Working Together, Working Apart: Feminism, Art, and Collaboration in Britain and the United States, 1970–81

Volume One

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Abstract

This thesis offers a feminist reading of women's art in Britain and North America in the 1970s. Through archival research and interviews, I trace and elaborate the social and political context for a range of art-making practices. Prompted by the organisational ideals of the Women's Liberation Movement, specifically decentralisation and anti-hierarchy, I focus on collaborations between women across four chapters populated by a number of case studies. With reference to the work of theorists and philosophers, including Juliet Mitchell, Hannah Arendt, and bell hooks, I analyse the ambivalences that can accompany working together, and the transformations that can arise from coming apart.

In Chapter One, I look at how artists were influenced by the form of feminist consciousness raising sessions, both in their own activism and in their artworks. From the *Rip-Off File* (1973) to *What is Feminist Art?* (1977) along with work by Hannah Wilke and Howardena Pindell, I examine how feminist artists created a space for women's art that was itself tested by dissensus and critique. Chapter Two focuses on collaboration at a distance, through the *International Dinner Party* by Suzanne Lacy and Linda Preuss (1979), the *Women's Postal Art Event* (1975-7), and the work made by Cecilia Vicuña while in exile in London from her native Chile post-1973. In Chapter Three I examine how artists used the home as a site for political work within the context of feminist pedagogy in California, squatting in London, and racialized gentrification in New York. Chapter Four looks at feminist exhibition-making, specifically *Issue: Social Strategies by Women Artists* organized Lucy R. Lippard in 1980 at the Institute of Contemporary Art, London. I examine the difficult relationship between socialist feminist politics and working-class women artists. My conclusion reflects on work of historical research in the context of recent feminist exhibitions and activism.

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Declaration

This dissertation is the result of my own work, and its contents are original, excepting the sources referred to in my notes. Portions of Chapter Two have been published or are forthcoming as 'I'll Show You Mine, If You Show Me Yours', *Tate Papers*, No. 25 (Spring 2016), and 'On Feminism, Art and Collaboration' in *A Companion to Feminist Art*, edited by Hilary Robinson and Maria Buszek (Oxford: Blackwell, 2017). This dissertation does not exceed 90,000 words, including footnotes, but excluding the bibliography and captions. This thesis has not been submitted for any other award at this or any other institution.

Introduction:
Working Together, Working Apart

This thesis maps the work of women artists influenced by and involved in the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s. Its four chapters explore how women collaborated in this period, both to make art and to support its circulation. The collaborations I study paralleled the organisational models of the broader Women's Liberation Movement, which was structured by small local groups connected nationally and internationally through ad-hoc publications, magazines, large conferences, gatherings and marches. For women artists, small support and discussion groups, along with women-only education programmes and group exhibitions, worked in a similar way. This provided a new infrastructure, which catalysed new ways of thinking about and making art. At the same time, protests took place at established museums and galleries, and the canonical history of art was critiqued for its patriarchal, misogynist underpinnings. Newly-politicised women sought equality, and to make space for themselves in the public sphere. This entailed the interrogation of what that space might be, what it might look like, and what form it might take. Artists and writers played a key role in thinking through the representation of gender, and the study of the continuum of violence from personal memory to collective social history. Crucially, political activity happened between women, as they sought out ways of being together which would displace the isolation of old routines and old orders. While this togetherness was rewarding, often long-lasting, and politically effective, these new relationships were not always smooth. They broke down and groups fell apart: but I contend that this antagonism strengthened, rather than weakened, the movement. In the case studies that follow, I show how art provided a test-space for these new relations. Women worked together to make art, and used collaboratively established spaces as well as collaborative methods to critique and to imagine new worlds.

The aim of this thesis is not to measure the success of these imaginings, or their concrete outcomes, and while I do want to insist on the vitality and energy of women's politicisation in the 1970s, it is the dynamics of interaction between women artists that are the subject of my research. I am interested in the failures and fallings-out, the mistranslations and misunderstandings, as well as the connections and consensus that structured women's collaborations in the 1970s. I argue that focusing on the push and pull between ideas and affiliations leads to a more inclusive story of the art of this period. One that takes account of repetitions in thematic concerns – like the home, the body or media representation – as well as in formal strategies and concepts within and between artists' practices. A key aim of this thesis is to hold the myriad different positions and debates together, and put them back into conversation. But I also argue that this way of working ushered in a different approach to art making, one in which ideas and concerns might be exchanged and worked through by different artists. From this perspective a range of artworks and artists, excluded from art history and on the precipice of disappearance, become visible and legible. This range of

work poses important questions about what constitutes a work of art, and how value is determined. I hope by looking again at the 1970s and more famous artists like Judy Chicago, Suzanne Lacy, Mary Kelly and Cecilia Vicuña as well as lesser-known figures, such as Candace Hill-Montgomery, Sonia Knox, Su Richardson, Monica Ross and Kate Walker, new ways of thinking about art and feminism will emerge. The relationships between these artists highlight an alternative artworld, in which the antagonism of working together and working apart is constructive as well as destructive.

This introduction provides a review of the relevant and recent literature in the field, presents some of the concepts and problems that I will return to throughout the thesis, and gives a brief account of the chapters that follow. But before setting out my methodological approach, it is important to discuss terminology. An apt starting point is Lisa Tickner's denunciation: 'there is no such thing as a "feminist art history". Feminism is not a methodology' and her proposition for a 'feminist *problematic*'.[1] Many other feminist-influenced art historians have agreed, arguing that simply writing accounts of women artists is not automatically feminist.[2] Indeed many of these art historians have developed important interventions, tracing a 'feminist problematic' through the gendered dynamics of power in histories of creative production, as well as the symbolism and iconography of the feminine. This thesis takes as its 'feminist problematic' the lack of sustained critical attention given to many artists and artworks I discuss here in writing of and from the period. However, the 1970s was a period when much scholarly and theoretical work on women's history and gender was in gestation, a moment when artists, historians, critics, writers and filmmakers shared thoughts and pushed new ideas together. Denise Riley has noted that during the 1970s the term to describe this politicisation was 'women's liberation' rather than 'feminism', gesturing to the mutability of the political work taking place in that decade and the eventual consolidation of 'feminism' in scholarship and academia.[3] While these terms remained loose and unsettled in the 1970s, there were sticking points and conflicts specific to the use of theory.[4] Artists often moved between associating and dissociating with actions, ideas and labels; sometimes seeing them as binding categories, sometimes as a platform to jump from. My discussion of each artist and project recognises the complexity of the terrain. In this thesis I talk about the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM), understanding it as a loose organisation, but referring to 'women's liberation',

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[1] Lisa Tickner, "Feminism, Art History and Sexual Difference", *Genders,* no.3, (Fall 1988): 92.
[2] While I explore the critical literature more below, writers like Rosemary Betterton, Tamar Garb, Amelia Jones, Mignon Nixon and Anne M. Wagner have also been influential to me in expanding the terms for thinking about women artists' work and gender in art and art history.
[3] Denise Riley, "A Short History of Some Preoccupations" in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York and London: Routledge, 1992): 124.
[4] It was often unspoken but many artists felt blocked by advanced theoretical discussions. This was something informally reiterated to me in my interviews with artists and filmmakers but is seldom reported. However, there are instances when this contention plays out in print. See, for example, the reaction to Mary Kelly's *Post-Partum Document* 1973–9 in *Spare Rib*: Margot Waddell and Michelene Wandor, "Mystifying Theory", *Spare Rib*, no.55 (1977): 5; and Parveen Adams, Rosalind Delmar and Sue Lipshitz, "Using Psychoanalytic Theory", *Spare Rib*, no.56 (1977): 4.

following Riley, when I mean a political atmosphere. I also make reference to the women's art movement, a term used by some to describe the flurry of groups, exhibitions and publications that emerged in the 1970s. Despite the looseness of political organising, any reference to the WLM also gestures to the inequalities evident in many of its groups, and particularly the dominance of white, middle-class, heterosexual women. At times I use the term 'feminist-influenced artist' – rather than 'socialist feminist' or 'radical feminist' – to denote an artist who was actively engaged with gender politics, but whose identification was fluid or unspecified.[5] The term 'feminist-influenced art' emphasises the political context in which the artwork was produced, and the continuing political currency of art that might influence feminism. I also use the term 'politicised women' to describe the flow of radical ideas among women for whom gender was not the only intersection of oppression. This category foregrounds the commonalities forged between women who sought out new ways to be together in the 1970s.

Mapping Feminist Art Histories

Histories of feminist-influenced art from the 1970s received a jolt and a new visibility after 2007 with a series of 'blockbuster exhibitions' that took place in a number of North American galleries that year.[6] These exhibitions – which ranged from historical shows like *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, and expansive surveys of work from across a forty-year period such as *Global Feminisms* at the Brooklyn Museum, as well as more contemporary approaches to feminist politics like *Shared Women* at LACE – put the artworks, the ideas and the influence of that moment of women's politicization on stage.[7] *WACK!* exclusively featured work made by women in the 1970s, or by women active in the 1970s, a decision which was directly related, for the curator Cornelia Butler, with the need to revisit this history because of renewed interest from younger artists. But it was also an attempt to contextualize the ideas and concepts raised in a number of exhibitions of feminist-influenced art in the mid-1990s. These exhibitions – including *Inside the Visible: Elliptical Traverse of Twentieth Century Art in, of and from the Feminine* (Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston 1996), *Sense and Sensibility: Women Artists and Minimalism in the 1990s* (Museum of Modern Art, New York 1994) and *Bad Girls* (New Museum, New York 1994) – emerged from the political movement of

[5] For a detailed breakdown of different positions see David Bouchier, *The Feminist Challenge: The Movement for Women's Liberation in Britain and the USA* (New York: Schoken, 1984): 62–92.
[6] See Hilary Robinson, "Feminism Meets the Big Exhibition: Survey Shows Since 2005", *On Curating*, no. 29 (May 2016): 29–40.
[7] See the catalogues for these exhibitions: Cornelia Butler, ed., *WACK!: Art and the Feminist Revolution,* exh. cat. (Los Angeles CA, Cambridge MA and London: The Museum of Contemporary Art and The MIT Press, 2007); Linda Nochlin and Maura Reilly, eds, *Global Feminisms,* exh. cat. (New York: Brooklyn Museum of Art, 2007); and Helen Molesworth's review of 'Shared Women' at LACE, "Worlds Apart", *Artforum*, vol.45 no.9 (May 2007): 101–102.

feminism but were also distinct from it.[8] So while an exhibition like *Inside the Visible* gathered artists together whose work could be described as 'in, of and from the feminine', meaning that it mined and played within the unnameable 'feminine' as a theorist like Luce Irigaray would have it, *WACK!* went back to the archives.[9] As Butler has commented: 'I went back […] and looked at all the old invitation cards, all the co-ops, everything we could find to generate the widest pool of names possible'.[10] The earlier exhibition focused on ideas emerging from feminism, the later one on understanding where those ideas came from and what was left out. As the title of Amelia Jones' interview with Butler about the exhibition attests, the curators became 'History Makers'.[11] This thesis takes a similar approach, although the cast of characters is much smaller. I also looked back, but perhaps burrowed deeper into the 'widest pool of names' and from this position sought to draw new connections and new stories. In doing so I also highlight the very real differences between women's careers and between the visibility some women have achieved, sometimes at the expense of others. The aim has been to take this art, whether it had or has not received institutional legitimacy, seriously. This has entailed understanding the context from which it emerged, namely the alternative art world, structured by women's interactions and collaborations.

Butler has described the difficulty of undertaking historical work of this kind. She has noted the sensitivity required to work with artists who had been actively excluded from commercial support and mainstream success, as well as acknowledging the threat a large-scale exhibition poses to 'closing' down a topic by claiming a definitive statement.[12] If anything *WACK!* opened up a discussion of feminist-influenced art from the 1970s, not only providing an important resource but foregrounding the problem of historicizing art from that period. In the exhibition Butler settled on thematic groupings that juxtaposed an international spread of artists, with a range of ideological investments and working in various media. This resulted in a sideways view that gestured to the

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[8] 'Bad Girls' had three iterations. The first was at the ICA in London in 1993, for which see the own exhibition catalogue *Bad Girls*, exh. cat. (London: ICA, 1993) and Katy Deepwell, "Bad Girls? Feminism and Identity Politics in the 1990s" in *Other Than Identity: The Subject, Politics and Art*, ed. Juliet Steyn (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997). The second, in New York, ran from 14 January–27 February, with a second part running from 5 March–10 April 1994. The third iteration was a sister show titled 'Bad Girls West', which ran between 25 January–20 March at the Wright Art Gallery at the University of California. Each had a different selection of artists. The two American exhibitions had one associated publication: Marcia Tucker, ed., *Bad Girls*, exh. cat. (New York, Cambridge MA and London: The New Museum and The MIT Press, 1994). See also: Lyn Zelevansky, ed., *Sense and Sensibility: Women Artists and Minimalism in the 1990s*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1994); M. Catherine de Zegher, ed., *Inside the Visible: Elliptical Traverse of Twentieth Century Art in, of and from the Feminine*, exh. cat. (Cambridge MA and London: The MIT Press, 1996). Notably these exhibitions appeared around the same time as Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard's edited volume, *The Power of Feminist Art* (New York: Harry Abrams, 1994).

[9] See Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1985).

[10] Amelia Jones, "History Makers", *Frieze*, no.105 (March 2007), accessed 19 September 2016, https://frieze.com/article/history-makers.

[11] Jones, "History Makers", unpaginated.

[12] Ibid.

impossibility of traditional art historical categories – like the national school or teleology – to contain these artworks.[13] The catalogue for the exhibition extended this approach with nine essays that built up a context within which to understand the work, rather than focusing on particular artists or artworks in the exhibition. The present thesis continues the work of opening up, and is committed to disrupting the history of art and rethinking what art is and who an artist can be. The interrogation of frameworks that structure history making is, therefore, a crucial part of my project.

Marsha Meskimmon's essay 'Chronology through Cartography' in the *WACK!* catalogue provides an important model, because it proposes an alternative way of mapping a feminist art history.[14] Meskimmon writes: 'It is as a counterpoint to the dead canonical histories of 1970s feminist art that this essay proposes an exploration of chronology through cartography'.[15] She goes on to argue that reading international feminist work through a chronology based on origin and influence relies on 'the self-same progress narrative', which produces 'not a critical cartography, but an uncritical chronology'.[16] Putting cartography over chronology, however, allows a perspective through which later developments can effect earlier ones.[17] Throughout this thesis case studies are situated on an expanse, rather than hung on a trajectory. I move forward and back across this expanse, showing how differences emerge not in a succession, but from lags, blocks, and entanglements. While lateral organization structures this thesis, it also determined the interactions of women within the liberation movement, from the circular structure of the consciousness-raising circle, to the migrating editorial board of journals like *Feminist Art News* in the UK and *Heresies* in the US.[18] This provides a way to read the diversity of this movement against discursive structures that value one thing over another, and that celebrate progress, rupture and paradigm shift.[19] While

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[13] More recently Helen Molesworth has written about the practice of curating as a feminist, rather than curating feminist-influenced art, along similar lines. See Molesworth, "How to Install Art as a Feminist" in *Modern Women: Women Artists at the Museum of Modern Art,* ed. Cornelia Butler (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010): 498–513.

[14] Marsha Meskimmon, "Chronology Through Cartography: Mapping 1970s Feminist Art Globally" in *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution,* ed., Cornelia Butler, exh. cat. (Los Angeles CA, Cambridge MA and London: The Museum of Contemporary Art and The MIT Press, 2007): 322–335.

[15] Meskimmon, "Chronology Through Cartography": 323.

[16] Ibid.: 324.

[17] Ibid.: 324.

[18] *Feminist Art News* (1980– 1993) was UK-based, and copies are held at WAL. I discuss this further in Chapter Three. *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics* (1978–1993) was largely based in New York. The Library of Congress, Washington D.C. holds a full run of the journal.

[19] Specifically this model suggests an alternative to the avant-garde, as described in Renato Poggioni's *Theory of the Avant-garde*, trans. by Gerald Fitzgerald (1962, Cambridge MA: Harvard, 1968). See Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and North American Art 1955–1975* (Cambridge MA and London: The MIT Press, 2001); as well as Rosalind Krauss' argument for 'the antidevelopmental, the antinarrative and the antihistorical' in "Grids", *October*, vol.9 (Summer 1979); and for a feminist-influenced critique, Griselda Pollock, *Avant-Garde Gambits: Gender and the Colour of Art History 1888–1893* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993).

there was antagonism and conflict, I argue that this was often about broadening and widening rather than obliteration.

The cartographic model is important for Meskimmon because of the global context within which she situates her work. In this thesis I am less concerned with claiming a global context for art in the 1970s, primarily because the economic and social changes – including deindustrialization and financialisation – which altered the dynamics of worldwide interaction were still in process and took place with different velocities in North America and Britain.[20] In the West, the transition to what was theorized by Ernest Mandel as 'late capitalism' transformed social relations, both in the workplace and at home. But this process was subject to intense social struggle.[21] The definition of 'work' and the composition of the workforce was the site of ideological and practical agitation for many politicised women. In the UK, the Equal Pay Act was passed in 1970; across Europe and North America, the Wages for Housework Campaign emerged around the work of Silvia Federici, Selma James and Mariarosa Dalla Costa; in 1977–78, the Grunwick Dispute saw Asian women workers striking for union representation. Though this economic history is not the focus of my thesis, these incremental victories and setbacks are mirrored in the loose formations of the women's liberation movement.

As I discuss in the following chapters, women from Britain and North America exchanged news, ideas and tactics. But the relationship between the two countries was subject to vicissitudes of connection, alliance, and isolation. This included the ongoing war in Vietnam; Britain's protracted negotiations for entrance to the European Economic Community, realized in 1972; and the competition between dollar and sterling on the international exchange. Even on a smaller scale, communication between the two countries was not straightforward. The growth in air travel in the 1960s and developments in communication technology, suggesting expansion and interaction, were matched by a poverty of means for many, particularly women artists. In Chapter Four, I discuss this in more detail in relation to Lucy R. Lippard and her interest in forging relations between British and American artists.

While the Cold War relations between the Soviet Union and the United States thawed under the Nixon administration, by the end of the decade and in the early 1980s, nuclear armament at foreign sites accelerated, which resulted – at Greenham Common particularly – in blatant anti-North American feeling, despite an increasingly close alliance between Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. This is the reason my thesis ends in 1981: it would require another project to analyse the impact of Thatcher's coming to power for feminists, not to mention the effects of her and Reagan's cuts to public funding for the arts. Likewise, the complex formations of protest and community at Greenham go beyond the women's liberation movement and the boundaries of the

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[20] See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard, 2001). Angela Dimitrikaki has recently discussed the importance of globalisation and biopolitics for the analysis of feminist art made since the early 1990s. Dimitrikaki, "The 2008 Effect: Thoughts on Artworld Feminism in the Shadow of Global Capitalism", *Third Text,* vol.27, no.4 (2013).
[21] Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism* (London: New Left Books, 1972).

project at hand.[22] In this way the map of interactions between British and North American women was complicated by both geography and geopolitics. This was not the background for the smooth slide of postmodernist mask-like signifiers, and as such any similarities drawn out across this new territory are also bounded and weighed down by differences. Here the map does not obliterate the territory, as the work of Jean Baudrillard might have once suggested, but instead brings it into view.[23]

The research behind this thesis involved a return to ground level, or grass roots. After reading and reflecting on histories of women artists of the 1970s and those written in the 1970s, I realized the two rarely met except through a shared interest in history and sometimes theory. While there was of course much to be done about thinking through these intersections, I was increasingly caught by images and descriptions of artworks that didn't fit and for which I didn't have a ready vocabulary or methodology. Like potholes, they sent me digging into archive collections across North America and the UK, some more complete and organized than others, looking for fragments and chasing paper trails. Where archival materials were absent, it meant interviews and discussions with artists, curators and writers, as well as generous access to their private collections. Despite this approach the thesis does not attempt a complete history; and yet neither is this a rescue mission. While I do think the artworks and artists discussed in this thesis deserve more serious and sustained attention, this should not be simply to make them fit the mainstream and concomitantly delineate a politically anodyne feminist art movement. Rather I want to take seriously the provocations sometimes at the forefront and sometimes embedded in the works, which spoke of more than the inclusion of women artists within the mainstream, or the investigation of the figure of woman, to explore the possibility of full subjectivity. To do this meant being selective, so the case studies I look at in the following chapters are only some of the stories of feminist-influenced art in the period, and specifically they are the ones that allowed me to think through some of the ways women came together. As such, I understand the project as amplifying some of the stories that have become harder to hear in the decades since the 1970s and which are constantly under threat of being lost. These amplifications act like markers in this expanded art historical territory.

When I started this project that threat seemed more acute. Now some of these artists (often posthumously) are represented by commercial galleries, their archives have been collected and in some cases major institutions have acquired work, but it is still important – if not more so – to reflect on how these histories are told and preserved and who has access to them. It is also important to notice the belatedness of this support and representation, as well as those artists who are still overlooked. Instead of reading art world recognition as indicative of success-at-last, this thesis looks back to the 1970s to trace other kinds of success that might challenge the dominant

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[22] See Sasha Roseneil, *Common Women, Uncommon Practices: The Queer Feminisms of Greenham* (London: Continuum, 2000).
[23] Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulation" in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford: University Press, 1988).

value structures of the art world, even though many of the artists under discussion were and are committed to showing their work, and have, as Butler suggests, felt the trauma of exclusion.[24]

There are a number of precedents for this way of doing history. The wealth of publications on art influenced by feminism in the 1970s is only increasing and has been enriched during the writing of this thesis. While Jayne Wark's work on performance art and Beth Anne Lauritis' doctoral research on Lucy R. Lippard, feminism and conceptualism have focused on particular media, others have traced a broader field of activity, for instance Kathy Battista's *Renegotiating the Body* and Siona Wilson's *Art Labor, Sex Politics* both of which focus on Britain, specifically London.[25] Wilson's book is, perhaps, closest to my own methodological approach. Wilson also organized her book through a series of case studies, which offer routes into a larger field of activity. However, the subjects we discuss are very different, with each chapter focusing on a single artist (Mary Kelly, Cosey Fanni Tutti and Jo Spence) and an analysis interwoven with a theoretical discussion of class, labour and sexuality.[26] Battista's book surveys a larger field of activity than I do here, and traces different artists' approaches to representing and absenting the body. The book is animated by the voices of women artists from interviews Battista conducted over a long period and in this way is an indispensible record. While I have also interviewed artists and critics for this project for the most part I do not quote from them directly. This was primarily because many of the interviews became conversations, developed over time and were weighted by personal investment, friendship and memory. Also given my interest in fall-outs and break ups, I chose to leave out personal details unless they were available in archival documents or other printed sources – especially because it was not possible to interview many women – and concentrate instead on the appearance of consensus and dissensus in artworks. The question of privacy is an important one. These artworks often challenged the limits of propriety, sometimes physically trespassing and reconstituting the boundaries of personal space. Tracing the residue and afterlives of these relations is a fraught business. I hope as more archive material becomes available my work will contribute to a renewed conversation about the politics of recovery and retrieval. It will require further work to develop a theoretical methodology that might meet the complexities of women's emotional investments in feminist struggle. The conversations I have undertaken, instead, offer the background to this history. They helped me get a sense of the world in which these artworks and politics were made. Throughout I have tried to treat these sources with sensitivity and respect.

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[24] Jones, "History Makers", unpaginated.
[25] Jayne Wark, *Radical Gestures: Feminism and Performance Art in North America*, (Montreal: McGill-Queens Press, 2006) and Beth Anne Lauritis, "Lucy Lippard and the Provisional Exhibition: Intersections of Conceptual Art and Feminism, 1970–1980", (PhD thesis, UCLA, 2009). Kathy Battista, *Renegotiating the Body: Feminist Art in 1970s London,* (London: IB Tauris, 2013) and Siona Wilson, *Art Labor, Sex Politics: Feminist Effects in 1970s British Art and Performance*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2015).
[26] See my review of Siona Wilson's book: Amy Tobin "The Work of Feminist-Influenced Art History", *Art History*, vol.39 no.5 (November 2016): forthcoming.

Other works such as Tal Dekel's *Gendered – Art and Feminist Theory*, focus on the intersection between art and theory, as well as crossovers between theoretical commitments in America and Europe.[27] The Getty-funded Pacific Standard Time project led to publications focused on feminist-influenced art on the West Coast including *From Site to Vision: The Woman's Building in Contemporary Art* and *Doin' It In Public: Feminism and Art at the Women's Building* and a monograph of the artist's group The Waitresses, as well as a curatorial approach that situated feminism and women's work within the broader historical context of California.[28]

Other stories of American feminism have touched on collaborations between women including Jane Gerhard's *The Dinner Party: Judy Chicago and the Power of Popular Feminism* and Andrew D. Hottle's book *The Art of the Sister Chapel: Exemplary Women, Visionary Creators, and Feminist Collaboration*, both of which come from the discipline of history rather than the history of art.[29] Importantly, both texts are sensitive to the complex dynamics animating the interactions between women involved in these projects, but in contrast to this thesis, neither Gerhard or Hottle discuss the challenge of collaborative work to the subject position of the artist or the status of the art work.

In addition to these books, there are a number of articles and theses, which provide important precedents for and supplements to this project. Writing by Jennifer Gardner-Huggett, Alexandra Kokoli, Laura Meyer, Michelle Moravec and Jenni Sorkin as well as research by Judith Batalion, Meredith A. Brown and Hazel Frizell have all contributed stories of women artists' collaborative practices. For the most part these studies have had a local geography: with Kokoli working on art in Britain, primarily London; Gardner–Huggett on Chicago; and Meyer and Sorkin on Los Angeles. Michelle Moravec has, in contrast, analysed the spread of the women's art movement across the US, attempting to go 'beyond NY/LA', and both Batalion and Brown

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[27] Tal Dekel, *Gendered – Art and Feminist Theory,* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013).

[28] Sondra Hale and Terry Wolverton, eds., *From Site to Vision: The Woman's Building in Contemporary Art* (Los Angeles, CA: Otis College of Art and Design, 2011); Meg Linton and Sue Mayberry, eds., *Doin' It In Public: Feminism and Art at the Women's Building* (Los Angeles, CA: Otis College of Art and Design, 2011) and Jerri Allyn and Anne Gauldin, eds., *The Waitresses Unpeeled: Performance Art and Life* (Los Angeles, CA: Otis College of Art and Design, 2011).

[29] Jane Gerhard, *The Dinner Party: Judy Chicago and the Power of Popular Feminism, 1970–2007* (London and Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2013) and Andrew D. Hottle, *The Art of the Sister Chapel: Exemplary Women, Visionary Creators, and Feminist Collaboration* (Burlington, VT and Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2014).

compare and contrast artworks and organisational projects across geographic distance.[30] This thesis sits somewhere between these two approaches, tracing the interactions between women on both local and transatlantic levels, paralleling the organisational structure of the movement itself.

In the final month of preparing this thesis Kokoli's book *The Feminist Uncanny: in Theory and Art Practice* was published.[31] This new publication takes a more international view than Kokoli's earlier work and includes analysis of some of the artworks discussed in this thesis, as well as a range of others. I look forward to engaging with Kokoli's book – particularly with regard to my own discussion of domestic space in chapter three and the uncanny in chapter four – however it is clear that our methodological approach is distinct. While Kokoli is concerned with 'the uncanniness of femininity in foundational psychoanalytic texts' and as such in a history of ideas, this project is committed to mapping the intersection between art and gender politics during the 1970s.[32] Indeed my own use of psychoanalysis, which I discuss later in this introduction, is more concerned with finding a set of relations against which to map women's interactions than understanding the theoretical history of femininity.

My thesis is distinct from other projects in further ways. Firstly, it is structured by four chapters, with a number of case studies in each, avoiding monographic emphasis on particular artists. Secondly, although I focus on collaborations and am interested in moments when women came together, my understanding of collaboration is expansive, and so is less sociological than projects like Brown's study of A.I.R. Gallery, Moravec's discussion of the West East Bag and

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[30] See Alexandra M. Kokoli, ed., *Reframing Feminism: Reflections on Art and Difference*, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007) and Kokoli, "Undoing 'Homeliness' in Feminist Art: Feministo: Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife (1975–7)", *n.paradoxa*, vol.13: Domestic Politics, (January 2004); Joanna Gardner–Huggett, "The Women Artists' Cooperative as a Site for Social Change: Artemisia Gallery, Chicago (1973–1979)" in *Entering the Field: Judy Chicago, The Fresno Feminist Art Program and the Collective Visions of Women Artists*, ed. Jill Fields, (New York and Oxford: Routledge 2011); Laura Meyer and Faith Wilding, "Collaboration and Conflict in the Fresno Feminist Art Program: An Experiment with Feminist Pedagogy", in *n. paradoxa*, vol.26, (2008) and Laura Meyer, "The Los Angeles' Woman's Building and the Feminist Art Community 1973–1991" in *The Sons and Daughters of Los Angeles*, ed. David E. James (Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 2003); Jenni Sorkin "The Feminist Nomad: The All-Women Group Show" in *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, ed. Cornelia Butler, exh. cat. (Los Angeles CA, Cambridge MA and London: Museum of Contemporary Art and The MIT Press, 2007); and Michelle Moravec, ed., *Frontiers,* Special Issue Feminist Art and Social Movements: Beyond NY/LA, vol.33, no.2 (2012), in that volume see Moravec, "Introduction": xii. Judith Batalion, "Mad Mothers, Fast Friends, and Twisted Sisters: Women's Collaboration in the Visual Arts 1970–2000" (PhD thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, Univ. of London, 2007); Meredith A. Brown, "A History of A.I.R. Gallery: Feminism and the American Art Institution" (PhD thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, Univ. of London, 2012).

[31] Alexandra M. Kokoli, *The Feminist Uncanny in Theory and Art Practice* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016). As the book came out in August 2016 I was unable to substantially address Kokoli's argument in this thesis. My thoughts on Kokoli's approach relate to the brief access I have had to the text and my own interaction with Kokoli. See my forthcoming review of the text in *Oxford Art Journal* (2017).

[32] This quotation features on the marketing material from the book, available at: http://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/the-feminist-uncanny-in-theory-and-art-practice-9781472505583/, accessed 7 September 2016.

Gardner-Huggett's work on Artemisia Gallery in Chicago.[33] Neither do I employ a particular theoretical methodology, like Batalion or Kokoli, though as I elaborate in the thesis, my research has benefited from my reading of Hannah Arendt, Juliet Mitchell, bell hooks, and Audre Lorde. Instead, concentrate on artworks, organizational strategies and curatorial concepts as prompts to think about when women came together to imagine new worlds, and what those new worlds might be. But also how working in the context of feminism, with a new, conscious awareness of structural inequality, as well as new opportunities and limited means and resources affected both art and artists. Fundamentally the aim is to discuss a broad range of work and contest any understanding of feminist art as a singular or containable movement. Instead I highlight the diversity and vitality of women's art and so resituate the works discussed as crucial to understanding and troubling the discourse of the history of art.

While I am interested in tracing the repetition of forms, concepts and materials across different artists' works, I am also interested in how the artwork mediated relationships between artists and between artists and viewers as well as the literal movement of artworks and their reproductions – and therefore ideas – across geographic distance. There are two further precedents that I want to acknowledge. The first is Lucy Delap's *The Feminist Avant-Garde: Transatlantic Encounters of the Early Twentieth Century*, the second Tirza True Latimer's *Women Together/ Women Apart: Portraits of Lesbian Paris*, whose title echoes my own.[34]

Although Latimer's book concerns an entirely different group of artists, in a different city and a different moment there are important intersections and divergences between our two projects that reverberate across our methodologies and titles. The first is her positioning of art practices as the means through which artists created an alternative world that gave form and shape to discordant lives. Hence for Latimer, in the work of artists and performers including Romaine Brooks, Claude Cahun, Marcel Moore, and Suzy Solidor, Paris becomes Lesbian Paris. Artworks functioned in a similar way for the artists in this thesis, where artworks provide the space through which to imagine a different world. A world in which women had more mobility and more agency, in which they could be part of the public sphere and in which other contemporary, political concerns could be staged and worked through. While Latimer argues that these artists 'used portraiture as well as autobiographical writing to "mythologise" their own histories', the artists in this thesis are less concerned with self-representation than in taking up space, whether

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[33] Batalion, "Mad mothers"; Brown, "A History of A.I.R. Gallery"; Michelle Moravec, "Toward a History of Feminism, Art, and Social Movements in the United States", *Frontiers* vol.33, no.2 (2012).

[34] Lucy Delap, *The Feminist Avant-Garde: Transatlantic Encounters of the Early Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Tirza True Latimer, *Women Together/ Women Apart: Portraits of Lesbian Paris*, (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2005). In addition Latimer, the title of my thesis is also echoed in Anita Shrieve's book *Women Together, Women Alone: The Legacy of the Consciousness-Raising Movement*, (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1989), a part fictional, part historical account of the effects of the women's movement through one consciousness raising group.

that be in newsprint, on walls, through postal exchanges or by occupying entire architectural structures.[35] Indeed this shift acknowledges the difference between the mass mobilised around an international women's movement in the 1970s, and the community of women occupying the 'loophole' of the 'as-yet-undefined category of women-without-men' in Paris after the First World War.[36] If the latter had a framework in which to 'play within the representational bounds of femininity', the former symbolically destroyed the structures both physical and conceptual that had held them, and women before them, in place.[37]

The second parallel I want to draw with Latimer's methodology is her interest in 'tension', because it is in this that our parallel titles reside.[38] In fact her version of the title with its allusion to women's newfound independence coinciding with new relationships between women, could serve my own project. Likewise the contention that the title 'evokes the tension between the historic struggles of women acting together and the necessity of deconstructing the enabling premise, of taking *women* apart' parallels many of the antagonisms I discuss in the following chapters.[39] However, the difference provoked by 'working' rather than 'women' in my title, gestures to the process the artists I discuss underwent to negotiate the experience of being together. By absenting 'women' from my title and emphasising 'feminism', I gesture to the development of a feminist politics through art practice, rather than focus on artists' differing approaches to womanhood and femininity, although the two are connected. The point being, to parse the differences between the politics of feminism and the potentially fluid category of 'woman', and indeed to foreground the tension within feminism in the 1970s, when not all women identified with, and some women were excluded from it. Indeed lesbian women sometimes occupied a precarious position within the WLM and the women's art movement. Homosexuality was deemed a threat by some in the movement, a problem exemplified in Betty Freidan's calling out of the 'Lavender Menace' in the American National Organisation of Women in 1970.[40] Despite these tensions, and in reaction to them, lesbian-feminists celebrated lesbian sexuality as the practice of feminist politics, articulating

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[35] Latimer, *Women Together/ Women Apart*: 9.
[36] Ibid.: 8.
[37] Ibid.: 9.
[38] Ibid.: 11.
[39] Ibid.: 11.
[40] See Lilian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in 20th Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991): 209–212 and for a detailed account of responses to Freidan's comments see Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America 1967–75* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989): 213–6.

the model of the 'woman-identified-woman'.[41] But this approach excluded other expressions of lesbian identity, particularly around butch/femme identifications and drag.[42] Numerous lesbians also describe the failures of other feminists to address issues beyond oppression in white heterosexual contexts.[43] Some of the debates around sexuality will appear in the case studies I discuss in this thesis. As such, Latimer's approach sits with and against my own, adding to it but also reminding of the specific and particular map traced in this project.

Delap's work likewise provides a historical precedent for the work I discuss in this thesis. Delap traces the emerging concept of feminism in the early-twentieth century, Anglo-American context, arguing that the term was 'relatively new' to the Edwardians and that it was debated and in flux in this period and across a transatlantic gulf.[44] The aim of Delap's intellectual history is to map this flux, paying attention to what 'was possible […] to say', and this thesis has a similar imperative.[45] I want to extend the contention that 'feminism' was an undetermined word to the 1970s – although it seems remarkably flexible and challenging in the present moment too – and while I do not explicitly test the currency of the term in this period, I do follow Delap in wanting to trace conversations between groups, arguing that it 'was not a distinctive development in each location, but also a shared conversation that spanned the Atlantic'.[46] By citing this history of an earlier moment of women's politicisation, I also want to point to the different circumstances of the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1970s, particularly the shift from the 'two groups' – intellectual rather than activist – and the plethora of small groups, organisations and bodies engaged in political thought, action and art. Indeed, I am also interested in how the concerns of the WLM jostled with feminist thought and theory, while suffrage and the feminism Delap analyses were distinct. Like Delap, though, I explore the spread of political activism across distance, as well as the mistranslations and disagreements that accompanied these interactions. It is my contention that these interactions shaped women artist's work, whether reactive, mimetic or quite literally changed by compromise. So while I dispute a feminist transatlantic binary, I am also interested in the tensions that played out between women separated across geographic distance, but united by a common language.

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[41] In response to Freidan's comments, a number of women formed a group who delivered a manifesto on the 'Woman-identified-woman' to the Second Congress to Unite Women in New York in May 1970. The group later became the Radicalesbians and published the manifesto. Radicalesbians, *The Woman Identified Woman* (Pittsburgh: Know Inc., 1970). Available in the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance archives, Duke University Online Collections, accessed 19 September 2016. http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01011/. See also Lynne Segal *Straight Sex: Rethinking the Politics of Pleasure*, (London: Virago, 1994; London: Verso, 2015): 49–54 & 170–7. I cite from the 2015 edition.
[42] Faderman, *Odd Girls*: 210.
[43] See the various editorial statements in *Heresies 3*, Lesbian Art and Artists, vol.1 no.3 (Fall 1977): 2–4. I discuss the issue in more depth in chapter one.
[44] Delap, *The Feminist Avant-Garde*: 2.
[45] Ibid.: 2.
[46] Ibid.:3.

Transatlantic Relations and Local Situations

A key aim of this thesis is to problematize the generalisations and 'glosses' that proliferate in the analysis of feminist art.[47] Some histories position American and British feminism in an oppositional binary. Most renowned for this is Thalia Gouma-Peterson and Patricia Mathews' survey article 'The Feminist Critique of the History of Art'. [48], As Griselda Pollock argues the text tie obtuse methodological positions to abstract ideas of nationhood, America as academic and Britain as radical.[49] Nonetheless the essay is American-centric. Like Pollock, Helen Molesworth's 'Housework and Artwork' contends with Gouma-Peterson and Mathew's progress narrative but even her comparative approach is populated by American artists. [50] Conversely the term 'Anglo-American' is also used in feminist theory to denote similarity against other international differences.[51] Usually symptomatic of a broader view, this reading acknowledges the dominance of Anglo-American feminism in both theoretical developments and the historical representation of the women's movement.[52] Beyond these glosses the relationship between British and American feminist artists has not yet been the subject of sustained attention, whether considered oppositional or symbiotic. This geography provides a ground upon which to see feminist ideas play out differently at local levels. So the specific contexts of Britain and North America, or London and Birmingham, New York and Los Angeles are important for understanding what was available and permissible in different localities, as well as how broader themes, ideas and critiques were translated between these different contexts. Consequently, my focus on British and American artists and the interactions between them serves as a starting point for other local and global narratives to be added.

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[47] Clare Hemmings' recent book analyses the 'glosses' in feminist writing to understand how feminism has been historicised. Clare Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

[48] Thalia Gouma-Peterson and Patricia Mathews, "The Feminist Critique of Art History", *The Art Bulletin* vol.69, no.3 (1987), 326–357. Gouma-Peterson and Mathews' comparison between Mary Kelly and Judy Chicago exchanges the *Dinner Party* for *The Birth Project,* completed later in 1985. The authors argue, nonetheless, that Chicago's 'mythical, historical and experiential' work exemplifies a first wave position in contrast to *Post Partum Document*, which is 'based on the concept of socially-constructed motherhood' akin to the deconstructivist model of the second wave, see page 347. See Gerhard, *The Dinner Party,* 211–245 and Amelia Jones, ed., *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago's Dinner Party in Feminist Art History,* exh. cat. (Berkeley and Los Angeles CA: University of California, 1996) for a further discussion of the history of the *Dinner Party* and its critical reception.

[49] See Griselda Pollock, "The Politics of Theory: Generations and Geographies in Feminist Theory and the Histories of Art Histories", in *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts, Feminist Readings*, ed. Griselda Pollock, (London: Routledge, 1996)

[50] Helen Molesworth, "House Work and Art Work", *October* vol. 92 (Spring 2000).

[51] Hemmings suggests that the 'Anglo-American' is primarily used to refer to the exclusion of European and particularly French theory from feminist discourse. Used by British and American writers, she comments that this distinction only serves to emphasise the otherness of French theory. Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*: 14–15.

[52] See Hilary Robinson, "Introduction: Feminism–Art–Theory – Towards a (Political) Historiography", *Feminism–Art–Theory: An Anthology 1968–2000*, ed. Hilary Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).

I use the term 'Anglo-American' to contain what art historians Sarah Monks and David Peters-Corbett have considered as the paradox of transatlantic exchange.[53] They argue that the paradox can be contained in the phrase itself through its hyphenation.[54] The authors split the term into its constituent parts; the 'Anglo' and the 'American', allowing them to remain distinct entities held in tension by the hyphen. This hyphenation stands in for a repurposed 'unique relationship', not merely subject to difference or similarity but to reflection.[55] To think about this reflection another way, the Atlantic could also be conceived of as a mirror, marked by projection and self-definition between similar subjects across an imagined distance. This thesis will take into account the moments when this mirror encounter comes under pressure; when bodies and bodies of work incorporate or reject the fragments of similarity and difference offered up in these encounters. For the most part though, artists were not preoccupied by their respective relationships to those in North America or Britain, particularly as transatlantic travel, telegrams and even telephone calls were often too expensive for women artists in the 1970s. But when connections were made the distance between them – both actual and conceptual – animated discussion between artists and impacted their work. As such my focus on Britain and North America is better described as transatlantic rather than Anglo-American, and can be understood as a pivot to introduce difference and diversity, based on geographic distance. This allows us to complicate readings of identities that may elsewhere be presented as homogenous and normative, such as the white heterosexual woman. The differences I am interested in are not located in nationhood or nationality, but reside in the particularities of the social and political contexts in which the artists I discuss lived and worked.

Feminism, Art and Collaboration

The idea of mapping a feminist art history, then, expands from the actual geographic coordinates artists occupied, to trace a terrain of political and artistic activity. I use the word terrain purposively to distinguish the actions and relations discussed here from Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the habitus and the cultural field.[56] The idea of a rough and uncultivated land provides a point of comparison to Bourdieu's argument, emphasising the paucity of classification or symbolic value that faced women artists in the 1970s. I suggest, ultimately, that neither the organised artworld nor the logic of the avant-garde offered a 'habitus' for feminist-influenced artists at this moment.[57] As such this thesis includes accounts of organisations and groups, as well as the more itinerant communities that

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[53] Sarah Monks and David Peters-Corbett, "Anglo-American: Artistic Exchange between Britain and the USA", *Art History,* vol. 34, no. 4, (September 2011).
[54] Monks and Peters-Corbett, "Anglo-American": 635.
[55] Quoting literary theorist Paul Giles, the authors suggest that 'these two nations serve as alternatives to each other, engaged in acts of "mirroring and twinning"'. Monks and Peters-Corbett, "Anglo-American": 636.
[56] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays in Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (Cambridge: Polity, 1993).
[57] See particularly Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production or the Economic World Reversed" in *The Field of Cultural Production*: 29–73, especially pages 64–73.

existed without anchors in particular places. So the terrain analysed in this thesis is one that was in process and was constituted by ongoing exchanges between women. In this way collaboration proved a political practice, capable of creating alternatives to women's everyday existence, of disrupting the structures, values and desires that kept them in place. Throughout this thesis I argue for a model of expanded collaboration that takes account of very different ways of coming together, beyond face-to-face interaction.

Collaborations structured the political organisation of the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1970s and they took many different shapes and configurations. Indeed collaboration might not always serve as the best descriptor for the ways in which women came together and terms like collective, community, group, partnership or network will all appear and seem more apposite through this thesis.[58] While these terms are not interchangeable, collaboration is my focus because it is suggestive of the process of working together. Breaking the word down into its constituent parts: 'co' and 'labour' underscores this sense of shared work, that in turn recognises the individual input of the subjects involved in the process – those who labour together. Importantly this disrupts an understanding of collectives and networks as separate entities composed of their participants or things with a third existence beyond that of its membership, as Charles Green argues in his book *The Third Hand*.[59] It also insists on the development of individual subjectivity within the group, and the mutual contribution of artists to imagining a different kind of art, as well as the space and time offered by collaboration for the development of individual women's work. This dynamic, between the individual and the group, is crucial for understanding how artists came together to negotiate agency in the 1970s.

Interactions between women ranged from constructive to destructive, as the autobiographies and histories of women from the movement – including Juliet Mitchell's *Woman's Estate,* Kate Millet's *Flying* and Alice Echols' *Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America 1967–1975* – attest.[60] In some histories, the stories of 'trashing' are called out as the reason for the failure of the Women's Liberation Movement to become revolutionary, a position that sometimes also aligned

[58] These terms have come under pressure in relation to more recent art practices. See for instance Maria Lind, "Complications: On Collaboration, Agency and Contemporary Art", *Public 39*, New Communities (Spring 2009). For a discussion of the relationship between feminist-influenced art of the 1970s and more contemporary work see Helena Reckitt, "Forgotten Relations: Feminist Art and Relational Aesthetics" in *Politics in a Glass Case*: *Feminism, Exhibition Cultures and Curatorial Transgressions,* ed. Angela Dimitrikaki and Lara Perry (Liverpool: University of Liverpool, 2013).
[59] Charles Green, *The Third Hand: Collaboration in Art From Conceptualism to Postmodernism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).
[60] Juliet Mitchell, *Woman's Estate* (London: Penguin, 1971); Kate Millet, *Flying* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois, 2000); Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1989).

with the stereotype of women as incapable of friendship.[61] But as the title of Echols' book suggests, criticism was also indicative of the shift women underwent to be 'bad', to argue, to disagree and to protest their positions. The swift changes in allegiances, the wealth of new groups and the many different ways of being together attests to the momentum of the movement.[62] This was no different for women artists influenced by feminism, and as this thesis will show different forms of organising, ways of working and ideological commitments challenged any singular idea of a women's art. Crucially, making the disagreements and failures part of the story also disturbs an understanding of the Women's Liberation Movement as inherently positive, and the relationships within it mutual. By raking up and returning to divisions between women in this discussion of collaboration, I follow the philosopher Jessica Benjamin in her discussion of love and domination: 'a theory or a politics that cannot cope with contradiction, that denies the irrational, that tries to sanitise the erotic, fantastic components of human life cannot visualise an authentic end to domination but only vacate the field'.[63]

Benjamin's insistence on domination and love parallels the tension in my title, alluding to the vital connection and the friction that makes up collaborative process of working together and apart. As such in this thesis the map of feminist activity is animated by antagonism; both between politicised women and in their relations with public and private spheres.[64] Antagonism gestures to the movement and disruption created as women began to move out of the positions and situations that secured them, as well as speaking to the practice of political dissent. The following chapters consider antagonism from the relationships between women, to their relationships to the press, the home, local community, and the institutional artworld. The different scales of these interactions are mapped in Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*, particularly through her concept of the 'space of appearance', which is explored in more depth in chapter one, but has proven influential throughout this thesis.[65]

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[61] bell hooks notes the insidiousness of 'women's sexists attitudes towards one another', but argues that these are conditions that 'women must work harder to overcome'. See hooks, "Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Between Women" in *Feminist Theory: from margin to center* (Camrbridge MA: South End Press, 2000): 43–67, 49. For a discussion of friendship between women see Janice G. Raymond, *A Passion for Friends: Towards a Philosophy of Female Affection* (Boston MA: Beacon, 1986).

[62] For a history of the vitality of women's political organization in 1970s Britain see Eve Setch, "The Women's Liberation Movement in Britain 1969–1979: Organization, Creativity and Debate" (PhD thesis, University of London, 2001).

[63] Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love* (New York: Pantheon, 1988): 10.

[64] Chantal Mouffe has discussed antagonism and the related concept of agonism in relation to political theory, while this work was informative for me I have not discussed it more detail because of Mouffe's work on more recent contemporary art practices. See in particular Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics*: *Thinking the World Politically* (London: Verso, 2013).

[65] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958, 1998): 199–212. I cite from the 1998 edition.

The critique of Arendt's discussion of women as political actors in *The Human Condition* has been acknowledged.[66] Her assignment of gendered roles in the spheres of labour, work and action in the *polis* tie women to the reproductive labour of care, while the free, male citizen can participate in political action. There is little in the book that attempts to break down the divisions between these three spheres, arguably the barriers between the home and the public world, as well as reproductive and productive work are reasserted. Nonetheless *The Human Condition* describes the gendered division of labour and the blocks to women's access to public speech, as well as diagnosing the threat of individualism and personal interest to the political process. These interests, often weighted by economic or military power, prejudice the freedom of the *polis* that is wrought, she argues, through the process of discussion between political actors. This group talk is the space of appearance, which through its contingency and reliance on interdependence forges its own fragile power, independent from other needs, desires and responsibilities.

Arendt's political theory does not map onto the policy-making projects of parts of the Women's Liberation Movement, which was concerned with the advocacy of women's rights to abortion and equal pay among other things. However, the model of the space of appearance does resemble the method of politicisation, namely consciousness-raising, as well as the persistence of collaborative and collective work. These structures depended on the kind of speech act Arendt describes, and on women's surrender to group processes and critiques. Like the space of appearance, collaborations depended on the maintenance of the group and were similarly temporary, fragile and itinerant. This model offers one way to think about how collaboration made space for women to be political actors, often in antagonism to the roles and positions set out in the world.

Another way to think about antagonism is by complicating the feminist dictum 'sisterhood is powerful'. The phrase was used as the title of Robin Morgan's 1970 edited anthology of writing from the early years of the movement, and was also a slogan in marches.[67] It speaks to the strength of woman-only alliances, and establishes a peer relation that rubs up against other disempowered hierarchical familial roles. Sisterhood sought to reach over differences in race, class, nationality and sexuality, supporting a feminism based on a framework of shared oppression. However, the decentralised and anti-hierarchical modes of organising associated with the idea of sisterhood did not result in equality between women. Jo Freeman's pamphlet 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness' diagnosed the effect of the formation of elites within these supposedly equal groups.[68] While other women reported the difficulties of talking about their experiences of race, class and sexuality in groups dominated by white, middle class women. In these instances, insisting on sameness produced lacunae in which resided experiences of oppression that did not apply to the majority of

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[66] See Bonnie Honig, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).
[67] Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Powerful* (New York: Random House, 1970).
[68] Jo Freeman (Joreen), "The Tyranny of Structurelessness", *The Second Wave*, vol.2 no.1 (1972).

women, or took place between members of group. These experiences, rather than being worked through in the group, sometimes caused a split, but more often, forced some women out. This is most powerfully iterated in the title of the Black Feminist Lesbian poet Audre Lorde's 1984 anthology *Sister Outsider*.[69]

In the context of the Women's Liberation Movement, sisterhood stood for solidarity, and eventually its breakdown. In this thesis, however, sisterhood does not stand for an indifference to diversity. Instead it provides a way to think through the dynamics of interaction within the movement and to trace some of the struggle women went through to determine an alternative set of relationships distinct from their existing oppressive positions in the public sphere, in the home and in the workplace.[70] This was not simply organisational, it also challenged who women were as subjects and, I want to suggest, determined different subject positions, or ways of being in the world and a different intersubjective dynamic. It is my contention that artworks provided a space to imagine and enact this way of being, and sometimes mediated relationships between women. More specifically art provided a space to work through points of recognition and difference, sometimes this work took place self-consciously within collaborative projects and sometimes it is evident in different women's different approaches to the same theme. It is these stories that play out in and through the case studies of each chapter of this thesis.

The psychoanalyst Juliet Mitchell has proposed a way of thinking recognition and differentiation through a field of lateral relationships in her book *Siblings: Sex and Violence*.[71] Written forty years after her involvement with the organised politics of the WLM and the publication of her book *Women's Estate*, *Siblings* is one product of Mitchell's work as a practicing psychoanalyst, a move that had origins in Mitchell's analysis of the theories of Freud, Lacan and Laing in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* published in 1974.[72] While that book investigated how sexuality was internalised, and uprooted psychoanalysis from its ideological foundations, *Siblings* provides a framework to think through peer-to-peer relationships, and to challenge the vertical, generational structures foundational to psychoanalysis For Mitchell this lateral view offers a change in perspective, one that correlates with a feminine position, because rather than focus on the

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[69] Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984).

[70] This focus on sisterhood in turn differentiates my approach to collaboration from that investigated in Whitney Chadwick and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds., *Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnership* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993). Although the book's stated intention to question 'creativity as an extraordinary (usually male) individual's solitary struggle for artistic struggle' is an important one. Notably though, the artists in this study are trying to breakdown the 'dominant social struggles concerned with familial, matrimonial, and heterosexual arrangements' that provide the background for the 'alternative stor[ies]' collected in that volume. Chadwick and Courtivron, "Introduction": 7.

[71] Juliet Mitchell, *Siblings: Sex and Violence*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2003).

[72] Mitchell, *Woman's Estate*. Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: Freud, Reich, Laing and Women* (London: Penguin, 1974). The book was later republished with the subtitled 'A Radical Reassessment of Freudian Psychoanalysis'. See Mignon Nixon, "'Why Freud?' Asked the Shrew: Psychoanalysis and Feminism, Post-Partum Document, and the History Group", *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society,* vol.20, no.2 (2015).

maintenance of the single, coherent subject – a condition determined by the castration complex – it makes the threat of annihilation and a desire to be the 'object, not the subject of love' central to the subject's development.[73] Furthermore, it moves the formation of the individual from the baby, and as such a fixed gender position, to the social world.[74] Through identification, recognition and differentiation the subject locates their individuality, and, as Mitchell writes, this can be both a positive and negative experience:

> the primary identification with the peer group is positive and subject not to negation but to differentiation: you are like the others but with differences. This means that in later life the peer identification can be total or can incorporate diversity – groups are at times constructed in uniformity, at times they dissolve into their individual parts. It also means that love and hate, jealousy and envy are social, and can be specifically lateral acquisitions in a group.[75]

Mitchell's model, which overlaps the psychic and the social, provides a space to think through the subjective struggle of a redistribution of social relations, when the dominant model for understanding subjectivity was dependent on reproduction and gendered, vertical family structures. Indeed, even though Mitchell does not link *Siblings* to her experience of women's liberation, the gulf in time between her earlier critique of these psychoanalytic models and this book proves the difficulty. This psychoanalytic model has provided a way to rethink the richness of conflict and consensus between women artists, but I don't use it as a methodological tool in the chapters that follow. One reason for this is that while Mitchell openly admits her focus on the 'downside to the sibling story', I am interested in thinking about the enriching as well as the destructive effects of lateral relationships.[76] As such sisterhood and the sibling relationship provides one way to map the politics of feminism, not only through alternative, anti-hierarchical structure proposed by collaboration, but also the concomitant challenge to subjectivity this mode of interacting ushered in.

Against this background of lateral intersubjective relations, the artwork also became less coherent. Sometimes locked in a collaborative environment, sometimes providing the means for women to connect, sometimes part of a group exhibition or a collaboratively produced publication, the singular, finished art object was opened up to flux and flow, moving through different supports, challenging medium specificity and disciplinary boundaries. The dissemination of the artwork often became integral to its formal structure, constituting an open way of working. In this way my discussion takes into account both the process of working together and apart for women artists and the effects of that process on art and its exhibition. Artworks became propositions for alternative

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[73] Mitchell, *Siblings*: 4.
[74] Mitchell, *Siblings*: 14.
[75] Ibid.: 14.
[76] Ibid.: 198.

ways of seeing the world, for new ideas and new languages that might develop through collaborative work, through the exchange of objects or through reproduction and display. As has become stereotypical of sibling relationships, sometimes ideas were jealously guarded, reluctantly shared or dismissively received, but the circulation of artworks provided the means to imagine new ways of making art and being an artist.

Despite my interest in the enriching effects of sisterhood, this thesis is committed to showing up the failure of politicised white women, and consequently the Women's Liberation Movement, to recognise difference. I highlight moments when women failed to recognise each other fully, and when intersectional concerns failed to unite different political motivations, positions and concerns. This is represented, as well as discussed, through the structure of the chapters one, two and three in which I talk about artists and artworks who were not part of the collaborative projects and groups under discussion: Howardena Pindell, Cecilia Vicuña and Candace Hill-Montgomery complicate the dynamic of togetherness and sisterhood between women in the 1970s, and show up some of the intersections that pushed feminism in other directions. Importantly these artists' works challenge understandings of mobility, the home, success and visibility for women artists more broadly, but it is also crucial to keep their exclusion from the mainstream in mind as another layer of the dynamic of working together and apart in this period.

