

# THE WOMEN'S CAUCUS REPORT

NATIONAL ART EDUCATION ASSOCIATION AFFILIATE

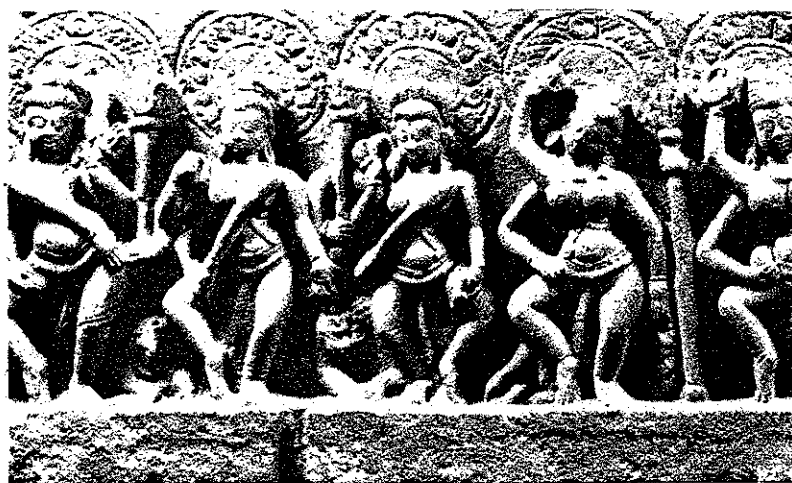
FALL/WINTER ISSUE 48 1991 - 1992

THE NAEA WOMEN'S CAUCUS REPORT  
WANTS TO FUNCTION AS A READER'S FORUM  
AND WELCOMES ARTICLES, LETTERS, BOOK AND  
EXHIBITION REVIEWS, NEWS ITEMS, SYLLABI FROM  
COURSES INVOLVING WOMEN IN ART AND  
EDUCATION.

Deadline for next issue is March 15

PLEASE SEND YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO:

Dr. Kathy Connors  
Editor, Women's Caucus REPORT  
278 Long Hill Road  
Wallingford, CT 06492 - 4948



A Relief with Mother Goddesses, Madhya Pradesh, ninth century. Gift of Paul F. Walter

Karen Keifer-Boyd  
44677 McKenzie HWY  
Leaburg, OR 97489  
JUN 91

Please send notices of change of address  
and membership renewal to:  
Mrs. Crickette Todd  
901 Cedar Park Drive  
Cincinnati, OH 45233



PRESIDENT'S PEN  
Carmen L. Armstrong  
Northern Illinois University  
DeKalb, IL 60115

We're most happy to be bringing you this issue of The Report. Does it ever seem to you that life in general causes delays? With economic constraints come pressures and expectations to share more responsibilities. From my experience and that of others with whom I have talked, the pace that is almost normal now would have seemed an impossibility a short time ago. If I were President Bush, I might say "Read my lips" and mouth a reassuring "Easier times are coming" to you. But, I can almost hear the chorus of "Promises! Promises!" Instead, I prefer to model my reaction, after another president, Jack Kennedy, modifying his charge to "Ask not what the Women's Caucus can do for you. Ask what you can do for the Caucus!" Now we need to gather up our resources and remember that there has been no end to the issues that brought us together as an affiliate. We need to remain active and supportive. A few ways to do so follow.

To refresh your memory, the members present at the 1991 Women's, Caucus business meeting voted to have a two year president-elect position, which means that an election will be held at the 1992 business meeting for that position. By the deadline, no nominations had been submitted. You are now asked to consider likely candidates, reread the qualifications, and submit nominations! recommendations, and a vita for each nominee to Blanche Rubin or Enid Zimmerman, co-chairs of the nominating committee. Please inform Blanche, Enid, and myself of your intentions to make a nomination at the national conference. Preferably, send the necessary materials to Enid or Blanche by April 15, 1992. Each nominee is expected to make a statement at the 1992 business meeting. Our addresses are:

Blanche Rubin, 17386 Raymer Street, Northridge, CA 91325; Enid Zimmerman, 132 Glenwood West, Bloomington, IN 47401; Carmen Armstrong, R#1 Brickville Road, Sycamore, IL 60178

Nominations for secretary or treasurer positions will be called for at the 1992 meeting, and the present officers are eligible to serve again. Our bylaws state that we should be reelecting them or electing replacements yearly. As I mentioned in this column, of the last Report, to insure continuity, longer terms make sense and this should be given consideration this year at the 1992 business meeting. I also am repeating the request for someone to write reviews of various art exhibitions for The Report

(three times a year). I see no reason why this must be limited to any one person. If you see an exhibition that is worth sharing with other members, take a few minutes to jot down a description and send it off to Kathy Connors, Editor of The Report. A small group of persons could share this task as rotating reviewers!

Perhaps of greatest concern is the fact that no nominations were submitted this year for the June McFee award. A major purpose of the Women's Caucus is to recognize achievements of deserving art educators. It is the first year that this award has not been given since 1975. My appointment of Jean Rush as McFee Award chair occurred after the deadline for submitting column material to the NAEA News. But I would have referred any inquiry to Jean. It is not the responsibility of the chairs of awards committees to solicit nominations. There are many deserving persons who could be nominated. There is no reason to wait for a call for nominations this fall. Jean has agreed to serve as chair again next year, so please send your nominations of outstanding male or female art educators to her at the Department of Art, Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois 61761. Repeat...there will be no June McFee Award given in 1992. If you have been asked to be the Women's Caucus representative for your state by Liz I Hartung, I hope that you are getting news into your state newsletters and alerting state association members to the existence of the NAEA Women's Caucus. Look for some opportunities and be sure to report on them at the NAEA Women's Caucus business meeting. To end on some good notes, it gives me great pleasure to announce that there are nominations for the Mary J. Rouse Award. Sally Hagamann's committee is reviewing the materials submitted and will make a decision, soon. The next issue of The Report and hopefully, the April issue of the Women's Caucus column of the NAEA News will announce the recipient. There are twelve Women's Caucus presentations scheduled for the conference. The majority of these are on May 1 starting at 10 a.m. In addition, there is a super session presented by Renee Sandell, Elizabeth Garber, Kristin Congdon, and Robyn Turner. We need your participation at the Women's Caucus business meeting, Saturday, May 2 from 4 - 5:50 p.m. and your support for the Rouse Award, Monday, May 4 from 8 - 10 p.m. A highlight of the business meeting will be the induction of the 1992-1994 Women's Caucus president, Kristin Congdon. It is a pleasure to hand over the gavel to such a capable person. See you in Phoenix!

