Critical Matrix: The Princeton Journal of Women, Gender, and Culture
Editor: Johanna Burton and Guest Editor Anne Swartz

Critical Matrix is a forum for research, criticism and theory in feminism and gender studies. Seeking connections among scholarly, aesthetic and activist approaches to gender, Critical Matrix brings together written and visual materials that explore, redefine or reach across traditional disciplinary boundaries. Today an award-winning, internationally circulated professional journal, Critical Matrix was founded by feminist graduate students in the early 1980s to provide academic support for exploratory scholarship in Women’s Studies and continues to encourage submission of work that might encounter resistance or neglect within established disciplines. We solicit new work by authors at any stage of their careers, with or without academic affiliation.

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Cover Image: Arlene Raven being swung through the air by her student/colleagues at Woman’s Building Los Angeles, California, circa 1975, photo: Maria Karras, courtesy of The Estate of Arlene Raven

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In 1985 Natalie Davis, of the Princeton History Department, and Kay Warren, anthropologist and director of the Women’s Studies Program, encouraged a group of graduate students to circulate a collection of the papers they had produced for a graduate colloquium on women and gender. Gathered by student editors and stapled together between paper covers, these collected “working papers” became the journal Critical Matrix. A year later, acting director Maria DiBattista, professor of English and Comparative Literature, applied to the Graduate School for funding to support and continue the journal. Dean Ted Ziolkowski responded with a gift of $3000, part of a Mellon Foundation Grant that had been awarded to the Graduate School. This initial investment on the part of Dean Ziolkowski, later supplemented by grants from the Helena Rubinstein Foundation and the Dean of Faculty, insured continuation of Critical Matrix and inaugurated an impressive twenty-plus-year run. In 1992 the journal took on a more professional appearance and continued to attract more submissions from outside the university. As a result of this refashioning, the Council of Editors of Learned Journals awarded Matrix its “Phoenix Award for Significant Editorial Achievement” in 1995.

Deborah Epstein Nord
Former Director
Program in the Study of Women and Gender
by Johanna Burton and Anne Swartz
This volume is a first effort to consider the life and legacy of art critic Arlene Raven. It will introduce readers unfamiliar with her writings and activism to much information about her life’s work and give avid fans (or even dissenters) of Raven’s work an overview and contextualization for a fresh, innovative approach to art, feminism, and the intersections between them in late twentieth century and early twenty-first century America. To this end, our introduction will outline some of the important features of Arlene’s critical efforts in order to frame and preface the group of diverse essays included here.

Arlene worked steadily to evolve a new kind of writing and critical practice. She was devoted to collaboration, questioning the assumed distance one ought to take as a critic and fostering connections between artists. She wanted to collapse the space between art and society, to showcase the ways art could help and heal both on the micro level of the individual and on the macro level of the culture.¹ She understood and expatiated on the necessity of activism for one’s social justice beliefs within an artworld (and academia) hard-pressed to focus on such qualities. She developed a lexicon for discussing temporal and dematerialized artmaking, especially performance art. She saw the value of resuscitating history and revising it. She knew that only when we understand the past can we understand ourselves. She was open to and promoted fluency in all kinds of intervention, using her writing and teaching as a way to change the minds and lives of others in an entrenched artworld not typically receptive to transformation, especially on the personal level she sought and encouraged. Gender was a construction she understood as central to the dialogue about art, and she privileged it; but she did not do so as others had, instead, using her own self-revelations as a feminist woman in order to fortify her own position and that of others. And, she believed and promoted the idea of “the personal is political” on all levels of her work because she had faith in human decency despite marked evidence to the contrary in all forms of personal and social violence. Above all, she was a feminist, committed to the cause of acknowledging women’s

contributions. Arlene’s death from cancer in August of 2006 was marked by her valiant fight to be well and her active involvement in many projects until only a few weeks before the end of her life.

Our collaboration as editors has been easy, which has made this project possible under what could have been an impossible deadline. Anne developed this project and commissioned the essays, evolving the roster of writers as rapidly as possible. Johanna was receptive to a volume dedicated to Arlene’s work from the inception and supported every twist and turn in its development with her hallmark willingness. We are grateful for this opportunity to bring this august group of established and emerging writers together to add to the circulation and study of Arlene’s role. It is our hope that this volume is but a first effort, the beginning of examinations and investigations into the fertile and myriad directions Arlene began in her writing and teaching. We are grateful for the support of Princeton University’s Program in the Study of Women and Gender and the overarching guidance and assistance of Professor Carol Armstrong and Professor R. Marie Griffith for their encouragement and backing of the project. This project would not have been possible without the kind support of Arlene’s partner Nancy Grossman and the assistance of Arlene’s dear friend, Lowery Stokes Sims, and the entire Estate of Arlene Raven.

The Estate of Arlene Raven has over fifty boxes of correspondence, drafts, publications by Arlene (including her poetry), ephemera, publications on Arlene, book proposals, photographs, and other memorabilia. The archive evidences that Arlene’s interests in the artworld were broad and included not only women’s art and performance but also Abstract Expressionism and Washington Color School, to say nothing of her work on so many individual artists that it is impossible to begin listing them here.

Eventually, the Archive of Arlene Raven will go to the Miriam Schapiro Archive of Women Artists at the Libraries of Rutgers University, where it will be made available to interested scholars and students. The Estate intends to publish many of Arlene’s unpublished writings on artists. Arlene would often write multiple reviews and complete several interviews in advance of writing more in-depth analyses of individual artists and art movements. She worked on different pieces in tandem, often considering an
artist’s work for years before deciding she had reached a point where she wanted to write something in further detail. Many of these studies have never been published and, in their eventual published form, will significantly add to our understanding of contemporary art. Additionally, she recycled titles and premises in different pieces, sometimes with completely different theses. She also willingly played with narrative structure as often as she maintained textual conventions.

The Estate of Arlene Raven kindly permitted us to include an interview/essay by Arlene in this volume. It was published elsewhere, but in limited circulation within the artworld, which is why the Estate wanted it included here as an example of Arlene’s work. The title “Words of Honor” permits us to mention an example of one of the interesting ways Arlene played on ideas, formats, and approaches. She had previously written an essay (which Suzanne Lacy discusses here in her essay, “The Artist Arlene Raven”) titled “Word of Honor,” which was included in Lacy’s anthology, *Mapping the Terrain.* In “Words of Honor,” she modified that title ever so slightly to use it again, invoking the first essay, while simultaneously expanding on its meaning. Arlene often confounded her critics by her willingness to play with traditional notions about writing, including repeating herself for emphasis (and to play with conventions—who else intentionally, in titling their work, vies for confusion?).

Anne’s contribution to the volume is a critical biographical essay on Arlene’s life and work. Using the first person voice, which was her first extended foray into this kind of narration, was challenging. She did this to utilize the process Arlene encouraged of speaking from one’s experience. Ultimately, she tried to act as a transparent narrator so the reader could develop an understanding of Arlene’s accomplishment and a glimpse into her personality.

Several pieces are more personal in tone and character. It would have been possible to incorporate hundreds of tributes, memories, and narratives, but time constraints and text limitations prevented us from doing so. Poet

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and novelist Terry Wolverton has been recognized for her central contribution to the activities at the Woman’s Building. Her essay here is a variation on a section first published elsewhere (in her autobiography *The Insurgent Muse* and in one of her contributions to the e-book she co-edited with Sondra Hale on the Woman’s Building, *From Site to Vision, the Los Angeles Woman’s Building in Contemporary Culture*). The complications of the early days of a revolution are much in evidence in Terry’s piece and help flesh out the image of Arlene’s work on a personal level.

Jerri Allyn was one of Arlene’s students and comrades at the Feminist Studio Workshop and the Lesbian Art Project. Now, a highly respected artist and educator, she offers a tribute, first given at a memorial in Los Angeles in August of 2006 and then again at the College Art Association’s Annual Conference in February of 2007, which showcases Arlene’s impact on Jerri’s life and work and how Jerri has herself utilized many of the concepts forwarded in Arlene’s work. Jerri’s piece is somewhat free-form, a selective set of remembrances and commentaries about Arlene and the permutations of her thinking.

And, renowned artist Thomas Knechtel offers a glimpse into Arlene’s working habits from his days as her assistant. He further extends our understanding of how Arlene used her authority and power at every turn to help others professionally, even when no one else was seemingly taking note. These three essays contribute to the multifaceted understanding of Arlene’s complex and important interconnection of her life and work.

Suzanne Lacy frames Arlene’s conceptually-oriented approach to criticism in the context of contemporary art practice, articulating how Arlene could, ultimately, be considered a kind of artist. Suzanne’s approach to Arlene’s work is significant because Arlene started out as a conventional art historian, moving between scholarly opportunities and teaching. She rapidly recognized the possibilities of a different kind of criticism and its import. Such efforts impacted many, many people and helped build new paradigms in a reticent, seemingly hopelessly habituated artworld. One of the key attributes underscoring Suzanne’s essay is the recognition that feminism had a revolutionary impact in the form of Arlene’s work and its legacy (which is
really the point of all the essays gathered here). We also publish here *Travels with Mona*, the artist’s book from 1977-1978 on which they collaborated and which has not been re-published since its original small edition print run of 2000. Including it here allows for a tactile instance of Arlene’s border-crossing production.

Jenni Sorkin investigates Arlene’s professional considerations of both her feminism in the Los Angeles artworld of the 1970s and her sexuality as a lesbian as it connected to her work. Jenni brings current discourse to bear on Arlene’s work by examining how revolutionary even the smallest gestures were in projects such as the catalogue for the “At Home” exhibition of 1983. She then examines Arlene’s involvement in the Feminist Studio Workshop and the Lesbian Art Project in careful detail, highlighting her innovations as an educator and as a historian/ critic. Her essay includes discussion as well of the impact today of Arlene’s work, particularly examining Arlene’s exhibition on the subject of rape.

Carey Lovelace writes on the role of advocacy in Arlene’s criticism. She surveys some ground covered in other essays here, but, as one indication of the richness of Arlene’s activities during those heady days in the 1970s, she expands on the understanding of that period and Arlene’s contribution to it. She moves across the specific arc of Arlene’s regular publications outlets, specifically *Chrysalis* and the *Village Voice*, as well as recounting significant features of Arlene’s work on the “At Home” exhibition. One complaint about criticism at the end of the twentieth century and into the early twenty-first century is that it tends to use superlatives to the exclusions of critique. Arlene wrote from a stance of advocacy; that is, she understood the power of the written word to help artists develop a stronger sense of themselves and their art. She used her writing as an activist tool, which Carey highlights. Rather than use the superlative freely or without cognition of its effects, Arlene simply reserved her efforts for art that interested or engaged her. She simply wouldn’t write about art that didn’t contribute to society in what she saw as a useful way. If it didn’t offer some opportunity for renewal, transformation, or healing, she didn’t bother. Whereas many critics would have complained as their mode of critique, Arlene did not bother to spill a drop of ink.
Arlene’s expansive approach to writing and teaching is the subject of Tanya Augsburg’s essay on how her professional activities bespeak her interdisciplinarity. Tanya is an interdisciplinary studies specialist, so to those unfamiliar with the literature in this area, she offers both an introduction to its main concepts and uses Arlene’s work as a case study into how comprehensive and inclusive a critic and feminist can be. Tanya looks at Arlene’s writings from many angles, focusing in particular on the ways that her writings on the subject of rape are groundbreaking and significant.

One of Arlene’s collaborators on her volumes of feminist art criticism, Joanna Frueh wanted to focus on personal content in art criticism and ended up with a perspective on the notion of the queer in Arlene’s work. She uses the term in multivalent ways, as Arlene intended. Anne asked Joanna to incorporate some of her artworks into her essay, specifically self-portraits or portraits of her where she collaborated on the images, because Joanna’s dual roles as artist and scholar are often intertwined. Those dual roles were an important part of the dialogue Joanna had with Arlene, which is why the images are presented with her text.

Elizabeth Garber writes on Arlene’s work in art and visual culture education, highlighting the particular legacy of her feminist pedagogy. She examines Arlene’s lesbianism and the ways Arlene used it to inform her educational theory. Elizabeth considers how Arlene engaged issues of social justice in her pedagogical work and how she contributed to the field of teaching art criticism. Her comments on Arlene’s persistent influence are especially helpful in framing the ways her work informs art and visual culture education.

Maren Hassinger and Leslie King-Hammond give the reader an opportunity to learn specifically about Arlene’s pedagogical process, alongside a discussion of how Arlene interconnected her life and work. Arlene was a respected teacher and pedagogical theoretician, and her approach to teaching was innovative on all levels. Maren and Leslie’s collaborative essay gives a glimpse into the interdisciplinary approach Arlene favored, as well as offering personal perspectives and recognition of Arlene’s professional support. They each offer specific anecdotes that give the reader impressions of Arlene as a friend, teacher, advocate, and mentor, among other roles.
Leslie King-Hammond curated the exhibition “Agents of Change: Women, Art, and Intellect” in January through February 2007. Originally, this exhibition was simply a part of several activities timed to coincide with the College Art Association’s Annual Conference. But, following Arlene’s death, it became a memorial to her life and legacy. Leslie’s curatorial acumen was impressive, as she brought together signature works by significant feminist artists, alongside the work of emerging artist Sungmi Lee. The exhibition included a portrait by Mimi Gross of Arlene with her art group — women collectors she took to galleries and studios twelve times a year for twenty-one years. It was the first exhibition of that fascinating portrait picturing a critic and her “students,” (a term we use loosely, since the members of the art group are accomplished and sophisticated women who followed Arlene’s lead in learning about the artworld). The piece included here is both a brief discussion of the show and an incorporation of the curator’s acknowledgements.

The chronology and bibliography of Arlene’s life and work by Anne included in this volume is partial and incomplete. It is not comprehensive, because, at the time of this writing, the Archive of Arlene Raven is still being inventoried. Further, many of the citations themselves are not complete, because of limited time to address all aspects fully. This list includes as much as was possible to obtain to date. It is hoped that students of feminist art and contemporary art history will find this early version of Arlene Raven’s chronology and bibliography, even in its partial state, useful for further study.

The fields of art history, art and visual culture education, and art criticism are all richer because of Arlene’s participation in them. On the most basic level, she left an impact, using the first-person pronoun to discuss art in a scholarly and critical way. Our hope is that the reader will learn from Arlene’s experiences and activities as a critic, teacher, historian, lesbian, advocate, feminist, and activist. That Arlene’s work will become the subject of broad study is our goal. She contributed much in many areas and has not been as thoroughly studied as some thinkers and writers who have received more consistent attention. Much more needs to be considered and investigated in her contributions to contemporary art. We hope this volume enables additional work into her life and its legacy.
WORDS OF HONOR: CONTRIBUTIONS OF A FEMINIST ART CRITIC

by Arlene Raven & Jean Pieniadz

Arlene Raven is an art historian writing criticism for the Village Voice and a variety of art magazines and academic journals. She is East Coast Editor of High Performance magazine, and a member of the editorial board of Genders magazine. Her selected essays were published in Crossing Over: Feminism and the Art of Social Concern (1988). She was Editor and contributor to Feminist Art Criticism: An Anthology (1988), for which she won the Susan Koppleman Award. She was the Editor of, and contributor to, Art in the Public Interest (1989). Exposures: Women and their Art was published in 1989, and Nancy Grossman in 1991. A founder of the Women's Caucus for Art, the Los Angeles Women's Building, and Chrysalis magazine, Raven has lectured nationally, taught at major art schools and universities, and curated exhibitions for a number of institutions. She studied at Hood College, George Washington University, and Johns Hopkins University, and holds an MFA in Painting, and an MA and PhD in Art History.

Jean Pieniadz is a clinical psychologist in independent practice at Mansfield Psychotherapy Associates in Burlington, Vermont. She is an adjunct faculty member in the psychology department at St. Michael's College, and is a field faculty advisor at Vermont College of Norwich University. She earned her BS in Psychology and Philosophy at Clark University, and her PhD in clinical psychology at the University of Vermont. She is a member of the Executive Board of the Vermont Psychological Association Council of Representatives. She is also a member of the Feminist Therapy Institute, and the Society for Research in Adolescence.

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I'm an art historian. My contribution, if I define it in terms of helping people, and in the area of mental health, would be in education. In 1972, I was finishing my graduate school course work for my PhD, and I attended a conference, which was the first conference on women in the visual arts on the east coast. There I met two artists, Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro. I was extremely interested in what they had to say, because I had been teaching at the Maryland Institute College of Art, and I was wanting to teach a course on women and art at that time. They had a whole program of study they offered in California, and I made arrangements to go there and visit them.

Between the time I made the arrangements, and the time that I went—which was one week—I was raped. This rape had a profound influence on what happened subsequently. I was completely distressed from having been raped, very brutally, and kidnapped by two people. That was a politicizing experience for me, and it allowed me to see, in a personal way, what role social institutions were going to play in my life. Here I was getting my PhD, and always feeling that education was going to help me to equality, and I realized that as long as I had a pussy between my legs, that was the only requirement to be oppressed. I was just as vulnerable as anybody else, and that fact was shocking to me. I had been in the civil rights movement, I had been in the SDS and the Labor Committee, and was a feminist, and I was going to consciousness-raising at the time. Still, I completely changed my life, toward increasing my commitment to feminist/political work.

I was married. I was raising a step-daughter and teaching, while also finishing graduate school. I then moved to Los Angeles, and became the art historian for the feminist program at the California Institute of the Arts. Judy Chicago and I taught at Cal Arts for one year, and then we were joined by Sheila de Bretteville, who is now the dean of the school of design at Yale. She ran a women's design program at CalArts.

Judy, Sheila, and I established an independent school—the Women's Building—and in this school, we taught women. We came together as a community, and we taught women very practical things: finding out what our real experiences were, and making work from those experiences. Many of our students had been incarcerated in mental hospitals. (I made a count one time, and one-third of our forty-five artists had been in mental hospitals! This was amazingly high, especially because these people were not crazy.) We went from consciousness-raising to making real work and being in the real world, instead of in a school setting. While it was a school, it wasn't exclusively that; deliberately, there wasn't that institutional buffer. We taught women how to write their resumes and get jobs and all kinds of things that you never learned in school. And we did that in the community. I think that that was very good, for my mental health, certainly.

I was also developing my scholarly field at that time. There was very little done in the art history of the 20th century, focusing on women artists. It was a completely open field, and one could be very creative. I did research with my students, about the discovery of women's art heritage. To learn about this heritage was also, in the social sense, a very strong, steadying influence, which counteracted the canon that we had learned in other schools. Namely, this canon left women feeling that they didn't make a contribution to art. In the text which is used for all art history students, there is literally not one woman mentioned. When it was pointed out to the author—Jansen is his name and it's called The History of Art—he was so arrogant as to say that no woman had done work that was worthy of being in that book—a completely crazy assertion. I believe that realizations such as those, and working to build that history ourselves, do that art work ourselves, and present it in the public sphere made us new people; it made us redefine ourselves completely. In the process, we challenged our prescribed limitations. In addition, I think the teachers were getting as much education as the students. Many of them already had their graduate degrees and were older students. They were community members. So it was a school, but also a community.

I had an opportunity to make a contribution in California because we created the Women's Building, whereas I was just teaching a course in an existing institution here. Our group of feminists in the arts also formed Womanspace galleries, the Feminist Studio Workshop, the Center for Feminist Art Historical Studies, the Lesbian Art Project, the Feminist Art Workers, and the Waitresses. We rented a building, and we went in with other women in the building,
a bookstore, a press, a feminist cooperative gallery, a commercial gallery, a café—we had a lot of different organizations in the building. The Women's Building existed for 18 years, and it saw many other organizations come and go in that time. It no longer exists as it was, however, because while we still have our corporation, we gave up our physical plant. There's an oral history of the Women's Building, which is becoming somebody's dissertation; we'll have archives.

I now primarily work as a columnist for the *Village Voice*, writing art criticism. And for me, that's working in the mainstream. It's funny that the *Village Voice* is considered a left-leaning paper, but for me, it's very different. I was so highly radicalized elsewhere that I find that some of the things that I've been saying for the last 20 years are still very challenging and startling to people in my current workplace. But I still have to keep saying them.

I feel that I have made a number of contributions to the field of art criticism. I was responsible for writing the theory of the Women's Building and our feminist art-making there. Among other things, the theory states that art-making is intended to raise consciousness and invite dialogue, and to lead to action. That's a very different idea of what art is, so it has very different requirements. Part of putting the theory into action meant that our teaching process was unique at the time. We did a great deal of team teaching and co-teaching with people who came in as students. This gave us a sense of overall equality, while still respecting that there might be some kind of particular information that each person could impart to someone else. That was very important to me.

I taught by example and participation. I was in work groups with people and I participated in their art, as they participated in mine. I shared my writing with everybody else. In other words, I wasn't simply there as a teacher—I was also there as a participant. I co-created works of art, as well as art critiques, with students. I also did take the responsibility for structuring what was going to happen. That's a hard line to walk. I tried to do that because I felt we hadn't had enough of that kind of experience before. The women who started and taught in these feminist workshops were extremely articulate, very brilliant, and very visible in the field. Thus, it was a relative kind of equality: if you wanted to go where you were equal, you really had to go there, and not stand on how you were different from the others. Professional feminists are prone to making distinctions between themselves and other women, as a way of elevating themselves. While I think that's very natural, class-bound thing to do, it has to be stopped sometimes, deliberately.

My body of writing is a very unique body, which has also been recognized by the art-critical establishment. I was one of two women, and seven people, who were asked to be part of a special series of essays on art in the 1980s (I contributed to the writing in a book called *Crossing Over*, from that series). I felt grateful to have the quality of my work acknowledged, even though it's far off the "beaten path." My art criticism is artful, and I try to use different forms, either plain or poetic without jargon.

I employ a feminist process in my art criticism. I think of my work as "writing alongside" the art of other people, and I enter into a reciprocal relationship with the artists whose work I attempt to interpret. Part of this process also means that I struggle to gain an understanding of artists' intentions and assess the fulfillment of their intentions within their audience. The context is also considered in my work. In addition, I "value" every work I choose to write about according to my known and unknown biases and taste. The way in which I preselect themes and subject matters to review, based on my own preferences, may explain why I don't write so-called bad reviews. Unlike Georgia O'Keeffe, for whom color was always more definite than words, I honor the words of art criticism themselves as an art form.

I think the fact that I'm a feminist who has just turned 50 is significant: I have been very steady in my commitments to feminism, and I put them out wherever I am, with a conviction that they're right. I know this is one thing that a number of people in my age group who've been in the movement for a long time can provide. Specifically, there's a certain kind of comfort and steadiness that other people, younger people, can acquire from you; they come to know that this is not just a one-year fight or a ten-year fight, or it's not even a lifetime fight. It's going to continue, and it's bigger than anybody's one lifetime. It's got to be passed down, and I feel some responsibility in that regard.
I was the founder, with other people, of two feminist magazines, Womanspace Journal, and Chrysalis. Womanspace was the first West coast women’s gallery space, and that was the first project I worked on in California. I’m also teaching a new series of workshops in Snowmass, Colorado, at the Anderson Ranch Arts Center. There is a residency program where artists can come, like an art colony, both during the year, and in the summertime. I’ve been teaching there for about six years, and in that time, I developed a workshop called “Writing for Artists,” which involves working with artists about their work. It involves learning ways to look at your work, and exploring its various meanings.

In the workshops, I start with—and this is my feminist approach to teaching again—what has been a very negative experience for many people in art school, which is a critique of their own work. Usually the teachers, who are probably not even doing any art work of their own, somehow make the students feel that they’re nothing. In these workshops, I try to create a community, wherein people start to write about their work by talking about it, and having other people write down what they are saying. They don’t really have to take it up as writing, until they’ve really got more than just a blank page.

It’s something that people have found to be a profound experience for them, and I am still very moved by what happens there. I try to conduct it in ways that are constructive for me, as well, i.e., in ways that are extensions of my teaching and writing philosophies.

I think that my ideas, overall, are the contributions of a feminist. In a recent interview in Art Papers, I took exception to the attitudes of people in the art world. I think the art establishment is unfair to artists, when there’s no reason to be. For example, an artists will send slides to a gallery, and the gallery will throw them in the trash—never call the artist, or say, “I got your slides,” or anything, because they don’t feel they have to. It’s the same with writers and editors. I think there are unprofessional practices, as well as inhumane. I’m therefore breaking with my normal art-world reference group, in that I’m trying to look critically at the art community, and to get people to try to act right. I know I’m not the last word on what’s right, but I know what’s humane and caring, and I know which things promote creativity and don’t squash it.

My life has changed a great deal as a result of my contributions to feminist theory, scholarship, and practice. Foremost, I’m a happy person! I attribute this to the fact that my work allows me to express myself, and I have taken, I’m glad to say, the paths that have lead me to do the work I want to do. I’ve made the sacrifices that I’ve needed to make and I feel very good about that. There’s much internal conflict for individuals in the arts: getting a secure job vs. doing the work you really want to do; being a promoter and dealer of work, rather than being a philosopher of work; choosing to deal with new people, marginalized people, people who haven’t had a voice yet (this is what I have chosen to do), as opposed to those who are more “bankable” people. It has been important for me to struggle with these conflicts, because I’ve been able to succeed anyway for some reason, and that sort of proves to me that I’ve gone the right way. I’ve always made those hard choices, and the risk-taking that I’ve made myself do in my life, as a result of wanting to live my feminism, and having a sense of justice, has been to choose the authentic life.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

IMAGES OF ARLENE RAVEN
Arlene Raven at the Woman's Building
Los Angeles, California, circa 1975, courtesy of The Estate of Arlene Raven

Arlene Raven being swung through the air by her students/colleagues at Woman's Building
Los Angeles, California, circa 1975, photo: Maria Karras, courtesy of The Estate of Arlene Raven
Sheila de Bretteville (far left), Judy Chicago (center), Arlene Raven (right)
1973, courtesy of The Estate of Arlene Raven
Arlene Raven with her beloved IBM Selectric and her beloved “familiar” Sophie Cat, circa 1979-1980, photo: Thomas Knechtel, courtesy of The Estate of Arlene Raven

Arlene’s diploma from Feminist Studio Workshop, 1977, courtesy of The Estate of Arlene Raven
I first met Arlene in 1992 while on one of my many jaunts to New York City as a graduate student researching my dissertation. At that time, my dissertation was to be an examination of the practice of wrapping in contemporary art. Nancy Grossman's art was one of the many subjects of that dissertation. Having read extensively about Nancy's work and having visited her retrospective at Artemisia Gallery in Chicago in 1991, I felt compelled to ask her some questions in person. Arlene had written the exhibition catalogue for Nancy's show at Artemisia, and her prose had left almost as deep an impact on me as had the exhibition. I had flown on Southwest Airlines on a much-discounted ticket from Cleveland, where I was in graduate school, to Chicago. Though I hemmed and hawed about the cost of the plane ticket, a mighty expense back in graduate school days, a friend impressed upon me that seeing the work would give me an insight into its scale and its impact on my body, which reproductions never could. I went to see that show and remember gaining a whole approach to art through my friend's insight about the encounter with the object. I learned in a real way that sculpture, whether it is related to the podium, the floor, or the wall, is always understood in relation to one's perceptions; that is, you have a complete sensual experience with the embodied object, an awareness of its veracity, which the photograph cannot entirely convey. I developed a healthy suspicion of reproductions as a result and a newfound love of Nancy's art. I also developed a full understanding of Arlene's perspective and was able to see better because of her writing. Now, parting with money I didn't have for a plane ticket to New York didn't even seem a question. The inestimable value of meeting with Nancy (and with Arlene to boot) surpassed any pragmatic frugality I might have earlier considered.

So, I climbed the stairs into Nancy and Arlene's loft on Eldridge Street, on the fringes of Chinatown, and entered into a new phase. I had been actively engaged in interviews with many artists, curators, and critics, including Louise Bourgeois, whose star was ascending sharply into the constellations of art world celebrity. Louise had been very generous with me, but, always, there was an air of suspicion. She had worked so long and hard to achieve some standing in the art world; she welcomed me, but also was wary because she had had many visitors wanting to investigate her and her work, so she had developed a suspicious approach to all comers. Nancy was the opposite. Where Louise insisted on conditions, Nancy simply asked for courtesies such as a copy of whatever I published about her work. Then Nancy offered that I should speak to Arlene. We spoke privately about Nancy's work. I had taken a class with Ellen Landau at graduate school at Case Western Reserve University on feminist art criticism. Arlene's writings had been a central part of that course. I felt somewhat awed in Arlene's presence and remember how clearly I was impressed by her honesty and willingness to speak with a graduate student. She kept giving me the goods on herself and Nancy, without hesitation. She even mentioned, at certain points, that she hoped I would be able to use some of the material she had, which she couldn't because she was too close to it. She treated me with respect and dignity. She relished our conversation, seemingly as much as I did.
Arlene was a renowned art critic, particularly noted for her feminist stance, support of lesbian issues, and advocacy of artists. She had something profound to say about nearly everything and she consistently gave of herself to her lovers, friends, family, students, colleagues, peers, associates, and to the field of art criticism, though she did not always receive consistent support for her views or choices. She was one of the most generous scholars, absolutely supportive and persistent in her drive to ensure the highest standards among professionals and friends. She began as a traditional woman—Arlene Rubin—striving to achieve what her parents wanted. She ended up being someone they never imagined—a lesbian activist, a highly regarded critic, and one of the most esteemed feminist art critics in the profession. This essay will conceptually survey Arlene's major phases and accomplishments, as well as considering her influence. It must be noted from the outset that this essay is intended as an overview, an introduction to Arlene's life and work. It will, hopefully, pave the way for more extended examinations of Arlene's life, her influence, and her insights.

Arlene's work has largely not acquired that status of the most significant feminist writings, despite the ubiquity of her influence. Reasons for this (in no particular order) are: her willingness to mine the personal freely, her dual status as art historian/art critic, her open life as a lesbian and lesbian professional, her feminism as activism as opposed to methodological practice, her use of her writing for advocacy purposes, and her ability to espouse her ethical stance so consistently. In surveying some of the recent tomes which gather together key texts of feminism and art, such as Helena Reckitt and Peggy Phelan's *Art and Feminism* (Phaidon Press, 2001) and Hilary Robinson's *Feminism-Art-Theory: An Anthology 1968–2000* (Blackwell Publishers, 2001), neither reproduces any of her writings.

The key developments in Arlene's writing were many. She wrote extensively about feminism and its role in art. Next, she articulated a lesbian sensibility. She was a fervent activist throughout her career. She developed a system of feminist pedagogy, which she honed at Cal Arts in the Feminist Art Program, when she taught with Judy and Miriam (Mimi) Schapiro, starting in 1972, and eventually in the Feminist Studio Workshop she started at the Woman's Building with Judy and Sheila Levant de Bretteville. Arlene formulated the goals of the Woman's Building as 'to raise consciousness, to create dialogue, and to transform culture.' Others would come to teach there as well, including Israeli art historian Ruth Iskin, with whom Arlene would develop the Center for Art Historical Studies, a research arm of the Woman's Building and a branch of the Feminist Studio Workshop. Together, Arlene and Ruth also started the West-East Bag Slide Registry, which collected slides of past and contemporary women artists, dedicated to revising art history by identifying all of the women important to art of the past. Later, Arlene expanded her educational practice to focus on a method she innovated of teaching artists to write, beginning in 1988. She was one of the premiere early writers on performance art, helping many of the important artists of the early days of the Women's Movement—Suzanne Lacy, Jerri Allyn, and Cheri Gaulke, among them—codify a language of expression for the relationship between

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1. This essay was first suggested by Ann Kibbey, Executive Editor of *Genders* and Associate Professor of English at the University of Colorado who remarked on how Arlene's work "may be of more consequence than the work of others who have been more famous." She suggested it as a way to communicate some framework for Arlene's ideas since "younger scholars are looking for some direction from previous work, but also want something different that they don't already know about." (Ann Kibbey, e-mail correspondence with author, August 15, 2006.) I am grateful to Professor Kibbey for her support of this project in an earlier form and her interest in Arlene's work. I have written this text based upon my extensive research into Arlene Raven's life and work, reading many of her published writings, beginning in the mid-1980s when I first encountered her reviews, and our conversations and correspondence, which began in 1992 when I started interviewing Nancy Grossman, Arlene's partner. Since Arlene's death on August 1, 2006, Nancy has spoken to me on a regular basis about Arlene's life and work. She sent me a copy of Crossing Over, gave me access to Arlene's papers, as well as reviewing the chronology of Arlene's life I wrote and this essay to ensure accuracy, and offering me extensive insights and suggestions. I am grateful to Nancy for her willingness to speak to me about all matters public and private, for her commitment to Arlene's legacy, and to her support of this project. Our conversations have been a source of strength for me. Thank you as well to my co-editor Johanna Burton for her editorial support and enthusiasm for this project. Thanks also to Cynthia Rubin, Lowery Stokes Sims, and Rosa Maria Ng of the Estate of Arlene Raven, I have spoken to many people about Arlene's work, including Judy Chicago, Jerri Allyn, Cheri Gaulke, Maren Hassinger, Leslie King-Hammond, Lowery Stokes Sims, Michelle Moravec, and Phyllis Rosser. Suzanne Lacy assisted me in the early conceptualization of this project and offered me suggestions on occasion as her time permitted, for which I am most grateful. Joanna Frueh was instrumental in helping me realize all aspects, large and small, of this volume and advised me in meaningful ways to ensure it would be an apt memorial in honoring Arlene's legacy; her support was sustenance and enabled me to complete this project rapidly. Additionally I must thank Jay and Charles Lose for their loving support.

2. Tanya Augsburg deals with the issues of Arlene's genre mixing and interdisciplinary approach in her essay, "From Blurred Genres to the Integrative Process: Arlene Raven's Interdisciplinary Feminist Art Criticism," in this volume.
art and the body and constructing the notion of the feminist body. Her role as a critic was innovative. She explored the relationship of the critic and the artist and the critic as artist/creator. In another milieu, she might have been an artist. She emphasized art in the public interest, the title of one of her anthologies, where artists engage with issues of social justice, ecology, and feminism, among other concerns. Her criticism provided a method for her to be an activist and advocate for artists. (She especially advocated for women artists, though she did support men artists, particularly during the period from the 1980s until her death.) She merged her educational, populist interests with her advocacy in leading a group of collectors to studios, exhibitions, and galleries: almost two-hundred and fifty tours over twenty years, focusing on women artists in particular. Ultimately, the contributions of her thought to contemporary art are prevalent and persistent, yet not fully understood.