In this line of thought I follow Lorde, who insisted on imagining a feminism built on commonality and mutuality across difference and against division. In her 1979 paper 'The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House' she laid this position out powerfully:

> Advocating mere tolerance of difference between women is the grossest reformism. It is a total denial of the creative function of difference in our lives. Difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. Only then does the necessity for interdependency become unthreatening. Only within that interdependency of different strengths, acknowledged and equal, can the power to seek new ways of being in the world generate, as well as the courage and sustenance to act where there are no charters.[77]

It is by writing in stories that conflict with the proposed terms of this discussion – collaborations between women artists in the 1970s – that I want to draw out some of the threads of intersection that highlight positions of similarity and solidarity, which were not always explicit at the time. I want to capture some of Lorde's dialectical spark, and broaden and deepen what we understand feminism in the 1970s to be. This is to make room within feminism and to enlarge its force. In another essay titled 'Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism', Lorde describes the problem and potential of anger

[77] Audre Lorde, 'The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House' in *Sister Outsider* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984): 110–113, 111.

between women. The problem she diagnoses is white women's perception of black women's rage as 'useless and disruptive', while the potential is clarity and change. Lorde writes: 'For anger between peers births change, not destruction, and the discomfort and sense of loss it often causes is not fatal, but a sign of growth'.[78] The recognition of this anger, of the oppression of racism and sexism, meant overcoming the objectification of difference, and confronting annihilation towards new intersubjective relations.[79] It is the formation of these relations, which constitutes my understanding of expanded collaboration. To quote Lorde once again: 'When we define ourselves, when I define myself, the place in which I am like you and the place in which I am not like you, I'm not excluding you from the joining – I'm broadening the joining'.[80]

This thesis aims to understand how these relationships, or the infrastructure that emerged in second wave feminism supported a field of art practice that has been largely overlooked and ignored. While some of the artworks I discuss are more well known than others, appearing in art history texts and populating museum shows, others have resided in the personal collections, sometimes the lofts and bedrooms of their makers. This collaborative backdrop provides a context in which to see these works historically, but I hope it also extends beyond that illustrating how the political project of feminist-influenced art is incomplete. This thesis provides a prompt to reconsider these works. While I have embedded this art within an alternative framework of artistic exchange, I want to insist that this art movement was not one that existed on the sidelines of the mainstream. It irritated the mainstream, questioning the boundaries, categories and values of art as it was defined, and changing its shape. As the critic and exhibition organiser Lucy R. Lippard suggested:

> the feminist insistence that the personal (and thereby art itself) is political has, like a serious flood, interrupted the mainstream's flow, sending it off into hundreds of tributaries', disturbing 'the increasingly mechanical "evolution" of art about art'.[81]

Conversation, Interaction, Influence and Exhibition-Making

The framework of expanded collaboration is mobilised in different ways in each chapter of this thesis. Specific artworks form the basis of each chapter's analysis in order to consider the ways in which the conditions of production and reception contributed to art making. Through this approach I seek to map the material outcomes of the political project of feminist artists, who rooted their interrogation of gender oppression in the process of making as well as the situation of viewing. By

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[78] Lorde 'Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism', in *Sister Outsider*: 124–133, 131.
[79] hooks also argues against the 'need to eradicate difference to feel solidarity' in hooks, "Sisterhood": 67.
[80] Lorde, quoted in Nancy K. Bereano, 'Introduction' in *Sister Outsider*: 7–12, 10.
[81] Lucy R. Lippard, "Sweeping the Changes: The Contribution Of Feminism to the Art of the 1970s" in *Get the Message: A Decade of Art for Social Change* (New York: EP Dutton, 1984): 149.

refocusing on the object of art practice, I reconsider how the tensions between political and artistic concerns played out in the works.

Chapter one focuses on a number of groups and projects – including the New-York based publication the *Rip-off File*, the Women's Workshop of the Artist's Union and the *What is Feminist Art?* project – formed by women artists and artworkers to address issues including sexism in the artworld and wages for artists. This chapter traces the diverse ways women came together from political gatherings, to independent newspapers, to group exhibitions, collective galleries and open call projects. The thesis opens by looking at what might be considered as more straightforward examples of collaboration. It begins with the intimate exchanges in consciousness raising groups, extending outwards to look at instances of public speech, and then to the limits of feminist spaces to hear and amplify different stories of oppression and empowerment. This provides a background – animated by the voices of women raised in political dissensus – against which women's desire for their art to be seen comes out in relief. I read these various organisational strategies through the lens of political theory, as well as philosophy, to consider women's collaborations as indicative of a feminist politics of support, which not only promoted women's art to the organised artworld – something which Lippard would later criticise as an attempt to get a slice of a poisonous pie – but also empowered women to experiment and to show work to each other.[82] Each of the artists considered in this chapter, I suggest, contributed to making a space, which not only irritated the borders and boundaries of the already-existing artworld but also built a context for women's art that was itself to be tested by dissensus and critique.

The second chapter shifts from this broad background to consider three case studies that deal with relationships crafted through art making. It focuses on Suzanne Lacy and Linda Preuss' *International Dinner Party,* the *Postal Art Event*, and Vicuña's *Precarios*. The relationships proposed or enacted in these works all turn around distance and proximity. While the first two connect women spread out across the world and between cities – Lacy and Preuss' work invited women to host a dinner party and send a telegram to California, where the artist mapped the international spread of activity in a performance, the *Postal Art Project* was a network in the UK through which women sent small artworks to each other through the mail – Vicuña's *Precarios* act like anchors connecting her to London, the city in which she had to live after the *coup d'etat* in Chile in 1973. Each of these artworks attests to the difficulty of being a political subject, of finding ways to connect and to act when those connections fall apart. The *Precarios* attest to Vicuña's specific experience of exile and are incredibly personal objects, which conflict with the focus on collaboration in this thesis. Vicuña did work collaboratively while in London, organising a group to protest the events in Chile and then co-founding Artists for Democracy with John Dugger, David Medalla and Guy Brett. But I focus on the *Precarios* in part because they have conceptual and formal similarities to the objects produced in the *Postal Art Event*; namely they are a combination of craftwork and ephemeral materials made on a

[82] See Lucy R. Lippard, "Introduction" in *Hayward Annual II*, exh. cat. (London: Hayward Gallery, 1978).

small-scale, and in the wake of a challenge to political subjectivity. By looking at this series of work, I want to highlight the different political investments women artists had in the 1970s and to make evident that the Women's Liberation Movement and feminism were not always central concerns. Yet I read these works through a feminist lens and situate them in this historical context, to notice when women's artwork extended beyond single-sex collaborative spaces, to acknowledge that spaces were not always so welcoming, and to give new focus to the work Vicuña produced while resident in London, which is not addressed in the existing discussion of these works.[83] Each of the case studies in this chapter tests what we understand the artwork to be; Vicuña's objects were like personal tokens or talismans, while both the *International Dinner Party* and the *Postal Art Event* relate to contemporaneous arguments to democratise the artwork through prints, editions and artists' books. Although notably neither project simply provided an egalitarian alternative, instead, like the *Precarios*, they challenged the stability of the art object.

Chapter three expands on the parameters of the creative experiments discussed in chapter two. Here I consider the dynamics of influence, recognition and rejection between three more case studies: *Womanhouse*, an installation by Chicago, Miriam Schapiro and the students of the feminist art program at Cal Arts in Los Angeles; *A Woman's Place (14 Radnor Terrace),* a work inspired by *Womanhouse* by Kate Walker and the South London Art Group and New York-based Candace Hill Montgomery's *Reflections on Vacancy* (1979). I put these three artworks in conversation, although the artists involved never actually interacted, to reflect on their different approaches to domesticity and the home. *Womanhouse* and *A Woman's Place* were both collaborative projects that used the architecture of houses as fertile sites to imagine feminist critiques, although this played out very differently between London and Los Angeles. *Reflections on Vacancy* provides a kind of a coda for the other two projects, highlighting an alternative politicisation of the home. For this work Hill-Montgomery covered the windows of a Harlem block with silver-Mylar. Her tenement twinned the appropriated buildings that made up the Soho alternative art scene on the other side of Manhattan: exposing the connections between art, race politics and gentrification in the city.

The fourth chapter moves from the home as a site to make work, to the exhibition and focuses on the show *Issue: Social Strategies by Women Artists*, which took place as part of the women's cycle at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London in 1980. I argue that this exhibition, which was selected by Lippard, tested the boundaries of the art institution, making the gallery function not as a space of legitimation, history writing or narrativising, but as holding place for the vital flow of feminist-influenced political art taking place beyond its walls. The effect of this framing of the gallery was to challenge its status. However, this gathering of diverse artists and artworks, one

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[83] Vicuña's work features in *Inside the Visible* and *WACK!*. See M. Catherine de Zegher, "Cecilia Vicuña's *Ouvrage:* Knot a Not, Notes on Knots" in *Inside the Visible: Elliptical Traverse of Twentieth Century Art in, of and from the Feminine*, ed. de Zegher, exh. cat. (Cambridge MA and London: The MIT Press, 1996) and Esther Adler, "Cecilia Vicuña", *WACK!: Art and the Feminist Revolution,* ed. Cornelia Butler, exh. cat. (Los Angeles CA, Cambridge MA and London: The Museum of Contemporary Art and The MIT Press, 2007).

of Lippard's stated intentions, also offers a window onto the diversity of women's art and some points of contention. One story I consider at length in that chapter is the (eventual) inclusion of Su Richardson, Monica Ross and Kate Walker's collaborative environmental installation *Fenix^{o}*. For Lippard, this work was too bulky to practically fit her curatorial plan and, because of its focus on domesticity, not social enough to fit her concept. Richardson, Ross and Walker persisted and made a different version of the work to correspond with Lippard's intentions. This negotiation evidences a mistranslation of what was considered a 'social' concern between Britain and North America, and as such shows up the ruptures and connections that galvanised between artists sharing the space of a gallery wall.

In this thesis, then, the term collaboration is expanded in order to interrogate the vital dynamics of the women's art movement, both between women artists and in the material tensions of their artworks. As such a central aim of the project is to trouble the nostalgic or even utopic associations of the revolutionary moment of second-wave feminism and the potential of artistic collaboration more broadly. This is not to say that this period (1970–81 here) did not foster radical upheaval, but to think through how confrontation and disagreement, within alternative groups, could be productive. Furthermore it is only by re-thinking the local roots of discontinuities that a clearer picture of politically-engaged feminist art can emerge, beyond the binarisms that often structure the histories of feminist art. In the following chapters I propose that feminist artworks were often contingent objects, shifting in affect as they travelled geographically and institutionally. In a web of circulation and exchange artworks staged appropriations and quotations, becoming the material for further discursive interrogation and analysis. This proposition re-situates the experimental, political strategies of feminist artists within longer histories. At once reaching back to Minimalist and Conceptual challenges to the grace of the artwork and forward to post-modernist tactics and socially-engaged practices. This is not to say that feminism and feminist art can be contained within the temporal or generational bounds of an 'ism' or style. But instead, it recognised that the contingency developed by feminists in the 1970s has become crucial for more recent art practices. Expanded collaboration, then, provides a lens to consider the antagonism of both the material and organisational tensions of the women's art movement.

Chapter One

What is Feminist Art? Consciousness-raising and the Constitution of a Feminist Politics in the Women's Art Movement

In 1972 a set of rules were published in the journal *West-East Coast Bag*. The eight rules were a set of instructions for how to run a consciousness-raising session. They began:

> 1. Select a topic.
> 2. Go around the room, each woman speaking in turn. Don't interrupt, let each woman speak up to 15 minutes and then ask questions only for clarification.
> 3. Don't give advice, don't chastise, don't be critical.[1]

The rules provided women who read the journal with a framework around which to hang the stories of oppression, depression and suppression they had come together to discuss. Practically they provided a starting point ('select a topic') as well as a method to organise the group and to sustain the activity. But in practice the rules had a more powerful effect, diverting the habits of everyday conversation and creating a space for a different type of speech. This speech was monologic and uninterrupted; it depended on the others listening but not on their response: 'Don't give advice, don't chastise, don't be critical'. The silence of the other women provided a basis, imbued with trust and respect, to 'let each woman speak'. These rules applied as much to the speaker as to the listener, because each woman in the group performed both roles. As a tool for organisation, the text describes a space of relationality rather than declaration and it is this experience of coming together to share stories which forms the subject of this chapter.

Despite the terseness of the West-East Bag's (WEB) 'Consciousness-raising Rules', the text provides a rich site to think through the structure of the movement and its delineation of particular kind of relational experience dependent on being together and apart. I will talk about other approaches to consciousness raising below, before I move on to look at examples of feminist organising in the women's art movement. However, I also want to emphasise that consciousness raising only provides a starting point, both in the context of this chapter and for how we might think of feminism and the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s more broadly. The other case studies in this chapter – the *Rip-off File* (c. 1973); the exhibition *Hang Up, Put Down, Stand Up* (1974); Howardena Pindell's *Free, White and 21* (1980) and the *What is Feminist Art?* (1977)

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[1] WEB (West–East Bag), "Consciousness-raising Rules" in *West–East Coast Bag* (June 1972): 1. Reprinted in Hilary Robinson, ed., *Feminism–Art–Theory: An Anthology 1968–2000*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000): 85–86.

project – offer up other examples of speaking and listening between women in an expanded framework. The Ad Hoc Committee of Women Artists' (Ad Hoc Committee) *Rip-off File* took a step into the public sphere via a print broadsheet; the Women Artists' Collective's (WAC) exhibition *Hang Up*, was one of the first shows of women's art in London; Howardena Pindell's video *Free, White and 21* highlighted the limits of who could be heard in the small group structure favoured by the WLM; while the Woman's Building *What is Feminist Art?* project was comprised of a collective utterance, albeit mediated through text and image. The focus on coming together through shared testimonies, incorporating instances of consensus and dissensus, begins the process of rethinking collaboration, which will unfold through the rest of this thesis. As such consciousness raising provides a foundation for my discussion, just as it provided a foundation for the early Women's Liberation Movement, defining both the content and form of feminist political struggle. This chapter therefore provides a springboard to destabilize our existing definitions of collaboration and to move toward something more akin to expanded collaboration, which will be explored in relation to mobility and enclosure throughout the rest of the thesis. Yet while group processes and horizontal structures were recurring touchstones for women artists throughout the 1970s, methods of organising changed through the decade, expanding to incorporate other women, more women; intersecting with other movements or working with other organisations. Women also fell out and developed distinct interests breaking up the groups that they had been a part of and making new alliances. Many of these instances of breakdown suggest failures of communication, or the inability of women to listen and understand one another, and thus attain the 'equality' which some have argued arises from sharing stories.[2] The case studies discussed in this chapter evidence the processes of differentiation and distinction, fragmentation and diversion that constituted the dynamic field of activity in the women's art movement and the WLM alike. They trouble any understanding of smooth sisterhood and make visible the 'complex textures' of 'networks and friendships' otherwise imperceptible in the WEB rules.[3]

This chapter is about the dispersal or diffusion of the consciousness raising model beyond the form advocated at the start of the movement, which in the case of WEB included having a group of no more than ten women, whose ideas and discussions could not be shared outside the session (see rules six and seven).[4] But it is also about the persistence of elements of this process as the movement grew and entered – or formulated – its own public sphere. The most palpable trace of consciousness raising remaining in these artworks and projects is their concern to gather and

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[2] See Jennifer Coates, *Women Talk: Conversation Between Women Friends*, (Oxford: Wiley, 1996) and Sara Ahmed, "Analysing Women's Talk and Gossip Between Two Female Friends", *Innervate*, vol.3 (2010–11).

[3] Rosalind Delmar in Mary Kelly, et al., "On the Passage of a Few People Through a Rather Brief Period of Time", Roundtable discussion, (March–April 2015), accessed 24 May 2015, http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/talks-and-lectures/mary-kelly-conversation-hans-ulrich-obrist/secret-agreement.

[4] WEB, "Consciousness-raising Rules": 85–86.

share stories by different women, rather than claiming a collective voice.[5] This suggests the particular way in which women came together to create a new political imaginary by destabilising the coherence of the individual subject, putting her in relation. I read this through Hannah Arendt's concept of the 'space of appearance', and trace women artists' attempts to organise differently, as well as to imagine a different kind of art and life in their work.[6] However, the political challenge of this work did not completely evacuate the individual in favour of a single group identity, but instead comprised a dynamic of working together and working apart.

Speaking Bitterness

In 1971 the British theorist Juliet Mitchell published *Women's Estate*.[7] It was an early example of Women's Liberation Movement writing in the UK and included a reprint of her article 'Women: The Longest Revolution', which she had fought to get printed in the journal *New Left Review* in 1966.[8] In addition to this article, which analyses the relationship of gender to class-based revolutionary politics, Mitchell also offered an introduction to the WLM. This portion of the book traces the context of its emergence materially and intellectually, as well as the movement's particular shape as an international collection of multiple small groups. Common to all these groups is the consciousness raising process, which Mitchell emphasises was crucial to developing an understanding of the relationship of the self to society, or the personal to the political in gendered terms.[9]

Mitchell's analysis detailed a particular kind of speech; she contended that consciousness raising was 'group therapy' and instead described it as a form of 'new politics' akin to the process of Maoist revolutionary discipline 'speaking bitterness'.[10] She wrote:

> These peasants, subdued by violent coercion and abject poverty, took a step out of thinking their fate was natural by articulating it […] "Speaking bitterness" is the bringing to consciousness of the virtually unconscious oppression; one person's realisation of an injustice brings to mind injustices for the whole group […] there is relevance which doesn't insult the plight of the Chinese peasant. In having been

[5] This was also important for many women and is evident in the writing of manifestos and demands. Most notably see the seven demands of the WLM, as well as the manifesto of the WWAU, at WWAU folder, Early Years, WAL. See also those reproduced in Katy Deepwell, ed., *Feminist Art Manifestoes: An Anthology*, London: ktpress, 2014. See the forthcoming chapter by Laura Guy, "The Time of the Manifesto: A Proposition for Art History's Feminist Futures", in *Feminism and Art History Now: Radical Critiques of Theory and Practice*, ed. Victoria Horne and Lara Perry, (London: IB Tauris, 2016). Guy kindly shared this text with me in 2015.
[6] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958, 1998): 199–212. I cite from the 1998 edition.
[7] Mitchell, *Women's Estate*.
[8] Mitchell, *Women's Estate*. For the original print of the article, see Juliet Mitchell, "Women: The Longest Revolution", *New Left Review*, no. 40, (November–December 1966).
[9] Mitchell, 1971.
[10] Ibid.: 60, 62.

> given for so long their own sphere, their "other" world, women's oppression is hidden far from consciousness […] it is the acceptance of a situation as "natural", or a misery as "personal" that has first to be overcome. "Consciousness-raising" is speaking the unspoken: the opposite, in fact, of "nattering together".[11]

Mitchell's connection of consciousness raising to leftist struggle rather than therapy, highlights her concern for women's liberation to be taken seriously as a revolutionary political movement by those on the Left. This not only suggests her particular investment in the intellectual scene in London, but also how this, in turn, shaped her approach to consciousness raising.[12] As such Mitchell's text also makes visible how ideas common to the Women's Liberation Movement internationally were translated to different intellectual and political climates, as well as how feminism related to other struggles, which I will go on to explore in more detail in other case studies through this chapter. Similar anxieties around the kind of politics constituted through speaking together appeared in the United States, resulting in fractures between certain groups.[13] But Mitchell's assertion also establishes a hierarchy of speech acts, in which the frivolous occupation of 'nattering together' is converted into the grave one of 'speaking bitterness'. A translation that is perhaps akin to the transformation of the personal into the political. Inherent in Mitchell's description is a call to change friendship into solidarity and to construct 'group consciousness'. Following a trajectory from WEB to Mitchell, consciousness raising was not a space to offer advice, but one in which to recognise each other's shared experience, to identify across difference and delineate common, society-wide instances of gender oppression. Mitchell registered the differences between small groups internationally, noting the proliferation of feminisms across America, yet she positioned consciousness raising as the route to a new politics based on a process of mutual identification and therefore horizontal structures. So even though this work located the personal within a larger political schema, it did not lose sight of the individual as a constituent voice, as Mitchell wrote of the small group and its members: '[it] permits the transition from the personal to the political and simultaneously interrelates them'.[14]

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[11] Ibid.: 62. The quotation marks are Mitchell's own.

[12] Mignon Nixon describes Mitchell's intellectual investments in Nixon. "'Why Freud?' Asked the Shrew". Mitchell's discusses her interests in her own words in, Sunit Singh, "Emancipation in the Heart of Darkness: An Interview with Juliet Mitchell", *Platypus Review*, no.38 (August 2011) accessed 4 November 2015, http://platypus1917.org/2011/08/05/emancipation-in-the-heart-of-darkness-an-interview-with-juliet-mitchell/.

[13] See Shreve, *Women Together, Women Alone*. This book traces consciousness raising as a separate movement, which intersected the Women's Liberation Movement. One of the fractures Shreve traces is in the formation of the Redstockings from the New York Radical Feminists, because of the interest of the former in consciousness raising. See pages 13–14. Like in Mitchell's text, Shreve is also interested in the form of consciousness raising, distinguishing it from 'group therapy' and aligning it with the process of 'speaking bitterness'.

[14] Mitchell, 1971: 59.

The leftist position in Mitchell's interpretation of consciousness raising points to many early feminists' initial investments in the student movement, Anti-Vietnam War struggles and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.[15] This climate of political activism also agitated artists and, among other things, resulted in their organisation into artists' unions. The Artists' Union (AU) in London and the Art Worker's Coalition (AWC) in New York both had women only workshops, where members could discuss the particular issues facing them, as well as potential solutions, before presenting these points of action to the broader union. In London the Women's Workshop of the Artist's Union (WWAU) focused debate and petitioned the general union on issues relating to women, including their exclusion from institutions and galleries, or the refusal of funding and fair pay that would have made them professional artists, both in terms of prestige and the ability to earn a living wage. But the women did not isolate themselves in the workshop, which met at different times than the union. Instead they supported artists to take on major roles: in 1972 Mary Kelly held the chair, with Margaret Harrison and Carol Kenna in the secretariat.[16]

Although the form of the women's workshop meetings is not clear, two statements issued by the group in 1973 and 1974 lay out the group's interests concerning the treatment of women in the arts.[17] The first statement from 1973 reads, 'Women in art are subject to conscious and unconscious discrimination and the artworld in all its manifestations from gallery system to educational system is based totally on a masculine identity'.[18] This evidences a sophisticated understanding of the multiple factors that diminished women's position as artists. Their grievances were not pinned on the problem of 'quality', but larger systemic imperatives and the problem was not 'men', but 'masculine identity'. This gestures to the importance of a women-only group that was connected to a larger struggle and highlights their interest in artworld reform. In addition to their participation in the larger AU, the WWAU also sought out connections with other women workers' struggles.[19] The WWAU's support of other campaigns and workshops registers an early attempt at intersectional feminism, connecting women across different class backgrounds, as factory workers and art workers. This support was made manifest in documentation of struggles

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[15] See Shelia Rowbotham, Lynne Segal, Mary Kelly, Roaslind Delmar, as well as the testimonies of Cynthia Cockburn and Ellen Malos in the Sisterhood and After collection at the British Library among others in the UK context, accessed 4 November 2015, http://www.bl.uk/sisterhood/interviews. For an introduction to the different origins of the movement in the US see Echols, *Daring to be Bad* and Susan Brownmiller, *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution*, (New York: Dial Press, 1999).

[16] By 1974 the WWAU had successfully added policies specifically tied to women's rights in institutions, galleries and art education onto the union's roster of demands.

[17] Women's Workshop, "A Brief History of the Artist's Union 1972–1973", in *Feminism–Art–Theory An Anthology 1968–2000*, ed. Hilary Robinson, (Originally c. 1973, Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).

[18] WWAU, collective statement titled "Women's Workshop", 1973, unpaginated, WWAU folder, Early Years, WAL.

[19] The group wrote: 'One of the aims of the workshop is to set up links with the women's sections in other unions […] it is our intention to support our sisters in their struggle for unionization and also in the action they take as organized workers.' See Women's Workshop, "A Brief History of the Artist's Union 1972–1973": 68.

including films such as *Women of the Rhondda* (1973) by Mary Capps, Margaret Dickinson, Mary Kelly, Esther Ronay and Sue Schapiro, which recorded the stories of the women supporting the miners during the 1926 General Strike and *Nightcleaners Part One* (1972–5) by the Berwick Street Film Collective, which documented the working conditions of female cleaners in London – who also had to care for their families – and their attempts to unite to protest pay and hours.[20] The 1973 statement also includes mention of work with women at a 'tinbox factory', which references the research Kelly, Harrison and Kay Hunt were undertaking for their collaboratively produced installation-cum-exhibition *Women and Work: A Document on the Division of Labour in Industry* (1973–5).[21] Each of these projects was an expression of solidarity directed at the formation of group consciousness between diverse women, like that described by Mitchell. However, the makers of *Women of the Rhondda*, *Nightcleaners* and *Women and Work* also had to navigate the power dynamics between the subjects represented and those making the artwork or film.[22] The question of exploitation was particular in this context, because although the women making the film did not work in the same conditions as their subjects, they shared similar experiences of the demands of domesticity, while artists like Harrison and Hunt also came from working class backgrounds. That the films do not focus solely on the workplace, but take all the demands placed on the women into account, suggests that the maker's not only offered their solidarity to the struggle of their subjects, but also recognised points of continuity with their own political situation. This sense of dual oppression, in the home and the workplace, constituted some of the earliest activism in the Women's Liberation Movement.[23]

In contrast to the relatively traditional union structure of the AU, the AWC was more fluid. It too had separate workshops including the Guerrilla Art Action Group and Art Strike, but was structured by regular open meetings. In this climate, and despite prominent female members like Lucy R. Lippard and Poppy Johnson, as Julia Bryan-Wilson notes, 'Women's rights were addressed by the AWC in an uneven, and for many women unsatisfactory, way'.[24] As Bryan-Wilson has argued members of the AWC identified as 'art workers' to instantiate a 'fragile solidarity' with other unionised workers, however the gendered valences of this identity position

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[20] The Berwick Street Film Collective were Kelly, Humphrey Trevelyan, Marc Karlin and James Scott. Trevelyan also worked as cameraman on the *Women of the Rhondda*, because Capps and Ronay could not find a woman to shoot the film. Esther Ronay, Sykpe interview with the author, 2 July 2016.

[21] WWAU, "Women's Workshop", unpaginated.

[22] Siona Wilson discusses these power dynamics in relation to the emerging leftist cinema scene in *Art Labor, Sex Politics*: 1–52.

[23] For instance the importance of the Wages for Housework campaign, which had chapters in New York and London and was ratified as the International Coalition for Wages for Housework in 1972. But also the radical feminist movement in the United States, which took shape in groups like the Redstockings, who phrased revolution as the liberation of women as a class. See the Redstockings, "Redstockings Manifesto", July 1969, accessed 4 November 2015, http://redstockings.org/index.php/42-uncategorised/76-rs-manifesto.

[24] Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Politics in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkley, Los Angeles CA and London: University of California Press, 2009): 153.

were rarely considered in AWC organising.[25] In 1969 fractures started to show with the formation of Women Art in Revolution (WAR), but by late 1971 most active women members of the AWC had left to participate in the other feminist groups including WAR, the Ad Hoc Women Artist's Committee and the Women Students and Artists for Black Artist's Liberation (WSABAL).[26] Each of the groups were centred on women's place as art workers, and their political actions included protests at the institutions that excluded them, as well as the formation of their own infrastructures of support.

Instead of consciousness raising according to the process laid out by the WEB rules, the women members of WAR, the Ad Hoc committee and WSABAL embarked on a campaign to raise the consciousness of both the public and art world concerning the absence of women from museum collections and juried exhibitions. To this end their voices were raised in protest, repeating the statistical facts of their exclusion as well as their demands, echoed on placards and signs. In this context women's speech did not seek identification and group consciousness – instead it sought to cause a ruckus, disturbing the authority of the museum's concrete façade allowing shouts to permeate the quiet of its interior. These protests extended from the street and onto the page, where women could read the stories others shared, as they might have listened to them in the tight proximity of the consciousness raising circle.

Call-Out: *Rip-off File*

In 1972 the Ad Hoc Committee issued a call to gather together the experiences of women artists and art workers who had suffered professionally because of their gender. The group included six women: Maude Boultz, Loretta Dunkelman, Joan Synder, Nancy Spero, May Stevens and Joyce Kozloff and in 1972 they circulated the following announcement:

> We are creating a dossier of reports of sexism (rip-offs, put-downs and discrimination) in the Art World and Art Schools – for publication and for exhibition. Please send examples of personal experiences (naming names or remaining anonymous as you will)… Deadline: 10 December 1972.[27]

The committee printed responses to the call out in the form of a broadsheet publication the following year. The testimonies are varied in length and style, some are signed, others anonymous, some name names as the call-out recommended, others allow the protagonists to remain anonymous. Artists, students, writers and teachers are all represented, creating a diverse picture of repeated acts of discrimination sometimes blatant, sometimes discrete. In this way the *Rip-off File*

[25] Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers*: 3.
[26] Although an important exception is the artist Lee Lozano, who address at an AWC open meeting described her rejection of art world, which prefigured her later boycott of women in 1971.
[27] Reprinted in Women Artists' Ad-hoc Committee, *Rip-off File*, artists' publication, New York: n.p., c.1973: 2. folder 202, box 5, A.I.R. Gallery Archive, Downtown Collection, Fales.

(fig. 1.1) makes for challenging reading, as report after report describes sexist discrimination at work, or when attempting to find employment or gallery representation. The tenor of the responses evidence explicit sexism; employers directly comment that they do not want to employ women, course leaders contest that there is not enough material to teach a course on women's art, a gallery director laments the possibility of representing a particular woman because he deemed her too beautiful and therefore too tempting to pay a studio visit.[28] In other cases sexism is reported as it aggregates through repeated experiences, being denied a few too many roles, or passed over for exhibitions. Each story is frustrating, but the experience of reading the entire document transforms the individual testimonies into an affecting chorus. The effect was, as the committee commented, for women to 'discover that the humiliations they'd endured were not unique or personal', and in this way the dossier was supposed to function like a 'large-scale "consciousness-raising" effort on the topic of sexism in the Art World'.[29]

As an example of consciousness raising expanded, the *Rip-off File* necessarily abandoned the form of a small group meeting. The accumulation of testimonies was represented materially and communicated through the volume of words, on large pages of broadsheet paper. Nonetheless it retained the effect of the process. So that just as a session would provoke recognition between women gathered in the room, as stories one thought were personal were spoken by another, so the *Rip-off File* related common experiences both between other printed testimonies as well as for the reader.[30] At times they are blatant, at others more implicit, suggesting how sexism extended from insults and excuses that named women as a problem, to those that simply overlooked or ignored them in favour of male colleagues. As such the *Rip-off File* made sexism in the artworld more perceptible, which in turn contributed to the formation of group consciousness.

The audience reached by the *Rip-off File* certainly numbered more than the ten suggested as the maximum group size in the WEB rules. There were forty-four contributors in total and although it is not clear from the archival holdings exactly how many broadsheets were printed, the editors wrote that they wanted to distribute the *Rip-off File* 'to women students in the art schools, which are all staffed by predominantly male faculties'.[31] And since the original call for submissions card was sent out to 800 women in the arts, the print-run must have numbered at least that. The mobility of the dossier was crucial to its function as a consciousness-raising tool and the format of the broadsheet proved ideal for this. Not only could it accommodate a lot of text, it was published on light paper that could be easily folded and posted cheaply. Furthermore it appropriated the form of the newspaper as everyday reportage, which recorded and therefore constituted the activities of

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[28] See Women Artists' Ad-hoc Committee, *Rip-off File:* Rosemary Wright's contribution on page 2, Barbara Zucker's on page 3 and Lucy Lippard's on page 8.
[29] Women Artists' Ad-hoc Committee, *Rip-off File*: 2.
[30] Barbara Zucker's account begins with 'There is a Chinese exercise called 'speaking bitterness'. It's not easy to 'speak bitterness' in black and white. Once having decided to do it, I picked the little story below'. Zucker in Women Artists' Ad-hoc Committee, *Rip-off File*: 3.
[31] Women Artists' Ad-hoc Committee, *Rip-off File*: 2.

states and citizens of the public sphere, subverting the content of articles from the machinations of large-scale societal issues and structures to personal accounts. In this sense the *Rip-off File* repurposed the newspaper form, circulating women's stories to a larger readership, in order to provoke recognition that would in turn reveal the societal causes for things usually considered trivial. It was consciousness raising writ large.

The *Rip-off File* might be thought of as a space to air alternative viewpoints in the public sphere. But its work is more complex that this statement suggests. Firstly it requires posing the question of what public sphere it addresses. The political theorist Nancy Fraser discussed the problem of defining a public sphere in her essay 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy' from 1990.[32] In the article she parses out the differences and connections between the state, economy and public discourse, alongside an analysis of Jürgen Habermas' argument in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962).[33] Fraser describes Habermas' understanding of a liberal democratic public sphere this way:

> the idea of public sphere is that of a body of "private persons" assembled to discuss matters of "public concern" or "common interest". This idea acquired force and reality in early modern Europe in the constitution of "bourgeois public spheres" as counterweights to absolutist states. These publics aimed to mediate between society and the state by holding the state accountable to society via publicity.[34]

In this context the public sphere provided a site for 'discursive interaction' of 'public matters'.[35] The formation of this discursive interaction, this making public of the machinations of the state, was contingent on the publication of ideas in the press. Fraser notes that Habermas' theory relied on a utopian potential for this public sphere to be accessible to all, which never came into fruition, because access to the public sphere became a framework for the 'process of bourgeois class formation'.[36] Only bourgeois men of means could enter a sphere as 'private persons' to discuss matters in the 'common interest', because they saw themselves as unmotivated by personal interest.[37] As such this new class depended on their distinction from others whose needs polluted their judgement surrounding the common good. Crucially this distinction was articulated through disinterested or rational speech. Fraser writes how this bourgeois public sphere depended on the exclusion of women and so instituted 'new gender norms enjoining feminine domesticity and a

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[32] Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text*, no.25–26 (1990).
[33] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into the Category of Bourgeois Society*, (Cambridge MA and London: The MIT Press, 1989).
[34] Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere": 112.
[35] Ibid.: 113.
[36] Ibid.: 114.
[37] Ibid.: 114.

sharp separation of public and private spheres [which] functioned as key signifiers of bourgeois difference from both higher and lower social strata'.[38]

Fraser's point is that the bourgeois public sphere and the liberal democratic ideal that emerged from it, was founded and depended on gender discrimination sedimented during the early twentieth-century. This process of distinction counted women out of the space of public discourse, as well as situating their voices in a signifying system that marked them as non-rational and devalued their speech.[39] I will return to Fraser's argument and her discussion of multiple public spheres later in this chapter, but for now I want to emphasise how the *Rip-off File* functioned as an instance of expanded consciousness-raising, which disrupted the liberal democratic sphere through its translation of personal testimony into public view.

The texts printed in the *Rip-off File* retained a sense of spoken testimony, as if they were stories or anecdotes being told. Likewise the variety in style, length and content contributed to the sense that there were multiple interlocutors, all speaking from different contexts and with different investments. The latter point was exacerbated by the division of the dossier into three sections, including 'jobs', 'education' and the 'art world'. In addition some of the texts overlapped, with the excuse given to one woman denied employment – because she was married, the prospective employer presumed she was unreliable as she would have to follow her husband's career – the reason for another's inability to find work.[40] As a result the women did not necessarily meet on the newspaper page as equals, contesting one point between them or presenting a coterie of voices supporting one argument, instead the testimonies are imbued with inconsistencies. Many also take the tone of tale telling, reporting something second hand.[41] As such they functioned less like the statistics used in the institutional protests, than individual stories shared between women, connecting the teller and the listener. The lack of objectivity in these personal testimonies connected the text to its writer, while the reader's recognition of the event established a relationship with them. This mode of writing, although related to Mitchell's conceit of 'speaking bitterness', is also suggestive of gossip.

Gossip is a form of speech denigrated and denied value in the sites of legal and public discourse, as well as by Mitchell herself. But it has more recently been considered as an epistemological tool in its own right. The annals of gossipy exchange have been recognised as the sites in which to find accounts of those often denied a voice in the public sphere. Kellie Jones'

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[38] Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere': 114–115.

[39] The are of course exceptions to this, some women did make pathways into political life, particularly through protest and petition although they were usually from the upper classes or women of means. See Delap, *The Feminist Avant-Garde*.

[40] See M. Garr and the 'Anonymous' testimonies in Women Artists' Ad-hoc Committee, *Rip-off File*: 4.

[41] Indeed the front page of the *Rip-off File* is a reprinted letter from Bernard Arnest of Colorado College to Rosemary Wright, who writes to inform her that she has not got a teaching position because 'it may well be that we simply did not have the nerve to add another woman to the art department faculty and thus bring the departmental balance to half male, half female'. See Women Artist's Ad-hoc Committee, *Rip-off File*: 1.

Eyeminded, which combines essays with personal anecdotes, gives a snapshot of the cultural community of Black art and poetry that provides the foundation for her criticism.[42] Amy Newman's oral history of *Artforum* meanwhile, gathers together the events, and the protagonists' reactions, that have shaped the tumultuous history of the publication.[43] The cultural theorist Gavin Butt has extended this, emphasising the importance of gossip as a methodology.[44] Butt thinks of gossip as a discourse with a particular power structure and he uses it to trace the queer history of homosexual relationships in the New York art world. Like the dense fabric of relationships and identities Butt traces, the *Rip-off File* also offers an alternate history of the American art scene, making visible its sexist foundations and providing new points of connection through story-telling.

Butt proposes a close look at gossip, not solely as a way to perceive stories otherwise absent from more normative histories, but also as a queer form of knowledge in and of itself. He writes: 'I am concerned with gossip's testimonial power to make evident that which could not be seen, which was not clear, and which was not disclosable – to consider the evidence of gossip's conventionally *non*evidential meanings.'[45] In other words, how gossip provided a site to perform and construct homosexual identities at a moment, pre-Stonewall, when this visibility was denied. There are significant differences between the specific conditions Butt discusses and the women who contributed to the *Rip-off File*, although disrupting the separation between public and private spheres was important to both. Crucially the *Rip-off File* provided a site for disclosures, which might have exceeded other frameworks and that attested to sexism otherwise considered reasonable and rational. As Butt suggests, gossip provides a semi-public sphere for other communities to come into being. The *Rip-off File* worked in a similar way, although unlike many of the subjects of Butt's book – artists, writers and critics who had already accrued quite some success on the New York scene – the women contributors sought to make visible the hidden mechanisms that kept them from accessing professional recognition. In this way the publication made the often downplayed, hidden narratives of failure and conjecture apparent in the public sphere.

Gossip has long been associated with intimate talk between women. The word's etymological roots lie in the Old English word 'godsip' meaning godparent, suggesting that this talk was familial or domestic. Writers such as Jennifer Coates have investigated the specific relationship between women and gossip, arguing that it provided a means to secure familiar relationships because sharing stories led to shared understandings.[46] Sara Ahmed has qualified Coates' gendering of gossip, arguing that it is as much a result of other factors such as race, class, age and context. Nonetheless, Ahmed insists that 'a community of practice appears through [the]

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[42] Kellie Jones, *Eyeminded: Living and Writing Contemporary Art*, (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2011).
[43] Amy Newman, *Challenging Art: Artforum 1962–1974*, (New York: Soho Press, 2004).
[44] Gavin Butt, *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosure in the New York Art World, 1948–1963*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).
[45] Butt, *Between You and Me*: 7.
[46] Coates, *Women Talk*.

mutual social engagement' that takes place when gossiping.[47] In this way the testimonies printed in the *Rip-off File*, like the speech between women in the consciousness raising circle, were not simply the product of gender identity. Rather, a community formed between discussants who happened to be women, through a focus on the subject of gendered identity. Ahmed suggests that this process of coming together most often takes place between speakers who already have something in common. Speech provided a foundation, upon which relationships were built, but Ahmed's point also betrays the fact that sharing stories could also be exclusionary. Indeed the *Rip-off File* largely consisted of white women from similar class and educational backgrounds, suggesting that access to this alternative public sphere was limited for many women. Despite the homogeneity of contributors, it did offer the possibility of forging bonds with women beyond the small group structure as well as interrupting public sphere print discourse with a text aimed at forging group consciousness through sharing stories.

The *Rip-off File*, then, represents a feminist appropriation of gossip. As another theorist Patricia Meyer Spacks provocatively argues, 'Gossip creates its own territory', as 'gossipers pool round [to] interpret their observations' and build 'a world view'.[48] In this sense if gossip historically functioned to provide immanent, temporary alternative worlds between its interlocutors, the valorisation of public speech about personal issues in second wave feminism drew on this power. As Spacks writes: 'Gossip as a phenomenon raises questions about boundaries, authority, distance, the nature of knowledge, it demands answers quite at odds with what we assume as our culture's dominant values.'[49] In this sense gossip has the political potential to muddy the modes of public speech, paralleling the disruptive power of *écriture féminine*.[50] This was demonstrated in the *Rip-off File*, with its translation of personal stories into public print discourse, constituting a disruptive textual act. The repeated accounts of refusal, the barbs (both reported and aimed), as well as the frustration and conjectural reasoning disrupted the usual, supposedly objective patterns of public speech. The *Rip-off File* did not bury its gossipy parts in separate columns or in the genre of the biographical or autobiographical book writing, instead it was sited front and centre in the mass-produced, wide open pages of a broadsheet-style publication. The *Rip-off File* also suggests a crossover between the mode of 'speaking bitterness' Mitchell celebrated and the gossipy 'nattering together' she disparaged, highlighting the possibility that political speech could take different forms. But perhaps most powerfully, because of the use of first-person, the association of gossip with the intimate sphere and the references to subjects as reproductive or sexualised bodies, it made the writer of the texts palpably present. This carnal, embodied language

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[47] Ahmed, "Analysing women's talk and gossip between two female friends": 2.
[48] Patricia Ann Meyer Spacks, *Gossip: A Celebration and Defense of the Art of Idle Talk, A Brilliant Exploration of its Role in Literature, Novels, Memoirs, Letters, Journals As Well As in Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985).
[49] Spacks, *Gossip*: 12.
[50] On *écriture féminine* see Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa", trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs*, vol.1, no.4 (Summer 1976).

not only disrupted the authority of printed text that constituted and maintained the disembodied rational subject of the bourgeois public sphere, but the origins of metaphilosophy as discussed by the feminist theorist Adriana Cavarero in her book *For More Than One Voice*.[51]

For Cavarero the origins of western philosophy in Platonic thought enacted a 'devocalisation of logos', rooting the discursive form in language and idea, which were figured as 'mental images'.[52] She writes:

> this translation is limited to that part of the logos that is not the vocal aspect, but the nexus of speech and signifieds. In other words, the translation emphasises only the silent activity of the mind that, respecting the order of these signifieds, "gathers" them and "links" them together.[53]

Cavarero suggests that the 'silent activity of the mind' tied thought and knowledge to the concept of a singular being who related to the world through eyesight.[54] Sound and speech on the other hand, are 'dynamic events', 'transient by nature' and thus not easily contained in the 'static quantities' of the idea.[55] The subordination of the vocal to the visual therefore instrumentalizes the voice as a tool of thought, substantiating the divide between body and mind. The unruly voice, like the abjection of the corporeal body must be marshalled by rational systems of control, which Cavarero argues, developed across a specifically gendered geometry. Furthermore this devocalisation resists the intersubjectivity inscribed in the speech act that requires a listener and which, more than sight, insists on subjective presence and recognition because as Cavarero argues, voices have particular timbres and ears are always open.[56] The multiple voices in the *Rip-off File* can be read as an instance of what Cavarero calls 'polyvocality', an insistence on embodiment and interaction between speaker and listener, which, in turn, also animates Spacks's rereading of gossip.

Cavarero's argument in *For More Than Voice* may seem to align more closely with women artists' experiments in performance, video and film practices in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s. Carolee Schneemann's *Interior Scroll* (1975/77) for instance is exemplar of the kind of

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[51] Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Towards a Philosophy of Vocal Expression,* trans. Paul A. Kottman, (Paolo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005). Cavarero comes from and theorises second wave feminism in Italy. Her work has addressed the relationship of identity to politics through speech, storytelling and narrative. In this way her philosophy runs parallel and intersects with that of feminist philosophers working in France such as Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva. This was a crossover that developed between Italian and French women who met in congresses in the 1970s. On this see, Patricia de Cicogna and Teresa de Lauretis, eds., *Sexual Difference: The Milan Women's Bookstore Collective*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990).
[52] Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice*: 36.
[53] Ibid.: 35.
[54] Ibid.: 26–33.
[55] Ibid.: 37.
[56] Ibid.: 38.

embodied, carnal vocality discussed in the book. As is Hannah O'Shea's *Litany of Women Artists* (1977) (fig. 5.1), a performance in which the artist sang the names of women artists absent from history. Likewise the disruption of language systems and the introduction of guttural noises in work by Suzanne Lacy such as *Learn Where Meat Comes From* (1976) take up Cavarero's arguments in other parts of the book that concern noises and songs and which she discusses in relation to Julia Kristeva's model of the semiotic *chora*.[57] But the relationship between text, speech and embodiment is also important in the *Rip-off File* where the bodies of the women speakers appear in their accounts as unruly additions to the public sphere. Cavarero's earlier book *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood* deals with the women's claim to *bios* over *zoe* through biography-writing and the process of consciousness raising, but rather than look at narrative and the subject formed in a dyadic relation as that book does, I am more interested, in relation to the case studies in this chapter, in the polyvocality argued for in *For More Than One Voice*.[58] But as I will go to explore, I want to push Cavarero's proposition for embodied speech to take account of different bodies, and particularly to highlight the limitations of the semiotic *chora* for thinking about those differences.

Before I move onto think through the question of difference, I want to stay a little longer with the *Rip-off File* and the kind of embodiment evident in that text. Throughout, the speakers' bodies punctuate the narratives. Anecdotes recall lusty glances and prolonged gazes at the speaker's 'tits', others suggest women will lack manual skills or strength and still more discuss the reproductive function of students', applicants' or artists' bodies. In their dealings with the world, even when they are bound to written correspondence, the women's bodies precede them in all things. In these different ways, the *Rip-off File* enacts revocalisation, in that the speakers recount instances when their gendered bodies overdetermined their relationships to the world. The content of the women's stories – that their bodies spoke louder to the teachers, potential employers, gallery dealers or buyers than their work ever could – reaffirmed the status of the (female) body as object and spoke of the violence of sexist oppression. However, the process of speaking out was also one of empowerment. The acts of commissioning, contributing, publishing and circulating the *Rip-off File* countered silence, by bringing individual voices together. The result was that singular experiences of harassment, appeared to be part of something larger. It is in this way that the *Rip-off File* could be thought of as expanded consciousness raising, because it broached the public sphere with something previously restricted to private spaces. This was not only the expansion of audience from the small group to a larger one. It also meant the transformation of these gossipy testimonies, normally restricted to the transitory site of speech, into print.

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[57] See chapter 2.4 of Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice*: 131–139 and Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1984): 25–30. For a discussion of the relationship between performance art, feminism and disclosure see Wark, *Radical Gestures*, particularly chapter four, "Stories to Tell: Autobiography and Narrative": 86–123.
[58] Adriana Cavarero, *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, trans. Paul A Kottman (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

Rendered in print the *Rip-off File* constitutes an important example of political action, rooted in collaboration. This brings us back to Nancy Fraser and her argument for a democracy that could hear feminism in its political framework. Fraser suggests that politics, as it is constituted by the bourgeois public sphere, is too limited to accommodate a panoply of different voices.[59] Rather, she suggests, politics must be thought of as a larger terrain that could encompass multiple publics who confront one another through a process of antagonistic debate that is ongoing, constantly testing the conditions and sacrificing any attempt at consensus.[60] This would be a political field always in dynamic motion, where voices would be brought together in a sequence of interaction and a constant process of working through. With Fraser's argument in mind, the *Rip-off File* could be said to constitute a feminist public capable of entering into antagonistic debate, in which women's voices contest the sexism of male speech and action. But just as the process of making public is a crucial endpoint of the *Rip-off File*, in another sense it suggests the political dynamics of making *a* public, or how collaboration and collectivity constitutes an alternative political model that in turn can contest the methods of doing politics.

The idea of doing politics through collaboration recalls Arendt's discussion of action in *The Human Condition*. For Arendt the political act is not concerned with the agency of the subject, which she associates with sovereignty, but with the freedom to relate to others and thus constitute a public. This public requires that its members come together without the weight of responsibility or association, to come to know each other at the moment of appearance through speech. Arendt's proposition requires the abandonment of certain identifying qualities – what you are – so as to provide the space to question who you are, like the basic model of the consciousness raising circle as laid out in the WEB rules.[61] This 'who' is always in process, and always unclassifiable in language; therefore it breaks away from personal incentive and deconstructs the idea of the singular subject, it also offers the opportunity for the speaker and the members of the group – through the process of listening – to dissociate from the particular identity that society has constituted for them. This casting off of an othered identity is visible in the *Rip-off File*, as the women narrate instances when they are too closely aligned with their bodies, exposing the relation as arbitrary. In this way the speakers do not act as 'women'; instead the act of narration provided the opportunity to dissociate from that identity. The collaborative framework demanded that women turn to one another and constitute each other outside the role of sexualised other. This position holds the contradiction in place, between what a woman was and who a woman was.[62] Following Arendt, the

[59] Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere": 111–112 and 128–129.
[60] In this article Fraser uses the language of conflict, 'conflictual' and contest, 'contestary', these terms prefigure the discussion of 'antagonism in political theory. "Rethinking the Public Sphere": 116 and 124.
[61] Cavarero also reads consciousness-raising through the trope of the political encounter in Arendt in *Relating Narratives*. See chapter 5 "On the Outskirts of Milan": 55–66 and 59–61.
[62] See Cavarero, *Relating Narratives*: 60.

process of constituting a group is not to achieve the end point of a better more powerful subjecthood but to harness the power of the group to create a new political reality.

The key point of bringing Arendt to bear on consciousness raising and the *Rip-off File* is to trace how the political is created through the process of making public. A process, which in the context of second-wave feminism meant transforming speech normally restricted to the private realm, or about 'private' matters into public discourse. Political theorist Linda M. Zerilli, however, has discussed the problem of taking the dictum 'the personal is political' as the sole conceit of feminist politics. Rather than read the already existing conditions of life as political, she argues that politics must be conceived of as the act of coming together to instantiate change.[63] She discusses it as a shift in focus from ends, or a set of fixed demands, to means. In this sense feminism would no longer be about the justification of women's political freedom as a social group, already defined, but the constitution of new groups who create new publics through the very act of being together. In this way they enter an 'abyss of freedom' where every relationship is open to change. This corresponds with Arendt's concept of the 'world', which Zerilli writes, quoting Arendt, is:

> the concrete objective and subjective "space in which things *become* public," the space in which, when we act politically, we encounter others who too, act and take up the effects of our action in ways that we can never predict or control with any certainty.[64]

Consequently the space is one generated and comprised by group activity, in which no one person is responsible for any one portion, but which is constantly constituted and reconstituted by the group. No single group creates the world but these 'spaces of appearance', to use Arendt's term, find their creative power through intersubjective relations between its members.[65] In the context of my argument, Arendt's model of the 'space of appearance' and the constitution of the group is crucial for rethinking the radicalism of consciousness raising and the ways women organised in second wave feminism. This was never simply formed in the negative – solely a response to the top-down, vertical organisations of political groups – but an important step in divesting those actually existing bodies from the suffocating conditions of societal expectations and actual lived conditions. Seen in this way the proliferation of groups and counter groups, can be seen as the generation of a vital texture of political action that not only created actually existing new realities – from organising group meetings, to exploring alternative family structures, to founding collectives and even separatist communities – but which also pushed at the still existent, still patriarchal mainstream.

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[63] Linda M. Zerilli, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
[64] Zerilli, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*: 14.
[65] Arendt, *The Human Condition*: 200

Hang Up, Put Down, Stand Up

Collaborations between women, of course, also led to more physical communities. Beyond the meetings and associated workshops of the AWC and the WWAU, women artists organised exhibitions, launched journals and established galleries. In contrast to the meetings held under the rubric of the larger union structures, which focused on women's existing place, or lack of it, in the artworld, new groups formed to offer different kinds of support. The British artist Sonia Knox, who was a member of the WWAU, has described how in 1974, a number of the artists involved in that group decided to form another breakout collective that focused more on women's discussion of their work and practice as artists.[66] This meant less research and discussion of exclusion in the artworld as it actually existed, and more focus on what it meant to be a woman artist, as well as a smaller infrastructure for supporting group and solo exhibitions of its collective members.[67] Importantly the work of this new group did not mean that its women members turned their back on the WWAU – many still attended the workshop or wider union meetings. Rather it offered a kind of group support or enfranchisement that may have seemed problematic or corrupt in the frameworks of union advocacy. In this way the Woman Artists' Collective (WAC), as the group came to be known around 1975, went beyond the support of women artists in the artworld that occupied the WWAU and AU, to come together to discuss what women's art was, as well as to support its making and exhibition.

According to Knox, the first iteration of WAC activity was an exhibition in 1974 called *Hang Up, Put Down, Stand Up* at the Arts Meeting Place in Covent Garden.[68] Confusingly the exhibition poster (fig. 1.2) and catalogue (figs 1.3–1.8) list the organisers as the WWAU; Knox puts this down the group's transition to a separate collective and their lack of urgency and indecision regarding a name.[69] This cross over, as well as the fact that most members of the WAC had met through the WWAU, illustrates how groups frequently overlapped and intersected, with connections and collaborations continuing despite splits. It attests to the idea of a vital terrain of activity, with women finding their way, rather than ploughing a path, with a particular end in sight. An idea which, in turn, supports a reading of the women's art movement as Arendtian, even if specific groups were associated with a kind of politics advocating for the social category of woman.[70] Indeed the exhibition included work by WWAU members Kelly and Harrison, who did not subsequently join WAC. Kelly exhibited *Manicure/Pedicure* (1974) an early part of the

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[66] Sonia Knox, telephone interview with the author, 15 September 2015.
[67] Sonia Knox, telephone interview with the author, 15 September 2015. Importantly this was something that had already began to be explored by WWAU members with a series of small exhibitions in the foyer of the Royal Court. See Women's Workshop of the Artist's Union, "Minutes", WWAU folder, Early Years, WAL.
[68] *Hang Up, Put Down, Stand Up*, exh. cat., London: N.P., 1974. Sonia Knox, Personal Collection.
[69] Sonia Knox, telephone interview with the author, 15 September 2015.
[70] Which it could be argued the WWAU did, as they demanded rights for artists in the existing funding structures and institutional environment of the art world.

installation *Post-Partum Document* completed in 1979, while Harrison showed a piece about the bill for the Equal Pay Act 1970. Both artists dealt with issues around work and labour or women's social role more directly than other artists in the show, signalling differences in commitment.

Hang Up, Put Down, Stand Up, as the commanding title suggested, offered the artists the space to show their art publically, with the effect that they would 'stand up' and be noticed. The idea of standing up is strikingly reminiscent of Arendt's concept of the space of appearance, in which people meet each other free of hang-ups and after other encumbrances have been put down. Yet in the context of an art exhibition this idea of appearance is also connected to the process of hanging work, or putting down an object or installation in the gallery. The title of the exhibition, then, locates action in the double meaning of the three imperatives, suggesting that the cessation of one occupation meant that the women could appear together. These actions, the pragmatic means of making the artist's work public, also constituted the creation or construction of a world. Furthermore the exhibition was not an endpoint, in that it constructed an open space in which gallery visitors could talk with the artists who were invigilating the show. Viewers could also interact with some of the works: Knox's contribution, for instance, comprised a blank expanse of paper upon which the audience could write thoughts about the exhibition (making them public too) or respond to the scrawled out poem *Waiting* that sat beneath it (fig. 1.5).[71] Knox had written the poem as a response to her feeling of helplessness while waiting for her husband to return from work. Taped red lines cut through the neat rhythm of the verses as an angry and unruly rejection of that role and its emotional affects, as she wrote in the catalogue, addressing the reader: 'destroy my passivity, your passivity, with action'.[72] If Knox's red lines rejected the considered form of the poem – or to invoke Cavarero again, the metrics of poetry that constrained the panoramic excess of the female muse's voice – then the blank expanse above offered an open space for new experiences, thoughts and forms of speech to be added.[73] The effect was a collective iteration that was like the gathering of different voices in consciousness raising and closer to the *chora* than the chorus.

Another work by Knox took the form of a small box with a mirror panel in the rear and bars at the front, so when the viewer peered into it, they saw their face reflected as if behind bars. Tina Keane's work *Collapsed Dream* (fig.1.6) also included a mirror, although in the form of a loose reflective sheeting that took up another expanse of wall and was held up by bamboo rods.

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[71] *Waiting* was also the title of the text Faith Wilding performed at the opening night of *Womanhouse* in February 1972. The content of both dealt with the same experience of feeling trapped in the domestic environment. Whereas Knox's poem provided an artifact of a past feeling for the artist to play out her rejection of that role, Wilding's piece was formally innovative using continuous verbs, repetitions and constrained physical performance to communicate the frustrations of housework.

[72] Sonia Knox in *Hang Up, Put Down, Stand Up*: unpaginated.

[73] The idea in Cavarero's text is that the poet is the only one who can perceive the narration of the muse, which is an all-encompassing mimesis, and mediate or contain it in his verse. Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice*: 87–9.

