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THE COOPERATIVE GALLERIES OF
THE WOMEN'S ART MOVEMENT, 1969-1980

presented by

Gayle Renee Davis

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Ph.D. degree in American Studies

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THE COOPERATIVE GALLERIES OF
THE WOMEN'S ART MOVEMENT, 1969-1980

By

Gayle Renee Davis

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

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Department of English
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ABSTRACT

THE COOPERATIVE GALLERIES OF
THE WOMEN'S ART MOVEMENT, 1969-1980

By

Gayle R. Davis

The first women's cooperative art exhibition group was organized in the United States in 1972, and by 1980 a nationwide network of such collectives had been established. This is a study of the historical, socio-political and artistic significance of the following twelve cooperatives as they developed over this eight-year period:

AIR Gallery (New York City), ARC Gallery (Chicago), Artemesia Gallery (Chicago), Center/Gallery (Chapel Hill, North Carolina), Central Hall Gallery (formerly Port Washington, New York), Floating Gallery (formerly New York City), Front Range Women in the Visual Arts (Boulder, Colorado), Grandview Galleries I and II (formerly Los Angeles), Hera Gallery (Wakefield, Rhode Island), MUSE Gallery (Philadelphia), Soho 20 Gallery (New York City), and WARM Gallery (Minneapolis).

The inception and continuous expansion of the co-op system reflected the decade's rapidly-changing social and political climate, in the country as a whole and in the art community. The struggles for women's rights and artists' rights especially influenced the early co-ops, setting their structural and ideological precedents, even though only some of the members actively supported these political causes. While social change groups inspired the formation of the collectives, political activism has never been their primary goal. Instead, art exhibition has been the one purpose to which the

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philosophically and esthetically diverse group of co-op artists unanimously ascribes. In fact, the memberships can be considered microcosms of the society-at-large, embodying a broad range of responses to the human rights activities which flourished in the early years of the decade and continued, more quietly, to affect the later 1970s.

In this study, based to a large degree on interviews and questionnaires completed by members of the twelve selected cooperatives, I take both an art historian's and a social historian's approach. Part I traces the early history of the collectives during the heyday of human rights activism, through the progressively more conservative middle and later 1970s when the co-op movement expanded to all regions of the country. Part II relates the specific political and organizational developments of the co-ops to the changing national climate. The structural and ideological precedents, adopted from the women's rights movement and others, emphasized the acceptance of various interests within their memberships. Therefore, the collectives have developed a complex philosophical system, with the satisfactions and problems one would expect in such non-homogeneous art organizations. The patterns of changes in the larger society are reflected in the specific projects and the shifting priorities of these highly diverse groups. Part III surveys and illustrates the artistic achievements of the co-op artists: the body of art itself, the critical attention the work has received, and the degree to which the co-ops have attained their professional goals.

This, then, is a study of the women's collective art groups and their public, as the subcultural movements for societal change in the 1970s affected them both. It is also a record of the strength of these alternative art organizations, as they have positively affected the environment for contemporary art and contemporary women.

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I greatly appreciate the direction of this study by my doctoral committee members, Dr. Victor Howard, Dr. Douglas Miller, Dr. Linda Wagner, and especially Dr. Linda Stanford, my extremely resourceful and supportive major advisor.

The participating women artists of the twelve collective art organizations included in the research showed nearly unanimous, enthusiastic support and gave careful attention to the time-consuming interviews and questionnaires required of them. Their interest made the research not only possible, but also immensely enjoyable. Some of these members functioned as 'contacts' within the groups, and I owe special thanks to them: Judith Heep, Sandra Kraskin, Joyce Lyon, Susan Macdonald, Donna Marxer, Janau Noerdlinger, Lois Polansky, Roberta Richman, Rachel Rolon de Clet, Beatrice Schall, Frances Schoenwetter, Barbara Shark, and Nancy Spero.

Two resource people, among the many who aided this research, were particularly helpful. Art writer Lucy R. Lippard provided both encouragement and valuable insights, gleaned from ten years of participation in the Women's Art Movement, to this study. Another veteran of the Movement, art historian Linda Nochlin, generously opened her 'storehouse' of Movement documents for my use.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1969 and 1970, groups of professional women artists¹ began meeting to discuss and protest two sources of deep dissatisfaction: the sexist discrimination that pervaded the art system, and the subordination of the professional needs and rights of artists to the controlling demands of the commercial art-marketing structures. One idea voiced at that time was the establishment of cooperatively-run exhibiting groups² for women artists only. Such groups would provide their memberships with regular exhibition opportunities as alternatives to showing in the mainstream commercial galleries, thus attempting a solution to both of the stated problems. Artists in Residence (AIR) Gallery in New York City, which opened on 17 September 1972, was the first women's co-op.³ Since then, the number of women's collective galleries has steadily increased across the United States. This is a study of both the socio-political and the artistic impact of twelve of the cooperatives formed between September 1972 and June 1980 (Table 1).

Much of the early impetus to organize the Women's Art Movement, including the creation of women's art galleries, came from the focus on human rights which characterized a major part of the American social and intellectual climate of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The co-ops outwardly followed the general precedent of other separatist, subcultural associations. In fact, they adopted

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Table 1. Study Sample of Women's Cooperative Galleries.

Cooperative	Opening Date	City	Region
AIR Gallery	1972	New York City	Northeast
Soho 20	1973	New York City	Northeast
Central Hall	1973	Port Washington, Long Island (formerly)	Northeast
Floating Gallery	1974	New York City (formerly)	Northeast
Hera Gallery	1974	Wakefield, Rhode Island	Northeast
MUSE Gallery	1977	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Northeast
Center/Gallery	1977	Chapel Hill, North Carolina	Southeast
ARC Gallery	1973	Chicago, Illinois	Midwest
Artemesia Gallery	1973	Chicago, Illinois	Midwest
WARM Gallery	1976	Minneapolis, Minnesota	Midwest
Front Range Women in the Visual Arts	1974	Boulder, Colorado	West
Grandview I, II	1973	Los Angeles, California (formerly)	Southwest

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some of the larger women's movement rhetoric and goal orientation. Therefore, it is no surprise that the public has viewed these art groups as political entities.⁴ Even though the co-ops' stated purpose is artistic growth and not political action, their sex-specific memberships make an inherently political statement to the art community and the society-at-large. Thus, they are microcosms of cultural change as well as important phenomena in the development of contemporary art. Because of the dual nature of this subject, I necessarily approach it from both an art historian's and a social historian's perspective.

There has been no other comprehensive research published on the women's cooperatives, either in social history or art history, to date. Although some initial documentation of individual galleries exists, the co-ops are usually treated as eccentric and isolated, having primarily local, small-scale effects. None of the literature makes a comprehensive, comparative analysis of the collectives to clarify the further impact of these galleries as a growing system of unique, professional art spaces.

The coverage of fine art in the mainstream press has typically confined itself to brief explanations of a gallery's philosophy while announcing its opening as a new cooperative;⁵ to the commemoration of several years of activities on the anniversaries or other landmark dates in the histories of the well-established co-ops;⁶ and to reviews of selected exhibitions. The mainstream art press has published capsule survey articles noting some of the most significant events of the overall Women's Art Movement, and these sometimes

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include mention of the women's cooperative galleries.⁷ And now that the decade of the 1970s is over, there recently have been a few articles 'taking another look' at the Women's Art Movement⁸ as well as one which considers the co-ops in particular.⁹

Several publications devoted to the political and artistic concerns of American women have provided the most consistent, extensive coverage of the Women's Art Movement.¹⁰ Although the number of articles specifically about the co-ops is still small,¹¹ these publications include important explorations of wide-ranging related issues, like competition among artists or societal backlash against the progress of the Movement, which help advance the understanding of the complicated nature of subcultural collective efforts.¹²

Descriptions by artists of their participation in the Movement's activities and organizations have been valuable contributions to the literature over the past ten years. Often made in conjunction with discussions of an individual's art-making, these artists' statements vary widely in length and scope, but they all provide important additional information on the effects of the Movement on each involved artist.¹³

Inadequate as the art-historical research is so far in this area, social-history scholarship is even further behind. No social historian has studied the art cooperatives in the larger context, as socially-related instruments of cultural change. Judith Hole and Ellen Levine are exceptional in that they devote a few but valuable pages to the beginning protests of women artists in 1969, in their important book, Rebirth of Feminism.¹⁴ However, most scholarly

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accounts that deal with the women's movement fail to discuss the artists' side of that effort toward equality. Some do cite patterns of other social movements, but these patterns have not been explored in relation to the Women's Art Movement.¹⁵

There have been approximately eighteen to twenty women's cooperative galleries established since 1972 in the United States. The exact number is difficult to establish. While fifteen of the co-ops are relatively well-documented, I have encountered mention of several others about which no further information is available. Such was the nature of the early alternative gallery efforts, especially before effective communication networks were established among the women's art groups and before at least minimal coverage by the general press was common. During my research, I found four collectives which eluded closer study. Three San Francisco cooperatives were listed in early feminist press publications and one local newspaper, but I could locate former members to interview from only one of them.¹⁶ An artist of Hera Cooperative Gallery in Wakefield, Rhode Island, described to me her previous activities in the now-defunct collective, the Alliance of Women Artists, of Portland, Maine. I assume that there have been some, though not many, other examples of short-lived women's galleries that I have not uncovered.

Since there is a variety of women's art organizations which provide exhibition opportunities or which organize shows of women's art, my selection was first narrowed to the groups which met the following criteria: first, the group operation and financing were collective efforts; second, the exhibiting members considered themselves professional visual artists; third, the co-op's philosophy

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was to include only women members and to focus primarily on issues concerning women artists, although some galleries show male artists' work in invitationals; and fourth, the artist members were each guaranteed a non-juried, group or solo show of her art every one to three years. Most of the galleries in this study have their own gallery spaces. However, the former Floating Gallery in New York City did not, choosing to organize group shows in alternative spaces; and the Boulder, Colorado, collective, Front Range Women in the Visual Arts, has not operated a gallery for most of its existence.

I was somewhat flexible in defining the kind of art group to be included in this research in order to increase the number of organizations from which to draw my sample. For instance, most of the co-ops in this study select new members based, at least in part, on the quality of the prospective member's art. However, several collectives, like Center/Gallery in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and Hera, have two different kinds of members--professional artists and non-artist women who are vitally interested in the arts. If the members who are professional artists are given non-juried, formal exhibitions, I considered the gallery for my study and included data from the artist members only.

Two concerns affected my choices among the galleries which fit the above criteria and whose members chose to participate in the research. I wanted to study co-ops which were in as many different geographical regions as possible, and which had been established at various times during the eight-year span. I could then see what influences there have been on the galleries as the national social,

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political and artistic climate has changed, and how these effects were felt at any given time in various locations across the country (Table 1).

The memberships in the co-ops range from approximately eight to sixty members. In order to meet the financial needs of the gallery, to allow each member to exhibit her work regularly, and to make the democratic decision-making process practical, most aim at twenty to thirty members as the ideal size. I visited nine of the twelve selected galleries and four larger women's art centers peripherally related to this study, and I interviewed members of two co-ops which had closed before my research began. During the visits, I tape-recorded interviews with as many of the current and past members as I could arrange to see, and provided questionnaires to be returned by mail for those with whom I could not meet (Appendix A). In this process I also collected slides and other reproductions of each artist's work, reviews, articles, catalogues, and any other documentation the artists or gallery made available. Whenever possible, I studied the gallery's internal documents as well, such as business meeting minutes, by-laws, and funding papers. I also researched the public, printed materials, such as past exhibition announcements and catalogues, educational-program and special-event descriptions, and publicity.

I am interested in the way the rest of the art community views the women's co-ops and how widespread their influence is. To gain a sample of this perspective, I interviewed a variety of other people when possible: women artists who are not involved in women's galleries, art historians, critics, and mainstream museum and gallery

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curators, in the same geographical location as each co-op.

There are several problems inherent in the methodology I have described. First, the questionnaire/interview method produces a cross-section of a group that depends almost as much on how busy the subject is, as on his or her interest in the project. Second, among those who do participate in the research, some answer with more detail than others, providing an imbalanced amount of information among the respondents. Third, it is difficult to represent adequately the viewpoints of all the participants, particularly within very diverse groups like the cooperatives. However, it is possible with as large a sampling as I have taken, to recognize how different priorities have dominated certain group decision-making processes as the times and the particular memberships in each gallery have changed. This study will provide an analysis of the ways both the artistic and the social goals and directions have developed for the various kinds of personal and political interests the galleries serve.

Another set of concerns which affects contemporary research involves human nature more than method. Verbal or written responses to questions involving personal opinions and values or an individual's recollection of an event can vary from day to day, relative to other life circumstances and priorities. And, if subjects are wary of research or publicity, they may edit their thoughts for the public and their peers, in spite of any guarantees of confidentiality on sensitive topics. Or the opposite reaction can occur whereby an outside researcher is trusted as a 'safe' person with whom to vent frustrations and anger. The responses, then, are inordinately negative and do not

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reflect the subject's total feelings about the research topic.

For these reasons, it should be stated here that I am not interested in the individual grievances and annoyances felt on an isolated bad day, or in the euphoric pride felt when a member's career is progressing unusually smoothly. I am concerned with the patterns of responses that are most consistently mentioned by the respondents as a whole.

In Part One of this study, I will briefly describe the history of the Women's Art Movement as it provided the setting for the formation of the cooperatives and characterize the galleries as they have singly and collectively developed over the past eight years. In Part Two, I will cite and discuss the major philosophical and political issues which have influenced the social and professional goals of these art groups. Finally, in Part Three, I will describe some of the primary effects of the cooperative gallery membership on an individual's art-making, her professional visibility, and her career opportunities.

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¹ 'Professional woman artist' will be used here, as it is in most literature of the Women's Art Movement, to describe an artist who considers her art-making a serious occupation and who seeks an audience for it within a contemporary, progressive-art community. In keeping with the philosophy of the women's movement, the emphasis on commercial success and/or fame that is generally associated with 'professionals' has been eliminated. Instead the re-definition stresses a woman's commitment to her art. See Anne Lasoff, "Writing in the Real World," in Working It Out, ed. Sara Ruddick and Pamela Daniels (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), p. 210; Melinda Terbell, "The First Invitational Show," Womanspace Journal 1 (April-May 1973): 18.

² Hereafter, these groups will be interchangeably referred to as 'cooperatives,' 'co-ops', or 'collectives'; and though not all of these organizations have a 'gallery' space, this term will be used for any of these exhibiting associations of artists when I speak in general about the sample groups of this study.

³ There has been at least one earlier women's cooperative gallery in the history of alternative art spaces, a New York City group called Gallery 15, founded in 1958. It was not, however, limited to women members, although no male artists chose to join. See Jeannette Feldman, "The First Women's Co-op," Women Artists News 4 (February 1979): 10.

⁴ The press has contributed to this attitude. The article announcing the opening of Chicago's two women's collectives was headlined, "Consciousness Raising on Ontario Street? Chicago Women's Galleries and the Women's Movement." See Devonna Pieszak and Bonnie MacLeod, The New Art Examiner 1 (November 1973): 3. "Putting the Ms. in Arts" was the title of a review of an early women's show at the Berkeley Art and Garden Center. See Brenda Richardson, "Berkeley and the Women's Movement," Museum News 51 (March 1973): 43.

⁵ W.R. Hegeman, "WARM, Artists Who Came in from the Cold," Minneapolis/St. Paul Twin Cities Reader, 30 September 1977, p. 6; Lucy R. Lippard, "More Alternate Spaces: The L.A. Woman's Building," Art in America 62 (May-June 1974): 85-86; Pieszak and MacLeod, p. 3.

⁶ Blue Greenberg, "No. Carolina's Center Gallery: A Progressive Women's Co-op," Art Voices South 3 (March-April 1980): 52-54; Franz Schulze, "Women's Art: Beyond Chauvinism," Artnews 74 (March 1975): 70-73.

⁷ Lawrence Alloway, "Women's Art in the 70's," Art In America 64 (May-June 1976): 64-72; Grace Glueck, "'Redefining the Whole Relationship between Art and Society,'" Artnews 79 (October 1980): 58-63.

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⁸ Avis Berman, "A Decade of Progress, But Could a Female Chardin Make a Living?" Artnews 79(October 1980): 73-79; John Perreault, "Something Happened," The Soho Weekly News, 27 December 1979, p. 43.

⁹ Joanna Frueh, "Rethinking Women's Galleries, Reflections on ARC and Artemesia," The New Art Examiner 7(December 1979): 5.

¹⁰ An especially useful history of the Women's Art Movement is Jacqueline Skiles, "Looking Back: the Past Ten Years," Women Artists News 6(Summer 1980): 1, 11-13. Other independent magazines of this type include The Feminist Art Journal and Womanart (now defunct), Heresies, Chrysalis, Helicon Nine, Woman's Art Journal. There are also numerous newsletters of women's art organizations: WARM Journal, Women's Caucus for Art Newsletter, Washington Women's Art Center News, Women in the Arts Bulletin, Central Hall Artists Newsletter, Seattle's Women Artists Group Newsletter, and many others.

¹¹ Miriam Brumer, "Central Hall: Art Outside the Metropolis," Feminist Art Journal 2(Fall 1973): 18, 21; "Floating Gallery Takes Off," Women Artists Newsletter 1(December 1975): 2; Jean B. Grillo, "Soho 20: a Diverse Women's Gallery," Feminist Art Journal 5(Summer 1976): 36-37; Victoria Kaufman, "Artemesia Inc.," Feminist Art Journal 3(Fall 1974): 12; Ellen Lubell, "Soho 20," Womanart 1(Summer 1976): 16-19, 30; Judy Seigel, "Lighting a Candle in Suburbia: Central Hall Artists," Women Artists News 3(June 1977): 4; and an important publication by the editor of Women Artists News: Cynthia Navaretta, ed. Guide to Women's Art Organizations: Groups / Activities / Networks / Publications (New York: Midmarch Associates, 1979).

¹² Joan Braderman, "Juggling Contradictions: Feminism, the Individual and What's Left," Heresies 1(January 1977): 88-93; "Competition," WARM Journal 1, Special Issue (Fall 1980); Jo Freeman, "Crises and Conflicts in Social Movement Organizations," Chrysalis, no. 5(January 1978), pp. 43-51; Lucy R. Lippard, "Some Propaganda for Propaganda," Heresies 3(1980): 35-39; "Women Working Together," Heresies 2, Special Issue (Spring 1979).

¹³ Feminist Art Program, Anonymous Was A Woman: A Documentation of the Women's Art Festival and a Collection of Letters to Young Women Artists (Valencia, California: Feminist Art Program, California Institute of the Arts, 1974); Feminist Art Program, Art: A Woman's Sensibility, The Collected Works and Writings of Women Artists (Valencia, California: Feminist Art Program, California Institute of the Arts, 1975); Judy Chicago, Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist (Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday and Co., 1977); Faith Wilding, By Our Own Hands, The Women Artists' Movement, Southern California 1970-1976 (Santa Monica: Double X, 1977); Barbara Zucker, "Making A.I.R.," Heresies 2(Spring 1979): 80-82; and countless others.

¹⁴ Judith Hole and Ellen Levine, Rebirth of Feminism (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1971) pp. 365-71.

¹⁵ Maren Lockwood Carden, Feminism in the Mid-1970s, the Non-Establishment, the Establishment and the Future (New York: Ford Foundation, 1977), p. 44; Maren Lockwood Carden, The New Feminist Movement (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1974), pp. 70-71; William H. Chafe, The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 245-49, 277; William H. Chafe, Women and Equality, Changing Patterns in American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 37; Sara Evans, Personal Politics, The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), pp. 219-20; John H. Howard, The Cutting Edge, Social Movements and Social Change in America (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1974), pp. 143-44, 157; Robin Morgan, "Rights of Passage," Ms. 4 (September 1975): 77, 99; Elouise C. Snyder, "The Anatomy of the Women's Social Movement," The Study of Women: Enlarging Perspectives of Social Reality (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), pp. 13-37.

¹⁶ References to the Clitartists and to the Bay Area Women Artists Group in Diana Insolio, "Galleries of Their Own," San Francisco Examiner, 17 November 1974, p. 31; reference to East Bay Women's Art Center in interview with former members Pat Henshaw and Evelyn Hinde, Oakland, California, 20 August 1977; reference to Bay Area Women Artists Group in Conference of Women in the Visual Arts (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1972), p. 13.

PART I

THE HISTORY OF THE
WOMEN'S COOPERATIVE GALLERIES

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BEGINNINGS OF THE WOMEN'S ART MOVEMENT:

NEW YORK AND THE WEST COAST

The first women's cooperative art exhibition organizations emerged from the very active, rapidly expanding Women's Art Movement of the early 1970s.¹ Many types of associations, planned to improve the professional position of women in the arts, had their origins and sometimes even their peak years in this time span: political art meetings, both independent ones and those that were divisions of larger organizations; small consciousness-raising sessions; schools and special classes; and large artists-resource centers providing training, support and art audiences. New publications and exhibitions which focused on women in the arts also appeared.

The explosion of activity began in New York City, but the women artists of the West Coast followed almost immediately with their own multiple, organized efforts to end sex discrimination in the art world. In surveying the major events in this early history, first in New York and then on the West Coast, one realizes the intensity and vigor of the artistic environment in which the first women's cooperative galleries were founded.

In New York, the formative years of the Women's Art Movement were from 1969 to 1972. In that time, the Art Worker's Coalition (AWC) and the Figurative Artists Alliance (FAA), two artists'

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political protest groups, supplied many of the women activists who led the formation of the first separatist associations of the Movement. The male-dominated AWC and FAA each failed to respond to the serious professional concerns of many of their women members, and those women who felt fundamentally ignored left. As art writer Jean Grillo states, "Women artists never started out to consciously isolate themselves; they just kept finding themselves isolated by others. Tired of exclusion, they looked for an alternative."²

The AWC was formed in January 1969 to protest infringements on artists' rights by the mainstream art system, racial discrimination against minority artists, and the United States involvement in the Viet Nam War.³ When member Juliette Gordon was ridiculed by the male artists for suggesting the AWC should also fight sexist discrimination in the art world, she began to organize other like-minded women of the group. They founded a women's caucus, Women Artists in Revolution (WAR), in late 1969. Through their consciousness-raising meetings they realized they could not expect significant support in achieving their goals as women artists from AWC, as they "were still expected to type letters written by men and to address the envelopes, leaving the important decisions about goals and strategies of the artists' movement largely to men."⁴

WAR held regular Monday night meetings for a year at Museum, A Project for Living Artists, in Manhattan. However, although it was supportive, Museum was a male-directed art center, and the WAR women wanted their own meeting place. In the spring of 1970, they founded a graphics and silk-screen workshop and moved to a former firehouse on Manhattan's Lower East Side. Joining them at the new location was

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Feminists in the Arts, a literary and performance arts group. The two organizations began planning a center to house workshops for women in all the visual, performing, and literary arts. After long negotiations, and finally confrontations, with the New York State Council on the Arts, the Women's Interart Center (WIC) was funded, and it opened in 1971 in an old warehouse structure on West 52nd Street in New York.⁵ Since its inception, the WIC has offered classes, exhibitions, performances, and discussions for its members and the interested public. It also maintains a valuable archive of slides of art work by women, as well as video- and audio-tapes documenting interviews, conferences, and speeches of the Women's Art Movement.

Similar to the formation of WAR, the Women's Caucus of the FAA was created in disillusionment with the larger organization's sexist policies. The Caucus began in the spring of 1969, initially organized by Patricia Mainardi, an artist and one of the earliest feminist art writers. Mainardi was also a member of another women's splinter group, the Redstocking Artists, formerly a part of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).⁶ Her radical feminist, Marxist views were revealed in the newspaper she edited in the fall of 1969. This one-page paper, whose motto was "Forward to Tokenism," made public the sexism of the FAA. Under Mainardi's leadership, the Caucus succeeded in arranging a show for its members in December 1970 at the International House and in holding a women artists' panel at the FAA in January 1971. This is not to indicate that the FAA came to fully accept the Caucus, however; the panel, "Women Artists and the Male Tradition of the Nude," drew extremely hostile reactions from the men in the audience.⁷

With the establishment of these first women's art organizations,

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activities in the New York Movement increased dramatically in number. Some women belonged to two or more of the new groups simultaneously, influences and ideas overlapped, and some of the political efforts were collaborative. The New York area community of artists was certainly large enough to support the different groups, each with its own esthetic and political priorities and goals.

In 1970, many members of WAR and the Women's Caucus of the FAA joined together to protest the sexist selection of works in the Whitney Museum of American Art's Annual Exhibition.⁸ Feminist art writer and novelist Lucy Lippard and artist Brenda Miller organized this concentrated effort against the museum through a newly-formed, second offshoot of the AWC, the Ad Hoc Women's Committee (AHWC).⁹ New York women activists combined forces to demand a fifty-percent representation of women in the Annual. The Whitney refused what it saw as a quota system, and a long series of pickets and 'guerrilla acts'¹⁰ ensued throughout the late fall while the Annual was on view. The tactics were moderately successful, subsequent Annuals (and now Biennials) representing a better percentage, but still not fifty percent, of women artists.¹¹

The Whitney was not the only New York art establishment to be confronted in 1970. WAR members made public demands that every New York museum must: have a women's exhibition by 1972, the art works to be chosen by drawing lots; include fifty percent women artists by 1975; "and make a public statement, an act of commitment against racism, sexism, repression, and war."¹²

By 1971, there was an obvious need for a communication system to record this jumble of Movement activities, and several small publications were established. Lucy Lippard, Los Angeles artist Judy Chicago,

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and artist Ellen Lanyon of Chicago organized the West-East-Bag (WEB) newsletter, "An International Liaison Network of Women Artists." It had chapters in many cities, each responsible for publishing the newsletter on a rotating, monthly basis.¹³ Several members of the Redstocking Artists began producing the journal, Women in Art, in December 1971, with the purpose of reconstructing women's art history and confronting sexism in the current art world. The journal only lasted for two issues before disagreements among the editors over the Marxist orientation led to a split in the group and the end of the publication. The non-Marxist faction established the Feminist Art Journal, whose first issue appeared in April 1972.¹⁴

New women artists' groups continued to appear during this heyday of the Movement in New York. As artist Nancy Spero recalls, "the whole process of women's self-realization and women's politicization was happening...so rapidly that it was like time speeded up. And things continued that way, one shock on top of another."¹⁵ In April 1971, Women in the Arts (WIA) was formed. It directed its efforts toward the inclusion of women artists in the mainstream art system by protest demonstrations and by publishing the sexist exhibition records of galleries and museums, while operating its own meeting and gallery space. Women Students and Artists for Black Art Liberation (WSABAL), led by artist Faith Ringgold, began its work against racist and sexist art world practices in 1970. In 1971, "Where We At," Black Women Artists Group, held the first black women artists' show at the Martin Luther King Gallery in midtown Manhattan. Member artist Kay Brown said the purpose of the group was to create more unity among black women by exploring the roles, expectations and myths that influence their lives.¹⁶

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Exhibitions of art by women, often organized by the artists themselves, became more and more common in New York during these years.¹⁷ The two earliest ones were X To the Twelfth Power (X¹²) and Mod Donn Art in 1970. X¹², including some WAR artists, opened at Museum in February. Art writer Cindy Nemser calls this show the first openly feminist art exhibition.¹⁸ Vernita Nemec, one of the show's organizing artists, defines their goals:

When artist Carolyn Mazzello and I first conceived the idea for having an all women's show, we were not consciously making a political, feminist gesture. We wanted to show our work, and the idea of having a show of only women artists was to make the point that making art is not a sex-linked characteristic, but a matter of individual ability.¹⁹

Press coverage of the show was abundant. However, to the participants, "many of the critics' reactions sounded angry...and in turn, they regarded us as angry."²⁰ A press debate over the validity of the exhibition's intentions resulted. Though the conflict was an emotionally-draining experience for the participating artists, X¹² attracted additional public attention to the Movement.

X¹² was followed in May by the Mod Donn Art Exhibition of eleven women artists at the Shakespeare Festival Public Theater in Manhattan. The group's political position was made clear in their program:

In the male dominated art world, female artists are considered dabblers, their art is 'feminine,' thus unworthy to be judged as real art... We no longer need the approval of the male in the art world to value ourselves as artists. Human life is the interaction of two sexes and art must be the expression of the total human world.²¹

Another effort to increase the number of exhibitions of women's art was the Registry of Women Artists, a slide collection of art by women, instituted by the AHCW in 1971. This was an important new concept in the Movement. It was hoped that 'ignorance of women artists'

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could no longer be used as an excuse for galleries and museums that excluded them. As it was advertised in 1971:

The registry is providing a way for women stuck in the suburbs or outside of art centers to have their work considered in those centers... It is being used by curators, writers, who are beginning to acknowledge the existence of good work by women but don't know where to start looking.²²

Although many women's art works had become much more visible in the New York art community through the efforts described here, artists were not content with infrequent group show opportunities and picketing. Seeing the city already overstocked with artists competing for very limited gallery space, some women sought a new solution: Artists In Residence (AIR) Gallery, the first women's cooperative, opened in New York City's Soho on 16 September 1972. The idea for the collective had originated with AHWC Artist Barbara Zucker. She, co-organizer Susan Williams, and four other artists formed a core group in December 1971 to identify other possible members using the newly-created Registry of Women Artists and their own personal contacts. By March, the collective was complete with twenty members, a half-time gallery coordinator, Kasha Linville and a video expert, Hermine Fried. Planning began and the three months of summer were spent finding and renovating the former machine shop/prospective gallery on Wooster Street.²³

AIR offered each member one-half of a two-women show, for two and one-half weeks, in the first exhibition season. High quality art was the co-op's first priority, but the members also took part in consciousness-raising discussions of various other concerns of women artists. The gallery began presenting public lectures, workshops and performances in their Monday Night Programs in 1972.²⁴

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proving to the public that talented women artists were indeed working, and keeping that art work constantly visible. AIR has served an equally important function nationally, as a model. The new co-ops that were established during the rest of the 1970s were based both on AIR as an immediate organizational prototype, and on the philosophies of feminism and collective action bred in the West Coast women's art groups, to which this discussion now turns.

The first activities of the Women's Art Movement began in California only slightly later than those in New York City, the early development spanning 1970 to 1975. Like the New York artists, the West Coast women were joining together in personally and professionally supportive art groups, and they were interested in confronting sexism in the mainstream art institutions. The West Coast Movement added a dimension not present in the New York scene, however: the education of the woman artist.

Judy Chicago was responsible for originating the first radically innovative methods of art instruction for women.²⁵ In the fall of 1970, she offered her first women's art classes at Fresno State College. She hoped that by making the courses gender-specific and by moving them to off-campus locations, she could reduce the pressures on the students from male peers and teachers to behave and make art according to the dominant male value system. She wanted the students to find 'their own' art, based on their 'inherent' sensibilities, as well as on their societal conditioning as women. Toward that end, consciousness-raising and other self-discovery techniques were basic to her classes.²⁶ As one student described the process, "It forced us to take our work seriously and to make a commitment to ourselves as artists."²⁷

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Chicago left Fresno in 1971 and went to the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, where she joined Miriam Schapiro for the next two years in establishing the Feminist Art Program (FAP). During the first term, the Cal Arts classes produced "Womanhouse," the first collaborative art exhibition based on women's domestic experiences. Under Chicago's and Schapiro's leadership, twenty-one students spent November and December completely renovating a condemned mansion and transforming it into a woman's environment, "as homage to all those women who have thrown their creative energies into decorating a house, feathering a nest."²⁸ The students presented their fantasies and memories of 'home' in the rooms and grounds of the house. They depicted the recurrent themes of women's lives: nurturing, pleasing others, maintaining collections of domestic paraphernalia, fearing old age, waiting.²⁹ Politically, the series of performances and the exhibition itself made a pointed statement about the societal roles of women, "a sharp critique of the confinement of female creativity to a limited sphere."³⁰ Practically, the project demanded a diligence from the students unusual in most art programs, requiring that they learn many new skills: how to exhibit art, collaborate on projects, bargain with lumber sales people, replace windows and wiring. Professionally, the women organized their first exhibition and learned to cope with feedback from the public.³¹ Womanhouse opened to an audience of hundreds on 30 January 1972 and was on view for the month of February. It received considerable press attention and thus was very influential in creating a nationwide awareness of the controversial West Coast Movement.³²

In spite of its success, there were serious conflicts between

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the two leaders and among the students concerning the FAP's philosophy and goals, as well as its relationship to Cal Arts. Chicago left the program in 1973. Schapiro continued, but with a reduced schedule of classes. During the next two years of the program, Schapiro directed two important students' publications:

Anonymous Was a Woman: A Documentation of the Women's Art Festival; A Collection of Letters to Young Women Artists in 1974; and Art: A Woman's Sensibility, The Collected Works and Writings of Women Artists in 1975. The FAP closed in 1975, although women's classes continued to be offered under artist Joyce Aiken. Consciousness-raising was still an important component of the courses, as was the requirement to produce a public exhibition at each semester's end.³³

The FAP experience at Cal Arts reconfirmed a strongly-felt need among many of the Los Angeles area feminist artists to be independent of male-oriented educational institutions. Sheila de Bretteville said, regarding her decision to quit teaching the Women's Design Program at Cal Arts, "I came to realize the ability of the dominant culture to annihilate a positive act, and to change and misuse the original meanings and intents of forms."³⁴ To meet this need for self-determination, the Feminist Studio Workshop (FSW), the first independent, feminist art-training program, opened in the fall 1972, under the direction of Chicago, de Bretteville and art historian Arlene Raven. Essentially, "FSW made an educational program out of the experiments in and principles of feminist art education gathered in the Programs at Cal Arts and Fresno," with a built-in, on-going system of evaluation and modification of the instructional plan.³⁵

In the fall 1970, at approximately the same time as Chicago's

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first Fresno classes, a very important organization of women artists was established in Los Angeles. In contrast to the educational focus of the previously-mentioned groups, the Los Angeles Council of Women in the Arts (LACWA) had a political and professional orientation. Its several hundred members, led by New York artist Joyce Kozloff, were intent on confronting the unequal representation of women artists in major museum exhibitions. They were particularly critical of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, with its all-male "Art and Technology" show on view during the spring 1971.

The LACWA's June 1971 report listed statistics proving consistent sexist discrimination at the museum for the previous ten years: four percent women artists in the group shows, less than two percent in the solo shows. Some of the twelve proposals included in the report were that: half of all contemporary art shown at the museum be by women, including one-artist shows and the works acquired for the permanent collection; the museum purchase works by past women artists to assure a better balance in the historical part of the permanent holdings; and half of the Board of Trustees and museum positions at every level be filled by women. Other demands countered those power-wielding policies in the mainstream which infringed on artists' rights in general, such as resale and royalty agreements. Another area of recommendations focused on educational programs, suggesting that women's art history be included in all museum classes and that fifty percent of all scholarships, grants and prizes be awarded to women.³⁶

The museum did respond, however minimally, by organizing a four-women show in 1972 and proposing a retrospective of women's art in 1974.³⁷

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in general museum sexist practices, however.³⁸

The LACWA also served as an early meeting ground for area women artists, and many personally and professionally rewarding liaisons were formed. Out of their consciousness-raising groups and informal gatherings grew enthusiasm and support for many other women artists' activities in Los Angeles. The LACWA stopped further political action in the spring 1972. Many of its former members, now organized as the Ad Hoc Women Artists Group, began plans for the next big project, 'Womanspace.'

The idea of establishing the West Coast's first women's art center and gallery had been developing for two years. In January 1973, Womanspace actually opened, in its converted laundromat space, to an audience of over two thousand. Membership, which soon grew to several hundred, was open to any interested woman who paid the minimal dues. Unlike a cooperative gallery, members were not guaranteed a show of their art. Instead, a rotating exhibition committee juried member shows from slides. There was also an open-wall space where four members at a time could hang their own work for one-week periods. In addition to exhibitions, Womanspace sponsored classes, lectures, open discussions of art issues and forums for the performance, dance and literary arts. It also published three issues of Womanspace Journal, from February to August, 1973.³⁹

The next phase to develop in the West Coast Movement drew together the various educational and professional interests already mentioned here. The Feminist Studio Workshop leased the former Chouinard Art School building in Los Angeles, sublet spaces to other compatible women's groups and called itself the Woman's Building.

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The feminist 'conglomerate' opened on 28 November 1973. For the first time, in the Woman's Building with its constituent organizations, "women...had control of all aspects of the art-making process, from education through exhibition."⁴⁰ Besides the FSW, other original occupants of the Building were the Sisterhood Bookstore, Womanspace, the Los Angeles Feminist Theater, the Associated Women's Press, Women's Improvisation, the first private all-women's Gallery 707 and two cooperative gallery spaces, Grandview I and II.

