

Mobile Fidelities

Conversations on
Feminism, History and Visuality

Martina Pachmanová

Published in English as an online edition
by KT press, www.ktpress.co.uk,
as issue 19, *n.paradoxa: international feminist art journal*
<http://www.ktpress.co.uk/pdf/nparadoxaissue19.pdf>
e-book available at www.ktpress.co.uk/pdf/mpachmanova.pdf
July 2006, republished in this form: January 2010
ISSN: 1462-0426

ISBN: 0-9536541-1-7 e-book
ISBN 13: 978-0-9536541-1-6

First published in Czech as *Vernost v pohybu*
Prague: One Woman Press, 2001
ISBN: 80-86356-10-8

Chapter III. Kaya Silverman 'The World Wants Your Desire' was first
published in English in *n.paradoxa: international feminist art journal*
(print) Vol. 6 July 2000 pp.5-11

List of Contents

Martina Pachmanová Introduction	4
<i>Art History and Historiography</i>	
I. Linda Nochlin : Writing History “Otherly”	14
II. Natalie Boymel Kampen : Calling History Writing into Question	22
<i>Subjectivity and Identity</i>	
III. Kaja Silverman : The World Wants Your Desire	30
IV. Susan Rubin Suleiman : Subjectivity In Flux	41
<i>Aesthetics and Sexual Politics</i>	
V. Amelia Jones : Art’s Sexual Politics	53
VI. Mira Schor : Painterly and Critical Pleasures	65
VII. Jo Anna Isaak : Ripping Off the Emperor’s Clothes	78
<i>Society and the Public Sphere</i>	
VIII. Janet Wolff : Strategies of Correction and Interrogation	86
IX. Martha Rosler : Subverting the Myths of Everyday Life	98
<i>Art Institutions</i>	
X. Marcia Tucker : Empowerment and Responsibility	110
XI. Carol Duncan : Maybe Feminism Has Just Begun	123
Diary of an Ageing Art Slut....(last installment)	136
Katy Deepwell a tribute to the Diary's author	143

Art Institutions Maybe Feminism Has Just Begun

Carol Duncan

Some feminists argue that only a synthesis of Marxism and feminism can emancipate women because it challenges both the capitalist and patriarchal structure of Western society, and shows the relationship between the construction of women's internal and external social experience. It is well known that the marriage between Marxism and feminism is not always a happy one, but the work of many feminist scholars in the United States, including your own, would look quite different without this "bond". How did these two theories/practices come together in your life and work?

My interest in both feminism and Marxism grew together organically. During the time I was in graduate school in the 1960s, there was no such thing as feminist art history and only faint traces of anything you could call Marxist art history. The governing approach was the study of artistic styles, understood largely as a formalist problem. Although there was a rich tradition of iconography, developed especially by German art history, the study of subject matter was not as glamorous scholarly project as style. Even at that time, I was struck by how little discussion there was about the scholarly paradigms people used - it was as if they were self-evident and universal, and required no examination or any counter-models. Yet once you posed a question that led even slightly in the direction of social or political context, a door opened for a more challenging examination of art and visual culture in general. I took a path that led from the "higher" sphere of neo-Hegelian history that dominated the field "down" into social and political history - into the "dirtier" historical strata that art (understood in its spiritual purity) was supposed to transcend.

My dissertation dealt with French Romantic art. It started as a thesis about the Rococo revival in France in the nineteenth century, and it took me into a lot of little corners of French art that the established David-to-Delacroix model could not account for. Once outside that model, the relevance of social and ideological questions couldn't be ignored. The material I studied led me naturally into questions about the class identity of artists and their patrons, and the strategies they used to claim or maintain or escape from class identities. I hadn't yet read Marx, and I certainly wasn't trying to write a "Marxist art history." But my research did teach me that if I wanted to be a good art historian, I would have to pay very careful attention to historical context - not just the intellectual and cultural history of a time, as the discipline already allowed, but also social, political, and economic history - or, for that matter, any other kind of history that touched on art. Eventually, when I did read Marx, his dialectical approach made great sense to me.