Arlene published several books including monographs on artists, as well as editing two books on feminist art criticism, and wrote hundreds of articles on art and artists. How does one gauge the extent of influence? Arlene got to see many of her students become practicing artists, committed to the pioneering and inventive strategies she embraced. Recently, anthropologist and women's studies professor Sondra Hale encapsulated Arlene's influence as:

exert[ing] strong influence on art historical ideas, for example, radical feminism/cultural feminism, essentialism as programmatic, the critic as inseparable from the artist, highly personalized art and her methods of writing art criticism, to name only a few.

Among other things, Arlene made it acceptable to discuss how artists used the body, making her both an important feminist critic, but also one of the critics who defined performance art (especially by women). Despite considerable dissension in the world of feminist art history against a unified approach to women and their roles in art history, Arlene's writings and teachings have a staying power, which results from the cogency of her thought and the accessible writing style she employed.

Born in 1944 to a Jewish orthodox family in Baltimore, Arlene once told me about how unhappy the separation of men and women in synagogue made her feel. She couldn't understand it and didn't like it. She told me she always worked against that sense of alienation, which had been a dominant part of her life. Her mother Annette was a housewife, the precursor of today's stay-at-home mom or house manager. Her father Joe ran a restaurant/bar, which also had jazz musicians perform. From her parents, she gained a desire to learn. But, she also understood their normative expectations of her and she sought another route, even though she initially conformed to a life focused on fulfilling their desires. She was devoted to her younger sister Phyllis and they spoke me about how unhappy the separation of men and women in synagogue made her feel. She couldn't understand it and didn't like it. She told me she always worked against that sense of alienation, which had been a dominant part of her life. Her mother Annette was a housewife, the precursor of today's stay-at-home mom or house manager. Her father Joe ran a restaurant/bar, which also had jazz musicians perform. From her parents, she gained a desire to learn. But, she also understood their normative expectations of her and she sought another route, even though she initially conformed to a life focused on fulfilling their desires. She was devoted to her younger sister Phyllis and they spoke daily, or as often as life permitted, throughout their lives and changing situations. She had been a “bad girl” in high school—voraciously seeking opportunities for smoking and boys—but as an adolescent was largely unaware of her brilliance. In a 2004 interview, Terry Wolverton asked Arlene if she thought of herself as a visual person when she was young, she replied that she didn't, saying “I have a sense of myself as a thinking and philosophical person. I always liked to look, but I wasn’t conscious of my perceptions or how they were constructed.” After high school, Arlene went to college at age 16, earning the

3 The following list of Arlene's accomplishments is based on a conversation with Suzanne Lacy who suggested many of these issues to me as the prominent aspects of Arlene's oeuvre. (Suzanne Lacy, telephone conversation with author, August 23, 2006).


5 Jenni Sorkin suggested to me the innovative role Arlene played as an art critic, which Suzanne Lacy discusses in her essay for this volume. (Jenni Sorkin, telephone conversation with author, August 23, 2006).

6 “Advocate critic” is Carey Lovelace's term, which she defines in her essay, “Arlene Raven and the Foresight of the Advocate Critic,” for this volume.


8 It is interesting that Arlene wrote/ spoke about the ubiquity of certain female identities as pervasive, specifically, that the lesbian and the housewife share a similar place as the human receptacle for the tasks society wants to ignore. These identities seem wholly disparate, yet, they have an unusual dominance in women's experience and history. (See Joanna Frueh's article, “All Queer,” in this volume for a full discussion of the implications of these ideas in Arlene's work; for comments on the housewife, see Arlene Raven, “At Home,” in Crossing Over: Feminism and Art of Social Concern (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1988), and Arlene Raven, “The Archaic Smile,” New Feminist Criticism: Art, Identity, Action, edited by Joanna Frueh, Cassandra L. Langer, and Arlene Raven, first edition (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1994), 5–15. Also, see Jenni Sorkin’s comment that Tee Corrine was a lesbian, not a queer activist, in her tour of the "WACK! Feminist Art and Revolution" exhibition, “Jenni Sorkin on Tee Corrine” [http://www.moca.org/wack/?p=235].
A.B. from Hood College in 1965. Life for Arlene had always previously been a world of men, their history, their experiences, and their names. In the homogeneous all-girls college environment, she had an awakening, a realization, about the world. It was there that she began to understand her voice and her potency as a scholar, writer, and intellectual. She went on to receive a M.F.A. from George Washington University in 1967. She had been active in the student revolutions of the 1960s and a member of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). She was briefly engaged to one man, and then had married another man, Tim Corkery, who advised her on her master's thesis at George Washington University and to whom she remained married for seven years; and, as his wife, she changed her name from Arlene Rubin to Arlene Corkery. Arlene remarked on the problematic nature of this relationship, "At the time, I was completely unconscious of how I was aligning myself." She helped raise Corkery's daughter Laura, with whom she became lifelong friends (decades later celebrating the arrival of Laura's child as any stereotypical grandmother would). This time was a period of many transitions and changes in Arlene's life; alongside her domestic duties, she was focusing on painting. But painting was proving too messy for her and she abandoned it after writing a long thesis on her work, which made her realize she was concerned with interpreting visual statements verbally. She became more interested in art history through her curatorial and writing experiences working at the Baltimore Museum of Art and the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Arlene earned her M.A. in 1971 and her Ph.D. in 1975, both in art history from Johns Hopkins University, and she began to associate with people whose values differed from those of her family and what she saw as their focus on material rather than spiritual or intellectual matters.

Arlene's doctoral dissertation focused on the Washington Color School painters, including the art of Morris Louis, which had been the subject of her master's thesis. In many ways, this thesis forecasts the directions her scholarship would take; in it, she utilizes a strategy of pursuing the personal (Louis was intensely interested in a modern translation of his personal beliefs and spirituality, especially of Jewish symbolism), while showing an awareness of the most interesting local art (she was living in the area), and giving close consideration of the dynamics of the group. She helped curate a group exhibition at the Baltimore Museum of Art in 1969 that included painters Gene Davis, Sam Gilliam, Howard Mehring, Paul Reed, Jacob Kainen, Kenneth Noland, Willem de Looper, Ed McGowan, and Morris Louis. Her contributions to the exhibition and accompanying catalogue were extensive enough to warrant specific and broad thanks in the catalogue acknowledgements by the curator, meaning she probably did most of the work.

Arlene's feminist awakening was rapid. From her days at Hood, she moved into a conventional married life, but simultaneously pursued quite varied feminist activities. She engaged in consciousness raising groups, much in vogue among some feminists in the late sixties and early seventies. She was teaching art history at the Maryland Institute College of Art. There she first realized no women artists were part of the art historical canon. She worked on a magazine, based in Baltimore, called Women: a Journal of

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9 Terry Wolverton's interview with Arlene Raven provided me with many of Arlene's comments about her biography included here. "Looking Through a New Lens: Terry Wolverton Interviews Art Historian Arlene Raven," From Site to Vision, the Los Angeles Woman's Building in Contemporary Culture, edited by Sondra Hale and Terry Wolverton (Los Angeles, CA: the Woman's Building, Inc, 2007), 103 (http://womansbuilding.org/fromsitetovision/pdfs/Raven.pdf).

10 Ibid, 108.

11 Ibid, 106.

12 Ibid.


14 Nancy Grossman made this last point to me in conversation in 2007.

15 Arlene described the beginnings of her feminist activism to Terry Wolverton. (See Wolverton, 108.)
Liberation, and helped at a free clinic. But the contrast to her stereotypical home life and the multiple demands on her time began to fray her marriage.

Increasingly disenchanted by domestic options and her marriage, particularly when she discovered her husband was having an affair, Arlene sought another course in her professional life. She helped found the Women’s Caucus (now the Women’s Caucus for Art) at the College Art Association annual convention in San Francisco in January of 1972 with Ann Sutherland Harris as its first president. Then, after attending “Women in the Visual Arts,” the First National Conference for Women in the Visual Arts at the Corcoran Gallery of Art on April 20-22, 1972 (an event held due to protests about the absence of women in the 1971 Biennial at the Corcoran) Arlene was radicalized on the spot and decided to head to California where feminist art activity was in full swing. She was intending to visit Los Angeles on a research trip to study feminist art; a few days before leaving, she was hideously kidnapped and raped, experiences that left her victimized, embarrassed, humiliated, vulnerable, and traumatized, but made it easier (or perhaps necessary) for her to start disconnecting from her life in Maryland.

On that research trip, Arlene showed up on Judy Chicago’s door in May of 1972. Judy helped Arlene find a way to express her feelings about the horrible experience of her rape. She interviewed her to be one of the many voices played during the performance of Ablutions, performed and organized by Judy, Suzanne Lacy, Sandra Orgel, Aviva Rahmani, and Jan Oxenberg and utilizing taped testimonies of rape Judy had collected. That interview with Judy became Arlene’s first discussion of her rape experience; she would mine this sort of revelation in forging a new kind of art historical and art critical practice.

Life in California was abundant with opportunities to interconnect art and feminism. Judy had been teaching at the first Feminist Art class in 1970 at Fresno State University, when she met Mimi at a dinner at Allan Kaprow’s house. Judy invited Mimi to lecture at Fresno, which then resulted in their decision to partner on a whole program dedicated to feminist art at Cal Arts, beginning in the 1971-72 academic year. The culminating project of that first year was the much-publicized collaboration between Judy, Mimi, their students, and some community members known as Womanhouse, a multi-room installation of a house which included performances, lectures, and readings by this group of diverse women, held from January 30-February 28, 1972. In the fall of 1972, Arlene was hired by Judy and Mimi as art historian for the Feminist Art Program at the California Institute of Arts, known as Cal Arts, where Mimi’s husband Paul Brach was dean.

Arlene learned a great deal from Judy and Mimi, and she responded in her work to their ideas and pedagogy even while bringing her past experiences to bear in this new area of inquiry into feminist art. Judy played an integral role in Arlene’s feminist awakening, encouraging her to change her last name to Raven (which the former has remarked stemmed from the latter’s big swath of black hair) as part of a general desire to abandon patriarchal structures such as the patronym. Judy also encouraged Arlene to use the first person pronoun, a verboten thing in the largely German-based art his-

\[16\] Raven, “The Archaic Smile,” 5-7. Arlene really outlined that conference to me in various discussions we had over the years as an emancipatory experience.


\[18\] As mentioned earlier, Arlene was the art historian for the Feminist Art Project in its second year at Cal Arts, a position occupied the previous year by Paula Harper, who returned to her graduate work at Stanford University.

\[19\] Arlene described how the Washington Color School painters formed an art school and how that was an influence on her ideas about feminist education. (See Wolverton, 107).

\[20\] This point has been made by Judy Chicago in many places, including in the biography by Gail Levin (See Gail Levin, Becoming Judy Chicago: A Biography of the Artist (New York, NY: Harmony Books, 2007), 212).
historical practices of American art history, as a way of indicating her dedication to working from personal experience. Mimi wanted to connect to the broader women’s history. Also, Mimi’s use of the journal in her journal-writing class at Cal Arts was a way to incorporate writing into the creative process, but also encourage diaristic aspects more overtly as well. The Feminist Art Program had a gallery called Womanspace, which she and Judy realized offered potential without the larger institutional limitations that they felt dictated Cal Arts. As but one indication of her formidable abilities, Arlene told me she was able to remain friendly with both Judy and Mimi after the two had fallen-out and even despite the fact that Judy and Arlene had decided to open the Woman’s Building together. Sheila, the designer of the Womanhouse exhibition catalogue, joined Judy and Arlene and in September 1, 1973 the Woman’s Building opened with an educational program known as the Feminist Studio Workshop. The Woman’s Building became a center for feminist activity, housing several different kinds of businesses.

Arlene’s educational stance was multi-faceted. Having experienced the prejudicial realities of largely male-focused academia, the separatist stance of the Woman’s Building and its programs presented impressive possibilities of a “feminist community structure.” The Women’s Movement promoted the benefits of consciousness raising, which Arlene coupled with a more intense style of introspection too. She regarded the role of the critic as providing the situation and climate necessary to promote artistic vision which she believed emanated from personal content; thus, the role of the critic was to engage in a dialogue with the artist to help excavate that content and with the audience to aid the artist in communicating it. The embrace of such concepts was an unexamined area of intellectual investigation since it conflated feminist radicalization with art criticism. Essentially, Arlene merged then-current psychological investigations of self with notions of healing in examining women’s art practices. The absence of men at the Woman’s Building made a whole world of difference in the process of educating students, whose work and thinking reflected the radical context.

After the first year of intense involvement, Arlene backed off some from her central role in the Woman’s Building, as did Judy and Sheila, and focused her attentions on her writing and teaching. She got more involved in writing, particularly in 1976 when Susan Rennie and Kirsten Grimstad, both academics interested in feminism, approached Arlene and Ruth about starting a magazine, which would become Chrysalis, A Magazine of Women’s Culture. Art was one of the main subjects of the publication. Arlene collaborated with artist Mary Beth Edelson on a centerfold discussion of women’s involvement in the arts in the first issue, which was written in a pastiched flow; one voice intermingled with the other. The collaged effect of polyvocality in this piece would become a hallmark of Arlene’s more experimental writing efforts in years ahead, which sometimes confounded readers with their inventive structures. Over the next four years, the editors, the number of which grew to include many other members over time, some who would participate in only a single issue and some who would stay for several, would eventually produce ten quarterly issues on many subjects about women’s culture, though art

21 Art History as a discipline was strongly influenced by German academics, including Johann Joachim Winckelmann, Jacob Burckhardt, Heinrich Wölfflin, Fritz Saxl, Aby Warburg, Ernst Kitzinger, Richard Krautheimer, Otto Brendel, Rudolf Wittkower, and Ernö Ernö Goldschmidt, and especially Erwin Panofsky. Arlene remarked on the influence of German art historians on the field and their emphasis on the formal voice in a video; see Lyn Billerbeck and Kate Horseyfield, producers, Arlene Raven: An Interview, (Chicago, IL: Video Data Bank, 1979), videocassette, 40 minutes. The moment in the video where Arlene comments on her unique use of first person voice is available on the Video Data Bank website (http://www.vdb.org/smacknacgil/tapedetail?ARLENERAVE).

22 Arlene once described herself to me as Mimi and Judy’s teaching assistant, suggesting her perceived status as learning from these “elder” experts. Mimi, ultimately, didn’t support the separatist view of a need for woman-only spaces. Gail Levin recounts many of the specific details of the friction and eventual schism between Judy and Mimi, much of which mirrors on a microcosmic level the divisions between feminists in the artworld. (See Levin, 189-90.) She was proud of her ability to remain friends with both of them, long after their professional split in 1972 and her decision with Judy to open the Woman’s Building with Sheila.

23 I have already quoted a few times from the excellent e-book From Site to Vision, the Woman’s Building in Contemporary Culture, edited by Sondra Hale and Terry Wolverton (2007) about the Woman’s Building which includes considerable anecdotal and scholarly investigation about all aspects of the Woman’s Building, its projects, and its role. See (http://womansbuilding.org/fromsite2vision/pdfs).

24 Arlene’s approach to artists is the subject of an essay in this volume co-authored by Leslie King-Hammond and Maren Hassinger titled “Arlene Raven: Critic, Advocate, Arts Activist, and Friend.” Arlene’s feminist pedagogy is the topic of “The Voice of Arlene Raven in Art and Visual Culture Education,” by Elizabeth Garber, also in this volume.

25 From an unpublished document written by Arlene, as quoted by Ruth Iskin in “Feminist Education at the Feminist Studio Workshop,” in Learning our way: essays in feminist education, edited by Charlotte Bunch and Sandra Pollack (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1983) and cited by Sondra Hale and Michelle Moravec, “At Home at the Woman’s Building (But Who Gets A
continued to be a main focus. The circulation reached 13,000, which is considerable, but not sufficient to continue publication. Editing was done in a collective approach, similar to what *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics*, an East Coast publication founded in 1977 by Mimi Schapiro, Joan Braderman, Mary Beth Edelson, Elizabeth Hess, Joyce Kozloff, Arlene Ladden, Ellen Lanyon, Lucy Lippard, Joan Semmel, Nancy Spero, May Stevens, Michelle Stuart, and Susana Torre, would use. Many of the *Heresies* collective—a larger group participated in the collective than were involved in the publication—would also write for *Chrysalis*.30

Arlene was self-aware about seeking a more experimental approach to her professional and personal life. She remarked to Terry Wolverton about how an expanded approach to art history influenced her: “myself in that body of knowledge that was going to determine my life and not a proscripted life of marriage and family.”31 An important aspect of her personal life that would come to bear on her professional life was that Arlene became a lesbian when she moved to California. The impetus for her decision to be with women exclusively is not something about which she wrote, despite her extensive discussion of her sexuality. She was committed to identifying a history of lesbians in art, especially in her classes with students, and in founding in 1976 the Lesbian Art Project (a performance outgrowth or an extension of Arlene’s Natalie Barney Collective, founded the same year as the Woman’s Building, which sought to document and write about lesbian artists.)32 The group included Terry, Nancy Fried, Kathleen Berg, Donna Reyna, Maya Sterling, and Sharon Immergluck in 1976.33 “Lesbian” was an identity that Arlene embraced willingly and openly, which is uncharacteristic of academics at that time (and arguably even to the present). She wrote about the lesbian sensibility with Ruth, which appeared in *Chrysalis*, and which has become an ur-text for the history of lesbians and art because it was one of the first approaches to the subject on a serious conceptual level.34 Later, in 1983, she remarked hauntingly on the invisibility of lesbians in the essay for her “At Home” catalogue, discussed more below, commenting on lesbianism as historically confined to the bedroom, which means it was restricted to the most remote and private parts of the house.35 She continued, remarking, “traditionally, lesbianism has

Room of Her Own?: Women of Color and Community,” *From Site to Vision, the Woman’s Building in Contemporary Culture*, edited by Sondra Hale and Terry Wolverton (Los Angeles, CA: the Woman’s Building, Inc, 2007), 144 (http://womansbuilding.org/fromsitetovision/).

26 Consciousness-raising was seen as a necessary counter to the historic isolation of women in the domestic environment and as a counter to the role of women’s groups in maintaining complicity in women’s own subjugation. These groups had a premise of revolutionary freedom which necessarily began with the emancipation of the individual. See, for instance, *How to start your own consciousness-raising group*, leaflet distributed by The Chicago Women’s Liberation Union, 1971, (http://www.cwluhistory.com/CWLUArchive/crwlu.html) and Kathie Sarachild, “Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon,” in *Feminist Revolution* (New York, NY: Random House, 1978), 144-150 (http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/wim/fer/fmsarachild.html).

27 Cecilia Dougherty offers useful insights on this topic in her discussion of the video interview of Arlene made by Lyn Blumenthal and Kate Horsefield. See Cecilia Dougherty, “Stories From a Generation: Video Art at the Woman’s Building,” *From Site to Vision, the Woman’s Building in Contemporary Culture*, edited by Sondra Hale and Terry Wolverton (Los Angeles, CA: the Woman’s Building, Inc, 2007), 290 (http://womansbuilding.org/fromsitetovision/).

28 Arlene began phasing out her involvement at the Woman’s Building by getting involved in other projects, including Chrysalis. See *Arlene Raven interview by Cherri Goulke*, September 19, 1992, New York, NY, Woman’s Building Oral History Project, 16-17.

See also Betty Ann Brown, “Feminist Art Education at the Los Angeles Woman’s Building,” *From Site to Vision, the Woman’s Building in Contemporary Culture*, edited by Sondra Hale and Terry Wolverton (Los Angeles, CA: the Woman’s Building, Inc, 2007), 136 (http://womansbuilding.org/fromsitetovision/).

29 For an example of Arlene’s work in this vein causing confusion, see a review of *Crossing over: Feminism and the Art of Social Concern* where the reviewer expresses her confusion about Arlene’s pastiched style: Pamela Gerrish Nunn, “Review, [Feminist Art Criticism, an Anthology by Arlene Raven; Cassandra L. Langer; Joanna Frueh; Crossing over: Feminism and Art of Social Concern by Arlene Raven]” *Woman’s Art Journal*, 11, number 2 (Autumn 1990-Winter 1991) 42-44.

30 Arlene mentioned the coinciding situation of these magazines with their near-simultaneous births. (See Arlene Raven, “Women Look at Women: Feminist Art for the Eighties,” *Crossing Over: Feminism and Art of Social Concern; (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1988) 14.)

31 Wolverton, 105.


33 Terry Wolverton describes some features of the inception and direction of the Lesbian Art Project in her essay for this volume.


35 Arlene lived in a large Victorian house in Los Angeles, with the bedrooms on the top floors. Arlene, Nancy Grossman, and Cherri Goulke all commented to me about this house and its import to Arlene. Also, Terry Wolverton discusses it in her writing about Arlene, including in her contribution to this volume. Johanna Burton suggested to me that perhaps Arlene felt she was occupying hidden terrain literally.
also been a part of the darkness, invisible in daylight but materializing with the fading of ‘natural light.’ Here, Arlene was careful to employ the denotative and connotative meanings of words and metaphors simultaneously to enliven and enrich her verbiage, as she focuses on the appearance of natural light as designating a separate sphere for women, in opposition to the oft-declared “unnatural” realm of lesbianism. A determined feminist, Arlene always was careful to give a place and space to lesbianism by calling it such instead of speaking more broadly about homosexuality. She also was aware of the importance of self-representation for all, for women, and for lesbians. In 1982, she commented: “There are many minority sensibilities; there is a great hunger to see ourselves.” She frequently lectured on women artists and lesbian artists to show their centrality in history.

But it was earlier, in 1977, as part of her changing focus on the Women’s Movement and her evolving role at the Woman’s Building that she became invested in examining the lesbian sensibility in art through the Lesbian Art Project which lasted from 1977 to 1980. The Project focused attention on the art and lives of lesbians as a way to counter the absence of their history. Terry directed The Oral Herstory of Lesbianism, at the Woman’s Building in 1979. Oral was performed by thirteen lesbians and based on their life stories. Arlene’s role was monumentalized on the cover of High Performance (a magazine published between 1978-1997 and dedicated to performance art) where she and another Oral performer, Catherine Stifter, are photographed kissing (a controversial image then and now). Arlene, during a period that coincided with her work on the Lesbian Art Project and her relationship with artist Cheryl Swannack, promoted a separatist women-only lifestyle, though she did continue some supportive friendships with men.

In the 1970s, Arlene expanded herself professionally, transitioning from art historian to feminist art historian to lesbian art advocate to feminist art critic. Perhaps one outgrowth of her involvement in the Woman’s Building was the recognition of women’s involvement in newer media, such as performance. Chrysalis and High Performance were two of the many avenues were Arlene would develop her trademark style of writing about artists. As an art critic, Arlene realized that her activism was to support and develop women artists; that is, she could utilize the written word to circulate information, as well as to support and advocate for the artist. Speaking at the 1977 annual conference of the College Art Association, held in Los Angeles that year, on a panel titled “Feminist Art Criticism: What Are the Crucial Issues?,” Arlene remarked on the importance of criticism in the evolution of women artists: “Criticism in the feminist community is an important aspect of the creative process and not an afterthought.” Part of the reason for this, she explained, is that women suffer from an archetypal level of self-destruction, making even factual information difficult to digest. She further noted, “Statistics demonstrate that women are so sensitive to criticism they are more likely to be personally devastated than to learn from it.” Thus, she embarked on an approach to criticism that was wholly different from any other critical voice of the day, attentive to producing a criticism with palliative, rather than destructive effects.

38 Cover, High Performance #8, II, 4, 1979. Jenni Sorkin mentioned this cover as one of several that could not be printed today because of the absence of publication venues for progressive, and homosexual material. (See Jenni Sorkin, “Envisioning High Performance,” Art Journal, 62, 2, Summer, 2003, 39.)
40 On the role of women artists at the Women’s Building in performance art, see Cheri Gaulke, “Acting Like Women: Performance Art of the Woman’s Building,” High Performance, #11/12 III, 3/4, (Fall/Winter 1980) and available at (http://www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2002/09/acting_likewom.php). That High Performance and her writings in its pages were important to Arlene is noted by the inclusion of six pieces first published there in her 1988 book Crossing Over.
42 Lang, 57.
Arlene’s critical voice was innovative, but shows her awareness of the critical generation around her. In addition to close friendships and associations with many of the significant feminist writers of her generation, including Susan Brownmiller, Kate Millet, Adrienne Rich, and, later, Gloria Steinem, Arlene was also aware of the expanded field of art history and contemporary art criticism. And beyond what she learned from Judy and Mimi, Arlene had other influences in shaping her criticism, especially Lucy Lippard and Jill Johnston. Many critics, including the likes of Clement Greenberg and John Coplans, had used their writing as an overt way to bolster and support artists. Responding to this context, Lippard is perhaps the penultimate example of a critic engaged and concerned with critical responsibility, especially in relation to artists who are friends. Lippard and Arlene became friendly, as an extension of Lippard and Judy’s friendship. Lippard began writing about artists she knew in the 1960s. She engaged in political activity in New York by the end of the 1960s, including becoming centrally involved in Women’s Action Coalition (WAC). She authored a major book in 1977 on her friend, the artist Eva Hesse who died in 1970 and on whom she had written several times. Lippard’s socialist approach was fervent and determined, an apt model for Raven.

Another heroine for Arlene was Johnston, the journalist who would become dance critic for The Village Voice, beginning in 1959, and who would by the end of the 1960s expand her purview to include art. Johnston fashioned a new approach to criticism as one of the first contemporary critics to combine biography with insight. As a woman coming out in the early 1970s as a lesbian, Arlene must also have relished Johnston’s status as a lesbian thinker and for her involvement in Shirley Broughton’s “Theater for Ideas,” held in New York City on April 30, 1971.

Johnston is also noted for her autobiographical style, which is an approach Arlene would also come to use and value. Arlene’s last major project with the Woman’s Building was curating the “At Home” exhibition at the Long Beach Museum of Art in 1983. She was part of a curatorial team, which included several women from the Woman’s Building. Though this show was not Arlene’s first curatorial effort, the collaborative curatorial approach and the exhibition catalogue was a much more expansive approach than she had tried before and signals the kind of practice which, by the early 1980s, had become typical of her professional efforts. She writes a narrative that is aligned and then misaligned, literally and figuratively from the artist’s statements, images, and descriptions of the art. It is a conflation in literal form of bits of text so that the reader doesn’t have a clear linear approach to it. In a sense it was a parenthetical closure on her life in Southern California’s artworld as it was the final project she would embark on in which her earliest concerns manifest most completely.

Arlene’s time in Los Angeles, from 1972 to 1983, was marked by her engagement in feminist separatism. She, Judy, and Sheila opened the Woman’s Building as a way to create a separatist location for women—a place and space for women to experience a supportive community—something which otherwise didn’t exist at that time. The success of their efforts is most obvious in the influence of their ideas, pedagogy, and philosophy on a whole generation of artists. However, a separate institution such as this usually cannot thrive because it does not have the funding base to support the artists.


44 Arlene carried a photograph of Jill in her wallet, so influenced was she by her criticism. Nancy Grossman mentioned this point to me in 2007.

45 In 1971, Johnston, along with literary critic Dianna Trilling, Jacqueline Ceballos, then president of The National Organization of Women (NOW), and Germaine Greer, author of The Female Eunuch, engaged in a much-publicized (and filmed) verbal battle with Norman Mailer who had recently authored his denunciation of feminism The Prisoner of Sex.

46 This exhibition is discussed by Jenni Sorkin in this volume in her essay, “Arlene Raven: Homecoming.”

and their practices on the level necessary to historicize, preserve, and conserve their efforts. Arlene spoke to Cheri Gaulke about the funding difficulties they faced at the Woman's Building, *Chrysalis* (which ceased publication in 1980), and in many of her efforts.\(^48\) An absence of financial support makes one's existence more precarious but also more independent. (Not having to rely on donors or government funding also means no definition or restriction.) And, as a result, much has been said about the alternative art made by those artists associated with the Woman's Building, which culminated in myriad ways, including several of the artists becoming performance artists and Arlene becoming a critic of performance art. Separatism had entered Arlene's life through her feminist efforts and then with her lesbian lifestyle. By the end of the decade of the 1970s, she was really limiting her exposure and involvement with men to a minimum, focusing on her life with women. It didn't last. Not for the unrealistic expectations some have countered that accompanies separatism, but, because Arlene's interests ultimately lay elsewhere.\(^49\) That is, she became increasingly devoted to the ethical stance of her feminism as a way to probe how artists could contribute to social justice and human decency. The opportunity to relocate to New York coincided with an expanded approach to her feminism.

The period at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s was not easy for Arlene. She had a car accident;\(^50\) she had drifted away from the Woman's Building; and she was searching for more consistent writing opportunities. An opportunity for professional change came in the form of a personal relationship. Nancy Grossman met Arlene when Arlene was in New York City to speak on a New School panel "Is There a Homosexual Aesthetic?," held on November 15, 1982, the first of a two-part symposium related to the exhibition at the New Museum, "Extended Sensibilities," curated by Dan Cameron. Arlene had dyed a strip of her long black hair fuchsia, signaling her alliance with the "lavender" of lesbianism. Arlene described the meeting as love at first sight.\(^51\) Theirs was an intense connection, prompting Arlene to relocate to New York City in 1983 to live with Nancy, after their long-distance courtship. This move heralded a new life direction for Arlene, who remarked to Cheri Gaulke that "when I moved to New York I became a full time writer."\(^52\) Publishing opportunities for reviews of art in the New York scene would introduce Arlene's writings to a broader audience. She embraced the insubordinate, the rebellious, and the revolutionary as necessary to artistic vision, even when it wasn't necessarily explicit or previously discussed in relation to an artist.\(^53\) Further, she embraced an idea about the artist in society that wasn't a preeminent notion for most critics. Her ideas about artistic vision and possibility stem from greater concern with community and collective involvement for the artist. That is, art could be a way to heal society—both the viewer and the artist. Rapidly, she found increased opportunities to write and discuss art. Alongside her regular contributions to *High Performance*, Arlene became a staff art critic for the *Village Voice* in 1985, which in the 1980s was a leftist alternative paper, yet even so Arlene was clearly one of the most radical writers.

\(^48\) Arlene Raven interview by Cheri Gaulke, 4, 5, 11, 12, 15, 18, 22.


\(^50\) Mary Beth Edelson, interview with author, May 5, 2007.

\(^51\) Arlene and I spoke at length in two conversations, one in 1993 and again in 1998, about her life with Nancy and its importance to her professionally beyond the obvious personal impact. This interconnection, which was documented in Arlene's book-length essay for Nancy's 1991 retrospective exhibition catalogue, became a main feature of an article I wrote about Nancy's art. (See "The Erotics of Envelopment: The Figurative Art of Nancy Grossman," *n. paradoxo*, Volume 20 (July 2007), 64-70)

\(^52\) Arlene Raven interview by Cheri Gaulke, 18.

\(^53\) Wolverton, 109.
In her consistent examination of women's life experiences as considered through art, including how artists consider rape, Arlene was radical. The taped discussion with Judy for Ablutions had been her first telling of the story and was significant because that experience propelled her to return to the investigation of rape as a predominant subject in women's art. Subsequently, in her involvement with the Feminist Studio Workshop, she pursued extensive research into the ways that rape was a central part of western art history, iconography, and mythology.

In 1985, at the University Gallery of Fine Arts at Ohio State University, she curated what was to date the only focused exhibition on the subject of sexual violation. Titled simply "RAPE," the exhibition centered on rape and the reality and ubiquity of it; her examination focused on personal experience, either direct as with survivors or indirect as with any woman who has a healthy fear of sexual violation. Her professional reaction to the subject was unusual then, and now, in that she chose not to remain cloistered and wounded as a mute victim, but, instead, took the experiences and made them into accessible, public aspects of her persona—a survivor who speaks to the community of anyone who has suffered rape, sexual abuse, damage, violence, or trauma. The exhibition included works by twenty artists—Jerri Allyn, Ida Applebroog, Stephanie Brody Lederman, Josely Carvalho, Sue Coe, Ann Fessler, Carole Fisher, Ann Gerckens, Marcy Hermansader, Kathe Kollwitz, Paul Marcus, Audre Lourde, Helen Mangelsdorf, Lynette Molnar, Paulette Nenner, Deanie Pass, Pat Ralph, Leela Ramotar in collaboration with Marty Schmidt, Nancy Spero, and, Susan Zurcher. Arlene wrote stirringly about her experience of going to the exhibition, her reticence about attending it and its potential to re-traumatize her in remembering her rape experiences, and the challenge in speaking about the taboo of rape in a rape culture, which she later published as a diaristic essay. She describes in extensive detail here about from organizational efforts—studio visits and slide review—to the installation of the show, in which several of the artists participated. She outlines how challenging the show was to its university home, "RAPE is a serious risk for the gallery on this campus and excites nervous anticipation," because of the prevalence of rape and the absence of discourse, her exhibition prompted dialogue about the subject of sexual aggression.

Arlene had earlier helped her students pursue the topic in their art, reclaim it as an issue in women's art from history, and deconstruct its use in the service of major monuments of western art history; so these aspects became part of the 1985 exhibition. Arlene's consideration of one of Suzanne Lacy's earlier works is instructive about what Arlene appreciated when an artist willingly tackled such difficult subject matter as rape. The bravery of speaking about trauma was one she lauded in others, as in her discussion of her 1977 collaborative Three Weeks in May, a project about a criminal perpetrating violence against women over a period of three weeks in Los Angeles; Arlene remarked that Suzanne's defiant performance was grand and meaningful because she decided "to make art about it rather than staying at home and remaining frightened, thus, she fought back." Arlene regarded Suzanne's work as an instance of how a personal approach can extend beyond the...
confines of personal circumstances and comfort zone, transforming damaging experiences into progressive art and, potentially even, society. She noted that this kind of art means “often sacrificing personal pleasure and the fantasy that we cannot make a difference.” She emphasized the importance of repetition in telling the story, humor, irony, text, appropriation, and the use of soft materials to reference the body, among other possibilities, which, she felt also ultimately were devices used in feminist art in general.

