EDITORS
JOAN MARTER AND ALIZA EDELMAN

BOOK REVIEWS EDITOR: ALISON POE

FOUNDING EDITORS: ELSA HONIG FINE
AND MARGARET BARLOW

EDITORIAL BOARD

NORMA BROUDE, CLAUDIA CALIRMAN, THERESE
DOLAN, BETSY FAHLMAN, MARY D. GARRARD,
PIA GOTTSCHALLER, SALOMON GRIMBERG,
ANN SUTHERLAND HARRIS, ELLEN G. LANDAU,
NANCY MOWLL MATHEWS, ROBERTA TARBELL,
MIDORI YOSHIMOTO, JUDITH ZILCZER

PRODUCTION, AND DESIGN SERVICES
OLD CITY PUBLISHING, INC.

WOMAN'S ART JOURNAL

2   PARALLEL PERSPECTIVES
By Joan Marter and Aliza Edelman

PORTRAITS, ISSUES AND INSIGHTS

3   SHIFTING SCALE, FRAMING OBJECTS:
DOROTHY DEHNER AND WOMEN SCULPTORS AMONG
THE ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISTS
By Sophie Lachowsky

16   MONIR SHAHROUDY FARMANFARMAIAN:
IN HER WORDS (1985)
By Donna Stein

26   THE VIBRANT MATERIAL OF FRANCES KUEHN
By Heather Cammarata-Seale

35   SHADES OF GRAY:
THE POSTMODERN PORTRAITS OF ROMAINE BROOKS
AND THE SLIPPAGE OF GENDER REPRESENTATION
By Elizabeth Richards Rivenbark

REVIEWS

43   *Transnational Belonging and Female Agency in the Arts*
Edited by Basia Sliwinska and Catherine Dormor
Reviewed by Maria Costantino

47   *Bisa Butler—Portraits*
Edited by Erica Warren **Reviewed by Lisa Farrington**

49   *Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks*
By Jennifer Blessing, Nat Trotman, and Gillian Wearing
Reviewed by Sigourney Schultz

52   *Dismantling the Patriarchy, Bit by Bit: Art, Feminism,
and Digital Technology* By Judith K. Brodsky
Reviewed by Charlotte Kent

54   *Faith Ringgold: Politics Power*
By Faith Ringgold, Michele Wallace, and Kirsten Weiss
Reviewed by Lisa Farrington

56   *Women Artists on the Leading Edge:
Visual Arts at Douglass College*
By Joan Marter
Reviewed by Heather Cammarata-Seale

59   *The Traumatic Surreal: Germanophone Women Artists and
Surrealism after the Second World War*
By Patricia Allmer **Reviewed by Andrea Gremels**

63   *Magnetic Woman: Toyen and the Surrealist Erotic*
By Karla Huebner **Reviewed by Ashley Busby**

65   *Women's Lives, Women's Voices: Roman Material Culture and
Female Agency in the Bay of Naples*
Edited by Brenda Longfellow and Molly Swetnam-Burland
Reviewed by Brigitte Keslinke

Woman's Art Journal was honored to receive many longtime and new friends at the annual College Art Association's onsite book and trade fair in New York. We recently launched our newly vamped website and social media campaign, where readers and contributors can find our updated editorial policies, at https://womansartjournal.org. For *WAJ's* Spring/Summer issue, the editors have assembled articles that retrieve the histories of fiercely ambitious, dedicated women artists. Two contributions probe the epic personal narratives of postwar twentieth-century artists pushing the boundaries of three-dimensional space, an excellent pendant to two incisive, thought-provoking essays on the unorthodox practices of modern and contemporary portraitists.

Our feature article by Sophie Lachowsky explores the connections among women sculptors of the Abstract Expressionist era. Recent publications have granted attention to women painters of the 1950s, however, this generation of women sculptors was relegated primarily to monographic studies. Only a few scholars have proposed the social and artistic interactions of Dorothy Dehner and Louise Nevelson, or the related works, in wood, by Louise Bourgeois. Lachowsky carefully considers the interrelated sculptural experimentations by Dehner, Nevelson, and Bourgeois, three women whose pioneering approaches to art in three dimensions—propelled by the utilization of innovative materials— established original methods and dramatic displays. Nevelson's stacked wood installations, culled from recycled materials, strongly parallel the interior scenes of Bourgeois's *Personages*. Dehner's surprising update to the traditional lost wax process, via the creation of openwork constructions, explains her success in the 1950s and thereafter. All three artists were at the forefront of postwar sculptural installations, but only in recent decades have they received international recognition.

Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian is presented by Donna Stein as one of the most accomplished multidisciplinary artists of her generation in Iran and the US. An expert on Iranian art, Stein retrieves from her archives an important interview with Monir from 1985, a fascinating recollection that explores the artist's enterprising and ambitious travels to Indigenous communities throughout Iran. Monir developed important relationships with the artisans from nomadic and settled tribes, and she acquired traditional paintings, jewelry, ceramics, textiles, and carpets. Some of these exquisite historical examples impacted the direction of her contemporary work. "In Her Words" is a revelatory encounter that illustrates Monir's indebtedness to the Iranian craftspeople whom she met throughout her singular career, many influencing her technical development of bas-relief constructions, tapestries, and Persian *ayeneh-kari* (mirror work).

A graduate of Rutgers University's Douglass College and MFA program, Frances Kuehn studied with Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Watts, and Geoffrey Hendricks. The progressive curriculum of Black Mountain College was favored by the great artists and teachers then making up the faculty at Rutgers, and Kuehn's exposure to this nonconventional arts education inspired her freedom to explore many new directions. Like George Segal, also then on the Rutgers campus, Kuehn pursued a deeply personal response to the study of the figure. Heather Cammarata-Seale's article begins with Kuehn's images of family members. Her paintings take a different course by 2003. Fabrics

and garments, arranged in grid-like configurations, dominate the canvas and elicit natural, mimetic, and animated bodily and nonhuman forms. Cammarata-Seale calls them *nature vivant* paintings—still lifes-cum-portraits—fabricating a "thing power" from their compositional vitality. Kuehn says "all our possessions speak about us in silent ways."

The portraits of early-twentieth-century painter Romaine Brooks offer sibylline representations of decadent queerness. Drawn to Whistler's subdued color palette and dandy iconography, Brooks utilized an anachronistic Decadent style associated with Symbolism and Aestheticism. Elizabeth Richards Rivenbark argues that Brooks' aesthetic and ideological tendencies align more comfortably with the later postmodern era, a position that advances how the radical gender slippage portrayed by Brooks' portrait sitters transformed the visual and sexual tropes of modern lesbianism.

Our meticulous *WAJ* book reviews editor, Alison Poe, has brought to fruition an exceptional corpus of criticism. Examining the "place-based strategies of transnational sisterhood and solidarity," Maria Constantino's review on global women artists explores the collective strategies of "belonging" and "unbelonging" that operate from the "in-between" spaces, borders, and geographies of nation states, political structures, and patriarchal institutions. Charlotte Kent's intertwined narratives of art and technology chart the feminist and gender-fluid histories of new media and digital projects, including AI, VR, and AR. Lisa Farrington surveys two book projects: on Bisa Butler's exhibition catalogue of quilted portraits, Farrington sumptuously harnesses the artist's capacity to guide, by way of fabric, the viewer's focus beyond race with the "seeming ease of wielding a paintbrush"; and in a separate volume, Faith Ringgold, renowned for her story quilts, is showcased by a lesser-known decade of her political agendas and activities. Joan Marter chronicled the leading women's postwar arts program and exhibition series at Douglass College, reviewed in depth by Heather Cammarata-Seale.

Contextualizing the rich histories of feminism, eroticism, and sexuality in the interwar period, Ashley Busby uncovers the mysterious persona and art of the avant-garde Czech surrealist, Toyen. Andrea Gremels's review likewise unsilences the histories of Germanophone women artists and trauma theory, extending the "palimpsestic" character of surrealism's feminist landscape beyond World War II. Sigourney Schultz unveils the intimate truths and human experiences of Gillian Wearing, a British multidisciplinary artist who "exhorts her audience to be who they would like to be, not what others want them to be." Brigitte Keslinke sheds light on the perpetually marginalized status of ancient Roman women and other communities in the scholarship of the ancient Mediterranean, recuperating the deep silences from the rich archeological bounty of textual and material evidence in the Bay of Naples, and turning an extraordinary volume of female-centric narratives and proposals into an "inclusive toolbox" for examining the Roman world.

Joan Marter and Aliza Rachel Edelman
Editors, *Woman's Art Journal*

Dismantling the Patriarchy, Bit by Bit: Art, Feminism, and Digital Technology

By Judith K. Brodsky
Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2022

Reviewed by Charlotte Kent

The perception that men dominate both art and technology forms part of a problematic narrative. Women have contributed to both fields throughout their respective histories, and the convergence of the two fields is replete with women's involvement. A focus on women as such, however, is limiting, since an array of identities needs recognition. In considering the intertwined narratives of art and technology, Judith Brodsky rightly shows that the feminist endeavor in art history has aimed to raise awareness of marginalized voices generally, and that although it has unfortunately reiterated some systemic injustices, it has also laid theoretical ground that has better shaped the discourse. *Dismantling the Patriarchy, Bit by Bit: Art, Feminism, and Digital Technology* offers a survey of projects engaging with new media and computer arts that have embraced a feminist ethos by confronting social injustices perpetuated by hegemonic systems.

