDELEN AF HIMLEN* by Claudie Broyelle about the women's movement in China was published in Danish. And Lucy Lippard's articles in *Ms Magazine.*

I will point out Jolanda Prinsens work *CANVAS* from 1979. It is 80% framed canvas with the last 20 % tied to the stretcher with 1960s garters from the first global feminist exhibition: *FEMINISTISCHE KUNST INTERNATIONAL* organised by the Gemeentemuseum in Den Haag, Holland in 1979. The catalogue is in Dutch, but there is a summary in English and a list of the so far very few books, articles and exhibitions on feminist art.

Quite a lot of feminist art works including your own focused on the conflict of being a woman and an artist in relation to patriarchal society. You have yourself combined the subject/object position of the woman artist and the conflict of being wife, mother, etc. and a productive artist at the same time. Why were these topics so relevant?

In the first part of the 1970s my studio was between the kitchen and the nursery. At that time I did not find one among the few available role models within public history that included kids.

My generation just wanted everything and language cannot talk about this as a conflict, that's the whole point. As well as on my body, the kids were at my hand from 7 to 24 hours a day. It was obviously a focus for me. It is interesting that earlier generations of known Danish female artists mainly painted flowers and patterns and happened to paint these from the inside of their houses - they went as far as to the window frame and saw it only from inside.

The European feminist wave from the early 1970s was a part of a socialist revolution and included a good knowledge of Marxist thinking. We did not want to make a single cup of tea for the revolution after the 1960s, we just wanted to secure it so that we and the kids could safely enter the new barricades and that the utopian spaces included us and would provide us with a breathing space.

Through our upbringing we were defined as reproduction tools and were supposed to behave in order to find suitable husbands. But we were now, thanks to

the post war growing western prosperity, wanted by the industry as production tools as well. We intended TO SURVIVE ALL BLOODSHEDS, not just the one in the art world. 1975 I made my first Solo exhibition HOUSE WIFE IMAGES/ HUSMORBILLEDER at Tranegaarden in Copenhagen. The image on the poster was LUNCH.

What do you think feminist art in the 70s has achieved (if anything)?

Everything, what the hell would you have in your mind, in your luggage, your museums, in your underground art scene without it? Duchamp could not find anything more to do, but for us there was a lot to investigate. And I know that you are paid 80% of a male curator's salary for your work. I know that the state supported art museums in Denmark bought just 6% of their art from female artists during 1990-2000. What might the % of the amount of money tell you? Are our works still bad investments? It was just a beginning, so go on girl!

Notes

1. The major literary works representing the period is the survey edited by Jytte Rex, entitled *Billedet som Kampmiddel*, 1977 and lately a book published by the contemporary artist group Women down the Pub called *Udsigt - feministiske strategier i dansk billedkunst" (View - feminist strategies in Danish Visual Art)*, 2004 (both Informations Forlag).

2. The piece has been described in following article: Vibeke Vibolt Knudsen 'Circumstances - 1973 - An Unknown work by Kirsten Justensen' Statens Museum for *Kunst Journal*, 2001

These papers were presented at the Symposium Geteilte Zeit: Kunstgeschichte als Internationaler Dialog / Shared Times: Art History as International Dialogue, at the European Academy in Berlin, 25 - 28 March 2008. This text is available in Gisela Weimann (ed) Geteilte Zeit: Fragen und Antworten (Edition Eselsweg, 2008) in German.

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Displaced or Nomadic Subjects

Eli Bartra

'Although the image of 'nomadic subjects' is inspired by the experience of persons or cultures that are literally nomadic, here the nomadism in question is related to the type of critical consciousness that resists confining itself within the socially codified modes of thought and behavior.' Rosi Braidotti (Braidotti, 2000, 31)

People can be uprooted or displaced by birth or by destiny. I prefer to think of myself as a nomadic subject. Nonetheless, and despite the many years in which it has been an everyday situation, this identity—hybrid, perhaps, and quite artificial, as are all identities—leaves a strange aftertaste. It is without any postmodern individualist intention, and only with the purpose of introducing myself, that I write here a few autobiographical reflections from the tropics.

I am a daughter of Catalan refugees from the Spanish Civil War, who—forced to exchange one land for another—found themselves in Mexico. In this country, by constitutional right, every person born in its territory is a citizen; and so I am one.

But the fact of belonging to a family with such a strong cultural identity as the Catalan—with its own language, quite distinct from Castilian—resulted in my mother tongue being Catalan. I am of lower middle class origins, but here every one who doesn't have a dark skin immediately comes to be a member of the class of "*güeros*", which is a synonym for foreigner, someone from outside, and by implication, of a higher social caste. As in many other parts of this planet, the color of one's skin seems to determine both national identity and class in Mexico —except that here, where the ideology of miscegenation reigns, neither whites nor blacks nor Indians

are admitted. This is a country of mestizos and everything that is not mestizo doesn't quite fit. At times, during the twentieth century, there has been an attempt to "sublimate" the indigenous peoples, but this has never gone beyond "pious thoughts"—a demagogic public policy without any real material underpinning. Since skin color and social class are so closely related, someone who is dark-skinned, but incontestably of the well-to-do classes, will also be magically transmuted into a "*güerito*".

So it was that I was raised and educated in Mexico... but as my parents happened to be foreign, during the presidential "reign" of Luis Echeverría (1970-1976), I was obliged to acquire a certificate of nationality certifying that I was Mexican by birth, which is in any case both absurd and unconstitutional. Of course it really doesn't matter very much here because, as in the imperial past, the catch-phrase is "I obey, but I do not comply". However, there was no other way it could have been, because my parents, during their thirty years of exile, had no passport and thus no nationality; they only had an identity and travel document—issued by Mexico—which had been given them as officially stateless persons. Nevertheless, a fatherland, or motherland, was something they had very clearly defined, though their exile led, with the passing of the years, to their also becoming to some extent hybrid persons.

As soon as I really established contact with Mexican society—from the age of about three, I suppose—the process of Mexicanization began. But, on entering school the process acquired a Spanish stamp since I studied in schools that were opened by the refugees. There they taught us Spanish pronunciation, and so I spoke with a lilt proper to Mexico City but with somewhat Castilian phonetics. That came to a stop when, aged 19, I made my first visit to Spain; I got off the plane in Madrid, took a taxi, and after pronouncing a few words, the driver turned and said to me 'You're not from here, are you?'

Time and time again throughout my life I've been asked 'What are you then? Mexican or Catalan? What do you feel you are?' During my childhood and youth I experienced a certain problem of national and ethnic identity. What was I really? Certainly, the question is from the outset a trick one, since it implies that one can only be one thing. With the passing of the years, and after trying to get inside this problem that other people create for you, I had to arrive at the conclusion that I am both things at once and that I have no need to choose. In some questions I am Mexican, in others Catalan, and in yet others I am a bit of a hybrid. There is a Chicano song that goes, mistakenly: 'My home's not here, nor there neither'; but I would say, rather: 'My home's here and over there too'. After all, it turns out that in Mexico I'm "from somewhere else", whereas, in Catalonia, my speech makes me seem—how awful!—a foreigner. In truth, I feel I'm from both places and it no longer gives rise to any conflict in me to recognize myself as bi-cultural or even hybrid.

Many people seem to think that everyone must have a single "pure", hundred percent, national identity, and that this "identity" is given you by the land you are

born in, the origin of your parents or the place where you decide to live. And all this is contingent upon each country and each particular circumstance.

Nowadays, as if by magic, the appropriate passport is issued at the appropriate place. My parents had no passport at all; I, on the other hand, have two. Ironies of destiny.

In the last resort, this question of national identity is as complicated (or as simple) as the question of gender identity. In this case, too, according to the hegemonic ideology, one can only be of one gender (and look like it, in accordance with the corresponding stereotype).

And so, after these digressions around the theme of identity, let me enter into the area of my professional and other interests. Since my youth I have been interested in art, all kinds of art. I liked the art of the theatre as well as the visual arts and literature. It wasn't quite so in my early adolescence, when, to show my independence in a family of writers, I read little, and big museums put me to sleep. But as a university student I had the chance to work in a museum and that was decisive for my future. In philosophy I preferred aesthetics, and in sociology, the sociology of art. In 1968, I found myself working for the Cultural Olympics in Mexico City, and nearly ten years later I was employed by the journal of the Modern Art Museum, where I soon became interested in folk art and art produced by women. It was precisely as a result of those experiences that I was able to get an intimate knowledge of what women were doing in the visual arts during the 1960s and 1970s.

Before the mid twentieth century, women artists were seen as an exception and were never taken as seriously as men—not even Frida Kahlo, who in her lifetime hardly exhibited or sold a painting. In Mexico, during the mid twentieth century, however, exhibitions by women painters or sculptors became fashionable, and there was at least one each year. In 1975, in celebration of International Women's Year, one was mounted with the very best of female plastic arts of that moment.

The first time I tried to bring together feminism with my interests in the field of art was when I was invited to give a lecture at the Goethe Institute in Mexico City. No one came to hear me speak and so I went back home without giving the lecture. Nearly thirty years have gone by since then.

I should like to take the opportunity, now, to think aloud about what would be the seven most interesting questions to ponder in relation to this link—which can be highly problematic for people of either sex, whether creative artists or not—between art and feminism. For some time, I have been making constant inquiries throughout Mexico into the question of whether women artists think that they are treated differently on account of their sex. The answers I have received have been constant. There are some who perceive that they are treated differently—and often in a discriminatory way—while others state that this is not so, that they have never felt any difference of treatment. In general, this seems to bear a relation to whether they have a feminist consciousness, whether they are alert to sexism; and in fact the

situation is the same as with women in other occupations. The Mexican visual artist Yosi Anaya, who lives in Xalapa, also a displaced subject –who at the time of the student movement of 1968 was a young art student and also worked for the Cultural Olympics–says in this respect: "For many years I had not realized that there were differences, but at a particular moment I reflected".

In this context it was very important–and it still is–to set up programs of women's studies in the universities (mainly as graduate programs, which we decided was the best modality). We made the first moves to establish a women's research program at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Xochimilco, in 1982–the first such program at Mexican universities– with the idea of "contaminating" the other disciplines, which continue to be eminently androcentric, and also, of course, to continue with the task of "consciousness raising" but then we took this to another arena and to another level. The Graduate Program "Maestría y Especialización en Estudios de la Mujer" was set up at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana - Xochimilco in Mexico City in 1994, after many years of persistent struggle.

