

rinky-dink field and that if she wanted to be a big frog in this small puddle, she need only publish and present at conferences in more prestigious fields. Last week, a friend of mine in art studio confided that she was puzzled to find the work of a printmaker from a big name art school so tight, so unimaginative, so 20-years-behind-the-times. She said, she discovered why when she talked with him over lunch. In the past, he had earned an EdD in Art Education from XYZ State. To her, this artist, even still, was just an art educator.

### Blaming the Victim

If women get raped, it is their fault for being in those places, at those times, wearing those outfits, etc. JUST SO, male and female art educators who are exceptions to the rule, will claim that only incompetent art educators who are exceptions to the rule, suffer from problems related to low status. "My principal knows I do a good job and I get all the money that I need for supplies. What's the matter with you?" Blaming the victim in art education can be one way of expressing our exceptionality. Because I am an exception to the rule, I can, with impunity, make fun of mickey mouse art education courses; holiday based art projects; the art of the art teacher; (you name it). If once in a while I meet someone who hasn't heard about my exceptionality and I get treated as if I were just another art educator, than I will know who to blame. Not you, not me, but all those art educators who fit the stereotype. But still, life in art education can sometimes seem bleak even for us exceptions. Occasionally we may indulge in a day dream or two.

### The Cinderella Fantasy

Mystified women dream of being rescued from their degraded and powerless positions and rewarded for their passive beauty and goodness. They don't dream of being rescued by other women but by a powerful member of the dominant class. Other females will either support us in this fantasy or be regarded as potential competitor; after all, there aren't enough Prince Charmings to go around. Like it or not, some of these other women will have to be wicked step mothers, ugly stepsisters, or fairy god mothers. JUST SO, the Cinderella fantasies of art educators, both male and female, have been recently stimulated by the Getty courtship. Will we be saved from who and what we are? Are some of us, even now, being cast as the impotent father, the wicked step mother, the ugly sister? Are some of us standing in line to be glass-slipper-fitters? Are others of us busy as fairy god mothers preparing to transform art education, to make it attractive and worthy of the great rescue? Is someone watching the clock? (I don't think we could take seeing another band-wagon turn out to be just the old, familiar pumpkin ...)

These are the ways of mystification. For art educators as art educators (male or female) the only known antidote is a raised consciousness of our shared group membership - and all this has meant and might yet come to mean.

## ON THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF MEN IN FEMINISM: TAKING A HESITANT STEP THROUGH THE MINEFIELD OF PHEMINISM IN ART AND EDUCATION\*

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[T]he real point at which change must come, exactly ourselves, the end of "masculinity" -which, of course, is the end of "woman" too (Heath, 1987:5).

Barthes one day in conversation: "you study what you desire or what you fear" (Heath, 1987: 6)

The relationship of men *in* pheminism<sup>1</sup> is an *impossible* one. On the one hand, the "proposition" of the preposition is intrusive; it signifies break and enter with all the multiple meanings that this entails, from virginal to criminal *reproachment*. On the other hand, the "preposition" of the proposition is an illusionary one, both in its flirtatious invitation to men and in its very non-existence of being, for there is no *inside* nor *outside*. Men are "implicated" in this relationship by virtue of both their difference and indifference which lie on either side of the "membrane" that separates the sexes. In other words, men have already committed the crime but are unaware of it. In the former sense, the crime of *in* difference, offers the contradictory discourses of woman as 'essence' as opposed to woman as a social cultural construction. Hence the Lacanian<sup>2</sup> question arises: "Does The Woman exist?" In the latter case, with the crime of *indifference*, the matter is facilely resolved as: the Woman does *not* exist! She is absent, the male's Other who lacks the Phallus.