The Grandview collectives had thirty to forty member artists. Many of them were former members of Womanspace who had left that group in search of higher quality exhibitions and solo show opportunities. At Grandview, each artist had a one-woman, month-long show twice every three years and a place in the annual group show. Membership was by selection based on personal recommendations, interest in a women's gallery and the ability to pay membership fees. Although the group operated from November 1973 to June 1975, there was always such a diversity of priorities that its membership divided into conflicting factions. Dissatisfaction arose over the uneven quality of the shows and the limited audience at the Woman's Building. The co-ops tried to formulate an esthetic and political position to which all of the members ascribed and found that they could not. Thus, when the building was sold in October 1974 and the Woman's Building was forced to relocate to Spring Street, Grandview I and II disbanded.⁴¹ Some of the former co-op members remained in the Woman's Building and joined together in Double X, a group "more interested in exploring feminist alternatives in making and showing art than in having its own gallery space."⁴²

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Other tenants of the Woman's Building changed over the years.

In June 1974, Womanspace closed, due, in part, to critical financial problems. Just as important to the gallery's demise were deep philosophical conflicts among the members: questions of feminist politics, commercialism and artistic quality.⁴³ The Woman's Building Community Gallery took its place. Gallery 707 also closed after the first year since the inconvenient location of the barrio Spring Street building caused a severe decline in business. Some of the other groups which have been housed in the Woman's Building at various times are: a graphics lab, the Los Angeles chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW), the Center for Feminist Historical Studies, the Lesbian Art Project and the Los Angeles Women's Video Center. One of the biggest projects in the building has been the Extension Program, coordinated by Helen Roth and Mary Yakutis. It offers a wide variety of classes and workshops, providing a "unique space for historical and theoretical study of women's contribution to culture and the development of communication skills."⁴⁴ Periodically since its beginnings, the Woman's Building has sponsored conferences for women--writers, designers, video artists--and thus helped to establish its reputation nationally as well as locally. The Building's diversity has been both a positive and negative factor. It offers a very wide variety of services; but some believe it may attempt too much, straining its organizational capacities.⁴⁵

The ideological foundation of the Woman's Building has come to characterize the formative years of the West Coast Movement. In comparison to the early Movement in New York, it is clear that there are similarities in the styles and/or purposes of some of the women's art

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activities: confronting major local museums and providing support, communication and exhibition opportunities for women artists. However, important differences are also evident. These dissimilarities in specific focal points of the East and West Movements can be understood by examining four of the major philosophical tenets of the Woman's Building.

First, as previously described, there was a high priority on influencing the education and early development of women as artists in Los Angeles.⁴⁶ This is unlike the New York scene, where early Movement activities were directed against the mainstream art system in support of the professional woman artist, already trained and 'on the market'.

Second, there was an interest, in those innovative educational programs, in exploring women's forms of creativity. This idea of 'female imagery' was one of the most controversial theoretical issues of the Movement, and, not surprisingly, "something most artists in New York opposed".⁴⁷ New York's reputation makes it a city where artists go to prove their unique talents, as critic Donald Kuspit says, "where the individuality of their art could be brought to fruition, however intense the struggle to do so."⁴⁸ Any art labels which are feared to diminish that individuality are rejected. In addition, the avant garde art of New York's mainstream system has been self-referential 'art about art', not politics. As critic Carter Ratcliff states, "New Yorkers seriously committed to art--or the art world--tend to view with suspicion any attempt to integrate art values with values of any other sort."⁴⁹ And when politics does provide images for anti-mainstream art, New York's tradition is in support of Marxism, not feminism, ever

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since the days of the AWC, the Art Strike and other early group actions. California artist Eleanor Antin said that New York feminism is "contaminated" with Marxism, but:

in California, feminism has been more a social, political and psychological thing about what it means to be a woman in this society, a particular woman, an artist... Which doesn't imply that the artwork coming out of it is necessarily better, only that very real political questions are often considered. The only kind of politics Southern California has is feminism.⁵⁰

Miriam Schapiro who has lived in both New York and Los Angeles feels the less tradition-bound atmosphere in Los Angeles is conducive to feminist art-making:

The culture was malleable, all ideas floating in the art world were acceptable, no one asked for accountability for new ideas. All those qualities that made L.A. easy to live in, and which make New Yorkers uneasy, provided mother's milk for the new outsiders--'the women artists'--who needed to form a culture of their own. Since the male artists lacked a tradition of taking their own ideas seriously and playing them out against a world setting, they now neither took the feminist ideas seriously or unseriously...New York being a more complex message center than L.A., the men have always been interested in art issues. It has been difficult for us to free ourselves from the intellectual seductiveness of their ideas and the ways in which they expressed themselves--to clarify our own feminist goals.⁵¹

A third West Coast characteristic is a much greater interest in collaborative art projects than New York women artists have. Sheila de Bretteville states the dominant feminist California stance:

I think many of the forces that are active on an individualistic point of view within our culture are forces which are viable and should not be turned off but which can be redirected and actually have greater fruits if they were to be done on a collective base.⁵²

Lucy Lippard believes the Los Angeles women have more of a collective spirit because of the unrelentingly "macho" social and professional environment that surrounds them.⁵³ The more dominating the mainstream, the less able one feels to change it, and the more crucial is the feeling

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of working together in the alternative system, to make a supportive community where there was none. Of course collaborative art ventures would be less attractive to the New York individualist tradition. Additionally, New York's shifting communities of artists--the Soho and Tribeca regions of lower Manhattan, since the late 1960s--supply some sense of close peer relationships that the geographically more widespread artists of the Los Angeles area lack. In part, collaborative art-making diminished the isolation the West Coast women felt.

Finally, a fourth goal in the Los Angeles Movement has been to build an alternative art structure and a supportive community of women where the participants would not only grow and develop, but also stay.

Artist Martha Rosler writes:

The Woman's Building shares the outlook of culturally oriented movements, which stress separatism and a voluntary change in material culture and in the organization of private life (and perhaps work), rather than an active program of mass education and the seeking of political power. That is, they stress the development of alternative institutions rather than a struggle for control of existing ones.⁵⁴

While this was true of some women artists in New York, most of them sought a way to be treated fairly within the mainstream and saw the separatist organizations primarily as filling temporary needs; or, as artist Sally Brown said, recalling a speech by Judy Chicago, "New York women want a piece of the pie and California women wanted a new pie."⁵⁴

Cindy Nemser defends the New York position:

In contrast to the scarcity of museums and galleries on the West Coast, New York provides an abundance of exhibition space for its artist community. Therefore, it is not surprising that the many women who had been standing at the palace gates for years were now determined to get a place at court.⁵⁶

Of course, this comparative analysis of the New York and West Coast early Movement is generalized. The media and mobility of people greatly

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reduce the regional dissimilarities between any two modern cities.

In recent years, New York women made Sister Chapel, a major collaborative art piece in 1978; the Feminist Art Institute, modelled after the West Coast prototypes, began classes in New York in 1979; and there are many other instances of duplicated processes, city to city.

Still, the early Movement activities in each location, culminating for the purposes of this study in AIR Gallery and the Woman's Building, left their specific marks on the co-ops which would eventually form the network of collectives considered here.

AIR provided the structure, adopted in part from New York's early tradition of co-ops, that the later collectives have followed with only slight individual variations. The galleries are separatist, their twenty to thirty members chosen according to the quality of their art works. Each member is given a three- to four-week unjuried show once or twice every two years. The costs in money, time and responsibility for operating the collectives are equally shared, with a system of rotating steering committees directing the groups' democratic decision-making. Part of the costs are defrayed by occasional grants to sponsor public educational programs. The co-ops' main purpose is to make their members' art more visible and not to support political issues, although art world sexism, racism and the capitalistic commercial gallery system are complaints of many members.

The contributions of the Woman's Building to the co-ops are less specific than AIR's, but very influential. It has supplied the co-ops with a perspective, and a style of rhetoric, for considering many elements of feminist ideology within an art context. Although, as I have

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stated, the collectives have not made feminism their primary consideration, their explorations of such issues as 'female' images and forms, self-sufficient separatist alternative institutions and artistic collaboration have been influenced by direct precedents in the Woman's Building.

Not only AIR and the Woman's Building, but also many other organizations of the Women's Art Movement continue to influence the development of the cooperative galleries. However, for present purposes, the remainder of this discussion will be limited to the cooperative galleries as they have developed in their various regions of the country from these auspicious beginnings.⁵⁷

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¹This study will only summarize the main events of the early Women's Art Movement. For further information, see: Jacqueline Skiles, "Looking Back: the Past Ten Years," Women Artists News 6 (Summer 1980): 1, 11-13; Grace Glueck, "Redefining the Whole Relationship between Art and Society," Artnews 79(October 1980): 58-63; Cindy Nemser, "The Women Artists Movement," Feminist Art Journal 2(Winter 1973-4): 8-10.

²Jean Bergantini Grillo, "Soho 20: A Diverse Women's Gallery," Feminist Art Journal 5(Summer 1976): 36.

³Lucy R. Lippard, "The Art Workers' Coalition," in Idea Art, A Critical Anthology, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), pp. 102-15

⁴Skiles, p. 1.

⁵Nemser, p. 8.

⁶Irwin Unger, The Movement: A History of the American New Left 1959-1972 (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 155; Skiles, p. 11; Jacqueline Skiles, "The Women Artists Movement," paper presented at the American Sociological Association annual meeting, New Orleans, 28 August 1972, p. 2.

⁷Nemser, p. 8.

⁸In the 1969 Annual, there were 4.5 percent women artists included; in the 1970 Annual, there were 22 percent women artists. In the period 1965-69, 60 of 729 artists exhibited at the Whitney were women. WEB, 15 September 1971, p. 2; Nancy Spero, "The Whitney and Women," The Art Gallery Magazine 14(January 1971): 26-27.

⁹Ellen Lubell, interviewer, "Nancy Spero - Artist, Member A.I.R. Gallery," Womanart 1(Winter-Spring 1977): 31, 36.

¹⁰Guerrilla activities at the Whitney included "interviews taped at the museum, an anonymously forged press release from the museum claiming 50% women in the Annual, forged invitations to the opening allowing 500 more women to attend." WEB, p. 5.

¹¹In 1972 the Whitney included 28 percent women in the Annual, in 1973 there were 25 percent in the Biennial. However, in 1977, there were only 4 percent women in "American Master Drawings and Watercolors." Nemser, p. 8-9; Jenny Tango, "Big Applesauce, the Whitney Rewrites History," Women in the Arts Newsletter 4(January 1977): 3.

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¹² W.A.R. statement of demands to New York Museums, June 1970, courtesy of Nancy Spero.

¹³ Skiles, "Looking Back," p. 12. There were WEB chapters in twenty-six cities by 1972, including ones in Canada, England, West Germany and Italy. Conference of Women in the Visual Arts (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1972), p. 16.

¹⁴ Skiles, "Women Artists Movement," p. 4.

¹⁵ Lubell, p. 31.

¹⁶ Nemser, p. 10.

¹⁷ For listing of some of the most significant shows, see Cynthia Navaretta, ed., Guide to Women's Art Organizations: Groups/Activities/Networks/Publications (New York: Midmarch, 1979), pp. 21-24.

¹⁸ Nemser, p. 8.

¹⁹ Vernita Nemec, "X¹²," Womanart 1(Summer 1976): 4.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

²¹ Jacqui Michot Ceballos, "Mod Donn Art, Eleven Women Artists," New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theater, exhibition opening program, 2 May 1970, New York City, courtesy of Nancy Spero.

²² WEB, p. 3. Local slide registries are now maintained in dozens of cities. For a partial listing, see Navaretta, p. 25, and under sponsoring organizations.

²³ Marcia Tucker, "Bypassing the Gallery System," Ms. 1(February 1973): 34.

²⁴ Interviews with Dotty Attie (13 October 1978) and Nancy Spero (18 October 1978), both of AIR Gallery, New York City, were very helpful in reconstructing the early history of AIR.

²⁵ Judy Chicago's autobiography includes descriptions of these classes and other aspects of the Women's Art Movement in which she was involved. See Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist (Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday, 1977).

²⁶ Priscilla English, "An Interview with Two Artists from Womanhouse," New Woman 1(April-May 1977): 36-38. The controversial topic of a "female sensibility" is discussed in Part III, Chapter 6 of this study.

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²⁷Janice M. Lester, "Building the Studio, " Everywoman 2, No. 7, Issue 18, p. 13.

²⁸"Womanhouse," Everywoman, Issue 30 (March 1972), p. 17.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 17-20.

³⁰Faith Wilding, By Our Own Hands, The Women Artists' Movement, Southern California, 1970-1976 (Santa Monica: Double X, 1977), pp. 27-28.

³¹Miriam Schapiro, "The Education of Women as Artists: Project Womanhouse," Art Journal 31(Spring 1972): 270.

³²Nemser, p. 9; Wilding, p. 106 (note 12).

³³Joyce Aiken, "Around the Country, A California Story," WWAC News 2(September 1978): 9. Independently, some of the students of Aiken's class established a co-op gallery, Gallery 25, in 1975.

³⁴Wilding, p. 41.

³⁵Ibid., p. 83-84.

³⁶"Los Angeles Council of Women Artists Report," 15 June 1971 (Mimeographed), courtesy of Linda Nochlin.

³⁷Wilding, p. 19. This retrospective did take place, the historic "Women Artists: 1550-1950," curated by Anne Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, in 1977. See Women Artists: 1550-1950 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976).

³⁸Wilding, pp. 47-57.

³⁹Ibid., p. 21.

⁴⁰Shirley Koploy, "The Woman's Building: Alive and Living in L.A.," Ms. 3(October 1974): 100.

⁴¹Wilding, pp. 67-71.

⁴²Ibid., p. 3; Koploy, p. 101.

⁴³Kenon Breazeale, quoted in Wilding, p. 56.

⁴⁴"The Extension Program at the Woman's Building," Los Angeles, 1977, advertising brochure.

⁴⁵Wilding, p. 81.

⁴⁶Martha Rosler, "The Private and the Public, Feminist Art in California," Artforum 16(September 1977): 66.

⁴⁷Wilding, p. 3.

⁴⁸Donald B. Kuspit, "Individual and Mass Identity in Urban Art: The New York Case," Art in America 65(September-October 1977): 69.

⁴⁹Carter Ratcliff, "Report from San Francisco," Art in America 65(May-June 1977): 55.

⁵⁰Eleanor Antin, quoted in Leo Rubinfien, "Through Western Eyes," Art in America 66(September-October 1978): 75. Another resurgence of New York's political art action since the mid-1970s, the group Artists Meeting for Cultural Change, is described in Nancy Marmer, "Art and Politics 77," Art in America 65(July-August 1977): 64-66.

⁵¹Miriam Schapiro, interviewed in Donald B. Kuspit, Carter Ratcliff, and Joan Simon, "New York Today: Some Artists Comment," Art in America 65(September-October 1977): 83.

⁵²Dolores Hayden, Sheila de Bretteville, Clare Spark-Loeb, "Social Organizations and Design," Arts in Society 11(Spring-Summer 1974): 133.

⁵³Lucy Lippard, "More Alternate Spaces: The L.A. Woman's Building," Art in America 62(May-June 1974): 86; Lucy Lippard, interview, New York City, 22 January 1979.

⁵⁴Rosler, pp. 67-68; Jane Bassuk, Beth Bergman, Alice Towle, eds., "Dividing the Pie," WARM Journal 1(Fall 1980): 5.

⁵⁵Artist questionnaire, Sally Brown: WARM Gallery.

⁵⁶Nemser, p. 9.

⁵⁷Of the women's organizations mentioned, and for whose futures I did not account, the following have closed or become largely inactive: WAR, WSABAL, the Women's Caucus of the FAA, and the Feminist Art Journal. Notable among the many new associations founded since the mid-1970s is the Coalition of Women Artists Organizations (CWA0), founded in 1977.

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DECENTRALIZATION

The ideas of the Women's Art Movement which developed in New York City and the Los Angeles area spread quickly in the early 1970s, and they have expanded to national awareness in the art community during the past decade. In this process, many groups have adopted the women's cooperative gallery format to advance their professional and esthetic development. By 1977, the twelve collectives included in this study had been established, in many types of locations, from large metropolitan art centers to very small towns and in every geographical region.¹ Each co-op evolved along slightly different lines, responding to the various artistic and political conditions of its specific environment. Such local considerations included the availability of a peer community, the attitude of the public toward 'alternative' structures, and the quality of the art coverage in the media. Although no consistent and comprehensive exchange of information has taken place among the collectives, the multi-faceted communication system which has grown along with the larger Movement kept women artists at least minimally aware of the various co-ops' activities.

Movement news has been disseminated primarily in women's art publications and through the many women artists' groups and university art or women's studies departments across the country which have sponsored relevant conferences, shows, lectures and workshops. Both methods have led to a system of personal interactions, national in

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Since 1971 when the earliest women's art periodicals, Women and Art and the WEB newsletter appeared,² there have been several specialized magazines which cover various aspects of the Movement. Following the general emphasis of Women and Art, the quarterlies Feminist Art Journal (1972-77) and Womanart (1976-78) primarily published revisionist art history and criticism. In 1977, two quarterly journals, Chrysalis and the collectively-published Heresies, began their valuable analyses of esthetic and political concerns pertaining to women. Two other quarterlies, Calyx (1976) and Helicon Nine (1979) include literary and visual art by women and related discussions. The newest publication, the semiannual Woman's Art Journal (1980) deals with a wide range of art history and contemporary women's art subjects. All of these periodicals are important for presenting the great variety of theories and activities of the Movement to a growing number of interested women artists. The Women Artists News (1975) has been the most informative, in terms of relaying otherwise hard-to-find details of panels, lectures, shows and other art events, especially but not exclusively in the New York City area.³ Although the circulation of this and other publications has been relatively small compared to that of mainstream art periodicals, they, along with the various newsletters produced by women's art centers,⁴ have greatly widened the national community of women artists.

In addition to sharing written information, many artists of the Movement have had opportunities to meet and discuss common concerns at the hundreds of women's workshops, seminars and exhibitions held around the United States during the last ten years. Group and exchange

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shows that traveled outside of New York and Los Angeles introduced the concept of separatist exhibits to new locales.⁵ The women who showed together as well as those in the audience could interact and begin to identify a community of peers.

Conferences on women in the arts were other arenas in which women found each other, discussed goals and planned possible solutions to their professional problems. The precedent for formal meetings of this sort was the national Conference of Women in the Visual Arts at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C., in April 1972. It was organized by Mary Beth Edelson and Cynthia Bickely in response to the exclusion of women artists from that year's Corcoran Biennial.⁶ Since then, many other full conferences and other segments of the annual meetings of mixed-gender art organizations, have been devoted to women's political and artistic concerns. Most consistently notable have been the yearly meetings of the Women's Caucus for Art, until 1974 a division of the College Art Association.⁷

As more and more women's art organizations were formed, they became valuable resource centers, many of them housing slide registries, libraries and archives of Movement documents. Interested women, sometimes those who wanted to start their own groups, came to the established ones for advice. Mary Ann Gillies of Soho 20 Gallery, New York, said:

In the beginning, you can't imagine the numbers of women's studies groups which kept writing to us, the number of questionnaires sent by this college or that. A lot of our energy was sapped the first year just trying to answer people's questions about us.⁸

Often the art centers sponsored lectures by prominent women in the Movement, like Judy Chicago, Lucy Lippard, Miriam Schapiro, Marcia Tucker and others. This type of connection has helped in several

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ways, the invited lecturers serving as role models and professional contacts, as well as more personal sources of information concerning national women's art activities. Susan Michod, member artist of Chicago's Artemesia cooperative, says that Marcia Tucker's visit to her gallery in 1974 was:

a most exciting program. I, for one, went home ready to paint all night. She showed slides of hundreds of super women, many of whom I had never heard of, of all ages and from all over the country, some from 'unheard-of' towns. The quality and variety of the work was so impressive and her enthusiasm was so great; it melted away recurring frustrations we feel in the art world. The work is what matters.⁹

This kind of experience, duplicated as the Movement reached more women, has inspired groups of artists in every region of the country to organize their own cooperative galleries. The form of these new collectives was based on the immediate needs of the local artists. More than region, the type of location--whether urban, suburban, or rural--had an effect on the experiences and structure of the women's art exhibition groups. Of this study's twelve cooperatives, three were in the country's 'art capital,' New York City (AIR, Soho 20, the Floating Gallery); one was founded in the suburbs (Central Hall); five were located in major cities other than New York (Artists, Residents of Chicago [ARC] Gallery, Artemesia, Grandview I and II, Women Artists Registry of Minnesota [WARM] Gallery, MUSE Gallery); and the remaining three operated in small, university-influenced towns or cities (Front Range Women in the Visual Arts, Hera, Center/Gallery). Each kind of atmosphere presented the resident co-op artists with a generally uniform set of advantages and disadvantages.

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arts, provides a unique environment for the artist. Its art community offers more opportunities than does any other: exhibitions; a wide variety of resources in schools, libraries and museums; every imaginable art supply; a large number of professional peers; extensive media coverage of art. Of course, for these reasons, it has also attracted more resident artists than has any other city, all competing for 'artistic success.' Even though the gallery system is extensive, it is still inadequate to exhibit the work of all the skilled professional artists in New York. In fact, artist-run exhibition spaces have a thirty-year history there, in response to these overcrowded conditions.¹⁰ AIR, Soho 20 and the Floating Gallery were part of this cooperative tradition. Then, when they opened in New York, they were so well-accepted that waiting lists for potential members became necessary. The New York co-ops can concentrate on high quality exhibitions and leave the more political activities to other organizations such as the WIA, since the artists community is large enough to support specialized endeavors within the Movement.

Some disadvantages for the co-op artists are also related to the vast art system of New York. It is expensive in its overcrowdedness, making the memberships costly in the collectives which have their own galleries.¹¹ The co-ops have a 'poor second' reputation among some critics, so their shows may be the last chosen for coverage in the press. The Floating Gallery, for instance, received almost no critical attention during its five years in New York, although AIR and Soho 20 have been fairly regularly reviewed. And, although New York is accustomed to professional women, so that women artists do not face the same strict roles as they do in rural America, they are still discriminated

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against in the mainstream art world.¹² In short, it is possible and enticing to strive for the heights of artistic recognition in New York, but it is also very easy to be overlooked in the high-pressure crowd.

Soho 20 and the Floating Gallery entered the teeming New York scene following AIR's example.¹³ Soho 20 opened in October 1973. Founding artists Mary Ann Gillies and Joan Glueckman, along with businesswoman Marilyn Raymond, had met through WAR and the AWC. They "saw AIR, Soho's first women-only gallery, open its doors with some success and began to undertake a similar set-up, with some carefully delineated differences." Namely, these differences involved in a commitment to diverse, experimental forms of art, not the art that AIR favored, which they saw as "abstract, the conceptual--movements more acceptable to the art establishment."¹⁴ The founders searched for more members from among the Ad Hoc Women's Committee's (AHWC) Registry of Women Artists, respondents to their Village Voice advertisement, and personal acquaintances. Soon they had their twenty members and became the second women's art cooperative in Soho, in their second-floor, former printer's shop space around the corner from AIR. Unfortunately for Soho 20, AIR has received most of the publicity and Movement acclaim as the first women's co-op, a fact which has continued to contribute to Soho 20's 'self-image' as second to AIR in quality as well as time.

The Floating Gallery, established in June 1974, was a much different type of collective from AIR or Soho 20. Artist Ruth Vodicka invited four others to join her in a small cooperative. The original core group, including Donna Marxer and Nadine Valenti who became two of the gallery's coordinators, wanted to limit the size in an attempt

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to avoid the "difficulties encountered when large groups band together, the inevitable development of power cliques, resentments expressed and repressed."¹⁵ Six more members were selected in 1974 through the AHWG Registry of Women Artists, and once the group was assembled, no additions were made to the close-knit collective during the five years of its existence.

The Floating Gallery artists realized that they had neither the time and energy nor the financial means required to operate a New York gallery. Instead, they met in each others' homes or studios and organized group shows in various spaces such as the Cork Gallery in Lincoln Center, Rockefeller Center and others. Each member included in an exhibit contributed equally to the costs, and the group was occasionally awarded small grants which helped to offset the expenses. However, there was never enough money for proper--and very expensive--advertising. As a result, the Floating Gallery was one of the artists' groups that was nearly invisible in the New York scene. The co-op disbanded in 1979, primarily because the energy, needed to continue the constant search for grants and places to show, was waning.¹⁶

To avoid the pressure and distractions of city life, some co-op artists in this study have chosen to establish their gallery close to their homes, in the near suburbs of a major art center. They hope to eliminate daily encounters with the frenetically active urban world while maintaining relatively easy access to art events and information. The combination seems perfect at first glance--proximity to art activities when one chooses to participate and the peaceful quiet of a suburban home or studio in which to work. However, the problems are numerous. It is difficult to make professional urban connections or

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to attract buyers who usually shop in the city where there is more to see. Artists of Central Hall Gallery, in Port Washington, Long Island, a near suburb of New York, have even made special invitations and travel arrangements in order to bring a city reviewer to see their shows.

Soho Weekly News critic William Zimmer remarked that, unfortunately, New York area suburban exhibits often get most of their coverage in the summer when "not much is going on in Manhattan."¹⁷

Women artists in the suburbs face additional problems related to the society's role expectations. As artist Nancy Ungar writes, of Northern Westchester, outside of Manhattan:

Those few people whom you meet during the day assume you are a housewife and a mother. They are, and why else would you be at home? When you go to the city to mingle with fellow professionals you often find the same assumption. The implication is that once outside New York, you are not a professional, but a hobbyist. Ignorance on the home front, snobbery in the city and the lack of an artists' community are terribly isolating.¹⁸

Central Hall Gallery opened in August 1973. The previous winter, artists Phyllis Floyd and Benson Woodrooffe attended a lecture at AIR describing how to start a co-op. That meeting sent them searching for other interested artists. They invited several women from Long Island who had been included in WIA's "Women Choose Women" show in 1973.¹⁹ Other contacts were derived from personal recommendations regarding the quality of an artist's work. There was initial disagreement about the proposed separatist nature of the gallery; but ninety percent of the membership application slides were submitted by very skillful women artists, so the gallery became an all-women's space.²⁰

The primary incentive for forming the co-op was to correct

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the image of the suburban artist as dilettante, "that oft-maligned creature viewed as a station-wagon-driving menace, her claims to artistic productivity providing her with even further ridicule."²¹

It also aimed "to provide an alternative to the commercial art gallery, and to dispel the widespread notion that quality art is only to be found in New York City."²² In fact, Port Washington has become the home of two other co-op galleries and several commercial ones since the opening of Central Hall.

Central Hall has had two different exhibition spaces in Port Washington since 1973. However, at the end of 1979, its members chose not to renew their lease, and 1980 was spent finding a suitable, affordable space in Manhattan in which to re-establish the gallery. The much-debated decision was finally made because of the need for a bigger, more diverse audience for their shows.

Most of the collective galleries in this study are located in other major cities with active art communities. They offer many professional advantages to the artist: exhibition opportunities, a gallery and museum system, and a sense of a peer community. Life is less hectic and less expensive than it is in Manhattan. However, that city's 'art mystique' has produced what Chicago artist Elaine Gallen calls the "If-I-am-not-in-New-York-don't-call-me-a-loser syndrome."²³ This does not merely point to some sort of artists' paranoia, as there is a real reluctance of buyers to support local artists wholeheartedly. Art critic Harold Rosenberg writes, "Out-of-town [non-New York] dealers strive to balance representation of local talent with offerings of New York Names."²⁴ Critic Joanna Frueh states that Chicago art buyers still look to artists of New York or Europe instead of their own for

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The media in most American cities give notoriously scant attention to the visual arts. WARM Gallery members Jane Bassuk, Sandra Taylor and Mari Lyn Ampe call Minneapolis/St. Paul art coverage of their shows "mixed and spotty" or just "bad," some think because the "public is not all that interested in 'alternative space'" galleries. According to Frueh, Chicago has generally poor local criticism of most shows unless the exhibits include the city's famous Imagists. Judith Heep, coordinator and artist at MUSE Gallery, says there is little coverage of their work in Philadelphia.²⁶

Women artists encounter a particular set of problems in a city where contemporary art is not enthusiastically supported. As Chicago artist Vera Klement sardonically notes, "Since art isn't considered a primary pursuit, then women, who are seen as amateurs and hobbyists anyway can breathe easily in Chicago's atmosphere."²⁷ Of course, this simply means that professional women artists have to convince the public to value serious art before they can even begin to persuade them to value serious women.

Chicago's ARC and Artemesia galleries were the first two cooperatives in this study to be established in a major city other than New York. They both opened in September 1973. The members who formed the collectives were originally brought together at an organizational meeting of the Chicago WEB on 9 February 1972. Dissension within the large group developed over issues of leadership and goal-setting, between the 'younger' women artists associated with the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and the 'older' North Shore women who were more established artists. To unify the two factions, a Chicago show called

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"Women Choose Women" was jointly arranged. Following the exhibition, as ideas for the two cooperatives were being discussed, the old divisions briefly reappeared. However, by the time the collectives began operations, each included members of both factions.²⁸ Joy Poe and Susan Michod initially led the younger artists to form Artemesia Gallery. Gerda Meyer Bernstein organized the older artists into ARC.

Both the Woman's Building (Los Angeles) and AIR (New York) were important influences on ARC and Artemesia. Judy Chicago had lectured at the April 1972 WEB meeting about her experiences in Los Angeles with Womanhouse and with the planning stages of Womanspace, Los Angeles' first women's art center. The impact of the educational projects integral to the Los Angeles Movement especially affected Artemesia, resulting in "Artemesia Studies." This program has offered many classes and apprenticeships for artists, one of them a consciousness-raising workshop reminiscent of the early days of the Feminist Art Program. Artemesia has typically been viewed as the more political of the two galleries, concerned with the overall social and theoretical problems of the Women's Art Movement and not only with art marketing.²⁹

AIR also had an important impact on the two Chicago groups. Frances Schoenwetter, founding member of ARC, writes, "Perhaps the women's movement, the stimulus of WEB, plus the success and support of AIR...combined with the climate of the times served as the catalytic agents to activate the motion of our birth."³⁰ Former Chicago artist and current member of AIR, Nancy Spero, was a close friend of Bernstein's; and Harmony Hammond, another founder of AIR, was teaching at the Art Institute. These two New York artists provided the Chicago women with

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information about AIR's structure and operation, and about the problems it had experienced to date. Both ARC and Artemesia assembled following AIR's basic organizational model.

The Chicago collectives have been close companions over the years. They have almost always been neighbors, first on Ontario Street and now on West Hubbard. They have shared evening programs and jointly sponsored state-wide art events. They have contributed significantly to the Chicago art scene. Franz Schulze, critic, writes, "To all appearances, ARC and Artemesia have stimulated a kind of esthetic communication around here that hasn't been exchanged, at least at the gallery level, within recent memory."³¹

The Grandview Galleries I and II opened just two months after the Chicago cooperatives, in the Woman's Building in Los Angeles. They, of course, emerged from the very active local Movement, and many of their members were formerly artists from Womanspace. The Grandview women were also directly influenced by the New York Movement and adopted the AIR structure. Susan Williams, founding artist of AIR, spoke at the Woman's Building in 1973. The close association of New York feminist art critic Lucy Lippard with the Los Angeles leaders also strengthened the cross-country link. Grandview artists had a strong support system within the Woman's Building, but unfortunately it was this insulated atmosphere which contributed to their closing in June 1975.³²

It was not until 10 April 1976 that WARM of Minneapolis, Minnesota, began to include a cooperative art gallery within its organization, although it has had a much longer history within the Women's Art Movement as an art resource association. In fact, it

was one of the first women's art groups to be established, with early if intermittent meetings beginning in 1971. As critic W.R. Hegeman writes:

Like the antiwar activities of the 1960s, the organizing of women in the arts began sporadically, with a meeting here, a conference there, a show by women somewhere else. But the times were right. More and more women discovered they shared the common purpose of changing an antiquated, out-moded social order. The history of WARM is a record of this discovery.³³

WARM organized "The Female Eye," Minnesota's first feminist art show, in 1972, and the "Women's Erotic Art Show" in 1973. Like WIA and the LACWA had done in their own cities, WARM artists researched museum art exhibition statistics, at the Walker Art Center and the Minnesota Institute of Art, in 1972.

By 1973, the organization was meeting regularly. That year artist Carole Fisher started teaching a women's art program at the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul. Judy Chicago, Arlene Raven and historian Ruth Iskin were participants, representing the Los Angeles Movement. Their ideas of collective action, consciousness-raising as art education, and 'female imagery,' stimulated discussion and influenced the thinking of WARM artists. This gallery still has the most staunchly-collective spirit of the co-ops in this study, a fact attributable in part to the Los Angeles influences as well as to the "traditional existence of the co-op movements [farming, crafts and others] in the Midwest," the rugged climate, and the pioneer spirit for collective action on many fronts.³⁴

Two events in 1975 firmly engaged the WARM artists in the goal of establishing a co-op gallery within the larger organization. In the summer, six member artists met several from ARC, Artemesia and

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Soho 20 at the Midwest Women Artists Conference in Michigan. Rachel Rolon de Clet of Soho 20 and other co-op members held consciousness-raising groups and discussions about the practical as well as the theoretical and personal concerns of starting a co-op. The same year, Carole Fisher and Janice Helloloid attended a conference of women artists and writers at the Woman's Building. These two experiences stimulated the WARM core group to search diligently for a gallery. By December 1975, they had located a former garment-shop space and gathered their forty artists from among the more than one hundred members of the mother organization. In April 1976, WARM, A Collective Women's Art Space, opened its first show to the public. Gradually more and more of the focus of the group went to the gallery segment of WARM, until in February 1978, the organization had become a "Gallery with an association of women artists on the side."³⁵

The most recently established large-city co-op of this study is MUSE Gallery, which opened in Philadelphia in October 1977. During the same year, that city's chapter of the Women's Caucus for Art (WCA) was being formed. Some artists involved in that new organization recognized that their needs for exhibition opportunities would not be met by the more political emphasis of the WCA. Nine of them, led by Judith Heep, decided to form a co-op, which first operated under the auspices of the WCA and then became a separate entity. Judith Heep was originally inspired to establish a collective gallery in her city by a friend, Roberta Richman, who was then the coordinator of Hera Gallery in Wakefield, Rhode Island. Hera, itself modeled after Soho 20, became the structural example for MUSE.³⁶ In its short history thus far, MUSE has expanded from the nine founding members to the

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A final type of location relevant to the collectives included here is the small city or town with strong ties to a local or nearby university. These places are isolated from national art concerns, but the universities provide (typically male-dominated) artistic and intellectual stimulation.³⁷ The fast-paced life is absent, but the artists must trade the large city's rapid information exchange and its art audience for the time, the cheaper space and easier lifestyle available in the more isolated location.

The smaller the town and the art system, the more socially out-of-place a professional woman artist generally feels. She may find it difficult to acquire supplies or the technological skills she needs for her art-making.³⁸ And, as might be expected, art coverage especially in the smaller towns is "grim."³⁹ Because of the isolation felt by these artists, the co-ops serve equally important functions as both support groups and exhibition spaces. The co-ops are the only women's art organizations in their towns, so they include not only working artists, but other women interested in supporting, viewing and discussing art as well. They draw their members from the local community and from the surrounding areas.

The last three collectives in this study are situated in three such non-art-center, university-oriented towns of different sizes: a medium-sized city, Boulder, Colorado, home of the University of Colorado; a small city, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, site of the University of North Carolina; and the village of Wakefield, Rhode Island, near Providence, Rhode Island and the Rhode Island School of Design.

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In the winter of 1974, Front Range Women in the Visual Arts was established in Boulder. One graduate and two post-graduate students from the University of Colorado received a small grant from Women in Leadership, a local religious organization, to fund a retreat for women artists that was designed to build a supportive arts community. After that successful gathering, participants continued to meet monthly in each others' homes, using a voluntary rotating leadership system to plan group exhibits collectively. During the year 1977, Front Range was funded to operate a gallery which they called Womanspace. It housed workshops and theater performances as well as exhibitions. However, the grant was not awarded the next year, and the group, now numbering approximately thirty, has not had its own exhibition space since then. Instead, they have used galleries at Weber State College, the Boulder Fine Arts Center and other institutions.⁴⁰ The lack of a 'headquarters' gallery may partially account for the poor local press coverage. According to member Barbara Shark, their shows are reviewed only "as a direct result of our own request."⁴¹

Center/Gallery is located in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, a much smaller city than Boulder. Because of its location in the 'Research Triangle' of Duke University, North Carolina State University and the University of North Carolina, the Chapel Hill area has an unusually engaging art community. Critic Blue Greenberg writes that it has an "artistic sophistication...and freedom more often equated with anonymous large cities."⁴² Artist Ann Connor writes, perhaps too glowingly, that "Chapel Hill especially (the entire community of 45,000 being university-connected) reminds us of a piece of Greenwich Village or D.C.'s Georgetown." But, she also adds that in North

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Carolina, "women's caucuses and discussions centering around politics in art are infrequent at best."⁴³ Considering university-dominated Chapel Hill, and with male-dominated university faculties being the national norm, this is not surprising.