Open to lecturing, writing, and discussing art in a wide variety of forms, Arlene would take part-time teaching assignments occasionally. She taught a course on understanding contemporary art, which included tours of galleries and studios, at the New School for Social Research in the winter of 1984. Her class consisted of a small group of women, seeking an opportunity to learn about art. They became aware of Arlene's low wages for the class and asked her to tour them around privately. Arlene took them to artist's studios, galleries, and, occasionally, museums. She focused on helping these collectors understand the ways that people decide to make art and what instigates their particular approach to art. She also took them to see women artists pre­dominantly, save the occasional male artist. The success of the group is measured in one way by their endurance; they met twelve times a year for twenty-one years.

Arlene began to expand her approach to art, considering broader ques­tions of social justice within the framework of the arts. She had long exam­ined under-recognized artists, but now wanted to broach the attending ques­tion: what does under-recognition do to a person? She and Suzanne held “Angry: A Speakout,” a panel at the College Art Association’s annual conference, in February of 1986 in New York City. They distributed red buttons that were to be understood as to mean “I am so angry, I am seeing red.” They offered people an opportunity to sound off about what was making them feel distressed or angry in the artworld, based on the premise that expression is the way to good health.

Arlene ended the speakout with the remark saying “Get out there and punch somebody!” which was really a way of saying “make a difference” since Arlene was consistently dissenting from any aspect of the culture that engaged in or promoted violence.

Arlene had been writing and publishing since the late 1960s, but in 1988, she published her first book—Crossing Over: Feminism and Art of Social Concern. It is an anthology of her selected critical writings from 1980 to 1986, and all but one of the pieces included were previously published reviews or exhibition catalogue essays. For the 1988 anthology, she significantly expanded several. The book showcases the variety of formats Arlene used in her writing—from the diffuse style of combined texts rendered into a single unit to the traditional art historical/critical narrative used for reviews or exhibition catalogue essays. In her layered writing, as evidenced in particular in the essay from the “At Home” exhibition catalogue, she makes text into an image on its own, a mainstay feature of Conceptual Art; this approach opens up the possibilities for making writing into a more animated experience for the reader, akin to the vocal layering of conversation and dialogue.
Art in the Public Interest appeared in 1989 and is an anthology edited and with an introduction by Arlene. This book includes an essay on the art of Helen and Newton Harrison by Arlene, which she had originally published in High Performance in 1987. The way this anthology is configured is defined by the introduction, where Arlene speaks to the healing nature of public art, or “public-spirited art,” as she calls it. “Of artists engaged in public-spirited projects, most hope for healing,” she remarks. And then continues “But in the healing we always find the wound.”65 This comment, though small, bespeaks the impressive fashioning that is at the heart of Arlene’s enterprise as a critic and of the kind of art she championed; art that will help us as a society also necessitates that we look at the horrors, crises, and terrors that scar, wound, and, define us. Her invention was to develop a language for discussing such features in art. Her essay about the eco-feminist and eco-aesthetic art of the Newtons in this same volume is a fascinating compendium of their art and its importance, and it comments provocatively on other artists working on a large-scale, such as Christo and James Turrell.

In 1991, she began using the approach she often had employed in her reviews in monographs for book-length essays published as exhibition catalogs. She wrote extended discussions of Nancy Grossman (1991), Hannah Wilke (1992), June Wayne (1997/2000), Alan Finkel (2001), Lesley Dill (2003), and Michele Oka Doner (2004). She worked closely and extensively with each of the artists to foster a clear understanding of their art and purpose, and to contextualize their art in a historical framework, within iconographical traditions, and acknowledges innovation. She would delve quite extensively into the literature the artist read and the formative experiences to craft biographical/psychological narratives alongside the discussion of their art. Arlene was, at the time of her death, developing extended studies on artists including Petah Coyne, Adrian Piper, and Janine Antoni.66

As an example of Arlene’s expansive approach, for the essay on Nancy Grossman’s art, in addition to referencing extensive reviews, conversations with the artist, and artist’s statements, she quotes from Angela Carter’s 1978 book The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography, as one way to reference the broader context of gender in Grossman’s often provocative figurative work; she also uses Richard Wright’s discussion of the social challenges for people of color who must, as he puts it, exist as “they are going to have to be both inside and outside of our culture at the same time,” in order to speak about Nancy’s art and the ways she incorporates alienation into the visual form of her work. Arlene’s other referents in discussing Nancy’s abstract and figurative work include: Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Jung’s longtime secretary and colleague Aniela Jaffe; writer Octavo Paz; psychoanalyst Phyllis Greenacre; literary and social theorist Marianna Torgovnick; psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud; cultural historian Elinor Gadon; feminist author Barbara G. Walker; sociologist Klaus Theweleit; psychoanalyst and specialist on childhood Alice Miller; German studies specialist Theodore Ziolkowski; philosopher Norman O. Brown; film and art writer Wendy Lesser; Frankenstein inventor Mary Shelley; writer John Milton; feminist theorists Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar; poet Robin Morgan; cultural anthropologist Ernest Becker; eco-feminist

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63 Arlene and I co-chaired a panel that would be a part of the day of panels we co-organized for the College Art Association’s annual conference in February 2007, in New York City. That panel was titled “Are We There Yet? The Status and Impact of Second- and Third-Wave Feminism, Women’s Art, the Women’s Art Movement, and ‘Feminist Art’” and was an intergenerational speakout by eleven emerging and established visual arts professionals—Mary Jo Aagerstoun, Jerri Allyn, Doris Cacoilo, Alison Denyer, Suzanne Jackson, Joo Kim, Catherine Morris, Dena Muller, Cindy Nemser, Siona Wilson, Midori Yoshimoto. As we were developing the panel, Arlene explained to me at length the conceptualization and her role in the earlier speakout. The 1986 panel included time to permit questions from the audience in addition to the prepared remarks panelists offered (and some plants in the audience). The quotation is taken from “86/#184 ‘Really Mad Artists’, as reproduced in Mutiny and the Mainstream, edited by Judy Siegel (New York, NY: Midmarch Arts Press, 1992), 252.

64 Suzanne Lacy discusses how Arlene viewed herself as a kind of Conceptual Artist in her essay, “The Artist Arlene Raven,” for this volume.


66 It is hoped the estate might publish posthumously Arlene’s extensive unpublished writings on these artists and many other aspects of contemporary art.
Mary Daly; feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir; literary critic Leslie Fiedler; literary theorist Paula Bennett; and writer James Baldwin. While this list is long, it is not unusual in the sense that many scholars discuss art in relation to divergent fields such as literary theory, psychoanalysis, or philosophy. But Arlene’s list is remarkable for the broad scope of disciplines it covers and the way she uses them to craft a narrative about Nancy’s work that expands its interpretative possibilities.

Arlene also helped create and promote a canon of feminist art criticism, which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s as written by such historians and critics as Norma Broude and Mary Garrard, Griselda Pollock, Linda Nochlin, and Katy Deepwell. She co-edited an issue of Art Journal with Joanna Frueh on Feminist Art in 1991, which was an outgrowth of an earlier 1988 book-length anthology on feminist art criticism, titled simply Feminist Art Criticism: An Anthology, co-edited with Joanna Frueh and Cassandra Langer. The three would co-edit another anthology in 1993, titled New Feminist Art Criticism: Art, Identity, Action. These texts, like the references I mentioned in the discussion of Arlene’s monographic writings, are wide-ranging and include both emerging and established writers and scholars.67 Arlene became entranced with how writing could function as an integral rather than supplemental part of artistic practice. In 1988, Arlene taught a writing workshop in Colorado at the Anderson Ranch, using a process she called simply “Writing for the Artist.” She described how she was “using my creativity in teaching.”68 The formulation consisted of open, intimate discussion between rotating partners about art, art-making, and whatever other issues related to that individual’s status as an artist. The dialogue was a monologue by one artist at a time with the other artist taking notes, but making no critique or comment. In a sense, this kind of practice resembles transactional analysis, so prevalent in the psychoanalytic practice of the 1970s. Arlene returned to the Anderson Ranch Center again in 1992 and then began holding workshops in New York and elsewhere. Artists would often repeat her workshops, finding her process useful and important. Similar to the long-term effects of the Feminist Studio Workshop of the 1970s, the strength and import of her more recent pedagogy is perhaps most exemplified by a group of eight women artists who met through her workshops in New York and are still meeting after a decade for monthly interactions inspired by those they had under Arlene’s tutelage.69 In 2000, Arlene accepted a position at the Rinehart School of Sculpture as critic-in-residence at the Maryland Institute College of Art.70 Though she had taught off and on in institutional settings since the late 1960s, she remarked to me on how she wanted to connect with artists more consistently and this position gave her that opportunity.

Arlene’s health became debilitated in the late 1990s and 2000s, yet she continued to write actively in reviews, in poetry, and for exhibition catalogues. She also became increasingly recognized as a critic, receiving many awards, including the Women’s Caucus for the Arts Lifetime Achievement Award (1999), Frank Jewett Mather Award for distinction in art criticism from the College Art Association (2001), Ally Award from the Monette/Horwitz Trust (2004) and a special award from the International Association of

67 I asked Joanna Frueh to co-edit a book, detailing the evolution of feminist art criticism today, as a continuation of the work she and Arlene had done together (both in collaboration with each other and in concert with Cassandra Langer). Pleasure and Passion in Feminist Art Criticism: Manifestos for the Present, edited by Joanna Frueh and Anne Swartz, with contributions by Tanya Augsburg, Julia Bryan-Wilson and Johanna Burton, Maria Buzzek, Joanna Frueh, Vivien Fryd, Elizabeth Garber and Erin Garber-Pearson, Dena Muller, Jill O’Bryan, Helena Reckitt, Mira Schor, Jenri Sorkin, Anne Swartz, and Midori Yoshimoto is in development.


69 Arlene remarked on the strength of the vision behind the Feminist Studio Workshop which produced many women artists. (See Arlene’s comment on the enduring quality of the FSW in her interview with Cheri Gaulke, Raven, “Interviewy by Cheri Gaulke,” 6). The group of artists connected by the workshops includes Elaine Angelopoulos, Donna Maria de Crefft, Janet Goldner, Amanda Guest, Judy Hoffman, Kerry Kehoe, Julie A. McConnell, and Joanne Ungar. At Arlene’s request, I assisted this group of artists in curating “Sustaining Vision: A Tribute to Arlene Raven,” an exhibition of their work and its relation to their shared process. The exhibition dates were March 5–April 16, 2008 at the New Jersey City University Art Galleries. It is the artists’ hope that the exhibition of their works will facilitate more dialogue about how Arlene’s method can inform artists to incorporate writing into their process and expand on their art through dialogue with others.
Art Critics, US Chapter (2006). These awards were in recognition of the countless number of artists, readers, critics, curators, students, peers, and colleagues she had influenced or challenged—or both—with her writings and teachings. These both warrant more extensive discussion than this essay can provide and it is hoped this volume generates such discourse. Arlene’s work needs to be discussed because it is important to the history of the period when she was active (from the late 1960s into the mid 2000s) and because her approaches offer rich models for present and future critics, historians, and artists.  

One of Arlene’s last major projects was The Feminist Art Project, which began as a conversation between Judy and she in the spring of 2005. Judy and Arlene noted how there would be several exhibitions of feminist art in 2007, including “WACK!: Art and the Feminist Revolution,” curated by Connie Butler at Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art and the installation of Judy’s multi-media work *The Dinner Party* at the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art alongside “Global Feminisms,” an exhibition curated by Maura Reilly and Linda Nochlin. Susan Fisher Sterling at the National Museum of Women in the Arts became involved in that discussion and the three of them came up with the idea for a devoted approach, or initiative, to capitalize on all the activity around feminist art in 2007 and to extend the dialogue beyond these shows and beyond that year. In April 2005, Arlene and I met for lunch at the Empire Diner in Chelsea before going to visit several galleries; she told me I should get involved in this idea she and Judy had been hatching with Susan. I attended the first meeting, which Judy facilitated, in May 2005 at art historian Gail Levin’s house, where the collected group was asked to develop ways to broaden the scope of activities. Some of the women present left, never to be heard from again because of their fears about feminist art. I worked closely with Judy and Arlene that summer to develop the ideas into a formal entity. But my personal obligations forced me to have to step down from much involvement. So, it was with much interest that I approached Ferris Olin and Judy Brodsky at Rutgers University about participating in the project, after Dena Muller, then-director of A.I.R. Gallery, suggested I speak to them about it. Judy Chicago remarked on how Ferris and Judy Brodsky were “our kind of gals” and Arlene noted how impressive they were as organizers. Ferris and Judy Brodsky took the seed of an idea and put the full force of their institutional building acumen behind it. They got telephone lines, a website (http://feministartproject.rutgers.edu/), assistants, publicity, and so much more for The Feminist Art Project. Judy Chicago, Arlene, and Susan all remained involved. Arlene’s health was declining rapidly, though she remained thoroughly committed. She was dying and yet she was participating completely.  

Others, like me, became entranced by the possibilities of this opportunity. I mentioned to Arlene the idea of a panel at the annual conference of the College Art Association (CAA), which would meet in New York in 2007. Her reply was a classic example of her grand vision. She said, “A panel, how about a whole day?” And so, Arlene and I set about developing a day of panels, along with two exhibitions, for CAA 2007. The preparations for those
panels, which included both established and emerging scholars, artists, and museum professionals, gave Arlene and me the unique opportunity to discuss her involvement in the history of feminist art. She told me endless details about her life, who were the people she had met and with whom they were involved, and why certain events had mattered to her. The experience was unprecedented for me, as we spoke or wrote several times a week for the last year of her life up until a few weeks before she died in 2006. Arlene was so committed to realizing the events and so many people were energized, I felt I must continue, despite my sadness. The scale of The Feminist Art Project, especially at CAA 2007, was impressive. Hundreds of people attended what evolved into about twenty different events. The panel chairs were myself, Elizabeth Mansfield, Suzanne Lacy, Helena Reckitt, Joanna Frueh, Mira Schor, and Vivien Fryd. Many chairs, panelists, and audience members described the experiences as exactly the kind of discussion visual arts professionals need to have in the art world. Judy Chicago made the comment to me that the only problem with CAA 2007 was that “it would have been a lot better if Arlene could have been there.” And she should have and should still be here. The Feminist Art Project has chapters in many cities and its website lists hundreds of events happening internationally, a fitting legacy of her more recent commitment to women in the visual arts.

Arlene became a central figure in the burgeoning Women’s Movement as it was connected to the world of art. Coming out as a lesbian, she entered into direct dialogue with colleagues and students about her femininity, her sexuality, her gender. These were not topics most art world insiders discussed. Her dedication to these topics was important, but what made Arlene so riveting to me was her grasp of the contemporary. She was interested in the important ideas of the moment. Since Arlene’s death, I have read much more about her past and I am intrigued about how she would make oblique references to it, but never dwell on it, whereas many would have, given how august her experiences were.

I have to return to my personal experience with Arlene as a way to offer the reader a few last thoughts about her deep impact on me. I would return several times to visit with Arlene and Arlene and Nancy and remained connected to Arlene my intellectual Virgil. She was my guide, though I never asked her for this kind of help and she never offered it in any explicit way; she seemed to be ready for anyone needing support. But, that kindness and my admiration blossomed into a mutual friendship over the years. Always, she was my friend.

Arlene and I became closer in the mid-1990s when she became more centrally involved in helping me forge my career. She offered advice freely. I arranged for her to lecture at my college in Georgia and she visited happily. Her sister was living there at the time, so we all spent a little time together before I left them alone, shrieking with joy at the sight of each other. Arlene and I spoke regularly and wrote occasionally. When I married in Georgia, I didn’t send an invitation, feeling like it was a request for a gift, since Arlene had told me she and Nancy couldn’t come. I felt supremely embarrassed by my ineptness, since Arlene and Nancy begged me for wedding photos.

The two exhibitions were a show of Daria Dorosh’s art at A.I.R. Gallery and a group exhibition curated by Leslie King-Hammond at Ceres Gallery, which she discusses in her “Agents of Change: Women, Art, and Intellect,” an for this volume. A third exhibition, a group show of gallery artists, curated by Dena Muller, at A.I.R. Gallery also emerged. These events, along with many others, are discussed in Midori Yoshimoto and Anne Swartz, “Feminist Art Events at Conference,” CAA News, May 2007, S. They are also discussed in Anne Swartz, “Epilogue,” edited by A. M. Kokoli, Feminism Reframed: Reflections on Art and Difference (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007), 281–288. In addition to the speakout Arlene and I co-organized, Elizabeth Mansfield chaired “Feminism, Women, and Museums,” with panelists Maureen Connor, Susan Dackerman, and Jeannine G’Ogrody. Suzanne Lacy coordinated “Re-gendering Public Practice,” a conversation between herself, Nato Thompson, and Martha Rosler. “Back to the Front” was chaired by Helena Reckitt and included panelists Lia Gangitano, Sharon Hayes, and Alyson Mitchell, “Occupying Our Hearts: Performing Self Transformation through Feminist Art,” was chaired by Joanna Frueh and included presentations by Tanya Augsburg and Jill O’Bryan. Mira Schor chaired “‘Life of the Mind, Life of the Market’: A Reevaluation of the Contribution of Theory to Feminist Art from 1980 to 2006” with panelists Mary Kelly and Johanna Burton. Vivien Green Fryd chaired “American Art and Sexual Trauma” with panelists Barbara T. Smith and Susan Jarosi.

Judy Chicago, e-mail to the author, February 19, 2007.

The reference to Arlene as Virgil (making me Dante) is personally significant because I read The Divine Comedy for the first time in my sophomore year in college in a course with Professor Pamela Macfie. That series of books were extremely important to me in understanding the way literary and visual art could function to help us understand the world and I loved all the imagery, the re-casting of ancient myths, and the ways passion and love complicated life in The Inferno. Pamela was the first dedicated feminist scholar and literary theorist I encountered. She helped me find my way in codifying my latent feminism explicitly into my academic work. I have written about these experiences elsewhere in my contribution to “Feminist Art: A Reassessment,” edited by Susan Bee and Mira Schor, M/E/A/N/I/N/G, number 4, 2007, (http://writing.upenn.edu/pepc/meaning/04/forum.html).
Visiting Nancy and Arlene in their new Brooklyn home in 2001 was memorable because, for a short time, they had to live in a makeshift section of the building—complete with a hot plate. Arlene reclined on a large cushion as we spoke one particular day and I thought of all the images of pleasure palaces I had known. Hers was a lush, strong beauty, resembling the fantasy of an expatriate, akin to Catherine Deneuve in an opium den in the 1992 film *Indochine*. Nancy had just had a wonderful review of a solo show appear in *The New York Times* and I was part of their excitement about life, their engagement in the artworld, and their efforts to bring their ideas to others.

When I became a mother, Arlene and Nancy sent me *Mothers Through the Eyes of Women Writers: A Barnard College Collection*, a book of short stories. When my husband and I visited with my son, they gave him a bag of power. Arlene and Nancy opened their hearts and minds to me and my family. They gave me ideas, listened, sent photographs, books, told me stories, made me laugh, and offered me hilarious kitsch from Nancy’s Aunt Millie (which my California relatives quickly scooped up as cherished objects for display in their “fab-u-lous” Los Angeles life, while a friend in Georgia begged me to send the plate of train pictures for her toddler obsessed with trains). But through all the laughs and good food, Nancy’s work remained persistently fascinating and Arlene remained steadfast. Arlene would write letters of support for me, would offer any kind of help I requested. We would meet when I was nearby her home, either at her home or in some fun place. We saw art, we ate food, we walked. When her health declined more, I helped her find places to sit along the way. But, she was assertive about her desire to move forward. She offered me options, contacts, and ideas. She would listen to my ideas and give me direction. She invited me to see art and she liked to see it quickly, which appealed to me as well. When I experienced life’s hardships, she would listen; inevitably elevating them to the status of archetypal experiences. I craved both her attention and her wisdom.

Arlene’s death on August 1, 2006 hit me very hard. She was a multi-dimensional crescent-shaped fan—each pleat suggesting another part of her personality, her knowledge, her awareness—a presence who cools and calms. She would turn every stress, every observation, into an opportunity for consideration, no matter how difficult or unbelievable the circumstances were. As I look back over Arlene’s life, I do so with fresh eyes. Every aspect of her scholarship contributed to the evolution of the kind of art criticism that helps artists achieve a more effective realization of the process of living. I learned about her death when I received a call from one of her close friends. I couldn’t speak and could only cry. Arlene gave me access to someone who lived authentically.
The Art of Lesbian Relationship: Arlene Raven and the Lesbian Art Project

by Terry Wolverton
When Arlene Raven first envisioned the Lesbian Art Project (LAP), she intended to enlist support for her art historical research on the work of lesbian artists. She could neither have anticipated the ways in which the visions of her students would expand and morph the initial concept of the project nor the ways in which research and life would become inseparable.

In February 1977 Arlene hosted a Lesbian Art Worksharing at the Woman's Building. Artists were invited to bring slides of their work and spend a few minutes each speaking about them. Arlene was interested in looking at what was currently being created by lesbians to see what connections might exist to work from the past she was studying, and to see what strands of a theory might suggest themselves to her. Perhaps she was also interested in gathering a community of lesbian artists, since she had helped to do this already with feminist artists in founding the Feminist Studio Workshop (FSW) and the Woman's Building with co-founders Judy Chicago and Sheila Levrant de Bretteville.

I had meant to attend that February Worksharing. Since my arrival as a student in the FSW in the fall of 1976, I had felt alienated in the program and, Arlene, the only out lesbian on the FSW faculty, had been on sabbatical. I'd been starved for a lesbian mentor and for lesbian community. But on the morning of the Lesbian Art Worksharing, my lover Cheryl Swannack and I had a fight—was it only coincidence that Cheryl had been Arlene's lover previously? —and I spent the rest of day in a fetal position in bed. Because of the fact that Arlene was Cheryl's ex, I felt unable to call Arlene and say, “Sorry I missed the workshop; is there still some way to be involved?”

By June, Cheryl and I had ended our relationship less than amicably. Cheryl and Arlene became lovers once again. But when Arlene announced a second gathering for lesbian artists at her home, I decided that nothing would stop me from attending. About twenty-five women gathered in her living room, most but not all visual artists, many but not all students in the FSW or involved in some way at the Woman's Building.

After everyone had had the chance to share her work, Arlene announced that she would be starting the Lesbian Art Project and was looking for others to join her. Although I wasn't sure what it meant, I didn't care: lesbian art was the arena in which I wanted to be involved. A few weeks later, Arlene announced that the project would be part of the FSW, and that those involved as organizers needed to be students or graduates of that program. I believe this was the method in which she had decided to return to “active duty” at the FSW in the wake of her sabbatical; she would participate through her offerings with LAP.

A group of six of us eventually signed on and at Arlene's suggestion we christened ourselves the Natalie Barney Collective, taking the name of the American ex-patriot who hosted a noted salon for women artists and writers in Paris in the 1920s. Barney was a model for Raven because of her elegant style and her insistence that lesbianism should be celebrated. Our collective, having come out in the context of feminist and lesbian liberation of the 1970s, eagerly embraced the mission of refuting the aesthetic of oppression and replacing it with an aesthetic of liberation.

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1 An artist and ceramicist, Cheryl Swannack was a participant in the first class of the Feminist Studio Workshop (1973-1975). During those years, Cheryl took on an important role in the running of the Woman's Building. She remained an active participant through the early 1980s until she left Los Angeles.

2 The Natalie Barney Collective consisted of: Kathleen Berg, Nancy Fried, Sharon Immergluck, Arlene Raven, Donna Reyna, Maya Sterling, and myself.
While Arlene had imagined us engaged in studying the work of lesbian artists, historic and contemporary, the other members of the Collective had more assertive activist agendas: we wanted to reshape the aesthetics of lesbian art and the public perception of lesbians. We had the ambitions of youth: we would create art ourselves, we would curate exhibitions, we would offer an educational program for lesbians, we would mount a public relations campaign, and we would travel to network with other lesbian communities around the world. Arlene, to her credit, did not attempt to reign in our enthusiasm. We were welcome to take on whatever we had the energy and means to do. She was even willing to follow our lead in some instances; while she had by far the most impressive credentials among us, some of us had been “out” as lesbians longer than Arlene had, and had been more immersed in an alternative lesbian culture. She was as excited to learn from that experience as we were to learn from her.

In the summer of 1977 we made our plans and, working with photographer EK Waller, began to create images: a photo series of campy spoofs in which the Collective members dressed first in butch drag, then in femme drag. The prevailing philosophy among 1970s feminist lesbians was that butch and femme were imitations of heterosexual roles, obsolete archetypes of a pre-consciousness era; we did not at the time engage seriously with the notion that these identities might have a distinct meaning for us as lesbians.

In the early fall we also hosted a Lesbian Fashion Show to premiere the opening of The Store, a thrift shop created by Collective member and artist Nancy Fried to help provide earned income for the Woman's Building. Nancy and I had already spearheaded a promotional effort to solicit donations, gathering six women to pose naked (again photographed by EK Waller) over the headline, “WILL YOU HELP?” Clothing and other items poured in from across the country.

While The Store was not a LAP project per se, Nancy’s involvement brought the participation of the rest of the Collective, and ensured that an outrageous and festive sensibility infused the endeavor. 1970s feminism had tended to be a serious business, and lesbian activists were most serious of all, dressing down in muted colors and shapeless garments that would elide male and homophobic attention. The women of LAP were determined to subvert this sensibility. At the Fashion Show, one model appeared in top hat and tails, another in her pajamas and bathrobe; still another took to the catwalk in a Polynesian sarong with a plastic parrot affixed to her shoulder. “Costume,” we were saying, and “Play!” We wanted to encourage lesbians to explore alternative identities, to move beyond the received images of who we could be.

Plans were underway for a one-woman exhibit of Nancy Fried’s bread dough sculptures depicting scenes of lesbian domesticity, her first one-person show. The Collective also hosted a Lesbian/Feminist Dialogue within the FSW. While some of the heterosexual students felt put on the spot, not understanding the reason for drawing this distinction, the lesbian students appreciated a space being made for them to be visible. Ironically, within the context of the Woman’s Building and the FSW, heterosexual women often felt as if they were the ones who did not entirely fit in the community.
These tensions were seldom acute, as they became in some other feminist communities across the U.S., but persisted as part of the culture of the Building throughout its existence.

Additionally, LAP launched an educational program with workshops offered on Sunday at Arlene’s home; the Woman’s Building was an industrial building with the austerity of a New York loft space, and Arlene wanted to hold these workshops in a more lush and homey environment. By now, she had moved into the house where I had briefly lived with Cheryl, a two-story Victorian in downtown Los Angeles. This scenario insured I would have frequent contact with my ex. The prospect made me nervous, but I forged ahead.

Despite the demands of these activities, Arlene continued to convene Collective meetings, insisting we utilize the consciousness raising process on which feminist education at the FSW had been built. At these meetings, she encouraged us to probe the layers of our lesbian experience, examining each aspect: our relationships with lovers, our connections with our families, the ease or difficulty we felt being in the world. This was motivated by her desire to examine these issues in her own life, and her wish to have companionship and support in doing so, but also by her core value that theory needed to spring from lived experience.

For many of us, this self-examination wasn’t an easy process. Among the Natalie Barney Collective, two women were lovers; that relationship ended as 1977 came to a close. Another member, motivated by her involvement with LAP, came out to her family and was devastated when she was entirely disowned. And, in the fall of 1977, the political Right began its public backlash (which has not abated to this day) against the gay and lesbian movements, in the form of the Briggs Initiative in California, which would have made it illegal for any known gay man or lesbian to hold a teaching position in a California public school. It was one thing to celebrate the delights of lesbianism; it was another to face head-on the strength and vitriol of oppression directed against us. Our collective began to fissure.

It was Arlene who resurrected the word “queer” to describe her experience of feeling alienated and marginalized. This wasn’t yet the proud banner of the 1990s that would serve as a welcoming umbrella to anyone outside a limited range of sexual or gender norms. This was the jeering taunt of the schoolyard, the attempt to isolate and condemn, “You’re queer.” Arlene asserted that anyone who has been unable or unwilling to fit into a mainstream role (an unmarried woman, a woman who supports herself, an artist, etc.) understands what it is like to feel queer.

By the beginning of 1978, the Natalie Barney Collective had fallen apart. Only Arlene and I were left in organizing roles, and we asserted our commitment to continuing. But we recognized that the program, as initially envisioned by seven of us, was far too much for two to carry out. Those plans would require a fulltime calendar of administrative tasks and no small measure of fundraising, and all of it would be at the expense of our own work. In co-founding the Woman’s Building, Arlene had already built one institution; she was not interested in building another.
Additionally, Arlene theorized, perhaps our model of social change was too male, the notion that revolution could only occur by big things happening on a large scale in the public realm. What if, she proposed, a female mode of making change could be conducted on a smaller scale, more underground, more cellular. Was consciousness only spread externally or did it unfold internally and, because it had sparked somewhere, would continue to spark everywhere? Arlene and I shared an interest in the unseen and non-material realms, and expressed faith in the power that lay there.

It remains an open question whether this new model was a reclamation of female power or a retreat from the challenges of social change, but Arlene and I did scale back our plans. We retained the art projects, some social and community events, Arlene’s research on the life and work of painter Romaine Brooks and her contemporaries, and the Program of Sapphic Education. This vision was inspired by Sappho’s school at Mytilene. We wanted this program to inspire artmaking, and at the same time build lesbian consciousness and community. In our meetings together, Arlene and I began to develop a theory of what lesbian education might look like. I proposed six archetypes to describe the roles lesbians might take on in such a learning community: the Organizer, the Visionary, the Artist, the Mentor, the Mother, and the Lover. Some of these roles are more highly valued, more envied than others, but each in its own way both carries the baggage of patriarchy and also contains the potential of a transformed future.

Extremely important to Arlene was the examination of the quality and processes of women’s relationships with one another. We defined these relationships as “lesbian” in that they excluded men, whether or not they included sexual expression. And so my meetings with Arlene included an investigation of our own “lesbian” relationship—the mother/daughter dynamics created by the ten-year age difference between us, the mutual mentorship in which we attempt to engage, the experiences with sexual violence and violation we had in common, and our explorations in the realm of magic and mysticism. These shared dynamics created, on the one hand a profound, almost claustrophobic intimacy, yet at the same time an odd distance—the hyper-consciousness required to probe the interaction affected the quality of the engagement. And almost never did we speak of her relationship with Cheryl and its impact on our connection.

There seemed to be no category for the relationship Arlene and I had in that year—more egalitarian than teacher/student; more intimate than co-workers; more studied than simple friendship; passionately, yet scrupulously non-sexual. We strove to understand it: Were we enacting a bond forged in a past life? Could the tarot cards provide us a clue? Was this depth of familiarity inherent in bonds between women, if they only allowed themselves the time and space to open to it? Was this depth of fear and mistrust inherent too?

I had this vision of you and me becoming one creature, a metaphoric creature for some kind of community of the self, relationship of unlike cells becoming one whole of like parts… and somehow that creates a grief in the space of separateness… —excerpt of a letter from Arlene Raven to Terry Wolverton, 6/23/78 3 Collection of the author.
We didn’t find an answer in our work together during that second year of the Lesbian Art Project. It had been our stated intention to culminate LAP by writing a book together at the end of our third year. Perhaps we would have articulated in that volume some of what we’d discovered, but it would not come to pass.

At the beginning of 1979 I initiated a performance project, _An Oral Herstory of Lesbianism_. It was similar in structure to other projects I’d produced previously—bring together a group of artists and involve them in a workshop process over time to generate the content of the piece, then shape this into a theatrical format to perform for an audience. In 1978, I’d produced a work about a female future using the same process.

Because _Oral_ would be produced under the auspices of LAP, Arlene decided to be a participant in the production. Her involvement, in turn, drew a number of accomplished artists to become involved, including Cheryl. We engaged in a ten-week workshop process, then spent six weeks shaping the production. It was in this process that long simmering tensions surfaced between Cheryl and myself. The escalating conflict between us caused a deep rift in my relationship with Arlene that we could neither discuss nor reconcile. We no longer held LAP meetings; we abandoned any process that might have helped us to examine the estrangement. We did manage to open _An Oral Herstory of Lesbianism_ and gave sixteen well-regarded performances in May of 1979. But it was clear that LAP was over.

In July, Arlene and I met in a dark Mexican restaurant not far from her home to officially suspend the Project. All the tools we’d attempted to cultivate over the last two years seemed useless in that moment. After all our explorations, there was surprisingly little to say.

Arlene and I would each go on to do additional work in the arena of lesbian art. In spring 1980, we each opened exhibitions at the Woman’s Building. Mine: “The Great American Lesbian Art Show (GALAS),” a national project developed by a collective of lesbians over the previous year. Hers: “Woman*Woman*Works.” Our paths did not even cross in the production of these projects.

A few years after this, she would move to New York, where her career as an art critic and her love life with a new partner, artist Nancy Grossman, flourished. I remained in Los Angeles, where I continued to work with the Woman’s Building for another decade.

Happily, we were able to reconnect before she left for New York and we continued our friendship over the twenty-two years she lived there. While there was never again the same fervency, I don’t think either of us ever lost the sense of being connected in some cellular, unseen, way.

In recalling this now, I wonder if our methodology was flawed, if there was some better process that might have prevented that rupture of our friendship and our work, or if the bond between two powerful women is so taboo that even we could not sustain it. And in either case, I wonder what this might teach us about the nature of relationships between women, and about lesbian relationships. If Arlene were alive, I’d like to call her up and talk about it, see what we might figure out.

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4 FEMINA: An IntraSpace Voyage, collaboratively produced and directed by Ann Shannon.