Chapters 1 through 4 provide a roughly decade-by-decade discussion of creative, conceptual, and technical innovations cultivated by artists in their assorted practices that employ computers or other electronic media. The other ten chapters consider thematic topics like digital language, queerness, and surveillance as well as the regionally specific subject of Japanese feminism and anime. While each chapter offers a few close readings of works or practitioners' biographies, the text tends to proceed quickly through numerous key artists whose technological projects present an intersectional feminist position. These overviews are necessarily incomplete given the broad scope of the book, but they offer a useful reference for scholars and a helpful introduction for students. Given the extensive existing literature on video works' engagement with feminist

issues, those chapters on video art are of lesser interest and utility, but their presence is justified, as Brodsky explains in the conclusion, because such practices contributed to legitimating digital art (207).

The introduction lays out the broad understanding of feminism that the book applies to digital art: "Post-colonialism, queer, and critical race theory recognized the basis of feminism as a social justice movement but transformed it to become inclusive of gender fluidity, race, power, and oppression in general. It became an intersectional movement" (1). The first chapter provides an overview of women in the early history of computing, from mathematician Ada Lovelace, who devised algorithms for the Babbage Analytical Machine in the nineteenth century, to the pioneering artists in the 1960s who experimented with early computers and electronic media. The second chapter offers a familiar history of feminism and digital art in the 1970s, with mention of the Feminist Art Program at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) and of the many artists there and elsewhere who used video and television to address patriarchal culture. In addition, however, this chapter introduces the ways that women participated in the development, manufacturing, and dissemination of new technologies in that decade, a valuable addition to the survey of artists that continues throughout the text. Among a significant group of Chicago-based women digital and video artists, for example, were Ellen Sandor (b. 1942), who helped develop early attempts at Virtual Reality (VR), and Janine Fron, an early game designer (34). Chapter 2 also emphasizes the role that university educators played in expanding interest in computer arts and feminist theories. With so much content in each chapter, the presentations of each person and project remain brief, but the book invites readers to learn more through the excellent resources in citations provided conveniently at each chapter's end.

The chapter "Reimagining the Binary Nature of Digital Technology" nicely condenses Sadie Plant's ideas in *Zeroes +*

Ones (1997) about the dependence of computers' binary code on the same values that underlie binary social constructs around gender (as does, this reviewer might add, the designation of plugs/ports as "male"/"female"). Brodsky presents how the feminist rejection of the hegemonic structures and visual orders within computer science was expressed through manifestos by the activist collectives VNS Matrix and Laboria Cuboniks as well as by artist Rosa Menkman (b. 1983) and curator Legacy Russell. While scholars frequently, as Brodsky notes, credit Plant with the coinage "cyberfeminism," many audiences associate this term with the *Cyberfeminist Manifesto* (1991) of VNS Matrix, a group whose vitriol culminated in their *Bitch Mutant Manifesto* (1996). *The Xenofeminist Manifesto: A Politics of Alienation* (n.d.) of Laboria Cuboniks responded against the kind of essentialism that had been pervasive in much feminist thinking to instead espouse a more progressive politics around gender identity. Menkman's *Glitch Studies Manifesto* (composed 2010 and published in the artist's 2011 *Glitch Moment/um*) argued for disrupting normative computer and web-based interactions at a time when concern about transnational corporate control over the internet was gaining traction. Russell's *Glitch Feminist Manifesto* (2013) injected a Black and queer perspective into the metaphor.

Brodsky's Chapter 4 explores how personal computers and an increasingly accessible internet enabled web-based activism. Chapter 5 shifts away from visual systems to examine women artists' use of language in electronic media, especially the adoption by Jenny Holzer (b. 1950) of public displays; it then moves into the phenomenon of hypertext literature. Brodsky's transition here might create unease for scholars of art and text who prefer to distinguish between the use of language in creative visual practices and the composition of text-based narratives. While digital media enable play with language's visual context and elements, maintaining distinctions remains helpful, despite the intersections Brodsky emphasizes. The excellent

discussion of three hypertext novels, Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* (1995), Judy Malloy's *its name was Penelope* (1993), and Carolyn Guyer's *Quibbling* (1992), reminds readers about early world-making techniques, such as participant interaction and choice arising out of a fragmented structure, that are relevant to today's much-hyped virtual realms (also known as cyberspace, and in popular media as "the metaverse"); they relate, too, to video games, the subject of chapter 11.