Women artists in Chapel Hill also face a regional problem:

"the aristocratic definition of the woman as a 'lady' is still embedded in the consciousness of the southerner--male and female."⁴⁴ The southern woman, even of 'North Carolina, the State of the Arts,' faces the tradition of paternalistic men; social conditioning discouraging self-promotion that is even stricter than that experienced by most women in American society; and the attitude that art is an "exemplary feminine 'accomplishment.'"⁴⁵

As the name indicates, Center/Gallery is composed of women interested in a center for the exchange of visual arts information and of working artists who also seek exhibition opportunities. As member Beatrice Schall writes, "Center/Gallery is only a 'cooperative' in the sense that we work together to make the group work. Some of our members don't even 'make' art but belong to our group to show support."⁴⁶

The idea of founding the center originated with artist Hollie Taylor. She was joined by other interested women whom she contacted at a lecture given by Lucy Lippard at the University of North Carolina in the spring 1977. They began meeting weekly in each others' homes as a support organization of thirty women. Their first group exhibition took place at Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina, in December 1977. In November 1978, they rented a small basement space in Chapel Hill. Finding that location inadequate, in October 1979, they moved to a second-story gallery in the former Art School building

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in Carrboro, just outside Chapel Hill.

Center/Gallery members have modelled their operation on the Woman's Building and the Washington, D.C., Women's Art Center. Like these models, they maintain an open-membership policy. There are no criteria determining which working-artist members can exhibit. It is the artist's own decision which determines when she is "ready" to show.⁴⁷

The last cooperative of this study's twelve is Hera Gallery, located in the village of Wakefield, Rhode Island. It is relatively distant from the Rhode Island School of Design, in Providence, which provides most of the area's artistic activities, and its own community supports almost no other arts events. For artists around Wakefield, "Living in a rural area further intensified the need for creating some sort of formal framework within which women working in the arts could reach each other."⁴⁸

Hera has felt direct influence from New York: Roberta Richman, one of the founders and Hera's coordinator for the first five years, had lived in New York and was a close friend of Lucy Sallick's, one of Soho 20's original members. Hera is patterned after that New York example. An advertising brochure for the gallery states its philosophy:

Although our interests and goals lie primarily in the arts and not as strongly in making political statements about the status of women, we are doing both simply by existing. We have exhibited the work of men in group shows and several men will be involved in special performances. However, our major goal is in offering these opportunities to women in the arts.⁴⁹

Because of the rural environment, Hera has developed along some atypical lines. Many members feel they have saturated their small local audience with their art, so some have chosen to curate

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invitational shows of non-member's work instead of displaying more of their own art. Hera's artists have offered art classes in various media as fund-raising projects for the organization. The group has considered moving the gallery to Providence. However, the move has not been made, primarily because they fear that a major relocation and the problem of staffing an away-from-home gallery would take more time and energy than the group currently has.⁵⁰

The geographical expansion of the women's cooperative galleries to almost every area of the country has very positively affected the Women's Art Movement, spreading exhibition opportunities to many more artists. Social historian William Chafe, writing about the women's movement at large, aptly describes the importance of groups such as the women's collective galleries:

The vitality of the movement lay precisely in the proliferation of local organizations, each growing out of a particular concern or experience of different groups of women. Because such organizations reflected the immediate priorities of the women who created them, they commanded substantial loyalty and energy.⁵¹

Just as importantly, the decentralization of the co-ops has insured a more nation-wide public awareness of art by women.

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¹See Appendix A.

²See Part I, Chapter 1.

³Until 1978, the Women Artists Newsletter.

⁴Some of these include the WIA Bulletin (since 1973); the WWAC News (1975); the WARM Journal (until 1980, WARM since 1976); Women Artists Group of the Northwest (1976); the Central Hall Artists Newsletter (1974); the AIR Gallery Newsletter (began and ended 1976); Womanspace Journal (began and ended 1973). See also Cynthia Navaretta, ed., Guide to Women's Art Organizations: Groups/Activities/Networks/Publications (New York: Midmarch, 1979), pp. 74-76.

⁵See Part I, Chapter 1 for further discussion of early women's shows.

⁶"Radical Alternatives for Women in the Visual Arts," videotape of panel discussion, 27 April 1974, Philadelphia. Collection of the Women's Interart Center, New York City.

⁷See Navaretta, pp. 24-25, for further listing of conferences.

⁸Jean Bergantini Grillo, "Soho 20: A Diverse Women's Gallery," Feminist Art Journal 5(Summer 1976): 37.

⁹Susan Michod, "Artemesia's Programs - Expanding," WEB Meeting (Spring 1974): 5.

¹⁰See Part II, Chapter 3 for discussion of the 1950s' New York cooperatives.

¹¹See Appendix D for comparative membership costs.

¹²The Creative Woman, A Report of the Committee on the Arts and Humanities (Washington, D.C.: National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year: 1975), pp. 3-6.

¹³See Part I, Chapter 1 for discussion of AIR's formation.

¹⁴Grillo, p. 36.

¹⁵Donna Marxer, "The Floating Gallery - And How it Grew," courtesy of the author.

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¹⁶Group interview with members of Floating Gallery, 2 November 1978, New York City.

¹⁷William Zimmer, interview, Soho Weekly News, 17 January 1979, New York City.

¹⁸Nancy Ungar, "Show and Tell in Westchester..." Women Artists News 4(November 1978): 4.

¹⁹This was the first women's show in a major New York museum, the New York Cultural Center.

²⁰Judy Seigel, "Lighting a Candle in Suburbia: Central Hall Artists," Women Artists Newsletter 3(June 1977): 4.

²¹Miriam Brumer, "Central Hall: Art Outside the Metropolis," Feminist Art Journal 2(Fall 1973): 18.

²²¹⁸ (New York: Graduate Center of the City University of New York, 1974), n.p.

²³Elaine Gallen, "Women and Winning: New York, the Provinces and Visibility," WCA Newsletter 6(June 1977): 9.

²⁴Harold Rosenberg, Discovering the Present, Three Decades in Art, Culture, and Politics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 117.

²⁵Joanna Frueh, "My Kind of Town? Chicago Women Artists," Feminist Art Journal (Fall 1976): 25

²⁶Frueh, p. 27; Artist's questionnaires: Taylor, Ampe (WARM Gallery), Heep (MUSE Gallery). Collection of the author.

²⁷Frueh, p. 27.

²⁸Matthew Rohn, "Feminism and Chicago Art Today," Chicago: The City and its Artists, 1945-78 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Museum of Art, 1978), pp. 48-49.

²⁹Devonna Pieszak and Bonnie MacLeod, "Consciousness Raising on Ontario St.? Chicago Women's Galleries and the Women's Movement," The New Art Examiner 1(November 1973): 3.

³⁰Frances Schoenwetter, "A Celebration to the Women in the Arts," WEB Meeting (Spring 1974): 4.

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³¹ Franz Schulze, "Women's Art: Beyond Chauvinism," Artnews 74 (March 1975): 72.

³² See Part I, Chapter 1 for further discussion of Grandview I and II.

³³ W.R. Hegeman, "WARM, Artists Who Came in from the Cold," Twin Cities Reader, 30 September 1977, p.6.

³⁴ Artist's questionnaire: Pat Olson (WARM Gallery).

³⁵ Mari Lyn Ampe et al, "State of the Organization 1978, A Steering Committee Report on WARM, A Women's Collective Art Space," unpublished, September 1978, p. 3. Courtesy of WARM Gallery.

³⁶ Artist's questionnaire: Judith Heep (MUSE Gallery); Judith Heep, telephone interview, 17 March 1981.

³⁷ For statistics on male to female proportions of all university art faculty, see The Creative Woman, A Report of the Committee on the Arts and Humanities (Washington, D.C.: National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year, 1975), pp. 24-25.

³⁸ Susan Fitzsimmons, "Out of the Mainstream," Women Artists Newsletter 1(March 1976): 2.

³⁹ Artist's questionnaire: Marlene Malik (Hera Gallery).

⁴⁰ Cath Murphy, untitled, unpublished description of Front Range. Courtesy of the author.

⁴¹ Artist's questionnaire: Barbara Shark (Front Range).

⁴² Blue Greenberg, "No. Carolina's Center Gallery: A Progressive Women's Co-op," Art Voices South 3(March-April 1980): 52.

⁴³ Ann Connor, "Letter from North Carolina," Women Artists Newsletter 2(January 1977): 2.

⁴⁴ Elsa Honig Fine, "Network Building for Southern Women Artists," Women Artists News 5(February 1980): 9.

⁴⁵ Fine, p. 10.

⁴⁶ Beatrice Schall to Gayle Davis, 5 April 1980, letter.

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⁴⁷Greenberg, pp. 52-53; "Center/Gallery - A Rough Chronology" (mimeographed), courtesy of Beatrice Schall.

⁴⁸"Hera Educational Foundation, Women's Cooperative Gallery," advertising brochure, courtesy of Hera Gallery.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Roberta Richman, interview, Hera Gallery, 21 March 1979, Wakefield, Rhode Island.

⁵¹William H. Chafe, Women and Equality, Changing Patterns in American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 128; See Appendix C for a summary of the expansion of the co-ops.

PART II

PHILOSOPHICAL DIVERSITY AND CHANGE

IDEOLOGICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL

PRECEDENTS

It is not surprising that the women's cooperative gallery as an organizational type developed from the Women's Art Movement of the 1970s. Most of the principles embodied in the co-ops were adopted from late 1960s' feminism, whose theories had evolved in turn from the various, sometimes overlapping, ideologies of many other American social movement groups. The most recent precedents were the cooperative galleries of the mid-1950s; Civil Rights organizations; the 1960s' anti-war, pro-social change coalitions of the New Left, including related off-shoot protest groups such as the Art Workers' Coalition (AWC); and others.¹ Some of the adopted principles modified to fit the women's galleries' specific purposes, included separatist memberships; non-hierarchical, non-competitive, participatory democracies; and an anti-commercial attitude. As a result of their unique fusion of all of these philosophies, the co-ops have operated on a complex, richly interwoven, theoretical basis.

Tracing the precedents for the definitive characteristics of the women's co-ops and noting the ways in which the original ideas have been adapted to the galleries' changing needs provide useful insights into the development of these innovative art associations. While the position of each co-op varies in degree on some issues, it is possible to identify common characteristics of the whole group of galleries:

first, their widely diverse memberships; second, the theoretical basis of the co-ops and the precedents for those ideas; and third, the organizational policies of the galleries and their origins.

The co-op artists who founded and joined the early women's galleries were typical of participants in other social movements in several ways. One characteristic they shared was that they were 'young' in their careers, many showing their work professionally for the first time only after joining the women's galleries. They were experienced enough, though, to have personally encountered the problems of trying to exhibit art in the frustratingly overcrowded commercial gallery market.² Depending on the political opinions of the individual co-op artist, she attributed those difficulties to sexist discrimination, the 'plight of the contemporary artist,' and/or capitalistic institutions. Whatever her views, the artist sought to rectify the situation for herself by participating in a collective.

A very large majority of women's co-op artists have been white³ and of a middle class socio-economic background. This type of membership fits the pattern sociologists like Maren Carden have recognized in other social movements. The American white middle class generally has high expectations for their lives, so that when they fail to attain their goals, their deprivation comes as a shock and they feel cheated.⁴ It follows that when middle-class white artists feel discriminated against, their indignation is likely to provide them with the motivation to join a co-op, and their economic position can usually furnish the financial resources needed for an often costly co-op membership.

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According to social protest theory, those of minority races and a lower economic class usually feel less surprise and disappointment than the middle-class person does, even in the face of greater deprivation, because they never had such high expectations for their futures anyway.⁵

The lack of minority members in the co-ops is not entirely due to economics, however. Middle-class minority women artists have not joined the women's co-ops in great numbers for much the same reasons as they have not constituted a very large part of the overall women's movement. The priority for most political minority women is fighting racism, and they do not feel the women's movement of recent years has addressed that issue sufficiently.⁶ And, concerning sexism, many black women agree with economist/writer Julianne Malveaux, who says:

Sexism in the Black community is an issue too long avoided by Black folks. It needs to be discussed, though, by Black people, and I am more impatient with white women who would use Black male sexism to forge fragile feminist alliances between us than I am with the Black male behavior that makes the notion of these alliances often tempting.⁷

Another way in which the early co-op artists were typical sub-culture group participants was that many of them, especially the founders, had had direct experience in other protest organizations, so they were likely to take part in an alternative group again. There had been almost a decade of political activism on several fronts, including civil rights, the New Left, and the women's movement, prior to the inception of the first women's co-ops in this study. Historian Sara Evans writes, "In an important way these years produced a mass constituency for the women's liberation movement. By 1967-8 hundreds of thousands of young women had been to a march, a meeting, a sit-in,

a rally."⁸ Evans describes some of the seeds of the women's movement, explaining how the civil rights effort gave participating women:

a language to name and describe oppression; a deep belief in freedom, equality and community - soon to be translated into 'sisterhood'; a willingness to question and challenge any social institution that failed to meet human needs; and the ability to organize.⁹

The women artists who participated in protest activities from the middle 1960s to the early 1970s most typically were involved in either the New Left-influenced art groups like the AWC or in the women's movement. Those activist artists who then came to the co-ops had a highly political awareness and were experienced in social protest philosophy, alternative organizational structures and techniques of voicing dissatisfaction with 'the establishment.' Protests by women artists usually took the form of museum picketing, leafletting, making political art works or publishing statistics proving blatant sexism in the art world. Although these politically active artists of the early 1970s still joined the women's co-ops for the primary purpose of exhibiting their art, their varying kinds and degrees of social interests--feminism, Marxism, human rights--carried over into their secondary expectations of how the co-ops should be formulated and operated.

Within each co-op, there have also always been artists who have not shared an active interest and/or belief in any or all of the political causes dominating the 1960s and affecting the 1970s. Their interest in belonging to the galleries has not been to confront the art system, but to become better, more professional, more visible artists within that structure.

Since the women's co-ops function as participatory democracies, it is natural that political and non-political members in any one co-op sometimes disagree over gallery goals. For example, a problem arises if, in the interest of creating professional liaisons with other cooperatives, some of the members want to have an exchange show with a gallery that includes art by male artists. Long discussions must ensue with the part of the membership who wants an entirely separatist co-op, following their priority on feminism or women's art. Another typical conflict occurs when members committed to the co-op as an alternative to the mainstream art system disagree with those who want the co-ops to function only as professional training grounds or stepping stones to the commercial market. The outcome has been that socio-political issues are included in gallery policy in direct proportion to the number of activist, or at least politically sympathetic, artists in each co-op's membership; and since the composition of the co-ops changes over time, gallery positions on certain issues change as well. However, in any case, radical political stances are generally made more conservative in drafting gallery policy during the democratic decision-making process, members eventually agreeing to a compromise best suited to the gallery's main goal of exhibiting high quality art. What historian John Howard writes about the women's movement applies as well to the diverse interests in the co-ops:

There is...a kind of tension in the movement. On the one hand, there is a strain organizationally toward fragmentation into particularistic groups representing the interests of homogeneous subpopulations...On the other hand, there is a

concern with issues which transcend differences. The first strain creates tensions within the movement; the second creates a sense of common identity and purpose.¹⁰

The different views of this mixed membership are evidenced in the theoretical basis of the galleries. Many of the complex issues involve four of the major topics of co-op philosophy: separatism; non-hierarchical, participatory democracy; competition; and commercialism.

The decision to create separatist co-ops was most directly prompted by the women's movement, which had defined the culture's traditional sex role expectations as oppressive and in conflict with some women's desires to be professionally successful. But twentieth-century feminists had adopted their idea to form separate, alternative structures to counteract societal discrimination from many different protest movements throughout American history. Black Power groups, for instance, believed that they needed to organize themselves, not allowing white men to direct them and thereby perpetuate white superiority.¹¹ New Left activists of the 1960s wanted to work outside the system for fear of the co-option of their causes.¹² Ironically, it was often women's participation in mixed-gender alternative groups that made them aware of the need for organizations solely for women. Experience had shown that even within non-traditional movement associations, women were still allowed little decision-making power, and their concerns took a low priority. Recent history reveals numerous statements such as these by feminist

writer, Robin Morgan, about the New Left:

Thinking we were involved in the struggle to build a new society, it was a slowly dawning and depressing realization that we were doing the same roles in the Movement as out of it: typing...making coffee...being accessories to the men.¹³

She states that the women were driven out of the movement by:

the serious, degrading, and pervasive sexism we encountered there, in each man's attitude and in every group's structure and in the narrow political emphasis and 'manhood-proving' tactical styles themselves....¹⁴

These experiences have been echoed by women involved in many different kinds of counter-culture groups, including those within the art community. In fact, Women Artists in Revolution (WAR) evolved from the male-dominated AWC in 1969 for just such reasons.¹⁵

The late 1960s' and early 1970s' separatist organizations of the Women's Art Movement, such as Women in the Arts (WIA) and the Women's Ad Hoc Committee in New York City, the Los Angeles Council of Women Artists (LACWA), the Women's Art Registry of Minnesota (WARM) in Minneapolis, and others, were also role models for the women's co-ops.¹⁶

However, it must be remembered that the co-ops were conceived as art exhibition groups, and the fact of their separatist natures does not necessarily indicate that they are committed to feminist political activities. In fact, several of the co-ops, including AIR Gallery in New York City, Central Hall formerly of Port Washington, Long Island, and others, were at first intended as co-ops of mixed memberships;¹⁷ and almost all the galleries in

this study have at one time or another considered the possibility of including male members, although none have done so yet.

The main reason the earliest co-ops adopted separatism was because "the time was right" for it.¹⁸ AIR opened in 1972, and Central Hall, New York City's Soho 20, and Chicago's ARC and Artemesia co-ops all opened in 1973, two of the peak years of women's movement activities nad publicity.¹⁹ Women's caucuses and associations within many professional specialities began to receive a large amount of media attention. In fact, Carden found that by 1975, "The media and the general public discussed 'Women's Lib' at such length that they took over (often in a distorted form) much of their [early women's groups'] function." Historian William Chafe supports this, writing, "In an era dominated by the mass media, the feminists displayed consummate skill in drawing public attention to themselves and 'raising' America's consciousness to the inequalities from which women suffered."²⁰ The increased visibility of women's groups' activities was attractive to women artists, even to those who were not particularly drawn to feminism and/or separatist structures. Once the precedent was established with a successful network of co-ops in operation by the middle 1970s, others wanted to join in, despite the fact that the days of women's co-ops as 'big news' were past. The success and longevity of the women's co-ops became their selling point by the end of the 1970s.

A second characteristic of the women's co-ops that derived from the women's movement was that of a participatory democracy within a non-hierarchical, non-competitive group. This value on

egalitarianism has greatly influenced the co-ops' philosophies and activities, affecting everything from personal achievement and competition, to discussion methods and the types of art made by the members.

Participatory democracy was certainly not a new idea in this country's history, having been a part not only of our early government, but also of almost every social protest group. Its most recent application, previous to the formation of the women's co-ops, was to meetings of New Left organizations, especially those of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and their Economic Research Action Projects, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and other associations of the Civil Rights Movement, as well as organizations in the women's movement.²¹

In the middle 1960s, the women's movement adopted the ideal of non-hierarchical associations. This was not a surprising development, since many early participants in the movement had splintered away from democratically-run groups of the New Left and the Civil Rights Movement, disgusted with the sexism they encountered there. The value of leaderless groups was, however, based on more than adopting an established counter-culture technique:

In the women's movement, this form of organization is not only the consequence of the process of movement development, it is also a central tenet of movement ideology. Supposed leaders are largely the creation of the press; identifiable units are usually leaderless and highly egalitarian; many women who identify themselves as being feminists belong to no group or only sporadically participate in group activities. The ideology which supports



this type of organization contends that women must not recreate in their own groups the forms of structured oppression of the male-dominated, bureaucratic world. No one person or group can lead or dictate policy because women will not be liberated until they individually assume control of and responsibility for their own destiny.²²

This issue was extremely important, especially in the early years of the women's movement, and it had widespread personal effects on many feminist activists. For example, Ti-Grace Atkinson decided to resign as the head of the New York chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW) rather than to keep her influential position at the top of the 'power pyramid.' She said, by the fact of "holding these offices I am participating in oppression itself."²³ The principle of egalitarian sisterhood clashed greatly with the image of women who were 'stars' of the movement or even of a local organization. Those who did not step down, as Atkinson had done, found themselves in conflict with the movement. When gentler peer pressures were not enough to keep individualism from winning out, 'trashing,' an informal type of ostracism or hostile withdrawal of support, was sometimes employed to demoralize the offending woman enough to force her to change her behavior. This was only a new name for an old type of social control, not at all unique to the women's movement. In a very critical article on this subject, activist Joreen writes:

The primary reason there have been so few 'great women _____' is not merely that greatness has been undeveloped or unrecognized, but that women exhibiting potential for achievement are punished by both women and men. The 'fear of success' is quite rational when one knows that the consequence of achievement is hostility and not praise.²⁴

The Women's co-op galleries adopted the feminist value on non-hierarchical groups, especially in the earliest years of the first co-ops. However, as the case is with all secondary issues in the co-ops, the importance of the political concern was never allowed to interfere with achieving excellence in the gallery exhibitions. The co-ops did not operate under as strict an egalitarian philosophy as that described by Joreen because they had, after all, been established to promote the work of a group of artists selected on the merits of their personal, outstanding, artistic ability. When the collectivism of non-hierarchical groups conflicted with the elitism of building the careers of a small number of women, the co-ops generally chose art career success.

The issue of competition is also related to the egalitarian/elitist conflict in the co-ops. Feminist theory has labelled competition a 'masculine,' negative trait and in the early years, many co-ops agreed with the feminist definition. However, the co-ops have been gradually exploring the implications of that philosophy.²⁵ Most members now maintain that competitions play a roll in women's endeavors as well as in the 'male establishment' and it can positively affect one's work, even enhancing "excitement, creative impetus, comradeship and closeness," if the competing people are "not after each other's blood."²⁶ Equal exhibition opportunities are strictly guarded in the co-ops, but a purely egalitarian spirit, without pride or jealousy, would seem humanly impossible among individuals geared toward their own, as well as the collective's professional success. The co-op members generally do feel committed to sharing information about show, grant, or job opportunities with

others in the group. Then every woman who wants to join the competition can vie for the prize.

A fourth complicated issue related to building art careers in the co-ops is commercialism. Originally, most women's galleries supported the 'anti-middle-class profit orientation, anti-materialism' philosophy of the 1960s 'hippies,' the New Left, and feminism.²⁷

The mixed-gender, non-commercially oriented co-ops of the 1950s also served as a model for the women's galleries.²⁸ In fact, Wolf Kahn, a founder of one of these early co-ops, the Hansa Gallery of New York, said, "Everyone that I knew had to overcome a great reluctance to start a gallery...feeling you'd lose your innocence being involved in a commercial thing." An artist might think about getting a show,

But not to become famous or make money; you had a show to see your own paintings in less grungy circumstances. Another great hope was that the older guys [de Kooning, Cline, Pollock, Rothko] would come and see your work.²⁹

A similar spirit has influenced the women's galleries. No agents are hired to promote sales; no one type of art dominates any of the co-ops, unlike the sales-oriented selections in most commercial galleries; and the only co-ops in this study that receive commissions on their artists' sales take less than one-half the amount charged by a commercial gallery.

However, the women's galleries have been becoming more and more interested in financial success as time has passed. On this study's questionnaires, lack of sales is one of the most often-stated problems of belonging to a co-op. This shift in attitude

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could be a result of a worsening economy. In the 1950s' co-ops, "Rents were as low as \$25 a month--about \$2.50 [per month] per member--a far cry from today's co-op costs, which can be more than \$1000 a year per member."³⁰ Another cause for the gradual change may be that in the early days, the artists were happy to be gaining visibility in the art world, a status long-denied most of the members. But, as the artists came close to real recognition in their careers, they began to want all the rewards, financial as well as esthetic, that go with some measure of success. Once again, it is a case of rising expectations producing a feeling of increased deprivation.

The women's collectives have closely followed not only the philosophy, but also the organizational structure of the co-ops of the 1950s. Then, as in the 1970s, eager young artists formed co-ops to increase their exhibition opportunities in spite of the flooded commercial gallery system. A few co-ops such as the Origo Gallery in Washington, D. C., opened before the end of the 1950s in other major cities, but the earliest and largest number of galleries--over twenty by the early 1960s³¹-- were located in New York City. These 'neighborhood' co-ops, away from the uptown commercial gallery districts, became known as the Tenth Street Galleries. In reporting an address by critic Dore Ashton, art writer Jean Cohen describes the co-ops as full of "the artists' dissatisfaction with the world at war in Korea, their pride in being a group apart."³² However, the co-ops were not "anti-establishment factions but adjuncts and entries into the uptown conglomerate."³³

The 1950s galleries were democratic collectives, with limited memberships selected according to the quality of an artist's work and his or her ability to pay the member's fees. Costs of operating the gallery were shared, and each artist was assured of regularly scheduled, three to four-week, one or two-person shows. The co-ops also periodically sponsored group exhibitions.

The early co-ops served as training grounds where the members could acquire professional attitudes toward art marketing and build the confidence they would need to seek entrance into the mainstream art system. While they still belonged to the co-ops, however, it was "the freedom from commercial expectations and from backbiting"³⁴ that members most prized in the co-op environment.

This description of 1950s' co-op structure also applies to women's co-ops of the 1970s. As much as the political and social climate of the country had changed between the decades when these two co-op systems were established, the women's galleries still adopted intact a surprising number of gallery procedures from the earlier groups. The Tenth Street co-op movement was over by the end of the 1960s, some think the victim of negative press attitudes and destructive pressure from the mainstream establishment.³⁵ Even so, it had provided the organizational model for the next decade's reintroduction of the art co-op structure.

Those aspects of 1950s' co-op structure that the women's galleries did alter or add to, reveal the effects of the various 1960s' political ideologies discussed earlier in this chapter.

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Especially influential in shaping 1970s' gallery procedure was the high value placed on a leaderless democracy. It affected almost every phase of gallery operation in the early years.

At first, most of the co-ops used a structureless approach to daily gallery business. Whoever answered the phone or was in the gallery was 'in charge' to respond to questions, deal with the landlord, talk to the press. This method taught all members about all aspects of gallery work. However, the disadvantages of lost messages, miscommunication, and unfinished tasks began to outweigh the advantages of direct member participation in running the gallery. Every co-op in this study has now resorted to operating under some sort of non-authoritarian administration, usually a rotating leadership and standing committees, with general member input encouraged, to increase efficiency. Major decisions are still made democratically, in monthly meetings, but no longer is every item of co-op detail directly decided by each member.

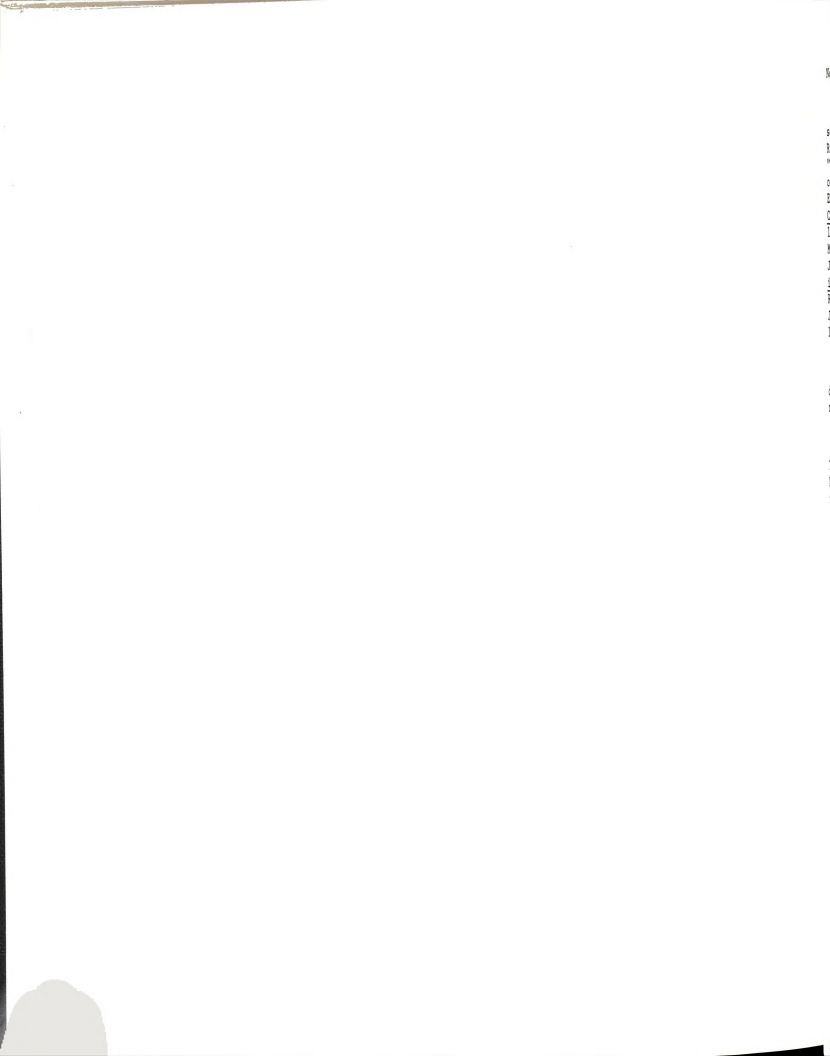
In the first years of the co-ops, business meetings included the leaderless technique of consciousness-raising (CR) as one discussion method. The procedure, learned from the women's movement,³⁶ allowed each member to state her thoughts on a subject without interruption or criticism. It was used to settle both business and interpersonal problems among the members. Although during the second half of the 1970s, CR as a technique was given up in most co-ops in favor of less time-consuming discussions, the co-ops still put a high priority on personal communication among the members, hoping to maintain a sense of trust and cohesion.

Another gallery policy affected by non-hierarchical thinking is the method of member selection. Only the quality and not the kind or style of art produced is considered. This is both a reaction against the mainstream's linear theory of art development, and a statement that one type of excellent art is not inherently better than another. This gallery perspective allows for the inclusion of art forms not usually accepted as avant garde in the past: fine art work derived from traditional handicrafts, feminist political art, new forms of realism, explorations of 'female sensibility,' and others.³⁷

A final major contribution of the leaderless philosophy of co-op structure is that by not touting co-op 'stars,' other women artists realized that they could be successful members of a women's co-op, too. Role models have been available since AIR opened, and the spread of other co-ops across the country has been very fast.

This extremely quick acceptance of the women's gallery idea is easy to understand considering the dire need for more professional art opportunities for women; and, as this chapter details, neither the idea of separatist structures nor that of co-op galleries was new in the 1970s. Individuals in the art community were not confronted with a totally foreign concept; rather, they only needed to think about combining these two familiar societal alternatives. This is not to say that the philosophies of the women's co-ops were stable or even uniformly easy to understand; in fact, the opposite was true. But the individual issues has been extensively debated in other contexts

before, so that informed artists had the exposure needed to form rather immediate reactions to the principles involved. Then it became an artist's individual decision whether a co-op gallery could provide a rewarding professional art experience for her.



Notes

¹For detailed discussions of the influence of these movements, see: Maren Lockwood Carden, The New Feminist Movement (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1974), pp. 151, 156-57; Elizabeth Diggs, "What Is the Women's Movement?," Michigan State University School of Social Work, East Lansing, Michigan, n.d. (Mimeographed); Sara Evans, Personal Politics, the Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), pp. 61, 137; Jo Freeman, "Crises and Conflicts in Social Movement Organizations," Chrysalis, no. 5(January 1978): pp. 43-51; John R. Howard, The Cutting Edge, Social Movements and Social Change in America (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1974), pp. 144-47; Robin Morgan, "Rights of Passage," Ms. 4(September 1975): 74-78+; Judith Papachristou, Women Together (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), pp. 216, 233.

²Carden, p. 30. The author states that until younger people directly experience inequities, they do not usually take part in related social change action.

³Over 99 percent of the co-op members in this study are white. There have been artists' groups for black women: Where We At, the Black Women Artist Group (founded 1970) and Women Students and Artists for Black Art Liberation (1971).

⁴Carden, pp. 23, 30.

⁵Ibid., pp. 30, 153-58

⁶Valerie Harris, "Power Exchange 1: Chris Choy," Heresies 2(1979): 26; Idem, "Power Exchange 4: Camille Billops," Heresies 2(1979): 117; Sandra L. Langer and K.M. McClure, "Regionalism, Isolation, and the Southern Lady," Women Artists News 5(February 1980): 3; Faith Ringgold, "The Politics of Culture: Black, White, Male, Female," Women Artists News 6(Summer 1980): 20; Michele Wallace, "Daring to Do the Unpopular," Ms., 2(September 1973): 24. For statistics on income, unemployment of blacks, see Julianne Malveaux, "Three Views of Black Women--The Myths, the Statistics, and a Personal Statement," Heresies 2(1979): 51-53.

⁷Malveaux, p. 54.

⁸Evans, p. 170.

⁹Ibid., p. 100.

¹⁰Howard, p. 148.

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¹¹Loren Baritz, ed., The American Left, Radical Thought in the Twentieth Century (New York: Basic Books, 1971), p. 469; Gil Green, The New Radicalism: Anarchist or Marxist? (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p. 155.

¹²Freeman, p. 48.

¹³Robin Morgan, ed., Sisterhood Is Powerful (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), p. xx in Howard, p. 144.

¹⁴Morgan, "Rights," p. 75.

¹⁵For further discussion of this topic, see Part I, Chapter 1 of this study.

¹⁶For further discussion, see Part I, Chapters 1 and 2 of this study.

¹⁷Corinne Robins, "The A.I.R. Gallery: 1972-1978," AIR Overview 1972-1977, An Exhibition in Two Parts (New York: Publishing Center for Cultural Resources, 1978), n. p.; Judy Seigel, "Lighting a Candle in Suburbia: Central Hall Artists," Women Artists News 3(June 1977): 4.

¹⁸Barbara Zucker, "Making A.I.R.," Heresies 2(Spring 1979): 81.

¹⁹Maren Lockwood Carden, Feminism in the Mid-1970s, The Non-Establishment, the Establishment and the Future (New York: Ford Foundation, 1977), pp. 7, 19. Statistics showing the growth of women's groups: in 1970 National Organization for Women (NOW) had 4300 members and over 40,000 by 1974; there were 300,000 women in non-establishment feminist groups by 1975.

²⁰Carden, Feminism in the Mid-1970s, p. 6; William H. Chafe, The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 238.

²¹Carden, Feminism in the Mid-1970s, p. 21; Evans, p. 137; Freeman, p. 45; Irwin Unger, The Movement: A History of the American New Left 1959-1972 (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 54.

²²Mary D. Howard and Joan Acker, "On Becoming a Feminist," paper presented to the American Sociological Association, New Orleans, 1972, pp. 10-12, in Howard, p. 147.

²³Diggs, n.p.

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²⁴Joreen, "Trashing, The Dark Side of Sisterhood," Ms.
4(April 1976): 94.

²⁵Jane Bassuk, Beth Bergman, Alice Towle, eds., "Dividing the Pie," WARM Journal 1(Fall 1980): 6.

²⁶Phyllis Goldin, "Reflections on Competition between Women," WARM Journal 1(Fall 1980): 10.

²⁷Evans, p. 175.

²⁸For further details about the 1950s co-ops, see: Jean Cohen, "Tenth Street Days--and Beyond," Women Artists News 3(March 1978): 8; Jeannette Feldman, "The First Women's Co-op," Women Artists News 4(February 1979): 10; Freda Pond, "10th Street Galleries of 1950s Included Many Women Artists," Women in the Arts Bulletin 5(January 1978): 2; Abby Tallmer, "Tenth Street Days: The Co-ops of the 50s," Women Artists News 3(January 1978): 1, 10; Nancy Ungar, "Tenth Street Revisited," Womanart 2(Spring 1978): 15-18+; Mimi Weisbord, "Tales of Tenth Street," Women Artists News 3(February 1978): 3-4, 7.

²⁹Weisbord, p. 3.

³⁰Cohen, p. 8.

³¹Cohen, p. 8. The 'original' eight of these co-ops were the Tanager, Phoenix, Hansa, Jane Street, March and Brata, Camino, James and Area galleries. The exhibition "Tenth Street Days: Co-ops of the 50s," celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of these artist-run galleries, 20 December-7 January 1979, in a multi-gallery, New York City show curated by Joellen Bard.