In the Spring of 1968, I was in the midst of my doctoral research at Columbia when the university was brought to a standstill by student protests against the war in Vietnam (and war-related research conducted at Columbia), and against racism (blatantly visible in the university's planned take-over of a neighboring park used by African Americans). For many of us on campus, the ensuing days amounted to an exhilarating short course in institutional politics and collective action. In brief, the liberal officers of the university, faced with protesting students who had seized various campus buildings, called in the police that (being working-class, meat-and-potatoes all-American cops) hated the affluent students and routed them with deliberate violence.

The university's use of force to end what was essentially a debate about moral values taught me a valuable lesson about the limits of liberalism and the violence it resorts to when its legitimacy is threatened. Some of my professors, venerated as "humanist" scholars by their students, seemed utterly blind to their own positioning in the university and saw no connection between themselves and the questions of moral and political responsibility that the crisis raised. Watching these prominent representatives of a liberal humanist discipline that paraded itself as a custodian of higher values made me worry. In the process of "mastering" it, how much of the attitudes and expectations of these professionals had I absorbed without thinking? Their way of disconnecting the politics of their professional lives in the university from the politics of the world outside appeared to replicate art history's avoidance of the social and the political meanings of art? I needed to find out in what ways my training had transformed me into a component of a machine I didn't like but would be dependent on for the practice of my profession. The events of 1968 led many of us to begin asking feminists questions, too - not so much because of the university's patriarchal policies, but because of the outrageously sexist attitudes of the protesting male students, who, it turned out, expected their female comrades to supply various comforts but not to decide policy.

So I set about reading intellectuals who wrote critically about culture - people such as Raymond Williams and E. P. Thompson, and Herbert Marcuse and other members of the Frankfurt School - and these writers opened up for me many issues about art and society. They gave me an introduction to concepts of ideology and to a kind of scholarship that was far richer and more vital than the narrow versions of it I learned in graduate school. One upshot of all of this is that for a long time, the last place I felt I belonged was in the center of established academia, least of all in some prestigious academic institution where I would be expected to transmit to others the conventional practices of the discipline. I should add that most prestigious universities felt the same way about me - that I didn't belong in them.

But your work is part of the art historical discourse today. You have a teaching position, you publish extensively, and your texts are included in most major readers and anthologies...

I'm very glad that my work has been recognized and that it's read by scholars and students. And by now, there has been a full turnover in academia. Those teaching in graduate schools are far more interesting and diverse in their approaches than their counterparts a generation ago. In fact, in recent years, I've done guest teaching in many big, prestigious research universities. I do sometimes wish for a lighter teaching load - I work in a little state college, and I teach two or three times more classes than most university professors. I have much less time to do research and write than people in research universities, but unlike many of them, I enjoy a congenial, completely unpretentious atmosphere. My teaching situation forces me to make my material interesting and understandable to students who do not come from elite backgrounds. I suppose I occupy an "in-between" position academically, but it provides me with a lot of freedom. I was actually fired from my first teaching appointment at a prestigious little college for overemphasizing the social aspect of art history (or so I was told) at the expense of "art appreciation". I wrote about it in an article called 'Teaching the Rich' in 1973. The days when you could be fired for something like that are long gone, but graduate-school teaching in the States carries with it other bothering pressures and annoyances that I would also want to avoid.

It seems to me that nobody wants to be identified with the mainstream, center, or authority these days, even the status of an outsider is often romanticized. I too believe that marginality or what you call an "in-between" position can provide a clearer insight, but I'm also worried about new stereotypes generated by an uncritical glorification of such a position. How can we avoid critical discourses turning into self-promoting and self-assuring truisms?

I suppose that this allure of marginality is like the idea of the avant-garde in art - it is a wish to be outside of the mainstream, bourgeois cultural machine. And yes, people can try to make careers out of being perpetually on the margins. But, what looks marginal at one moment can look very mainstream at another. The rise of the theory in recent decades, and the extraordinary proliferation of competing critical discourses have redefined the boundaries of the field so often, it's hard to keep track of where the center is any more. Given the speed with which critical theories appear and the hunger of the academic market place for new fashions, I wonder if the figure "margin/center" is useful any more. The issue it evokes has always been how we relate what we do as scholar-intellectuals to what's going on outside the academy, and the rise of theory has made that more difficult in many ways.