The viewer's reflection would have been blurred, preventing the recognition of fine details instead returning an undefined smear of shape and colour. *Collapsed Dream* therefore refused recognition through the still image, demanding instead that the viewer move, or act to register their presence. The collapsing mirror, just held in place by the rickety bamboo structure, allowed the viewer to dissociate from a perfected still image and begin the process of forming a new self, always suspended in a blur.

The poles of containment and release in Knox's and Keane's works again suggest the process of divestment of old roles and responsibilities for the sake of appearance. This was evident in other works too, like Jane Low's *Madonna of Mercy* (fig. 1.7), which investigated the invisible support structure that mothers or female carers provide, through the motif of the Virgin's cloak taken from Piero della Francesca's *Madonna of Mercy* (1445) from the Polyptych of the Misericordia, according to the associated catalogue. In Low's piece a thin bamboo strut supports a tent-like structure with a see-through panel at the top. The support could only be seen when the work was approached from a particular angle, suggesting that the work of support, the woman's work of care was not easily perceived. Or as Low's catalogue text read: 'Cloaked natural forces allow visual access only by means of a limited viewpoint. This view both reflects and radiates from this point – limited but infinitely generous.'[74] Sue Madden's work also played with visibility and invisibility (fig. 1.8). The piece was comprised of numerous diaphanous hand-shapes, dangling at different levels across the expanse of the window. In the catalogue photograph, taken in bright daylight, the shadows of the hands mark the floor below, doubling the already translucent fabric shapes with the contingent presence of shadow. Playing on the trope of the 'artist's hand', Madden's work represented a precarious constituency of artists. As she wrote powerfully in the catalogue: 'As each woman puts her mark onto the world and shares it with another – so we will escape this world of invisible women and begin to remember and control our existence of past and future and so create our own world.'[75]

Some of the works gathered together in *Hang Up, Put Down, Stand Up* explored the possibility of appearing together in an all-woman group exhibition in order to question what being a woman artist meant. Like the *Rip-off File* it was both a destructive and a creative act. For instance Madden in her comment: 'In making art from women's existence we attack male culture – for in a woman's identity is implied the acceptance of her role' or Rob Henderson's *Question Women, Question Art* (fig. 1.4): 'If women are defined as "being confined" by pregnancy, are they then confined to being defined by pregnancy?'[76] Yet, just as some works interrogated the identity 'woman', the exhibition as whole challenged what women's art was in 1974. This was evident in the diversity of the works on display and in the physical presence of the artists in the space responding to their work. The reportage of the exhibition in Rozsika Parker's arts editorial in *Spare*

[74] Jane Low in *Hang Up, Put Down, Stand Up*: unpaginated.
[75] Sue Madden in *Hang Up, Put Down, Stand Up*: unpaginated.
[76] See Madden and Rob Henderson in *Hang Up, Put Down, Stand Up*: unpaginated.

Rib reflected this discursive atmosphere.[77] Instead of publishing a straightforward review, Parker handed over the pages to the artists, for which they reprinted sections of the catalogue replete with handwritten texts of each contributor, as well as an imagined dialogue between the artists and the gallery visitors. It provides another translation of the verbal into written text, as was evident in the *Rip-off File*. That the article did not represent a single real-life exchange is important. The collectivising of the audiences' questions and the artists' responses points not to fallacy, but to another printed 'space of appearance' in which the artists come to define the power of their feminist art in relation to the viewers' provocations. For example, the women respond to the comment 'Much of the work seems unfinished', by suggesting:

> What does a well packaged product convey? One can say things in a multitude of ways. It's really a question of conveying what one has to say in its most precise and economical way. It is this factor that should determine the image.[78]

The 'unfinished' nature of the work that provides a barrier to the audience's understanding, is transformed into a definition of how the work of art should communicate in the 'most precise and economical way.'[79] Consequently the process of question and answer redefines the art object and its limits. The exhibition was not about presenting a 'well-packaged' complete artwork, or artist for that matter. Instead the works were supposed to 'convey… what one has to say' in order to 'determine the image', suggesting the transformation of art from a finished endpoint to a means of creating or recreating something new. In this way, to quote Parker, because of 'the exceptional atmosphere of the show... [i]t became a women's meeting place.'[80]

Call-Out II: Resignations and Denunciations

All-woman group shows like *Hang Up, Put Down, Stand Up* were a crucial method for women to come together in the women's art movement in both Britain and America. The British-born, American-resident art critic Lawrence Alloway, husband of the painter Sylvia Sleigh, alighted upon this as the key contribution of feminism and women's art to the New York art world.[81] Alloway saw women's collaborations as ushering in a new artworld system less contingent on the nexus of power located between the commercial art gallery and the museum, and which used the solo artist as the means to determine culture. He traced the development of women's collaborative work from the earlier one-off group shows, to the emerging infrastructures of support in women-only artist-run galleries like A.I.R. in New York, founded in 1972 and which included Sleigh on its roster. Crucially though the collective model of organising employed in A.I.R. was quite different

[77] Roszika Parker, "Exhibition at the Arts Meeting Place", *Spare Rib*, no.29 (November 1974): 38.
[78] Ibid.: 38.
[79] Ibid.: 38–9.
[80] Ibid.: 38.
[81] Lawrence Alloway, "Women's Art in the 70's", *Art in America*, (May/ June 1976).

from the all-women group shows that preceded and continued alongside it. Although it did have some group exhibitions, A.I.R. primarily provided space for its artist-members – who contributed to its upkeep financially, as well as in labour – to hold solo exhibitions of their work.

As Meredith A. Brown has argued in her comprehensive PhD thesis on the organisation, unlike other alternative, artist-run spaces around Soho at the same time, A.I.R. looked like a commercial space.[82] The founding collective transformed an empty property at 97 Mercer Street, Manhattan into a clean white-walled space with two functioning galleries. Collective members paid dues to the gallery for the rent and met regularly to decide the programme and coordinate events and talks that took place every Monday night. On the occasion of an exhibition, women had to install and take down their own work as well as invigilate, although there was a rota to split this labour more evenly. A.I.R. had many successes: some women managed to sell their work and all the members received greater exposure, as well as support for their work. Furthermore the space and its almost-unique ethic of collective organisation meant that the question of women's art garnered more serious attention. It created a different kind of environment and provided a focus, much like the Woman's Building in Los Angeles did, for discussion and debate as well as an example for others.

A.I.R. also had its limitations. Like WWAU, it was also subject to conflict and fracture, something which is well-documented in the extensive archival holdings related to A.I.R. now held in the Downtown Collection at Fales Library, New York University. The archive, along with some ex-members' writing about the gallery, show up a number of contentious issues between women, which as Barbara Zucker wrote 'reached the pinnacles of pettiness'.[83] I want to pick up on two particular points of contention that help get towards an understanding of the kinds of discursive conflicts that happened within women's groups and pushed the field to develop in different directions.[84] First, A.I.R.'s focus on solo exhibitions and the problem of being heard, and second the overwhelming whiteness of the organisation and the problem of being seen. The first point concerns the inequality of collective members as artists. The second point concerns the inequality of collective members as women.

As the organisation progressed through its first year, the reality of remaining committed to the gallery opened up conflict and exposed inequalities. Some women had trouble sticking to the invigilation rota, others paying their dues. Some couldn't attend collective meetings, while others found themselves constantly picking up the slack. In some cases these problems balanced out, but in others it exposed chinks in the collective structure, whereby members became responsible for the

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[82] Brown, "A History of A.I.R. Gallery": 78–115.
[83] Barbara Zucker, "Making A.I.R.", *Heresies 7*, Women Working Together, vol.2 no.3 (Spring 1979): 81.
[84] The papers held in the A.I.R. Gallery Archives, ca. 1972–2006, MSS 184 at Fales, and those in Sylvia Sleigh and Lawrence Alloway's papers at GRI, offer an incredibly rich resource in comparison with the relatively thin holdings of such procedural documents relating to other groups in America or the UK.

exhibition and to some extent the care of other women's work. So if a woman did not show up to invigilate, then the gallery would remain closed and the exhibiting artist would lose a day of exposure, or if the space was left messy then it would disturb the likeness of A.I.R. to other commercial spaces. As Zucker has remarked:

> Given the number of hungry egos collectively assembled it's amazing how much we accomplished […] The thing that differentiated A.I.R. from other women's collectives at that moment is that it was intended to be a support group. It was a professional organisation, and the point was quality.[85]

In this way A.I.R.'s entanglement in the commercial artworld of New York meant that the collective artists were not all equal, or more precisely, did not always feel equal. And because all collective decisions had to pass with the approval of all members, then some women felt that their perspectives were sacrificed for the greater good of the gallery. This resulted in a spate of resignations.[86]

One letter-writer missing from this folder is Howardena Pindell. Pindell resigned from the gallery in the mid-1970s after being invited to join as a founding member in 1972. Like most of the other members of the gallery, Pindell was scouted by the original organising committee, comprised of Zucker and Sue Williams, who sought out women artists in the registries of slide collections of the WEB and the Manhattan gallery Artist's Space.[87] A.I.R. provided Pindell with a regular space to show her work, after she had struggled to find support from institutions, commercial galleries and peers because she was black, a woman and working at MoMA. In an interview with the art historian and critic Kellie Jones, Pindell discussed being looked down upon at AWC and turned down for a show at the Studio Museum in Harlem in the late 1960s. She commented:

> I was told by the director [of the Studio Museum] at the time […] that I wasn't doing black art because I was not using didactic images. I was not dealing with information that would be helpful to the black community. I also felt that there was bad feeling because I was a woman, I wasn't one of the boys. So I was told to go downtown and "show with the boys." I felt real depressed about that because I knew how I was closed out downtown. I had no recourse.[88]

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[85] Zucker, "Making A.I.R.": 81.
[86] Resignation letters from Rosemary Meyer, Harmony Hammond and Nancy Kitchel are held in Series I, Sub D Box 2 folder 93, registration letters, 1973–1985, in A.I.R. Gallery Archives, ca. 1972–2006, MSS 184, Fales.
[87] Howardena Pindell discusses her association with A.I.R. in Kellie Jones, "Interview with Howardena Pindell", in *Eyeminded: Living and Writing Contemporary Art*, (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2011): 223 and 226.
[88] Pindell in Jones, "Interview with Howardena Pindell": 223.

After a spree of showing work in other Soho spaces and as result of an introduction to feminism through an early association with Lippard (during the planning of her Max Ernst show at MoMA, where Pindell was assistant curator) she joined what was to become A.I.R. and she was an important part of the collective. According to Zucker she came up with the name for the gallery, transforming the suggestion of 'Jane Eyre' into A.I.R. as a pun on the 'Artist in residence' signs that alerted the New York Fire Department to those living cheaply in the otherwise abandoned buildings in ex-industrial SoHo.[89] Pindell also appeared in David Attie's photographs of the renovation of 97 Wooster Street, which in turn were used for the marketing materials at the opening of the gallery (fig. 1.9). She had her first exhibition in the space in 1972. Her work at the time primarily comprised abstract canvases, thick with paint and sometimes littered with small paper circles, which were the detritus from the hole-punched stencils she used to construct earlier paintings (fig. 1.10).[90] These pieces contrast with the figurative or bricolage work of artists more overtly associated with the Black Art Movement such as Martin Puryear and Bettye Saar, but they were made in response to Pindell's specific living and working conditions. She had a full-time job and so had to work at night, at home and with few resources. Unstretched canvases allowed her to work in small spaces and to use every inch of the material, while her incorporation of leftover punched-out circles, stencils, scraps of canvas and clothes meant she could develop her work beyond the academic-style, flat painting dominant at her *alma mater*, Boston University.[91] Although the subject matter and form of these works was distinct from the citation and appropriation of representations of blackness in other artists' work, the incorporation of materials from her immediate environment also represented her reality.

As Pindell remarks in her interview with Jones, and in her important two-part article 'Breaking the Silence' in the *New Art Examiner*, racism in the art-world, art education and American society more broadly, fundamentally shaped her work.[92] Brown reports that Pindell was aware of '"racial tensions"' at A.I.R. in the 1970s, and that she was 'outspoken in her desire for the gallery to recognize the work of non-white women […] although, she admitted in 2009, "I should perhaps have been more aggressive about making sure that the membership was more

[89] Brown writes: 'Although the final name came out of an evolving discussion, the founding members generally give credit to Howardena Pindell for naming the gallery because her suggestion initiated the conversation that led to the final name.' in "A History of A.I.R. Gallery": 44.
[90] See Helen Molesworth, "Painting with Ambivalence", in *WACK!: Art and the Feminist Revolution*, ed. by Cornelia Butler, exh. cat. (Los Angles CA. Cambridge MA. and London: Museum of Contemporary Art and The MIT Press, 2007).
[91] Pindell in Jones, "Interview with Howardena Pindell": 224–5. Also see, Howardena Pindell, "Breaking the Silence", *New Art Examiner,* part one in vol.8, no.2 (October 1990): 18–23 and part two in no.3 (November 1990): 23–27.
[92] See the Jones interview where she discusses racism during her studies at Boston University and Yale, although she emphasizes that at the latter 'racial stuff was subtle, I think the dominant tension was sexist in nature'. Jones, "Interview with Howardena Pindell": 219–220.

integrated."'[93] Yet in her 1989 interview with Jones, Pindell spelt out her frustration with the organisation of the women's movement more clearly:

> Here I was in New York, trying to form myself as an artist and I'm dealing with basically white women's issues. But I identified with issues of my blackness in a racist society. … I would say I was always yanked back and forth between racism, classism and sexism. As ideas were forming and crystallising over the issues of race, I was turned off by the white women's movement because their attitude was, "white women first". They would sort of trot me out with this big heavy résumé as their token. It was really frustrating because it was like saying to other women of colour, "If you can't be Superwoman then we don't want you."[94]

Pindell left the gallery in 1976, yet the papers at the Fales Library do not include a letter of resignation and so the specific reasons remain unclear. Nonetheless in 1980 Pindell exhibited again at A.I.R. in Ana Mendieta's *Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists of the United States*. The exhibition was Mendieta's direct response to the lack of attention paid to women of colour in feminist organisations, an effect she had felt at A.I.R. since joining in 1978. In some ways the absence of Pindell's voice in the archive is more than made up for in the work she showed in this exhibition, the video piece *Free, White and 21* (1980) (figs 1.11–1.12). In the video Pindell first appears looking directly at the screen, speaking about her experience of racism while studying at Boston University. Her sentence is cut off as the camera moves to another profile view of Pindell, this time wearing a blonde wig and sunglasses and caked in white face make-up. As if responding to the previous speech, this speaker says: 'You know you really must be paranoid. Those things have never happened to me. I don't know anyone whose had those things happen to them.' The video carries on flipping back between the two Pindells, as the made-up version becomes increasingly hysterical in her denouncements of the other's trauma, finally covering her face – wig and all – with a nylon stocking as if to conceal and obliterate her identity, a further indictment of the homogeneity of organised women's liberation.

Pindell has remarked that *Free, White and 21* corresponded to her experience of the women's movement and in particular consciousness-raising. In an interview with Lynn Herschman-Leeson she details how:

> I was the only black person in the group, and what I noticed if I brought up issues relative to racism I ran into, I was told to basically shut up because I was dealing with political things, these are political issues. And I said, "Well these issues… I

[93] Pindell quoted in Brown, "History of A.I.R. Gallery": 199.
[94] Pindell in Jones, "Interview with Howardena Pindell": 223.

> encounter this as, as part of my daily life," and the attitude of the other person was basically, "Well I don't. And it really, it's not of any use to me to discuss this".[95]

The denial of Pindell's experience registers a breakdown of feminist communication. This breakdown was rooted in a failure of identification, which fell across racial lines. The white woman's misidentification depended on an inability to recognise that women's personal experiences could be distinct, and that racism was a daily experience not just an outcome of state infrastructure and ideology. Whereas Pindell reports that white women 'wished' she 'had been cooperative', she remarks that in the end it was her who felt 'isolated as a token' because 'white women wanted me to be limited to their agenda'.[96] The theorist bell hooks discusses the situation in her book *Feminist Theory: from margin to center*. She writes:

> Our presence in movement activities did not count, as white women were convinced that "real" blackness meant speaking the patois of poor black people, being uneducated, streetwise, and a variety of other stereotypes. If we dared to criticise the movement or to assume responsibility for reshaping feminist ideas and introducing new ideas, our voices were tuned out, dismissed, silenced. We could be heard only if our statements echoed the sentiments of the dominant discourse.[97]

Both Pindell and hooks report the failure of some women to listen or to hear others and note the irony that despite white women's reports of black women's belligerence or anger, it was the 'white voice [that] was the dominant voice'.[98] hooks' and Pindell's analyses pitched individual women's experiences as evidence of systemic racism, paralleling the realisation of Patriarchal oppression in the consciousness raising process. But because many white women did not get beyond the stereotypes and associations accrued to black bodies, perceived differences replaced both points of solidarity and distinction, which in turn prevented collaboration and coming to know one another through conversation. Yet just as Pindell was not heard, despite her presence in women's organisations like A.I.R., neither was she fully supported by the Black Arts Movement, at least in the late 1960s when she first approached the Studio Museum. So neither one of the brothers, nor a sister, Pindell found herself locked on the negative side of an intersectional identity, caught in a blindspot between two movements. As she wrote:

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[95] Howardena Pindell interviewed by Lynn Herschmann-Leeson, "!Women Art Revolution", 9 May 2006, accessed 4 November 2015, https://exhibits.stanford.edu/women-art-revolution/catalog/yz335ww8221.
[96] Howardena Pindell, "*Free, White and 21*", *Third Text*, vol.6, no.19 (1992): 31.
[97] hooks, *Feminist Theory: from the margin to the center*:11
[98] Pindell, "*Free, White and 21*": 31.

> Well I think I was struggling with myself then, because there were two movements. There was both the… black movement, the Civil Rights movement, … there's also the black artists movement, which basically, in, in some ways was male-oriented, and there was the feminist movement… and there were also African-American women who were pointing out… women's rights for African-American women. So I was sort of… pulled in a thousand directions.[99]

Free, White and 21 also reveals the frustration of that split identity. As the artist discusses instances of racism in her and her mother's lives, the white woman's responses are evasive, ranging from; 'Hmmm', to 'You know you really must be paranoid. Those things never happen to me', to 'You ungrateful little… after all we have done for you' to 'Don't worry we will find other tokens!'[100] While Pindell reports instances of being ignored, snubbed and physically hurt, the 'white' woman issues attacks that only serve to isolate Pindell along with the repetition of 'we' and 'you' throughout the responses. Crucially this is a dialogue that does not flow; despite the video's edit between the speakers who occupy the left and right sides of the frame as if cutting between two interlocutors. This sense of exclusion is heightened by Pindell's performance of a young white woman. The white make-up, sunglasses and wig look unconvincingly shabby, purposefully showing up the ridiculousness and well as the discomfort of performing a role one does not fit. The repetitive flicking between the two versions of the artist emphasises the difference between the identities, despite obviously being performed by the same woman.

Thinking back to Arendt, *Free, White and 21* shows up an instance of when political action is stifled by a focus on the what rather than the who. It reveals a situation when difference between members of a group did not catalyse and propel politics but arrested it, because of a failure of identification across separation. Furthermore the separation of race into a different, political issue belies the limited freedom being fought for when politics is based on the advocacy of a particular, predefined group. As such *Free, White and 21* highlights a moment when the radical politics of feminist organisational structures failed to work, when differences were not listened to, as in the consciousness raising group, and only seen. When limited vision and understanding prevented the perception of the panorama of differences that could have radically rewritten structures of exclusion and limitation.

By showing *Free, White and 21* at A.I.R. in Ana Mendieta's *Dialectics of Isolation*, Pindell's work offered a rejoinder to the women she had felt excluded by.[101] The video allowed her

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[99] Pindell interview: unpaginated. Ellipses in the original.
[100] A transcript of the video is included in Howardena Pindell, "*Free, White and 21*": 37–8.
[101] The exhibition insisted on the power of the other identity, against the homogenous. Mendieta wrote in the catalogue: 'This exhibition points not necessarily to the injustice or incapacity of a society that has not been willing to include us, but more towards a personal will to continue being other.' Ana Mendieta, "Introduction" in *Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists of the United States*, exh. cat. (New York: A.I.R. Gallery, 1979).

to voice her experiences and show up the racist dynamics that prevented those experiences being heard. Furthermore the video presented a white character whose persona was reflected negatively against that of the black woman artist, in an important reversal of Zora Neale Hurston's famous testament that 'I feel most coloured when thrown up against a white background'.[102] This figure served as a point of identification, so that black viewers might recognise their own experiences of racism doubled in daily life and the WLM, and white women could see the violence of their responses reflected back. According to Pindell's account the video solicited a hostile response from those at the opening night and in subsequent exhibitions.[103] By attracting more negativity and reaffirming the separation of black and white women, the work provides an example of speaking bitterness from within and about women-only organisations. That this intersection sparked bitterness, rather than consensus, suggests how difference might have been constitutive (and may prove to be within historical writing) of a more expansive feminism.

What *is* Feminist Art?

Pindell's work offers one example of difference proving divisive in the women's art movement. In what follows I want to consider more instances of divergence, in order to sketch out the complications and contradictions that constituted the texture of women's collaboration in the 1970s. As the decade wore on and it became clear that there was no straightforward similarities or directives to trace between the work of women artists, questions began to centre more on creating feminist art, as well as maintaining and establishing new structures to empower women artists based on feminist organisational principles. By 1975 three women – the art critics Arlene Raven and Lippard and the art historian Ruth Iskin – under the auspices of the nascent Center for Feminist Art Historical Studies, thought it appropriate to ask the question 'what is feminist art?' publicly, and solicited responses from diverse artists. The responses are held in the Woman's Building Collection at the Archives of American Art in Washington D.C.[104] The original call out is not included among the papers and as such it is not clear when or where it was placed, nor the language of its provocation.[105] But in 1977 the responses were collated and shown in an exhibition at the

[102] Zora Neale Hurston, "How it Feels to be Coloured Me", in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature: 1914–1945,* edited by Julia Reidhead (New York: Norton, 2012 [1928]): 541.
[103] Pindell interview: unpaginated.
[104] Box 25, Folders 1–10, labelled Responses to 'What is Feminist Art?' (folders divided alphabetically) Artists' Works, Woman's Building Records, 1970–1992, AAA.
[105] The printmaker and founder of Tamarind Lithography Workshop, June Wayne's letter to the organisers mentions the restrictiveness of the 8 x 11 format. Another letter from the UK-based Art + Research remarks that their response followed the feature of the call out in *Artforum*. Furthermore although there are documents that note that the responses were amalgamated into an exhibition, it is not clear how many works were received after the original call-out(s) and the invitation posted at the exhibition for others to send in further responses.

Woman's Building in Los Angeles, during which viewers could contribute their own responses, paralleling the rhythm of a consciousness raising circle.[106]

The *What is Feminist Art?* project provides an index for many of the organisational dynamics and structures of the women's art movement. The geographic spread makes visible the international, national and local extension of women's interactions, although the concentration of local responses also highlights the material limits of communication, something I discuss in more detail in relation to Suzanne Lacy's *International Dinner Party* in the following chapter. The project also highlighted division and divergence between different women's approaches to feminist art; some expressed their investment in the power of women, while others sought to challenge that category and its associations. There were responses more concerned with individual women's place in the artworld and those that expressed the importance of collective identity. For some, feminist art had already been achieved, for others it was in process and for others it was still to come. In this way *What is Feminist Art?* brought together a number of individual responses to constitute a larger collective utterance comprised of dissensus as well as consensus.

For one contributor, Anne Marie Nolin, an answer was found on a page of the *Village Voice* from 29 March 1976, which was reproduced on a letter sized sheet (fig. 1.13). This comprised her contribution. The listings page had all the women's names and female pronouns underlined in red pen, including a three-line notice of Nolin's own exhibition at Zeigford Gallery. Otherwise silent, this response seemed to suggest that some work had already been achieved, with the red ink marking out successful ventures into exhibiting as well as examples of feminist artists to the reader. If this was Nolin's intention it was contradicted by some of the other contributions, which critiqued the desire for artworld representation as an instance of feminist art. In fact both Martha Rosler (fig. 1.15) and Mary Beth Edelson (fig. 1.14) contested similar positions in their responses. Edelson wrote:

> As we separate ourselves from our defining processes, there appears to be a split between the women who wish to end discrimination in order to further their careers and the women who also wish to build a feminist culture. Some keep a foot in each camp. Feminism is being used. Used to get a foot in the door and then disavowed once inside.[107]

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[106] Ruth Iskin's letter to participants dated 15 January 1977 notes that 'At the close of the exhibit, all of the responses will enter the CFAHS [Center for Feminist Art Historical Studies] archives for use in future research, projects and possible publication.' Box 25, Folders 1–10, labelled Responses to 'What is Feminist Art?' (folders divided alphabetically) Artists' Works, Woman's Building Records, 1970–1992, AAA.

[107] Mary Beth Edelson, untitled contribution to *What is Feminist Art?*, c.1977–8, held in the Box 25, Folders 1–10, labelled Responses to 'What is Feminist Art?' (folders divided alphabetically) Artists' Works, Woman's Building Records, 1970–1992, AAA.

Edelson's statement alerts us to the 'split' and a concern about the instrumentalisation of feminism to get ahead. She suggests, instead, that feminism was about more than equality, and required the redefinition of cultural values. Rosler went further in her rejection of this model of feminist work, commenting on the ways in which fighting for artworld representation meant obscuring other instances of work to be done. She wrote in her contribution:

> Artists' feminism, in its attack on the fortress-like art network and its accompanying rhetoric helped call into question more than just the exclusion of women from mainstream shows, galleries and history books, implicating both the class-dominated and gender-dominated definition of art-world membership. Accepting the entry of select individuals, no matter how, means running the risk of losing all gains when token acceptance buys off our vigilance and vitiates our analysis.[108]

Rosler's rhetoric could be read as an almost direct response to Nolin's highlighted newsprint, especially since so many of the names included in the listing were prominent women artists, many of whom were of the generation before or had separated themselves from WLM politics. In this way Rosler's and Edelson's responses disrupted Nolin's interpretation of feminist art, highlighting the divisions that appeared between women as the early work of consciousness raising opened out onto the analysis of gender oppression on a broader and more general scale. Simply put, whereas Nolin wanted entry in the listings and galleries, Edelson and Rosler wanted out. And so not unlike the branching off of WAC from WWAU in London a year earlier, these three contributions show a few more of the different tributaries that constituted feminism.

There were however, also considerable differences between Edelson's and Rosler's contributions. While both artists sent in a typed statement, Edelson's is centred on the page with four paragraphs surrounded by a set of fifteen drawings that also incorporate text elements and in Rosler's the text takes up the entire page, almost to the edge, with white-out corrections and handwritten interjections. The differences really reside in the content of the text though. Edelson, for instance, suggests that feminist art will 'reflect' the 'basic forms' of a new women's culture, which is not 'the same as present or past patriarchal' systems.[109] In the illustrations around the edge of the page she makes a number of suggestions about what feminist art is or could be. They read: 'Feminist art is the essence of feminist culture / Feminist art is the energy of the great mother / Feminist art is becoming'.[110] The texts appear within sketchy round forms that resemble rocks or boulders, suggestive of dictums engraved on stone tablets. Along the bottom margin these rocks

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[108] Martha Rosler, 'What feminism might be…' c.1977–8, held in the Box 25, Folders 1–10, labelled Responses to 'What is Feminist Art?' (folders divided alphabetically) Artists' Works, Woman's Building Records, 1970–1992, AAA.
[109] Edelson, untitled: single page.
[110] Ibid.

appear to transform into a female figure reaching upwards with fists clenched in an empowering gesture. This metamorphosis, along with Edelson's reference to 'basic forms', as well as the stone tablets and their biblical connotations, evoke a sense of returning to an originary point. Indeed the words 'Great Mother' inscribed on one of the tablets alludes to the alternative matriarchal spirituality that accrued a new following of second wave feminists, but that was nonetheless monotheistic.

These ideas make reference to Edelson's larger art practice and particularly her interest in matrilineal culture, an idea, which had been given a new currency in the 1970s resulting in theoretical texts like Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* and archaeological work like Merlin Stone's *When God Was a Woman* and Marija Gimbutas' *The Gods and Goddess of Old Europe, 7000-3500 BC: Myths, Legends and Cult Images*.[111] Gimbutas was particularly important for Edelson, as she began to take journeys away from her New York base to visit the archaeologist in Los Angeles and then to other sites where Gimbutas argued traces of Great Goddess culture could be found. Through a series of performative actions and their photographic documentation, Edelson enacted a kind of archaeological work, embodying the spirit of the Great Goddess through markings and ritualistic gestures as if pulling fragments of that past from the ground and making present potential futures that had otherwise been lost. Edelson's call for a foundational feminism in her contribution can be seen in relation to her work and her interest in breaking through the cultural sedimentation that had erased the hypothetical Goddess cults. Importantly Edelson's position was based on forging an alternative culture, rather than an alternative society. This indicates that, for her, gender difference was located in ideas and beliefs, which in turn influenced how people came together in communities.[112] In contrast, for other feminists, including Rosler, the opposite was true: structures determining relations between people produced ideas and beliefs including gender inequality. As the artist wrote in her response: 'I think all we can know of female consciousness is that it is a product of one's time & place & particular position in socioeconomically defined world'.[113] Consequently feminist art, for Rosler, was a counter-ideological tool, aimed at renegotiating societal structures.

Rosler proposed that feminism has already had an important effect on art: contributing to an 'assault on modernism and exposing the falseness of '"neutral universality" – that good art, high

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[111] Jennie Klein has discussed the importance of these texts for Edelson's work in Klein, "Goddess: Feminist Art and Spirituality in the 1970s", in *West of Center: Art and the Counterculture Experiment in America, 1965–1977*, ed. Elissa Auther and Adam Lerner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012). Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston Ma: Beacon Press, 1978); Merlin Stone, *When God Was a Woman* (San Diego CA: Harcourt, 1978) and Marija Gimbutas *The Gods and Goddess of Old Europe, 7000–3500 BC: Myths, Legends and Cult Images* (New York and London: Thames and Hudson, 1974).

[112] For Edelson's own reflections on her investment in goddess cultures see Mary Beth Edelson, "Male Grazing: An Open Letter to Thomas McEvilley", in *Feminism – Art – Theory: An Anthology 1968–2000*, ed. Hilary Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001): 592–6.

[113] Rosler, "What feminism might be…": single page.

art, transcends every particular'.[114] Feminist art had exposed the framework that suppresses women in favour of genius cast in the shape of a male freedom, and in turn had begun to forge new relations. She wrote: 'Furthermore the idiosyncratic nature of their [artists'] vision is deemphasised in favour of a view of art as an act representative of a broader, socially shared reality.'[115] In this sense art and artists were no longer perceived as being at a distance from lived reality, but part of it and part of forging it. Artworks exposed injustices and provided the means for recognition and identification between people. This was not based on an intrinsic connection between women or any other identity group, for Rosler, but instead on 'strong collective pressure for change' towards new 'financial, institutional and critical supports'.[116] Notably Rosler was not part of a woman-only collective in the 1970s, although she often worked with women, she was also associated with Allan Sekula, Fred Londier and Phillip Steinmetz in the San Diego group. This attests to the diverse situations within which women worked and developed their feminist politics, as well as many women's interest in working with men to realise political change.[117]

Rosler's and Edelson's texts trace two divergent paths through 1970s feminism, one concerned with ideological deconstruction and the other with generating a distinct culture. In some ways this maps onto the oft-quoted distinction of essentialist and theoretical feminist positions: with Edelson's summoning of the 'Great Goddess' through her own body, in contradistinction to Rosler's emphasis on critical analysis.[118] In fact despite their differences the two texts both suggest the importance of collaborative work, and respond to the question 'what *is* feminist art?' with a discussion of steps already taken, as well as propositions for the future. Both artists also make use of the future continuous tense in their texts, suggesting an ongoing process rather than something already achieved, or something that will arrive. As the apparently partial fragment on one of Edelson's tablets suggests: 'Feminist Art is becoming…'.[119] The divergence between them, then, lay in whether feminism's alternative had a precedent that might have been drawn upon for strength, or whether that strength originated in the activism of the movement.

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[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.
[117] See my discussion of the artists involved in the exhibition 'Issue: Social Strategies by Women Artists' in chapter four.
[118] An analysis of this complex intellectual history requires more space than I have here. For a discussion of Rosler and the San Diego group's theoretical investments see Steve Edwards, *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* (London and Cambridge, MA: Afterall and The MIT Press, 2012). For a philosophical approach see the classic text Diane Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and History* (Oxford: Routledge, 1989). Furthermore as I have discussed in relation to Howardena Pindell above, this division erases the criticisms and arguments of women of colour as well as those of lesbian women throughout the 1970s. On the latter point see Harmony Hammond, "Introduction", in *Lesbian Art in America: A Contemporary History*, ed. Hammond (New York: Rizzoli, 2000).
[119] Edelson, untitled: single page.

Call-Out III: Beware Fascist Feminism?

Alongside the divisions that emerge from reading the contributions, *What is Feminist Art?* also provided the space for women to work through already-existing tensions. This is most evident in Hannah Wilke's *Marxism and Art: Beware Fascist Feminism* (c.1976–7) (fig. 1.16) and the accompanying correspondence. Wilke's poster consists of a photograph of the artist, taken from her 'performalist self portrait' *S.O.S. Starification Series* (1972–84), in which she poses, hands on hips, wearing a man's shirt open at the front exposing her breasts with a large tie slung loosely around her neck.[120] Although partially covered by the tie, small nuggets of rolled or folded gum also puncture her torso. The top and bottom margins of the photograph are bordered by bold white text, which reads: 'Marxism and Art'/ 'Beware Fascist Feminism'. The text, added to an already-existing image, was directed specifically to the *What is Feminist Art?* project. It answered the question with a graphic warning, which belied the hurt Wilke felt from the criticism of her work. The letter she sent to Ruth Iskin accompanying the poster attests to this:

> Enclosed you will find my poster for the feminist art project. I am also sending you a poem I wrote after our talk on the phone. I sometimes feel bad that I get so upset, but I am glad you were so patient with me and listened to the things I worry about, because really they are for all women not just myself.[121]

Although the reason for Wilke's 'upset' has been lost to the unrecorded phone call, the accompanying poem points to the problem:

> so
> why
> is it okay
> for Gertrude
> (Stein)
> to say
> I am beautiful today
> because
> I am beautiful today
> because
> I am beautiful today

[120] 'Performalist self portrait' was a term of Wilke's invention, denoting an image in which she posed and directed, but that was taken by someone else.
[121] Hannah Wilke, letter addressed to Ruth [Iskin], undated, c. 1977–8, held in the Box 25, Folders 1–10, labelled Responses to 'What is Feminist Art?' (folders divided alphabetically) Artists' Works, Woman's Building Records, 1970–1992, AAA.

because[122]

The repeated refrain 'I am beautiful today' responds to the now well-documented criticism Wilke's work received from writers, including Elizabeth Hess, Judith Barry and Sandy Flitterman, Catherine Liu and notably in this context Lippard, a co-instigator of the *What is Feminist Art?* project.[123] Amelia Jones has written about how Lippard diagnosed 'the dilemma faced by women artists seeking to explore their own embodied subjectivity, acknowledging that narcissism is a particularly charged label in relation to women'.[124] Jones goes on to suggest, quoting selectively from Lippard's essay 'The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth', that the critic denounced Wilke as a 'glamour girl in her own right who sees her art as "seduction"'.[125] Although Lippard's text has more nuance than Jones allows, at the time and in concert with other critiques, there was a palpably negative reaction to Wilke's use of her body. Jones calls this 'antiessentialism', but it feels closer to a wariness of Wilke's performance of heterosexual sexuality, especially since she frequently collaborated with or responded to the work of male artists.[126] Her images do play with female archetypes, but these range from the seductive to the sacred and images of her naked, sometimes show her languorous or listless and sometimes contorted in a pin-up pose. The poem's listed repetition, emulating Stein, might provide a way to decode her serial posing as a form of parataxis rendering many guises of beauty as a complex accumulation. The critique of Wilke's work then, suggests the failure of feminists to see the woman behind the image. This in turn relates to the

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[122] Hannah Wilke, untitled poem, correspondence relating to *What is Feminist Art?*, c. 1977–8, Box 25, Folders 1–10, labelled Responses to 'What is Feminist Art?' (folders divided alphabetically) Artists' Works, Woman's Building Records, 1970–1992, AAA.

[123] Amelia Jones unpacks these critics accusations of narcissism in Wilke's work through a discussion of narcissism as a critical position. See Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject*, (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998). See chapter four, "The Rhetoric of the Pose: Hannah Wilke and the Radical Narcissism of Feminist Body Art": 151–196, particularly 172–175.

[124] Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject*: 175.

[125] Lucy R. Lippard quoted in Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject*: 172. In fact Lippard's discussion of Wilke is a little more cautious than condemnation suggests. The sentence Jones quotes is partial, it continues: '…is considered a little too good to be true when she flaunts her body in parody of the role she actually plays in real life'. Lippard also compares the criticism the artist has received for her work and on a personal level to the ease with which Hans Peter Feldman 'can use a series of ridiculous porno-pinups as his art'. See Lucy R. Lippard, "The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth: European and American Women's Body Art", in *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art*, (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1976): 126.

[126] Wilke worked with the British artist Richard Hamilton on a film *Through the Large Glass* (1976), for which she posed nude in front of his recreation of Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass*. She also restaged Duchamp's *Étant donnés* with her own body in a work titled *I Object; Memoirs of a Sugar Giver* (1977–8). A more direct riposte was offered in *What Does This Represent / What Do You Represent? (Reinhardt)* (1978–1984), a captioned photo-portrait rejoinder to Ad Reinhardt's cartoon of the same title, which offered a defense of avant-garde abstraction. See Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject*: 157.

second half of Wilke's title, 'Beware of Fascist Feminism', which foregrounds the failure of some to acknowledge the difference of Wilke's Jewishness.[127]

The small folded forms that punctuate Wilke's body in *Marxism and Art: Beware Fascist Feminism,* and which appear across the *S.O.S. Starification Series* of 'performalist self-portraits' are made of chewing gum. Wilke purposefully made the forms so that they could be read as both penis- or vagina-like and they stuck to her body like wounds, as external signifiers of internal injury resulting from embodied experiences, whether prompted by gender or ethnicity.[128] While these markers testified to the violence of patriarchal society, the presence of Wilke's wounded body in the *What is Feminist Art?* project also highlighted the injuries that sprang up between women in the context of second-wave feminism. As such the *S.O.S.* series was a picture of a woman's experience of opening up her internal wounds for other's to see, a document of the violent recognition of being subject to societal oppression, and a statement of empowerment – the presentation of battle scars.

Call-Out IV: Reflections

Yet if Wilke's performance of heterosexuality, or the exploration of relationships between women and men more broadly, was a problem for some feminists, lesbianism and woman-centred relationships were also a source of contention.[129] While Arlene Raven was a co-organiser of the project, there were a number of lesbian-identified contributors to the *What is Feminist Art?* project including Harmony Hammond, E.K. Waller, Rita Mae Brown and Terry Wolverton, yet for the most part the subject of lesbianism or lesbian relationships is almost absent from the contributions, or at least to a viewer unfamiliar with the intricate entanglements structuring the Woman's Building community. For instance it appears in a portrait of Arlene Raven by E.K. Waller from her *Reality/ Fantasy Portrait Series* (c.1976–8) (fig. 1.19), or in a photograph of Raven, again, with an unknown woman at a dinner table by Rachel Vaughan (fig. 1.20).[130] Both images emerged from the

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[127] Jones discusses Wilke's Jewishness in *Body Art/Performing the Subject*:194–5. Wilke is not discussed in Lisa E. Bloom's *Jewish Identities in American Feminist Art* (Oxford: Routledge, 1996), but the book is nonetheless useful in parsing out the often-obscured exploration of Jewishness in Eleanor Antin's, Judy Chicago's, Mierle Laderman Ukeles's and Martha Rosler's artworks.

[128] Wilke wrote: '"To also remember that as a Jew, during the war, I would have been branded and buried had I not been born in America. Starification-Scarification… Jew, Black, Christian, Muslim… Labeling people instead of listening to them… Judging according to primitive prejudices. *Marxism and Art*. Fascistic feelings, internal wounds, made from external situations.' Quoted in Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject*: 183. Ellipses in the original.

[129] See Charlotte Bunch, "Learning from Lesbian Separatism", in *Lavender Culture*, ed. Karla Jay and Allen Young (New York and London: New York University Press, 1978): 433–444.

[130] E.K. Waller's photography appears in Terry Wolverton, *Insurgent Muse: Life and Art at the Woman's Building* (San Francisco CA, City Lights, 2002): 58–9 and 64. A brief discussion appears in Wolverton, "The Art of Lesbian Relationship: Arlene Raven and the Lesbian Art Project", *Critical Matrix,* vol. 17 (Spring 2008). See also Julia Bryan Wilson, "Handmade Genders: Queer Costuming in San Francisco Circa 1970", in *West of Center: Art and the Countercultural*

close circle of lesbian-identified women that sprung up around the Woman's Building in Los Angeles, in the Natalie Barney Collective (fig. 1.17) and Lesbian Art Project, which included Waller, Raven, Wolverton, Su Freidrich, Cheryl Swannick and others.[131] While this appearance was not announced, it foregrounds the importance of intimate relationships between women. The fact that lesbianism or woman-centred politics is not discussed in the project, points to the incapacity of the designation 'feminist' – this was not the place to situate the conversation. As such the *What is Feminist Art?* project is indicative of the shifting relationship between lesbianism and feminism in the 1970s. For some the two were inextricably bound together, particularly for those who felt able to pursue lesbian relationships because of the consciousness and empowerment they had developed from second-wave feminist groups and texts. For many, though, the movement was either hostile or not committed enough to the exploration of what it meant to be a lesbian and of histories of lesbian life, which had been hidden even further from view at the margins of narratives written according to a heterosexist framework.[132] While some women saw the movement as lesbian-feminist as I discussed in the introduction, others argued for lesbian-only sites beyond those of the mainstream heterosexual movement.

One example of more fruitful crossover between lesbian-identified and feminist sites was the third issue of the journal *Heresies*.[133] This issue of the collaboratively produced journal was given over to a editorial group of women who identified as lesbians, and was focused on 'Lesbian Art and Artists', only including work by women who also identified as such (fig. 1.18).[134] The group editorial statement makes clear that the women saw their dedication of an issue of *Heresies* to lesbianism as controversial.[135] They acknowledge the difficulty of exclusion, the limitations of the journal format but also the problem of siting their work in *Heresies* particularly, as the collective wrote: 'There is also a sense that the women are "occupying" *Heresies*, which they identify as a "heterosexual" publication'.[136] This sense of occupying the journal temporarily is made even more pointed by the fact that some members of the editorial collective of issue three,

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Experiment in America 1965–1977, ed. Elissa Auther and Adam Lerner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

[131] See Wolverton, *Insurgent Muse*: 27–97 for a discussion of the formation and dissolution of this group as well as candid descriptions of her own romantic relationships and emotional ties to its members.

[132] See Bunch, "Learning from Lesbian Separatism", 1994. For the UK context see Sarah F. Green, *Urban Amazons: Lesbian Feminism and Beyond in the Gender, Sexuality and Identity Battles of London* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), particularly "Difference and change: transformation in the community": 97–101.

[133] *Heresies 3*, Lesbian Art and Artists, vol.1 no.3 (Fall 1977).

[134] The editorial collective were Cynthia Carr, Betsy Crowell, Betsy Damon, Rose Ficthenholtz, Louise Fishman, Su Freidrich, Harmony Hammond, Marty Pottenger, Amy Sillman, Christine Wade and Kathy Webster.

[135] Cynthia Carr, et al., "Issue three collective statement", *Heresies 3*, Lesbian Art and Artists, vol.1 no.3 (Fall 1977).

[136] Carr, et al., "Issue three collective statement": 1. Although lesbian-identified women did contribute to other issues, see for example Terry Wolverton, "Lesbian Art Project", *Heresies 7*, Women Working Together, vol.2 no.3 (Spring 1979).

such as Harmony Hammond and Amy Silman, were also permanent members of the *Heresies* production board. This gestures to the split women felt between feminism, lesbianism and, as Hammond discusses in her editorial note, the compound 'lesbian-feminism'.[137]

The relationship between lesbianism and feminism was complex. In some instances, feminism opened up the possibility of exploring other sexualities. It provided the space for the empowerment of women beyond relationships with men or family and offered the space to focus on issues effecting lesbian women beyond the mixed, or sometimes male-dominated Gay Liberation Movement. But homophobia also appeared within the movement and in relation to it, in the press and popular culture.[138] Those outside the movement frequently misread women's turn inward, to focus on themselves and the support of other women as a threat, and sometimes associated this threat with lesbian sexuality. While many writers have since explored the erotics of female interaction, the homophobic tone of these reports had the potential to close down interactions with women who felt unable to explore their sexuality freely, whether it was hetero- or homosexual.[139] This, often unwritten, episode of women's liberation resulted in divisions and unexplored connections.[140]

The 'Lesbian Art and Artists' issue of *Heresies*, then, constitutes one instance of the intersection of lesbianism and feminism in the 1970s, which interrogated the direct connection argued for by lesbian-feminists. It presented lesbian-identified women's testimonies in a space dedicated to discussion of art and feminist politics. Unlike other issues of *Heresies,* in which the editorial collective spoke in unison, in number three this was supplemented by individual testimonies. A separate text authored by each editor candidly describes their hopes, fears and failures of the project. Three more multi-voiced sections interrupt the authored features received from the open submission. The first is a set of responses to the question: 'What does a lesbian artist mean to you?', the second a 'Visual Art Portfolio' and the third 'The Tapes' which gathers together

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[137] Harmony Hammond, "Editorial Statements", *Heresies 3*, Lesbian Art and Artists, vol.1 no.3 Fall 1977: 3.

[138] See Brownmiller, *In Our Time*: 81–3. Rita Mae Brown, who was expelled from the National Organisation of Women by Freidan, formed the lesbian feminist community The Furies in 1971 in Washington D.C., which published a newsletter. Brown discusses the formation of The Furies here: Brown, "Our Own Space", online video, 1:33, accessed 4 November 2015, http://www.makers.com/moments/furies-women-only-spaces.

[139] On the erotics of women working together see Rita Mae Brown, "The Shape of Things to Come", *Women: A Journal of Liberation*, vol.2 no.4 (January 1972): 44–6. Arlene Raven proposed 'sapphic pedagogy' as an alternate way of interacting between students and teachers. See Lyn Blumenthal and Kate Horsfield, "Arlene Raven, 1979", video, in Woman's Building Videos c.1973–1991, Long Beach Museum of Video Art Archive, GRI and Raven, *Crossing Over: Feminism and the Art of Social Concern*, (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988). On the intersection between lesbian separatism and art see Anne B. Keating, "'A World We Have Invented Here': Exploring Community, Identity and Art in the Construction of 'The Farm', Kate Millet's Feminist Art Community" (PhD thesis, University of Maryland, 1995). I discuss Raven and the lesbian community at the Woman's Building in chapter three.

[140] See Janice Helloid's account of the collective gallery W.A.R.M. in Minnesota in Various, "What Does Being a Lesbian Artist Mean to You?", *Heresies 3*, Lesbian Art and Artists, vol.1 no.3 (Fall 1977): 44–45.

fragments of group discussions between lesbian artists.[141] Issue three then mobilised both collective and individual speech, allowing women to come together to reflect on a question or a shared process, as well as to present their work produced individually within a collective space. The journal represented a dynamic process of identification and differentiation, showing up how both were part of constituting a lesbian identity and in turn, how this dynamic structured other identifications around gender and class.[142] Like Pindell, this was an effect of the alienation women had felt from consciousness raising groups, as one speaker in 'The Tapes' suggests: 'I came out publicly five years ago, at a Women's Ad Hoc Committee meeting. There was no comment from anyone there. It was as if I'd sneezed.'[143] If anything the 'Lesbian Art and Artists' issue sustained a discordant chorus, demonstrating the diversity and difference that existed between artists identified as lesbians. Although there were contributions that emphasised the political potential of coming together as women, collaboration was not a synonym for solidarity. Difference was something to be given space, made visible and explored rather than hidden away or disguised.[144] As Amy Sillman wrote in her statement:

> As an editor I have reflected only my own biases and opinions. I have done so only with the hope that other lesbians will investigate our lives true to their own opinions and values – and that we will analyse our differences with an eye towards our diverse pasts and collective futures.[145]

And it was something that all the editors agreed could not be contained in a single issue of *Heresies*. Importantly though, in the context of this chapter and the contingent form of the space of appearance, which I have mapped onto the way in which women came together in the context of feminism, the 'Lesbian Art and Artists' issue represented a moment when women opened up a

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[141] See Various, "What Does Being a Lesbian Artist Mean to You?" in *Heresies 3*, Lesbian Art and Artists, vol.1 no.3 Fall 1977, 38–49; and "Visual Art Portfolio": 72–74; Louise Fishman, ed., and with photographs by Betsy Crowell, "The Tapes": 15–21. "What Does Being a Lesbian Artist Mean to You?" could be compared to the *What is Feminist Art?* project in its form. "The Tapes" offers a comparison to the *Rip-off File*, concerning how disclosure and secrets are dealt with – notably the quotations are attributed, although the participants are listed as Betsy Crowell, Betsy Damon, Rose Fichtenholtz, Louise Fishman, Harmony Hammond, Amy Sillman, Christine Wade, Kathy Webster, Sarah Whitworth and Ann Wilson. See also Fishman's editorial statement on page 15.

[142] Harmony Hammond's article focused on issues of class. Hammond, "Class Notes", *Heresies 3*, Lesbian Art and Artists, vol.1 no.3 (Fall 1977). There were no article on race and sexuality in the Lesbian Art and Artists issue, the editorial collective was entirely white as were those who submitted to the open call.

[143] Unattributed account in Various: "The Tapes", *Heresies 3*: 15.

[144] On this point and in relation to lesbian histories, the issue includes numerous articles and interventions about couples and groups who forged lesbian lives against the grain, including a long article on the photographer Alice Austin; Ann Novonty, "Alice Austen's World", *Heresies 3*: 27–33, and images of Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas, *Heresies 3*: 50, among others.

[145] Amy Sillman, "Editorial Statements", *Heresies 3*, Lesbian Art and Artists, vol.1 no.3 (Fall 1977): 4.

space in feminist discourse for lesbian voices.[146] This is particularly important in relation to Arendt's space of appearance because this issue of the journal highlighted the contingency of the labels 'feminist' and 'lesbian' and sought to explore their relevance for artists at that specific moment. As Marty Pottenger wrote:

> I am not a lesbian. I make love only with women. I am in every way what society calls a lesbian as long as something called a heterosexual or bisexual exists. In all probability, I am referring to a sexuality that will never exist inside of me.[147]

One of the only direct crossovers between 'Lesbian Art and Artists' issue and *What is Feminist Art?*, which were both in production over roughly the same period between 1976 and 1977, was the work of E.K. Waller. Waller submitted a photograph of Raven to the latter, and numerous portraits from her *Reality/ Fantasy Portraits* series to the former. Perhaps Raven personified 'feminist art' for Waller, or signalled the community of lesbian feminists at the Woman's Building to which Raven belonged.[148] Waller had also taken photographs of members of the Lesbian Art Project dressed in masculine and feminine formal attire that were playful portraits appearing to mimic and mock famous images of artist groups from 'The Irascibles', to Sleigh's paintings of the members of A.I.R. and Soho 20.[149] The seven images reprinted in *Heresies* have a different character, they are solo portraits of four women relaxed in baggy clothes, sitting or standing casually for their 'reality portraits' and three further women posed in Marilyn-style costume, Mariachi attire and hidden behind an American flag for their 'fantasy portraits'. The sitters are all students, members or associates of the Woman's Building and include the writer Bia Lowe and the actress Lily Tomlin. The portraits illustrate the community of the building, showing individual subjects connected through the series; a form that loosely parallels the mode of participation in a consciousness raising circle.

Waller's portraits might, themselves, be thought in relation to the intersubjective encounter that Arendt lays out in her discussion of the space of appearance. The portrait photograph is an act of recognition of the subject on the part of the photographer, who in this case registers the reality or

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[146] Coincidentally the issue includes an article by Adrienne Rich on Hannah Arendt. Rich, "Conditions for Work: The Common World of Women", *Heresies 3*: 52–56.
[147] Marty Pottenger in "Editorial Statements", *Heresies 3*, Lesbian Art and Artists, vol.1 no.3 (Fall 1977): 2–3.
[148] Waller's brief text in *Heresies 3* notes: 'My present work is about feminist community and deals primarily with the fantasies of feminist women.' Waller in "E.K. Waller, Fantasy/ Reality Portrayals", *Heresies 3*, Lesbian Art and Artists, vol.1 no.3 (Fall 1977). On representation and lesbian idenity see Rose Jordan, "A Question of Culture: Mirror Without Image" in *Lavender Culture*, ed. Karla Jay and Allen Young, (New York and London: New York University Press, 1978): 445–451. And on mirrors in relation to the work of women artists see Marsha Meskimmon, *The Art of Reflection*: *Women Artists Self Portraiture in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Colombia University Press, 1996).
[149] See Nina Leen, "Irascible Group of Advanced Artists Led Fight Against Show", 24 November 1950, Sylvia Sleigh, *A.I.R. Group Portrait*, 1977–8 and *Soho 20 Group Portrait*, diptych, 1974.

fantasy they present to her. This trope of recognition appeared across *What is Feminist Art?* through the image of the mirror. Here the mirror image acted like an auto-portrait capable of prompting recognition or resituating the viewer, just as Knox's and Keane's mirror works solicited the interaction of the exhibition visitor. While the image might trigger the process of politicisation, it was secondary to the internal work and the intricate communities that supported it. Like the kind of embodied speech Cavarero seeks to reclaim, many of the contributions to *What is Feminist Art?* articulate a sense of vision opening up, to see the unknowable, which in turn echoes Zerilli's abyss of freedom. A process that is eloquently and powerfully summed up in Rita Mae Brown's short contribution: 'Feminist Art is when your mirrors become windows.'[150]

Yet, as this chapter has argued, the process of working together required more than the initial moment of recognition. Rather, it demanded a sustained engagement supported by interaction. Arendt's space of appearance offers a model to understand the process of developing oneself in relation to others and the surrounding world. Most of the examples in this chapter have relied on texts and artworks appearing, rather than or in addition to the women themselves, in one sense this attests to the expansion of collaboration and group work from face-to-face interaction to more mediated interactions, but it also suggests how artworks and texts might themselves be thought of as contributing to a contingent space of appearance (or at least to mimic it) in order to constitute a different experience of art, or discourse about the artworld – one shaped by the political, as it was reconstituted by feminist artists. Beyond the works displayed in *Hang Up, Put Down, Stand Up* and Pindell's *Free, White and 21*, many of these case studies would not usually be considered artworks. It is not a claim I want to make for the *Rip-off File*, *What is Feminist Art?* or *Heresies*' 'Lesbian Art and Artists' issue, but I do want to insist on their importance as sites across which women collaborated to create a new space for discourse that was at once separate and interventionist. I want to end with a final piece from *What is Feminist Art?*, the one that first attracted my attention. It is a letter by Shelia de Bretteville and Deena Metzger, both faculty members of the Feminist Studio Workshop at the Woman's Building (fig. 1.21). Metzger and de Bretteville's contribution represents the importance of coming together across difference, as well as acknowledging scars and fractures. Their response consists of a red and white candy-stripe page made from two letters, one from Metzger to de Bretteville and the other from de Bretteville to Metzger. The letters are woven together, revealing the individual voices and ideas of each woman as well as presenting them as a single text. In its combination of textual play and graphic clarity – Metzger taught creative writing and de Bretteville graphic design – the work represented an encounter between different skills and ideas as well as voices, and as such stands for the process of working together and apart, which the subsequent chapters of this thesis will go onto explore in more depth.

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[150] Rita Mae Brown, untitled, *What is Feminist Art?* c.1977–8, held in the Box 25, Folders 1–10, labelled Responses to 'What is Feminist Art?' (folders divided alphabetically) Artists' Works, Woman's Building Records, 1970–1992, AAA.