³²Cohen, p. 8.

³³Ungar, p. 27.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Cohen, p. 8.

³⁶Consciousness-raising had earlier precedents in the Chinese Revolution's group criticism where it was called "speaking bitterness," and in the "Guatemala Guerrilla Approach" of SDS meetings. Evans, p. 214.

³⁷See Part III, Chapter 6 of this study for a discussion of the art of the co-ops.

PHILOSOPHICAL DIVERSITY

Considering the organizations from which the cooperative galleries of the Women's Art Movement inherited their ideological bases, one would expect their members to be actively political. One imagines them intent on promoting women's rights through separatist feminism, and on asserting artists' rights by creating alternatives to the exhibition structures of the mainstream. This is certainly true of some co-op artists. But there is not the unanimous agreement among them that one would anticipate on these two philosophical issues. The co-ops have encouraged the same type of philosophical diversity that was bred in the women's movement of the early 1970s, producing a membership with widely varied social, professional and esthetic interests. They include non-political and political artists, and the political members themselves espouse wide-ranging degrees of commitment to women's and artists' rights.

There are definite advantages to such diversity within an organization. The tenet handed down by the larger women's movement is that:

ideological diversity...does foster individual enthusiasm, encourage members to experiment with new ideas, increase the total number of women who are attracted to the movement, and insure that any social problem is tackled from several different directions, thereby increasing the probability that some resolution will be found.¹

The co-ops have been stimulated by their "internal polarities," and have called the mix "the basis of our strength and of our potential

development."² Differences among the members can be complementary, allowing the pooling of many resources directed toward achieving common aims. Even the conflicts resulting from differing opinions can lead to creativity and build group cohesiveness if the problems are thoroughly aired.³

However, the co-ops have always recognized the very thin line between the creative, growth-producing effects of exposure to diverse ideologies, and the divisive, paralyzing results of unsettled arguments and conflicting goals. Historian Jo Freeman writes:

The more inclusive an organization is, the less the commitment required to join and remain a member. An organization that consciously tries to diversify its membership base as much as possible runs the risk of diluting its belief system... in order not to alienate the potential membership. This is a conflict faced by many feminist groups because of a pervasive belief that they must somehow be 'everything' to every woman.⁴

Some organizations have not withstood the strain. Womanspace and the Grandview Galleries in Los Angeles and the Alliance of Women Artists in Portland, Maine, for example, were closed because of the philosophical disagreements of their members. Artist Faith Wilding describes the problem: "In short, the diversity of needs which artists brought to Womanspace soon overwhelmed its capacity to accommodate them and became great stumbling blocks in its path to unity and strength."⁵

Co-ops have survived the tension of differing internal ideologies by accepting the disagreements as inevitable and proceeding with gallery business through compromise. However, the

process of decision-making in such diverse groups can be enervating. Over twenty-five percent of the respondents in this study agree that difficulties with other members during democratic problem-solving sessions is one of the major disadvantages of belonging to a collective. It is also one of the primary reasons artists leave their co-op galleries. These disparities of goals became evident at the first organizational meetings of the co-ops, and the conflicts continue today. The result is disunity among the members on such basic issues as feminism, separatism, and the potential of alternative galleries to assert artists' rights.

Since their beginnings, the collectives have puzzled and argued over whether or not to call themselves "feminist." Part of the ambivalence results from the many connotations attached to the term, no clear definition having been thoroughly or widely accepted. Therefore, it has been difficult, even for many of the sympathetic but cautious co-op artists, to align themselves with a political position whose 'politics' are unclear, both to the general public and the art community. Many artists have been able to accept a general definition of feminism, like that of historians Ruddick and Daniels: "Feminism implies that we recognize fully the inadequacy for us, the distortion, of male-created ideologies, and that we proceed to think, and act, out of that recognition."⁶ This description is abstract enough to include many women, at the same time that it does not require specific behavior from them. The narrower the definition, the fewer the supporters. Somewhat less

attractive to 'prospective' feminists is the only slightly more restrictive definition written by critic Lawrence Alloway:

[A feminist] is a woman who is willing to work with other women to reduce inequality in the long run or to achieve a specific short term reform. Without the aspect of collaboration, whether it is to found a cooperative gallery, infiltrate an art school or expose the prejudices of art dealers, a woman artist is not a feminist.⁷

Because his definition specifies collaboration, even some of the artists of the collectives find it untenable. Many prefer to see themselves seeking individual professional recognition through the galleries.

Much of the artists' hesitancy or refusal to accept the feminist description for the co-ops and themselves has stemmed from an artistic aversion to categorization, but even more from the public image this particular label has acquired. The media cliches reflecting public backlash have created the picture of a 'screaming feminist' who is militant, hostile, strident, and anti-male.⁸ Most women artists have not been eager to declare themselves feminists under these circumstances, and those who have, carefully qualify the term. As critic Elizabeth Janeway states, "Because women have let the false images stand as our representatives, we have falsified ourselves, diminished ourselves, chosen to divide ourselves and exist in a hopeless, endless stasis, unable either to act truly or to be ourselves in freedom and enjoyment."⁹ In creating a new image for women, most unabashed feminists believe if women fear ridicule by others who see feminists as blind extremists, they need to correct the stereotype and not deny their political allegiance.¹⁰



The artists of the collectives who do identify themselves as feminists are generally "liberal" or "cultural" and not "radical" feminists. Loosely-defined by writer Joan Braderman and others, liberal feminists ultimately want equality within the existing social institutions; the 'mainstream' society.¹¹ Radical feminists want to create philosophically and financially independent structures that are permanently separate from the dominant society. Their stance is not easily accommodated in the collective galleries, since all these groups do participate in the established art system and accept many of its rewards for artistic achievement. Although they are the small minority, there have been some radical feminists in each of the co-ops studied here throughout the decade.

Within any one of the co-ops are artists who are pro-feminist, anti-feminist, and a-feminist. They all use the terms according to personal criteria that are often the result of unconscious conditioning as well as decisive thought. The actions of a given member clarify her views for the other artists of her gallery, but the specific meaning she gives to feminism is rarely articulated. It is no surprise that four of the galleries in this study have decided to call themselves "women's" and not "feminist" groups in their public literature. Conflicting opinions about feminism have influenced more than the co-ops' publicity. The sides of the dispute have been polarized into 'feminism versus careerism,' and they have become major, long-standing areas of internal dissension.

Feminism versus careerism has been described by members of WARM Gallery as its "dipolar character--internal, feminist, supportive

of women artists cluster versus an external, professional to the world, competitive association."¹² These strong, opposite positions have affected many gallery policies, among them, the process of new-member selection. A gallery operating purely according to feminist 'sisterhood' would include art by any woman who wanted the support of the collective, regardless of her art career experience of the quality of her work. However, in order to compete in the professional art community, the galleries must show the highest quality art possible. Pat Olson of WARM Gallery calls the resulting conflict that of "P and Q, Potential and Quality."¹³ WARM originally allowed any interested artist, new or accomplished, to join, up to the limit of forty members. But, as the members' art matured to high refinement and the gallery's reputation grew, the co-op artists became more and more concerned with maintaining quality and presenting a thoroughly professional image. They began to select new members based on the quality of their art. Some variations of this pattern can be seen in the histories of the twelve co-ops of this study. Seven co-ops initially had open memberships, and now only two do so.

All twelve co-ops have felt this dilemma of collectivism versus elitism, and it has affected their public image as well as their internal processes. Ann Shearer of Center/Gallery notes that the larger art community is critical of the quality of her collective's unjuried shows, which it sponsors as an "essential part of our support [for women artists] function."¹⁴ On the other hand, women who approach the co-ops expecting to find 'sisterly' support and

openness are sometimes dismayed and confused by the careerist orientation they find instead.¹⁵ And so the conflicts continue. The degree to which any collective operates according to feminist or careerist goals varies, depending on the political disposition of the majority of the membership at any specific time. In general, it seems the co-ops promote the collective spirit at times and in locations where little other support is available for women artists and where the art community is small. Where the art system is larger and more active, the co-ops tend to follow the elitist nature of their surrounding art scene.

In spite of the partial commitment to feminism within the co-op memberships, they have always been separatist organizations. This fact, which also contributes to the misguided public view of the co-ops as completely feminist, has remained consistent throughout the 1970s. This is not to say, however, that the decision to restrict the membership to women was easily reached or sustained. On the contrary, every group in this study has periodically debated the idea of inviting male artists as members.¹⁶

The artists who argue against separatism basically feel that it does not serve to integrate the co-op or its individual members into either the alternative or the mainstream art system. Separatist galleries are criticized for creating an 'unrealistic' environment for their artists, insulated from the tougher scene of the larger art establishment. With the women's movement's emphasis on support and acceptance, some artists think a 'too secure' atmosphere is fostered, which eventually becomes a closed system. It is difficult

for a woman to leave the homey, secure environment in order to compete in the mainstream system, to "push herself out of the nest," as Soho 20's former member Vernita Nemec states it.¹⁷ Within the "safe harbor,"¹⁸ the "womb,"¹⁹ it is easy for women to become comfortable and complacent. Feminist poet Anne Dutlinger says, "But too much support can fool us. We may end up settling when we should be arguing."²⁰

Supporting their argument with various theories of social movement development,²¹ some artists state that making separatist galleries available allows the mainstream to take less responsibility for its discrimination against women artists. The co-ops thus function as "stop-gap measures that substitute for needed social change" and contribute to the "unintentional perpetuation of the status quo."²² Since the member artists do have a place to show, their frustration is dulled, they don't complain as much, and the mainstream can conduct their usual, discriminatory, business. In fact, the position for artists of the collectives may be even worse than 'usual.' Vernita Nemec points out that other gallery representatives may not even visit the co-op artists' studios because "they already have a gallery."²³

Critics of separatism say that the collectives have become women's "ghettoes." Art historian Mary Garrard writes:

Women artists are discussed in courses on women artists, are written about in feminist journals, are grouped in single-sex exhibitions, and if I sound churlish about these activities, which surely have their positive effects, it is only with apprehension that we will all--feminist historians, artists and critics--remain trapped in a great cultural ghetto of our own devising if we do not now begin to force the issue of integration.²⁴

Eventually, communicating only with like-minded women and therefore despairing of having any immediate, significant impact on the society as a whole, some artists have quit the co-ops. Joan Fitzsimmons, former member of Artemesia Gallery, left, she says, because "I was just tired of beating my head against a wall."²⁵

The arguments in favor of separatism have centered around the desirability of removing women from the male milieu, where feminists believe their traditional sex-role conditioning and the effects of male peers can impede their most creative work. Artist Martha Rosler, writing specifically about the Los Angeles Woman's Building, states:

They aim to make women more direct in recognizing and expressing their own needs, and to make use of their personal and collective strengths; to validate women's occupations, free of male interference, and to help them enter the art world. This approach avoids the energy drain of incessant battles with sexism, personal or institutional.²⁶

Proponents of separatism cite the examples of women who had attended all-women's colleges, and who later had little difficulty speaking assertively in mixed groups. They had cultivated their intellects in non-threatening environments where thinking was not the exclusive domain of the male.²⁷ Lucy Lippard writes:

The difference between talking to a mixed art school class and one made up solely of women has to be experienced to be believed, but there sure as hell is a difference in the way women open up, become smart and imaginative and assertive--and better artists. Those who denounce such situations as 'separatist' should get a glimpse of the sense of purpose and relaxed exhilaration at the Woman's Building. There, everything seems possible--including a nonseparatist future.²⁸

By combatting conventional role expectations to be passive, unselfish, and unambitious, the women artists could, as artist Judy Chicago says, exist as more than traditional "non-beings."²⁹

Co-op feminists also support separatism because it is clear that the mainstream art structures are not, even now, fully open to women.³⁰ Even in the face of 'reverse discrimination' charges, the co-ops reply that they simply give long-denied access to women's art. The Washington Women's Art Center's former director, artist Ellouise Schoettler, writes that her center:

should be sexist. The very fact that women felt a need to establish a place of their own to share viewpoints and to support each other because they weren't receiving it elsewhere, reflected a sexist aspect of our society. Without our continued awareness of the special reasons that brought us together in the first place, we risk losing the benefits we've gained.³¹

For the politically-aware artists, the choice to remain separatist is based on the knowledge that social change is slow and that it is finally accomplished only when stereotypes are directly confronted.³² Toward that end, separatist galleries insure that professional women's art is constantly in evidence.

Although some co-op artists want permanently separate art facilities for women, this radical position is certainly in the minority. Most see integration and not separatism as the ultimate goal. The question that has been debated since the early 1970s is when integration should be accomplished. Some, such as Rosemary Mayer, formerly of AIR, feel it is past the time to integrate in areas such as New York City where the Women's Art Movement has had the longest history and therefore the most impact.³³ Vernita Nemec agrees. She wrote in 1976 that it was time:

to risk being very selective and competitive. The important thing is to maintain the ground we have gained. We must be persistently conscious of the proportion of existing

professional female artists to those who have opportunities for recognition and be sure that it matches the opportunities that male artists enjoy... We have participated in a necessary stage which has allowed women to come into prominence in a basically male world.³⁴

However, citing the still sexist statistics of even New York commercial galleries, others such as Lucy Lippard say when women have fifty percent of the art world opportunities at every professional level, then it will be time to stop separatism.³⁵

Members of the women's collective galleries are no more uniformly committed to alternative galleries and the 'politics' of artists' rights than they are to the rights of women. To further complicate the factions of agreement and disagreement within the co-ops, there are approximately as many feminists and non-feminists within the ranks of those who support the cooperative over the commercial gallery system.

The recent development of active concern for artists' rights began in the late 1960s in such New Left-inspired groups as the Art Workers' Coalition (AWC) and the Figurative Artists Alliance (FAA).³⁶ Part of the reason these men and women organized was to protest their treatment by the mainstream art institutions concerning financial arrangements for showing and selling art, exhibition and sales exclusivity, and the artists' lack of decision-making power in the marketing of his or her art. In order to gain more control, as well as to create much-needed exhibition opportunities, artists began opening their own mixed-gender, and later women's, cooperative galleries. By 1979, there were an estimated one hundred such groups in the United States.³⁷ Many of the alternative galleries are

loosely-bound together by the New York-based Association of Artist-Run Galleries (AARG).

Many of the women's co-op artists support this movement and prefer the philosophy of alternative galleries to that of the commercial system. They are interested in their collectives as galleries which are functional as ends-in-themselves.³⁸ Twenty-five percent of this study's participants cite the freedom they feel to show their own selection of work, to learn how it should be marketed, and to install it the way they choose, as major advantages of exhibiting in a co-op. An artist may show work which is new and experimental, without worrying about pleasing a commercial dealer from whom there is very often pressure to 'sell out the show.' If an artist does sell work, most collectives take no commission, unlike the thirty to fifty percent commissions received in commercial galleries. All the while, a co-op artist has an association of peers from which to elicit constructive criticism and support, much different from the more isolated existence of a commercial gallery artist for whom the exhibition space is strictly a place of business and not a community. And, with all this freedom and self-determination, the co-ops still provide secure shows, guaranteed visibility, and the possibility of further professional contacts and opportunities for their members. In the co-ops, the artists make the art, control their career business, and receive the rewards. The dealer, long-established as the expert art advisor, is eliminated from the process. MUSE Gallery's Linda White writes, "I think it is becoming clear to everyone that most artists not only know more about art than most dealers, but want the

flexibility to exhibit what and when they want and to be able to market their work in whatever way they see fit."³⁹

Marxist thought plays a small but significant role in this preference for alternative galleries among the more political co-op members. Not primarily seeking sales, their interest is in communicating to a wide audience, in rebellion against the elitist, class orientation of the art establishment. Some of these artists who have integrated socialist theory into their approaches to art distribution are also feminists, a combination whose basic contradictions have long been debated. The small number of socialist-feminist co-op artists generally take the position described by Charnie Guettel in Marxism and Feminism: "It is enough in studying the history of women to grasp that class struggle is in the long run the underlying social factor in propertied society and, in the short as well as the long run, history does not move in a straight line."⁴⁰ "Secondary contradictions," or inequalities in the society other than class, create these diversions, nonetheless productive, away from the straight line of progress toward classless goals. Sexism is one such secondary problem. Guettel describes the importance of feminism: "Even legal reform is a gain, however limited for women, insofar as it pushes the movement forward and heightens contradictions which press to be resolved."⁴¹ As historian Irwin Unger says, "Sexism, like racism, predated capitalism and would postdate it, unless women, like blacks, fought for themselves."⁴²

Other members of the collectives, who have no strong political inclination toward alternative structures, would prefer to belong to a commercial gallery's stable. The cooperatives do not offer them

opportunities for the career advancement they desire within the established system. The best commercial dealers promote his or her artists' work by publicizing their shows in mainstream channels and contacting prospective buyers, curators,⁴³ and reviewers. Sometimes the dealer even offers stipends, rather like advances on sales, so the artist can depend on a regular income. The commercial stable artist thus has more time and money to devote to his or her art-making.

While in a commercial gallery the administrative, maintenance, and promotional work is all done by the gallery staff; in a collective, the artists are the staff. Over thirty-five percent of the respondents in this research mentioned the strain of the huge time investment each member must make in the co-op. Commonly, a core of members do most of the gallery business and eventually suffer from 'burn-out' and disillusionment with their organization.⁴⁴ The time pressures are especially frustrating as an artist becomes more successful, participates more actively in the art world, and finds she cannot spend adequate time on her art. And when the collective also becomes more prominent in the art community, it takes additional effort and time to keep it growing. The time demands on each member continue to multiply.⁴⁵

There are also constant financial problems in the cooperatives. Most operate on initial membership fees of between \$150 and \$250 and on twenty-five to fifty dollars per month, per member. Each artist also pays for the publicity and installation costs of her own show, averaging a total of \$400-\$500 at AIR, for example. Since the collectives do not have sales agents, and since they are still often

considered "sub-galleries,"⁴⁶ the artists can not even depend on covering their costs through art sales. Another extremely important funding source for the collectives is public grant money. This fact can only lead one to predict that the co-ops' financial crises will increase in the next several years, with the cutbacks scheduled in 1981 for such agencies as the National Endowment for the Humanities and the state Arts Councils. Critic Phil Patton, in his 1977 survey of alternative galleries, wrote, "A large increase in government spending for the arts [beginning in 1965] was perhaps the crucial factor in sustaining alternative spaces," and "it is unlikely that alternative spaces as they now exist could have been developed without public money."⁴⁷ The commercial galleries, although certainly affected by national economics and conservative governmental impulses, are at least, as established institutions, less vulnerable than the cooperatives which depend on public funds and a favorable political climate for their existence.

The split in the memberships of the women's collectives over cooperative versus commercial philosophies makes itself evident in the way in which the galleries present themselves to the public. Depending on the amount of support for each position, the exhibition space is plush or serviceable; the art is 'establishment' avant garde or more experimental; and the programs sponsored follow mainstream or counter-culture paths. One instance in which the conflicts are most clearly felt is when a member artist who aspires to the commercial scene leaves the co-op as she begins to receive professional acclaim. The remaining artists often feel used or deserted, and the resentful

feelings on both sides have been difficult to avoid.

But it is feared that even more difficulties face the co-ops if they confront these issues of feminism, separatism, and artists' rights on which there is so much disagreement among the members. If each co-op formulated one philosophy and required allegiance from every member, the "organization risks a 'split in the house.'"48 So far, most of the collectives have chosen instead to tolerate the problems of diversity, although some have not. The Cal Arts Feminist Art Program, Womanspace and the Grandview co-ops all attempted to achieve a completely united front, an effort that was so divisive that the organizations dissolved.

However, in spite of the draining effort it sometimes has taken, the galleries have succeeded for years in resolving these seeming impasses, by means of open, if often heated and long, discussions and constructive compromises. The multi-purposes I have described have been remarkably well-served, member artists joining and then remaining or leaving the galleries in a sifting process which is entirely natural, as artists respond to their own particular needs. In all the stages of 'changing with the times,' the women's cooperative galleries have continued, positively affecting the environment for contemporary art and contemporary women.

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Notes

¹Maren Lockwood Carden, The New Feminist Movement (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1974), p. 85.

²Mari Lyn Ampe, et al, "State of the Organization 1978, A Steering Committee Report on WARM, A Women's Collective Art Space," WARM Gallery, Minneapolis, Minnesota, September 1978, p. 5, courtesy of the gallery.

³Eleanor Olds Batchelder and Linda Nathan Marks, "Creating Alternatives, A Survey of Women's Projects," Heresies 2(Spring 1979): 107-108.

⁴Jo Freeman, "Crises and Conflicts in Social Movement Organizations," Chrysalis, no. 5(January 1978): p. 44.

⁵Faith Wilding, By Our Own Hands, The Women Artists' Movement, Southern California, 1970-1976 (Santa Monica: Double X, 1977), p. 53.

⁶Sara Ruddick and Pamela Daniels, ed., Working It Out, 23 Women Writers, Artists, Scientists, and Scholars Talk About Their Lives and Work (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), p. xvii.

⁷Lawrence Alloway, "Women's Art in the 70s," Art In America 64 (May-June 1976): 64.

⁸Catherine R. Stimpson, "I'm Not a Feminist, But...", Ms. 8 (July 1979): 62; and Joanna Frueh, "Rethinking Women's Galleries, Reflections on ARC and Artemesia," The New Art Examiner 7(December 1979): 5.

⁹Elizabeth Janeway, "Image of Women," Arts in Society 11(Spring-Summer 1974): 12.

¹⁰Janeway, p. 12; Stimpson, p. 62.

¹¹Joan Braderman, "Juggling Contradictions: Feminism, the Individual, and What's Left," Heresies 1(January 1977): 91; Jacqueline Skiles calls it "reformist" feminism in "Looking Back: The Past Ten Years," Women Artists News 6(Summer 1980): 13.

¹²Ampe, et al, p. 1.

¹³WARM Gallery, group interview, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 20 November 1979.

¹⁴Artist's Questionnaire: Ann Shearer (Center/Gallery).

¹⁵ Artist interview (name withheld by request), New York City, 12 January 1979.

¹⁶ See Part II, Chapter 3 of this study. Over 25 percent of the artists in this study favor beginning to include men as members.

¹⁷ Vernita Nemec, interview, Soho 20 Gallery, New York City, 5 January 1979.

¹⁸ Barbara Zucker and Joyce Kozloff, "The Women's Movement: Still a 'Source of Strength' Or 'One Big Bore'?", Art News 75 (April 1976): 48.

¹⁹ Lucy R. Lippard, "Lucy Lippard Answering Questions: A Dialogue with the Audience," talk presented at the annual meeting of the Women's Caucus for Art, Los Angeles, 2 February 1977.

²⁰ Anne Dutlinger, "To the Editor," Washington Women's Art Center no. 15 (January 1977), p. 5.

²¹ Carden, pp. 75-78; John Howard, The Cutting Edge, Social Movements and Social Change in America (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1974), p. 157.

²² Carden, pp. 75, 77.

²³ Nemec.

²⁴ Mary D. Garrard, "Feminism: Has It Changed Art History?" Heresies 1 (Winter 1977-1978): 59.

²⁵ Joan Fitzsimmons, "Wall, Not Poe, Reason for Departure," The New Art Examiner 7 (February 1980): 12.

²⁶ Martha Rosler, "The Private and the Public, Feminist Art in California," Artforum 16 (September 1977): 68.

²⁷ Ruddick and Daniels, pp. 220, 243; Linda Nochlin, interview, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York, 17 November 1978.

²⁸ Lucy R. Lippard, From the Center, Feminist Essays on Women's Art (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1976), p. 99.

²⁹ Judy Chicago, "Woman as Artist," Everywoman, 2 (May 1971): 24.

³⁰See Part III, Chapter 7, Tables 2 and 3.

³¹Ellouise Schoettler, "Letters to the Editor," Washington Women's Art Center, no. 13(November 1976), p. 2.

³²William H. Chafe, The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic and Political Roles, 1920-1970, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 249.

³³Rosemary Mayer in Interviews with Women in the Arts Part II, (New York: Tower Press, 1976), p. 18.

³⁴Vernita Nemec, "X¹²," Womanart 1(Summer 1976): 7.

³⁵Lucy Lippard in introduction to Women Choose Women, Women in the Arts, New York Cultural Center, 12 January - 18 February 1973, p. 6 "Lucy Lippard Answering Questions."

³⁶See Part I, Chapter 1 of this study for discussion of the AWC and FAA.

³⁷Freda Stern Pond, "Cooperative's Gallery Role for Artists," Women in the Arts Bulletin 6(June 1979): 2.

³⁸See Part III, Chapter 7 of this study for discussion of the roles of the co-ops in a member's career.

³⁹Artist's questionnaire: Linda White (MUSE Gallery).

⁴⁰Charnie Guettel, Marxism and Feminism (Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1974); p. 10.

⁴¹Guettel, p. 37.

⁴²Irwin Unger, The Movement: A History of the American New Left, 1959-1972, (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 155.

⁴³Rita Reif, "Dealers and Museums: The Relationship Is No Longer Anonymous," Artnews 73(October 1974): 34-35.

⁴⁴Janice Helloloid and Cynde Randall, "An Interview with Ruth Iskin," WARM, May-August 1976, n. p.; Meeting of Women's Interart Center, tape, 31 July 1973, collection of Women's Interart Center, New York City; Deborah Dorsey, "Disillusionment Expressed at Meeting," Women in the Arts Bulletin 8(January 1981): 1.

⁴⁵Lucy Lippard, interview, New York City, 22 January 1979;
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1979.

⁴⁶Jean Bergantini Grillo, "Soho 20: A Diverse Women's Gallery,"
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New York City, 22 January 1979.

⁴⁷Phil Patton, "Other Voices, Other Rooms: The Rise of the
Alternative Space," Art in America 65(July-August 1977): 81.

⁴⁸Pamela Zagaria and Jane Eastwood, "Planning Workshop with WARM:
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PATTERNS OF CHANGE

The 1970s was a time of radical shifts in the national social and political climate. The decade encompassed both the conclusion of the human rights activism begun in the late 1960s and the beginning years of a new inward-turning conservatism arising primarily from the worsening economy and the overall political disillusionment of the American people. In examining these changes, social historians have identified various stages of the ideological confrontations between subcultural movements within a society and the establishment.¹ One series of stages a movement may follow, once the societal preconditions are suitable for its emergence, involves various kinds of mainstream suppression, including co-optation and partial incorporation of movement ideas, and the institutionalization of the rebellious faction. As the 1970s have become more conservative, this appears to be the direction in which the subculture has been led.

These cultural changes are clearly reflected in the women's cooperative galleries. Although the co-ops have always included members with widely diverse personal, political and esthetic philosophies, the more radical or conservative of these positions has gained prominence at various times in the decade, in direct correlation with the 'outside' patterns of political change.

The women's galleries have always had an ambiguous relationship to the social movements of their day, including even the Women's Art Movement. The differing opinions of their members prevent the organizations from either fully supporting or opposing subcultural causes, because art exhibition and not political activism has been their primary goal. Therefore, these galleries are not solely instruments of reform or revolution, although they do influence change with their educational programs, their art, and their very existence as models for future ventures of professional artists. Because the artists are, thus, both involved in and withdrawn from the political causes related to their groups, the women's galleries are more appropriately examined as microcosms or symbols of cultural developments in the larger society. The range of personal ideologies among the members can be suitably viewed as a cross-section, though not a random one, of the philosophies of contemporary women artists.

The kinds of changes each cooperative has experienced, in its morale, public image and types of exhibitions, are strikingly parallel to the long-recognized patterns of development through which social movements typically progress. Since the gallery members depend upon the outside society for communication, audience, inspiration and recognition, it is not surprising that they directly reflect its phases of change. And especially because the public has automatically associated the collectives with the women's rights movement, changes in societal attitudes toward women or the Women's Art Movement are particularly mirrored in the operation of the galleries.

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The patterns of subcultural movements identified by various social historians are generalized formulations which preclude detailed descriptions of the extremely dynamic advances and retreats of any cultural rebellion. However, they do provide a useable framework within which to understand specific societal responses, such as those of the co-ops, to the advocacy of change.

Certain conditions within a society have repeatedly proven to be especially conducive to the formation of a dissatisfied, sub-cultural self-consciousness, the necessary first ingredient of a budding social movement. Historian Sara Evans lists five such preconditions needed for the development of a "collective identity":

- (1) Social spaces within which members of an oppressed group can develop an independent sense of worth in contrast to their received definitions as second-class or inferior citizens;
- (2) Role models of people breaking out of patterns of passivity;
- (3) An ideology that can explain the sources of oppression, justify revolt, and provide a vision of a qualitatively different future;
- (4) A threat to the newfound sense of self that forces a confrontation with the inherited cultural definitions... and finally;
- (5) A communication or friendship network through which a new interpretation can spread, activating the insurgent consciousness into a social movement.²

Many of the women who would eventually form the Women's Art Movement and some who would found and join cooperative galleries felt the sense of common identity described by Evans. Their perceptions of self-worth and models of assertive action were products of their participation in mixed-gender art groups, consciousness-raising,

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and protest associations of the women's, artists', or anti-war movements.³ Feminism's ideology identified sexism as the problem and collectivism as the answer, since little other support for women artists could be found in the mainstream. News of the pre-Women's Art Movement activities was spread by 'word-of-mouth' and by a few periodicals, such as the WEB Newsletter and the Feminist Art Journal.⁴

The earliest cooperative galleries originated at the height of the Movement's political activism, but as groups, were only peripherally involved in its protests. Conceived in such an atmosphere, at a time when the social climate was receptive to reform philosophies, the co-ops were branded political, sometimes almost in spite of themselves. The art exhibited often explored newly-emerging feminist themes. In that time of high visibility for feminist causes, the galleries profited by their association with the Movement.

According to historian Roberta Ash, once a social movement becomes "formalized," when organizations are established to meet the members' particular needs, the larger society begins its process of "suppression... the destruction of movement organizations and the bringing of sanctions against unorganized individual behavior."⁶ Some suppression methods only aggravate the issues, sometimes radicalizing the participants. Feminist politician and psychologist Berit As calls them the "Five Master Suppression Techniques." They include ridiculing individuals, often in a sexual way, withholding information, making movement efforts invisible, attributing shame and guilt to participants, and creating a "damned if you do

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Women artists of the co-ops as well as of the Movement have certainly encountered all these backlash behaviors. They have been criticized as 'unwomanly' and 'too aggressive,' at the same time as they are told that 'they aren't aggressive enough to be artists.' Male members of the audience at a feminist art panel discussion made such comments as, "This shows hatred of men," and "Women are helping to fragment society."⁸ The abuses are keenly felt by the cooperatives' members, who are vulnerable on a very local level because of their on-going, sex-specific shows. Charges of "sexism" have been levelled at them, evidence of a "counter ideology," which as historian John Howard describes the phenomenon, provides "a rationalization for forestalling further advances and possibly even for returning to the status quo ante." Problems of inequality are reversed and blamed on the inadequacies of the "have nots."⁹

When individual professional goals are at stake, backlash responses such as these can be personally wearing. They are particularly frustrating to the co-op artist who is not politically invested in feminism in the first place. Her position in the gallery becomes more complicated in the face of these reactionary confrontations. She may feel it is not in her best interests to be identified with the Movement through the gallery,¹⁰ and she is more likely to verbally differentiate her goals as a woman and an artist from those of feminist artists. Barbara Zucker, founder but no longer a member of AIR Gallery, wrote in 1975, that "feminism has become an easy,

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predictable target. I do not believe our strengths will be reinforced by staying in this polarized oasis."¹¹

The types of suppression which attempt to divide and dissipate a social movement's energy have more lethal effects, not only on individuals but on the movement itself. Ash cites "co-optation" and "partial incorporation" as the two most dangerous of these kinds of suppression. Co-optation, a "structural process of placing movement personnel into elite-sponsored positions,"¹² gives high visibility to some individuals and divides their energies between the establishment and the movement. "Partial incorporation" is "a cultural process of incorporating portions of movement belief systems into the prevailing ideology."¹³ These two techniques can give the false appearance that there has been significant progress toward movement goals. The group of movement participants not selected for token involvement in the elitist society may regress to the belief that their problems are caused by personal failure, after all, since it seems apparent that some of 'their kind' have been successfully established in the mainstream.

The Women's Art Movement has experienced these types of suppression. Because some few living women artists, like Louise Nevelson, Alice Neel and others have finally been recognized and are relatively prominent in the contemporary art world, the public is encouraged to believe that women and men can achieve artistic success with equal ease. That there have been occasional women artists shows in major museums superficially convinces the lay person that sexist discrimination no longer exists. However, the proportion of women

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included in gallery and museum shows and in their critical reviews does not confirm that impression. As feminist writer Joan Braderman states, "Certainly the patriarchy was sufficiently threatened to let the feminist token into the limelight. But she did not make it into the statistics."¹⁴

In the collective galleries, these forms of suppression further divide the memberships. Many of those aspiring to the mainstream and without a strong commitment to the co-ops, do not identify it with tokenism when women artists are accepted into the established art system. In fact, these members hope for the same in their own careers. The other artists, with longer-term goals of women's equality or artists' rights, feel that what they see as co-optation and partial incorporation undermine their causes. John Howard writes:

It is a question of whether the attainment of some of the more tangible and immediate objectives will erode the energy and enthusiasm needed to pursue longer-range, less tangible, but equally fundamental, goals. The consequence of proximate successes may be to decrease the momentum of the movement.¹⁵

It is partly a matter of practical concern: the more successful one is, the busier, and the less energy one can devote to a social cause.¹⁶ Further, once an artist enters the mainstream system, she may become dependent upon its rewards and less apt to appraise it critically. An angry black woman artist writes, "It is...curious to see how quickly many white feminists...fell in line with the other side when they felt that rocking the boat might disturb some of the 'crumbs' they had gained."¹⁷

Movement organizations not only suffer from outside suppression, but they also are transformed by internal pressures. One such

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change is "oligarchization."¹⁸ This structural change, toward support of a few decision-makers, often accompanies "goal displacement," in which "the goals of organizational maintenance override the initial goals of social change."¹⁹ Instead of such a group "putting itself out of business by changing the situation that gave rise to it,"²⁰ the longevity of the organization begins to take precedence over the political concerns.

Both the organizations of the Women's Art Movement and the co-ops show evidence of these transformations. The structureless democratic ideal of the early 1970s has given way, for efficiency, to loose administrative systems.²¹ And the Movement's political activism, though not completely quiet, has certainly diminished in intensity during the progressively more conservative, "law-and-order mood" of the second half of the 1970s.²²

Many of the collective galleries originally had the secondary goal of providing an actively supportive community for women in the arts, resembling what John Howard calls the "expressive" purposes of "fictive kin" groups.²³ This early priority has become less and less important, though, as the career interests of the members have become even more dominant than they were initially. Now the co-ops have become primarily "instrumental" associations, operating more or less solely for a specific professional function.²⁴ The galleries have stopped trying to be 'all things to all women artists' and have narrowed the range of their endeavors.

The type of new members joining the galleries also reflects the change in focus. Former member of ARC Gallery and one of its

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founders, Frances Schoenwetter, echoes the feelings of many others in this study when she notes that many of the new co-op artists are not feminists and they are not motivated by the same commitment to the collective that the early members felt.²⁵ AIR's Patsy Norvell voices the same concerns: "They're [the younger generation in general] not taking over and we're losing ground. They take everything for granted, but things are not so equal now that we can stop keeping track."²⁶

The more individual-oriented, careerist attitudes of the new members and the quieting of the collective spirit of the galleries has led many to speculate that the collectives have become "institutionalized." As defined by Ash, this term refers to a group "which is structurally and ideologically thoroughly incorporated into the status quo, that is, it supports the existing class relationships and the political system."²⁷ Essentially these groups no longer actively support social change.