## Responses:

### Feminist Artists Who Write Criticism

by: Mary Wyrick

Paper Presented at the  
1991 NAEA Conference

Central to current feminist art and criticism is the breaking down of discourses which structure and perpetuate oppressive systems. The following feminist artists, Martha Rosler, Silvia Kolbowski, and Barbara Kruger, examine such systems in response to the representation of women in mass media sources. Using text and image, they focus upon feminist critiques of print media, advertising, news media, and network television. They maintain that gender is socially constructed and that certain assumptions about gender underlie representation of female sexuality. Through study of feminist artists and criticism, the student can become sensitized to issues of representation and can learn to critically target certain systems. Use of mass media as resource and subject for criticism is not only reflective of practices of exemplary artists/critics, but also utilizes an accessible, popular culture common to all students. A socially responsive curriculum should provide the student with strategies for argument and revision of oppressive aspects of systems and institutions. Given the interdisciplinary nature of women's studies, these artists are especially significant in their use of text, appropriated images, and visual form to reconstruct alternative representations.

Martha Rosler, teacher/critic/photographer, has turned to video as the best visual art form to effect social change. When she recently visited Penn State University, she showed a video, *Born to Be Sold: Martha Rosler Reads the Strange Case of Baby M*, 1988. She produced this video for public access cable television, an alternative media collective. In the video, Rosler assumes various roles in the highly publicized story of the "Baby M" case in which a surrogate mother sued to regain custody of her child. In this performative video, Rosler uses humorous costumes to become all players in the story, including the floating sperm which was implanted into the surrogate mother. In one frame from the video, Rosler, as "Baby M" addresses the viewer from a crib. She is wearing a placard which reads "Melissa Stern," an exaggerated baby bonnet, and, in the video, she alternately speaks and sucks on a pacifier.

In her lecture about this video, Rosler discussed how the elitist structure of the gallery/museum world has reduced art to a commodity which is inaccessible to the general public. That elitist

structure is a male dominated one, as well. Such commodifiable "fine art" painting and sculpture produced requires certain investment of money and skill development on the part of the artist. Many working class artists (to include many women) are thus denied access to the artworld. A lack of concern for the viewer as individual creates art products aimed at a "high culture" art market. Further, commercial media use promotional strategies to create often discriminatory pre-assumptions in the viewer~ to mold the viewer into consumer. Rosler seeks to subvert the cultural domination reinforced by the artworld and other "worlds" by using video performance. She advocates this artform which can be broadcast and easily understood. Performance as an artform is a more accessible form to produce and, other than the expense of documentation in the form of the video, could be used by anyone to shift artmaking to a critical social practice. Although her videos are, in fact, marketed and sanctioned by such venerable institutions as the Whitney Museum, she has responded to media representations by providing strategies to critique and construct alternative representations of women.

In *Born to Be Sold*, Rosler sensitizes us to the intersection of legal, technological, and social systems which reproduce gender and class problems. She shows us that feminist issues become issues of class and race relations because of medical technology which enables men of means to hire surrogate mothers to bear their young. The pool of surrogate mothers is inevitably stocked by working class and unemployed women who need the money but who may elect instead to keep the newborn. Rosler takes her response a step deeper—into the problem by critiquing news media representations of the case. She shows and parodies media coverage which portrayed the working class mother in negative terms, consistently referring to her by her first name, "Marybeth." The biological father and his wife, on the other hand, were portrayed as "Dr. and Mr. Stern," emphasizing the title and privileged position of the couple. Rosler exposed how both news media and legal system shifted emphasis from the opposition of biological father against biological mother. Instead, photographs and taped interviews pitted adoptive mother Dr. Stern against "MaryBeth" (Ms. Whitehead.) Recorded news reports were mixed with Rosler's readings in various roles to question the biased reporting of the information. Her disruptions question the underlying assumptions that define gender "appropriate" roles. Rosler also openly challenged the legal system as one which denied certain rights to the biological mother. Such rights included the denial of a legal "grace period" during which the biological mother may reverse her decision

to give up her child. Rosler never says Ms. Whitehead should have won the suit to regain custody of her child. Rosler uses the case to critique the news medias' marketing of a sad situation as a media event. She also exposes how class and gender struggles are hampered by manipulations of representation in the media.

Like Rosler, Silvia Kolbowski is a feminist artist who seeks to change oppressive attitudes toward women as they are represented in visual sources in the media. The visual pictured is part of an installation which "critically addresses the intersection of corporate absorption of art as commodity and the commodification of woman as an object of beauty" (Lichtenstein, 1985, p. 12). This image of a black and white photograph of a Madonna and Christ child within a circle is hung beside a black and white ad for a mechanical cog, with a commemorative plaque documenting "December 1984." It is similar to another work which aligned fashion photography with close-ups of high heeled feet and model's faces, one obscured by shadows, one languishing beside a mirror. Kolbowski "embraced existing images and text from the mass media, literally cutting them up and reassembling them to present a feminist critique of our shared commodity culture" (Zinsser, 1989). Kolbowski's criticism of the depiction of women also describes her own work, especially in the repetition of the frames, suspended action, excessive display, and repetitious posturing. She writes, "representations of women in the advertising print medium generate the most diffident of responses: flipping through the pages of a magazine or newspaper, each image/slogan registers no more than a pale imprint as it dissolves into the text" (Kolbowski, 1989). She pairs woman with product, showing how women are positioned as commodity and as object. She pairs the art object as well with woman-as-object, showing how the same structure operates in similar ways to commodify and ultimately, to de-value. Kolbowski also does some "textual pointing" in criticism of Mapplethorpe's photographs of Lisa Lyons, finding that Mapplethorpe "frames Lyon's foot, the classic fetishistic substitute for the penis" and uses other techniques to "immasculate" Lyons, concealing and thus denying her femininity, doing "violence in the name of culture" (Kolbowski, 1983.) Thus Kolbowski's work and criticism call for "an injunction to women to affront the representational strategies that construct sexuality, constituting women as a set of meanings and the violence thereby incurred" (Linker, 1984~. Barbara Kruger seeks to change subject positioning in addressing feminist issues by relating consumption in commodity culture to the depiction of women in advertising media. She writes, "The dream of advertising is to couple pictures and