Chapter Two

Collaboration at a distance in the *Women's Postal Art Event*, the *International Dinner Party* and Cecilia Vicuña's *Precarios*

This chapter considers three different artworks in which collaboration took place across distance: the *Women's Postal Art Event* (1975–7), Suzanne Lacy and Linda Preuss' *International Dinner Party* (1979) and Cecilia Vicuña's *Precarios* (1972–5). Each project responded to geographic separation by connecting women through material exchanges. These art events provided a means for artists to come together that mapped onto the decentralised, networked organisation of the Women's Liberation Movement. What follows will trace the interactions and exclusions enacted through these exchanges, in order to analyse both how women artists mobilised on an international scale and the limitations placed on their mobility by the architecture of the home and the museum, as well as by political upheaval. Following on from the previous chapter I will discuss how women navigated the public sphere, but this time concentrating on works that set their sights on a wider geographic spread, troubling the intimate parameters of the group. Specifically these projects challenged the isolation of the home and opened up communities that extended from the local, to the national and international. While the last chapter focused on the exchange of speech and authored texts read through the consciousness-raising model, this chapter will focus on the exchange of artworks. Mediation, a term often associated with the negative aspects of alienation, provides a way to consider how objects can provide a means for coming together across distance, a kind of instrumentalisation that, in turn, disturbs the singularity and value of the art object.[1]

Both the *International Dinner Party* and the *Postal Event* were mail art projects; the latter with a national spread and the former an international one rooted at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMoMA). The *Postal Event* took place over a longer time than the *International Dinner Party,* which was initiated by Lacy as a celebration of her mentor Judy Chicago's the *Dinner Party*. Lacy, in collaboration with Preuss, and initially others, invited women to gather together for a meal at a particular hour on a particular day. Each dinner party group then sent a document of their feast to the artist who noted the origin of the dispatch, tracing the geographical spread of the event on a large world map. In contrast to Lacy's synchronous event the *Postal Event* took place over two years, between 1975 and 1977. The women participants in this project exchanged small objects made from craft materials and the detritus of their domestic worlds. Whereas the former documented a shared event across distance, the latter created connections between women in different locations. Thus the material objects circulating in these projects

[1] Political theorist Iris Marion Young discusses the association of mediation with alienation in her article "The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference", *Social Theory and Practice*, vol.12, no.1 (Spring 1986). I pick up on Young's writing again later in this chapter.

supported different models of collaboration that nonetheless moved between domestic and institutional, private and public spaces.

I argue that both projects parallel the decentralised organisational structure of the Women's Liberation Movement, with the *International Dinner Party* providing a speculative model for how the movement might expand. So while that work used telephones and telegrams to collapse the distance between women and instantiate a network through a one-off performance, the *Postal Event* depended on long-term epistolary exchange to nurture the political consciousness and creative skills of the participants.[2] These works offer very different challenges to what is typically thought of as artwork. Both use poor materials, with Lacy and Preuss collating documentation in the form of snapshots and telegrams from each dinner party as the material outcome of the work, while the objects of the *Postal Event* incorporated household bits and pieces, transforming them into intimate gifts.

The subjects of the third case study, Vicuña's *Precarios*, are different again. Unlike the objects in the previous two case studies they were not exchanged. The *Precarios* are a series of small works made by Vicuña throughout her career. The series changes in form and content from object to object, but also in response to the specific context of their making. This chapter will consider a number of the *Precarios* from the artist's time in London in the early 1970s. Vicuña made these small unassuming objects from material yielded from the city streets during her studies, and later her political asylum, in England in the early 1970s. Unlike the communality in making and doing evident in the other projects, the *Precarios* were made in isolation and, I argue, manifest that isolation. This personal project inscribes mobility differently. Made in a time of physical and emotional displacement for Vicuña, the *Precarios* were purposefully ad hoc, compact and transportable. The objects, comprised of leftovers, trace the artist's daily existence and metonymically stand in for her contingent state of being in the UK. These objects resonate with the ephemerality of those made for the *Postal Event* as well as the documentary quality of the *International Dinner Party*. However, they problematize the idea of the home and hospitality on different terms. It is with this difference in mind that Vicuña's non-collaborative piece can be seen in relation to the models of collaboration in Lacy and Preuss's work and the *Postal Event*, bringing the problem of the home into relief. Whereas those artists could be seen to be opening out the

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[2] Mail art has its own specific history, although many artists and writers were also looped into exchanges. See John Held Jnr's three essays on mail art in Held, *Mail Art: An Annotated Bibliography* (Metuchen N.J. and London, The Scarecrow Press, 1991). Mail art circulated in different ways, some groups were small and focused on distribution to likeminded artists and collectors, others made distance a part of their work. But despite the ephemerality of its objects, the mail art scene was sophisticated with its own exhibitions, collectors, archives and publications; the latter of which regularly included lists of potential, often high profile correspondents. On conceptual art and collaboration see Green, *The Third Hand*. Green discusses Ian Burn and Mel Ramsden's collaborative practice that registered the distance between Australia and the UK, where they were based. Green also discusses Joseph Kosuth's interrogation of authorship through text-based artworks in newspapers and magazines, which circulated to different audiences. See Ibid.: 3–24 and 25–58.

private sphere to create space for social movement, which was a fundamental organising tool of the Women's Liberation Movement, Vicuña's objects acted like anchors situating and tracing her otherwise untethered existence. The *Precarios* act like a mobile, material environment, a habitat without walls for the artist to occupy and to speak from. The different characterisations of home brought out across these three projects elucidate the complex terrain of racial, class and political identities that structured the movement.

A Habitual Monument: *The International Dinner Party*

In the early months of 1979 the Los Angeles-based artist Suzanne Lacy along with seven collaborators – Thea Lisios, Linda Preuss, Audrey Wallace, Susan Brenner, Shannon Hogan, Adrienne Weiss and Sharon Kagan – printed and dispatched an open invitation to women to participate in an international art event (fig. 2.1– 2.2). The folded A4 card featured text on one side and a schematic, triangular diagram on the other. It is addressed 'Dear Sisters' and begins:

> We would like to ask you to participate with us in a worldwide celebration of ourselves! We are asking women in many countries to host dinner parties honouring women important to their own culture. These dinner parties, held simultaneously in March 1979, will create a network of women-acknowledging-women which will extend around the world.[3]

The invitation entreats its readers to transform a relatively everyday activity, having dinner, into a symbolic act of international feminist solidarity. The 'International Dinner Party Event', as it is referred to later in the invitation, borrows from the logic of a protest march or durational artwork to amplify and direct the intimate act of eating together into a larger collaborative exercise. Yet rather than appear together, to occupy the same space for a distinct period of time, the dinner party relied on a network supported by women's interactions and their agreement to host a dinner party on the same day: 14 March 1979. These interactions were spread out across 'many cities and countries', with women hosting '**their own** dinner party, paying homage to women in **their area** who have contributed to our lives'.[4] Here the invitation distinguished between different investments in a shared culture, with the bold text highlighting ownership based on 'area', alluding to both geographic place and specialism, with some dinner parties honouring women in their professional fields. The language of the invitation shifts the terms of its address: at times speaking to 'you' and 'your group', distinguishing between 'we', 'theirs' and 'us' and looping these together as 'ours'. Ending with an address contact for Lacy, and the hope 'to hear from all of you', the document

[3] Suzanne Lacy, Linda Preuss et al., "An International Dinner Party to Celebrate Women's Culture", 1979, folder 23, box 83, Judy Chicago Papers, Radcliffe.
[4] Ibid,.

sought to initiate collaborative relationships on both local and international scales, allowing for difference but anticipating connection.

A follow-up note, printed on the front and back of a smaller card signed by just Lacy and Preuss, details further instructions for the event (fig. 2.3).[5] The copy on the card is mostly repetitious, except for the invitation to document the dinner parties and to send that documentation to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. The instructions ask women to send a 'telegram, mailgram or postcard' with a message including details of the group and the women they were celebrating before or during the event, as well as a black and white photograph and letter afterwards. This invitation to self-document transformed the *International Dinner Party* from an imagined event into a materialised network. The unfixed, shifting pronouns in the invitations were to be fleshed out with the images and written voices of actual women. Geographic distance would not just be imagined but actually traversed by the movement of telegrams and mail correspondence to San Francisco from an international community of women. In this way the work not only sought to catalyse collaboration, it also represented existing groups, collectives and communities. Dinner parties and sharing food had already proven an important means for coming together for newly politicised women, not only offering an opportunity to get together but also a means to hijack an ideological tool of family life and remake it for feminist solidarity.

Dinner-table discussions were a component of the shared studio of first Feminist Art Program that I discuss in the next chapter, but dinner parties also featured as a motif in many different artworks, from Mary Beth Edelson's collage poster *Some Living American Artists/Last Supper* (1972) (fig. 2.4), to Louise Bourgeois' *Destruction of the Father* (1974) (figs 2.6–2.7). In a way both works reset the dinner table. For instance in Bourgeois' sculptural installation an abstract body-like form – that Bourgeois suggested represented her father's – lays stretched out across a table.[6] The body is made up of hemisphere parts arranged on a black fabric sheet in parallel lines, with a single one for a head at the end. These parts are almost synonymous with the surrounding stools, and large abscess forms on the ceiling and floor. The pinky-purple colour of these blister-like contusions, as well as the red glow of the work's illumination, further appeals to their corporeality, as if the central body has been eaten up by the surrounding environment. This corresponds with Bourgeois' narration of the work, that it was a manifestation of her childhood desire to consume her father. By destroying the father at the dinner table, Bourgeois enacts a symbolic transgression not only killing him, as would the Oedipal son, but eating him too. In this way the work cleared away the routine of familial power, by ingesting the head of the table, as well as showing up the formal space of coming together in the home as a menacingly corporeal.[7]

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[5] Suzanne Lacy and Linda Preuss, "INSTRUCTIONS: International Dinner Party Event", 1979, folder 23, box 83, Judy Chicago Papers, Radcliffe.

[6] See Louise Bourgeois, quoted in Mignon Nixon, *Fantastic Reality: Louise Bourgeois and the Story of Modern Art* (Cambridge MA and London: MIT, 2005): 258

[7] My reading is indebted to Mignon Nixon's discussion of the work in relation to the theories of Melanie Klein and Sigmund Freud, see Nixon, *Fantastic Reality*: 254–260.

Edelson on the other hand, literally replaced each of the heads in a reproduction of Leonardo Da Vinci's iconic *Last Supper* painting with those of women artists. Edelson's image is an appropriation of old master gravitas, celebrating not a panoply of stars, but just 'some living American artists', as the low-key tone of the title suggests. However, the disjuncture between the title and symbolic clout of the image might also point to the latent hierarchies between the women, or the danger of women artist's entrance into history. This double-message is evident in another work by Edelson, *Death of the Patriarchy* (1976) (fig. 2.5), in which portraits of A.I.R. gallery members replace the inquisitive faces of the students in Rembrandt's *Anatomical Lecture of Professor Nicolaes Tulp* (1632). The image was originally made for A.I.R. as a poster. While the corpse evidences the 'death of patriarchy' through women's collective action, the autopsy suggests a perverse interest in its inner workings – alluding perhaps to the gallery's mimicking of commercial gallery spaces. In both of Edelson's works the symbolic stability of the old master painting, rubs up against feminist collectivity as if gesturing to the difficulty of sustaining the lateral relationships of sisterhood.

Unlike Edelson's collages and Bourgeois' installation, the *International Dinner Party* was conceived of as a triumphant occasion. The invitation emphasised that it offered an opportunity for women to come together in 'celebration of ourselves', with the labour of making the dinner shared out across the attendees as a collaborative effort, and contributing to the 'collective' staged in the work.[8] But the invite also asked each organiser to select 'a woman or group of women' to honour at their dinner tables.[9] Edelson held one of the dinner parties in New York with Ana Mendieta, and appropriately enough they selected Louise Bourgeois as their honorary guest (fig. 2.8). For this event the invited women were asked to come dressed up as their favourite artist, with some attendees, cheekily, coming as themselves.[10] In the photographic documentation, the group pose with Mendieta dressed as Frida Kahlo front and centre. This gathering of artists, old and young became its own collaborative piece, with each woman's contribution, her performance, bringing both Bourgeois' *Destruction of the Father* and Edelson's *Some Living American Artists/ Last Supper* to life. Another photograph (fig. 2.9) shows artists based in London – Cate Elwes, Margaret Harrison, Tina Keane, Rose Garrard, Kate Walker, Nina Kellgren, and Liliane Lijn – gathered around a low table at a party in Alexis Hunter's studio, raising their glasses in a toast, while one issue of the *Women's Caucus for Art Newsletter* documents a large dinner party held in the New

[8] Lacy commented: 'it was getting more than two thousand women to participate in an event that was both distinctive to each group – self-determined and designed – and yet collective.' Suzanne Lacy, "Interview", in *Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art,* ed. Stephanie Smith, exh. cat. (Chicago IL: Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago, 2012): 81.
[9] Lacy, Preuss, et al., "An International Dinner Party to Celebrate Women's Culture".
[10] Letter from Edelson to Lacy dated 6 March 1979, reproduced in Smith, ed., *Feast*, 2012: 82. The list of attendees included: Susan Cooper, Michelle Stuart, Barbara Zucker, Hannah Wilke, Judy Bernstein, Anne Sharp, Edit D'Ark, Joyce Kozloff, Barbara Moore, Phyllis Krim, Patricia Hamilton, Poppy Johnson, Marisol, as well as, as Edelson says, 'Louise, Ana and myself'.

York chapter, for which women contributed ostentatious cakes.[11] So the *International Dinner Party* provided an index of already-existing women's groups and – as Edelson's and Hunter's photographs show – prompted all-women gatherings. These gatherings extended beyond artists and art organisations and reached across the Atlantic, into Europe, Africa, Australia and India.

On 14 March 1979 news of each dinner party was sent to Lacy at SFMoMA via telegram. Lacy occupied the gallery with a large world map, folders and a set of pins (fig. 2.10). Through the day and night she received telegrams notifying her of dinner parties happening internationally. When a telegram was received Lacy pinned a red marker to the map, and as the performance went on the markers multiplied, visually relating the international spread of the work's participants. The performance functioned like a camera, recording a snapshot of the women's movement, albeit one with a 24-hour exposure, adding up to an image to be communicated. The telegrams were then filed into folders below the map for visitors to flick through and these records were added to over the subsequent weeks as participants sent documents in the form of letters and photographs of their dinner parties (fig.2.11). Lacy's emphasis on documentation is important because it complicated the temporality and the site of performance. The *International Dinner Party* comprised both a day-long, geographically-dispersed set of dinner parties, and the process of documentation in the gallery. The gatherings were time and context-specific, in that they were prompted by what Lacy has called a 'performance structure', but they also endured through the picture the artist created on the large-scale map, making an everyday thing exemplary.[12] In this work, then, performance and documentation as well as local and international contexts, intersect and settle in complex formations, which mirrored and captured the complex organisational dynamics of the Women's Liberation Movement itself.

The organisation of the event followed the form of movement organising too. Lacy has described using a telephone tree to spread news of the work internationally, while the telegrams and postal exchanges also parallel the form of the open call newsletter, which provided a means for women to connect with each other and share news across distance. This process was expensive, time-consuming and materially excessive; the labour is evident in the invitations and documentation scattered through different archives and personal collections, as well as in the

[11] The photograph of Hunter's dinner party is in the Fenix° folder, Early Years, WAL. *Women Caucus for Art Newsletter*: 6–7. Held in Folder 178 Women's Caucus for Art, Box 4, Sub. F, Series I, A.I.R Gallery Archives, 1972–2006, Fales.
[12] Lacy, "Interview": 81.

binders that also made up part of the work.[13] The addition of these stationary materials to the installation repurposed another realm of work associated with women: administration. Unlike other conceptual works that used typewritten texts, folders and telegrams to dematerialise the artwork, emphasising the banality and exchangeability of these materials, in the *International Dinner Party* the components took on a new value as the means to map relationships between women and to represent the network between them. That the bits and pieces making up the work – from invitations, to photographs, to letters – are spread through different collections suggests that this representation could never be complete, was not centralised and as such depended on fragmentation to represent exchanges between women. The picture the *International Dinner Party* presents was incomplete, highlighting how women's writing has been dispersed across epistolary exchanges and marginalised as the means of support for other conversations and communiqués. Lacy's act of mapping not only represented women's politicisation, but longer histories of female labour as operators of communication technologies.[14] In *International Dinner Party*, administrative labour was represented and repurposed for the making of art, providing the content of the work, and the means to document its constituent performances.

The telegrams, photographs and letters in this work do not, of course, function in the same way as a photograph of a one-off action might.[15] They are not indexical to an original event, but provide the way for women to connect with one another over space and across time. In this way they compare more with Philip Auslander's description of performative documentation, in the sense that the material trace of the photograph constitutes the performance itself.[16] Auslander writes, using J. L. Austin's terms: 'I am suggesting that performance documents are not analogous to constatives, but to performatives: in other words, the act of documenting an event as a performance is what constitutes it as such'.[17]

Auslander's use of 'performative', here, disconnects the document from an association with truth, or fixed meaning. Instead the document confirms the contingent status of a performance

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[13] The *International Dinner Party* was recently exhibited as a static installation, with the map and binders. Lacy has been invited to show her event-based work in this way in numerous settings including *Three Weeks in May* at LACE in 2012 (for which it became *Three Weeks in January*) and the *Crystal Quilt* (1985–7) at The Tanks, Tate Modern in 2012–3. These displays often also include newly commissioned performances, responding to older works but updated for a new context and setting. Interestingly Lacy revisited the network elements of the *International Dinner Party*, although without acknowledgment as an artwork, to research and reconnect with performance artists for the research project Pacific Standard Time. See Paul David Young, "The Suzanne Lacy Network", *Art in America* (June 2012), accessed 20 September 2016, http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazine/the-suzanne-lacy-network/.

[14] See Thomas C. Jepson, *My Sisters Telegraphic: Women in the Telegraph Office 1846–1950* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2000) and Jennifer S. Light, "When Computers Were Women", *Technology and Culture*, vol.40, no.3 (July 1999).

[15] Here I am thinking of Peggy Phelan's influential argument in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York and Oxford: Routledge, 1992).

[16] Philip Auslander, "The Performativity of Performance Documentation", *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art 84*, vol.28, no.3 (2006).

[17] Auslander, "The Performativity of Performance Documentation": 5.

because it is only a component of a larger event. This aligns with Lacy's description of a 'performance structure', which she writes, took 'a set of lifelike actions and framed them in terms of time, representation, and so on, and made the activities into art.'[18] For both Auslander and Lacy documentation allowed an action to become visible and therefore perceptible as art, but in the case of the *International Dinner Party* it was not the dinner parties that were made into artworks, but the process of coming together and the creation of a network of politicised women. This extended beyond the 14 March, as photographs and letters were sent after the fact to be added to the folders, constructing an archive of the event. But Lacy also sent out another piece of correspondence, printed on one side with an image of the map, and on the other with text (figs 2.12–2.13), it read: 'This postcard is one way we're continuing the chain of worldwide women's communication', below which a blank space was left for 'your message' and 'your name'.[19] Next to that space, Lacy's name appeared – with no mention of Preuss – making the recipient her new collaborator. The postcards were then sent to other women involved in the project, forging new connections within the community established by the event. That there was no attempt to gather together these responses suggests that the artwork and the archive that comprised it were not an endpoint, but an active way of organising. In this way the work became an active monument to the Women's Liberation Movement.[20]

The currency of the *International Dinner Party* offered a counterpoint to Chicago's *The Dinner Party*, which was also on display at SFMoMA on 14 March 1979 (figs 2.14–2.15). In fact Lacy conceived of the *International Dinner Party* as both a celebration of Chicago's work and an expansion of its representation of women's history, mapping a geographical span rather than a historical lineage. While both works focused on bringing women together, their organisational principles were almost antithetical. Lacy's use of the map, participation, technology and information appealed to the form of a sociological study tracing and forging relationships between women, whereas Chicago's work was an act of retrieval through a monument rich in symbolism and stylised feminine and vaginal forms. These two works relate to distinct feminist positions. The *International Dinner Party* critiques the limitations of the home and the woman's role in the bourgeois family, aligning with tropes in socialist and Marxist feminist arguments. It situated women within a social world that went beyond the domestic and instantiated bonds between them that challenged the capitalist division of labour, alienation in the work place and oppression at home. In contrast *The Dinner Party* was affirmative, insisting on the vitality of women's work in the home and on the margins of creative practice. Chicago reclaimed processes overlooked in the

[18] Lacy, "Interview": 81.
[19] Suzanne Lacy, untitled postcard, 1979, folder 1, box 26, Judy Chicago Papers, Radcliffe.
[20] For a discussion of the intersection between ephemeral and temporary documents and monuments, an argument for a public art that is not authoritarian, see Metchild Windrich, *Performative Monuments: The Rematerialisation of Public Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

realm of fine art, such as china painting, and also recovered figures lost or downplayed in history, both investments that had more in common with cultural feminism. This approach centred on Chicago's interest in defining a feminine sensibility in art, which centred on the female body and female bodily experience evident in the vaginal forms on *The Dinner Party* plates. The juxtaposition of these two works, along with their shared origins in California, demonstrates that differences existed even between women in close proximity and who had a longstanding relationship, which began in this case at Fresno State College in 1970 when Chicago was Lacy's first fine art tutor.

The Dinner Party was something of a departure from Chicago's previous work as a painter, sculptor and performer primarily because it was larger than any other project or series and demanded help in the form of a studio of volunteer labour known as the Loft. Different volunteers had or developed skills that ranged from embroidery to leatherwork, research and fundraising. As such behind the lineage of named figures sketched out on the table and on the floor, was a community of women workers committed to realising *The Dinner Party*. But Chicago insisted that she retained sole authorship of the work, because of the conceptual control she had over the installation.[21] The volunteers, although inquisitive about the credit they would receive, were mostly dedicated to the project for the experience of working with Chicago.[22] Chicago's role at the Loft paralleled her pedagogic technique on the Feminist Art Program where she fervently insisted on women's commitment to their artwork.[23] In contrast to the *International Dinner Party*, the collaboration necessary to complete Chicago's *Dinner Party* was almost entirely effaced in the finished work. This discrepancy was made more pointed after the second showing of the work in Houston, Texas, which incorporated a quilt built with panels donated by the work's audience – this continued in the subsequent tour as the *International Quilting Bee*.[24] As such the audience members could become expressive collaborators, albeit in the confines of a supplementary display, while the creative work of the volunteers remained at the service of Chicago's vision.

Even without the quilt, the exhibition of Chicago's *Dinner Party* at SFMoMA in 1979 was rich. The work had three major parts: an entry way hung with six tapestry banners; the sculptural installation comprised of three dinner tables standing on a white tiled floor, marked with 999 names in gold leaf, organised in a triangle and dressed with thirty nine place settings; and finally a

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[21] For a discussion of the climate at the Loft, see Gerhard, *The Dinner Party*: 86–97.
[22] Gerhard describes Chicago's role as the 'muse of the studio', see Gerhard, *The Dinner Party*: 105–107.
[23] I discuss Chicago's pedagogic practice in chapter three.
[24] The press materials for the international tour of *The Dinner Party* mention the *International Dinner Party*: 'Thus, the spirit of THE DINNER PARTY was extended beyond the boundaries of the exhibition itself' and describes the institution of The International Quilting Bee at the second showing at the University of Houston. For this anybody could contribute a quilt panel celebrating a woman, which was then added to the touring exhibition. Each panel had to be the same triangular dimensions – the same shape as the heritage tiles – with the celebrated woman's name, the city and country of the panel's origins in the border around the image. See *The Dinner Party – Judy Chicago,* exh. pamphlet (London: Diehard Productions, 1985). Rose Garrard, Personal Collection.

set of museum-style panels that contextualised Chicago's history of women.[25] The vibrant colours, diverse materials and techniques added up to a serious remaking of the Last Supper.[26] However, in this work the devotion and betrayal in the biblical story and its interpretation by Da Vinci and appropriation in Edelson's photo-collage are exchanged for equidistant, decentralised place settings. Whatever influences, interactions or interests the women along the table might have shared are erased, as the figures become the foundation for a recovered heritage, an alternative set of founding mothers who, though not all American were predominantly from the West. While the Last Supper motif – with its iconography remade with feminism in mind – along with its scale and material wealth provided gravitas, the craft techniques used in *The Dinner Party* were the preserve of domestic decoration and amateur hobbyists. The effect was an exaggeration of the elaborate worlds made by the frustrated creative housewives who provided inspiration for the work.[27]

The critical response to *The Dinner Party* was mixed, but negative reviews were vitriolic and came from feminist and non-feminist writers alike.[28] These ranged from critiques on the limitations of Chicago's teleological lineage, the almost exclusively Western focus, her ghettoization of women and representation of their history through the domestic forms of the dinner party and craft, which some feminists saw as precluding women from entering the public sphere. Interestingly the potential problems of Chicago's work seem to have been evident to Lacy in the organisation of the *International Dinner Party*, and therefore before the work had received its critical response. The call-out for participants carefully laid out the relationship between the works:

> Inspired by this work, several California artists want to expand the idea of honouring women from Western History to encompass living women of all cultures.[29]

The invitation addresses (and as such points out) the lacunae of Chicago's work, particularly its Western bias – Chicago was petitioned by a committee of women for her exclusion of a Chicana representative from the dinner table place settings – as well as its focus on legacy rather than the

[25] The place settings are all illustrated and explored in Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party* (London: Penguin, 1996): 161–210.
[26] Chicago references the Last Supper as an influence in Chicago, *The Dinner Party*: 7.
[27] Chicago, *The Dinner Party*: 4–5.
[28] For a discussion of the critical commentary see Gerhard, *The Dinner Party*: particularly "Debating Feminist Art: *The Dinner Party* in Published and Unpublished Commentary 1979–1989", 211–245; Jones, ed., *Sexual Politics* and Hortense Spillers, "Interstices: A Small Drama of Words", in *Black, White and In Colour: Essays in American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003): 152–175.
[29] Lacy, Preuss, et al, "An International Dinner Party to Celebrate Women's Culture".

problem of contemporary women's visibility.[30] In seeking to find, frame and document contemporary women's activity internationally, the *International Dinner Party* was not just a supplement but also a corrective to Chicago's work. The contrast in content was also played out materially. *The Dinner Party*'s fine finish, multiple, large-scale elements and fragile surfaces found stark opposition in Lacy's cross-continental mail-art event. The heavy materiality of Chicago's piece chimed with the rich and weighty history the artist sought to invoke. By contrast the ephemeral telegrams in Lacy's piece register the mobility and spatial dispersion of the Women's Liberation Movement. Even the process of making and eating a meal and its photographic documentation in the *International Dinner Party* provided a counterpoint to the ritualistic place settings and vulvic pseudo-portraits of *The Dinner Party*'s plate reliefs.

Despite the almost-antagonistic material and conceptual differences between the two works, Lacy did not frame the *International Dinner Party* as a critique. Rather than an Oedipal rejection of her tutor and her contentious artwork, Lacy sought to 'expand' on Chicago's piece, moving beyond its historical remit to cover different ground.[31] This was figured almost literally, since the cartographic form of Lacy's SFMoMA installation did not deal in timespans, but mapped the activity of women across distance at a particular moment. Like Chicago's work it was organised around the shared identity 'woman', but in response to Chicago's delineation of a shared heritage and also to concurrent debates around the class, race and sexual blindness of second-wave feminism, Lacy mapped the international spread of the women's movement and as such chose to frame (or catalyse) diversity. So just as the work sought to map the spread of women's politicisation internationally it also critiqued the terms along which the movement had been organised, namely around a latent connection between women. In contrast forging new links through an invitation to participate in a dinner party centred on personal, local celebration.

In subsequent work Lacy explored the dinner table motif again, but these works were much more about proximity and shared space than dispersal. Projects and performances such as *Freeze Frame* (1982) (fig. 2.16), *Of Immigrants and Survivors* (1983) (fig. 2.17), *The Waves*, *The Wind* (1983–4) (fig. 2.18) and *The Crystal Quilt* (1985–7) (fig. 2.19) gathered women together from different racial backgrounds, ages or professions, but usually within a particular local area. While *Of Immigrants and Survivors* had a similar celebratory tone to the *International Dinner Party*, and also included a banquet, food was absent from the other works and instead empty tables provided a surface across which the women connected. In *Freeze Frame*, *The Waves, The Wind* and *The Crystal Quilt* the women participants sat at the tables and conversed, before pausing their talk and

[30] The petitioning committee included Gloria Nievez, Shirley Culver, Kathy McKinney, Irene Castillo, Bev Dorsey and Judith Meyers. The committee, although angry, prepared research on Juana de la Cruz for a meeting with the artist in September 1978, in the hope that she might be included but Chicago refused citing practical issues. In response Estelle Chaoon wrote an even angrier open letter. See 'Latina Controversy', Folder 16, Box 25, Papers of Judy Chicago, Radcliffe.

[31] Lacy, Preuss, et al, "An International Dinner Party to Celebrate Women's Culture".

using the tables as stages for tableaux.[32] During *Freeze Frame* the women literally paused mid-action; in *The Waves, The Wind* the women's gathering on a beach could only be viewed from the promenade, while the women conversed by the tide line and in *The Crystal Quilt* the tables were organised in a pattern like a quilt, with the women and their choreographed arm movements acting like stitches. The focus on community development and representation in these works highlighted Lacy's development of a social art practice, while this practice was rooted in feminism and her participation in the Women's Liberation Movement, the *International Dinner Party* was a picture of the movement as well as a product of it.[33]

So the *International Dinner Party* was oddly suspended between documenting the spread of women's politicisation and instigating activity. It held the contradictions of local and global, presence and absence, ossification and catalyst together. Yet the space created in the work was important for the sense of interaction, exchange and collaboration it established between women, as well as the record it preserved of the diversity of women's interaction in an age of new but still limited rights, new but still limited communication technologies; two factors that were at the fore of the organisational structure of the women's movement.

Something For Myself: *Women's Postal Art Event*

While the *International Dinner Party* was a feat of network building in a pre-internet age, the *Postal Event* was more low-tech. Instead of a same-day telegram, objects were exchanged by Royal Mail delivery, and rather than the interruption of a one-off celebration, making, sending and receiving were folded into the everyday tasks of housework. In distinction to the *International Dinner Party*, the *Postal Event* had a far longer duration and covered a far smaller terrain, extending through the UK, with clusters of activity in Birmingham, London and Leeds. The *Postal Event* did not seek to record the activity of women artists or activists but instead to encourage its

[32] See Jennifer Fisher, "Interperformance: The Live Tableaux of Suzanne Lacy, Janine Antoni and Marina Abromovic", *Art Journal*, vol.56, no.4 (Winter 1997) and Moira Roth, "Suzanne Lacy: Social Reformer and Witch", *TDR: The Drama Review*, vol.32, no.1, (Spring 1988): 42–60.
[33] Lacy has narrated her coming into feminism and art (in that order) through her participation in Chicago's Feminist Art Program in Fresno, which I discuss in the next chapter. Lacy moved to the California Institute of Art in 1971, when Chicago did, but worked as a course assistant to Shelia de Bretteville on her graphics and design programme. See Moira Roth, "Suzanne Lacy on the Feminist Art Program at Fresno State and CalArts", *East of Borneo*, 15 December 2011, accessed 4 November 2015, http://www.eastofborneo.org/articles/suzanne-lacy-on-the-feminist-program-at-fresno-state-and-calarts. De Bretteville also proved an important influence on Lacy, as did the artist Allan Kaprow, who was also a tutor at CalArts. De Bretteville, but particularly Kaprow, prompted Lacy's social practice, for more on the latter relationship see Lacy, "Debated Territory: Toward a Critical Language for Public Art", in *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art,* edited by Suzanne Lacy (Washington: Bay Press, 1995). Notably Kaprow has an essay in the same volume.

participants to make things and to connect with others.[34] The things they made often comprised materials from the home: for instance a marmite jar dressed in a nappy and turned into a baby (fig. 2.20), or an advert appropriated from the pages of a magazine and shown up for its brazen sexism. Others were made using craft processes, more usually deployed for homely purposes, like Su Richardson's sinister crochet sandwiches laced with spiders, baby-doll faces and tongues. The objects were subversive, moving from home to home like incendiary devices packed with dark humour in which images, bodies, food and containers mix and merge. As well as missiles they were also missives, building relationships in a way akin to the stories shared in consciousness raising sessions. Indeed the objects also provided a means of communication and highlight both the positive and the negative feelings between participants. This was exemplified in a series of crochet potted plants made by Richardson: while one colour-filled flowery arrangement was sent to her friend Kate Walker on Mothering Sunday (fig. 2.21), another spikey, needle-studded cactus went to a less supportive friend (fig. 2.22) and one in 'lurex with phallic leaves and immense detail for a fine art friend who needed impressing'.[35] This section considers what effect this postal collaboration had. I argue that it broke women's isolation in the home, resituated where art could be made and exchanged, and challenged what an art object might look like.

I concentrate here on how the participants in the *Postal Event* hewed a space for artistic production that specifically responded to and reacted against the role of the housewife. Collaboration across distance is a crucial factor in this project, then, for the way it exposes the isolation of women in the home and organises a model of interaction not based on presence – as the structure of the consciousness raising circle demanded – or even through the publication of texts as I discussed in the last chapter, but through material exchange. It is the focus on exchange as a way to find other ways of making art that differentiates this project from the *International Dinner Party*. The *Postal Event* – and in the next section Vicuña's *Precarios* – are considered through the intersection of material and mobility, craft and detritus, collaboration and distance. While the *Postal Event* highlights how community was mobilised without direct interaction, the discussion of

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[34] There were, though, a series of exhibitions in which the objects made during the *Postal Event* were displayed. These exhibitions took place at North West Arts in Manchester; Birmingham Arts Lab; the Reader's Lounge, Central Library, Birmingham; The Academy Gallery, Liverpool and the Institute of Contemporary Art, London. The shows had different titles, including *Feministo*, by which the project is sometimes also known. Other variations include: *Feministo: Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife, Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman, Portrait of the Artist as a Young Housewife*. Alexandra Kokoli notes that 'Kate Walker preferred the title *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman* all along because it alluded to James Joyce's first novel *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*' and that the title was changed to *Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife* after some lengthy debate. See Kokoli, "Undoing 'Homeliness'": note 7. In an article written by Kate Walker in *Heresies 9*, Organised Women Divided, vol.3, no.2 (1980): 34, the project had a compromise title: *Feministo: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Housewife*. I have chosen to use the title *Postal Art Event* because this was the preferred title of Su Richardson – the only member of the project with whom I have been able to speak – and because in this article I focus on the postal exchange rather than the exhibitions, which tended to take the longer titles.

[35] Su Richardson, "Butterfly Sandwich: a letter from Sue Richardson", *FAN*, no.4 Women's Craft Issue, 1981: 3.

Vicuña's objects attests to the exclusions of that community and suggests a different approach to art practice at a distance.

The first recruitment of *Postal Event* participants was down to a very public declaration by Walker at the Women's Art History conference in 1975. As recounted by one of the recruits, Richardson, Walker stood up and announced:

> Look aren't there any housewives here who want to make some art, and who are fed up with all this fine art business? Aren't there any of you making things at home that you'd like to show each other?[36]

By this point Walker has already begun exchanging small homemade objects through the mail with another artist Sally Gollop. Their communication began when Gollop moved from London to the Isle of Wight following her husband's new job. Their exchanges by post were a surrogate for the communication they shared when living close-by, providing a way to relieve the isolation both felt at home as artists and mothers of young children. Walker's announcement at the Women's Art History conference seems to confirm that isolation. The call to 'housewives', to reject 'all this fine art business', declaims the world of institutions and galleries with a pejorative that couples creative practice with the bourgeois pubic sphere. Here the label 'housewife' becomes something to occupy and focus on, rather than escape. But her demand to engage with 'each other' was not simply a withdrawal; it invoked a change of focus from the attentive gaze of the audience member at a political conference to the sideways look of a conversation. For Richardson and many others, Walker's proposition had great appeal and from 1975 to 1977 a continually expanding network of women were exchanging small art objects through the post.

The political stakes of the *Postal Art Event* appear counter-intuitive, given most artists' attempts to make their work, and that of historic women artists, visible on the walls of museums and galleries and in the pages of history books. But the project was still about empowerment, although the terms were changed and the paths and thresholds the objects moved through were very different. The making and sending of objects, made quickly and with limited resources, practiced the kinds of critique feminist influenced art historians and critics were developing about the marginalisation of women's creative work. So while Linda Nochlin asked her reader to look again at greatness and quality and Rozsika Parker, and Griselda Pollock argued for a new framework through which to perceive the work of historic female artists, the participants in the *Postal Event* found a different means for their work to be received beyond the taxonomic systems defining fine

[36] Walker quoted in Su Richardson, "Crocheted Strategies: A New Audience for Women's Work", in *Women and Craft*, ed. Gillian Elinor, Su Richardson, Angharad Thomas, Sue Scott and Kate Walker (London: Trafalgar Square, 1987): 39.

art.[37] That many of these objects are now lost, destroyed or held only in the private collections of their makers or receivers (mainly attics and bedrooms) attests to the lack of impact the project had outside the postal exchange or the exhibitions. But the rejection of history, critique and theory in the *Postal Event*, also allowed for a different set of parameters to become visible, namely the specific domestic contexts the women occupied and the constraint women laden with bags and buggies felt in the world beyond. While many of the objects reflected on the experience of being a housewife, the exchanges between the women provided a new reason to come together, and created a community separate and antagonistic to the routes and routines of daily life.

The process of exchange was mostly ad hoc. Participants could post objects to friends or strangers and one woman could have as many correspondents as she wished. In contrast to consciousness-raising sessions there were no rules to observe, with the only constant the small scale of the objects, which kept postage costs low. Beyond the limits of size, the postage process was not inscribed on the objects, something that distinguishes them considerably from other mail art works from the 1960s and 1970s. Many other mail art objects or projects took the form of a letter or postcard, with experimental images and texts. Although sometimes works would be addressed to a specific correspondent, often they were reproduced and multiple missives were sent out to the names on one of the many listings of correspondents circulating in avant-garde journals like *File* and the parody publication *Vile*.[38] These networks had both political and aesthetic dimensions. The prospect of posting things meant getting access to an international art audience, while eschewing galleries and dealers as well as passing over national borders and political barriers.[39] Artists also used postal exchanges as a conceptual device, for instance in *Portrait of Robin Crozier*, the artist Robin Crozier played with his anonymity, and distance from any artworld centres, to commission his portrait from artists he had never met. Although this work depended on Crozier making contact with others, it is quite distinct from the kinds of relationships forged and worked on over time in the *Postal Event*. The latter had no single instigator, no final outcome, and while Crozier's work overlaid the structures of the artworld and overturned the dynamics of authority between artists (he addressed his work to commercially-successful and well-known practitioners), ultimately *Portrait* depended on those structures for the detournement to pack a conceptual punch. The *Postal Event* in contrast, bypassed them completely. So while Crozier's *Portrait* broke down the artist's identity into so many fragments, the objects in the women's

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[37] Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" (1971), *Women, Art and Power and Other Essays* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989): 145–178 and Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (Oxford: Routledge, 1981).
[38] Gwen Allen discusses both publications in her book *Artists' Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art* (Cambridge MA and London: MIT, 2011): 147–174 and 308.
[39] See Zanna Gilbert, "'Something Unnameable in Common': Translocal Collaboration at the Beau Geste Press", *ARTMargins*, vol.1, no.2–3 (June–October 2012): 47; as well as Carmen Juliá, "Mapping the City: Felipe Ehrenberg in London 1968–71" and Dominic Johnson "File Under COUM: Art on Trial in Genesis P-Orridge's Mail Action", both *London Art Worlds: Mobile, Contingent and Ephemeral Networks 1960–80*, ed. Jo Applin, Catherine Spencer and Amy Tobin, (Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, forthcoming 2017).

exchange enabled a picture of women's experiences as daughters, wives and mothers to develop. It was this picture that was put on show in the 1977 exhibition *Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife* at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London.

The *Postal Event* no only bypassed the existing commercial and institutional art worlds, it also troubled the boundaries of the home. The circulation of these objects ran counter to the movement of things through the domestic environment, intervening in the cycle of consumption and the daily tasks of reproduction. Here craft items were rendered functionless and detritus was not thrown away but used to make objects that re-entered a different home. This intrusion in the labour of care picks up from and expands on Kokoli's discussion of the project, casting her analysis of the objects' uncanniness as a psychoanalytic process of 'undoing' into undoing as a mode of remaindering or translation, which dissociates the participant's work both from the labour of care in everyday life and from the work associated with the professional artist.[40] In this way the *Postal Event* allowed a space for relationships to form that fostered an alternative infrastructure. Within this space, this framework, participants could shrug off the identities of housewife and artist, or at least their stereotypical associations, and experiment. While the women did not evacuate the domestic sphere they caused friction within it, which troubled both the ideological and psychic borders of the home.

The *Postal Event*'s mechanism of reversal is well illustrated by a series of small crochet panels by Richardson. Each panel spells out 'ME' in large letters on concentric frames of brightly coloured borders or on exotically printed backgrounds (fig. 2.23). The kitschy brightness of these small objects, obviously crafted but defiantly self-centred, put artistic production and domestic labour in tension. Crochet is a quick and efficient stitching technique usually employed for children's clothes, blankets or decoration. It can be undone and remade straightforwardly, unlike most knitting stitches, and can be easily taken up and put away unlike more complex craft techniques like pottery or woodworking. Richardson's 'ME' panels, however, are too small to function as a covering of any sort and anyway, their soft surfaces are contained behind glass in a small wooden frame.[41] Perhaps they relate more closely to decorative embroideries that are also sometimes framed and hung; yet the 'ME' at the centre of the colour panels is more declarative than representational. There is nothing really to see on this surface, but as the pattern divests to the crochet knit, the *faktura* of the panel (the exposure of process in the form) reveals the subject, the

[40] Kokoli, "Undoing Homliness": 82.

[41] Importantly Richardson also made rugs, blankets and baby clothes. Her first piece of crochet was a sprawling rug. Her choice to make the 'ME' panels on a small scale can, in this context, be seen as a crucial choice; suggesting a sense of intimacy but also the limited time the artist had to make something for herself. Richardson also showed the jumpers she made for her son in a recent exhibition curated by Kokoli of her work titled *Burnt Breakfast and Other Works by Su Richardson* at Goldsmiths College, London, 6 July – 9 September 2012.

'ME' of the work.[42] Yet because the panel is not representative there is no visible owner to this declaration. This anonymity is doubly inscribed in the context of the postal art project, where the recipient did not always know the maker of the work. The 'ME' is invested in the stitches, the labour of the object's production, which in turn supports a dynamic declaration of self-interest, reiterated visually by those energetically radiating concentric bands. What is crucial to the 'ME' panels, and to the other crafted objects in the project, was not the end product but the process of making something outside the needs and demands of the family. As Richardson has summed up, 'this was just something I made for myself'.[43]

Importantly Richardson's crochet objects, like many of the other craft pieces in the postal art project, held domestic labour and artistic practice in tension. The 'ME' panels perform this antagonism through the conflation of a craft activity associated with anonymity and the boldness of declared subjectivity. This juxtaposition of process and subject-formation is also evident in a different way, in the work of Robert Morris and particularly his *I-Box* from 1961 (fig. 2.24). Both the 'ME' panel and the *I-Box* situate artistic subjectivity in the materiality of the work.[44] The craft and scale of Richardson's work calls up the artist's presence at the moment of production, as well as inscribing, in the context of the postal art project, an intimate viewing experience: the moment when the object was received and unpacked. Morris' *I-Box* sets up a similarly intersubjective encounter. Not a box at all but another panel, the *I-Box* is a metallised plane with a hinged-on wooden 'I'-shaped door. The invitation to open the door is resolved in a full-length portrait of the artist naked. As Amelia Jones has suggested, the artists' phallus, which hangs in the centre of the cutout shape, roughly where the handle rests on the alternative side of the panel, parallels the capitalized form of the letter 'I' suggesting a synonymous relationship between the artist-subject and maleness.[45] The photograph of Morris almost embodies the 'I', his figure stretches from top to bottom, left and right of the letter-shaped frame, *he* is at the centre of the picture and as such *he* becomes the artist-subject *par excellence*. And although the artist's slightly too-pleased expression and portly form punctures the image with a dose of humour that pokes fun at the association of the hero-artist with masculinity, still the work transforms what could be an intimate encounter into a gauche public exposure.

Morris' 'I' finds a replacement and a qualification in Richardson's 'ME'. The latter artist's use of the object form of the pronoun reveals the direction of the declarative statement. Whereas,

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[42] Facture of *Faktura* is a term associated with Russian Constructivism, and alludes to the exposure of the material production of work in its image. In this way it is suggestive of an index but is more concerned with process of production. See Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography", *October*, vol.30 (Autumn 1984): 82–119 and in relation to craft see T'ai Smith, *Bauhaus Weaving Theory: From Feminine Craft to Mode of Design* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2014): 79–111.

[43] Su Richardson, interview with the artist, 7 May 2014, Birmingham, UK.

[44] 'ME-panel' is a title I have given to the work, as it remains otherwise untitled, hence why it appears in quotation marks and Morris' *I-Box* italicised.

[45] See Amelia Jones, "Dis/playing the Phallus: Male Artists Perform Their Masculinities", *Art History*, vol.17, no.4 (December 1994).

'I' is active and other-directed, 'me' is self-directed. It reorients the subject from an outwards, public focus to an inward, embodied 'myself'. This sense of going inside parallels the kind of thought and reflection demanded from consciousness raising. So despite the singularity appealed to in Richardson's 'ME' panels, this disclosure was prompted and amplified by the *Postal Event*. She wrote:

> I found so much of myself that had been hidden and repressed, so much resentment at the way I had been treated as a woman, and I discovered that other women's work was coming back to me in the same vein, using the same imagery. We'd found a commonality; it gave us strength… We'd found an audience in each other.[46]

The sharing of stories that took place in the consciousness raising circle was pulled out across distance and mediated by artworks in the *Postal Event*, re-plotting the coordinates of an intimate encounter. The analogy to consciousness raising was also evident at the time and appears in Rozsika Parker's review of the ICA exhibition, which also included the letters exchanged between women alongside the objects. Parker wrote that the show's effect was that of a 'long distance consciousness raising session'.[47]

In the review Parker continued by expanding her discussion of the collaboration and collectivity in the work:

> *Feministo* […] undermines […] the idea of the isolated genius (the artist, who whether they wish it or not, intimidates others from producing), by revealing the collective basis of inspiration […] And as each woman can reply directly to the work she receives, the division between art producer and consumer begins to be broken down. Art practice becomes a living process – more of a dialogue.[48]

So Parker hitches the project's renegotiation of authorship, not only to the marginalised craft practices it redeployed – which she discusses later in the review – but also to collectivism. This was not simply the delegation of authorship across the production of a single object, as in Chicago's *The Dinner Party*, nor was it a participatory performance like the *International Dinner Party*. Instead the interlocutors took on the roles of art producer and consumer only to reverse them again, with the object received serving as a prompt for a new object to be made. For instance Lyn Austin's *Bubble Bath Suicide,* illustrated in the documentation of the project in *MAMA: Women Artists Together* (fig. 2.26), finds a partner in *Sanctuary*, a now anonymous work illustrated in

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[46] Richardson, "Crocheted Strategies": 39.
[47] Rozsika Parker, "Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife", *Spare Rib,* no. 60, (July 1977): 5
[48] Parker, "Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife", 5.

Parker's review (fig. 2.25).[49] *Bubble Bath Suicide* comprises a narrow rectangular box, filled with polystyrene balls to resemble the bubble bath in the title. Within the balls are the peaks of a body – head, chest, thighs, shins and ankles – making up the dead or dying subject of the suicide, also referred to in the title. Although the correspondence and context surrounding this work is lost, it seems to document a fearful and depressive state with bubbles made of polystyrene alluding to a particularly toxic suffocation. But this effect is transformed in *Sanctuary*, which reimagines the bath as a space of one's own. In this work the bath is surrounded by another box, maybe a shoebox, in which it nestles among tissue paper wrap. Inside a moulded female figure lies with knees up in filmy water. While it is now hard to trace whether these objects were related to each other – because many were lost or destroyed after the exhibition toured to Australia and others reside the private collections of their makers – repeated conceits suggest that some objects may have been made in direct response, while shared imagery such as windows, masks, butterflies and mirrors highlight a developing visual language. As one participant Phil Goodall stated:

> Our isolation is broken by recognising images that are instantly knowable as to do with women. Images are reiterated in different people's work, images and ideas aren't private property. The strain of being creative is removed from the individual and begins to become a bit more collective.[50]

Here 'reiteration' and recognition provide alternatives to 'reference, deference and difference' as principles for structuring the formal and personal relations between artworks and artists.[51] The collaboration in the *Postal Event* then, depended on building up and on ideas shared between artists. So although the touring exhibitions were comprised of ever more dense installations, the objects always remained distinct and the work of one correspondent. The effect of this collaboration was that the project pushed at the categories defining fine art and reoriented the territory from a linear teleology of one thing after another, to a horizontal terrain of co-existence. As Monica Ross powerfully summed up: 'It is a non stop process, new work constantly emerges as a visual conversation develops. The aim is communication, not perfect aesthetics.'[52]

The *Postal Event* resulted in a kind of artistic fraternity, better described as sisterly community, except that the association between the women was not founded on a shared identity

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[49] See the coverage of the *Postal Event* by various authors in *MAMA: Women Artists Together*, (Birmingham: n.p., c.1977): 21–34, WAL, Special Collections, Goldsmiths College, London. Parker's review did not include the names of those who made the works she illustrated. This caused some contention from the artists themselves, who saw it as a double standard, because the review carried the writer's signature.

[50] Phil Goodall, "Feministo: Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman", *Spare Rib*, no 49, (August 1976): 37.

[51] Pollock, *Avant Garde Gambits*: 15

[52] Monica Ross, "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman: A Postal Event", *MAMA: Women Artists Together*, (Birmingham: n.p. c.1977): 24, WAL.

but an ongoing process of identification. In other words the women were differentiated – physically isolated by their separation from each other – and came together through the mail art exchange. This paralleled the idea of community developed by the American theorist Iris Marion Young. Young's work was influenced by Hannah Arendt, and her essay 'The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference' extends the model of political work Hannah Arendt proposed with the space of appearance.[53] Young develops the idea of a community formed through communication and identification with Julia Kristeva's theory of language. Young argues that the very concept of a shared identity is impossible as every potential connection is mediated by interaction in conscious and unconscious ways. She writes:

> the logic of identity represses heterogeneity, which [Kristeva] associated with the body as well as language. She […] focuses on language and the process of signification especially the speaking subject […] The subject is never a unity, but always in process.[54]

Here Young, following Kristeva, suggests that identity is actually identification, both that rooted in the self and that, which develops from interaction. In this way Young is breaking with any supposed 'logic of identity', to propose that identity positions might form in relation and that those relations could be changed over time, consolidating new forms of community. Along these lines, community would not necessarily depend on proximity in space, but on the ability to recognise the potential of mediation. Young goes on to suggest:

> I take there to be several problems with the privileging of face-to-face relations by theorists of community. It presumes an illusory ideal of unmediated social relations, and wrongly identifies mediation with alienation.[55]

Young's proposition that 'mediation' is falsely allied with 'alienation' is an important one for the *Postal Event* and returns us to Walker's rejection of academic language and political debate that jumpstarted its expansion. Here material mediation provided a means for women isolated at home, or 'housebound' as Pen Dalton comments, to make contact with others and reflect on their own lives, without the language of discourse developing between other women and in the other spaces of the Women's Liberation Movement. Ross' description of a 'visual conversation' is crucial to understanding the importance that art could play as means for politicisation and political expression. This was particularly important for bringing together the different generations of geographically dispersed and predominantly working class women who participated in the *Postal Event*.

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[53] Young, "The Ideal of Community": 1–26.
[54] Young, "The Ideal of Community": 4.
[55] Young, "The Ideal of Community": 15.

While the reclamation of craft practices certainly challenged the tenets of fine art in the exhibition displays, the process of making the objects in the home contested the status of women's homework as a form of unskilled and poorly paid labour. This was a pervasive topic in both feminist-influenced art and cinema in the 1970s. It was the subject of Margaret Harrison's 1977 piece *Homeworkers*, for which she interviewed a number of women incorporating their handprints and stories onto a large hessian banner (fig.2.27). While those women did extremely menial tasks, there was a longer history of skilled work in the home, instead of, or alongside industrial labour. Sue Clayton and Jonathon Curling's film *Song of the Shirt* (1979) (fig. 2.28) interrogated the 'sweated labour' of women textile workers in London in the wake of new philanthropy and protectionism in the nineteenth century, bringing this history to bear on that moment, through the juxtaposition of period and contemporary scenes. Many of the skilled textile workers in that film were also illiterate and, while those conditions were quite distinct from those the women in the *Postal Event* faced, an interview between Walker and her mother Agnes Walker reveals that the exploitation of women's craft work was not so distant. Walker wrote:

> I, like my mother, maintain some scepticism about the rediscovery of craftwork because for working-class women, any nostalgia about it is bogus. Exploited, unpaid work was the very thing that my grandmothers left North Yorkshire and County Mayo to escape. My mother and I are all too aware that although we respect the skills passed onto us, they stink of poverty. It is impossible to pretend that those objects were 'good works' or 'art'. In those days your work was used, traded on, or worn right out, like you yourself.[56]

That this history of exploited craft labour sits at the background of the *Postal Event* highlights the possibility that some housewives in the 1970s had to redirect the social relations they occupied. Likewise it shows up the fact that this project was not transhistorical: two generations earlier, everything crafted at home was sold, and in Walker's mother's generation all that was brought into the home was exhausted therein. This she described as a process of 'demotion – jacket, to rug, to doormat'.[57] To borrow from the subtitle of the book in which the interview was published, craft was an 'aesthetics of survival'. That many of the objects and materials of the *Postal Event* were going spare highlights a different association to materials, or a different set of materials. Plastics, branded cardboard boxes and jars all featured in the objects exchanged, and all were materials that could not be easily re-used. Instead the signification of a 'Marmite' jar and a 'Black Magic' box added to the substance of the work (fig. 2.20 and 2.25). The latter featured in an object made by

[56] Kate Walker, "Starting with Rag Rugs: The Aesthetics of Survival", in *Women and Craft*, edited by Gillian Elinor, Su Richardson, Angharad Thomas, Sue Scott and Kate Walker (London: Trafalgar Square, 1987): 27.
[57] Walker, "Starting with Rag Rugs": 27.

Walker, in which pursing, pouting lips and body parts replaced the consumed chocolates in the tray. Here the romantic economy of gifted chocolates – 'Black Magic' had the tagline 'All Because the Lady Loves' – was playfully exposed. A winning smile becomes a sinister grin, and the 'sweetness' of courtship is fragmented into a set of gestures and body parts to be received and serviced.

As such the *Postal Event* provided a different aesthetics of survival, not through making things that could be re-used, but instead by making things that could be recirculated and therefore breaking the isolation of the domestic environment at mid-century. This project imagined the pressure of making and maintaining a home and family during the acceleration of consumer capitalism, against the saving and thriftiness of the generations before. The *Postal Event* serves as a meditation on the deskilling of housewives and the difficult 'tangle', as Walker calls it, of maintaining these traditions as they increasingly sat under the realm of leisure.[58]

Nonetheless the movement of materials in this project created a community that mapped onto the structure of political community in the 1970s. While these exchanges established and cemented relationships between the women, they also threw a spanner in the works of domestic reproduction. This resistance, in turn, showed the home to be another kind of political space, like the parliament, the street or the factory and one that might also demand coalition building and collectivity. In the next chapter I discuss the dissolution of the single-family dwelling in more detail and in relation to *A Woman's Place* (1974), another artwork with which Walker was involved. But the *Postal Event* also demonstrated another way of being an artist, untangling the association of having a practice with a committed, singular focus and instead revealing the ways in which making might fit around other things and literally emerge from them.

The emphasis on process and the formation of a community in the *Postal Event* offered a different form of collaboration to the *International Dinner Party*. The former was longer lasting, smaller in scale and more focused on the internal development of the women participants, as well as sustaining the relationships between them. The latter built in smaller group interaction, but ultimately sought to imagine an international network of politicised women, in a display of strength. Although Lacy would go on to explore the possibilities of community formation in her later work, this was based on putting women into dialogue face-to-face and making this interaction integral to the artwork, of which the performance would provide a translatable image.[59] Both of these works stage a process of politicisation through participation in group activity. But just as they provided positive ways of working together, there were always women left out. In what follows I want to think about one such woman, the Chilean artist Cecilia Vicuña whose *Precarios* and *Twelve Books for the Chilean Resistance* were produced in response to the artist's travels between Chile, London, Colombia and New York.

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[58] Walker, "Starting with Rag Rugs": 30.
[59] See Grant Kester on Lacy's work in *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkley, CA: University of California, 2004): 84–5 and 183–7.

Unlikely Anchors: *Precarios* and the *Twelve Books for the Chilean Resistance*

The *Precarios*, along with the *Twelve Books*, map a personal geography tracing Vicuña's iterant, intermediate subjectivity that contrasts starkly with the collaborative, dialogically structured organisations of the *Postal Event* and the *International Dinner Party*. The *Precarios* have animated Vicuña's artistic practice from early works dating from the mid-1960s through to her most contemporary performances.[60] Sometimes the objects were precarious because they would be left in the environment (fig. 2.29), Vicuña describes her first foray into this work on a beach in Con-cón, Chile as a response 'to the Earth in a language that the tide would erase'.[61] These works took the title *Con cons*. At other times the objects were simply made from 'street debris' and kept as a *Diary of Objects for the Chilean Resistance*, this series were the objects made during Vicuña's time in London in the early 1970s (figs 2.31–2.32).[62]

Vicuña's visual art practice is frequently (and sometimes literally) tied to her environment, and each object, performance or poem responds to the context of production and produces an index of that moment. Her performances rarely trace her own actions, rather her actions trace particular ecologies, including the natural, technical or social strata intersecting in every environment. These works take the form of woven environments, composite objects and complex part-improvised poetry readings.[63] Vicuña's 1980s series of *L'Agua Neuva York* (1983), which comprised monuments of rubbish left on the streets and waterways of New York, as well as her *Con cons* (1966–7), consisting of woollen strands woven in particular environments including river banks and buses in Chile, have been discussed for the particular mode of precariousness they create as artworks which are not discreet objects, but fragmentary material interventions into systems of flow. Lucy R. Lippard has connected these two series through their use of waterways as channels for interaction, while in the same volume M. Catherine de Zegher discusses Vicuña's oeuvre as an 'open-ended work' which circles back and forth.[64] Her description of the *Precarios* seems apposite for her point about Vicuña's practice as a whole:

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[60] Some of the earlier *Precarios* are documented in a poetry book by Vicuña titled *Precario/Precarious* (New York: Tanam, 1983).