Within the network of collective galleries, there has emerged a hierarchy of quality such as one typically sees in the institutionalized commercial gallery system. The 'highest echelon' co-op is AIR Gallery. The art marketing world and other artists accord it fuller recognition than any of the other collectives. It was the first co-op, it is the best-known, and it has survived the longest, with a turnover rate that is among the smallest in this study. The percentage of artists who are content to retain their memberships at AIR is larger than in any other women's gallery. Some are afraid that AIR is the token women's co-op recognized by the mainstream. Others,

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like Barbara Zucker, believe the relative success of AIR has bred complacency in the whole system of co-ops. She writes:

A kind of lethargy seems to have settled over feminism, not just in the arts but in all phases of its development... But worse, there is a kind of settling in, an acceptance of the feminine 'institutions' which have developed since the late 1960s; and those who seem the most quiescent, and the least able to ask questions about where to move next, are the feminists who are part of these collective oases.²⁸

However, many observers feel the comparative quiet of the Women's Art Movement and the co-ops reflects a national, social movement mood. Writer Paul Fromm sees the 1970s as a retreat from the activism of the 1960s: "We may need this time to find our roots, to learn where we've been so that we can go forward."²⁹ Women's Interart Center's Dorothy Gillespie says the atmosphere is calmer because "the time for crying is over, the time for blaming is over, the time for complaining is over," and now women artists must simply work hard.³⁰ Feminist writer Robin Morgan also defines the mood of the late 1970s as "digging in" and not dying.³¹ She continues:

We know that such change seems to move in cycles (thesis, antithesis and synthesis--which itself in turn becomes a new thesis...), and we also know that those cycles are not merely going around in circles. They are, rather, an upward spiral, so that each time we reevaluate a position or place we've been before we do so from a new perspective. We are in progress, continually evolving....³²

Although all the co-ops were affected by the beginning economic recession in the mid-1970s and the increasingly conservative political climate, the chronology of these changes is somewhat different for each co-op gallery, dependent especially on their locations and the political attitudes of their founding members. The philosophies

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of the Women's Art Movement, beginning on each coast in the early 1970s, are still spreading to the other regions of the country.

Social historian Maren Carden explains the time lag which is typical of any social movement:

each wave [of reform] passes through each segment of society twice--first in principle, then in practice. A person, group, or institution accepts a new idea in principle before it accepts responsibility for changing behavior in accordance with that principle.³³

Artist Cynthia Carlson applies the theory to women's art:

When the women's movement started organizing exhibits, in the early seventies, it had an effect in places like Colorado of allowing women who hadn't been given credibility for having talent...to begin working. Almost a decade has passed and their work has grown stronger. It is now an appropriate time for those women, who said, 'o.k. maybe I do have the confidence to make art' [to begin showing it].³⁴

So, although organizational structures, art esthetics or ideological tenets can be learned from model co-op art groups, it is an entirely different individual and collective process to actively implement that knowledge. Social historian Jo Freeman writes that "people must go through [stages] to get to new levels of consciousness" and develop at their own, sometimes slow, rates.³⁵

These stages of developing consciousness, which the co-ops too have gone through, are powerfully influenced by the political positions taken by their founding members. That initial core group chooses the other artists, makes early policy decisions and sets the overall political and personal tone of the gallery. Applying the theories of social change discussed here, it is predictable that a greater proportion of artists who would establish a collective

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in New York in 1972 would be politically more aware and/or active than the artists who would found a collective in 1977 in Philadelphia. Political activism was simply more prevalent and artists were more willing to be identified with their political opinions in the first half of the 1970s than in the second.

Because of the quiet political mood of the late 1970s the Women's Art Movement co-ops have certainly changed and become less confrontive of the status quo. And the co-ops' and Movement organizations' dependence upon public funding is a serious problem, considering the country's current bleak economic condition. However, women artists of the co-ops have improved their professional environments significantly, and their political influence, though more dormant now, is not dead. When their gains begin to be accepted as natural and taken for granted, other 'layers' of discrimination will surface and reach the awareness of some, new higher expectations will arise, and a new push for further equality will be attempted. Historian William Chafe's words are relevant: "No one can claim that equality has been achieved as a result of these changes, but it may be that a foundation for seeking equality has been established."³⁶ The social process is certainly not over.

Be wary about speculation about cycles and overhasty pronouncements of rigor mortis. Feminist and pre-feminist thought, and undoubtedly action as well, do not die; they go on.³⁷

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¹An especially clear account of these stages may be found in Roberta Ash, Social Movements in America (Chicago: Markham Publishing Co., 1972), pp. 1-28. I will use the term social movement as she defines it: "attitudes and self-conscious action on the part of a group of people directed toward change in the social structure and/or ideology of a society and carried on outside of ideologically legitimated channels or which uses these channels in innovative ways."

²Sara Evans, Personal Politics, The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), pp. 219-20.

³See Part II, Chapter 3.

⁴See Part I, Chapter 1.

⁵William H. Chafe, The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic and Political Roles (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 277.

⁶Ash, p. 23.

⁷Berit As, "The Five Master Suppression Techniques," speech given at A Woman's Place, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 17 October 1979. See also Pringle Smith, "Eight Games the System Plays, or, How to Psych Out the Bureaucracy," Ms. 4(February 1976): 97-100, and Letty Cottin Pogrebin, "Have You Ever Supported Equal Pay, Child Care, or Women's Groups? The FBI Was Watching You," Ms. 5(June 1977): 37-44.

⁸Bibi Lencek, "Artists Talk on Art Jan. 30: Their Balls Were Black and Blue," Women Artists Newsletter 1(March 1976): 2.

⁹John R. Howard, The Cutting Edge, Social Movements and Social Change in America (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1974), pp. 258, 260.

¹⁰Elouise C. Snyder, ed., The Study of Women: Enlarging Perspectives of Social Reality (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 33.

¹¹Barbara Zucker, "Letters to the Editor, What Do Women Want?" Women Artists Newsletter 1 (December 1975): 2.

¹²Ash, p. 23.

¹³Ibid.

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¹⁴Joan Braderman, "Juggling Contradictions: Feminism, the Individual and What's Left," Heresies 1(January 1977): 89. See Part III, Chapter 7, Tables 2, 3, 4.

¹⁵Howard, p. 157.

¹⁶Meredith Rode, "Notes from the Women's Caucus for Art," Art Journal 34(Summer 1975): 345.

¹⁷"Action Against Racism," Heresies 2(1979): 111.

¹⁸Ash, p. 24

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Jo Freeman, "Crises and Conflicts in Social Movement Organizations," Chrysalis no. 5(January 1978), p. 43.

²¹See Part II, Chapter 3.

²²Freeman, p. 49.

²³Howard, p. 154.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Frances Schoenwetter, interview, ARC Gallery, Chicago, Illinois, 8 June 1979.

²⁶Grace Glueck, "'Redefining the Whole Relationship between Art and Society,'" Artnews 79(October 1980): 63.

²⁷Ash, p. 24.

²⁸Barbara Zucker and Joyce Kozloff, "The Women's Movement: Still a 'Source of Strength' or 'One Big Bore'?" Artnews 75(April 1976): 48.

²⁹Paul Fromm, "Cultural Retreat of the '70s," The New Art Examiner 6(October 1978): 22.

³⁰Dorothy Gillespie interviewed on "Woman in Her Own Write," videotape, collection of Women's Interart Center, New York City, winter 1975.

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³¹Robin Morgan, "Forum: Rights of Passage," Ms. 4 (September 1975): 78.

³²Morgan, p. 99.

³³Maren Lockwood Carden, Feminism in the Mid-1970s, the Non-Establishment, the Establishment, and the Future (New York: The Ford Foundation, 1977), p. 44.

³⁴Colorado Women in the Arts (Boulder: Colorado Women in the Arts, 1979), p. 189.

³⁵Freeman, p. 47.

³⁶Chafe, p. 254.

³⁷Sarah Slavin Schramm, Plow Women Rather Than Reapers, An Intellectual History of Feminism in the United States (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1979), p. 343.



PART III

THE EFFECTS OF THE COOPERATIVE GALLERIES
ON CREATIVITY AND 'SUCCESS'

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'PLURALISM' IN THE ART OF THE COOPERATIVE GALLERIES

As the 1970s ended, the usual retrospective analyses of the decade's art appeared in the press. The various writers agree that no one esthetic, but rather a wide diversity of art styles characterized the time. "Most of the art world [is] grumbling that there was no new art, no superstars, no new movements, no isms that lasted longer than fifteen minutes."¹ 'Pluralism' is said to be more prevalent in contemporary art than at any other time,² an assessment received with mixed, strong feelings in the art community. Those art writers who most adamantly support the mainstream's traditional focus on one or two art developments at a time are the most distressed by the current 'chaotic' scene. The views of the following three critics illustrate the range of these art-world reactions. Hilton Kramer of the New York Times voices one of the dimmest views of 1970s art, feeling that we are "condemned" to the "perpetual whirl of countervailing and contradictory styles and attitudes" which reflects a "culture desperately engaged in ransacking the past...in the hope of discovering an identity that can win our credence."³ Kim Levin writes in Art Journal that the situation is "transitional" if "slightly crazed," corresponding to a historical period when the society has begun to lose its confidence in "unlimited progress and expansion" and is now occupied with a very eclectic "search for meaning."⁴ Taking

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the most positive perspective of the three, John Perreault of New York's Soho Weekly News enjoys being "greeted with the spectacle of many styles" and welcomes it as a "healthy state of affairs" which allows the "possibility of egalitarian pluralism."⁵

Especially those writers who are supportive of the Women's Art Movement share Perreault's positive opinion of the current artistic diversity. The Movement, bound together by social and political rather than stylistic affinities, encourages a wide, free range of art-making. This preference for variety originated in rebellion against the mainstream's "modernist" attitude which favors a linear evolution of self-referential artworks within a hierarchy of esthetic styles.⁶ In fact, Lucy Lippard writes "Feminism's major contribution for the future of art has probably been precisely its lack of contribution to modernism."⁷ Even critics once disdainful of the 'quality' of women's art, such as Carter Ratcliff, were beginning to change their minds by the mid-1970s: "I don't really believe that all...feminist artists have broken really free of the horrible old art-world rules, but most of the people doing that seem to be women and they [are] going in a good direction."⁸ Also applauding the shift toward multi-styles, critic Kay Larson says, "most of the interesting and important stylistic developments of the decade have been directly or indirectly related to feminism...And far from displacing men, female leadership has opened up new freedom for everyone."⁹ That freedom had been long overdue.

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Almost all writers agree that the most noticeable general change in contemporary art since the late 1960s is the renewed interest in "content."¹⁰ In this study, content will be used to indicate what the artists intended to convey as meaning. "Intrinsic meaning," as Panofsky writes, is "a unifying principle which underlies and explains both the visible event and its intelligible significance, and which determines even the form in which the visible event takes shape."¹¹ Recently, art which has been created with the primary intention of investigating the formal elements of art-making--line, shape, color, marks--has been widespread. As Carla Gottlieb writes in Beyond Modern Art, "form was promoted to serve as the content of contemporary art," artists taking recourse in form for innovation.¹² So, although all art involves content, for simplicity in this study, I will refer to objective or non-objective art whose principal content derives from formal considerations in art as "formalist," and to art whose content derives predominantly from human experience as "content-oriented."

Kim Levin, along with many other art writers believes social discontent led to the reintroduction of 'subject' or content to art:

The disillusionment of the late sixties was transformed into the illusions of the seventies. The art object itself had become a fiction in a world which, littered with technological debris, became obsessed with identity, behavior, appearance--with physical and psychic survival...behavioral art [was made] that abandoned form to reveal privacies, enact rituals, expose obsessions, depict illusions, or retreat to revivalism.¹³

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Many feminists feel that especially their movement, with its stress on self-knowledge, the potential for emotional growth, and communication, led to the changes toward human content in 1970s art. Artist Martha Rosler writes:

Occurring at the moment when subjecthood could be identified as an elementary concern of art, the concept [of women's art] was clearly a response to nonformal pressures that can be summed up as women's push for fully recognized subjecthood in society.¹⁴

Artists were integrating their personal development, accelerated by the support of the women's movement, with their art, and developing new, more expressive, content.

Ninety percent of the co-op artists in this study feel that their participation in art collectives, the Women's Art Movement, or the larger women's rights movement has positively affected their individual art-making. Approximately sixty percent of these artists say the influence has been supportive and indirect, without impact on the specific imagery in their work. They feel the collectives provide "encouragement," increasing the incentive to work and grow artistically.¹⁵ Each artist's freedom to select the work she will exhibit allows experimentation "to develop my art as I please," and strengthens her self-image as an artist. The availability of a peer community to discuss the artwork permits helpful examination and clarification of a member's artistic development. Hunter Levinsohn of Center/Gallery says, "Working in the isolation of my home has affected my art and being a member of the women's art organization has reinforced and heightened the direction." Maureen Garvin of MUSE Gallery believes that even though she had made

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"feminist art" before joining her collective, by showing the work in a "feminist context," the "content becomes clearer." Most members say that they would have created much the same art with or without the support system of the women's communities, although maybe not as quickly. Several artists, though, such as Harriet Bart of WARM Gallery, believe the Movement probably did have an unconscious impact on all of the art, since it "has affected our lives in so many ways."

Those artists who acknowledge the women's movement's direct influence on their art's content--only thirty percent of the artists in this study--say they have begun to make more "personal," "intuitive," "autobiographical," or "political" art than they had before. Several can identify specific relevant developments in their art: Marcia Carlson Marfia of Front Range says, "I used to be afraid or ashamed of utilizing personal, sentimental or nostalgic images in my painting," and that until the Movement, she would not consider using pattern painting because she believed it was "shallow." Katie Seiden of Central Hall writes that, influenced by the women's movement, she changed from "realistic" painting of "bottles and reflections," to sculpting her present work "which has something to do with struggle, emerging, rebellion, striving, humor, mystery," possibly because "some of my unconscious ideas and feelings were freed." Some have very self-consciously at least experimented with "feminist art," even though they may have returned to a more classically formal approach to art-making subsequently.

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The co-op artists strive for widely divergent artistic goals. The art of the collectives runs the content and style gamuts of 1970s work, from formalist to political, minimal to decorative. Within the co-ops, one can readily identify artists who are primarily concerned with many types of formal issues in their work as well as those who focus on various kinds of content. That content generally reflects social issues publicized by the women's movement, whether or not the individual artist intended a specifically political subject. This 'women's content' can be divided into two categories: images associated with a contemporary woman's responses to living in today's society; and traditional or archetypal images of women and their roles in history. The works I will assemble here include these two categories as well as formalist art.¹⁶ The artworks cross stylistic boundaries, but in terms of attitudes toward content, each division's unity is clear.

Less than fifteen percent of the co-op artists make primarily formalist art,¹⁷ and that proportion reflects a fairly steady decline since the early 1970s. This esthetic direction away from formalism in the collectives is not surprising, considering the increasing stylistic pluralism evident in the larger art community during the decade. In addition, the combination of the free artistic environment of the collectives¹⁸ and the prevalence of the philosophical issues of the Women's Art Movement led to even more than usual experimentation among the co-op women. By the last half of the 1970s, pluralism, including "women's art" styles and content, was acknowledged; artists could be professionally accepted whether they chose to make formalist

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Four examples¹⁹ of formalist artworks from the co-ops illustrate the variety of artistic efforts in these 'classic' directions. Marion Ranyak of Soho 20 made brightly-colored, geometric, painted collages, like Syncopation, during the early 1970s (Figure 1). Her art pieces "involve the relationship of forms, shapes, and colors, either working together as a totality or with each other."²⁰ Blythe Bohnen, during her two years at AIR Gallery in 1972 and 1973, focused on the definition of gesture. Form in Three Brushstrokes is a strong example (Figure 2). She writes, "I am one of the activating forces in my art, working at the same time as gravity, moisture, temperature, and light."²¹ Gesture is also important in the work of Salli Zimmerman of Central Hall Gallery. In Haloed of Muted Light #1, she uses charcoal, pastel, pencil, and graphite on paper, as a "demonstration of energy, activity, and imagination achieved through an interplay of light and dark"²² (Figure 3). A last recent example of formalist art is Song on the Wind, by Judith Ingram of MUSE Gallery (Figure 4). Her image is handmade paper and fleece, and using only these she can "create the texture of weaving, the line of drawing, the color of painting, the dimension of sculpture."²³ Co-op artists have certainly used formalist concerns to depict a variety of innovative, expressive meanings.

The co-ops have shown approximately six times as much content art as formalist art in the 1970s. About one-half of that content work portrays a woman's experiences in contemporary society. Sex

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role expectations are often explored. Sometimes 'woman's place' is protested; sometimes it is extolled, by elevating the everyday accoutrements of women's lives to the status of fine art images; and always, the meaning is personal. The intent is often, though not always, to make a social statement. Within this category of contemporary women's content are autobiography, portraiture, sexuality, domestic imagery, and feminist politics, although these content divisions very often overlap.

The appearance of autobiography in art in the 1970s is perhaps predictable, in a decade branded "narcissistic" by Tom Wolfe and many other social commentators. Detractors find it easy to associate the "Me Decade" with representational autobiographical art and dismiss the work as "vain, boring, or inconsequential."²⁴ However, supporters of humanist art and/or the Women's Art Movement, with its backdrop of consciousness-raising and self-awareness, feel quite differently. Critic Joanna Frueh writes:

autobiographical work by artists of either sex offers public, non-exclusive disclosures that carry us beyond the superficial details of one individual's life to their emotional realities; these we hold in common... Instead of advocating the artists' self-importance, their work defends the worth of us all, and its easily identifiable bodies, settings, or situations contribute to this outward reaching.²⁵

Feminist artist Eleanor Antin believes, "women [have] renewed art's freedom to be human and explore human realities," because they "are not ashamed of dealing with their own experience."²⁶

While every art piece, since it is an expression of an individual artist, is self-revealing to some degree, the work

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identified here as autobiographical has as publicly-acknowledge, primary content, the artist's own life experiences. Almost twenty percent of the co-op artists work in this category, and the art includes a very large range of styles and approaches. Soho 20's Lucy Sallick uses the still life genre and realism to present objects that record her life. She included family memorabilia and domestic objects in her earlier work, such as Photos of the Children, Letters, and Sketchbook (Figure 5). In the second half of the 1970s, she was still using everyday personal paraphernalia, but she began depicting her art utensils, materials, and even her own watercolor sketches on her studio floors within the large autobiographical compositions.²⁷ Patsy Norvell of AIR Gallery, who often uses natural materials in her art, constructed a huge, outdoor, autobiographical sculpture/environment entitled Lifeline in 1977 (Figure 6). It is built with a variety of fencing materials, and "it is designed to be walked through as a connecting series of walled pathways, enclosures and settings."²⁸ The paths narrow or widen, become flower-lined or enclosed in barbed wire, as symbolic expressions of various periods in Norvell's life. Lois Polansky of Central Hall Gallery, uses the format of family albums to present her abstracted life memories, as in Narcissus (Figure 7). "The idea evolved from encounters with personal family diaries and photo relics. Like traditional family memorabilia they explore fantasy and reality, and visibly record the passage of time."²⁹ Unlike traditional family keepsakes, however, Polansky's

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express her feelings, incorporating repeated, ripped, burned, or transformed-by-age imagery. A final much different example of autobiographical art is the untitled serial drawing of Roberta Richman of Hera Gallery (Figure 8). She states, "My concerns center on the tension created by opposing stability and permanence with the subtle and gradual changes involved in the day to dayness of my life."³⁰

Closely related to autobiography in women's art are portraits and self-portraits. Historically, these two genres have been used to record lives, functioning like modern conventional photography to capture the visual characteristics of people. Although contemporary portraiture still aims to portray life likenesses, many artists are now attempting to say more, to "penetrate the matrix of the human psyche,"³¹ and to assert the importance and uniqueness of the individual. Artist Patricia Mainardi writes:

I think most people are fed up with the industrial age. Science was supposed to cure everything and it didn't cure anything. People are coming back to the idea that it's basically human beings that count...We're not anonymous, faceless, interchangeable.³²

Not all contemporary portraitists consciously include social or psychological 'editorial comments' about their subject's personality; but many innovative artists feel "obligated to respond to the human beings who comprise the lonely crowd, of which he [she] is a part, and from which he [she] is often estranged."³³

Approximately ten percent of the co-op artists are at least sometime-portraitists. Because of the nature of the genre,

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their styles are usually fairly realistic, but the settings or 'props' may be fanciful or symbolic in order to add psychological or biographical meaning to the work. Sharon Wybrants, for example, a former member of Soho 20, presents herself as a cultural heroine in Self Portrait as Super Woman (Figure 9). This work was included in the collaborative Sister Chapel project, a traveling exhibition which included over life-sized paintings of eleven female heroines. Wybrants' contribution to the show symbolizes her personal strength in a popular culture motif. Wybrants often uses these intense moods in her self-portraits, as she did for her 1977 "environment" in which twelve self-portraits marked the process of the dissolution of her marriage.³⁴ Helen Barchilon Redman, a Front Range artist, places her self portraits in a decorative setting of imagined images. Her Self Portrait of the Artist includes not only herself working at her desk, but also detailed, realistic, 'daydreamed' visions symbolic of her roles and how they affect her career (Figure 10).

The artist's family and friends have always been likely subjects for portraits. WARM Gallery's Susan McDonald furthers this tradition in her multi-media In the Woods (Figure 11). She has used four duplicate etched images of her daughter, overlaid with butterflies and asters. Symbolic of the passage of time, the flowers and insects extend her thoughts about her child to include the universal human condition.³⁵ Judith Penzer, of Soho 20, makes almost life-sized paper cutouts of her subjects, often in double portraits such as Twins: Ellen and Linda (Figure 12). She has

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been interested in "people who were trying to effect some image of themselves, partly because I saw something of myself in them...the way they dress, how they talk, their affectations...in conflict about who they are, what they want to be."³⁶

Related to their examinations of themselves and others through portraits, approximately ten percent of the co-op artists have also used figurative art to explore male and female sexuality in their work.³⁷ Sometimes nude full-figures, and sometimes only the genitalia of the models, are presented, with various degrees of frank erotic intent. While the practice of depicting the erotic nude is centuries old, women artists, especially those painting male nudes, are new in the field. Two sets of traditions, almost taboos, are broken with this new development. First, women were educationally and socially banned, until the late nineteenth century, from studying and portraying the nude male figure. Now, not only are women artists showing male nudes, but the powerful sexual role of the male is often reversed in this contemporary work. He, as the model, takes the passive, while the woman artist takes the active, sex role.³⁸ Second, when women artists depict female nudes, alone or in heterosexual or homosexual couples, there is an attempt to break the communicative "coding" that equates female nudes with seduction and pornography.³⁹ Instead, women's sexuality is shown from a woman's perspective, employing personal symbolic language to develop the erotic themes.

As one might imagine, the viewing public and the art community have not been entirely supportive of the new perspectives

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in erotic art by women. There have been many instances of censorship by museum and gallery officials, sometimes prompted by public pressure. The censors have usually threatened to deny future professional contacts, refused to allow the offending artworks to be installed in their exhibition, or even closed shows early. Some of the negative reaction stems from personal values against erotic art of any kind and not only that by women artists. However, many feminists feel, since traditionally-depicted female nudity is part of the standard fare of most museums and galleries, that the real problem is "the male ruling class just isn't ready for vulnerability."⁴⁰ Censorship was already enough of an issue by the winter of 1973 that Anita Steckel and other New York artists who were using "sexually explicit art... political, humorous, erotic, psychological," formed a protest group called Fight Censorship.⁴¹ The controversy still continued at the end of the decade.

Judith Roode, of WARM Gallery, writes, "I am interested in issues of energy resulting from alternate tension and compression (shapes which simultaneously pull in and move out), issues of strength and vulnerability, and the representation of a woman's sexuality as part of a total human being, reversing male stereotypes."⁴² Open Zigzag is typical of her strong drawings of female nudes (Figure 13). Sylvia Sleigh, who has belonged to both Soho 20 and AIR galleries at various times, also reverses the roles usually seen in conventional nude paintings. In her Imperial Nude, Paul Rosano, she gives her model the pose, setting, demeanor and soft treatment usually accorded

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a female nude reclining figure (Figure 14). This portrait likeness of a nude model also breaks with tradition, a choice which reveals the artist's frank interest in individual human, sexual beauty. Like Sleigh, Floating Gallery's Martha Edelheit has been working with male and female nude content for many years. The tone of her Birds, A View from a Lincoln Towers Terrace is quite removed, unromantic, unidealized, with an almost "dehumanizing clarity"⁴³ (Figure 15). Although she approaches her work like a realist, the content is fanciful. She writes, "I am not a realist...My paintings are about my dreams, my appetites, my fear of the self-indulgent, the sensual, the seductive."⁴⁴ Radically different from these three examples of art with erotic content is former AIR member Judith Bernstein's Horizontal (Figure 16). This huge, abstracted phallic image has the power to shock. Art writer Nessa Forman reports the opinion of Mayor Frank Rizzo of Philadelphia, that "A dark, hairy phallus...was not the kind of thing he wanted his kids to see, or the city's school children either."⁴⁵

Much less threatening to the public are artworks which depict the everyday domestic objects and environments with which middle-class America lives. Almost fifteen percent of the co-op artists investigate this familiar content. Domestic imagery has a long history in art. Nineteenth century artists, for instance, showed household interiors in which the housewife reigned as "a guardian of the hearth, holy center of the kitchen, and the sole caretaker of material goods."⁴⁶ Much of the contemporary use of this content is markedly different in intent. The 1960s and 1970s

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versions of the domestic realm frequently "saw the American housewife as a consumer-sex object imprisoned in an environment created by mass production and the mass media."⁴⁷ The influence of the women's movement is evident; and early in the 1970s, the Womanhouse project set the example for extensive use of political domestic content.⁴⁸ Because of the special relevance of domestic objects to women's social roles, a woman artist using this imagery elicits a different response than would a male artist employing the same subjects. In fact, politics is nearly impossible to avoid, especially since the women viewers are bound to associate their own social attitudes with the so-recognizable objects.

However, not all the domestic content in co-op art is intended as a socio-political statement. Practically speaking, women artists who choose to, or must, work at home are attracted to household subject matter because it is so available and familiar. Artists with a non-political approach seek to work by "objectifying the personal" and focusing on the formal aspects of the subject, "relinquishing emotions (boredom, resentment, affection) when they are irrelevant to pictorial purpose."⁴⁹

Ruth Gray, a Floating Gallery artist, has made numerous non-political paintings of unmade beds, such as Patchwork (Figure 17). Drawing attention to the significance of her subject, she writes, "Events of greatest importance in our lives occur in bed: conception, birth, death. The bed is a refuge, playground, battlefield, home of the essential dream life."⁵⁰ Although the beds are unmade and therefore depict another repetitive maintenance task usually assigned

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to women, they also express a kind of appreciation of life's processes. Gray states, "Look at these tumbled sheets still warm from human bodies. Look at the baroque beauty of the sheets. Look how they resemble organic forms."⁵¹ A watercolor by Stephanie Carleton of Center/Gallery, Shirt on Queen Anne's Chair, presents a similar loving attitude (Figure 18). Her surroundings, including the antique china collected and given to her by her grandmother, are precious to her and worthy subjects of art. Much less affectionate, the political use of domestic content often elicits its audience response through sarcasm or fantasy. Barbara Jo Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman of Artemesia Gallery, in Glory on a Budget, A Domestic Mythology, have made a fanciful photographic series of the household duties of the modern American woman, including her 'responsibilities' as a sex object. Odalisque visually takes domestic imagery to the stereotypical role-expectation limits (Figure 19). And Nancy Boswell-Mayer of ARC Gallery, in A Woman's Work Is Never Done, extends the fantasy to its logical conclusion: 'this work is going to kill me' (Figure 20).

As we have seen, any of the types of art mentioned so far can have political meaning. However, this final section pertaining to feminist political work, eliminates any ambivalence of theme or intent. It protests women's overall inferior cultural position by questioning the basic beliefs and institutions of the society. These are not well-accepted themes in the art community, where political art is derided as "crude, illustrative, or plainly propagandistic, in contrast to 'good/serious/modernist' art."⁵²

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The disinterest of the art-buying public, professional pressures, and the art system method of distribution discourages political art. Art writer Barry Schwartz states:

the ways in which the art world handles, markets and exhibits art nullifies the impact of political art... The result, a political result, is that within the environment, it is established that art incorporating political concerns or insights is usually considered 'bad' art.⁵³

In fact, in the art world, esthetics has been so separated from 'life' that, as Lucy Lippard writes, "The art gallery audience is in training to be able to accept anything," even art using images that are "fascist," sexist or in other ways politically irresponsible. She rightly cautions against believing that art is really politically neutral in audience impact, in spite of the distant art/life correlation the mainstream encourages.⁵⁴

Recognizing the importance of cultural symbols, the Women's Art Movement supports personal/political art content as a tool of social change. "Feminism has potentially changed the terms of propaganda as art by being unashamed of its obsessions and political needs, and by confirming the bonds between individual and social experience."⁵⁵

Approximately seven percent of the co-op artists exhibit the kind of feminist political art described here. Floating Gallery's Anita Steckel paints nude women on found photographs of New York City which have been silkscreened onto canvas. This Giant Women on New York series presents a variety of optimistic and pessimistic images. Impaled is of the latter type (Figure 21). It portrays

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ultimate defeat, the end of a woman's struggle against the male-dominated city which is symbolized by the phallic skyscrapers. The reality-based work of AIR's Nancy Spero contrasts with the actual/fantasy fusion in Steckel's political images. Critic Donald Kuspit writes, "There is no retreat from or disguise of reality by fantasy, and even the fragments of dreams that appear in the women pictures are from social dreams, i.e., myths."⁵⁶ Spero, in her Notes in Time on Women II, uses poster-like texts and images to record instances of world-wide victimizations of women (Figure 22). Kuspit states:

Spero's art is a struggle against the insanity of world events, which have their reflection in her personal life. She avoids insanity the only way one can: by acknowledging the reality of what one is tempted to deny.⁵⁷

Former Grandview Gallery member Suzanne Lacy and Joy Poe of Artemesia Gallery also confront the physical mistreatment of women. Lacy's Rape Is... book identifies, through the use of powerful understatement, subtle forms of rape in society's attitudes toward women (Figure 23). Poe, in her Rape, A Matter of Degree, has created a protest work that confronts the audience with its size and expressionistic style (Figure 24). In a collaged 'wall' of newspaper accounts of rapes, graffiti-like painting and affixed rape-related objects such as weapons and bits of clothing, Poe strives to bring attention back to political issues that have been de-sensitized by the media. Toward this goal, during the opening of the exhibit in which the rape collage was shown, Poe arranged a mock rape of herself. The immediate shocked reaction of the audience to this performance has become various degrees of approval and repulsion in the art community. The reaction has been primarily negative. Art writer Cindy Lyle

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states, "In maximizing the impact of her anti-rape statement, Poe perhaps unwittingly placed herself in the odd position of being both assailant [on the sensibilities of her audience] and victim."⁵⁸

A flurry of reports, letters and confrontations about the show disrupted Poe's personal and professional life. "Prospects for inclusion in other exhibits have dried up. Her work is now considered 'too political' to touch."⁵⁹ Like the women making erotic art, political artists risk censorship or professional ostracism.

Contemporary artists not only develop content by examining the current society, but they also reveal a desire to make connections with their female heritage in their art. Artists have established this link by repeating the processes of women's handicraft traditions, by reenacting and reformulating women's birth, marriage, and death ritual ceremonies, or by presenting their definition of 'women's sensibility' and symbolic systems.

Art which refers to traditional women's crafts, recently called "heritage art,"⁶⁰ is of two principal types: in one, craft materials, techniques, and forms are used in a fine arts context; and in the other, the traditional designs and styles of ornamentation and decoration are adopted for patterned or decorative art. Although these are adaptations of the formal elements of craft, the relationship they establish with the traditional occupations of women imbue the color, media, and style choices with women's content.

Several reasons have been proposed for the popular and esthetic interest in traditional handicrafts in the 1960s and 1970s. Artist

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have perpetually proclaimed systems of rank, usually determined by their own position in society. One of the results has been that women artists have found their work undervalued, channeled into 'suitable' modes, damned with faint praise, and robbed of an equitable share of remuneration.⁶⁵

The mainstream usually attributes the minor status of craft objects, to the functionality of the work or its creator's anonymity. However, feminist artists are sure the real problem is sexism,⁶⁶ and they have challenged the evaluations of the craft tradition by including the forms and materials of women's heritage in their work. Writer Vera Norwood says of contemporary artists:

at the same time that they use materials from the past, they use them in much the same structures as their foremothers. What the contemporary artists add are the conscious sense of adventure...and a feeling of timelessness (rather than progress) which gives these new pieces strength.⁶⁷

The variety of work in this category is very large. Some feminist artists employ actual stitchery, fabric, or fiber as media; some refer to the appearance of such materials but transform them into painted images. Artists Melissa Meyer and Miriam Schapiro coined "femmage" to refer to the collage, assemblage, decoupage or other collecting and combining techniques "as they were practiced by women [of the 1970s] using traditional women's techniques to achieve their art...activities also engaged in by men but assigned in history to women."⁶⁸

Approximately fifteen percent of the co-op artists in this study make art which refers in some way to traditional women's handicrafts. Harmony Hammond, formerly of AIR Gallery, uses

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Beth Gutcheon thinks that quilt-making is part of a "'back to basics' attitude that evolved as Americans grew tired of identical mass-produced items" in the second half of the century.⁶¹ Art historian Cynthia Redick also cites the "desire for well-made, handcrafted objects, and lists the ecology movement and feminism as major causes for the current craft interest."⁶² Certainly the Women's Art Movement has contributed the most comprehensively to the documentation, reappraisal, and appreciation of women's traditional crafts. More than this, artists of the Movement, by transferring these methods and materials to the fine arts arena, have developed an art content and category of materials significant to their cause. What artist Paula King writes about needlework applies to all the crafts:

I began to understand that both the form and the content might have political meaning, and that the very act of making stitchery in a way that was respectful of tradition could be a celebration of the creative spirit of generations of women who have never been considered artists.⁶³

Decorative and pattern art work⁶⁴ can have as its content the visual and emotional metaphors of this culture's domestic environment. While artists' intentions and sources of patterns differ widely, feminists working in this area usually relate their content to the nurturing role of women, the providers of comfort and beauty within their households.

The Women's Art Movement, with its non-hierarchical attitude toward art styles has predictably confronted the "low art" status given these art works that are so closely associated with women's traditional occupations. Art writer Sylvia Moore states:

The differentiation of 'art' from 'craft' is one aspect of an ongoing quest for hierarchies in the arts. Theorists

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acrylic and cloth in her Presence IV (Figure 25). She writes:

The rags and hair come from women and add their personal power to my pieces. It is the connection to my female ancestors which provides an ethnographic content to my work, but extending this, it is also a desire to break down the distinction between painting and sculpture, between art and 'women's work,' and between art in craft and craft in art...To give form to my female feelings, to give form to myself, it seems necessary to work with women's materials.⁶⁹

Joan Glueckman, a now-deceased founding member of Soho 20, often used crewel embroidery to create her portraits such as Penny Ross (Figure 26). Inspired by her suffragette grandmother, who was also a skillful needlepoint artist,⁷⁰ Glueckman consistently portrayed the experiences of women in her work. Sally Elliott of Front Range also finds inspiration in her female relatives' handmade crochet, lace and afghan projects for such artworks as Afghan Series #1 (Figure 27). She makes graphite rubbings from these objects, creating images which "have a fragile appearance, are vulnerable, impermanent looking and basically comment on my experiences as a woman artist."⁷¹ WARM Gallery's Sandra Kraskin cites several influences on her work, among them Mondrian and the "Neo-Plastic tradition," but her art also "encompasses the clarity of form and the natural colors of Navaho weaving...the impact of shape and its variation crystalized in the Amish quilts of rural America."⁷² In the painting Umber Triad, especially the colors of the Amish craft are evident (Figure 28).

Only half as many, approximately seven percent, of the co-op artists make art which focuses on decorative and/or patterned images. AIR's Mary Grigoriadis writes, "My paintings, secular icons,

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are composed of geometric forms positioned with ordered schemes and embroidered with ornamental devices. Each work has a theme and subject matter created by the color, forms, and composition."⁷³ Pegasus is a strong example of her works in large scale, painted in bold colors of oil on raw linen (Figure 29). Linda Bastian of Soho 20 makes decorative work, such as Cross My Heart, that is often described as "tapestry-like" in design, covered with images of flowers and sometimes animals (Figure 30). Bastian's art is expressionistic, "very pretty," and it often refers symbolically to her personal experiences.⁷⁴ Jane Bassuk of WARM Gallery also uses natural images within her patterned work, but in a much more fanciful way, as illustrated in Water Plant (Figure 31). She writes, "My paintings create atmospheric qualities which relate to human emotions...The shapes are suggestive, vaguely familiar...often connote growth...My paintings are rich in color and pattern. Areas appear to be made of beads, sequins, or seem embroidered."⁷⁵ Another WARM Gallery artist, Beth Bergman, works from a grid to create her Paradise Lost: Atlantis, her "layered...compulsive...gaudy colorful lyrical" painting⁷⁶ (Figure 32). Her marks are personal, handwriting of a sort, which in this piece create a pattern somewhat reminiscent of stitches against a quilt background.