words in such a way as to tap directly into that lucrative spot where mainstream values overlap with the acquisitive instinct" (Grimes, 1989). In "Remote Control," a regular column Kruger writes for *Artforum* magazine, Kruger critiques television in terms of the love, power, and material rewards which form the basis of network programs. Her writing contrasts public image with private desire, using a feminist rhetoric to explore connections among text, object, historical context and culture in the representation of women to decontextualize and de-historicize. Her writing about television focuses upon types of programming, female stereotypes, and the methods newscasters use in creating media events. Her writing uses phrases that seem to have come from commercials and might become slogans for her artworks. Her background as a poet and activist in a Marxist organization, "Artists for Social Change," has focused her interests upon the interactions of metaphors, advertising rhetoric, and propaganda in creating the sexed subject. In combining word with media image in her artworks, Kruger uses text intrusively to challenge the associations that the viewer brings to the viewing of the image. Kruger's strategies, as identified throughout *Love for Sale*, a book on Kruger's work by Kate Linker, include "hail and entice the spectator," "interfere," "positioning of the social body," "intrusion of public into private," "mingle major with minor," "erode classifications," "use double address," and "identify stereotype." She uses dated black and white media images to "counter the media's promises, affording a doubled address, a coupling of the ingratiation of wishful thinking with the criticality of knowing better" (Linker, 1990, p. 17). Here Kruger is drawing the reader/viewer into critically consuming the plethora of media images surrounding them. Kruger also writes, "The world is a media circus where construction and management of society are controlled by the mere extending sway of the media" (Linker, 1990, p. 29). Not only do we consume but we are socially organized by what we view. In an interview, Kruger said, "I'm not saying it's wrong to read art history, but the spectators who view my work don't have to understand that language. They just have to consider the pictures that bombard their lives and tell them who they are" (Squires, 1987, p. 85). Kruger's work critiques media images by appropriating those images, relying on a "media literacy" which we all share. Feminist concerns become relevant in her work because vision is privileged in the mediation of social relations and women are the most prevalent form of imagery (p. 30). Feminist strategies are employed to dislocate the subject/object positionings which reinforce passive acceptance of damaging stereotype. The viewer/spectator becomes complicit in the set of circumstances implied by Kruger's work. The viewer pieces

together meaning of text and images and finds a polemic set up between "we" and "your." Kruger writes, "I am interested in making an active spectator who can decline that 'you,' tapping into the part of us that's been invaded and colonized by media" (Squires, p. 81). Her text serves as injunction, challenging subject positioning and critiquing "realist modes which naturalize bourgeois ideologies as common sense" (Pollock, p. 171). Kruger's work utilizes feminist critical strategies by challenging codes and conventions which perpetuate sexual difference and by positioning woman as subject of her own discourse and as desiring subject" (Pollock, p. 171). Kruger writes that stereotype is a powerful form, "living and borrowing off what was true," and that we should not "smash stereotype without considering what we are replacing them with and if they should be replaced" (Mitchell, 1990, p. 446). In a visual work, "We Are Your Circumstantial Evidence," feminine eyes meet the gaze of the viewer, except that the eyes appear on a fragment of shattered glass which could be pieces of a mirror in disarray upon a flat surface. A pattern of notions is evoked, associated with beautiful women surrounded by mirrors, lights, admiring photographers, adoring viewers, and other accoutrements of beauty-as-spectacle. The mirror also refers to the narcissistic female gaze. A female is denoted while a stereotype of the alluring model is represented. There is a double construction in the sense of representation in which Kruger appropriates media images which could be clipped from magazines and thus re-creates an interaction with that image which extends to the "original" ad. The represented stereotypical image reads more as a code because it is black and white, planar, flat, displayed, and frozen, like a mannequin. The stereotype for Kruger, "is the prime instrument of submission which constructs the woman as type" (Linker, 1990, p. 29). Since the viewer could be peering into a shattered mirror, the viewer is constructed twice-over, once as individual and once as type. Kruger "erodes impassivity," blocking the stereotype, showing how "relations of image and word contradict the conventions of media" (Linker, p. 29). Kruger pairs the commodification of art object with the commodification of woman-as-object. She uses promotional strategies and graphic design techniques to commodify her own artworks. The slick presentation and "red frames announce market status and point to the market as the irrefutable condition that no object, least of all art, can evade" (Linker, p. 27). Her most recent exhibit in January 1991 at the Mary Boone Gallery challenged the contradictions inherent in political artists' successful inclusion into the art market. The works took the form of installation in an elite "blue-chip" Soho art gallery. However, the

works spread across the walls as murals, and enveloped the spectator with confrontational images and text which covered ceiling and floor, reconstructing the gallery environment. White words on the floor became worn and ruined by masses of feet which dragged red fragments into the street outside, drawing the viewer into a complicity in questioning the sanctity of the art object. A crucified female with gas mask on was covered with text reading "Its our pleasure to disgust you," creating potentially multiple subject positionings. The "our" could represent artists as a group within an elite and hegemonic order which censors the artist. The "our" could also represent the female as victim, nailed and crucified, confronting society with her struggle. The enlarged scale of the text and images, which include photographs of childbirth, are powerfully monumental and defy the notion of art object as fetishized object by creating an installation that will not exist when the floor is stripped and the walls are peeled. The installation invokes a rejection of the traditional notion of the modernist aesthetic experience. The viewer is enveloped by the work and the impression of its temporality. The memory of this installation, as reported in sources such as this presentation, become the artifact, and shift emphasis to art as social practice.

These socially responsive artists/critics use written and visual works to provide strategies for argument and revision of sexist aspects of systems and institutions. They focus critique upon the artworld, a hierarchical system of artists, critics, dealers, curators, and collectors who interact to determine the making and distributing of art and what it has to teach us about our contemporary world. They also work with mass media images, methods, and strategies in the site of popular culture to examine representation of women. They scrutinize the pervasive influence of media images and messages and act to subvert negative representations of women and other marginalized groups. They apply feminist theory in various modes such as speaking, writing, image manipulation, and in various disciplines such as art history, criticism, studio art, and aesthetics. At the same time, they erode the boundaries between disciplines to use interdisciplinary approaches to uncover multiple meanings. These artists rejected modernist fictions of heroic male artist portraying female-as-object. They demonstrate how a gender hierarchy can be challenged through subject positioning, in appropriated imagery, photography, installation, and written criticism. A curriculum which provides a structure for development of critical thinking as a process of inquiry places the student as producer of meaning. Production of artworks and critical writings allows students to pursue content for study with the goal of recombina-

tion and synthesis into new forms. These feminist strategies reflect a feminism defined by Joanna Freuh which is "not involved in gaining power, but in an empowering process (Freuh, p. 161)." Results of such a process are students who can evaluate and eventually reconstruct the socio-political conditions in which they must function.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### Women Art Educators III

You are invited to submit a manuscript or art work for Women Art Educators III, a publication of the National Art Education Association, Women's Caucus. Funds to support this publication come from the Mary Rouse Memorial Endowment at Indiana University.