You have mentioned the student movement of the late 1960s, Marxism, the Frankfurt School, and the social history of art as primary inspirations for your work, but all of them usually subordinate the issues of gender to those of class. How do you negotiate this tension?

I should say first that, long before I knew the work of Marx or Raymond Williams or any other Marxists, I read Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. It was in 1960 and the book astonished me. It made it possible for me to think about what would later become important feminist questions. I should emphasize that I could only begin to think about such things - I couldn't do more until feminism became a movement again and these questions could be asked collectively. Later, at the end of the 1960s and in the early 1970s, when feminism had finally come out of what seemed a hibernation, I re-read *The Second Sex*, and once again relished the richness and brilliance of its insights. I found de Beauvoir's existentialist approach especially appealing. I still like a lot about it - in particular the way it situates woman's consciousness both in the biological body and in historical and social experience. De Beauvoir saw into how deeply gendered Western culture is, and to what extent the category "woman" is a projection of male interests, fears and fantasies. I'm sure I absorbed her ideas in ways I no longer even remember. Certainly reading her helped me cross between gender and class issues in my own work, since she thought a lot about Marxism and was a part of the French intellectual left herself. I can't say that I resolved the tension you mention in any definitive way, but whatever the theoretical difficulties, feminism and Marxism seemed equally necessary to account for the complexities of social relations - those between sexes as well as classes.

Beauvoir introduced the concept of the constructed nature of gender into feminist thinking but she was also criticized for designating women as the Other or the negative of men which is itself seen as a phallic construct. You're saying how much

you value her work, and I wonder how can her existentialist philosophy be used in contemporary feminism?

It struck me some time ago that contemporary feminism was greatly in need of something like existentialism. After years of deconstructing the subject, we got to the point where the self was totally dissolved in relativity, and it was quite impossible to theorize a human entity with a psychic center - let alone a being capable of action. I realized that existentialism (which had pretty much fallen off the theoretical radar screen) would be a good thing to reconsider, since it allows for a subjective self - not as something fixed or even unified, but as something that grows up within and in dialectical response to complex biological, social, cultural, and other causes. Beauvoir said that one is not born a woman, but becomes one, and the body is always a part, if not the whole, of one's situation.

Yes, she even suggested that the female body should be the instrumentality of women's independence and freedom rather than their prison.

If I could go back to the first part of your question, unless I seriously misread it, I see nothing of this notion of women as the negative of men in her writing. One mustn't confuse the messenger with the bad news. In *The Second Sex*, she says that women are forced by the real relations of power - the relations they live - to see themselves as Other, and she precisely invites us to contest that. That is another thing that existentialism might help us think about today - a way of seeing ourselves as moral and historical actors. It scares me to see how popular are the politics of turning-away-from-politics in contemporary US academia. De Beauvoir's work gives us a creative subject that can act in opposition to existing social relations. It may be that the existentialists got carried away with the possibility for individual self-invention, but compared to some theoretical ideas fashionable today, especially those that can find causality only in cultural forms, the existentialist concept of a rational subject that can think and act is refreshing. Which brings me to the Enlightenment. It seems to me that throwing away the whole of the Enlightenment is as arrogant and foolish as despising existentialism. We might live in the so-called post-Enlightenment era but by single-mindedly and blindly undermining any suggestion of rationality we fail to acknowledge things the Enlightenment brought that we value and need. I know how totally unfashionable it is to say this, but just as there are things I like about existentialism, so there is much about Enlightenment I want to keep and build on - its fight against religious dogmatism and extremism, for example, against forces that directly threaten the self-realization of both women and men in many parts of the world, including, of course, the US where the right to control one's body is constantly under attack by a fanatically religious right. Nor should we forget that it was the Enlightenment that introduced a new

approach to human rights and worked out the fundamental rationale for it - one we still use.

But what does the Enlightenment's emphasis on brotherhood and fraternity say, for instance, about civil rights for women? Besides praising the values of this humanist project, shouldn't we also question its "shady" side, including its constructions of a gendered hierarchy or normative aesthetics?

