The New York Times

Playing Word Games With Sacred Texts

By JOYCE BECKENSTEIN JULY 11, 2014

A mannequin styled as a priest, one of five "robotic devotees" in the exhibit.
Credit Gordon M. Grant for The New York Times

The artist Nina Yankowitz is known for projecting words in glass houses, and oh how they can shatter the place. For "Criss-Crossing the Divine," her current exhibition at Guild Hall in East Hampton, she takes on sacred texts. "I've always been disturbed by the way religion is so often used to incite people towards divisive behavior," she said of the interactive show, which is scheduled to run through July 27. "It prompted me to think of ways to motivate individuals to re-examine their personal value judgments."

"Criss-Crossing the Divine" combines scriptures, digital games, video art, three-dimensional animation and robotic avatars. Examining intolerance through the lens of five major religions — Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism — the lively, intuitive piece provides visitors with a different way to experience art, despite its rather serious implications. "I've been following her work for 20 years," said Christina Mossaides Strassfield, Guild Hall's director and chief curator. "It's intellectual and conceptual — the kind of work that can, frankly, be boring for people to look at. But Nina transcends that. Her work comes alive; you have that 'aha' moment."

Playing the game at the heart of the piece.
Credit Gordon M. Grant for The New York Times

Visitors entering the gallery initially find themselves in a "sanctuary" where "robotic devotees"- mannequins dressed in traditional garb representing the five faiths communicate through their respective spiritual gestures. A Jew in a tallit and skullcap prays, a priest raises his hands in blessing; a Buddhist wearing a robe nods meditatively, a Hindu wrapped in a sari clasps her hands in prayer, and a Muslim wearing a hijab raises her open hands to praise Allah.

Behind these figures, a three-dimensional multifaith glass cathedral spins, trapped in an endless cycle of creation and destruction. The sound of the sea, of apocalyptic waters swooshing in, fills the space. Three-dimensional images of glass shards fly by. The devotees, however, are unscathed: Human folly may be able to destroy the architecture of religion, but it cannot shatter faith.

After taking in these attention-grabbing images, visitors turn to the projection based game that is the heart of the piece. Displayed on one of the gallery's walls is a virtually painted spiral vortex; displayed on another, a six-line graph. Tap on either "game board" with a laser rod, and a topic word, culled from a vast database, appears. Up to five words may be selected at once, and players prioritize each one, assigning it high or low importance.

In addition to a priest, mannequins depicting a Jew, a Buddhist, a Hindu and a Muslim greet visitors. Credit Gordon M. Grant for The New York Times

The value that users place on the words cues the database to search for them within five holy books: the Tibetan Book of the Dead, the Old and New Testaments, the Quran and the Vedas (the Rig Vedas in particular are used for this exhibition). Passages from those texts and relevant to the chosen words pop up on the wall instantaneously, color-coded by religion, though players don't learn the significance of the colors until much later.

Visitors seem beguiled. The game momentarily endows each player with a bit of power, and there is a kind of a high that comes from playing high-tech wizard, wielding a wand and decreeing where, say, "God" should rank. But the endgame can be humbling when participants study their "plays."

Devon Leaver, 21, was among the perplexed. "I gave high priority to 'Woman,' and the word means something different to me than it does in these texts," said Ms. Leaver, a Guild Hall employee. One passage that appeared on the wall said women must be covered. Another read, "Neither was man created by the woman, but the woman for the man.

Taking his turn, Joe Brondo, 32, gave the word “existence” a low value because, he said, he “thought of it as an egocentric word related to self-absorption.” Mr. Brondo said he was surprised at what the database produced because he had not considered the word “in terms of being, the existence of life itself.” He added: “I think this project will have people look inward, to think of their own values and compare them to different religions.”

Challenging stereotypes appears to be one of the exhibition’s goals. Barry Holden, Ms. Yankowitz’s husband, an architect who serves as project coordinator for his wife’s installations, edited the 46,000 texts in the database down to readable lengths.

“Some texts setting down rules emerged when religion was inseparable from economic and political life,” Mr. Holden said. “Faiths you stereotype as gentle have violent passages, those you may think are harsh advocate love and kindness, but in some instances the core values of each faith can be remarkably similar.”

In addition to her husband, Ms. Yankowitz credits two international designers, Mauri Kaipainen, a Swedish media professor, and Peter Koger, an Austrian professor and software interface designer, for helping to create the user-friendly experience.

One message to be taken from “Criss~Crossing The Divine” is that shifting cultural interpretations drive human behavior more than scriptural texts do. Players can reflect further by visiting a website where they can download a copy of their word rankings, a customized mini-bible of sorts.

“This is the museum’s first interactive digital exhibition and it brings timely, technology-based art to a new millennium of Guild Hall museum visitors,” Ms. Strassfield said. It can also bring individuals face to face with their biases — a good idea in an age often marred by religious strife.

Nina Yankowitz: “Criss-Crossing the Divine” is at Guild Hall, 158 Main Street, East Hampton, through July 27. Information: guildhall.org or (631) 324-0806.

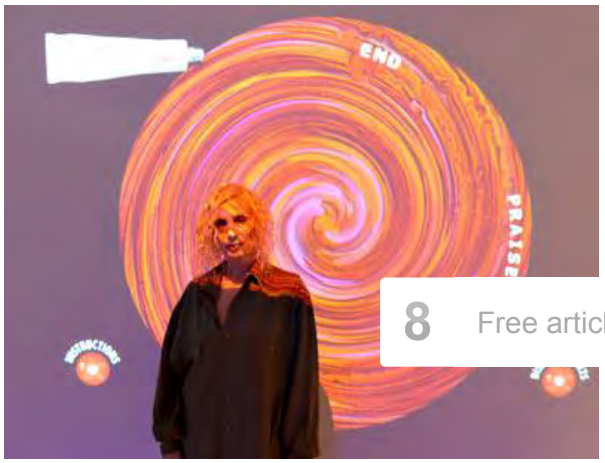
THE EAST HAMPTON STAR
SHINES FOR ALL

Nina Yankowitz: Searching Sacred Texts

The completed installation transformed Guild Hall's Spiga Gallery into a virtual sanctuary or "theater in the round,"

. y Mark Segal | July 8, 2014 - 2:02pm

Slightly frazzled, toting coffee in a takeout container, Nina Yankowitz admitted having been up until 4 a.m. — not partying but working — as she welcomed a Sunday-morning visitor to the Sag Harbor home she shares with her husband, Barry Holden. While Mr. Holden, an architect and sometime collaborator, disappeared, laptop in hand, for a conference call, Ms. Yankowitz led her guest to an upstairs living room overlooking Noyac Bay.



Nina Yankowitz is illuminated by her Vortex Paint Game, one of two interactive games in her Guild Hall installation, "Criss-Crossing the Divine," that invite viewers to engage in a dialogue with sacred religious texts. *Mark Segal*

It was a week before she was to begin the installation at Guild Hall of "Criss-Crossing the Divine," a gallery-sized piece of enormous technological complexity involving collaborators in Sweden, Austria, and the United States. Her lack of sleep was understandable.

The completed installation, which will be on view through July 27, transformed Guild Hall's Spiga Gallery into a virtual sanctuary or "theater in the round," as Ms. Yankowitz called it during a visit to the museum two weeks later. A video of a rapidly revolving and mutating building — the artist refers to it as "Houses of Warship" — is projected across the east wall of the gallery. Three robotic figures, Hindu, Catholic, and Buddhist priests, appear to levitate above the gallery floor in the middle of the room, while two more, a Muslim woman and a Jewish man, flank the video projection. The figures' movements suggest the ways in which they worship.

Interactive games are projected on the gallery's north and south walls. Visitors, using an infrared wand, are invited to select words that appear in the sacred texts of all five religions. Each time a word is selected, color-coded excerpts from the texts containing that word appear on an adjacent screen.

Both games function similarly, though with different visual configurations. Each is essentially a complex search engine that not only chooses from more than 48,000 scripture selections but also organizes and reorganizes them in a way specific to the player's direction. Once finished, participants can save their search results, retrieve them from a website, and learn from which religions the color-coded texts originated.

The intention of "Criss-Crossing the Divine" is to emphasize the similarities among the different scriptures and their tendency to change over time. Ms. Yankowitz will discuss the project and related issues with Christina Strassfield, the museum's curator, on Sunday at noon.

The project, funded by a grant from European Mobile Lab for Interactive Media Artists (e-MobiLArt), was a life-changing experience. "We met in five different countries," Ms. Yankowitz said, "and I made my presentation each time." Mauri Kaipainen, a Swedish professor of media technology, designed the interactive multi-perspective search engine; Peter Koger, an Austrian media technology professor, designed the software/hardware interface. Other collaborators were Mr. Holden, who served as project coordinator, and Qing Tian Chen and Mark Klebach, the robotics team. The project was developed almost entirely on Skype.

Ms. Yankowitz was born in Newark and raised in South Orange, N.J. While still in high school, she said, she would cut classes to hang out at the folk music venues in Greenwich Village, where she first heard about a collective of artists, musicians, and poets called Group 212. She spent the summer of 1968 with the group in Woodstock, N.Y. (the famous Woodstock Festival happened the year after), where she met Juma Sultan, a percussionist who played with Jimi Hendrix, Archie Shepp, Sunny Murray, Dave Burrell, Kenneth Werner, and Bob Dylan.

It's no wonder that much of Ms. Yankowitz's work, ever since she earned a degree from the School of Visual Arts in 1969, has involved collaboration, interactivity, politics, and technology. She had her first exhibition in New York that same year at the Kornblee Gallery, where she showed "Oh Say Can You See: A Draped Sound Painting," created in 1967-68. She painted the first few notes of the national anthem on cloth and hung it loosely on the gallery wall. It was accompanied by a recording of the notes, distorted by Mr. Werner on a synthesizer. The work combined an implied antiwar message and what was then cutting-edge technology with pushing the boundaries of what a painting, or any artwork, could be.

Only four years out of art school, Ms. Yankowitz was selected for the Whitney Biennial in 1973. At the same time, she was a founding member of the Heresies Collective, a feminist group that gave rise to Heresies magazine, which was published from 1977 to 1992 and called into question many of the assumptions and practices of the art world. "I was never interested in having work that used 'female' imagery or methodology," she explair respected it, but it just wasn't my thing. But Heresies opened a lot of doors for disenfranchised now it was necessary to take one thing, in that case female imagery, and push it through in order to make a change."

Ms. Yankowitz moved into a loft building on Spring Street in 1973, and two years later, while a visiting artist at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, she met Mr. Holden. They met again in 1980, when he moved to New York, and were married in 1986. Their son, Ian, graduated from Northwestern University in 2012 and is a cinematographer and film editor. They purchased the Sag Harbor house in 1993.

Ms. Yankowitz has long been involved with public art projects, many of them in collaboration with her husband. Their last joint project was Interactive Poetry Walk, completed in 2009 in East Cleveland. Granite spheres embossed with texts conceal speakers which, when activated by passersby, speak poetry by admired poets who lived or worked in Cleveland. The spheres appear to be skidding to a halt, leaving behind imprints of poems inlaid along granite paths for visitors to read. The project combines technology, interactivity, language, and visual elegance.

Houses have figured prominently in Ms. Yankowitz's work since 2000. The basic structure is constructed from glass panels and aluminum framing. Like the house in Jennifer Bartlett's paintings, it is a schematic, iconic image that remains constant through various iterations. The glass walls of "Kiosk.edu," which was exhibited in Guild Hall's sculpture garden in 2005, consist of quotations from artists, actors, architects, and writers. At night the quotations are illuminated from within. "It's about playing with words and contemplated concepts providing windows into creative minds and the creative process," said Ms. Yankowitz.

"One night I woke up and told Barry I was going to make a cloud house," she recalled. "He thought I was crazy." Intrigued by the idea of bringing the outside inside, Ms. Yankowitz read that ultrasound could produce mist from tiny droplets of water. She placed water on the floor of the glass house and an ultrasound generator inside. "Depending on the moisture outside, the barometric pressure, the cloud would move and change. I put little LEDs in the generator so it would be lit at night."

In 2011, at Galapagos Theater Space in Brooklyn, Ms. Yankowitz directed an interactive performance film with five other collaborators. Titled "The Third Woman," the starting point of the piece consisted of film clips shot in Vienna by Pia Tikka and Martin Rieser, some of them in the same sewers where Orson Welles was pursued in the climactic scene of Carol Reed's film "The Third Man." The Algorithmics, a group of models wearing costumes with QR codes

on them, circulated through the audience, whose members could click on the codes and receive films clips and questions to answer on their cellphones. Through their responses, the audience determined the outcome of the final film via communal voting on a shared Wi-Fi network.

Ms. Yankowitz's work has taken many forms over the course of her career. In addition to her exhibitions here and abroad, she has executed many public projects, including an M.T.A.-commissioned tile installation in the 51st Street Lexington Avenue subway station, two rooftop gardens at I.S. 145 in Queens, and public seating projects in Denver and Santa Monica, to name just a few. Her work is in many public and private collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, and the Bank of Boston International.

About the Author

Mark Segal
Arts Assistant/Reporter

631-324-0002

e-mail: mark@ehstar.com

Need to Know

East Hampton Village Trustee Elbert Edwards Dies at 71

Seasons by the Sea: How 'Bout Them Apples!

Corps May Approve More Montauk Sand

Fishermen Oppose Commercial Ban

Ax to Fall on 20 Acres Near East Hampton Airport

Video

artlyst

Art News

Feminist Art, Barbara Nessim,Judy Chicago, Nancy Grossman

The Feminist Art Explosion: A Global Phenomenon Born In 1970

30-09-2013

Ilka Scobie looks back on a vibrant period of art history and social change - Artlyst Exclusive

Notorious for street crime, a crumbling urban infrastructure, abandoned buildings, and homeless people, New York City, my hometown, was fertile ground for social and creative resolution. 1970 was the year that the Ad Hoc Women's Artist committee challenged the lack of women in the 1969 Whitney Museum Annual, when only eight of the one hundred and forty three artists included were women. New York was where avante garde women artists like Carolee Schneeman , Yoko Ono , and Charlotte Moorman were in the vanguard of performance based work. Schneeman's sexually explicit imagery pioneered the use of her own body to explore the relationship between experience and imagination. In America's "Second Wave of Feminism", women artists and critics banded together to challenge and expand the male dominated art world. At the same time, in London, the first Womens Liberation Art Group founded by Margaret Harrison formed in 1970.

1972 was the year "The Feminist Art Journal" began in NYC, and in England, a women's collective founded the feminist journal "Spare Rib." A few years later, Heresies was born in 1977, and "Chrysalis" began publication in Los Angeles, where Judy Chicago had organised the first feminist arts program in Fresno State in California. Forty years later, her monumental multi media piece, "Dinner Party" has found a permanent home in the Elizabeth Sackler Feminist Art Center in the Brooklyn Museum.

Women-artists like Faith Ringgold, Nancy Grossman, Barbara Nessim, Mary Beth Edelson, Martha Rosler, Miriam Schapiro, Harmony Hammond, May Stevens, Nina Yankowitz used their art as an intersection between politics and creativity. Arlene Raven, Lucy Lippard, Elizabeth Hess and Marcia Tucker were just some of the critics/historians/curators to address the burgeoning artistic movement.

Speaking with Carey Lovelace, critic, historian and co-Curator and Commissioner (along with

Holly Block, director of the Bronx Museum) of the American Pavilion at the 2013 Venice Biennale, she recalled the seventies as a time when, "Women began to meet and come to lofts in Soho. It was the first time women saw other women-artists, and to see each other's work." Coincidentally, the 2013 American pavilion is featuring a woman-artist, women-Commissioners and fabricators of the exhibition.

As a young woman and poet, I became involved in consciousness raising groups that focused on writing. Womens CR began in New York in 1967.Adapted from a tool of the Civil Rights movement, participants "go around the room, talking about personal issues." In 1973, probably at the height of CR, 100,000 American women participated. At the same time, visual artists banded together in similar groups to discuss and explore female creativity.

Nina Yankowitz recalls her first show reviewed in the New York Times as a "one man show", which was followed a week later by critic Cindy Nemser writing a rebuttal article with the headline, "Can Women have One Man Shows?" Nina recalls, "The Feminist Imagery in the 70's depicted by Judy Chicago, Miriam Schapiro and Joyce Kozloff and many other women, was invaluable to the Feminist Art movement. They developed a methodology based upon the perception of the then disenfranchised activities commonly associated with women's work. For example, quilt making, sewing, embroidery, pattern and decoration, hormonal recordings, handicrafts, knitting, pottery, were some of those addressed." Nina's installations are internationally exhibited and a recent one woman exhibition was shown in Williamsburg's Galapagos Space.

Two women-artists (and friends) who began their careers in the late fifties and continue to make vital and exciting work are Barbara Nessim (currently exhibiting at London's V&A Museum) and Nancy Grossman, both graduates of Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. Barbara began working as an illustrator right out of college and was an early explorer of computer arts.

Barbara welcomed me to her beautiful sunny Village studio overlooking the Hudson River. She showed me her treasure trove of sketchbooks, going back to 1963.

The Bronx born artist recalled being twenty-five and unmarried, and viewed as an oddity. "I was consciously not married. I didn't want to be married before I could support myself." In 1967, Barbara was the second woman to be hired as an instructor at the School of Visual Arts. Teaching was a way for Barbara to exchange ideas, and she became a seminal influence at Parsons The New School for Design, where she helped create their state-of-the-art computer lab.

Because of her high visibility in the illustration world, "Time invited me to be an artist in residence at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. I taught myself and became known as a person working with computers. Computers made the art world open up and the Internet has opened so many creative avenues." Today, she is heralded as a pioneer in the world of digital arts.

The talented Nessim was "very focused on being an illustrator and making a living. In the 70's Richard Lindener tried to get me a gallery. The Madison Avenue galleries all liked my work. But one guy said to me, "How old are you? Look at you. People are going to look at you and think you're going to get married, have kids, and the gallery's going to lose their artist." While Barbara did participate in group shows, she focused on iconic illustrative pieces for major publications. When her old friend Gloria Steinem founded Ms. Magazine, Nessim's signature undulating, sensual line helped define the hip vitality the magazine was recognized for.

Bob Chaundy: Art on the Menu -Fera at Claridges

Collette Walsh: Review: La Bohème - Opera North at The Lowry Salford 5/5

Victoria Sadler: Fiona Shaw in 'The Testament of Mary', Barbican Centre

Dr Michael Petry: Location Location, Location

Jamie Andrews: Literature Is a Library

RECOMMENDED ART BOOKS

Barbara's current show at the Victoria and Albert Museum "An Artful Life" coincides with a major monograph of the same name. At her studio, the surrealistic collages she is creating dazzled me. A recent project, "Chronicles of Beauty" features thirteen large-scale digital collages printed on aluminum and commissioned by New York's Eventi Hotel. The images combine classical sculptures with photos gleaned from contemporary fashion magazines.

Nancy Grossman, friend and peer of Barbara remembers, "We were all accomplished and loved each other a lot. Barbara was always so generous and supportive."

Born in New York City, to an Italian mother and Jewish father, Nancy's family moved upstate to Oneonta. Living with her extended family, Nancy became the artist who sewed doll clothes and made toys for the younger children. At twenty-three, after graduation from Pratt Institute, Nancy began showing her drawings and paintings. An early Richard Avedon photo of Nancy shows her with her roommate Anita Siegal, "the only person I believed in." Together, the young women illustrated children's books, hung out in downtown bars. As the young women artists painted and played in New York, "we shared a loft, and worked like dogs and went to the bars. We never said we were artists. Anita would say she was a hairdresser and I would say I was a manicurist." At twenty five, Nancy won a Guggenheim Fellowship for her early paintings, the only woman painter to receive the coveted award that year. In the following years, she illustrated several children's books, even collaborating on one with Anita.

At the same time, the Civil Rights struggle blazed across America, and later protests over the Vietnam War took center stage. Anita Seigel was creating Op Ed illustrations for the New York Times, and continued to do so for twenty five years. An early group, Women Artists in Revolution (WAR) began to write to museums in protest of their corporate sponsorship, and Nancy became a pivotal member of women's artist groups that provided both support systems and political protest.

By the time she was thirty, Nancy had five one-woman shows, and by the late sixties began to work on what were going to become her iconic leather covered sculptural heads. Grossman has said that the heads are "self portraits", and likens the muzzled, locked in heads to portraits of "self imposed and societal restrictions." Although she is best known for her leather sculptures, Nancy continues producing collages and drawings. She lives in Brooklyn, in a magnificentally reconverted lumber yard, and recently had an exhaustive one-woman show, " Tough Life Diary" at the Tang Museum at Skidmore College.

Until her death, art critic Arlene Raven was Nancy's companion. In her last years, Arlene, along with Judy Chicago founded Rutgers University's Feminist Art Project. Nancy and Arlene, both foremothers of the women's art movement, met through the Chicago Women's Archives and lived together in New York City, first on the lower east side, and later, in the spacious reconverted lumber yard with sweeping ceilings and room enough for both Nancy and Arlene's studios.

FACEBOOK FEED

DOWNLOAD THE ARTLYST APP

In writing this, the most rudimentary of introductions to a revolutionary cultural movement, I am awed by the bravery and pluralism of our feminist foremothers, including the two inspirational artists I was fortunate enough to meet with.

Carey Lovelace commented about the Feminist Art movement. "It changed everything. I interviewed Eric Fischl (the prominent American realist painter) at California Arts. He actually and very graciously said that the feminist bravery of expressing emotion through art profoundly influenced him."
"The opening up of the realm of the personal, pluralism, deconstructionism, all came out of feminism. Using art to analyse, gender politics, the re-emergence of collage, are all traceable back to feminism and it's impact on contemporary art."

Half a century after the stirrings of a feminist art movement, there is a strong presence of women artists, curators, gallerists, museum staff, historians, critics. The specific female imagery of the seventies has evolved to a creative cornucopia ranging from traditional painting and sculpture to digital, performance, cyber, installations and multi media works. Male artists (like Nick Cave's costumes and choreography and Will Cotton's painterly confections) embrace what was once designated "women's work."

In today's commercial and complex art world, women continue to explore shifting political agendas while expanding and promoting social change.

In 1970 Ilka Scobie was one of the 20,000 marching down Fifth Avenue in the first Women's Strike for Equality. She is a poet and teacher whose prose have appeared in Artcritical, Artnet and Italian Marie Claire.

Words: Ilka Scobie Photo credits top to bottom: 1.Barbara Nessim photo ©Dorothy Handelman,2.Barbara Nessim c 1976 Photo © Seiji Kakazaki "The Dream", collage and pen and ink 1983 "Untitled", collage pen and ink and watercolor. Nancy Grossman with leather sculptures photo © Artlyst 2013/MOMA/ Tang Museum 4.Margaret Harrison Drawing (Courtesy, Payne Shurvell Gallery London) Judy Chicago The Dinner Party courtesy Brooklyn Museum, Gloria Steinem & Barbara Nessim in 2013 Photo © Artlyst

Add your comment

Related Articles
Hayward Gallery Presents Work By Two Leading Women Artists This Autumn
Art And Left Wing Values Explored In New Tate Liverpool Exhibition
The Resurgence Of Older Women In Contemporary Art
WOMEN TAKE CHARGE: 10 LONDON ART EXHIBITIONS NOT TO MISS IN APRIL

Top Stories

101 Spring Street Is Ready To Reopen

The studio of renowned artist Donald Judd has been meticulously restored.

by Yukie Ohta
Community contributor

If you live in or near SoHo, you have probably noticed that the building at the corner of Spring and Mercer streets that was shrouded in scaffolding and netting for the past decade is now visible. The the former residence and studio of artist Donald Judd (1928-1994) at 101 Spring Street has been meticulously preserved by The Judd Foundation and will reopen after 3 years of intensive restoration work. The restoration project began on June 3, 2010 (the artist's birthday) and will conclude on June 3, 2013. The building will be presented as it was when it was new and the interior – including the furnishings and works of art it houses – will be as it was when Judd lived and worked there.

Beginning in June, visitors will take guided tours through each floor of 101 Spring Street, where they will be guests in Judd's kitchen, bedroom, living room, and, of course, his art studio. Throughout the space are also numerous art pieces as Judd installed them. Pictured above view of the fifth floor, facing North, while it was under renovation.
Photo courtesy of the Judd Foundation

Rainer Judd, Judd Foundation co-president and daughter of the artist explains: "The careful and high-quality restoration of 101 Spring Street is an achievement not only for Judd Foundation, in its service of the goals of Donald Judd, but also for the art community and the historic preservation community. With this restoration, I am proud to say that an exquisite building has been most sensitively restored and Judd's home and studio is able to be shared with the community and the public."

Indeed, the space remains true to its late-19th century construction while leaving Judd's interior design untouched and promotes a wider understanding and appreciation of Judd's legacy. It was in the SoHo building where Judd developed his concept of "permanent installation," where the placement of a piece of art is as important as the work itself, before he fully implemented his ideas in Marfa, Texas, where he moved in 1972 and eventually purchased 40,000 acres of undeveloped land.

The building itself has been "restored with the dual goals of non-interference to the original structure and to Judd's interventions, and studies were done with art and environmental conservationists, as well as historic preservationists, to devise ways to improve conditions for the art without altering Judd's carefully designed and installed spaces," says a Judd Foundation spokesperson. This meticulous attention to detail has resulted in a careful balance between historic accuracy and modern upgrades, such as modifying the building's fire, life safety, and other infrastructure to meet code and safety requirements.

Guided tours

Beginning in June, visitors will take guided tours through each floor of the building, where they will be guests in Judd's kitchen, bedroom, living room, and, of course, his studio. Throughout the space are also numerous art pieces as Judd installed them, including sculptures, paintings, prints, and furniture by Jean Arp, Carl Andre, Larry Bell, John Chamberlain, Marcel Duchamp, Dan Flavin, David Novros, Claes Oldernburg, Ad Reinhardt, Lucas Samaras, Frank Stella, and Judd himself, alongside items Judd acquired during his travels abroad. Presenting the building to the public as such, the Judd Foundation is fulfilling its mission "to preserve Judd's living and working spaces and promote a wider understanding and appreciation of Donald Judd's legacy." The tours will be by appointment only and will be in small groups led by artist guides who will provide information about the building and its history. Future plans include hosting public programs, such as readings, and film screenings. The building can, however, house lectures.

Judd's work has been exhibited widely throughout the world in major museums including The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1968, 1988); The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (1975); Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands (1987); and The Saint Louis Art Museum (1991) and more recently at The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1995); The Museum of Modern Art, Saitama, Japan (1999); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2001); and Tate Modern, London (2004), among others. Judd was also a critic for ARTnews, Arts Magazine, and Art International and his theoretical writings on art and exhibition practices have proven to be some of his most important and lasting legacies.

Reflections from a SoHo artist

Nina Yankowitz, a SoHo artist and Judd's former neighbor reflects, "[Judd's] works, devoid of emotional expression, reflected the cold, industrial, commercial, America as it was and still is. His voice rings true today as artists use hybrid forms e.g. robotics, interactive media, and virtual reality technology to define America now." She adds, "While I was a young artist living in TriBeCa and exploring how linguistics was used in artistic practice during the late 1960's, I was simultaneously drawn to the industrial materials Donald Judd used to create his architectonic serial forms, as if a language of conjugations serially defining space and form."

In 1989, Donald Judd wrote an essay entitled "101 Spring Street," where he recalls his vision for the building when he moved in: "I thought the building should be repaired and basically not changed. It is a 19th-century building. It was pretty certain that each floor had been open, since there were no signs of original walls, which determined that each floor should have one purpose: sleeping, eating, working. The given circumstances were very simple: the floors must be open; the right angle of windows on each floor must not be interrupted; and any changes must be compatible. My requirements were that the building be useful for living and working and more importantly, more definitely, be a space in which to install work of mine and of others."