**Topic:** Contemporary Feminist Issues in the Theory and Practice of Art Education

**Format:** A variety of formats are encouraged such as storytelling, plays, black and white drawings, comics, and jokes. The editors encourage the writer/artist to investigate not only ideas which are timely, but innovative ways to explore and present contemporary feminist issues in art education.

**Deadline:** October 1, 1992

**Send a copy of work to each editor:**

Dr. Enid Zimmerman  
School of Education  
Indiana University  
W.W. Wright Education Building  
3rd and Jordan  
Bloomington, IN 47405

Dr. Kristin Congdon  
Community Arts Program  
College of Arts & Sciences  
University of Central Florida  
Orlando, FL 32816



Social Studies:  
a series of life-size  
wooden cabinets  
by Gayle Marie Weitz





Book review by  
Sharon Kesterson Bollen, Ed.D.  
College of Mount St. Joseph  
Cincinnati, Ohio

Title: Collecting Souls. Gathering Dust:  
The Struggles of Two American Artists,  
Alice Neel and Rhoda Medary.

Authors: Gerald L. Belcher and Margaret L. Belcher

Publisher: Paragon House

Date: 1991

ISBN: 1-55778-336-5

Price: \$22.95 (hardbound)

This book is a double biography, weaving a narration of the lines of two aspiring art students whose paths crossed at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women in 1921. Alice Neel and Rhoda Medary were considered the best students in the small institution and their talent, ambition and mutual admiration drew them together. They were extremely dedicated to becoming 'serious painters and they jointly pursued this goal for the next decade.

In 1931 Medary married and found herself in the conventional, and not always happy, role of wife and mother. For 28 years, she never picked up a brush. After her husband's suicide in 1963, Medary returned to painting in a limited way and enjoyed a small one-women show at a local college in 1975. When she died in 1981, few mourned her passing and few knew she had once been an artist with remarkable promise.

Neel never gave up her art and, of course, fulfilled her dream of securing an international reputation as a painter. Her arduous journey towards validation, beginning in the 1920's, takes the reader through Neel's hardships, defeats and painful choices to the victorious celebration of her one-woman retrospective exhibit at the Whitney Museum of American Art in



February of 1974. When she died in 1984, she was given lengthy obituaries, and was widely mourned as one of the most important artists of the century.

Their friendship and similar early goals make Alice Neel and Rhoda Medary an interesting pair to study. Their paths led them in vastly different directions. And at their reunion in 1973 after 45 years apart, Medary could not help but compare her life to her schoolmate's and admit that she should have chosen differently, following Neel more closely: "What a waste, for I was not a good mother or wife and I could have been a fine artist." Rhoda Medary dwelled in the past, but Alice Neel, with no regrets, looked forward to her increasing celebrity and major exhibitions. She felt "pity and scorn" for Rhoda and considered her an example of what happens "when women give up art for life."

However, a full reading of this book reveals a more complex picture than Neel's simplistic axiom about women's choices when they are confronted with the constraints of their family situations and society's expectations. Both artists endured antagonism, opposition and barriers ~ following their dreams. While Medary may have eventually given in to the conditions imposed upon her, Neel vacillated between rebellion and capitulation. The emotional turmoil in her life led to hospitalization, divorce, attempted suicide, living with a physically abusive lover, alcohol abuse, and the abandonment of her second daughter.

The round-faced grandmother with the sparkling, smiling eyes so familiar to her fans in the 1970's and '80's, led an often self-centered, self-indulgent life; she was frequently calculating, courting celebrity for her bohemian image. She encouraged the legends of her struggles and deprivations because they increased her heroic stance in the art community.

The book centers on the lively narration of the artist and her adventures. There is some description of her art works, but no serious art criticism and no attempt at art historical evaluation. There are some illustrations of her works, but the 31 black and white photographs do not give a cohesive overview of her endeavors. Actually, the photos of Neel and Medary - while few and fuzzy - are most interesting. The collection is oddly incomplete (there is a picture of Rhoda's mother, but none of Alice's parents who are frequently mentioned, nor of husbands, lovers, children).

In the end, the Belchers seem to affirm their convictions about the two women as first described in the title. Alice Neel, as she said herself, was a "collector of souls," rendering her subjects with forceful vitality, searing honesty and personal conviction in her bold, inimitable style. Rhoda Medary's collection of hundreds of her paintings, executed in the 1920's, "gathered dust" in her basement for over five decades of her life.

While this is an account of how two women responded to societal norms in the 20th century, it is also the biography of a significant woman artist. In

the absence of a definitive treatise on Alice Neel, this book serves to provide a great deal of information on the idiosyncratic artist. If you can get through the first 80 or so pages which are filled with convoluted, run-on sentences, you'll find the prose becomes crisper and the style more accessible. In fact, the story becomes a "page-turner," with enough crises, failures and triumphs to keep the reader glued to the narration. You have to keep reminding yourself that this was real; the plot almost appears to be that of a best-selling novel. You may like Alice Neel a little less as a person when you're finished, but you can't help admiring her for the incredible obstacles she overcame in her professional endeavors. And then there's poor Rhoda who at over 80 years of age compares herself to Alice and comes up short and wishes her whole life had been different. Maybe that's the saddest part of this story.





## Book Review

by

Sharon Kesterson Bollen, Ed.D.

Professor of Art

College of Mount St. Joseph

Cincinnati, Ohio

Title: Perspectives on Morisot

Editor: T. J. Edelstein

Publisher: Hudson Hills Press, New York

Date: 1990

ISBN: 1-55595-049-3

Price: \$35.00 (hardbound)

In 1987 Berthe Morisot - Impressionist, an acclaimed exhibit of the French painter's work was displayed at Mount Holyoke College Art Museum in association with the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. The show's catalog, written by Charles F. Stuckey and William Scott, (and previously reviewed in this publication) brought renewed scholarly and critical attention to this important 19th century woman artist. Perspectives on Morisot is intended to complement the catalog and to extend the examination of Morisot's life, production and career.