Women artists of the 1970s have sought a sense of history and power not only from the craft traditions, but also from the mythologies and symbols of ancient, pre-patriarchal cultures. The search has included investigations of Neolithic artifacts and speculations about that period's social structures and beliefs,

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religions and the goddess rites of the earth which revere both regenerative and destructive nature.⁷⁷ Art writer Gloria Orenstein calls the "new Goddess consciousness...a holistic mind-body totality." She writes:

Transcending the false dualities and dichotomies established by patriarchal systems of the thought which split mind from body, spirit from matter, and sacred from profane, the Great Goddess as a psychic symbol suggests the rebirth of woman to a holistic psychological perception of the sacred, as a new form of her feminist evolution.⁷⁸

The women artists working in this content area draw from both their intuitive and spiritual creative energies and from the physical investigation of the remains of the ancient matriarchal cultures. Artist Mary Beth Edelson of AIR Gallery, has made pilgrimages to the sites of goddess caves. She writes, of her 1977 trip to Grapceva, Yugoslavia:

I needed to do my rituals in an actual prehistoric cave: to experience a Neolithic site where I could smell the earth, poke around in the soil, breathe the air, and know that the cave air had circulated through my body and become a part of me.⁷⁹

The symbols of female potency in the ancient artifacts have served as primary referents for contemporary artists. Tapping what they consider to be sources of emotional, archetypal power, twentieth-century women have rediscovered Goddess symbols and rites and have introduced them into today's art context. Writer Carol Christ lists three kinds of significance the Goddess has for contemporary women:

(1) the Goddess as divine female, as personification who can be invoked in prayer and ritual; (2) the Goddess as symbol of life, death, and rebirth energy in nature and culture, in personal and communal life; (3) the Goddess as affirmation of the legitimacy and beauty of female power

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Orenstein writes:

This new art...in its modern transformed meaning...is about the mysteries of woman's rebirth from the womb of historical darkness, in which her powers were so long enshrouded, into a new era where a culture of her own making will come about...⁸¹

Approximately eight percent of the co-op artists have made art which reflects Goddess/ritual themes. Edelson has spent most of her recent career making ritual pieces such as Traveling Coat Series: Fire Flights in Deep Space III (Figure 33). Often including the use of fire in an outdoor setting, Edelson's spiritual connection to natural forces is primary to her art:

The search for self today seems to include understanding those very first human stirrings, those very first basic gestures--food gathering, relationship to moon and sun, and the cosmos, to the ground, to planting, harvesting--to the sea from which all living things come--salt water in our veins--our boundless curiosity for our early beginnings.⁸²

She symbolizes all women in her enactments, and she documents the events by using time-lapse photography techniques which capture the composite images of moving fire and meditative natural surroundings. Donna Byars, also of AIR Gallery, relies on visionary or dream experiences of the Goddess in her sculpture. She describes the dream source of Oracle Stone's Grove (Figure 34):

A stone woman who sat in a grove of trees spoke to me in vapors, not words. She was very poetic and mystical and spoke only in truths. All of a sudden, like in a faint, she slid from her chair into a hole in the underground. I grabbed her before she went underground and when she came up she was no longer able to speak. I woke up with a terrible feeling of sadness.⁸³

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WARM Gallery artist Sandra Taylor has also used Earth Mother Chairs in her art, alluding to the throne of the deity (Figure 35). Her series of Goddess chairs are made of cloth, paper, mop string, and sisal, hardened over a body mold with polyester resin. Reviewer Janet Koplos notes how the "Great Mother supports and enfolds" us in these seats.⁸⁴ A final example of Goddess imagery is Early Impressions I by Muriel Castanis of Floating Gallery (Figure 36). She, like Taylor, uses resins to harden normally soft materials over molds, in this case creating a regal presence of light and mystery.

The predilection of contemporary women artists to use nature as art content comes from many sources: the precedents of centuries of art history; the late 1960s ecology-minded, back-to-nature value system; and the Mother/Nature symbology reinforced in recent years by the women's movement. Over twenty percent of the artists of the collectives included in this research focus on nature in their work, realizing a wide range of styles and intentions. Janau Noerdlinger, of Front Range, reveals an environmental concern in her Buffalo Clouds Over Dream Houses (Figure 37). The housing development has cluttered the western plains until "the buffalo's only realm is in 'the sky' or our imagination."⁸⁵ The relationship to nature shown in the work of WARM Gallery's Joyce Lyon is a more personal and less political one than that of Noerdlinger. In Pond Study II she explores the layers and refractions of light and shadow as the water reaches mysterious depths and becomes another reality (Figure 38). Lyon's work, introspective and abstracted, seeks hidden

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knowledge in nature and the artist herself.⁸⁶ Linda White of MUSE Gallery also uses nature as a source for her non-objective Night Sky (Figure 39). She writes:

My work demonstrates the interwoven play of fitted parts and systems: forms that connote nature in its repeated structures. The minute callibrations of tone and texture allude to nature's change and its attending, expectant stillness.⁸⁷

The drawing of Nancy Kerner of ARC Gallery refer more to the Goddess spirit of nature than the other examples cited here. Kerner explores and celebrates the symbolic sexual and spiritual power of hair in Moon Hair (Figure 40). Critic Joanna Frueh writes, "She seems to be engaged in a reverential examination, through her ceremonial objects, of correspondences among the body, nature and the cosmos."⁸⁸ The works allude to meditation on animal/human, sexual/spiritual relationships.

Woman's traditional association with nature has been due primarily to her reproductive capacities. However, whereas the ancient cultures celebrated women's birth-giving powers, later Western religions reversed this attitude when they began to dissociate the mind and the body. From the patriarchy's condemnation of Eve for the Fall of Man, to Freud's theory of penis envy, and beyond, Western culture has denigrated women's biological nature as more "carnal, fleshy, and earthy" than the supposedly more spiritual male.⁸⁹ Today's feminists rebel against the idea of male physical and spiritual superiority and have again begun to celebrate their sexuality and reproductive functions.

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In art, this unashamed appreciation of the female body has led to the most heated controversy to appear in the Women's Art Movement thus far. Variouslly called anatomical, sexual, central, vaginal or cunt imagery, many women artists have been making art with direct, often explicit, reference to female sexual organs. The theory behind this type of female imagery originated in Los Angeles with Judy Chicago and the early feminist West Coast art movement.⁹⁰ Essentially, the much-debated hypothesis states that women make art images which are inherently different from men's, and that some of that imagery is based on women's sexual characteristics. The image may be abstract or concrete; and it may be "circles, domes, eggs, spheres, boxes, biomorphic shapes, maybe a certain striation or layering."⁹¹

The art community was quick to choose sides on this highly controversial issue, and the debate continued without resolution through the decade, although the furor of the argument calmed in the last few years of the 1970s. The opponents of the theory contend that there is no way to prove such an assertion, because male art sometimes includes such images, and because no one knows what is inherent or archetypal and what is socially-conditioned. Linda Nochlin presents the moderate view and writes that women's collective experiences are indeed different from men's, but that there is still room for much individual choice among women about their artistic directions:

That a given artist is a woman constitutes a necessary but by no means a sufficient condition of her choice of a given style or subject: it is one element along with

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others, like her nationality, her age, her training, her temperament, her response to available modes of expression, or her priorities of self-identification.⁹²

Regardless of the plausibility of the theory as iron-clad, it is nevertheless true that a number of women artists, including five percent of the co-op members, make conscious and unconscious references to female sexual anatomy in their art. Floating Gallery's Donna Marxer paints large botanical or aquatic shapes which allude to the similarities in female body forms. She states that her images, such as White Within, "could be interpreted as sensual or erotic, relating to human or floral anatomical parts...There is always the enclosed form, a central image, now breaking open to reveal a secret"⁹³ (Figure 41). Judy Chicago, formerly of the Grandview Gallery, has used female imagery in her art for many years. Her designs for the plates exhibited in The Dinner Party (1979), the huge, collaborative art celebration dedicated to women in history, are characteristic of her art since the mid-1970s. An example of the plates, Margaret Sanger, typifies the opening, butterfly image (Figure 42). Very explicit sexual imagery is also depicted by Soho 20's Marjorie Abramson, in her sculpture entitled Jezebel (Figure 43). The contrasting textures of glistening center and dark, softer, but spiked bordering fringe, express the conflicting attraction/repulsion of the piece's namesake. A final example of what can be called female imagery is Contingent by Eleanor Allen of MUSE Gallery (Figure 44). She describes the work:

Eggs, while fragile, are surprisingly strong; yet when mishandled, quite vulnerable. Under direct light they are translucent, often colorful, but otherwise opaque: exquisite miniature containers of clues to a multitude of secrets.⁹⁴

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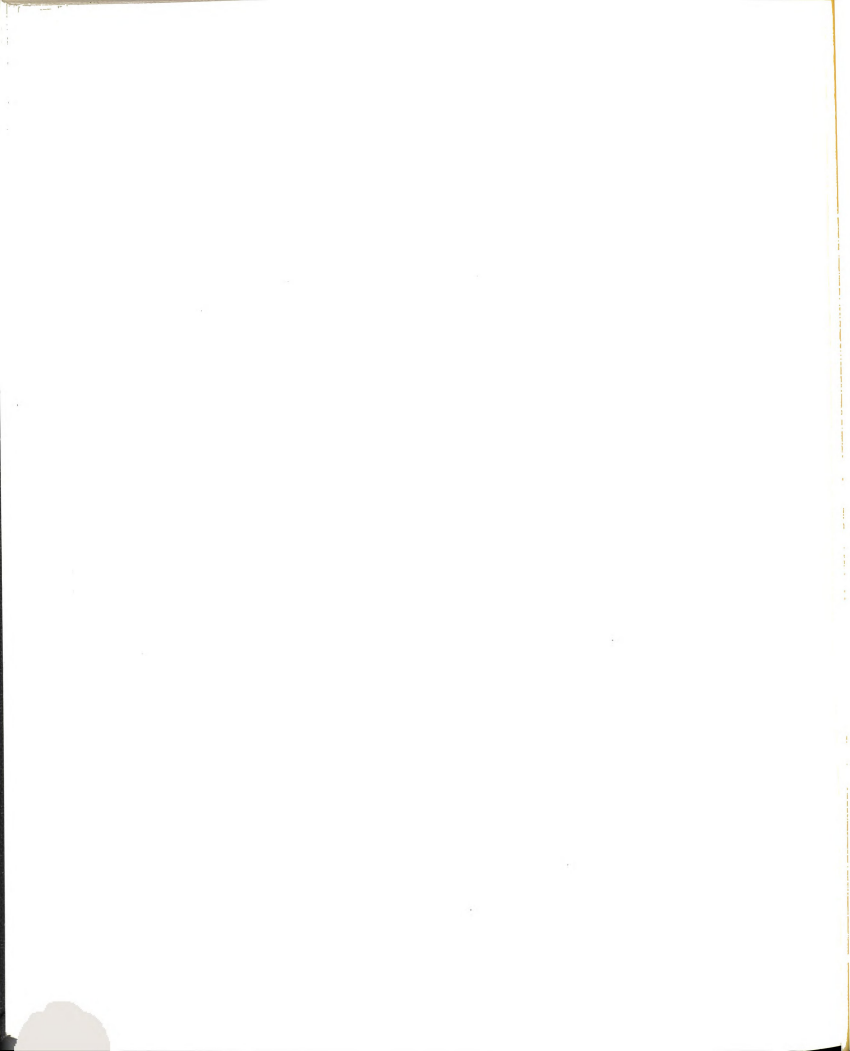
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The art that I have described in this chapter demonstrates again the diversity of esthetic interests and political viewpoints held by the co-op artists. Undoubtedly the art is not a random cross-section of the overall body of contemporary art. The membership in a women's gallery is composed of artists who are at least minimally comfortable with separatism or who consider themselves strong feminists. Therefore, the less political members are exposed to theories of women's art that they might not respond to or even hear about in another professional setting. Although the collectives are certainly not radically political,⁹⁵ the atmosphere of many of the galleries encourages and affirms women's content in the art made by their members. In fact, one could say that the two main categories of women's content that I have discussed directly parallel two of the major endeavors of the larger women's movement: bettering the present social and professional positions of contemporary women, and repairing history by filling the gaps where important activities of women have been omitted.

In this chapter I have presented a small sampling of specific artworks set within the loose, still not inclusive categories of formalist art, art including contemporary women's content, and that exploring traditional women's content. The extremely large body of work made by co-op artists is as various and changing as the members themselves. Although it is impossible to analyze it adequately in a study of this kind, the art of the collective galleries is a particularly fruitful arena for future research.



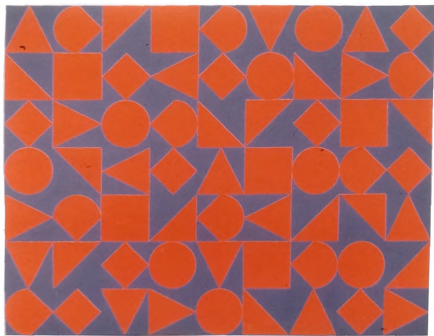


Figure 1. Marion Ranyak. Syncopation, 1973.





Figure 2. Blythe Bohnen. Form in Three Brushstrokes, 1972.



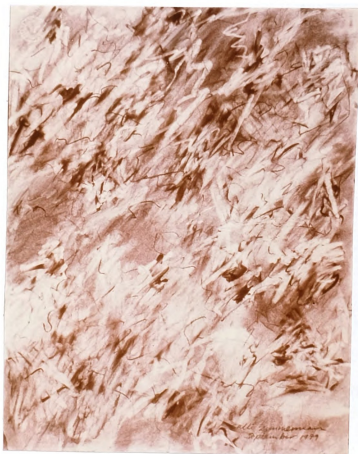


Figure 3. Salli Zimmerman. Haloes of Muted Light #1, 1979.



Figure 4. Judith Ingram. Song on the Wind, 1979.





Figure 5. Lucy Sallick. Photos of the Children..., 1974.



Figure 6. Patsy Norvell. Lifeline, 1977.



Figure 7. Lois Polansky. Narcissus, 1979.

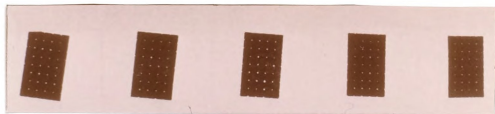


Figure 8. Roberta Richman. Untitled, 1978.



Figure 9. Sharon Wybrants. Self-Portrait as Super Woman, 1975.





Figure 10. Helen Barchilon Redman. Self Portrait of the Artist, 1979.

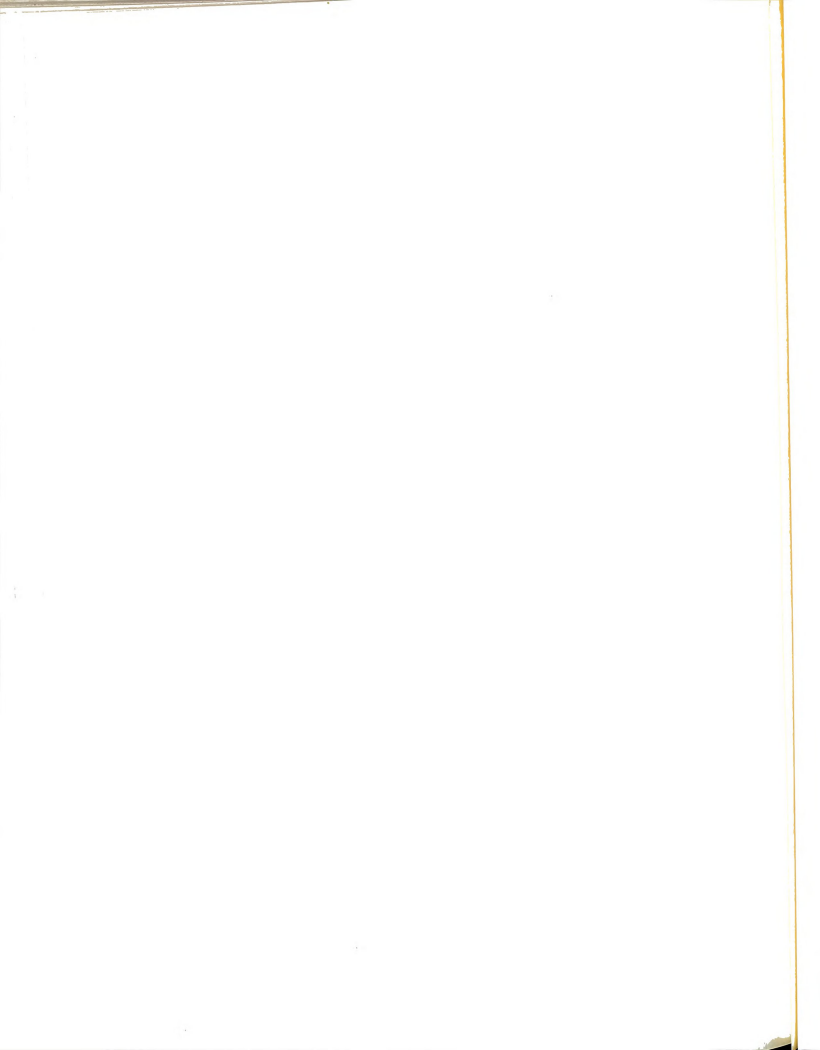




Figure 11. Susan MacDonald. In the Woods, 1979.





Figure 12. Judith Penzer. Twins: Ellen and Linda, 1978.





Figure 13. Judith Roode. Open Zig-Zag, 1979.





Figure 14. Sylvia Sleigh. Imperial Nude, Paul Rosano, 1975.





Figure 15. Martha Edelheit. Birds,....., 1974-75.





Figure 16. Judith Bernstein. Horizontal, 1973.





Figure 17. Ruth Gray. Patchwork, 1975.





Figure 18. Stephanie Carleton. Shirt on Queen Anne's Chair, 1978-79.





Figure 19. Barbara Jo Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman. Odalisque #3, 1979.

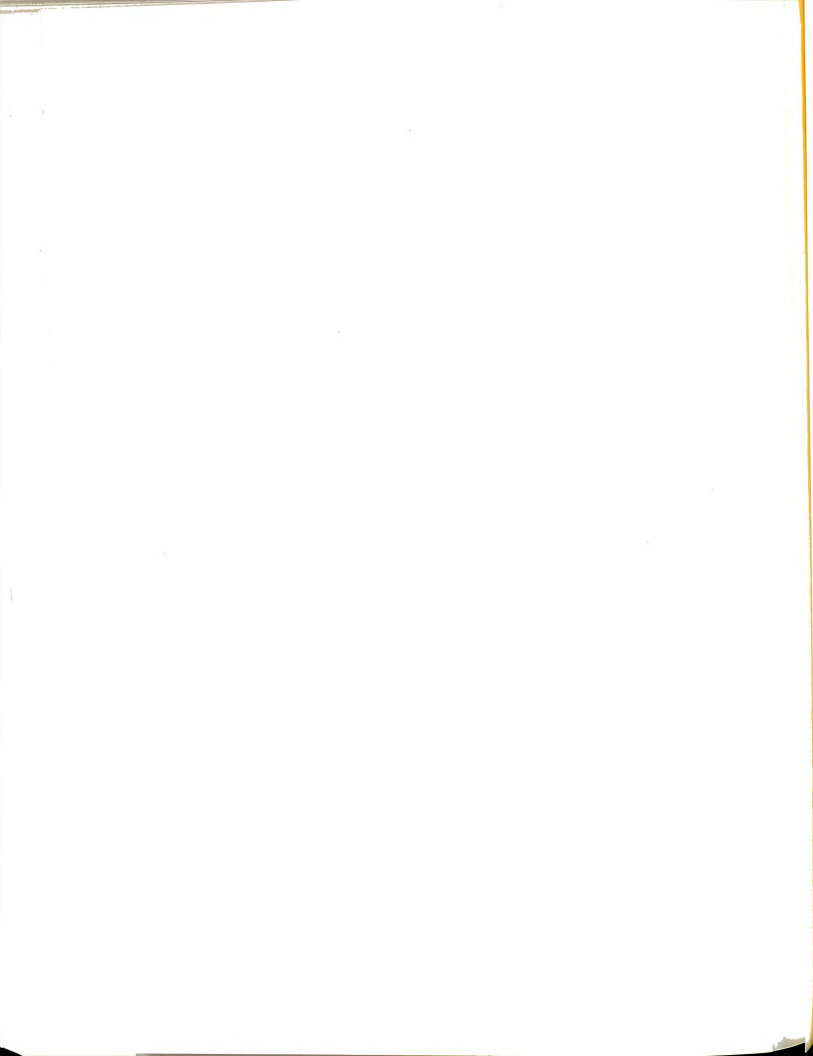




Figure 20. Nancy Boswell-Mayer. A Woman's Work is Never Done, 1978.

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Figure 21. Anita Steckel. Impaled, 1975.





Figure 22. Nancy Spero. Notes in Time on Women II, 1979.

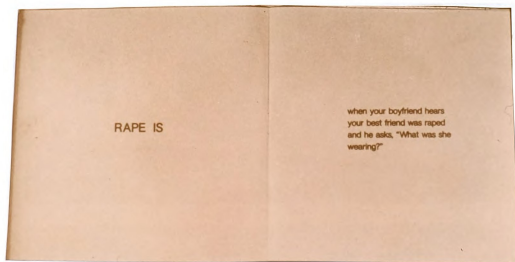


Figure 23. Suzanne Lacy. Rape Is..., 1972.

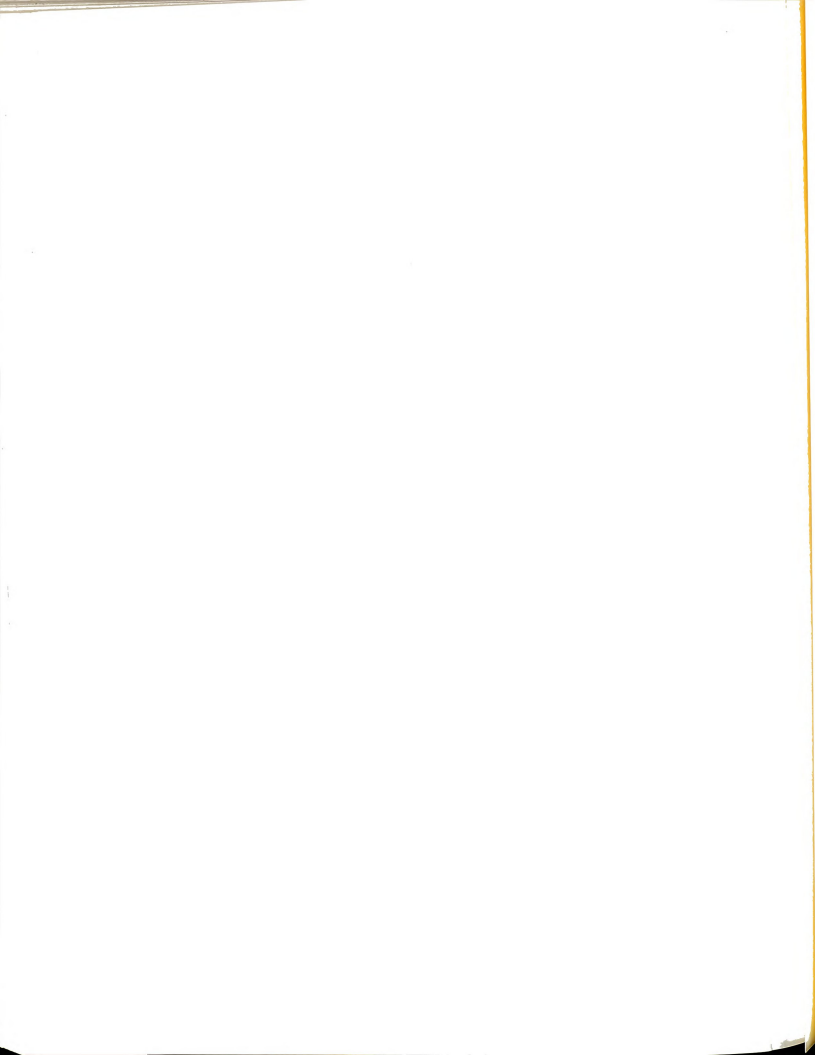




Figure 24. Joy Poe. Rape, A Matter of Degree, 1979.

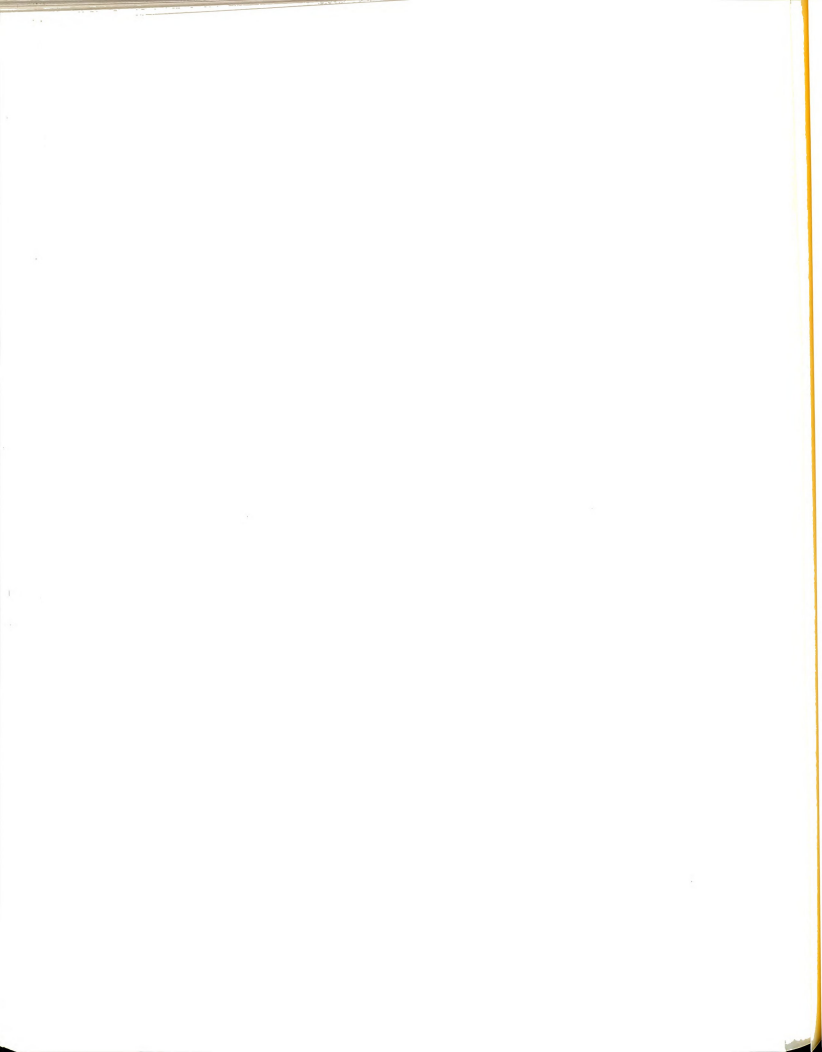




Figure 25. Harmony Hammond. Presence IV, 1972.





Figure 26. Joan Glueckman. Penny Ross, 1977.

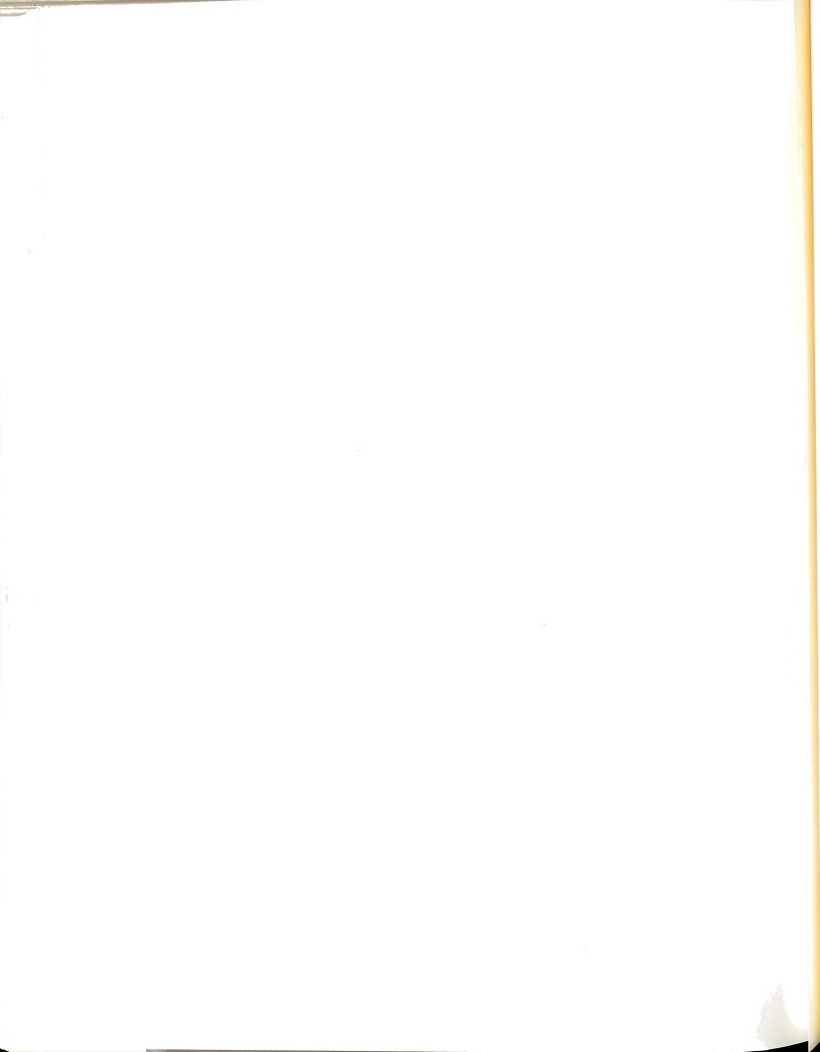
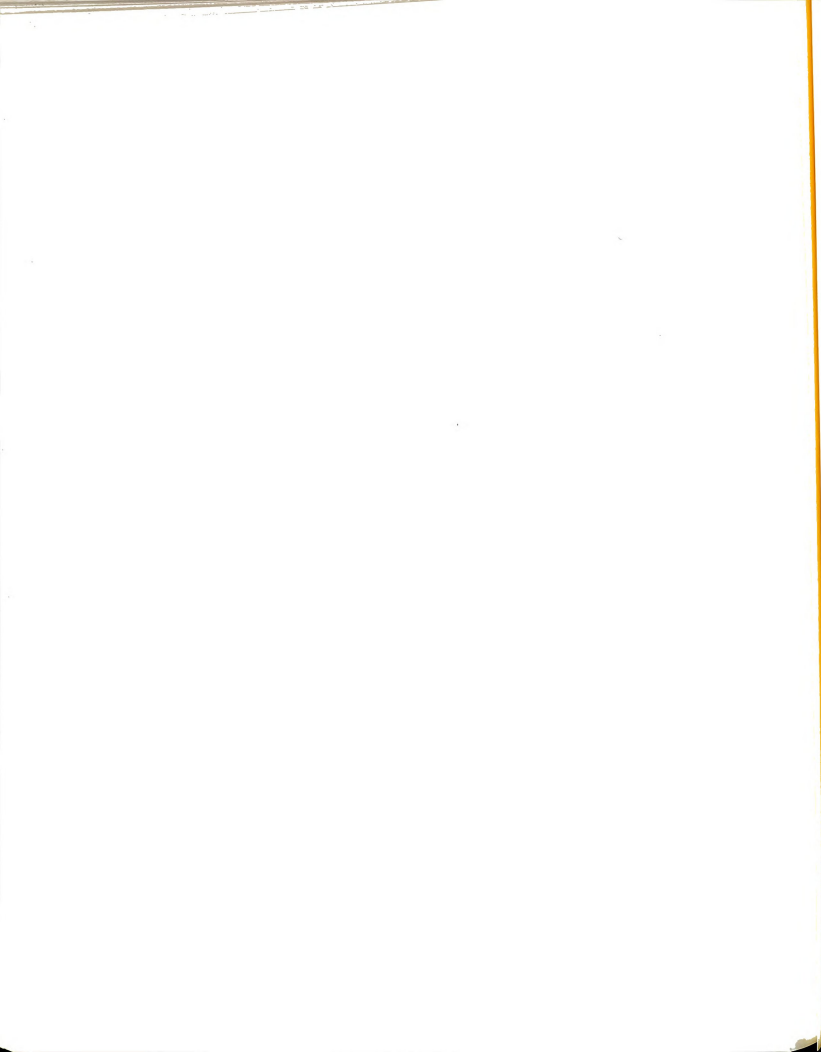




Figure 27. Sally Elliott. Afghan Series #1, 1980.



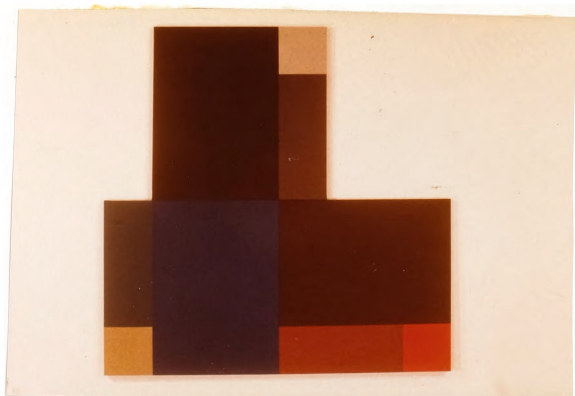
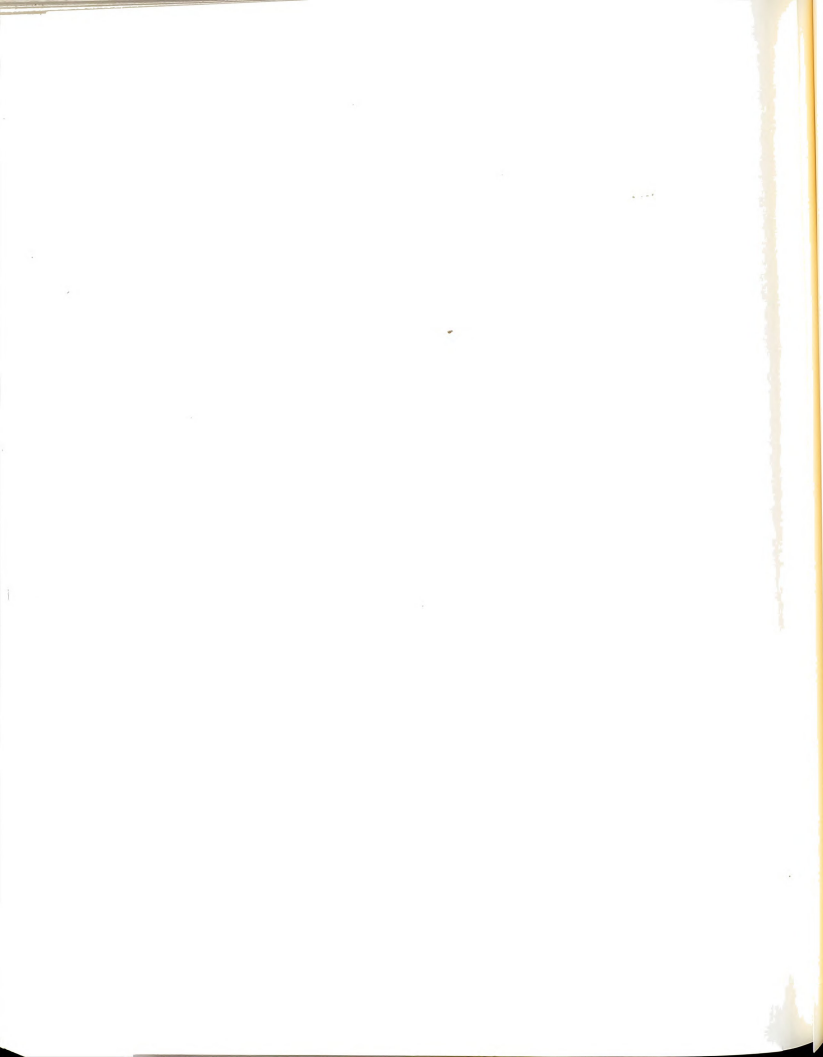


Figure 28. Sandra Kraskin. Umber Triad, 1978.



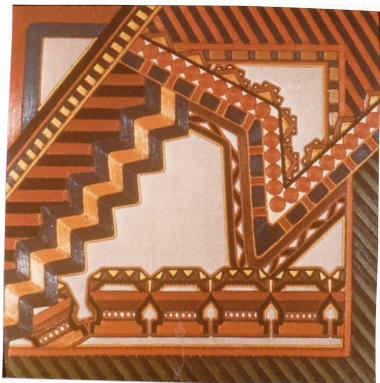


Figure 29. Mary Grigoriadis. Pegasus, 1978.





Figure 30. Linda Bastian. Cross My Heart, 1977.





Figure 31. Jane Bassuk. Water Plant, 1980.





Figure 32. Beth Bergman. Paradise Lost: Atlantis, 1979.

