SPRING / SUMMER 2019 VOLUME 40, NUMBER 1

2 PARALLEL PERSPECTIVES
By Joan Marter and Margaret Barlow

PORTRAITS, ISSUES AND INSIGHTS
3 Defying Gender, Suzanne Valadon and the Male Nude
By Lauren Jimerson

13 Leonor Fini and Dressing Up: An Act of Creativity
By Rachael Grew

21 The Art of Pan Yuliang, Fashioning the Self in Modern China
By Sandy Ng

31 Penny Slopis: Tula Tula, Re-membering the South African Nanny-child Relationship
By Irene Bronner

REVIEWS
40 Fanny Palmer: The Life and Works of a Currier & Ives Artist
By Charlotte Streifer Rubinstein, edited by Diann Benti
Reviewed by Betsy Fahlman

41 Anne Brigman: A Visionary in Modern Photography Edited by Ann M. Wolfe
Reviewed by Sally Brown Deskins

43 Berenice Abbott: A Life in Photography By Julia Van Haaften
Reviewed by Caitlin Davis

45 Race Experts: Sculpture, Anthropology, and the American Public in Malvina Hoffman’s Races of Mankind
By Linda Kim
Reviewed by Jennifer Wingate

46 Hilma af Klint: Paintings for the Future By Tracey Bashkoff
Reviewed by Annika Öhrner

48 Sophie Taeuber-Arp and the Avant-Garde By Roswitha Mair, trans. Damien Sears
Reviewed by Joanna Gardner-Huggett

Reviewed by Jordan Troller

51 Charlotte Salomon: Life? Or Theatre? A Selection of 450 Gouaches
Essays by Judith C.E. Belinfante & Evelyn Benesch;
Charlotte Salomon and the Theatre of Memory
By Griselda Pollock
Reviewed by Judith Zilczer

53 Mona Hatoum: Terra Inima By Michelle White & Anna C. Chave
Reviewed by Donna Stein

56 Leonora Carrington and the International Avant-garde Edited by Jonathan P. Ebune & Catriona McArta
Reviewed by Caroline I. Harris

58 Rachel Whiteread Edited by Ann Gallagher & Molly Donovan
Reviewed by Mary Trent

59 Juncuress in Women’s Leadership: The Arts
By Judith K. Brodsky & Ferris Olin
Reviewed by Anne Swartz

61 “I’m Not Myself at All”: Women, Art, and Subjectivity in Canada
By Kristina Huneault
Reviewed by Carolyn Butler Palmer

62 The Art of Feminism: Images that Shaped the Fight for Equality, 1857–2017
Edited by Helena Reckitt
Reviewed by Jessica Holmes

64 Women Artists in Paris, 1850–1900 By Laurence Madeline
Reviewed by Lauren Jimerson

66 A Capsule Aesthetic: Feminist Materialisms in New Media Art
By Kate Mondloch
Reviewed by Ellen K. Levy
During a well-attended conference of the College Art Association in New York City in February, the editorial staff and our publisher, Ian Mellanby of Old City Publishing, celebrated the fortieth year of continuous publication for Woman’s Art Journal. Joining us were WAJ Founding Editor Elsa Honig Fine, retiring Book Editor Ute Tellini, and new Book Editor Aliza Edelman. We are pleased to report that current and future issues of WAJ can be accessed in a print edition and online.

Over time, we see more and more feminist scholars from around the world drawn to WAJ, and seeking opportunities to publish. This Spring/Summer 2019 issue demonstrates this global reach. Authors of the four articles in this issue represent four continents, with scholars based in the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, and South Africa, and an American living in France.