The chapters are actually the texts of lectures delivered by seven distinguished art historians at a symposium held on April 9, 1988 at Mount Holyoke while the exhibition was on view. The foci of the essays are patronage, iconography, sources and social context. The text is supported by 24 color plates and 53 black-and-white illustrations.

The essay titles and the authors are: *The Spaces of Everyday Life: Berthe Morisot and Passy* by Kathleen Adler; *"Manet, Morisot, and Propriety"* by Beatrice Farwell; *Berthe Morisot and the Feminizing of Impressionism* by Tamar Garb; *"The Other Side of the Mirror"* by Anne Higonnet; *Berthe Morisot: Nineteenth-Century Woman as Professional* by Suzanne Glover Lindsay; *Morisot's Wet Nurse: The Construction of Work and Leisure in Impressionist Painting* by Linda Nochlin; *La Dernière Mode: Berthe Morisot and Costume* by Anne Schirrmeyer. The Introduction is by T. J. Edelstein, the organizer of the exhibit.

Edelstein establishes the context of the essays by describing Morisot as at the center of an ambiguous, confounding and ambivalent paradox. "Remarkably for a woman of the nineteenth century, she pursued a professional career and raised a family...the world of Morisot is a suburban existence removed from the arena of modernity...Manet, her great mentor, portrays her hovering on the gray line between courtesan and proper young lady." (pp 33-34) The essays explore this tentative position as they examine the critical issues that confronted Morisot as a woman and a woman artist. But, as Edelstein points out, "the essays do not

resolve the contradictions of her art but perhaps these very contradictions are what make her work so pertinent to us today."

Each of the chapters, while scholarly in tone and research, is easy to read and contributes to the total emerging picture of the enigmatic Morisot. There are abundant endnotes as well as an extensive index to support the content. The total effect of the readings is a view of the artist from a female perspective, an exploration of the conditions which led to her position as a "lesser" Impressionist in her time and ours. As Nochlin relates in her essay, studying Morisot's life, career and paintings leads inevitably to a renewed consideration of "ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions - about the nature of work, about gender, and about painting itself."



A notice from:

6A the Journal Times, Friday, October 26, 1990  
Racine, Wis.

Racine County

### Patton-gift assists art faculty

A fund to assist full-time classroom art faculty in the Racine Unified Schools attend professional art conferences, seminars or summer art institutes was established Wednesday with the Racine County Area Foundation through an endowment gift from Helen Patton.

Patton is former director of art in the Racine Unified School District. She now lives in Franklin, N.C.

Patton was in Racine Wednesday to make the announcement at a luncheon in her honor at the Racine Country Club.

Beginning with the 1991-92 school term, selection of grants to be funded from earnings of the Helen Patton Continuing Education Fund will be made by an advisory committee to be chosen by the Racine County Area foundation.

Applications will be sent to art teachers in Unified shortly after the first of the year with April 1 as a deadline to apply. It is expected that in the first year two grants up to \$500 each will be awarded.

## WOMEN ARTISTS: CREATIVITY AND IMAGERY 1972-1987.

Presentation given in Hamburg, Germany, 1987  
by: C. Bickley Green

This paper is composed of three parts: (1) an introduction that suggests some reasons why the work of women artists should be studied; (2) a brief survey of ways to look at the creativity of women; and (3) an abbreviated review of the content of imagery in some women's art work. The time that has been selected—1972-1987—was chosen because 1972 marks the year of the first national conference in the United States for women in the visual arts and 1987 marks this year.

### INTRODUCTION: Why consider women's work?

An article in the *Time* magazine of June 16, 1986, purports to be a summary of American culture of the 80's Pop Goes the Culture." However, it represents the culture of only part of the total population. The article is illustrated with photographs of a coke bottle, Fred Astaire, Superman, Little Richard, Rambo, Satchmo, and McDonald french fries. The only image of a woman is a painting of Marilyn Monroe by Andy Warhol. These masculine images and other similar items of American male culture are discussed in the text of the article. The author explains how they are symbols of freedom. Exported all over the world they are apparently embraced, enjoyed, and sometimes emulated by Europeans, orientals, and third-world citizens. From my perspective today they are symbols of male freedom. They represent the concerns and creative expressions of members of a patriarchy -- that seems to have the sole purpose of creating and disseminating pictures of violence in most human encounters, images geared to excite male sensuality, and creations of male characters in various scenarios of superreality. (I want to pause for a moment to mention that Coca Cola and McDonalds do not limit their publicity to masculine come-ons—both address their advertisements to a broad population that includes women and children. But, because they are associated with American male freedom which often includes a weapon or a bottle of booze in every social setting, these relatively innocent products become symbols for less sensitive activities. For example when McDonalds first opened in Rome, Italy, the total area was "trashed" with the napkins and paper cartons used to serve the burgers. Apparently the Italian teeners who flocked to establishment in droves thought that to eat *al la Americano* meant that

one need not respect the local environment by disposing of trash properly. The trademarks of the "me generation" steamrolled women, children, and the elderly and anyone else who might not want to party with the crowd.)

Often the "pop" in pop culture is the sound of a fist smashing into a face or a bottle being broken in a bar. Where are the images made by American women? Often women make works that have been designed to tend to the egos of male creators. Up until the past two decades much writing and art criticism done by women concerned itself with the work of men. Women rarely expressed their opinions or sensibilities about their lives or the lives of their friends and those for whom they cared.

At the time of the 1972 Conference for Women in the Visual Arts in Washington, D.C., three goals for women in the visual arts were defined: (1) the development of mechanisms for professional advancement; (2) the recognition and creation of imagery that was related to women's life experiences and sensibilities; and (3) a review of the structure of art analysis that, up until that time, gave value to some masterpieces in art history and ignored works by women. In 1972 some writers were able and encouraged to express quite bluntly that women in America were not integrated into the fabric of the culture of America. Although such overt statements about women's second class status are not popular today in 1987, it is even more difficult to find women's expressions in mainstream culture or in fine art than it was in the 70's.

Ads such as those published by Guerilla Girls were in *Arts Magazine* in 1986. Guerrilla Girls are a group of anonymous women who call themselves the conscience of the art world. This group keeps statistics on the number of women whose work is shown in galleries, museums, and other art establishments in the United States and sometimes abroad. Guerrilla Girls keep their identity secret because it has been said that they are better able to represent all women artists in this manner.