[61] Cecilia Vicuña, "Performing Memory: An Autobiography" in *Spit Temple: The Selected Performances of Cecilia Vicuña*, ed. Rosa Alcalá (New York: Ugly Duckling, 2014): 55.

[62] Rosa Alcalá, "Introduction, 'Made Not of Words, But Forces': Cecilia Vicuña's Oral Performances", in *Spit Temple*: 25. This book describes the *Precarios* as a 'Diary of Objects', but on the occasion of their display at Art Meeting Place in London in 1974 they were called 'A Journal of Objects for the Chilean Resistance', which was also the title of the exhibition. See Jane England, ed., *Cecilia Vicuña*, exh. cat. (London: England and Co, 2013): 24.

[63] See Alcalá, "Made Not of Words, But Forces" for more discussion of this element of Vicuña's practice, the same volume also includes transcripts of some of the performances as well as essays recalling some of the performances.

[64] Lucy R. Lippard, "Spinning The Common Thread" and M. Catherine de Zegher "*Ouvrage*: Knot a Not: Notes on Knots", in *The Precarious/ QIUPOem: The Art and Poetry of Cecilia Vicuña*, ed. de Zegher (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan, 1997): 20.

> Each piece is composed in such a way that every material holds another in balance. And although not featuring any symmetry, each whole structure stands up in a fragile state of suspended equilibrium.[65]

The works, then, capture a moment of 'equilibrium' that will not hold. They are indexical markers of a moment in the artist's life, like a journal entry, which brought about a new significance that held against the momentum of day-to-day life. In this way the objects are precarious.

To conclude this chapter I want to consider the indexicality of the *Precarios* made during Vicuña's stay in London in the 1970s. This is a move from the macro scale of Lacy's *International Dinner Party*, to the national reach of the *Postal Event*, to the micro level of Vicuña's daily practice. While this might be seen to shrink the network, or diminish the strength on display in Lacy's map, the *Precarios* articulate a different kind of political agency in light of isolation. Despite the differences between the three case studies, each concerns the transmission of smaller scale, habitual activities onto a larger, more public framework. Although the *Precarios* were small and ephemeral they endured in the artist's collection and as reproductions in her book *Saborami*, unlike the monuments of rubbish the artist made in New York a decade later or the *Con cons* assembled on the beach before she left for London, although both series were also documented.[66] In contrast to those objects, which register the flow of environmental distribution and redistribution, the London works provided more hardy markers. They index Vicuña's time in London and the busy flow of the city, but they also trace the artist's displacement and distance from her homeland, Chile. The index here acts a kind of personal measure, marking the trauma of this separation and a notch against which to collect thought and emotion. This was also the case with *Saborami*, as the artist and co-editor of the book Felipe Ehrenberg writes:

> Appearing as it does two months after Chile was carefully raped by starry striped militarists, *Saborami* is the very first howl of pain to emerge from the rubble under which Chile's conscience lies stunned. This book is sheer irony; the result of converging chance happenings: it collects nearly ten years of work by Cecilia and was planned as a celebration. Now it symbolizes the contained fury and the sorrow of her country's present. It also gives an inkling of the strengths that will fight to break the New Disorder now in power.[67]

That Ehrenberg describes the publication of that book as the 'very first howl of pain' from the military overthrow of Salvador Allende's socialist government registers Vicuña's emotional

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[65] de Zegher, "*Ouvrage*: Knot a Not": 21
[66] Cecilia Vicuña, *Saborami* (Cullompton, Devon: Beau Geste Press, 1973, republished by Chainlinks, 2015).
[67] Felipe Ehrenberg quoted in Alacalá, "Made Not of Words, But Forces": 26. The passage appeared as the foreword to *Saborami*.

response to the 1973 *coup d'etat*. Ehrenberg's comments describe a kind of severance, in which the celebratory tone of Vicuña's text was displaced, allowing fragments of her broken present to interrupt the page. It was a cry that could only issue from a distance, given the backlash against Allende's supporters in Chile, and that both addressed and was produced by that distance.[68] The *Precarios*, which de Zegher notes evokes the Latin *precarious* or prayer, were also a response to the *coup*.[69] As Vicuña has described, the objects: 'try to kill three birds with one stone. Politically, they stand for socialism, magically they help the liberation struggle, and aesthetically they are as beautiful as they can be to recomfort the soul and give strength'.[70]

The works made in London represented Vicuña's precarious position between Chile and England. Sometimes this took the form of expressing her anger and pain through symbolism. For instance in a painting made on the night of the coup titled *The Death of Salvador Allende* (fig. 2.30), she imagined Chile 'as a desert with a colossal drop of blood falling into the sea'.[71] Other works, such as the *Twelve Books* (figs 2.33–2.34), which formed part of the *Diary of Objects for the Chilean Resistance*, took a more activist stance. One of the books was made up of teletypes yielded from the Chilean embassy in London, while another included material supporting the Chilean resistance that had circulated through a solidarity group based in the capital of which Vicuña was a member. The thin tissue-paper pages and cut-and-paste technique fix the bits and pieces of material in place. Their fragility attests to the difficulty of circulating information about Chile internationally, as well as Vicuña's personal distance.[72] Nonetheless through the books and other activities – including giving talks in London pubs and organising a benefit exhibition – Vicuña mediated the news and through this connected with others in the city. Furthermore when the works were exhibited they were accompanied by 'explanations', which described them for the viewer, hence the title of her 1973 ICA exhibition *Pain Things and Explanations*. Although in London the explanations had the added function of translating texts from Spanish, in a less straightforward way they also provided the artist's narration. This intertextuality extended a way to think about the object, giving it amplification, but it also binding it more tightly to the artist-maker.

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[68] Even before the *coup*, Vicuña's poetry had been censored because of its eroticism, after the military dictatorship took power many supporters of Allende were disappeared or at the very least discredited. Vicuña has also related that on searching her Chilean boyfriend's home, representative of the new government destroyed some of her artworks, see Vicuña, "Performing Memory: An Autobiography": 72.

[69] de Zegher, "*Ouvrage:* Knot a Not": 20.

[70] Vicuña in Lippard, "Spinning The Common Thread": 9.

[71] Vicuña, "Performing Memory: An Autobiography": 71.

[72] Vicuña's was not the only howl of pain. Stories of violence in Chile, especially the disappearances, were smuggled out of Chile as illustrations on quilts. The fabric used were factory off-cuts, which were then stitched by communities in Chilean *barrios*. The quilts were made for international attention and could circulate because of the tourist trade in traditional crafts. An exhibition of these works were shown at AIR Gallery in London in 1978. See Lucy R. Lippard, "Raising Questions, Trying to Raise Hell", in *Get the Message: A Decade of Art for Social Change* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1984): 85–6.

The *Precarios* are more like residual interventions or interruptions than conventional artworks. Protest signs appear on fragments of cardboard, one reads 'La luche en la fuente cultural?' (is struggle the source of culture?). While on a disintegrating scrap of wood the words: 'resistencia/ regional /organizada > revolu/ción' emerge as if Vicuña was testing out ideas. Another object includes a scrap of red fabric worn by Vicuña as an armband, which pinned onto a branch, transformed into a flag. These bits and pieces of resistance are not forceful or strong. Formally they parallel a howl of pain heard at a distance and in this way signify the drift of a subject excluded from the machinations of political action, or a migrant untethered from the place of their citizenship. But the composition of empty wrappers and material fragments loosely bound together, albeit frail, also register Vicuña's resistance to that drift. As the artist has stated, 'these materials are lying down and I respond by standing them up'.[73]

The reverberations of the *Diary of Objects* are quite distinct from the political address of other women's art from the 1970s. They are far from celebratory or empowering, but nonetheless they bear some comparison. Many of the objects, despite their roughness, were carefully crafted. Some are painted with bright patterns, others are bound together with thread or stitched and embroidered. These ones in particular seem to negotiate a generational displacement, signalling Vicuña's engagement with the culture of Andean weaving. In this way the objects parallel those made in the *Postal Event*, they both bridge the border between high and low art and are concerned with art making in the everyday. Vicuña was cognisant of her relationship to these histories, although it was not until the 1980s and her involvement with Lippard and the *Heresies* collective that she consciously engaged with feminist organising. In London it was in the company of Guy Brett, John Dugger and David Medalla that she founded a political group, called Artists for Democracy (AfD). The first project the group undertook was to support the resistance to the *coup* in Chile.[74] As such I do not want to claim Vicuña for the narratives of feminist-influenced art in Britain, but instead to think seriously about her presence and absence from exhibitions, organisations and alliances that were the product of women's activism. By introducing Vicuña to the story I want to suggest that participation in the women's art movement should not determine an artist's relationship to feminist politics, which might be partial or complex and also intersect other investments and activities.

The *Precarios* traced a different route than the *International Dinner Party* map or the *Postal Art Event* objects. They were not part of a larger project, but tied to a single artist and once

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[73] Vicuña quoted in Lippard, "Spinning the Common Thread": 15.

[74] Vicuña hosted an event during the tour of Lippard's *c. 7,500* in London, her name appears written in hand next to 'Thursday 18th April – Women and Revolution' in "Press Release", *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970–1986*, edited by Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock (London: Pandora, 1987): 197. Vicuña also appeared in *Spare Rib,* see Vicuña, "The Coup Came to Kill What I Love", *Spare Rib*, no.28, (October 1974): 36–8. She also attended Artists' Union meetings, but there is no record of her meeting with the WWAU. The Artists for Democracy came out of Vicuña's discussions about Chile, it was a mixed group but Vicuna was the only female founding member. See Vicuña, "Performing Memory: An Autobiography": 75.

the materials had been incorporated into a work they were immobile, except when Vicuña, who made the objects small enough to travel with her, moved on. The *Precarios* are not things remade and re-circulated but materials appropriated and paused in their circuitous flow. The waste materials, when fixed in place by the artist, acted like roots grounding her in place, unlike the exchange of crafted objects, which expanded the horizons of women bound to their domestic environment. Both of these strategies constituted new relationships between the artists and the spaces they occupied. For Vicuña the *Precarios* provided an anchor in the midst of her displacement from Chile, but they also situated her within the squat culture in a London still under-populated and underdeveloped from pre-war suburbanisation and post-war reconstruction.

Vicuña came to London on a British Council scholarship in 1972 to begin post-graduate studies at the Slade School of Art. In a recent publication Vicuña has remembered the isolation she felt without much contact from either her peers or teachers.[75] Unlike the artworlds of Chile, Mexico or New York, which the artist had visited in the previous years, London in the early 1970s was a flabby and disparate group of commercial galleries, museums and often short-lived countercultural spaces.[76] While Vicuña made some impact in this world, she did not put down roots, and promptly left the city after the breakdown of the AfD. But after gaining asylum in the UK in the wake of the *coup*, Vicuña found herself at the end of her studies and her grant, so found a place to live in a squatted and tumbledown house in Camden (fig. 2.36). The squat became a space for Vicuna to host visiting artists and refugees from Chile and elsewhere, and as such it became a channel for the flow of bodies that passed through an equally 'mobile, kinetic and ephemeral' artworld.[77] The environment Vicuña occupied in London in the 1970s, then, was far more contingent than the relative stability of the domestic environments that the *Postal Event* artists experienced. Her professional and domestic spaces merged in a melange of people and borrowed spaces. In this context the *Precarios* can be seen as part of this mobile cultural sphere, not concerned with forward momentum and progress but the reverse rhythms of a counter-cultural movement.[78]

While squatting provided living space in 1970s London, empty housing and industrial buildings were also used for studios and exhibition spaces, I discuss this in more depth in chapter three. These ad-hoc, spaces were often used by women artists – think for instance of *Hang Up, Put Down, Stand Up* at Art Meeting Place discussed in the previous chapter – and it was through the

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[75] Vicuña in Cecilia Vicuña, "Chronology", in *Cecilia Vicuña*, ed. Jane England, exh. cat. (London: England & Co, 2013): 24.

[76] Susan Hiller has remarked on the disparate spread of the city. See Yves Alain Bois, Guy Brett and Susan Hiller, "Retrievals", in *Susan Hiller*, ed. Ann Gallagher, exh. cat., (London: Tate Britain, 2012): 33.

[77] I borrow this phrase from the subtitle of the book Applin, Spencer and Tobin, ed., *London Art Worlds*. The essays in this book, although not focused on Vicuña, illuminate the context she occupied in early 1970s London.

[78] See Astrid Proll, ed., *Goodbye to London: Radical Art and Politics in the 70's* (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2010) and Tom Holert, *Marc Camille Chaimowicz Celebration? Realife* (Cambridge MA and London: MIT and Afterall, 2007). The latter installation took place at Gallery House, another alternative space, in 1972. The installation recreated the atmosphere of alternative living.

circuit of these exhibition spaces that Vicuña came to participate in the women's art movement.[79] In 1974 she spoke and hosted a discussion on 'Women and Revolution' in a series of events associated with Lippard's touring exhibition of conceptual work by women artists, *c. 7, 500*. The exhibition took place at Garage gallery, a space funded by Terence Conran, Antony Caro and Richard Smith in an old van store on Covent Garden. This space, like Art Meeting Place, where Vicuña exhibited the *Precarios* later in the same year (fig. 2.35) were part of the changing focus of space in central London, from industrial and commercial to retail and residential. Art galleries like these functioned as catalysts for that transformation, although it must be said more consciously by spaces like Garage than Art Meeting Place.[80] Importantly neither of these spaces was women-only or even run by women, but they did provide spaces for occupation when more established spaces in London would not.[81]

Just as Vicuña participated in the events associated with *c. 7,500*, she also engaged other groups speaking at Artists' Union meetings and participating in activities in the Chilean Solidarity Committee in London. Her activism in this period was closely associated with the form of her artistic practice, which frequently wove words and textiles together, as de Zegher has argued, into linguistic systems. It is my contention that the *Precarios*, as an index of the artist's displacement, delineates a mode of public speaking that parallels the shared conversation between the women in the *Postal Event*. Yet instead of constructing a separate collaborative space, they provided another outlet for Vicuña's howl of pain as well as a means to map the artist's time in the city.

Vicuña's *Diary of Objects* offers a different picture of politicised art making than has so far appeared in this thesis. The objects were not collaboratively produced, although they do speak to broader themes like solidarity. Nonetheless by bringing together these three art projects, I want to put them in conversation and draw out parallel paths that did not meet. These parallels allow the works to reflect each other and as such show up the different investments, not to mention the different women that animated the field of political art making in the 1970s. This chapter has continued to think about speech and political empowerment between women, but this time at a distance. The next chapter will draw this out further, but instead of thinking with organisational models like the consciousness-raising group, or the international spread of small groups, the chapter will focus on the home or more precisely the fabric of the house.

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[79] See Battista, *Renegotiating the Body,* particularly chapter three "Alternative Spaces for Feminist Art": 91–138.

[80] For an imaginative recreation of the time, particularly the context around Garage gallery see Susannah Worth, "Trading Places Butler and Conran: A Fictional Conversation", in *After Butler's Wharf: Essays on a Working Building* (London: Royal College of Art, 2013): 31–40.

[81] See Fiona Anderson and Amy Tobin, "Collaboration is not an Alternative: Artists Working Together in London and New York 1971–1984", in *Collaboration and Its Discontents* (London: Courtauld Books Online, forthcoming 2016).

Chapter Three:

Ruined Houses and Radical Domesticity: Women Artists at Home in Los Angeles, London and New York

Think about fabric, a textile or a bolt of woven thread. It is all surface, no matter the depth of the weave, the compression of threads, the thickness. The abiding quality of this fabric is its status as a plane, an expanse; something that could provide shelter just as it can be easily collapsed and folded away. It is with the contingency and invisibility of fabric, as well as its prevalence, that I want to begin thinking about the intersection between architecture, domesticity and politics in three case studies: *Womanhouse* (1971–2), *A Woman's Place* (1974) and *Reflections on Vacancy* (1979). While each of these works is distinct, I also want to think about their interrelation and as such to posit a concept of the 'home' as something that could be mobile yet specific, something that could be shaped and reshaped. As Bauhaus artist Anni Albers reminds us:

> When we move about, we carry with us, all else, the clothes we wear and these have always been of material, textile in its nature […] The same type of material that proved so suited for clothing was also appropriate [for shelter], a material that was pliable above all characteristics and therefore easily portable […] And if we think of clothing as a secondary skin we might enlarge on this thought and realize that the enclosure of walls in a way is a third covering, that our habitation is another "habit".[1]

As Albers describes, textiles are intimately connected to architecture. This is a far from depoliticised statement by a woman working within the Bauhaus, where the best place for women was perceived as the fabric workshops rather than those of painting, industrial design or architecture. But beyond contending the status of fabric design, and its association with women's work, Albers' essay bespeaks a vital continuity between surface and structure. As an example of the close relation between fabric design and architecture, she implores her reader to look at Le Corbusier's design for the High Court at Chandigarh. Perhaps more evocatively, she also proposes thinking abstractly about the connection between our own dwellings and their textile elements. How, she asks, does their complex woven structure, industrially developed to work differently as towels, curtains, carpets or furnishings, mimic the foundations, insulation, pipes and wires that

[1] Anni Albers with illustrations by Zoe Leonard, "Habitation in a Habitat", *Interiors*, ed. Johanna Burton, Lynne Cooke and Josiah McElhelny (New York: Bard College, 2012): 45 and 53. On the gender dynamics at the Bauhaus see T'ai Smith, "A Collective and its Individuals: The Bauhaus and its Women", *Modern Women: Women Artists at the Museum of Modern Art*, edited by Cornelia Butler (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010): 158–73.

make up the built environment? The recent republication of this essay in Johanna Burton, Lynne Cooke and Josiah McElheny's edited book *Interiors* emphasises this point by pairing Albers' essay with a series of photographs by Zoe Leonard (fig.3.1).[2] Taken on the artist's mobile phone the close-up images of her domestic textiles focus attention on the surfaces we know more by touch than sight. The haptic surfaces rendered smooth by the mobile phone camera and screen restage and update the encounter between textile and technology crucial to Albers' discourse on fabric.

Albers half-laments the semi-structural role textiles have to play in the Modernist architectural project, but her analysis speaks to an older problem. A problem that has stabilised the grandeur of the architecture since Alberti, which as Mark Wigley famously argued is gendered, and that settles around the dichotomy of wall and surface, building and ornament.[3] Wigley emphasises the separation between support and surface: whereas the structure of the wall is integral to the building, the surface is only a superficial gloss. But this is not to say that it does not have a function, as the finished, plastered and painted wall screens and eliminates the mechanics of the home. The interior is cleansed of the organs of the house, just as it excludes and neutralises exterior threats.[4] The house as a mechanism of control therefore parallels gender dynamics, which associate the feminine with the bodily, something to be marshalled and made up to a polish. The surface, then, covers the mechanics that make the home permanent and transform it into a Heideggarian place of dwelling, which conceals and eliminates the labour of life, and the process of feeding and excreting that allows 'building' and 'dwelling' to be placed in continuum with 'thinking'.[5]

But again, the path Heidegger lays out is loaded with gender bias. For here it is the man who builds, who dwells and who thinks. In his discussion of being, the role of maintenance is left out of the analysis, as is the woman. The house has been over and again marked out as one of heterosexual, gendered occupation: the man moving between outside and inside, and the woman retaining her 'place' within the home: a space that is never a sanctuary but one of constant maintenance and performance. Reading into Albers a little, a route of escape could be suggested in the qualities of the textile and particularly the textile as a nomadic shelter. The bolt of fabric suggests a getaway and the possibility of living lightly, without the permanence or the deep excavation of building and dwelling. If not an escape it might also be an alternative, a place away from the home, or other buildings inscribed as institutions architecturally. This nomadic space sustains connection over and through its surface, paralleling or constituting connections and

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[2] Leonard's photographs are from a series called *Pliable Plane* (2012).
[3] Mark Wigley, "Untitled: The Housing of Gender", in *Sexuality and Space*, ed. Beatriz Colomina (New York: Princeton University, 1992).
[4] Beatriz Colomina's work on the architecture of Adolf Loos, Le Corbusier and Eileen Gray has also explored the gendering of space. Colomina's essay "The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism", in *Sexuality and Space*: 73–131; along with the book, *Privacy and Publicity: Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge MA and London: MIT, 1994) have proven influential to the argument in this chapter and the next. See also, Colomina, "A House of Ill Repute: E.1027", *Interiors*, ed. Johanna Burton, Lynne Cooke and Josiah McElhelny, (New York: Bard College, 2012).
[5] Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking", in *Basic Writing,* London: Routledge and Keegan and Paul, 1978.

interactions between women. In this way the house-bound installations I focus on in this chapter are on a continuum with the networks of exchange and communication discussed in the previous one. Just as in chapter two I argued that these connections broke the isolation of women in the home, in this chapter I am interested in the process of breaking down and actual attacks on the physical structure of houses. Whereas homely crafts became incendiary objects in the *Postal Event*, in these artworks the house itself becomes the material for radical art making. Although *Womanhouse* and *A Woman's Place* preceded both the *International Dinner Party* and the *Postal Event*, this chapter follows the discussion of those works to purposefully upset chronology and teleology. Indeed it also attests to the prominence of the domestic for women artists in the 1970s, as well as a pivot point in this thesis to trace more clearly some of the transatlantic links and misconnections animating the women's art movement.

The first two artworks I will concentrate on, *Womanhouse* and *A Woman's Place* were both collaboratively produced installations. Whereas the former is well known, an icon of feminist-influenced art practice, the latter is almost undocumented and absent from the narratives of art and feminism. Both took place in domestic buildings, or more precisely in derelict homes. The women worked with the degraded structures to make their artwork and in this way the artworks entered into dialogue with the material fabric of the houses. Importantly, both *Womanhouse* and *A Woman's Place* trod the line between installation and exhibition, a distinction that can also be mapped onto the degree of collaboration between the participating artists. To some extent both works were comprised of numerous discrete artworks, but these works were also made and brought together by the physical structure of the house and the artists' shared concern to deconstruct their experience of the home. Even though individual authorship remains important in each installation, the exhibitions brought women together in the construction of an alternative space. The women intervened in the buildings, renovating as well as messing up the space, and therefore disturbing the smooth superficiality of a surface structure dichotomy. In this way both works reveal the oppression of women's place in the home, whilst simultaneously using that home as space. Not simply a retreat then, the women remade these houses in the context of their art practice to politicise the status of the home as a safe space of dwelling and as such revealing the physical, emotional and psychic labour of the home from the perspective of the woman within.

These two case studies could be conceived of as nomadic shelters that provide a safe space of collectivity. But rather than make the surface a bolt of fabric, they unravel it, pulling at threads to reveal the construction of women's association with the home and its labour. Fabric also offers a way to think of the connections between women, with threads that act as integers connecting women across a transatlantic divide. As I described in the introduction, I am interested in both the local and the international; the micro and the macro structure of women's interactions in the context of the Women's Liberation Movement. So just as we might think of a women's group or a group exhibition as providing a space of interaction structured by that interaction, we might also conceive of the movement as a whole. This is particularly important in relation to these two

connected case studies as *A Woman's Place* was directly influenced by *Womanhouse*. Two of the London artists, Kate Walker and Sue Madden, had read about *Womanhouse* in *Time* magazine and images of it had circulated in Lucy R. Lippard's London slide lecture on women's work the year before.[6] Walker and Madden, then '"felt impelled to have a go" at constructing "rooms as images of mental states from unconscious basements to hot tin rooftops".[7] This transatlantic connection evidences the importance of material exchange for the women's movement and the delays and miscommunications inherent in this exchange as well as, perhaps most strikingly, the possibility that the Los Angeles artwork provided a direct precedence for the London women in the context of their own nascent women's art movement.

Indeed, just as there was miscommunication between women across distance, there were also breaks in communication rendered by cultural, political and age differences between those both within and without the movement. This leads me onto my third case study: Candace Hill-Montgomery's [now Candace Hill] *Reflections on Vacancy*. This work also took place in a house, specifically a tenement block in Harlem, New York City. Unlike *A Woman's Place* and *Womanhouse*, the tenement could not be entered. Hill-Montgomery closed the building off, sealing its windows and doors with planes of crinkled Mylar, a reflective silver sheeting material. The covered windows shielded the interior from prying eyes, but also by reflecting the viewer it inscribed them at the building's thresholds. I argue that this work troubled the formation and reassertion of community through the ghettoization and gentrification of black and Puerto Rican communities in Harlem. This work was not produced by a group and it breaks with the gendered dynamics of the home suggesting alternative dimensions for a feminist critique, which take into account the class and race-based urban politics in the United States and more specifically, New York City. But importantly it also reflects on *Womanhouse* and *A Woman's Place* by showing up the limitations of sisterhood for feminist politics, as well as offering an alternative, critical position on collaboration and collectivity in the New York artworld. While I discuss these three case studies separately, establishing connections and disconnections between them, this chapter illustrates how the house and the home were tested as sites for women's political activism.

Womanhouse: When a House is not a Home

Womanhouse was a product of the second iteration of the Feminist Art Program (F.A.P.) at California Institute of Art (CalArts) in 1971–2.[8] The installation was entirely constructed and conceived of by women from the course, including its teachers Judy Chicago, Miriam Schapiro and

[6] See Lisa Tickner, "Kate Walker" part of "Women Artists in the UK: Nine Women Critics Write About Women Artists of their Choice Working in the UK", *Studio International*, vol.193, no.987 (June 1977): 189.
[7] Walker and Madden quoted in Tickner, "Kate Walker": 189.
[8] The first iteration of the course was at Fresno State College in 1970–1.

Paula Harper as well as its students.[9] Not only was the work developed specifically for the space, the space was also sought out, rented and renovated by the students.[10] This experience was seen by Chicago as a vital part of her feminist pedagogy, developing her students' confidence in dealing with the public world of men at a moment when it was difficult for a single woman to obtain property, rent a car or take out a loan without the signature of a male friend or relative. The house they found in Los Angeles at 533 N. Mariposa Avenue was large, derelict and slated for demolition (fig.3.2). As such it provided the ideal space to create a one-off installation. The women worked on the house from November of 1971 until January 1972, first repairing the building structure and then working on the art that filled each room, corridor and closet.

Womanhouse is one of a few artworks produced in the context of feminism that appears in broader art histories. But it has also suffered from these glosses, which often do not explore the many different works and artists involved in the project in any depth. However, different questions can be asked of this installation. How did the work explore the relationship between home, woman and the feminine? In what ways did it foster collaboration? And finally, how did its iconicity function within the women's art movement more broadly? To answer these questions, this section first looks at the different representations of work in the installation, then at its materiality and finally, in a separate section, how the space was represented and disseminated in image, writing and film. To understand *Womanhouse* in such detail, it is necessary to return to the first Feminist Art Program (F.A.P.) at Fresno State College in 1970 and the studio established for that course, which was the forbear of the CalArts program and the more famous feminist construction project.

Art historian Laura Meyer has argued for a more careful consideration of the feminist art program at Fresno.[11] In light of Meyer's work uncovering the histories of the Fresno F.A.P., a more nuanced understanding of *Womanhouse* can also emerge, one that pays closer attention to the forms of labour employed and developed in these two different settings. Although the process of empowerment, achieved by bringing women together to create an autonomous space for their art, was fundamental to *Womanhouse,* it had its roots in the Fresno program.

Chicago started the feminist art program at Fresno State, a liberal arts college in rural Northern California in 1970. She had been teaching at the college the year before and in response to the political activity of students on campus, including Faith Wilding and Suzanne Lacy, as well

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[9] The students include Beth Bachenmeier, Susan Frazier, Camille Grey, Vicky Hodgett, Kathy Huberland, Judy Huddleston, Karen LeCoq, Janice Lester, Paula Longendyke, Ann Mills, Robin Mitchell, Sandra Orgel, Jan Oxenburg, Christine Rush, Marsha Salisbury, Robin Schiff, Mira Schor, Robin Weltsch, Faith Wilding, Shawnee Wollenmann, Nancy Youdelman, Janice Johnson. The installation also included Sherry Brody, Carol Edison Mitchell and Wanda Westcoast.

[10] Faith Wilding narrates the process of producing the work in "The Feminist Art Programs at Fresno and CalArts, 1970–1975", in *The Power of Feminist Art,* edited by Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Abrams, 1993). Other memories and resources are collated on the *Womanhouse* website, 16 September 2016, http://www.womanhouse.net/.

[11] Laura Meyer and Faith Wilding, "Collaboration and Conflict in the Fresno Feminist Art Program: An Experiment with Feminist Pedagogy", *n. paradoxa*, vol.26, (2008): 40–51. See also Faith Wilding, ed., *By Our Own Hands*, (Santa Monica, CA: Double X, 1977).

as the dominance of male students in her sculpture classes, she established a woman-only program.[12] At first the class met on campus, but at the request of the cohort they soon broke away from the classrooms and studios of the art school to take up residence first in the homes of the students and finally in a communal studio off-campus (see fig. 3.3).[13] Chicago remarked on the effect of this spatial shift in her autobiography *Through the Flower*:

> Once I had organised the class, taken it away from the school, given myself and the students a space of our own and a support group, provided them with a positive role model and an environment in which we could be ourselves, growth for all of us was inevitable.[14]

In this passage Chicago implies that art school was a man's world. This designation was particularly pointed in California, where car culture and fine industrial finishes added up to a macho context.[15] In what could be seen as a retreat, in parallel with the currents of early feminist organising, discussed in chapter one, the F.A.P. students removed to their homes. Yet this was not simply a return to a space in which women felt they belonged and would stay, but a chance for renewal realised in their development as a group. The group's appropriation of domestic space paralleled the grassroots activism of the Women's Liberation Movement, which was seeded in the personal but brought out through the support of a group. Although Chicago has commented that the early group discussions of the F.A.P. were not consciousness raising sessions, they had the same structure.[16] Each woman was invited to speak out about her oppression or her feelings about a particular experience initiating a process of politicisation.[17] But the home also provided a launch pad for the women's move into the public realm and the foundation of a communal studio space paid for and converted by the students. Wilding described the experience:

> Finding that space, learning to deal with realtors, and figuring out how to fund and renovate the building proved a highly instructive aspect of our venture. We set to

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[12] This history is laid out by Chicago in Judy Chicago, *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist* (London: The Woman's Press, 1982): 70–92. See pages 93–133 for a discussion of CalArts and *Womanhouse*. Chicago has reflected on the F.A. P. and her teaching career more recently in Judy Chicago, *Institutional Time: A Critique of Studio Art Education*, New York: The Monacelli Press, 2014 and in Judy Chicago, "Feminist Art Education: Made in California", *Politics of Study*, ed. Sidsel Hansen and Tom Vandeputte (N.P.: Open Editions, 2015).
[13] Wilding, "The Feminist Art Programs at Fresno and CalArts": 34.
[14] Chicago, *Through the Flower*: 78.
[15] Notably Chicago admits her interest in this way of working: 'The hard materials (plastics and metals), perfect finishes, and minimal forms in my work of 1966 and 1967 were "containers" for my hidden feelings'. Chicago, *Through the Flower*: 43, also see pages 40–5 and 87–8.
[16] Chicago, *Through the Flower*: 75.
[17] Chicago, *Through the Flower*: 77.

> work to make it a professional art studio, with space for research, experimentation and sociality.[18]

The space the women found was an ex-theatre big enough to accommodate multiple work areas as well as a kitchen, a dining area and a 'rap room'.[19] In the new studio the group were concentrated in a single space, where work and social activities were collapsed into one building. Indeed the combination of the programme's radicalism and the rigorous commitment Chicago demanded meant that many women spent more and more time at the communal studio, some rarely returning to their homes to do anything but sleep.[20] The group environment of the F.A.P. nurtured a hybrid space in which art making was collapsed with socialising and 'crits' with consciousness raising.[21] Likewise workspaces were constantly merged and reworked in an atmosphere of experimentation that supported different types of art production from painting to poetry and performance. The flexibility of the studio space was a product of and helped to foster the radical pedagogy at Fresno. It set the stage for collaboration and informal support structures in which women could serve as each other's models as well as their critical interlocutors.[22] However, the political function of the space was ambiguous. It was autonomous and represented the women's break from the male-dominated studios on campus yet in contrast to *Womanhouse*, the space and the art produced there were unconnected. Consequently, the separatism of the Fresno studio did not challenge women's relationship to the home or the spaces of art production.

Meyer has commented that the 'production and display of *Womanhouse* marked the public culmination of the Fresno F.A.P. as much as it did the beginning of the programme at CalArts.'[23] On a pragmatic level the second iteration of the F.A.P. included many of the women from the first programme who had transferred with Chicago to CalArts, and as such participated in *Womanhouse*. It also suggests the conceptual connection between the process the women underwent at Fresno, and the shift to CalArts where the F.A.P. was one instance of radical art pedagogy among many.[24]

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[18] Wilding in Meyer and Wilding, "Collaboration and Conflict": 43.
[19] Wilding, "The Feminist Art Programs at Fresno and CalArts": 34.
[20] Wilding, "The Feminist Art Programs at Fresno and CalArts": 34–35.
[21] Meyer and Wilding, "Collaboration and Conflict": 43–44.
[22] For instance the collaborative photographic series of female types by Dori Atlantis, Janice Lester, Shawnee Wollenman and Nancy Youdelman among others. These images are reproduced in Laura Meyer, ed., *A Studio of Their Own*: *The Legacy of the Fresno Feminist Experiment*, exh. cat. (Fresno CA: California State University, 2009): 41–8.
[23] Meyer and Wilding, "Collaboration and Conflict": 41.
[24] CalArts opened a year before the Woman's Building and identified itself as a liberal and political school with an expanded teaching practice that actively fostered interdisciplinary work. Miriam Schapiro, an originating faculty member, along with her husband, was asked to join CalArts and develop the faculty along with other notable artists and critics such as Allan Kaprow, Alison Knowles, John Baldessari, Max Kozloff and Douglas Heubler, chosen both for their expertise and to create an attractive radical identity for the new institution. Chicago was invited by Schapiro. See Jeff Kelley, *Childsplay: The Art of Allan Kaprow* (Berkley CA: University of California, 2004): 147–148. The move to CalArts would also have been precipitated by the faculty backlash against the student's politicisation at Fresno. Wilding and Lacy had established a consciousness-raising

Certainly the creation of the woman-only studio at Fresno determined how the women worked together on *Womanhouse*, as well as the content and form their artworks might take. But I also want to emphasise the disjuncture between the rewriting of space during the Fresno F.A.P. and the creation of the collaborative installation, *Womanhouse*. Unlike the Fresno studio, the later work staged a return to the domestic environment, dramatizing the separatism of the F.A.P. and critically engaging with the relationship between women, space and the production of femininity.[25]

That many more of the students reacted against working on *Womanhouse* is testament to the shift in process and expectations. In contrast to Fresno the women worked toward a specific end, the creation of an installation rather than a space that they might occupy and claim as their own. *Womanhouse* was also open to the public, and demanded that the students make work for display much earlier and in a much more confined context than the conventional end of year exhibition. Moreover in the environment of CalArts – which had just opened the previous year with a stellar faculty and a series of sensational public works and happenings – *Womanhouse* can be seen, partially at least, as a product of a West Coast art scene interested in making its mark nationally and internationally, as well as infamous for its countercultural activity.[26] So despite the similarities between the two F.A.P.s, the Fresno studio and the *Womanhouse* installation provided entirely different experiences. While the former empowered women with the means to develop their own art practices in the recesses of a small liberal arts college, the women of *Womanhouse* worked in the glare of an avant-garde art school and high-wattage media attention, with a structure laid out and an endpoint in mind.

This returns me to the surface, because if the Fresno studio was a space to be worked in, *Womanhouse* was one to be worked on. The processes were comparable: in both places the women had to replace windows as well as build, plaster and paint walls. Whereas the women at Fresno created a hybrid space tailored to the needs of a new group-oriented art practice, at CalArts they worked primarily on their own or in pairs to produce work in dialogue with the domestic setting.

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group and a course 'The Second Sex: On Women's Liberation' under the rubric of 'The Experimental College', part of the English department in 1970. However, the course when the university administration cracked down on the Experimental College and the English Department. Wilding comments that the course was 'reorganized it as a student activity in the Student Union'. In Meyer and Wilding, "Collaboration and Conflict": 42–43. Also see Paul J. Karlstrom, "Art School Sketches: Notes on the Central Role of Schools in California Art and Culture", in *Made in California: Art, Image and Identity, 1900–2000*, edited by Stephanie Barron, Sherri Bernstein and Ilene Fort, exh. cat. (Berkeley CA, Los Angeles and London: LACMA and University of California Press, 2000).

[25] Importantly the Fresno F.A.P. did continue, see Jennie Klein, "'Teaching to Transgress': Rita Yokoi and the Fresno Feminist Art Program" and Lillian Faderman, "Joyce Aiken: Thirty Years of Feminist Art and Pedagogy in Fresno", in *Entering the Picture: Judy Chicago, the Fresno Feminist Art Program, and the Collective Visions of Women Artists*, edited by Jill Fields (New York and Oxford: Routledge, 2012).

[26] On Los Angeles in the 1970s see Michael Fallon, *Creating the Future: Art and Los Angeles in the 1970s* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2014) and the essays in Auther and Lerner, eds., *West of Center: Art and the Countercultural Experiment in America, 1965–1977* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2011).

Womanhouse was never inhabited; instead it was more like a show home for all the anxieties and restrictions of domestic space.

Some of the rooms in the large house were organised into a disjointed narrative of women's relationship to home, from Shawnee Wollenman's *Nursery* (fig.3.4), with outsized furniture, to the bride perched at the precipice of a staircase aisle in Kathy Huberland's contribution (fig. 3.5) and the aging woman in Karen le Coq and Nancy Youdelman's *Lea's Room* (fig. 3.6). Other rooms did not have figures and these installations invaded rooms with proliferations of feminine matter, including Beth Bachenheimer's *Shoe Closet* (fig. 3.7) and Camille Grey's *Lipstick Bathroom* (fig. 3.8). In the latter, rows of lipsticks stacked on the shelf transferred their colour onto the walls and furniture, saturating them in a vivid blood-red gloss. In the documentary photographs the room looks like an exposed bodily interior, tethering the inhabitant to the habitat and bloodying the white walls. Underwear laid out on the side of the bath, added to the suggestion of layers being peeled away, in a strip that was more gruesome than seductive. Other rooms also played with excessive scale and immersive installation. Wilding's now well-known *Crochet Environment* (fig. 3.9) appeared alongside Judy Huddleston's *Personal Environment* (fig. 3.10) and Janice Lester's dream bedroom, *Personal Space* (fig.3.11). All three prompted audience members to occupy the spaces, with Wilding and Huddelston both creating enclosures within rooms, while Lester depended on both 'beautiful and frightening elements' to submerge the visitor in her dream of a room that was both a 'sanctuary' and a 'trap'.[27] Mira Schor, Ann Mills and Robin Mitchell each painted the walls of her respective room. Schor's *Red Moon Room* (fig. 3.12) featured a life-size self-portrait of the artist pointing to the moon as a statement of her feminist credentials, against criticisms levelled at her and other conflicts within the group.[28] Mitchell's *Painted Room* (fig. 3.13) was similarly immersive, although it did not attempt to enclose the viewer in the same way. Instead the walls, floors, ceilings and furniture became the canvas for an abstract painting. As the artist wrote: 'To make a painting that is a room/ To make a room that is a painting'.[29] In this work Mitchell merged the problems of finding a space to paint, with the haptic quality of large-scale expressionist painting. *Painted Room* folded the body of the spectator into the work and spread colour out onto the walls.

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[27] Janice Lester, "*Personal Space*", in *Womanhouse*, exh. cat, *(*Los Angeles, CA: n.p., 1972): unpaginated.

[28] In the catalogue Schor wrote: 'When the painting was finished I realized that the room also is the dark side of myself, midnight moon blood red dark purple Mira, the pointing and pointy Mira of the awry perspective who sometimes feels only she really owns the moon'. See Schor, "*Red Moon Room*", in *Womanhouse*: unpaginated. Schor has written of her experience of the F.A.P. in 'Appropriated Sexuality' and 'Authority and Learning' in *Wet: On Painting, Feminism and Art Culture* (Durham NC: Duke University, 1997): 3–12 and 125–134 and has also reflected on it for artist Ulrike Mueller's project *re:tracing the feminist art program*, online archive, accessed 25 August 2016, http://www.encore.at/retracing/index2.html, see page 4 especially.

[29] Robin Mitchell, "*Painted Room*", in *Womanhouse*: unpaginated.

Despite Mitchell's gestural scrawls in both the photographic documentation and the warm haze of Johanna Demetrakas' film, *Womanhouse* had the appearance of a newly decorated home.[30] In each room, corridor and closet the installations disturbed smoothly plastered and freshly painted surfaces. The dome forms of Vicky Hodgetts' *Egg to Breast* (fig. 3.14) bulged from the flat pink background of the kitchen wall like matte bubbles of paint. Sandra Orgel's mannequin (fig. 3.15) takes a step forward out of the clean and empty hallway closet that violently quarters her. Another female figure is fixed in the hard material of a sand-set bathtub in Robbin Schiff's *Nightmare Bathroom* (fig. 3.16), as if the building materials have developed agency and claimed her body in a life-size version of Lynn Austin's postal work *Bubblebath Suicide* discussed in chapter two (see fig. 2.25).[31] Each room has a fine finish, providing a fine background for the feminine fall-out to wreak havoc. This took place, perhaps most infamously, in Judy Chicago's *Menstruation Bathroom* (fig. 3.17) where an otherwise spotless white bathroom was marked by the red of menstrual blood on sanitary ware, which spilled out from a bin raised up to the most visible spot on a shelf. These apparently bloodied cottons punctuated a scene that was delineated and sealed off with a bolt of white gauze. Chicago rendered the bathroom a visual terrain that played out and assaulted mechanisms of obfuscation by making menstrual blood visible, yet preventing access to the room and therefore the potential to clean it away again. The gauze also troubled the passivity associated with female visuality; while it veiled the scene, it also provided a lens through which to see.

In different ways and with numerous effects *Womanhouse* destabilised the association of the home with safety and security. The installations sustained the tension between clean and dirty, clear and opaque, solid and viscous, flat and three-dimensional, with the effect of disturbing the viewer's orientation. Walls were both physically and symbolically dissolved through the juxtaposition of domestic and natural elements, and the evocation of biological interiors as well as bodily disruptions. The installation had a dislocating effect, disturbing the boundaries of the discreet body and of physical and psychic spaces. As each of the installations differently attacked the structure of the house in order to break down the naturalised relationship between women and the home, the merging of foreground and background also created an encounter between artistic production and group work, and between artwork and labour, that could not be so easily resolved. But *Womanhouse* was not solely a critique of the domestic environment; it also prompted new relationships to architecture – by enlisting the women in reconstruction – and new relationships within the home, through collaborative practice. The opening night performances also performed this double move. Experiences of everyday family life were played out – including the isolation of

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[30] Johanna Demetrakas, dir., *Womanhouse*, 47 minutes, 1974. The film is available at the Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

[31] Schiff's *Nightmare Bathroom*, sometimes has the alternate title *Fright Bathroom*. The use of mannequins in *Womanhouse* has important resonances with Charlotte Perkins Gilman's novella *The Yellow Wallpaper* in which the female narrator merges with the wallpaper of an attic room. I talk more about the story in relation to *Fenix*^{a} in chapter four. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (London: Virago, 1981).

the woman in Wilding's *Waiting* to the fight over washing up in Chicago's *Cock and Cunt Play* (fig. 3.18) – alongside *The Birth Trilogy* (fig. 3.19) that offered up an image of female homosociality, in which women were 're-born' by moving through an arch of the legs of other women.[32]

Although the process of restoring the Los Angeles mansion for this work was similar to those that went into making up the Fresno studio, the models of working together were quite different. In *Womanhouse* the spaces were not remade and redistributed for the co-habitation of a working group of artists, rather the domestic layout of the house was retained and the women split up to produce art for each room. As a result the later work failed to foster the same sense of community and reinscribed the association between artistic production, originality and singularity.[33] The narratives of the CalArts students, as well as the testimonies of Chicago and Schapiro, spell out a fraught time of conflict and irritation during the restoration of the mansion.[34] Wilding, for instance, described the breakdown of relationships between students and teachers as Chicago and Schapiro refused to dedicate the same amount of time to the work as the younger women. Chicago's autobiography is also laced with anxiety over the generational relationships between herself and the students as well as those with Schapiro, who was already a well-established artist.[35]

These problems emerged after Chicago and Schapiro's speaking and lecturing tour around the United States, which the women concluded, implied that the older women spoke for them. Tension also appeared because of the pressure the students felt *Womanhouse* placed on their own art practices, which they were encouraged to continue working on alongside the installation, as hand-drawn calendars made at Chicago's behest demonstrate.[36] The calendars of Janice Lester (fig. 3.20) show the time dedicated to *Womanhouse* between November 1971 and January 1972, by the repeated scrawl of the word 'house' across daily segments. In many of the accompanying

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[32] The performances ran from *Waiting* to *The Cock and Cunt Play* through to *The Birth Trilogy* suggesting a narrative of rebirth from the isolation and anger of a pre-feminist moment. These three performances were preceded by two more; *Three Women* (which explored three female types; the 'hustler', the 'hippie' and the 'naïve' mother) and an ironing piece. See *Womanhouse*, unpaginated for a brief description of the performances, although they are also documented in Demetrakas' film.

[33] Batalion reads this separation through the psychoanalytic concept of 'division'. Batalion, "Mad Mothers": 34.

[34] See, Paula Harper, "The First Feminist Art Program: A View From the 1980s", *Signs*, vol.10, no.4 (1985): 777–781; Chicago *Through the Flower:* 78–82; Wilding, "The Feminist Art Programs at Fresno and CalArts": 39; Miriam Schapiro, interview with Ruth Bowen, "A Grand Melee of Radical Procedures: Miriam Schapiro on CalArts and the Feminist Art Program", *East of Borneo* (24 November 2011), accessed 30 January 2015, http://www.eastofborneo.org/articles/a-grand-melee-of-radical-procedures-miriam-schapiro-on-calarts-and-the-feminist-art-program. Also see Mueller's *'Re-tracing the Feminist Art Program*', for many of the students' responses to the programme twenty-five years after the event.

[35] Chicago, *Through The Flower*: 81.

[36] This complaint arises in letters the students wrote to Chicago. Education Programs/ Feminist Studio Workshop/ CalArts class evaluations, box 11 folders 37–40, *Woman's Building Collections,* AAA.

testimonies held in the F.A.P. archive records, the women reassure Chicago that painting, printing and photographic work continue alongside the group project.[37]

To some extent the stresses accumulated in the early stages of the project ebbed away when the women began to install the work. Schapiro described the whole class joining together to produce the dining room installation, which featured mural-painted walls and a table filled with a luxurious faux-food meal (fig. 3.21).[38] Likewise in the exhibition catalogue, Hodgett's remarks that the idea for *Eggs to Breasts* developed from dialogue between women although authorship is still attributed to her alone.[39] As such, and like many of the group projects I discuss in this thesis, *Womanhouse* was characterised by both cooperation and conflict. The project was not an instance of failed collectivity between women, but an example of the process of artistic collaboration. Importantly though working together and working apart settled across a division in types of labour: that of restoring the house and that of producing artworks. Both students and teachers were supposed to chip in the labour of renovation, when they did not it produced conflict. In this way the labour of renovating the house was devalued in relation to producing artwork and therefore rehearsed the separation between the worthwhile work of production for the exhibition and the denigration of the labour in the home.[40]

This divisiveness comes into focus when *Womanhouse* is put in contrast with the Fresno F.A.P., where the creation of the studio empowered the women as a group. The production of a new space supported an atmosphere of collaboration structured by support – both moral and material – as well as criticism. In this way building became a powerful experience, transforming the ordinary into something impressive, think for instance of Wilding's description of the 'grand, smooth white wall'.[41] Wilding also commented: 'The "Wall" was as much symbolic as it was real; it defined our big exhibition/performance/studio space'.[42] Rather than a symptom of architectural concealment and control, the smooth wall became the backdrop for women's art and a symbol of their shared efforts. In this case there was more continuity between renovation and artistic production, as well as more hybridity between group work and artistic practice, particularly through the merging of speaking out in consciousness raising and the creation of performances.

Womanhouse retained the structure of the domestic house, and consequently the divisive spaces that characterise the modern family home. Like the cliché of the man in his study, teenage child in bedroom and wife in the kitchen, most of the rooms were divided up and associated with one artwork each – except the kitchen, which had three (although each piece was still individually

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[37] See testimonies written by Lester and Karen LeCoq in Education Programs/ Feminist Studio Workshop/ Cal Arts class evaluations, box 11, folders 37–40, *Woman's Building Collections,* AAA.
[38] See Miriam Schapiro, "The Education of Women as Artists: Project Womanhouse", *Art Journal,* vol.31, no.3 (1972).
[39] Hodgetts quoted in *Womanhouse*: unpaginated.
[40] Batalion also discusses the process of renovation, see "Mad Mothers": 40–42.
[41] Meyer and Wilding, "Collaboration and Conflict": 43.
[42] Wilding in Meyer and Wilding, "Collaboration and Conflict": 43.

authored) and the dining room. So as the house's structural integrity was restored, the newly painted walls cleaved the women apart. Nonetheless the effect of the gratuitous excess of the installations and quite simply of the women's take-over of domestic space was powerful. *Womanhouse* not only attacked the physical fabric of the home, but also its symbolic structure, particularly the restrictions of heteronormative, white, middle-class family life. By coming together in the house, the women disturbed the roles usually played therein – mother, wife and daughter – and sought out new, undefined relationships. It was this lack of definition that might account for the difficulties of collaboration, as the women struggled to marshal feelings of anger, frustration and desire, as well as to manage the relations of power between them. This context meant that women worked at the limits, testing when they could work together and when they needed to be apart. Sisterhood did not imply harmony and collectivity in all things, but instead belied a process of coming to know oneself, as well as investigating the expectations placed on women in 1970s Los Angeles. In the context of the production of a large-scale installation, it also meant rearticulating what it meant to be an artist.

Just as *Womanhouse* wrought havoc on the domestic environment, allowing the woman artist to emerge from the ruins, it also remade it as a site potentially more hospitable to women. This can be seen in Wilding's all encompassing *Crocheted Environment* or Ann Mills' mural-covered walls (fig. 3.22) in *Leaf Room*. Wilding's crochet web hung to the ceiling and corners of the room, rounding and softening its straight, smooth walls to evoke a haptic response that has been compared to a bodily interior, so much so that it gained the second title *Womb Room*.[43] By contrast Mills' room appeared to reach outside, to nature. Her large painted leaf forms were pasted onto the walls of a room from three-quarter height on the wall and pooled down onto the floor. These oversized leaves reconfigured the room by obscuring its parameters and disrupting the wall as a boundary to the natural environment. Conversely this breach resulted in a kind of sanctuary, as Mills wrote in the catalogue that the 'leaves grew into large shields for me, behind which I could hide, while at the same time they revealed what I was'.[44]

Womanhouse is an important early instance of collaboration between women, which used the group as a space for individual empowerment. It exemplifies how the conjunction of art and pedagogy could result in a political practice. In this way the work is not simply an exemplar of feminist collaboration – open to the critique of failure – but an instance in which the process of artistic experimentation and political community formation comes into view.

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[43] It is not clear who gave the work this second title but it certainly gained currency and has consistently been associated with it, even during its reconstruction in 1995 for *Division of Labor: Women's Work in Contemporary Art* curated by Lydia Yee at Bronx Museum of Art, 16 February–11 July 1995.

[44] Ann Mills, "*Leaf Room",* in *Womanhouse*: unpaginated.

The Currency of *Womanhouse*

In the 1970s the documentation of *Womanhouse* had international currency. So even though the installation was demolished shortly after its six-week run, it had an afterlife in Demetrakas' film, Shelia de Bretteville's catalogue (fig. 3.1) and a number of publications. *Womanhouse* became nomadic, framing women's break with the home and the formation of new itinerant female communities in the space of the artwork. Although the circulation of the work was not part of it's formal structure, as it was in the *International Dinner Party*, in a similar way to that work, the documentation of the installation provided an impetus for women artists to come together and a symbol for the impulse of women in the broader movement to claim female-only spaces outside the home.[45] In this way *Womanhouse* offered a model for a way to work together, as well as a platform to begin exploring the particularities of the domestic in these different contexts.

There was no single approach to coming together and the organisation of space for politicised women in the 1970s. This depended on numerous factors from the socioeconomic context of a place, to the race, class or sexuality of women participants. In some places vacant commercial properties were rented or appropriated, in others old homes too large to heat, or in the 'wrong' part of town provided sites for women's organisations ranging from information centres and refuges to women-only bookshops and art galleries. Women's centres were established that held multiple functions under one roof. In Los Angeles after the demolition of *Womanhouse* Chicago, de Bretteville and the art historian Arlene Raven founded the Woman's Building.[46] It incorporated the Feminist Art Program's successor, the Feminist Studio Workshop, as well as multiple art spaces, a bookshop, a café and even a travel agent among other things, in larger ex-public and industrial properties.[47] In states and cities including Minnesota, Chicago, New York and Washington D.C., woman-only galleries and slide libraries were established in spaces both domestic and commercial.[48] They were just one form of women's organisations that sprang up throughout the United States in the 1970s. Some were single instances, intimately connected to the needs of women who lived in proximity; others were outposts or products of national networks. Separatist communities were also established in rural sites supporting alternative forms of woman-only living, such as Kate Millet's initiative The Farm, which had creative production and art practice at its heart.[49] The shape of the movement in the United Kingdom was similar, with a

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[45] *A Woman's Place* was one example of this, but there was another plan to recreate *Womanhouse* in London, referred to in the notes from meetings of the Women's Workshop of the Artist's Union, dated Monday 4 June 1973. The minutes refer to 'Miriam Schapiro's Article'. WWAU folder, Early Years, WAL.

[46] See Hale and Wolverton, *From Site to Vision* for more information on the Woman's Building.

[47] First the Woman's Building was located at the old Chouinard Art Institute building in a fairly central location on Grandview, in 1975 it moved to North Spring Street near Los Angeles' China Town. Terry Wolverton writes that it 'was a challenge to locate', in *Insurgent Muse*: 38.

[48] See the essays collected in Jill Fields, and for a description of the landscape of feminist activity in the United States, Fields, ed., *Entering the Picture: Judy Chicago, The Fresno Feminist Art Program, and the Collective Visions of Women Artists* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

[49] See Keating, "A World We Have Invented Here".

plethora of small local groups. Although there were never any large-scale national organisations, lobbying committees for specific issues were set up, most notably by the first female minister in the UK parliament, Barbara Castle. In lieu of a version of the American National Organisation of Women (N.O.W.), the British movement relied on the distribution of newsletters and publications.

One part of this landscape of newsletter exchange was *WIRES*, an ad hoc publication that reported on Women's Liberation Movement activities in the UK (fig.3.23), which was composed and distributed by a different group of women each issue.[50] In 1972 the British women's liberation glossy *Spare Rib* launched its first issue (fig. 3.24). It sought to connect groups of women, but also to address those outside the movement's loose conglomeration of organisations appearing in newsagents nationwide. In contrast, early issues of *WIRES* feature debates on whether the newsletter should be on bookshop shelves or only available on request over the counter, and therefore to women only. Articles in *Spare Rib* ranged from reports on international struggles for women's rights, strikes and protests, to dress patterns and recipes. But in contrast to *WIRES*, professional journalists produced the glossy, and although the editorial team functioned as a collective the magazine circulated via the routes of commercial distribution. Women artists in Britain also eventually had their own publication called *Feminist Art News (FAN*) (fig.3.25), which was established in 1980 as a follow-up to the successful single-issue zine *Mama: Women Artists Together* (c.1977) that was the first publication to collate the activities of British women artists and art writers.[51] *Feminist Art News,* like *WIRES* and the New York-based publication *Heresies* (1978–1993) (fig. 3.26), was produced by a different collective each issue, which was on a different theme.[52] *FAN* always had a much smaller and more informal distribution than *Heresies*, and while the latter publication often printed work by artists in different countries *FAN* did not have an international audience and primarily concentrated on women artists' who lived in Britain.

Women artists and women art groups, like their sisters in the broader movement, also disseminated information on feminist art activities and interacted with others through published writing and lecture tours contributing to a dense terrain of intercommunication, both national and transatlantic. Women who sought to study as well as to live and show their work abroad actively sought out this international exposure. Advocates for women's art were also committed to circulating information about it. Most notably among these were the critic Lucy R. Lippard – whose exhibition organising and writing has cropped up throughout this thesis and who I look more

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[50] *WIRES* stood for 'Women's Information, Referral and Enquiry Service'. A run of *WIRES* is part of the Women's Library Collection in the London School of Economics Printed Collections. See Battista, *Renegotiating the Body*: 135–6.