It seems to me that in Europe and the United States people worry a lot, on a recurrent basis, about the question of the famous lost generation. In Mexico, however, there is no sense at all in thinking in those terms; even less so with reference to the generation born in the 1940s and 1950s. Why lost? Nobody could be regarded as belonging to a lost generation; here this question has no meaning.

One of the reasons may be that the feminist movement began later and has yet to become–unlike in Europe and the United States–an important but already historical period. Women artists of that generation here are at a mid-point in their struggle and just beginning to gain broader public acceptance.

This is an opinion shared by Yosi Anaya. She says: 'I don't understand this. I don't consider my generation to be "lost" (a closed concept, perhaps originating in the United States?), nor myself for that matter'.

I have also been interested in investigating to what point Mexican female artists think that their own creations, their own work, is political in a feminist sense, and to what extent they see it simply as art, something completely apart from politics; and, once again, what I have discovered is that there is no consensus. When I put the question to Yosi of whether she believes that such a thing as feminist art exists, and whether hers is an example of such, she answered somewhat meditatively: 'Well now, Mónica Mayer and Maris Bustamante could be considered exponents of a feminist art in their performances in the 1990s, because in itself that was their direct and militantly militant message. [...] But to my way of thinking, the feminist movement in art has taken a variety of different paths and in many cases is implicit in the artistic statements. [...] And whether there is feminist art in Mexico or not is something to be gauged from the subjectivity of the exponent as well as that of the person who is thinking about it.

'To define this categorically is something I cannot do, something foreign to me. Like many other fields, feminism in art is full of crossovers, mixtures and adaptations. As far as my production is concerned, in general it moves in a field relegated to women (textiles) and is concerned with those activities; it comes from the soul of women—it has a feminist message, but a subtle one. There is that message, hidden for those who know how to—or perhaps rather those who want to—read it.' And thinking about it, Yosi adds: 'A single feminism, no. But a multitude of feminisms, yes; and many ways of making art; and so there can be many arts that are feminist, but don't necessarily belong to that category—'a feminist art'. And at the same time, they can be many other things and belong to many other currents. If it's art, it must be like that.'

On various occasions, over the years, I have pondered on the question of what have been the most important transformations in the visual arts practiced by women in recent decades, and in truth I believe that the answers are very complicated and require a detailed analysis. As regards art that could be properly described as feminist, there are a certain number of creators who have been making a kind of art that has changed little.

Maris Bustamante and Monica Mayer, for example, have always worked with the performance medium that they originally called "happenings". Often they developed works with a similar basic feminist approach that referred to the female body and female erotics. In the 1980s they created the group *Polvo de gallina negra* (lit. "dust of a black hen") and they stated that their aim was: 'to create images out of the experience of being a woman in a patriarchal system, based on a feminist perspective and with an eye to transforming the visual world so we can change reality'.

In 1987 they created a performance titled *¡Madres! (lit."Mothers!"*, but as an exclamation it could be understood as something like "*Deamn!*"), and as part of it they both actually got pregnant and carried out different actions in order to make a critique of pregnancy in our patriarchal society, for example, they went on a TV show, where they fashioned a big belly on the famous host and declared him "mother for a day".

Of course, 30 years later their work is more sophisticated and more complex but not basically different. There can be no doubt that new female artists are appearing who take their place in different artistic fields and bring a new vision to bear on old themes, and this is quite refreshing. They are more confident, less dogmatic, less "militant"; their feminism is taken for granted, and this enables them to be more creative, more inventive.

Raquel Tibol, for example, believes that an evolution is taking place in the arts practiced by women, since 'one has to give its due to this rising presence in both numbers and quality' that has taken place during the second half of the twentieth century (Tibol, 2002, 9). I wonder if this conception is not overly evolutionist, incorporating the notion of "progress" in the field of the arts; one might rather think that the first half of the century was richer as regards the contributions of women to the visual arts than the second. It seems to me that, although there were less of them, those women attained very high peaks in all the arts. This statement is, of course, not meant to denigrate the works of high value that have been produced in the last few decades. I was surprised by

the precise and synthetic quality of Yosi's answers, because I was already tearing my hair out in an attempt to answer it, and she simply said: '(a) we have proliferated; (b) we have diversified; (c) there are, besides, woman artists, writers, curators, museologists, editors.'

It is the enormous, complicated, and even perverse, theme of evaluation and comparison between works of art that opens the question of thinking in terms of whether the Mexican plastic art produced by women today is better or worse than that of thirty years ago. And once I had put this question to myself I saw the absurdity of asking anything of the sort. What I did get out of Yosi was this significantly laconic opinion. Her response allows us various readings: 'In general, the means of artistic expression have diversified and varied much in the last thirty years and new spaces are still being opened. Therefore, the participation of women in art has increased (or at least has made itself felt to a greater extent) and has thus become more varied. How can one compare the qualities of production at different moments and in different historical contexts? I can't do that. At any moment there are and have been things of value.' That's how it is. But I wonder for the nth time who is it who decides what things are "of value" and which are not? That is the problem. And when political questions become mixed up in art, in other words when works are "politically correct" but "artistically incorrect", how is one to express it?

Women were (and are) systematically excluded from the art distribution circles (museums and galleries) directed by men and women alike. Therefore, in order to "solve" that problem, the place of women always has to be the ghetto. We are in the ghetto in women's studies programs in the universities; we are in the ghetto when we stage a women-artists' exhibition–as well as today, in Mexico, in the virtual museum of women artists. I think these ghettos are extremely useful and necessary. They share the "downside" of the ghetto, which is exclusion (or self-exclusion), marginalisation. The museum of Mexican women artists, for example, is necessary because Mexican artists, by virtue of their national and/or ethic origin are excluded from mainstream art circuits. Therefore, it is indispensable to create something to compensate for that fact.

The question of the collective exhibitions by women has always been the object of passionate comments in favour and against. Yet nobody has ever been vehement about the fact that the overwhelming majority of works exhibited everywhere are by men, and often, by men alone. When one talks about artists it is automatically taken for granted that one is referring to men, and so if we want to make the contrary clear it is necessary to specify that we are talking about women artists; as Griselda Pollock puts it: 'The myth of free, individual creativity is gender specific; it is exclusively masculine. We never talk of men artists or male art; but if you wish to specify that the artist is female the term must be qualified with the feminine adjectival prefix.' (Pollock, 1988, 203). So I asked Yosi whether she was in agreement with exhibitions of exclusively women artists, and she said without hesitation:

'Well why not, when all the time there are, and always will be, exhibitions by just men. It seems to me there must be something of everything. [...] I would love to see in the next Venice Biennale a selection from Mexico consisting solely of women artists as a reply to the curatorship of Gabriel Orozco in 2005, who only chose works by his friends (all of them men)—he didn't choose a single Mexican woman, as if there were no women artists in Mexico!'

It seems that the idea of plurality is finally permeating the social fabric and what is now referred to as the "collective imaginary". Or perhaps I'm being too optimistic. The fact is that the last question I should like to consider is about the existence of feminist visual arts in Mexico.

Yosi Anaya, alert to what is happening in the world, says 'There's something of everything, although not all these feminist visual arts have achieved a path of technique and production of their own. Some are based on patterns of exhibition and methods proper to patriarchal arts. And some present themselves in such a way as to achieve a transcendent excellence. There's no doubt about it.' Thus it seems ever more evident that as regards the relation between art and feminism, things are neither easy nor clear.

In conclusion, there would seem to be no doubt at all that feminism came to the rescue of the art of women and has brought them out of their underground or outcast condition. If women have lived, in many senses in a sort of rootless state, like other kinds of displaced subjects, feminism has been creating for them a geography of their own.

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Three Female Hypotheses of the Romanian Avant-Garde

Ramona Novicov
Translation: Ioan Danubiu and Liana Cozea

I was born on 10 July 1960 in a small city founded by the Soviet Union in 1952, near the Western border of Romania. I studied at the art colleges in Brasov and Oradea, and then at the Art Institute in Bucharest in the department of history and art theory/museology, from which I graduated in 1983. In 2001 I received my doctors degree at the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj, with a thesis entitled 'Avant-garde Art in Romania between the 1970s and the 1990s'. I work as an art critic and curator, as a lecturer at the Faculty of Architecture of the University in Oradea and as a producer of the programme Art Style for Transylvanian television. I have published two books on experimental Romanian art.

My interest in contemporary art and especially in its avant-garde aspect was triggered by several exhibitions of contemporary Romanian in the arts section of the Muzeul Tarii Crisurilor in Oradea, a very important museum that dared to offer an extensive opening towards the west with its international exhibition programme even in the toughest years of the communist régime. Among all these exhibitions, there was one that had a decisive impact on my artistic direction: that of Geta Bratescu, a woman artist who was a real spearhead of the Romanian avant-garde art. It was a true event, which I had the possibility to organise and conceive in spite of the fact that we were in 1988, when the oppression of the communist ideology was extremely strong (the Romanian anticommunist revolution took place only one year later). Another moment of great importance for my professional orientation towards the avant-garde was my entrance into the national circle of young artists, called Studio 35. This circle, which had a clearly defined experimental and avant-garde orientation, was founded in Cluj by Ana Lupas, an exceptional artistic

personality. It was she, who ensured that the concept of the Biennale de la Jeunesse in Paris was successfully introduced to the Romanian artistic environment of the 1980s. Due to this cultural corridor with international openings, the powerful Romanian generation of the 1980s was born, a generation connected to the values of post modernism, which leads the artistic movements of today.

Due to the fact that I experienced the Romanian artistic reality of the 1980s directly, and also through my doctoral studies the reality of the 1960s and the 1970s, I chose as representative artistic examples, three iconic names from the top of Romanian avant-garde. Here, at this level of the elites, information on international art scenes was circulated subversively, which prevented communist censorship from strangling it. The Library of the Artist's Union in Bucharest had valuable collections of contemporary art books and international magazines which I studied incessantly during my student years. Important international reviews could also be read, and Romanian artists whose creation was remarkable could participate in international events with the help of two art critics of European importance: Ion Frunzetti and Dan Haulica. I would like to underline the fact that Romanian art was not separated from the international contemporary art scene. But I also cannot deny the existence of severe censorship, which coexisted with a craven obedience to the orders of the communist rulers, with drastic restrictions of travelling abroad and of cultural exchanges especially with the Western world. But these were characteristics of the communist régime that were experienced by the whole population of Romania.