> ***"The interrelation of the architecture of 101 Spring Street, its own and what I've invented, with the pieces installed there, has led to many of my newer, larger pieces, ones involving whole spaces. Several main ideas have come from thinking about the spaces and the situation of that building."***
>
> Donald Judd, 1977

Carol Goodden, founder the of iconic SoHo restaurant Food and friend of the Judd family remembers that "Judd used each floor only for one purpose, and because of the simplicity of that, each floor was a sculpture all its own. On the far north end was a space allowed for the bathroom where there was a stainless steel sink which Judd had designed and was rather like his own box sculptures, very neat, precise and perfect." Another floor, she adds, was at one time devoted to cacti. The entire floor, up against the windows had multiple types of cactus plants that Judd had brought back from the West.

The only single-use, cast-iron structure left in SoHo, the building was constructed in 1870 by Nicholas Whyte and was purchased by Judd in 1968. It is part of the SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District and is also one of the founding sites of the Historic Artists' Homes and Studios for the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The restoration, led by New York City design firm Architecture Research Office (ARO) and overseen by Judd Foundation board members, cost approximately $23 million, and was funded in part by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation and the Federal Save America's Treasures Grant Program administered by the National Park Service, among other public and private sources.

The Judd Foundation is, in essence, creating the physical embodiment of a memory. 101 Spring Street will be the trace

Continued on next page

As SoHo Life went to press, 101 Spring Street was still under renovation, with a targeted opening date of sometime in June. Here is a peek at the building under construction, as well as some historic photographs.

Top row, from left: Donald Judd with his students. The sculpture, Andre, on the first floor of the building.

Middle row, from left: The fourth floor of 101 Spring Street, looking west. A portrait of Donald Judd.

Bottom row, from left: The second floor of the building while under renovation. The exterior of 101 Spring Street. The fourth floor of the building, facing south.

All photos courtesy of the Judd Foundation

Continued from previous page

that was left by Judd, along with a bygone group of people in a bygone era, whose ethos will be present in what is preserved there. It is the only comprehensive physical proof of how people in SoHo lived, worked, and played back in the 1960's and 1970's when Judd lived there with is family, and as such, it is the equivalent of an archaeological dig that uncovers a lost civilization.

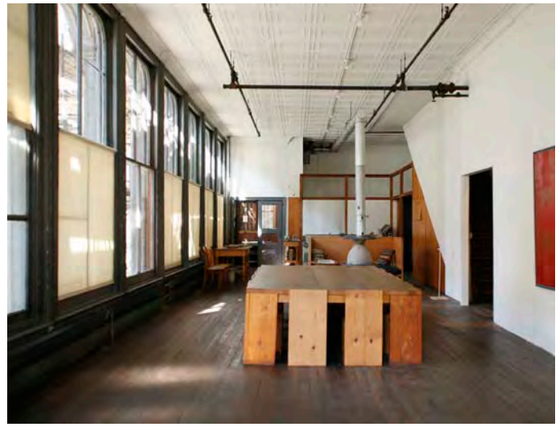
Flavin Judd, Judd Foundation co-president and son of the artist reflects: "We worked hard to preserve all aspects of the original building and also all of Don's modifications to it. He worked on the building on and off for over 20 years so there is a lot of history and development. We tried to change as little as possible, because the building is already great, and there is no need for improvement, just careful maintenance. This was 101 Spring Street's 140-year check-up. Unfortunately it needed surgery, but it shouldn't need anything else for at least another 140 years."

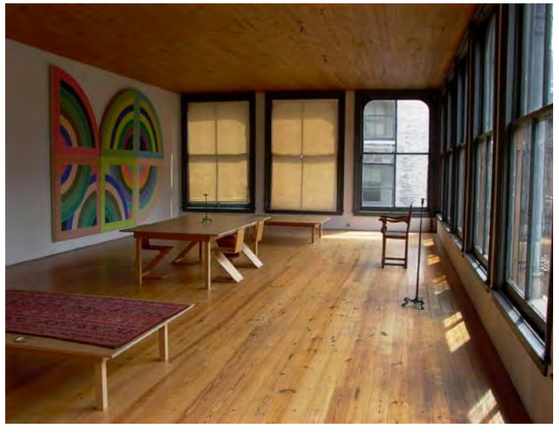
The building is all at once museum, gallery, historic landmark, education space, memorial, archive, and a home.

The fact that there is no word in the English language that accurately describes what the Judd Foundation has done with 101 Spring Street speaks to the ground-breaking vision of Judd and his foundation. One could call it a museum only as a default, catch-all term that the public can comprehend, but it is much more. A "visitor experience space" of sorts, it is all at once museum, gallery, historic landmark, education space, memorial, archive, and a home.

To enter 101 Spring Street is to physically enter a memory, one's own personal memory of SoHo merged with that of the larger community that is eagerly awaiting to see how Judd's vision, carried forward by the foundation that bears his name, will be honored and preserved.

For additional information, call the Judd Foundation at 212-219-2747, email to info@juddfoundation.org, or visit the organizaton's website at juddfoundation.org





25th February 2013 Scholarly Posts 1 and 2 by Allison Wright

Nina Yankowitz's Crossings Promotes Religious Tolerance for Contemporary Audiences

From painting to sculpture to poetry to new media, Nina Yankowitz crosses boundaries with her art. She is a woman of varied skills and interests who is not afraid to try new things and tackle new goals. Her career began in the late 1960s/early 70s, a time ripe for an artist with a social conscious, and Yankowitz was up to that challenge. It was against the feminist, civil rights, anti-war backdrop that the young artist began to develop her cross-genre, ever-changing, collaborative method of producing work that has allowed her to look seriously at current issues and address them

appropriately, and in the years since, her style has matured. In her 2009 interactive installation piece, Crossings, originally shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Thessaloniki, Greece, she explores the motives behind religious intolerance using the tools she has developed over the years. With Crossings (Fig. 1), Yankowitz creates an immersive, multi-media environment that interacts with the audience on a contemporary level on a near spiritual level, inviting them to learn and question their preconceived notions of religion and ultimately promoting the tolerance that stems of a place of greater understanding.

Her previous work has focused on issues from feminism and racism to global warming. Grappling with heavy issues is not a new concept to her. Much of her work from the past decade is dedicated to demonstrating the effects of global climate change. Her Cloud House (Fig.2), from 2004, and Global Warming Window (Fig.3), from a 2012 exhibit celebrating the opening of a sustainably-focused non-profit, educate the public on this important environmental issue.[1] Both works use technology and shapes reminiscent of the home (a house and a window) to play out the horrible and unpredictable weather patterns associated with climate change. As art historian Joyce Beckenstein writes in a recent article on Yankowitz for Woman's Art Journal: "Cloud House omens the extinction of the generic home as a consequence of eco-carelessness."[2] Cloud House is one of many glass houses Yankowitz has produced, with her collaborators, and through this piece and how it addresses environmental (and subtly political) issues, it is easy to see how Crossings came to be imagined and became the all-immersive, spiritual and educational work that it is. Built in the shape of a traditional sanctuary, the building invites audience members to actually enter the space and interact with the piece, which has been characterized as a game.[3] Cloud House and Global Warming Window are pieces for the audience to watch, but in Crossings, they must participate. Writer and new media expert Frank Rose explores this wave of participatory, immersive media in his book The Art of Immersion. The internet has upped audience's expectations of stories, movies, and games, and Yankowitz has tapped into this trend in her use of participatory media. Crossings is her built world, designed to immerse and educate her audience, and Rose would say this is what a contemporary audience demands of its entertainment.[4] In a world so focused on technology and new media and "immersive video games," Yankowitz's idea of using immersion is an effective way of making her art piece engaging to a contemporary audience, one that about which it is often thought their brains are being rewired, the brain being "almost infinitely malleable" and completely affected by the technology available and potentially harder to interest, the more technology that is available.[5] For the lesson of Crossings to be effectively learned, it must engage all of the physical senses, with the possible exception of smell, and fully capture the curious, intellectual mind, getting audiences to put down their smart phones and fully enter the world of the piece.

It does. When viewers enter Crossings, they are confronted by Yankowitz's almost spiritual, encompassing world. The room is dark, lit by projections of religious mosaics and other designs on the floor, and the wall that they must control. The voices being played in the background are religious texts being read in their original languages.[6] These texts are taken from the five major religions: Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Islam, as are the floor designs. Having been presented with an infrared wand when entering, the "players" use it to tap the screen, which lights up with words "that suggest narrative gospel shining through stained glass windows," describes art history Beckenstein. She goes on to describe the process: "Using the wand, the player selects one word per [six horizontal lines] and slides that word from left to right, assigning it a relative weight . . . These word placements trigger a search

engine to locate scriptures that attribute similar emphasis to chosen words."[7] The scriptures searched are the scriptures from the five religions, color-coded though not explained. The players find out only after they leave and receive a print-out of their self-created "Bible," which religion each of the texts is from. Yankowitz told Beckenstein her goal, saying she was questioning the political and social issues that stem from religious intolerance and began wondering, "Are world religions really different? Or, are the same ideas and values pitched to each flock from a different set of agendas?"[8] The audience enters Crossings, interacts with it, and is then reborn into the outside world, with a new understanding of the sameness and fluidity of religions, and a printed handout to prove it.

The search engine technique and her use of associative words to find connections between short scriptures is another example of how Yankowitz has successfully lived up to new media demands of today's audience and of how new media itself has changed the way people think. The internet has altered the ability to process long pieces of information, and has instead played to the associative-strengths of our brain. Wikipedia being a prime example of this, linking to new article after new article, finding connections between topics.[9] By developing her search engine, Yankowitz proves that she has a deep understanding of the value modern technology and of reaching audiences across it, especially if the goal of reaching them is to educate them. Also, by asking viewers to participate, even in 2009, she is catering to a trend of people wanting to do more than look at art. They want to Tweet or Facebook, text or IM. Basically, they want to talk about it and be a part of it.[10] Yankowitz predicted the development of this trend early on, in 2009, and allowed her audience to engage directly with her art piece and gave them an element of control.

Yankowitz has created previous pieces that include elements of design, such as her "Tunnel Vision" in the New York subway system from 1988 (Fig. 4), and she brings some of her understanding of design past into her activist work.[11] This combination of design and activism reflects another side of activism that Yankowitz has touched on simply called design activism, which, according to Design scholar Thomas Markussen, "is not a boycott, strike, protest, demonstration, or some other political act" but is "a designerly way of intervening in people's lives."[1]2 It disrupts people from their daily selves and gives them a new perspective on a familiar activity or place.[13] Crossings is, as stated before, shaped like a church, with the mosaic floor typical of traditional churches. The players enter this shape and make discoveries regarding religion, perhaps becoming a more enlightened being before exiting. By having this transformation take place in a church-shaped area, Yankowitz is asking her viewers to draw parallels between this experience of religion and the one typically found in churches. These conclusions are not forced on viewers, but the message of the "game," combined with the voices reading the scriptures, the immersiveness of the content, and the physicality of the space, works to create a religious experience. Is this the sort of experience one should have within a church or another type of religious building? Is it significant that Yankowitz chose a typically Christian form or is that part of her designer's eye (churches are the most common in America so perhaps the most likely to disrupt the viewer? Shake their preformed views on the idea?) If this religious experience can happen in a piece of art, with words from all of the different scriptures being read on repeat, almost like a mantra, then does religion need to be enclosed by the walls of a church; do people need to be boxed in to one religion and forced to misunderstand and not engage in other religions in order to to live moral lives? Is this art placing itself into religion or trying to understand religion?

The religious aspect of this work plays into a contemporary understanding of religion in art, which has developed and changed significantly since the early days of art, most specifically since the Renaissance, when art began to be revered for an artist's skill and not simply its religious intent.[14] In even more modern times art has become detached from the church almost entirely, and indeed created a piece that is simply "religious" is often not enough, even for religious audiences.[15] Yankowitz's work, while akin to a worshipful experience, "is not 'religious' in its intent," says Beckenstein.[16] She is merely commenting on the religious experience and cultural understandings of religious values and trying "to reach across cultures" and get people to see past their "ethnocentric" ways, she told Woman's Art Journal.[17] This contemporary use of religion, while a form of activist education, is also a reflection of today's ever-more progressive society, as her understanding of new media is. Simple religious art is not welcome in the art world and often looked down upon, and educated audience members are demanding more and more complex and thought-provoking world.[18] A work like Crossings is effective because of immersive, participatory qualities and its complexity, its charge to the viewer to make them think, question, draw conclusions, act.

Crossings is an exemplary contemporary art piece of social activism, focusing on the new media demands of its

audience while addressing a long-standing social issue that is full of political and perhaps artistic implications. By created an immersive and participatory world, Yankowitz is educating her viewers while at the same time challenging them to stand up, pay attention. Participate, and in more than simply her work. While one downfall to new media is that, especially in today's world, it may never be "new" enough, and perhaps the ability to produce a timeless piece with technology without fear of it becoming outdated is gone, but Yankowitz seems an artist capable of watching trends and following them, of finding new collaborators and methods to spread her message. She, along with newer generations of artists, will work to keep art relevant in this fast-paced world and continue using it as not merely an escape from society, but a safe place to critique it and attempt to improve it. Time will tell.

Endnotes

1. Joyce Beckenstein, "Riverhead exhibit: Art for nature's sake," Riverhead News-Review, October 21, 2012, http://riverheadnewsreview.timesreview.com/2012/10/40444/riverhead-exhibit-art-for-natures-sake/ (accessed February 22, 2013).
2. Joyce Beckenstein, "Nina Yankowitz: Re-Rights/Re-Writes," Woman's Art Journal, Fall/Winter 2012, 25.
3. Joyce Beckenstein, "Nina Yankowitz: Re-Rights/Re-Writes," 20-27.
4. Frank Rose, The Art of Immersion (New York: Norton, 2011).
5. Nicolas Carr, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" Future Media (San Francisco: Tachyon, 2011), 33-43.
6. Nina Yankowitz, "Crossings Interactive Installation Documentary," YouTube video, 3:01, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWyhQZcw2XM (accessed February 3rd, 2013).
7. Joyce Beckenstein, "Nina Yankowitz: Re-Rights/Re-Writes," 20.
8. Ibid.
9. Nicolas Carr, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?"
10. Frank Rose, The Art of Immersion.
11. The Website of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, "Arts for Transit and Urban Design," http://www.mta.info/mta/aft/permanentart/permart.html?agency=n&line=V&station=5&artist=1&img=1&xdev=360 (accessed February 24, 2013).
12. Thomas Markussen, "The Disruptive Aesthetics of Design Activism: Enacting Design Between Art and Politics," DesignIssues, Winter 2013, 38.
13. Thomas Markussen, "The Disruptive Aesthetics of Design Activism: Enacting Design Between Art and Politics," 38-50.
14. James Elkins, On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art (New York: Routledge, 2004), 7.
15. Ibid.
16. Joyce Beckenstein, "Nina Yankowitz: Re-Rights/Re-Writes," 20.
17. Ibid.
18. James Elkins, On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art (New York: Routledge, 2004), 39-49.

Fig. 1, ***Crossing***s, 2009.

Fig. 2, *Cloud House*, 2004.

Fig. 3, *Global Warming Window*, 2012.

Fig. 4, *Tunnel Visions*, 1988.

Posted 25th February 2013 by Ally Wright

2 View comments

Andrew Hurst March 1, 2013 at 9:07 AM

Your post about Nina Yankowitz was very delightful to read. I found what Nina Yankowitz was trying to do to be very interesting. I like that Yankowitz is trying to show and challenge her viewers to pay attention to what is around them. I'm also glad that Yankowitz is trying to keep art around in the world today. I like how her previous work was focus on problems like racism, feminism, and global warming. I surprise to learn that her past work was mostly dedicated to the effects of global climate change, I don't know many artists that center their work around that, but I found it to be very interesting.

Andrew Hurst

Reply

Jasmine Banks March 4, 2013 at 1:36 PM

As someone who grew up in the church and surrounded by religion, I really like the idea and execution of Yankowitz's Crossings. I think we spend so much time consumed in our own beliefs (whether religious or not) that we tend to shut others out – not even realizing or considering the possibility that they may be similar in terms of thoughts and values. I appreciate her stance on promoting not only religious tolerance, but understanding and accepting other cultures as well.

Reply

http://www.midwayfilm.com/about.html [http://www.midwayfilm.com/about.html]

http://www.chrisjordan.com/gallery/midway/#CF000313%2018x24
[http://www.chrisjordan.com/gallery/midway/#CF000313%2018x24]

Posted 3rd March 2013 by Savonna Nicole

0 Add a comment

25th February 2013

Crossings Brief Documentary

This is to go along with my scholarly post. It is listed in the endnotes, but I figured I'd put a separate link to it to draw attention to it. It is a brief documentary about viewing the piece *Crossings*, by Nina Yankowitz:

Safari Power Save
Click to Start Flas

-Allison

Posted 25th February 2013 by Ally Wright

0 Add a comment

Scholarly Posts 1 and 2 by Allison

with a social conscious, and Yankowitz was up to that challenge. It was against the feminist, civil rights, anti-war backdrop that the young artist began to develop her cross-genre, ever-changing, collaborative method of producing work that has allowed her to look seriously at current issues and address them
appropriately, and in the years since, her style has matured. In her 2009 interactive installation piece, Crossings, originally shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Thessaloniki, Greece, she explores the motives behind religious intolerance using the tools she has developed over the years. With Crossings (Fig. 1), Yankowitz creates an immersive, multi-media environment that interacts with the audience on a contemporary level on a near spiritual level, inviting them to learn and question their preconceived notions of religion and ultimately promoting the tolerance that stems of a place of greater understanding.

Her previous work has focused on issues from feminism and racism to global warming. Grappling with heavy issues is not a new concept to her. Much of her work from the past decade is dedicated to demonstrating the effects of global climate change. Her Cloud House (Fig.2), from 2004, and Global Warming Window (Fig.3), from a 2012 exhibit celebrating the opening of a sustainably-focused non-profit, educate the public on this important environmental issue.[1] Both works use technology and shapes reminiscent of the home (a house and a window) to play out the horrible and unpredictable weather patterns associated with climate change. As art historian Joyce Beckenstein writes in a recent article on Yankowitz for Woman's Art Journal: "Cloud House omens the extinction of the generic home as a consequence of eco-carelessness."[2] Cloud House is one of many glass houses Yankowitz has produced, with her collaborators, and through this piece and how it addresses environmental (and subtly political) issues, it is easy to see how Crossings came to be imagined and became the all-immersive, spiritual and educational work that it is. Built in the shape of a traditional sanctuary, the building invites audience members to actually enter the space and interact with the piece, which has been characterized as a game.[3] Cloud House and Global Warming Window are pieces for the audience to watch, but in Crossings, they must participate. Writer and new media expert Frank Rose explores this wave of participatory, immersive media in his book The Art of Immersion. The internet has upped audience's expectations of stories, movies, and games, and Yankowitz has tapped into this trend in her use of participatory media. Crossings is her built world, designed to immerse and educate her audience, and Rose would say this is what a contemporary audience demands of its entertainment.[4] In a world so focused on technology and new media and "immersive video games," Yankowitz's idea of using immersion is an effective way of making her art piece engaging to a contemporary audience, one that about which it is often thought their brains are being rewired, the brain being "almost infinitely malleable" and completely affected by the technology available and potentially harder to interest, the more technology that is available.[5] For the lesson of Crossings to be effectively learned, it must

engage all of the physical senses, with the possible exception of smell, and fully capture the curious, intellectual mind, getting audiences to put down their smart phones and fully enter the world of the piece.

It does. When viewers enter Crossings, they are confronted by Yankowitz's almost spiritual, encompassing world. The room is dark, lit by projections of religious mosaics and other designs on the floor, and the wall that they must control. The voices being played in the background are religious texts being read in their original languages.[6] These texts are taken from the five major religions: Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Islam, as are the floor designs. Having been presented with an infrared wand when entering, the "players" use it to tap the screen, which lights up with words "that suggest narrative gospel shining through stained glass windows," describes art history Beckenstein. She goes on to describe the process: "Using the wand, the player selects one word per [six horizontal lines] and slides that word from left to right, assigning it a relative weight . . . These word placements trigger a search engine to locate scriptures that attribute similar emphasis to chosen words."[7] The scriptures searched are the scriptures from the five religions, color-coded though not explained. The players find out only after they leave and receive a print-out of their self-created "Bible," which religion each of the texts is from. Yankowitz told Beckenstein her goal, saying she was questioning the political and social issues that stem from religious intolerance and began wondering, "Are world religions really different? Or, are the same ideas and values pitched to each flock from a different set of agendas?"[8] The audience enters Crossings, interacts with it, and is then reborn into the outside world, with a new understanding of the sameness and fluidity of religions, and a printed handout to prove it.

The search engine technique and her use of associative words to find connections between short scriptures is another example of how Yankowitz has successfully lived up to new media demands of today's audience and of how new media itself has changed the way people think. The internet has altered the ability to process long pieces of information, and has instead played to the associative-strengths of our brain. Wikipedia being a prime example of this, linking to new article after new article, finding connections between topics.[9] By developing her search engine, Yankowitz proves that she has a deep understanding of the value modern technology and of reaching audiences across it, especially if the goal of reaching them is to educate them. Also, by asking viewers to participate, even in 2009, she is catering to a trend of people wanting to do more than look at art. They want to Tweet or Facebook, text or IM. Basically, they want to talk about it and be a part of it.[10] Yankowitz predicted the development of this trend early on, in 2009, and allowed her audience to engage directly with her art piece and gave them an element of control.

Yankowitz has created previous pieces that include elements of design, such as her "Tunnel Vision" in the New York subway system from 1988 (Fig. 4), and she brings some of her understanding of design past into her activist work.[11] This combination of design and activism reflects another side of activism that Yankowitz has touched on simply called design activism, which, according to Design scholar Thomas Markussen, "is not a boycott, strike, protest, demonstration, or some other political act" but is "a designerly way of intervening in people's lives."[1]2 It disrupts people from their daily selves and gives them a new perspective on a familiar activity or place.[13] Crossings is, as stated before, shaped like a church, with the mosaic floor typical of traditional churches. The players enter this shape

and make discoveries regarding religion, perhaps becoming a more enlightened being before exiting. By having this transformation take place in a church-shaped area, Yankowitz is asking her viewers to draw parallels between this experience of religion and the one typically found in churches. These conclusions are not forced on viewers, but the message of the "game," combined with the voices reading the scriptures, the immersiveness of the content, and the physicality of the space, works to create a religious experience. Is this the sort of experience one should have within a church or another type of religious building? Is it significant that Yankowitz chose a typically Christian form or is that part of her designer's eye (churches are the most common in America so perhaps the most likely to disrupt the viewer? Shake their preformed views on the idea?) If this religious experience can happen in a piece of art, with words from all of the different scriptures being read on repeat, almost like a mantra, then does religion need to be enclosed by the walls of a church; do people need to be boxed in to one religion and forced to misunderstand and not engage in other religions in order to to live moral lives? Is this art placing itself into religion or trying to understand religion?

The religious aspect of this work plays into a contemporary understanding of religion in art, which has developed and changed significantly since the early days of art, most specifically since the Renaissance, when art began to be revered for an artist's skill and not simply its religious intent.[14] In even more modern times art has become detached from the church almost entirely, and indeed created a piece that is simply "religious" is often not enough, even for religious audiences.[15] Yankowitz's work, while akin to a worshipful experience, "is not 'religious' in its intent," says Beckenstein.[16] She is merely commenting on the religious experience and cultural understandings of religious values and trying "to reach across cultures" and get people to see past their "ethnocentric" ways, she told Woman's Art Journal.[17] This contemporary use of religion, while a form of activist education, is also a reflection of today's ever-more progressive society, as her understanding of new media is. Simple religious art is not welcome in the art world and often looked down upon, and educated audience members are demanding more and more complex and thought-provoking world.[18] A work like Crossings is effective because of immersive, participatory qualities and its complexity, its charge to the viewer to make them think, question, draw conclusions, act.

Crossings is an exemplary contemporary art piece of social activism, focusing on the new media demands of its audience while addressing a long-standing social issue that is full of political and perhaps artistic implications. By created an immersive and participatory world, Yankowitz is educating her viewers while at the same time challenging them to stand up, pay attention. Participate, and in more than simply her work. While one downfall to new media is that, especially in today's world, it may never be "new" enough, and perhaps the ability to produce a timeless piece with technology without fear of it becoming outdated is gone, but Yankowitz seems an artist capable of watching trends and following them, of finding new collaborators and methods to spread her message. She, along with newer generations of artists, will work to keep art relevant in this fast-paced world and continue using it as not merely an escape from society, but a safe place to critique it and attempt to improve it. Time will tell.

Endnotes

1. Joyce Beckenstein, “Riverhead exhibit: Art for nature’s sake,” Riverhead News-Review, October 21, 2012, http://riverheadnewsreview.timesreview.com/2012/10/40444/riverhead-exhibit-art-for-natures-sake/ (accessed February 22, 2013).
2. Joyce Beckenstein, “Nina Yankowitz: Re-Rights/Re-Writes,” Woman’s Art Journal, Fall/Winter 2012, 25.
3. Joyce Beckenstein, “Nina Yankowitz: Re-Rights/Re-Writes,” 20-27.
4. Frank Rose, The Art of Immersion (New York: Norton, 2011).
5. Nicolas Carr, “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” Future Media (San Francisco: Tachyon, 2011), 33-43.
6. Nina Yankowitz, “Crossings Interactive Installation Documentary,” YouTube video, 3:01, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWyhQZcw2XM (accessed February 3rd, 2013).
7. Joyce Beckenstein, “Nina Yankowitz: Re-Rights/Re-Writes,” 20.
8. Ibid.
9. Nicolas Carr, “Is Google Making Us Stupid?”
10. Frank Rose, The Art of Immersion.
11. The Website of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, “Arts for Transit and Urban Design,” http://www.mta.info/mta/aft/permanentart/permart.html?agency=n&line=V&station=5&artist=1&img=1&xdev=360 (accessed February 24, 2013).
12. Thomas Markussen, “The Disruptive Aesthetics of Design Activism: Enacting Design Between Art and Politics,” DesignIssues, Winter 2013, 38.
13. Thomas Markussen, “The Disruptive Aesthetics of Design Activism: Enacting Design Between Art and Politics,” 38-50.
14. James Elkins, On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art (New York: Routledge, 2004), 7.
15. Ibid.
16. Joyce Beckenstein, “Nina Yankowitz: Re-Rights/Re-Writes,” 20.
17. Ibid.
18. James Elkins, On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art (New York: Routledge, 2004), 39-49.

Fig. 1, ***Crossing***s, 2009.

Fig. 2, *Cloud House*, 2004.

Fig. 3, *Global Warming Window*, 2012.

Fig. 4, *Tunnel Visions*, 1988.

Posted 25th February 2013 by Ally Wright

2 View comments

23rd February 2013

Operation Paydirt

23rd February 2013

An Exhibit about Mother Nature (with Nina Yankowitz)

Hello!

My forthcoming scholarly post will focus on another side of Nina Yankowitz, but here is an article describing an exhibit she was a part of focusing on environmental issues. Her piece was a window that acts out the effects of climate change, showing the weather changing drastically and unpredictably in a short span of time. Some of the other artists focused on endangered species, recycling, and more: Click here [http://riverheadnewsreview.timesreview.com/2012/10/40444/riverhead-exhibit-art-for-natures-sake/] to read more and see some of the cool ways artists are educating the public on environmental issues! And here [http://media.timesreview.com.s3.amazonaws.com/suffolktimes/files/Nature3_web.1.jpg] for a picture of Yankowitz's window.

-Allison

Posted 23rd February 2013 by Ally Wright

0 Add a comment

23rd February 2013

Peace in Every Step

I would like to introduce my teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, he is an artist and speaker for peace. Anyone who listen to his teaching will be enlighten, because he speaks the truth, and the truth is PEACE. I admired him deeply because he sacrifice his youth and all the remainder of his life for the sake of other and help them achieve inner and outer peace. I choose to talk about Thich Nhat Hanh because he helps awaken my inner self which allows me to walk like a free person, like Jesus and Buddha. His calligraphic art is peace, everything he do and speaks is peace. One of his core teaching is ***living in the moment***, it is often that we are here, but our mind is somewhere else. If we could bring our mind back to our body, then we could truly live and experience life to the fullest and this is also peace. Would you like to experience peace? Would you like to walk like a free person, like Jesus and Buddha?

