

# Women Artists

## NEWSLETTER

Vol. 1 No. 6

November 1975

### BROOKLYN MUSEUM PANELS WOMEN'S PUBLICATIONS & FEMINIST ART by Sophie Rivera

"Works on Paper-Women Artists," was given minor billing in the Print Gallery at the Brooklyn Museum, where the women were out-flanked by a major exhibit, "For Men Only." The women's show was conceived, juried, and funded by the organization "Women In The Arts." A series of panel discussions took place at the museum in conjunction with the exhibit.

"Excellence, like mediocrity, has no sex," said artist/moderator June Blum in her introduction to the first panel, "Changing the Economics of the Art World through Women's Publications" (Oct. 5). The four panelists, Edit de Ak of "Art Rite," Camille Billops of "Afra," and Cindy Nemser and Gloria Orenstein of the "Feminist Art Journal" delivered statements that left little time for questions from the audience in the hour allotted.

Gloria Orenstein discussed women's presses as a new public art form -- promoting education, raising consciousness, creating new roles and alternative life styles, offering workshops, courses, and inventing new concepts for autonomous women. (Although her ideas were well documented, they bore no direct relationship to the art world.)

Cindy Nemser related the history of the "Feminist Art Journal," a publication currently published in magazine format, that has received several grants -- including one this year from the New York State Council on the Arts for the purpose of increasing subscriptions. Nemser said she had been a guest curator for a women's exhibit in Philadelphia last year and had to make a record of the artists' work in the FAJ since no funds had been allocated for a catalogue. "Art magazines should write about artists, enhance reputations, draw the attention of museums, and take the initiative to write about women before the artist is shown in a commercial gallery." Furthermore, once the women have had some success, the magazine shouldn't drop them," Nemser added.

Camille Billops deplored the system that pits minorities against

### WOMEN ARTISTS: WHAT HAVE THEY GOT and WHAT DO THEY WANT

by Judy Seigel

I think the best thing AIR (women's co-operative gallery) could do would be to have men. I hope there won't be any more women's panels and I hope this is the last one I'm on. You get what you want in this world by surprise, by doing the unexpected. They expect us to continue the way we are ... I don't think feminism is the real world any more. The point was to get women artists taken seriously. Women still aren't as equal as men, but I don't think women's galleries are helpful any more. I don't think it helps to be in AIR.

--Barbara Zucker.

That statement came midway in a brisk discussion by six well-known women of the art world, speaking to a full house at the Soho Exhibition Center, an audience which included the video eye of Ingrid and Bob Wiegand, and a noticeable proportion of men.

Moderator Robins began by noting that the 6 women artists "all benefitted from the women's movement, as every woman has ... but what happens when 'The Year of the Woman' is over? Feminism is getting to be a tired issue to many people!" (Adding, however, that "the abuses are still there.")

Continued Page 2

by Joyce Kozloff

Corinne Robins, Moderator.  
Joyce Kozloff, Barbara Zucker,  
Nancy Spero, Phoebe Hellman, How-  
ardina Pindell, Mary Beth Edelson,  
Panelists.

I felt pained to hear co-panelist Barbara Zucker say that "women's panels are boring," "women's shows are boring," and "women's galleries are boring."

Clearly feminism is not boring and women's art is not boring -- quite the contrary. They why are these attitudes suddenly around? One reason is that the approaches to talking about and showing women's art have become repetitious and unimaginative. Why is it that women artists are always expected to talk only about "Is there a Feminine/Feminist Sensibility?" or "Do Women Artists want to be Part of the System or make Alternatives?", and that the panels are divided between those who say 'yes' and those who say 'no,' so that there is no possibility for the development of ideas and theory?

I have observed that many women who have been through consciousness-raising and the political activities of the last five years have become strong, highly individualized artists. Their work reflects (in many different ways) a sense of personal and group identity. I see new kinds of imagery and content emerging: Exploration of female sexuality. Reflections on personal history. Fresh approaches to materials. New concepts of space. A re-examination of the decorative (and of the so-called decorative) arts. A reaching out toward non-Western sources and a non-paternalistic attitude toward the "primitive." Direct political approaches to art-making. And art which consciously parodies male stereotypes.

All these are vital subjects for panels, exhibitions, etc., and none of them precludes the others. What is exciting, to me at least, is the diversity of ways in which women's art is emerging. We should not be confined to speaking in generalities and with tired rhetoric. Let's talk about the art and the ideas around the art.

Next Month Shirley Fuerst and Evelyn Schwalb  
on Women Artists, Seventy Plus.

GWEN  
JOHN



"La Petite Modele" by Gwen John, gifted sister of the more famous Augustus, was in a retrospective at Davis & Long Co., which closed Nov. 1. A graceful tribute to Ms. John on the art page of the Oct. 30 Soho Weekly News signals that recognition of women's history is in effect .... almost. They're getting the idea. But somebody still thought it had to be, or ought to be a man. The painting SWN reproduced was attributed to that doughty old master -- John Gwens! Heads up, SWN! (WAN brings you Margaret Thatcher on John next month.)

Continued Page 4