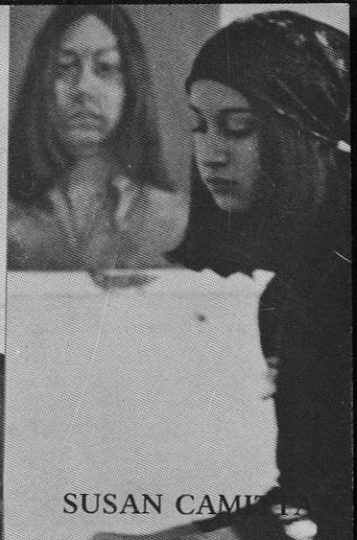


NATASHA SHULMAN



VICTORIA NODIFF



SUSAN CAMILLA



TERI YARBROW



ROBIN MITCHELL



LELIA AMALFITANO



MOLLY RHODES



IDA FOREMAN



SHERRY BRODY

INDEED, I WOULD VENTURE TO GUESS  
THAT ANON, WHO WROTE SO MANY  
POEMS WITHOUT SIGNING THEM, WAS  
OFTEN A WOMAN.

VIRGINIA WOOLF

no cause to hope  
no cause to despair  
frustration, the only legitimate total  
the horror of an endless loose end

it's hard to feel you lost  
and I can smile, that you,  
laughing shy moth  
suddenly bold, would bolt,  
straight to the light

(Ms. Nova, send us a card)

A member of our program, Connie Marsh,  
mysteriously disappeared last March while  
out painting near CalArts. It is with great  
sadness that we dedicate this book to her.

# ANONYMOUS WAS A WOMAN

A Documentation of  
the Women's Art Festival

A Collection of Letters to  
Young Women Artists



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## Letters To A Young Woman Artist

March 6, 1974

Your personal vision and achievements have moved us and enriched our development as young women artists. You are a model to us.

We in the Feminist Art Program at California Institute of the Arts are creating a seven day Women's Art Festival to celebrate the emergence of our own new spirit of visibility and vitality in the arts.

We plan to document this event with the publication of a catalog which will have a section called "Letter to a Young Woman Artist". We would be deeply honored to include such a letter from you about your experiences, or advice, or whatever feelings you might wish to express.

Your letter would be an invaluable contribution in our efforts to build a strong identity for women. We sincerely hope you will respond to our request. Our publication deadline is March 18, 1974.

Thank you,  
Feminist Art Program

Lelia Amalfitano  
Linda Burnham  
Susan Camitta  
Amy de Neergaard  
Barbara England  
Ida Forman

Rikki Frankenstein  
Cynthia Genn  
Jill Giegerich  
Constance Marsh  
Victoria Nodiff  
Molly Rhodes

Sydney Schuster  
Natasha Shulman  
Rena Small  
Susan Starbird  
Teri Yarbrow

Miriam Schapiro, Director  
Sherry Brody, Graduate Assistant

## INTRODUCTION TO THE LETTERS

Thirty five years ago, I was fifteen and I wanted to be an artist. I was frightened, but my mind was set. I had been told by my father (himself an artist) that I was gifted and that the fact that I was a female, made no difference. At that time I didn't understand that my ambition and my gender didn't match. I was so crazy/serious about all of this, that I went to the library to look up the lives of famous artists to find out "how they did it".

It turned out that THE LIVES OF FAMOUS ARTISTS did not include women-artists. Did that mean that there weren't any? I felt rotten, angry — cheated of my own history. I did not want Rembrandt as a role model — he had a penis. I knew that if I were forced (for lack of female models) to identify with him, I would be neutered and lose the richness that came from my female fantasy life. I thought about being Mrs. Rembrandt — right sex — wrong profession. Everything was wrong: I wanted to learn from **women** what it felt like to want to be an artist. I wanted to check out all of my feelings, to compare them to see if I **was** crazy — to get reinforcement for my craziness. I needed to be less lonely, less frightened. I wanted. . . I needed. . .

SOPHINISBA ANGUISCOLA: I get pleasure from the very difficulty of pronouncing her name. Had I known about her thirty-five years ago, I would have known:

that it was O.K. to be a woman and an artist  
that it was alright to marry  
that one could even marry a nobleman  
that a lifetime of painting was possible for a woman  
that one could even be praised by Vasari  
that a woman artist could be 96 and be sketched by  
and acclaimed by Van Dyke.

Well, what a life, better than Rembrandt, eh!

So much for my thoughts at fifteen. Later when I was twenty-seven, an artist, graduated from college, married to an artist, I found myself still nagged at by that feeling (I called it the "monster" feeling) of mis-match between "woman" and "artist". My husband, Paul Brach, and I were living in Columbia, Missouri. I found a paper given by Max Beckman, the German expressionist artist, to the women at Stephens College. I read it with great interest, it was called : LETTER TO A YOUNG WOMAN ARTIST. I hoped that there would be some words of illumination for me — perhaps he would touch on the "monster" problem? It was disappointing — cold, reserved, formal — not at all the way women talk to each other. It was impossible to know that young women were being addressed. "God," I thought, "there must be a better way than this, to communicate with women artists!"

Not until this year, as I was teaching the women in the Feminist Art Program, did I realize that the communication must be done by two women — one asking the question and one answering it. Our women composed a letter asking a question which entirely reflected their own needs and the replies came back with astonishing variety and sometimes poignant similarity. All women artists mourn their lack of history. At times we are enraged that "we" who surely existed, were excluded from the records. In this collection (a bare beginning) we try to fill the cup of history adding a small amount from the vital repositories of woman's wisdom. ANONYMOUS WAS A WOMAN, she need no longer be.