Nina Yankowitz

Re-Rights/Re-Writes

By Joyce Beckenstein

Nina Yankowitz, a pioneer feminist artist, takes the word as her vehicle and drives it from its most abstract, primal form through an expansive contemporary lexicon of databases. Cutting a zigzag path through her own shifting perspectives, she steers her message through traditional media—painting, mosaic, and sculpture—then, without missing a stop, through performances, high-tech installation art, and cyberspace. But high- or low-tech, she refuses to stick an emblematic stamp on her work. In fact, she recalls the lament of one curator, who in 1985 quipped, "You just don't fit into any slot."[1] Yankowitz is happy to keep it that way.

Her process, consistent albeit eclectic, reaches its apotheosis in *Crossings* (2009; Figs. 1 and Pl. 7) an installation/game that premiered at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki, Greece.[2] Religious texts provide the thematic armature for this project, but the work is not "religious" in its intent. *Crossings*, instead, takes religious scriptures as an organizing principle to underscore how tangled cultural values blur the intent of words as they appear in the texts of the world's five major religions. In it, Yankowitz asks: "Are world religions really different? Or, are the same ideas and values pitched to each flock from a different set of agendas?" Taking as her premise that the world's religions preach essentially the same core values, she concurs with Lucy Lippard's observation that ethnocentric differences account for narrow-mindedness, and that "Everyone is ethnocentric to some degree…It's not easy to reach across cultures."[3]

Crossings uses technology as a reasoning tool to bridge multicultural divides by cross-referencing scriptural texts to illustrate the similarities that unite most faiths. Yankowitz makes this conceptual exercise easy for new-millennium audiences by presenting her message as an intriguing electronic, interactive game. Players entering *Crossings* find themselves in a virtual temple representing the world's five major faiths: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. A schematic projection of composite religious architecture, symbolizing the unifying principles of all faiths, slowly rotates on an entrance wall. Entering the installation's inner sanctum, the player stands on a floor projection of iconic mosaics—quatrefoils, stars, arabesques, and circles. An electronically woven soundtrack plays a chorus of voices simultaneously reading scriptures from Old and New Testaments, Buddhist and Hindu texts, and the Qur'an. They speak many tongues in a multitude of cadences and dialects, including Arabic, English, German, Hebrew, and Italian.

Fig. 1. Nina Yankowitz, *Crossings* (2009), interactive installation with computers, infrared tracking wiimote, projectors, metal wand, variable size. Photo: Mauri Kaipainen.

A player activates the "game" with a hand-held infrared wand. Tapping the wall with it lights up the dark space with illuminated words that suggest narrative gospel shining through stained glass windows. On one wall, bright red words, randomly selected from a database of thousands, emerge along six horizontal lines. Using the wand, the player selects one word per line and slides that word from left to right, assigning it a relative weight. Placing a word to the far left ascribes it a low weighting or value, way to the right, the highest weighting. These word placements trigger a search engine to locate scriptures that attribute similar emphasis to the chosen word(s). The results appear simultaneously on an adjacent wall, now color coded in LED light, hued orange, blue, green, yellow, and purple, a different color assigned to each of the five represented faiths.[4] Comparative scriptures about death, for example, uniformly agree that death is a given, but that it arrives in different forms. Three examples allocating a high weighting to the word "death" produced these examples:

"Death even to the well-fed man comes…in varied shape."[5]

"And what is death? The parting and vanishing of beings out of this or that order of being."[6]

"And every man shall be put to death for his own sins."[7]

The curious, seduced by the game, may ask: "Will scriptures vary when "death" is given a lower weighting? How are less emotionally charged words such as "if," "should," or "want" treated? They can find out by reweighting the words and/or choosing others with a wand tap. Players don't, however, learn the color-coded religious sources of their choices until they finish the game and press a SAVE button to retrieve a printout.

The lure of the "game" deflects the often-prickly issues undermining cross-cultural conversations about faith, so it is with a sense of play that one enters the *Crossings* sanctuary. Further easing the dialog, players are usually surprised to find that, for all the wand waving, the scriptures hardly vary. But the endgame becomes problematic as those leaving the sanctum, self-edited "bible" in hand, stop to ponder the choices they've made. It becomes clear that during the moment spent as an anointed wizard in high-tech Oz, the wielded wand took the mercurial temperature of their personal biases. That prompts the sober question: "What are the consequences when an individual or single institution assigns values to these words and interprets them to sway human attitudes?" Yankowitz's wand here cuts a wide and deep swath, from self-reflection to global value systems, making clear that individuals, not scriptural texts, drive human interactions. If her premise is correct, then information technology (the one thing in our global universe that all seem to worship) may presage an effective means of fostering greater understanding. *Crossings* points the way.

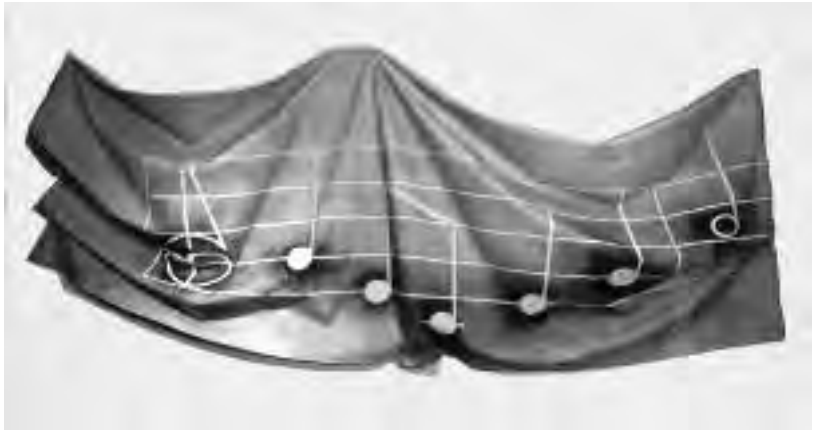


Fig. 2. Nina Yankowitz, *Oh Say Can You See – A Draped Sound Painting* (1967-68), latex paint on cotton duck, audio by Phil Harmonic a.k.a. Ken Werner, 4'x10'x 6". Photo: Jay Cantor.

Computers and information technology are for today's artists what marble was for Michelangelo and pocket-sized tubes of paint were for Monet. Microchips and software are the new tools informing today's visual language. From its onset, artists have found in the electronic age a riveting way to engage audiences more directly, and to navigate art's dead zone—that space between the viewer and what hangs on the wall or sits on a pedestal. In 1967, Robert Rauschenberg, working with Billy Klüver, a research scientist at Bell Labs, and then joined by Robert Whitman and Fred Waldhauer, formed Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.), "an organization devoted to facilitating interaction between artists and engineers in order to address the technical challenges of realizing artistic concepts."[8]

Now, almost fifty years later, technology makes possible art that is intensely complex in its logistics but remarkably user-friendly for the viewer/participant. Such art most often requires collaborations between the artist, who provides the conceptual blueprint for the work, and the technology experts who make the art happen. For *Crossings*, Dr. Mauri Kaipainen a professor of media technology at Södertörn University (Sweden), who holds a PhD in musicology and cognitive science, recalls it this way:

> I got to know Nina in Rovaniemi, Finland in 2008 at the eMobilArt meeting of artists and scientists. I was impressed with her sketches for the Cathedral project [*Crossings*] as well as her … enthusiasm. We focused on the issue of (religion and) mutual understanding … elaborating the idea cross the seas in an endless number of skype calls … always enjoyable as creative brainstorms, but never systematic and organized. During the fall of 2008 and winter, 2009, the idea matured to something that would combine the intellectual challenge with an interesting and beautiful interface.[9]

Kaipainen says it was his role "to define the automated means to annotate the massive amounts of religious text so that the computer would always be able to find the related topics from the database in which they were stored." He credits Peter Kroger, who came aboard later in the project, as the "tech hero," who made everything work, with very short warning."

Some of Yankowitz's earliest works were collaborative efforts; they weave a thread throughout her story that unfolds against the backdrop of the feminist revolution, Vietnam War, civil rights movement, and a reinvention of the art object. She's also embraced technology in her many incarnations of the word as musical notation, abstract sign, automatic scrawl, relief, minimal glyph, narrative text, and bar code. After a quick start out of the gate as a feisty young artist, she faded into the background for awhile, as did many women artists who came of age in the 1960s. Now she's again hit her stride, this time using high-tech art on a global interactive stage.

Yankowitz was a student at The School of Visual Arts in New York City in 1968, a time when "the rebellion initiated in the fifties by the Beats, on the one hand, and civil rights activism on the other, exploded into a full-fledged counterculture."[10] She spent that summer with Group 212 in Woodstock, New York,[11] befriending other young artists and performers. Most of them, enraged by the Vietnam War and emboldened by the nascent cries of civil rights and feminist activists, were finding their voices in protest. Baby boomer artists who teethed on Warhol's Brillo boxes bit into more iconoclastic forms, and musicians, most notably Bob Dylan, wrote "complex lyrical songs that ranged from powerful social commentary to symbolic tales with profound poetic imagery."[12]

In Woodstock, Yankowitz recalls, "I met Ken Werner[13] Sunny Murray, Dave Burrell and Juma Sultan, who made drums for Bob Dylan. I met Juma at Dylan's house … Dylan let me in. I was so intimidated." She performed, danced, and draped bolts of patterned lounge chair fabric through the trees. The dalliance of youth? On the contrary. This intuitive experimentation that August produced a seminal work, *Oh Say Can You See—A Draped Sound Painting* (1968; Fig. 2). Yankowitz here painted the music score of the first bar of the national anthem on a stretch of cloth then attached it to a wall like a haphazardly hung curtain. Wanting to protest the Vietnam War, she asked Kenneth Werner to use a synthesizer to distort the anthem to match the comically droopy swag of the piece. This young artist, already adept at blurring distinctions between images and sound, could also play a subversive hand, here casting a patriotic icon and its heroic song in the less honorable light of an ill-conceived war.

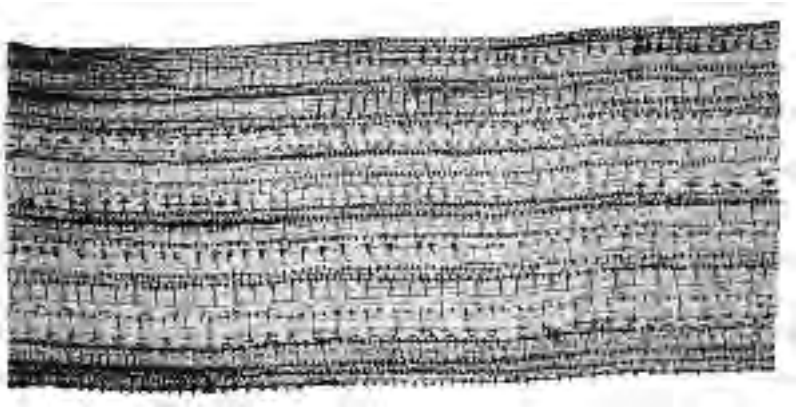


Fig. 3. Nina Yankowitz, *Dilated Grain Readings* (1972 -74), extruded acrylic/flash paint on linen, 109" x 49". Photo: Alan Nyssola.

Such anti-war activism paralleled a formal art movement that reconsidered traditional forms and stretched the boundaries for making art. By 1971, "sculpture" might well have passed as an answer to the question "What is a painting?" Robert R. Littman made that the point of his 1971 exhibition, "Hanging/Leaning," which left it up to the artwork to decide its identity. He wrote in the catalog introduction, "Matter and gravity, not structure or space, were primary considerations … a renewed freedom existed—letting the material 'make itself' instead of order being imposed."[14] Yankowitz's *Untitled* (1969), a painted canvas, falling in folds and pleats similar to those of *Oh Say Can You See*, hung in sync with its gravitational pull, more sculptural than painterly in its disdain for the flat wall. Yankowitz and Eva Hesse were the only women in this show, which included art by Robert Morris, Joel Shapiro, and Keith Sonnier.

In 1973, The Whitney Museum formally acknowledged the obsolescence of conventional definitions for new genres by merging their annual exhibitions—one year painting alternating with one year sculpture—into biennial extravaganzas. Yankowitz exhibited *Painted Thread Readings* (1973), a work made of duck binding that she stripped down to threads, then coated with red paint, reweaving, twisting, and braiding the fibers into a richly textured hanging scroll. With nubbed pigment forming text-like "reading paths" down its surface, the painting was so ambiguous as to be singled out by John Perreault, in the *Village Voice*, as an example of "notable sculpture"![15]

In a subsequent series of works, Dilated Grain Readings (1972–74; Fig. 3), Yankowitz linked the run-on visual rhythms seen in her Whitney piece with the idea of rhythmic sound. "When I hear sound I see color, and when I see color I hear sound," she says. There are some physical bases for these connections, but Rudolf Arnheim has distinguished between science and synesthesia. "Some people see colors when they hear sounds," he writes.[16] Yankowitz's sensations are of the synesthetic variety, but she explores them with Newtonian zeal. Her densely textured Dilated Grain Readings read like prehistoric glyphs, a Ur Song, in Braille, done on linen. From a distance these colorful notations resemble musical scores. Up close, beads and bubbles of color squeezed straight from the tube look more like a primitive tapestry.

Years later, Yankowitz began to write free-form verse, straddling the words with automatic writing in the form of black and white scribbles. Then she elaborated her idea of text-as-scribbled-notations in a two-act opera, *Scenario Sounds/Personae Mimickings or Voices From The Piano* (1979; Fig. 4). Conjugating her "libretto" into a score of red, blue, and green scrawls, she now added sound—guttural groans and falsetto trills—that she interpretively sang with French, German and Italian inflections in a 1980 performance for the 12th International Poetry Festival in New York.[17] Joyce Kozloff's introduction to the limited-edition, hand-signed artist's book with audio cassette (1981) offers a keen understanding to Yankowitz's uninhibited but serious vision:

> I found my friend Nina … who … never studied … (foreign language or music) … at the piano, bursting into "opera" … a bizarre range of sounds suggesting personalities, emotions, dialects, all juxtaposed in a cacophonous collage.… The audience took the proceedings quite seriously. I … felt … amusement at Nina's sheer chutzpah.[18]

Yankowitz later recorded a *Scenario Sounds* CD.[19] This not–so-easy-to-listen-to avant-garde recording commingled sound and voice the way her dilated thread paintings wove color and texture. The montage of dialects also points to the orchestration of tongues that inform several later works, including *Crossings*. As Kozloff summed it up, "Nina transformed visual art into a temporal and aural experience … her ideas accessible in a new way."[20]

For a woman artist in the 1970s, Yankowitz had an amazing start, being included in the first Whitney Biennial and in exhibitions at the few New York galleries then featuring women artists. She recalls: "Jill Kornblee, who exhibited Dan Flavin and Malcolm Morley, initially said she didn't show women artists, but ultimately added many to her stable, including Janet Fish and me." Kornblee held three solo exhibitions of Yankowitz's works between 1969 and 1971. James R. Mellow, in a *New York Times* review, referred to Yankowitz's "second one-man show"

at Kornblee. He described the work as "tasteful, like a decorative wall hanging … seductive … between old-fashioned easel painting and some new species of handcraft."[21] "Can Women Have 'One-Man' Shows?," cried Cindy Nemser in her op-ed response to the review. "Mellow still has not caught on… women are not ashamed of their sex and resent being mistaken for men."[22]

About the same time, Yankowitz personally faced a number of conflicting feminist issues. "I felt two-faced exhibiting my art while others were unfairly ignored. I was included in the '73 Whitney Biennial, where I had previously marched in protest of their disproportionate representation of women." It is interesting to note the similarities between Yankowitz's feminist experiences and those of Louise Bourgeois, one of feminism's greatest heroes and role models, who despite her stature still experienced feminist conflict as late as the 1990s. In their documentary film, *Louise Bourgeois: The Spider, the Mistress and the Tangerine*, filmmakers Amei Wallach and Marion Cajori capture Bourgeois's solidarity with women trumping her artist persona. When the Guggenheim Museum launched its SoHo space with the 1992 exhibition, "From Brancusi to Bourgeois," Bourgeois joins ranks with activists protesting the museum's token nod to all women by including her as the only woman in that show. But "feminism established Bourgeois's reputation," says Wallach,[23] voicing a fact of life for most every woman who crested on the wave of the feminist revolution.

Though Yankowitz was an active participant in the feminist movement—a member of the "mother" collective that formed the groundbreaking magazine *Heresies*, and interviewed by Joan Braderman, whose documentary, *Heretics*,[24] chronicles that publication's evolution, she was later side-stepped. She was, for example, unmentioned in retrospectives such as *Global Feminisms*, which "included artists with a more a direct feminist agenda as well as ones who do not proclaim themselves as feminists but definitely raise feminist and gender issues in their work."[25] Yankowitz acknowledges viewing the movement's purpose differently from many of her sister activists, and says: "I didn't believe you had to reference female issues using female-specific imagery to be a feminist…. I thought of the movement more as a way to end the divisions between male-female-gay-heterosexual genres. Now, looking back, I recognize the importance then of projecting a unified voice through that inherent female imagery."

She claims no specific seat along the feminist spectrum, but the movement infiltrates Yankowitz's sensibility as it does the consciousness of anyone—male or female—who lived through those formative years, or who has since reaped its rewards. More specifically, few women artists can deny the direct or indirect influence of gender-focused artists, such as Judy Chicago, whose *The Dinner Party* (1974–79), celebrating the achievements of well- and lesser known women throughout history, also raised craft to the level of high art.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Pattern and Decoration (P&D) movement countered the tenets of formalism with crafts and craft-inspired art, including folk art, fabric designs, quilts, embroidery, and tile art. While Yankowitz was not a direct participant in that movement (though she says she was

Fig. 4. Nina Yankowitz, *Scenario Sounds/Personae Mimickings or Voices From The Piano* (1979), page from 1/6 limited edition silkscreen print books, 8 1/2" x 11". Photo: Nina Yankowitz.

invited to participate), many of her colleagues and friends—Joyce Kozloff and Miriam Shapiro included—were among the movers and shakers of this celebratory craft revival. "Where convinced modernists saw Minimalism's aloof stillness, silence, and simplicity as potent with rarefied meaning, others could comprehend only a void," writes H. H. Arnason, in his discussion about P&D.[26] Concurrent with the movement, Yankowitz created many tile installations, including two ceramic murals for New Jersey schools for the blind and hearing impaired.[27] Incorporating her use of abstract glyphs as "text" into ceramic, she used clay slip oozed from ketchup bottles onto handmade tiles, approximating "Braille" for the deaf to "hear" and the blind to "see." These tile works anticipate her later narrative works and interactive installations.

For *Hell's Breath – A Vision of Sound Falling* (1982; Fig. 5), curated by William Hellerman for P.S. 1, Queens, New York,[28] Yankowitz again integrated sound as she had in her draped works and opera, and as she would do later with *Crossings*'s sacred voiceovers. But this scenario played more like "Hell – The Musical." It consisted of an impressive room-size "stage set," comprising eight red, white, and black ceramic tile panels surrounded by a frieze. High-relief images of devils with gaping mouths, and snakes set the stage for a sound experience: a wafting cacophony of metallic groaning church organs and fallen souls echoing remorseful wails. The vibrations, experienced as the sensation one feels in the groin when an

Fig. 5. Nina Yankowitz, *Hell's Breath – The Sounds of Falling* (1982), ceramic relief panels with frieze, 5′ x 37′ x 3″. Photo: Barry Holden.

elevator drops, vividly captured the idea of falling from grace.

"I didn't want to be known as a tile artist," Yankowitz says almost as abruptly as her flirtation with craft looked elsewhere. There's this wrecking ball in *Sphere* (1990), a fresco-secco painting made on canvas panels abutting one another like tiles, that indeed sounds the death knell. Included in "The Technological Muse: Affirmation and Ambivalence in American Machine Imagery (1840-1990)," the 1990 inaugural exhibition for the Katonah Museum of Art, *Sphere* consists of a cannon-like ball, powered by an electric train motor, hurtling along a track in front of an abstract cityscape painting, a commotion of abstract ovals, circles, and triangles. The ball disappears and reappears through two black spiky blast holes puncturing the work. Yankowitz describes the piece as a study of layered perspectives. Compositionally, she teases the viewer's sense of center as the eye follows the moving ball. Thematically, the ball as bullet train suggests the speed of travel through time and space. And politically, in keeping with the exhibition's theme, the machine-made wonders facilitating life portend a descent into some dark and dangerous abyss. Her thoughtful analysis of these multiple perspectives dissects her sensibilities, which then barrel headlong into issues of gender, bias, ecology, and faith.

An important travelling group exhibition in 1993, "Ciphers of Identity,"[29] dealt with racism, sexism, homophobia, and subjugation. It included Yankowitz's *Dog on Beam* (1993; Fig. 6), a sculpture of a copper dog stuck in place on a balance bar, unable to reach its ball, without falling. Maurice Berger wrote that: "the perilously perched animal… recalls our own struggle against the destabilizing forces of society…. A… (humiliating) balancing act that continually undermines any stable sense of center."[30]

Humiliation also informs Yankowitz's *Yellow Man* (1998), exhibited in "Size Matters" at Gale Gates Gallery in New York. This small faceless and feckless mechanized robot, perched on a pedestal attached to the wall, mindlessly salutes no one in particular as he babbles slavish salutations—"yes sir," "no ma'am," etc.—in a variety of languages and dialects, reminiscent of both the gibberish of *Scenario Sounds* and the sacred echoes in *Crossings*.

But it is with a series of glasshouses, created between 2002 and 2009, that Yankowitz's interests—with themes, text-base imagery, and technology—coalesce into a mature body of signature works. Yankowitz loves to play with tension, and these glass architectural structures, shielding all they expose, make sturdy but vulnerable homes for both her didactic tableaus and her implied narratives, particularly her ecological themes. They also provide a neat wrap for her fascination with oddball multimedia combinations, as evidenced in *Femme Fatale* (2003; Fig. 7). As close as Yankowitz to that date came to gender specific imagery, it contains a model F-15 suspended upside down over a pile of fluffy white feathers that Lilly Wei referred to "as an ironic equation of war machines with the female body."[31] Teeming with subversive contrasts—strong/weak, male/female, war/peace, nature/ machine—the work was included in "Outside/In," an exhibition Joyce Kozloff curated for Wooster Arts Space.

For later glasshouses (prototypes for the schematic

Fig. 6. Nina Yankowitz, *Dog on Beam (*shown with *Empowered)* (1992), copper, aluminum ball, leather, 5′ x 11′. Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts/ University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMBC).

Crossings temple), Yankowitz mined computer databases for a series of text-based installations, as she would again do on an exponentially larger scale for *Crossings*. Downloading prodigious amounts of information from the Internet for *Kiosk.edu* (2002–04; Fig. 8), she searched for short quotes by visual and performing artists and architects that condensed the essence of their visions into short, pithy prose: "*Color is my day-long obsession—joy and torment*," wrote Claude Monet. "*Writing about music is like dancing about architecture*," said Laurie Anderson. "*We can't destroy the past…it's gone*," exclaimed John Cage.

Yankowitz projected these quotes with hundreds of others on the surface of *Kiosk.edu*. At night, the bold red, white, and black texts appear to float like twitters from cyber-heaven. *Kiosk.edu* shelters an enormous glut of information, but there is irony here that tells in her title that shorts "education." One wonders, "Does the blind person running a hand over Yankowitz's tile mural, or the reader attempting to "sing" the color scrawls of her *Scenario Sounds*, experience more "felt" knowledge about the power to communicate than someone searching Wikipedia.com?" As she later did with *Crossings*, Yankowitz here uses the allure of technology to plumb a daunting universe for its words and texts. But then she slows the viewer down, making a few choice words by selected individuals speak volumes. Knowledge, instantly accessible, is easily forgotten, she suggests. Hence the need to entomb but reveal it in glass, especially when it relates to the contributions of those unrecognized in their lifetimes. Though similar to Barbara Kruger and Jenny Holzer's use of text-as-image, Yankowitz uses words to inform, not to inflame. She says, "I want to re-right/re-write history, especially about women."

Buried Treasures/Secrets in the Sciences (2006; Pl. 8), a particularly ambitious installation dedicated to women in science, does just that. Protective as it is suffocating, and surreal as it is enlightening, this glasshouse acts as a physical and virtual vitrine for histories of women whose contributions have long been stuffed away in time's storage bin. An oversized chemistry tube sitting on a laboratory table inside the glass container drips virtual chemicals. The drops form puddles of comic-book-like word balloons divulging little known facts—who knew that the actress Hedy Lamarr, remembered as a Hollywood sex siren, was the co-inventor of a frequency hopping technology that ultimately led to secure military communications, even cell phone technology? Her story quivers in a globule on the floor, just long enough to be read, before slithering away in the wake of the next elucidating bubble about another woman in science.

Concurrent with her use of text within glasshouses, Yankowitz produced a number of ecological installations. Using the inside/out metaphor to illustrate the threat of climate change she created *Cloud House* (2004; Pl. 9), a glass and aluminum enclosure that squeezes

Fig. 7. Nina Yankowitz, *Femme Fatale* (2003), aluminum, glass, fiberglass, feathers, 8'4" x 6'4" x 7'2". Photo: Barry Holden.

weather into a confined interior space. A generator producing ultrasound vibrations creates a cold mist that forms clouds within the structure that wanes pale grey by day, and waxes hot red to violet LED light by night. A beautiful sight that sucks in the viewer with the attention-getting hook of a looming tornado, *Cloud House* omens the extinction of the generic home as a consequence of eco-carelessness. As an algorithmic projection above the house unfolds phases of an origami-like moon, it is for the viewer to decide whether some hidden cosmic order will override human folly.

Exponentially raising this eco-apocalyptic bar at the Museum Quarter in Vienna, Austria, in December 2011, Yankowitz appropriated the venue's entire glass-walled space to create her site-specific installation *Global Warming Schauram Bursting Seams* (Fig. 9). Imagine hearing water, faintly gurgling, then dripping, rushing and gushing; then watching water—

Fig. 8. Nina Yankowitz, *Kiosk.edu* (2002-04), aluminum, glass, LED light, digital texts, 12'4"x 6" 4" x 7'2". Photo: Barry Holden.

Fig. 9. Nina Yankowitz, *Global Warming Schauram Bursting Seams* (2011), projectors, computers, P. Kroger mappings, 250 sq. feet. Photo: RGB Klein.

weeping, seeping, and cascading through moldings, crevices, and within glass walls. A virtual window projected onto an actual window bears witness to an onslaught of typhoons, tornadoes, and scorching sun announcing the arrival of global Armageddon. The viewer gazes at the devastation helplessly, from behind the glass wall. What is one to do?

Make a cell phone call. That, at least, is an option handed the audience facing a crisis of another sort—global terrorism—in "*The Third Woman" Interactive Performance and Film-Game* (2011; Fig 10), an international collaborative effort involving conceptual, electronic, performance and design artists.[32] The work pivots on *The Third Woman,* a ten-minute film conceived and produced by Martin Rieser and Pia Tikka that riffs on Carol Reed's 1949 spy thriller, *The Third Man*. *The Third Woman* follows the misadventures of Lara Line as she becomes embroiled in a saga about modern-day terrorists trafficking in bio-hazardous materials. The film is the centerpiece for a series of separately orchestrated installations, to date exhibited in several venues: New York City; Vienna, Austria;, Bath, England; and Xian, China.

Yankowitz is credited with producing the movie's teaser and a separate, related documentary. She also directed and organized a 2011 exhibition unique to Galapagos Space in Brooklyn, New York. Here, as the audience sat cabaret style in small groups viewing Yankowitz's trailer scenes, women performers dressed in outfits printed with Margarete Jahrmann's scannable barcode designs, shimmied about, asking audience member-players to aim their cell phones at the coded frocks to download a series of directorial options. The audience never saw the original Rieser/Tikka film. They instead viewed it in sequential segments on a large screen and on their cell phones. When the film paused, players texted their directorial decisions to such questions as: Should Lara say

A." She was not supposed to get so nosy."
B. "I love him, but they're on my tail."
C." Should I kill her too?"