Of course, like many other Romanian citizens, many valuable artists left the country, for reasons which are completely understandable. But those who stayed succeeded in giving an identity and a consistent value to contemporary Romanian art, and managed to keep the avant-garde spirit alive. There were both male and female artists who, from the sparsely populated heights of the artistic elite, with both hidden and revealed sacrifices have nurtured Romanian spirituality with force, with courage, with responsibility, and above all with high artistic landmarks which are today more apparent than ever. Their example of social commitment with actions that could be considered events, also made me determined to preoccupy myself with the problems of social influence, of detention, of alienation and of resistence in an oppressive environment. This year, for example, I have initiated an art course in a prison environment, at the Penitentiary of Oradea, entitled Luminescences.

In order to talk about the Romanian avant-garde art practiced by fine artists, I have chosen three artists from three generations who have, in an exemplary manner, lived through not only inner revolutions, but also revolutions or crises of contemporary history, and have remained important landmarks of the Romanian and international avant-garde. With a rare elegance of artistic attitude, always aspiring towards an elevated purism of plastic language, of a heraldic type, their work expresses, on three chronological layers of contemporary art, an essentially counter-culture attitude, an implicit political and social rebellion, uncomfortable

for any kind of establishment, subtly altered in recurrent artistic cycles.

Out of the sheer volume and complexity of the works I have chosen a certain theme: the female face in the interval between disclosure and camouflage. The self-portraits of the three fine artists, explicit or implicit, always suggest a tough, uncompromising search for their own existence on the narrow knife-edge between the physical and the meta-physical, between beauty and truth.

Geta Bratescu

Geta Bratescu was born in 1926 in Ploiesti, in a family of intellectuals refined both by culture and aristocratic heritage. Between 1945 and 1949 she studied at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy of the University of Bucharest. Then, after the long and oppressive years of the establishment when the communist regime began to fade, she studied art at the Institute of Fine Arts of Bucharest between 1969 and 1971. Thanks to her vast literary and visual background, she worked as graphic designer and collaborator of the most prestigious art magazine in *Romania, Secolul XX (The 20th Century)* for 20 years (1963-1983).

She has written five books in her own unique descriptive literary style. She lives and creates with the same exceptional energy in Bucharest where, in 1999, the Romanian National Museum of Art organized a vast retrospective of her work. She is an artist of a creative nature, essentially experimental. From the beginning, she was attracted by the expressive languages of intermedia and performance and conceptualized and quantified them using the sequential methods of the photo and video techniques. The interval when she attended university courses coincided with a short happy period of communist regime and with the years in which there was a cultural and political opening of Romania towards Western countries. 1968 was the year when the chief of state Nicolae Ceausescu distanced himself from the policies of Moscow by refusing to participate in the invasion of Czechoslovakia with Warsaw Pact troops. In the interval 1968-1974, thanks to Western, especially American, support, Romanian artists were able to participate in the most important international biennial exhibitions and events of the avant-garde: Venice, Sao Paolo, the Youth Biennial Exhibition in Paris, Milan, Edinburgh, The Hague, London, etc.

On the other hand, works of American avant-garde artists were displayed on the walls of the museums of Cluj and Bucharest, connecting Romanian artistic world directly with the latest trends of the contemporary international art elite. In this interval of political and cultural freedom, along with other artists of the 1960s generation, Geta Bratescu tackled directly the problem of the object, of installation and performance, to which she would remain faithful all her life. Her work is absolutely exceptional in its complexity of language and conceptual elements. It has a preference for serialism, for the recurrence of the patterns and clichés, which lends her plastic expression an interior unity.

Analysing her work, I understood why the artists at the forefront of the Romanian avant-garde of the 1960s and 1970s made subtle use of the "cold" and conceptual mechanisms of plastic objectivity: fragmentation, serialization, sequencialisation in the form of the pattern and of the module: because in practising with a programmatical lucidity those mechanisms of objectivation, they could reach a zero degree of subjectivity, and hence avoid becoming stranded in a over-obvious pathos concerning the political engagements of a totalitarian leader. That zero degree of the serial language, with a high coefficient of objectivation, could suspend and neutralize the pressure of the communist ideology and propaganda manifested through the language of Socialist Realism, permitting "escape from everyday life", and eventually, an escape from the system. Because preformed patterns, modules or photo clichés are plastic spaces devoid of substance, or of their own individual message, they are essentially open spaces and their great quality is that they can transit or "deviate" other plastic realities towards meanings that cannot be intercepted or possessed by the forces of other systems (in this case, that of the socio-political sphere). In other words, those modular spaces possess an "incorruptible" plasticity, virtually infinite, which cannot be capitalized or exploited by a particular ideology. That fact is cleverly underlined by Geta Bratescu in the course of her entire oeuvre, but there is a specific type which I think is able to focus on the tension of this problem in an exemplary manner: the self-portrait.

Beginning with *Self-portrait. Towards White* (1975, action in seven photographic sequences) and passing on to the specular game of *The Pillars* (1985, three pieces, mixed media), of the *Self-portrait in a Mirror* (1985, object, mixed media) of the *Censored Self-portrait* (1978, photo collage on textile support), unfolding the folds of Adventure (1991, object-book), or the *Book with Eyes* (1991, cardboard, paper, tempera, photo), through the strange series Make-up and the exuberantly phantasmagorical series *Caprices* and reaching the "disguise" in *Mrs. Oliver in riding costume* and of *Mrs. Oliver and Chevalier Thonet*, installations from 1991, so passing through all these sequential or metaphorical reflexions of one and the same face, what remains is the perplexity in front of a Protean face, whose versatility suggests a creative intelligence of fascinating plastic expression.

Ana Lupas

Ana Lupas was born in Cluj, in 1940. Her father, the outstanding historian Ioan Lupas, had been severely persecuted by the communist regime. In 1962, Ana Lupas graduated from The Fine Arts Institute of Cluj. It is Ana Lupas who, since 1973, has brought to Romania the spirit of the International Young Artists Biennial from Paris. From the 1970s to the 1990s, she founded and guided with her exemplary way the national gathering of young fine artists entitled Atelier 35 to which she has given an undeniably avant-garde influence.

Her sculptural or textile objects evolve within the environment like a piece of

architecture, subjected to similar rigours of construction and generating a similarly special poetry. Ana Lupas holds a privileged position given her radical approach and the ceaseless experimental attitude. She is among the Romanian artists who enjoy widest exposure within the exceptional international elite of the avant-garde. She has always placed herself in the most risky fine art language area: at the intersection of tapestry, sculpture and architecture. Artistic gesture takes on the magnificence of a remarkable event; experimentation with shape paves the way to the lost paradise. Before ambient art or the description of a process came along her work already had the nature of an event. Indeed, Ana Lupas attribute a solemn rhythm to the spatial play with shapes. However, she simultaneously makes a tactile invitation which invites intimacy and even a certain delight derived from touching. *Hemp thread, Playing Prometheus* (1973, textile thread, wood, fur), *Red-painted egg in nest* (1973), *the Bridge* (1973) are each open-ended works, protean, with flexible spatial dynamics, reversible and combinable. They suggest organic evolution, like some nest sculpted from the bodies of gigantic creatures, silently entangling or disentangling but untameable. And yet her works have also a subjacent function, as a vehicle for initiation spanning different levels of the visual.

Their textile material also emphasizes the sacred meaning of the works: the thread, the binding, the knot, the net - everything merges in an erotic discourse about pattern and "zone" which condition our existence. Despite the fact that they are fashioned according to traditional techniques and from similar rough materials, the works display a certain elegance; their demanding minimalism is flexible because their three-dimensional geometry emerges from the mobility of surfaces exclusively woven from organic and warm materials: natural fibers, leather, fur, wood, wheat stems. Some recurring cycles are illustrative in this respect: **Flying carpet** (a piece which was later named *Humid* installation, 1970), *Margau*, and *Solemn process*, a series of installations made between 1964 and 1974.

These are ambient installations with an ecological undercurrent: spaces "re-inhabited" with modular mobile shapes, so as to turn them into a place for celebration. Still in the traditional rural environment, sumptuous vegetal architectures spread like "ecological paradise-like elements", to quote Anca Arghir. Coined up from wheat, straw, hemp, cotton, stitchings, insulating materials, wood and metal, an intermedia environment comes into being, which is reloaded with the force of the primordial gesture as it is repeated with minor changes. The idea of remaking, rebuilding and repeating a massive spatial action normally has de-personalizing connotations; however, here the serial gesture alludes more to the ritual aspect which basically remains the same, because it relates to the same essential principle that it was once generated from, time immemorial. Between 1964 and 1970, Ana Lupas alternated two types of ambient installations derived from action. In 1964: *Solemn process, Saliste*; in 1966: *Humid* installation, Grigorescu district in Cluj; in 1967: *Ieud*, installation; in 1970: *Humid* installation, Margau; in 1972: exhibition hosted by Apollo Galleries in Bucharest.

The *Humid* installation theme was resumed in 1991 as well, in the University Square, in association with the idea of the rented garment. Eventually, they would result in Monument of rags. Also, in the remarkable exhibition entitled Europe, Europe: a century of the avant-garde in Central and Eastern Europe, opened in Bonn in 1994, Ana Lupas reconstructed the *Humid* installation, but on this occasion she gave it tragic and not humorous overtones (an installation made of textiles, acrylic and twenty containers of different materials). Another series developed between 1977 and 1991, entitled *Preparations for a round grave* also has an unsettling significance, with the haunting gravity of its message.

The obsession with Thanatos in the 1980s and 1990s came to replace the humorous and the erotic one that had thrived in the seventies. The celebration robe, characteristic of flight and of an agrarian ceremony, is being reduced to a piece of casual clothing, an item for social camouflage, transitive and ridiculous, to be abandoned or passed on: Ana Lupas' *Robe* (1989), *Rented clothes* (1989 - Cluj, Sibiu, Oradea), culminating in its most decrepit and threatening incarnation: *Monument of Rags* (University Square, Bucharest, 1991, bitumen-impregnated cloth, eight wooden supports, metal scaffolding, 1,000 sq m.). The *Flying Carpet* of the 1970s has turned into a kind of feathered plumage of death, anchored and made visible for a second in the heart of the capital: a fixed black shadow, heavy and motionless.

This progress from Eros to Thanatos inevitably led to an action as desperate as it was ironic, and yet perfectly logical: conservation (canning). The conserves are tin boxes welded together, which contain, like some kind of funeral recipients, the remains of the once great and ambitious flying works, that formerly used to roam excitedly in the open space.