Of course we should question them, but why should we be surprised that Enlightenment thought is full of contradictions? Yes, a lot of its ideas were far from rational - they were even bizarre and obscure - and there are endless examples of horrible things done to people that can be blamed on Enlightenment modes of generic and hierarchical thinking. But, let us not forget that feminism itself is an Enlightenment project even if it was a recessive or merely implicit one during the Enlightenment - as is the struggle for equal rights and freedoms by people of color, gays, lesbians, and other "Others" (religious minorities, handicapped people, and so on). When reason is used as a tool to dominate the human body and repress sensuality or to destroy the natural environment in the name of progress and technology, it is certainly oppressive. This is where one needs a concept of ideology to sort out causes, and also to distinguish between an instrumental use of reason and reason as a principle of human freedom. Oppression almost always works in the interests (or perceived interests) of an oppressor - by which I mean actual persons, classes, and groups of people. It doesn't mean that everything that comes from reason is automatically suspect or that one should reject all of "the Enlightenment" as a homogenous ideology of repressive reason.

Although studying the representation of women in history - be it women artists or women as models - is usually associated with the first stage of feminist art historical research, it is still one of the crucial tasks for any scholar in this field. However, the concept of gender has opened other problems, including the construction and representation of masculinity. You published a number of important essays focused on images femininity but is there any "imprint" of the male body in your work?

Let me say first that in my view, since you mention it, the division of feminist art history into distinct stages can obscure the history of feminist thought as much as it might clarify it. As you point out, many of the concerns of the so-called "first stage" remained important later. In addition, the very term ignores the existence of women who were full of feminist insights in the early twentieth century, for example, Mary McCarthy. Besides, even in the "first stage", there were diverse approaches. My own project was never to rescue women artists from oblivion in order to give them "equal" status to male heroes of art history, a project that, in my view, left aside the whole

question of “art history” as a construct, and also rested on an unexamined notion of what feminism is all about. What interested me instead was the history of women’s possibilities as socially and politically constructed and as culturally mediated, which, of course, involved questions of male interests and aspirations as well as women’s. Nor do any of these questions make much sense without also considering broader contexts.

In the 1970s, I wrote two articles about art from around the time of the French Revolution that reflected these concerns. One of them was called “Happy Mothers,” the other “Fallen Fathers” (they both appear in my book *The Aesthetics of Power*). When I was working on this material, patriarchy was the target of a lot of feminist criticism but it was mostly taken as an eternal, unchanging source of women’s subordination, and there wasn’t much attention given to how it varied in different times and places, including the different ways it organized the social and psychic lives of men. “Happy Mothers” had been about the emerging ideal of the modern family in French bourgeois culture in the decades before the French Revolution. “Fallen Fathers” explored the corresponding changes in political ideology. It argued that the emergence of the bourgeois state was related to both the new culture of domesticity and also to a new political identity for the bourgeois male - that of the citizen. I got at these issues through an examination of paintings and prints from the second half of the eighteenth century. My aim in part was to demonstrate how hard the art of the time worked to produce social and political messages, and that without some consideration of those issues, one can’t really grasp the different meanings of the various genres of eighteenth century French art.

*You pointed out many times how often art historians, critics, and curators treat the content of everyday life as irrelevant, and how they create a kind of aura or “aesthetic detachment” around works of art. You are an uncompromising critic of both artistic formalism and transcendentalism (that very often overlap), and your work helped to undermine many recurrent myths about conflation of the moral and the aesthetic in works of art, especially in the field of abstraction. As your book *The Aesthetics of Power* suggests, aesthetics can be a very authoritative ideological tool. Yet, doesn’t your emphasis on iconography draw you sometimes unnecessarily too far away from appreciating the visual aspects of works you deal with?*

I admit it’s not always easy to find the right balance between the two phenomena, but I also don’t conceive them as fundamentally separable as they used to be thought of a generation ago. I have never denied the importance of aesthetics, since I hold it to be one of the dimensions of our existence, and I try to take formal configurations into account whenever I see a way to do that. But, remember that at the time I began to write, and for many years after that, it was usual to treat the history of art as a series of styles conceived largely in formal terms. That is less true today, especially in university seminars, but these new ideas have been slow to enter museum culture.