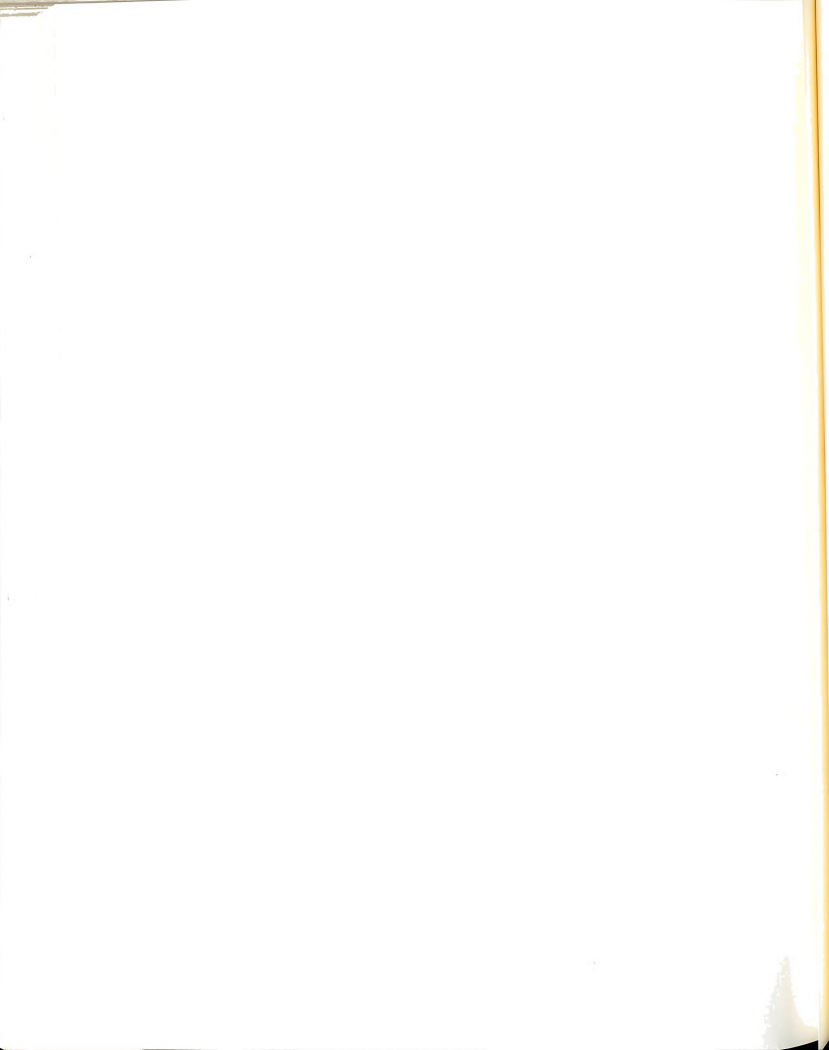




Figure 33. Mary Beth Edelson. Fire Flights in Deep Space III, 1978.

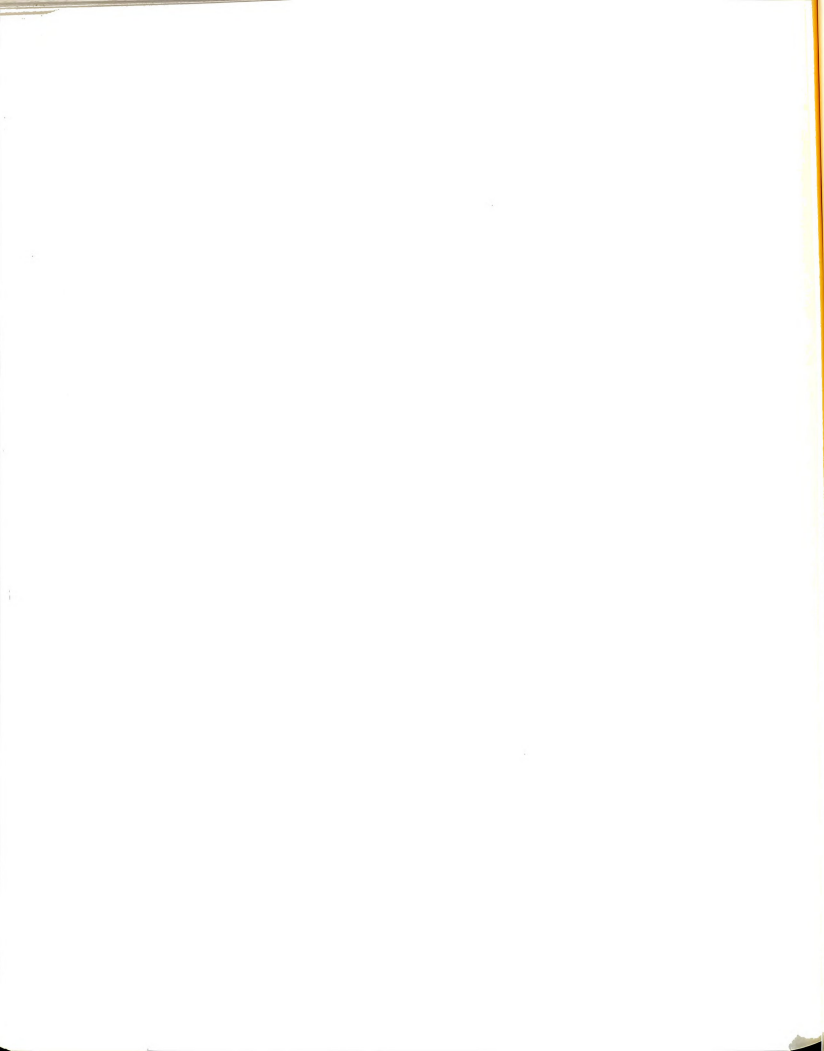




Figure 34. Donna Byars. Oracle Stone's Grove, 1977.





Figure 35. Sandra Taylor. Earth Mother Chairs, 1976.





Figure 36. Muriel Castanis. Early Impressions I, 1973.



Figure 37. Janau Noerdlinger. Buffalo Clouds Over Dream Houses, 1978-79.





Figure 38. Joyce Lyon. Pond Study II, 1979.





Figure 39. Linda White. Night Sky, 1980.





Figure 40. Nancy Kerner. Moon Hair, 1979.

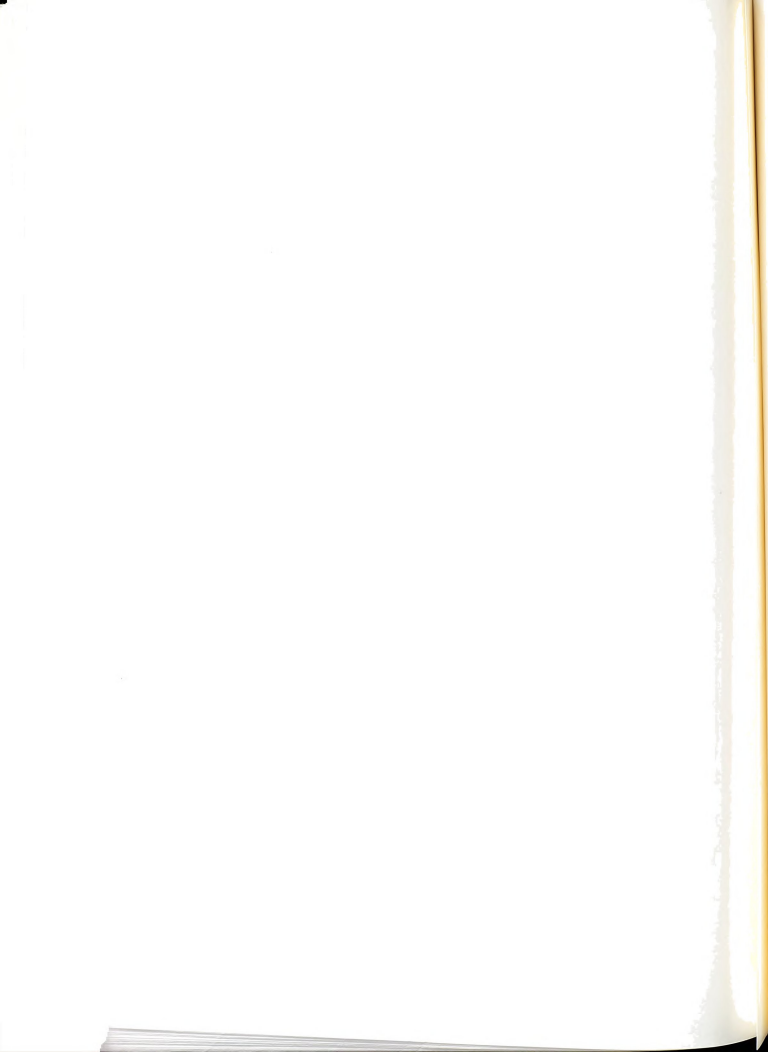




Figure 41. Donna Marxer. White Within, 1974.





Figure 42. Judy Chicago. Margaret Sanger, 1976.





Figure 43. Marjorie Abramson. Jezebel, 1977.





Figure 44. Eleanor Allen. Contingent, 1979.



Notes

¹Kim Levin, "The State of the Art: 1980," Art Journal 40 (Fall-Winter 1980): 366.

²John Perreault et al., "Pluralism in Art and in Art Criticism," Art Journal 40(Fall-Winter 1980): 377.

³Hilton Kramer, "Today's Avant-Garde Artists Have Lost the Power to Shock," New York Times, 16 Nov. 1980, sec. 2, pp. 1, 27.

⁴Levin, p. 368.

⁵Perreault et al., p. 377.

⁶Many others in the arts with 'anti-establishment' attitudes share this non-hierarchical view with feminists. See Part II, Chapter 3 of this study.

⁷Lucy R. Lippard, "Sweeping Exchanges: The Contribution of Feminism to the Art of the 1970s," Art Journal 40(Fall-Winter 1980): 362.

⁸Carter Ratcliff quoted in Judy Seigel, "The Personal and Public in Women's Art," Women Artists News 3(January 1978): 2.

⁹Kay Larson, "'For the First Time Women Are Leading Not Following,'" Artnews 79(October 1980): 64.

¹⁰Larson, pp. 64-72; Levin, pp. 366-368; Lippard, pp. 364-365; John Perreault, "Something Happened,": The Soho Weekly News 27 December 1979, p. 43.

¹¹Erwin Panofsky, Meaning in the Visual Arts (Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955): p. 28.

¹²Carla Gottlieb, Beyond Modern Art (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1976): 117.

¹³Levin, p. 368.

¹⁴Martha Rosler, "The Private and the Public, Feminist Art in California," Artforum 16(September 1977): 66. See also Lucy Lippard, From the Center (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1976): p. 141.

¹⁵The quotations used here are taken from Artist's questionnaires unless otherwise cited.

¹⁶My selection of artworks illustrated here is primarily intended to indicate the variety of content, styles and media used by the co-op artists. I included work from each gallery, whose dates of execution are scattered throughout the decade. While quality was a factor in the choice, presenting a wide range of the art was primary.

¹⁷The percentages cited here and in the remainder of this chapter were derived from statements provided by the artists or located in published material. The percentages are to be understood as approximate and only relative to each other, since many co-op artists work within more than one of the categories used here.

¹⁸Most of the co-op members have a BFA or MFA and most were educated in the 1950s and 1960s, so they had been exposed to the now notoriously male-dominated school systems of art training. Few artists in this study described art-school experiences that permitted experimentation in art styles apart from the prevailing mainstream modes of the time.

¹⁹For each type of art content mentioned in the remainder of this chapter, I will include four illustrations, selected according to variety of medium, co-op and date of execution. This uniform number does not indicate that equal numbers of art works of each type have been made in the co-ops.

²⁰Exhibition announcement, Soho 20 Gallery, New York City, 23 February-20 March 1974, courtesy of the artist. Ranyak changed her art style by mid-decade and turned to nature, away from abstraction which was beginning "to feel empty" to her. Marion Ranyak to Gayle Davis, 22 March 1979, letter.

²¹Blythe Bohnen in AIR Gallery, Overview 1972-1977 (New York: Publishing Center for Cultural Resources, 1978), n. p.

²²"Drawings by Salli Zimmerman," Central Hall Artists press release, November 1979, courtesy of the artist.

²³Judity Ingram in MUSE, Museum of the Philadelphia Civic Center, 21 September-28 October 1979, n. p., courtesy of the gallery.

²⁴Joanna Frueh, "The Personal Imperative, Post-Imagist Art in Chicago," New Art Examiner 6(October 1978): 4.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Eleanor Antin in Leo Rubinfien, "Through Western Eyes," Art in America 66(September-October 1978): 76-77.



27 See Lenore Malen, "Lucy Sallick, Studio Floor Still Life: Watercolor Series," Soho 20 Catalogue, September 1977, courtesy of the artist.

28 AIR Gallery press release, 11 March-5 April 1978, courtesy of the gallery.

29 "Lois Polansky - Handmade Paper Bookworks," Central Hall press release, March 1979, courtesy of the artist.

30 Roberta Richman in "Serial Drawing," Hera Gallery catalogue, 17 November-17 December 1978, n. p., courtesy of the gallery.

31 Barry Schwartz, The New Humanism, Art in a Time of Change (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), p. 147.

32 Pat Mainardi, ed., "Talking about Portraits," Feminist Art Journal 3(Summer 1974): 13.

33 Schwartz, p. 151.

34 Marjorie Kramer, "Sharon Wybrants," Womanart 1 (Spring-Summer 1977): 30.

35 Susan MacDonald interview, WARM Gallery, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 21 November 1979.

36 Judith Penzer in "Soho 20," advertising packet/brochure, n.d., courtesy of the gallery.

37 "Vaginal imagery," another form of sex-related but not necessarily erotic content will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

38 See John Berger, Ways of Seeing (New York: Viking Press, 1972), pp. 45-64.

39 Maureen Turin, "Lifting the Veil: Women, Desire and the Visual Image," paper presented at the College Art Association annual meeting, New Orleans, 2 February 1980.

40 Jamaica Kincaid, "Erotica!," Ms. 3(January 1975): 33.

41 "Women Artists Join to Fight to Put Sex into Museums and Get Sexism and Puritanism Out," Fight Censorship press release, March 1973, collection of Linda Nochlin.



- 42 Judith Roode to Gayle Davis, 5 March 1980, letter.
- 43 Margaret Walters, The Male Nude, A New Perspective (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 319.
- 44 Martha Edelheit in Feminist Art Program, Art: A Woman's Sensibility, The Collected Works and Writings of Women Artists (Valencia, CA: California Institute of the Arts, 1975), p. 19.
- 45 Nessa Forman, "Good-bye to the Femme Fatale," Artnews 73 (Summer 1974): 66.
- 46 Carolyn J. Seifert, "Domestic Madness: Images of the Housewife and Household Objects in the Art and Poetry of American Women in the 1960s and 1970s," paper presented at American Women in the Arts, 1980-1980, conference, University of Pittsburgh, 28-30 March 1980, pp. 2-3.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 See Part I, Chapter 1 of this study for a description of the Womanhouse project.
- 49 Sylvia Moore, "Close to Home: 33 Still Lives by Women," Feminist Art Journal 5 (Winter 1976-1977): 32.
- 50 Ruth Gray in "Floating Gallery," publicity brochure, 1978, n. p., courtesy of Donna Marxer.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Ruth E. Iskin, "Female Experience in Art, The Impact of Women's Art in a Work Environment," Heresies 1 (January 1977): 71.
- 53 Schwartz, p. 95.
- 54 Lucy R. Lippard, "Retrochic: Looking Back in Anger," New York, The Village Voice, 10 December 1979, p. 67.
- 55 Lucy R. Lippard, "Some Propaganda for Propaganda," Heresies 3 (1980): 36.
- 56 Donald B. Kuspit, "Spero's Apocalypse," Nancy Spero (Hamilton, New York: Picker Art Gallery, 1979), n. p.
- 57 Ibid.



⁵⁸ Cindy Lyle, "Chicago Rape Performance," Women Artists News 5(June-Summer 1979): 14.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Rachel Maines, "Reassessing the Heritage Art of Needlework," Women Artists News 6(December 1980-January 1981): 4.

⁶¹ Anne Stuart, "Quilter Sees Her Art as Part of 'Back to Basics,'" East Lansing Michigan State News, 18 May 1979, p. 10.

⁶² Cynthia T. Redick, "Quilting: Out of the Scrapbag of History," Women Artists News 6(December 1980-January 1981): 16.

⁶³ Paula King, "Reminiscences," Heresies 1 (Winter 1977-1978): 86.

⁶⁴ John Perreault, "Issues in Pattern Painting," Artforum 16 (November 1977): 36. He defines pattern painting as "the systematic repetition of a motif or motifs to cover a surface uniformly."

⁶⁵ Sylvia Moore, "Book Review - Women Artists of the Arts and Crafts Movement, 1870-1914," Women Artists News 6(December 1980-January 1981): 9.

⁶⁶ Maines, p. 4.

⁶⁷ Vera Norwood, "'Thank You for My Bones: Connections Between Contemporary Women Artists and the Traditional Arts of Their Foremothers," paper presented at the University of Pittsburgh "American Women in the Arts, 1880-1980" conference, 28-30 March, 1980, p. 2.

⁶⁸ Melissa Meyer and Miriam Schapiro, "Waste Not, Want Not, An Inquiry into What Women Saved and Assembled," Heresies 1(Winter 1977-1978): 66-67.

⁶⁹ Harmony Hammond in Feminist Art Program, p. 29.

⁷⁰ Joan Glueckman, 1940-1978," press release, Soho 20 Gallery, 9 May 1979, courtesy of the gallery.

⁷¹ Sally Elliott, artist's statement, 1979, courtesy of the artist.

⁷² Sandra Kraskin, "Kraskin," Minnesota Artists Exhibition Program, 17 February-2 April, 1978, n. p., courtesy of the artist.



- ⁷³Mary Grigoriadis in Feminist Art Program, p. 26.
- ⁷⁴Linda Bastian, interview, Soho 20 Gallery, New York City, 23 January 1979.
- ⁷⁵Jane Bassuk, "Jane Bassuk, Scenic Views: Paintings," WARM (Fall 1979): 14.
- ⁷⁶Beth Bergman, "Beth Bergman," WARM, n.v. (1979), p. 15.
- ⁷⁷Neolithic goddess shrines date from 8000 B.C. and the last goddess temples were closed in the early Christian years of Byzantium. See also Merlin Stone, When God Was A Woman (New York: Dial Press, 1978).
- ⁷⁸Gloria Feman Orenstein, "The Reemergence of the Archetype of the Great Goddess in Art by Contemporary Women," Heresies 2(Spring 1978): 74.
- ⁷⁹Mary Beth Edelson, "Pilgrimage/See for Yourself: A Journey to a Neolithic Goddess Cave, 1977, Grapceva, Hvar Island, Yugoslavia," Heresies 2(Spring 1978): 96.
- ⁸⁰Carol P. Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess," Heresies 2(Spring 1978): 10.
- ⁸¹Orenstein, p. 74.
- ⁸²Mary Beth Edelson, Woman Rising Collection, 1975, p. 16, courtesy of the artist.
- ⁸³Donna Byars in Orenstein, p. 79.
- ⁸⁴Janet Koplos, "WARM at CMU," source unknown, courtesy of WARM Gallery.
- ⁸⁵Janau Noerdlinger, interview, East Lansing, Michigan, 20 March 1981.
- ⁸⁶Joyce Lyon, interview, WARM Gallery, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 20 November 1979.
- ⁸⁷Linda White in MUSE, Museum of Philadelphia Civic Center, 21 September-28 October 1979, n. p.



⁸⁸ Joanna Frueh, "Crucibles of Beauty, Occult Symbolism and Seven Chicago Women," New Art Examiner 8(November 1980): 5.

⁸⁹ Christ, p. 10.

⁹⁰ See Part I, Chapter 1 of this study.

⁹¹ Lucy R. Lippard, From the Center, Feminist Essays on Women's Art (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1976), p. 81.

⁹² Linda Nochlin, "Some Women Realists," in Gregory Battcock, ed., Super Realism, A Critical Anthology (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1975), p. 65.

⁹³ Donna Marxer in "Floating Gallery," publicity brochure, 1978, n. p., courtesy of the artist.

⁹⁴ Eleanor Allen in MUSE, Museum of Philadelphia Civic Center, 21 September-28 October 1979, n. p.

⁹⁵ See Part II, Chapters 3 and 5 of this study.



THE ARTISTS AND THE ART WORLD

The primary professional goal of the artists of the women's collective galleries has been to increase the visibility and artistic recognition of their many different types of artworks. That purpose has certainly been achieved. The extent to which the members feel it has been accomplished depends on their individual expectations of what the cooperatives should be able to do. In other words, the degree of success of the gallery for any given member is determined by the role she wants the collective to play in her career. Different individuals in this study have viewed the co-ops as permanent alternative structures, training grounds for professional art exhibition skills, stepping stones to commercial gallery stables, or a combination of these.

The first group, those artists who joined the collectives hoping to find a viable exhibition structure as an alternative to the commercial gallery system, comprises slightly under seventy percent of the co-op artists in this study.¹ This is not to say that all these members would decline a suitable offer from a mainstream gallery, although indeed some would. The majority would continue to participate in their collectives for the advantages they offer,² no matter what other professional opportunities they might accept concurrently.

The co-ops have succeeded in providing the kind of visibility these artists want from their memberships on several levels. Of course, as soon as she joins, each member's audience expands to include the



other artists of her collective; and her first exhibition introduces the work to the local art-viewing public. More than this, the growing number of women's and mixed-gender alternative galleries across the country has been gradually establishing communication links since the mid-1970s. Although the network could be more inclusive, many galleries stay in contact with each other through newsletters and show announcements, or exchange shows. There are also occasional conferences, such as the New Art Space Conference sponsored by the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art in April 1978, or the national and regional meetings of the Women's Caucus for Art, the College Art Association, or the Coalition of Women's Art Organizations. Through these channels, members can share their experiences in alternative art groups, and they can make their artwork visible to a widening group of peers and interested public.

The collective galleries have not succeeded in establishing real alternatives to the commercial system financially, however.³ Not all co-op artists expect to sell their work, and many remain vitally interested in maintaining alternatives that do not emulate the commercial system. In fact, part of the motivation for creating conceptual artworks, which purport to be 'anti-object' and unsalable, is their inherent non-marketability. However, the lack of sales can affect a member's art and her participation in the collective. Both art-making and co-op membership are expensive and time-consuming.⁴ When little or negligible remuneration is generated by the art, more time must be spent either in earning a living from another source, which reduces the time and energy available for creating art, or in rationalizing one's art career in the face of negative financial



rewards. Both result in decreased art production, lower morale, or both, especially for co-op artists who expect to make their permanent professional homes in the collectives.

The second group, approximately forty percent of the co-op artists, are primarily interested in the collective as the provider of professional art marketing training, whether they intend to remain members or leave once they acquire these skills. Critic Joanna Frueh acknowledges the collectives as "the most positive initiators of change for women" because "when an artist asserts her professionalism (which continually develops in a co-op), the public takes notice."⁵ These art business skills are not easy to acquire. Ann Shearer of Center/ Gallery echoes many descriptions of art school programs when she writes, "My student experience provided little support and almost no information about exhibitions, competitions, professional art marketing and the like."⁶ The Women's Art Movement has recognized this problem, compounded by the sex role conditioning of American women not to be assertive or to feel professionally competent. Collectives, conferences and women's art classes⁷ have offered 'how to' workshops which provide directions for writing press releases, photographing artwork, maintaining a professional mailing list and completing many other necessary business procedures. The co-op artists directly experience all the steps of exhibiting their art and taking an active, rather than passive, role in their own careers.

While the increase in professionalism certainly aids the visibility of co-op artists' work, small budgets in the collectives have precluded two types of very important exposure. Most of the co-ops have rarely been able to afford the publication of catalogues or



other illustrated, extensive documentations of their members' shows. It is generally with the help of outside grants that such catalogues have been published, so they usually appear only in conjunction with special exhibitions such as gallery openings or anniversaries, or major invitationals.⁸ The same financial strains prevent the galleries from buying extensive advertising space in the press. Coverage and critical attention for the co-op shows is thus less extensive than if the galleries could afford to utilize all the marketing skills the members know in order to promote their work.

The third perspective on the cooperatives, the galleries as stepping stones, is held by over thirty percent of the artists in this study. Those members feel the co-ops offer acceptable opportunities for shows, but for a variety of professional, financial and political reasons, they aspire to the commercial scene. The collectives have certainly succeeded in stimulating esthetic interest in many members' art within the mainstream art community. Every year from 1972 to 1979 saw at least one member of AIR Gallery in the Whitney Museum of American Art's Annual, and now Biennial, Exhibitions. Numerous members who had never had a post-art school exhibition before joining the co-ops find themselves included in outside shows and receiving at least local press reviews. Many members have affiliated with commercial galleries since joining their co-ops. Member artists say their co-op participation is usually treated with respect by others of the art community who would not be so responsive to an artist without a gallery. Professional contacts can be made at the cooperatives and news of art opportunities spreads through the memberships, increasing the likelihood that when mainstream exhibition possibilities surface, co-op artists will be informed and ready to participate.



However, the collectives have only been partially successful as stepping stones. Although the professional status of artists who belong to a co-op is 'higher' than that of an unaffiliated artist, their futures in commercial galleries, major museum shows and the art press are definitely not assured. One problem is that co-ops fight a reputation as second-rate art centers, so the visibility they allow their members is tainted in the eyes of some art community figures who see the collectives as vanity galleries. Secondly, the separatist nature of the co-ops has given them some of the characteristics of women's art ghettos, women communicating to other like-minded women instead of to the larger audience.⁹ Third, and most importantly, the several mutually-dependent components of the contemporary art system--galleries, museums, collectors, critics, curators--have excluded most women artists from equal representation throughout the decade. The interconnections of the system have served to "buttress one another's aesthetic policies and the business activities of the market...and...their insistence upon white male superiority."¹⁰

Critic Lawrence Alloway, in "Network: The Art World Described as a System," identifies four "distribution" contexts through which a successful artwork progresses.¹¹ The art is initially seen in the studio, and then in its first exhibition at an art gallery. From there, it may be purchased or selected for inclusion in other gallery or museum shows, and finally, it may receive extensive documentation in the printed media. To emphasize the complexity of this art system, Alloway uses the theories of several social scientists to explain "the pattern of partial information" which characterizes



the art world: each component of the system influences some aspects of some of the other components, though without a completely predictable, causal relationship existing among them.¹²

Less analytic and certainly less flattering is Harold Rosenberg's sarcastic description of what he sees as the "shaky" interactions of these art market processes:

Owing to its condition of unrelenting anxiety, the art establishment is easily swayed...by aggressively stated opinions, attention-getting stunts...sheer brass... Praise by a critic or museum employee of an artist or a tendency is bound to fetch some support, providing the praise is all-out and without critical reservations. The claim that a work is historically significant is sufficient to clinch a sale, regardless of the poor condition or lack of attractiveness of the work itself, as is a confident forecast of capital gain. Periodic mentions in the press, expensive catalogs and reproductions, dealer-subsidized 'critical' biographies, large private and gallery parties influence an artist's standing despite everyone's awareness of how these things are arranged.¹³

Artists of the Women's Art Movement have long-recognized these art system intricacies. Since the early 1970s, they have documented the sexism they perceived at every level by compiling statistics showing the disproportionate amounts of art attention given to male artists in the galleries, museums, and the press.

Women in the Arts (WIA) has made an on-going study of the male to female artist ratio in the stables of ten to twenty prominent contemporary galleries, covering the years 1975, 1977 and 1979 (Table 2). Some small gains have been achieved in these years, but the results still reflect abysmally discriminatory gallery selection practices. In her summary article of the last



Table 2. Women in the Arts Survey of Contemporary New York Galleries.

Selected New York Galleries	Male Artists			Female Artists		
	1975	1977	1979	1975	1977	1979
Borgenicht Gallery	21	20	18	1	1	1
Leo Castelli Gallery	29	30	29	1	2	4
Ronald Feldman	8	10	15	2	2	3
O. K. Harris Gallery	42	37	81	5	5	15
Nancy Hoffman Gallery	21	21	20	3	3	3
Sidney Janis Gallery	7	6	10	2	2	1
Knoedler Contemporary Art	11	12	8	0	0	1
Marlborough Gallery	24	32	36	2	1	3
Pace Gallery	14	12	13	2	3	3
Sonnabend Gallery	15	12	?*	3	3	?
John Weber Gallery	22	26	23	2	2	4
Mary Boone	?	?	8	?	?	0
Perrone Westwater Fischer	?	?	15	?	?	1
Alan Frumkin	?	?	11	?	?	1
Max Hutchinson	?	?	18	?	?	3
David McKee	?	?	6	?	?	1
Sculpture Now	?	?	17	?	?	3
Louis Meisel	?	?	20	?	?	5
Andre Emmerich	?	?	10	?	?	5

*Figures not available for these years because of the changing research base used by the WIA.

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ten years of the Movement, Jacqueline Skiles writes:

Many more women artists are being shown in professional spaces rather than being confined to the local art association's show, the outdoor art fair, and the library, as was largely the case in the past. But the entree to the world of prestige galleries that truly represent an artist and develop an artist's reputation, career and pocketbook seems as elusive as ever. While it is true that there are only a handful of new artists accepted in any given year by all the major New York galleries combined, the percentage of women artists has actually declined.¹⁴

The primary explanation given for this unfair distribution of gallery spaces has been that women's art does not sell well.¹⁵ It is certainly accurate that commercial galleries are businesses and that they need to minimize their financial risks when choosing a new artist to show. However, since prominent galleries themselves play major roles as taste-makers, and since high quality women's art is more in evidence than ever before, many supporters of the Women's Art Movement correctly view the 'lack of sales' of women's art as an excuse, disguising underlying sexist attitudes. Conventional ideas of proper roles for women create the problems. As early as 1965, Rosenberg and Fliegel in The Vanguard Artist report that gallery owners often found women artists "difficult to deal with." If the woman was assertive, she was labelled "too aggressive"; if she was passive, she was seen as "role-locked."¹⁶ In 1974, artist Joyce Weinstein stated that women were not handled by top galleries because the art community still did not take women seriously as artists. While male artists had the "la bohème" social legend to bolster their professional role, women were without supportive myths or models in the top echelons of the art system.¹⁷



Since curators often search in galleries for art to be included in upcoming museums exhibitions, it is not surprising that the same sexist exhibition record exists in the country's museums. Over the past ten years various kinds of 'artists counts' have been collected to document descrimination in museum shows and permanent collections (Table 3).¹⁸ The results speak for themselves.

The art press offers no better fare for women artists. Rosalie Braeutigam and Betty Fiske of the Tamarind Lithography Workship researched "Sex Differentials in Art Exhibition Reviews," a study of the line counts of art coverage of living male and female artists' exhibitions in 1970-1971.¹⁹ The findings again proved blatant sexism (Table 4). The editors of the periodicals reacted to the report by blaming the galleries and museums for not showing more women's art for them to review. As Tom Hess, editor of Art News replied, "The conclusion is that it's harder for women to get shows--that's news?"²⁰ The system had circled the issue. No new studies have followed the Tamarind research. Considering the rest of the mainstream system, however, one would not expect to see full equality in press coverage for women's art today.

Although the quantity of critical attention paid to women's art is not equitable, there have been significant gains in the quality of the coverage. Early in the 1970s, more discussion was devoted to the new separatist nature of the cooperatives than to the art they exhibited. During those years, with women's content well-represented but ill-understood, feminist artists began clamoring for 'feminist



Table 3. Surveys of Various American Museums (See Note 18).

Museum	Date	Show/Collection	Women
Museum of Modern Art New York City	1929-72	solo show	.005%
	1972	collection	9.0%
Metropolitan Museum New York City	1969-71	new acquisitions	0.0%
	1972	collection	10.0%
Guggenheim Museum New York City	1976	Selected Sculpture and Works on Paper	2.0%
	1976	Postwar American Painting	6.0%
	1976	20th Century American Drawing	3.0%
Whitney Museum of American Art New York City	1969	Annual	5.0%
	1971	collection	8.0%
	1962-72	solo shows	6.0%
	1977	Biennial	20.0%
	1977	American Master Drawings and Watercolors	4.0%
Corcoran Art Gallery Washington, D. C.	1972	collection	6.0%
Los Angeles County Museum Los Angeles	1962-72	solo shows	0.0%
	1962-72	group shows	4.0%
Minnesota Institute of Art Minneapolis	1953-67	solo shows	4.0%
Walker Art Center Minneapolis	1960-69	solo shows	5.6%
	1970-74	solo shows	10.0%
Art Institute of Chicago Chicago	1970	69th American Exhibition	0.0%
	1972	70th American Exhibition	8.0%



Table 4. Partial Findings of the Tamarind "Sex Differentials
in Art Exhibition Reviews" Study, 1970-71.

Magazine/Newspaper	Number of Reviews	
	Men	Women
Craft Horizons	55.7%	44.3%
Art News	78.6%	21.4%
New York Times	81.8%	18.2%
Arts Magazine	82.9%	17.7%
Los Angeles Times	83.7%	16.3%
Los Angeles Herald-Examiner	84.4%	15.6%
San Francisco Chronicle	85.6%	14.4%
Artforum	87.8%	12.2%
Time Magazine	89.7%	10.3%
Art in America	92.0%	8.0%
Newsweek	96.5%	3.5%



criticism.' They wanted the work to be reviewed as art, and as art in the context of the social experiences of women and men in this culture.

Toward this end, feminist artists and writers began to formulate various theoretical bases from which to view women's art.²¹ Although the new categories and analyses of women's content are quite controversial and have not received unanimous support in the art community, the result has been an increasing number of critics who have stopped ignoring and have begun to consider and evaluate art by women seriously.

The mixed reactions of critics have led to lively, important critical coverage in the last half of the decade. Some mainstream writers, like Hilton Kramer of the New York Times have not altered their initial evaluations of the Women's Art Movement. Kramer's constantly-stated worry is that 'quality' is lost when, as he sees it, the art world is pressured to comply with democratic rather than esthetic standards.²² Much more supportive than Kramer, critic Donald Kuspit has expressed his concern that some proponents of different forms of women's content, particularly those of decorative art, may become "authoritarian" feminists who will allow as little flexibility as did the male authorities of the past.²³ At the same time, critic Alloway directs the women artists to formulate a clear, esthetic philosophy to strengthen the tenets of the Movement.²⁴

Some critics have taken a less directive stance in the discussion and have enjoyed the multitude of styles and lack of rigid definition that characterize contemporary women's art, while giving

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it serious critical attention. Chicago's Joanna Frueh and Franz Schulze, New York's Lucy Lippard and John Perreault, and other very prominent critics, many quoted in these pages, are supporting, constructively discussing, and acknowledging the importance of art by women of the 1970s.

Women artists continue to join the collectives for all three of these reasons, to find a gallery as an end-in-itself, to learn art marketing, and to 'step up' to the commercial scene. As the social and economic climate has changed and as the co-ops' sense of collective community has diminished,²⁵ what has remained constant is a full commitment by the member artists to art-making, regardless of their future career hopes.



Notes

¹The data in this chapter is taken from Artists' Questionnaires unless otherwise cited. Because some members joined the collectives for more than one of these three reasons, the percentages stated total more than 100 percent.

²See Part II, Chapter 5 of this study for a discussion of cooperative gallery versus commercial gallery advantages and disadvantages.

³Lack of sales, mentioned by over 50 percent of the co-op artists, is the most often-named disadvantage of belonging to a co-op. Reasons for this include no gallery public relations or sales agent and the low status of co-op galleries in the eyes of many serious investors. Elizabeth Erickson of WARM Gallery states that people regularly ask if the work exhibited is for sale, indicating the audience's confusion of the co-ops with museum-like structures or with art that is not done 'professionally.' Elizabeth Erickson, interview, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 20 November 1979.

⁴70 percent of the artists in this study named the amount of time required of a member as the biggest weakness of a co-op membership. 20 percent felt the biggest problem was the costs involved, and we can expect that percentage to increase in the future, under the present recession and with the imminent cutbacks of funding for the arts under the Reagan administration.

⁵Joanna Frueh, "My Kind of Town? Chicago Women Artists," Feminist Art Journal 5(Fall 1976): 28.

⁶Ann Shearer, Center/Gallery, Artist's Questionnaire.

⁷An example of one special class is "Functioning in the Art World," offered at the New School for Social Research in New York City. Artists affiliated with the Women's Interart Center, Alice Baber and Dorothy Gillespie, developed and have taught their course since 1975.