Janet Goldman, an artist and active member of the Women's Caucus of Art—an offspring of the College Art Association—quotes the following statistics: 38% of the artists in the United States are women according to the 1980 census. Less than 10% of the artists represented in galleries are women. She also likes to call attention to the Guerilla Girls' poster that notes that women in America are paid 59 dollars for every 100 dollars paid to men. Women artists earn 33 dollars for every 100 dollars given to male artists.

Many of you are familiar with the art textbooks written by Laura Chapman. The National Sculptor's Conference: *Women's Work* held in CinCin-

nati during the spring of 1987 was organized by Chapman. She told the audience that she had applied to 117 organizations before she was able to find funding for that conference. Sally Bingham of the Kentucky Foundation for Women provided some financial assistance for the event. The University of Cincinnati provided other resources. What we understand from this series of events is that women's expressions in the visual arts are not part of contemporary consciousness nor are they often afforded institutional support.

However, during the past decade and a half, since the 1972 conference, women's organizations in professional art societies have developed into substantial forces. The women's caucuses of both the College Art Association and the National Art Education Association have large memberships and some power in the areas of art education, critical review of art, and art historical analysis. Unfortunately, the work of these groups does not appear to have affected the visual art production of the nation as a whole.

Given the condition of the under representation of women as creators and as leaders in visual arts education in higher education, it behooves us as art educators to learn ways to understand the images and the creativity of women in order that we may enable women to express themselves and their concerns as freely as we have allowed men to express themselves. Both sexes should be allowed the tools and the opportunity to create images of the world as it is and develop new images of the world as it might become. By being cognizant of the creative processes of both men and women, we will be better prepared to recognize the current as well as the potential contributions that women might make to culture.

#### **WOMEN'S CREATIVITY: What can we learn from the differences?**

Thinkers have considered the natural gifts and occupations of men and women since classical times. In "Occupation: Women Artists" the German Renate Mohrmann calls our attention to a passage by Plato: "To conclude then, there is no occupation which belongs either to women or to men, as such. Natural gifts are found here and there in both creatures alike; and every occupation is open to both, so far as their natures are concerned...but if the only difference appears to be that the male begets and the female brings forth, we shall conclude that no difference between man and woman has yet been produced that is relevant to our purpose. . ." (*Republic*, Book V translated by F.M. Cornford, Oxford, 1966.) Mohrmann goes on to discuss the question of women's creativity in cinema and film. I, however, want to take this opportunity to explore the descrip-

tions and analysis of creativity that have been made by some social scientists and biological researchers. As we can understand from the passage in the *The Republic* Plato felt that there was a similarity between the abilities of men and women. In more recent times—1950 to 1980—Paul Torrance has utilized visual and verbal tests ~The Torrance Tests for Creative Thinking—TTCT) to obtain substantive information about the creative thinking abilities of boys and girls and women and men. Tests from the 1950's resulted in males scoring higher than females. The same type of tests administered in the 1970s and 80s showed a rise in the scores of females. One can suggest that the changes in society and education brought about by the women's movement in the United States contributed to the rise in the female scores on the TTCT.

A second researcher, Morton Hunt, feels that in the complex process of creative thinking, both women and men have similar potential. In creative thinking and problem solving, Hunt suggests that most people—men and women—think in terms of what is probable—how do we express it? A solution occurs when the thinker says: "Most likely. . ." Then when both men and women are pressed each guess violating logic—and each is correct!

Researchers have found differences in brain functions between sexes. By convention most women have a verbal superiority, and most men are able to work with spatial problems with more facility. However, these gender differences are averages. Some men are verbally superior to most women, and some women are more gifted in spatial thinking than most men. The biological dissimilarities have very little influence on the overall ability of both sexes to think logically or reason about most scientific matters. In the 1970s, it was popular to look at the physical and hormonal development of women in relationship to mental style. This information was used to assist in the formulation of a basis for understanding creativity. A series of interviews conducted with prominent women in women's studies provides summaries of thinking about women during the 1970s. Medical doctor Estelle R. Ramey talked about the biological structure of women and its implication on creative thinking. She recounts that sex hormones account for some of the outstanding differences in behavior. She also points out that "although women have the physiological design to bear children, in the past they were still required to work just as hard as men work. They were required to spend most of their considerable energies in just staying alive. She continues by saying that poor women have always had to work [in the fields or] in the mines until they delivered their child. Everyone expected that they would have the strength to do or they would die."

At this point I would like to suggest that in

most primitive societies survival requirements for both men- and women were similar. Finding basic shelter; basic protection from wild animals; and sufficient food supply required the same type of creative thinking. Persons who did not interact creatively with the environment would die.

In more recent times researcher Doreen Kimura, a professor of psychology at the University of Western Ontario writes "... given the (effects of hormones on brain function) it follows that while genital sex is related to our mental capabilities, it is going to be a very poor screening device for intellectual assessment. Numerous environmental events interact with our genetic heritage from prenatal development onward, and the human brain is extraordinarily malleable and variable. Thus we can predict very little about an individual's mental capabilities based on his or her sex... There may be no inherent characteristics unique to the brains of either sex that necessarily limit the intellectual achievements of individual men or women."

It has been shown that it is possible to have somewhat wider biological variations in maleness and femaleness than we previously suspected. Psychologist June Reinisch of the Kinsey Institute in Indiana has shown that girls who have had higher-than-usual exposure to androgens before birth tend to be tomboyish. And Guther Dorner's work in East Germany suggests that even some instances of homosexuality may reflect variations in fetal hormones. These examples may mean that although the two sexes differ sharply in genital appearance, each has a range of potential behavior broad enough to defy characterizing behavior patterns as exclusively limited to one sex of the other.

To summarize these writings one might conclude that the creative process for both men and women is similar and that societal rather than biological differences have caused women's work to be undervalued and have suppressed women's creative statements.

However there are some psychologists and philosophers who feel that in making the above assumptions and determinations, we are overlooking aspects of creativity that might demonstrate a significant difference between men and women. Psychologist Abraham Maslow has called attention to the different contributions that men and women make to the birth cycle—the supreme act of human creation. Using this gender-based paradigm he suggests that one might find parallels between artistic or cultural creativity and biological creativity. The male contribution to the birth cycle consists of a short period of quick, frenzied activity and culminates in an ejaculation. Women's participation first works in tandem with this excitatory interlude to achieve conception then provides conditions to

protect the fetus for a period of nine months until the tangible results of the creative process—the infant—can enter the world. It may be erroneous to draw a parallel between biological and cultural creativity to describe the unique characteristics of men's and women's inventive process, but the analogy is not unattractive. If for the past few millennia we have been experiencing the effects of a predominate male creative process with some luck—barring nuclear or microbial disaster—we may look forward to a much longer interlude of nurturing the fetus of cultural achievement contained in the minds of our women and men. The fruit of the matriarchal gestation may result in a true cultural achievement of humankind because it will be the result of the contributions of both men and women.