If these are the politics of location, or should I say dislocation, as a mail/male, how am I to be delivered? First *in* in difference. Let me begin by quoting a recent analysis of feminist aesthetics by Rita Felski (1989), who, in my opinion, has danced through the minefield brilliantly. She writes:

It was argued earlier that no convincing case has yet been made for a gendered aesthetics, for the assertion that men and women write in distinctively different ways or that certain styles or structures in literature and art can be classified as inherently masculine or feminine (p.156).

This is particularly annoying for a feminist politics unless a strategy can be found: 'to be' or 'not to be' a woman, that is the question! and for this question to be answered depends on the contextual signification which is site/sight/cite specific. Let me explain.

The earliest *liberalist* feminist ruse, adopted by middle class white women, was to claim equal status to middle class white men who essentially were the guardians of the Canon, overlords of the cultural heritage. Pejoratively stated, Old Mistresses were resurrected to stand up to Old Masters.<sup>3</sup> The weddings took place in the same cathedrals, the great exhibition halls where Leyster wed Hals, Gentileschi wed Carravaggio and so on. There were even squabbles over property rights. Who owned the portrait of Charlotte du Val d'Ognes - David or Constance-Marie Charpentier, his studio counterpart? Incestuous relationships, illegitimate births, and property rights, metaphorically speaking of course, became issues amongst feminist art historians which repeated patriarchal and capitalist attitudes to ownership of commodity goods and to custody of the Name. Marietta Tintoretto, to give one example, was given back her offspring - *Portrait of Marco dei Vescovi and Grandson*, which had wrongfully been attributed to the "hand" of her father, Jacob Tintoretto. It was soon discovered, however, that the occupation of *genius* had already been occupied (*Besetzed*). It seems that only men with "feminine sensibilities" possessed such a gift, which was vividly on display through the masterful strokes of their hand. Such strokes, could easily be distinguished by connoisseurs from similar attempts by dilettantes and amateurs. The ejaculatory force, energy and vitality just wasn't "present" in these inferior works. Elizabeth Battersby (1989:8), in her brilliant analyses of the Romantic male genius, had put it this way: "A man of genius was like a woman ... but was not a woman." Acts of genius were confined to the contexts of the Academies. This location assured men of their privacy so that history painting might be "made" over the bodies of women. The nude, as sir Kenneth Clark, that connoisseur of flesh reminds us, was "invented" by the Greek male "mind" in the 5th century B.C. What Max Headroom is to the simulacra of the high tech market today, the idealized, measured nude was then to history painting. Her representation was now *literally* in the hands of men, for women were excluded from Academic classes in "life" drawing.

Women have had to learn to appropriate this game of "both being and non-being" for themselves - to become "masculine women" in order to gain access to male domains, by writing under pseudonyms, dressing like men or wearing a masquerade.<sup>4</sup> When they found becoming like a man failed in their bid to effectively change the historical artistic canon, they became women, arguing for perceptual difference, especially in the rendering of content. Artemesia, to take a typical example, was claimed to have represented *Susanna and the Elders* from a women's perspective in contrast to the voyeurism of her male painter counterparts. Content, rather than style, became the issue. Broude and Garrard, as editors of *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany* (1982), were representative of this development. Yet it was Svetlana Alper's essay on Dutch painting, in that edited edition, which put the entire argument of a distinct female perception to question. In her account of the difference between Northern and Italian painting (now a full length book, *Art of Describing*, 1983), she claimed that Vermeer's use of the *camera obscura* had eliminated the spectator from a specific viewpoint. He represented women in their ordinary duties in the Dutch home and had not idealized them, as had the southern tradition. These women, through their painted letters, revealed their elusiveness.