Your question refers specifically to a chapter in my other book, *Civilizing Rituals*, in which I point to what has been the dominant way of telling the story of modern art, namely as a series of ever more abstract styles. In the discourse of formalist art history, this phenomenon of increasing abstraction was described as an ever more uncompromising renunciation of everyday existence (including its material and biological needs) and, concomitantly, an ever more urgently felt drive for some higher, purer “truth.” I found these ideas repeatedly, especially in the critical and art-historical writing of the 1960s and 1970s when the influence of Clement Greenberg was at its height, but later, too. It is especially in that writing that I noticed that the celebration of the “aesthetic” achievement of abstraction was also an ideological celebration of individual moral triumph (of the heroic artist), and, as such, a demonstration of the “freedom” of the Western capitalist system. My intent was to pierce the protective envelope of aesthetic value and expose its ideological load. I should add (in response to your original question) that I do not accept that the “appreciation” of the visual (or formal) aspects of art, what is often taken as its “aesthetic” value, ever happens in an ideological vacuum.

It seems that you directly associate this “progress” toward greater abstraction with patriarchal cultural order. No matter how much gender-bias you can detect in abstract art, there have always been excellent women artists producing either abstract painting, or contributing to its development through other techniques and materials of, mainly, decorative arts. Why are feminist art historians and critics so rarely “friends of abstraction”?

Yes, it has been claimed that abstraction - in thought and in art - is less natural to women than to men. I certainly don't agree with that or with the idea that there is a specifically feminine aesthetics, style or set of materials. It is true, however, that certain abstract styles, for example, American Abstract Expressionism, were dominated by men and associated with male drives for spiritual transcendence. Yet, there were and are extraordinary women abstract painters (a whole group of them in Russia, in the 1910s and 1920s), and if abstract art has sometimes been gendered as male, it's not because of any inherent meaning in abstraction itself but because of how it has been masculinized by artists and their critic friends at particular times. That is what I tried to challenge in my work - not abstraction *per se*.

Abstract art has played a prominent role in the iconographic programs of many American museums, and you addressed this issue in your work very early on. Your first texts on museums came out in the mid-1970s, and you have gradually become one of the most respected thinkers and critics in the field of the museum studies in this country. What drew you to this field?

The beginning of my interest goes back to 1976. At that time, I joined a group of artists who were protesting a big show at the Whitney Museum of American Art. The show featured the Rockefeller Collection of American Art and was part of the bi-centennial celebration of the American Revolution. It was entitled *Two Centuries of American Art*, but it should have been called *Two Centuries of Art by White American Men* since that's what it contained (with one or two exceptions). Our group published a critique of this show, and in the many discussions we had preparing it, I became increasingly interested in art museums.

I suppose, like many people, I had thought of art museums as more or less neutral containers for art, but now I began to realize they did much more than merely house art objects. They were elaborate symbolic structures, powerful engines of ideology that have taken over some of the functions fulfilled in the past by sacred architecture. Alan Wallach and I argued about these ideas in two articles published in 1978 and 1980. The first one appeared in *Marxist Perspectives* and was called 'The Museum of Modern Art As Late Capitalist Ritual'. It treated the museum as a ritual that visitors perform by walking through its programmed displays. Once we looked at it in those terms, we discovered some surprising things. Perhaps the most startling was the MoMA's resemblance to ancient and primitive labyrinth rituals. Like them, the museum's program was structured to take visitors, implicitly defined as males, through a kind of drama in which they reenact an ordeal and triumph of the spirit. In the context of the museum's program, abstract works were frequently positioned near some of the MoMA's many images of threatening female bodies, providing viewers with an escape to a realm of spirit that transcended the female world of matter and flesh and biological need. Finally, we argued that the purified self that the museum ritual produces makes a perfect ideological fit with the capitalist culture of the present. While working on this project, Alan and I often felt like anthropologists, engaged in researching the strange primitive structure of the modern male psyche.