Their cell phone responses connected via WiFi to computer techs, who tallied the vote and edited the movie to reflect the audience's majority opinions. The event ended with a viewing of the audience-(re)directed film.

Hardly intended to author a community action plan for dealing with bioterrorism, this "U-vote the plot movie" created a film more "dada" than anything else. However, just as *Crossings* enabled individuals using options to edit their

Fig. 10. Nina Yankowitz, "*The Third Woman" Interactive Performance and Film-Game* (2011), "The Algorithmics" performers, computers, projectors, audio, projection screen, water projections, 2500 sq. ft. Galapagos Theatre. Photo Composite: Martin Rieser.

own "bibles," so did *The Third Woman* installation at Galapagos underscore the potential for individuals harnessing technology to impact life's big picture.

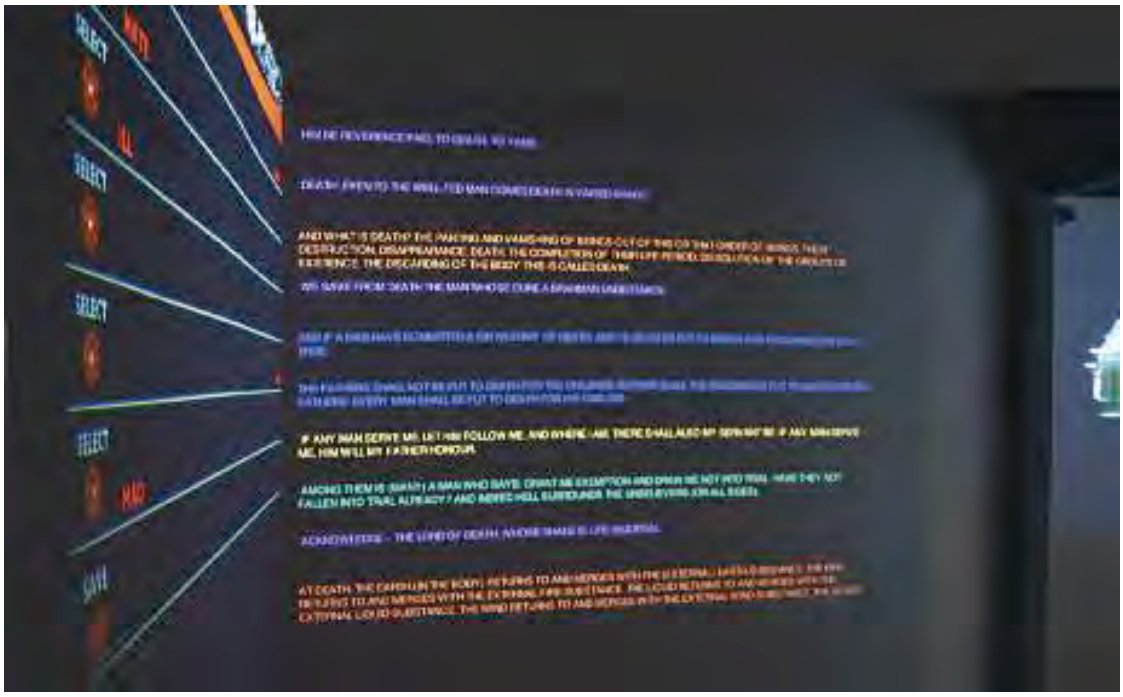
There is another side to all this that speaks to a new, egalitarian age for art. Works such as *Crossing*s and more so *The Third Woman,* share ownership of the creation with a brigade of collaborators, viewers included, all of whom are messengers of the message they helped craft. The artist suffering self-effacement here does so willingly, with the hope that all involved in the art process will see in art a call to arms for the betterment of living.

Nina Yankowitz harvests her near-half-century process with such installations. They morph her abstract notations into barcodes and allow the word as image and idea to fly through cyberspace. She steps from center stage—where she once sang her falsetto *Scenario Sounds*—into the crowd. Bowing to her public as protagonist in her process, she continues to trade up her text-based messenger tools to present multiple views of the world in media that communicate in the vernacular of the day. Her art is thus as ever changing as life. •

Joyce Beckenstein is an art historian and arts writer living in New York.

NOTES

1. All artist quotes based on my interview with Nina Yankowitz, June 2, 2011.
2. *Crossings* (2006–09), an art installation conceived by Nina Yankowitz, done in collaboration with Mauri Kaipainen, Barry Holden, Pia Tikka, Peter Kroger and Scott Fitzgerald; e-MobilArt, European Mobile Lab for Interactive media Artists, funded by The European Union. See www2.media.uoa.gr/~charitos/emobilart/exhibition_crossings.html.
3. Lucy Lippard, *Mixed Blessings, New Art in Multicultural America*; (New York: Pantheon, 1990), 10.
4. The color coding of the texts as they appear in *Crossings* are as follows: blue for Old Testament, yellow/gold for New Testament, purple for Hindu Rig-Veda, orange/red for Buddhist, and green for Qu'ran.
5. This passage is from the Rig-Veda, one of the four Vedas or primary texts of Hinduism, dating from 1500 B.C. It is from Hymn CXVII, Liberality (purple).
6. These were the words of Buddha, c. 500 B.C. (The Eightfold Path) (orange-red).
7. This passage is found in Deuteronomy 24:16:07, the fifth book of the Hebrew bible (Old Testament) (blue).
8. Susan Davidson, *Robert Rauschenberg, A Retrospective* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publ., 1998), 290.
9. This and the following quotes are from an email exchange with Dr. Mauri Kaipainen, June 12, 2012.
10. Lisa Phillips, *The American Century, Art & Culture, 1950-2000*, (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art and W.W. Norton, 1999), 173.
11. Group 212 was the name given to the community of artists who gathered in the environs of New York State's Ulster County, between Woodstock and Saugerties, along State Highway, Route 212 in the late 1960s.
12. John Carlin, "Pop Apotheosis: Rock Music Rules," in Phillips, *The American Century, Art & Culture, 1950-2000,* 179.
13. Kenneth Werner, aka Phil Harmonic, was an electronic musician and multimedia artist who provided the musical accompaniment for Yankowitz's multi-media work, *Oh Say Can You See*" (1968).
14. Robert Littman, *Hanging/ Leaning* (Hempstead, NY: The Emily Lowe Gallery, Hofstra University, 1970), introduction.
15. John Perreault, "Two Seasons Stacked for Baling," *The Village Voice* (Feb. 1, 1973).
16. Rudolf Arnheim, *New Essays on the Psychology of Art*, (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1986), 205–07. Synesthesia is a sensation produced in one modality when a stimulus is applied to another modality, as when the hearing of a certain sound induces the visualization of a certain color, see http//dictionary.reference.com.
17. Other venues for *Scenario Sounds/Personae Mimickings or Voices from the Piano* included Cal Arts University, Valencia, and Leah Levy Gallery, San Francisco, both 1981.
18. Joyce Kozloff, introduction to Nina Yankowitz, *Scenario Sounds/Personae Mimickings or Voices from the Piano* (New York: Street Editions, 1981), a limited edition hand-signed artist's book and audiotape, hereafter *Scenario Sounds*.
19. Yankowitz, *Scenario Sounds*; a CD version was issued by NY Art Projects, LLC in 2007. The publication is in the Franklin Furnace Archive, currently housed in the Museum of Modern Art, New York City.
20. Kozloff, *Scenario Sounds*, introduction.
21. James R. Mellow, "Cheops Would Approve," *New York Times* (Dec. 5, 1971). Mellow incorrectly referred to the December 1971 exhibition as the "second one-man show," while, in fact, it was Yankowitz's third solo show at Kornblee.
22. Cindy Nemser, "Can Women Have One-Man Shows?," *New York Times* (Jan. 9, 1972), Letter to the Editor.
23. Amei Wallach, from my Dec. 15, 2011, interview with her about her 2008 film, *Louise Bourgeois: The Spider, the Mistress and the Tangerine*, directed by Wallach and Marion Cajori.
24. *Heretics,* Written and directed by Joan Braderman, produced by Joan Braderman and Crescent Diamond Productions, 2009.
25. Maura Reilly and Linda Nochlin, *Global Feminisms* (London: Merrell, 2007), 11; catalog for the "Global Feminisms" exhibition organized by the Brooklyn Museum.
26. H.H. Arnason, *History of Modern Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986), 615.
27. Yankowitz created two tile relief walls (each 4'x12') in 1980, sponsored by the New Jersey Council for the Arts, for the School for the Blind and Hearing Impaired, Jersey City, and School for the Blind and Hearing Impaired, Newark.
28. Bill Hellermann, a composer, guitarist, and experimental musician launched the first exhibitions of sound sculpture and audio art, bringing into usage the term "Soundart"; see www. Issue projectroom.org.
29. "Ciphers of Identity," curated by Maurice Berger, opened at the Fine Arts Gallery, University of Maryland Baltimore County, November 1993, and traveled to multiple venues including Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York, N.Y., 1994.
30. Maurice Berger, *Ciphers of Identity* (Baltimore: Fine Arts Gallery, Univ. of Maryland Baltimore County, 1993), 28.
31. Lilly Wei, "Outside In," *Art News* (March 2004): 134.
32. www2.media.uoa.gr/charritos/emobilart/exhibition_gr/third_woman.html, "The Third Woman" and Interactive installation with film material created and produced by Martin Rieser and Pia Tikka. Other participating artists include Anna Dumitnu, Cilona Harney, Margarete Jahrmann, Barry Roshto, Nita Tandon, and Nina Yankowitz; e-MobilArt, funded by The European Union.



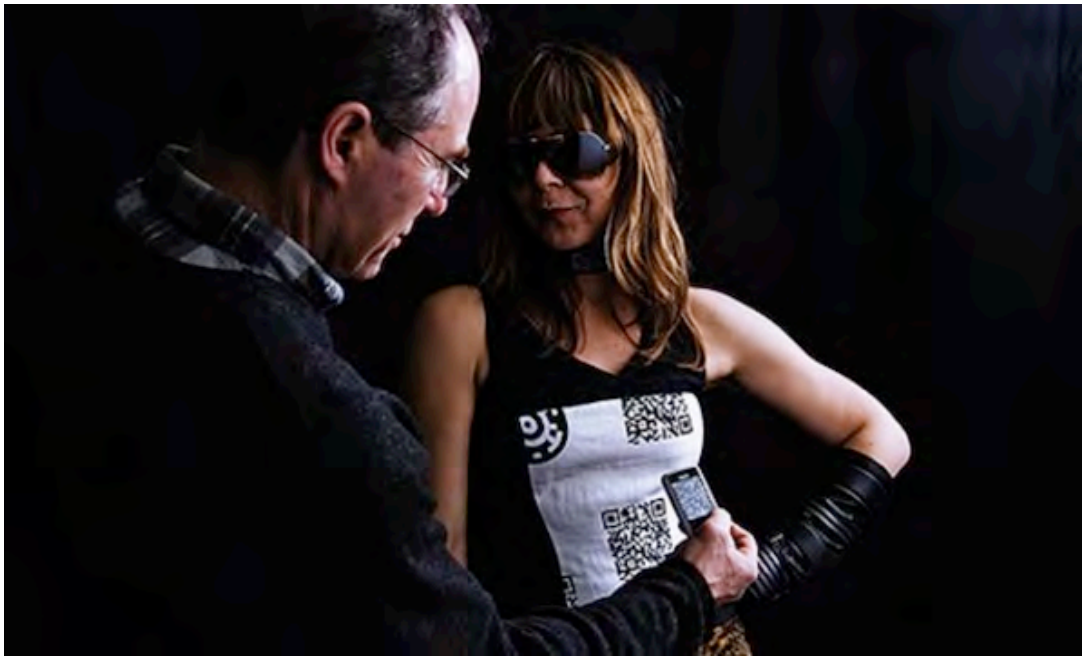
Pl. 7. Nina Yankowitz, *Crossings* (2009), interactive installation with computers, infrared tracking wiimote, projectors, metal wand, variable size. Photo: Mauri Kaipainen.

Pl. 8. Nina Yankowitz, *Buried Treasures/Secrets in the Sciences* (2006), aluminum medical table, paper scroll, text and algorithmic projections, 12'4" x 6'4" x7'2" Photo: Barry Holden.

Pl. 9. Nina Yankowitz, *CloudHouse* (2004), aluminum, glass, water mist, ultrasound generator, 8'4" x 6' 4" x 7' 2". Photo: Barry Holden.

Interactive Digital Noir Piece Combines Cinema, Fashion And Gaming

Dylan Schenker September 01, 2011



Margarete Jahrmann/Martin Rieser QR code clothing code reading

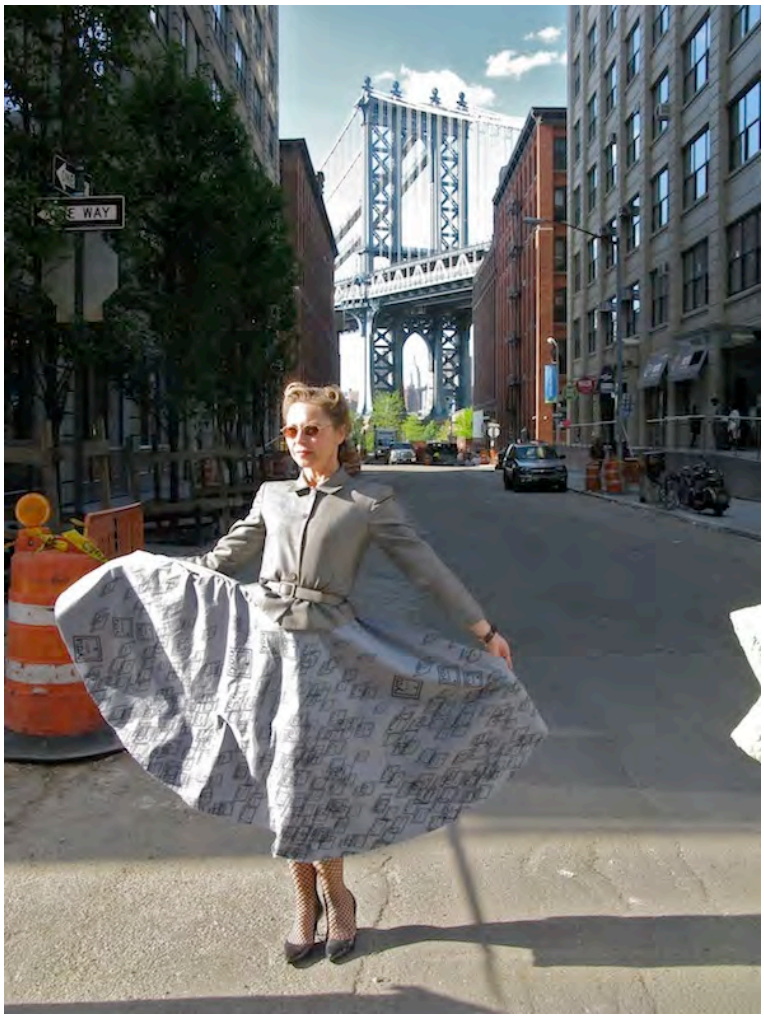
Film as both an art and entertainment form continues to contend with advancing technologies that make it more convenient to acquire content online and through streaming services. Physical exhibitions—screenings or performances of something easily accessed from the comfort of one's home—become less attractive when coupled with irrationally high ticket prices for something that can be seen for (practically) free. Exhibition itself is in need of a transformation and one of the options open to film is to revert back to its roots as an art form traditionally predicated on performance, theatrical or otherwise.

Theater, as we have seen, is ripe for participatory and interactive potential, not just for an enhanced exhibition of original content. With the *Third Woman*, an interactive performance qua film, Martin Rieser, Pia Tikka, and Nina Yankowitz have employed mobile phones, gaming, QR codes, a multi-screen narrative and smart fabrics to deliver an immersive transmedia experience.

THIRD WOMAN INTERACTIVE MOVIE DOCUMENTARY NYANKOWITZ.MOV

In an homage to the classic Carol Reed film, *The Third Man*, the team has adapted the original post war themes outlined in the film to explore the global threat of bio-terrorism. As it says on their website, one of these major themes is codes and in that way they have discovered a method of integrating its content into its formal elements. The story itself unfolds across a projected screen installation, but how it occurs is up to the audience.

An interventionist performance group called the Algorithmics, outfitted in scannable, interactive costumes, mingle with the audience intermittently before and after projected segments of the film. When the QR code-laden costumes are scanned, the audience is given the opportunity to direct the outcome of the film via communal voting over a shared WiFi network. Individuals are also sent back film information specifically to their phones after scanning through what is called an “ontoscope” network. The film is composed of sections with three different possibilities for how it will play out, ensuring a different experience each time.



Model: Margarete Jahrmann/ Photo: ©Martin Rieser/©Michelle Stuart/©Margarete Jahrmann

The film itself follows Holly Matins as she travels to Vienna to meet her friend Hari Line. On her journey she becomes immersed in a tale of intrigue wherein she discovers her friend has actually been smuggling hazardous materials for a terrorist group living in the city. Mirroring the film, they shot at all the original locations of *The Third Man* and used updated versions of its script to create the narrative. The black and white has a gauzy, noir feel, albeit with a sleek digital look.

What is important about *The Third Woman*‘s interactive component is that it engages its audience morally and intellectually. It goes further than asking them to guide the narrative, but to actually consider the decisions they are making in a larger context of the themes of the film. The film is not only aware of its audience as present, but also aware of them as opinionated, sentient, intelligent individuals. Many times when artists use the word ’interactive’ to describe their work they only mean it to be responsive or performative. It does not take into consideration that the complexity of human behavior offers only a very limited set of options for people to merely choose from. Although *The Third Woman* still only offers a limited set of choices, what sets it apart is how they seek to generate thought among their audience.

A MULTIVERSION INTERACTIVE FILM THE THIRD WOMAN GALAPAGOS BROOKLYN NY

DOCUMENTARY OF INTERACTIVE PERFORAMCE FILM~GAME NY BY MARTIN RIESER

The Third Woman *Interactive Performance and Film-game in New York* Since the city itself is so important to the themes of the film, performances vary from location to location. The display of the film and its performance is augmented to the space that it inhabits so the film is unique on a global level as well. For example, for the screening in U-Bahn, different rooms were dressed as police incident rooms to enhance the experience. In New York, the performance projected images into the Galapagos Art Space's pools of water. In China they even went so far as to remove people who they deemed "infected with Miazma" from the audience

The Third Woman *Film-Game and performance in Xian, China*
Exhibition has typically been a distinctly separate aspect of the film itself whereas a film is already completed by the time it is shown anywhere. By incorporating performance into its exhibition it explores the possibility of a formalistic malleability that transcends a single projected screen. Transmedia is a concept gaining a lot of traction right now, but it is mostly concerned with how to expand the film experience outside of the theater. The exhibition itself should not only be seen as a generic packaging of a work but a formalistic extension of the particular film that communicates its themes as clearly as the content.

The CREATORS PROJECT

http://thecreatorsproject.com/blog/interactive-digital-noir-piece-combines-cinema-fashion-and-gaming

The New York Times

Art & Design

ART REVIEW | '185TH ANNUAL'

Academy Gives Art Some Wiggle Room

By KAREN ROSENBERG
Published: February 18, 2010

The 2010 Whitney Biennial, which opens next week, is one of the leanest in recent memory. So by its own standards is the National Academy Museum's "185th Annual: An Invitational Exhibition of Contemporary American Art" — down to 65 artists from the usual 120 or so. Reduced finances are to blame, in both cases.

Oddly, this situation is the best thing that could have happened to the Invitational. The standards for this juried exhibition have tightened, and its mission — contemporary art with a visible connection to the traditional studio practice — has a new clarity and intensity.

It helps that some 400 artists, an unprecedented number, submitted work. Quality is high overall. Congestion has been reduced, even though the show occupies fewer galleries than before. Large swaths of the fourth floor and part of the second are left empty. (This is sad to be sure, but the overstuffed exhibitions of yesteryear didn't do the art any favors.)

A side effect of the show's winnowing is the widening of the gap between the academy's members-only Annuals and its Invitational (nonmember) Annuals, which alternate years. The members' shows have become walled fortresses of figuration and complacent gestural abstraction. The Invitationals look more contemporary, though still dominated by painting. (Since this is the academy and not the Museum of Modern Art, that's not even up for debate.)

The lineup for this year's Invitational looks almost suspiciously young and sexy. It includes the relative newcomers Dana Schutz, Ghada Amer, Chris Martin and Alison Elizabeth Taylor, all of whom have been successful in the market. Petah Coyne, Lari Pittman and Barkley L. Hendricks have longer résumés but a similarly strong following in Chelsea.

It's great to see them all here, mixing with lesser-known talents like Judith Bernstein, Michael Schall and Anna Lambrini Moisiadis. At times, though, you sense that the selection committee gave some of the bigger names an automatic pass. "Girl With a Dog" (2009) isn't one of Ms. Schutz's better canvases, although its confettilike dots strike a festive tone. And Mr. Hendricks, a celebrated portraitist, is not well served by a small oddity of a landscape.

The academy's shambolic Beaux-Arts building can be hostile to curators, but the extra wiggle room this year has given the organizer Marshall Price a break. He works with the architecture instead of against it, for instance, hanging vibrantly patterned pieces in a room with a

zigzagging floor inlay.

Most inspired is the placement of Ms. Taylor's gigantic marquetry work of a beachcomber in a domed, marble-floored alcove on the second floor. Luxury is the glue in this May-December romance.

Even the normally problematic fourth floor, with its low-ceilinged and windowless galleries, looks sharp. Here you'll find small-scale works — drawings, prints, collages and cabinet paintings — with an outsize level of ambition.

Tucked away by the elevator is a large-scale Surrealist object, Stina Köhnke's "Spell" (2007) — a fainting couch upended and draped in tan felt, with dozens of little pouches containing tweezers. Like much else in the show it is formally ingenious and a little wicked.

Nearly everything in the exhibition reveals some trace of the maker's hand, but the academy has embarked on a few tentative forays into more distanced art forms. One of them is Nina Yankowitz's installation "Buried Treasure/Secrets in the Sciences," on the second floor. With digital projections on a laboratory table, it highlights overlooked female scientists: an interesting topic, but the piece looks cold and forbidding in a room of mostly painting.

Nearby, though, is a light-boxed photograph by Cildo Meireles, made in homage to Piero Manzoni, the Arte Povera legend. In it, Mr. Meireles does a headstand on a famous Manzoni plinth in Denmark. The Manzoni, inscribed with "socle du monde" ("base of the world"), proclaims that art is everywhere we look. Mr. Meireles's playful tribute may be the closest the academy has come to engaging the sort of Conceptual shenanigans that go on across the street at the Guggenheim.

The academy hands out prizes for specific types of painting (and some other mediums), as seen by the placards on several works. This may seem conservative, but the winning entries describe a field of remarkable breadth. They include Ms. Schutz's messily exuberant canvas, Richard McLean's photorealist landscape and Elisa Jensen's haunted, Peter Doig-like blend of abstraction and figuration.

Learning to do more with less isn't a bad thing for the academy. For the time being it forces the jury to be choosier and ensures that the art that makes the cut will be shown to best advantage. Ideally some of these lessons will translate to the members' Annuals.

"The 185th Annual: An Invitational Exhibition of Contemporary American Art" continues through June 8 at the National Academy Museum, 1083 Fifth Avenue, at 89th Street; (212) 369-4880, nationalacademy.org.

A version of this article appeared in print on February 19, 2010, on page C26 of the New York edition.

THIS WEEK IN NEW YORK
THE INSIDERS GUIDE TO THE CITY SINCE 2001

THE ANNUAL THROUGH THE AGES

Cildo Meireles, "Atlas," transparency in light box, 2007 (courtesy of the artist and Galerie Lelong)

185th ANNUAL EXHIBITION OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN ART

National Academy Museum 1083 Fifth Ave. at 89th St. Friday, April 9, free with museum admission of $10, 6:45 Exhibition continues through June 8 212-3694880 www.nationalacademy.org

Founded in 1825, the National Academy is in the midst of its 185th Annual, featuring painting, sculpture, and installations by sixty-five American artists who are not members of the academy, selected by a panel of National Academicians. The exhibit includes work by such artists as Ghada Amer, Petah Coyne, Barkley L. Hendricks, Valerie Jaudon, and Dana Schutz, with all but one piece dating from 2006 or later. (Delfina Nahrgang's "Woman in the Mosque I" is from 1994.) The show, which has several empty rooms because of budget constraints (keep on moving even if you think it's over, as that last room past a narrow hallway is often overlooked by visitors), contains some fine painting; among the award winners are Richard McLean's "Toward Delano," Elisa Jensen's "Trapped Sky," and Charles Parness's "Sometimes the Yoni Gets Angry with the

Lingham." Richard Van Buren's "Green Movement" captured the sculpture prize, while Chuck Holtzman's "Untitled (#798)" won for best graphics. Be sure to sit in the chair that is part of Sam Hernandez's "I'm Listening," which offers a unique perspective. Alison Elizabeth Taylor's unusual wood inlay and shellac piece, "Bombay Beach," gets a position of prominence, standing boldly by itself. Cildo Meireles slyly comments on Piero Manzoni in the playful light-box transparency "Atlas." Perhaps the academy's boldest selection, for a somewhat traditional organization, is Nina Yankowitz's multimedia installation "Buried Treasures," which comments on great and overlooked scientific discoveries made by women.

Nina Yankowitz, "Buried Treasures," installation with video, 2008 (photo by twi-ny/mdr)

On April 9 at 6:45, chief curator David Dearinger will lecture on the history of the National Academy's annual exhibition. In addition, there will be a guided tour of the annual on May 7 at 6:45; artists Julia Randall, Ghada Amer, and Judith Bernstein will participate in "Let's Talk About Sex: Gender Issues in a Post-Feminist World" on April 16 at 6:45; and curator Marshall Price will host a tour and lecture of the exhibit with artist Sarah Walker on June 4 at 6:30.

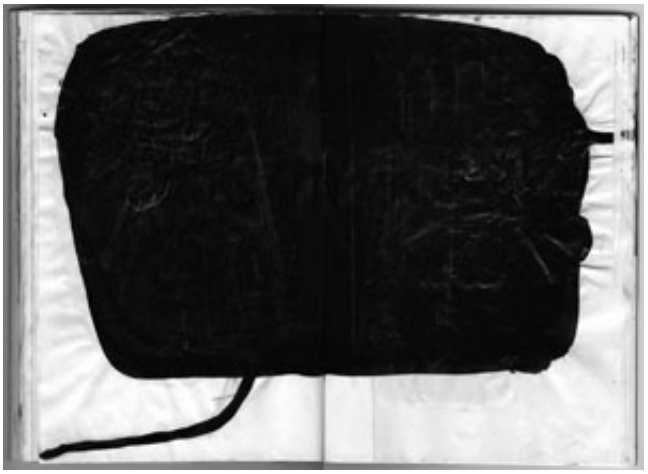
THE BROOKLYN RAIL
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

ArtSeen February 6th, 2008

"I am not now nor have I ever been..."

by Mira Schor

I am not a feminist artist.



Mira Schor, "Summer Thought Balloon," (2007). Ink and graphite on paper. 12 1/4" × 9 1/2 in.

Now I've got your attention. I am following a time-honored tradition and taking a page out of Marina Abramovic's playbook. At the MoMA symposium "The Feminist Future: Theory and Practice in the Visual Arts" at the end of January 2007, she introduced herself that way (as she does at every *feminist* art event to which she is invited) to an audience that included Harmony Hammond, Ida Applebroog, Carolee Schneemann, Mary Beth Edelson, Faith Wilding, and dozens of other major women artists who have identified themselves with the feminist movement, who were not invited to the podium, and whose presence in the room was like a barely acknowledged 300-lb. GUERRILLA GIRL.