Vermeer's women were a world apart, inviolate, self-contained, but more importantly - self-possessed. Such a vision was the antithesis of the Italian gaze which coveted the woman as object. Alper's concluded her thesis in this way: "To want to possess meaning is masculine, to experience presence is feminine... It was not the gender of makers, but the different modes of making that is at issue" (p.198). Despite Alper's analysis, her voice was ignored. The feminine essentiality of perception was argued on many registers. On the high end of the spectrum, feminists of a liberalist persuasion, like the literary critic Elaine Showalter (1979) had coined the word "gynocriticism" to identify this movement. Casandra Langer (1988) followed suit by calling it gynergetic art criticism. Such claims rested on that well known turn of phrase, "equal but different," a phrase which was like a mobius strip, continually twisting in the paradoxes it created. It "twisted" the opening of a door's frame for the identification of a unique female iconography, equal but different from that of men.

### Hit Them Where It Hurts

Feminist iconography played itself out on many discursive registers. The strongest forms, were of course the malignment of the phallus in whatever imaginative way possible, such as Lynda Benglis's pose in the 1974 *Artforum* where she appeared as a pin up with a huge latex dildo protruding from her genital area, symbolic of her missing "phallus." In the late '60s and early '70s, Louise Bourgeois' hung sculpted penises and made breast sculptures which resembled some form of tuberosus plant. Then there was Mary Steven's "Big Daddies," usually military men "dressed up" as erect penises with army or hard hats perched on top of their heads. The most extreme case of male bashing might be the shooting of Andy Warhol by Valerie Solanas as part of her S.C.U.M. Manifesto. Here, the hate focused on the symbolic phallus was turned toward the entire fetishized "live" male body, reversing the sex-roles of "snuff" films, if you will.

Art, concerning women's iconography, first and foremost, was manifested through the display of the body:<sup>5</sup> the mildest forms being women represented in active roles in all possible locations where they had been previously excluded, for example - as manual workers, or as professionals, and executives, but it was the vulva and 'vaginal' iconography which gained prominence. The full exposure of the genital area, the vulva becoming iconic of *vagina dentata*, the toothy female genital mouth with teeth said to swallow a man and reduce him to nothing, played on the male's fear of castration. It was a further reminder that man was born of woman. As the castrated mother, she was someone to fear. The flower paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe were quickly appropriated as antecedents to this tradition,<sup>6</sup> while Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party*, became the monumental and definitive work of this genre of the '70s.

Women art educators in the NAEA Women's Caucus went along with a similar liberalist critique, taking a similar posture, the difference being that their statement was an entire decade late, riding on a well established tradition of feminist art works which had been developed in the early '70s.

This should not be surprising, given that education as practiced today is a very conserving-socializing institution. *Women, Art, and Education* (1984) under the editorship of Georgia Collins and Renee Sandell, identifies both trends discussed above. First, an achievement roster is evident. A list of women art educators, all white I believe, are given a paragraph each in recognition;<sup>8</sup> second, the admonishment of sexism and the desire to achieve sex equity appears throughout the book. Equity rather than equality is the signified word, suggestive of difference and the needs of redress. There are echo's of Germaine Greer's (1979) "obstacle course" thesis. Currently, the Women's Caucus of the National Art Education Association regularly nominates a woman educator of the year award; The Mary Rouse Award ensures recognition of the roster's status. Although there are women art educators who are aware of other developments, Elizabeth Garber (1988) for one, has consistently presented and questioned the liberalist stance during NAEA Conferences, it appears that a liberalist base remains fundamental to the Caucus. I would argue that in art education, that these same liberalist arguments are furthered by detailed studies of the autobiographical lives of women art educators: how they came to art (Korzenik, 1985), who they studied with, what their art was like and the lives they led as art educators. This seems inevitable, despite the critiques of such psycho-biographical endeavors (Krauss, 1985; Barthes, 1977; Pollock, 1980), since a liberalist feminist position continues to be the one most equated with feminism; it has received the most media coverage over existent controversies. The equal rights legislation and civil liberty issues provide a clear basis for women to argue against discrimination in areas where they feel males have a "manopoly." It is precisely this liberalist tradition, with its (white) heritage of Suffragette activism, claiming that women are as rational as men, that has gained the most ground. The fight for equal pay, daycare, pregnancy leave, just hiring practices, fair treatment for rape victims, equal job opportunities - an endless list of inequalities can be identified which require constant vigilance for change since virtually all institutions are in the hands of men.