On our cover is a bold depiction by French artist Suzanne Valadon (1865-1938) of herself and her lover, both nude, as Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The nude male figure, readily identifiable as Andre Utter, who would become Valadon’s husband, appears in several paintings and drawings by the artist. For removing the proverbial fig leaf, Valadon, who absorbed her knowledge of painting while posing as a model for the likes of Degas and Puvis de Chavannes, is unparalleled among her generation of women artists. Author Lauren Jimerson, who wrote a dissertation on this artist, notes that “Valadon exploited her lower-class position, treating a subject that was taboo for female painters: the male nude.” Comparing her drawings to those of male artists of the time, particularly Degas, Jimerson describes Valadon’s rendering of “the male body straightforwardly in graceless poses and from unflattering angles.” Although most of these works were not exhibited or discussed at the time they were painted in the early twentieth century, today they join a complex discourse on sexuality and gender.

Rachael Grew’s subject, the versatile artist and designer Leonor Fini (1907-1996), is closely associated with the French Surrealists (with whom she exhibited multiple times), despite her expressed wishes to reject identification with that group. The focus here is on Fini’s propensity for “dressing up” and the costume and set design work she did in addition to her paintings. The author writes that, “Fini used her costumed body as a vehicle for artistic creation, producing characters that illuminated facets of her identity, which then reappeared in her art and design.” Remarkable photographs of Fini in various costumes and settings complement her paintings and sketches.

“Through the medium of costume,” writes Grew, “Fini enabled not only her own body, but the bodies she depicted on canvas and in three dimensions to continuously re-make their identity.”

The painter and sculptor Pan Yuliang (1895-1977) is unusual among Chinese women artists for her reclining female nudes and her candid self-portraits—some of them nude—including many created in her later years. Pan came from a humble background that stunted her career prospects in China, and Sandy Ng considers the fortuitous circumstances that gave Pan an opportunity to study in Paris. Following her return to China, Ng describes how, for a time, “the widespread acceptance of nude imagery coupled with the persistent aspiration to modernize, encouraged Chinese women artists to render female nudes.” Along with greater opportunities for education for women came greater awareness of their rights and social roles, and Ng chronicles how in early twentieth-century China, “female modernity” became closely aligned with contemporary cultural changes. Pan, however, explored her own vision of the New Woman. Her images differed greatly from the stereotypical images of the young consumers and “happy mothers” seen in popular Chinese illustrations of her time.

“Pan Yuliang’s paintings of female figures were among the most provocative in modern China,” writes Ng, and it was likely for this reason that the artist moved permanently to France in 1937.

The South African artist Penny Siopis creates disturbing images that explore inequalities that relate variously to gender, class, and race, and to the contentious history of apartheid. The relationship between the black “nanny,” who figured so importantly in the lives of many of that nation’s white families, and the children for whom she cared, is the subject of Irene Bronner’s discourse on Siopis. The artist centers on Tula Tula (1994), a mixed-media portrait by Siopis based on a photograph of the artist’s young brother seated on the lap of his nanny. Siopis (b. 1953) addresses the complex surrogacy relationship between these figures during apartheid and beyond. “From the mid-1980s through the 1990s,” writes Bronner, “Siopis consistently references various black female figures with the intention of disrupting colonial and apartheid narratives about gender, race, and representation.”

The extra-long section of book reviews in this issue reflects an outstanding effort by our outgoing and incoming book review editors and, as expected, the notable excellence of our reviewers. Interestingly, most of the books under review span subjects of the last century. Among these, the American photographers Anne Brigman (1869–1950) and Berenice Abbott (1898–1991) receive well-deserved attention, as do German modernist Jeanne Mammen (1890–1976), Swiss multimedia artist Sophie Taeuber-Arp (1889–1943), and the Swedish abstractionist Hilma af Klint (1862–1944). A new book on Malvina Hoffman’s (1885–1966) “Races of Man” sculptures reveals how these works continue to draw controversy in today’s sensitive political environment. Two books chronicle the monumental production, Life? or Theatre?, by Charlotte Salomon (1917–43), whose life was cut short at Auschwitz. On more contemporary subjects are reviews of major catalogues documenting recent exhibitions on UK-based multimedia artist Mona Hatoum (b. 1952) and sculptor Rachel Whiteread (b. 1963).