As the Wizard makes perfectly clear at the end of *The Wizard of Oz*, in a spectacle society, you are something only if you are given some visible symbolic proof: the Tin Man gets his heart through an official testimonial. So by the rules of the spectacle, I am not a feminist artist because I am not included in *WACK! Art and The Feminist Revolution* (opening February 17th at P.S.1) or last year's *Global Feminisms* at the Brooklyn Museum. But before you dismiss my argument as sour grapes, please take note that I'm in great company: most of *my entire generation* has been eliminated from the history of feminist art by the two major museum shows devoted to the subject in 2007-2008. In determining the composition of *WACK!* Cornelia Butler concentrated on what might be termed the pioneer generation: since this was part of "Second-Wave Feminism," let's call it "Generation 2." In the case of *Global Feminisms*, Maura Reilly and Linda Nochlin selected women born after 1960, Generation 3. So a chronological ditch was created into which fell most of the artists born after 1945 but before 1960.

Call it Generation 2.5: the first generation whose members were able to embrace feminism as a path in their youth. The generation who really developed most of the tropes we think of as feminist art, often

inventing and building them at the same time as their pioneer mentors. Women such as Maureen Connor, Judith Shea, Rona Pondick, Robin Mitchell, Shirley Kaneda, Suzanne Joelson, Joan Waltemath, Zoe Leonard, Rochelle Feinstein, Abigail Child, Deb Kass, Leslie Labowitz, Vanalyne Green, Barbara Kruger, Erika Rothenberg, Nancy Bowen, Pat Ward Williams, Peggy Ahwesh, Beverly Naidus, Terri Berkowitz, Shu Lea Cheang, Nancy Fried, Elise Siegel, Shelly Silver, Valerie Jaudon, Susan Bee, Laurie Simmons, The Guerrilla Girls, Sophie Calle, Jana Sterbak, Johanna Drucker, Lenore Malen, Kiki Smith, Susanna Heller, Elena Sisto, Bailey Doogan, Perry Bard, Lisa Hoke, Elissa D'Arrigo, Elana Herzog, Xenobia Bailey, Nancy Davidson, Faith Wilding, among many others. Not all of these artists make—BIG SCARE QUOTES—*"Political Art,"*—more on that in a minute—but they form a politically conscious cohort.

By the way, among the women artists left out of the two exhibitions, one can make a distinction between Generation 2.5 and Generation 2.75, women who in some cases were born after 1960 but who were also not included in *Global Feminisms* because they were seen as established artists who had been showing since the early 90s. These include Nicole Eisenman, Kara Walker, Judie Bamber, Janine Antoni, Renée Cox, Liz Larner, Ingrid Calame, Coco Fusco, Jeanne Dunning, Gillian Wearing, Renée Green, Mona Hatoum, Andrea Fraser, Rachel Lachowicz, Portia Munson, Patricia Cronin, Carrie Moyers, Sheila Pepe, Andrea Zittel, Lorna Simpson, Collier Schorr, and Rachel Whiteread.

Many commentators noted with dismay or bemusement the sheer volume of images of mothers, breasts, raped and brutalized naked female bodies represented in *Global Feminisms*. Viewers were asking, Do these works represent a dominant vein of imagery? Is this what younger women self-selected as feminists consider feminist art, or is this a reflection of the views of the curators? What was problematic was not the imagery—many of these works were quite powerful and add to the impressive lexicon of feminist art. It was the lack of political or theoretical discourse on the profusion of such imagery.

Here the issue of denial of feminism comes into play. "I am not a feminist/feminist artist" is the surprising mantra of all feminist exhibitions, symposia and journal forums since the late '80s. Read carefully the catalogue biographies of the artists included in *WACK!* and you will see that in each case the curators tacitly seek to justify the inclusion of the artist in a show of feminist art by citing some indication of her public or private identification as a feminist. This proves untenable, however, as further reading reveals that a significant portion of the show's 119 individual artists and artists' collectives are described as having little or no public relationship with feminism, or as denying the identification outright. It is quite interesting to track how many of the women included in *WACK!* were not, are not feminists in any active sense, even if you take into account the differing geo-political contexts and/or the age of the artist in relation to the benchmark dates of Second Wave Feminism, and even if you agree that the value of an artist's work to a feminist analysis of representation and form is not dependent on her private politics or intentionality (the age-old struggles between individual creativity and public politics notwithstanding). "Many of [Marina] Abramovic's best-known performances from the 1970s stand, in part, as critiques of the traditional role of women in the arts…Despite this, the artist has distanced herself from the feminist movement: 'I have never had

anything to do with feminism." (*WACK!* p. 210); "[Louise] Bourgeois's relationship to feminism is complex…'There is no feminist aesthetic. Absolutely not!'" (220); "[Theresa Hak Kyung] Cha's work is not overtly feminist but…" (223); "Perhaps indicative of her lifelong antipathy to categories, [Jay DeFeo] did not identify herself as a feminist" (226); "Although [Rita] Donagh was not intimately engaged with the burgeoning feminist discourse in 1970s England…" (229); "While [Lili] Dujourie has recalled feeling marginalized by her primarily male colleagues and acknowledged a debt to feminist film theory…she has also rejected a specifically feminist reading her of her work." (231); [Louise] Fishman too was struggling to resist a movement that had supported her and through which she was able to develop her identity as an artist." (236); "Although [Catalina] Parra does not identify herself as a feminist artist…" (280); "Although [Katharina] Sieverding does not explicitly ally herself with feminism…" (299).

This politics of denial is familiar: for example, under the covers, as it were, of the qualifiedly triumphant 1997 *ARTNews* cover headline "We've come a long way…MAYBE" were a number of statements by women artists, many of whom articulated the kind of deferral, demurral, anxiety of identification with feminism of the "I'm a feminist *but*" variety: "On the flip side, when it comes to feminism, I'm kind of, Ick, I don't want to talk about it. It's such a scary yucky subject—like any 'ism'" (Nicole Eisenman); "I wouldn't say that my work is 'feminist" in the sense that I have it as a mandate or a goal" (Kiki Smith). In each full statement the woman artist both aligns herself with some aspect of what she thinks feminism is but separates her work from feminism. So, indeed, how far *have* we come?

All artists reject limited readings of their work. But when the work clearly deals with gender and gendered power relations, when it deals with femininity, when it explores female sexuality and the female body, when the work uses the vocabulary of gendered tropes developed by the first generations of the feminist art movement – the ones in *WACK!* and the ones left out of the history proposed by *WACK!*--how is it not feminist art? Why is it still such a problem?

Clearly, it is. These denials are a troubling indication that feminism continues to be perceived as a controversial and dangerous identification. Women still don't want to be seen as feminist artists because that would limit them to being seen as women artists and no one wants to be seen as a woman artist. "Woman" still denotes second-class status within a (still male after all these years) universal. That this should be, or should be perceived to be, the case only proves that feminism is still a necessary political analysis of society and a powerful tool for mobilizing the production of art that engages with the question of gender and injustice on all levels.

Surprise, surprise, a lot of people in the art world are not feminists and a lot of people who have power in the art world prefer to deal with people who do not threaten a gendered power system. Feminists are inconvenient so mainstream success often seems to be at the price of denying a feminist identity. This denial insures that these women artists are more likely to be incorporated into a variety of art histories. It is part of the cost of their ticket of admission into the art market and art history. The feminist art movement did make it possible for *women* artists to achieve big careers in the art world, but not necessarily for *feminists* to achieve such success.

In fact one sub-theme expressed in Butler, Reilly, and Nochlin's catalogue writings is that perhaps it is actually better if the artist is not intentionally making feminist art, rearticulating the long-held belief that works done by artists with a conscious political agenda will not have the formal interest *nor even the political power* of artworks done in a more personal and individualistic engagement with form and self-expression. That is the oldest canard in the canon of supposedly neutral high modernist style, the age-old criticism of political art, as if feminism had not helped make clear that these more "universal" aspirations always have a gendered political dimension.

There is a basic misunderstanding about what political art means. Being a feminist doesn't mean your art has to represent cunts and lace. You may not find many obvious markers of a feminist art work in terms of representation of the sexualized or gendered body in the current art made by many of the women artists who do not deny feminism, but the sedimented subtext remains feminist (in contradistinction to the kind of representation in photography and video installations that dominated *Global Feminisms*, a show that included little abstraction or painting but lots of lacerated women's bodies).

One way to get around the paradox of embarrassment with feminism as a political position is to dilute the meaning of feminism. The word is as inconvenient as the people who don't apologize for it. If only one could get rid of it and keep the societal advantages it won for women. Meanwhile let's make it palatable by taking "the political" out of the old feminist slogan, "the personal is the political." To say that feminist art is not anything that a woman artist makes, but that it emerges from a political analysis of power and its representations, is just too, well, too political.

Think for a minute about the social structure that supports the art market: is it going to support artists who don't pull their punches when it comes to patriarchy? No, and that's where the notion that political artists don't make as good art comes in so handy.

If you say you're not a feminist then you're not a feminist. But then why would you want to be in exhibitions that have the word in the title?

It really isn't that hard to say you are a feminist: it is a political interpretation of power structures in society. Your work doesn't have to be illustrative of previous tropes. But if you say you are not a feminist artist, don't pretend that you are not engaging in a political act. "I am not a feminist artist" is political speech, with serious effects.

The inclusive, extensive feminist artist community I have lived among was suggested by the Guerrilla Girls' 1989 poster, Guerrilla Girls Identities Exposed. For this poster, which played with the widespread curiosity about who they really were, the Guerrilla Girls simply wrote to or called up as many women artists, art writers, art historians, and curators as they could think of and asked them if it was OK to use their names: would they accept the public designation Guerrilla Girl? Feminist? Among the 500 women on the list, in addition to people I have already named, were artists Suzanne Anker, Emma Amos, Polly Apfelbaum, Andre Belag, Andrea Blum, Jackie Brookner, Ellen Brooks, Emily Cheng, Petah Coyne,

New Sculpture Speaks Volumes

By Pat Rogers

At nighttime, the words seem to float on air. During the day, the black and red type becomes part of a house of quotes supported by glass and steel. The network of one-liners captures thoughts uttered by artists, actors, architects, writers and other creative types.

After reading the musings on art, creativity and life, visitors may remark on how the sculpture's appearance takes on another form. It could be seen as a monument to creativity. The steel lines may invoke musings about the lines between the artists—whether the medium of choice is a paintbrush, blueprint or musical instrument. From there, it's not a large leap to wonder if the sculpture's structure should be viewed in the context of connections across history and among people in general.

Welcome to "Kiosk.Edu"—a glass and steel house of quotes on vinyl placed in orderly lines. The work was created by Sag Harbor and SoHo artist Nina Yankowitz with Yankowitz and Holden, a partnership between the artist and her architect-husband Barry Holden. It will be unveiled at Guild Hall on Saturday in the museum's newly redesigned outdoor sculpture garden. "Kiosk.Edu" was recently exhibited at the Chicago Art Fair and in an AIA (American Institute of Architecture) exhibit. The work will remain on view at Guild Hall through October 23.

Guild Hall's sculpture garden is located in the back of the building behind a tall row of shrubbery that separates it from the museum's parking lot. The sculpture garden has been closed while it received a complete makeover. Along with new greenery and new pathways, lighting was installed to enable the highlighting of future works exhibited in the space.

"We decided to showcase one piece and allow the garden to show off on its own for a minute, and we would add more pieces later," said Guild Hall Curator Christina Mossaides Strassfield.

Ms. Strassfield selected "Kiosk.Edu" because it is artwork that talks about the process of art. Quotes include thoughts expressed by Jackson Pollock, Frank Lloyd Wright, Georgia O'Keeffe, Louise Nevelson, Claude Monet, Martin Mull and many others.

In an interview, Ms. Strassfield said, "I've been a fan of Ms. Yankowitz's work for a long time. When I saw this, it seemed perfect. It's a universal piece and most artists can appreciate it."

Ms. Yankowitz was excited that "Kiosk.Edu" was selected for the show and would be seen in her own backyard, so to speak. She has designed and executed public art projects with Yankowitz and Holden in Queens, Manhattan, New Jersey, Connecticut, Florida, Massachusetts, Denver, San Francisco and other places across the country. Museum installations include the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Biennial, the Art Institute of Chicago, Dia Center for the Arts, the Katonah Museum of Art, the Parrish Art Museum, Guild Hall and more.

Her work has been exhibited in Germany, Japan, Italy, numerous Manhattan galleries, PS1 in Queens, San Francisco, Chicago, and places across the country and across the world in traveling exhibitions. Ms. Yankowitz has lectured on art and taught at the Brooklyn Museum of Art School, Finch College, the Philadelphia College of Art, Pratt, the School of Visual Arts and more.

A favorite quote from "Kiosk.Edu" is by actor and painter Martin Mull. "I have artistic fibrosis and, yes, it is a crippler." Another comes from John Cage: "We need not destroy the past—it is gone." This is the way she views her work, Ms. Yankowitz said. Once it's conceived, it becomes part of the conceptual past.

Finding the quotes and sharing them through the work are equal parts joy for Ms. Yankowitz. The quotes are culled from internet sites, library archives and numerous sources and were collected over a year.

"It's so important to share some of the conceptional ideas, whether they're from painters, musicians or writers," she said. "I find it so interesting to find these poignant quotes that the world can understand and get the art references without all the specialized and technical words that are used about art."

"Kiosk.Edu" is also about connections formed between artists along a historical line. It's about the now and about how technology and the digital age have made information-gathering, learning, cross-world and cross-community connections possible, she said. It's about playing with words and contemplated concepts. It provides windows into creative minds and the creative process.

The process of creating "Kiosk.Edu" and exploring the idea of connectedness and relationships throughout the ages led to another connected concept. Her next project will cull quotes from authoritative religious texts on ways women are perceived and treated in Christianity, Judaism and Islam. How differences and similarities translate into practice is an important area of exploration. The sculpture will use a similar house structure as "Kiosk.Edu."

All of Ms. Yankowitz's work has a strong architectural component to it. She particularly likes the shelter structure used in "Kiosk.Edu" because it is versatile and adaptable to the creative demands of her concepts. She also has worked with peeling, concealing and revealing concepts, using floors and wall shapes to make her art. Images of some of her works and public projects can be found at www.yankowitzandholden.com.

"Kiosk.Edu" and the redesigned Guild Hall sculpture garden will be unveiled at a reception on Saturday from 4 to 6 p.m. Ms. Yankowitz plans to attend. The reception will also mark the opening of the museum show: "Two Exhibitions: Robert Rauschenberg and Cindy Sherman." Both exhibitions will be on view through October 23.

Guild Hall Museum in East Hampton will unveil Nina Yankowitz's work, Kiosk.edu, during a reception in the sculpture garden from 4 to 6 p.m. on Saturday, August 13.

CALENDAR
MUSEUM
JOHN DREW THEATER
EDUCATION
MEMBERSHIP
SPECIAL EVENTS
VOLUNTEERS, JOBS, INTERNS
SHOPPING
HOME

ORDER TICKETS NOW!
TheaterMania.com

6TH ANNUAL SUMMER GALA
Click here for the Items for Auction

A NOTE ABOUT TEXT SIZE

AUGUST 13 - OCTOBER 23
NINA YANKOWITZ EXHIBITION

AUGUST 13 - OCTOBER 23
TWO EXHIBITIONS: ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG and CINDY SHERMAN

The Museum is available for your corporate soiree on selected Fridays from 6:00PM - 8:00PM.

Call the development department at 631.324.080 for pricing and details.

AUGUST 13 - OCTOBER 23

NINA YANKOWITZ EXHIBITION

Guild Hall Museum will unveil part of its revamped sculpture garden on Saturday, August 13 with Kiosk.Edu.on view from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. The exhibition will be on view through October 23rd, 2005.

Kiosk.Edu is a glass and steel house that reflects quotes from artists, architects, and performers mined from the contemporary and art historical excavations.
This interior lit house measures 6 feet 4 inches b 8 feet by 7 feet 2 inches tall. The glass house was designed to inform the public about the personal, conceptual and/or emotional journeys these artists traveled in the process to achieve their respective creative destinations.

Among the many quotes imprinted on the house is black and red type are:

"Art is science made clear". Jean Cocteau

"I found I could say things with color and shape that I couldn't say any other way-things I had no words for." Georgia O'Keefe

" Every good painter paints what he is." Jackson Pollock

"Form follows function- that has been misunderstood. Form and function should be one, joined in a spiritual union." Frank Lloyd Wright

" A woman may not hit a ball stronger than a man, but it is different. I prize that difference." Louise Nevelson.

" Color is my day-long obsession, joy and torment" Claude Monet.

'Outside/In'

WOOSTER ARTS SPACE

Artist Joyce Kozloff donned her curator hat for this starstruck show featuring five women artists. Elizabeth Demaray's eye-catching re-creation of NASA's Mercury reentry module (2003) almost knocked you over at the entrance. Suspended from the ceiling and wrapped in silver duct tape, the unit is cozily upholstered in cushions and throw pillows and is large enough for one person to climb inside, lie down, and be soothed by music and a projection of starry skies, space-travel domesticated—frequent-flyer miles accumulating.

Donna Dennis contributed an encased, miniature winter landscape of Styrofoam snow in cross section, with a tiny telescope pointed toward a twinkling night sky like a submachine gun (2002–3); and a larger installation (from 1996–2003) picturing the derelict underbelly of Coney Island, a wasteland glamorized by a heaven made from a ceiling-to-floor cascade of black tulle studded with glass jewels.

Nina Yankowitz, long enamored of airplanes, presented them as images on paper and as a stunning installation, *Femme Fatale* (2003). Contained within a glass greenhouselike structure, a black F-15 fighter hung upside down over a drift of feathers, on pause. Yankowitz has upped the ante from cars to planes in her ironic equation of war machines with the female body.

Nina Yankowitz, *Femme Fatale*, 2003, fiberglass, aluminum, glass, feathers, and lights, 8'5" x 6'4" x 7'1½". Wooster Arts Space.

Abby Robinson's C-prints, from 2000 to 2002, most closely mirrored the title of the show. Shots of photography studios, the subjects were various backdrops that bring the outdoors inside; one of them, of course, depicted a painted night sky. Simonetta Moro deconstructed the process of fresco painting, from the transfer of images via cartoons, to the graphite underdrawing that stands in for the earth-tone pigment, to examples of finished fresco on board. The images were based on Piranesi's "Carceri" series, although some resembled constellations. Altogether, it was a smooth-riding show, easy takeoff, easy landing, and good to look at. ***—Lilly Wei***

THE EAST HAMPTON STAR
East Hampton, N.Y. Shines for All Online November 21, 2002

NINA YANKOWITZ

Art Of The Moment

By Robert Long

A life-sized ear is embedded high in the wall of Nina Yankowitz's dining room, and a nose monitors her kitchen. Soon, a variety of sights and sounds will emanate from the floor, inside which Ms. Yankowitz, an innovative artist with a pronounced sense of humor, and her husband, the architect Barry Holden, are about to install a digital library. Ms. Yankowitz has been exhibiting at leading galleries and in museum shows such as the Whitney Biennial since she was still an art student in the 1970s. In the last years, she and Mr. Holden have been brainstorming on public art installations. Some recent projects might be seen as a revival of what was once called Earth Art; Yankowitz and Holden, as they are professionally known, have proposed making geometrical sculptures of cantilevered dirt in striated colors while lit from beneath, Motorized walls that open or close to reveal different views of landscape; entire corners of houses slide up or down to open views; small sections of walls "peel" in neat curls; waterfalls run down interior walls, turning to rivers that cross the room. From a smooth red brick floor, benches rise like popups in a children's book. A ribbon of water flows through a trench cut into a gentle slope of lawn. These projects "put a whole new edge on landscape architecture," Ms. Yankowitz said recently at her house, which has a sweeping, peaceful view of Noyac Bay.

Thank The Computer

In the old days, public art usually translated into what Tom Wolfe once memorably described as "the turd in the courtyard" - an abstract sculpture plopped down in the middle of a cement plaza. These installations can be seen in every major American city, and although the art is sometimes wonderful, it rarely has anything to do with the environment it's placed in. That has changed gradually over the years. "Artists who do a lot of public art have become used to responding to park sites, say, and working with them," Ms. Yankowitz said. "Over the years sculpture and the environment have come closer together. And now there is a completely new phenomenon. Because of technology, artists can build portfolios out of imagined, rather than real sites. That's something we've been doing - building imaginary sites in the computer." Architects use computers as they once used pencils. Frank Gehry's buildings, such as the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, could never have been designed, not to mention built, without computer programs. Mr. Holden, who has designed a number of houses on the East End, noted that although he still has an office, its functions now reside to a large degree in his laptop. The computer "allows us to work with scientific ideas, with things like gravity," Ms. Yankowitz said. "The dirt cantilevers are a result of that. And we've been working on floors as containers for fish life - fish swimming through what we call tide trenches in the floor of a house, or a public place.

Ms. Yankowitz's career speaks first and foremost of an artist whose sensibility has always been of the moment; she may know her art history, but she is wholly unconcerned with artificial connections to art of the past. The pleated paintings she made in the early 1970s are a case in point. They are spray-painted canvases that hang in loose folds and bunches, casual-looking but gravely elegant, a literal undoing of art convention. One hangs in the stairwell of her house; it has the understated presence of a medieval tapestry. "As a kid, in high school, there was the whole movement of Junk Art, those works by

Rauschenberg and Kaprow, and I was fascinated by those new ways of seeing. I can remember reading about Vermeer in art history, learning about chiaroscuro and perspective, and I'd immediately have ideas - I'd think, imagine the light effects you'd get if you took big flashlights and embedded them in the walls! I've always had that associative kind of mind; I tend to think in spirals rather than in a linear fashion." "I always had this need to dig in, to explore, to examine things from many different angles at the same time. I've done multiple voice paintings, for example. I'd get very excited when I could take information and restructure it in a way that gave it a new form, that gave me a new perspective. If it was new for me, then I learned something; it was edifying."

Ms. Yankowitz's work has sometimes taken shapes that are literally transgressive. One well-known installation, "Vanishing Point," made in 1997, takes the form of the bright blue tail and wingtips of a jet that intersect with the exterior of the Freedman Gallery in Pennsylvania; the aircraft appears to have just crashed into the building without misplacing a single brick. It's a breathtaking work. Miniature rowboats have found themselves in the walls of galleries, as has a mysterious black circular form that reads as either the door to an old-fashioned bank vault or the front of a steam locomotive; you're not sure if it's static or plunging toward you. She was born and raised in New Jersey and in junior high began "sneaking off to cafes to hear Bob Dylan. I feel like I discovered him. I heard him at the Cafe Wha and was at the show where Pete Seeger brought him out and introduced him as a bright new talent." She studied for two years at Temple University, because "it had a good writing department, and I thought maybe that was what I wanted to do. Then I realized that what I really wanted was to make art." The School of Visual Arts became her launching pad. Malcolm Morley, Janet Fish, and Sol

Le Witt were among her teachers. Ms. Fish was "the only woman teacher at the school then, believe it or not. Sol Le Witt was fabulous, very supportive. He was making paintings then. He called me up and said, 'I have someone I want you to meet, she's just starting to show her work.' It was Eva Hesse. We were in some shows together that year, at the Aldrich Museum and elsewhere." While she was still in school, the Kornblee Gallery added her to its roster, and she found herself showing with Mr. Morley, among other art stars. She even had work exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art. "I was so young. I didn't even know you were supposed to go to your own openings," she said, laughing. She also decided to pass up an opportunity to enroll in an accelerated master's in art program that the University of Massachusetts offered to S.V.A. students. "I felt I should just work in the studio, and maybe I could get a teaching position as a visiting artist. So I went to the College Art Association and I was hired to teach at the University of Massachusetts graduate program. I went there only to discover that all of my students had been my classmates! It was a really tough situation, And on top of that, I was a woman." She survived that experience to advise students at the Pratt Institute, the Rhode Island School of Design, the University of Colorado at Boulder, Finch College, the University of Cincinnati, and a dozen others, including her alma mater, all the while showing in over a dozen museums around the country and participating in about 100 solo, group, and traveling exhibits. On the East End, she has had pieces at the Parrish Art Museum and Guild Hall.

Digital technology has not only influenced the work Ms. Yankowitz and Mr. Holden do, but has changed the nature of the art world, she pointed out. While New York was once the undisputed art capital, now "it's everywhere. There's wonderful work in California - there always has been, but now there is instant access to it. So much wonderful stuff is happening in London. And we can see what's going on there by going on the Internet." As far as the state of art in New York, she said, "It's how it has always been. But there's a lot more of it. When I started out, there were maybe 30 galleries, and now there are hundreds. It's huge." "I have no choice but to interpret the world as I see it," she said. "The value of making art is to give new meaning to what you see. You want the viewer to recontextualize the world as they know it, to see it in a different light." "What I hope to have happen is not only to surprise myself but to make the viewer see something in a way they never would have considered before. In that way, art adds to and enriches your life."

YANKOWITZ AND HOLDEN: A COLLABORATION

By Nancy Princenthal

Nina Yankowitz and Barry Holden have been collaborating on public art projects since 1987. Though both have independent careers, Yankowitz as a sculptor and Holden as an Architect, they have always been deeply concerned with issues that bridge their respective disciplines: the public accommodation of private experience, the role of humor in public art, the social responsibilities - ethical, educational - of working in the public realm, and, as an important part of those responsibilities, the provision of heightened perception and sheer visual pleasure. Their collaboration brings together complementary creative, conceptual and technical abilities, as well as deep familiarity with historical and contemporary art, and with meeting the practical demands of a wide variety of project programs.

Each of their projects has represented a unique solution to a distinctive challenge. But certain themes emerge in their work. Yankowitz has long experience working with mosaic tile, and her 1,000 sq. ft. Tunnel Vision ceramic tile mural, which creates trompe l'oeil rips through subway walls, providing views of hidden seascapes, was one the first new mosaics to be installed as part of a recently expanded art program in the New York City subway system. Many of her solo works, and of the team's collaborative projects, have involved illusionistic cuts into or through walls, revealing fictive secrets, creating fictive ruins. Sometimes substantial forms protrude from the wall, among them a cylinder that could be the front end of a train, and a sleek, ambiguous wing that evokes airplanes, but also an out-thrust tongue.

Themes that recur in Yankowitz and Holden's collaborative work include such vernacular American architectural forms as white clapboard farmhouses and humble wooden rowboats. Often, such forms, and others, are set adrift, made to seemingly hover in midair, to be lit from within, or, conversely, to be immersed in solid material, from which they only partially emerge, dreamlike but altogether believable. One proposal called for 18'-high columns to be clad in lacy, perforated stainless steel, lit internally so they seemed to generate their own light; a central element of this proposal was a public bench illuminated so that it, too seemed to glow, and, most dramatically, to float inches above the floor.

A realized project that has received particularly wide acclaim is Garden of Games/Garden of Scientific Ideas, commissioned by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs' Percent for Art program for the two 3,000 sq. ft. rooftops of a New York City public school. The Garden of Scientific Ideas incorporates a wide variety of interactive, cast-bronze sculptures based on scientific instruments, including a sound wave magnifier, a "Newton's Cradle," and a parabolic image generator; the Games garden, constructed of granite mosaics inlaid in limestone tables and benches, features chess and backgammon playing boards. They rest on colored pavers that echo the game board theme, as do further, geometric sculptural elements, some of which double as seating. Among the project's distinctive features is an oversized clock that sends out shifting patterns of light through a perforated stainless steel grill that revolves across its face.

Yankowitz and Holden are looking towards projects that will allow them to realize their interest in provocative uses of new technologies. Having long been interested in paradoxical physical experiences - in seemingly solid and forms that can be made permeable, and stable, massive ones that can be made to shimmer, shift, and even levitate --they are eager to expand the means by which such effects can be achieved. Like Alice in Wonderland, they continue to follow their curiosity about alternative spatial worlds, and to explore new means of bringing them vividly to life.