Although C.G. Jung does not seem to be able to define women's sensibilities without contrasting them to male sensibilities, he does presage this view of the potential of women's creativity in an essay entitled "Women in Europe." He writes, "The woman of today is faced with a tremendous cultural task—perhaps it will be the dawn of a new era."

Looking directly at visual artists work often underscores the societal hurdles that are placed before women who elect to become creators. The inventive woman must work around caring for family members both young and old and responding and functioning in a society that pays less to women than to men for equal work. Most debilitating of all to the creative spirit—women work in a society that lauds and values even the least gifted expressions of most men while ignoring, undermining, and even attacking the work of women artists. These conditions imposed by society make most current comparisons between the creative processes of men and women almost meaningless.

To conclude this part of the discussion of the creativity of women, one might say that a complete theoretical basis has not been established for studying most modes of creative action. However, it seems that it might be useful to view the creative processes of men and women not as opposites and contrasts but rather as coordinate paradigms.

To leave the area of theory and consider instead the actual visible characteristics of the process of working visual artists one will find that for each mode of invention employed by a woman or a group of women one will also find a male artist who follows a similar strategy. In any case one might mention the follow brief list of creative strategies that seem to be used often by women in the visual arts. This list is not exhaustive but it does recognize some aspects of the creative process that women seem inclined to use. These include (1) working on collec-

tive endeavors; (2) exploring or having a strong belief in subconscious or supernatural events or images; (3) taking a longer period of time to realize a creative achievement; and (4) crossing intellectual or academic boundaries with facility. One feels with this last item that since women had so little to do with the structuring of the boundaries, they are less inclined to recognize or agree with the reasons for the particular divisions that have been imposed.

The visual art examples that I will use to illustrate these concepts have been chosen not only because the work provides good illustrations of the particular points that I wish to make but also because most of the artists have been working in the visual arts as professionals since 1972. Some of these women have received regional acclaim for their work. Some have received national and international recognition for their contribution to visual art. I have omitted some of the most celebrated women because you are, no doubt, familiar with their work. Indeed, the city of Hamburg has hosted art exhibitions of American women artists in the past.

To continue then with this consideration of characteristics of the process of women in the visual arts, both Mary Beth Edelson and Judy Chicago provide good examples of women who work in cooperative ways with large groups of people to make creative statements. For example, in the 1970s, Edelson asked representatives of the Washington, D.C. art scene to suggest art works for one of her exhibits. Adelyne Breeskin, Walter Hopps, Alice Denny, and Roy Slade were among the figures who made suggestions for art works. With this expanded range of ideas, Edelson was able to enlarge her art production to include ideas and materials that she had not used before. Eventually this interaction took the shape of performances and events that Edelson created for groups of people in universities and galleries across the United States.

Judy Chicago is well-known for her pieces that explore the talents of craftspersons as well as the ideas and imagery of women who contribute to the topics and themes that Chicago has selected. In the *Dinner Party* Chicago had persons stitch the table runners that she designed. She incorporated the images and the handwork of many women in the *Birth Project*.

New Orleans artist J.H. Mayer is an example of a creator who explores her subconscious to generate universal images. For her recent exhibition *The Cave of Art* Mayer writes, "[My] art becomes a continuity. Art does not have to refute the past in order to be considered valid. Nor does it emulate the past. It continues the past with its own voice and viewpoint."

A third characteristic of women has been their ability to work easily with unlikely ideas or

materials. I would like to offer my own work of the 1970s as an example of making sculpture with unusual materials in unlikely formats. I had been creating dyed-silk sculptural constructions to explore the suggestive power of color in three-dimensional space. After some criticism that the work was too feminine and after a personal desire to create images that had a stronger visceral presence, I found the room-temperature vulcanizing rubber that seemed to me to resemble a kind of bloody flesh that allowed a greater range of expression than the silk. This material was fashioned into quasi-human/quasi botanical, forms.

Some women artists like Nancy Lukasciewicz, director of the Lyndon House Art Center in Athens, GA, chose processes that take a long time to complete. In the 1970s Lukasciewicz wove images of symbols of power into her wall pieces. She used the abstract color concepts of Chevreul and fittingly worked them into woven pieces. She has written that she enjoys the long period of making that allows her time to reflect on the work of art.

The consideration of creative modes in this manner can offer a list of the characteristics of women's creative process, but it does not provide a complete overview. Because I have also elected to discuss women's imagery today as well as women's creativity I will turn my attention to some areas of imagery that I have found to be characteristic of women's work.

#### IMAGERY: What can women offer?

Up until this time I have not found it profitable to try to isolate formal visual elements that characterize female artists' work. I have found, however, that it is profitable to look at the content of art work to identify areas of women's concerns. I will share with you a small, informal study that I recently made using the Torrance Tests for Creative Thinking-Figural. I isolated the content of the imagery produced by the children taking the test because the TTCT seems to free of gender bias and the influence of subject matter that might be chosen by the classroom teacher or other persons administering the exams. In a pilot qualitative analysis I listed names of the pictured items from the tests of 12 children ages 7 and 8. The lists yielded similar content for both boys and girls with the exception of two categories. As one might expect the boys drew more guns, knives, bayonets, and bombs. The girls did not include weapons in their drawings. But more surprising was a comparison of the category that represented humans. The boys drew a man with a chain saw, a smiling face, a flat boy, a pilot, and a robot. The girls drew a baby in a buggy, a square face, a sad lady, a dancing man, a teacher, people who like apples, a

smiling face, a flat boy, a pilot, and a robot. The girls drew a baby in a buggy, a square face, a sad lady, a dancing man, a teacher, people who like apples, a self-portrait, a little boy wearing a hat, a clown, a mean lady, a fat man, a boy, a lady, people and a family on balls! As one can see from this analysis the girls were considering old and young, male and female, and their people had emotions, were engaged in a variety of activities and were pictured in groups as well as individuals.

Similar concerns can be shown in the work of mature women artists. Ruth Weisberg portrays a range of women and children. Her *Circle of Life* is about the flow of time, memory and the movement from childhood to adulthood. The *Dunes* contains a child, the child moving into an adolescent, and behind and above them all the adult artist consciously watching and memorializing. She endows the composition with emotional and psychological states.