Indeed, the work of Ana Lupas became entirely hermetic (in the strictest sense), a result of the existential hermeticism of the artist, a consequence of her reclusion in the box normally known as workshop. The gesture of creating has been condensed, by means of a spectacular conceptual effort, thus becoming the compacted, ascetic gesture of conserving creation. The work of art has imploded and is encapsulated within itself - in fact, in its own urn: like a post-modern Taj Mahal.

To put it briefly, we might say that Ana Lupas' self-portraits are implicit, as they are portraying inner states of mind, situated at the crosspoint of camouflage and excoriation. It comes as no surprise that the artist has resumed the theme of her *Humid* installation but has produced three major variants: one in 1970, in a village near Cluj, when the artistic liquid was water, evaporating in an action staged with great subtlety. The second *Humid* installation was on public display in 1991, in University Square in Bucharest, a space symbolically destined for protest, with respect to the Romanian revolution. In this case, the viscous suffocating bitumen, mourning-like black material used has replaced the elemental clarity and purity of water. The third *Humid* installation, like sort of a third age, a third inner epoch, was displayed in Bonn, in 1994, at the already mentioned emblematic exhibition for the

international avant-garde: Europe, Europe - a century of avant-garde in Central and Eastern Europe. This time, the liquid was a blood-red acrylic substance, whose near motionless flow took on a significance beyond personal or national tragedy. The image, cold and cruel, had the power of a grief memorial. Ana Lupas created on that occasion one of the most disturbing representations of the sacrifice, in the form of a metaphoric self-portrait: a wounded face, camouflaged in cultural attire.

Adriana Blendea

Adriana Blendea was born in 1961, in Bucharest, into a family of well-known fine artists. She graduated in 1984 from the Institute of Fine Arts in Bucharest, painting department, and in 2006 she received her diploma from University of Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne. She has lived in Paris since 1988, but has maintained close ties with the Romanian artistic world. Her painting debut took place under the uncomfortable sign of neo-expressionism, whose violently articulated language was a key feature of the 1980s avant-garde. However, her artistic maturity in painting showed that her personal forms of expression were not influenced by the spirit of her generation alone.

'For me the self portrait is a plastic pretext which sums up a series of symbolic elements whose exploration takes me on the most direct path to finding the essence of being human, by probing the self. These self portraits are made up of thousands of past faces and worlds which hide behind a single face that appears as an ultimate emblematic symbol of the successive layers of consciousness. All these "self portraits" are in fact the images of some imaginary portraits that I appropriated, as if they were shamanistic masks. They were born during the course of the creation process and only assume this final form after many "facets" have disappeared, as if they decide themselves how to appear, and I am only a vehicle. I call them self portraits, meaning that my ego tends to fuse with them and my face, as I see it from within, can become anonymous, androgynous, atemporal.' (Adriana Blendea)

Fascinated by the deconstruction, by the breach, of a painful, abrupt inner archeology, she constantly places her images near the limit, where the figurative switches completely to its opposite in a form of self abandonment. Because the theme of all Adriana's portraits is the sacrifice: the sacrifice of her own talent due to its dissolving into uncertainty and the risks taken in seeking its own limits; this is evident through an image of her face which has become an heuristic instrument of her own beauty, seduction, grace and subtle sensuality but it is frequently replaced with the hypnotic aridity of the "relics", of the face (prosopon) transfigurated in an ideogram of celestial fragrance. The image barely consists of the face, although it is deeply carved into the image, utterly mute, just as a scratched hieratical image on a clay pot. For Adriana, the act of painting is like making deep cuts in the seductive glow of the layer of color, casting out the demons of superficial seduction, the repression of Melusine's song bursting through the unctuous brush strokes. The

image itself becomes sparser, rougher and more reduced, even virtual transparent. The face is caught in the change, one minute hesitant, frontal, and the next hardened like a solid shield which has survived some plague against all odds, and has blossomed from the source of its own exhaustion.

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Preserving, Describing, Conserving Cultural History and Making it Accessible FFBIZ, The Women's Research, Education and Information Center in Berlin

Prof. Dr. Ursula Nienhaus

Texts, biographies, correspondences, catalogues and other kinds of media by and on female artists are less frequently preserved in archives than those by men in general and by male artists specifically. It is estimated that European archives still contain only 8 to 13% personal papers by women. That is why the women´s research, education and information center, FFBIZ in Berlin, tries to collect such important documents either as deposits or as gifts for permanent custody in cooled and air-conditioned stacks.

We also own a collection of nearly four and a half thousand posters, which are currently being digitalized once they have been described and registered in a database. Thus, for example, one can find out a lot about Berlin`s first feminist gallery from us, established by Ebba Sakel in 1978, the same year the FFBIZ itself came into existence. Part of these documents will be exhibited by the Berlin Gay Museum at the end of August this year.

Since 1978, we have continually collected countless newspaper clippings, folders, exhibition announcements, critical reviews or catalogues by authors, writers, painters, photographers, film, video and mixed media artists, on actions or installations, also on the life and works of women from a Berlin potter with an artist's identity to a French/German caricaturist.

By far the most extensive holdings of this kind we have comprise the unusually rich Gisela Weimann collection of papers and books, which – so far – include data from 1970 to 2006. An important part of this collection are more than 400 catalogues

from women artists all over the world who express themselves in diverse art forms as well as publications on feminist art criticism and art history. There are varied materials on individual artists in the Weimann collection like, for example, on Catharina Cosin and a long list of others, as well as on collective exhibitions in Berlin, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Turkey, Great Britain, Poland, Spain, Mexico, Cyprus, the US and the Czech Republic. Six extensive folders contain documents on Gisela's own projects so far; there are also two folders with her correspondences, followed by biographical data collections, interviews, diary notes and publication lists.

As we have already known each other for a long time and have worked together on this shared project for a while, Gisela was particularly conscious of the need to personally take responsibility for her own cultural assets. Therefore she signed a legal contract with us according to which she will transfer her documents regularly. They are entrusted to us on a regular basis and as soon as a new batch arrives, we register these accessions, check their quality and value for the archive and arrange for future description and registration in a database. It is labour-intensive work.

All the documents in the IT inventory from 1970 to 2006 are already prepared for research use. We plan to place them in the internet at the end of this year. We are doing all this because of our dedication to the advancement of the recognition of the intellectual and aesthetic contributions women have made to the art world.

We also acknowledge the growing importance of women in all the visual arts, particularly since the 1970s. We especially want to encourage more scholarly research in female artists in the field of gender studies by strengthening dialogues across differences.

Why am I portraying this in such detail? I very much want to encourage each one of you to follow Gisela's example and sign a legal agreement with an archive during your lifetime, when you yourself still can be in control of all the formal and legal arrangements.

Why should you do this? Because by focusing attention on your own life and work as a female artist, you will help people imagine what the world might be like if women's art and perspectives were fully integrated into all of our lives. You may also inspire communities and scholars around the world to find new ways of recognizing women artists.

If you show passion for your art and help to preserve it, if you make it accessible to the widest possible audience in cooperation with an archive you not only help to make artists of today better known internationally; you also make sure that knowledge of your name, of your expertise, your life and your work will be handed down to future generations instead of being erased from history.

Ursula Neinhaus is the director of FFBIZ

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A False Interview with Real Answers

Mercedes Replinger
Translation: Angiola Bonanni

The idea behind this interrogation is to highlight a strange mismatch between the country's situation and the politically non-committed stance of women artists. How could it be that in the face of a dictatorship they could adhere to a neutral art practice, a distanced geometry? On the basis of my own experience, I have come to understand that it may have been their only possibility. We chose not to talk or act as committed women, but only as artists or art historians, regardless of our belonging to the female sex. Recognizing our own womanhood would have meant, in those times, already placing ourselves as inferior. Before being able to situate ourselves as women, we needed to put things in their place, organize our space on an equal footing with men. Thus, geometry became a home, the domestic space that had traditionally been our share. The home as the place for our claims, as women and as political beings.

Obviously, this interview never really took place, but it might have.... At some point in the 1970s we were all in Madrid, and our lives might have crossed. I, Mercedes Replinger (Murcia, 1954) was studying Art History at Complutense University; Soledad Sevilla (Valencia, 1944) and Elena Asins (Madrid) were attending courses, seminars and debates at the same university's Center for Calculus; Esther Ferrer (San Sebastian, 1937) and Group Zaj were performing and giving concerts that were very close to the experiments of Fluxus and the music of John Cage. In those years, one could already see the work of Concha Jerez (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 1941) and Eva Lootz (Vienna,1940) who had arrived in Spain in 1965 and settled there.

Part 1

Between geometric rigor and boredom, why silence? In 1969, the University is closed for three months and further censorship is imposed on the media. Two years later, we have the Burgos trial and the subsequent execution of left wing militants. All the work of the above artists seem to be alien to (or separated from) these events. Their voice finds its expression through a cold, accurately calculated and measured geometry, in the case of Soledad Sevilla and Elena Asins, or the illegible text in Concha Jerez, empty pictures in Eva Lootz or dilated time in Esther Ferrer's performances.

Mercedes Replinger: Soledad Sevilla, at the end of the 1960s you are living in Madrid, after graduating at the University of Barcelona in 1964, and you take part in the workshop and seminars of the Center for Calculus (1). At that time, your oil paintings were geometric, large linear meshes made out of an countless number of colour lines. What did the Center for Calculus do for your work?

Soledad Sevilla: It was technological art, and therefore the opposite of everything I had been taught (2).The Center for Calculus allowed me to learn rigor, a demand for rigor and a way to work that I alone in my studio would not have achieved... There I met great artists: Barbadillo, Sempere, Alexanco, Gerardo Delgado, and that was very rewarding. There were debates with other artists (3)....However, though I found geometry interesting, I did not see it as based on machines, computers or technology: I preferred a geometry that we could call "soft", closer to emotions, which is perhaps one of the characteristics of my work. My work is not a process that requires prior intellectual effort; rather, it is based on emotions, even when it is geometrical.(4)

Mercedes Replinger: It is interesting to see this drifting toward what we might call a humanistic abstraction, in which emotion prevails over rigor, expression over ideas, the hand - and the trembling of the hand - over order. This line of research is at the opposite end of the work of Elena Asins, who also collaborated with the Complutense's Center for Calculus in the same years. What did you do at the Center and what were you aiming at?

Elena Asins: My interest for the geometry of space had to do with measuring; hence the stress on purely linear development, that gradually did away with color itself...at the former Center for Calculus, following their seminars on computer technology, my analytical skills were awakened, and so was my search for order and controlled direction.