Nancy Princenthal

Scenarios : Scripts to Perform

Richard Kostelantz, Marina Abramovic, Ulay, Blair H. Allen, Charles Amirkhanian, Michael Andre, Bruce Andrews, Mel Andringa, Anna Banana, Amari Baraka, Peter H. Barnett, Wolfgang Bauer, Lee Baxandall, Allan Bealy, Kenneth Bernard, George Brecht, Carolyn Brown, Ed Bullins, Donald Burgy, John Cage, Carl D. Clark, Guy de Cointet, David Cole, Paul Epstein, Loris Essary, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Robert Filliou, A.M. Fine, Richard Foreman, Peter Frank, Ken Friedman, Malcolm Goldstein, Paul Goodman, Dan Graham, Spalding Gray, Charles Gruber, Guerrilla Art Action Group, Anna Halprin, Ihab Hassan, Scott Helmes, Bob Heman, Hi Red Center, Dick Higgins, William M. Hoffman, Jerry Hunt, Patrick Ireland, Tom Johnson, Ben Johnston, Sheila Keenan, George Ketterl, Michael Kirby, Alison Knowles, Christopher Knowles, Kenneth J. Leon, The Living Theatre, Philip Lopate, Alvin Lucier, Mary Lucier, Otto Luening, Toby Lurie, Jackson Mac Low, George Maciunas, Sarah Maclay, Toby MacLennan, Aaron Marcus, Kenneth Maue, Michael McClure, Jonas Mekas, Dave Morice, Charlie Morrow, Linda Mussman, Opal Louis Nations, Claes Oldenburg, Rochelle Owens, Nam June Paik, Pedro Pietri, Le Plan K, Bern Porter, Rachel Rosenthal, Jerome Rothenberg, R. Murray Schafer, Francis Schwartz, Stephen Scobie, Douglas Barbour, Stuart Sherman, Mieko Shiomi, Paul Sills, Stuart Smith, Gertrude Stein, Conciere Taylor, Jim Theobald, Lorenzo Thomas, Fred Truck, Tristan Tzara, Wolf Vostell, Keith Waldrop, Robert Watts, Carole Weber, Emmett Williams, Robert Wilson, Nina Yankowitz, Paul Zelevansky

Anthology of theatrical/performative scripts and documents conceived as of as a companion to Breakthrough Fictioneers and Essaying Essays. Compiled and edited by Richard Kostelantz. Features contributions by Marina Abramovic, Ulay, Blair H. Allen, Charles Amirkhanian, Michael Andre, Bruce Andrews, Mel Andringa, Anna Banana, Amari Baraka, Peter H. Barnett, Wolfgang Bauer, Lee Baxandall, Allan Bealy, Kenneth Bernard, George Brecht, Carolyn Brown, Ed Bullins, Donald Burgy, John Cage, Carl D. Clark, Guy de Cointet, David Cole, Paul Epstein, Loris Essary, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Robert Filliou, A.M. Fine, Richard Foreman, Peter Frank, Ken Friedman, Malcolm Goldstein, Paul Goodman, Dan Graham, Spalding Gray, Charles Gruber, Guerrilla Art Action Group, Anna Halprin, Ihab Hassan, Scott Helmes, Bob Heman, Hi Red Center, Dick Higgins, William M. Hoffman, Jerry Hunt, Patrick Ireland, Tom Johnson, Ben Johnston, Sheila Keenan, George Ketterl, Michael Kirby, Alison Knowles, Christopher Knowles, Kenneth J. Leon, The Living Theatre, Philip Lopate, Alvin Lucier, Mary Lucier, Otto Luening, Toby Lurie, Jackson Mac Low, George Maciunas, Sarah Maclay, Toby MacLennan, Aaron Marcus, Kenneth Maue, Michael McClure, Jonas Mekas, Dave Morice, Charlie Morrow, Linda Mussman, Opal Louis Nations, Claes Oldenburg, Rochelle Owens, Nam June Paik, Pedro Pietri, Le Plan K, Bern Porter, Rachel Rosenthal, Jerome Rothenberg, R. Murray Schafer, Francis Schwartz, Stephen Scobie, Douglas Barbour, Stuart Sherman, Mieko Shiomi, Paul Sills, Stuart Smith, Gertrude Stein, Conciere Taylor, Jim Theobald, Lorenzo Thomas, Fred Truck, Tristan Tzara, Wolf Vostell, Keith Waldrop, Robert Watts, Carole Weber,Emmett Williams, Robert Wilson, Nina Yankowitz, and Paul Zelevansky.

Brooklyn, NY : Assembling Press, 1980 ; critical theory ; wrappers ; offset-printed ; sewn bound ; black-and-white ; 23 x 15.5 cm. ; 704 pp. ; edition size unknown ; unsigned and unnumbered ; ISBN 0915066427

51st Street/Lexington Avenue-53rd Street
NINA YANKOWITZ
Tunnel Vision, 1988
Ceramic tile in lower pass

Tunnel Vision consists of handmade tiles that line the 51st Street and Lexington Avenue subway underpass. The 1,000 square-foot ceramic tile installation contains a series of wide cracks that appear as deep indentations in the form of lightning bolts ripping through the site and exposing bright blue marbleized water tiles. Revealed within are seascapes that offer a view to another realm. A ceramic relief architectural frieze of the New York City skyline in red, black, and white wraps around the top portion of the walls, and column-like forms appear as pillars supporting

THE SUN
LIGHT • FOR • ALL
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1993 THE SUN

'Ciphers': Artistic questions of identity

By John Dorsey
Art Critic

ART REVIEW

What: "Ciphers of Identity"
Where: Fine Arts Gallery at University of Maryland Baltimore County, 5401 Wilkens Ave.
When: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays; through Jan. 15
Call: (410) 455-3188

Barbara Kruger's "Untitled" in UMBC's show "Ciphers of Identity" plays with identity in several ways. She used an existing photograph of a woman's hands pulling a photograph out of a file drawer filled with folders bearing numbers — 2400, 3150, etc.

The photo the hand holds is blurred; you can't tell what it shows, so the subject doesn't have an identity. The numbers indicate that whatever or whoever the photo shows has been reduced to something nameless for the purposes of this file. On the photo Kruger has superimposed the written legend "Who do you think you are?" By throwing this question at the viewer, Kruger indicates we all have as little identity as the subject of the photo.

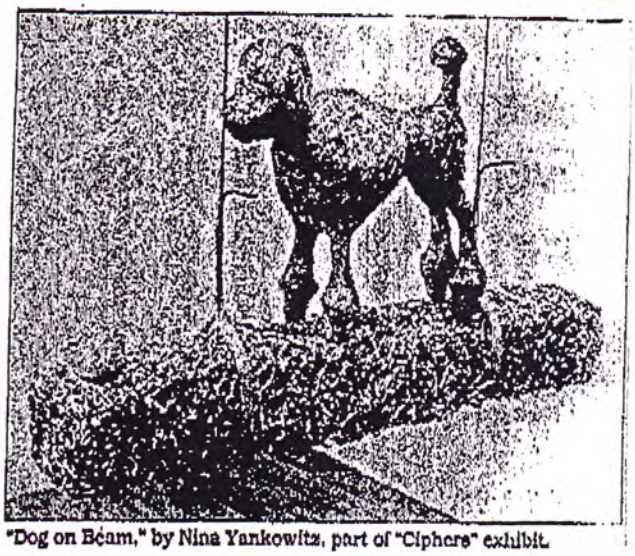
By using an old photograph for new purposes, she has altered its original identity. The woman's disembodied hands suggest that she, whoever she was, has no identity for us beyond what her hands are doing. By extension, Kruger says, our identity changes depending on what we do, who sees us do it, and how they interpret it. Our identity, therefore, doesn't belong to us.

- The premise of "Ciphers of Identity," curated by cultural historian and art critic Maurice Berger, is challenging. A UMBC statement defines the exhibit as an investigation of "how artists from diverse racial, ethnic, sexual, and economic communities have defined cultural identity in the politically charged climate of America in the 1990s."

Identity is a difficult question, especially in America, because there are so many complexities to it. There is individual identity, socio-economic identity, cultural identity and national identity, and sometimes they're conflicting. How does one identify oneself as black, say, or homosexual, and at the same time as American, when the country as a whole has traditionally rejected or oppressed one's culture? It's not surprising that the artists here, like Kruger, deal not so much with defining cultural identity as with how difficult that is to do.

Fred Wilson's "Friendly Natives" consists of four plastic skeletons in four old-style showcases in which one might have seen artifacts from "other cultures" in an ethnographic museum. The impersonality of these skeletons suggests the inadequacy of such exhibits to encompass the real nature of whatever it was they purported to show. But by labeling the skeletons "somebody's mother," "somebody's brother," Wilson gives this work another meaning as well: that we all ultimately lack identity, that identity is a myth. And by using fake skeletons he suggests that even the myth is a myth.

Elaine Reichek's "Red Delicious" consists of a romantic depiction of what appears to be a young American Indian woman, inset with stills from old movies showing white men crudely dressed as Indians torturing white women. The work suggests that both the romantic and the Hollywood western versions are stereotypes, and the title further indicates the indignities to which American Indians have been subjected.

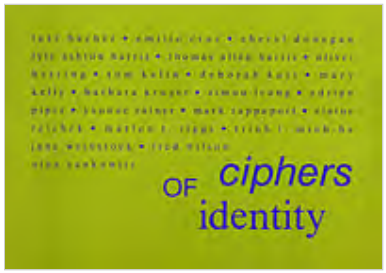


"Dog on Beam," by Nina Yankowitz, part of "Ciphers" exhibit.

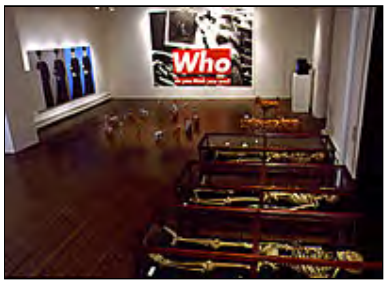
Lyle Ashton Harris' "Face" shows the artist as himself, a black man, and in blond wig and white makeup, suggesting that the difficulties of identity of blacks and homosexuals are compounded when one is both.

These are but a few examples from an thought-provoking show.

News
Gallery Info
>Exhibitions
Artists
Sales
Publications
e-Mail
HOME

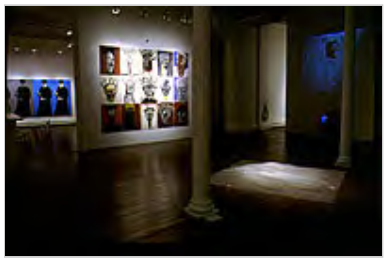


Ciphers of Identity June 4 - July 8, 1994

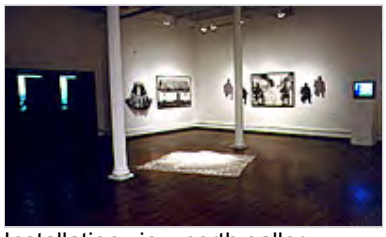


Installation view south gallery
Deborah Kass, Barbara Kruger, Nina Yankowitz, Fred Wilson

Installation view south gallery
Nina Yankowitz, Fred Wilson, Lyle Ashton Harris



Installation view north and south galleries
Deborah Kass, Emilio Cruz, Simon Leung, Oliver Herring



Installation view north gallery
Adrian Piper, Elaine Reichek, Oliver Herring

Artists included in **Ciphers of Identity:**

Lutz Bacher
Emilio Cruz
Cheryl Donegan
Lyle Ashton Harris
Thomas Allen Harris
Oliver Herring
Tom Kalin
Deborah Kass
Mary Kelly
Barbara Kruger
Simon Leung
Adrian Piper
Yvonne Rainer
Mark Rappaport
Elaine Reichek
Marlon T. Riggs
Trinh T. Minh-ha
Jane Weinstock
Fred Wilson
Nina Yankowitz

Click here for a PDF version of the following Press Release.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 3, 1994

Ciphers of Identity

June 4 –July 8, 1994

Curated by Maurice Berger

Nina Yankowitz • Fred Wilson • Jane Weinstock • Trinh T. Minh-ha
Marlon T. Riggs • Elaine Reichek • Mark Rappaport • Yvonne Rainer
Adrian Piper • Simon Leung • Barbara Kruger • Mary Kelly • Deborah Kass
Tom Kalin • Oliver Herring • Thomas Allen Harris • Lyle Ashton Harris
Cheryl Donegan • Emilio Cruz • Lutz Bacher

Throughout history, artists have often played a significant role in shaping national and personal identity. Organized by Maurice Berger, Senior Fellow at the Vera List Center for Art and Politics at the New School for Social Research, New York, the exhibition explores the ways in which artists of varying racial, ethnic, sexual, and economic communities have defined cultural identity in the politically charged climate of America in the 1990's. At a time when racism, sexism and homophobia have become the linchpins in censorious and oppressive attacks against marginal or oppositional culture, artists are now faced with fundamental political and aesthetic questions: In the age of mass communication, can artists produce effective and moving work within high cultural contexts? Should cultural figures and social communities under attack define themselves in relation to individual racial, sexual and ethnic groups and risk divisiveness, or should a cultural politics of coalition and consensus be encouraged? Is it possible for artists to represent themselves through multiple identities? What role should social, cultural, and art history play in redefining the role of self in modern society?

Ciphers of Identity examines the work of contemporary painters, photographers, filmmakers, and video, performance, and installation artists who are committed to examining the complex relationship between identity politics, forms of aesthetics address, and the struggle for social and cultural freedom. The show has a central aesthetic and theoretical theme: each participant employs the formal and theoretical device of displacement – allowing identity to exist outside of autobiography through displaced representations of the self – to question the notion of a unified, coherent identity. By splitting the self into ciphers – in which the self is represented through other people, articles of clothing, animals, objects, fictional characters, skeletons, and other cultural icons – these artists problematize the idea of identity as something immediately apparent and recognizable and hence a willing partner to destructive and undermining stereotypes.

An innovative, forty-four page catalog accompanies the exhibition; the book contains a critical essay by Maurice Berger, black and white reproductions and film, video and performance stills of artists' work, a checklist of the exhibition, and a selected bibliography. To expand the discourse, the catalog includes a selection of quotes and statements on the subject of identity from a broad range of intellectual, cultural, and political figures. Additional information including biographies of the artists and curator are available upon request.

The exhibition originated at the Fine Arts Gallery, University of Maryland Baltimore County and will travel to the University of California/Irvine, the University of South Florida/Tampa, the New Orleans Center for Contemporary Art, and the Kemper Center at the Kansas City Art Institute. The exhibition is made possible with support from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation, and the Maryland State Arts Council.

Since a number of the works in the traveling exhibition have been shown extensively in New York, several have been temporarily replaced by new pieces never before seen in New York.

Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Mondays by appointment. There will be a reception on Saturday, June 4 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. For more information or photographs, please contact Susan Yung at (212) 226-3232.

TOP

TZ'ART
&
CO.

f o r i m m e d i a t e r e l e a s e

BARE BONES

CURATED BY NINA YANKOWITZ
June 25 · September 5, 1996
(August by appointment only)

opening reception: Tuesday, June 25, 6-8 pm

Armature: A skeletal framework built as a support to construct something, as in the basic underlying framework or features of infrastructures

TZ'ART & Co. is pleased to announce its exhibition "Bare Bones", showing the work of painters, sculptors, and architects who from the 1960s to the present have dealt with the idea of armature at the aesthetic core of their work. "Bare Bones" will open on June 25th and will run through the summer.

"Bare Bones", conceived and organized by sculptor Nina Yankowitz, includes the work of **Alice Aycock, Jo Baer, Sam Brody** and **Rolf Ohlhausen, Stuart Diamond, Kathy Goodell, Ron Gorchov, Zaha Hadid, Andrew Kennedy, Kennedy & Violich, Susan Leopold, Sol LeWitt, Fabian Marcaccio, Donald Moffett, Roxy Paine, Kyong Park, Renzo Piano, Marjetica Potrc, Hani Rashid and Lise Anne Couture, Dorothea Rockburne, Sean Scully, Robert Stackhouse, Frank Stella, Michael Webb, Stephen Westfall,** and **Andy Yoder**.

The exhibition juxtaposes work from the sixties and seventies with more recent art. Some of the participants focus on exposing the armature, relying on the structure of the materials to give visual meaning, while others create the illusion that the framework does not exist. It is the intent of this exhibition to pose a dialogue between the idea of how the armature has been handled in the minimalist/post minimalist era and the present.

An illustrated brochure accompanying the exhibition is available upon request.

f o r m o r e i n f o r m a t i o n c o n t a c t 2 1 2 · 9 6 6 · 9 0 5 9

Frederieke Sanders Taylor & Tom Zollner
28 Wooster St. New York NY 10013-2227 T 212.966.9059 F 212.966.9175

Art

Ignore the exhibit but look at the art

'Monumental Propaganda' artists triumph despite spareness of display.

By ALICE THORSON
Art Critic

Presented in glass-topped cases in the manner of a library historical display, "Monumental Propaganda," a recently opened exhibit at the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, 4420 Warwick Blvd., is not the most inviting art show you're likely to encounter this season.

ART SHOWS & OPENINGS

But its contents are absorbing and entertaining despite the exhibit's austerity.

Russian emigre artists Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid, well-known for their collaborative artworks lampooning Soviet art and ideology, initiated the project, which offers alternatives by 113 artists to the wide-scale destruction of Soviet monuments.

The project began with a call for artists in the May 1992 issue of *Artforum* magazine. "We propose neither worship nor annihilation of these monuments," Komar and Melamid wrote, "but a creative collaboration with them—to leave them at their sites and transform them, through art, into history lessons."

And artistic transformations they got—in the form of 160 proposals from artists residing in the United States, Russia, Canada and Europe. Independent Curators Incorporated in New York took on the task of organizing the respondents' drawings, collages, photographs and texts into the travelling exhibit which is now at the Kemper, replete with skewed banners of Lenin on the walls and inverted plaster busts of Stalin supporting the display cases.

Humor, of the wry, irreverent variety, is this exhibit's stock-in-trade. Robert Beckmann's proposal presents a "Lenin Slot Machine," slyly titled "The Gamble that Didn't Pay Off"; Judith Fleishman envisioned statues of Marx and Lenin clad in bras and garter belts.

A number of artists invented ingenious, if absurd, new practical uses for Russia's dated effigies. Andrei Roiter conceived a memorial statue as a support for a playground slide; Thomas Lawson responded with a proposal for a "Lenin Drinking Fountain."

Another favorite strategy of the artist respondents was to devise unlikely coverings for the statues, as in the Mother Russia topiary proposed by Nina Yankowitz, or the mulched and spray foam-coated versions of monuments conceived by the team of Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler.

And what better comedown for a communist leader than to be memorialized in a compromising relationship with capitalism, as in Constantin Boym's collage , "Endorsed by Lenin," showing the former Soviet leader hawking Nike shoes.

The proposals are not all poking fun and games. Susan Hoeltzel responded to Komar and Melamid's serious concern over the monuments' destruction with a work that addresses the ever-shifting political and ideological currents that swirl around them. Her "Fall-Proof Monument" would leave an existing statue intact, save the leader's face, which would be replaced by a video monitor presenting the leader of the day.

A series of essays in the show's accompanying catalogue also explore the serious issues underlying "Monumental Propaganda."

"Shaped images stand for historical memory which finds new definition with each generation," notes Dore Ashton.

See OPENINGS, Page 23, Col.1

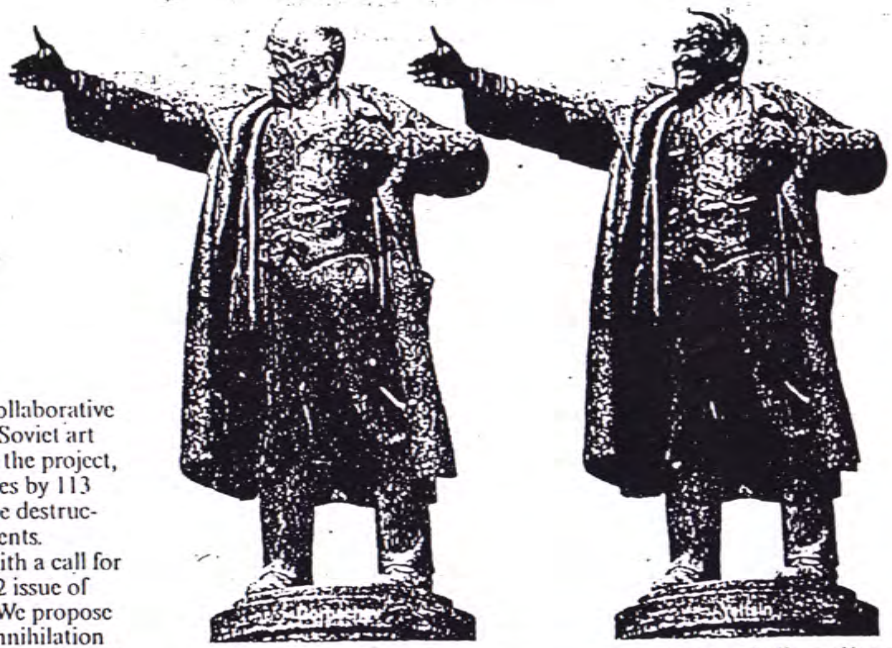


Photo courtesy of the Kemper Museum

"Recycled Lenins," by Irina Nakhova, and featuring Gorbachev (left) and Yeltsin.

OPENINGS

Continued from Page 22

"The sacredness of the monument's space derives from our willing complicity in the monument's essential illusion," writes James E. Young.

One of the cleverest and most thought-provoking ideas for monumental retooling came from Joseph Kosuth. Viewing the statues' bases as a subversion of the social realist ethos of the effigies they supported, the guru of Conceptual Art proposed an exhibit of monument bases as abstract artworks.

Some viewers will find the two-dimensional proposal format of the works in this exhibit to be tedious, and long for objects. But the show's conceptual drift is not inappropriate given the cultural realities it recalls.

Even as it was breaking up, the Soviet Union was a place where art materials were hard to come by, and people in general defined themselves through idens rather than the possessions that served

"MATERIAL GIRLS," Gender, Process and Abstract Art Since 1970, 128 Gallery, 128 Rivington Street, Lower East Side, (212) 674-0244 (through tomorrow). The artist Harmony Hammond has put together a wide-ranging show of small works by 31 women in a tiny space. The earliest pieces, a pleated painting by Nina Yankowitz and a near-transparent Mary Miss sculpture, date from 1967. The 70's are represented by Sarah Draney, Maxine Fine, Kazuko (with a tense wall piece of twisted string and nails), Patsy Norvell, Howardena Pindell and Carla Tardi, among others. The body-oriented work of the 1990's got its start with such pioneer artists, and they are joined here by a handful of their heirs, including Lisa Beck, Linda Matalon, Sarah Rapson, Kiki Smith and Carrie Yamaoka. (Cotter)

Dialectical Spiritualism: A Language of Critique and Belief
Olivia Gude, University of Illinois Chicago, Chicago Public Art Group

Most young artists stop making art within a few years of being out of school. If teaching art at the college level is more than a pyramid scheme, we must ask ourselves, why this is. Is there just too much art around? Are these simply artists without the drive and talent to keep on keeping on? Are we teaching young artists to make art that isn't wanted, needed or understood?

After graduating from the University of Chicago, I was fortunate to receive a second graduation education in the Chicago community mural movement, a tradition which extends back to the historic 1967 Wall *of Respect*. Through this apprenticeship with artists who invented a new public art practice, I was introduced to ideas such as creating art which utilizes artists' knowledge and insights while respecting community aspirations, rethinking the social description and interior experience of being an artist in order to be open to collaborative strategies, and the need to become a multi-cultural person, rooted in the imagery and understanding of various cultures of representation and belief.

Many of my mural projects are the result of complex collaborations with community members and other artists. The projects are woven out of fragments of images and ideas. The aim is not to create a seamless whole, but rather to develop a heterglossic aesthetic medium in which multiple points of view represent a postmodern reweaving of collective, social consciousness.

We often talk about the way this society doesn't support and often actively suppresses artists statements. Is it possible that these dysfunctions in the political and economic spheres result from a major dysfunction in the aesthetic sphere? Does our art have survival value at a time when the survival of many human communities is at stake in the slightly longer run?

Do artists have a role in cultivating the utopian imagination of the society? Which artists are willing to risk the appearance of naiveté by expressing belief in possibility?

Can we shift from secular to a sacred paradigm of art making? Can we create an art of dialectical spiritualism? Can we interrogate and critically investigate concepts like "justice" or "community" while we use them in praxis? Can we invent a language of critique and belief?

The Lone Rangers: Beyond Early Feminist Orthodoxy

Chairs: Nina Yankowitz, artist, New York; and Carey Lovelace, art writer, New York

This panel will explore the work, decisions and political positioning of pioneer women artists of the 60s and early 70s, who were struggling to create careers at the crucial moment just before and at the emergence of the feminist movement, women who strongly identified themselves as feminist, but who turned away from the movement's rigid orthodoxies.

In particular, the panel will focus on women artists who dealt with "materiality": Many created sculpture using timber, rope, raw canvas, paper, industrial materials, work that on the surface seemed to have no female-related content. It could be argued that the efforts of these women, although they operated outside organized politicizing, helped advance the cause of women in important ways—perhaps even more than collective activity. How do we see the 70s debates about activism vs. "working within the system" in our own day? Did the artwork of these women, more than was acknowledged at the time, lay the groundwork for later feminist theories and organizational clout?

The session will open with a slide lecture on related work of the 1960s and early 1970s, followed by a discussion with panelists.

Questions for Panelist Discussion: (1) In the 60s and early 70s, in what ways was it political merely to be making work as a female in a male-dominated art world? (2) What impact did collective action by others have on the careers of women not actively engaging in groups? (3) Is the time devoted to political activism to the detriment of art making? (4) What impact did the successful careers of particular women have on the advancement of women in general? (5) In retrospect, which had the greater impact on the situation of women artists: women who worked within the established system to make their own careers, or those who worked politically, attempted to establish separate institutions, etc.? (6) Was there feminist content in apparently "neutral" (Minimal, Conceptual) work? (7)Was the "handling" of materials by women different from the male-determined norm? (8) Did earlier work (by panelists and others) set the stage for later "feminist" themes (decoration? domestic art? social protest?) (9) Before the women's movement, was work dealing with certain types of materials (glass, fabric) read critically (derogatorily) as "feminine"? (10) Was there a "dialogue of effects" between feminists working within the system and feminists seeking collective action? In what ways did their achievements feed each others?

Panelists: Emma Amos, Rutgers, State University of New Jersey; Mary Miss, artist, New York; Pat Steir, artist, New York; Michelle Stuart, artist, New York; Jackie Winsor, artist, New York; Barbara Zucker, artist, New York

25th February 2013 Scholarly Posts 1 and 2 by Allison Wright

Nina Yankowitz's Crossings Promotes Religious Tolerance for Contemporary Audiences

From painting to sculpture to poetry to new media, Nina Yankowitz crosses boundaries with her art. She is a woman of varied skills and interests who is not afraid to try new things and tackle new goals. Her career began in the late 1960s/early 70s, a time ripe for an artist with a social conscious, and Yankowitz was up to that challenge. It was against the feminist, civil rights, anti-war backdrop that the young artist began to develop her cross-genre, ever-changing, collaborative method of producing work that has allowed her to look seriously at current issues and address them

appropriately, and in the years since, her style has matured. In her 2009 interactive installation piece, Crossings, originally shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Thessaloniki, Greece, she explores the motives behind religious intolerance using the tools she has developed over the years. With Crossings (Fig. 1), Yankowitz creates an immersive, multi-media environment that interacts with the audience on a contemporary level on a near spiritual level, inviting them to learn and question their preconceived notions of religion and ultimately promoting the tolerance that stems of a place of greater understanding.