⁸AIR Overview 1972-1977, An Exhibition in Two Parts (New York: Publishing Center for Cultural Resources, 1978); ARC, Past and Present (Chicago: ARC Gallery, 1979); A Day in the Life, Twenty-four Hours in the Life of a Creative Woman (Chicago: ARC Gallery, 1980); and others.

⁹See Part II, Chapter 5 of this study for a discussion of separatism.

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¹⁰Nancy Spero, "The Whitney and Women," The Art Gallery Magazine 14 (January 1971): 26.

¹¹Lawrence Alloway, "Network: The Art World Described as a System," Artforum 11(September 1972): 28.

¹²Alloway, p. 29. He cites H.J. Leavitt, "Some Effects of Certain Communication Patterns on Group Performance," Organization Theory in D.S. Pugh, ed. (no Publishers cited), p. 72, and Raymond D. Cottoll, "The Nature and Measurement of Anxiety," Scientific American 208(1963): 96.

¹³Harold Rosenberg, Discovering the Present, Three Decades in Art, Culture and Politics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 113.

¹⁴Jacqueline Skiles, "Looking Back: The Past Ten Years," Women Artists News 6(Summer 1980): 13.

¹⁵Bernard Rosenberg and Norris Fliegel, The Vanguard Artist, Portrait and Self-Portrait (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1965), p. 261; Joyce Weinstein in "New York Professional Women Artists," videotape of panel discussion, 17 January 1974, reel 2, collection of the Women's Interart Center, New York City; Grace Glueck, "Making Cultural Institutions More Responsive to Social Needs," Arts in Society 11(Spring-Summer 1974): 57.

¹⁶Rosenberg and Fliegel, pp. 262, 264.

¹⁷Weinstein.

¹⁸W.R. Hegeman, "Where Are the Great Female Artists?" Minneapolis/St. Paul Twin Cities Reader, date and page unknown, courtesy of WARM Gallery; Mary Winget, "WARM Spotlights Women Artists," Insight, 24 January 1979, page unknown, courtesy of WARM Gallery; The Creative Woman, A Report of the Committee on the Arts and Humanities (Washington, D.C.: National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year, 1975), pp. 3-5.

¹⁹Rosalie Braeutigam and Betty Fiske, Sex Differentials in Art Exhibition Reviews: A Statistical Study (Los Angeles: Tamarind Lithography Workshop, 1972).

²⁰Grace Glueck, "Art Press Blames Sex Bias on Museums, Galleries," Craft Horizons 32 (August 1972): 60.

²¹See Avis Lang Rosenberg, "Feminist Art Criticism," Women Artists Newsletter 2(April 1977): 1, 8; and Part III, Chapter 6 of this study.

²²Hilton Kramer, "Does Feminism Conflict with Artistic Standards?" New York Times, 27 January 1980, sec. 2, pp. 1, 27.

²³Donald B. Kuspit, "Betraying the Feminist Intention: The Case Against Feminist Decorative Art," Arts Magazine 54(November 1979): 124-126.

²⁴Lawrence Alloway, "Women's Art in the 70s," Art in America 64(May-June 1976): 68-72.

²⁵See Part II, Chapter 5 of this study.

CONCLUSION

This examination of the eight-year history of the women's cooperative galleries makes clear their social, professional and esthetic impact on the art world of the 1970s.

Politically, the cooperatives are not entirely feminist, nor are they completely peopled with social activists. However, their partial support of and intrinsic relationship to the women's movement and the Women's Art Movement have had very positive effects on those efforts toward equality. Social historian Maren Carden, in her classification of various kinds of women's organizations, would call the collective galleries:

small, informal, locally-oriented [groups which] serve two important functions: first, they formulate new ideas, new projects and new ways of looking at women's opportunities, all of which can then be borrowed...And second, they provide a means whereby large numbers of individual women can translate feminist ideology into practice by exploring nontraditional behavior patterns.¹

Professionally, the co-ops have especially supported their own members, but they have also acted as collective and individual role models for artists of both sexes throughout the art world.

Esthetically, the cooperative gallery members and other women artists of the 1970s have been largely responsible for the artistic directions taken by contemporary art in matters of style and content. Critic Irving Sandler writes:

I should like to stress the influence of feminism on the



development of pluralism and post-modernism. Consciousness-raising played a vital role in the evolution of an introspective, personalist, anti-purist art, as did the brilliant proselytizing of feminist art critics such as Lucy Lippard.²

Not only have art critics of very different politics, styles and degrees of professional recognition acknowledged the current influence of women artists, but some are also positing that women have been the primary innovators of 1970s art. Critic Kay Larson states, "For the first time in Western art, women are leading, not following."³ She discusses art types, such as pattern and decoration, words and diaries, and body and self content, as some areas in which women artists are either dominating or 'sharing the lead' with male artists in the development of new modes of avant-garde art. She quotes artist Nicholas Africano as saying, "Yes, I feel an affinity with feminism... Their [female poets] personal histories allowed me to have the self-confidence to do that kind of confessional art."⁴ Larson also mentions Robert Zakanitch and Brad Davis, among other male pattern and decoration artists; and Jonathan Borofsky and Paul Zelevansky, who work with content of "secret...self-expression" through words and diaries. Her conclusion is that men and women are both now working within areas of content for which women artists have won acceptance.

Lucy Lippard calls these innovations by women artists important but "surface" phenomena. She writes:

This is a difficult subject [the contribution of women's art] for a feminist to tackle because it seems unavoidably entangled in the art world's linear I-did-it-firstism, which radical feminists have rejected (not to mention our own, necessarily biased inside view). If one says--and one can--that around 1970 women artists introduced an element of real emotion and autobiographical content to performance, body art, video and artists' books; or that they have brought over into high art the use of 'low' traditional art forms such as embroidery, sewing and china painting; or that they have changed the face

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of central imagery and pattern painting, of layering, fragmentation and collage--someone will inevitably and perhaps justifiably holler the names of various male artists.⁵

Instead, she sees that "The goal of feminism is to change the character of art,"⁶ to re-establish art's communicative link with society.

The art of the co-op artists, as it reveals these 'new communications' in styles and subjects; as it relates to art made by women artists not involved in collective groups; and as it takes its place in the larger body of contemporary art, is an especially rich area for future, intensive study.

As the 1980s begin, many observers are concerned for the future of the cooperative galleries. The economy is the largest threat to their survival, with sources of revenue disappearing with each new 'budget cut.' Lois Polansky of Central Hall Gallery recently commented that artists will have to accept 'survival of the fittest' lifestyles since "there are just too many artists, especially in New York" struggling against nearly impossible financial odds to make a living in their field.⁷ It seems clear that a new atmosphere in the arts and in alternative, grass-roots organizations surrounds the collective galleries. As Lindsay Lochman of Artemesia Gallery says, it is "the beginning of a new era, and now we just need to decide what that era will be like."⁸ Regardless of how the next evolution of the social and artistic climates develop, the inroads that the women's cooperative galleries have made, on the professional rights of women and all artists, and on the societal acceptance of women's creative forms and subjects, are recorded and recognized. The next phase of change will feel their influence.

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Notes

¹Maren Lockwood Carden, Feminism in the Mid-1970s, the Non-Establishment, the Establishment, and the Future (New York: Ford Foundation, 1977), p. 17.

²Irving Sandler, "Modernism, Revisionism, Pluralism, and Post-Modernism," Art Journal 40(Fall-Winter 1980): 346.

³Kay Larson, "'For the First Time Women Are Leading Not Following,'" Artnews 79(October 1980): 64.

⁴Larson, p. 70.

⁵Lucy R. Lippard, "Sweeping Exchanges: The Contribution of Feminism to the Art of the 1970s," Art Journal 40(Fall-Winter, 1980): 362-65.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Lois Polansky, Central Hall Gallery, conversation, 15 March 1981.

⁸Lindsay Lochman, Artemesia Gallery, conversation, 22 March 1981.



APPENDICES



APPENDIX A

Artist's Questionnaire

Questionnaire information requested:

Background Information - Name

Name of art organization

Date joined

Usual art medium

1. Why did you join your particular gallery or center? Have your original expectations been met?
2. What are the strengths of the gallery and the advantages of belonging?
3. What are the weaknesses of the gallery and the disadvantages of belonging?
4. What changes in philosophy or structure have you seen in the organization since you became a member?
5. Are there any changes or developments you would like to see in the organization in the future?
6. How do you support yourself financially? Have your art sales been affected by your membership in the gallery?
7. How has your involvement in the women's art organization or the larger movement affected your art, if at all? (Slides or illustrations documenting the development of your art would be very helpful.)
8. How would you describe the press coverage of your shows, both before and since your involvement with the gallery? (Copies of reviews, articles about your art, show announcements, etc., would be valuable.)
9. What role do you see the gallery playing in your career? A training ground for professional art marketing and exhibition skills? A stepping stone to a commercial gallery? An alternative art structure in itself? Other?
10. Are you now or have you ever been involved in any women's political organizations within or outside of the art world?

Please feel free to add any other comments that seem relevant to my research.



APPENDIX B

Interview and Questionnaire Responses*

The gallery names are abbreviated according to the following key:

GALLERY	KEY	USUAL NUMBER OF MEMBERS	RESPONDENTS
AIR Gallery	AIR	20+	13
ARC Gallery	ARC	20+	7
Artemesia Gallery	ART	20+	9
Center/Gallery	CG	60+	12
Central Hall Gallery	CH	20+	16
Floating Gallery	FG	11	8
Front Range Women	FR	30	9
Hera Gallery	H	10	6
MUSE Gallery	M	20+	4
Soho 20 Gallery	S	25+	13
WARM Gallery	W	30+	15

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSE TYPES

RESPONSES IN NUMBERS

	AIR	ARC	ART	CG	CH	FG	FR	H	M	S	W
1. Why joined?											
a. <u>support</u>	8	3	7	12	7	4	8	4	3	9	15
b. <u>art visibility</u>	9	7	9	2	12	6	3	4	4	9	7
c. <u>expectations met</u>	12	7	9	12	14	8	8	6	4	12	14
2. Advantages?											
a. <u>art visibility</u>	9	3	1	9	10	2	7	2	3	9	7
b. <u>support</u>	6	7	6	11	11	6	5	5	3	4	13
c. <u>quality art</u>	7	0	4	0	13	4	0	1	0	6	3
d. <u>art contacts</u>	0	7	9	5	0	4	4	2	2	6	3

* See Appendix 1 for the exact wording of the questions.



QUESTIONS AND
RESPONSE TYPES

RESPONSES IN NUMBERS

	AIR	ARC	ART	CG	CH	FG	FR	H	M	S	W
3. Disadvantages?											
a. time	9	1	6	7	8	1	4	3	4	8	11
b. cost	1	0	3	1	1	1	0	0	0	9	0
c. democratic method	5	5	5	0	7	3	4	2	1	5	5
d. no sales, recognition	6	1	3	1	4	6	0	3	0	8	6
e. ghettoized	1	3	3	1	1	3	0	0	0	5	1
f. no audience	0	0	0	1	4	5	0	3	0	0	0
g. too secure	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	3	1
4. Changes?											
a. no major changes	4	2	1	2	6	6	1	3	1	4	1
b. more professional orientation	4	4	6	5	1	0	7	0	0	3	11
c. less completely democratic	3	2	2	6	1	0	0	2	2	1	6
d. less 'spirit' or politics	5	5	3	3	3	4	0	1	2	6	3
e. more critical attention	0	4	5	0	2	0	1	1	0	4	0
f. wider goals geographically	0	3	2	0	3	0	1	1	0	0	0
g. according to member turnover	0	3	4	0	3	0	1	1	0	0	0
5. Future Hopes?											
a. artists' programs	2	0	1	2	1	0	0	1	4	0	2
b. sales, recognition	2	1	0	3	3	6	2	1	0	4	4
c. money, grants	5	0	0	8	3	6	0	0	2	4	1
d. better space	6	1	0	1	5	0	0	0	1	2	0
e. change in executive structure	7	2	2	0	2	0	0	3	0	2	4

QUESTIONS AND
RESPONSE TYPES

RESPONSES IN NUMBERS

	AIR	ARC	ART	CG	CH	FG	FR	H	M	S	W
5. Future Hopes? (cont'd)											
f. shows in other areas	0	0	2	1	0	0	2	2	0	0	4
g. more members	2	2	1	1	4	0	1	1	0	1	0
h. better artwork	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
i. more feminism	0	4	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	3
6. Financial Support?											
a. spouse	4	3	1	6	7	2	3	2	2	3	5
b. outside-of-art job	2	0	3	2	1	1	1	1	0	1	2
c. art-related job	4	2	4	1	4	3	2	2	0	2	4
d. teaching art	6	3	6	2	5	2	3	1	4	9	6
e. art sales unaffected by co-op	2	5	7	11	5	8	5	4	3	5	6
f. supports self with her art	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7. Women's Movement's Effects on Art?											
a. none	1	2	2	3	6	2	2	1	1	1	1
b. free choice of style and content	6	3	5	5	3	4	3	2	2	8	4
c. more confident	0	7	9	3	6	11	4	1	0	0	7
d. feminist con- sciousness	3	4	1	1	3	2	2	2	1	2	2
8. Press Coverage?											
a. sufficient	7	2	2	1	11	0	5	0	1	4	1
9. Gallery's Role?											
a. stepping stone	6	7	4	3	10	1	2	2	2	5	3
b. end-in-itself	10	4	5	8	9	5	5	2	4	8	12
c. training ground	4	3	5	4	6	4	2	4	3	6	7
d. support group	0	2	2	4	2	3	2	1	0	1	9



QUESTIONS AND
RESPONSE TYPES

RESPONSES IN NUMBERS

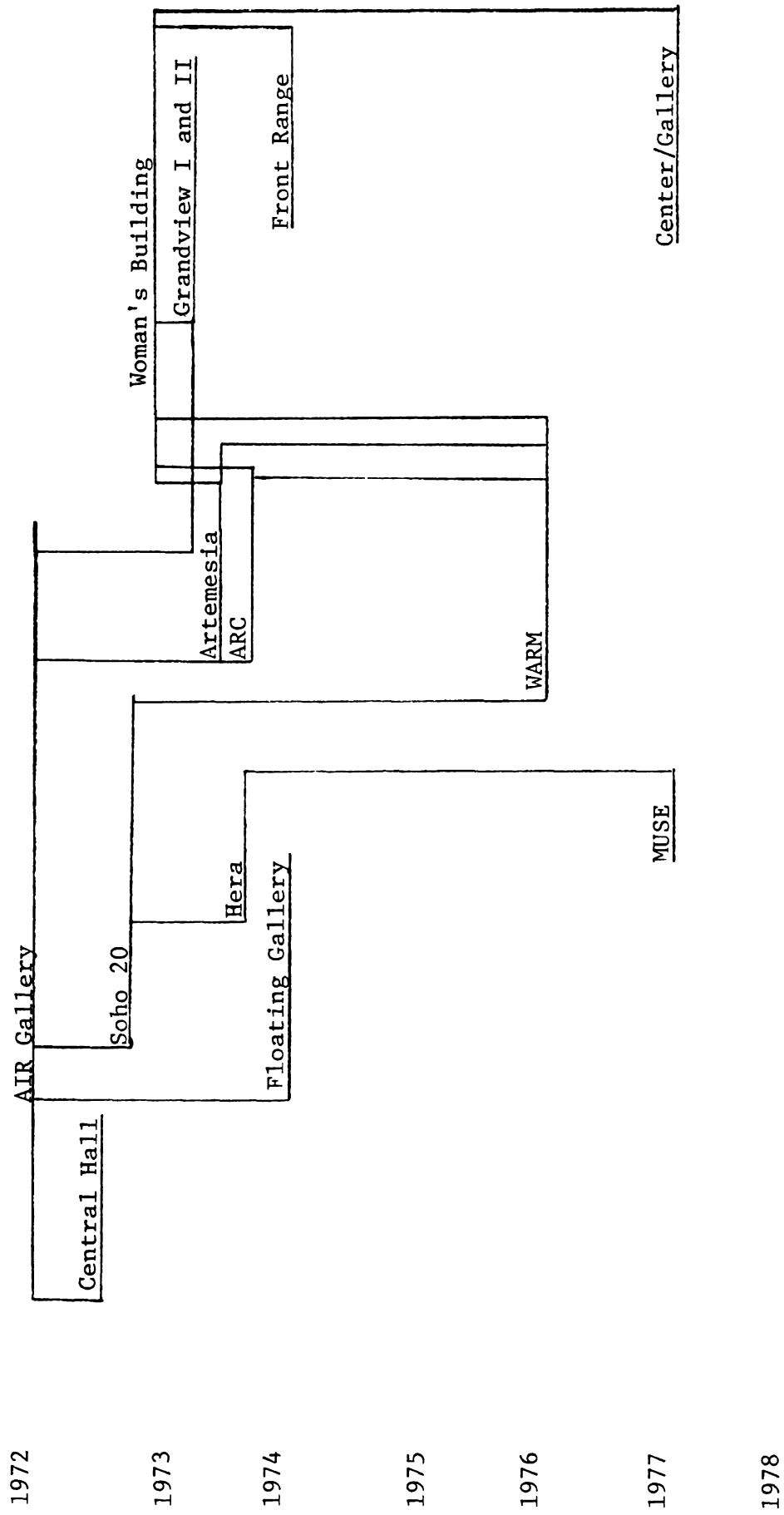
	<u>AIR</u>	<u>ARC</u>	<u>ART</u>	<u>CG</u>	<u>CH</u>	<u>FG</u>	<u>FR</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>
10. Involvement in Political Groups?	8	4	7	4	7	7	4	5	2	7	9

(Grandview Galleries I and II were not listed here because they had closed before this research began, and their memberships had scattered. Information about these groups used in other parts of this study was taken from printed materials which document their existence relatively completely.)

REPORT
BOSTON

APPENDIX C

Expansion of the Cooperative Galleries





APPENDIX D1

Individual Gallery Descriptions*

Name of cooperative: Artists in Residence (AIR) Gallery

Address: 97 Wooster Street, New York City 10012 (moving to
63 Crosby St., New York City, 1981)

Type of space: first floor, storefront gallery (former machine shop);
one exhibition room, storage area.

Number of members: twenty to thirty

Selection criteria for new members: quality of art

Costs to belong: \$300 initial membership fee; \$35 per month

Time commitment required: committee work

Frequency of member shows: one show every two years; three-week
duration

Funding: New York State Council on the Arts

Administrative structure: Paid director (non-member), standing committees, rotating committee chairwomen.

Educational programs: Monday Night Programs, student apprenticeships.

Newsletter: in 1976 published the AIR Newsletter (discontinued).

Special characteristics: has sponsored international invitational shows of women's art; has produced a print portfolio of members' art; has served as a prototype, the first women's cooperative gallery in the US; national affiliate memberships.

Artwork by these members included in the illustrations of this study:

Judith Bernstein, Blythe Bohnen, Donna Byars, Mary Beth Edelson,
Mary Grigoriadis, Harmony Hammond, Patsy Norvell, Sylvia Sleigh,
Nancy Spero

*as of December 1980.

APPENDIX D2

Individual Gallery Descriptions

Name of cooperative: Artists, Residents of Chicago (ARC) Gallery
Address: 6 West Hubbard Street, Chicago, Illinois
Type of space: first floor storefront gallery and basement gallery;
two large exhibition spaces on the first floor, one
in basement (RAW Space), office and storage area.
Number of members: twenty to thirty
Selection criteria for new members: quality of art
Costs to belong: \$150 initial membership fee; \$35 per month
Time commitment required: monthly business meeting, committee work,
gallery sit six hours per month
Frequency of member shows: one show every eighteen months; four-week
duration

Funding: Illinois State Council on the Arts, small grants
Administrative structure: President and standing committees

Educational programs: (ARC Education Foundation) lectures, programs,
involvement in local and state-wide women
artists projects

Newsletter: none

Special characteristics: invitational shows, outside artists
(male and female) in RAW Space.

Artwork by members included in the illustrations of this study:
Nancy Boswell-Mayer, Nancy Kerner



APPENDIX D3

Individual Gallery Descriptions

Name of cooperative: Artemesia Gallery

Address: 9 West Hubbard Street, Chicago, Illinois

Type of space: second floor gallery; one large and two small exhibition spaces, office and storage area.

Number of members: twenty to twenty-five; ten in photo gallery

Selection criteria for new members: quality of art

Costs to belong: \$125 initial membership fee; \$70 per month for show in entire main gallery space, \$35 per month for half the main space or one small space.

Time commitment required: monthly meeting, committee work, one to two days per month gallery sitting

Frequency of member shows: one show every year, four-week duration

Funding: Illinois State Council on the Arts, private grants

Administrative structure: Executive, standing and ad hoc committees

Educational programs: (Artemesia Fund) Artemesia Studies lectures, programs, involvement in local and state-wide women artists projects

Newsletter: none

Special characteristics: slide library, video library, photo gallery, speaker's bureau, student apprenticeships

Artwork by members included in the illustrations of this study:
Barbara Jo Ciurej and Lindsay Lochman, Joy Poe



APPENDIX D4

Individual Gallery Descriptions

Name of cooperative: Center/Gallery

Address: 150 East Main Street, Carrboro, North Carolina

Type of space: second floor gallery (former Art School building);
one large and one small gallery space, office, small
storage space

Number of members: sixty

Selection criteria for new members: open membership

Costs to belong: \$25 per year

Time commitment required: monthly business meeting, committees,
three hours of gallery sitting every
ten weeks

Frequency of member shows: one unjuried member show and approxi-
mately five outside shows per year;
members show when they feel 'ready'

Funding: North Carolina Council on the Arts, private grants

Administrative structure: Board of Directors (members), committees

Educational programs: poetry readings, lectures, workshops and
classes

Newsletter: Center/Gallery (monthly)

Special characteristics: includes non-artist members; slide registry

Artwork by members included in the illustrations of this study:
Stephanie Carleton



APPENDIX D5

Individual Gallery Descriptions

Name of cooperative: Central Hall

Address: formerly 402 Main Street, Port Washington, Long Island,
New York

Type of space: first floor gallery (former automobile showroom);
two large and one small exhibition rooms, office
area. The group is now meeting in each others'
homes while negotiating for a new gallery space
in Manhattan (since December 1979).

Number of members: twenty to thirty

Selection criteria for new members: quality of art

Costs to belong: \$300 initial membership fee; \$50 per month

Time commitment required: monthly meetings, committee work, gallery
sitting during each member's show and one
afternoon every four months during group
shows

Frequency of member shows: one show every eighteen months, three to
four-week duration

Funding: New York State Council on the Arts, NEA, small grants

Administrative structure: Board of Directors (Members) and committees

Educational programs: lecture series

Newsletter: Central Hall Artists Newsletter (quarterly)

Special characteristics:

Artwork by members included in the illustrations of this study:
Lois Polansky, Salli Zimmerman



APPENDIX D6

Individual Gallery Descriptions

Name of cooperative: Floating Gallery

Address: no gallery space

Type of space: NA

Number of members: eleven

Selection criteria for new members: quality of art, personal compatibility

Costs to belong: \$50 initial membership fee; shared cost per show

Time commitment required: monthly meetings

Frequency of member shows: irregular

Funding: various private grants

Administrative structure: member co-ordinator

Educational programs: lectures for interested groups

Newsletter: none

Special characteristics:

Artwork by members included in the illustrations of this study:
Muriel Castanis, Martha Edelheit, Ruth Gray, Donna Marxer,
Anita Steckel



APPENDIX D7

Individual Gallery Descriptions

Name of cooperative: Front Range Women in the Visual Arts

Address: no gallery space

Type of space: NA

Number of members: twenty to forty

Selection criteria for new members: open membership

Costs to belong: \$20 per year, shared costs of shows

Time commitment required: monthly meetings

Frequency of member shows: annual group and small group shows,
irregular special exhibits

Funding: special grants for individual shows

Administrative structure: executive committee, standing committees

Educational programs: lectures, involvement in state-wide women
artists projects

Newsletter: none

Special characteristics:

Artwork by members included in the illustrations of this study:
Sally Elliott, Janau Noerdlinger, Helen Barchilon Redman



APPENDIX D8

Individual Gallery Descriptions

Name of cooperative: Grandview Galleries I and II

Address: formerly in the Woman's Building, 743 South Grand View Street, Los Angeles, California

Type of space: two second floor galleries (former Chouinard Art School building); two large exhibition spaces, office area

Number of members: thirty to forty

Selection criteria for new members: quality of art

Costs to belong: \$25 to \$30 per month

Time commitment required: monthly meetings, committees

Frequency of member shows: two shows every three years, three to four-week duration, one annual group show

Funding: small grants

Administrative structure: committees

Educational programs: slide shows, artists talks

Newsletter: none

Special characteristics: close affiliation with the Woman's Building

Artwork by members included in the illustrations of this study:
Judy Chicago, Suzanne Lacy



APPENDIX D9

Individual Gallery Descriptions

Name of cooperative: Hera Gallery

Address: 564½ Main Street, Wakefield, Rhode Island

Type of space: one-floor building (former laundromat); two large
exhibition spaces, office and storage areas

Number of members: ten to fifteen

Selection criteria for new members: quality of art, interview

Costs to belong: \$25 initial membership fee; \$25 per month

Time commitment required: gallery sit one or two days per month;
monthly meetings

Frequency of member shows: one show per year; one annual group
show

Funding: Rhode Island Council on the Arts, NEA, New England Founda-
tion for the Arts, other private grants

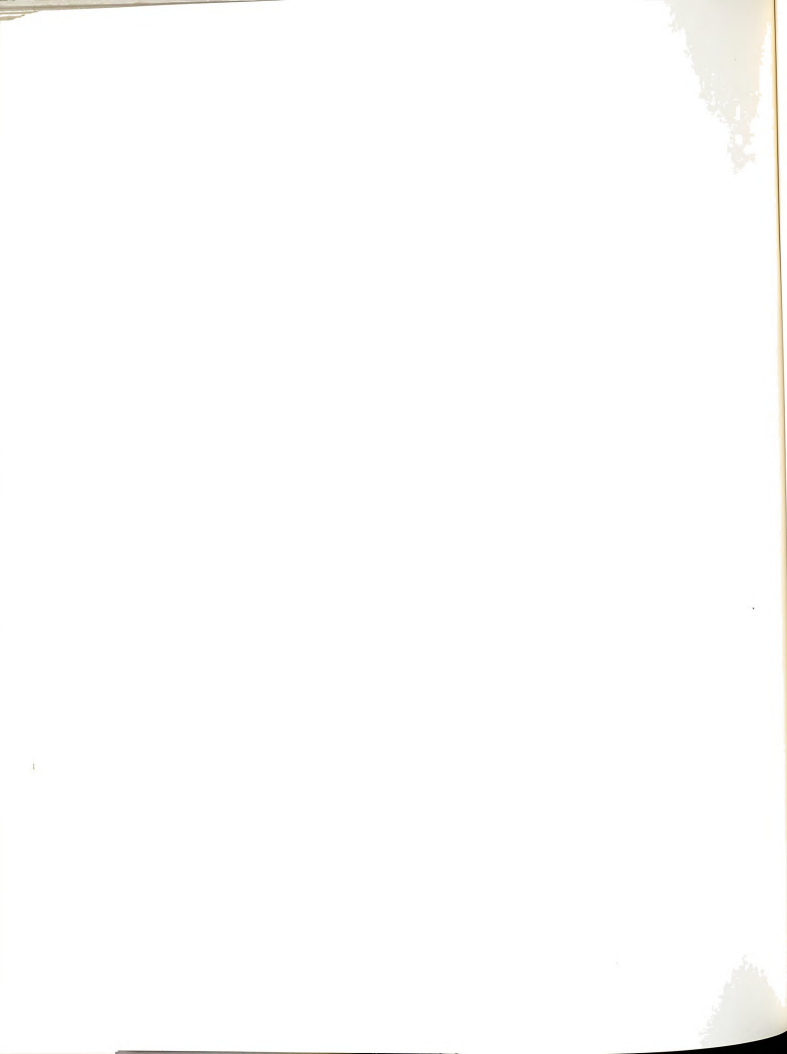
Administrative structure: two coordinators

Educational programs: lectures, performances

Newsletter: none

Special characteristics: invitational shows with catalogues
(a member's option to curate a show
instead of showing her own work)

Artwork by members included in the illustrations of this study:
Roberta Richman



APPENDIX D10

Individual Gallery Descriptions

Name of cooperative: MUSE Gallery

Address: 1915 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Type of space: second-floor gallery; two large exhibition spaces,
office area

Number of members: twenty

Selection criteria for new members: quality of art

Costs to belong: \$50 initial membership fee; \$25 per month

Time commitment required: gallery sitting one or two days per month,
monthly meetings

Frequency of member shows: one show every two years, three-week
duration, one annual group show

Funding: fund-raising events (does not have tax-exempt status),
private grants

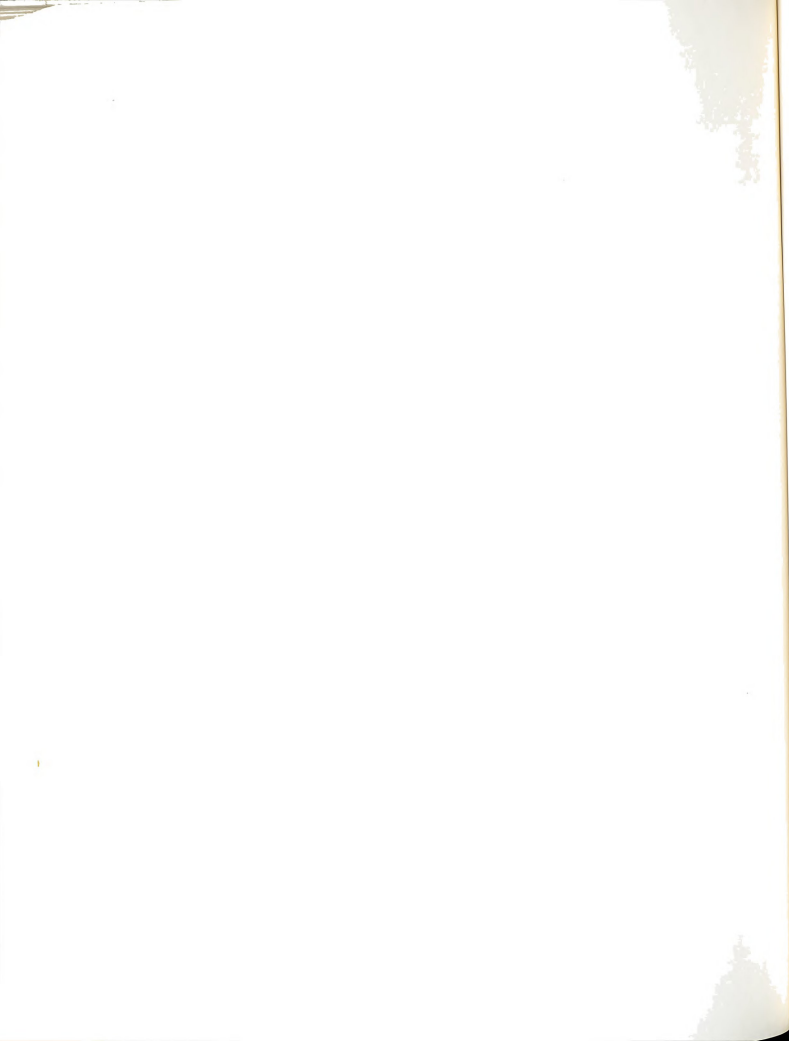
Administrative structure: coordinator (member), committees, Board of
Directors

Educational programs: film series, lectures, poetry readings, student
interns

Newsletter: none

Special characteristics: annual invitationals

Artwork by members included in the illustrations of this study:
Judith Ingram, Linda White



APPENDIX D11

Individual Gallery Descriptions

Name of cooperative: Soho 20

Address: 99 Spring Street, New York, NY 10012

Type of space: second floor gallery (former printer's shop);
one exhibition room, office, storage area

Number of members: twenty to thirty

Selection criteria for new members: quality of art

Costs to belong: \$200 initial membership fee; \$35 per month

Time commitment required: gallery sitting, 6 hours per month

Frequency of member shows: one show every two years, three-week
duration

Funding: none

Administrative structure: standing committees

Educational programs: weekly lectures

Newsletter: none

Special characteristics:

Artwork by members included in the illustrations of this study:
Marjorie Abramson, Linda Bastian, Joan Glueckman, Judy Penzer,
Marion Ranyak, Lucy Sallick, Sylvia Sleigh, Sharon Wybrants.



APPENDIX D12

Individual Gallery Descriptions

Name of cooperative: Women Artists Registry of Minnesota (WARM)
Gallery

Address: 414 1st Avenue, North, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Type of space: first and second floor, storefront gallery (former
garment warehouse); two large and one small exhibi-
tion spaces on first floor, one large space on balcony
floor, basement storage, office space on first floor

Number of members: thirty to forty

Selection criteria for new members: quality of art

Costs to belong: \$50 initial membership fee; \$13 per month

Time commitment required: thirty hours initial commitment; five hours
per month gallery sitting; monthly meetings,
committee (400 hours per year)

Frequency of member shows: one show every 18 months, four-week
duration

Funding: Minnesota State Council on the Arts, many private grants

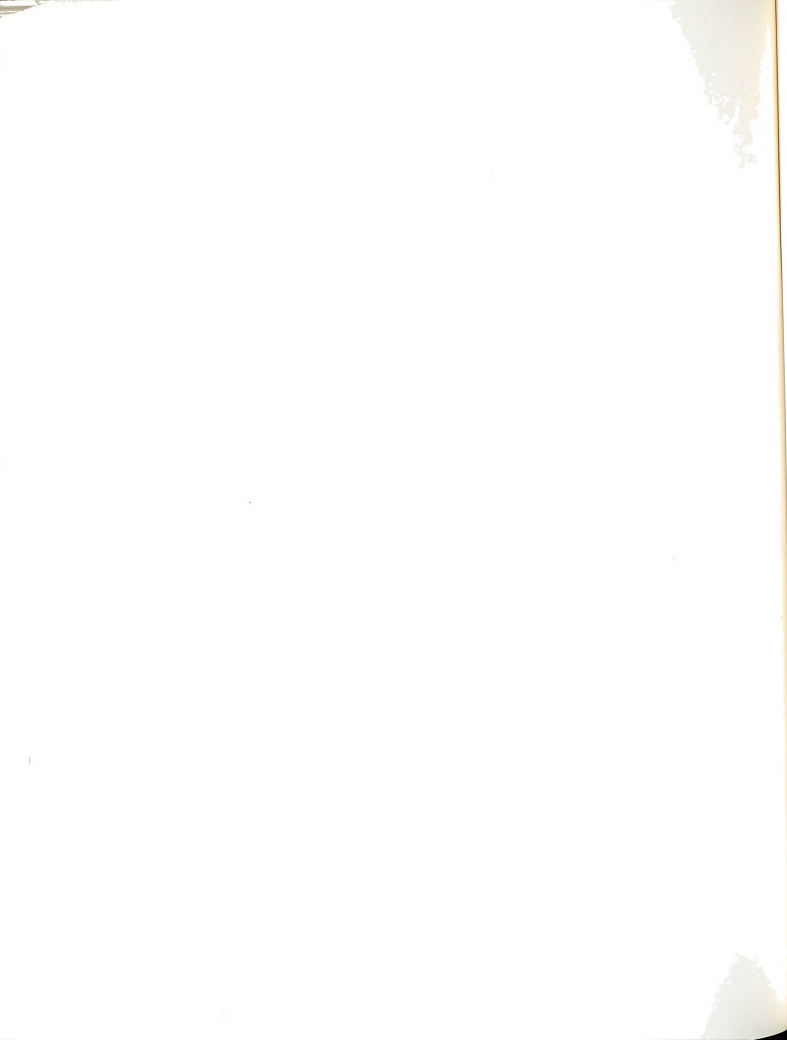
Administrative structure: non-member Director of Development,
committees

Educational programs: slide-tape packages, lectures

Newsletter: WARM Journal (quarterly)

Special characteristics: slide registry, print portfolios of members'
art

Artwork by members included in the illustrations of this study:
Jane Bassuk, Beth Bergman, Sandra Kraskin, Susan MacDonald
Judith Roode, Sandra Taylor



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SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

This listing is arranged according to the following divisions:

- I. General - social history and esthetic theory not directly focused on the twentieth-century women's movement or the Women's Art Movement
- II. History of the Twentieth Century Women's Movement - (a.) the larger women's movement and (b.) the Women's Art Movement
- III. Women's Art of the 1970s - artwork by women, both members and non-members of collective galleries
- IV. Individual Women's Collective Art Organizations - articles, reviews, interviews, and questionnaires concerning specific galleries in this study listed alphabetically according to group name, with interviews and questionnaires listed at the end of each section.

These divisions were determined by the main focus of each reference, so some overlapping of topics occurs. Each source is listed only once, in the most general of the applicable sections.

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