Soledad Sevilla: For me, it was just the opposite: after the experience at that same Center I started stressing the more playful aspect, one that can create an ambience, an atmosphere. Ultimately, although the norm was present in the checker,

the structure, the rhythm, through some sort of figure that evolved along spatial or flat networks, I always felt entitled to break the norm and solve problems as I saw fit.

Elena Asins: However, structure is the interesting side, I would say that my aim is to try not to see in order to see more deeply...into the scant visibility of a world which is inapprehensible to our senses -clumsy senses! The concept, then? Maybe....the real beauty is inside...aesthetic choice belongs to an order that is more complex and lucid than appearance. Appearance is not so important (5)...In Germany I started exploring the idea of structure or sequences of geometric figures...it could be analogue to music, or to a readable text, meaning that these sequences include time within space and cannot be comprehended instantly on sight, but only through reading (6). A painting is a text to be read and interiorized.(7)

Mercedes Replinger: Your idea of an art that tries not to see sounds interesting. It could be seen as stemming from an ascetic, platonic tradition, completely opposed to the approach of Concha Jerez, who points to non visibility as a metaphor of her country's situation. Concha, you defined yourself as an artist who does not live in outer space, segregated from reality. What was you form of commitment with the situation in your country? More specifically, I would like you to talk about the illegible texts from the seventies, for instance, those from 1974, that dealt with the indictment in a political trial before a military court and the disarticulation of an underground political party.

Concha Jerez: Those illegible, self-censored writings were like the tip of an iceberg made of more complex structures that dealt with information, with how it reached us after being filtered and mediated, especially the press (8)...I cannot feel alien to injustice, and the more time goes by, the more sensitive I become. I believe that I used to work with more abstract concepts, but now I tend to focus on specific situations, as if to issue a call for attention. But one must be very careful not to end up with a pamphlet, because pamphleteering in art is of no use at all. (9)

Mercedes Replinger: Eva Lootz, who says she is interested in language, in relationships between the audible and the visible through matter, was working in those years on the literality of canvas through black paintings.

Eva Lootz: I have always worked both with objects (three dimensional) and with painting, but at the beginning of the 1970s I was making canvases. There was a series in which I only used black with different degrees of density. I was very keen on the idea of closing representational space, the space of perspective. On the literality of surface .... My paintings were exercises in density: I attached great importance to painting fluids...on the canvas, I used black starting with thick

pigment and ending in its complete dissolution...depending on its concentration, the paint behaved in a different way, transgressing the canvas to larger or lesser extent. (13)

Mercedes Replinger: In artist and performer Esther Ferrer, geometric rigor, non visibility to the advantage of the legible and the illegible adopts the form of a slowing down of time, another tempo that even gets close to boredom as an aesthetic category. Could you explain the use of this concept as a revulsive weapon? Maybe boredom could protect us from so many messianic artists who tried to tell us what to do or not to do?

Esther Ferrer: Boredom is a human feeling, but we should first agree on what boredom is. For our generation, the problem was how not to manipulate people, either through emotion or feeling,through staging or lighting. People should identify with themselves. To the kind of people who need to be nourished or entertained, what I do may seem boring. Many artists reject this term as negative. In my opinion, it is absolutely positive. I never removed anything from my performances because I thought people would find it boring. First of all because I don't think about the audience when I perform, but also because I think it is a positive factor, that may help people take a creative stance.(14)

Part 2

The journey as the discovery of identity. Why was nomadism seen as a reaction to the country's situation? When we think about exile in Spain, we immediately think of the Civil War, in 1936. But there has been another, voluntary exile, not strictly due to political coertion, among a generation that had not lived through the war, but was suffering its consequences. They found in displacement the means to achieve an identity.

Mercedes Replinger: Elena Asins, you leave Spain for Stuttgart, in Germany, where your ideas materialize in what you call Structures of a New Serial Order. You write experimental poetry, contact Max Bense and then move to the US between 1982 and 1987. You even teach a course in Computer Art at Columbia University. What was your experience? Why did you need to go away, to leave the country?

Elena Asins: It was the great opportunity of my life. From then on, my mental work, especially my creative work, free from the burden of the actual making, and thanks to the new measure of time allowed by electronics, has been able to grow, deepen and expand beyond limits.(15) The Spanish scene was restrictive, especially because they value the materiality of work and I feel I do not belong in there, because

I am not a material artist-in fact, I am not the least bit interested in matter. I am interested in ideas, concepts, structures...(16) always bearing in mind that the less you emphasize materiality, the easier it will be to apprehend the idea. Intervals and measure are the focal points of my work.(17)

Mercedes Replinger: However, it was precisely materiality, the presence of matter that prompted Eva Lootz to make the reverse journey, from Austria to Spain. Matter is important to this artist, even when she was making her minimalist black paintings and used thick pigments, she was looking for something less innocent, a stickier binding medium, and started using wax and paraffine.

Eva Lootz: To me, the physicality of matter has always been very important, even at psychological level. That's how I stumbled upon paraffine and wax...when I used wax I was aware not only of the character of the medium, but also of a peculiar coupling of sensations related to its being produced by bees. When you think wax you also think honey...one thing resounds in the other. In the production of bees, we combine in our thought what is clearly separate in human speech: the edible and the construction material.(18) Mercedes Replinger: and this relationship with the medium develops in a foreign country, through a journey that maybe was necessary in order to find her own roots. A similar case is Soledad Sevilla, who received a grant to go to the U.S. in 1980. Supposedly, she was going to connect with the international scene and get away from her Spanish isolation, whereas what she in fact discovered there was Spain, and her own roots.

Soledad Sevilla: I arrived in the U.S. full of expectation, precisely because in Spain I felt a lack of connection with the art that was being done internationally, and I felt that there I would find the utmost freedom to develop... I thought it would be a very constructive experience, which it was, but in a very different sense from what I had imagined. There, I recovered my identity... I felt very bound to my roots, and realized that if on the one hand the Spanish milieu was coercive, on the other hand, all the things that could make me advance and learn were to be found there. North American art seemed to me too cold, too immediate, just like their culture, in a way... The whole culture disappointed me. At the end of that stage I started my series of Las Meninas, as a recuperation and affirmation of my roots.(19)

Mercedes Replinger: In a way, what Soledad Sevilla discovered in the U.S. was the relationship between geometry and contents, between rigor and theme, because geometry is never neutral. Travel as a journey towards identity. Elena Asins, too, had to return to her country before she could find a connection between geometry and symbols. Did geometry lead you to a sort of mysticism, of religiousness?

Elena Asins: (From another text, again the same idea): The historical references loaded with symbolism that accumulate around the figure of the menhir...capturing the religiousness-in fact, undeniable-or the lack of religiousness in this exhibition becomes a secondary task in the face of an idea or a message of a lofty kind of communication that would be impossible by other means... Human beings manifest themselves as contingency, finitude between two voids, in need of salvation, subjects of exclamations. And it is from here, from this ultimate limit, that art must be understood, as community work, as timeless work that perpetuates human expressions, beliefs and opinions.(20)

Mercedes Replinger: Concha Jerez lived in North Africa, in Sid Ifni, in the Sahara, then a Spanish protectorate. She studied in the U.S. with a scholarship, studied music until the age of 17 and moved to Paris, before returning to Spain to major in Political Science. What did displacement, travel mean for the development of your work?

Concha Jerez: I have always felt closer to the conceptual approach generated around Intermedia, in the wake of Fluxus, where you could find people that had grasped that approach as mature artists, well formed musicians who were not just young people to whom any gesture was conceptual art. I watched those first steps that were taken in Madrid around the German Institute as a spectator, but I saw myself in a different place... .(21) Furthermore, I am rather a stateless person, maybe due to my personal history, and I can easily take roots wherever I am.(22)

Mercedes Replinger: So your form of exile was to reject traditional languages and even study something like Political Science, that had nothing to do with Fine Arts. At the same time, you got in touch with Group Zaj, then composed of Juan Hidalgo, Walter Marchetti and Esther Ferrer, the one who would settle in Paris in 1973, though she would visit Spain quite often. Esther, what is your relationship with institutions abroad?

Esther Ferrer: Fine, whenever they let me do what I want. The only case in which I would refuse to collaborate with an institution is when it represents a fascist government. If Franco had been alive, I would not have exhibited at the Venice Biennale. During Franco's times, we never worked with institutions, we could not accept it...(23)

Part 3

The house as the space for creation. Where can an inhabitable place be found? As a necessary consequence of the above, that is, of nomadism, we see the rise of an interest in the home, the attempt to make the inhabited space a space for art. Home,

intimacy and reading as authentic projects for their situation as woman artists.

Mercedes Replinger: Elena, in the magazine El Paseante there are striking pictures of the walls of your house in New York. I was really impressed: all those walls without furniture, with nothing at all, only covered with the abstract graphics you were making at the time. How did you build your home from the rigor of geometry?

Elena Asins: My work aims at ordering space, as sequential measurement of spatial and temporal categories. My strucural constructions are guided by the idea of creating new orders, a non conventional knowledge achieved through images. This can be applied to Town Planning down to the smallest, most private dwelling of a human being, bearing in mind its potential use in Music or Ethics.(24) Actually, my work is purely graphic, or rather cryptological. Diagrams: that is a constant in my work... Everything means something, the smallest variations are significant shadows.(25)

Mercedes Replinger: Elena, you apply your structures to an architecture, to the construction of a home, perhaps because your works already have a spatial organization. It is interesting to note that Soledad Sevilla arrives at installation, at a space to be inhabited, from an opposite approach, from an almost atmospheric definition of geometry. How did you approach the real space, the construction of the home? Was it when you made M.I.T. Line, at Massachussets Institute of Technology?

Soledad Sevilla: I was trying to get away from the canvas painting. I made that work on a very long roll of paper, and, as it was impossible to see it all in my studio I took it to the university campus and displayed it there.(26)

Mercedes Replinger: Yes, but it seems that your house is not the idea of the home, but the specific home that shows the traces of neglection, its wounds, the cracks that run along its walls. I am thinking of your installation for the Castle court at Velez, or the installation with fences and birds called Its Song Hurts Me (1994-95), inspired by the helplessness of a beggar, or more recently El Rompido, the abandoned tuna net that you use to study the memory contained in ruins as matrices, as molds of time.