5 Jerri Allyn, Nancy Angelo, Leslie Belt, Cheri Gaulke, Chutney Lui Gunderson, Brooke Hallock, Sue Maberry, Louise Moore, Arlene Raven, Catherine Stifter, Cheryl Swannack, Christine Wong, and myself were the collaborators and performers.
Arlene Raven Tribute

by Jerri Allyn


The program was in conjunction with the RedCat Gallery Exhibition, “Nothing is Neutral” by Andrea Bowers and curated by Eungie Joo and took place Sunday, August 20, 2006 at REDCAT, 631 W. 2nd Street at Hope Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012.
It is auspicious that Suzanne [Lacy] asked me to share a tribute of Arlene with you today. This intergenerational dialogue follows on the heels of another I participated in at the College Art Association Conference, held in New York City a few years ago. When it came to Arlene’s turn, during a panel on Feminist Art Education, she declined to present, and rather said, “I’ll let my students speak.” I was sitting in the first row, and she tossed me the microphone.

I shared about being at the San Francisco Art Institute in 1975, where art training was all about form and style; that Western-European, mostly male, modernist model. Along came radical FEMALE Professors, who asked me instead about content and audience: “What did I want to say, and who did I want to say it to?” I was waitressing my way through art school. I wanted to make art about working women.

That College Art panel turned into an intergenerational dialogue. Younger women were frustrated that the old guard did not take for serious their explorations. As the mic was passed from one to another, it dawned on me that many in my generation REBELLED AGAINST the establishment, REJECTED the art world to build an alternative, and RAGED against a mainstream that boxed women into ONE subservient role. The era was noteworthy for earthshoes, burning bras, ethnic attire, or some kind of androgynous look. ENGAGEMENT was in.

Younger artists (who may refuse the title Feminist, but do adopt their own, like Riott Grrrls) have seized upon a different kind of liberation. Many young women today EMBRACE the mainstream, and take the opportunity to COMMENT ON pop culture within the gallery and museum scene. DISTANCE, IRONY, SATIRE is hip. They love, and now have the freedom to try on, multiple identities—“performing” or morphing into hyper-female, male, transsexual, racial, religious, et al. Gender theory refers to their living and juggling great complexities, as FLUID identities. Wearing, for instance, those four and five inch fuck me heels that are back in fashion to an event—while bringing a pair of equally fashionable flip flops to change into when their calves tire of those killer pumps.

Mixing and matching clothes statements from various decades, it is common for women in the arts to design their own impossibly snug corsets, for example, which have also made a fashion come-back. However, these young artists are just as likely to rip them off once they’ve had it with that tight fit. They flaunt an erotic sexuality and twirl their chi-chi’s in newly defined strip shows that I’ve witnessed in dyke clubs, as well as straight ones.

Elaine Woo of the Los Angeles Times (B14, August 13, 2006—and here I also quote Holland Cotter from the obituary in The New York Times, August 6, 2006)—where he writes: “Arlene Raven, art historian, critic and educator who helped transform feminist outrage into The Woman’s Building, an iconoclastic Los Angeles institution that for 18 years was a magnet for women seeking to produce art on their own terms, died of cancer August 1st at her home in Brooklyn (that she shared with artist Nancy Grossman, her partner of 24 years). She was 62.”

In 1973, Raven, along with artist Judy Chicago and graphic designer / public artist Sheila de Bretteville, colleagues at Cal Arts (California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, California), launched the Feminist Studio Workshop,
quote, “a two year training program that sought to merge CONSIDERATION–
RAISING with practical art education.”

Elaine Woo remarked in her extended obituary on Arlene that, “For most of its existence The Woman’s Building was a source of often outlandish cre­ativity, where painters, poets, performance artists and others turned out work on subjects as mundane as waitressing and as disturbing as rape.”

Raven, who often described The Building as a place for “living and work­ing with another vision of the world,” taught art history there and co­founded the Lesbian Art Project with Terry Wolverton. Arlene loved playing with artist’s, and often performed.

Accredited by several colleges, the Feminist Studio workshop included studio art training, experimentation with new art forms and with art in public to reach broader audiences than the art world. There was an emphasis on drawing out one’s individual voice, and mentoring students to realize their potential through experiential exercises, a rigorous inquiry-based curriculum, and reflective practice.

I wonder if this sounds familiar to recent art school grads? For in fact, much of Feminist Art Education has been incorporated as the vanguard into many college and university training programs today, through postmodern practice and theory and along with other transformational education strategies from community art movements of the ’60s and ’70s, like the Chicano/a Mural Movement, Asian­American Media movement, African­American cultural renaissance, Nuyorican Brown Panthers, and Native American movement, among others.

As the Western­Euro derived art world is wont to do, innovations that make themselves known each decade outside of the art scene, are appropriated, “aestheti­sized,” and commodified into the rarefied world of museums and auction houses. Rarely are these innovations credited in this dominant world.

Arlene was a major player in the transformation of the art scene, and in art education. I find the definition of Feminist Art, penned 30 years ago by Raven and Ruth Iskin (another art historian who taught at The Woman’s Building), to be an accurate description of what today comprises far more pluralistic art world/s than ever before: Art that raises consciousness, invites dialogue, and ultimately transforms culture.

In Los Angeles in 1977 Arlene co­founded and co­edited Chrysalis, an avant­garde feminist journal, and during the mid­’80s she was the chief art critic for the Village Voice (in New York). Raven was a contributing editor to On the Issues: the Progressive Woman’s Quarterly, as well as on the board of the United States chapter of the International Association of Art Critics.

Raven wrote and edited nine books, including Feminist Art Criticism with Cassandra Langer and Joanna Frueh in 1988, and Art in the Public Interest in 1989.

I am deeply grateful that she lived to be honored publicly with the Frank Jewett Mather Award from the College Art Association in 2001, for distinction in art criticism.

And for the last 5 years, Arlene had been critic in residence at the Rinehart School of Sculpture at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, which, in record speed, established a scholarship in her name.

1 Elaine Woo, “Arlene Raven, 62; Established L.A. Center to Support Female Artists,” Los Angeles Times (August 13, 2006).
I cannot speak enough about the power and importance of mentoring. I lost my own mother to cancer when I was only 19—in part because she never made time to get medical attention, so busy she was, being devoted to her husband. She also died of a broken heart, once she learned he was having an affair. Such are the perils of women who put all their eggs in one basket.

I lost my grandmother to shock treatments in the ’50s. A Spanish farming immigrant, she “married up.” My grandfather was Vice-Consulate from Spain to the United States, stationed in Philadelphia. He was found drowned in a bathtub at age 41; his death remains a mystery. It was rumored, however, that Pedro had been murdered by Franco’s military, because he was raising money for the Socialists during the Spanish Civil War. My grandmother lost her mind, and she never got it back.

Assassinations of unwanted activists is certainly not exclusively a feminist issue. However, “personal” issues like mental illness and the nuclear family were discovered to have broader “political” implications and became fodder for art-making, in consciousness-raising groups across the county.

In a world where our government claims to be defending FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION around the globe, we continue to see the rights of American citizens eroded through the Patriot Act…. And in a world where the Bush Administration claims to be making the world safe for DEMOCRACY, yet its actions frighteningly mirror those of terrorists and torturers…. It has become increasingly difficult to decipher who is SANE from those who are INSANE.

Along with artmaking… my mentors have literally saved my soul. For years I’ve been carrying with me a favorite review Arlene wrote about Georgia O’Keeffe for the Village Voice in 1988 (December 6) I quote, “(O’Keeffe’s) flower paintings … are metaphorical chronicles of nature and culture, observed in stunning asymmetrical arrangements. But they are neither anatomical nor decorative. O’Keeffe’s flower paintings—her most controversial works—FLOWER, and are about FLOWERING. Her eros did not rest in the genitals.”

She was born Arlene Rubin. She chose Raven.

“In its plumage, the RAVEN is a natural totem for the deities of death,” my encyclopedia tells me. But the RAVEN is so much more. Orphism was a popular religion developed out of the cult of Dionysus, who celebrated orgies with drunkenness and sacramental feasting. “A RAVEN perched on the shoulder of an Orphic initiate as he”—OR SHE—“entered the temple for the ceremony of mock death, and REBIRTH.”

Black too can be symbolic of depth, the powerful and often heart-wrenching journey into the psychic unknown, to construct new meaning in one’s life. Arlene, a good, heterosexual girl, was also such a bright, intellectual scholar that she completed her PhD studies years ahead of her anticipated graduation date. She chose this name, RAVEN, in the early ’70s, to symbolize her rebirth as a lesbian, into a women’s art community, to honor the body as well as the mind. Arlene was gorgeous, sensual, a hedonist who loved feasting on good friends and food, drink and love making.
“According to the Mythraic Mysteries in Rome, an initiate receives the title RAVEN when he”—or SHE—“attains the first degree of enlightenment, which corresponds to the ascent of heaven’s lunar sphere, the domain of the Moon-goddess who cares for the dead.” —from Barbara Walker, *The Woman’s Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, 1983.

The Raven is dead. She has dropped the physical body. As much as I mourn her passing, I love the idea of her caring for the dead on another plane. Caring for my mother, my grandparents, caring for our ancestors.

As much as I mourn her passing, I love that Arlene lives on in her work. That her spirit guides us today in CONSTRUCTING A NEW VISION OF OUR “FLOWERING” TOGETHER—heaven help me, that such an essentialist statement slips from my lips.

While I mourn her passing, I love that Arlene, as are many of us, was also about Civil Rights, another antiquated movement. There is such a wonderful range of women, range of color, and even men who have joined us today, to “uplift the HUMAN race.” I love that there are new words for issues that still nag at us. Worldwide I now hear people refer to their participation in “Civil Society.”

If the word “feminist” is dead, along with “consciousness-raising groups,” and other markers that defined an era—(though I could argue that essentialism is making a comeback with the discovery of queer genes)—I love that we’ve come out to GET CONSCIOUS about one another today.

And as much as I mourn Arlene’s passing, I am honored to participate in the work of a mentor that is still alive, to be a part of this conceptual, performance event. A new art genre created by Suzanne. Feminist Art that contributes to building community. That across the generations, we gather to MENTOR each other, to create “another living, working vision of our world today.”
Picture This

or

Why Is Art Important?

by Arlene Raven

Arlene Raven, title page handwritten dedication to artist Tom Knechtel, in Arlene Raven, Picture This Or Why is Art Important? Houston: The Judy Chicago Word & Image Network [1728 Bissonnet Street, Houston, Texas 77005], 1982.
Searching through bookshelves recently, I came across Arlene Raven’s *Picture This or Why is Art Important?* an essay published as a pamphlet in 1982. It begins by describing a young male artist working in his studio, surrounded not only by his work, his materials and books, but also by the history of other male artists and the structure of the art world, with critics, dealers, curators, and collectors willing to support his work. She goes on to explain that it is exactly this infrastructure that women artists are lacking and which has to be built so that women can take their place as artists in history.

Arlene told me that she had been thinking of me when she wrote the opening. I remembered that; but what I had forgotten was that on the flyleaf she had written: “For Tom, who makes this perspective obsolete.”

That inscription was typical of Arlene’s generosity to a young artist. She gave me the pamphlet while I was working as her Guy Friday: cleaning the apartment on Venice Beach, doing the grocery shopping, moving art, running errands. Our friend Victor Hack named her the Giant Lesbian Princess (we called her the GLP for short) for her habit of indolently lolling on her bed while dispensing the day’s instructions. But working for the GLP was enormous fun; Arlene, with her raffish glamour, sharp intelligence, and brassy laugh, made me feel that I was enclosed in a charmed circle. And she was extraordinarily generous, as she was to everyone who passed within her orbit. At the time she gave me that essay, I was beginning my first teaching job, the art history survey class at Otis, a job Arlene had secured for me; and *Arts* was publishing an essay she had written about my work.

I had met Arlene while I was a student at CalArts in the early seventies, when the faculty of the art school was exclusively heterosexual, with the exception of Arlene. This isn’t to say that the art school was dismissive of its gay students; but having a gay teacher was tremendously important. And what a gay teacher to have! Arlene breezed into class, with her magnificent mane of black hair and her commanding presence and got down to the business of connecting us both to art history and to ourselves, teaching us how to form our experiences into art. Her approach to art history wasn’t doctrinaire in any sense. While fervently advocating for a feminist approach
to art history, she gave a lecture on Morris Louis that my friend Gordon Pollack still remembers as one of the high points of his time at CalArts. Arlene shared my fondness for the PreRaphaelite Brotherhood; indeed, with her tumbling locks, the GLP looked quite PRB, and my copy of Rossetti’s poems is one she gave me. I adored her. When we ran each other at an opening, I was so in awe of her and nervous that I introduced her to a friend as “Arlene Raven, the famous feminist lesbian.”

Most importantly, Arlene acted as a fierce contradiction to the prevailing norms of the art world of the late 1960s/early 1970s, when the message was insistent: painting is about painting, not about story-telling or sexuality. In her critiques and lectures, Arlene insisted on the opposite: that it was important to tell stories about our own experiences, especially when that experience as a woman or a gay person has gone undocumented. She explained that in those stories rested a power – a power to understand one’s self, to find one’s place in history, to deepen and complicate the content of the work. She helped me to understand the power of naming your experience and then harnessing that experience to critical thinking and historical understanding. It can’t be overemphasized how vital that message was and how important it was to hear it from one of my gay elders. Young gay people in my generation didn’t have enough contact with older gay role models, and Arlene was an articulate and generous one.

After her death, the memories of that generosity came back in waves. When one is young—and especially when one is a young man—one takes such generosity for granted sometimes, thinking that it is the natural position of the world to approach you with open hands. Which leads me back to the inscription on that essay. Arlene wrote that dedication to an anxious young artist, one whose admiration of her and uncertainty about what lay ahead were evident to her. She wrote it to give me heart, to encourage me. But of course it’s not a true statement. I didn’t make her fiercely argued, beautifully written perspective obsolete. Nor is it obsolete now, twenty-five years later. My women students face an art world that offers them little more infrastructure than it did thirty years ago. If they are ambitious, they are still tacitly encouraged to identify themselves with male artists, not with female artists. Going to galleries or the fairs and biennales that proliferate throughout the world, they will see far more male artists than female. When women artists come to speak to our classes, their resumes are likely to seem less dazzling than a male artist’s, less loaded with impressive shows and collections. And the culture has taught my women students to recoil when I mention the F-word.

So we have a lot of work to do. That is our legacy from Arlene. We may not be as glamorous as the Giant Lesbian Princess; but it is incumbent on us to bring to this task her discipline, her passion and persistence, her humor and generosity. Arlene helped younger artists, both women and men, to see feminism as a tool with which to articulate their experience. We feminists who were fortunate enough to have been nurtured by her have the obligation to do that for the next generation, to open our hearts to younger artists and help them to find their place in the art community and in history.
The Artist Arlene Raven

by Suzanne Lacy
I came of age as an art writer just before conceptualism hit M.F.A. programs. I might have identified myself as a conceptual artist had I attended graduate school five years later than I did. A translator, I put words to forms. And I regard critical writing at its best as containing the truth of art—of fiction and metaphor—rather than merely of facts. I think of my work as “writing alongside” the visual or performative efforts of other people. The dialogue, and even collaboration, of my work and theirs “shows” visually in some of my written commentaries. —Arlene Raven

Arlene Raven was an artist. As evidence, I present for the reader’s consideration this collaboration—Travels with Mona—a postcard travelogue of photographic images (Los Angeles, 1978). When I was assembling the project I asked Arlene, my long time friend, teacher, and colleague, for suggestions. She thought it needed a narration and that she was just the artist for the job. It was not the first of our creative partnerships but in this one she was quite specific that her role was as an artist, not as critic or educator.

Arlene’s ironic commentary in Travels with Mona articulates meanings that came from her knowledge of my work and intentions, as well as a broader range of political, aesthetic, and spiritual understandings emerging from seventies performance/conceptual art and feminist art. Ours was a particularly fertile environment for new ideas. California Institute of the Arts (Cal Arts), where I first met Arlene in 1972 (I was a student and she taught in the Feminist Art Program), influenced a generation of artists who migrated after graduation to downtown Los Angeles and downtown Manhattan. Performance/conceptual art and feminist art were broadly recognized constructions in the arts by then (see Lucy Lippard’s Dematerialization of Art and The Pink Glass Swan), but not in the public realm. I was tired of answering queries about my profession as an artist—the inevitable “what do you paint?”—and decided that a Mona paint-by-number accompanying me would offer a convenient (and, more to the point less tiresome) response. On trips to Europe and Central America that summer, seeking to connect with other women performance artists, I took Mona and at various sites pulled out my oil paints and dutifully filled in the numbers.

At the Los Angeles Woman’s Building’s Feminist Studio Workshop, started in 1973 by Arlene, Judy Chicago, and Sheila de Bretteville, we taught a new generation of women artists and sought to create scholarship around women’s art. I was the faculty member in performance art and, as part of the agenda of the times, was interested in understanding what, if anything, identified performance art made by women. We created what was probably the first exhibition of women’s performance art at Womanspace Gallery, using documentation of prior work and presenting new works by Lynn Hershman, Linda Montano, Eleanor Antin, Adrian Piper, Barbara Smith, Nancy Buchanan and Rachel Rosenthal among others. In Europe during the summer of 1977 I first met Ulrike Rosenbach, Annette Messenger, Iole de Freitas, and other artists (some of whom photographed me for the Travels performance); visited Documenta VI; and became part of an informal international network of body-oriented and conceptual artists, one in evidence among artists selected for the recent exhibition, “WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution.”


Although by this time Arlene and I were teaching together at the Feminist Studio Workshop, in important ways she remained my teacher as she had been at Cal Arts. She offered insights that dramatically marked several intersections in my life and work. In the mid seventies, for example, she returned from an East Coast speaking engagement and handed me Beyond God the Father, a new book by the theologian Mary Daly, commenting on its relevance to my work. After reading it I created the performance and exhibition “One Woman Shows,” a month-long exploration of the connections between the emerging women’s art “community” in Los Angeles. Arlene was one of three women I asked to initiate the chain of community by creating a self-defining performance for three additional women, who each performed for three others, and so on. The chain of performances grew throughout the month, every event marked by traces left on the walls of the gallery.

Arlene’s ongoing relationship to my work (and me to hers) was an outgrowth of not only our personal relationship but of forces within the arts which were blurring boundaries. Roles and practices were being deconstructed, political agendas revealed. The valuation of art was effected by prejudices against women held in other sectors of public life. Although critics continued to pretend impartiality and critical distance when writing (or more to the point not writing) about women’s art, it was increasingly apparent that women needed to write about women’s art. Arlene Raven (along with Lucy Lippard, Linda Nochlin, Moira Roth, and Griselda Pollock) was one of the earliest critics to adopt a complex intellectual advocacy for women artists and to challenge their exclusion from mainstream critical discourse.

At the Feminist Studio Workshop, we questioned how critique was approached in art schools, where the work of female students was often subjected to appalling prejudice (against the color pink for example!). We developed forms of critique that distinctly differed from current methodologies. In addition to large critique sessions, small teams of faculty concentrated on individual critiques to uncover hidden personal meanings (necessary in an era of repression of women’s experience, for example, of violence). Rather than assuming a generalized audience for art, or assuming it would necessarily be exhibited in art contexts, we asked that students understand whom their work addressed. Although rigorous in our demands that they develop an understanding of their personal intentions as well as the impact of their art upon others, our pedagogical position was to partner with students in the discovery of their work.

This educational practice—critique through advocacy—was elegantly expressed in Arlene Raven’s writing on how women learned and what their art revealed. Over time she developed this into nuanced and ethical notions that were the basis of her criticism. Throughout her life Raven expanded on the reciprocal relationship between critic and artist, ideas that foreshadowed today’s fluid artist-curator and artist-critic practices. “Here” she said, “the line between art and criticism blurs…” And so it did in our collaboration, Travels with Mona.

As Arlene reviewed Travels, she looked for places that our ideas might intersect and meanings she might contribute, a form of collaboration grow-
ing out of the critique process described above. At that time performance art was less analytical and more intuitive, gestural, and action-oriented. It was not that we didn't think about what we did, but often analysis came after. I'd carried my dog-eared paint by number canvas with me everywhere that summer, but I thought of it as a somewhat curious, laborious and quixotic gesture that somehow commented on the emerging discipline of performance art—or made fun of myself as a performance artist trying to convince people this was indeed a real art form. From our conversations when I returned, Arlene extracted a complex play of meanings that referred to the projects of early feminist conceptual art. In the text she alluded to my complaints about media hierarchies (painting vs. performance), the still operative romance of the individual artist, and class (as a working class resident of a small town I had grown up bereft of museums, except the kind that displayed agriculture equipment). Arlene added perspective on the valuation of art through the gendered gaze of art history. Throughout her ironic commentary on travel and its role in art education, she seems to compare the colonizing gaze of Western on other cultures with the colonization of women in the arts: Mona, a continuing canvas for our projections.

In *Travels with Mona*, Raven articulates a conflated and ambiguous identity for the artist described: the subject of Da Vinci’s gaze, the unknown Mona, is mixed up with a gendered and performative contemporary maker. I am labeled “the artist,” “she,” and “Mona,” but never am I “Suzanne,” a specific artist. As one of the feminist projects we were sorting out women’s position in the arts as subject and as maker. At one extreme, questioning this emergent authorship provoked the widespread development of various forms of collaborative practices among women. In the text of *Travels*, the ambition appears at first to be unabashedly personal: a young artist is off to Europe after graduate school, traveling to broaden herself culturally as did adventurous 19th Century Englishwomen. But how could this be only Suzanne who was taking on the most important master in art history? According to Raven, “she” (this artist, this Mona) is comparing herself to the great artists and monuments of western civilization—“How will Mona make her mark?” Under the irony is a note one might take seriously as a predicament of those early times: how will women make their mark?

Before I continue in this vein, I am compelled by recent experiences with younger audiences, to point out that humor was significant, though often misunderstood, in feminist art of the seventies. As I look back on Arlene’s text today, her outrageous art historical comparisons—like the one between Paul Gauguin and Ed Ruscha—still make me laugh. One of the things we shared, a characteristic embedded but often unrecognized in both of our work, was the wicked humor of the oppressed. Arlene and I poked fun at our feminism (“When does a woman become a legend or a ruin, a wreck?”) and at the fallibility of our endeavors (“…in London, Mona makes a spectacle of herself”). Visiting Kassel, Germany for Documenta VI, the penultimate exhibition of contemporary art, the lonely figure of the female artist paints a pathetically dated representational portrait—copies it, even—and Raven comments: “Mona measures the buttocks of Hercules, for art’s sake.” This ana-
tomical observation is interesting in light of the scandalous prioritization of conceptual art over painting that year and my report on the featured projects by Walter de Maria (a mile long hole in the ground) and Richard Serra (monumental plates of metal extending skyward and blocking the entrance to Documenta, so infuriating German artists that someone used it as a latrine when I was there).

We were also conscious of the seriousness of that historical moment for women and our role as artists within it. We stood on the threshold of a new feminist movement, and were collectively optimistic in our power to transform the world. At the start, as Raven says, “she is unfinished” – the “she” representing the massive feminist project for equity, a project that remains, in spite of our best intentions, incomplete. In the caption to the photo from the Louvre, she suggests the Mona postcard is “altered to erase and unfinish (different from Duchamp’s moustache which masculinizes)…” speculating on a continuing trajectory from that moment in 1977—early in the evolution of a specifically “feminist” art—into a future that is today.

Many feminist artists then, perhaps unlike today, were deeply rooted in a sense of solidarity and common cause that expressed itself in Los Angeles as an actual community of cultural producers. Metaphorically at least, many of us felt we did not operate alone, a position that caused conflicts between our youthful assertions of ego and our belief in the whole. The grand “we” was often employed in cases where “I” would contradict the ways in which our continuing discourse influenced each of us. The ongoing evolution from student to colleague yielded supportive relationships where mentorship continued over time. In this community, offering an idea (e.g. Sheila de Bretteville suggesting that my project *Three Weeks in May* be installed in a public space instead of a gallery, a suggestion that revolutionized my relationship to audience) was a gift to, not an intrusion on, one’s artistic originality. Approaching Arlene to work with me on *Travels* was the type of everyday collaboration that came from the ethos of our community.8

Several years later, in 1994, Arlene participated in the “Mapping the Terrain” symposium that launched the book project of the same name. I brought together critics, artists, and curators to consider a range of practices that we termed “new genre public art.” Her essay, “Word of Honor,” explored the relationship between the critic’s voice, the notion of community both within and outside the art world, and what she calls “the language of virtue,” or the expressions of critics’ often covert values presented as givens of virtuosity. Writing alongside other writers and artists pondering the history, practice, and criticism of what we termed “new genre public art,” Arlene begins her article:

> I have lost interest in giving opinions and constructing arguments that lead to judgments about the “value” of artworks. Such judgments, I believe, are irrelevant to this time. Proclamations and negotiations of worth also lead to a kind of conformity of thought within a monolithic merit system that is now hidden in an academic philosophical vocabulary but is antithetical to art as I know it.9

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8 That spirit of connection and mission is expressed in a variety of writings from that era, including Judy Chicago’s autobiography *Through the Flower* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1977) and Moira Roth’s catalogue of women’s performance art, *The Amazing Decade* (Los Angeles, CA: Astro Artz, 1983).

While critiquing critical assumptions, Arlene nevertheless states that criticism can add “to the experience of artworks—data and insights that will place them in literary, geographical, historical, critical, political or thematic contexts.”¹⁰ In this essay she stresses that this relational approach to criticism should not be seen as simple advocacy, but rather as part of a more complex evaluation of the artist’s conscious or unconscious intentions and the impact of her work upon numerous and multiple points of reception, toward the end of human freedom. Her position as critical advocate, expanding on the artist’s meaning and exploring the implications of a specific artwork to a larger social justice project, suggests that for her there are things at stake far beyond an artist’s career success. Art, as Arlene Raven knew it, was a philosophical endeavor in a historical lineage of critiques that are meant to lead to some form of personal or collective emancipation.

While emancipatory-oriented critique is found throughout the history of philosophy, the basis for Arlene’s thinking was experientially sourced in second-wave feminism and, specifically, in her personal engagement in the Los Angeles art community during the seventies. Her prior ethical development was both academic and cultural (her Jewish heritage), but its mature expression through her writing was a condition of her time (influenced by the Civil Rights movement and students revolt against the Vietnam War) and her identity as both woman (one with personal experience of violence) and a lesbian. Traces of the ethical system Raven articulated can be found in various forms of feminist thought and social organization from that time, e.g. the formation of artist collectives and social cooperatives, the validation of personal subject matter in art, and the focus on audience experience.

Community was a concept that was central to her ethical position. In “Word of Honor,” she suggests that the critical context for an artwork, created by the language of the critic, is itself part of the “artists’ community.” She was an articulate commentator on the relationship between community, social progress, ethics, and art making, drawing connections between feminist art and what she called “art in the public interest.”¹¹ While aspects of this critical praxis are applied today to a range of public and community arts, the feminist legacy of this thinking is relatively unrecognized, and the critical connection between feminism and today’s public practices made by Raven remains relatively unexplored in that arena.

After Arlene Raven’s death, the number of people who came forward to attest to personal and profound moments when she had transformed their work or their lives was truly astounding. From artists to insurance underwriters, from housewives to students, they came forward with their stories—in memorials on both coasts, in letters, and in website postings. While this was not surprising given the way women formed friendships during the seventies, resonant with politics, history, and a sense of collective mission, it was, from today’s perspective, a rare reminder of a time and place where women were just discovering their commonalities.

¹⁰ Ibid., 160.

Many art projects were inspired by, constructively critiqued, dedicated to, and collaboratively created with Arlene Raven—the feminist educator, the writer, and the artist. It is not possible for me to separate the development of my own work from my friendship with Arlene, a friendship grounded in our shared values of equity and social justice. I offer this collaboration with Arlene Raven as one early and specific example of her influence. In tracing the influences of her life and her work—this volume being only a beginning—Arlene’s expansive network of friendships will be as revealing as her texts and images as we reconstruct a portrait of this visionary woman’s life-work—profoundly contextual, relational, aesthetic, and ethical. While still being funny. I have a photo strip on my desk, with Arlene and a friend in a photo booth and on the strip she wrote: “You can pick your friends and you can pick your nose, but you can’t pick your friend’s nose.” You can imagine what they are up to.
Arlene Raven: Homecoming

by Jenni Sorkin
Arlene Raven’s eleven-year tenure in Los Angeles culminated in the collaborative exhibition “At Home,” which opened in October 29, 1983 at the Long Beach Museum of Art, in Long Beach, California, marking the ten-year anniversary of the founding of the Woman’s Building. As an influential pedagogue and thinker, Raven’s work was crucial to the development of women’s art in Southern California, a category that emerged in the heady 1970s and then struggled for survival into the lean Reagan years of 1980s arts funding cuts. Raven’s pioneering contribution to women-centered educational theory and art criticism remains undiminished as a model of activism and on-the-ground history making. But from this historical distance, feminist art criticism, and specifically, the lesbian sensibility that Raven cultivated as an aesthetic, is at once, undeniably radical and hopelessly dated to feminists of my own third-wave generation. This essay examines the possibilities and limitations of Raven’s critical approach.

“At Home” was a month-long exhibition conceived of by Raven and team-curated by Lyn Blumenthal, Cheri Gaulke, Susan King, Barbara Pascal, Rachel Rosenthal, and Raven herself. It was championed and facilitated by the innovative video curator Kathy Rae Huffman, who ran the unique video artist residency program at the Long Beach Art Museum during the early 1980s, under then-director David Ross. The exhibition was a reprise of the significant achievements of Los Angeles feminist artistic community, with a particular emphasis on activist and collective endeavors. Coming on the heels of Moira Roth’s traveling exhibition “The Amazing Decade: Women and Performance Art in America, 1970-1980,” “At Home” was one of the earliest exhibitions attempting to historicize the feminist movement in a particular locale, but its accompanying catalog was not the first publication to do so, preceded by Faith Wilding’s By Our Own Hands: The Women Artist’s Movement in Southern California of 1976. Raven’s exhibition catalog is, however, the first self-consciously conceived historical project of the feminist art movement in Southern California, with a chronology of exhibitions, performances, and events over a thirteen-year period (1970-1983), as well as an extended bibliography. It also emphasized the documentation of “At Home’s” satellite events, performances, screenings—now under the guise of the museum education department—that are often lost to scholars and historians looking to piece back together an exhibition’s influence and reach. Raven includes the “Calendar of Events” within her exhibition catalog, as a way of making permanent the efforts and enthusiasms of the participants, solidifying their participation as central, rather than as peripheral, and ultimately, ephemeral. The calendar is a fantastic snapshot of the nearly now-defunct alternative and academic gallery scene, full of events and exhibitions planned to run concurrently with “At Home.”

“At Home” used domesticity as a broad thematic upon which to project the abundant and often mordant desires and grievances found throughout American feminist art production of that era, in a wide range of media, from artists’ books to video. The idea of home, particularly the search for shelter, can be seen as a larger metaphor for community building, and the attempt to showcase the lesbian feminist community that had been painstakingly built.
over the course of a decade in Los Angeles proper. As Raven writes in her preface, “‘Home’ is a unique place—more than a place, an internal comfort that some women have felt as ‘coming home,’ through feminism, to ourselves.”4 This idea of a homecoming can be read as promoting both a tribal and gynocentric world view. The clan-like, tightly knit community structures that lesbians formed and lived within conceived of “home” as a literal safety net; while the “internal comfort” embraces the womb and the reproductive capacities of creativity, putting forth a biological metaphor for artistic production. Rather than scoff at this interpretation as either essentialist, or sentimental, I believe it is important to see Raven’s words as a good-faith effort to afford lesbians a richer sense of belonging within the realm of heteronormative feminism.

Raven’s critical endeavor can be seen as a search for self, and a conscious rejection of the oppression that had existed in her personal life, as well as her life’s work as a budding art historian in the midst of writing a dissertation on the Washington Color School—which included the painters Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, and Gene Davis. In the aftermath of a brutal rape and a divorce, Raven, encouraged by the momentum and intensity of feminist community she experienced at the Conference of Women in the Visual Arts, held at the Corcoran School of Art in Washington, D.C, changed her surname from Rubin to Raven, and arrived in Southern California in the fall of 1972. Here, Raven encountered artists—lots of them. But these weren’t those artists—bald, pontificating, patronizing, maybe a little flirtatious—the generation that was used to having women look the other way. Rather, the artists Raven encountered were terribly young, and intensely vulnerable, young women in their early and mid-20s, earnest, committed, and many of whom were far from home, sacrificing familiarity and the assurance of a traditional university degree to relocate to Southern California.

By the time Raven completed her doctorate in 1975, she had forged a way in which to merge her interests. A strong component of her investment in the Washington Color School itself was their pedagogy. In her own words:

I was particularly interested in their approaches to art education. Many of these artists formed an independent art academy, and many of my own ideas about independent feminist education came from this.5

Among her classmates in art history at Johns Hopkins, Raven was not alone in developing contemporary interests that challenged the academy, finding new ways to engage pedagogically beyond the boundaries of the Greenbergian formalism that would have been the basis for much of her dissertation. It is intensely interesting that among her graduate peers were other luminaries who forged non-traditional paths, among them former The New York Times senior critic Michael Brenson; Leslie King-Hammond, Dean of Graduate Studies at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA); and Lowery Stokes Sims, a curator at the Museum of Arts and Design.

Los Angeles was at the forefront of radical feminist activity. Judy Chicago had invented feminist art pedagogy, founding the Feminist Art Program in 1970 at California State University (Fresno) as a means of combating the

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4 Raven, At Home, viii.
overwhelming sexism and lack of rigor that young women artists faced in art schools and university art programs. The program relocated the following year to Cal Arts, with Chicago and Miriam Schapiro at its helm, but disbanded by 1973. Without a “building of its own” or any real agency, the separatist strategy of the Feminist Art Program couldn’t have been anything but short-lived in its struggle for survival within a well-established and co-ed art school. Consistently left out of literature is the fact that during the run of the Feminist Art Program, women were teaching at Cal Arts, among them, Alison Knowles (1971) and Lynda Benglis (1972).

The separatist model, however, laid the foundation for a more permanent experiment in feminist pedagogy, the Woman’s Building (1973-1991), founded by Chicago, Raven, and graphic artist Sheila de Bretteville, and The Feminist Studio Workshop (FSW) housed within it. The creation of a separatist institution was a radical gesture, a conscious strategy employed to mandate change without the constraints of an institutional framework. FSW was a non-traditional art school. While Chicago left after one year, de Bretteville and Raven, joined by critic Ruth Iskin, stayed on to run and teach in the program. In 1974, Deena Metzger founded the “feminist writing program,” which, in tandem with the FSW, sponsored readings by high-profile women writers such as Mary Daly and Adrienne Rich.