Writing is also important for the artists discussed in the subsequent chapter, "Queerness, Race, and Digital Art." Brodsky explains that lesbian, transgender, queer, and intersex digital artists, many of them nonwhite, have frequently employed writing as part of their intersectional politics, which seek to dismantle "patriarchal society as a whole (use of language, capitalism, government control of the body, the militaristic basis of technology) through the lens of gender and race" (75). From the classic lesbian lovemaking video *Female Sensibility* (1973) by Lynda Benglis (b. 1941) to the trauma-suffused installation *Four-Year-Old Temptress?* (2017) by Alex Mawimbi (formerly Ato Malinda; b. 1981), this chapter presents an impressively wide range of challenging works by artists whose practices attest to the complexities of identity constructs around the world. Other examples addressed here include the Golden Lion–winning live work *Faust* (2017) by Anne Imhof (b. 1978), orchestrated at the Venice Biennale via smartphones; the satirical social media video *Masculinities and Male Bodies on the Internet* (2013) by Jennifer Chan (b. 1988); and works by Zach Blas (b. 1981), micha cárdenas (b. 1977), Shu Lea Cheang (b. 1954), Jesse Darling (b. 1981), and Vaginal Davis (b. 1969).

The chapters "The Avatar" and "The Female Body Disappears" present well-worn discussions about mediated representations of the self and about the move away from essentialism towards an understanding of how perceptions of bodies are socially constructed; such a survey can only begin to gloss the extensive literature on both topics. Given the complexities of scientific

discourse, Brodsky does an admirable job in "Creating Feminist Paradigms of Knowledge Through Digital Technology" of explaining how digital artists have used feminism to shift perceptions of science and medicine: Ellen K. Levy, Laurie Anderson (b. 1947), and Addie Wagenknecht (b. 1981) have addressed space exploration; Kathy High (b. 1954) and Patricia Piccinini (b. 1965), Darwinian evolution; Neri Oxman (b. 1976), Mary Mattingly (b. 1978), Diane Burko (b. 1945), and Marina Abramović (b. 1946), material ecology; Heather Dewey-Hagborg (b. 1982), gene technology; and Anicka Yi (b. 1971), biotechnology. Brodsky's whirlwind overview creates a sense that there is much more to learn about artists engaged with laboratory sciences.[1] Some of these artists' practices also invite sociological paradigm shifts in a manner similar to creative projects mentioned earlier in the book. The Iranian artist Morehshin Allahyari (b. 1985), for example, has developed the notion of "Additivism" as her attempt to overcome the binary of human/animal and of so many other systems; Allahyari's self-imposed exile from Iran makes her acutely aware of how digital technologies can reinforce colonial attitudes of othering, particularly since the technologies are largely designed and developed by white people (121). Using three-dimensional printing with clear resin, Allahyari reconstructed twelve sculptures destroyed in 2015 by ISIS to produce the series *Material Speculation* (2015–16; Fig. 1). Each sculpture contains a memory card and flash drive with texts, videos, and GPS location data and maps of the sites where the originals stood, preserving the history of the ancient works for the future. Brodsky concludes this chapter with the use by Sondra Perry (b. 1986) of stationary exercise equipment to illustrate the racial inequalities in health care that Black Americans face within the legacy of slavery.

The last five chapters show some of the strengths and challenges of the survey genre. Philosopher Jeremy Bentham's notion of the panopticon, further developed by Michel Foucault, contextualizes most of the works in the

Fig. 1. Morehshin Allahyari, *Material Speculation: ISIS, Priest with Eagle* (2015), 3D-printed resin and electronic components, 12" x 4" x 4". Courtesy of the artist.

chapter "Surveillance"; it represents the kind of controlling opticality that undermines—and is in turn undermined by—recent creative practice addressing digital technologies' algorithmic information bias. Brodsky presents artists' resistance to the visuality of surveillance through works like *Index of the Disappeared* (ongoing since 2004) by Mariam Ghani (b. 1978) and Chitra Ganesh (b. 1975), a filing cabinet of index cards about ostensible terrorism suspects who have gone missing since 9/11, and *The Library of*

Missing Data Sets (2016) by Mimi Ọnụọha (b. 1989), which invites viewers to open a physical file cabinet containing empty folders labeled with topics that lack established or publicly available data (e.g., "English language rules internalized by native speakers," "Cause of June 2015 black church fires"). The chapters "Feminist Artists and the Gaming Industry" and "Japanese Feminism, Video Games, and Anime" are both excellent introductory texts that can serve as memory lists for those familiar with these topics.