The eventual elimination of the differences between men and women so that an "androgynous society" might emerge is naively appealing and fuels the desire for liberal change. The term "person," a neutral word, would replace the extremes of man and woman as gendered subjects with equal characteristics in a 'sexless society.' This elimination of specific gender roles has led to much in-fighting, both from feminists who wish to preserve a difference, and from women who shun away from being burdened by yet another label. They are resentful that they must now wear yet another hat in addition to that of the traditional housewife, i.e. the 'working woman' who is now expected to compete on male terrain in the workforce - thereby giving up part of her autonomy in her traditional space of the home. As Virginia Woolf noted in *A Room of One's Own* (1929:102) - when a writer like Coleridge insisted that the mind of a great artist was androgynous, he certainly did not mean that such a mind had any specific sympathy with women. Nor did he mean that a great creative artist is female" (in Battersby, 1989:7). The Romantic androgyne had male genitals with a 'feminine' soul. Battersby goes on to point out that the same logic repeats itself in Jung's view of the androgyne. The woman can only inspire the

man to greatness. These problems with androgyny are only a very small part of the controversy. A devastating critique from a psychoanalytic point of view has been brilliantly argued by Pacteau (1986). The androgyne can only exist in fantasy life as the phallic Mother. Once the overlays of color, class, age, ethnicity, and ideology are added to the difficulties of the liberalist discourse, feminism can become a morass of "contradictions of oppression."<sup>9</sup>

These contradictions are made even more problematic when socialist feminists examine the liberalist feminist art history and its forms of gynocriticism. The best known American social feminist critic continues to be Lucy Lippard, who, throughout her writing career, by and large, presented a marked contrast to Linda Nochlin.<sup>10</sup> Lippard's recent book, *Get the Message* (1984) presents a review of politically socially active women in performance, video and in more acceptable studio activities. British feminists have had a more ingrained socialist tradition than that of the American context. Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock's *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*, written in 1981 from a social feminist point of view, in my opinion, further puts to flight the question of a distinct feminine aesthetic. In their first chapter, "Critical stereotypes: the 'essential feminine' or how essential is femininity," the authors chart a strategy which preserved the question of women's art, but did so by examining the way history was written and the way women were recorded and described, positioned by and in it; the relationships between women artists and institutions of art and ideology as they appeared historically in their shifts and changes were examined discursively. "The concept of 'Woman,' they write, " whose history we have been tracing is not based on biology or psychology, but is rather a structured social category - a set of roles prescribed for women, ideologically sustained and perpetuated by being presented as descriptions of women" (p.113). By this they mean a linguistic signifying discourse which pre-exists as a "series of historically reinforced codes, signs and meanings" which could be manipulated and even transformed, but which could never exist outside of that particular "text." Griselda Pollock (1988), in particular, continues this influential reexamination of women in art history, developing the notion of woman as 'sign.'<sup>11</sup> I shall come back to this 'post-structuralist' position later, for now there is need to comment on the pronounced emphasis on 'individualism' as developed in the modernist bourgeois context.

Germaine Greer's *Obstacle Race* (1979), and more recently, Borzello and Ledwidge's (1986) *Women Artists* (1986), present a residual sense of idealism which is characteristic of the bourgeois liberalism. The social is now defined only in terms of obstacles, or "barriers, beliefs, prejudices," (Pollock, 1988:144) placed around an individual's freedom of action; the implication being that such obstacles, the result of false consciousness, can be dispelled by an act of will alone. The contradiction of this idealism,....

*Due to an executive decision it was felt that the length of this essay was not representative of the five page limit allowed for a panelist's response. The remainder of this essay is available upon request by writing to the author at The University of Alberta, Dept. of Secondary Education, 338 Education South, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, T6G 2G5.*