Rejecting the modernist, and traditionally masculine, disciplines of painting and sculpture, in small classes, women at the FSW were encouraged to explore video, writing and performance, mediums that united easily and were vastly more flexible in their technical requirements. Raven emphasized the interdisciplinary approach:

In the Feminist Studio Workshop, we sought a further integration and maximization of history and image, message and form, by deliberately merging the skills and arts of design, art history, writing, performance, visual and graphic arts. The work that emerged in this context included performances in which slides and graphic elements were used, visual art in which writing was an element, art-historical work which was self-consciously designed and illustrated as a graphic piece, or books made by visual artists with a historical and political perspective and personal imagery.

Spontaneous and empowering, writing was perhaps the most highly adaptive art form, aiding in the creation of both individual and collective activities, as well as accommodating the narrative potential of personal experience. Through the writing workshop format, the revelations and disclosures that poured forth became the basis for much of the intense cohesion and formation of performance-based collectives such as The Waitresses (guerilla tactics to raise consciousness about the inherent sexism within the service industry), Mother Art (public cleaning rituals), Sisters of Survival (nuclear awareness) and the Lesbian Art Project (lesbian consciousness).

Raven herself took part in the Lesbian Art Project, the first American lesbian art collective, which she co-founded along with Terry Wolverton in 1977. The group was comprised of thirteen women, many of whom had been Raven’s students at the FSW. Through consciousness-raising, roleplay, and shared personal experience, the group generated an experimental theater project from a series of workshops spread over the course of two years. The
resulting production, *An Oral Herstory of Lesbianism* (1979), was a collective script-based construction fostered through a dynamic of spontaneity and intimacy. In her memoir, *Insurgent Muse*, Wolverton writes:

Arlene is also “The Mentor,” depicted as an upturned crescent cradling a smaller circle. While she acknowledges this as her role, she is adamant that the mentorship be mutual, she and I each learning from the other. It is our declared feminist lesbian principle to unseat the hierarchy that has been traditionally inherent in the mentor/student role, but I secretly worry that this egalitarianism has no basis in reality. Other than my organizing skills, my ability to manifest ideas into practical applications, I cannot see what I might bring to her, although she insists she is inspired by my decidedly alternative vision, my metaphysical bent, and my fierce commitment to lesbianism. It will be many years later, years of being a teacher and mentor myself, before I will fully understand her determination to stave off the isolation of that role, to subvert the objectification and projections that one receives when one is “mentor.”

Wolverton’s self-reflective commentary reveals Arlene Raven to be both simultaneously heroic and vulnerable, a capable and generous leader committed to unseating traditional power structures and traditional relationship boundaries. This is particularly crucial to the remainder of this chapter in Wolverton’s text, in that Wolverton and Raven both shared a lover during the span of their involvement in the project, and that such an entanglement catalyzed the perhaps premature demise of the group. The very high stakes of maintaining a separatist women’s culture is a crucial lesson for my own more laisse-faire generation. The very ability to live and work as a lesbian in the public domain beyond the confines of separatism, or rather, the very ability to live and not work as a lesbian, without fear of suppression or invisibility, is a legacy that Wolverton and her peers struggled mightily to leave us. But we are perhaps without the same kind of intensity of vision that Raven offered her students. Today, lesbianism in America is often a vicarious and rather fraudulent commodity, rather than a lived experience: why seek out the one remaining women’s bookstore when you can watch the *L-Word*? (fucking crying breathing dreaming….this is the way is the way that we live…and LOOOOVE, goes the tepid theme song by the band Betty.)

The other collective practices that formed under Raven’s tutelage dealt head-on with rape and sexual violence. Ariadne: A Social Network, initiated by Leslie Labowitz and Suzanne Lacy in 1976, Labowitz’s collaborations with WAVAW (Women Against Violence Against Women) (1976), Lacy and Labowitz’s *Three Weeks in May* (1977), and the one-year Incest Awareness Project, initiated by Nancy Angelo, (1979), all involved a series of exhibitions, street actions, and media campaigns. The FSW was a pedagogical venue that actively encouraged artmaking to politicize taboo issues regarding rape, violence, and child sexual abuse.

It is interesting to juxtapose this flurry of activity with the lesbian S/M movement that was gaining momentum up the coast, in San Francisco. The sex-positive movement that had initiated the Women’s Health Initiative (a switchboard founded in 1970, staffed by artists and activists such as Tee Corinne and Joani Blank, the founder of the collectively-owned feminist sex shop Good Vibrations), gave way to a proliferation of leather bars, in which power exchange was explored in ways that many women found exciting and empowering. By 1983, the Samois Collective’s S/M treatise *Coming to Power*:

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Writings and Graphics on Lesbian S/M (1981), had already gone into its third printing. These were the kind of lesbians that didn’t get invited to the Woman’s Building: leatherdykes, S/M practitioners, Pat Califia.

This bias gives way to a particular kind of aesthetic that was promoted by Raven and her colleagues at the Woman’s Building. I would call this ethical lesbianism—women advocating for social change, creating activist works and championing social causes through the visual and performing arts. Anti-nuclear activism, anti-pornography, anti-violence, the teaching of tolerance, the de-mystification of the lesbian body, rape advocacy and awareness—all of these issues were deemed compelling by artists during the first decade of the Woman’s Building. As Raven commented in a 1977 interview, “Work produced in a feminist/lesbian community has the possibility of acknowledging the radical transformation of self through revolutionary social practice.”

I’m not so sure I agree. The radical transformation of self seems fixed and wholly over-determined by its historical moment awash in the momentum and excitement of feminism as a utopian project. That utopianism hasn’t translated to my generation, not just because we cannot fathom the fervor that comes with impassioned social advocacy—we’ve been to anti-globalization marches and anti-war protests, we’ve tutored low-income children and built homes for Habitat for Humanity—that’s not the part with which we have trouble—it’s the idea that lesbianism could possibly be a radical lifestyle choice. Thirty years later, homosexuality is a fact of mainstream culture. Lesbian communities might still be far less affluent and less visible than gay male urban culture—but it is hard to self-identify as radical when we’ve been embraced by the Weddings and Celebrations section of The New York Times.

The other point I take issue with is that it was radical to produce socially-engaged artwork. By and large, the work that came out of the Woman’s Building is astoundingly didactic—it is hard to watch, and hard to sit through for me. The culture at large has absorbed many of the lessons that feminist artists sought to impart. Which is not to say the work wasn’t valuable; it was. No question. But perhaps its greatest impact was immediate.

That is not to say that all the women who engaged in ethical lesbianism were even lesbian. Many of them, including Labowitz and Lacy, were not. Certainly not Barbara T. Smith, who in 1979 did a performance in which she traded places with a homeless woman and sat on a bench in McArthur Park for a week. Perhaps such a performance absolved her of her earlier, decidedly edgier, and notorious work Feed Me (1970), in which she had Tantric sex with three different men during the course of an all-night performance at the Museum of Conceptual Art in San Francisco that had offended so many women. Myself, I’d choose Smith’s Feed Me any day. It is far more radical in its self-indulgence.

Indeed, Raven’s entire critical and pedagogical practice can be seen as consciously ethical, informed by autobiographically-inflected writing transparent enough to offer a healthy dose of self-expression within the realm of her aesthetic choices. This approach is best exemplified by the curatorial project she undertook at Ohio State University Gallery of Fine Art in 1985, the exhibition RAPE. Its catalog essay, “We Did Not Move from Theory/We Moved to

the Sorest Wounds," was reprinted in her collected essays, *Crossing Over: Feminism and Art of Social Concern* (1988), and followed by a short, diaristic piece titled "Close to Home" that charts Raven's extreme personal distress at attending, much less organizing, such an exhibition, allowing the reader a path into the process and the price of such socially engaged taste-making.\(^\text{12}\)

Raven's pained interiority is not at odds with her position as the extroverted and strong leader of a group of women artists who perform their subject positions as survivors and indeed, flourishers, in the face of trauma. As Raven writes: "RAPE is a serious risk for the gallery on this campus and excites nervous anticipation... Stephanie Blackwood tells me that RAPE is the first exhibition of its kind. The profusion and commonality of rape make me wonder how this can be so."\(^\text{13}\)

And indeed, it was. RAPE was the first group exhibition to undertake rape as a subject of direct inquiry, versus couching it within a larger exhibition about violence, or trauma. Raven's 1988 version of the essay opens with a dedication to Ana Mendieta, and a discussion of Mendieta's 1973 graduate school performance *Rape-Murder*, in which she invited classmates to an abandoned building where she staged her own sexual victimization using make-up and live performance. But through Raven's footnote, in which she recounts Mendieta's then-recent murder/fall, I was jolted into thinking of Mendieta's death as a sexual trauma, even though it technically was not. Raven brilliantly and subtly collages the situation of her recent death with her prior performance, all read against the topic at hand, rape, to offer prescient, nearly wordless commentary about the situation of rape in the world today, beyond the realm of an exhibition catalog. This is Raven at her most brilliant and most effective—layering images via a series of sentences—word-images, in effect, that coalesce in the reader's mind to create an entirely new image-idea: that the crime against Mendieta was rape, though it never would be called that. That of course it would never be presented as such, that of course Mendieta would be blamed in whatever capacity, given the history of her own image-making. Raven allows her readers to draw their own conclusions, and then addresses them later in the text, in the devastatingly lucid sentence: "Perhaps your own disgust kindles your interest in coming to see RAPE, until finally we are all on fire as we enter the gallery."\(^\text{14}\)

This direct address strikes on a few different levels: the direct implication of the viewer/reader, the assumption of that viewer/reader's empathetic rage, and lastly, a reference to Ana Mendieta's *Silueta* imagery, in which a female effigy (figure) was burned into the landscape (ground). Raven uses the art historical principal of figure-ground to foreground her own argument: empathy and witnessing, against a backdrop of rage—and she is not unclear about the many potential forms of that rage. This rage is not limited to the survivor-artists and their supporters, but also accounts for the potential backlash directed at them by the larger Ohio State University (and worldwide) community.

Reading Raven's writing, then, demands the kind of active awareness and engagement with the meta-text that she urged her students to understand, appreciate, and utilize in their own interdisciplinary visual practices. Art historian Hannah Feldman credits Raven as influential to a group of young women, who curated, as part of the Whitney Independent Study Program, the exhibi-
tion *The Subject of Rape* (1994). A few years back, I got in touch with Feldman, one of its curators. The following is an exchange from our interview:

JS: I want to talk a little bit about the possible predecessors to “The Subject of Rape.” I noticed you did thank Arlene Raven. Were you aware of Arlene Raven’s show RAPE that she did in 1985 at Ohio State?

HF: Yes, I—we—we were aware of Arlene’s show, and we went and met with her, and she was really helpful. We had the catalog from her show in our reading room.

JS: Were you aware of the larger history that she came out of, the Woman’s Building, and Southern California feminism? Because it seems to me that the show was very influenced by the sort of ideas that were at the Woman’s Building, and circulating in 1970s feminist publications like *Chrysalis* or *Heresies*. Before I jump to conclusions, I should ask you, were you looking back at the 1970s?

HF: I have to say we did not look particularly hard at the 1970s. I mean, we included Suzanne Lacy, and her piece was in Arlene’s show, and came out of that era, but it wasn’t something I knew much about. I did not have an art history background, and I was very invested in 1980s feminist theory that I was reading. I really wanted to use the show to take a look at 1990s contemporary work that was being made in the present moment.

It is striking to me that within the space of a decade, from 1985 to 1994, that the painstaking advocacy work Raven and others had done in the 1970s had all but disappeared, buried by 1980s feminist theory, as Feldman rightly acknowledges.

I met Arlene for the first time in 2001. As a young writer, I could never understand how Raven, into the last decade of her life, remained committed to the same generation of feminist artists, authoring an exhibition catalog on June Wayne (1997), Beth Ames Swartz (2002) and Hannah Wilke (2004), championing the same artists, over and over. It seemed less engaged than seeking out new works by younger women. She rarely wrote about male artists, and was unapologetic about her commitments to friends and lovers. But it makes perfect sense to me in the face of her erasure. Within the span of ten years, what was the second decade of the Woman’s Building, the feminist movement had not continued as planned. *Chrysalis* was short-lived, running only from 1977 to 1980. The Woman’s Building closed forever in 1991. *High Performance* magazine, to which Raven frequently contributed throughout the 1990s, had ceased production in 1997. No wonder Raven felt the need to re-assert the presence of her own generation, to continue to champion the artists and issues for which she cared passionately. But neither did Arlene cease her engagement with younger generations of artists, and writers, and indeed, became an important mentor, teaching at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) during the last years of her life. There is nothing like being embraced by the city in which you were raised. A Baltimore native, Arlene made the weekly trip from Brooklyn to teach there each fall semester, from 2000 to 2006. More than likely it felt like a homecoming.

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16 Jenni Sorkin, unpublished interview with Hannah J.L. Feldman, October 21, 2003. For a transcript, see exhibition files, *The Subject of Rape*, The Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College. Feldman was very kind to speak with me at length about this exhibition, and she was quite young when it was organized, attending the ISP program straight out of her undergraduate days. Currently, she is an assistant professor of art history at Northwestern.
Arlene Raven And The Foresight Of The Advocate Critic

by Carey Lovelace
It is a distinguished, yet irregular, tradition dating back to Charles Baudelaire. Actually, even farther back, to John Ruskin and his mid-19th century Modern Painters, when he championed the revolutionarily effervescent landscapes of J.W. Turner. And further back still. But it also includes English critic Roger Fry with his Post-Impressionism, Polish-Frenchman Apollinaire christening Orphism, at 20th century’s dawn. And Clement Greenberg extolling new American painters like Jackson Pollock to a post-war Europe complacent in its heritage. It includes especially Lucy Lippard defining ’60s and ’70s styles—Post-Minimalism, Conceptual Art, Feminist production, multiculturalism. And even Carlo McCormick delineating the rowdy East Village scene of the 1980s.

The advocate critic champions artists. She is a first-responder, early on the scene, formulating initial principles. The advocate critic provides an assessment of the landscape, identifies talent and trends the world, with its vested interests, is not yet able to see. As a writer and even judge, she embraces subjectivity—what else is there at the beginning? The advocate critic encourages artists themselves, gives voice to causes held as vital.

Criticism, often viewed as monolithic, in fact embraces a range of functions. Most often, we think of the critic as a “reviewer” (particularly in film, TV, theatre), an expert bestowing judgment, providing consumer advice about what we might like or perhaps should avoid. But even a reviewer plays a more complex role—even after an experience, we turn back to a review to help us understand our own responses, evaluate feelings. Criticism sorts through, mulls over, assesses. It awakens new thoughts, explains life itself, using works as a mirror of the culture around us. “To collect photographs is to collect the world,” Susan Sontag says in On Photography. And one thinks, “Yes, that’s right.” Or “People robbed of their past seem to make the most fervent picture takers, at home and abroad.”

Criticism refines our sensibilities. It also entertains. The boisterously dyspeptic Robert Hughes wrote in The New Republic in 1987 of his favorite Neo-Expressionist, overmarketed bête noire, Julian “Schnabel is to painting as Stallone is to acting—a lurching display of oily pectorals,” a parody who could only be embraced by a money-besotted American art world that “despite its recent fixations on the idea of irony does not have much of a sense of humor.”

Then, there is the theorist, who determines structural principles. And the connoisseur or tastemaker critic, who determines heritage, provenance, value—the “quality” of the fine object, determining what the status will be bestowed by its possession. In this regard, criticism aligns itself with the interests of power.

The advocate critic, however, has a more subversive role to play, dismantling the status quo. Lippard, in the tumult of the late 1960s, advanced the work of “difficult” and—for many—incomprehensible artists who, for example, launched the anti-market Conceptual Art of the late 1960s. There was Sol Lewitt, who crafted instructions for the making of works for others to realize elsewhere, which they did; or Larry Weiner, who simply wrote words and sentences on a wall. In elegant prose, she advanced the causes

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and world views of artists nobody had yet grappled with critically, establishing their relationship to other art she had been seeing. One article termed her an “artist-forwarder.”

Arlene Raven’s evolution into an advocate critic was gradual, radical. It is an analytic genre, nonetheless, that seems to shape itself around each of its practitioners differently, because it always concerns the description of the as-yet unknown. She was a citizen of the New Left, born just after the close of World War II, at the beginning of the Baby Boom. The cohort of late ‘60s pioneers penetrating new political landscapes, grounded in Marxism, with its hostility toward capitalism (a point of view at certainly at variance with subsequent art-world attitudes), its alliance with the disenfranchised. In her hometown of Baltimore, a member of the firebrand Students for a Democratic Society, she worked in a free clinic and on an early feminist magazine. She was aware of Women’s Lib (CR), and, as a radical rite of passage, was part of a consciousness-raising group, becoming aware of inequities in her marriage. (She had married her George Washington University thesis advisor). But she was too busy raising a stepdaughter, teaching at the Maryland Institute College of Art, to become fully involved.

Arlene had started off, at age 16, studying painting at the all-woman Hood College in Maryland as a painter—her parents would only let her go to college if she agreed to stay near the working-class Baltimore neighborhood where she grew up. Early on, she was attracted to writing, but, the way it was portrayed to her, “artists were geniuses, historians were parasites.”

“I went to a liberal arts college,” she said later. “I prefer writing, but critics always got such a bad rap, that I went ahead and got an MFA in painting. I always think of Georgia O’Keeffe saying that color was more explicit to her, more definite than a word. It’s completely opposite for me.” In painting at George Washington University, “I wrote the longest Master’s thesis that they had ever received from a fine arts student and I took all the art criticism and history that I could.” This training, she remarked later, gave her deep sympathy for artists, a desire to work alongside them in understanding their work.

By this time, she was a Ph.D. art history candidate at Johns Hopkins, specializing in the monochrome canvases of the Washington Color School. But a cluster of pivotal, traumatic experiences would determine a new direction and unleash her from the moorings of the past. She discovered that her professor-husband was having an affair with a student; they quickly separated. During the same period, she attended the landmark Corcoran Conference for Women’s Art in April, 1972 in Washington, D.C. There she heard Judy Chicago and Mimi Schapiro lecture about events at the nascent Feminist Art Program at California Institute of the Arts, notably its revolutionary Womanhouse, in which students had filled each room in a Hollywood mansion with imaginative, politically tinged environment exploring women’s domesticity. Her own awareness newly raised by her CR group, she had been thinking of proposing a course on women artists at the Maryland Institute. But she was dramatically impressed with developments in Los Angeles. “I was going to teach this little course and they had this whole context. It was so clear that what was happening there was so much more advanced, with so much more opportunity for a real women’s revolution.”


3 Author’s interview with Arlene Raven, September 3, 1998.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.
Inspired, Arlene immediately planned a trip to visit Chicago at Cal Arts, but only a few days later, she experienced a near-fatal rape at the hands of two men on a Baltimore Street. She realized that she had felt, given her education, her upward mobility, that she was somehow immune from society’s sexism—this was a violent reminder of how vulnerable she was. (“I realized that as long as I had a pussy between my legs, that was the only requirement to be oppressed….the fact was shocking to me.”) She arrived in Los Angeles, traumatized and radicalized. Chicago reached out to her at this emotional moment, helped her find a new identity—and a new last name, changing Corkery—previously Rubin—to Raven. She adopted a new sexual identity, as an “out” lesbian, partly from her revelations prompted by her recent personal experiences. And soon after, she had a job teaching art history at Cal Arts’s pioneering Feminist Art Program.

Thus, it was with an openness born of trauma that Arlene severed ties to the past, and moved into the art territory of California’s Southland, then just beginning to flourish. The Feminist Art Program at Cal Arts was spawning new types of production, much of it coming from consciousness-raising, women going around in a circle examining personal experiences. From this process, art developed, was made, using elements drawn from women’s lives—from mundane elements, like obsessions with cosmetics, like menstruation or sexual abuse. Arlene’s own rape experience was incorporated, along with those of other women, into a collaborative one-hour Ablutions, in which various visceral actions took place—one woman was ritualistically tied in a chair, two others sat in tubs bathing in egg yolks—as personal testimonies were recounted over a loudspeaker.

Feminist art was as yet completely novel, full of untried ideas newly given voice. Arlene later wrote of “the eruptive quality of revolution—action that embodies an equally necessary upheaval in the underground of our very basis of being,” a description that fits many of the upheavals of the late 20th century, but particularly the world of the early 1970s as it was being changed by women. The young art historian was one of a handful dealing with this radical new field that was not even considered a field, using academic skills to see the value in—previously disdained trivial—small watercolors by women, china painting, works in out-of-the-way rural museums, personal journals, 19th century books about “lady” painters. “In order to bring those women into the canon you really had to be a professional art historian who understood what made up the canon and how to incorporate women’s contribution,” she later recalled. “I saw this as my joyful task, as did many other feminist art historians.”

A year after she arrived in Los Angeles, in 1973, she and Chicago and designer Sheila Levrant de Bretteville left CalArts to launch the Woman’s Building in downtown Los Angeles, which was to become “the capital of cultural feminism,” as Lucy Lippard described it, remaining in existence.
until 1991. Within it was the two-year graduate Feminist Studio Workshop, the building’s main tenant, developing a training approach that was “beyond radical,” as Arlene herself described it.12 Again, consciousness-raising formed the foundation of this first independent feminist art program anywhere. Arlene, who continued to run the school with DeBretteville and others after Chicago left, helped forge its mission statement—to foster artmaking that intended to raise consciousness, invite dialogue, and lead to action. “I was using my education,” she later said, “not to train students but to explore new, heretofore uncharted territories.”13

“Our teaching process was unique at the time,” she has said. “We did a great deal of team-teaching, and co-teaching with people who came in as students.”14 Performance artist Cheri Gaulke, for example, who later co-founded the Feminist Art Workers, one of the innovative collaborative groups that came out of the institution, under the tutelage of Arlene and others, recalls Arlene teaching a class called “Feminism 101,” where she bestowed general insights about woman and politics. “They were like prophecies. They all came true.”15

Arlene worked with Woman’s Building colleague, Suzanne Lacy, originally a CalArts Feminist Art Program student, as she evolved her innovative citywide collaborative performances—such as the 1977 In Mourning and In Rage, made with Leslie Labowitz, protesting sexual violence in Los Angeles, using 10-foot-high costumed figures, “speak-outs” involving women reading personal testimonies or holding press conferences. She encouraged Lacy to take her works about politics out of the gallery and into the streets, and helped the revolutionary experimenter, with no art training before the Feminist Art Program, understand her works’ relationship to 1960s New York Conceptual Art. Indeed, Lacy’s collaborative brand of socially-oriented performance, “good works combined with the new public and private forms”16 was a genre Arlene would increasingly help define and promote, eventually editing an entire book on the subject, Art in the Public Interest (1989).

At the Woman’s Building, she came in touch with other representatives of the blossoming West Coast art community—many not directly involved with feminist art per se, but often engaged in other sorts of utopian enterprises. San Diego-based artists Helen and Newton Harrison, for example, were creating massive speculative installations exploring ecology, as in The Lagoon Cycle of 1974–1984, the flow of water in estuarial basins as modes of regeneration. Muralist Judy Baca was another figure who began working out of the Woman’s Building; by 1976 had begun her Great Wall of Los Angeles, the world’s longest painting, along the concrete walls of a flood control channel, enlisting Latino teenagers to depict the history of minorities in the Southland.

In 1977 Arlene co-founded Chrysalis: A Magazine of Women’s Culture, small and beautifully designed, a classic of its genre. (She earlier had helped launch Womanspace Journal in 1973, published out of the West Coast’s first women’s gallery, the first project she worked on, after arriving.) Following the non-hierarchical models of the time, Arlene’s articles were often collaborative. A notable 1978 Chrysalis essay, “Through the Peephole: Toward a Lesbian

12 Looking Through a New Lens: Terry Wolverton Interviews Arlene Raven,” 117.

13 Ibid., 111.


15 Author’s interview with Cheri Gaulke, April 6, 2007.

Sensibility in Art” written with fellow editor Ruth Iskin took the form of interlacing observations, like a dialogue. It grappled with a theory of lesbian sensibility in art, the first work of writing to do so anywhere. “The lesbian is an exemplary symbol—the woman who takes risks,” Arlene and Ruth wrote, “who dares to be a creator in a new territory, who does not follow rules, who declares herself the source of her artistic creation. They prefigure what many women wish to become as feminists—strong, powerful, creative, effective in the world.” 17 It proposed new paradigms, such as female creator to female muse—culturally less oppressive than the “heterosexual” model.

Thus she began pioneering a new field that caused even more cultural anxiety than women’s art. The Lesbian Art Project begun in 1978, in conjunction with Feminist Studio Workshop students, used as its jumping-off point an examination of the 1920s Paris émigré circle of painter Romaine Brooks. The project aimed to gather together their works and those of other women-identified-women through history, studying aspects of lesbian culture and experience at a time when there was no positive context at all on the subject. Arlene herself “performed” in a project directed by FSW student Terry Wolverton, the 1979 Oral History of Lesbianism. “Performance art was like playing dress up in a lot of ways,” she wrote, of the genre which became so important at the Woman’s Building, “because we did it not only for an audience but also in terms of role-playing inside of the educational experience.” 18

Just scraping by financially, Chrysalis, finally unable to sustain itself, closed in 1980. The next year, the Feminist Studio Workshop ended too, the victim of a more conservative political climate, affecting government grants. Meanwhile, Arlene had met the New York-based sculptor Nancy Grossman, who would be her life partner for the rest of her life, and she decided to move back to the East Coast. Thus far, Arlene had expressed her advocacy of artists through institutions, albeit revolutionary ones, and personal interactions; she was becoming increasingly interested in devoting herself solely to the act of writing.

Before leaving Los Angeles, though, as a kind of capstone, she began to compose a massive exhibition, At Home, finally staged in 1983 at the Long Beach Museum, bringing together the many artists she had worked with, championed, and cared about over those years—Lacy, Betye Saar, the Harrisons, Faith Wilding, Eleanor Antin, Susan Mogul, Susan King, Rachel Rosenthal. It also included the collaborative groups that had grown up under the Woman’s Building—The Waitresses did small performances addressing working-class issues in local diners; the Sisters of Survival (including Gaulke) dressed as nuns and did anti-war, anti-nuke performances. True to principle, “At Home’s” catalogue itself had a collaborative quality, Arlene’s own text running through it, was interwoven with commentary by the exhibiting artists, with ample space provided to them to document their work as they saw fit.

The advocate critic is positioned in the cusp of change. When Charles Baudelaire wrote his revolutionary keystone treatise “The Painter of Everyday Life,” it was the dawn of a new age. People were beginning to move away from the formality of the past, artists to abandon flowery visual rhetoric,
the flowing robes, the Classical columns, Biblical references in their works. Baudelaire focused on a particular artist, one he called CG. (It was Constantin Guys, who for some reason wished to be anonymous.) He posited Guys as a model of a new type of creator, walking through the tumult of the street, witnessing engaging with lived experience, recording what was actually around. This exhortation to embrace the new and seemingly mundane was tonic to younger artists.

Similarly, back in the 15th century, Leon Battista Alberti, too, positioned himself to usher in a revolutionary age, at the dawn of the Renaissance. In On Painting, trying to win over artist and patron alike, he built an argument for a startlingly new approach, one-point perspective, and the lifelike representation that accompanied it—heresy at the time, in the context of the religious, symbol-oriented medieval art that had long held sway.

Some years after moving to New York, Arlene began writing for the Village Voice—a position she held through the early 1990s. Here, she truly assumed the mantle of advocate critic. But for Arlene, it was a more conservative context than she was used to. "It's funny that the Village Voice is considered a left-leaning paper," she remarked at the time. "I was so highly radicalized elsewhere that I fret that some of the things I've been saying for the past 20 years are still very challenging and startling to people in my current workplace." 19

But in fact, the 1980s scene that she began to chronicle, the East Village of the mid- and late 1980s, with its throwaway art, club sensibility, materialism, Pop ideas, was itself more philosophically retrograde. Celebrating street-boy graffiti art, entranced with young male celebrities, it was in many ways antithetical to feminism. Even seemingly transgressive works were market-driven, with upwardly mobile aspirations, in a way art would have been appalled by in earlier years. ("Art is the doorway into the collector's home," was one famous quip by an East Village artist, which seemed wildly craven at the time.)

There was still plenty on the margins to rattle the cage of the status quo—a growing gay subculture, a multiculturalism, sexually explicit performance, AIDS-related political activism. Furthermore, many of the day's glittery canvases, tacky assemblages, autobiographical performance works, and even infatuation with media and popular culture stemmed from permissions given by feminist art when it rebelled against the Minimalist austerities which had reigned previously.

In her long-form reviews for the Voice, Arlene took her ability to encourage, to articulate, and applied her skill first, to some fairly well known figures like Hannah Wilke, Philip Guston, and Andy Warhol—who nonetheless, for various reasons operated at variance to the mainstream. But most of all, she gave voice to those on the margin—like Korean artist Ik-Joong Kang, who depicted episodes of his life on 3x3 inch squares, or porn star-turned-performance artist Annie Sprinkle, notorious for works such as her legendary installation in which she permitted a queue of viewers to file one by one for a glance into her uterus through a speculum, greeting each one almost as a hostess would. ("Hi! "Thank you for coming!")

Arlene chronicled group shows representing non-mainstream constituencies—"Art As a Verb," a show of African American artists curated by Lowery.
Stokes Sims and Leslie King-Hammond, or “Vidas Perdidas/Lost Lives” a 1989 Artists Space exhibit by the Border Art Workshop, a collective of Mexican, Chicano, and North American artists dealing with the then seldom documented plight of Mexicans crossing the California border. Always, she kept expanding the framework of discussion to encompass those often overlooked.

Art criticism, even in popular journalism, has a slightly different mission than in other disciplines. Artists seek to contribute to advance the language. Criticism’s purpose, then, is partly to situate the artist’s work in the ongoing dialogue of movements and trends. (This academic function is why non-initiates, to whom it is not addressed, often describe it as “unreadable.”) To locate work within that matrix involves citing other artists and developments; like other art writers, Arlene, too, deployed a range of references. But in her case, the goal was not so much to establish pedigree or locate work within a canon, the “civilizing” approach of most art analysis, but rather to bring out unexpected resonances, even to position the work within larger history itself. “I put a lot of information back to back, so it will implode,” she once said, “and use contradictory images, talking about Goddess worship and anti-abortion images at the same time, for example, to evoke emotions of outrage. I hope this will empower my audience to make social change.”

This unsettled, unstable gathering of references indeed would solicit the reader to actively engage with grappling with them. Arlene might put into service everything from Henry David Thoreau to Anne Rice’s Vampire Lestat to ancient Albrecht Durer to news reports about mothers throwing their babies out the window. “In the book of Revelation,” she began a review of a group show, based around the Mexican Day of the Dead at the Alternative Museum, “John envisioned stars falling onto parched soil and plagues that raise malignant ulcerations on feverish bodies as signs that signal the end of the world.” Reviewing a Museo del Barrio retrospective of Pepón Osorio’s flamboyant, Arte Povera assemblages using furniture, mirrors, windows, decorative detail, Arlene discussed the Puerto Rican artist’s work in relation to Robert Venturi’s modernist architecture as well as discussing, at length, the focus of Caravaggio in his Baroque paintings on common people, “the painter of dirty feet,” as he was called. And talking about an alternative-space Soho museum show pairing two women artists, she began with several paragraphs describing the feeling of rapture she had once experienced at the Philadelphia Museum looking at a Rogier van der Weyden painting of Jesus taken off the Cross. This was preceded by a quote from Jesse Jackson.

Although not obviously so, Arlene held subversive views about the nature of judgment itself. Throughout, she continued to champion old friends, notably Judy Chicago—who had ushered her into her life as an advocate, had suggested she use the “I” in her writing, instead of the third-person in the Germanic scholarly tradition in which she had been schooled.

But Chicago was a lightning rod. Starting with her magnum opus installation The Dinner Party of 1979 through subsequent works, including The Holocaust Project of 1992, Arlene’s mentor was often attacked for a variety of sins—the use of unattributed workers for her massive installations, as well as for the quality of the work, its technique reminiscent of 1930s New Realist...
mural painting castigated as ungainly and naïve. Arlene, stood up for her. (“I always learn something,” she said). At the same time, while acknowledging her reservations about some aspects of aesthetics. (“I don’t like her way of shading things with spray paint, I don’t like the boneless, wormlike rendition of forms.”24) In “Judy Chicago, The Artist People Love to Hate,”25 Arlene addressed the topic in the framework of her own definition of criticism’s larger mission—that it “confronts the truth inherent in a work of art, the struggle between empathy and antipathy.” Quoting a statement by a fellow fighter in the feminist trenches, Lucy Lippard, Arlene proposed that feminist art should elicit a different approach, that “an art that brings people together, that envisions a better world, should be able to take its place alongside of (or merge with) other kinds of art that are also formally, intellectually, psychically or psychologically provocative.”26

Thus, the advocate critic is to a degree always redefining terms and conditions. Compared to the theorist, the connoisseur, the raconteur, the advocate has the greatest alliance with the artist, and in many ways, takes the greatest risks. “I think of my work,” Arlene once remarked, “as ‘writing alongside’ the art of other people, and I enter into a reciprocal relationship with the artists whose work I attempt to interpret.”27 The advocate critic may disappoint, neglect, rebuff the artist. But she is also a potential savior, and thus has the most power. Reading widely through history, one finds the response which criticism is most associated—the negative judgment—is the element that has the least staying power, looks the most foolish in retrospect.

Negativity, it turns out, a form of resistance, ages badly. For that reason, advocate critics often win out in the long run; they outpace time itself.