The pitfalls of condensing information are evident in the chapter "Artificial Intelligence, Facial Recognition, and Virtual Reality," which limits its discussion of AI to robotics, ignoring many other important artistic practices involving machine learning and algorithms. This is a shame, as a broader treatment would have brought the book full circle by returning to artists mentioned in the first chapter, like Vera Molnár (b. 1924), whose art practice over the last sixty years has playfully explored the potential of algorithms, and whose work has recently been referenced by numerous contemporary practitioners of generative art. The section on VR makes no mention of Char Davies (b. 1954), whose *Osmose* (1995) responds to users' breath in their navigation of the virtual space, reinforcing phenomenological relations between the self and the world; it remains one of

the most thought-provoking applications of VR. Brodsky focuses on artists' use of VR to comment on global sociopolitical issues, but the immersive nature of VR also raises other feminist discourses, particularly that of embodiment, and many artists cultivate this more personal dimension of the medium. Distinguishing VR from Augmented Reality (AR) is increasingly important, and the last chapter's examination of "Digital Public Art and Augmented Reality" helpfully addresses AR's greater accessibility, discussing artists who employ smartphone apps to introduce people, landscapes, abstract shapes, sounds, historic landmarks, and/or imagined elements into viewers' experiences of their environment. The artists are major figures, but the works selected are didactic in a way that does not do justice to their practice. While the emergent medium bears great potential for broadening audience engagement with climate change, community histories, social dynamics, and other issues addressed across Brodsky's book, it also offers beauty and subtlety that are not conveyed here.

With the explosion of interest in digital art recently, *Dismantling the Patriarchy, Bit by Bit: Art, Feminism, and Digital Technology* provides a needed overview of the creative and critical work that artists in this realm are doing to disrupt hegemonic forces. The faltering discussions of assorted practices in a few

of the chapters disappoint, but such lapses are inevitable in a book that covers so much ground. The feminist critique of dominant social systems expressed by technology is the responsibility not only of artists but of scholars as well. Brodsky's book is an important survey that can easily be excerpted for particular use in courses on digital culture or gender studies, but much more must still be written about the convergence of art and technology through an intersectional feminist lens. ●

Charlotte Kent, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Visual Culture at Montclair State University and an arts writer. She has contributed to numerous magazines and academic journals and is an Editor-at-Large for *The Brooklyn Rail*. She is the co-editor of *Contemporary Absurdities, Existential Crises, and Visual Art* (Intellect Books, forthcoming) with Katherine Guinness.

Notes

1. On approaches to the biological sciences in art, see recently Ellen K. Levy and Charissa N. Terranova, eds., *D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson's Generative Influences in Art, Design, and Architecture: From Forces to Forms* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021), reviewed by Christine Filippone in *Woman's Art Journal* 43, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2022): 41–44.

Faith Ringgold: Politics Power

By Faith Ringgold, Michele Wallace, and Kirsten Weiss
Weiss Publications, 2022

Reviewed by Lisa Farrington

Authored by Faith Ringgold (b. 1930), her daughter Michele Wallace, and Kirsten Weiss of Weiss Publications in Berlin and New York, this 104-page volume illustrates and discusses the artist's works from 1967, when her iconic *Black Light Series* was conceived, to 1981, when Ringgold began to create her story quilts. Linen-

bound with an embossed cover, the book features thirty-two color images and fourteen historic black-and-white photos and documents related to the artist's political activities. Ideal for a student audience, the book pairs each image with a short essay that discusses the work's significance or how its iconographic and formal elements communicate the artist's political agenda. Each page spread is highlighted by a quote from Ringgold that further reveals the meaning of the featured work of art. For example, the painting *Black Light Series #1: Big Black* is heralded with the words "I wanted to paint dark tones … to create *black light*."

Ringgold's words allude to the inherent racism in the classic technique of chiaroscuro, which relegates dark tones (including skin tones) to the background and utilizes light tones to bring forms forward.

The first section of *Politics Power* is devoted to *Black Light Series #1-12* (1967–69; Fig. 1), in which Black figures—mostly heads and busts—or evocative words (e.g., "American," "Black," "Art," and a racist imprecation incorporated into an American flag) occupy canvases either left whole or subdivided using color. Essays are, in some cases, straightforward descriptions of the works. Others offer insights into