We thank Ute Tellini and Aliza Edelman, our four authors, and our sixteen accomplished book reviewers for their invaluable contributions to this issue. We also thank our partners at Old City Publishing for seeing the journal into print and into the hands of readers worldwide, and the Art History Department at Rutgers for its ongoing support of WAJ.

Joan Marter and Margaret Barlow
Editors, Woman’s Art Journal
Dillon’s essay, “The Dream Site,” he refers to this aspect of her art as giving the viewer “impossible imaginary places in which to think” (199). For Dillon, the cast sculptures make us wonder, even dream, about what is inside them. Whiteread’s works, to some degree, offer themselves up as vessels to fill with the viewer’s own remembrances and resonances. Dillon’s claims about Whiteread’s “impossible, imaginary places” and “dream sites” seem to take hold in the diversity of perspectives offered by the catalogue essays. Upon finishing the text, the reader has a range of options for how to dream these works historically (Minimalist, Surrealist, post-Minimalist, etc.). The reader is also left confident of Whiteread’s importance to the history of art. The extended commentary on Ghost and House along with the captivating imagery of her work and the thoughtful essays all affirm her body of work as extensive and significant. A remarkably consistent artist, Whiteread offers a restrained and minimal but also richly tactile career-long meditation on the lived environment and its casting in specific times and places.

Mary Trent is an adjunct professor of Art History at the College of Charleston in South Carolina and a Special Projects Associate at the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art.

Junctures in Women’s Leadership: The Arts
By Judith K. Brodsky and Ferris Olin
Rutgers University Press, 2018

Reviewed by Anne Swartz

This much-needed volume, with its primary focus on visual arts professionals, brings attention to a group of women whose biographies have not been joined before. Many of the names among Judith K. Brodsky and Ferris Olin’s selections for Junctures in Women’s Leadership: The Arts fall outside the familiar. There is no Betty Parsons or Peggy Guggenheim, no Faith Ringgold or Maya Lin here. Instead, in thirteen chapters, they take as their fourteen subjects women who each made some brilliant contribution to her time and profession. Philanthropist Bertha Honoré Palmer (1849–1918), activist and collector Louise Rosenfield Noun (1926–2002), artist and art historian Samella Sanders Lewis (b. 1924), theater founder Julia Miles (b. 1930), actor and theater founder Mfi’am Colón (1936-2017), Native American artist and curator Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (b. 1940), gallerist Bernice Steinbaum (b. 1941), museum director Anne d’Hamoncourt (1943–2008), artist and gallery director Martha Wilson (b. 1947), choreographer and dance company founder Jawole Wille Jo Zollar (b. 1950), print artist and papermaker Kim Berman (b. 1960), arts administrator Gilane Tawadros (b. 1965), and textile entrepreneurs Veomanee Douang-dala and Joanne Smith (both b. 1976) are mostly known within their spheres of activity as visual arts, arts administration, theater, film, and dance professionals. (The Latinx artist Yolanda M. López [b. 1942] is a fifteenth defacto subject, since the inclusion of her well-known Portrait of the Artist as the Virgin of Guadalupe (1978; Fig. 1) makes a visually compelling cover, while adding another woman’s accomplishment to the collection.)

I liked learning about the experiences of each woman. The book is less than 300 pages, making each chapter relatively short, and I found myself wanting to know more about each woman, which will prompt further study. Brodsky and Olin combine thoughtfully written and carefully researched analyses with provocative commentary on women’s lives during the period of the mid-nineteenth century through to the present day. They use their subjects as microcosms for the greater trends and transitions in the inequalities, gains, and difficulties women have experienced in society and in the arts and related institutions. The authors use occasions in the women’s lives to intermingle
related cultural moments, people, and theories. (Iconic figures ranging from Obama to Mandela to Hillary Clinton show up.)

Recognized as leaders in their own right, both Distinguished Professors Emerita at Rutgers University, Brodsky and Olin promote social justice, particularly gender equity, in their teaching, curating, writing, scholarship, and art. Both continue to play central roles in their respective professional associations in the visual arts and related fields, particularly in espousing opportunities for women.