24 Author’s Interview.

26 Arlene Raven, “Judy Chicago,” 40.

From Blurred Genres to the Integrative Process: Arlene Raven’s Interdisciplinary Feminist Art Criticism

by Tanya Augsburg
In the “Author’s Preface,” feminist art historian, critic, curator, and educator Arlene Raven explains why she chose to title her 1988 book *Crossing Over: Feminism and Art of Social Concern*:

“Crossing over” is the journey into new territory of hundreds of American artists inspired by feminism and the possibility of social change in the seventies and eighties. Painters dared to perform and write books. Scholars risked poetry and political analysis. Emerging artists chose video, performance, artists’ books, costume and clothing, conceptual art, and decoration as their media. These new genres developed against the background of social ideologies infused in an art which wanted to affect, inspire, and educate to action as well as please.²

With these words, Raven communicates clearly to the reader that “crossing over” is to be understood as a metaphor for how feminism changed American society and culture by genre-mixing and innovation. Likening her book to a “journey into new territory,” Raven signals that the book contains pioneering criticism on emergent artists whose cultural and artistic works at the time had yet to be studied extensively—if at all.

Raven’s feminist art criticism, scholarship, teaching, and curation have been foundational and influential for feminist art, feminist art history, feminist art criticism, and feminist art education. In 1973 she founded The Women’s Caucus for Art within the College Art Association and co-founded along with Judy Chicago and Sheila de Bretteville the Feminist Studio Workshop. In 1976 she founded the feminist art journal *Chrysalis*. Raven was an important mentor for many, including a number of contributors to this volume: Joanna Frueh, Suzanne Lacy, Terry Wolverton, Jerri Allyn, Anne Swartz, and myself—even though Raven and I never met. (Raven and I worked on a writing project together late in her life and we communicated by telephone, letters, and fax.)

This essay is meant to be my two-fold tribute to Arlene Raven and her intellectual legacy. I will first situate the significance of *Crossing Over* within the context of current interdisciplinary studies scholarship, which considers the ways in which multiple academic disciplines or domains of knowledge intersect, integrate, and/or are being brought together. In so doing I illustrate the revolutionary and prescient aspects of Raven’s writing for the purposes of expanding its purview beyond the realms of art, feminist art, and art history. More specifically, I point out that while Raven’s vivid descriptions of artists crossing and mixing genres, mediums, and disciplines quoted above have a notable precedent, Raven corrected previous intellectual oversights by focusing on the intellectual, cultural, and social achievements of women and feminism.

Next I examine the interdisciplinary nature of Raven’s writing on rape in order to illustrate how her 1980s art criticism both anticipated and exemplified recent scholarship on the integrative process. I illustrate how Raven’s writings on rape can be extremely instructive to scholars, artists, and students interested in understanding what is meant by integration. Ultimately I make the case that Raven was an ideal feminist interdisciplinarian who self-consciously blurred boundaries and addressed complex problems such as rape in order to advance the general understanding and knowledge about women and feminist art.
From Blurring Genres to Crossing Boundaries

In 1980 anthropologist Clifford Geertz published his influential and frequently cited essay, “Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought.” Geertz asserted that “there has been an enormous amount of genre mixing in intellectual life in recent years.”

Geertz’s essay had two main points overall: first, that genre-mixing “has become the natural condition of things” and second, “it is leading to significant realignments in scholarly affinities—who borrows what from whom.”

To illustrate these claims, Geertz listed in “Blurred Genres” multiple types of genre-mixing work along with their exemplary practitioners. Geertz’s cohort of genre-mixing exemplars were exclusively male; among those included were celebrated writers such as Samuel Beckett, Jorge Luis Borges, Donald Barthelme, Norman Mailer, and Vladimir Nabakov as well as well-known thinkers such as Claude Levi-Strauss, Edward Said, Stanley Clavell, and Paul Feyeraband.

One can only wonder why Geertz did not include any women among his examples of genre-mixing in “Blurred Genres.” To paraphrase Linda Nochlin in her landmark essay in feminist art history: why have there been no great women genre-mixers? As Nochlin pointed out, “The question is crucial, not merely to women, and not only for social or ethical reasons, but for purely intellectual ones as well.” Leaving out individual women’s achievements makes it easier not to consider their collective contributions. Case in point: when Geertz lists later in his essay other interpretive “approaches” (besides hermeneutics) that social scientists have taken up, he mentions “structuralism, neo-positivism, neo-Marxism, micro-micro descriptivism, macro-macro system building, and that curious combination of common sense and common nonsense, sociobiology”—but not feminism.

Geertz’s omissions (exclusions?) were Raven’s starting points in Crossing Over, a compendium of her writings, though there is no indication that Raven consciously responded to Geertz. All but one chapter were previously published as essays or articles published in newspapers, journals, or exhibition catalogs. I think it is important to point out that Raven’s work effectively considers issues Geertz missed, in at least three ways. First, she wrote about women genre-mixers—thank goodness! Raven was quite inclusive in her approach, as she considered artists who were already well known in the 1980s as well as those who were not. Perhaps because of her involvement as a writer for High Performance and her awareness of performative strategies, Raven appeared to be particularly drawn to feminist performance artists (e.g., Judy Chicago, Mary Beth Edelson, Suzanne Lacy, Cheri Gaulke, and Ana Mendieta) who fuse social activism, personal testimony, feminist art, and expressions of spirituality. As Raven writes in “The Circle: Ritual and the Occult in Women’s Performance Art” (Chapter 3), “Before feminist performance was art it was occult ritual.” What I take from this statement is that Raven believed that feminist art went beyond the limitations of rational (and masculinist) thinking. In that sense she was not far from Geertz when he wrote the following about the cognitive impact of genre-mixing, “Something is happening to the way we think about the way we think.”

The essays in Crossing Over

3 Geertz, “Introduction,” Local Knowledge, 8.
4 Geertz does mention two women scholars, Jane Harrison and Susanne Langer, at different points later in the essay. He cites Langer when discussing “the drama analogy for social life.” Harrison, Francis Fergusson, T.S. Eliot, and Antonin Artaud, according to Geertz, are all associated with “the so-called ritual theory of drama.” Geertz refers to “the cognitive aesthetics of Cassirer, Langer, Gombrich, or Goodman” as examples of “other humanitarian analogies on the social science scene” (Geertz, “Blurred Genres,” 27-27; 33).
demonstrate how women’s creative and intellectual works were not only socially and politically engaged but advancing what Geertz calls “the refiguration of social thought” with their “present jumbling of varieties of discourses.”

Second, Raven’s own writing tended to mix and fragment multiple literary genres, including personal reflection and poetry. Art critic Donald Kuspit gets to the heart of the matter while describing Raven’s writing style in the “Editor’s Preface:” Raven’s intensity is technically an effect of her staccato, collage method of writing. Many of her essays—and I use that term with its connotation of experiment, tryout, attempt—are a sum of fragmentary observations about artists who are themselves regarded as fragments in the greater mosaic whole of feminism. The fragment, for all its partiality, conveys a sense of experiential density, perhaps because we imagine the whole of which it is a part to be concentrated in it. It functions synecdochically, its brokenness adding an extra edge to its poetry.

Kuspit’s explication of Raven’s willingness to experiment with the form of the essay bespeaks her perceptive approach in developing a highly effective, personal, and hybrid mode of writing to discuss art.

Kuspit’s point about Raven’s fragmentary observations leads to my next point. Raven herself mixed typically distinct areas of study in her holistic approach to analyze the complexity of American culture and society. In her essay “The New Culture: Women Artists of the Seventies” (Chapter 1), for instance, she situates the rise of the feminist art movement in the seventies amidst other developments in the women’s liberation movement, American politics, and popular culture. Raven brilliantly pulls off a discussion of women artists of the seventies alongside a celebration of the personal and collective achievements of politician Geraldine Ferraro while also cogently analyzing the significance of television’s popular fictional bigot and racist, Archie Bunker. Such thought-provoking juxtapositions were no accident. In her preface to *Crossing Over*, Raven regarded her art criticism as a form of genre-mixing in its own right that blended feminism, contemporary art, and the academic discipline of art history:

> I also crossed over a professional boundary to bring my commitment to feminism and my work as an art historian together in writing about this social and aesthetic avant-garde. I was inspired by feminist writers (especially Adrienne Rich, Mary Daly, and Susan Griffin) to enter the new territory.

As a feminist performance scholar who has immersed herself in the academic discourse concerning interdisciplinarity, I find Raven’s use of boundary metaphors in *Crossing Over* fascinating. Raven’s describes her intellectual work deploying what renowned scholar of interdisciplinarity Julie Thompson Klein has identified as “the dominant image” in the discourse of interdisciplinarity: geopolitics. Territories and boundaries are geopolitical spaces that are typically monitored, paroled, and enforced. To cross a boundary without permission either literally or figuratively is to risk getting caught trespassing and suffer potential consequences. Entering a new or unknown territory implies taking risk with unknown results. Raven suggests that by taking up feminism, her professional status as an art historian changed but stops short of saying exactly how, which leads me to see her as embracing the practices of those who inspired her. By aligning herself with influential feminist writers whose impact knows no disciplinary boundaries, Raven provides an important clue: she implies that she has consciously attempted to follow their examples as feminist interdisciplinarians.
Raven’s Interdisciplinary Approach to Rape

What does it mean to be an interdisciplinarian, i.e., to be interdisciplinary? The terms “interdisciplinary,” “interdisciplinarity,” and “interdisciplinarian” are all too frequently deployed these days without a clear understanding of their meanings. My own understanding of interdisciplinarity draws from two oft-cited scholarly definitions of the term. The first is from Roland Barthes: “In order to do interdisciplinary work, it is not enough to take a ‘subject’ (a theme) and to arrange two or three sciences around it. Interdisciplinary study consists in creating a new object, which belongs to no one.”

Barthes’s formulation offers a compelling option for feminist scholars such as Raven, who seek to identify modes of study without a patriarchal lineage. The second definition has been forwarded by Klein and William H. Newell: interdisciplinary studies may be defined as a process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline or profession. Whether the context is an integrated approach to general education, a women’s studies program, or a science, technology, and society program, IDS [interdisciplinary studies] draws on disciplinary perspectives and integrates their insights through the construction of a more comprehensive perspective. In this manner, interdisciplinary study is not a simple supplement but is complementary to and corrective of the disciplines. Thus, for feminists like Raven, the study of women’s lives, which includes the study of women’s art, requires the expansive frameworks and strategies associated with interdisciplinarity.

When considering Barthes’s definitions together with Klein and Newell’s, we can deduce the following: that interdisciplinary study is the process of addressing problems or questions that cannot be understood or answered from one discipline alone, which is particularly appealing for feminism since such an approach reflects the reality of women’s experiences as multi-dimensional, sprawling, and sometimes fragmented. The result of interdisciplinary study is something new that cannot be contained within any discipline’s boundaries. Due to its very “newness” this result of interdisciplinary study serves as a counterexample if not a “corrective” of existing disciplines.

Both definitions stress the significance of a particular subject, problem, topic, or theme in doing interdisciplinary work, providing an illuminating lens through which to see Raven’s system in examining the topic of rape in her critical writing. Newell once wrote about how interdisciplinary study begins with “the confrontation of the interdisciplinary with the world, be it a problem, an event, or even a painting.” I have interpreted Newell’s assertion to mean “interdisciplinary projects begin with one’s experience.” In Raven’s case, there were many complex problems that interested her, which stemmed from her personal experiences and commitment to feminism and women’s issues. The ones that propelled her to write, and about which she wrote so powerfully, dealt with those topics of study that were considered “new” only insofar as they were taboo or “unwanted.” Violence against women, particularly rape.

16 Tanya Augsburg, Becoming Interdisciplinary: An Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies, 2nd ed. (Kendall/Hunt, 2006), 90.
17 Raven writes in “Close to Home”: “We have to tell you a hundred times. Because rape is terrorizing unwanted education. No one wants to know the violent potential of the male body and the defenseless vulnerability of female biology, the crushing demoralization of power relationships out of balance, “sex” as the act of violent aggression held in the dark underworld of a culture whose values produce rape” (Crossing Over, 167-168).
Seven of the sixteen chapters in *Crossing Over* address the complex problem of rape. Two of these seven chapters focus on rape as their primary subject of inquiry. “Close to Home,” the previously unpublished chapter (Chapter 11), is Raven’s personal account about her thoughts leading up to the exhibition opening of her 1985 RAPE exhibition held at Ohio State University. It is supplementary to “We Did Not Move from Theory” (Chapter 10), which serves as the exhibition catalog essay. “We Did Not Move from Theory” can be read as an interdisciplinary scholarly study of rape as a theme in feminist art; in it, Raven intersperses scholarship with candid and brave personal disclosures regarding her experiences and feelings about rape. As Raven admits, “Rape is first a personal issue. Disclosure is risky.”

When she was raped in 1972, she found solace and strength in the work of women artists who gave her a safe venue for disclosure. Of this experience Raven writes the following:

> When I visited Los Angeles in May of 1972, the Feminist Art Program performance workshop under the direction of Judy Chicago was preparing *Ablutions*, soon to be performed in Venice, California. Part of this performance was an audio tape that contained the stories of rape victims. I had been raped only a week before my visit. I told my story as it was recorded for *Ablutions*. I not only had a friend silently listen to my pain, but I participated in a process of feminist art which is based on uncovering, speaking, expressing, making public the experience of women.

Such remarks emphasize the importance of moving the personal/private into the public/social sphere as a device used in feminism to ensure connection, opportunity, speech, among many other options and extensions. Raven had already disclosed in more depth the personal devastation of her rape in Chapter 3:

> Judy Chicago was making the *Ablutions* tape when I visited her in the Spring of 1972. I had been raped three days before, and I was the shock, panic, self-loathing and despair of the raped victim, because I felt so helpless all I could do was lie there and cry. But I rose on the third day anyway to pursue my survival and future . . . by flying three thousand miles to perform a ritual of speaking pain and of initiation with a woman I had met, powerfully, only once.

Raven’s allusion to Christ’s resurrection in an essay about women’s spirituality cannot be regarded as coincidental. I interpret this reference as inspirational testament to the palliative power of feminism despite Raven’s admission in Chapter 11 of being “never healed.” Raven’s rape, in her own words, became the “pivot which hinged my understanding of my life until then and motivated every action since.” Without question the personal became political, professional, public, social, and intellectual for Raven.

Returning to interdisciplinary theory, Newell has written on how “the interdisciplinarian examines complex issues by taking insights the disciplines have to offer, pulling them together, reconciling them, ferreting out missing information, and then maximizing the contribution of the disciplines to an understanding of the problem.” There is a lot to unpack in this statement with regard to Raven’s analysis of rape. To begin, Raven was well aware of the challenges involved in understanding rape as a complex phenomenon. She wrote: “The meaning of rape to the nature of rape reaches far beyond any simple answer to the question, ‘What is rape?’” She also realized the necessity of studying rape from multiple disciplinary perspectives: “From the perspectives of politics, psychology, spirituality, will we have full, autonomous being

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18 Arlene Raven, “We Did Not Move from Theory/We Moved to the Sorest Wounds,” *Crossing Over*, 164.

19 Raven, “We Did Not Move,” 165.


22 Ibid.

or crippled passivity?” With this one sentence Raven’s illustrates how a polydimensional approach can overcome the limitations of disciplinary boundaries.

It comes as no surprise then that Raven systematically studied the phenomenon of rape and its effects on women, reading widely from numerous disciplines, learning their disciplinary perspectives on rape, and integrating their various insights. Raven recognized that political science, psychology, and religious studies were not enough; she additionally gathered and evaluated insights from legal studies, sociology, art history, history, women’s studies, as well as popular culture. Her training as an art historian provided Raven with disciplinary insights that at times directly conflicted with her feminist commitments and personal experience. For example, Raven did not summarily dismiss so-called masterpieces such as Peter Paul Rubens’s *Rape of the Sabine Women* for their disturbing subject matter; instead, she pointed out that “these metaphorical works, based on mythology and history, had little to do with rape as we now understand it.” Such statements, given her personal experience, dispel any possible accusation of a lack of integrated approach, for they reveal a deep art historical understanding and a reluctance to make quick categorical dismissals despite one’s own subjective vantage point.

Raven’s interest in reconciling and synthesizing insights from multiple perspectives extended beyond her own research. In Chapter 10 she witnesses great potential in feminist art for providing new perspectives:

> When we have carefully traversed the territory of RAPE we can finally grasp the complex, evolving analysis of rape. The works in this exhibition, created over the past decade and a half, communicate this rich overview, one of the great gifts of the exhibition. Furthermore, the evolution has not only expanded definitions but also changed a basic perspective—by including the actual nature of rape from the point of view of its victims…. This point of identification, which is the beginning of seeing rape, occurs in ever deeper cycles. We must return to this point to continue and to begin again.

Because Raven understood the value of seeing a problem through multiple viewpoints, she was able to underscore the significance of feminist artists allowing the viewer to understand the victim’s perspective. In the above passage she points out that such perspectives were both novel for the time and invaluable lessons. Though she was limited in speaking about rape since she was literally inventing the language of discussing it in art from the position of the subject rather than the object, she nevertheless expanded and innovated the existing discourse about rape by her informed personal testimony and holistic approach. Furthermore, Raven’s emphasis on repetition at the passage’s end is another indication of her adherence to interdisciplinary methodology, which is generally viewed as iterative in the professional literature. As Klein has described the crucial importance of repetition for the integrative process: “Reconsideration, reformulation, and restating are vital activities.”

Raven’s research led her to the conclusion that the problem of rape has no solution: “I know that there is no ultimate solution to the problem of rape.” With this statement Raven recognizes the limits of interdisciplinary integration, which is dependent on what insights are made available at the time. Nonetheless, Raven expresses achieving deeper understanding or satisfaction for having at least addressed it: “Yet I take comfort in affirming that we have
done what we can do now.” Indeed, Raven seems quite hopeful in her affirmation that as sources of perspectives on rape increase knowledge about the problem, so too will understanding about rape increase (and thus make its prevention possible). Together, these statements could be regarded as Raven’s anticipation of Newell’s view that interdisciplinary study enables the construction of a more comprehensive understanding. By drawing on diverse perspectives and integrating their insights about rape, Raven facilitated new understanding that enabled others henceforth to view the problem of rape differently—with the victim’s experience in mind.

According to Newell, interdisciplinarity helps us to see the real-world relevance of what is studied in academic disciplines, which Raven did in her writing as a way to consider heretofore undiscussed topics. For example, Raven could not have been clearer regarding the real-world relevance of rape when she wrote in Chapter 10, “Three women in any room, one has been raped.” Raven’s art criticism reminds us to go beyond the ivory tower and to take the time and effort to consider the educational possibilities of artistic expression and consciousness raising. By writing about what feminist art offers, Raven filled in what had been left unsaid about women genre-mixers (interdisciplinarians) and anticipated much of what would be said about the integrative process by her own highly original, extremely interdisciplinary, scholarly and creative feminist art criticism. I have no doubt that Raven’s legacy as a feminist interdisciplinarian par excellence will only continue to grow the more we learn about what it means to be interdisciplinary.

29 I have to thank William H. Newell for helping me to articulate the more subtle implications of Raven’s statements. Newell graciously read a draft of this essay upon my request as I was concerned about not misrepresenting his scholarship as well as the scholarship of others who write on the integrative process.


32 Raven, “We Did Not Move,” 158.
All Queer

by Joanna Frueh
Queer Glamour

I love the idea that anyone can be queer. I felt the expansiveness of “queer” when I read that it “can refer to: the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically.”¹ Eve Sedgwick, one of the most famous theorists of queer, from its beginnings in the early 1990s, wrote those words in “Queer and Now,”² a chapter in her book Tendencies, which I enjoyed several years after its publication in 1993. I felt included; in being whoever and whatever I am, sexually, erotically, bodily, and, no less, intellectually. Wholly and glamorously. While many people presume that glamour is effect, and most likely an artificial and delusional one, I see glamour as source: our deepest beauty.

Sedgwick’s definition effected me wonderfully, but it came long after I heard the inimitably queer Arlene Raven state, in a 1979 video interview, “Everybody feels queer.”³ She related that understanding to queerness being a way of being oneself. I watched Arlene’s interview around the time of the March 28, 1980 opening of “The Art of the Woman’s Building,” an exhibition curated by Arlene for Artemisia Gallery, a woman-artist-run mini-institution in Chicago. I didn’t think about whether “queer” meant weird or whether it referred to a person’s sexuality. Rather, queer comforted and relaxed me, as does any home that is truly sweet. Arlene’s statement penetrated me, soul-and-mind-inseparable-from-body. It touched my source, and I felt embraced completely. Indeed, I felt complete, because her lucid inclusiveness and epigraphic acuity and directness relieved my reluctance to be as queer as I am. That is a lifetime mission, but “everybody feels queer” has come back to me over the years, reminding me to let go of a little more reluctance, and also to help others to be as queer as they can be, which is glamorously emancipating.

Arlene and I met in 1976, my last year of being the director of Artemisia—I’d begun in 1974. Artemisia’s members exhibited in the gallery and invited other women—mostly artists—from elsewhere—mostly New York and Los Angeles—to speak in the gallery for the benefit of the members themselves and the public. Arlene was such a visitor. She gave a workshop with her partner, the art historian Ruth Iskin, titled “Feminist Educational Methodology.”⁴ We quickly became friends. One evening during that visit, in the living room of an Artemisia member’s home, Arlene, my elder by only four years, mentored me, deftly, warmly, and matter-of-factly. Soon we became colleagues, which eventually evolved into collaborating in the late 1980s and early 1990s on several publications.⁵ That night in Chicago, sitting on luxuriously comfy furniture with the plush cheer of a lime-colored carpet under our feet, I told Arlene that I wanted to write art criticism. I paraphrase her short response: sure, go ahead, no problem. Any doubts disappeared. Arlene was gifted in cutting to the chase. Her glamour highlighted that queer directness, which was her ability to be unusually personal by saying what she really meant and meaning what she said, thereby communicating from her deepest source to someone else’s. Inimitably queer: she demonstrated the highest form of personalization as a friend, a colleague, and a critic.

³ Lyn Blumenthal and Kate Horsfield, producers, Arlene Raven (Chicago, IL: Video Data Bank, 1979), videocassette, 40 minutes.
⁴ I thank Marjorie Vecchio, a former Artemisia member, for contacting Barbara Blades, another former Artemisia member, who provided me with the title and date of Arlene’s and Ruth’s workshop. Thank you, Barbara, for your swift response to my request.
Taking It Personally

Don’t take it personally, we’re advised when we’ve accepted into our soul-and-mind-inseparable-from-body a barb that may or may not have been intended to hurt us, and in educational and professional lessons, scholars and critics learn not to get too personal with their material. I say, Take it, read it, hear it, give it personally. I say, Be queer and make whatever the material is your own, whether it be words, ideas, or images, love, pleasure, facts, or feelings. As you observe, digest, and wonder about life, let your deepest beauty pursue living as self-knowledge. Arlene did that. In the 1979 interview, she advocates self-knowledge as a process. She is specifically addressing the necessity of self-knowledge in order to support other women, and I’ve personalized her wisdom on every viewing of that video and identified Arlene as my companion Pythia. Together, in mutual support, we’ve practiced the ancient discipline of knowing oneself. The Pythias were the oracles at Delphi, and inscribed in the pronaos of the Temple of Apollo, from whose interior the Pythias communicated their prophecies and wisdom, were the words, Know Thyself, which have been associated with at least five Greek, male sages as well as with the female seers, the Pythias.

Delving into one’s own private world, reflecting on it alone and with friends, then sharing it publicly has been as important for my growth as it was for Arlene’s. “Making the private public breaks time-honored, secret, guarded taboos,” she asserts in her book proposal, “Woman*Woman*Works,” sent to me most likely in 1981. In an accompanying letter, she writes, “I appreciate your support so much. I’m anxious for any suggestions you might have, especially how other work might fit into each section (Los Angeles, I mean) or if there are large areas of thought missing.” The invigorating exercise of personal and professional support, from the generosity of love to the specifics of intellectual critique, awakens consciousness. In her book proposal, Arlene’s belief that “feminism begins with consciousness and self” leads into several paragraphs about consciousness-raising, a method for self-revelation and social revolution used in early second-wave feminism. Women sat with one another in a circle and spoke in turn about their own situations, fears, and joys. At the Feminist Studio Workshop, the school for women artists that was housed at the Woman’s Building, the overarching subjects were authority, money, work, and sexuality. For Arlene, social revolution necessitated the radically personal act of self-transformation.

All Queer, All Clear

Arlene had described a condition that I felt, a lot—the queerness of estrangement from common ways of seeing and experiencing the world, especially in regard to sexual and bodily matters; and the queerness of consciousness itself. Queer, as she used it, had struck me, too, as simply and hugely human, a state of consummate realness, which requires the continual exploration of the personal. Understanding that everybody feels queer arouses compassion, for oneself as much as for others. Gentle, Joanna, be gentle with yourself. Of course I knew that people hide their feeling queer, which is their being queer, thus suppressing their uniqueness. Today I know that when people do that, they dim their glamour. Muddiness results: an unclear spirit.
How often a person’s self-judgments attack her soul-and-mind-inseparable-from-body. Shooting into it bullets of shame, doubt, and self-hatred, she feels odd, she feels ugly to the core of her, she feels alone—queer indeed. Queer in need—of solace and self-acceptance. Embraced by queer, my capacity for gentleness increases, because comprehending that everybody feels queer provides at least a conceptual community in whose province I shine, being clearly myself. All queer, every single one of us. Queer provides a mental world realized in the actual world, where I blossom into the all-queer of me. All clear: it means that the shooting has stopped. All queer, all clear: that is one of Arlene’s many gifts to me. A balancing, healthful, and grounding consciousness in which to truly live.

Creating the Creator
Arlene’s publications date from the beginning of the 1970s, and her early work as an art critic and historian, including the “Woman*Woman*Works” proposal, places lesbian art and artists centrally. By 1979 she was theorizing them into a model for women’s creativity. I perceive Arlene’s ideas as precursors of queer theory, whose beginnings scholars often date to a special issue of differences, “Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities,” guest edited by Teresa de Lauretis and published in 1991. Arlene and I never talked about queer theory or about her lesbianism or my heterosexuality. Early in our friendship I was partners with a woman, a painter, and Arlene, for a bit, was partners with Ruth. From my twenties into my early thirties, intimate relationships with women felt more whole than all but one of my relationships with a man. Arlene continued to be involved with women, and by 1982, men had become my primary romantic interest.

In a 1977 issue of Chrysalis, which billed itself as a “magazine of women’s culture,” Arlene and Ruth hold a dialogue that fluidly expands the idea of a lesbian sensibility into lesbianism as a model for feminist art-making and feminist community. “Through the Peephole: Lesbian Sensibility in Art” theorizes the personal: Arlene’s and Ruth’s lived reality as lovers and partners with women


10 Chrysalis existed from 1977 into 1981. A question printed on the inside cover of issue number 4 reads, “Susan [B. Anthony], what is this hot new magazine of women’s culture?” Arlene was one of the founders of Chrysalis.
and as friends with lesbian artists, in combination with the scholarly—
their research in art history and their knowledge of contemporary lesbian art.
I avidly read their conversation, looking for self-clarification, looking to per-
sonalize what they said, as a scholar who, four years later, would receive her
Ph.D. in History of Culture from the University of Chicago, as a critic writing
for local and regional publications, and most importantly, as a woman who
was learning to relish her own queerness.

In my past readings of “Through the Peephole,” I bracketed and under-
lined many passages, such as this from Arlene: “Lesbianism can symbolize and
express feminism. The lesbian is an exemplary symbol—the woman who takes
risks, who dares to be a creator in a new territory, who does not follow rules,
who declares herself the source of her artistic creation.” Wow! Did I resonate
to the power of that model! I could do or be anything, create the most queerly
glamorous work. That has always been my inclination, though the rules of
publishing and academia and of an age-damning beauty culture have daunted
me at times because my queer words, in writing and in professorial lectures,
and my queer costumes and self-portrait photos as a midlife woman exceed
the conventions of common practice.

“Through the Peephole” is a call to be creative, to be a creator, and to be
conscious. As a very creative and imaginative young scholar and critic I read it
as a call to be queer. Personally, it is one of the most important and formative
feminist writings that I’ve ever read, equal to Luce Irigaray’s and Hélène Cix-
ous’s work, which I discovered in 1981. In my identification with all of those
writings, I breathed a sigh of relief and more easily released my passions into
my work.

Tender Illumination

“Through the Peephole” heralds Arlene’s interest in queer once it became, in
the 1990s and, in a commonly broad, scholarly definition, resistance to heter-
onormativity. Examples of her own such resistance in the 1990s and beyond
include involvement with CLAGS, the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies,
-founded in 1991 and housed at the Graduate Center of the City University

11 Arlene Raven and Ruth Iskin,
“Through the Peephole: Lesbian
Sensibility in Art,” Chrysalis 4 [1977]:
21. The quoted statement dovetails
with another one made by her in the
1979 interview. She names the
lesbian “the strong creative woman.”
See Arlene Raven.
of New York (CUNY), and her participation in a conference, “InterseXions: Queer Visual Culture at the Crossroads,” organized by CLAGS and the Queer Caucus for Art and held at CUNY on November 12-13, 2004. The sculptor Nancy Grossman, Arlene’s partner from 1983 till Arlene’s death, states that “queer was a term she embraced as a positive thing,” which explains not only my initial response to the inclusiveness I sensed in “everybody feels queer,” but also her receipt of an award from the Monette-Horwitz Trust twenty years later. The Trust recognizes individuals and organizations for their meaningful work in ending homophobia, and in 2004 it honored Arlene for being “among the first to study and acknowledge female, lesbian, and gay artists beginning in the late 1960s. Raven participated in the first presentation of scholarly papers on homosexuality and the arts at the 1977 College Art Association meeting in Los Angeles and originated the Lesbian Art Project in 1977.” Tenderly illuminating queer, Arlene’s work proved her belief spoken in the 1979 interview that all groups, from different sexual activist foci, could work together for their mutual benefit.

A January 2007 call for submissions to the scholarly journal English Language Notes seeks contributors for an issue about “queer space” who “explore gay, lesbian, bisexual, and queer” perspectives. In other words, a loose and large territory of sexuality, some feminist and lesbian scholars, close to the very “founding” of queer theory, have voiced their problems with a usage of “queer” encompassing so many sexualities, sexes, and genders, that matters of their particular identity, and activism in behalf of those distinct sexes and genders, recede. Depending on who uses “queer,” it may include the above list of positions and experiences along with transgender, bondage domination sadomasochism (bdsm), heterosexual, and more. Resistance to heteronormativity is pretty much the largest umbrella that queer can spread, and for some scholars, it has become so large that queer becomes vacuous. Also, these scholars have discussed the displacement of lived life by the conceptual and the Trumping of taking to the streets, poll booths, or Capitol Hill by theory, so that, for example, the economic and political facts of living as a lesbian or the vulnerability of a sexualized body to rape cease to be addressed. I bring up these

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15 Janice McLaughlin concludes her essay, The Return of the Material: Cycles of Theoretical Fashion in Lesbian, Gay and Queer Studies,” by making peace between queer and feminism: “Feminists are correct to challenge the arguments and politics of queer writings for their too easy dismissal of feminist work and the need to stay tuned to the material world outside of the academy…. If theoretical debate can move past asserting which body of work got it right we might be able to engage in multiple debates that explore the complexity of matters that count.” In Diane Richardson, Janice McLaughlin, and Mark E. Casey, eds., Intersections Between Feminist and Queer Theory (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 77.

16 See Richardson et al, for discussions about the tensions between feminism and queer theory and lesbianism and queer theory. The intention of Intersections is to wisely negotiate such tensions.
problems that lesbians and feminists have had with queer\textsuperscript{17} because Arlene was both lesbian and feminist, in personally and professionally dedicated ways, yet being so didn’t lead her to dissociate herself from queer.

Trained to seek, uncover, and analyze problems, scholars work wonders in clearing away the murk of cultural habits and also of personal behaviors for those of us who relate our reading to our living better lives. Yet, those same skills can pile up such heaps of rhetoric that the beneficial potential of scholarly brilliance may work against the synergy of these parts—individuals, like me, whose erotic predilection throughout most of their lives is heterosexual—and this whole—a term, queer, that operates tenderly to illuminate our personal practices and beliefs as at once plainly and monumentally human. For example, very recently, and more profoundly than ever, I’ve realized that expressions of my sexual passion and behavior in intimate relationships with men are by cultural determination designated masculine and male, such as my forcefulness, my very active responsiveness, and my penchant for fucking without the necessity of much foreplay or desire for it. All of that is intuitive and natural for me, so in my erotic life I am not deliberately going against the grain of conventionalized female and feminine receptivity. Behaviorally and emotionally, my passionate particularities have been a given. However, in my scholarly and creative practices, I have enjoyed undoing heteronomativity through much thought and research as well as intuition. Not to mention my pleasure in producing pin-ups as a midlife woman. Astounded and intrigued by my queerness, I weave it both poetically and cognizantly into my work.

Besides reading “Through the Peephole” as a call to be creative and conscious, I’ve also read it as a call to love. Arlene’s following words strike me as a proclamation: “We can describe a relationship of love among women which is lesbian regardless of whether or not their sexual practice is with women.”\textsuperscript{18}

In the soul-and-mind-inseparable-from-body ardors of my bisexual twenties, my heart grew, and it grows still, with Arlene’s language of sisterly love. In retrospect I see in queer clarity that one of the foundations for foregrounding love in all of my work is Arlene’s regard for love’s tender powers.

Getting Personal

Arlene wanted to interact with the material about which she wrote. I take that to mean that she wanted to get personal with it. In the 1979 interview she recounts a difficulty that she was having doing precisely that while approaching the writing of her first piece, “Woman’s Art: The Development of a Theoretical Perspective,” for \textit{Womanspace Journal}.