From the very beginning of this work, it was the idea of the museum as a ritual site that got under my skin. I'm not sure I can summarize it here very well - in *Civilizing Rituals*, I take a whole chapter to set out my ideas - but at the core of it is the concept of liminality, which I learned from the anthropologist Victor Turner. This concept lets us distinguish between the kind of attention we give to everyday, mundane concerns and the different, more intense kind of attention we call forth when we enter a sacred site, or when the lights dim in a theater or concert hall or when we enter an art gallery. At such moments, we cross a threshold into a liminal or ritual space or time. The modern concept of aesthetic experience is but one way to formulate this liminality, which is also identified with many religious experiences. Within the museum's liminal space, visitors pass through series of rooms and walk past arrangements of art objects. Together with the architectural settings and installations, all of these elements form a museum's program, or ritual scenario.

Visitors perform it (well or poorly, depending on their background and interest) simply by moving through it and taking it in. By walking through certain narratives and enacting the ritual identities implicit in them, visitors live out ideological values as vivid, immediate, concrete experiences - in this way the museum gets them to live symbolically ideas that may have developed through quite different social and political content. Museums are very powerful identity-defining machines or, as Ivan Karp put it, they are 'privileged arenas for presenting images of the self and "other"', but these ideological functions are usually well hidden behind the "veil" of pure aesthetics and overwhelmed by the rhetoric of connoisseurship. People actually do a lot of ideological work in museums, but they rarely have the concepts that would help them to be aware of this. Instead they follow the script that museum culture lays for them. They become pilgrims who seek out the world's spiritual treasures and are uplifted by their wondrous sight.

The notion of a "great artist" has had an enormous impact on art history, and museum collections are usually built around those works of art that were signed by such "prodigies". In your book you have shown how the modern state appropriates this notion to demonstrate the highest form of civic virtue, and to make citizens know themselves as civilized. Nevertheless, the "genius" is gendered male, and however universal the modern citizen is claimed to be, it embodies male values as well. One of the chapters in your book is entitled "The Modern Art Museum: It's a Man's World", but how can it be otherwise? How can the museums become also a woman's or, actually, everybody's world?

Different kinds of museums present different problems. The chapter you mention was about museums of modern art, and also modern wings in general museums. Their character could certainly be modified by displaying in them more works by women, lesbians, gays, and non-white peoples. But, such inclusion by itself is not sufficient. The problem is much more complicated. The whole culture of the art museum and its entrenched display practices have assumed an ideal visitor who is a white middle- or upper-class man, and this legacy is still very alive. The museum's ritual subject has been a man even when the actual visitor is a woman, and it is this ritual subject whose interests and needs have structured the museum's program. Thus the question is how can the museum be made to address all of its visitors?

In this country, most of the big museums have thought a great deal about making women more comfortable as visitors. So they serve more salads and light food in their cafeterias, and they sell jewelry, scarves and other female accessories in the gift shops. The trouble with this approach is that women are seen almost exclusively as shoppers (and only a minority of mostly well-off women at that). While men are treated as art connoisseurs and bearers of knowledge, women are treated as agents of consumption, and the gendered character of museum galleries

is left as is. Of the museums I have visited, the Museum of Modern Art's galleries were the most masculinized, to a point that I can only call hysterical. Hopefully this will change when the new, expanded MoMA reopens in a couple of years. The installation of modern art I liked most is in the Art Institute of Chicago. It unfolds in a broadly chronological way, but includes several thoughtful thematic rooms - for example, a room full of political art and one exploring a whole range of statements about love - so that the whole emphasis is on the variety of modern art and the variety of its protagonists. Needless to say, it's an approach that makes it easy to fit in women, black artists, other "Others". It's much richer and more interesting than the old style-after-style program, and it offers a way to finally demasculinize the existing museum structures, at least where modern art is concerned.

Contemporary US academia might be more specialized in language and is sometimes overly theoretical, but it is here where many critical and challenging issues and methods are deployed in these days. What is the reason that such discourses have won much less ground in American museums?