While women’s involvement in the visual arts professions remains halting, the literature on leadership remains scant. The profiles share complementary characteristics, the authors note, including childhood support fostering interest, commitment to culture by women in their families, dedication to education, direct experience with gender discrimination, mentorship, and the influence of social movements.

Part of Rutgers University Press’s Juncures: Case Studies in Women’s Leadership Series, (previous publications in the series include women in social movements and business), the proscribed format requires that the case study be organized into a background section, “which describes the protagonist’s rise to leadership and lays out a decision-making juncture or problem” (xiii), followed by the resolution and the legacy. However hampering this cumbersome framing might seem, the authors enliven it with their fondness for their subjects, even interlacing their autobiographies in the preface, noting similar circumstances. The approach of bringing one’s autobiography into dialogue is a useful tactic commonly employed in feminist popular writing, as in Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards’s Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future (2000).

This ordering system provides a game plan. The authors give us the goods, not shying away from realities, as when they describe how the performance artist Martha Wilson founded Franklin Furnace, a major Brooklyn-based arts organization and archive supporting emerging and established avant-garde artists, after a friend provided a pilfered mailing list from the Clocktower, the precursor to the current MoMA PS1 (173). The section on artist Jaune Quick-to-See Smith details how:

... she undertook strategies that provide models for future leaders to consider. She understood that it would be more effective to gather together a group of artists whose work belonged in the mainstream and establish an alliance rather than only to promote her own work. So she created a collaborative of Native American artists living in the Albuquerque area who, like Smith herself, were integrating motifs from their Indian heritage with Modernist style (112).

The authors take every opportunity to emphasize the import of what their subjects did and stress its value. For example, Smith’s centrality as an organizer and activist are given their due. By detailing the artist’s steps along the way, the authors make clear that the artist’s achievement of success is the result of her sheer determination, effort, and hard work, not luck or serendipity. This book will probably become a textbook, given this blueprint-type framing for feminist visual arts leadership and drawing out these details.

Besides representing a variety of professions, the subject selection offers some diversity, with one Asian, one Latinx, one Native American, one Middle Eastern, two Black, and eight white women—all but four are from the US. These case studies depart from true biographies, centering primarily on the professional life of each featured woman. The authors acknowledge that ‘feminist’ is not a designation all the women claimed for themselves, yet they are included in this study because of the force of their convictions about overcoming gendered limitations and discrimination (xv).

Access to opportunity was not equal for all of these women, whether because of race, class, education, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. While not all components of identity get due consideration, some realities of racial or economic inequities form a subtext in the book. Sexuality is glossed over, save the occasional mention, like how sexual abuse proved transformative to Martha Wilson, who was unwilling to allow the experience to confine her (169), or Kim Berman’s homosexuality causing her to flee her native South Africa, where it was still criminalized (210). The role of marriage or partnership is mentioned, both when important, as in the instance of Bertha Honoré Palmer’s financial mobility coming from her marriage (1), or not, as with Bemice Steinbaum, when mention of her unnamed husband casually occurs following the listing of her accumulated degrees, though there is careful analysis about her concerns of avoiding homemaker status (128–29). Motherhood is noted as a defining life experience, never a limiting one, with children a reality, not an encumbrance or obstacle. That there are scant remarks about disability suggests only that it was not relevant in the experience of these particular women.

The sources and references range widely; the authors relied on primary source material including personal interviews when possible. Their sound scholarship is essential to advancing the understanding about the contributions of these women as well as the general contributions of women in the arts. No similar books offer case studies on women leaders across different professions with this focus. Hopefully, more such accessible tomes will follow. ●

Anne Swartz is Professor of Art History at the Savannah College of Art and Design. She focuses on contemporary art in her writing, curating, and public lectures, with an emphasis on feminist art, and has published numerous essays, reviews, and exhibition catalogues.