[51] These magazines are briefly contextualized in Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock's survey of the women's art movement in Britain, "Fifteen Years of Feminist Action: From Political Strategies to Strategic Practices", in *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement, 1970–1985*, edited by Parker and Pollock (London: Pandora, 1987): 3–78.

[52] See Carrie Rickey, "Writing (and Righting) Wrongs: Feminist Art Publications", in *The Power of Feminist Art*, edited by Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harry Abrams, 1993): 120–129, which discusses the different magazines that characterized the women's art movement in the United States.

closely at in the next chapter – but also Los Angeles-based art historian Paula Harper, as well as artists such as Margaret Harrison, Alexis Hunter, Susan Hiller, Carla Liss and May Stevens to name a few. Reproductions of *Womanhouse* featured in slide lectures by Lippard; as well as in the teaching slides of artists resident in Britain in the Women's Art Library slide collection.[53] It was among many artworks that gained a new circulation as women sought to learn more about the activity of women artists in both the past and present.

In this climate of sisterhood and interaction the British artist Kate Walker heard of *Womanhouse*.[54] Walker proposed to her women-only art group, the South London Art Group (S.L.A.G.), that they should undertake a project similar to *Womanhouse* and repurpose a house for an exhibition of women's art. The installation included the work of Walker, along with Sue Madden, Cathy Nicholson, Shireen Banu and three artists now only known by their first names; Clara, Joy and Martine. Like *Womanhouse* it was also demolished shortly after the display, but unlike the rich resources leftover from Chicago and Schapiro's project, *A Woman's Place* remains all but undocumented. Only a single poster and three known images (figs. 3.27–3.29), which circulated in the feminist press, hint at what the installation looked like.[55] There are also three descriptions of the piece, one by Lisa Tickner in a short article on Walker in *Studio International*, one obtained by Judith Batalion in her interview with Walker, and another recorded in 1975 in which Walker and Nicholson describe their interventions.[56] The photographic images that survive are fuzzy, the sound of the taped discussion is muffled, and the descriptive texts are second-hand. This paucity of information is important in relation to the abundance of *Womanhouse* documentation. It suggests another avenue to compare the London and Los Angeles works, besides their formal and conceptual similarity. This leads to an analysis on the context of *A Woman's Place* in a South London borough marked by dereliction, desuetude and radical sexual politics. The relationship between *Womanhouse* and *A Woman's Place* marks out the successes and failures of feminist networks both local and international in the 1970s, as well as the differences and antagonisms between what has otherwise been considered the harmonious sisterhood of the straight, white woman's liberation movement. In addition, *A Woman's Place* contributes to how we might understand the landscape of art production in London in the early 1970s – one already sketched out in the previous chapter in my discussion of Vicuña – and the intersection of women's art movement therein.

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[53] See Hannah O'Shea's box of teaching slides, WAL.
[54] Batalion, "Mad Mothers": 84.
[55] Illustrations accompanied Rozsika Parker, "Housework", in *Spare Rib* no. 26, (August 1974): 38. (Reprinted in Parker and Pollock, *Framing Feminism*: 200).
[56] Tickner, "Kate Walker":189–190; Batalion, "Mad Mothers": 84–89. And Kate Walker and Cathy Nicholson's lecture on *A Woman's Place* at the Franklin Institute, London 1975, tapes in Lisa Tickner, Personal Collection. The installation is also discussed and illustrated in Battista, *Renegotiating the Body*: 125–9, and an image of the work is reproduced in Helena Reckitt, ed., *Art and Feminism* (London: Phaidon, 2001): 94. I was unable to interview Walker for this thesis.

A Woman's Place: Occupying the Home

A Woman's Place, like *Womanhouse*, utilised the existing architecture of the home. The installation made or remade home at 14 Radnor Terrace, in a building that had been squatted and used as a women's centre. The rooms of this building were also divided although unevenly. Madden had one upstairs bedroom, with Walker taking the upstairs and downstairs rooms at the front of the house, as well as the kitchen. The other artists all installed their work in the drawing room. The hallways, though, were a result of collaboration. Batalion describes them as lined with grass, with a bird's nest in the stairwell. She also notes that there was a communal 'message or collage board' in the basement, which Rozsika Parker also mentions in her review of the piece in *Spare Rib*, although she describes them as the minutes of S.L.A.G. meetings.[57] There were also evening performances, lit be candlelight, in one Walker performed a reverse striptease.[58] Through these interventions the status of the group was asserted alongside individually produced artworks.

A collaged noticeboard and minutes also hint that these relationships were in progress: minutes suggest a will and a need to record for future action and posterity, while the collage noticeboard may have invited contributions from visitors. The group could also have been made present in the drawing-room hang, which included two-dimensional artworks by most of the participating artists, as well as a piece by Walker on the ceiling.[59] Only Walker and Madden's installations were separated from the group, in contrast with the strict room divisions and even distribution of women through the seventeen rooms of *Womanhouse*. Perhaps Walker's works dominated the environment, while Madden's were isolated on the upper floor, and the drawing room hang was arranged in order to exaggerate artistic identity, but importantly the artworks were also connected through the fabric of the house, which was undergoing entropic disintegration.

The space Walker, Madden and the other members of S.L.A.G. settled on for *A Woman's Place* was 14 Radnor Terrace in Lambeth South London, a borough whose old Victorian and Edwardian terrace houses were either in the process of being demolished by the local council housing authority or playing host to squatted residents. To the council, these buildings were outmoded, too large a drain on resources in comparison to the new modernist estates and single-family dwellings repopulating war-ravaged London.[60] 14 Radnor Terrace was much smaller than the Los Angeles mansion, and the women artists neither worked on the installation full time nor for

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[57] Batalion, "Mad Mothers": 87 and Parker, "Housework": 38.
[58] Walker performed this work again in the exhibition 'Sweet Sixteen and Never Been Shown" at the Women's Free Art Alliance in 1974. It is illustrated in Tickner, "Kate Walker": 189.
[59] Batalion, "Mad Mothers": 87.
[60] Areas which had been flattened by aerial bombardment during World War II were given over to new building initiatives. These often comprised a modernist aesthetic of high-rise apartment living. Many of these estates were commissioned by local councils but quickly became concentrations of the city's poorest residents. As the demand for housing grew, councils initiated plans to raise older terrace housing to make room for estates that could house more people, however due to a raise in demand, anti-welfare directives at local council levels and cuts in budgets these estates did not progress, resulting in streets of empty housing. See Cynthia Cockburn, *The Local State: Management of Cities and People* (London: Pluto, 1977).

as long before it opened to the public. In contrast to the destructive proliferation of the sickly sweet and overlaid surfaces of *Womanhouse, A Woman's Place,* and particularly Walker's piece, resembled a domestic environment in the aftermath of a housework strike. In this way the installation responded to the decline of 14 Radnor Terrace and a way of life that squatting in London had begun to provide an alternative to, for the city's poorest families and countercultural community. In the 1970s the occupation of homes for little or no rent became widespread, particularly in the expensive and overpopulated boroughs of London. Local council bodies, supported by the parliament in Whitehall, administered social housing to those most in need of shelter. However, following the economic downturn in Britain in the late 1960s, unemployment and low salaries as well as a rise in managerial and administrative jobs exacerbated an already stretched housing provision. The squatting movement allowed empty council and private properties to be used to reoccupy the city. In the early 1970s squatting organisations like the Lambeth's Family Squatters were established and supported by local councils, eager to remedy the double strain of empty properties and homelessness on their budgets.[61]

The Family Squatters were advised of properties that families, or those already on council waiting lists, could take on for a nominal price per week.[62] However, the borough councils soon fell into conflict with the loose organisations that legitimised squatting. The demand for housing, however, did not decrease and so those without shelter or in precarious situations began to squat independently. Activist Cynthia Cockburn described this situation reasoning that along with the demonization of squatters in the press, squatting became politicised.[63] Cockburn suggests that squatting changed from being a solution to the problem of social housing to a form of antagonism against the corporatisation of the local government and the organisation of welfare needs that placed priority on the nuclear family.[64] She proposed that this interest in supporting the family mirrors the interests of social reproduction for capitalism, in that a stable domestic environment nurtures and preserves the current and next generation of workers. This is important as it offers a reason for both the councils' initial support and eventual criminalisation of squatting when it provided the means to shrink the cost of living, as well as suggesting how some women became more politically active at this moment when struggle moved into the home.[65] More broadly, it also

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[61] Cockburn, *The Local State*: 77.
[62] Cockburn, a worker at the Family Squatters notes that in return for £3 per week and preservation or renovations to the accommodation people were housed.
[63] Cockburn, *The Local State*: 77.
[64] Cockburn, *The Local State*: 62.
[65] In December 1972 women from groups all over London held an open meeting on the housing crisis. A publication was produced afterwards by the Essex Road Women's Centre. It describes women's particular experience of the housing crisis in 1970s London: 'It is women who are hit by the full force of the housing crisis, and through this, tho [sic] women herself is in crisis. It becomes increasingly clear that coping isn't just a question of personal, bourgeois capabilities that the woman has or hasn't, but that all those pressures are outside the control of the individual and must be fought on a class basis.' In 'Housing Crisis- Women's Offensive', pamphlet in the Essex Road Women's Centre Archive, 5ERC/2/3, LSE. Cockburn was also the author of a pamphlet profiling

signifies how the physical and material manifestations of squatting created important alternatives to the habituated spaces and times of family life.

Many different people squatted in the 1970s; it provided housing for those who could not find it elsewhere, but it was also an alternative for a growing number of young people seeking to reject family life as the post-war generation had defined it. Publications advising how to break in, what to say to authorities and how to render derelict houses habitable on a minute budget circulated under-the-counter and in alternative magazines. Sometimes living in a squatted accommodation meant having to move on frequently, but in some parts of London, such as Tolmers Square in Fitzrovia, whole streets were transformed into established communities capable of fighting off bailiffs and resisting eviction.[66] The ex-theatrical boarding houses off Brixton's Coldharbour Lane were also a site of community formation. As historian Matt Cook has argued, squatting on Railton Road provided the space for gay men to live together communally.[67] Only a decade after the legalisation of homosexuality, these houses provided an enclave of relative safety and a domestic setting that rejected the association of home with the family unit. Although squatters had minimal rights to stay or alter the fabric of the building, here residents got rid of inside doors and connected the houses along the street by removing the walls that divided the back garden.[68] An analogue to the infamous cruising sites on London's great stretches of heathland, the communal garden provided a space for leisure and flirting between men. Bounded, this space could be occupied freely in bright daylight, as well as under the mask of night that had provided the cover and anonymity in vast parklands.

Tolmers Square, Railton Road as well as Drummond Street and the area around Somers Town were crucial sites of squatted communities. All three hosted communal events in which the occupants of the condemned houses would gather together in carnivalesque celebration. The Tolmers Square festival and the building interiors are documented in Nick Wates' photographs (fig. 3.30).[69] The pictures show communal gardens, large group dinners and shared childcare that disrupt the conventions of isolated family life as structured by architecture of the typical post-war English home. The buildings squatted in Tolmers Square were larger than most family homes and provided space for multiple people and family units, as well as shared exterior space that encouraged social interaction between those living in different houses. Despite their external

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women's activism on the subject of housing and labour in London. Cynthia Cockburn, *As Things Are: Women, Work and Family in South London* (London: Union Place, 1976).

[66] See Proll, ed., *Goodbye to All That* and Nick Wates, *Tolmers in Colour: Memories of a London Squatter Community* (Hastings: Bay Leaf, 2011).

[67] Matt Cook, "'Gay Times": Identity, Locality, Memory, and the Brixton Squats in 1970's London", in *Twentieth Century British History,* vol.24, (2011): 84–109. See also Matt Cook, *Queer Domesticities: Homosexuality and Home Life in Twentieth-Century London* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[68] Photographs of the squat, the gardens and the interiors by Ian Towson are held in HCA/Towson archive collections at London School of Economics, London.

[69] See Wates, *Tolmers in Colour*.

disrepair, evidenced in crumbling facades broken up by weeds, the interior shots show large, bright and ordered spaces.[70]

Squatted residencies provided and moulded alternative lifestyles. The Railton Road squats constructed alternative domesticities for a community emerging from the margins of private and public spaces.[71] Tolmers Square, among other sites, allowed space for family life without the division and isolation implicated in the ownership of property. Around Drummond Street squatting supported a diverse community including politicised white youth and immigrants to the UK, primarily from Bangladesh. In her memories of living in the area the activist Anne Neale noted the cooperation between these different communities against both racist attacks and threats to squatters' rights.[72] As I discussed in the previous chapter Vicuña also lived in squatted accommodation during her asylum from Chile in London in nearby Camden (fig. 2.36). Importantly the Drummond Street area also had a woman's centre associated with the Wages for Housework campaign, one of many spaces established across the landscape of abandoned domestic and commercial buildings in 1970s London.[73]

These examples of London squats evidence the complex racial, sexual, economic and countercultural narratives that intersected domestic space in the 1970s. One narrative that has been difficult to trace through the publications, archives and websites that make up the histories of this movement is that of woman-only separatist or lesbian identified squats. As Cook suggests, both heterosexual women and lesbian women were mostly absent, if not unwelcome, from gay male spaces.[74] In fact, apart from meetings of Gay Liberation Front, the interaction of lesbian and gay male communities in London did not always extend beyond shared public places, to domestic spaces. Cook makes only one reference to an all woman squat in the length of his article.[75] However, in her study of lesbian-feminists in 1980s London Sarah F. Green discusses this history in part, noting that while 'Squatting was almost unknown by the late 1980s […] it had been

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[70] To some extent these photos meant to emphasize the quality of life and responsibility of squatters as Wates' images were used in campaigns to save the Tolmers Square from redevelopment. See Wates, *Tolmers in Colour*.
[71] Cook, "'Gay Times': Identity, Locality, Memory": 5.
[72] Anne Neale Paper given at *Women's Spaces and Feminist Politics: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* conference at Queen Mary University of London, Friday 16 May 2014.
[73] This space was started by a collective including Selma James, a prominent member of the Wages for Housework campaign in the UK. This centre also became an important site of community interaction as it was used by Bangladeshi women, some of whom wanted to protest against the use of Depo-Povera contraceptive. The centre was subject to numerous attacks and threatened closures through the 1970s and 1980s and although it has moved from Drummond Street to Wolsey Mews in Kentish Town it is still open, accessed 30 January 2015, http://www.crossroadswomen.net/.
[74] Cook, "'Gay Times': Identity, Locality, Memory": 14. Testimonies of men who established The South London Gay Community Centre in Brixton, note that some women were involved in the centre but far fewer than men. See Felix Alvarez and Bill Thornycroft in HCA/ Ephemera/ 1318 – Goodbye to London, London School of Economics Special Collections.
[75] Cook, "'Gay Times': Identity, Locality, Memory": 14.

standard practice during the 1970s'.[76] As well as arguing that 'squatting was common and seen as part of the feminist project', after quoting a squatter, given the name Beverley:

> Lots of women were squatting houses and living together in groups – lesbians, mostly. And we kind of overlapped with the mixed squatting movement. And some of the women became lesbians and moved into women only houses, which was quite a new thing at the time. It was very difficult too, on a material level. You know, getting the plumbing and electricity, and dealing with the council and all that sort of stuff.[77]

Yet there are other traces of these spaces. Doris Lessing's novel *The Good Terrorist* (1985), a satirical examination of radical politics in England that centred on a South London squat, provides another example.[78] At the book's beginning Roberta and Faye, a lesbian couple, share a room in the squat, which is decrepit and filled with buckets of excrement. The central character, Alice, moves in and immediately begins repairing the situation, laboriously moving each bucket into a D.I.Y. cesspit and restoring the concrete-filled toilet bowl and damaged plumbing to working order. As Alice takes hold of the house Roberta and Faye remove to a woman-only squat, escaping the rampant domestication. Alice's cleansing, tidying and rebuilding of the house restores its homeliness, but does not resolve the fractions between those who live there. She never gets any closer to Jasper, a gay man who she supports and cares for in lieu of a romantic relationship. Others lose their jobs, sink into depression and even die. When Faye does return to the house she attempts suicide. In *The Good Terrorist* Lessing lampoons the trajectory of the English Left that she was once affiliated with, but also narrates lives lived out of sync. It is clear that she is satirising the naivety of a supposedly politicised youth – Alice, for instance, cannot follow the theoretical debates that take place at the squat during her first visit there. But the book also documents the characters' confrontations with bad childhoods and the precariousness of their way of life. Interestingly it is Alice's play of middle-class heteronormativity that most unsettles the alternative lifestyles of the squat's inhabitants and pushes them onto the periphery of Lessing's sketch of radical London.

This blindspot was also true of the organised feminism of the Women's Liberation Movement as I discussed in chapter one. Many lesbian women did create and join separatist communities to discuss issues like coming out, as well as histories of female companionship and activism around police treatment and poverty. But there was also a sense of continuity between lesbian women, lesbian feminists and straight feminists, as Adrienne Rich argued for in her article

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[76] Green, *Urban Amazons*: 73.
[77] Green, *Urban Amazons*: 74, 73.
[78] Doris Lessing, *The Good Terrorist* (London: Penguin, 1985).

'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence'.[79] So just as a lesbian collective might occupy the pages of *Heresies*, lesbian groups also sprung up within women's organisations, as well as in separate spaces. One instance of this queer co-habitation was at the Woman's Building, where Arlene Raven and Terry Wolverton founded the 'Natalie Barney Project' (fig. 1.16) and then the 'Lesbian Art Project' to coordinate artworks and theatre performances that explored lesbian experience.[80] These separatist projects provided a space for a community of women to form within the Woman's Building that was not divorced from it, particularly as Raven had been a co-founder and Wolverton, its director. This demonstrates the dynamic of 'alliance' and 'autonomy', as Julie Podmore and Manon Tremblay have argued, that structured the relationship between lesbian and straight politicised women to protest the double bind of 'heteropatriarchal culture'.[81] Alliance and autonomy provided points of strength for organised lesbian women in the 1970s, and demand focused scholarship. But it is also important to bring these alliances to bear on histories and art histories of women's political work that might also be read with queerness in mind. This is particularly so for *A Woman's Place*, whose poster features interlocking female symbols often used to signal lesbian relationships (see fig. 3.27 and 3.32). Furthermore as Parker's review described, it occupied the site of an 'ex-woman's centre'.[82]

The women's centre was a squat, one of two in the area, the other being a 'dyke community'.[83] If there is little material documenting *A Woman's Place*, there is currently still less about the woman's centre at 14 Radnor Terrace.[84] While the physical proximity between the women's centre and the lesbian community is unclear, the shared use of squatted space and the concomitant organisation of domestic life away from the idea of privacy usually associated with

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[79] Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Sexuality", Signs, vol.5, no.4 (1980): 631–60.

[80] See Wolverton, *Insurgent Muse*: 57–123 and Jennie Klein, "The Lesbian Art Project", *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, no.14, (2010): 238–259.

[81] Julie Podmore and Manon Tremblay, "Lesbians, Second-Wave Feminism and Gay Liberation", in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Lesbian and Gay Activism,* ed. David Patternotte and Manon Tremblay (Burlington, VT and Farnham, Surrey, 2015): 124, 123.

[82] Parker, "Housework": 38.

[83] Frankie Green described the squats in this area as a site for 'dyke community', in a talk given at the launch of 'Music and Liberation' exhibition in London in 2012. The untitled talk is available online, accessed 27 August 2016, https://womensliberationmusicarchive.co.uk/2012/12/.

[84] Parker remarks that 14 Radnor Terrace was previously a women's centre in "Housework": 38. Battista comments that 14 Radnor Terrace was given to Walker and others, for use as a women's centre by the 'council', which would correspond with the cooperation of local authorities with the Family Squatters. An advert for the centre appears in *Feminist Art News*, no.7, (1974): 29. There is evidence of another centre called 'A Woman's Place' at Hungerford House WC2, see undated call-out, Early Years, WAL. One issue of the *Women's Liberation Newsletter* was published from the squat in 1973, periodicals, Feminist Archive South, Special Collections, Bristol Library. There is also reference to the See Red Poster Collective relocating their studio to the centre, when their previous squat became untenable. Bill Thornycroft mentions that: 'Because of the imbalance [in the Railton Road squats and South London Gay Community Centre] – always ten men to one woman, some lesbians left and formed women only groups. There were lesbian squats at Radnor Terrace in another part of Lambeth and a women's print cooperative.' See Thornycroft in HCA/ Ephemera/ 1318 – Goodbye to London, LSE Special Collections.

the home, is important. It is likely that the both were women-only spaces, as centres also provided sanctuaries from abuse, as well as spaces for alternative lifestyles and such I want to think about them on a continuum. That these buildings on Radnor Terrace were woman-centred offers a different angle to the S.L.A.G. work. It suggests a proposition or a challenge of what and where a woman's place could be, one that proposed a reconstitution of domestic space. This reconstitution was organised around the breakdown of the expected trajectory leading from girl, to wife, to mother and housewife. More specifically than in *Womanhouse*, this took place through a narrative of episodes in a life dominated by what Rich calls 'compulsory heterosexuality'.[85] While I do not mean to speculate on the actual sexualities or lives of those who made and contributed to *A Woman's Place,* I do want to consider the attack on the home – which amounted to stopping the reproduction of the family and the home environment by freezing them into a tableaux – as a contribution to the alternative lifestyles taking shape in London and in which women experimented with woman-centred life and love.

The first chapter in the narrative of womanhood staged in *A Woman's Place* was Madden's *Chrysalis,* which visualised the suffocation-by-stereotypes that girls undergo in their transformation to women. Her all-white 'virginal bedroom' was 'claustrophobic and lined with girl-paraphernalia' overwhelming the viewer with the material weight that pressed upon the girl to impress womanhood.[86] Cutting to the next big event in this predictable trajectory, the following bedroom focused on the figure of a bride and included the material excesses of the wedding day. Downstairs, away from the bedrooms and the spaces of adolescent fantasy and married reality, the installations switched from white to black. The kitchen was, as Tickner described it knee-deep in 'rotting garbage', although in the cupboards tin-can products were perfectly stacked as if untouched by the nuclear fallout beyond.[87] Walker's *Death of the Housewife* (fig. 3.28), in another room in the house, provided a partner work to the bridal chamber upstairs. The work included a mannequin corpse laid out in the centre of the room, perhaps suffocated by the material excess of the home, but absolutely worn-out by housework. The figure lay prone under a layer of domestic detritus, surrounded by plastic baby dolls whole and in fragments, which provided pops of pink within the murky mess. The dolls' stubby arms appeared to reach out toward nothing but the lifeless body and two rows of not-so-nourishing fizzy-pop bottles topped with teats.

Walker and Madden clogged up the rooms of the house with the material products that women are supposed to conceal in the maintenance of domestic order. By filling the rooms with everything from dirt, rubbish, grass, twigs and papers to girly stuff and bridal gear, the women created ridiculous environments that despite their potential for humour also lapsed in to horror. This material excess was frequently focused on the walls and floors of the house. Chalked ghostly

[85] Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Sexuality".
[86] Batalion, "Mad Mothers": 88.
[87] Tickner, "Kate Walker": 189.

footprints traced the circular routes of housework.[88] Piles of paper, newspaper and ephemera crowded out floors and gathered around the living room fireplace. Grass sprang up in the hallway at the meeting point of wall and floor, visually punning on grassroots activism, destroying the isolating boundaries of the home by letting nature in. In contrast to the tableaux in the rooms of *Womanhouse*, the installation irritated the material structure of the whole house, which was presumably already shabby after being squatted as a woman's centre. In this way *A Woman's Place* threatened the integrity of the home as a site for social reproduction. Its narrative of adolescence, marriage and housework ended too abruptly with the housewife's death. So the home, no longer supported by the rhythms of maintenance and care fell into mess and disrepair. The babies remained eternal-infants as the material durability of their plastic skins – always with a patina of youth but not vulnerability – declined hope in a new generation. As Walker commented:

> I refute absolutely the idea that domestic imagery… always has to expose the bitterness of oppression. That's only one tiny part of it. We have the future to think of. And we have the past. Acres of time to draw on. It's all there waiting to be tapped. And that is a *thrilling* prospect. You know it's a whole culture that we're demolishing and rebuilding from the other side: it's a whole new view.[89]

The architectural structure of Radnor Terrace was in disrepair, like the weed-ridden bricks on Tolmers Square and broken down walls on Railton Road. I want to suggest that the context of squatting in London complicates the form and content of the artwork installed in *A Woman's Place*. In this way Walker's staging of the death of the housewife was not just a melancholy meditation on women's oppression, or the deconstruction implicit in the *unheimlich* home, but a death knell for one way of life in order to usher in another.[90] Like those other squatted residences, number 14 participated in creating an alternative lifestyle. This could be achieved through the freedom from the need to work full time, in paid work or housework, in order to maintain a room of one's own. Squatting could also generate a shift in gender roles, whether co-habitants shared the labour of housework or abandoned it all together.[91] Moreover the material environment of squatted homes and women's centres provided new communities. Like the removal of garden walls on Railton Road and the festivities around Tolmers Square, the merging of interior and exterior spaces unsettled the binary of public and private and particularly the symbolic power of the wall as a divisive and concealing structure. This is also evident in the East London photography collective

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[88] According to Walker's description on the Franklin Institute tapes, 1975, collection of Lisa Tickner.
[89] Walker quoted in Tickner, "Kate Walker": 190.
[90] See Kokoli's discussion of the function of the *unheimlich* in '"Undoing Homliness". And Kokoli's recently published *The Feminist Uncanny: In Theory and Art Practice* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).
[91] There is evidence to suggest that women became politicized through both feminism and housing struggles, forging new structures for domestic relationships. See Cockburn, *As Things Are*: 1976.

The Hackney Flashers' photo-collage *Who's Holding the Baby* (1978) (fig. 3.31), in which made women's isolation in the home visible. The most famous image in the series is a spliced photograph of an end-terrace brick wall with an aperture revealing an interior scene showing a woman tending to her children. This image juxtaposed interior and exterior in order to represent, but also break down, the separation and concealment of the wall. *A Woman's Place* did something similar, but rather than depict the otherwise invisible labour of the housewife, the installation at Radnor Terrace visualised the effect of its absence, which further contributed to the degradation of the house and its isolating architecture.

A Woman's Place was neither a retreat to, nor a rejection of the home. While the installation spurned the heteropatriarchal organisation of motherhood and domestic care, I want to emphasise that did not reject either experience altogether. For one, Walker was a single mother and was committed to combining child raising with art practice. But *A Woman's Place* also engaged with the fertile environment of the squatting movement in 1970s London, and as such, with the demand for alternative lifestyles. The work disentangled and destabilised the relationship between property and ownership, as well as the gendered function of the home as a site of social reproduction. In other words this installation participated in a kind of radical domesticity that symbolically threatened the integrity of the home, but also participated in the entropic decline of a building. The effect was that the cycles of reproduction inherent to family life, were slowed down. In this way *A Woman's Place* was an occupation that redirected women, – both artists and viewers – from the habits of habituation, to refocus on the present, on themselves and each other. So despite suffocated mannequins and broken baby dolls, this waste landscape of a home was not barren, but a fertile site of feminist activism, evidenced in the collaborative work of producing the exhibition. As the poster declared: 'Its been rearranged, destroyed, reconstructed, redeployed, rebuilt, reborn, rejoice'.

The suggestion on the poster that the 14 Radnor Terrace had been renovated (and destroyed) could be interpreted as a reference to the specific building, to the concept of the home and, I want to suggest, to *Womanhouse*. *A Woman's Place* was a kind of reproduction of the earlier work, mimicking the process of collaborative production, as well as the idea for a domestic installation. Indeed some of the same conflicts arose in both projects. Madden described some of the participants' lack of 'commitment […] close contact and communication' claiming that the work did not create a 'significant women's working environment'.[92] While Walker emphasised the importance of equality between the women of S.L.A.G., although she admitted that she was seen as a leader to some of the women because she was older and had a child.[93] Batalion has picked up on the difficult dynamics in both installations, arguing that it fed into anxiety about fulfilling roles of mother and daughter.[94] Nonetheless the two works were separated by an interval in time and

[92] Madden quoted in Batalion, "Mad Mothers": 86.
[93] Walker quoted in Batalion, "Mad Mothers": 87.
[94] Chicago, *Through the Flower*: 81 and Batalion, "Mad Mothers": 63–65.

geographic distance, as well as by the resources available and the immediate political contexts of Los Angeles art school and London art world. It is the relationship between them that I want to focus on next as an example of expanded collaboration, before moving onto the final case study.

Womanhouse and *A Woman's Place*: Sister Installations

In a 1979 article on Walker art historian Lisa Tickner also picked up on the connection between *Womanhouse* and *A Woman's Place*:

> On the whole there was both a tattier and a more austere appearance, and a harsher edge to the English work. The *Womanhouse* 'nuturant' kitchen, with its fried egg/breast motif and lush pink paint, seemed positively welcoming beside the rotting garbage and mounting chaos of Radnor Terrace. Similarly, the 'Bride' was closer to Keinholz than to *Womanhouse*, and came to a more explicit and blacker end than her Californian sister.[95]

In Tickner's description the brides are sisters, but little more than the domestic setting connects them. Instead *A Woman's Place* prompts comparison with the figurative installations of Edward Keinholz, another Los Angeles artist whose collaboration with his wife, Nancy Reddin Keinholz, on later works was only subsequently acknowledged. The Keinholzs' created life-size tableaux of familiar scenes from the bar to the car, peopled with plaster bodies.[96] Although almost-precise copies of real life scenes, these works were often rough, dark and gloomy in form and content, contrasting with the gloss and colour of contemporary work by artists like Larry Bell, Craig Kauffman, Ed Ruscha and the participants of *Womanhouse*.[97] Although there is not space to parse the relationship between the Keinholzs' work – particularly the prone figure in *Back Seat Dodge '38* (1964) (fig. 3.33) – and *A Woman's Place* further here, they are connected by a shared concern to map the social relationships in particular sites.[98] In this sense *Womanhouse* was quite distinct. As a product of an art school project, it was more closed off from its social context. But while the Keinholz tableaux and *A Woman's Place* have entropy and social commentary in common, they did not have the same political investments and anyway it was not the well-known Los Angeles artist that provided the impetus for the London work. It is because *A Woman's Place* was conceived in

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[95] Ticker, "Kate Walker": 89.
[96] Robert Pincus, *On a Scale That Competes With the World: On the Art of Edward and Nancy Reddin Keinholz* (Berkley, CA: University of California, 1990).
[97] See Peter Alexander et al., *Finish Fetish: LA's Cool School*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles, CA: Fisher Gallery, University of Southern California, 1991) and Ken D. Allan, Lucy Bradnock and Lisa Turvey, "For People Who Know the Difference: Defining Pop Art in the Sixties", *Pacific Standard Time: Los Angeles Art 1945–1980,* exh. cat. (Los Angeles and London: Getty Research Institute, J. Paul Getty Museum and Tate, 2011).
[98] See Pincus, *On a Scale That Competes With the World*: 12–28.

relation to *Womanhouse*, but was not a perfect simulation, that I want to think of them as examples of expanded collaboration.

The relationship between the two is not collaborative in the sense that the Los Angeles-based and London-based artists worked together. But taken in an expanded sense, it emphasises the political effect of repeating a work of art in a feminist context. On the one hand it evidences the affinity the London women felt with their sisters in California, but also challenges the status of the artwork by an act of trespassing over conceptual property.[99] Like the attack on the physical walls of the home, the London women's repetition of *Womanhouse* destabilised the qualities like originality and singularity, usually associated with the evaluation and validation of fine artworks. Furthermore by reading these works on a continuum, or as if the latter were a version of the former, the connections and disconnections between the two become apparent, as well as the mediation between women in an international movement primarily connected by print culture, film and slides. In a similar way to the *Postal Event* I discussed in the previous chapter, these two installations can be paired in a visual conversation that offers insight into the process of sisterhood in second wave feminism. Like biological sisters, the works are rooted in a shared origin – women's experiences of the home – but are differentiated both by their contexts and in relation to each other. In this way sisterhood did not imply an immediate and happy connection binding women together, but a process of working together and apart, against the isolation of the nuclear family home.[100]

Reflections on Vacancy: Defending Homeplace

In her 1990 article 'Homeplace (A Site of Resistance)' the feminist theorist bell hooks took a different approach to the home, defending it as a site of nascent politics.[101] The 'homeplace' she emphasised was important in situating the political activism of women, particularly mothers in the context of race struggle. As homemakers, hooks argued, the mother played a crucial role in reproducing not workers, but activists for Black civil rights struggles. Politicised from an early age at home, these activists were imbued with both a sense of their cultural heritage and a future orientation, which Lisa Gail Collins suggests was also crucial to the structure of the black arts

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[99] Although I have not found any evidence that the Los Angeles artists were aware of *A Woman's Place*, Chicago did respond to a letter about *Castlemilk Womanhouse*, another version of the work that took place in Glasgow in 1990 and ran up until 1995. The project archive is available online, accessed 19 September 2016: http://womenslibrary.org.uk/discover-our-projects/house-work-castle-milk-woman-house. The reaction was negative and Chicago emphasized both her intellectual rights over the project and the disavowal of the Glasgow iteration. Despite Chicago's reaction, which corresponds with her position concerning the authorship of *The Dinner Party* (as discussed in chapter two), I am not so concerned by the authorization of *A Woman's Place* by the *Womanhouse* artists, than the fact that the London artists were inspired to do it. The letter is in the collection of the Women's Library, Glasgow.

[100] See Mitchell, *Siblings*.

[101] bell hooks, "Homeplace (A Site of Resistance)", in *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (Boston MA: South End, 1990).

movement.[102] The political theorist Iris Marion Young later picked up on hooks' argument for her own revaluation of the home as a site for feminist struggle.[103] Young argued, reframing hooks, that the home and the preservation it fostered provided a place for subject formation. This was, at once, grounded in the past, by which she meant one's belongings, and positioned to the future, implied by the ongoing work of preserving one's environment through life and beyond it. hooks sought to defend the role of women in the context of Black struggle as well as less explicitly arguing for its importance for black women who chose to stay, or could find no other place in feminist movements. Young develops her defence around a longer history sensitive to the problems of the home, particularly in relation to its historical formation as a site of privilege often built on the oppression of others. Her argument sets out the value of place, whilst somewhat meekly suggesting that the power to be found in this place is contingent on access to it for everybody.

Importantly hooks and Young defend the home as a political site against feminist critiques of the home as either only oppressive or a site of retreat. In this final section of the chapter I focus on hooks' argument in relation to Hill-Montgomery's *Reflections of Vacancy* (figs 3.34–3.35). I argue that hooks' counter argument against the problem of the home, for the civil rights movement and feminism, reflects the experience black women had struggling to find a place in the political field that otherwise denied their intersectional identity. The title of Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott and Barbara Smith's edited book aptly summed up this identity displacement: *All The Women Are White, All The Men Are Black, But Some Of Us Are Brave*.[104] hooks' revaluation of the home as a site performs an about-turn locating black female empowerment in the home, away from the race and gender-blind alternative spaces of the women's liberation and civil rights movement respectively. This is no retrenchment but a reclamation of private space denied to black bodies historically through colonisation, slavery and immigration. The home and the potential for privacy and stability of the family was a battle for space hard won and ongoing. In this way housing and hooks' 'homeplace' were crucial sites of resistance against systemic race-based oppression that worked through ghettoization and gentrification to divide communities.

Hill-Montgomery's *Reflections on Vacancy* paralleled hooks' theoretical counter move. In contrast to *A Woman's Place* and *Womanhouse*, both of which invited visitors into the home, Hill-Montgomery's tenement installation resisted the presence of a viewer. The windows and doors were covered in Mylar sheets, which the artist has commented were 'heavy and opaque enough to be a silvery curtain hiding the degradation behind the door'.[105] The building was also abandoned,

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[102] Lisa Gail Collins, "Activists That Yearn For Art That Transforms: Parallels in the Black Arts and Feminist Art Movements in the United States", in *Signs,* vol.31, no.3 (Spring 2006).
[103] Iris Marion Young, "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme", in *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Theory and Policy*, (New York: Princeton University, 1997).
[104] Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott and Barbara Smith, eds., *All The Women Are White, All The Men Are Black, But Some Of Us Are Brave*: *Black Women's Studies* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1982).
[105] Hill-Montgomery, email interview with the author, 28 January 2015.

an interior photograph reveals the dust, dirt and rubble clogging the interior and denying any sense of hospitality.[106] As such *Reflections on Vacancy* did not create the nurturing homeplace of hooks' writing, but resisted the societal mechanisms that put those spaces under threat. The Mylar sheets not only hid the interior scene from prying eyes, the reflective fabric also returned the gaze of the passer-by or snoop. As such the installation might seem more of a lament than a protest, but *Reflections on Vacancy* certainly intervened in the flow of urban accumulation that was beginning to remake New York City into a place for the privileged to live, as well as work. Situated in Harlem, a district of New York famous for a cultural scene that grew out of forced migration and ghettoization, the installation registered the forms of spatial appropriation that delineated, and then denied black community.

Reflections on Vacancy offers an important instance of black cultural activism that intersects with feminist politics. Hill-Montgomery's work is not an addendum to *A Woman's Place* and *Womanhouse*; rather it challenges the status of the home as a place of isolation that the other works critique, as well as alerting us to the question of access and privilege. Neither should this last case study be seen as way to invalidate or neutralise the power of the works by white women. Instead I want put them in conversation to show the connections between women across difference in the 1970s, as well as to acknowledge and explore what kept them apart. Like my discussion of Vicuña in the previous chapter, I want to consider women's art that intervened in gender politics beyond movement-affiliated or feminist-identified groups, spaces or individual practices. Neither Vicuña nor Hill-Montgomery were members of groups, but both felt the pull of intersectional identities that re-routed them into different places and strategies. Just as I argued Vicuña's objects acted like anchors in contrast to the mobility sought out by participants in the *International Dinner Party* and the *Postal Event*; so Hill-Montgomery withdrew access to the home performing a counter-move that highlighted the oppression of black women as the women of the CalArts F.A.P. and S.L.A.G. opened it up to reveal their subjugation.

In this chapter *Reflections on Vacancy* provides a third example of installations in homes by women artists, a final stop in a trajectory running from vibrancy, to messiness, to ruin. Each installation, and the formal tactics it employed, was rooted in a particular moment and locale. In this way the renovation of the Fresno studio and the *Womanhouse* building responded to the climate of radical pedagogy in California as well as the need, earlier in the movement, for a

[106] The tenement at the intersection of Malcolm X Boulevard and Morningside Avenue in New York City was empty when the work was installed and Hill-Montgomery did not receive permission from the building owner. In any case she did not need it because the front door was left unbolted, and even though it remained so, no one entered the house. There are no exact dates for the duration of the exhibition. In my interviews with the artist she comments that she entered the building, hung the Mylar and allowed it to respond to the environment, eventually it was gone either fallen or taken down. Hill-Montgomery, interview, 28 January 2015.

separatist space for women's art.[107] Likewise the formal disrepair of *A Woman's Place* paralleled the radical domesticity evident in the London squatting movement. Hill-Montgomery's work was in dialogue with urban developments in Harlem, and New York City more broadly. If the silver Mylar panels symbolically prevented access to the tenement, its partner work *Black and White in Closure* (fig. 3.36), a 9ft glossy white picket fence surrounding an adjacent vacant lot, forced the point.[108] Located opposite *Reflections on Vacancy*, the fence was painted with white enamel, creating another shiny surface that returned the viewer's gaze. The posts were also sharpened to a tip, transforming an archetype of homeliness into an insurmountable barrier. These works intervened in the dire slum conditions many tenement residents suffered in that district and throughout the city. The installations garnered attention from the New York press leading to a commission from Artist's Space gallery in Manhattan.[109] For the downtown show, Hill-Montgomery created related works that reflected on the relationship between the alternative art scene that was emerging in previously industrial or destitute sectors of the city and the situation in the tenement blocks. Hill-Montgomery occupied multiple spaces as artist and resident; she lived in Harlem, was artist-in-residence at the Harlem Studio Museum in 1979 and showed works at galleries in mid- and lower Manhattan, including the New Museum (fig. 3.37), as well as finding a place in the alternative art gallery, Fashion Moda and the collective Group Material.[110] Hill-Montgomery shuttled between these different locations, occupying them all somewhat precariously. Her work critically responded to displacement and regeneration, but it also explored the potential of these peripatetic conditions for making art and complicated the binary between public and private space. In this way Hill-Montgomery made the nonplace of black womanhood concretely present.

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[107] The idea of retreat in *Womanhouse* also relates to countercultural communities in California and around San Francisco. The state and the city certainly had more spaces available to create alternative ways of living. See Elissa Auther and Adam Lerner, "Introduction The Counterculture Experiment: Consciousness and Encounters at the Edge of Art", in *West of Center: Art and Counterculture in Los Angeles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2011): xvi-xxxiv. On the American countercultural movement see Paul Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, eds., *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and 70s* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

[108] The fence also just concealed a motor-boat, shored up on the patchy grass, suggesting the degradation from a community of homes to delineated blocks to hold the accumulated goods of Manhattan's high earners.

[109] According to Hill-Montgomery the installation was featured in the *New York Amsterdam News*, a Harlem-based paper. Hill-Montgomery, interview, 28 January 2015.

[110] Hill-Montgomery's New Museum show was called 'Currents' and took place between 7 August and 22 September 1982. Fashion Moda was located in the South Bronx at Third Ave and 149th Street. The neighbourhood was diverse including communities of Latin American, Caribbean and people with roots in the American South. See John Allan Farmer, ed., *Urban Mythologies: the Bronx Represented Since the 1960s*, exh. cat., (Bronx, NY: Bronx Museum of Art, 1999). Particularly Betti-Sue Hertz's "Artistic Intervention in the Bronx", 18–27. Also Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity*, (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT, 2002). Group Material occupied a storefront at 244 East 13th Street in the East Village. See Julie Ault, "For the Record", in *Alternative Art New York,* ed. Julie Ault (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2002) and Lauren Rosati and Mary-Anne Staniszewski, eds., *Alternative Histories: New York Art Spaces*, *1960–2010* (Cambridge, MA. and London: MIT, 2012).

The intersectional cultural activism evident in Hill-Montgomery's work was distinct from many of her predecessors and contemporaries in the Black Arts Movement in the United States. As art historian Darby English has argued art was an important part of civil rights struggle. He writes:

> Despite what were often fierce battles, these formations [between art and political activism] seldom flagged in their agreement upon uplift as a "common" cause for black Americans, or in their emphasis upon the artist's special role in this project.[111]

The 'uplift' English highlights was a form of cultural retrenchment that sought to define and nurture 'black art's uniqueness', as well as its origins and orientation toward a black audience.[112] Hill-Montgomery's practice evaded this focus on 'uniqueness' and community. Her work did not seek or establish coherence; rather it struck out and splintered the surface patina that masked the racial antagonism supporting both urban environment and cultural sphere. Yet she also reasserted the space of the home as political by colliding the urban-domestic and artistic spheres.

While Hill-Montgomery's work did not perform 'uplift', it was imbued with a concern about political complacency. This was most potent in a piece titled *An Unknown Relative* from 1979 in which a photograph of a man bound to a tree with chains was suspended from a gallery ceiling by a chain.[113] The work performed a temporal slippage, a reminder of the threat of physical violence wrought against black people through the collapse of representation and object. Hill-Montgomery remarked that this piece returned the symbolic power to the photograph, that was lost as memories of lynching faded, and the visual terrain swelled.[114] The stark violence made present in this work found a correlative in Hill-Montgomery's paintings and canvas works, which were frequently marked by splashed pigment and torn Mylar. Indeed angry material and gestural moves were also evident in the political work of her installations and performances.[115] Yet whereas the paintings – many of which were produced during Hill-Montgomery's time in residence at the Harlem Studio Museum – and the photographic works addressed a neutralised visuality, the

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[111] Darby English, *How to See a Work of Art in Total Darkness* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2010): 8
[112] English, *How to See a Work of Art in Total Darkness*: 8.
[113] *An Unknown Relative* is described in the publication for Hill-Montgomery's 1982 exhibition 'Currents'. Lynn Gumpert, *Currents: Candace Hill-Montgomery*, exh. cat. (New York: New Museum, 1982): unpaginated. Available online accessed 30 January 2015, http://archive.newmuseum.org/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object_id/6436.
[114] Hill-Montgomery commented: 'I am not taking ordinary objects as the Surrealists did and raising them to the 'level of art'; quite the opposite, I am using the objects to hang the work so as to keep these realities outside of art, to bring us back into the reality of our existence, to remind us of the naked truths of the world we live in'. Quoted in Lucy R. Lippard, *Issue: Social Strategies by Women Artists* (London: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1980): unpaginated.
[115] For a discussion of some of Hill-Montgomery's paintings and performances see Lowery Stokes Sims, "Aspects of Performance in the Work of Black American Women Artists", in *Feminist Art Criticism: An Anthology*, ed. Arlene Raven, Cassandra Langer and Joanna Frueh (Ann Arbor, MI. and London: University of Michigan, 1988): 207–226.

installations in the Harlem tenement and the Artist's Space gallery seem directed at an oppressive gaze.

Another artist who shifted between the spaces of the black community and the Manhattan art scene was David Hammons. Hammons moved to New York from Los Angeles in 1974, where he had studied and successfully exhibited work. Hammons picked the streets of Harlem for twigs, feathers, wine bottles and hair to be incorporated into his art, as well as making works in the district's public places.[116] In addition to this object-based practice Hammons also occupied Harlem, Tribeca and Brooklyn, performing an artistic persona that responded to the street-life of black and working class communities. This trickster-hooligan often trussed up in too many layers or casual, cool dashikis responded to the displacement and obsolescence of unemployed men escaping from the home.

To some extent this performance practice paralleled the appropriation of black stereotypes and cultural symbols that has formed the backbone of Hammons' studio practice. Since the late 1960s he has employed his body as print, creating indexical profiles with grease. Sometimes these figures are contrasted against a white background; others involve more overt juxtapositions including a school door and the stars and stripes. In *The Door (Admissions Office)* (1969, fig. 3.38) a butterflied body-print slams into a glass door marked 'Admissions', a powerful evocation of the exclusion of black students from American universities. Likewise the seated, bound and gagged black figure in *Injustice Case* (1970) is exposed on a bright white surface bordered by the edges of the American flag beneath it. The flag underscores the violent antagonism between black and white in the print. Hammons has also made series of works that pose materials associated with black bodies and cultural stereotypes including Afro hair, spades, chicken bone and hair oil, in sanitised gallery settings.[117] The content of these works and their circulation in the elite spaces of white culture foregrounds the contestation of black identity.[118] They are also antagonistic, pitting the materiality of black bodies and metaphors of blackness against, often all-white spaces, which couple clearness and the visual in modern art. The confrontational quality of these works, however, was not so evident in the art Hammons' made in and for the street, even if his performance of the errant flaneur did take issue with Richard Serra's imposing sculpture *T.W.U.* by urinating on it in the bitingly-titled *Pissed Off* (1981).

Hammons' practice is a complex weave of visual symbols and material metaphors but just as his works reappropriated and recirculated waste from the city streets, he also intervened in the

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[116] These works are documented in photographs by Dawoud Bey and Bruce Talamon in *David Hammons: Rousing the Rubble*, edited by Tom Finkelpearl, exh. cat. (Cambridge, MA. and London: MIT, 1991).

[117] See Kellie Jones, "The Structure of Myth and the Potency of Magic", in *Rousing the Rubble*: 15–38.

[118] Although Hammons has also been critiqued for the anodyne presence of his artworks in commercial art circuits, as English argues his work is more than black art as critique but an exploration of the exceptional presence of black artists in still white dominant art world spaces. See English, *How to See a Work of Art in Total Darkness*: 2–6.

public sites of the black community that were seen as wasted spaces or spaces in which to waste away. In one series empty bottles of cheap wine, favoured by street drinkers in Harlem's increasingly destitute neighbourhoods, were picked up, upended and slotted onto the empty branches of the city trees. As public art works, the bottle-trees participated in the material flow of the Harlem streets. The slow accumulation on the leafless branches marked out the connected problems of alcoholism and unemployment that were fuelling a crisis of black masculinity. Yet in his occupation of the streets, Hammons celebrated their decorative quality and the visual pleasure to be had from such insidious gleaning. As Dawoud Bey writes:

> Walk through Harlem any given day and you will see David Hammons' work. The work he does for people who cannot go to Soho and gallery hop. The people that he knows. The people that he comes from… Hammons… creates visual music and something to smile about in an environment that doesn't offer a lot in the way of jokes.[119]

In another work Hammons erected a basketball net made of found materials at the corner of 125th street and Lennox, the site at which Malcolm X gave his speeches.[120] The net stretched far taller than those on Harlem's courts; it was composed of stacked telegraph poles embedded with a skin of bottlecaps and a notice reading 'Higher Goals' (fig. 3.39). This sculpture also participated in the masculine street culture in Harlem, which for younger men centred on basketball. Like the bottle-trees, the message is ambiguous appealing to both the time wasted playing as well as the positive and transferable attributes to be gained on the courts. Located at a crucial site in the history of civil rights struggle, the work echoes the serious sentiment of that moment distilling the message into a punning tagline. When seen together, these two works represent Hammons' complex approach to public art in the context of the history of black cultural uplift.[121] Both pieces lament the degradation of the black community in Harlem, whilst transforming the waste of the city into art that encourages an upward glance and reminder of time(s) lost on the Harlem streets. There is a shift in orientation then, between Hammons' studio work and his work on the streets of Harlem. Whereas the former intervenes in systems of oppression with puncturing eloquence, the latter works along with Hammons' performances seem to merge with Harlem – its waste and wasted men – offering uplifting interruptions.

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[119] Bey quoted in Jones, "The Structure of Myth": 16.
[120] Jones, "The Structure of Myth": 29.
[121] Hammons work in Harlem does not straightforwardly relate to the occupation and reclamation of public spaces in the Black Arts Movement. See Lisa Gail Collins and Margo Natalie Crawford (eds.) *New Thoughts on the Black Arts Movement*. (New Brunswick NJ and London: Rutgers University, 2006). Particularly Margo Natalie Crawford's essay on the Chicago wall of respect, "Black Light on the *Wall of Respect*": 24–41 and Kellie Jones' discussion of the Watts Festival in, "Black West, Thoughts on Art in Los Angeles": 43–74.

Although Hammons and Hill-Montgomery both negotiate the streets, homes and galleries of Harlem and Manhattan, their tactics are different. The split between antagonism and uplift evident in Hammons' work contrasts with the balance of anger and lament in Hill-Montgomery's installations. As Jones has argued Hammons remains elusive, a trickster who moves between spaces without associating directly with any.[122] Hill-Montgomery on the other hand occupied spaces, making connections between them. This is particularly clear in *Candy Coated* (figs 3.40–3.41) another sister work to *Reflections On Vacancy* and *Black and White in Closure*, which was installed at Artists' Space Gallery in November 1979. This installation referenced the Harlem-based works, with the inclusion of a piece of silver Mylar hanging on a wall next to a large scene of tenements rendered rough-hewn on paper, although *Reflections on Vacancy* was no longer extant. Likewise the white-picket fence appeared again at Artist's Space, shrunk down to 3ft and bordering the tenement mural. The connection between these works suggests something different from the split orientation of Hammons' work. *Reflections on Vacancy* does not address the black community in Harlem with a message of uplift, but comments on the devastation of that community, its absence, and the problematic presence of the white-dominated groups of tenement rent collectors and redevelopers who sought to candy-coat it. This point was compounded visually in the work as the white enamel surface of the fence was shadowed by black, signifying the complex race relations in the urban environment. The fence acted like a barrier against entry to the scene behind it, the darkened slits revealing the foundations of black oppression upon which the American idyll was built. These connected installations represented the displacement of the black residents of Harlem, but also spoke to the long history of forced migration and ghettoization of the black community.[123] In this way Hill-Montgomery's critique, different to Hammons', was levelled at the systems of oppression that threatened black homeplace.

Reflections on Vacancy and *Candy Coated* do not deal with an immutable category of home. Instead they evoke the specific socio-cultural associations of the New York City tenement block. These blocks have a long history of housing the poorest of New York's residents.[124] Built in the early nineteenth century they have numerous floors with two or three apartments on each level. However, in the 1970s the buildings were frequently overcrowded, with single rooms used by entire families. The condition of the blocks were exasperated by indifferent property owners, who, benefiting from a situation in which demand outstripped supply, could keep rents high and

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[122] Jones, "The Structure of Myth": 26.

[123] St.Clair Drake and Horace Cayton describe the context in Chicago: 'The persistence of a Black belt, whose inhabitants can neither scatter as individuals nor expand as a group is no accident. It is primarily the result of white people's attitudes toward having negroes as neighbours'. Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993 [1962]). Richard Wright's *Twelve Million Black Voices* narrates the experience of Black migration from the rural South. Wright, *Twelve Million Black Voices: A Folk History of the Negro in the United States of America*, with photographs by Edwin Rosskam. (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1941).

[124] This situation was most famously documented in Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements in New York* (Cambridge MA. and London: OUP, 1970).

standards low. The Harlem tenements also helped create the conditions for the emerging civil rights movements in the early twentieth century.[125] The gridded streets of multi-family blocks provided migrants from the expansive rural south and mid-west with a place to live together in close proximity. The cramped conditions also had the correlative effect that Harlem residents used the stoops, parks and street corners as sites for meeting and celebration. This occupation of the streets, along with the district's renowned theatres and concert halls all contributed to the vivacity and cultural eclecticism of what became known as the Harlem Renaissance.

By the 1970s Harlem had changed as the street culture and oration that pervaded the streets earlier in the century brimmed over into protest, which the Manhattan authorities felt had to be contained.[126] The anger and frustration of the black community was redirected by these authorities into its own streets and the rivalry between different groups. As community cohesion was breaking down, the conditions in the tenements continued to decline. Property developers bought up more and more lots resulting in large monopoly controls that forced residents to accept impossibly high rents. The German conceptual artist Hans Haacke's *Shapolsky et al., Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971* exposed the corruption and chicanery saturating the Harlem property market. This series of photo-text panels is one example of Haacke's practice in the 1970s that utilised art, both the work itself and the site of its display, to expose the interrelation of wealth and political power underscoring cultural spaces.[127] Haacke's documentation also foregrounded the forced destitution of the black and Puerto Rican communities north of Central Park, which further served the plans of property developers eager to exploit the location of Harlem tenements to Manhattan.[128]

The Artists' Space press release for Hill-Montgomery's exhibition read:

> her intention as an artist is to alter the "containment" in which urban people live. She feels that, "…each individual has his or her own definitions, perceptions of what the urban landscape represents given their experience". To point and reconcile these differences in perception, Hill Montgomery's installation will exist in two locations: one at Artists' Space in the form of a wall-sized representation of

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[125] See Claire Corbould, "Streets, Sounds and Identity in Interwar Harlem", in *Journal of Social History*, vol.40, no.4, (Summer 2007).

[126] Jonathon Gill, *Harlem: The Four Hundred Year History From Dutch Village to Capital of Black America* (New York: Grove Press, 2011). And on the burgeoning gentrification of Harlem towards the end of the 1970s, Sabiyha Prince, "Race, Class and the Packaging of Harlem", in *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, no.12, (2005).

[127] The work not only names but also details the financial transactions of an actual business man, Shapolsky. It was incredibly controversial and resulted in the cancellation of Haacke's retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum in 1971. See Brian Wallis (ed) *Hans Haacke Unfinished Business*, exh. cat., (Cambridge MA, New York and London: The MIT Press and New Museum, 1986). Also Luke Skrebowski, "All Systems Go: Recovering Hans Haacke's Systems Art", *Grey Room*, 30 (Winter, 2008).

[128] Richard Schaffer and Neil Smith, "The Gentrification of Harlem?", in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol.76, no.3 (Sept. 1986).

> a tenement surrounded by a real picket fence and the other in the form of a ten foot picket fence in front of a real tenement.[129]

The shift between the 'real' and representational, artwork and site, served Hill-Montgomery's desire to 'point' out the particularity of the viewers' perceptions. But rather than reconciliation, the installation seemed to aim at disjuncture, or more specifically at making evident the power of a white person's perception of space. The white surface against black on the fence, like the white faces mirrored in the broken down tenement apertures, forced white and black into relation. The installations made whiteness strange, showing it up as a force writing black oppression and revealing the construction and antagonism at play in the association of blackness with darkness and the ruin of the ghetto versus whiteness, sanitation and homeliness. On one level these installations show up the racial dynamic of gentrification in 1970s New York, but on another they expose the impossibility of the category 'home' for black communities. The 'homeplace' is far more contingent, a place of becoming a subject rather a space of escape or seclusion from the public sphere. The multiple locations of *Reflections on Vacancy, Black and White in Closure* and *Candy Coated* present this contingency and the threat of forced migration or 'containment' for black communities against white systems of desire. They also refer to Hill-Montgomery's non-place between the spaces of Harlem and Manhattan, home and the art gallery. In this way Hill-Montgomery used her contingency, transforming it into a nomadism that did not retreat but moved between spaces. The panels of silver Mylar fabric, although delicate and subject to creases and crinkles, provide a kind of shelter for this nomadic political art by reflectively and reflexively implicating the viewer in the construction of homeplace and nonplace.