Her previous work has focused on issues from feminism and racism to global warming. Grappling with heavy issues is not a new concept to her. Much of her work from the past decade is dedicated to demonstrating the effects of global climate change. Her Cloud House (Fig.2), from 2004, and Global Warming Window (Fig.3), from a 2012 exhibit celebrating the opening of a sustainably-focused non-profit, educate the public on this important environmental issue.[1] Both works use technology and shapes reminiscent of the home (a house and a window) to play out the horrible and unpredictable weather patterns associated with climate change. As art historian Joyce Beckenstein writes in a recent article on Yankowitz for Woman's Art Journal: "Cloud House omens the extinction of the generic home as a consequence of eco-carelessness."[2] Cloud House is one of many glass houses Yankowitz has produced, with her collaborators, and through this piece and how it addresses environmental (and subtly political) issues, it is easy to see how Crossings came to be imagined and became the all-immersive, spiritual and educational work that it is. Built in the shape of a traditional sanctuary, the building invites audience members to actually enter the space and interact with the piece, which has been characterized as a game.[3] Cloud House and Global Warming Window are pieces for the audience to watch, but in Crossings, they must participate. Writer and new media expert Frank Rose explores this wave of participatory, immersive media in his book The Art of Immersion. The internet has upped audience's expectations of stories, movies, and games, and Yankowitz has tapped into this trend in her use of participatory media. Crossings is her built world, designed to immerse and educate her audience, and Rose would say this is what a contemporary audience demands of its entertainment.[4] In a world so focused on technology and new media and "immersive video games," Yankowitz's idea of using immersion is an effective way of making her art piece engaging to a contemporary audience, one that about which it is often thought their brains are being rewired, the brain being "almost infinitely malleable" and completely affected by the technology available and potentially harder to interest, the more technology that is available.[5] For the lesson of Crossings to be effectively learned, it must engage all of the physical senses, with the possible exception of smell, and fully capture the curious, intellectual mind, getting audiences to put down their smart phones and fully enter the world of the piece.

It does. When viewers enter Crossings, they are confronted by Yankowitz's almost spiritual, encompassing world. The room is dark, lit by projections of religious mosaics and other designs on the floor, and the wall that they must control. The voices being played in the background are religious texts being read in their original languages.[6] These texts are taken from the five major religions: Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Islam, as are the floor designs. Having been presented with an infrared wand when entering, the "players" use it to tap the screen, which lights up with words "that suggest narrative gospel shining through stained glass windows," describes art history Beckenstein. She goes on to describe the process: "Using the wand, the player selects one word per [six horizontal lines] and slides that word from left to right, assigning it a relative weight . . . These word placements trigger a search

engine to locate scriptures that attribute similar emphasis to chosen words."[7] The scriptures searched are the scriptures from the five religions, color-coded though not explained. The players find out only after they leave and receive a print-out of their self-created "Bible," which religion each of the texts is from. Yankowitz told Beckenstein her goal, saying she was questioning the political and social issues that stem from religious intolerance and began wondering, "Are world religions really different? Or, are the same ideas and values pitched to each flock from a different set of agendas?"[8] The audience enters Crossings, interacts with it, and is then reborn into the outside world, with a new understanding of the sameness and fluidity of religions, and a printed handout to prove it.

The search engine technique and her use of associative words to find connections between short scriptures is another example of how Yankowitz has successfully lived up to new media demands of today's audience and of how new media itself has changed the way people think. The internet has altered the ability to process long pieces of information, and has instead played to the associative-strengths of our brain. Wikipedia being a prime example of this, linking to new article after new article, finding connections between topics.[9] By developing her search engine, Yankowitz proves that she has a deep understanding of the value modern technology and of reaching audiences across it, especially if the goal of reaching them is to educate them. Also, by asking viewers to participate, even in 2009, she is catering to a trend of people wanting to do more than look at art. They want to Tweet or Facebook, text or IM. Basically, they want to talk about it and be a part of it.[10] Yankowitz predicted the development of this trend early on, in 2009, and allowed her audience to engage directly with her art piece and gave them an element of control.

Yankowitz has created previous pieces that include elements of design, such as her "Tunnel Vision" in the New York subway system from 1988 (Fig. 4), and she brings some of her understanding of design past into her activist work.[11] This combination of design and activism reflects another side of activism that Yankowitz has touched on simply called design activism, which, according to Design scholar Thomas Markussen, "is not a boycott, strike, protest, demonstration, or some other political act" but is "a designerly way of intervening in people's lives."[1]2 It disrupts people from their daily selves and gives them a new perspective on a familiar activity or place.[13] Crossings is, as stated before, shaped like a church, with the mosaic floor typical of traditional churches. The players enter this shape and make discoveries regarding religion, perhaps becoming a more enlightened being before exiting. By having this transformation take place in a church-shaped area, Yankowitz is asking her viewers to draw parallels between this experience of religion and the one typically found in churches. These conclusions are not forced on viewers, but the message of the "game," combined with the voices reading the scriptures, the immersiveness of the content, and the physicality of the space, works to create a religious experience. Is this the sort of experience one should have within a church or another type of religious building? Is it significant that Yankowitz chose a typically Christian form or is that part of her designer's eye (churches are the most common in America so perhaps the most likely to disrupt the viewer? Shake their preformed views on the idea?) If this religious experience can happen in a piece of art, with words from all of the different scriptures being read on repeat, almost like a mantra, then does religion need to be enclosed by the walls of a church; do people need to be boxed in to one religion and forced to misunderstand and not engage in other religions in order to to live moral lives? Is this art placing itself into religion or trying to understand religion?

The religious aspect of this work plays into a contemporary understanding of religion in art, which has developed and changed significantly since the early days of art, most specifically since the Renaissance, when art began to be revered for an artist's skill and not simply its religious intent.[14] In even more modern times art has become detached from the church almost entirely, and indeed created a piece that is simply "religious" is often not enough, even for religious audiences.[15] Yankowitz's work, while akin to a worshipful experience, "is not 'religious' in its intent," says Beckenstein.[16] She is merely commenting on the religious experience and cultural understandings of religious values and trying "to reach across cultures" and get people to see past their "ethnocentric" ways, she told Woman's Art Journal.[17] This contemporary use of religion, while a form of activist education, is also a reflection of today's ever-more progressive society, as her understanding of new media is. Simple religious art is not welcome in the art world and often looked down upon, and educated audience members are demanding more and more complex and thought-provoking world.[18] A work like Crossings is effective because of immersive, participatory qualities and its complexity, its charge to the viewer to make them think, question, draw conclusions, act.

Crossings is an exemplary contemporary art piece of social activism, focusing on the new media demands of its

audience while addressing a long-standing social issue that is full of political and perhaps artistic implications. By created an immersive and participatory world, Yankowitz is educating her viewers while at the same time challenging them to stand up, pay attention. Participate, and in more than simply her work. While one downfall to new media is that, especially in today's world, it may never be "new" enough, and perhaps the ability to produce a timeless piece with technology without fear of it becoming outdated is gone, but Yankowitz seems an artist capable of watching trends and following them, of finding new collaborators and methods to spread her message. She, along with newer generations of artists, will work to keep art relevant in this fast-paced world and continue using it as not merely an escape from society, but a safe place to critique it and attempt to improve it. Time will tell.

Endnotes

1. Joyce Beckenstein, "Riverhead exhibit: Art for nature's sake," Riverhead News-Review, October 21, 2012, http://riverheadnewsreview.timesreview.com/2012/10/40444/riverhead-exhibit-art-for-natures-sake/ (accessed February 22, 2013).
2. Joyce Beckenstein, "Nina Yankowitz: Re-Rights/Re-Writes," Woman's Art Journal, Fall/Winter 2012, 25.
3. Joyce Beckenstein, "Nina Yankowitz: Re-Rights/Re-Writes," 20-27.
4. Frank Rose, The Art of Immersion (New York: Norton, 2011).
5. Nicolas Carr, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" Future Media (San Francisco: Tachyon, 2011), 33-43.
6. Nina Yankowitz, "Crossings Interactive Installation Documentary," YouTube video, 3:01, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWyhQZcw2XM (accessed February 3rd, 2013).
7. Joyce Beckenstein, "Nina Yankowitz: Re-Rights/Re-Writes," 20.
8. Ibid.
9. Nicolas Carr, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?"
10. Frank Rose, The Art of Immersion.
11. The Website of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, "Arts for Transit and Urban Design," http://www.mta.info/mta/aft/permanentart/permart.html?agency=n&line=V&station=5&artist=1&img=1&xdev=360 (accessed February 24, 2013).
12. Thomas Markussen, "The Disruptive Aesthetics of Design Activism: Enacting Design Between Art and Politics," DesignIssues, Winter 2013, 38.
13. Thomas Markussen, "The Disruptive Aesthetics of Design Activism: Enacting Design Between Art and Politics," 38-50.
14. James Elkins, On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art (New York: Routledge, 2004), 7.
15. Ibid.
16. Joyce Beckenstein, "Nina Yankowitz: Re-Rights/Re-Writes," 20.
17. Ibid.
18. James Elkins, On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art (New York: Routledge, 2004), 39-49.

Fig. 1, ***Crossing***s, 2009.

Fig. 2, *Cloud House*, 2004.

Fig. 3, *Global Warming Window*, 2012.

Fig. 4, *Tunnel Visions*, 1988.

Andrew Hurst March 1, 2013 at 9:07 AM

Your post about Nina Yankowitz was very delightful to read. I found what Nina Yankowitz was trying to do to be very interesting. I like that Yankowitz is trying to show and challenge her viewers to pay attention to what is around them. I'm also glad that Yankowitz is trying to keep art around in the world today. I like how her previous work was focus on problems like racism, feminism, and global warming. I surprise to learn that her past work was mostly dedicated to the effects of global climate change, I don't know many artists that center their work around that, but I found it to be very interesting.

Andrew Hurst

Jasmine Banks March 4, 2013 at 1 :36 PM

As someone who grew up in the church and surrounded by religion, I really like the idea and execution of Yankowitz's Crossings. I think we spend so much time consumed in our own beliefs (whether religious or not) that we tend to shut others out - not even realizing or considering the possibility that they may be similar in terms of thoughts and values. I appreciate her stance on promoting not only religious tolerance, but understanding and accepting other cultures as well.

Reply

ROOTS OF THE 1969 WOODSTOCK FESTIVAL

Nina Yankowitz Recalls Woodstock's Group 212

December 30th, 2010 by Julia blelock

A 1968 Draped Painting by Nina Yankowitz: "Oh Say Can you See?"
The Woodstock Festival of 1969 was officially named the Woodstock Music & Art Fair. According to Michael Lang in *Roots of the 1969 Woodstock Festival*, the inclusion of "art" in the festival name was a nod to Woodstock, NY's status as an art colony—beginning in the early 1900s with Byrdcliffe and the Maverick Festivals, and later with organizations like Group 212. Recently I spoke by phone with Nina Yankowitz of nyartprojects about her days at Group 212. A 1969 Fine Arts graduate of the School of Visual Arts, Yankowitz doesn't recall where she first heard about the fusion collective, but she says that word about it was on the street in NYC's Greenwich Village. Nina loved Group 212's fearless collaborative spirit, and remembers that she first installed her draped paintings on the trees in the surrounding Group 212 landscape. She says that Group 212's propulsive and adventurous style of mixing music, painting, sculpture, photography, electronic sounds, poetry, and performance art opened her up to embrace new technologies and emerging artistic disciplines. For example, she met Ken Werner, a musician, at 212 in the summer of 1968, and she recalls their collaboration. Werner made an audio rendition to realize Nina's desire to include sound that would mimic the musical score, *Oh Say Can You See*, on her draped canvas. This embodied the concept of hearing and *seeing* sounds as they unfolded from her draped paintings. The installation was exhibited later that year at Kornblee Gallery in New York City.

Nina Yankowitz (in Foreground) Dancing at Group 212

Yankowitz remembers running to catch the bus to Greenwich Village from South Orange Junior High School in New Jersey. She would sneak out of school to attend performances by Dylan and Hugh Romney at the Cafe Wha in the Village, returning without her delinquency having been discovered. Her later Woodstock experience put her in touch with many new and exciting musicians and artistic collaborators. She met people like Sunny Murray, Dave Burrell, and Chuck Santon—an artist who spent most of his time at Robert Wilson's Byrdcliffe, devoted to experimental workshops/productions. She also met musician Juma Sultan, and it was he who encouraged Nina and a friend to dance while Juma, Archie Shepp, Sunny Murray, and Dave Burrell were jamming. She remembers the music director wanting to "pull the cane around our necks!" Juma also took her to Byrdcliffe to meet Bob Dylan, and they, with others from the community, attended a Sound-Out at Pan Copeland's farm. Yankowitz recalls people jumping through the fences, lying on the grass and watching acts like Tim Hardin and Ritchie Havens.

One detail eludes Nina about her time at Group 212. She remembers a friend there who created marvelous performances based upon the myth of Icarus. He also made beautiful photographs with his box camera.

~Weston Blelock

STANZE A PROGETTUALITÀ POSTUMA

Questa sezione comprende progetti, anche nella forma di schizzi, suggerimenti, oppure di partiture, disegni, programmi. Ciascuno dei progetti non ha ancora avuto una realizzazione, per motivi tecnici e/o concettuali. La maggior parte di essi sono inediti.

This section includes projects, also in the form of sketches, suggestions, or scores, drawings, programmes. Each one of the projects has not yet been realized, for technical and/or conceptual reasons. Most of them are unpublished.

CLAUDIO AMBROSINI (Italia)
JACKI APPLE (USA)
EUGENIA BALCELLS (Spagna)
DAVID BEHRMAN-PAUL DE MARINIS (USA)
STEVEN BERKOWITZ (USA)
MARIO BERTONCINI (Italia)
JOEP BERTRAMS (Olanda)
K.P. BREHMER (Germania)
MICHAEL BREWSTER (USA)
LEIF BRUSH (USA)
JOHN CAGE-JOHN FULLEMANN (USA)
NICOLAS COLLINS (USA)
ALVIN CURRAN (USA)
DAL BOSCO-VARESCO (Italia)
HUGH DAVIES (Inghilterra)
CORT DAY (USA)
MARIA NOVELLA DEL SIGNORE (Italia)
DAVID DUNN (USA)
MAX EASTLEY (Inghilterra)
RICHARD FELCIANO (USA)
BRUCE FIER (USA)
BILL FONTANA (USA)
DIETER FROESE (Germania)
JOHN FURNIVAL (Inghilterra)
RAYMOND GERVAIS (Canada)
JOCHEN GERZ (Germania)
MALCOLM GOLDSTEIN (USA)
WILLIAM HELLERMAN (USA)
KAY HINES (USA)
MARTIN DAVORIN JAGODIC (Francia)
HOWARD JONES (USA)
JULIUS (Germania)
HERWIG KEMPINGER-GOGO KHATIBI (Austria- Iran)
TAKEHISA KOSUGI (Giappone)
CHRISTINA KUBISCH (Germania)
RONALD KUIVILA (USA)
ANNEA LOCKWOOD (Nuova Zelanda)
ALVIN LUCIER (USA)
JACKSON MAC LOW (USA)
PIERRE MARIETAN (Svizzera)
TOM MARIONI (USA)
ALBERT MAYR (Italia)
GIANNI MELOTTI (Italia)
ROBERT MORAN (USA)
DAVIDE MOSCONI (Italia)
MAURIZIO NANNUCCI (Italia)
MAX NEUHAUS (USA)
PAULINE OLIVEROS (USA)
HANS OTTE (Germania)
JACK OX (USA)
CHARLEMAGNE PALESTINE (USA)
WALTER PRATI-WILMA BACCHESCHI (Italia)
TERRY RILEY (USA)
F.M. RUPRECHTER (Austria)
SARKIS (Turchia)
ALAN SCARRITT (USA)
GIANCARLO SCHIAFFINI-LORENZO TAIUTI (Italia)
DIETER SCHNEBEL (Germania)
URS PETER SCHNEIDER (Svizzera)
JILL SCOTT (Australia)
JACQUES SERRANO (Francia)
PAOLO «SILVER» SILVESTRI (Italia)
KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN (Germania)
AKIO SUZUKI (Giappone)
ROBERTO TARONI (Italia)
NINA YANKOWITZ (USA)

N.B. Laddove le illustrazioni sono sprovviste della didascalia, si intende che il progetto è riprodotto nella sua interezza.

N.B. Wherever the illustrations are not provided with any indication, it is intended that the project is reproduced in its entirety.

NINA YANKOWITZ

Questo lavoro si basa sulla pittura, sui testi filmici e sulle partiture sonore, come espressioni di forma.
Pannelli dipinti, aventi per tema suoni vocali, descriveranno vari scenari sonori e verranno appesi alla parete a diverse altezze. I pannelli tentano di rivolgersi allo spettatore giungendo, attraverso diverse aree del corpo, alla sua percezione. Ciascun pannello avrà contemporaneamente il proprio testo audio che parlerà con le voci multiple che sentiamo dentro di noi durante una qualsiasi azione. Queste voci multiple saranno rappresentate visualmente dal tono, dal colore e dalla chiave musicale.
Ad esempio, un pannello strutturato visivamente per penetrare il corpo dello spettatore all'altezza del ginocchio avrà simultaneamente sei bande vocali. Lo scenario che creerò sia visivamente che con gli audiotapes si delinea come tentativo di provare le sensazioni create da suoni visivi e vocali, profondi e risonanti. Il testo audio sarà composto di tre scenari differenti e simultanei con tema il ginocchio. Una voce – veloce, dura, bassa, *staccato* – dice: «Li piglio per i ginocchi». Nello stesso tempo si sentirà un'altra voce ampia, lunga e ondulante: «La pelle del ginocchio può essere morbida e...». E ancora una voce dai toni decisi ma bruschi e concisi dirà: «Il ginocchio è la zona (segue la definizione del vocabolario)...». Le altre tre bande trasmetteranno assieme i testi delle prime tre, imitando attraverso un sistema di contrappunto, i suoni di queste voci differenti.
Un'altro esempio è un pannello che entra nello spettatore attraverso le labbra. Questo pannello potrebbe servirsi dell'applicazione di colore in modo altamente cosmetico. Allo stesso tempo le voci, sia in modo letterale che imitando questi suoni vocali, raggiungeranno una proiezione lunga, dolce, ampia, ondulante e languida.
In base allo spazio disponibile per l'installazione, ogni singolo scenario, progettato per quel particolare spazio, potrà funzionare come una scena individuale di un'unica sceneggiatura.

This work deals with issues of painting, filmic texts and sound scorings, as embodiment of form.
Painted panels, all painted with sounds of voices as their theme, will depict various scenarios of sound and will be hung at varied wall heights. The panels will attempt to address the viewer by entering his or her perception through different areas of the body. At the same time, each panel will have its own audio text that will speak with the multiple voices we hear within ourselves during any particular act. These multiple voices will be represented visually through pitch, color and key.
For example, a panel that is visually structured to enter the viewer's body at knee level will have six simultaneous voice tracks. The scenario that I create both visually and with audio tapes will be determined in an attempt to experience deep, resonant visual and vocal sounds. The audio text will have three varied and simultaneous scenarios of and about the knees. One voice- fast, hard, low-piched, staccato - will say: «I'll get 'em in the knees». Simultaneously, another voice will say in a long, undulating, sweeping tongue: «The skin of the knees can be soft and...» Still another, a third, voice can be heard saying in short, choppy but firm tones: «Knees are the area (A dictionary definition follows)...» The other three tracks will run simultaneously with the text(s) of the first three tracks, mimicking in a counterpoint system the sounds of these various voices.
Another example may be a panel that is designed to enter the viewer through the lips. This panel will perhaps make extremely cosmetic use of color application. At the same time the voices, both literally and by their mimickery of these vocal sounds, will achieve a long, sweeping, soft, undulating and languorous projection.
Depending upon the installation space, each individual scenario, designed for that particular space, can function as an individual scene within an overall script.

P R E S S R E L E A S E For Immediate Release

AMERICA HOUSE CENSORS WOMEN ARTISTS; CANCELS EXHIBITION IN WEST BERLIN

America House, Berlin, a U.S. government sponsored cultural center, has cancelled a scheduled exhibition of works by 47 leading American women artists. The cancellation came after 30 of the participating artists requested that statements expressing their views on the war in Vietnam be displayed alongside their works during the exhibition period. A majority of the statements strongly condemned American policy in Indochina.

The exhibition was originally shown at the Kunsthaus in Hamburg April 14 - May 14 and was organized by Sybille Niester, president of GEDOK, a German feminist artist organization, founded by Kathe Kollwitz.

A general statement, reading

> We, American women artists participating in this exhibition, are outraged at the inhuman war the U.S. government is waging against the people in Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia. We can exhibit in America House in Berlin only if this statement is prominently displayed along with our work. We are willing to show in this building in the spirit of cultural cooperation between the German and American people. We are part of the international cultural and artistic community which stands for peace and against America's war in Indochina.

was signed by Cecile Abish, Alice Adams, Pat Adams, Lynda Benglis, Blythe Bohnen, Maude Boltz, Mary Frank, Nancy Graves, Joyce Kozloff, Jeanne Miles, Mary Miss, Louise Nevelson, Howardena Pindell, Sylvia Sleigh, Joan Snyder, Nancy Spero, May Stevens, Stella Waitzkin, Barbara Zucker.

Individual statements were signed by Lilly Brody, Annick du Charme, Agnes Denes, Martha Edelheit, Ronnie Elliot, Buffie Johnson, Lila Katzen, Kiki Kogelnik, Lil Picard, Hannah Wilke, Nina Yankowitz.

The cancelled exhibition was scheduled to open in America House, Berlin on June 15, and was then to travel to America House, Munich.

For further information call (212) 226-5304 or 226-2977

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1971

Cheops Would Approve

By JAMES R. MELLOW

AT 59, Tony Smith is one of the most impressive of contemporary sculptors. Originally an architect, designer and painter (he worked for a time with Frank Lloyd Wright), Smith began producing sculpture relatively late in his career. The large mock-up structures derived from geometric forms and constructed of plywood painted black, which Smith began exhibiting in the mid-sixties, however, clearly established him as an important figure in American art, an artist with a talent for sculpture that was monumental in scale and environmental in its ambitions.

The Museum of Modern Art is currently showing a large-scale indoor sculpture which Smith designed expressly for the museum's ground-floor gallery fronting 53d Street. Titled "81 More," it is comprised of a low triangular-shaped pedestal whose measurements are governed by a basic triangular module —the module slightly over four feet per side—its surface scored and subdivided into the 81 triangles from which the sculpture derives its name. Atop this, 15 tetrahedral forms, again based on the same module, have been positioned in a rigorously prescribed order. The sculpture is painted earthy red rather than Smith's usual black. (The color, according to the sculptor, relates to the red in certain paintings by the Mexican muralist Orozco.) Although originally intended for the indoor site at the Modern, Smith now envisions the piece as being the scale model (one-fifth the size) of a possible environmental sculpture for an airport.

"81 More" is so inherently rational, so rigorously disciplined in its forms that it leaves one with a profound sense of the ideal relationship that can obtain between geometry and art. There is no technological mystique involved—the mathematics of the piece are relatively simple and straightforward—but the geometry provides a kind of faultless system which makes the forms of the work "compose" perfectly from every vantage point.

One has to make the effort to visualize the sculpture in its intended scale—a spacious plaza with its pyramid-like forms stretching down vistas of broken light and shadow, a kind of surreal Egyptian dream-scape. Smith's inspiration for the sculpture—and for some recent projects shown in drawings—is an archeological site closer to home, however: the modular architecture of the Pyramids of the Sun and Moon in Teotihuacán, Mexico. In any event, it is visually striking as a sculpture and would be awesome as an architectural environment. Less wayward in its forms than some of Smith's earlier pieces, it provides a handsome example of that unusual combination of strictly disciplined forms and romantic associations with archaic sites that seems to be one of the remarkable features of Smith's talent.

NASSOS DAPHNIS

A similar rage for order and purity of form marks the exhibition of modular paintings by the veteran geometric abstractionist Nassos Daphnis now on view at the Castelli Gallery, 4 East 77th Street. (Daphnis's screenprints are being shown concurrently downstairs at Castelli Graphics.) The most successful modular series here, I think, is based on a hexagonally shaped canvas unit subdivided into wedges of bright color (two reds, blue, yellow, black and white), the color sequence strictly maintained in each unit. The modular sections are joined together to create quite different overall configurations, the largest —a series of interlocking star-shapes, open at their centers—measuring approximately 9 feet high by 19 feet in width.

The formal variety that Daphnis achieves in these paintings, both with the external format and the internal structuring of the patterns, is stunning. A second series, shaped from a modular rhomboid in a narrower range of colors, is somewhat less effective—the basic form is not so adaptable. But both series display a craftsmanship that is impeccable and conceptual ideas that are brought to a high order of perfection. The exhibition, I think, is one of Daphnis's strongest to date. Like Smith's sculpture, it serves to remind one that in an imperfect world, a radically "pure" art remains a kind of ultimate romance.

NINA YANKOWITZ

The paintings of Nina Yankowitz, who is having her second one-man show at the Kornblee Gallery, 58 East 79th Street, present an entirely different order of experience. Miss Yankowitz first paints or spray-paints her canvases in usually soft, dusty colors or pale stripes. Then, without benefit of conventional wooden supports, the painting is tastefully draped and stapled to the wall. The result is something more like a decorative wall hanging or drapery, relating the work to the kind of unusual modern tapestries one sees nowadays rather than conventional easel painting.

As outlandish as this type of work might sound, there is something seductive about it. The most effective piece in the show is a 9-foot-high painting of pleated canvas in mauve-pink, fancifully draped, somewhat feminine—a painting *en déshabille*, as it were. Less successful is a stitched and pleated canvas that looks a bit too much like an elegant curtain left to gather dust in an abandoned house. The pale, ghostly colors are, one suspects, necessary; anything brighter would tend to make the work look too much like bolts of drapery fabric. Still the most interesting feature of the work is the manner in which the artist manages to hold the ground between old-fashioned easel painting and some new species of handicraft.

Given the queer fate of easel painting in recent years —canvases have been splattered, punctured, shredded, shot at, twisted into every conceivable shape—there is no reason why an artist shouldn't attempt to pleat and drape his pictures. On the other hand, Miss Yankowitz's present work doesn't quite offer convincing enough reasons why anyone should. At the moment, her paintings seem to fall, a bit too modishly, into the bright-idea category.

ARTFORUM Feb. 1972

NINA YANKOWITZ, Kornblee Gallery; SAM GILLIAM, Museum of Modern Art;

Clearly, NINA YANKOWITZ shares the acute sensibilities of the younger generation of New York artists — one is tempted to say, of the generation of the School of Visual Arts' artists — a sensibility which, in a short time, three years at most, has been subject to, in Yankowitz' case, the purification of the devices she came upon and claimed for her own while still a student there. These devices — non-stretcher supported canvas, peculiar methods of joining, sprayed color, and Expressionist maculation — if not entirely immediate to the corridors and studios of SVA were also the issues being argued in the galleries from 1968 on, issues which continue in her work although, to the vast improvement of that work, she has relinquished the extraneous notes of an abstract illusionism.

Granting art today as possibly being the objectification of a pictorial/sculptural sensibility, a concession I only begrudgingly make, then the essential loveliness of Yankowitz' work is beyond contest, although the devices of her art seem to me to be outmoded. Enlarging her eccentric Constructivist postulates to now include pleating, folding, and puckering, her wall cloths present a kind of drapery not divorced from the procedures and effects of complex curtain manufacture, Austrian shades for example. It is intriguing that Yankowitz can still convince us of her ambitiousness while employing her Constructivist ploys ornamentally rather than structurally. The Olitski-like flushes and exhilarations remain in her work although they are now keyed darkly, so that the convention of paint as light or atmosphere which comes to us from the early '60s, is only tenuously alluded to. In certain works in which these curtains are splayed or banded to the wall, one sees that Yankowitz is capable of real eccentricity but her lack of aggressiveness indicates that she remains on a sill which, once crossed, will bring her beyond mere stylistic hold.

like flushes and exhilarations remain in her work although they are now keyed darkly, so that the convention of paint as light or atmosphere which comes to us from the early '60s, is only tenuously alluded to. In certain works in which these curtains are splayed or banded to the wall, one sees that Yankowitz is capable of real eccentricity but her lack of aggressiveness indicates that she remains on a sill which, once crossed, will bring her beyond mere stylistic hold.