She talked with Judy Chicago about the problem, and Judy suggested, “Why don’t you start with I?”\textsuperscript{20} So often people keep their distance from themselves and scholars keep their distance from the material about which they write. Arlene, intimate with herself, showed her intimacy with her material. Over and over, her queer closeness to her own heart and experiences shaped her criticism. Here, in 1981: “Judy Chicago was making the Ablutions tape when I visited her in the Spring of 1972. I had been raped three days before, and I was the shock, panic, self-loathing and despair of the raped victim, because I felt so helpless all I could do was lie there and cry. But I rose on the third

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} Through most of the twentieth century “queer” referred derogatorily to gay and effeminate males and, to a lesser degree, to others who displayed gender behavior beyond the limits of convention. During the 1980s gay activists reclaimed “queer,” as feminists in the early 1970s reclaimed the offensive and abusive “cunt.” But just as all feminists have not embraced “cunt” as a term to define or describe their genitalia, not all gay men have adopted “queer” as a positive self-designation. Some lesbians choose to step out from under the queer umbrella. Indeed, Teresa de Lauretis, whom some scholars have credited with establishing queer theory in 1991, was distancing herself from it in 1994. (See Teresa de Lauretis, “Habit Changes,” in “More Gender Trouble: Feminism Meets Queer Theory,” differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies, 6, 2–3 (Summer-Fall 1994): 297.)
\item \textsuperscript{18} Raven and Iskin, 26.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Arlene Raven, “Woman’s Art: The Development of a Theoretical Perspective,” Womanspace Journal, 1,1 (February/March 1973): 14-20.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Arlene Raven.
\end{itemize}
Figure 9  Dean Burton, Joanna looking and listening in The Scholar’s Touch installation, Joanna Frueh: A Retrospective, Sheppard Fine Arts Gallery, University of Nevada, Reno, NV 2005

(top) Figure 10 Glascock and Glascock, page from BRUMAS: A Rock Star’s Passage to a Life Re-Vamped, 1982

(lower right) Figure 11 John Glascock, BRUMAS, publicity photo, 1982. Shot during rehearsal. Joanna Frueh and Thomas Kochheiser are not in costume.
day anyway to pursue my survival and future...”

21 Again, in 1981: “For the purpose of this article—to build a theory for the art of the altar—I assemble an altar and create a ritual which will consider the questions about which I now wonder with the artists whose art raises them.”

22 And almost a quarter century later, in 2004, eleven years after artist Hannah Wilke's death: “This is my testimony. I knew Hannah Wilke…. I know her today. Even better.”

Arlene believed, “We shape one another through our criticism,” and I agree. Arlene, this is my testimony. So much more intimate than an obituary. We shaped one another by collaborating on projects and by evaluating our lives, together analyzing and interpreting art and the most personal events and desires. Arlene, today I know you as I always have, in sisterhood. Sisterhood. That's how Arlene signed the letter she sent with her book proposal.

Our friendship was my first with a scholar, and, significantly, a feminist scholar in art, one who asserted in 1979 that she always maintained her sense of being an artist. Arlene received an M.F.A. in Fine Art from George Washington University in 1967. As she says on the video interview, she studied painting. How comfortable I felt with her in our similarities: writer and artist, poet, scholar, woman. Arlene collaborated with others artists, most famously on the Lesbian Art Project (1977-79), which included Terry Wolverton's play An Oral Herstory of Lesbianism (1979), in whose creation Arlene participated. I began presenting performance pieces in 1979. We did not talk regularly on the phone, nor did we get together every time that I visited New York, where Arlene moved from Los Angeles in 1983. Whenever we spoke with one another, our criticism was never judgmental, which is why we could talk so personally, in critical communion.

We agreed that our writing would never be the same after reading Mary Daly's Gyn/Ecology. Her powerfully intellectual play with language. Arlene spoke in detail about her experiences with illness and its effects on her body, her psyche, and her work. We sat on a bench on the Lower East Side, in our dark winter coats. 1993. I listened, commenting now and then, as she talked about her separation from Nancy. Following my divorce in 2001, we chatted about men and me. Arlene wanted to introduce me to a couple of them on

21 Arlene Raven, Crossing Over: Feminism and Art of Social Concern (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1988), 27.

22 Crossing Over, 72.


24 Arlene Raven.

my next visit to New York. I spoke about living in Reno, which I never thought was a happy hunting ground for a lover let alone a partner. In frank and sexy language, full of girlfriends’ warmth, we made and critiqued possibilities; and we laughed. We met at a Starbucks in SoHo and, after hot drinks, left to see a number of shows. Our responses to them were the same, and our method of looking was too. If we weren’t interested, we stayed in the gallery a matter of seconds. We reflected, concisely, about the ossification, as Arlene called it, that can happen when people don’t recognize that they’re emotionally stuck. We agreed that a spiritual life moves one into greater flexibility. In our fifties, we began to talk about the importance of a spiritual life. She wrote a piece about my work in 2004 and titled it “From Her Lips to God’s Ear.” My heart beat faster, in the self-recognition that Arlene’s queer love gave so easily to me.

She took for granted my queerness in the most loving way. During one of our one- to two-hour phone conversations, late last century or early in this one, she offered, almost in passing, something like this: Of course, we all think you’re queer. What she conveyed to me is my belonging to a community, and her generosity struck me, as it always has. Arlene saw easily into the truth that is Joanna. No judgment about my heterosexual relationships or my writing about them. No suspicions that I was other than how I lived, no suggestion that I change. In her inimitably queer seeing of me, I could grow into my inimitably queer self. What a beautiful collaboration. In her book proposal she posits that collaboration “has been perhaps the most developed method of art-making in the feminist art community over the past eight years.”

We collaborated on the art of making a friend, on friendship as art making. What a glamorous way of getting personal.

Aphroditean Alignment
I was ripe when I heard “everybody feels queer” to free myself into greater glamour. I was more ready than before to award myself for being who I was. I expressed the necessity of people awarding themselves in a review of The Art of the Woman’s Building that appeared in the April 11, 1980 edition of The Chicago Reader. This is the concluding paragraph:

26 “Woman*Woman*Works,” unpaginated. Although Arlene lists the number of each beginning page of her nine chapters and a chronology in the contents of the proposal, only pages 1 to 6 in the proposal itself are paginated.
The women of the Woman's Building are trying to give up playing by society's rules. It is not that they see themselves as some kind of superwomen; rather, in this world, humane behavior requires an outlaw mentality, which in part proceeds from the desire to be good to one another. This is a far cry from Pollyanaism or smug benevolence. In a private performance by Raven at a restaurant after the opening, I perceived the meaning of this goodness. As she presented awards to her coworkers, I realized that in order to create a humane future, both women and men must find ways to award ourselves for being ourselves.27

We must grant ourselves our own wishes and award ourselves with praise. People need to give themselves a break from the negative self-criticism that disorders Aphroditean alignment, which is the agreement from soul to mind to body that we are good—deeply beautiful.

Already in 1980 I wrote art criticism in a distinctly personal and poetic style. My scholarly and critical interests in women's art and sexuality were clear, and looking at my curriculum vitae from the early 1980s, following my joyful absorption of "everybody feels queer," I see one startling move more deeply into my own beauty, the 1982 performance BRUMAS, which is a fictional narrative about a rock star, Brumas, whose intense sexuality, dissatisfying sex life, and disenchantment with the world in general lead her to a softening that transforms her, awakening her innocence.

Looking back at BRUMAS, I see myself expressed more clearly than in any of my previous writing. I see my eroticism and my passionate pain and my desire to release the latter and to explore the former without shame. Also, BRUMAS is the first performance for which I wrote lyrics and sang.28 Thomas Kochheiser, who I later married, composed the music and played electric guitar. As a student of mine last spring declared, more or less out of the blue, to some of his peers during class, “Joanna was a rocker!” Brumas cum Joanna is gorgeously queer as she finds herself, "a wholly heavenly dynamo,"29 who, through the mystery of words traveling through the soul-and-mind-inseparable-from-body, owes a profound part of her growing glamour to Arlene.

Brumas is wildly heterosexual and wildly resistant to heteronormativity. In Swooning Beauty: A Memoir of Pleasure, published in 2006, I spell out, poeticize, and theorize that queerness which surfaced almost twenty-five years earlier.30 I am so much freer to feel and express my glamour. I assert, “At the age of fifty-two, I realized I was a man,” and especially in the chapter titled ‘Fairy Beauty,” I write about my identification with gay men and celebrate their glamour.

Today I know you, Arlene, in your Aphroditean beauty. I see it in your big, loose curls of hair to your shoulders, your bright, sad eyes and sensual mouth, the serious stillness of your face and its sudden filling with laughter. I hear it in your tough-girl vocal inflections and tone. I feel it in your practice of ethics, which is the inimitable queerness that imparts integrity to your work. Arlene, my heart beats harder, I am writing from my aorta, which is located, I've been told, close to the surface of my body, closer than most people's, so close that I feel my pulse very easily, as easily as your generosity enlivened all my beauty, queer Aphrodite that, like you, I am. In Aphroditean alignment unto ourselves and with each other, in a sisterhood of glamour, we enable the practice of giving.

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27 Although I saved the review, I cut and pasted the newsprint onto two 8½ x 11-inch sheets of paper, printing the date but leaving out both the title given to the piece by The Chicago Reader and other citation information.

28 BRUMAS: A Rock Star’s Passage to a Life Re-Vamped (Oberlin, OH and Ukiah, CA: Freshcut Press, 1982), is the artist’s book that I produced from the performance. It includes the text and lyrics and also photos that were shot for the book and that do not document the performance. BRUMAS, the text, is included in Joanna Frueh, Clairvoyance (For Those In The Desert): Performance Pieces, 1979-2004 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), 2007.

29 BRUMAS: A Rock Star’s Passage, 24.

30 During my writing about “Swooning Beauty” for this piece, I received an email whose synchronicity amazed me. The letter came from Sachiko Nagasawa, a graduate student at the University of Toronto. I recently have read your book Swooning Beauty... I plan on using it for a Queer Theories paper and I would like to argue that your text could be used in Queer Theory by the ways you deconstruct the stability of gendered identities... and the many ways in which one can experience pleasure... I would hate to take your work out of context or project my feelings onto your work. Please let me know if you think your text could or should be read in a queer theories class.
The Voice of Arlene Raven in Art and Visual Culture Education

by Elizabeth Garber
I. Feminism and Art/Visual Culture Education

FEMINISM IS VISION, VOICE, AND THIS MOMENT…

Feminism is a CLICK which resounds in a woman-deaf and woman-blind world so intent on his own echo and image that women are rendered mute and invisible.

Feminism means enlightening the dark void and breaking this silence by naming and expressing the particulars underlying the vision and experience of women.¹

It’s the spring of 1986. We 14 or so women and one man sit in a circle twice a week for Joanna Frueh’s “Feminist Art Criticism.” It’s evening and we huddle, drawn close by the project of feminism, by the outside of this room that is still Judy Chicago’s art school experience.² One night, near the end, we read Arlene Raven. We read “Picture This or Why is Art Important?”, “The Eye of the Be*Hold*Her: The Lesbian Vision of Romaine Brooks;” “Dark Horse: New Paintings by Tom Knechtel;” “Lady-Unique-Inclination-of-the-Night”; “h a r m o n i e s.” And other writings. Raven is uncompromising in her writing. Feminism is crucial for women and for art. Feminism is the future. She explores the erotic, sometimes breaks free of social constraints and explores desire. Her writing evokes the art, works alongside of it. “I enter Harmony Hammond’s works. I am no longer looking at but begin standing among, joining with… I want to converse with…³

As other contributors to this volume indicate, Arlene Raven’s was an early and persistent voice that feminisms are plural. Writing about so-called “first” and “second generation” feminisms in “Cinderella’s Sisters’ Feet,” she charged that “the antagonism between them is fiction,” that feminist art rose from a community of women.⁴

When WITCH burned their bras at the 1968 Miss America Pageant, feminists publicly renounced longing for Cinderella in favor of her sisters—the vast sisterhood of the rest of us who, toes and heels severed, tried and failed to fit our bloodied feet into the modish shoe of cultural femininity. And in the process of trying and failing, exposed the myth.⁵

This article was an important seed in my own early work in art and visual culture education, in which a recurring theme was that contemporary feminist art criticism is a group of overlapping projects, with each project also representing the basis of a separate although not succinct strand. With the practice of art criticism in art education at the time emphasizing formal and expressive properties of art to the exclusion of understanding connections of art to cultural and social phenomena, feminist art criticism introduced to education gendered perspectives, plural and complex approaches to art, and a model of respect for differences. Arlene’s writing was a root of my conceptualization.⁶

¹ Arlene Raven, Picture This or Why is Art Important? (Houston, TX: The Judy Chicago Word & Image Network [1728 Bissonnet, 77005], 1982), unpaginated.

² My students today question if Judy Chicago’s art school experience could possibly have been as sexist as she described it.

³ Arlene Raven, h a r m o n i e s (Harmony Hammond), Pamphlet (Chicago, Illinois: Klein Gallery, 1982), unpaginated.


⁵ Raven, ibid., 6, 8-9.

⁶ For example, Elizabeth Garber, Feminist Polyphony: A Conceptual Understanding of Feminist Art Criticism in the 1980s (Ph.D. Diss., The Ohio State University, 1989); Elizabeth Garber “Implications of Feminist Art Criticism for Art Education,” Studies in Art Education 32,2 (1990): 17-26; and Elizabeth Garber, “Feminism, Aesthetics, and Art Education,” Studies in Art Education 33,4 (1992), 210-225. I also acknowledge the important influence Joanna Frueh’s work had on my work then.
Other educators at the time also noticed Arlene Raven’s work as opening pathways to the relevance of feminism to understanding art. Folklorist and art education scholar Kristin Congdon noted Raven as among a number of feminist scholars and artists who have helped us understand a “new and extended kind of identity” through connecting artworks with daily life. Art education scholars Congdon and Doug Blandy noted Arlene’s work helped us understand how the world had been visioned through the male gaze.

Having now taught art criticism for educational settings to hundreds of students, guiding them to examine their implicit and explicit beliefs about art as well as gender, race, and other lenses of understanding the world, my teaching (and no doubt, the teaching of some of my colleagues) is always guided by the foundations laid by feminist work. These students often become art teachers in schools, curriculum writers, or community workers in recreational settings or other community arts venues. It is through them that Arlene Raven’s respect and passion for the vision and voice of diverse peoples, especially women’s diversity, continues in educational settings.

II. Lesbian and Education

Finally the enemy is us. Ninja, Nancy Grossman’s leather and zipper covered wooden sculpture head (“Maelstrom”) is unzipped and undone, lips locked in a fierce grimace, yet the vulnerable back of the head exposed. Zipped: sight, speech, and thought enclosed. The wounded self is divided against the wounding self, with the potential to explode.

This passage, from an essay by Raven on violent art and its potential to heal, holds ramifications for the violence done in education and society at large to anyone who is different from the narrow norms of heterosexual culture. Within art education, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered/queer realities, identities and roles are at odds with conceptions of teaching as apolitical and asexual. Education is neither, of course. Education is inherently political, as education theorist Michael Apple has reiterated over the course of his career, training students to “naturalize” norms and values of those in power. And desire is a strong force within students in how they understand and interact, as well as a (usually unacknowledged) motivator for teachers. Arlene Raven wrote of the struggle lesbians faced within both art and feminist worlds. “Until the early 1970s,” she noted, “there was nobody [sic] of work that could be called lesbian art—the result of a painful conspiracy of silence between fearful lesbians and a homophobic society.” Believing in the “simple persistence and the will to go on working” as important to social change, she suggested a lesbian vision in writing of art created by women for women about women. A radical idea at the time, it is indicative of an ecology of ways that Raven challenged the status quo in art. Another way she did this was by writing about her partner’s art. This has been empowering to other women, one of them an art educator, Laurel Lampela, who comments, Just knowing that a lesbian feminist art critic was out there writing about women artists and feminist art was very important to me personally as a lesbian feminist and as an art educator. If a noted art critic was not afraid or concerned about how the art world might take her “in your face” approach to writing about art by women, then by god I can be confident to do what I need to do…. Raven’s courage and the courage of feminist artists and lesbian feminist artists helped me to feel more confident in writing about the accomplishments of lesbian artists and
why students need to be educated about the works and lives of lesbian artists...I thought about the monograph she wrote in the early 1990s about the work of her partner, Nancy Grossman. The support she gave her partner, a lesbian artist, helped me to see that it’s okay to write about my partner.  

All of us who care about LGBT/Q issues face a continuing struggle to create respect for differences in the current conservative culture of schooling, but it is clear from Laurel’s words that Arlene Raven and others have reinforced our fortitude and strategies to continue the struggle.

III. Social Justice and Education

Our processes prefigured the emerging public art practice today that moves fluidly among criticism, theory, art making, and activism. Our work was interactive and collaborative, our criticism of each other’s work mutual and participatory. We team taught, worked together on performances, created conferences, developed exhibitions, and wrote contextualizing theory... Our notion of common good centered on ideals of equality.  

This quotation comes from a volume edited by artist Suzanne Lacy; the essays in it indicate that feminism as part of social justice is a recurring theme in Raven’s writing in the late 1980s. Media bombardment, world survival, rape, pornography, violent art, peace and healing, homelessness, politics turned against the people and towards unapologetic profit for the wealthy, and global injustices such as starvation and United States intervention in Central America caught her attention as part of “carnivorous” male culture.  

Similar goals drive various overlapping strains of progressive pedagogy known as “feminist,” “liberatory,” “critical,” “radical,” and “visual culture:” education as a practice towards what social scientist and comparative education scholar Carlos Alberto Torres calls “substantive democracy,” through critically questioning assumptions and the status quo, and through creatively seeking ways and possibilities for social (including feminist) change. Crossing Over, the title of a collection of Raven’s essays, refers to crossing boundaries between art and life, art and audience, feminist and social concerns, lesbian and straight, arts disciplines, states of mind, communication between people. “Crossing over” is where feminism is now in most art and visual education: part of a larger whole of social justice concerns.  

In his book Criticizing Art, Understanding the Contemporary, art educator Terry Barrett featured Arlene Raven as a critic whose work could tell students something about art criticism, and particularly art criticism “‘inspired by feminism and the possibility of social change.’” Barrett’s books on art criticism are the most widely read source for knowing about and teaching art criticism in United States schools today. Barrett found Raven’s work important in its goals to inspire and educate for social change through the social topics she chose to write about, her incorporation of popular culture, and her play with writing style.  

The University of Arizona’s 2000 symposium “Art in the Public Interest,” named after Raven’s anthology of the same name, brought leading scholars, curators, and artists Dan Cameron, Suzanne Lacy, Mary Jane Jacob, and Arlene Raven together to discuss the creation of an interdisciplinary public art program. Andy Polk, printmaker and then-Chair of the Art Department, reflects:

14 Laurel Lampela, email communication with the author, April 15, 2007.


16 Phyllis Rosser and Toby Z. Liederman. Feminism and Art: Four Lectures by Arlene Raven; Women Artists News (September 1985), 10-11.

17 Torres distinguishes between formal and substantive democracy. Substantive democracy is located within what C.B. MacPherson has identified as “participatory democracy”. In “participatory democracy,” socially equal and conscious individuals contribute to building “a sense of community, of association, of belonging and joining.” Other types of democracy that MacPherson identifies are “protective democracy,” based on the hegemony of a market economy; “developmental democracy, based on elevating working-class people into rational beings who are ‘self-interested consumers and appropriators’ and democratic participants”; and “equilibrium democracy” (or “pluralist democracy”), where apathy among the majority of citizens is crucial to a functioning democracy because participation “overloads the system with demands which it cannot meet” [C.B. MacPherson, The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke (Oxford: Oxford University, 1962), 146-147]. Substantive and participatory democracy are not the democracy that is supported by corporations nor many school boards, as David Sehr points out in “Studying the Democratic School: A Theoretically Framed, Qualitative Approach;” Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Atlanta, Georgia, April 12-16, 1993; Full text available from ERIC database, ED367074). See Carlos Alberto Torres, Democracy, Education, and Multiculturalism: Dilemmas of Citizenship in a Global World (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).

The idea (and the title) were inspired by Arlene Raven’s book of the same name... As outlined in Raven’s book, such public art was not limited to large-scale sculptures or permanent murals, but could also include ephemeral works (performance, broadcast, and temporary on-site installations). For me, Raven’s book was the first (and at the time most important) book to talk about art in public places from the standpoint of social and cultural responsibility, and it did so comprehensively. What I found through my efforts was that there was (and I assume still is) a profound interest in such a focus, and that there were very few programs such as that envisioned. Individuals from across the state and country expressed interest and enthusiasm for the idea.¹⁹

Andy Polk’s message ends by saying, “Sadly, due to economic and philosophical shifts at the time, the program never came together.” Arlene Raven was, and still is, ahead of her time. One of the contributions Arlene Raven made during the seminar was a willingness to ask hard questions, to approach without sentiment social issues in art. While my notes from the seminar are rather incomplete, what she posed were questions similar to some of her writings:

“Is such work as empowering for the onlooker as for the creator?”²⁰

“And do artists working in the public interest produce credible, rich works of art that audiences who may not necessarily go to a gallery, museum, or theater can know?”²¹

“... in the healing [that many publicly engaged artists strive for] we always find the wound. Defending the defenseless, needy, and desperate may stir up a devastating disorder.”²²

In asking hard questions, Raven encourages art and education scholars to consider the deeper points of the work, beyond the initial grand ideas. She carries us closer to understanding and implementing social justice.

IV. Art Criticism and Education

CLICK
I was a woman writing.
I began to write for women.

And Picture This:
The sight and sound of
CLICK
At this moment
changes the whole picture.²³

The essay Picture This, or Why is Art Important? protested women’s lack of an important role in art (“every woman must confront the blank wall without her reflection in the world”²⁴) and the hope for women to shape the future of art. The form of the essay was important, as was often the case in Arlene Raven’s writing. A five-part story, the tempo built a crescendo across the first three parts from calm to a shouted realization that women aren’t part of the art picture. The repeated word “CLICK” (that Raven borrowed from feminist writer Jane O’Reilly) in parts three and four had several functions: as a metaphor for picture taking (a play on the title), the sound of a camera shutter clicking, and an earthshaking revelation.

In 1995, Arlene Raven was invited to Ohio State’s summer Colloquium on Teaching Contemporary Art for teachers.²⁵ Colloquium organizer Sydney Walker notes that Arlene was invited because her “writing about [artist Sandy] Skoglund brought substance and depth to work that might have been received

¹⁹ Andy Polk, email communication with the author, April 8, 2007.
²⁰ Raven, “Not a Pretty Picture,” 106.
²² Ibid.
²³ Raven, “Picture This,” unpaginated.
²⁴ Ibid.
²⁵ The Institute was organized by Ohio State faculty member Sydney Walker and included Sandy Skoglund as the featured artist; Arlene Raven as featured critic; and Terry Barrett (Ohio State), Sally McRorie (Florida State), and Elizabeth Garber (University of Arizona) as faculty.
as less than serious, entertaining fare, but hardly worthy of serious critical attention. Arlene’s insights definitely challenged and alter any such perceptions.”  

In her presentation to teachers in the colloquium, Arlene emphasized that to understand and interact with art, a viewer needed to come from the physical properties of the work as well as to be informed about the artist, the social context, the style and schools of artists, and communities. As a way to meet this challenge, she noted, she was then visiting artists’ studios five days a week. Most critics, she observed, overlay their opinions on top of the work rather than looking for a synergy between the art and the critic’s interests.

Most of Arlene’s presentation to the colloquium was in the form of a back-and-forth conversation with Sandy Skoglund, in which she looked for connections between the work, the artist, and her own ideas. It was this performance of her approach to criticism that made an impression.

Raven’s performance at the colloquium connects to what she wrote about art criticism: “I regard critical writing at its best as containing the truth of art—of fiction and metaphor—rather than merely of facts… I have lost interest in giving opinions and constructing arguments that lead to judgments about the ‘value’ of artworks… [they] lead to a kind of conformity of thought within a monolithic merit system… antithetical to art.”  

These approaches to writing art criticism, as a collaborative act between artist and critic, hold parallels to the way artists in the public interest work: the art (or criticism) is about the communication, about the values communicated, about social change. This way of working connects to photographer and theorist Deborah Bright’s observation that language employed in the classroom is of critical importance because “the words we use are ideology made flesh.”  

In teaching about art and its importance as part of culture and social change, those of us in art education turn to Arlene Raven as a clear example of impassioned, informed writing with a physical as well as intellectual impact.

V. Arlene Raven and Education

Art and visual culture educator Peg Speirs interviewed Arlene Raven for her dissertation on feminist art education. Peg writes that she sought Arlene out, because she made historically significant contributions to the teaching of art, writing about art, and the making of art by women…. As a co-founder of the Feminist Studio Workshop and as a teacher in higher education for many years, Arlene’s influence and legacy continues as generations of students who have become teachers pass on what they learned from her to others.

The dissertation drew from fourteen interviews that Speirs conducted with feminist artists and educators, through which she identified recurring, overlapping themes relevant to feminist art education. In discussing Arlene’s influences, Peg highlighted Arlene’s approaches to pedagogy that have influenced her own teaching.

Arlene believed in teaching by example. She maintained a sense of openness and a degree of humility when working with students, seeing each as a person and not just as a student. Arlene believed in customizing education by getting to know her students and working from their interests. Because she educated future artists, Arlene provided her students with practical information that she felt every artist would need in order to succeed. She taught her students how to write about their own work rather than depend solely on art critics to do it for them. And following the philosophy of the Feminist Studio Workshop, Arlene created community in her classroom by establishing a climate of support where students talked and listened to each other about their work.
Arlene's sense of community carried into her writing as well and has influenced me as a researcher. Arlene would weave different voices with her own and include her whole community, acknowledging all the voices that contributed to a project or idea. Over the years Arlene continued to give support by following people along in their careers. When I co-edited an anthology, Arlene called to congratulate us on our achievement.  

Arlene Raven isn’t part of most class readings these days, but she is a persistent influence on those of us who have worked intensively in feminist art education and in art criticism. Going back through my folders and writings, I see how much I owe a debt to her. After my review of *Crossing Over* was published, she wrote me and said thanks for noticing the craft in her writing. I wish I could write her back after this rethinking of her work and tell her thanks for inspiring me all these years. I’ll do that by keeping her voice and her ideas alive in feminist and social justice education.

31 Speirs, email communication.
ARLENE RAVEN: CRITIC, ADVOCATE, ARTS ACTIVIST, AND FRIEND

by Maren Hassinger and Leslie King-Hammond
The last six years in the life of Arlene Raven were in part spent working with Maren Hassinger developing an artistic community and critical infrastructure for the Rinehart School of Sculpture at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). In reality the impact and role of Arlene Raven's life at MICA and the Rinehart School of Sculpture has a long, important history largely unknown to many in today's art world.

This part of the story begins in 1969 when I, Leslie, met Arlene as we began our doctoral studies at Johns Hopkins University in the Department of Art History. The following year Lowery Stokes Sims joined the program at Hopkins and we three unknowns began what became a lifelong journey of discovery, growth and friendship. It was a volatile period in history and we were in the vortex of that history—Anti-war, Civil Rights, feminist, Gay Liberation, and the Black Power Movements. We three were like “Snap, Crackle, and Pop” in no particular order, as we engaged and were enraged by the politics of our times. We laughed, yelled, talked, debated, and argued as we sought to define our individual and collective sense of self and agency.

At the time Arlene was married to Tim Corkery who was the Dean of Continuing Studies at MICA. Corkery was looking for someone to teach some classes on “Black Art” and Arlene asked if I might be interested. I began to teach at MICA, got married, and completed my doctorate at Hopkins. Arlene decided to get a divorce and move to Los Angeles and became a founding member of the West Coast Feminist Movement. Lowery left Hopkins to join the Community Affairs Department at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

In the 1970s and 1980s Baltimore, New York, and Los Angeles became the triangulation from which we continued to work and stay connected. Arlene and her new partner, sculptor Nancy Grossman, became “Aunties” to my son Rassaan while Lowery and Joyce Scott, a multimedia artist, became the “Godmothers.” Intellectually, as we developed our individual voices and critical expertise, we grew closer as we continued to work and consult each other regarding projects, exhibitions, publications, politics, and aesthetic issues.

My career at MICA expanded, I was appointed Dean of Graduate Studies in 1976 and continued to teach. In 1983, Arlene and Nancy were living in NYC. Lowery had become part of the Twentieth Century Department curatorial team at the Met. Whenever possible I would try to get to New York to hang out with Arlene, Nancy, and Lowery who were serious movie junkies and often had movie marathons in Nancy and Arlene’s loft in SoHo.

In 1992 MICA awarded Lowery an Honorary Doctorate, and Arlene and Nancy came to celebrate Lowery’s achievements. Nancy drove her beloved 1970s vintage Cadillac, which broke down upon arrival in Baltimore. They all stayed at my house, including Lowery’s sister, Ann, and her mother, Bernice. According to my son Rassaan, “that was just too many women in one house.” We had a riotous time laughing, eating, telling stories, and deconstructing the art world—it was an awesome, profound moment in our lives and in my memory. The result of that experience was that I invited Arlene in the fall semester to be my Critic in Residence for a class I taught on “Perspectives in Criticism.” The art world was in a constant state of upheaval with the emergence of multi-culturalism, the culture wars, post-modernism and identity politics. I was having difficulty getting the students to communicate with each other and to come to terms with the evolving realities of the art world and the possibilities for their futures.

Arlene Raven arrived at MICA, entered the classroom and listened to the students voice their concerns about themselves and their future. She asked the students hard questions which made them stop and think about what they expected from their educational experience, and their futures. Arlene broke them up into small groups to make the students interact instead of react. In the following weeks she gave assignments that created two-person teams who had to
communicate outside of class and then each had to present the results of that experience to the full class. The results were as hilarious as they were horrendous and the students were in awe of Arlene’s dynamic, disciplined, yet compassionate, skills that brought light to their reality as artists and human beings. It was a revelatory experience for all involved in the class that year. In retrospect it was, for me, a personal and professional epiphany. I, too, became Arlene’s student. It was one of the many gifts that Arlene brought to MICA.

In 1997 Maren Hassinger was hired as the Director of the Rinehart School of Sculpture at MICA. She was the first woman and the first person of color in the history of that program to be the Director of the Rinehart School. In 1999, Maren replaced retiring sculptor Salvatore Scarpitta (1919-2007) after twenty-five years as Rinehart’s Artist in Residence with Arlene Raven. Arlene became the first Critic in Residence at Rinehart. She was crucial to the vision of a new era in the education and training of sculptors in the twenty-first century.

Arlene’s legacy will always be remembered with a scholarship fund established to support the students in Rinehart and art history programs at MICA. Nothing can replace the memory of Arlene’s love and passion for her students, artists, family and friends. She was a friend and colleague to me in ways I am still trying to comprehend and accept—we were blessed to be in her circle.

I, Maren, first became aware of Arlene Raven in 1973 in Los Angeles during a period of seminal feminist exhibitions many of which were inspired by Judy Chicago and Arlene Raven. We met in 1996 when Arlene was writing a review for the Village Voice of the Neuberger Museum Biennale in Purchase, New York. I was hanging “blossoms” (pink plastic bags filled with good wishes) in the trees. Arlene was fascinated. Later, she often talked of that meeting. In 2000 I invited Arlene to become part of the faculty for the Rinehart School of Sculpture. I was an experienced sculptor and “new” director but Arlene was already a seasoned critic and curator. Her presence in the Rinehart community was crucial to everything I aspired to for young sculptors to realize during their studies at MICA.

The most important thing Arlene did was create a sense of community where there was none. Writing workshops, highly personal critiques, and selected readings—heavy on the pedagogy and sculpture—praxis were her three-fold method. As part of that practice, frequent visits to artist’s studios were encouraged, attending openings of peers’ exhibitions were mandatory, and written responses to writers who had reviewed or discussed your art in print. This attitude was “a how to” course in how to behave as a student who was fast becoming a professional.

Sometimes writing workshops were supported by additional readings. For example, there was a time when every student kept a daily diary—writing three pages without fail. This was suggested by Julia Cameron in The Vein of Gold. The writing workshops themselves had several dimensions. They were a way students became articulate about what they were doing. This interaction always helped their work proceed on a more profound path. Because the workshop often involved one student talking about their work for an extended time while their partner student “took dictation,” the students became intimate with one another’s lives and thoughts and invariably community began to happen. What a glory those workshops were….

Arlene rarely chose theoretical readings, she much preferred readings about writing, readings about teaching, and readings about artists. All of this reality had a practical bent. She thought the teaching readings she assigned were important, since many of the students would become teachers and she wanted to avoid, as much as possible, continued bad behavior in the classroom. No more teaching in a “banking method,” where the teacher deposits information to the students,
or becomes a “dictator at the dais.” So we read Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire and Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom by bell hooks. The last of these teaching books was Frank McCourt’s autobiographical Teacher Man, documenting his thirty years in a high school classroom. I can hear her saying, “it’s a great book.” The last artist book she chose for us was by and about Vik Muniz called Reflex: A Vik Muniz Primer. It accompanied a major exhibition of his work. He was a neighbor of hers in Brooklyn and she was quite taken with his work. The book was a beauty, just a beauty—an artwork to treasure. Arlene could also accept reading suggestions. One of these was the gorgeous Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art, edited by Jacqueline Baas and Mary Jane Jacob, suggested by a student, Sungmi Lee, who is a Buddhist.

All of these experiences, including the two or three times a year she took us to New York for field trips were handled with what looked like minimal effort. She led tours of artist’s studios for twenty-one years with her Women’s Art Group. So, her skills at artist, gallery, and museum visits were well honed. Invariably we’d arrive Friday evening all disheveled from Baltimore for a free night at the Whitney Museum of American Art and cross the street afterwards for dinner at the Three Guys Restaurant. Saturday, we would have brunch at the loft Arlene shared with her partner of more than twenty years, Nancy Grossman. Nancy provided a spread of edibles unmatched in quantity and variety and treated us all with absolute generosity and good humor. Often Arlene invited neighborhood artists to brunch with us. Later that afternoon, we would visit artist studios and Chelsea Galleries. At other times we would visit Brooklyn or Queens non-profit spaces and were given tours.

Sometimes when we discussed books Arlene could take large, large ideas and digest them and respond to them in a single sentence. This ability was Arlene’s gift—a brilliant, knife-edge mind and never a wasted word. Yet she was always kind and unfailingly generous with her time, often doing line edits of writing samples for our flock at Rinehart. During the spring of 2006 it became hard for Arlene to get around because of increasing physical limitations. She had hurt a hip and used a cane. But whenever I retrieved her from the train station she was radiantly smiling. She wanted to be with the Rinehart students and Artists in Residence Ming Fay and Alan Finkel. At Arlene’s suggestion Alan Finkel had become Rinehart’s second Artist in Residence. She believed, rightly so, that Alan’s knowledge would be invaluable to students. I had chosen Ming Fay as our first Artist in Residence a year prior for all that he knows and brings to the students.