Hill-Montgomery was a successful and prolific artist through the 1970s. Her resume from the Artist's Space and New Museum shows list a self-published book of poems called *Fire Escape Scrolls*, documentaries, residences, performances as well as exhibitions in most of the cutting edge galleries in New York City including, Just Above Midtown, Cinque Gallery, Fashion Moda, The Alternative Museum, Cayman Gallery and Franklin Furnace.[130] However, the documentation of her work is sparse and critical writing almost non-existent.[131] Unlike Hammons, Hill-Montgomery did not translate her lack of belonging into a critical artist persona, but she did continue to make work

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[129] Press release for the November 1979 exhibition series at Artists' Space, Series I, Box 8, Folder 10, Artists' Space Archive, Downtown Collection: Fales.
[130] Gumpert, *Currents*: unpaginated.
[131] The archival materials relating to her Artists' Space show are minimal, but include some reviews. One review by William Burnley confuses Hill-Montgomery's installation with Haim Steinbeck's work, which featured in another room. The reviewer reads Steinbeck's pastel interior (attributed to Hill-Montgomery) as feminine cliché and Hill-Montgomery's work (attributed to Steinbeck) more interesting for its political statement. Burnley, "Installation Feed", *Soho Weekly News* (13 December 1979): 47. This and other reviews as well as the exhibition press release are held in Series I, Box 8, Folder 10, Artists' Space Archive, Downtown Collection: Fales.

outside of New York City after the rising Harlem rents had forced her out.[132] But Hill-Montgomery's mobility, autonomous or forced, traces an important narrative of women's art from the 1970s. Unlike the women of the F.A.P. or S.L.A.G., her engagement with the male-dominated art world was not concerned with entering or escaping those spaces, but with negotiating a place within it. Importantly these places did include collectives, but these collectives were not the feminist-identified alternative galleries or woman's only spaces, but more temporary and contingent meeting places like The Times Square Show and the Group Material collective.[133]

The Times Square Show, organised by Collaborative Projects Inc., as well as Group Material's storefront exhibitions occupied derelict sites in New York City.[134] Both groups along with a constellation of other alternative galleries defined a new social-political role for the artist through interventions in space as well as work with community groups.[135] The success of these social art projects remains disputed, as does the political traction of their at times trashy aesthetic. Yet the presence of Hill-Montgomery's work in these settings responds to the drive to make and show art in new, contested spaces evident in these group projects, rather than the reclamation of space, for primarily white women artists, at A.I.R. or Soho 20.[136]

In one sense Hill-Montgomery's interest in urban experience corresponded with those of emerging socially-engaged artists. In one review Lippard evokes Hill-Montgomery's nonplace in her comparison of this new artist-type angrily displaced on a street corner, to the artist working away in *his* studio.[137] The occupation of a ruined ex-brothel for The Times Square Show and the eviction and displacement of ABC No Rio, corresponded to the degradation of *Reflections on Vacancy* and the mobility of *Candy Coated*.[138] The imperative to occupy the streets and reflect on the local consumption of the urban environment was common to both the artist-run gallery scene and Hill-Montgomery's artistic practice. In 1980 she showed *Inner City Environment* (figs 3.42–

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[132] Hill-Montgomery, email interview with the author, 13 November 2014.
[133] Hill-Montgomery showed *92 Morningside Remember Fred Hampton* (fig. 3.44) at the Times Square Show. Artist and Collaborative Projects Inc. member Colleen Fitzgibbon noted that Hill-Montgomery's work was shown on the fourth floor with the Harlem Workshop Group, see online repository for *The Times Square Show*, accessed 30 January 2015, http://www.timessquareshowrevisited.com/accounts/coleen-fitzgibbon.html. The artist commented that she was invited to work with the Group Material collective. Hill-Montgomery, interview with the author, 13 November 2014.
[134] For a discussion of Manhattan gentrification see Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living*: *Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1989) and Rosalyn Deutsche and Ryan Gendel Cara, "The Fine Art of Gentrification", *October*, vol.31 (Winter 1984): 91–111.
[135] See Lucy R. Lippard, "Real Estate and Real Art a la Fashion Moda", in *Get the Message: A Decade of Art for Social Change* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1984).
[136] Meredith A. Brown describes how A.I.R. simulated the clean, white spaces of commercial galleries in Manhattan in contrast to other experimental alternative spaces such as 55 Mercer Street or 112 Greene Street. See Brown, "A History Of A.I.R. Gallery": 77–116.
[137] Lippard, "Real Estate and Real Art": 179.
[138] ABC No Rio, another Collaborative Projects Inc. exhibition on Delancey Street was closed down by city authorities in 1980 on the occasion of their Real Estate Show. See Shelley Leavitt, "ABC No Rio", *BOMB*, vol.1, no.2 (Winter 1982), accessed 19 September 2016, http://bombmagazine.org/article/34/abc-no-rio.

3.43) at Fashion Moda in the South Bronx. It was another fence work, this time bordering a patch of real grass with, according to Lippard, 'a battered found-metal frame hanging over it'.[139] The spatial dynamics of interior and exterior evident in this work related to other works in the exhibition including sign paintings by Fidel Rodriguez, Louis Badillo's spray painted rose after 'a painting on a wall at 5th Ave and 110th street' and John Ahearn's plaster cast portraits of local men and women.[140] This new breed of galleries, often artist-run, functioned less like stables caring for and supporting their named artists, than sites that artists could occupy. These occupations often concerned the social context surrounding the gallery space, inviting interaction between the public sphere and the art gallery, both successfully and unsuccessfully.

Reflections on Vacancy and *Candy Coated* focused on the inequalities of life in New York City. Yet unlike exhibitions like The Times Square Show, Fashion Moda or even the installations of David Wojnarowizc on the city's piers or Gordon Matta-Clark at 112 Greene Street, Hill-Montgomery did not participate in the degradation of the urban environment.[141] Instead her work was positioned against it, protecting the falling down spaces of the city from the gentrifying principle of culture and capital. Whereas these other projects attempted to delineate supposedly alternative environments by participating in the ruin of the city, Hill-Montgomery lamented lost homeplaces. As such her work relates to a politics of black womanhood, which in a comparable way to *Womanhouse* and *A Woman's Place*, deals with the problem of occupying space. Yet whereas the women of the F.A.P. and S.L.A.G. used domestic buildings to break the bindings that tied women to their homes, Hill-Montgomery's work showed up the lack of space for black communities ghettoised into the poorest housing. In this context the homeplace was an important political site to gain and reassert the rights of black people over their bodies and histories. *Reflections on Vacancy* lamented the dereliction of the tenement but also blocked entry to it, reinforcing this exclusion with reflective surfaces that returned the viewer's gaze. The installation affronted the white viewer, causing them to take notice of themselves and follow a different path away from the tenement. It is this reorientation that paralleled the work of black feminism in relation to the broader movement. While I want to emphasise the about turn in Hill-Montgomery's practice, both in this chapter and the context in which she worked, this was not a complete break-away but a shift that registered the heterogeneity, diversity and critique at the heart of women's political art making in the 1970s[142].

The artworks discussed in this chapter evidence a field of art making comprised of different women in conversation. The shared conceit and material differences between

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[139] Lippard, "Real Estate and Real Art": 182.
[140] Badillo quoted in Lippard, "Real Estate and Real Art": 182. See Kwon on John Ahearn in *One Place After Another*: 83–99.
[141] See Robyn Bretano and Mark Savitt, eds., *112 Workshop/112 Greene Street: History, Artists and Artworks*, exh. cat. (New York: NYUP, 1981).
[142] Hill-Montgomery also organized an exhibition with Lippard about working women, titled *Working Women/ Working Artists/ Women Together* at Gallery 1199, 310 West, 43rd St. New York, 26 January – 5 March 1982. See Bryan-Wilson, *Artworkers*: 169–170 (fig. 3.45).

Womanhouse, *A Woman's Place* and *Reflections on Vacancy* suggest the warp and weft that strengthen the structure of fabric. The conversation is constructed by intersecting points and diverging strands that parallel the larger shape of the women's art movement in Los Angeles, New York and London, one built on difference as well as similarity; once again, on the process of working together and working apart. Importantly the connections between these works also relate the relationship between the feminists and their local context and concomitantly expanding the maxim 'the personal is political' from the subject and the body to social relationships, particularly family and community. In this way the ruin of the house does not spell the destruction of the symbolism of the home but the potential for a radical domesticity that deconstructs it as a site of gendered and racial control. The surface becomes a textile, haptic and deep with the technology of weaving that parallels and connects to the mechanics of the home. These three artworks merged with the fabric of the house, dulling the gloss that conserved the isolation of the woman in the ideal home.

Chapter Four

The Issue with 'Issue': Feminism in the Art Gallery

In 1979 Lucy R. Lippard wrote a series of letters proposing an idea for an exhibition of political art to various London institutions. The show was to focus on women artists and socialist feminism, and be co-organised by British artist Margaret Harrison and American artist May Stevens. It was eventually realised in November 1980 at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (ICA) with the title 'Issue: Social Strategies by Women Artists', one of three women-only exhibitions in a series that came to be known as the 'Women's Cycle'. The cycle also included 'Women's Images of Men', an open-call exhibition of figurative art and 'About Time', which focused on performance art and was curated by Catherine Elwes and Rose Garrard.[1] Whereas Elwes, Garrard and the organising committee of 'Women's Images' – including Jacqueline Morreau, Lisa Tickner and Pat Whiteread – were all prominent London-based artists, Lippard was a visitor to the city, with a formidable international reputation. For the London-based women the cycle was a long fought for achievement of institutional recognition and a celebration of over a decade's work, but for Lippard, who had successfully organised and contributed to women-only exhibitions and publications in America since the early 1970s, the political tenor of 'Issue' was quite different. Coming at the end of a long decade of social activism the exhibition reported on a broad range of artworks, artists, and artistic practices. Yet it was not a celebration or memorial of work already done, instead it was future-oriented and included portions of works or documents of practices that were still in process. The result being a consciousness-raising session in exhibition form, in which each artists' work was a call to action that pointed out beyond the gallery walls, and to politics on a social scale.

One of the prerequisites of the exhibition was that all the works included had to be fresh to a London audience. 'Issue' was intended to provide a kind of update and consolidation of feminist

[1] The proposal for 'Issue' was accepted by Sandy Nairne, who had recently been appointed as curator at the ICA. Nairne had already agreed to an open call women-only exhibition and saw the 'Issue' proposal as an opportunity to build a larger programme. Sandy Nairne, interview with author, 2 July 2013. Lisa Tickner advised on the artist panel for 'Women's Images of Men'. A third exhibition, 'About Time' was also scheduled, highlighting the importance of time-based and new media art for women artists. Iwona Blazwyck was assistant curator. In addition to the ICA exhibitions, there were a number of related exhibitions including 'Eight Artists: Women: 1980' at the Acme Gallery and the 'Extended Women's Images of Men' at the Bakehouse gallery in Blackheath and a curated film season at the ICA. The artists included in 'Issue' were: Ariadne (Leslie Labowitz and Suzanne Lacy), Fenix° (Su Richardson, Monica Ross and Kate Walker), Nicole Croiset and Nil Yalter, Margaret Harrison, Candace Hill-Montgomery, Alexis Hunter, Jenny Holzer, Maria Karras, Mary Kelly, Margia Kramer, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Loraine Leeson, Beverley Naidus, Adrian Piper, Martha Rosler, Miriam Sharon, Bonnie Ora Sherk, Nancy Spero, May Stevens and Marie Yates.

political art in order to take stock and fuel new work and new activism.[2] As Lippard emphasised in her proposal to curator Sandy Nairne this would be achieved by bringing women artists together from dispersed geographies, and sending the exhibition out on a tour to different institutions in the UK.[3] Yet while the exhibition sought to recognise a shared dedication to 'issue-based' politics it also mapped a diverse range of issues and strategies. By bringing women together across the walls of a gallery space, the potential for collaborative overlap, as well as the productive tension between the different works came into view.

This chapter stages Lippard's plans for 'Issue' against its realisation and, in particular, the collaborative work produced for it by Kate Walker, Su Richardson and Monica Ross, titled *Fenix^{o}*. This project, begun in 1978, was an accumulating touring exhibition-cum-artwork, which had shown at venues including Birmingham Arts Lab, Dartington Hall Gallery, Devon and Bluecoats, Liverpool. In this iteration, as a touring installation, *Fenix^{o}* created an environment with a series of false walls and room structures, a proposition that ran counter to Lippard's plans for her own touring show.[4] Lippard's intention was to bring the different works included in 'Issue' together across the long walls of the ICA's corridor and main galleries, imagining them as a kind of 'newspaper page' reporting on the 'social strategies' of artists who had vacated the gallery (or had never been in it in the first place).[5] Conceived of in this way, the exhibition would be easy to tour and, therefore, the political message, easier to disseminate. This depended on imagining the walls of the gallery like pages, which would gather together different stories and present them with some continuity. Lippard literalised the connection on the title wall of the exhibition, which was pasted with newspaper front pages (fig. 4.1). In this way the exhibition might be read as an extension of Lippard's work as a writer and laying out a different collaborative relationship than that discussed in the open publications in chapter one.[6] This also played out in Lippard's work with *Heresies*, for which she organized a 'Big Pages' fundraising exhibition, featuring blown up 'pages' that immersed the viewer in text and image (fig. 4.2).[7] Or her slide lectures, in which the art critic would project images of artworks as the body of her argument, rather than talk and read through a

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[2] See Lucy R. Lippard, 'Issue and Tabu [sic]', *Issue: Social Strategies by Women Artists*, ed. Lucy R. Lippard, exh. cat. (London: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1980), unpaginated.
[3] Lippard in a letter to Sandy Nairne, dated 12 July 1980, in folder TGA/955/7/5/51, ICA Papers. Lippard had already organized a suite of touring exhibitions titled the 'Numbers Shows', by commissioning contributions from conceptual artists that could be sent low cost to the location of the exhibition, or made on site to instruction. The final iteration of this series 'c.7,500' had an international tour, which travelled in Lippard's suitcase. See Cornelia Butler, "Women – Concept – Art: Lucy R. Lippard's Number's Shows", in *From Conceptualism to Feminism: Lucy Lippard's Number's Shows 1969–74* (London and Vienna: Afterall Books and Van Abbemuseum, 2012).
[4] The tour only took place in a limited form. It went to Dartington College in Totnes, Devon in January 1981. See correspondence in TGA/955/7/5/50, ICA Papers.
[5] Lippard in a letter to Margia Kramer dated 12 July 1980 in folder TGA/955/7/5/50, ICA Papers.
[6] Butler also proposes this in relation to the Numbers shows. Butler, "Women – Concept – Art": 24.
[7] The exhibition included work by Sandra de Sando, Vanalynne Green, Michele Godwin, Sue Heinemann, Lyn Hughes, Patricia Jones, Kay Kenny, Nicky Lindeman, Lucy R. Lippard, Sabra Moore and Holly Zox. See "Heresies Big Pages", exh. pamphlet, New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984, in folder on 'Woman's Art', Box 19, Papers of Lawrence Alloway, GRI.

text.[8] Furthermore 'Issue' demanded a particular kind of art practice, that could fit or that could be made to fit physically and conceptually into Lippard's editorial vision. The inclusion of *Fenix^o*, in its installation form, would have fractured this exhibition structure, contributing to a 'rabbit-warren' effect that Lippard wanted to avoid.[9]

Fenix^o, though, depended on gallery spaces for its realization: it combined the display and production of art, and juxtaposed it with domestic work. That it did not fit physically or conceptually with Lippard's plans for the exhibition, or her understanding of socialist feminism, evidenced a disjuncture between the American critic and the British artists. As we shall see, Lippard did not accommodate the installation in 'Issue' and instead the artists' presented fragments of the work and documentation. This chapter is organized around this compromise and I use it to show up a moment of misunderstanding between the *Fenix^o* artists' approach to making art and Lippard's grasp of what constituted political art. While it offers another example of the antagonisms that attend working together it also evidences how women artists and cultural workers negotiated institutional spaces like museums and galleries. Indeed 'Issue' was animated by transatlantic mistranslations and ideological conflicts, but the artworks included in the exhibition highlight the recurring strategies and shared concerns between the exhibiting artists. In other words, in both organization and realization, the exhibition was structured by working together and apart.

The problem of the walls in 'Issue' and *Fenix^o* extends from the surfaces I discussed in the previous chapter. *Womanhouse*, *A Woman's Place* and *Reflections on Vacancy* intervened in the fabric of the house, dissolving the material threshold and the division between public and private. The walls I am concerned with in this chapter though, had different ideological associations. While *Fenix^o* simulated domestic space, even in its comprised form, the ICA gallery was an institutional space. But this is also more complex than it may first seem. Firstly in the context of the London art world of the 1970s, the ICA was one of the most experimental and versatile spaces for the display of art with a long association with avant-garde art.[10] It was also interdisciplinary, with a café, a cinema and a music venue as well as a full programme of lectures and supplementary talks. Despite the prestige of an address on the Mall and the neoclassical architecture of its façade, it was quite different from other major art galleries, like the then Tate Gallery (now Tate Britain) and the Royal Academy. It was much smaller than other new spaces like the Hayward gallery, and yet more of an institution than both commercial spaces and the more ad-hoc artist-run venues that sprang up in

[8] Some of these slide lectures are reproduced in Lucy R. Lippard, *Get the Message: A Decade of Art for Social Change* (New York: E.P Dutton, 1984): 200–210.
[9] Lippard in a letter to Kramer dated 12 July 1980. In a Letter to Martha Rosler, who was a friend of the critic, dated 12 July 1980 Lippard exchanged 'rabbit warren' for 'whore house'. See TGA 955/7/5/50, ICA Papers.
[10] For a history of the ICA before 1968 see Anne Massey and Gregor Muir, eds., *Institute of Contemporary Arts: 1946–1968* (London: ICA, 2014).

different sites in the 1970s, which I discussed briefly in chapter one.[11] It had hosted some of the most thought provoking exhibitions of the previous decades, as well as showing important early shows of feminist art including Mary Kelly's *Post Partum Document* in 1976, *Feministo: A Postal Art Project* in 1977, Bobby Baker's *Art Supermarket, Perpetuity in Icing* in 1978 and Cosey Fanni Tutti's *Prostitution* series as part of the 1976 exhibition of the work of COUM Transmissions.[12] Furthermore it was an institution open to democratic challenge, as the Women's Cycle only took place because of a protest of an exhibition of Allan Jones prints there in 1978.[13] Yet the domestic, even homely space evoked by the wallpaper motifs on Richardson, Ross and Walker's installation were never woven into the fabric of the artwork as it was at 14 Radnor Terrace. The walls in *Fenix^o* did not function as boundaries or enclosures, they did not join together, instead more like scenery, the artists constructed a space for a participatory deconstruction of the interior. In this way artists and visitors worked in and on the space troubling the psychic imposition of the home as a structure, without occupying it. Although coming from opposite directions, the home and the gallery, both Lippard's exhibition and Walker, Richardson and Ross's installation were itinerant and purposefully crossed both physical and psychical boundaries. This chapter argues that both 'Issue' and *Fenix^o* exemplified an active art-on-the-move that depended on feminist collaborative infrastructure and which, concomitantly, destabilized the symbolic role of the gallery wall.

Moving Pictures

'Issue' was a large sprawling exhibition, using the two floors of the ICA's gallery space, as well as a long narrow corridor that connected the first space downstairs

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[11] Lubania Himid discusses the particular character of the ICA in Himid, *Thin Black Line(s)* (Lancashire: UCLAN, 2011): 12–13.

[12] Both Kelly's *Post-Partum Document* and Cosey Fanni Tutti's *Prostitution Series* garnered massive press outrage. See Roger Bray, "On Show at the ICA: Dirty Nappies", *London Evening Standard* (14 October 1976). The Throbbing Gristle exhibition resulted in reaction from parliament and Tory MP Sir Nicholas Fairbairn declamation of the work as 'a sickening outrage. Obscene. Evil. Public money is being wasted here to destroy the morality of our society. These people are the wreckers of civilization!' Simon Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation: The Story of COUM Transmissions and Throbbing Gristle* (London: Blackdog, 1999): 6-22. Tutti's exhibition followed Kelly's. These events are also described in John A. Walker, *Left Shift: Radical Art in 1970s Britain* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002): 173–174. I discuss *Feministo: A Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife* a little, later in this chapter (see figs.68–69), for further discussion see Kokoli, "Undoing 'homeliness'": 75–83 and Wilson, *Art Labour, Sex Politics*: 93–138. Bobby Baker's exhibition-installation is discussed in Bobby Baker and Michele Barrett, eds., *Bobby Baker: Redeeming Features of Daily Life* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007). The work is also discussed in Battista, *Renegotiating the Body*: 68–71. In this exhibition the gallery was filled with art objects that could be purchased at a till manned by Baker. The artist wrote: 'The point was that the larger the image you purchased the more you destroyed the artwork and exponentially the more it cost you', Baker in Baker and Barrett, *Bobby Baker*: 45.

[13] For a discussion of the events leading up to the 'Women's Cycle' see Catherine Elwes, "A Parallel Universe: The Women's Exhibitions at the ICA, 1980, and the UK/Canadian Film and Video Exchange, 1998–2004", in *Issues in Curating Contemporary Art and Performance*, ed. Judith Sedgwick and Michele Rigg (Bristol, UK and Chicago Il: Intellect Books and The University of Chicago Press, 2007).

(fig.4.3). Lippard's selection was diverse on many levels: from the issues explored, to the media used as well as the selection of artists, who were at different stages of their careers and from different countries. The effect was dissonant, attesting to the vitality of women's art, as well as to the development of text-heavy, documentary work that demanded the viewer's concentration. Lippard's interest in these practices extended from her involvement with conceptual art, and presented a more radical renegotiation of what an artwork could be. One that was closer to the argument laid out 'The Dematerialization of the Art Object', because many of the objects included in 'Issue' did not take a single form and existed in different iterations inside the gallery and out.[14] But the artworks not only pushed beyond the gallery with their focus on social strategies, but also sought to move the viewer to political action.

The strategies were also diverse, soliciting different affective responses from the exhibition visitors. For instance Beverley Naidus's piece *The Sky is Falling, The Sky is Falling (A Panacea for a Pre-Millennium Tension)* (figs 3.4–3.5) directly confronted the exhibition viewer with the apocalyptic scenario of nuclear war. The work included a polyphonic audio track, alongside a questionnaire asking 'whether you wanted to be among those who survive or those who are the first to go'.[15] While Naidus was in London she occupied the installation, asking visitors to fill out a questionnaire, when she returned to New York after the opening three days the installation was left unattended with a sign reading 'Be Back in a Minute'. The piece also included 'subway posters' with 'synchronous "end of the world" content and scrawled text that said dystopic things'. Participatory performances, often involving interrogations, were characteristic of Naidus' work in the 1970s. In these scenarios she disrupted the optical distance of the viewer, eliciting their responses to and therefore their reflection on different situations, from nuclear arms to unemployment. Naidus had met Lippard during her performance *Apply Within* at Franklin Furnace in 1979, which was running concurrently with Lippard's exhibition of Artist's Books at the gallery. For this work, Naidus constructed a welfare office to which people came looking for jobs and to whom she subjected her own experience of unemployment offices before breaking role and discussing it with the 'viewer'. *The Sky is Falling, The Sky is Falling* marked a change of direction and content, catalyzed to some extent by the necessity to make work that could travel with few resources and which appealed to an audience with which Naidus was unfamiliar.[16]

Although she wasn't physically present in the gallery, Martha Rosler's photo-text artworks prompted the viewer to consider their position within the art gallery and culture more broadly. *Tijuana Maid* (1975) (fig. 4.6) and *The Restoration of High Culture in Chile* (1977) (fig. 4.7) told

[14] John Chandler and Lucy R. Lippard, "The Dematerialisation of the Art Object", in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge MA and London: MIT, 1999).
[15] Beverly Naidus, email interview with the author, 21 June 2015.
[16] Naidus revisited the theme once again for the group exhibition 'The End of the World: Contemporary Visions of the Apocalypse' at the New Museum, New York December 10 1983–January 22 1984, in her work *This is not a Test* (1983).

stories as 'decoys' to reveal hidden streams of oppressive social violence.[17] In *The Restoration of High Culture*, music and audibility provide a metaphor for the suppression of the working class resistance by the Chilean government, and a cipher for the role of a blinded or corrupt liberal United States. In the first of three texts the narrative follows an American visitor, perhaps the artist, to Tijuana where she is exposed to the gap between the cultural elite and the violence of the *coup d'etat*.[18] In the second section the text juxtaposes hearsay statements about socialism in Chile prefaced by the recurring refrain 'People have said that', with longer statements supported by examples and data, prefaced with 'People have shown that'. The first set of fourteen statements is contradicted by the set of thirty that follow. In the final section, the narratives of the first and second, are brought together, as the high culture world introduced earlier, cancels out that of the resistance, and masks its violent elimination. It reads:

> She imagines she hears the rich contralto of Norma, in a brown velvet gown… singing German lieder, drowning out the songs and then the cries of the Nueva Habana. She imagines the synthesised music of Norma's tall blond husband, American Bill, drowning out the songs of Victor Jara and then his screams and the sound of machine guns in Santiago stadium.[19]

Originally published as a pamphlet for a memorial exhibition following the murder of Chilean diplomat Orlando Letelier in Washington D.C., the work sought to expose both the violence of the junta and the United States complicity in it. The re-display of the work at the ICA, brought the issue of American hegemony to London. Far from just reporting news from abroad, the work also implicated the British art audience, pushing the viewer to understand their own complicity with political machinations hidden underneath a high culture veneer.

Lippard felt that it was impossible to build an exhibition around directly political work like Rosler's in the United States and saw the opportunity of organizing a show in the UK as a way to

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[17] The title of the artist's collected writings is Martha Rosler, *Decoys and Distractions: Selected Writings 1975–2001* (Cambridge MA and London: MIT, 2004). See also Alexander Alberro, "The Dialectics of Everyday Life: Martha Rosler and the Strategy of the Decoy", in *Martha Rosler: Positions in the Lifeworld*, ed. M. Catherine de Zegher (Cambridge MA and Birmingham: MIT and Ikon Gallery, 1999).

[18] The text and images comprising this work are reprinted in *Martha Rosler: 3 Works* (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1981).

[19] From Martha Rosler, *The Restoration of High Culture in Chile* (1979). Republished in *Martha Rosler: 3 Works*: 2–8, 8.

foreground 'social', or a socialist message in relation to women's artwork.[20] She spells this out in her exhibition catalogue introduction, but also refers to it in a 1978 interview with Margaret Harrison for the British tape publication *Audio Arts*.[21] In this recording Lippard calls Britain a 'socialist country', which Harrison quickly contests, before they go onto discuss the differences between feminism and the women's art movement in their respective home countries. The key difference, they decided, is the separatism of the early American movement and the pull of leftist political organizing in Britain. In her book *Get the Message,* Lippard further commented that the 'British socialist feminist artists' she had met presented 'theories on women and class […] far in advance of most American artworld expositions'.[22] While there is some truth to this distinction, particularly in the wake of McCarthyism, there are important exceptions including, Rosler, Candace Hill-Montgomery, Margia Kramer and May Stevens all of whom were making and exhibiting works of social criticism.[23] Indeed politicized women in the UK were critical of leftist organizing, and the political climate in 1970s Britain was particularly tumultuous: with new pressure on national industry, trade union strike action and economic deflation in the wake of the oil crisis, all of which threw social democratic politics in to decline and the parliamentary labour party into division.[24] Before its acceptance by Nairne at the ICA other London galleries, including

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[20] This was bolstered by the political exhibitions 'Art for Whom?' at the Serpentine Gallery and 'Art for Society' at the Whitechapel, which took place in London in 1978 when Lippard was visiting. See the exhibition catalogues: Richard Cork, ed., *Art for Whom?,* exh. cat. (London: Serpentine, 1978) and Martin Rewcastle and Nick Serota, eds., *Art For Society*, exh. cat. (London: Whitechapel: 1978). And Lippard's review "Raising Questions, Trying to Raise Hell: British Sociopolitical Art", which was originally published in the American publication *Seven Days'* August 1978 issue.

[21] Margaret Harrison and Lucy R. Lippard, interview, *Audio Arts*, Feminist Issues in Contemporary Arts, vol. 4 no. 1, sides A and B, (January 1979), accessed 29 July 2015, http://www.tate.org.uk/audio-arts/volume-4/number-1.

[22] Lippard, *Get the Message*: 88.

[23] All these artists made work that took issue with the national imaginary, policies or law enforcement in the United States. I discuss Hill-Montgomery's work in chapter three. See May Stevens' *Big Daddy* series (1968–76), I talk about Stevens' contribution to 'Issue', *Ordinary/ Extraordinary* briefly later in this chapter. See May Stevens, "Looking Backward in Order to Look Forward: Memories of a Racist Girlhood", in *Feminism – Art – Theory: An Anthology 1968–2000*, ed. Hilary Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001 [1982]): 364. Margia Kramer included portions of her work on the FBI's treatment of the actress Jean Seburg in 'Issue', Jeannine Tang discusses this work in "Double Agent: Art and The Politics of Information" (PhD thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, 2014). I do not discuss the work of either Alexis Hunter or Marie Yates in this chapter, on the former see, Lucy R. Lippard, "Hands On", in *Alexis Hunter: Photographic Narrative Sequences* (London: Edward Tootah Gallery, 1981); on the latter see Fenella Crichton, "Marie Yates", part of "Women Artists in the UK: Nine Women Critics Write About Women Artists of their Choice Working in the UK", *Studio International*, vol.193, no.987 (June 1977): 184–186 and Griselda Pollock, "Art, Art School, Culture: Individualism After the Death of the Author", *Block*, no.11 (1985/6).

[24] On the crisis in the labour movement see Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the Labour Party* (London and New York: Palgrave, 2015 [1997]): particularly "Labour in Crisis? 1970–79": 185–208. For contemporary discussions of the 'crisis' see Martin Jacques and Francis Mulhern, eds., *Forward March of Labour Halted?* (London: New Left Review, 1978): particularly Tony Benn, "An Interview with Eric Hobsbawn": 75–99.

the Whitechapel, had already refused Lippard's proposition for an exhibition of political art by women.[25] In the context of the UK's domestic politics the Americans' excitement seems misplaced, or at least insensitive, particularly as art made or displayed in leftist contexts was still dominated by men.[26]

This dynamic played out at the 'Questions on Women's Art' symposium accompanying the 'Women's Cycle' of exhibitions, of which 'Issue' was a part. Rosler's work received a frosty response.[27] The gathered audience read her discussion of political art as a claim that the 'Issue' artist's work was more radical than that included in the other exhibitions, although because of the sequential cycle of shows and the ICA's small budget, she had in fact only seen 'Issue'. The exhibition also found a hostile audience in the British press, with one review – titled 'Gallery Socialists' – taking issue with political tenor of the exhibited artworks.[28]

'Issue' included works that had a leftist or Marxist political foundation and those that were intersectional or concerned with other, non-class-based systemic social structures. This was a considered aspect of the exhibition's framing. In the correspondence relating to 'Issue', Lippard, along with Margaret Harrison and May Stevens detail their interest in showing 'socialist feminism' work, before dropping this specific designation in favour of the more elastic 'social strategies by women artists'.[29] The shift is explained by Lippard as a problem of different artists' (dis)identification with this label, which had particular associations around the intersection of class and gender as organising principles. Lippard had questioned her own relationship to the labels, writing in *Heresies* that she was 'a feminist first and socialist second, rather than a socialist-

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[25] Lippard and Harrison approached the Whitechapel Gallery because of their 1978 exhibition *Art for Society*, which Lippard had seen on her last visit to the city. Writing in the catalogue of that show, Nicholas Serota, then director of the Whitechapel, had situated *Art for Society* in a lineage of politically committed exhibitions and expressed his hopes for more in the future. But Lippard and Harrison's proposal was turned down. Serota, "Foreword", in *Art for Society*: unpaginated.

[26] Lippard, May Stevens and Margaret Harrison's proposal to Nairne states: 'The exhibition should offer a provocative complement and at times contradiction to the above of British political art (mostly male) of recent years. It would keep vital issues alive. It would bring together point of view unfamiliar to the majority of museum goers and provide a strong and focused show.' In TGA 955/7/5/51, ICA Papers. The necessity of organizing as women on the left is evident across a range of groups. It spurned publications like *Shrew* and *Red Rag* – see Nixon, "Why Freud?": 131–3 – and alternative groups like the WWAU, discussed in chapter one. It gestures to the wider theoretical problem of the woman question in socialist politics, see Shelia Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright, *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism* (London: Merlin, 1979). This book was influential for Lippard; she cites it in her introduction to the 'Issue' catalogue: "Issue and Tabu": unpaginated.

[27] The episode is commented upon in Caryn Faure Walker, *Ecstasy. Ecstasy. Ecstasy. She Said. Women's Art in Britain; a Partial View*, exh. cat. (Manchester: Cornerhouse, 1994): 24.

[28] Caroline Tisdall, "Gallery Socialists", *Time Out*, (1980), WAL. Notably Griselda Pollock's review in *Spare Rib* celebrated the exhibition, see Griselda Pollock, "'Issue': an Exhibition of Social Strategies by Women Artists", *Spare Rib*, no.101, (December 1981).

[29] Lippard, Harrison and Stevens in a letter to Nairne, TGA 955/7/5/51, ICA Papers.

feminist'.[30] While the political affiliations of artists in the exhibition were left fluid, each artwork not only represented an issue of social concern, but also troubled what art could be and how it might communicate. Lippard described the aim of the exhibition this way:

> While all art should to some extent act as provocation, as a jolt or interruption in the way social life and sensuous experience are conventionally perceived, the work shown here attempts to replace the illusion of neutral aesthetic freedom with social responsibility by focusing – to a greater and lesser extent – upon specific issues.[31]

So the artworks on show in 'Issue' were diverse, with different issues, approached in different ways. Crucially the exhibition not only addressed developments in art practice, but also made the issues addressed visible. It was a collation of different formal strategies, and different problems and circumstances. This had the effect of showing up the diversity of women's work and approaches – much like projects such as the *Rip Off File* and *What is Feminist Art?* discussed in chapter one. But while those projects occupied the formal constraints of the newspaper and the open call exhibition respectively, 'Issue' melded these approaches, making the art gallery wall into a space to report on actions happening elsewhere, or systems and structures conditioning lived reality. Many of the artworks on display were hardly artworks at all, especially if art is understood as that which has a singular, serial or editioned form. While some were discreet works, some were fragments of series, some were documentary reports of larger projects and others were iterations of forms that bypassed the art gallery. This concatenation of approaches, divorced political impact from stylistic criteria – a position Lippard had explored before and been disappointed by in relation to conceptual art.[32] Instead it foregrounded formal experiment, as well as the possibility that art might mutate in different contexts, inside and outside the gallery. Indeed this was demonstrated by Rosler's inclusion of the *Restoration of High Culture in Chile,* which was originally produced as a political pamphlet, as well as her postcard novel *Tijuana Maid*.[33]

Tijuana Maid tells the story of a fictional maid. It is a collation from a series of interviews Rosler had conducted with members of a domestic workforce, who had travelled or migrated to

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[30] Lucy R. Lippard in "From the First Issue Collective", *Heresies 1*, vol.1, no.1 (1977): 2–3. For further reflection on her political investments see Lucy R. Lippard, "Moving Targets/ Concentric Circle: Notes from the Radical Whirlwind", in *The Pink Glass Swan: Upward and Downward Mobility in the Artworld* (New York: The New Press, 1995): 3–30.
[31] Lippard, "Issue and Tabu": unpaginated.
[32] See Lucy R. Lippard, "Postface", in *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972…* (London and New York: Studio Vista and Praeger, 1973; Berkley, CA. and London: University of California, 1997): 263–264. Citations refer to University of California Press edition.
[33] Martha Rosler, *Tijuana Maid* in *Service: A Trilogy on Colonization* (New York: Printed Matter, 1978, 2008). The text was published in both Spanish and English; there is also room to add one's own recipes.

San Diego from Mexico.[34] The novel was distributed in the mail on postcards and printed in Spanish, with an English version available on request.[35] The text incorporated recipes translating classic American dishes, like apple pie and even peanut and jelly sandwiches into Spanish. Notably there was no attempt made to solicit responses, or start conversations as the *Postal Event* did. This perhaps aligns with Rosler's criticism of the 'cultural feminism' she saw taking place in group situations like *Womanhouse,* and which she felt were politically limited.[36] Rather than connect those who received the postcards, then, they were interventions, showing up uneven power relations within the domestic environment, which was otherwise deemed apolitical.[37] In her introduction to the text, Rosler writes:

> Mail both is and isn't a personal communication. But whether welcome or unwelcome it thrusts itself upon you, so to speak, and must be dealt with in the context of your own life. Its immediacy may allow its message to penetrate the usual bounds of your attention.[38]

The proposed circulation of this work in serial form mirrored the tradition of serialized dramas in print and on television, planting a political message in the quotidian and highlighting the micro-political frontline of racial difference within the gendered division of labour in border states.[39]

In 'Issue' the *Tijuana Maid* postcards were displayed on the wall, translating the drawn out temporality of the mail art project – one postcard was sent every five to seven days – into a long sequence. Each episode became one frame in a longer narrative immediately available for the art gallery viewer, in contrast to their staggered dissemination in the home.[40] Simply put, it told the story while also showing up the formal strategy of the work and opening up connections with the other pieces on display. Yet, even though the work entered the gallery, Rosler sought to disrupt its

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[34] It was this work for which Rosler was critiqued in the 'Questions on Women's Art' symposium. See Rosler, *Decoys and Disruptions*: 378, n.18.
[35] See Catherine Ceasar, "Martha Rosler's Critical Position Within Feminist Conceptual Practices", *n.paradoxa online*, no.14 (February 2001).
[36] See Martha Rosler, "The Private and the Public: Feminist Art in California", *Artforum*, (September 1977): 66–74.
[37] Steve Edwards has connected Rosler's work on food with her interest in Henri Lefebvre and the 'symbolic overcharging' of everyday life and quotidian activities. See Edwards, *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems*: 70.
[38] Rosler, "A Note on One Aspect of Form, August 1976" in *Service: A Trilogy on Colonization*: unpaginated.
[39] This alternative distribution also bypassed the art world, which Rosler felt asked its audience to "Abandon wordly concerns (except if you're buying), ye who enter here" in Rosler, "Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, and Makers: Thoughts on Audience", in *Decoys and Disruptions*: p.28.
[40] See Martha Rosler, interviewed by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, in *Martha Rosler: Positions in the Lifeworld*, ed. M. Catherine de Zegher, (Cambridge MA. and Birmingham: MIT and Ikon Gallery, 1999).

accumulation of value in these spaces by also publishing both projects as low cost artist's books – notably with English translations – that were not editioned.[41]

Other artist's works underwent similar translations for display at the ICA, including the media actions of Suzanne Lacy and Leslie Labowitz who worked together under the name Ariadne. The actions – *Three Weeks in May* (1977), *Record Companies Drag Their Feet* (1978), *In Mourning, In Rage* (1978), *Take Back the Night* (1978) and *Incest Awareness Project* (1979) (fig. 4.8) – were represented through photographic documentation arranged into a grid structure somewhere between a contact sheet and a conceptual map of their actions.[42] Likewise Maria Karras's *Both Here and There* (1979) (figs 4.9–4.10), a set of photographs of Angeleno women displayed individually on the city's bus routes, were reframed and hung in sequence in 'Issue'. In situ, Karras' posters communicated the stories of their subjects and connected the geographically divided and diverse communities in Los Angeles. In London they did the same, although bridging a greater, transatlantic distance. The iterations of both Ariadne's and Karras' works document the original formal frame of the work, gesturing to something that cannot be recreated or contained in the art gallery.[43]

Karras' interest in forging new relations between segregated groups animated many of the other works in the exhibition too. Miriam Sharon's *Ashdoda Harbour Project* (1978) and *Sinai* and *Negev Art Projects* (1975–7) were represented through photo-text documentation of Sharon's work with immigrant workers in Ashdod and Bedouin women respectively. Both projects occupied the point of conjunction between industrialization and tradition, and attempted to preserve, and make new, connections between and within communities. Like Sharon's *Ashdoda Harbour Project*, Mierle Laderman Ukeles also sought to show up an often-overlooked group of workers in *Touch Sanitation* (1979–80). For this work, Ukeles shook hands with every sanitation worker in New York City, and a few in London especially for 'Issue'. This act literalised Ukeles' relationship with the workers, who service the city and its population, but it also changed the terms of that relation

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[41] *The Restoration of High Culture* was published in *Martha Rosler: 3 Works*: 2–8. *Tijuana Maid* was published in *Service: A Trilogy on Colonization*: unpaginated.

[42] See Leslie Labowitz and Suzanne Lacy, "Learning to Look: The Relationship between Art and Popular Culture Images" and "Feminist Artists: Developing a Media Strategy for the Movement", both reprinted in *Leaving Art: Writing on Performance, Politics and Publics, 1974–2007*, ed. Suzanne Lacy (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2010): 72–82 and 83–91.

[43] Both Lacy and Karras were influenced by the graphic design work of Shelia de Bretteville at CalArts and the F.A.P. at the Women's Building in Los Angeles. In a class entitled 'Private Conversations: Public Announcements' de Bretteville asked the women to produce a map of the city, noting where they felt under threat of violence, make a graphic work and negotiate for it to be shown on that site. Shelia de Bretteville, interviewed by Jerri Allyn, youtube video, 15:12, posted by Otis College of Art and Design, accessed 12 December 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGJUbYc5O98. There were plans to re-circulate Karras' work, or a remake, on the London bus network but his never came to fruition. Lippard in a letter to Karras, TGA 955/7/5/50, ICA Papers.

by offering thanks rather than disgust or indifference.[44] *Touch Sanitation*, not only involved an act of care on the part of the artist, but also highlighted that care work expanded beyond the home into the public, keeping the city moving, as well as being the job of both men and women. The scale of this proposition was made present in the exhibition through the display of maps and schedules, which tracked the complex routes and routines of urban sanitation and underscored the dependency of the city of this work (fig.4.11). Above the maps and other documentation – including the worker's gloves – hung a series of stuffed rubbish bags, suggesting the immanent threat of a cessation in this work, something which the London audience would have been all too familiar with after the bin man's strikes in 1970 and 1978–9.[45] Ukeles also went out with a team of Westminster bin men on their morning pick-up before the exhibition opened, and invited them to attend the preview night. This had the effect of transgressing the boundaries of the art gallery; Ukeles invited a new audience in, moved out into the city and made palpable the relationship of the gallery to its supporting infrastructure.

Nicole Croiset and Nil Yalter's contribution was a photo-text installation that served as a portrait of a Kurdish woman resident in Istanbul, Rahime, who the work is named after (fig. 4.13). *Rahime* tells the story of the woman's displacement from a small rural village to the city, her marriage and her work as a nanny and in a hospital, across a film and a series of photo-text panels. The spoken narrative was paired with images building on the details in Rahime's description, while the photo panels portrayed the speaker in her home and at work stuffing large pillows with rags. Below the images were fragments of text, or in one case a ragged fringe, akin to those represented, but saturated in red pigment. On the floor immediately in front of the panels, was a pile of soil, bricks, a white jumper and four cups and saucers, creating a kind a pathway out into the world and a route for to the viewer to enter the work – although one strewn by disembodied remains and partially blocked by the bricks.

Rahime was one in a series of collaborations between Croiset and Yalter, which explored women's negotiation of spaces – public, private, contingent, temporary or state regulated – as well as their 'integration in the labour market', dependent on class, race and immigration status.[46] Although it is a theme that Yalter had begun to explore earlier in the decade, and that she continued to work with later too.[47] The context of their collaboration brought the work to a French audience – Croiset is French and Yalter Turkish-French – detailing the story of a Turkish woman's life, in a country with a large immigrant Turkish population. In this way, *Rahime* is a complex negotiation

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[44] Ukeles' entry to the catalogue included descriptions of the negative comments the sanitation worker's received during their collections. See Mierle Laderman Ukeles' contribution to *Issue*: unpaginated.
[45] See Conrad Atkinson's *Garbage Strike: Hackney* (1970) (fig. 4.12), which documented the effects of the first action.
[46] Jennifer Allan, "Nil Yalter", *frieze Deutsche*, no.2 (Autumn 2011), accessed 12 July 2016, https://frieze.com/article/nil-yalter?language=en.
[47] Fabienne Dumont, "Nil Yalter: memory, migrants and workers in 1970s–1980s France", *n.paradoxa*, vol. 26, Feminist Pedagogies (July 2010): 52–58.

of identities and associations mapped out through symbols and materials that provoked a direct, sensuous response. The work prompted a relationship with the viewer, but refused to expose Rahime or erase the personal and social violence expressed in her story. Indeed it also foregrounded the relative and distinct privileges of the artists, which was also contingent, for Yalter especially, on location. Translated to the ICA, or rather untranslated, because much of the text was displayed in Turkish and French (including their contribution to exhibition catalogue), the invitation to relate was troubled by dislocation.

Significantly each of these artworks trespassed the threshold of the art gallery, integrating it into the circulatory paths of the artworks and the networks they created. In this way the ICA functioned as a kind of holding place for this vital set of art practices, which sometimes conceptually and sometimes literally were on the move.[48] But just as these works ruptured the gallery walls, this did not simply fall across the binary of public and private – and their concomitant gendered associations – but brought together different pathways intersecting the complexity of racialised and gendered social relations, to which the London context provided another complicating layer.[49]

Both Sides Now

By 1980, and the occasion of the 'Issue' display, the early-1970s feminist dictum 'the personal is political' had been complicated by many conflicting intimacies and detachments. In addition to the works I discussed in the previous section, this was evident in contributions by Kramer on the persecution of the actress Jean Seburg by the FBI (fig. 4.14), as well as Adrian Piper's *Mythic Being* portraits (fig. 4.15) and Candace Hill-Montgomery's *Historic Evictions* series (fig.4.16) all of which reconfigured the relationship between the body, domesticity, seclusion, protection and exposure.[50] More broadly all of the works in 'Issue' exposed the violence of the social situations or representational codes into which they intervened, but the exhibition was less about mourning and melancholia than transformation.[51] On one level the included artworks were under transformation, taking different forms for the exhibition, on another they were transformative, both mobile and

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[48] Notably some of the works included moving image and film elements.

[49] In this way the mobile quality of the exhibition parallels Jenni Sorkin's argument in "The Feminist Nomad": 458–471. But rather than read the group show as always an autonomous group directed project, here I am interested how hierarchy emerges and was negotiated by women artists. See Butler, ed. *WACK!*: 474–499 for a chronology of all-women group exhibitions, compiled by Jenni Sorkin and Linda Theung.

[50] Hill-Montgomery commented: 'I am using the objects to hang the work so as to keep these realities outside of art, to bring us back into the reality of our existence, to remind us of the naked truths of the world we live in.' See Candace Hill-Montgomery, "Notes", in *Issue*: unpaginated. For a discussion of Piper's work see John P. Bowles, *Adrian Piper: Race, Gender and Embodiment* (Durham NC: Duke, 2011) and Adrian Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight: Selected Writings in Meta-Art, 1968–92 vol.1* (Cambridge MA and London: MIT, 1999).

[51] Here I refer to Douglas Crimp's argument in *On the Museum's Ruins*, (Cambridge MA and London: MIT, 1993), differentiating from his discussion of the museum and Lippard's approach to the art gallery.

emotionally moving, but the form of the group exhibition was also empowering, tracing new relationships and points of solidarity between artists and issues. I want to return to some of the refrains from chapter three concerning the redistribution of relations across architectural settings, transposing my discussion from the home to the art gallery.

In chapter three I discussed how the ruin of 14 Radnor Terrace in *A Woman's Place* provided a stage for women to relate to each other, away from the generational hierarchy of the family. This was also one of Lippard's stated claims for 'Issue', which was originally titled 'Issue: Two Generations of Women's Art'.[52] This title, which incorporates the double pun of 'issue' and 'generation' having double meanings as verbs and nouns, in turn echoes my reading of the fertility of the *A Woman's Place* installation. While this title designates between two generations and as such implies division, the verb form – to generate – also suggests the continuation and continuity of an activist feminist practice rather the destructive Oedipal drama associated with artistic styles. In any case the designation fell away in the face of the difficulty in distinguishing between a first and second generation, which in turn follows Juliet Mitchell's discussion of the impact of the sibling relationship on understanding all social relations.

As such 'Issue' realised Lippard's concept of the feminist movement, not along the lines of an artistic movement that could be swept away by the next stylistic development, but as an evolving process that effected real change in how art was realised and encountered as well as its sites and audiences. But it was not only the artworks that ushered in that change, it was prompted in the fabric of the exhibition. As she wrote:

> I am convinced that the cross references made between all these works – even within the limiting context of an art show – add up to a denser, deeper statement. I hope the web of interconnections and disagreements will cross boundaries of medium, esthetic [sic] and ideology to facilitate a dialogue with the audience.[53]

Lippard's appeal for a 'denser, deeper statement', complicates how the disruptive motion of this political art can be understood. It also complicates Lippard's own claim that the exhibition should function like a newspaper page, perhaps suggesting that the exhibition selector had to bend her vision in response to the work on display. Indeed the realization of the exhibition conflicted with Lippard's description and negotiations in her correspondence, instancing her own – sometimes reluctant – collaborative process, as well as the 'interconnections and disagreements' between the artists. In this way the relationships between the works within the gallery, were as important as their exterior outlook.

As I have discussed the work on display dealt with very different social issues, but the exhibition selection also belied a number of hidden relationships. Most obviously, it was biased to

[52] See letter from Lippard to Nairne, dated 19 February 1980, TGA/ 955/7/5/50, ICA Papers.
[53] Lippard, "Issue and Tabu": unpaginated.

North American and British artists, with a considered even split between those based in New York and Los Angeles. Furthermore the two international contributions were by artists – Croiset, Yalter and Sharon – who had exhibited in New York at A.I.R. gallery, where Lippard probably encountered their work. As a curator Lippard was not unique in relying on personal networks, but close relationships with artists had long characterised her criticism and curation – so much so that it verged on collaboration and sometimes risked overshadowing the artist completely.[54] In his review of Lippard's exhibition *557, 087* Peter Plagens wrote: 'There is a total style to the show, a style so pervasive as to suggest that Lucy Lippard is in fact the artist and her medium is other artists'.[55] But as I suggested earlier, Lippard's style might be closer to writer than artist, and more precisely to the work of an editor. In this way Plagens' 'total style' might be reconfigured into a frame, or concept that marshals the multiple messages of the 'Issue' artists' work into a discourse on politics and art.

Indeed by the 1970s Lippard's close relationships with artists had become a network of support. Throughout this thesis her name has cropped up as a co-organiser or a commentator on projects as diverse as the *Rip-Off File* and *Heresies* to the Hayward Annual II. Across these different projects Lippard served as a lynchpin, translating her likes and dislikes, friendships and acquaintances new and old, into an alternative cultural infrastructure. From the late 1960s Lippard increasingly looked beyond New York and the United States to make connections with political artists internationally.[56]

The dominance of British artists, as well as the fact the exhibition took place in London, were the result of Lippard's relationship to the UK art scene, which developed from a column in *Studio International* in 1973, to an extended sojourn in Totnes, South Devon in 1978.[57] Throughout the 1970s she toured exhibitions, visited shows and contributed essays to UK publications, traces of which are evident in 'Issue'. But it was in New York that she made contact with her co-organiser Harrison, during one of the artist's multiple visits to the city for exhibitions of her own and her husband Conrad Atkinson's work at the Ronald Feldman gallery. This instance of transatlantic exchange was reflected in two shows Lippard organized: 'Some British Artists on the Left' at Artist's Space in 1979 (fig. 4.17) and a woman-only, Anglo-American group show titled 'Both

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[54] See Laura Cottingham, "Shifting Ground: On the Critical Practice of Lucy R. Lippard", in *Seeing Through the Seventies: Essays on Feminism and Art* (London: G+B Arts, 2000): 1–46.
[55] Peter Plagens, "557,087: Seattle", *Artforum*, vol.8, no.3 (November 1969): 67.
[56] See Pip Day, "Locating '2,972,453': Lucy R Lippard in Argentina", in *From Conceptualism to Feminism: Lucy Lippard's Number's Shows 1969–74*, ed. Cornelia Butler (London and Vienna: Afterall Books and Van Abbemuseum, 2012).
[57] See Lucy R. Lippard, "One", *Studio International*, vol.186, no.958 (September 1973); "Two", vol.186, no.959 (October 1973); "Three", vol.186, no.960 (November 1973) and "Four", vol. 186, no.961 (December 1973). She also published the text from a lecture, "Art Outdoors, In and Out of the Public Domain", *Studio International,* vol.193, no.986 (March/April 1977).

Sides Now' at Artemisia Gallery, Chicago in 1979 (fig. 4.18).[58] These exhibitions used the word 'now' to confirm the political imperative of the work on display, but it is 'Both Sides Now', which parallels 'Issue' more closely, not only because of its focus on feminism or women's art but also because created connections between artists of different ideologies commitments and those outside of and beyond the art world centre of New York. The title of the Chicago exhibition exemplifies connection as well as cooperation, and although the artists did not travel for this show, like 'Issue' it sought to juxtapose different artists with a simple, almost continuous, hang across the gallery walls. The influence of this previous show is evident in the London exhibition catalogue in which Lippard comments: 'This is not the place to delve into the disagreements between socialist feminism and radical, cultural feminism (I, for one, am one 'Both Sides Now').'[59]

The correspondence between intellectual investment and geographic connection related to Lippard's paradoxical dependence on itinerancy.[60] Rather than work for a single publication, museum or gallery, Lippard remained freelance and as result somewhat apart from the commercial art world. Likewise her politics, although committed, seemed less about focused activism, than networking and exposure. These two strains came together through Lippard's interest in page art. One of the precedents for 'Issue' was a five-page spread in *Studio International*, titled 'Caring: Five Political Artists', which included Mary Beth Edelson, Adrian Piper, Martha Rosler, Nancy Spero and May Stevens.[61] Both strategies are evident as precursors to 'Issue', not only did 'Caring' include some of the exhibited artists, but Lippard also produced an exhibition catalogue comprising an introductory essay and page art contributions from each artist, and furthermore planned that the exhibition would tour. The publication was also an important extension of the exhibition, enabling it to literally move beyond the gallery walls and to persist in a different form.[62] None of the works displayed were illustrated by documentary photographs, but instead created an alternative picture of the concerns of the artists. The catalogue provided another space for the artists to come together, instituting a formal equality between the artists that was not evident in the exhibition, by restricting them to a double page spread and black and white print.

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[58] For a discussion of 'Some British Art from the Left' see Elena Crippa, "1970s: Out of Sculpture", *British Art Studies*, no.3, (Summer 2016), accessed 6 September 2016, http://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/issues/issue-index/issue-3/1970s. Artemisia was an artist run, woman-only gallery in Chicago. See Joanna Gardner-Hugget, "Artemisia Challenges the Elders: How a Woman's Art Cooperative Created a Community for Feminism and Art by Women", *Frontiers*, vol.33, no.2 (2012). And for a discussion of 'Both Sides Now' see Laura Litten, 'Both Sides Now', *New Art Examiner,* no.6 (April 1979); and Gardner-Hugget, "The Women Artist's Cooperative Space as a Site for Social Change": 178–183.

[59] Lippard, "Issue and Tabu": unpaginated.

[60] See Bryan Wilson, *Artworkers*, particularly chapter four titled "Lucy Lippard's Feminist Labour": 127–172, which addresses Lippard's gendered precarious work and Cottingham, "Shifting Ground": 25.

[61] Lucy R. Lippard, "Caring: Five Political Artists", *Studio International*, vol.193, no.987 (June 1977).

[62] Lippard ed., *Issue*: unpaginated. The same could be said for the catalogue of *c. 7,500* for which each artist submitted two pages printed on notecards that were unbound and could be shuffled by the artist.

Ultimately though her desire to mobilise the varied social strategies of different women artists – who were not committed to a single formal strategy as the conceptual artists in *c. 7,500* were – was challenged. The touring show never took place, except in a limited form, because it was logistically too complicated. And while many of the works could travel economically, the formal strategies and materials employed appealed to different forms of transmission, as well as old and new technologies. This ranged from Harrison's fragmentation of a protest banner in *Craftwork* (1980) (fig. 4.19), to Spero's appropriation of information from an Amnesty International report in *Torture in Chile* (1974) (fig. 4.20) and Mary Kelly's Rosetta stone remakes, *Documentation VI Pre-writing Alphabet, Exergue and Diary* (1979) (fig.4.21).[63]

Not all the artworks in 'Issue' were in sync with this temporality – one that, with its allusion to print media, was perhaps more connected to a public sphere. In contrast *Fenix^o* was more about repetition, mapping the constant process of self-reproduction onto the production of art. Like *A Woman's Place* it was also concerned with breakdown, using the space of the art gallery to build a second interior with dud walls. A psychic space, made up of excessive layers of symbols and ideas that travelled between galleries, but that also developed from the installation at 14 Radnor Terrace in 1974 and from the exhibition of the *Postal Event* also at the ICA in 1977. Indeed, in her correspondence with the organisers Walker even asked if she could use the same materials.[64] In this way the social played out differently in *Fenix^o*, and the compromise installation makes visible the difficulties these women had relating to Lippard's (social) network.