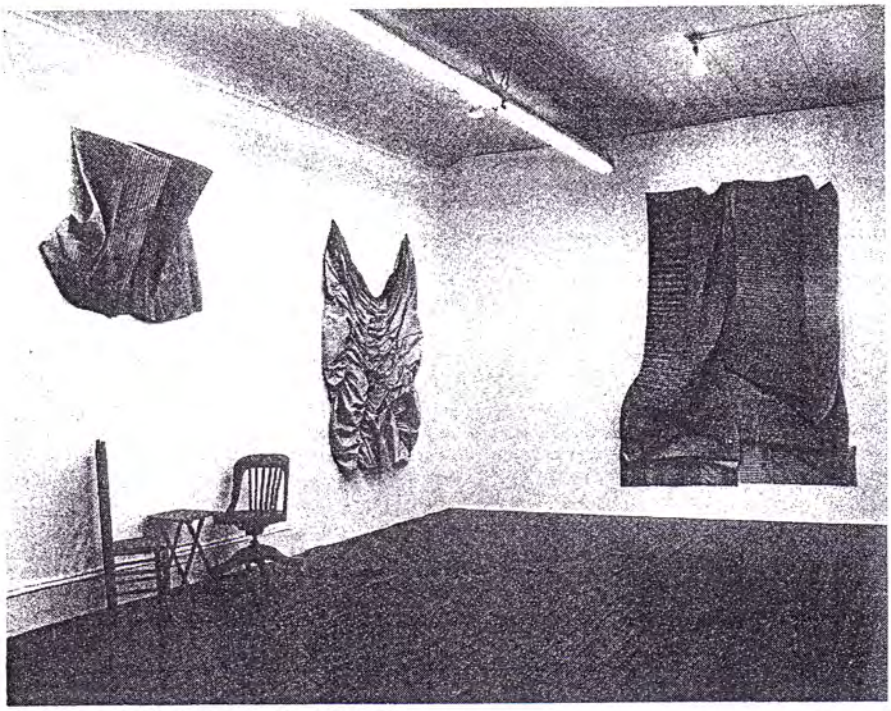
These remarks are apposite to the draped and speckled color paintings, SAM GILLIAM's project for the smaller downstairs exhibition rooms at the Museum of Modern Art which have become, since this past summer, perhaps the museum's most interesting exhibition halls, what with Mel Bochner following Keith Sonnier and Gilliam now following Bochner in this space. I note the architectural problem presented by these rooms because each of the artists has attempted to answer in some way the architectural riddle posed by them, solutions which have been reported on at length in *Artforum*.

Gilliam has made a kind of snaking bunting or twisted banner sequence for the corridor. The generally baroque configuration of his work with its reliance on knotting and large tying indicates that Gilliam's solution is the one most immediate to conception of the architecture of the room which functions (in relation to his eccentric splashed over Constructivism) as a container or spatial frame for the artists' extremely inherited artistic syntax — the painting as stage set or decor. See the work of the Berman brothers.

In the front chamber Gilliam has set up a few "real" architectural elements to support these drop cloths of fat field painting: wooden panels, a thick wooden rod. Again one sees that these new elements are placed there as a means of supporting the drapery.

What is invalid in Gilliam's work is that fustian operatic effects are superficially couched in the terms of audacious modernity. Oddly, it is not modernity which is betrayed but baroque sensibility which, after all, has been the only authentic note of the numerous thin episodes of Gilliam's many museum-sponsored appearances these last two years.

—ROBERT PINCUS-WITTEN



Nina Yankowitz, installation view, Kornblee Gallery, 1971.

ARTFORUM DECEMBER 1972

ROSENQUIST AND SAMARAS

THE OBSESSIVE IMAGE AND POST-MINIMALISM

ROBERT PINCUS-WITTEN

During the Minimalist phase of the art of the last decade sculptural form tended towards a simple expression of planar shapes. Often, when projected spatially, such forms satisfied an architectural condition while answering a pictorial ambition. In this way, painting, sculpture, and architecture tended to coalesce. It is the work of Frank Stella more than any other painter that provides the paradigm.

Until about 1968 painting was assumed to be an enterprise which was executed on a canvas surface, a surface stretched or tautly supported. In many instances, this requirement of a hard surface was met by employing a smooth panel or, occasionally, a wall. Subsequently, painting gradually lost its exclusively drum-taut nature. Just as the Minimalists questioned what constituted a composition (often answering this query in terms of unitary monochromatic images), so the canvas support changed and became a more casual appendage of the wall. At length, even the wall itself received the direct application of a pencil line or a pastel marking. Sol LeWitt is an example of the latter and Sam Gilliam and Nina Yankowitz of the former. Similarly, the brushstroke normally on the surface of canvas could now be regarded as freed from this traditional locus. It grew into autonomous elements often consisting of eccentric substances, such as neon, aerated plastic foams, rope, earth, rags, and various gelatinous materials, especially as seen in the work of Keith Sonnier, Bruce Nauman, Robert Morris, Richard Serra, Robert Smithson, Joseph Beuys, and the late Eva Hesse.

ARTS MAGAZINE/Dec. 71-Jan. 72

NINA YANKOWITZ's (Kornblee, *Nov. 20-Dec. 9*) pleated spray paintings show a concern, as art writer Lucille Naimer has noted, for the potential of canvas as a material. Her canvasses tumble off the wall into irregular shapes, shapes which are derived from different processes—sewing, steam pleating or folding. Yankowitz's fascination for certain aspects of clothes is incorporated into her latest work. She thinks of clothes as paintings for the body. In order for her to perceive this reality as painting, she must distance herself from three dimensional objects. Yankowitz's work is perceived as painting, rather than sculptural, three dimensional objects, because the outline of the hanging image is perceived as flat. In the steam pressed canvasses, the pleated physicality of the surface becomes pictorial by creating an even surface. The pleats gradually get bigger in the areas of most draping so that they cancel out the jagged outline of the sides. As a result, one is forced to perceive the outside line as straight, pushing the whole area inside into a two dimensional plane. Nina Yankowitz has achieved a synthesis of concept and sensual intimacy with material. Her work offers a challenging and highly rewarding visual experience.

DENISE GREEN

THE NEW YORK TIMES, Sun - April 1, 1973

By PETER SCHJELDAHL

"SOFT as Art" is a fairly deplorable grab-bag of an exhibition of art works in soft materials that is currently at the New York Cultural Center. Destined to make the rounds of museums in three other New York City boroughs, it is the second such touring show sponsored by the city's Department of Cultural Affairs. The first one, called "Outsized Drawings," was a grab-bag, too, and inferior in over-all quality to "Soft as Art," but maybe its theme was sufficiently casual, a mere pretext for a show, its unevenness was tolerable. Not so in the present case.

The use of flexible materials — cloth, rubber, vinyl, rope and whatnot—has been an important feature of some of the most original and interesting art of the past several years. It is also a still-spreading phenomenon that could do with some serious attention to its characteristic forms and most original proponents. Which is not to say that the use of soft mediums in itself constitutes a homogenous esthetic. But the very diversity of recent soft-art work would seem to guarantee an illuminating and entertaining exhibition, provided that enough curatorial rigor be involved to give the thing some minimum taste and balance.

"Soft as Art" fails for the not very complicated reasons that too much of the work in it is bad and too much good or at least representative work—by established artists whose names come readily to mind—is mysteriously absent. It fails, that is, to give a decent account of its subject. The subject remains engaging enough, however, to make one accept "Soft as Art" as the occasion for some reflection. Theme shows being rare these days in our impoverished museums, we may never get a better one.

The contemporary use of soft materials is usually traced to certain assemblages made by Robert Rauschenberg in the late 1950s. (Rauschenberg is represented at the Cultural Center by an amazingly pepless self-imitation of recent vintage.) But certainly the most significant pioneer of the mode has been Claes Oldenburg, whose flabby foodstuffs, appliances and so on still exert a powerful fascination. In Oldenburg's hands, softness takes on a peculiar poignancy, a kind of deadpan, sad-sack humor with subtle erotic undertones. Beyond their blatant jokiness, his works exploit in an understated way a psychological tendency in us to identify softness with living things, particularly with flesh.

In the late sixties, Robert Morris and a few other artists began using flexible materials in a more direct, formal, abstract way, not as conveyors of metaphor but purely as themselves. The biggest and most satisfying piece in "Soft as Art"—a new version of a work Morris did originally in 1968—comprises three huge, overlapping sheets of thick felt mounted on the wall, their ends drooping with geometric symmetry onto the floor. A collaboration, as it were, between the artist and the force of gravity, this work straightforwardly enlists the properties of felt to produce an imposing, very *physical* presence. Another fine piece in the show, by Richard Serra, achieves a similarly forceful effect even more succinctly, with a single thick sheet of vulcanized rubber propped up on the floor.

Oldenburg's visual-tactile poetry and the "Process" formalism of Morris and Serra, among others, represent two sources of inspiration for contemporary work in soft mediums. Another, more diffuse source is a widespread interest, among young artists, in craft procedures like weaving and sewing, sometimes with romantic reminiscences of primitive tribal batiks and such. This craft business is treacherous, often giving rise to an esthetic muddle in which one's only distinct impression is that the artist is indeed very deft. The imagery in such works tends to seem, if not repellently hokey, at least vaguely second-hand.

Perhaps the most problematical of soft-art styles are those closest to painting, filially related to the shaped-canvas experiments of the sixties—most of which were pretty problematical themselves. The ambition to "extend" or otherwise modify the space of painting remains a common one, and the success or failure of such ambitions is frequently a hard thing to judge. The most attractive works in this vein at the Cultural Center are those of Nina Yankowitz—a canvas pulled into soft, bunched folds by areas of stitching and suavely spray-painted—and Al Loving—canvas torn into strips, tie-dyed and hung from the ceiling.

Interestingly, much of the best (as well as, to be fair, some of the worst) soft-art work these days is being done by women, and one feels no hesitation in calling it "feminine." The sexual orientation of Hannah Wilke's "Venus Basin" — sheets of poured, pink-pigmented latex snapped together and drooping from the wall in a sensual lotus configuration—is certainly clear enough: what's surprising is its extraordinary loveliness and sweetness. Rosemary Mayer's beautiful "Veils VII" is alike in effect, though not in imagery. Its lyrical arrangement of fragile, diaphanous veils in pink, soft green, violet and gold has, for me anyway, an air of vulnerability that is deeply touching.

There are 23 artists represented in "Soft as Art." I have mentioned those whose work seemed to me to be well above average. My list would be longer if the organizers of the exhibition — Seena Donneson of the Cultural Affairs Department and Mario Amaya of the Cultural Center—had seen fit in their wisdom to tap the talents of John Chamberlain, Richard Tuttle, Lynda Benglis, Alan Saret, Ann Wilson, Christo, Terry LaNoue, Nancy Graves and Paul Thek, to name a few very likely candidates. As it is, the character of "Soft as Art" makes it a nearly perfect specimen of bureaucratic sorties into the arts: lots of energy and not an ounce of thought. It's worth seeing, but just barely.

the village VOICE, March 29, 1973

Hung, draped, and plopped

art

by John Perreault

Sculpture is not what it used to be. Soft works, either hung, draped, or plopped, if they do not predominate, certainly infest. Soft sculpture has rapidly become a favored mode, so much so that it is no longer startling. Works are no longer of interest merely because they are soft. The shock of innovation has worn off and we are left with an almost fully-formed vocabulary. Soft sculpture was an important innovation, opening up whole areas of expressiveness for sculpture, new materials, new forms, some close to painting and some, alas, too close to craft. Sculpture no longer has to be self-supporting or of rigid materials.

How did this come about? Duchamp's 1917 "Traveller's Folding Item," a typewriter cover, was first, but there is no doubt that Oldenburg's soft versions of ordinary objects were what did it. His giant soft black-vinyl fan, currently displayed on the new ground-floor gallery installation at the Museum of Modern Art, is a superb example. Soon, too, Eva Hesse began using string and latex in her works, and more abstract uses of soft materials in sculpture or as sculpture proliferated. You might say that just as sculpture got off the pedestal into the world of blunt objects, it began to climb the wall and hang in space like shredded painting.

At this point "Soft As Art" at the New York Cultural Center is an obvious show, probably just what is called for. It indicated the recent history of soft sculpture by judicious examples, and features the work of younger artists working with soft or relaxed forms in this context. Not all the work stands up when shown along with a Robert Norris felt piece, Richard Serra's arched slab of vulcanized rubber, and Oldenburg's 1964 "Bean Slices," but enough of it does to make a visit worthwhile.

Half the artists in the show are women, which is a success for those who have been insisting upon such representation. More important from my point of view is that of the younger artists represented the women come off the best. Brenda Miller's "Abscissa," a grid of sisal of different lengths, includes a diagram that reveals the system; there is a nice contrast between the conceptual clarity of the piece and the sensuous results. Rosemary Mayer's "Veils VII," although from 1971, is one of the best pieces of hers I've seen. Nina Yankowitz's stitched and sprayed canvas wall piece offers the space of texture, close to painting, but a cloth relief. I also liked Jacquelin Winsor's "Double Circle" and Jackie Ferrara's "Four Balls II."

The installation is one of the best I've seen at the Cultural Center, which is burdened with impossible spaces originally designed for Huntington Hartford's collection of 19th-century paintings. Hannah Wilke's "Venus Basin" of pink latex and snaps, for instance, suffers because it could not be attached directly to the Cultural Center's fancy walls and had to be mounted on a board.

"Soft As Art" is sponsored by the Department of Cultural Affairs, conceived by Cultural Center Director Mario Amayo, coordinated by Seena Donneson, and will travel to various points throughout the five boroughs this coming year.

Two seasons stacked for baling

Voice: Fred W. McDarrah

ALFRED LESLIE'S "THE KILLING OF FRANK O'HARA"

art

by John Perreault

The Whitney Museum sculpture and painting Annuals, which used to alternate, have now been combined into a Biennial, the first of which is now completely installed on all five floors of the Whitney. More than 200 art works are jammed into the museum, on every floor, on almost every wall, in the lobby, in the garden (which I still think of as the Whitney moat), and, in two instances, in the stairwells. As far as I could tell there was no new art in the lavatories, the elevators, or on the roof, mercifully. It is all a bit overwhelming, even to me, even though I have already seen a great deal of it in the galleries throughout the past year. That much art in one place is bound to create some energy and some confusion.

The installation is the best that can be expected, given the situation, a large part of which no doubt involved fierce competition for space. I would not have wanted the job.

Everyone complains about these Whitney surveys and I too have done my share of complaining, but the fact is that they have always been important shows. If they did not exist, they would have to be invented. The exposure for artists is absolutely necessary, for not everyone covers the galleries religiously or thoroughly. The Whitney surveys afford a kind of condensed art season that is of great service to the general public. The opening night celebration too is a kind of art-world ritual that makes the art world really feel like the art world.

The rigid distinction between painting and sculpture no longer applies, has not applied for a long time now, and finally the Whitney has acknowledged this. Theoretically this should have made room for the increasing number of works that are both painting and sculpture, somewhere between, or neither. In the first two instances there has not been much difficulty, although now the curators do not have to worry at all about whether something is or is not painting or sculpture. It is in the latter case that there is still a lack. This time around, however, there are videotapes by Robert Morris, Joan Jonas, William Wegman, Keith Sonnier, John Baldessari. There is also Peter Campus's excellent video camera/monitor/mirror piece called "Kiva." For the first time, too, there's an architectural redesigning a section of Binghamton, New York. So things are opening up a bit. Not one example of Conceptual Art is included, however. The Whitney surveys should be descriptive, rather than proscriptive. It may be true that Conceptual Art is not the wave of the future, but like it or not, a number of artists are producing valid works along these lines and they should have been represented. Also, not one example of Body Art or of Performances is present. Ignoring these forms just will not make them go away. It might be argued that the videotapes included this year cover these categories. I think not.

It may be that some effort has been made to play down trends this year, to discourage trend-sniffing and any charge of trend-setting. When an artist's work is selected for the Whitney survey there is no denying that this is a form of validation. That's why the pressure to get into the show is so enormous. If a certain style appeared to be in the majority, that too would seem to be a validation. It is a difficult problem. Big museums have been accused of art market impact. I think that is unavoidable. But there is a difference between taste-making and commercial manipulation, a charge that cannot be leveled at the Whitney as far as I can see.

The reason I am indicating this anti-trend factor is that I see no

Continued from preceding page

other way to explain why photo-realist and new figurative painting has been so slighted this year. If, as stated, the purpose of the show is "to survey the current state of American art," then this slight is inexcusable. Perhaps the curators responsible for the selection just do not like this kind of painting, but I find it hard to believe that they can like the acres and acres of fussy color-field painting that they have included. If the truth be known, the Whitney surveys are in no way as objective as they pretend to be.

For all its faults, however, the Biennial cannot be missed by anyone interested in current American art. All of the work is professional—which is saying a lot these days—and I'd say at least half of it is "interesting," a very high percentage indeed. If any trend is visible it is the one we already know: a pluralism of styles. This will make it difficult and confusing for anyone not willing to form a personal evaluation. One can no longer say that the best work is necessarily abstract. If anything, it would seem otherwise.

Sculpture is still going strong. The Judd piece in the lobby is successful and the huge works by Ronald Bladen and Tony Smith on other floors are spectacular. Carl Andre's stairwell piece is not at all as modest as it looks. Rafael Ferrer continues to come on strong, this time with an ice, leaves, tepee, large-drawing combination in the garden. Ira Joel Haber's "August in a Brown Brick Box," although oddly placed and cramped by the installation (an almost universal complaint), looks as good as it did in his one-man show at Fischbach this year. I could go on and on: Nina Yankowitz, Brenda Miller, Louise Bourgeois, Ree Morton, Ed Shostak all have works of note. I really liked George Trakas's new piece, too, a kind of motionless Rube Goldburg construction.

Drawing Today in New York is an exhibition of the work of forty artists who are currently living and working in metropolitan New York. This project, originally conceived as a teaching exhibition for Rice University, has been increased in size and scope for traveling. Each selection is the most recent drawing available and is indicative of the artist's current concerns. While the paintings and sculpture of most of these artists are well-known nationally, the drawings are not often seen west of the Hudson.

This is not a School of New York show. In fact, many artists generally associated with that school are not included because they no longer live in the New York area. This exhibition, rather, is a broad survey of the drawings of a varied group of important New York based artists. Many of these drawings have a direct relationship to larger statements in painting and sculpture. Still other artists in the show are represented by works which are concerned with drawing as a final statement. Whether these works are studies or end products, each one can stand as an independent work of art.

Although the definition of drawing recently has been expanded to include all work on paper, we have chosen drawings which are executed, in most cases, with traditional tools: pencil, ink, crayon and pastel. The drawings in this collection demonstrate skill, invention and sophistication. We were attracted by the presence of these works and shared the immediacy of the artist's perceptions. Furthermore, we follow the artists' thought processes and appreciate their intuitions.

We are grateful for the generosity of the lenders: Victoria Barr, Grace Borgenicht Gallery, Susan Caldwell Gallery, Leo Castelli Gallery, Chuck Close, John Civitello, Christo, Cunningham Ward Inc., Arne H. Ekstrom, André Emmerich Gallery, Rosa Esman Gallery, Fischbach Gallery, Allan Frumkin Gallery, David Hare, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, Ian Hornak, Hundred Acres Gallery, Max Hutchinson Gallery, Will Insley, Ray Johnson, Sidney Janis Gallery, Knoedler Contemporary Art Gallery, Kornblee Gallery, Janie C. Lee Gallery, Marlborough Gallery, David McKee Gallery, Robert Motherwell, the Pace Gallery, Ray Parker, Alice Neel, Deborah Remington, Joan Snyder, Sperone-Westwater-Fischer Inc., John Weber Gallery, Zabriskie Gallery, and William Zierler Gallery.

A very special thanks to John Civitello, Ian Hornak, and Ray Johnson who created drawings for the exhibition.

Patricia Hamilton and
Check Boterf,
Guest Curators

NINA YANKOWITZ

Nina Yankowitz's paintings are not paintings about painting; they are paintings about sound and the language of sound—a language that speaks first to the eye and then plunges to find its deeper mark. Based on an intellectual system, the form of these paintings is determined by the function of that language and by the patterns of the particular dialogue. It would seem ironic that in a decade of almost excessive rejection, Yankowitz should likewise choose to challenge the traditional notions of painting and yet arrive full circle at its most primary and ambitious goal: the communication of what it means to be alive.

Paint Readings, or *Voices of the Eye,* as the works are aptly termed, command an immediate interest because of their singular format and the unburdened clarity of their attitude and execution. When this interest wanes because it becomes difficult to understand the reasoning behind the images, the catalogue is conveniently at hand to ensure that both the system and the nature of their experience are not misunderstood. Any involvement with painting instinctively resents and suspects the necessity for explanations; nonetheless Yankowitz takes that risk, and not without success. With or without the text the work takes time, and though given the time an understanding could be reached without its aid, a simple explanation of the system and the experience which motivates its discourse is helpful and revealing. Instead of giving away some secret, the text is a key to the door out of which pours her light. The work is decidedly difficult, the result of an entirely unique imagination: her own invention.

The paint floats on the surface suggesting a movement in space apart from that surface; animated marks loose in a spatial plane, directed *ad libitum.* They lead the movement of expansion and contraction from one frame to the next; tuned to the song of the heartbeat they record the impulses felt through the cycles of a human experience: rise and fall, pound and purr, dance and death. Yankowitz has each frame following the previous, left to right, so that they can be read in sequence in the conventional reading manner. Together they make up one image and one statement.

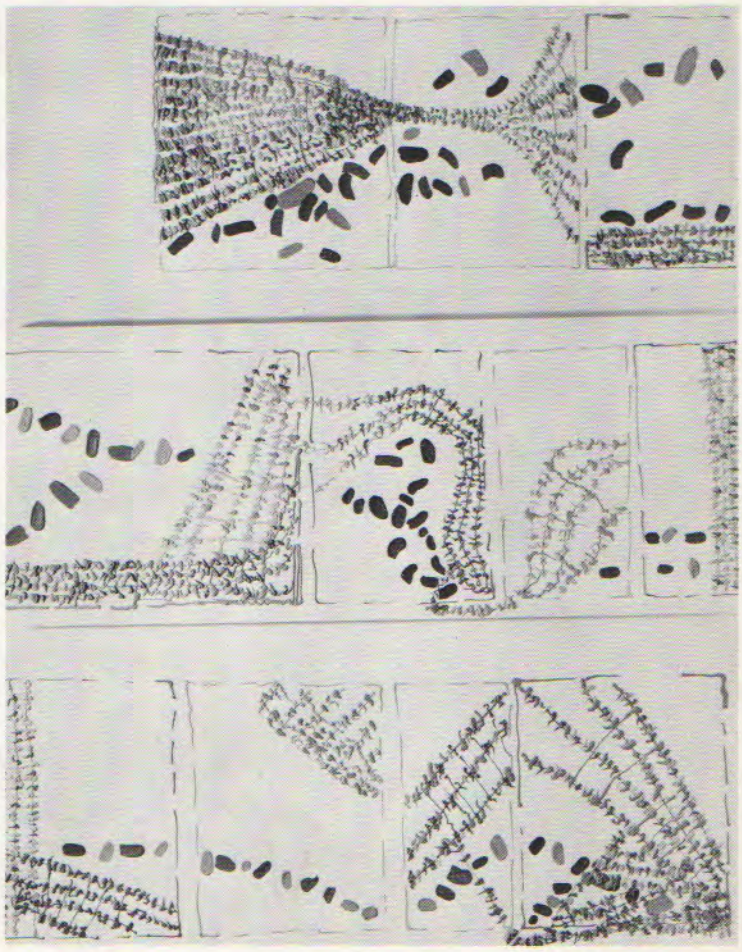
As the shape, size, and energy of the marks are the building bricks of this calligraphic tower, the color plays a supportive role in further defining the exterior which houses their meaning. Here the prismatic dialogue is limited to a subtle range and the emphasis is placed on the degree of value. Darks and lights cluster, setting up an aggressive linear rhythm to which the colors quietly harmonize in their three- or four-pronged processional song.

"My *Paint Readings* are done on long, horizontal, porcelain-enameled steel or wood panels which are to be read left to right like verbal texts or musical scores. This procedure is called scanning. The paint is applied with brushes and squeeze bottles of varying nozzle widths. The paint is an acrylic-based material with special additives designed to give an absolute matted finish that reflects no light. The various ways I apply these colors make the viewer's eyes read or scan from left to right, from place to place. Each panel is divided into a number of frames. Each of these frames suggests a single frame through projection, as in a filmstrip or a cranked-out roll of film. I attempt also to explore synesthesia as classically defined: the transference of one sense impression into another, such as light to music. In my work it means to see sound in color."

Yankowitz has chosen to use sound to define the physical-emotional experience, and color and paint to make that sound visual. Following the course of this communication from beginning to end to better observe its transitions, a simple outline reveals that there is first the impulse, which becomes a conscious feeling or idea and is then turned into sound which gives it character and direction; from there it becomes color and takes shape in a variety of marks, to be reinterpreted by the viewer who turns it back into sound, into feeling, into impulse. Whether this is an unnecessarily difficult route (confusing the identity of the experience by first making it an audio and then a visual end) with too much distance between the point of departure and the destination is one question. The work is certainly bound to an equation: the impulse is the variable while the constants are subjectively limited. Insert an impulse, run it through the equation, and there is a tune that makes a pattern for a painting by Nina Yankowitz.

The only objection to these paintings seems naive in view of their intense power and inherent success. The paintings glow and transcend the system now weightless in their light. The work is of high quality, integrity, and seriousness, and the sincerity and science of the system are admirable. What is questionable is the need for that system. Can the outcome of such a system ever rise above the ground floor consciousness within its present limitations? Where is the jungle of feelings and ideas, color and paint, risk and revelation, out of whose chaos is born the real paint experience, the spirit and form of the adventure called art? These pieces are alive because Yankowitz has the power to instill that force in her work. Wouldn't the result be even more vital if she denied the system, abandoned the equation, and just realized the variables. (Stefanotti, *October 6-November 3*)

Addison Parks



Nina Yankowitz, Paragraph Voicings, 1979. *Acrylic on wood panels. Courtesy Stefanotti Gallery.*

Joan Braderman, *The Heretics*, 2009, stills from a color film, 95 minutes. Left: Detail of Joyce Kozloff's *Voyages*. Right: Lucy Lippard.

"IT BECAME VERY CLEAR TO ME that everything in my life, in terms of my art, I was going to have to fight for." So says artist **Nina Yankowitz** in *The Heretics*, Joan Braderman's info-packed documentary on the groundbreaking feminist art magazine *Heresies*. The film contextualizes the hurdles faced at the dawn of second-wave feminism: Prior to the 1970s, as interviewees attest, one of the highest compliments a female artist might get from teachers and critics was that she "painted like a man." Published from 1977 to 1992, *Heresies* was produced out of (still) scrappy Lower Manhattan by a sprawling collective of artists and writers drawn together to support and explore women's art in defiance of a curatorial and historical vacuum. Herself a *Heresies* veteran, Braderman reconnects with former participants, now living around the globe, including critic Lucy Lippard; filmmaker Su Friedrich; architect Susana Torre; artists Amy Sillman, Miriam Schapiro, Mary Miss, and Cecilia Vicuna; and twenty or so others, editing together their stories into a fast-paced, thematically chaptered montage.

Upbeat and affirmative, the documentary employs copious low-tech text and graphics sequences in keeping with the style of Braderman's canonical video-lecture projects like *Joan Does Dynasty* (1986) and *Joan Sees Stars* (1992). Though *The Heretics* ends with a nod to the present with a short sequence on third-wave feminist collective publishers LTTR, it's Braderman's portrait of another era that drives the film. The stories these women tell envision a radically different moment in art-world history, one in which questions of career and market are barely mentioned, and philosophical arguments are firmly grounded in street-level politics. Braderman's take is unabashedly utopian and celebratory but looks to the past for lessons rather than nostalgia. For as artist Emma Amos notes, "There are more women artists than there are male artists. More of them will get into the best programs. And then what happens? The boys still have the edge on us."

— Ed Halter

The Heretics *screens at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, October 9–15. For more details, click here. A website devoted to the film and* Heresies *archives can be found here.*