Faith Ringgold has created a classical composition of the many family of black peoples—men, women, young and old—in this mixed media, quilted composition.

Maxine Olson, an artist who has worked and exhibited in California since 1965 and recently came to the University of Georgia as a professor in painting, creates paintings that depict women placed in varying roles of intimacy or sexuality. *Margaret* is a woman placed in a nursing home who holds her teddy bear like she might have held a child in a different age. In *Saturday Night at Riverland* the woman finds herself in that awkward position of not wishing to dance with her short partner, yet not wanting to offend, she endures the dance. In *Lady Madonna*, sexuality and intimacy are confronted in a direct manner. Mother and child are bound by circumstances but involved in their own separate thoughts. Olson's newest composition *Past Lives* combines and appropriates images of history, religion, and the artist's Portuguese culture from a feminine sensibility. This artist has also painted men. One of these is a picture of her father and his sister. Olson writes, "For me [the painting] is a transmission of love—from me to my father and his love for his sister."

Like the young girls who took the TTCT these women artists demonstrate a special ability to see and portray a wide range of human emotions and conditions.

Another category of imagery that was popular in the early 1970s was the development of images of female figures of leadership that were often embodied as goddesses. Mary Beth Edelson, she herself a leader of the 1972 conference, produced a number of these images. Nancy Cusick, an attendee of the 1972 conference and a participant in the

exhibits that were held in Washington, D.C., during that period, also searched for images of great goddesses. In the 1970s women read Robert Graves' *White Goddess* or James George Frazer's *Golden Bough* in developing female myths and images.

## Bay Area Figurative Art

1950-1965

CAROLINE A. JONES



Joan Brown with self-portrait

"Passionate and committed. . . [Jones] has brought new theoretical techniques to bear on the subject while she has given close readings to individual paintings."—*San Francisco Examiner*

"Jones's extraordinarily thorough catalogue seems to track down every possible fact about the Bay Area figurative movement."—*New York Times*

"The essential starting point for any art historian who wants to investigate further the phenomena of figurative painting in the San Francisco Bay Area, this indispensable research tool traces the history of the Bay Area figurative artists, and establishes the movement in the correct historical perspective."—*Choice*

"It had gotten to the point . . . where anything seemed possible in abstract painting, and therefore nothing was. It was a liberation to paint the figure, to deal with forms that followed other forms."—Richard Diebenkorn,

*National Observer*, April 22, 1968

(By permission of Dow Jones & Company, Inc.)  
1990 251 pp. 9 x 12" 118 color illus.  
51 duotones (W)

JONBAY ISBN 06841-6 \$47.50 cloth

JONBAX ISBN 06842-4 \$27.50 paper

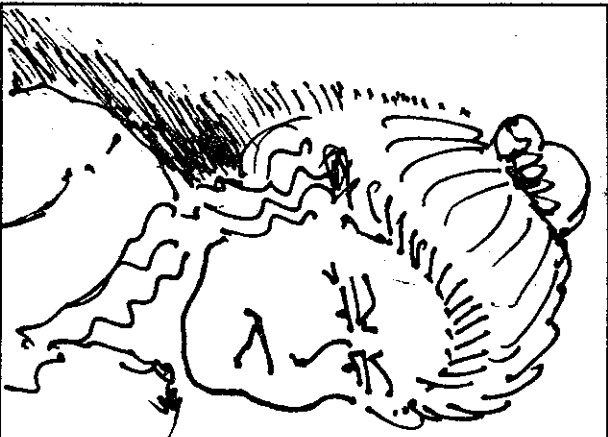


April Showers, Flowers, Rainbows,  
and Flying in a Hot air Balloon.  
by Diana Janík  
(age 4)

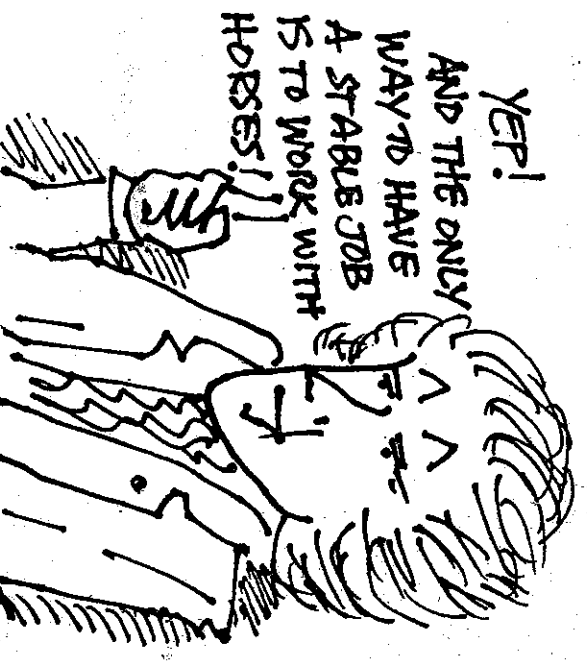


# Jare Exchanges

by: Casey



I'M REALLY DEPRESSED!  
THE OZANIE LAYER IS IN  
TROUBLE, LIBERAL IS A  
DIRTY WORD, ONE THIRD OF  
OUR FACULTY IS RETIRING  
AND THEY AREN'T REHIRING,  
MORE AND MORE FAMILIES  
ARE HOMELESS, AND ART  
PROGRAMS ARE ONCE AGAIN  
BEING THE FIRST TO  
BE CUT EVERYWHERE!



YES!  
AND THE ONLY  
WAY TO HAVE  
A STABLE JOB  
IS TO WORK WITH  
HORSES!

DAPHNE and CHLOE Decide to Present a Lesson on Rosa Bonheur. 1992

## WOMEN'S CAUCUS : National Art Education Association Affiliate MEMBERSHIP FORM

Make checks payable to NAEA Women's Caucus

Send to:

Mrs. Crickette Todd  
901 Cedar Park Drive  
Cincinnati, OH 45233

check here for address change

Renewal/Contributing \$15  
New: \$10  
Student: \$5  
Life Member: \$200  
Sustaining: \$25  
Patrons: \$100  
Benefactors: \$5,000  
Philanthropists: \$10,000  
Lapel Pin with Logo: \$10

DUES: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
PIN: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
CONTRIBUTION \_\_\_\_\_  
TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_  
NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
HOME PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_  
WORK PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_