The issue with *Fenix^o*

The inclusion of *Fenix^o* in 'Issue' was the result of a mishearing between Walker and Lippard among the departing trains at Paddington train station in London on 15 April 1980, as the pair made hasty plans before the latter left the city. Lippard reported her misunderstanding to Walker in a subsequent letter, which delicately refused the artist's offer to show the work and asks her to consider another piece.[65] But Walker persisted and the work was represented in the gallery through documentation of its previous iterations. *Fenix^o* was a 'cooperative travelling installation' (fig. 4.22), which toured to spaces in Birmingham, Liverpool, Devon and Bristol.[66] In each of these locations the three artists constructed walls in the gallery space, creating loosely delineated rooms that provided the support for other works. These works ranged from illustrations, text and patterns

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[63] See Nancy Spero, interview with Jo Anna Isaak, "Jo Anna Isaak in conversation with Nancy Spero", in *Nancy Spero*, ed. Jon Bird (London: Phaidon, 1996): 24.
[64] Kate Walker letter in Lippard and Nairne, dated July 1980. TGA/ 955/7/5/50, ICA Papers.
[65] Letter from Lippard to Kate Walker, dated 1 July 1980. TGA/ 955/7/5/50, ICA Papers. The letter Lippard responds to was sent by Walker on 6 July 1980, in that letter Walker notes that Lippard 'left the question of the nature of my contribution open'.
[66] Suzy Varty is also listed as a contributor to *Fenix^o* in its first iteration in Birmingham in 1978, see Joanna Klaces, "Phoenix Arising", *Spare Rib*, no. 76 (November 1978): 37 (reprinted in *Framing Feminism*: 215). *Fenix^o* toured to Birmingham Arts Lab in 1978, Bluecoat Gallery Liverpool in 1979, Dartington Hall Gallery in 1980 and Bristol Arts Centre in 1980.

printed directly onto walls (fig. 4.23), to furniture-made-strange, mannequin figures, clusters of domestic ephemera and craft objects. Taken together these elements created pseudo-domestic environments. The installations ranged from particular room settings, like a bedroom (fig. 4.25); to scenes of domestic labour; a woman doing the ironing (fig.4.24), to objects made using craft techniques. While the installations were homely, they were not enclosed and there was confusion between the walls and windows of the gallery and the artwork (fig. 4.26). The effect was an overlay of surfaces and this was supplemented by wallpaper and framed prints, objects, pictures and projections that gave the work a dense texture (fig. 4.27), the motifs of which also appeared across the pages of the artists' zine *Flying in the Face of Male Artocracy*.

As I alluded to above, the work had formal similarities to the installation *Feministo: Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman* at the ICA in 1977, for which the artists also created a domestic structure for the display of small objects created during the *Postal Event* (1975–1977) discussed in chapter three. Indeed Walker, Richardson and Ross all participated in both projects and the artists acknowledged the connection: 'The idea of organic process [in *Fenix^o*] is something we picked up from the postal event. When we did that long series of exhibitions, we tried to play with it, display it in different ways'.[67] The ICA show was the last exhibition in a series of displays of postal art throughout the UK and the only one to construct a domestic setting. The earlier exhibitions in Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and Birmingham had become progressively messier after starting out with a relatively clear and conventional hang on white walls.[68] As the project garnered more participants – which was to some extent a result of the exhibitions – there were more objects to include and by the time of the ICA show, there were enough to create a dense and oppressive interior that extended from the darkly humorous to the 'Rape Room'.[69] The multiple elements that made up the *Feministo* display exposed collective feelings of happiness, oppression and threat in relation to the domestic environment. As such 'portrait of the artist as a housewife', as the exhibition was otherwise titled, did not depict a single figure, but a group formed in response to complex feelings of belonging and entrapment.

The limitations of working on a small scale for the *Postal Event* provided the motivation for *Fenix^o*. The later project incorporated objects and fragments that could be produced at home into an expansive, ambitious accumulating multi-part work. This demanded a smaller collective structure, in which each artist was supported in the process of producing an installation in contrast to the visual conversation developed in the *Postal Event*.[70] So what was exhibition design in *Feministo,* became artwork in *Fenix^o*. This shift in the formal structure of the work likewise

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[67] Su Richardson, Monica Ross and Kate Walker, *Fenix^o: Flying in the Face of Male Artocracy*, (N.P: Self-published, c.1977–8): 4. Held in the *Fenix^o* folder, WAL.
[68] See the description of the earlier exhibitions in Monica Ross, "Postal Event Exhibition May – June 1976" [composed of letters from Ross to Monica Sjöö] in *MAMA: Women Artists Together*, (Birmingham: N.P. c.1977): 26–27.
[69] Kokoli, "Undoing 'homeliness'": 77 and 80.
[70] The artists refer to the differences between the two works in *Fenix^o*: 4.

resulted in a shift in the site of artistic production, from the home to the gallery. Consequently Richardson, Ross and Walker incorporated the exhibition into the space of the artwork, even making the conceit of the touring show a constituent part of their practice. Each time *Fenix°* moved to a new site it was completely reinstalled, accumulating new objects and elements. As the artists wrote:

> FENIX° is made in situ at each gallery. The artists work publicly, improvising the installation for one week at each site, after which it is kept for a further period. It then travels to the next exhibition space where it continues to grow, building on previous work.[71]

There was also a connection between *Fenix°* and *A Woman's Place* (1974), discussed in chapter two. In 1975 Walker commented that she felt the earlier work had 'failed' because it was 'finished' by the time people saw it.[72] The implication being that the work would have been more successful if the process of entropic dissolution had taken place over the course of the exhibition. *Fenix°* achieved this because it was constantly expanding, and as such redirected the repetitive temporality of maintenance work toward the production of an artwork. Importantly, through the translation of the domestic environment from the architecture of the house to the art gallery, *Fenix°* demonstrated that home was as much an imaginary space as a physical one.

A Woman's Place, the *Postal Event* and *Fenix°* represent an alternative narrative to Lippard's international network of social strategies. Each work expanded the domestic into different sites and explored it as a fertile site for making art. This was epitomised in the shift from broken plastic baby dolls in the earlier installation, to the timeline of legs and feet by Su Richardson titled *A Life in Legs*. An installation photograph, dated to 1978, shows four sets of feet and legs arranged in a row (figs. 4.28). The first two pairs are set against a wall: one in striped socks and Mary-Jane style shoes, the second with legs outstretched in brown tights and heeled shoes – situating it firmly in 1970s style.[73] The next set of feet sits astride a bucket, with a pair of disembodied hands clenching the handle and a cleaning rag. The long legs of the last set, in white high heels and sheer stockings, are spread, while a pair of arms in white elbow-length gloves reach up from the ground. Through attire and accouterment, as well as activity, these body parts represented different stages in a woman's life from girl- to womanhood. They visualised the process of growing up and growing into roles, with dark comic effect. These body parts proposed that the feeling of exhaustion accompanying hard work was akin disembodiment – where thought divorces from body as one goes through the motions.

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[71] Richardson, Ross and Walker, *Fenix*: 1.
[72] Kate Walker in an artist's talk with Cathy Nicholson at the Franklin Institute, 1975. Recording in the collection of Lisa Tickner.
[73] Richardson discusses the craft processes that went into making *Fenix° in* Richardson, "Butterfly Sandwich": 4–5.

In other versions of *Fenix^o* this piece was redeployed, another installation shot also from 1978 shows the body parts all arranged flush to a wall, as if the bodies lay underneath the structure resembling the disembodied limbs of Robert Gober's later sculptural work (figs. 4.29).[74] In contrast with the fine finish of Gober's phallic objects – they could pass as severed body parts – Richardson's work was handmade, employing the skills of stuffing, sewing and dressing associated with the process of doll making. Yet rather than being instructive of maternal love, marrying-up domestic work with an object of care, the fragmented limbs cannot be held or penetrated as another type of doll might allow. Indeed without torso or head, they make poor anthropomorphic substitutes, and conversely represent a condition of invisibility, or a subject on the verge of disappearing into their care for another.

The isolated feet are also reminiscent of the severed corpse of the Wicked Witch of the West in the film, *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). Gill Perry has discussed the complex portrayal of home in that film, in relation to the appearance of the domestic environment in contemporary art, but it has a particular resonance for *Fenix^o*.[75] Because like the flying cottage swept up by the tornado in Victor Fleming's movie, *Fenix^o* was ungrounded, moving around and coming to settle in different locations. The artists even wrote that *Fenix^o* 'travels well and has even been rumoured to fly".[76] And just as in *The Wizard of Oz*, the house transports Dorothy into an interior dream world, so *Fenix^o* delineated a psychic environment. Yet whereas in the film, as Perry points out, the actors in Dorothy's doting family take on the fantastical roles of fairytale characters – the stuff of a young girl's imagination – the figures occupying *Fenix^o* were constructed from the material remainders of the house. While Dorothy's dream world played out the fears and hopes of an adolescent girl for the moviegoer, *Fenix^o* made real the psychic imposition of the domestic. In this way the film's restorative catchphrase 'There's No Place Like Home' took on a sinister edge, imagining the psychic weight of the home and exploring the archetypes – witch, housewife, girl – to whom the severed limbs belonged.

Other figures occupied the environments. Some were made up of mops and cloths – materials gleaned from the home and which imagined its residents merging with it – whereas some were mannequins, gesturing to the inorganic perfection of the feminine in the commercial world beyond.[77] These figures could be seen as mimetic stand-ins for the artists, or as ghostly afterimages

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[74] See Hal Foster, ed., *Robert Gober*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles CA: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1997) and Ken Johnson, "Cleaning House", *Art in America*, vol.78, no.1 (Jan 1990).
[75] Gill Perry, *Playing at Home: The House in Contemporary Art* (London: Reaktion: 2014): 7–9, 99 and 106–8.
[76] Richardson, Ross and Walker quoted in Richardson, "Butterfly Sandwich": 5.
[77] See Esther Leslie for a reading of mannequins as inert matter, Leslie, "Ruins and Rubble in the Arcades", in *Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, ed. Beatrice Hanssen (London: Continuum, 2006). It is important to note that other works were also making visible issues around women in the workplace, see The Berwick Street Film Collective's film *Nightcleaners: Part I* (1972–5) and Margaret Harrison, Kay Hunt and Mary Kelly's installation at the South London Gallery, *Woman and Work: A Document* (1973–5). See Judith Mastai, *Social Process/Collaborative Action: Mary Kelly 1970–1975*, exh. cat. (Vancouver: Charles H. Scott Gallery, 1997): 77-94.

of the roles they left behind. The body in Ross' bed sculpture (fig. 4.25 and 4.30), for instance, lay face down, its skin and hair synonymous with the white sheet of the duvet. Like a Pompeian figure, the body was composed of the material that caused her death, although in this case she was suffocated by sheeting rather than ash. Antony Vidler has described the importance of the Pompeii corpses for the formation of the nineteenth-century 'literary and artistic uncanny', which centered on the domestic.[78] He argues that at Pompeii, the domestic was simultaneous with the horrific in the well-preserved remains of the city, which kept 'the idea of history suspended, the dream come to life, the past restored in the present'.[79] Vidler's focus on the disjointed temporalities produced after the conjunction of the personal and the private, the past and the present links the threat of enclosure, with that of return, rooting this horror in the home.

In *Fenix^o* the uncanny emerged less through the re-appearance of a sublimated traumatic episode, than through the re-presentation of repetitive chores paused in the static tableau of a mop-and-brush-women and a ghostly, whited-out mannequin ironing. The inertia of these figures contrasts with the narrative of the uncanny Vidler proposed. In the texts he discusses from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, dead and inert figures have a powerful effect because of their unexpected animation, but in *Fenix* the mannequins stand in for the opposite, as they provide deathly reminders for a realm of actions and activities that the women artists leave behind as they become active as producers of the scene. In this way, those deathly figures found a parallel in the appearance of the artists in the work. Their physical presence suggested rebirth and the palingenesis of the phoenix myth, which the artists redeployed in the work's title as *Fenix^o*, with 'Fe' denoting the female or feminist as it had done in the renaming of the *Postal Art Event* as *Feministo* the year before. This rebirth is important because it points to an alternative inorganic reproduction, beyond the contemporaneous new possibilities – and regulatory cycles – of the pill and IVF. That this took place in an installation that untethered the domestic and repopulated the home with a chaotic gathering of figures also suggests a form of art making, that renarrativised the threat of the home, of the feminine and of enclosure as a threat to the woman and remaking the domestic as a creative site. Something summed up in the title of the artist's zine; *Flying in the Face of Male Artocracy*.

The idea of palingenesis referred to in the title *Fenix^o* signals its feminist activism. It suggests that the deconstruction of the home and the stereotypes structuring family life therein, resulted in a rebirth that disrupted the path of women's life and broke with the familial and societal structures that kept her in place. The mobility gained through this rebirth allowed these women artists to rethink their practice and take it from the home to the gallery. By using both the home and the gallery as studios, the women did not move from one place to another, but moved between them, overlaid them even, to constitute a new kind of practice from the ashes of the old. This new

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[78] Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge MA and London: The MIT Press, 1992): 47.
[79] Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny*: 47.

artwork could make the gallery space hospitable to feminist politics and redirect the repetitive labour of domestic work into a creative, conceptual proposition. Furthermore this was all achieved through a collaborative working process that used the home, but could not – because it was a touring exhibition, with many different iterations – be contained by it. As the women wrote: 'There are times when you can carry oppression lightly and succeed in throwing some of it off, because of the energy generated by the group'.[80]

The installation harnessed the energy of the audience. There were participatory elements including a set of questions and answers on cards that visitors could fill out with their experiences of marriage and parenthood.[81] This pseudo-sociological questionnaire sought reflection rather data collection, troubling the space of the gallery with idiosyncratic stories and making a mass of women visible and audible. The artists described this process in the zine. Richardson writes:

> We just want to be making the work, where people can see it and make comments, talk about it, where you can see their reactions. Then you know if its going to work, if it doesn't alter it. It takes a little bit of pressure off people not to have to go and look at specific objects with reverence. I felt, they felt, I think, as if they were coming into a workshop.[82]

Other ways of looking or interacting with domestic space were also offered in the zine, which included a page with a keyhole that could be cut out and used as a viewfinder for the exhibition. This interactive element invited the viewer to transgress the threshold and enter into the artwork's confusion of public and private, exhibition and installation, domestic and psychic interiors. Both intimate and irreverent, the installation tested out a kind of feminine voyeurism. As they wrote in the zine:

> K.W. I hate all that reverence given to fine art. I want to bust it all up! I really liked Liverpool. I felt very involved because people contributed so much. We are doing something with form, in response to those contributions which I think will be new.
> S.R. Yes it's a process of collecting experience and collective work. We record the events and installation with tapes, photos, writing. The audience can see a progression from one gallery to the next.
> K.W. It's an image of female life. We're not aiming at static complete perfection. It's an organic process.[83]

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[80] Richardson, Ross and Walker, *Fenix°*: 9–10.
[81] Klaces, "Phoenix Arising": 37.
[82] Richardson in Richardson, Ross and Walker, *Fenix°*: 4.
[83] Kate Walker (K.W.) and Su Richardson (S.R.) in Richardson, Ross and Walker, *Fenix°*: 4.

The process of making, exhibiting, viewing and documenting came together in *Fenix^o*, dissolving boundaries between different spaces and opening up the object of the artwork to constant flux.

This sense of dissolve was heightened by the inclusion of projections, a medium that did not feature in either *A Woman's Place* or *Feministo*. Although the precise form and content of the projections remains unclear, the remaining materials, installation photography and descriptions of the work in letters and zines, suggest that they overlaid other elements of the installation: falling over walls, false windows and objects. For instance, Joanna Klaces' review of the first iteration of the work at Birmingham Arts Lab described how 'Domestic pictures were filtered [through] fine muslin from a projector in a box onto a screen made of old white clothes pinned to the wall.'[84] The effect of this overlay would have brought the separate parts of the three-dimensional installation together in a mesh. Furthermore it would also have revivified the environment, bringing other temporal registers into play and potentially activating the *mise-en-scene* in the absence of the artists. The animation of this domestic environment bears comparison with the psychic projection in Charlotte Perkins-Gilman's novella *The Yellow Wallpaper*.[85] As is now well known and would have been to Richardson, Ross and Walker in 1978, at the end of the story a young wife, confined to her bedroom, loses herself in the pattern of the yellow wallpaper decorating the room.[86] She does not simply become obsessed by the design, but begins to see it move and vibrate, to the extent that the forms break free from their yellow background, opening up another space for her to occupy and eventually enclosing her. The heroine's psychic projection dissolves the wall – the symbol and means of seclusion and oppression – but Perkins-Gilman leaves ambiguous whether this is a further entrapment or liberation. In *Fenix^o* the projection induced a similar experience, dissolving the fixed expanse of the wall and potentially inscribing the body of the viewer into the scene, in way that was quite distinct from the attack on the fabric of the walls in *A Woman's Place*.[87] The projection was situated above Monica Ross' *Bed Installation* (fig. 4.30) as if playing out the dreams of the facedown figure. The images related to housework and then morphed into patterns and motifs associated with flight. The other projection, which Klaces suggests fell over old white clothes, was a series of stenciled words beginning with 'Self Image/ Imagine/ Magazine/ Maze' by

[84] Klaces, "Phoenix Arising": 37.
[85] Perkins-Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (Originally published in *New England Magazine* 1892, 1981).
[86] There is no record of the artists having read the book, although it was reprinted by the woman-only New York-based Feminist Press in 1973 and by Virago in 1981, which resulted in a new audience for the story.
[87] The artist Tina Keane's film *Faded Wallpaper* (1988) made a more direct reference to Perkin-Gilman's novella, overlaying images of female figure with patterned wallpaper, narrated with personal recollection. The work, which uses the relatively new medium of video, utilised the formal qualities of that medium, including its display on a small screen to create a different sense of confinement and enclosure.

Richardson.[88] The words were arranged in a vertical list, with each word sharing letters with some of those preceding it: 'self-image' became 'imagine', which was then cut-off by 'magazine' and 'maze', highlighting the complex visual terrain women negotiated in print media and the public sphere as well as at home. The projection was adjacent to a mirror that would catch the viewer's reflection, further involving her in the scene. Likewise the hanging clothes, acted like remainders of absent inhabitants or skins to be inhabited. That the clothes become the 'screen' is important. The ruffles and lace of the garments disrupted the smooth surface for projection and – its sister visual trick – reflection, suggesting how a woman's imagination might be marked by the lingering traits of femininities past. Indeed this seems particularly apt with the Edwardian style clothes, then much outdated that hung in *Fenix^{o}*.[89] The collapse of bodies with walls was also evident in Walker's poppy-printed wallpaper, which migrated from walls, to framed prints, to tattoos on the bodies of plastic mannequins, in a reversal of Perkins-Gilman's narrative. This work, illustrated in Rozsika Parker's article on women's art groups in *Spare Rib*, was titled *Self Portrait* (fig. 4.30).[90] Whereas in the novella the heroine enters the wallpaper enclosure, in Walker's *Self-Portrait*, the poppy stems seem to creep over the hard bodies, interpolating them in the installation suggesting psychic resistance and physical surrender, but also sanctuary and protection. This staging paralleled the physical and perceptual experience of the home, suggesting how architecture and emotion become messily inscribed.

The immersive quality of the *Fenix*^{o} installation directly contrasted with Lippard's aim for 'Issue'. She argued in a letter to Walker that this ultimately disrupted the potential of the exhibition to create connections between the artists.

> I don't feel that Fenix, with its rambling structure (and theme), makes sense for the show physically or theoretically, and I'm really sorry that I didn't get that across when we talked […] I have made the same specifications to the other artists requesting walls etc., since the show was conceived not as a group of separate rooms but as a continuous "newspaper" – almost a collective work in entirety, in which issue confronts and supports issue as one proceeds through the spaces. Floor space is available, but not extra or added wall space, so the openness of the idea will be extended into the physical aspect as well.[91]

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[88] The list was also stenciled onto a roll of toilet paper – a poor material suggesting the ongoing labour of housework, as well as its constant demand. Su Richardson, Personal Collection.
[89] It is important to stress the consideration Richardson put into selecting the items displayed in *Fenix^{o}*. Richardson had been trained in design in Sheffield, for her graduation project she designed a series of coloured plastic outfits. Su Richardson, interview with the artist, 7 May 2014, Birmingham, UK.
[90] Rozsika Parker, "The Story of Art Groups", *Spare Rib*, no.95, (June 1980): 50–51.
[91] Lippard letter to Kate Walker dated 01 July 1980. TGA/955/7/5/50, ICA Papers.

Lippard's response to Walker was perhaps the most explicatory, but also the harshest in tone of all the letters relating to 'Issue'. In one sense it was practical, but her description of *Fenix°* as 'rambling' and 'elaborate' also suggests her refusal to read the material excess of the installation as its social strategy. It also jars with Lippard's investment in craft practices that were judged as bad taste by the art world because of their commonality and kitsch ostentation, which she read as a political issue.[92] Likewise it distinguishes between different 'Issue' artists' approaches to craft, particularly Harrison's *Craftwork*, which was more contained in set of wall-mounted panels (fig. 4.19). The piece was a large, multi-part tableau comprised of text and images that reflected on the relationship between working-class women, craft and industry. It turned around three columns one showing quilting, one lace and the last doilies. Each column had three parts presenting one actual, one painted and one photographed example of domestic craft. Stencilled text banners between the images declared 'DESKILLING COLLECTIVE', 'CRAFT ALIENATION' and 'SINGLE CREATION', eluding to the increasing tension between craft work and the consumption of industrially-produced goods in working class women's lives. Across more detailed text panels and recorded audio, the work expanded on the loss of female community and historical legacy, wrought through this material shift.

Harrison's vocabulary evidences her familiarity with Marxism, which distinguishes her approach from Richardson, Ross and Walker's in *Fenix°*. Other works also corresponded more closely to Lippard's interest in left politics and socialist feminism, for instance May Stevens' juxtaposition of the life of the revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg, with her mother in *Ordinary/Extraordinary,* 1977; or Alexis Hunter's *The Marxist's Wife (Still Does the Housework)*, which showed a hand smearing a portrait of Marx, rather than cleaning it, across three columns of photographs resembling a film strip. Loraine Leeson's contribution to the exhibition was a set of posters designed to help the campaign over hospital closures in East London (fig. 4.32). Leeson, who worked closely with her then partner Peter Dunn, understood them as 'visual pamphlets' made to communicate the demands of the campaign, although those included in 'Issue' were focused on raising women's consciousness to the importance of fair health care.[93] The posters were produced in multiples and available to buy in the gallery shop – further complicating the distinction between

[92] Lucy R. Lippard, "The Pink Glass Swan: Upward and Downward Mobility in the Art World", *Heresies 1*, vol.1, no.1 (January 1977).

[93] Loraine Leeson, telephone interview with the author, 17 June 2015. Leeson and Dunn's work concerning health care began when they were commissioned to make a film documenting the occupation and strike at Bethnal Green Hospital. After completing the film, they wanted to work more collaboratively with those in the occupation, rather than documenting them. Working with activists and hospital workers, Leeson and Dunn produced an exhibition to educate patients about the occupation and how they could support it. The East London Health project was formed afterward and Leeson and Dunn were invited to join as artists alongside trade union representatives and hospital workers. The Women and Health series were made as part of this initiative. On another project by Dunn and Leeson: see Peter Dunn and Loraine Leeson, "The Art of Change in Docklands", in *Mapping the Futures*, ed Jon Bird et al (Routledge: London and New York, 1993) and Peter Dunn and Loraine Leeson, "The Docklands Photomurals", in *Art and Social Change: A Critical Reader*, edited by Will Bradley and Charles Esche (London: Tate and Afterall, 2007).

artwork and agit prop in the exhibition. In fact Lippard had also investigated including work by the photographer Jo Spence and the Hackney Flashers collective of which she was part.[94] *Who's Still Holding the Baby?* was a sequence of photographic and illustrated panels about the isolation of women at home and the provision of childcare in the London borough of Hackney (see fig. 3.31) The cardboard mounted image-text composites were toured across the UK, and displayed at political meetings, in hospitals and in libraries. The group understood this project as a piece of agit prop and was troubled by its potential inclusion in art exhibitions. This played out, not in relation to 'Issue', but after an invitation to show the work at the Hayward Gallery's *Three Perspectives on Photography* in 1979. The decision to participate eventually split the group – possibly preventing their inclusion in Lippard's selection – despite attempts to make the exhibition more accessible to those who wouldn't normally visit the gallery with a series of events.[95]

There are obvious differences between *Who's Still Holding the Baby?* and *Fenix^o*, although both were made with touring in mind and deal with working class women's relationship to the domestic environment. The thematic crossover between the two works highlights their shared interest in housework and the gendered division of labour in the British Women's Liberation Movement in the 1970s. These ideas had currency through the Wages for Housework campaign, although it also had chapters in New York, to other activities with and within Leftist groups, which were often more entangled, than the separatism of the American women's movement. While the conceit of the touring show allowed both the Hackney Flashers and Richardson, Ross and Walker to bypass the commercial art world and institutional support, as well as to approach a diverse audience. This movement also directly supported the message of both projects, which as the Flashers have remarked, sought to make the invisible visible, and breakdown women's isolation in the home.[96]

However, while *Who's Still Holding the Baby?* documented the experiences of housewives as well as statistics related to childcare and the provision of anti-depressant medication in Hackney, *Fenix^o* was a personal response. Richardson, Ross and Walker were working class women and artists, all of whom had studied in art after changes in art school education in the early 1960s.[97] The Hackney Flashers, on the other hand, were a mixture of British and American women; long-term and short-term Hackney residents; activists, photographers, and mothers. Their collective work began as a protest to an all-male photographic history at the Hackney Trades Council, and depended on creating a sensitive and non-exploitative, but nonetheless documentary practice of

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[94] The Hackney Flashers collective included Jo Spence, Maggie Murray, Michael Ann Mullen, Julia Vellacott, Sally Greenhill, Liz Heron and Jini Rawlings.

[95] The poster relating to the Hackney Flashers' alternative art program at the Hayward is available on the Hackney Flashers' website, accessed 15 July 2016, https://hackneyflasherscollectiveblog.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/hayward-leaflet.jpg.

[96] This was remarked upon by members of the Flashers, particularly Maggi Murray, at the 40th Anniversary Event celebrating the collective, held at Chat's Palace in Hackney on 12 October 2014.

[97] See Lisa Tickner, *Hornsey 1968: The Art School Revolution* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2008).

variety of occupations. The comparison between these two works also bears out between most of the works in 'Issue', because they also dealt with women's social situation by bringing other stories to light, rather than negotiating their own relationship to the social world. In *Fenix^o* this grassroots perspective exchanged clear communication for the chaotic unraveling of collaborative work. Lippard suggests as much in her discussion of *Fenix^o* in the catalogue introduction: 'while the esthetic [sic] outcomes of their collaborations is risky, it is less significant than the process itself and the effect on the audience'.[98]

That Lippard reasoned the problem lay in the work's potential to disrupt the material fabric of the exhibition, and the collectivity of the group show, indicates the failure of the American curator and the art gallery to accommodate a work by, rather than, about working class women in Britain. Concomitantly this situation could be read as symptomatic of the erasure of difference in the process of group work.[99] Instead of incorporating *Fenix^o* as an installation and allowing 'Issue' to become one more stop on its ongoing tour – a show within a show – it was represented through documentation in a tableau arrangement of wallpaper remnants, seventeen surgical gloves, two rows of notebook sketches and a 'sewn/photo/collage' by Ross (fig. 4.33).[100] All of which were displayed across a single flat wall.

Missed Connections

By detailing the encounter between Lippard and *Fenix^o* I do not want to suggest it is exemplary, or that it was particularly aggressive or affective. Instead it serves as one example, among many included in this thesis and not, that when looked at detail reveal the antagonisms that motored collaborations between women. Richardson, Ross and Walker's re-presentation of their ambitious work around Lippard's curatorial concept, as well as Lippard's decision to include the collective work demonstrates that differences, although evident, were not insurmountable. Although the artists had to fit the form of the exhibition, Lippard also compromised by including a work that did not originally fit into her concept.

However, Lippard's refusal to include the full installation of *Fenix^o* takes on a different patina in comparison with the display, in the same room, of Sherk's documentation of her Los

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[98] Lippard, "Issue and Tabu": unpaginated.

[99] This is also evident in the extremely detailed notes Walker left so the installation of *Fenix* could go ahead in the artists' absence. Richardson and Ross were absent because they both lived in Birmingham, Walker was unable to work at the gallery in the daytime because of her teaching job, as she writes: 'I'll try to get away from work early (Portsmouth), but even so it will be early evening before I arrive'. Kate Walker's instructions for the installation. TGA/955/7/5/50, ICA Papers.

[100] Kate Walker's instructions for the installation. TGA/955/7/5/50, ICA Papers. This list of materials is seriously reduced from that sent by Walker to Lippard and Nairne in a letter dated 6 June 1980, which includes: 'four slide projectors/ a tape recorder…/ 18" wallspace together (shared by the 3 artists)/ all space on this surface to the ceiling. 3" floorspace directly in front + total length of 18"/ 10 free standing screens (of the type we have used before at ICA in 1977…)/ Black/ white emulsion paint/ some scaffolding and platform…/ possibly 2 or 3 spotlights'. Letter from Walker to Lippard and Nairne dated 6 June 1980, TGA/955/7/5/50. ICA Papers.

Angeles-based project *Crossroads Community* (*The Farm)*. This work titled *A Triptych, Within a Triptych, Within a Triptych, Within the Context of a Counterpointed Diptych: Technological/ Non-Mechanised etc…* (fig. 4.34) was an 'environmental performance sculpture' composed of a built framework, plants and live mice.[101] If the verbose title, with its allusions to multiple parts and layers, seems to run counter to Lippard's desire for smooth surfaces, then the inclusion of plants and animals would surely count as 'elaborate' or 'rambling'. Yet in her letters to Sherk, Lippard encouraged her to present something connected with *The Farm* and she offers the artist an 'open space in middle of big gallery', which could accommodate 'something on a small scale… (Sandy didn't blanche when I mentioned animals, bushes…)'.[102] The possibility of an international exhibition was also appealing to Sherk, as she wrote, 'the work relates to global connections – essences' and in this way the artist's ICA installation sought to establish a transatlantic link to the *Crossroads Community* in San Francisco that went beyond documentation.[103]

Crossroads Community took place at the spatial intersection of different communities within San Francisco and under the shadow of a freeway exchange (figs 4.35–4.36). The community provided a site for disparate people to come together and for city dwellers to use the land to grow food and livestock. It also had a theatre, 'an exhibition space, a "school without walls", a healing centre, and a darkroom'.[104] *Crossroads Community* was as much a 'working community farm/garden' as it was an 'environmental education centre and alternative art space'.[105] At the ICA Sherk condensed this long-term project into a participatory artwork that encouraged the viewer to reconsider their situation within the gallery by asking them to look through a series of frames. The first labeled 'Exhibit A' was a documentary video about *The Farm*, the second, Exhibit B, was a dinner party tableaux, which Beth Anne Lauritis describes as 'gesturing toward hospitality and the cycles of life'.[106] Exhibit C was Sherk's letter of resignation from *The Farm* and a business card. The final section was a 'bank of theatre seats with attached binoculars [that] permitted leisurely study of different levels of reality in the gallery assemblage or the scene beyond the window' that looked out toward St. James' Park.[107] The *Triptych* setup a number of 'conjunctions'; between the interior and exterior of the gallery, between the space of the art and the habits of life and between London and San Francisco. This complex configuration depended on the viewer to bring them together. Sherk's performance practice – which often took place in public settings – also depended on articulating new perspectives. For instance in *Public Lunch* (1971) the

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[101] Sherk quoted in Lauritis, "Lucy R. Lippard and the Provisional Exhibition": 267.
[102] Lippard in a letter to Sherk dated 12 July 1980. TGA 955/7/5/50. ICA Papers.
[103] Bonnie Ora Sherk in a letter to Lippard dated 31 July 1980. TGA 955/7/5/50. ICA Papers.
[104] Lauritis, "Lucy R. Lippard and the Provisional Exhibition": 270. See Bonnie Ora Sherk, "Crossroads Community (The Farm) Is an Alternative to Art Spaces", *Heresies 13*, Earthkeeping, Earthshaking: Feminism and Ecology, vol.4, no.1 (1981): 31.
[105] Stephanie Smith, "Bonnie Ora Sherk", in *Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art*, ed. Stephanie Smith, exh. cat. (Chicago IL: Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago, 2012): 126.
[106] Lauritis, "Lucy R. Lippard and the Provisional Exhibition": 270.
[107] Ibid.: 270–271.

artist dressed formally, ate an elaborate meal in a cage adjacent to the tiger enclosure in San Francisco zoo, inviting comparison between eating and dining, between nature and civilization, but also highlighting the violence of the cage, by measuring the animal's incarceration against her own. Sherk's use of her own body as a symbolic measure emerged again in *Response*, in which she sat in an armchair resting precariously in a refuse dump, muddying the division between waste and the everyday. [108]

Sherk's precise visual aesthetics – including framing, juxtaposition and scale – explore the possibilities of an ecological form, by making environmental concerns perceptible in the everyday. Her work made connections between life forms and their environments, showing-up the interdependency and exploitation of animal life and natural resources for human gain. As such the apparently simple gestures in her work, reverberated on a large scale. This was also the case in *Crossroads Community*, which as Carl E. Loeffler writes, 'when seen as a whole, or as Sherk would say, "when viewed through a wide angle lens," [*The Farm*] formulates an incredibly rich "life/art theatre."'[109] Because although it was more ambitious as an artwork, it was literally a smallholding.

Sherk's ecological perspective contrasts with the other works included in 'Issue', and Lippard's interest in it, reflected her own increasing investment in the environment.[110] But it also related to Lippard's longstanding interest in works of public art, as well as those that belonged to the landscape. She had developed a series of articles on this theme for *Studio International* in the early 1970s, with particular reference to work of Robert Smithson as well as writing a piece for *Art in America* in 1979 that cited Sherk's work.[111] This series of writing traces an alternative, ecological narrative in Lippard's investment in political art. Rather than celebrate the possibilities of everyday materials that could circulate beyond museum and gallery settings, as she had in relation to conceptual practices, this art was rooted to the landscape and longer histories of humanity. Her book length study of this relationship between contemporary art and prehistory, *Overlay* found its origins in Lippard's sabbatical in Devon. [112] As such the book points to another transatlantic narrative, less concerned with the different political contexts of the US and the UK, and the shape of the women's art movement in and across these different territories, than the

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[108] For more information on *Public Lunch,* see Smith, "Bonnie Ora Sherk": 126 and for more information on *Response* see Alec Lambie, "Things Are Not As They Seem', *Artweek*, vol.3 (25 March 1972): 3.
[109] Carl E. Loeffler, "From the Body into Space: Post-Notes on Performance Art in Northern California", in *Performance Anthology: Sourcebook for a Decade of California Performance Art*, ed. Carl E. Loeffler and Darlene Tong (San Francisco: Contemporary Arts Press, 1980): 380.
[110] An interest that has continued until very recently and Lippard's most recent publication: *Undermining: A Wild Ride in Words and Images through Land Use Politics and Art in the Changing West* (New York: The New Press, 2014).
[111] On this theme and "Gardens: Some Metaphors for a Public Art", *Art in America,* vol.69, no.9 (November, 1979): 146.
[112] Lucy R. Lippard, *Overlay*: *Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory* (London and New York: Random House and Pantheon Press, 1983).

relationship of humanity to nature. Nonetheless Lippard made a gender critique central to the book.[113]

In *Overlay* Lippard does not argue for an inherent connection between women or women's art, and the natural world. Instead she evidenced the ways in which social and cultural progress have cut off humanity's relationship to other forms of knowledge, and through technological development have alienated human life from natural resources. She argues that these developments have followed a Patriarchal logic and, among other things, erased matrilineal systems of belief and societal structures. Lippard's analysis in *Overlay*, parallels Sherk's pastoral bohemianism in *Crossroads Community*. Sherk's work also relates to other radical political groups that sought to counter capitalist industrialization through a return to the land such as William Morris and the Fabians, as well as the women-only communes and colonies that sprung up in response to women's politicization in the 1970s. *Crossroads Community* was not separatist, although it did encourage alternative approaches to family life, including sharing childcare and involving all ages in the production and care of the community. Arguably it was also more pragmatic than revivalist or utopian, the site of this alternative community was hardly idyllic and emphasized the reclamation of land within urban spaces. It was also open to visitors, offering the experience of a different way of life, rather than creating and protecting something through isolation. The sprawl of buildings encompassed numerous architectures untethered from any particular national style, it included; a Savonius windmill, white patio furniture and picket fences – typical of an American suburban home – an 'International Living Room', as well as the proposition of a Japanese farmhouse.[114] *The Farm* also made use of advanced technology, like a solar-paneled greenhouse, to promote an ecology that was forward-looking, rather than dictating a return to a more archaic existence. Sherk called this a 'transform[ation of] dead space'.[115]

As I have argued this kind of transformation was also at play in *Fenix*^{o}. Sherk's contribution to 'Issue', like the full manifestation of Richardson, Ross and Walker's touring exhibition, used the gallery as an ideological space and a mechanism for viewing. While the latter focused the viewer's gaze on the internal psychic world of the housewife, Sherk invited an expansive advantage to an exterior that extended beyond the immediate context of the gallery and the city, all the way to San Francisco. The display of animals and natural materials in *Triptych Within a Triptych* also brought the labour of care into the gallery and prompted reflection on the

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[113] See Lippard, *Overlay*: chapter two 'Feminism and Prehistory', 41–76. However, women's art is discussed throughout the book, especially in chapter 5 'Ritual', 159–196. Bonnie Sherk's work is illustrated and discussed on pages 232–234.

[114] These details feature in Lippard's discussion of *Community Crossroads* in Lippard, *Overlay*: 234. Also see Jana Blankenship's discussion of the work's relationship to the counter-cultural imperative and legacy on the West Coast, "The Farm by the Freeway", in *West of Center: West of Center: Art and the Counterculture Experiment in America, 1965–1977*, edited by Elissa Auther and Adam Lerner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

[115] Bonnie Ora Sherk, "Interview", in *Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art*, ed. Stephanie Smith, exh. cat. (Chicago: Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago, 2012): 128.

ecological impact of urban spaces. Whereas other works in the exhibition provoked the viewer to metaphorically take a look outside – through documentation, mail art and participatory performances – Sherk literally asked the viewer to look out the window, while the windows in *Fenix°* collapsed onto different vistas of psychic experience. Like *Fenix°* the work interrogated the space of the gallery and Sherk's concept of her work as *Life Frames*, 'literally fram[ing] life, so we can see it and experience it more profoundly', parallels Richardson, Ross and Walker's aim for their installation, which asked the viewer to look through the keyhole.[116]

The missed connection between Sherk's contribution and the full realisation of *Fenix°* shows that the diversity of women's work could not be contained by a single concept. In the end 'Issue' incorporated artists working across leftist, ecological, psychoanalytic and personal perspectives and it was this diversity that corresponded with Lippard's interest in destabilizing the authority held in the architecture of the gallery, by making its walls porous. That this exhibition was built on compromise and negotiation, foregrounds the kind of collaborative work that sustained women's political action in the 1970s. As such the exhibition literally played out Lippard's comment that:

> the feminist insistence that the personal (and thereby art itself) is political has, like a serious flood, interrupted the mainstream's flow, sending it off into hundreds of tributaries', disturbing 'the increasingly mechanical "evolution" of art about art'.[117]

These 'hundred of tributaries' encompass both different geographic contexts and personal experiences. These pathways moved in and out of dreamscapes, depressions, private homes and hidden atrocities, creating a map of women's social worlds, intersected by gender, sex, race and class struggle. Art provided the means to make these pathways visible, and to tell stories differently. This ranged from the abstraction of painters and sculptors included in *Eight Artists: Women: 1980* at Acme gallery, to the time-based and conceptual works in *About Time*, to the figurative sculpture, photography and sculpture included in *Women's Images of Men* all of which

[116] Sherk, "Interview":128. Sherk was also interested in investigating the roles women play in the public realm. Costume was an important part of her solo practice in the 1970s, as was her interrogation of paid work and the performance of the self, for instance in *The Short Order Cook* (1973–4) and *The Waitress* (1974). In *The Short Order Cook*, she worked the role at Andy's Donut shop for a year, in *The Waitress* she stood in front of a coffee urn and tray of donuts ready to serve in a gallery. See Smith, "Bonnie Ora Sherk": 126–133 for a description of the works and documentation.

[117] Lippard, "Sweeping Exchanges": 149.

made up the 'Women's Cycle' of which 'Issue' was a part.[118] 1980, then, was far from a point of consolidation for women artists. If anything it was a moment when more was at stake, particularly as women developed in different directions and working apart, became more common than working together.

In this context Lippard's flood became more of a threat, than a wave to be ridden. These fears were expressed in the 'Questions on Women's Art' symposium that accompanied the 'Women's Cycle', with the critic Monica Petzal describing this 'pluralism' as an 'umbrella full of holes with the rain pouring through'.[119] The threat Petzal described exposed the risk of opening up and pulling apart the structures, both physical and ideological, which maintained both avant-garde and fine art traditions. As such Petzal's response – which was directed at a panel discussion on political art, featuring Rosler and was also aimed at 'Issue' – betrays her anxiety in the wake of the flood and the disorientation it ushered in. There were other threats on the horizon though, including the spread and dilution of gender-based politics across activism, liberal reform and academia, as well as the retrenchment of Margaret Thatcher's premiership in Britain and the Ronald Reagan administration in the United States, not to mention the effects of their transatlantic cordiality. In these climates of restriction and enclosure many of the freedoms and possibilities of the 1970s were sewn-up, battles were lost and new frontlines were drawn.

Nonetheless, women-only groups, community art projects and exhibitions found space and grew throughout the decade, with artists such as Suptapa Biswas, Sonia Boyce, Mona Hatoum, Lubania Himid and Ingrid Pollard making important work and creating infrastructures for black women artists to make and show work in the UK.[120] As well as artist-run spaces like A.I.R. and Franklin Furnace and Artist's Space securing sites for the production and preservation of radical art practices even as access to National Endowment of Arts funding waned in the US. Reforms in art education were petitioned for and won by Women's Art Change through the 1980s, substantially altering the landscape of art schools in the UK. Beyond the art world too, woman-centered activism took centre stage at Greenham Common Peace Camp, which occupied the common land in front of the four gates along the perimeter of RAF Greenham. By dating this project to 1981 I want to avoid enclosing the artworks and activism I have discussed within a single decade and finishing on a moment of peril. While I have focused on the 1970s in this thesis, as 'Issue' demonstrates 1980

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[118] The full list of artists included in 'Women's Images of Men' and 'About Time' are featured in their respective exhibition catalogues, the first edited by Joyce Agee, Jacqueline Morreau and Lisa Tickner, the second edited by Catherine Elwes and Rose Garrard, both published by the ICA in 1980. The artists included in *Eight Artists* were Claire Smith, Shelagh Cluett, Emma Park, Jozefa Rogocki, Mikey Cuddihy, Sarah Greengrass, Margaret Organ and Alison Wilding.

[119] Monica Petzal, "Questions on Women's Art Conference", *Art Monthly,* no. 42 (Dec/Jan 1980/81): 23.

[120] See Himid, *Thin Black Line*, exh. cat. (London: Urban Fox, 1985); *The Thin Black Line(s)* and Eddie Chambers, *Black Artists in British Art: A History Since the 1950s* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014): 128–155.

was by no means a year of consolidation and closure.[121] Rather, each of the projects I have discussed could be connected to later works and later projects, extending the antagonistic relation of working together and apart up to the present day.

[121] For a discussion of the collaborative project 'London/LA Lab', which took place at Franklin Furnace in 1981 see Amy Tobin, "I'll Show you Mine, if You Show me Yours: Collaboration, Consciousness raising and Feminist-influenced Art", *Tate Papers*, no.25 (Spring 2016), accessed 24 September 2016, http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/25/i-show-you-mine-if-you-show-me-yours.

Conclusion

History Coming Apart at the Seams

In 1979 the filmmaker Lis Rhodes published a text called 'Whose History?'. It was written for and published in a book called *Film as Film*, which sought to trace a history of filmmaking. In her essay, Rhodes reflects on the lack of women in this history and the difficulty of fitting women into it. She writes:

> The history represented here is the illustration of a philosophical ideal, the meshing of moments to prove a theoretical connection. It is as though a line could be drawn between past and present and pieces of a person's life and work pegged on it; no exceptions, no change – theory looks nice – the similarity item to item reassuring – shirt to shirt – shoulder to shoulder – an inflexible chain, each part in place. The pattern is defined. Cut the line and the chronology falls in a crumpled heap. I prefer a crumpled heap, history at my feet, not stretched above my head.[1]

The imagery of Rhodes' text draws parallels between laundry or the organisation of domestic work and the perception of historical time. Although not explicitly said, it draws our attention to the fact that histories, like households, need maintenance. This is not just the task of the history writer, or the researcher, but of those who manage and care for the tangible documents and the less tangible stories of the past. Her comparison marks the administration of history as gendered. Rhodes' description also relates to her own work as a filmmaker; the row of shirts, 'shoulder to shoulder' echoes the order of frames in a roll of film. Read in this way, the order she describes is that of narrative form, something both 'reassuring' and 'inflexible'. Notably these were all qualities that Rhodes and her colleagues at the London Filmmakers Cooperative sought to make a break with in the 1970s. Therefore that *Film as Film* represented this history as a teleological narrative is, at the very least, ironic. Even in a climate of creative experiment, the pattern was defined, and this pattern could not accommodate women filmmakers past, but neither did it fit the work of contemporary practitioners. But more than simply ironic, in 'Whose History?' Rhodes describes the violence of this line of history, discussing both the reduction of what is known, valued and preserved of women's lives, as well as the impossibility of pegging 'moments of emotion', 'a sentence reheard' or 'crumpled snapshots' onto the line.

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[1] Lis Rhodes, "Whose History?" in *Film as Film: Formal Experiment in Film 1970–5*, exh. cat. (London: Hayward Gallery, 1979): 119.

Rhodes' text is a powerful evocation of women's relationship to historical consciousness in the 1970s. Looking back was arguably as important to the Women's Liberation Movement as grassroots activism and often the two mixed. For instance many British women report that the first feminist event they attended was a Women's History conference at Ruskin College, Oxford in 1970; while one of the first groups to form in the UK was the women's art history collective and many programmes in the United States, from Linda Nochlin's course at Vassar to Chicago's Feminist Art Program, included historical research. The British artist Hannah O'Shea's performance work *A Litany for Women Artists* (1977) (fig. 5.1) – in which she sang the names of women almost absent from historical record in the rhythm of a Catholic litany for an hour – also attested to the fulfilling and emotional work of this research. The difficult and strenuous archival work that these women did undoubtedly provided the foundations for much subsequent research and historical re-evaluation. I evoke Rhodes here because just as she writes of the violence of history, she also alludes to committing another violent act on that history: cutting the line and letting the chronology fall in a crumpled heap.

Rhodes' provocation can be read, again, in relation to her work as a filmmaker. If the line is taken to be the roll of film, cutting it is the ultimate radical act. Similar acts of violence appeared in many women's expanded cinema events. Most obviously in Annabel Nicholson's *Reel Time* (1973) (fig. 5.2) in which the film stock ran through a cycle of projector and sewing machine until the needle had obliterated it completely. But also in Rhodes' work *Light Music* (1975) (fig. 5.3) where the film was completely absent, and the projector was transformed into a performance prop, translating a musical score into a light pattern.[2] This work depends on creating an environment, and on the audience's negotiation of the dark space and of the shaft of light. The screen does not show the recorded film, but captures the movements of bodies as they intersect the light. The focus on the present in this installation echoes the image of Rhodes' cutting of the chronology; her action pulls the attention, as the cadre collapse. The history at Rhodes' feet is like the film stock, pooling after the cut. The violence of this proposed act echoes many of the artworks I have discussed in this thesis, many of which interrupted, exceeded or highlighted the limitations of the art world system.

When I first read Rhodes' article it stopped me in my tracks, because the 'crumpled heap' she describes reminded me of the feeling I sometimes had approaching my research materials. Sometimes things were literally crumpled and falling apart, at other times, and more figuratively, stories were confused, documents in the wrong order, names lost or misremembered. While many people have worked incredibly hard to archive their own work, as well as to start and maintain organisations dedicated to women's work and its histories, the lack of resources and shifting priorities have put pressure on preserving things and making space. In other places though – and has increasingly become the case over the four years of working on this material and researching

[2] See "Lis Rhodes, *Light Music*", text and video (2013), accessed 16 September 2016, http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern-tanks/display/lis-rhodes-light-music.

art and film in this period – things are being straightened out.[3] Archive collections have been acquired and catalogued, exhibitions organised and books and catalogues produced. In July 2016 the Tate Modern's extension opened with a new collection hang which included far more women artists, after a year of major retrospective exhibitions by women.[4] While this has certainly given more visibility to women's work, often these projects do not represent the context of feminist activism and political work that frequently brought this art to light. The risk is that women's work or the work of women artists is pegged up onto a line above our heads that may now be longer, but is no more accommodating to particularities of weight and irregularity.

However, the past four years have also been animated and disturbed by renewed feminist activism alongside other approaches to historical work. Traces of the aberrant 1970s persist in the material of the surviving works, which escape and disrupt the conventions of museum display. For instance the Hackney Flashers' photo-collage panels *Who's Still Holding the Baby?,* which went on display at the Reina Sofia in Madrid in 2015, were marked by the puncture holes of pins used to hang them in the community centres and libraries where they were originally shown. While the display of Margaret Harrison, Kay Hunt and Mary Kelly's *Women and Work: A Document on the Division of Labour in Industry* (1973–5) at Tate Britain in 2013 (fig.5.5) was accompanied by a display of the paintings of the suffragette Sylvia Pankhurst curated by the Emily Davison Lodge, a group comprised of the artists Olivia Plender and Hester Reeve, who petitioned the gallery for the display (fig. 5.4).[5] The juxtaposition of these two works pushed the discussion from the formal elements of Harrison, Hunt and Kelly's installation and Pankhurst's paintings and brought the history of women's working lives, particularly in factory jobs, to view. Oddly, temporarily, the art gallery was transformed into a museum, arguably making present something of the original

[3] I mean this process of 'straightening out' quite literally, because histories of feminism and women's art have often failed to take into account the narratives of lesbian, queer, and transgender lives.

[4] These exhibitions were all single artist retrospectives, primarily of women painters. They included Leonora Carrington, Marlene Dumas and Agnes Martin in 2015, as well as Mona Hatoum, Maria Lassnig and Georgia O'Keefe in 2016. See José de Silva, "Show Me the Numbers", *Art Newspaper* (15 June 2016), accessed 16 September 2016, http://theartnewspaper.com/reports/show-me-the-numbers/. For a discussion of Tate and feminism see Lara Perry, "'A Good Time to be a Woman?' Women Artists, Feminism and Tate Modern", in *Politics in a Glass Case: Feminism, Exhibition Cultures and Curatorial Transgressions*, ed. Angela Dimitrikaki and Lara Perry (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 2013).

[5] The Emily Davison Lodge was an organisation set up after the death of its namesake under the king's horse during the campaign for women's suffrage in 1911. The artists Olivia Plender and Hester Reeve revived the lodge in 2010 as a 'conceptual institution', which not only advocates for more visibility for histories of the suffragettes, but also connects the imagining the possibilities for a militant artistic practice. See Hester Reeve, "Emily Davison Lodge", entry on the artist's website, accessed 16 September 2016, https://hester-reeve.squarespace.com/emily-davidson-lodge/.

political impetus of these artworks.[6] Artists have also made the histories of Women's Liberation, feminism and other political movements the subject of their work. These approaches to history are often animated by the dynamics of identification and disidentification with the politics and figures of the past, from Alex Martinis Roe's restaging of consciousness raising sessions (fig. 5.6), and the Sisters of Jam's archival displays (fig. 5.7), to Anna Bunting Branch's reworked feminist posters (fig. 5.8). As well as by a desire to reconnect with historical moments when questions on women's life, gender and sexuality were posed but not resolved. For instance Sharon Hayes *In My Little Corner of the World, Anyone Would Love You* (2016) (fig. 5.9) comprised a five-channel video in which thirteen people from contemporary queer and feminist communities read from texts originally published in newsletters and ad-hoc publications between 1955 and 1977. These readings, which took place in a domestic setting, were projected in sequence onto a plywood structure, resembling a noticeboard in enlarged form. While the circumstances and emotive quality of some texts registered across time, others marked points of disjuncture, particularly around gender identification. In different ways feminist and queer work, then and now, disrupts the order and pattern of historical narrative.[7]

In my introduction I described how women's collaboration is often seen as ending in acrimony. This can take form of political disagreements, personal fallings-out, misunderstandings and cultural mistranslations. But throughout this thesis I have tried to understand how departures and divergences have their own political dimensions. They might be understood as acts of dissensus, that push feminist politics on. Moments of disagreement and even breakage aren't incidents of failure, if we understand failure as cessation or stopping. In practice, as I've shown in relation to women who challenge heteronormativity and white supremacy, dissensus is an expansion that redirects but does not annul feminist political thought and action. The emotional and psychological investment of working together sometimes necessitates working apart: this dynamic is inherent in the notion of collaboration I have described in the case studies, and is also evident in the broader politics of sisterhood and the women's liberation movement which provide the context for this thesis as a whole.

In this context it feels strange to be concluding a project about women's art in the 1970s. It is one way of many that the pragmatics of academic research has rubbed up against feminism in practice and politics during this project. But to conclude I want to return to Rhodes' provocation and the 'crumpled heap' at her feet. For Rhodes that heap is the mess of both women's histories

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[6] Pankhurst's paintings and *Women and Work* were shown at Tate Britain as part of the series of BP Spotlight series, which were temporary displays sponsored by the oil company BP. Victoria Horne has discussed the irony of displaying this work in this context in "Institutional Dissonance", *Radical Philosophy*, no.186 (July/August 2014). See also Victoria Horne, "The Art of Social Reproduction", *Journal of Visual Culture*, vol.15, no.2 (2016). After a series of protests by the group Liberate Tate, BP ceased their sponsorship of Tate in 2016.

[7] On this approach to history in contemporary art, as well as investments in past moments see Catherine Grant, "Fans of Feminism: Re-writing Histories of Second-wave Feminism in Contemporary Art", *Oxford Art Journal*, vol.34, no.2 (2011).

and the more ordered one that she has snipped. Although that action allows her to intervene in the narrative, the article continues not by offering a solution to the problem of history, but instead to acknowledging the difficulty of assembling and representing a 'different history'. While there are many feminist revisions of the art historical canon, as well as analyses of feminist-influenced work, the question of writing histories of feminist-influenced art is a relatively new one.[8] These histories are different to the ones that have already become established through artworld affirmation and continued careers, and they are also under threat of being lost and forgotten. This is to say that the paradoxical and somewhat frustrating position that Rhodes narrates in 'Whose Histories?' parallels the one I found myself in researching this work. As I discussed in the introduction this led me to cut the chord of chronology and 'map' the terrain of women's art and exhibition making in the 1970s. This mapping is imperfect and punctuated by holes. I hope, however, that it is also shaped by these lacuna; that it is not flattened out and precisely measured but traces some pathways as well as showing up more jumping-off points that leave room for new associations and activities to take place. But just as Rhodes' work and her peers in the co-op proposed a cinema without film, I hope that the variety of activity and creative work discussed in this thesis might also reassert the challenge that feminist-influenced artists posed to art making. One that demands a different system of value, a different understanding of what artistic work might be as well as what issues art might address and how it might affect its audience.

[8] See Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999). On the difficulty of feminist narratives see Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*: 1–30.

Abbreviations

AAA: Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

Fales: Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University, New York.

GRI: Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles CA.

Radcliffe: Schlesinger Library and Special Collections, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge MA.

ICA Papers: Papers of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, Tate Archives, Hyman Kreiten Library, Tate Britain, London.

WAL: Women's Art Library, Special Collections, Goldsmiths College, London.

> I make several references to material from a box in the WAL titled Miscellaneous Early Years of the Women's Liberation Movement. In my references this is shortened to '**Early Years, WAL'**.

Note on Sources and Archives

I also consulted archival material in the Women's Library, London Metropolitan University, which closed in 2013. This material is now available in the Women's Library Reading Room at the London School of Economics (LSE). In addition, I used the collections of the Feminist Archive South, Bristol, the Glasgow Women's Library and the Art Institute, Chicago.

Where I viewed material in the personal collections of artists, this is indicated in footnotes as [Artist Name], Personal Collection.

I conducted many interviews and less formal conversations with the artists, writers, and curators who were involved in the period that forms the subject of this thesis. Though I do not quote directly from these sources, where I have relied on oral testimony I cite the interviewee, the date and form of the interview.

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