Outside of Rinehart, Arlene and I became great friends. I miss her so much. I have rarely felt the kind of support she offered. First and foremost, she was pragmatic and a woman of few words. When I asked her to write some notes for me for a solo show I was having in Baltimore at Loyola College Art Gallery she composed a beautifully written and poetic statement. I was unsure about a quote she had taken from the Bible and, without taking a breath she simply said, “if you don’t like it, I’ll take it out.” And she did. In my experience, an artist is rarely offered this level of respect. That’s what motivated all of Arlene’s existence—the unconditional support of the art making process and its practitioners. It was at the root of her pedagogy. It was everything.

I was having a solo show at David Allen Gallery in Brooklyn. Arlene said, “You’ve gotta have a party. Nancy and I will have it at our place.” She believed I needed that celebration and she knew parties were important in the art world. She and Nancy organized it along with Rinehart students. It was a fabulous event. Friends new and old attended. There was music and dancing and loads of good fattening food. Arlene and I danced. She was a great dancer….

Donations may be sent to Arlene Raven Scholarship Fund, MICA, Development Office, 1300 West Mount Royal Avenue, Baltimore, MD, 21217.
Leslie King-Hammond curated this exhibition as part of The Feminist Art Project events in conjunction with the College Art Association’s 2007 Annual Conference, held in New York, NY. The exhibition was held at Ceres Gallery, 547 West 27th Street, Suite 201, New York, NY. The dates of the exhibition were February 1-24, 2007. There was no catalog for this exhibition and this text is intended by the author to serve as introduction and acknowledgements.

Over the past thirty years the art world has witnessed the emergence of women artists who have increasingly articulated a broad range of aesthetic vision and artistic concerns. Those visions and political issues emerged as the feminist art movement in the early 1970’s. “Agents of Change: Women, Art and Intellect” became part of a nation-wide The Feminist Art Project initiative to show the impact women artists have had on American art since the advent of the feminist Movement. This showcase included some of the founding artists of this movement, as well as artists who are pushing beyond the borders of feminism. Not all the artists believe themselves to be feminist or even identify with the ideology of that movement. More important however, are the larger complex questions that engage these artists about what it means to be a woman and an artist in the current tide of our conflicted and challenged history as was recognized by The New York Times critic, Holland Cotter.1

The attitudes, politics, and intellect of women artists have re-visioned our assumptions and expectations of female contributions to the legacy of America’s cultural and artistic heritage.

This exhibition reflected a wide range of generations, artists, and artistic possibilities. The diversity of personal and political ideologies among this select group of artists is far reaching and without any specific unifying stance except that they are all women who are artists of enormous artistic, intellectual, and conceptual vision. The role of the feminist art movement is particularly indebted to the exceptional criticism and scholarship of Arlene Raven (1944 – 2006). Raven gave meaning, definition, theory, and affirmation to the long overdue recognition of women artists. “Agents of Change” celebrates Raven’s contributions as one of the founding members of the feminist art movement. Raven was an especially ardent supporter, scholar, mentor, and teacher to female artists who sought a means to express their aesthetic sense of self. This exhibition was created to salute the tradition and heritage of women artists and the legacy of Arlene Raven who helped center, within the consciousness of America, the dynamic contributions and role of women artists.

The works of Frances Barth, Judy Chicago, Renee Cox, Lesley Dill, Mimi Gross, Joyce Kozloff, Sungmi Lee, Faith Ringgold, Alison Saar, Betye Saar, Miriam Schapiro, Joyce Scott, Kay Walking-Stick, Kara Walker, Deborahah Willis, Nancy Grossman, Grace Hartigan, The Guerrilla Girls, Maren Hassinger, and Ana Mendieta are select examples of the vitality of creativity and artistry that has become essential to America and the world. These works and the efforts of these artists, individually and collectively, have become crucial “Agents of Change” to the future of the aesthetic heritage of America and the world.

This particular project was part of an enormous collaborative effort on the part of numerous individuals, patrons, students, artists, galleries. Acknowledgements are extended to Emmanuel Lemakis, Nancy Grossman, Phyllis Rosser, Anne Swartz, Dena Muller, Tiffany Calvert, Ferris Olin, Judith Brodsky, Nicole Plett, Stefany Benson, the Ceres Gallery members, René Treviño, Jennifer Lee, José Mapily, Lowery Stokes Sims, Bernice Steinbaum, Sue Kaufman, Mira Desai, Nora Berlin, Vals Osborne, Joan B. Reutershan, Frances Benson, Sherry Zukoff, Rhoda Greenberg, Marti Minker, Lynn Surry, Jeanne Huggins Thugut, Robert Thugut, Kate Weschler, Elizabeth Wakefield, Susan Hines, Lynn Dodd, Anonymous in memory of Arlene Raven, Mary Ross Taylor and Virginia B. Galtney, The Toby Devan Lewis Fund for Emerging Artists, the College Art Association, and the Maryland Institute College of Art.


This exhibition became the focus of my class on “Women in the History of Art.” The following students participated in the endless details, research and design of this modest exhibition. I am deeply appreciative of the contributions to this project by Jocelyn Bocchino, Allison Braun, Juan Budet, Andrea Chung, Kathryn Dambach, Annamarie Damron, Rebecca DiMreo, Alexandra Ebright, Nuria Frances, Alicia Gravois, Medeline Gray, David Hayes, Jane Hitchings, Sarah Jablecki, Young-Jae Jang, Jules Joseph, Seung-Yeon Jung, Yeon-Ju Jung, Lorie Chris Kim, Maureen Kinsella, Jong Sun Lee, Seul Ki Lee, Benjamin Leuthold, Stephanie London, Paul Manning, Katherine Miller, Sarah Mires, Christina Nixon, Lindsay Orlowski, Sandra M. Parra Oldenburg, Kimberly Raschdorf, Kellie Romany, Leslie Smith, Christine Tran, Abigail Uhtege, Carlos Vigil, Rachel Ward, Kristy Yang, and Chiu-Chen Yeh.

Please see exhibition-related images starting on page 42.
ARLENE RAVEN: (IN PROGRESS) 
CHRONOLOGY

by Anne Swartz

The list that follows is not comprehensive and many of the citations listed here are incomplete, due to limited access to all the resources necessary to make them complete. Please note that the Estate of Arlene Raven is in the process of cataloguing the entire Archive of Arlene Raven, which will be deposited at the Miriam Schapiro Archive of Women Artists at the Libraries of Rutgers University. The reader is also advised that Arlene worked on her ideas over long periods of time, returning to them, considering issues about an artist's work in extended writing alongside completing shorter reviews of the work. Additionally, the Estate of Arlene Raven has several files of research in which Arlene was engaged, but has not published. The Estate plans to publish this material in the future to make it widely available. Nancy Grossman offered me much assistance in compiling the information that is included here.

Political Affiliation: Students for a Democratic Society, Democrat

Memberships: College Art Association, Art International Association of Art Critics, U.S. Chapter.
(AICA/USA), National Writers Union

Listed:
Who's Who in the East, 21st edition
Who's Who of Emerging Leaders in America, 1st edition
1944: Born to Joseph and Annette (Latin) Rubin on July 12 in Baltimore, Maryland

1949: Began attending Arlington Grammar School and Peabody Institute for Music (where Arlene studied piano)

Sister Phyllis is born (year?)

1956: Began attending Garrison Junior High School

1957: Valedictorian of Bat Mitzvah class—Beth Jacobs Sunday School, once a week

1958: Began attending Forrest Park High School, Baltimore

1961: Began attending Hood College, Frederick, Maryland

1962:

1963: Exchange student in Madrid Spain; Arlene was proficient in Spanish

Arlene became known as the "existentialist in pigtails," a nickname which appeared in a brochure about the Father/Daughter Day and remained with her throughout her life

1965:

1966: AB, Hood College, Frederick, Maryland

1967: Master's in Fine Art at George Washington University, Washington, DC

1968:

1969: Youngest faculty member at Corcoran School of Art, Columbia division

Started attending Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, and was awarded a fellowship under Title IV


1971: MA, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland

1972: Attended the Conference of Women in the Visual Arts at the Corcoran School of Art in Washington, D.C.; decides to move to California

Helped found the Women's Caucus for Art founded at College Art Association annual convention. Women's Caucus of College Art Association (CAA) founded at annual meeting in San Francisco (later becomes Women's Caucus for Art)

Raped and kidnapped by two men in Baltimore, Maryland, one week before leaving to go to California to complete research on feminist art.

May: Judy Chicago interviewed Arlene Raven for Abulutions, which involved aural testimonies of rape. This interview became Arlene’s first discussion of her rape experience; performed with the taped interviews in Venice, California.

Separates from Tim Corkery and moves to California.

Teaching assistant for Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro at Cal Arts (California Institute of the Arts)

1973: Grant from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1973


Feminist Studio Workshop (FSW) founded by Judy Chicago, Sheila de Bretteville, and Arlene Raven (Sheila and Arlene continued to teach at CalArts)

November 28: Helped found The Woman’s Building (at 743 S. Grandview)


1974:


1975:

Raven, Arlene and Judy Chicago. Judy Chicago discusses her work, sound recording (Valencia, CA: California Institute of Arts, 1975?).

Chicago, Judy and Arlene Raven. Feminist Art History, sound recording (Valencia, CA: California Institute of Arts, 1975?).


“Conversation between Eleanor Antin, Judy Chicago, Arlene Raven, Ruth Iskin, Sheila de Brettville,” Ms. (July 1975).


Chrysalis, a magazine of women’s culture, established at the Los Angeles Woman’s Building by Sheila de Brettville, Kirsten Grimstad, Ruth Iskin, Arlene Raven and Susan Rennie. Contributing editors include Mary Daly, Lucy Lippard, Audre Lorde, Linda Nochlin, Gloria Orenstein and Adrienne Rich.

Raven, Arlene. “Your Goodbye left me with eyes that cry (Lili Lakich),” Chrysalis, a magazine of women’s culture, no. 5 (October/November 1975): 54-57.


Woman’s Building relocates to 1727 N. Spring Street; includes Womanspace; Feminist Studio Workshop run by Arlene Raven, Sheila Levant de Bretteville, and Judy Chicago; the co-op galleries Grandview 1 and 2; Sisterhood Bookstore; the Los Angeles chapter of the National Organization for Women.

Received grant from the California Arts Commission, 1975

Raven, Arlene. Interview with Judy Chicago, 1975. (In Judy Chicago archive)

Arlene completed the Feminist Studio Workshop

1976:


1977:


Advisor, Arts Committee, Committee on the Observance of International Women’s Year, 1977

Served on the California Committee on Status of Women, 1977-83

Raven, Arlene. Lecture on Georgia O’Keeffe given at Stanford University, October 1977


Curator, Your 5,000 Years Are Up! (LaJolla, CA: La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, University of California at San Diego, 1977).

1978:

1979:
HHD, Honorary degree from Hood College, Frederick, Maryland


Fellow, National Education Association.

Zora, “Zora’s Interview with and of Judy Chicago and Arlene Raven,” Artes Visuales (Mexico), no. 9 (Spring 1979): 26-9, 62-4 (in Spanish and English).


Raven, Arlene. “Eleanor Antin: What’s Your Story?,” Chrysalis, a magazine of women’s culture, no. 8 (Summer 1979): 43-51.

Kaprow, Allan, Arlene Raven, Kate Horsfield, and Lyn Blumenthal. Allan Kaprow, videorecording (Chicago, IL: Video Data Bank, 1979).


An Oral Herstory of Lesbianism was a play conceived by Terry Wolverton, and collaboratively created out of the life stories of 13 lesbians: Jerri Allyn, Nancy Angelo, Leslie Belt, Chutney Gunderson, Brook Hallock, Sue Maberry, Louise Moore, Arlene Raven, Catherine Stifter, Cheryl Swannack, Christine Wong, Terry Wolverton and Cheri Gaulke. (Cover of program, poem by Arlene Raven).


High Performance, issue 8, vol. 2, no. 4 (Winter 1979-80): cover (photograph of Arlene Raven kissing Catherine Stifter from the Lesbian Art Project, The Oral Herstory of Lesbianism, 1979), photographed by Jo Goodwin.)

Feminist Studio Workshop closes

Received National Endowment for the Arts Critics’ Fellowship, 1979

1980:

Raven, Arlene. “[title of article not known],” High Performance, issue 11/12, 3, 3/4, (Fall/Winter 1980): 159.


Jacqueline Skiles papers, 1963-1980. Correspondence with Arlene Raven about the Feminist Program at California Institute of the Arts, and with family members, colleagues and business associates; teaching material; papers relating to a discrimination complaint filed by Skiles against Ramapo College, NJ; announcements; posters; a sketch; printed papers; biographical data; miscellany; and a photograph of Skiles by Barbara Williams.

1981:
Becomes member of faculty, Otis/Parsons, L.A., 1981-83

1982:
Becomes member of faculty, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, 1982-83
Raven, Arlene. Picture this, or, why is art important [Houston: The Judy Chicago Word & Image Network [1728 Bissonnet Street, Houston, Texas 77005]], 1982.
Raven, Arlene. Harmony是一名nics (Harmony Hammond), pamphlet (Chicago, IL: Klein Gallery, 1982).

1983:
Raven, Arlene. Lecture: “Dr. Arlene Raven Responding to Subject : Women,” Exhibition - Subject: Women, University Art Galleries [exact location unknown], (September 12 - October 23, 1982), October 1, 1982.
Recipient Vesta Award for Woman's Building, leaves the board of directors of the Woman's Building, though she remains involved in the project
Moves from California to New York
Raven, Arlene. “Passion/Passage: Arlene Raven looks at Cheri Gaulke's 'This is my Body' (review),” High Performance, issue 21, 6, 1 (1983): 14-17.

1984:


Received National Endowment for the Arts Critics’ Fellowships, 1984


1985:
Fellow, National Education Association.


Raven, Arlene. "We did not move from theory: we moved to the sorest wounds," Rape, exhibition catalogue with essays by Arlene Raven and Susan Carinella-McDonald. (Columbus, Ohio: University Gallery of Fine Arts, Ohio State University, 1985.) (Raven’s essay republished in Crossing Over: Feminism and Art of Social Concern (Contemporary American Art Critics, No 10) (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1988).)


1986:


Raven, Arlene. Lecture: "Reading Exposure: Women and Their Art," Small Press Center, Tuesday, March 10, 1986 (Broadcasted on WNYE (91.5FM).

Raven, Arlene. "Pina Bausch: The Seven Deadly Sins (review)," High Performance, issue 33, 9, 1 (Spring 1986): 78.


Raven, Arlene. "Lily Tomlin and Jane Wagner In Search Of...," High Performance 34, vol. 9, no. 2 (Summer 1986).


Raven, Arlene. "The Arties - award ceremony for 20th C. avant-garde artist who have contributed to popular culture)," New Art Examiner (October, 1986).


1987:


Raven, Arlene. Lecture: “Women artists of the ’80s.” Art Institute of Chicago School, Chicago, IL.


1988:


Raven, Arlene. "Here Comes the Neighborhood (100 Years: A tradition of social and political art on the lower east side)," Village Voice, 33, 27 (July 5, 1988): 82.


1989:


Participated in Barbara Smith’s The Celebration of the Squash,” performed at “Fashion Moda in the Bronx” (Raven played one of the three wise women.)


Raven, Arlene. ‘Dare to Deviate,” Village Voice (November 21, 1989).


1990:

Raven, Arlene. Lecture: “Firing the Canon: Feminism, Art History and the Status of the canonical,” WCA Ohio Chapter – College Art Association Annual Conference, 1990, Other speakers besides Arlene Raven were Linda Nochlin and Griselda Pollock, listed in brochure on page 11.


Panel participant at Alternative Museum, NYC; on Domestic Violence in conjunction with “The Domestic Violence Project” exhibition including Arlene Raven, Art Historian and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project, and Roberta Richman, Warden, Rhode Island Department of Corrections, and Artist, and artist Peggy Diggs.

1991:
Woman’s Building closes


1992:


In the Last Hour: Sandy Skoglund: Photo/Sculpture, texts by Arlene Raven and Gloria Picazo, exhibition catalogue (Norman, OK: The University of Oklahoma, 1995).


1993:


1994:


1995:


Raven, Arlene. "Superskywoman- La Caduta: Things I Know you should know - by Coco Gordon (Se Tu Sapessi – Arlene Raven’s poem)," The Print Collector’s Newsletter, 26, 2 (1995).


Ora Lerman: Inside the ark, a mural commissioned by Percenter for Art/New York, painter’s prologue by Ora Lerman; preface by Margaret Mathews-Berenson; essay by Phyllis Braff; epilogue by Arlene Raven (New York: O. Lerman, 1995).


1996:


Becomes member of faculty, Parsons School of Design, 1996-2000.

Large Drawings and Objects from The Arkansas Art Center Foundation Collection, edited by Townsend Wolfe, et al, essay by Arlene Raven (Little Rock, AK: Arkansas Arts Center, 1996).


1997:


March 4: Lecture by Arlene Raven, “Kate Millett in an Art Historical Context,” University of Maryland Baltimore County, Fine Arts Gallery in conjunction with “Kate Millett, Sculptor: The First 38 Years.”


1998:


ARLENE RAVEN: (IN PROGRESS) CHRONOLOGY  

ANNE SWARTZ
2003:
Medal and Certificate of Honor from The Veteran Feminists of America: Salute to Feminists in the Visual Arts: panel with Arlene Raven, Gloria Orenstein, Miriam Schapiro, Judith Brodsky, Faith Ringgold, Betsy Damon, Susan Schwalb, and Suzanne Benton.


2004:
Received the Monette/Horwitz Trust 2004 Award, which honors individuals and organizations for their significant contributions toward eradicating homophobia


2005:

Began conceptualizing idea with Judy Chicago, then Susan Fisher Sterling, that would become The Feminist Art Project, now administered by Rutgers University

2006:
Member, Professional Women’s Advisory Board, Biography Institute


May: Presented with a special award from the International Association of Art Critics, US Chapter

August 1, Arlene Raven died at home, from cancer
Contributors

Jerri Allyn creates interactive installations and performance art events for site-oriented spaces that become a part of public life. An artist and scholar, Allyn develops structures that allow for participation and various opinions. She is best known as a founding member of The Waitresses and Sisters of Survival, seminal public performance art groups of the Feminist Art Movement. Internationally exhibited, Allyn has been grant funded and commissioned for 25 years.

Tanya Augsburg is Assistant Professor of Liberal Studies at San Francisco State University. She is author of Becoming Interdisciplinary: An Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies, 2nd Ed. (Kendall/Hunt, 2006). She has recently completed editing a volume of critical essays on the work of Joanna Frueh.

Johanna Burton is the editor of Cindy Sherman (2006), a collection of critical essays on the artist for MIT Press’s October Files series. She authored an article on the women-only art magazine Eau de Cologne, published last year in Witness to Her Art (eds. Rhea Anastas and Michael Bresn, Center for Curatorial Studies, 2006). A faculty member of Bard College’s Center for Curatorial Studies and Columbia University’s School of the Arts, she was a critical issues fellow in the Whitney Independent Study Program and is presently writing her dissertation at Princeton University on appropriation in American art of the 1980s.

Joanna Frueh is an art critic and art historian, a writer, an actress, a singer, and a multidisciplinary and performance artist. Her most recent books, Swooning Beauty: A Memoir of Pleasure and Clairvoyance (For Those In The Desert): Performance Pieces 1979-2004 (2008), feature the exploration of love, eros, sex, beauty, the body, and human relations that are characteristic of her work. Frueh is Professor of Practice in the School of Art at the University of Arizona.

Elizabeth Garber is Professor of Art and Visual Culture Education at the University of Arizona. Her research revolves around how art and visual culture education can contribute to social justice, and concentrated on feminist and cultural theory, craft, and public and community arts. Before becoming involved with education, she was a ceramicist and photographer living in the country and working at a sustainable life style; before that, she was a student activist for Civil Rights, the environment, and women’s rights.

Maren Hassinger has been Director of the Rinehart School of Sculpture at Maryland Institute College of Art, one of the oldest programs of its type in America. The Los Angeles native has mounted many solo exhibitions and participated in more than 120 group shows. Her work is included in more than 34 catalogs and in the public collections of AT&T and the Pittsburgh Airport. The Anonymous Was A Woman and International Association of Art Critics awards recipient has performed at the Museum of Modern Art, been reviewed in Art in America, The New York Times, and ARTnews, and received grants from the Gottlieb Foundation, Joan Mitchell Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Leslie King-Hammond is Dean of Graduate Studies at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, Maryland and is a nationally respected scholar, educator, author, curator and visual artist who has organized countless exhibitions. She is also professor of art history and the former president of the College Art Association. In addition to an extensive publication record, her art has been exhibited widely.

Tom Knechtel is an artist living in Los Angeles. He is a professor at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena and is represented by Marc Selwyn Fine Arts, where there was an exhibition of his work in May 2007.

Sungmi Lee was born in Seoul, South Korea and now lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. Lee has exhibited her work in multiple invitational shows and her work was also included in P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center’s (an affiliate of MoMA) exhibition “Bearable Lightness...Likeness”. Reviews of Lee’s work have appeared in Sculpture Magazine, The Washington Post, Baltimore Sun, PS 1 Newspaper, The Korea Times, The New York Times, NY Arts Magazine, among others.

Carey Lovelace is an art writer and playwright living in New York. She has a BFA from California Institute of the Arts, an MA from New York University, and an MFA from the New School, and studied at the Universite de Paris VIII in Paris. She has written for Art in America, Newsday, The New York Times, Harper’s, Artforum, the International Herald Tribune, and artnet.com, and has appeared on WPS1 radio and BBC3. She is co-president emerita of the U.S. chapter of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA/USA). She is working on a book, An Army of Lovers Cannot Fail: A Passionate History of the Women’s Movement in Art, 1968-2006; vol. 1, “Dancing at the Revolution: the 1970s.” She has had productions of her short plays at the New York-based Ensemble Studio Theatre, the Samuel French One-Act Festival, and REDCAT Theatre in Los Angeles, among other locales.

Jenni Sorkin is a PhD candidate in the History of Art Department at Yale University. She is a frequent contributor to Frieze magazine. From 2002-2004, she was Research and Exhibition Coordinator for “WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution” at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Her essay in the exhibition catalog is titled “The Feminist Nomad: The All-Women Group Show.”

Anne Swartz is a professor of art history at the Savannah College of Art and Design. She guest curated the exhibition “Pattern and Decoration: An Ideal Vision in American Art,” at the Hudson River Museum in Yonkers, New York. She writes on various aspects of contemporary art, has published in symmploke, n.paradoxa, The Cleveland Museum of Art Bulletin, Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Art, Woman’s Art Journal, and NY Arts Magazine, in addition to writing numerous exhibition catalogs and is completing a forthcoming book on new media art from Prentice Hall.

Terry Wolverton is author of six books: Embers, a novel-in-poems; Insurgent Muse: life and art at the Woman’s Building, a memoir, Bailey’s Beads, a novel; and three collections of poetry: Black Slip, Mystery, Bruise and Shadow and Praise. A new novel, The Labryns Reunion, will be published in 2008. She has also edited fourteen literary anthologies, including Mischief, Caprice, and Other Poetic Strategies. She is the founder of Writers At Work, a creative writing center in Los Angeles, where she teaches fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry.
No. 2 ($8.00 per issue)  
1992  
Cynthia Davis, “Privileging Differences or Different Privileges?”  
Ellis Hanson, “Narcissism and Critique”  
Paulette Singley, “Living in a Glass Prism: the Female Figure in Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe’s Domestic Architecture”  
Glyn Hughes, “When Your Only Tool is a Hammer, Everything Looks Like a Nail: AIDS (W)riting Dis-Easily”  
Nevin Mercede, “POSITIVE WOMEN: an excerpt”  
Debra Weinstein, “Poems from Rodent Angel”  
Jennifer Manlowe, “Seduced By Faith: Sexual Traumas and Their Embodied Effects”  
Michele Rivkin-Fish, “Post-Communist Transformations and Abortion Politics: Reflections on Feminist Strategies and ‘Choice’”  
Maggie Hopp, “Photographs of the 42nd Street Art Project”  

VOLUME 7 ($8 per issue)  
1993  
No. 1  
Janet Gray, “Access to Kangchenjunga”  
Ann Marie Hebert, “Rewriting the Feminine Script: Fay Weldon’s Wicked Laughter”  
Joanne Shen, “Dora: The Case for Hysteria”  
Lydia Douglas, “Reverse Angle,” photo essay  
Shireen Carroll, Wendy Carse, Annette Trefzer, “Fashioning Professional Selves”  
Tracy Seeley, “[Un]weaving the Shroud of the Fathers: ‘A Woman’s Sentence’ in Between the Acts”  
No. 2: Special Issue: Cultural Studies  
From the Editors: Feminism and Cultural Studies  
Andrew Ross, “Andrew Ross in Cultural Studies”  
Interview by David Hawk, “Tricia Rose on Hip-Hop”  
David Lewis, “A Home for Murphy Brown’s Son(s)”  
Debra Silverman, “Making a Spectacle, or, Is There Female Drag?”  
David Lewis, Lisa Lynch, Jeffrey Schulz, Bruce Simon, “Caught in Space? The Configuration of a Twenty-Something Generation”  

Volume 8 ($8.00 per issue)  
1994  
No. 1 From the Editors: Interdisciplinarity, the Feminist Journal, and You  
Lesley Wheeler, “Poems: Her Heart in a Box, Dissertation Proposal, Clouds Blow Over”  
Christopher Bracken, “Constance and the Silkweavers: A Discussion of Working Women and Colonial Fantasy in Chaucer’s ‘The Man of Law’s Tale’”  
Susan Nygaard, “Redecorating Dombey: The Power of ‘A Woman’s Anger’ versus Upholstery in Dombey and Son”  
Craig Dionne, “Shakespeare and Gender: Toward a Theory of Popular Cultural Mediation”  
Hawley Russell, “Crossing Games: Reading Black Transvestism at the Movies”  
Margaret Coombs, “Wearing the Dog-Suit or The Irrelevance of Irigaray”  
No. 2 From the Editors: A Matrix of Critical Positions  
Interview by Felicia Kornbluh, “What’s Wrong with Raw, Carnal Lust?” Kristin Luker on Sex, Welfare, and Feminist Scholarship”  
Lauri Umansky, “‘The Sisters Reply’: Black Nationalist Pronatalism, Black Feminism, and the Quest for a Multiracial Women’s Movement, 1965-1974”  
Glyn Hughes, “When Your Only Tool is a Hammer, Everything Looks Like a Nail: AIDS (W)riting Dis-Easily”  
Nevin Mercede, “POSITIVE WOMEN: an excerpt”  
Debra Weinstein, “Poems from Rodent Angel”  
Jennifer Manlowe, “Seduced By Faith: Sexual Traumas and Their Embodied Effects”  
Michele Rivkin-Fish, “Post-Communist Transformations and Abortion Politics: Reflections on Feminist Strategies and ‘Choice’”  
Maggie Hopp, “Photographs of the 42nd Street Art Project”  

VOLUME 9 ($8.00 per issue)  
1995  
No. 1  
“In the Mess’: A Roundtable Discussion of Feminism and Interdisciplinarity,” transcribed and edited by Heather Hadlock  
Marilyn Migiel, “Olimpia’s Secret Weapon: Gender, War, and Hermeneutics Orlando Fiuso”  
Sarah Teasly, “(Anti-)Hysteric Glamour: Masquerade, Cross-Dressing, and the Construction of Identity in Japanese Fashion Magazines”  
Natalie Grinnell, “Griselda Speaks: The Scriptural Challenge to Patriarchal Authority in ‘The Clerk’s Tale’”  
Bethzabé Guevara, “The Señorita Didn’t Teach Me,” translated with an introduction, notes, and bibliography by Kathy S. Leonard  
No. 2  
Cynthia Cupples, Anne-Lise François, and Barbara Krauthammer, “Working on Truth: An Interview with Nell Painter”  
Lidia Yukman, “Isms”  
Corinne Field, “Breast-feeding, Sexual Pleasure, and Women’s Rights: Mary Wollstonecraft’s Vindication”  
Nan Byrne “Poems from Uncertain Territories”  
Elizabeth B. Frierson, “Unimagined Communities: Women and Education in the Late-Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909”  
Deborah Meadows, “Mrs. Doc Warner: An Epistemological Western”  
Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, “A Case of Mistake[is i]n Identity: Bearing Witness to the Montreal Massacre”  
Kelly Searsmith, “The Ideal Daughter”  

VOLUME 10 ($8 per issue)  
1996  
Martha Moulsworth’s “Memorandum” (1632) – one of the first autobiographical poems in English – issues an early call for educational equality, provides an inside view of the life of a Renaissance woman, and is one of the few writings about widowhood by an early modern widow.

“The Birthday of My Self” offers original and modernized texts of Moulsworth’s “Memorandum,” notes and biographical background, and a broad range of critical approaches to the poem by student contributors from the first year of college to advanced graduate study.

Originating as an experiment in the integration of pedagogy and scholarship, this special issue of Critical Matrix is intended to address students and teachers in women’s history, literature surveys, and advanced courses in literature and theory, to encourage the close reading and analysis of works by other early women writers that have missed the close attention they merit and reward, and to suggest how professors and students can work together as collaborators and colleagues.

Cosponsored by the National Council on Public History.

Nos. 1-2
Margit Dementi, “Luminous Obscurity: Marguerite Yourcenar and the Academy”
Maya Hostetler, “Summer Evening”
Natalie Grinnell, “The Other Woman in Chrétien de Troyes’s Yvain”
Joseph Auner, “Soulless Machines’ and Steppenwolves: Renegotiating Masculinity in Krenk’s Johnny Spielt Auf”
Benay Blend, “Building a ‘House of Earth’: Mary Austin, Environmental Activist and Writer”
Lesley Wheeler, “Attitudes of Mothering: Review of Rita Dove’s Mother Love”

VOLUME 11 ($12 per issue)

1997
No. 1 Body Parts
Tamara Ketabgian, “The Human Prosthesis: Workers and Machines in the Victorian Industrial Scene”
Thomas Strong, “Blood / Money”
Kristin Kalajainen, “Mouth Heart Colon: Dissecting Kathie Lee Gifford’s Organs of Speech”
Elena Filipovic, “Immaculate Conceptions: Genitals, Mannequins, and the 1938 Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme”
Gage McWeeny, “The Primal Seen: Captain Cook and Cannibal Visions at Hawaii”
Julie Park, “no sex in ethereals: Making the Heart and Hymen Real in Clarissa”
Wendy Nolan, “The Other Eye: Assia Djebar’s Bodily Gaze”

1999
No. 2 Gendered Labor, Labored Gender
Ruth Larson, “The Whore’s Tale: Reading and Writing the Prostitute’s Life”
Denise Brennan, “Women at Work: Sex Tourism in Sosúa, the Dominican Republic”
Valerie Kanno, “Between Victim and Offender: Aileen Wuornos and the Representation of Self-Defense”
Deborah E. B. Weiner, “Hull House and the Production of Women’s Space in the Late Victorian City”

VOLUME 12 ($1.5 per issue)
2001
Nos. 1 and 2 Making Sense
Aileen Forbes, Making Sense: Introduction
Caroline Levander, “Informed Eyes: The 1890s Child Study Movement and Henry James’s The Turn of the Screw”
Robin Bernstein, “Too Realistic’ and ‘Too Distorted: The Attack on Louise Fitzhugh’s Harriet the Spy and the Gaze of the Queer Child”
Gordon Hughes, “The Painter of Mental Scenery: Robert Delaunay’s Sensory Abstraction and Modern Perceptual Theory”
Mark Hansen, “Embodying Virtual Reality: Touch and Self-Movement in the Work of Char Davies”
Timothy Aubry, “White Noise Generation”

VOLUME 13 ($15 per issue)
2002
No. 1 Camera Women
Marta Weiss, “What’s a nice girl like you doing in a place like this? Diane Arbus at the Museum of Modern Art”
Kaira Marie Cabañas, “Francesca Woodman’s Interruption”
Michelle A. Foa, “Meditations on Sally Mann’s Immediate Family”
Meredith Martin, “Contested Space and Female Subjectivity in Tracey Moffatt’s Laudanum”

VOLUME 14 ($15 per issue)
2003
Spaces of Modernity
Suzanne Hudson, “Feedback: Vito Acconci and the Space of His Public”
Laura Rice, “Of Heterotopias and Ethnoscapes: The Production of Space in Postcolonial North Africa”
Sarah Edwards, “That Honeysuckle Rose will soon Encircle the Globe: A Reception History of The Country Diary of an Edwardian Lady”
VOLUME 15 ($15 per issue)

Summer 2004
Disciplines and Disciplinarity
Cover Illustration—Marc Snyder, “Annie Jones and Joseph Beuys in Times Square”
David Ball and Johanna Burton, “Discerning Disciplines”
Evan Horowitz, “Prolegomena to any Future Interdisciplinarity”
Lisa Fluet, “H.G Wells, Disciplinarity, and Cultural Studies”
Rena Lederman, “Towards an Anthropology of Disciplinarity”
Jacqueline Foertsch, “The Trials of Trialoging in Gay, Lesbian, and Feminist Studies”

VOLUME 16 ($15 per issue)

Fall 2007
Fates and Futures of Feminism
Carol Armstrong, “Pink”
Gillian Howie, “After Postmodernism: Feminism and Marxism Revisited”
Marjorie Jolles, “Chic Radicals: Feminism as Authenticity in Women’s Popular Culture”
Nicky Marsh, “In Cite of the Wall: Democracy, Poetry and the Public”
Kirsten Swenson, “Semisphere or Breast? Contradiction in the Art (History) of Eva Hesse”
Sungmi Lee, Scent of Sumi I, 2005, sumi ink on paper, 22” x 30”,
Courtesy of C. Grimaldis Gallery, Baltimore, MD

Sungmi Lee, Scent of Sumi II, 2005, sumi ink on paper, 22” x 30”,
Courtesy of C. Grimaldis Gallery, Baltimore, MD