The "new art histories" have touched US museums to some extent, but we have to acknowledge that museums have a different position in society than colleges or universities. I don't want to oversimplify this difference but it seems to me that it is much easier to sit in a seminar room with a group of ten or fifteen students, and agree on the importance of critical, oppositional approaches to culture. In the academic world, one is rewarded for such work. But in museums, you depend on the approval of trustees and the support of a public, and sometimes even the OK of government officials, and all or most of these people are likely to be years behind current academic debates. So whether you want to or not, you can't be as critical or radical or oppositional or whatever it is you would like to be. To be under such a pressure and still be challenging is very difficult, and it requires a lot of courage and, most importantly, a lot of responsibility. The height of the museum world also constitutes the most prestigious and visible accumulation of cultural capital, which is to say it's the cultural face of concentrated political power and economical capital, too. So to be a radical in a place like the MoMA is not only harder but also less likely than in smaller art institutions. For that reason, I am more interested in the smaller, more "peripheral" museums these days. It seems to me that it is there where really challenging and innovative art and curatorial practices can be found.

While feminist art historians and critics used to emphasize the politics of social transformation, they now focus more on the scholarly and academic dimension of their work. You have been involved in this field for the last thirty years, and I would

like to know what does this transformation mean for you, and how do you envision the role of feminism in the new millenium?

Let us recall that the US feminism that rose up in the late 1960s and which was so strong in the 1970s, was part of a broad movement to extend rights and privileges not only to women but also to other so-called minorities. The civil rights movement helped ignite the women's movement. It's true that many academic feminists today seem less preoccupied with social change and less moved by visions of social justice than was once the case. However, there has always been a tendency for feminism to subside into a movement to empower middle-class women in their careers (which is certainly not a bad thing). On the other hand, it's also true that many women teaching in colleges and universities are still committed to social change. They are still thinking, writing, and organizing around issues of social justice for all women, and there are some powerful voices - Nancy Fraser, bell hooks, or Kate Soper, among others - that insist on the importance of practical politics to realize feminist aims. It's just that one doesn't often read or hear about them in the more trendy theoretical academic journals.

As for predicting the future contribution of feminism: the roots of any significant movement are so multiple and complex, I wouldn't know where to begin to look for any future trend. It does seem that, at least in the Western democracies, feminism has thrived when there have been other strong progressive movements, but it's hard to predict what forms these might take. Certainly the recent protests against the World Trade Organization - protests that forged alliances between environmentalists and Labor - hold promise for the future, especially since what is at stake concerns everyone on the globe. It seems obvious to me that feminists from all over the world, but especially from the post-colonial countries, have a vital contribution to make to this kind of coalition. Feminism is not going to go away - it is needed locally as much as it is needed globally. Today, women as women are still oppressed in many parts of the world, and in some places their situation has gotten worse. What is different today is that there is a living legacy of feminist thought and practice that is in the process of being accessed by women in scores of languages and cultures. Feminism is there, in historical experience, in art and literature, in thought and memory. There is a whole culture of feminism that can touch even the most repressed feelings of women, awaken in them new aspirations for self-determination, and help them formulate a language with which to demand freer, fuller lives. Maybe, feminism has just begun.

Carol Duncan is Professor Emerita at the School of Contemporary Arts, Ramapo College of New Jersey where she taught from 1972 through 2005. Since the 1970s, she has been involved in feminist art history. Her best-known essays and books are focused on museum and exhibition practices. She is the author of three books, *The Rococo Revival in French Romantic Art* (New York: Garland, 1975), *The Aesthetics of Power: Essays in the Critical History of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), and *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995). Her essays were anthologized in a number of important books, including *The Poetics and Politics of Representation*, Ivan Karp and Steven Levine, eds. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990), *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, Norma Broude and Mary Garrard, eds. (New York: IconEditions, 1992), and *Art History Past and Future: A Reader*, Donald Preziosi, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). Many other texts were published in magazines such as *Marxist Perspectives*, *Art History*, *Art Bulletin*, *Oxford Art Journal*, *Art Forum*, and others. She is working on a new book: *John Cotton Dana, Prophet of Progress, His Library and Its Museum*.