Soledad Sevilla: What I want is to stand in front of something and analyze what lays behind. Smoke is a consequence of fire, then, what interests me is fire.What seduces me about things is their essence, why they are generated, why they happen, that is what I want to convey, not just facts and images, but presences. Finding and

defining the interior space of things (27)... I wish to convey a feeling of delving, of depth, of something that transports you to another place (28)... At the Metropolitan they had the cloister of the Velez-Blanco castle, exhibited in one of their halls and completely torn, like myself, from its roots. It caused a lacerating feeling, that of a tragedy that had to be borne in mind. Then I thought that the only thing one could do was to give back to Velez-Blanco what had been taken away, and show again what can no longer be seen in the patio of the castle. That is, projecting on the ruined walls the splendor that had been looted.(29)

Mercedes Replinger: Compared to this feeling of the home as rooted in the history and the life of a country, Concha Jerez' home is portable, nomadic. In the past few years she had been focussing on surveilled spaces. Are your installations connected with the space you occupy?

Concha Jerez: Of course. One sees through one's own dimensions. Furthermore, there is a way to appropriate spaces that owes nothing to geometry, but rather to personal and direct perceptions that turn space into a prolongation of oneself, of one's own body, as if one had tentacles (30)... Sometimes I feel like a snail with its house on its back, or like a turtle that grows layer after layer. Sometimes I shed one, but never completely: I undergo continuous recycling.(31)

Mercedes Replinger: In Esther Ferrer, it's the body itself that creates an inhabitable space, like the shock waves that rise from her profiles, her silhouettes on the walls. Esther, could you explain your idea of performance as a homeless space?

Esther Ferrer: Utopia has no real place, it is just an ideal place, free from contamination with time... Therefore, utopian spaces are usually closed spaces, like wombs (paradise...?), as we said before. While utopia is not located anywhere, performance is everywhere, as it has no specific location, no space of its own, it occupies every space. Its space is where it occurs, and that can be any. (I like to say that performance is homeless, and like in the case of the homeless, its place is the street). But these places for performance, contrary to the places of utopia, are neither protected nor free from contamintaion with time. On the contrary, they are totally immersed in it. Performance is not puristical, it is simply plural. (32)

There are may unasked questions still, but there is one I have not approached so far, and I need to ask myself: what was I doing at that time? I was a student and took part enthusiastically in strikes and demonstrations, and I was a member of a leftwing party, but none of this is reflected in my texts. Just like the artists interviewed, I did not want my gender to be evident in what I did. I wanted to be equal to.... I wanted to

write about art theory without any qualifying adjectives. Where can we find, then, the commitment to feminism and the country's situation? It can be found precisely there, in that silence, which was a way to put order into the world.

Notes

1.The Center for Calculus, at Complutense University in Madrid, was an experimental center where outstanding Spanish artists of that period (between 1968 and 1973) approached the rationalization of the creative process, both in architecture and in painting: automatic generation of forms. Artists: architect Navarro Baldeweg, painters Barbadillo, Francisco Briones, Yturralde, Alexanco.

2.Santiago B. Olmo: Geometría Poética. Entrevista con Soledad Sevilla. *Lápiz,* nº 112 (May 1995), p.27

3.Ibid p.27

4 Ibid p.28

5.Elena Asins: Pasado, Pasado, Pasado, *El Paseante.* Madrid, nº 9 (1988), p.40

6.Santiago B. *Olmo: Geometría poética*...op. cit., p.28

7.Elena Asins: *Futuro, Futuro, Futuro* (Hamburg, 1988). *El Paseante.* Madrid, nº 9 (1988), p.40

8.Elena Asins: *Algunos comentarios* (New York, 1986). *El Paseante.* Madrid, nº 9 (1988), p. 42

9.Elena Asins: Pasado, Pasado, Pasado....op. cit.p.40

10.Alicia Murría: Entrevista con Concha Jerez in *Lápiz.* Madrid, nº 141 (March 1998), p. 27

11.Ibid, p. 29

12.Javier Olivares: Entrevista con Eva Lootz in Una obra para un espacio. Comunidad de Madrid, 1987,p.79

13.Ibid,,p.82

14.Francisco Javier San Martín: Entrevista con Esther Ferrer in *Lápiz*, nº 156 (October1999), p.41

15.Elena Asins: Pasado, Pasado, Pasado ...op.cit., p.40

16.Celia Montolío: Entrevista con Elena Asíns in Lápiz. Madrid, nº123 (June 1996), p.40

17.Elena Asins: Pasado, Pasado, Pasado ...op.cit.,p.40

18.Javier Olivares: Entrevista con Eva Lootz ...op.cit., , p .82

19.Santiago B. Olmo: Geometría poética...op.cit., p. 28

20.Elena Asins: *Biografía in Menhires.* Madrid, Galería Theo, 1995

21.Alicia Murría: Entrevista con Concha Jerez en *Lápiz.* Madrid, nº141 (March 1998). p. 33

22.Ibid, p. 27

23.Francisco Javier San Martín: Entrevista con Esther Ferrer en *Lápiz,* nº 156 (October1999), p.40

24.Elena Asins: Algunos comentarios ...op.cit, p.42

25. Elena Asins: Futuro, Futuro, Futuro ..op.cit., p.40

26.Santiago B. Olmo: Geometría poética...op.cit.,p. 30

27.Mariano Navarro: *Entrevista con Soledad Sevilla en Proceso .* Madrid, Galería Soledad Lorenzo, 1992

28. Entrevista con Dan Cameron, 1990 quoted in Santiago B. Olmo: 'Una hoja cuya rama no existe' en *Soledad Sevilla.Instalaciones.* Diputación Provincial de Granada,1996,p.15

29.Soledad Sevilla: texto en *Soledad Sevilla. Instalaciones.* Diputación provincial de Granada,1996 , p. 114

30.Alicia Murría: Entrevista con Concha Jerez in *Lápiz.* Madrid, nº141 (Marzo 1998) p. 25

31.Ibidem, p. 27 32.Esther Ferrer: Utopía y Performance, for the Seminar at the Paris Higher Institute of Fine Arts Studies, "L'abri et l'utopie" at http://www.gipuzkoa.net/~arteleku/artistindex/ferrer/textos.htm

This papers were presented at the Symposium Geteilte Zeit: Kunstgeschichte als Internationaler Dialog / Shared Times: Art History as International Dialogue, at the European Academy in Berlin, 25 - 28 March 2008. This text is available in Gisela Weimann (ed) Geteilte Zeit: Fragen und Antworten (Edition Eselsweg, 2008) in German.

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THE DYNAMICS OF A LEGACY
Living where you don't belong

Amaya Martinez de la Escalera Castells
Translation: Angiola Bonanni

One of the massive political exiles of the 20th century took place in Spain in 1939. After nearly three years of war, almost half a million people walked across the border without carrying anything with them, since the few things they had taken, such as clothes or family souvenirs, had to be left behind when their strength failed and they could no longer bear their burden. The refugees fled in fear, without knowing that many of them would never return to their country, unaware that the ideals they were leaving behind would be lost forever. Upon arriving in France, which they thought was a safe haven, the land of freedom and hope, the authorities separated the men from the women, and the former were taken to concentration camps. About 25,000 among those people could find refuge in Mexico as an alternative to their uncertain political situation. Cardenas welcomed them and gave them work permits and legal protection. Even taking into account the variety of personal approaches, it seems that it was not easy for them to accept exile and silence, that is, the interdiction of political activity imposed by Mexican law.

In the field of the arts, the incorporation of refugee artists to the Mexican milieu was extremely complex, not to say impossible, because the Mexican School of Painting rejected the kind of art practiced by Spanish exiles. For instance, Sequeiros remarked: 'there is no other way but ours'. However, the divergence between the two approaches originated great and intense debates on the international visual avant-garde. Some expatriate artists like Climent showed the conflict in which they were immersed, the weight of nostalgia and the paradox of living in a place where they did not belong. The conflict between the locals and the newly arrived was rooted in

history: the Spanish conquest was very often the theme of the former's paintings, which caused the expatriates to feel rejected, while on the Mexican side it led to a feeling of revenge, of "*reconquista*". The emotional conflict involved is so complex that it would be worth an in-depth analysis which I cannot undertake here. But it is important to say that in spite of all this there were moments of encounter in which both Spanish and Mexican artists managed to coexist and befriend each other and some refugee artists became involved in cultural or art projects that had great impact on education. They also contributed some elements that favoured a change in the visual arts and eventually led to the development of a so-called neo-avant-garde.

An outstanding presence among expatriate painters was Remedios Varo, who always tried to adapt to the country, which cannot be said of everybody, and to the people who had accepted her. Apart from a short period of time she spent in Paris, she always lived in Mexico. Because of her being a woman, a renowned artist and a refugee, I would like to dwell on her case and her visual production, which places her among the main representatives of the late Mexican Surrealism. A fellow student of Dalí at San Fernando Academy in Madrid, she was one of the first women who went to art school. After the civil war, she took refuge in Paris, where she became a friend of Breton, Elouard, Crevel, Desnos, Miró and other Surrealists. During the German occupation, she was taken prisoner and sent to a French concentration camp, together with her partner Benjamin Peret, until the end of 1941. Then she fled to Mexico, where she became part of the refugee artists' community. Her work mixes dreams and memories of childhood, her gender experiences, the fear and horror of war, the search for wisdom and truth through science, religion and philosophy. She explores and delves into the theory of gravitation and relativity, into mysticism and buddhism, into psychoanalysis, alchemy, the Kabbala, the tarot, magic, and so on. Through color and mystery, Remedios Varo leads us to a different kind of reality, to fantastic worlds where men are transmuted into cats, women travel in strange boats or feed the moon puréed stars. Anything is possible in her world; in her imagery, enigmas inhabit a world of expression where, as Breton said, 'only the marvellous is beautiful'.

'Homo Rodans' is both the name of one of her short stories and of the only sculpture by her that has been preserved. Human figures with mechanical or inanimate body parts are constant in her work. From 1938 on, she draws *Like a Dream*, where legs turn into wheels, and the same happens in *Tortuous Paths*, in *Time Space Fabric* (1954) or *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1956), where several female figures with wheels instead of legs go to a spare parts fahion shop to purchase spare parts. In *Toward the Tower* (1961) the handle of the nun's biclycle is the prolongation of her habit, while others are knitting needles. In *Hair Locomotion* (1960) some male figures have beards that become wheels, or beards and moustaches that turn into bicycle handles. The same kind of transportation can be seen in *Tailleur pour Dames* (1957), where one of the female figures rides a boat that is a carapace with a tiny wheel.

At any rate, the case that I know best and about which I can reliably talk about is my own and my family's, as I am the daughter of Spanish refugees. My parents were among the 25,000 Spaniards that reached Mexico during the Civil War and Francoism. Like many others, they disembarked on the coast of Veracruz in 1942, intending to stay for a short time. My mother, who came from a family of aniseed spirit distillers, was barely 14 upon her arrival, my father was 21. They did not yet know each other.

My mother's family suffered the consequences of their flight to France, where they had arrived walking across the Pyrenees in August 1939, soon after the Republicans' defeat. My grandfather was confined to a French concentration camp, like many other Spanish refugees. Some time later, my grandmother managed to obtain a safe-conduct that allowed her to have her husband released and travel to Mexico, in the third and last journey of a Portuguese boat called Nyassa. They reached Veracruz in 1942 and a year later my grandmother died of typhus, which was incurable in those times.

After his wife's death, my grandfather, who had started a small liquor business, went into a terrible depression, which he tried to get over by travelling. This meant leaving my mother, then 15, to take care of the household and of the education of her two younger brothers. My father, who had been active in the underground within a communist youth organization, was arrested in Madrid, where he was tortured and had to watch executions. A descendant of outstanding entomologists and scientists, he was forced to abandon his studies when the war started. Released on probation a few months later, he fled to Portugal, where he remained in hiding for 6 months, locked in one room. Finally he left for Veracruz on the same boat, the Nyassa.

My father told me that when he arrived he was struck by the number of armed civilians, the way they looked and lived, the corruption and moral disorder, all combined with friendliness and hospitality, with the natural beauty of the country and the charm of the autoctonous. He felt, he said, that he had come to no man's land, to a lawless place. His first job was door-to-door peddling of crockery, then he found work as a tyre repairman, and he managed to save a bit and start a more creative enterprise: the block printing of fabrics with Mexican motifs and colours, which allowed him to fare pretty well the rest of his life.

My situation as the daughter of Spanish exiles determined my life strategy and by and large most of my emotions. The need to understand the past in order to dignify the present, the search for identity, the option of integration into a country that was and wasn't mine at the same time. Over the years, I found in artistic expression the mortar that binds together the different fragments of my cultural legacy.

Inner exile goes hand in hand with geographic exile and, in a personal inquiry, memory acts as the container of what was lost: the underpinnings of identity. Art is a way to transcend disappearance, the death brought about by silence and oblivion. Rejection of death gives me aspirations for the future and a desire to belong to the

entire humankind. In my work, the imaginary is the permanent consolation against reality. Drama and consolation that pertain to artists, in every part of the world and almost under any circumstance. For reasons that I cannot know, my parents were intense both in desire and destruction and transferred their war experience to their personal lives. My brothers and I witnessed the persecution of the weak by the strong, my father's pathological jealousy – to the point of delirium – of a mother that was also delirious, maybe due to the torture and punishment my father delivered on her: the Pentothal injections, the cigarette burns, the beatings. I've always wondered whether this was a result of what they had gone through during the war, and the reply I found is that there must have been a part of the story that I had not been told, but that installed them forever in the pathology of war.

My mother ended up committing suicide with cyanide at the age of 40, when I was 17.

We experienced a reproduction of war between two people we loved, and were brought up as "*criollo*", people who pronounced the "*c*" sound "*th*", in a place where only mestizos were accepted. Mexico does not belong to us, nor do we belong to it, and the same can be said of Spain. We do not speak like Spaniards and we have not managed nor wanted to preserve their customs untouched. We cannot be full fledged members of any society. Unrooted from the country in which we were born, we were dispossessed of our history and of the rights other people have in both countries, excluded from the law, we became unclassified cases, floating in the precarious balance of a promised return, unaware for a long time that the outbreak of the war had caused an irreparable fracture. We are the children of parents who remember a history we cannot share, and parents of children who have adapted to a Mexico that cannot understand us. We never lost the Spanish paradise because we had never seen it, but we suffer the consequences of its absence: we are not Spanish and we are not Mexican, and to our children Spain is a remote country that belongs to their grandparents' past.

I am aware that I'm not an exception, that the contemporary self has no inner abode, that our roots are getting thinner and our differences more arbitrary, that the search for an identity, nation, faith or religion defines many human beings today especially as no one is a full member of anyone's society and the permanence of what we own and know can never be taken for granted. I am aware that we are all under the permanent threat of an armed conflict that may make everything meaningless and that humankind is walking on a tightrope. It is not just Spain that is a lost paradise: to some, their whole universe has been lost.

In its positive aspect, exile is a continuously changing world of emotions, that allows for variants, digressions and diversions. Not belonging can also be an inspiration for life, an open attitude to other ways of experiencing life or coping with it. It is my exile that makes it possible for me to appreciate what mestizos do not often see in Mexico: its colour and its courage, its madness and its tragedy. It is

my exclusion that allows me look on the indigenous people the way I do and identify with those that are unique and alone, with those that are not included.

My aesthetic does not deny evil, it does not hide experience: it transmutes the tragedy of life into expression, death in a drive to live. It is a tribute to existence, an expression of the pleasant and the terrible stretched to the utmost limits of colour and form. I am not trying to attain absolute beauty: I think that perfect and absolute beauty does not exist, it's a human myth. I try to express the beauty of passion, the beauty of desire, the one that embraces the cursed, the terrible, the chaotic, the tragic: the unbearable beauty of the tragic. My creation emerges from the void, from lack of conformity. From emotions and commotions comes the inexplicable energy that impels motion, the creative impulse toward a vast horizon: in it, there is an underlying exorbitance, rupture, transgression.

As an expatriate, I relate to Mexico without resolving my differences, convinced that only those that can relate to other human beings without resolving their differences can achieve intimacy. And it is from my intimacy with Mexican culture and my distance from it that I have come to appreciate its values. Here my body grew. Heli Morales says that "the body is like a book in which a text is being written, it's the place where our history is written, where love is inscribed, and also the battles of hate, silence and neglect. There we find the scars of childhood". As a Mexican-Spanish separated from both cultures, I express the historical grief of a silenced body, a pain that cries out in the intimacy of exile.

The refugees had to adapt to Mexican society, with its laws and institutions, with its allowed spaces, its tolerated or forbidden places. Says Heli Morales that ‘cultures have their own conception of the body. The architecture of the body will shape the ways in which they represent themselves. Culture makes the body become the mirror of its representation’. It was they're being confronted with the possibility of death that forced Spanish refugees to leave aside any doubt about their desire. The limit imposed by death pushed them to accept the risk of living like Wim Wender's angel, for the love of a woman. We, the children of those refugees, have experienced the consequences of our parents' possibility to die. We accompanied them and witnessed their abyss, and we have stayed in a place on earth that does not belong to us, a space without identity, to which we are thankful for giving us the opportunity to live and preserve our written bodies.

And finally, as an artist, I declare myself incapable of being satisfied with the visual representation of a reality that eludes me every day. My painting is like the continuous renovation of an endless construction, in which repeated exploration provides the pleasure.

This paper was presented at the Symposium Geteilte Zeit: Kunstgeschichte als Internationaler Dialog/ Shared Times: Art History as International Dialogue, at the European Academy in Berlin, 25 - 28 March 2008

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Installed Ideas

Concha Jerez
Translation: Angiola Bonanni / Gisela Weimann

Installed Ideas – Introduction

Since 1976 I have made more than fifty installations as works in situ, in concrete spaces of wide dimensions, the majority of which had an intermedia character. They always start off from a concept that is developed in the space itself by taking it as support for an extensive, but usually subtle, mise en scène. In this way, my installations have an intense life inclusive of elements that integrate the spectators and allow them to make an inner and outer journey while always being surrounded by precisely planned interventions, that lead them necessarily deeper into the proposed idea. Of course, at any time there is the option for the spectators to leave the place and, consequently, give up all reflection about the piece.

On many occasions, once the development of the inherent concept of a work is concluded, it has inspired me to make other complementary works to the first one, considering that the idea could be developed in other forms as well. Using this method of looking at it from another angle it could become richer than the original concept it had started from. Sometimes and due to the requirements of the action, performances have arisen in this way that extended the concept of the work. Others, for example, may have required a strictly acoustic development of the concept and have found the deepening of the idea in the field of radio art. Again others have needed the visual medium as moving image to go deeper into the concept through realities immersed in the immaterial electronic space. So this is how my works have been growing in independent ramifications, becoming richer with each variation on the basis of the experience of the original concept.

From this line of thought grew the necessity of making the project I am presenting here today. It extends the reflections of the following ten installations that I have selected and that are presented together, one after the other, in this interactive DVD.

Installed Ideas - Content

Under this generic title enunciated as a mental action of "installing ideas", I arranged a group of ten digital video-art works that stem from concepts and from images of ten selected InterMedia installations of mine made between 1994 and 2006.

Among the ideas that come together in these realized works of mine - originating from their corresponding installations - we will mention the concept of interference, developed as an active individual attitude in the widest sense. Starting from this concept I had made the videos *Through interferences, Passage of interferences* and *Walking through interferences beyond broken utopias*, the last one being connected as well to the utopia concept.

There is another work, *Golden Stars*, which reflections on the political power of European institutions and on some realities that happen under it, like the lack of elementary human rights, situations of inequality and poverty of specific sectors of the population, lack of solidarity with populations of the third world...

Another work, *Traveller of imagined paradises* centers in the discourse of the fact of emigration, the search for chimeras that disappeared on arrival, the uprooting, the lack of communication, the humiliation...

The dark side of the mirror goes deeper into the limits of justice from the spaces of stabulation of the jails; the inner reality and the reflection of the outside...

The work *Garden of signs* deepens the concept of signs and reflects about communicative behaviour between signs in its diverse objective, linguistic, media aspects...

The work *Anonymous* rests of the shipwreck reflects on the shipwreck of ideals - coming from the French Revolution, from the social movements of the XIX century and the first half of the XX century -, as much on the side of the political powers, as on the side of the majority of society. It remembers in it relevant people of the field of thought and of creation, protagonists of historical avantgardes, as well as key socio-political events that happened in the world.

In another work *Walking in between the discourse* centers on the idea of "between", that subtle space between people, between feelings, between events, between the political correctness and incorrectness... and the decision of walking in between.

Garden of written words deepens on the duality between freedom of expression and self- censorship. While the voice of poets of the XX and XXI century is heard by reading their texts, the silent eloquence of the self-censured illegible texts remember so many ideas that we cannot express and, less so, write even to our closest people...

Alongside an extensive screening of video works discussed here: this paper was presented at the Symposium Geteilte Zeit: Kunstgeschichte als Internationaler Dialog / Shared Times: Art History as International Dialogue, at the European Academy in Berlin, 25 - 28 March 2008. The book Gisela Weimann (ed) *Geteilte Zeit: Fragen und Antworten* (Edition Eselsweg, 2008) is available in German.

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Equality – a call to and from all politicians

Gabriele Kämper
(Senate Department for Business, Technology and Women's Issues)

It gives me great pleasure to be a guest at this exciting conference and to explain to you the Federal State of Berlin's policies on equality and cultural affairs. As the invitation was sent to me personally and not to the Senate Department of Science, Research and Culture, I am not really addressing you as a representative of cultural politics but as an employee of the women's political section, and moreover as someone who supports cultural policy in women's issues as much as possible.

This 'double identity' is not a coincidence. I have frequently become involved in funding and supporting feminist projects which, even though they are genuinely about cultural politics, are not directly supported by the Senate's cultural administrative section. For instance, last year we staged a celebration and symposium in honour of the film director and feminist, Helke Sander. We also supported the exhibition on the anniversary of Frida Kahlo's 100th birthday. And we stepped into the breach in the case of this conference. There's nothing wrong with that, because it's important to feminist politics, but it goes to show that questions of cultural policy on feminist issues have not yet acquired sufficient respect within mainstream cultural politics.

My involvement in this kind of event concerning women's and cultural politics has led me to work with Gisela Weimann from time to time and to assist her in carrying out projects she has initiated. I was delighted by her invitation to become involved in the book project *Geteilte Zeit* in the section 'Thoughts on time' which also gave me the impulse to look back at my own feminist past, a process which I found very enjoyable. The section 'Thoughts on time' demonstrates impressively to

what extent the creation of artworks has to do with struggles and opportunities of histories and political movements.

One constant factor in this area is the exclusion of women artists from the cultural consciousness, because they are considerably worse hit by the upheavals of history. Women artists tend not to be represented by institutions, and hence are less well connected and canonized than their male colleagues. Extreme disruptions such as exile, banning or even annihilation, but also social upheaval or even just changes in art fashions mean that women artists in particular often become excluded from any artistic tradition.

Das Verborgene Museum (The Hidden Museum) and the Inselgalerie are two places in Berlin where work by women artists can be exhibited, rediscovered and publicized. Both institutions have been awarded the Berlin Women's Prize, das Verborgene Museum in the first year of the award and the director of the Inselgalerie, Ilse-Maria Dorfstecher last year. In making these awards, our organization highlighted the importance of this rediscovery of women artists. However, our organization is not a substitute for adequate funding of these two institutions: this is up to the cultural authorities of the Federal State of Berlin.

I would like now to talk to you about the politics of art and culture in Berlin from the perspective of the economic and employment market and follow this up by describing the situation of women artists working in creative fields and finally, beyond this, the main elements of current equal opportunity policy.

Art and culture as relevant economic factor and job market

Art and culture represent a key economic factor of growing importance. The creative industry in Berlin comprises over 18,500 businesses with approximately 75,000 employees liable for social insurance producing a turnover of over 8 billion euros. In a nationwide comparison, Berlin has the highest proportion of tax-liable companies in the creative industry sector.

If the industrial components such as the printing industry are excluded, the core of the creative industry - over 13,400 businesses employing 45,000 permanent staff - achieves turnover in excess of 4 billion euros, in other words, around 51% of the total creative industry of Berlin. In spite of their diversity, the individual segments of the creative industry have several things in common:

In order to function, all businesses within the segment require artistic/creative potential, which they find in Berlin.

* The creative industry is characterized by an above average number of young and small businesses which show a marked ability to adapt and innovate when the basic conditions change and hence speed up the necessary economic structural change in Berlin.

* For businesses within the creative industry, the use of digital communication technology is an important factor in the way they operate.

* The financing of culture by public funds - and their reduction - has an effect, albeit a variable one, on all segments of the creative industry.

A number of branches of the creative industry – such as the film and music branch – contribute significantly to Berlin's image-building capacity. For businesses in this sector, Berlin is the place to be. Culture and the creative industry dictate the quality of a location and form the basis of decisions such as where to locate, set up or expand a company. Without the relevant creative environment, many companies such as Universal Music, the music channel MTV and many other service industries would not have made the move to Berlin.

The potential of the creative industry lies in its above-average effect on employment and, compared to other branches, its fast growth rate. Women contribute an enormous potential to this field, which is not yet being used optimally.

Women artists and women in the creative sector in Berlin

Women working in artistic and creative fields in Berlin are not just participating in shaping its cultural life, they are also influencing it in a unique way.

In spite of this there is still a great deal to do in order to improve equality for women artists and women working in the creative sector as a whole.

Many young women aspire to an artistic career, but it is obvious that they do not receive a share of the art funding or promotion commensurate with their professional artistic training. The program for women artists run by the Department of Culture - which the locals among you will already know about - works to ensure that women artists are adequately represented in line with the appropriate funding provision. Women are also underrepresented among the upper echelons of art institutions, as a study in 2004 by the German Arts Council showed. To give one example: in Berlin there are only two women in top management positions in the 20 largest art institutions as opposed to 28 men.

In spite of the problems obtaining sufficient data for this area, some statements can be made about the economic situation of women artists using figures from the KSK (Social Insurance for Artists) and the BBK (Berlin Artists' Association) as a basis. It is undeniable that women artists' income is 10-30% less than that of their male colleagues. This is true for both East and West Berlin. The figures for minimum earnings of 3,900 Euro per annum required for admittance into the KSK give an impression of the often highly precarious financial situation in which women artists find themselves.

In terms of art education, women are represented in above average numbers: in the academic year 2004/2005 4,382 students qualified, the percentage of women being 59.63%. Yet if we look at their numbers in academic and artistic employment the picture is different: just 40%. Some catching up needs to be done.

For decades, a network has been growing in Berlin of of women's projects, groups and associations working specifically for women: this applies to the creative sector

as well. With a great deal of commitment, work by volunteers and relatively modest means, they make an important contribution to the city's cultural activities. In addition these initiatives should not be underestimated as networks which women artists and creative workers can exchange information and give start-up help and support with the ups and downs in the life of the freelance artist.

Since 1992 the arts and culture budget has included an estimate which has a direct relation to women and is exclusively and unambiguously earmarked for promoting opportunities for women. These funds should and will be used directly to support women in areas in which they are still considerably underrepresented. Notable measures here are the awarding of grants and project funds to women artists based in Berlin: individuals and groups and art initiatives specifically for women, the latter including the Association for Feminist Film, Das Verborgene Museum , European Women's' Action, Association of Women Artists and Art Promoters (GEDOK Berlin), the Association of Women in the Film Industry and the Inselgalerie.

Our organization, the Senate Department for Business, Technology and Women's Issues, supports such cultural projects for women as the women's cultural center Begine or the Alpha Nova workshop which develops cultural activities for women.

One woman artists' support project which has been especially impressive and successful is the Goldrausch (Gold Rush) Project artIT, which is devoted to the systematic professionalization of women artists.

The Goldrausch Project for Women Artists was started in Berlin in 1989/1990 as a reaction to the situation that women visual artists were underrepresented in public art life. The project's course lasts for one year, during which time the participants acquire sufficient professional skills to operate effectively as visual artists and receive support in goal-oriented positioning and artistic practice within the wider scope of a visual arts career. One important element of the training project is the individual website and catalogue which are produced during the course as well as the group exhibition at the end. The results are seen by professionals in the field as effective presentation tools and are a key publicity factor in further artistic development.

The figures for sales and grants after the training course confirm the program's success. Goldrausch is thus a good example of how effective targeted support and further training can be.

In order to improve the opportunities for women in the art and culture industry, the Berlin Senate has committed itself to securing within the key areas of the whole concept of cultural politics the conditions needed for putting into practice measures to ensure equal opportunities for men and women. The Senate has declared itself willing to contribute to developing conditions whereby both sexes can participate in artistic and creative practice and cultural activities.

The gender issue continues to impinge on all key questions in cultural politics and art and culture sponsorship in Berlin. This means for example:

* embedding the guiding principle of equal opportunities for both men and women in such areas as formal agreements, contracts, etc.

* distributing funds from the program within cultural institutions for gender issues

* observing the Federal State of Berlin's regulations on equal opportunities in cultural institutions

* improving equal representation on cultural committees

* gender-specific appraisal of all publicly funded programs

Social program for equality

Equal opportunities for women and men in all areas of life and work belongs, as expression of a democratic self image, to the central responsibilities of the Senate, which has responsibilities in every area of politics.

Berlin has assumed a leading role in its equal opportunities policies in many areas, for instance with the proportion of women professors at its higher education establishments, the large amount of childcare available comparatively speaking, and innovative and effective anti-violence measures. In spite of all this, no one would say that women and men in Berlin have equal opportunities in their lives. Images of women and men in public and the media are still heavily influenced by gender stereotypes and sexism.

The new social program for equal opportunity policies hopes to revive the debate on gender equality, to combine it with current issues across the board and pinpoint the most important areas to tackle during the coming legislature period. When the social program is put into practice there should be a notable improvement in gender equality over the next four years. Until now, equal opportunity policies have usually been directed towards improving the situation for women and girls and this will remain the case in future. Women are still at a disadvantage in many respects and it is mainly women themselves who campaign for greater equality.

Campaigning for equal opportunities cannot afford to stand still. Apart from anything else, more equality means a change in the relationship of the sexes to each other. What's at issue is to extend the perspective of equal opportunity politics systematically to the point where men's role in the necessary changes to gender role limitation is more sharply emphasized, and where awareness of problems and disadvantages connected with the male gender role is raised.

In a series of key debates on topical subjects such as, for example, the one on education and integration, it is clear that the relation of the sexes to one another is of central importance. We will not find a suitable answer, and thus a satisfactory solution, if the traditional division of work between the sexes, and the social structures dependent on it isn't reexamined in a whole new light. The equal society which we are striving for is based on the free and individual development of men and women, boys and girls, without restrictive, gender-typical allocation of roles.

In Berlin we have initiated an open process, with workshops, surveys and the conference 'Equality: thinking ahead'. In the coming years we will take this slogan onto the political, governmental and public arena to collect knowledge, creative ideas and energy. I am confident that this way we can create vital building blocks for a gender-equal society.

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