MIRIAM SCHAPIRO



Bennington, Vermont  
March 10, 1974

Dear One: artist, woman, young,

I opened your letter at the end of a long work day. Thoughts came out from the top and the bottom of my as-is state. Nothing was said of training or skills, of plastic elements and formal relations; I assume education is going on and that you write to me for the telling of how it is, for biography plus auto.

These past two months have been so absorbed in work that feelings are especially raw and open and awkwardly accurate. My sons (Matt and Jase), Arnold Ricks and I are still closely bound by our four months travel in the Middle East last spring and by the vivid self-consciousness of personal remaking that a second marriage and a new home bring. Experience (as homo sapiens apprehends it) is running full tide. I want that tide high; I am stunned by it. A certain tolerance for this paradoxical state develops: a switch-off of youth's energy for maturity's endurance?

But there are too many off-days in my new studio. The mother, teacher, lover has outrun the artist; my living life has outrun my marking of it. And I need to dream slowly, connect and make sense visual and palpable. Today nothing became visible; devices were available but their use gave no experiential reality; contrivances brought no breath into that skin of a surface. Precious time, rushing time. I must say to myself, "Stay. Don't give out." I fear I will break before the painting sets its demands, its route. It is awful the time before it begins. I work until I cannot; and I watch what was worked until I must work again. Many things are being worked; something must give. Calculation, chance, process, observation. . . anything, everything tried to induce "it"; but the "it," the life of the work, comes in its own time.

And that is unlike anything other in life, those peak times in making when one knows it is the self becoming. And that assertion, that will to form deflects for a time a surrounding awareness of the slide toward death. I turn to paintings to sustain myself. Last night I turned to Lavin's book on Piero della Francesca's *Flagellation*. I felt that exercise of being, of everyman's nature in play and preferences controlling my perceiving system. As with the Hittite, Seljuk, Egyptian works—exhilaration comes in recognizing that there is a reality subsumed and a reality proposed that speaks to a unity of kind, an identity of species, anybody/everybody. I am lifted; these works counter fall, counter decay, counter dissolution.

Let me say that I am saying, "Stay steady; know your subject is being; love and embrace the costs of deep caring."

Work well.

My fond regards,

Pat Adams

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March 13, 1974

Letter to Young Women Artists

Dear Friends:

*They set the slave free, striking off his chains,  
but he was as much a slave as ever.  
You cannot set slaves free;  
You can only set free men free,  
and there is no need of that:  
Free men set themselves free.*

Above was the answer I once gave to a group who asked me what I thought of the Women's Liberation Movement, in its early days.

I in no way wished to demean the movement, especially in America, where it gains ever in esteem, as I view it from the perspective of world travels. American women are in the forefront, inspiring women of the world. What I meant was that as the movement evolves, it seems to me that women must begin to recognize that ego strengthening is not enough, but awareness of the **Higher Self** must enter consciousness if women are not to become victims of egocentricity, rather than ego-hood. Only thus may stature and true liberation prevail. Such an initiation — and it is that — must be achieved in our time through Art, and we women artists have the responsibility of defining this vision for the world. Imaginative thinking and intuition must replace abstractions and substance-centered thinking with the fire of our enthusiasm and the wisdom of our knowledge. These alone can revivify the creative act which can heal humanity.

The time is ripe to renounce destructiveness in our work in the various arts — emphasis on the mediocre, the trivial, the ugly, the obscene — and to replace these with a concept of the potential Nobility of humankind which can bring hope in a world of despair and illusion.



It is widely acclaimed today that world leadership is defunct. Is it not because male leaders have lost the vision of a higher consciousness, and have been motivated by selfishness, lust for power and wealth, and an alarming short-sightedness? Is it not perhaps a moment in time when women must prepare themselves to assume roles of world leadership? I say "prepare themselves" for if they continue to think of themselves only as substance — dominated, they will risk the same fall into corruption. Artists must embrace science, —scientists, —art, —and our goals, must go beyond the economic, the political, the sexual, if we wish to become pillars of a balanced future — pillars of wisdom and love as envisioned by those Greek philosophers and clairvoyants for future mankind.

"To create great poetry and to put one's destiny in order," said the great Swiss poet, Albert Staffen, "are one and the same." He meant Poetry with a capital P. as did the French poet Mallarmé, which stands for all the Arts.

Let us, dear friends, set as our goal, the writing of great Poetry, — a re-articulation of the Creative Word within us, so that we may become worthy instruments through whom, humankind may voyage toward true freedom. May we as women artists be the examples for men and women of the world of that higher individual consciousness which alone can liberate us.

"Fare forward, Voyagers!"

Daisy Aldan

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### Letter to a Young Woman Artist

Eleanor Antin

I remember, years ago, being invited to join a weekly group therapy session my analyst held regularly for a selected group of clients. There was a star patient there who had charmed everybody by her considerable beauty, graciousness, kindness, her aura of success. She had created, with the help of the analyst, who adored her, a comfortable, cheerful atmosphere. I had nothing against cheerfulness. Normally, I like it. But I hadn't created this play. It was a drawing room drama and she was the hostess. I succeeded in darkening the tone, so much so that the analyst insisted I leave the group. I was destructive. Cruel. I know now I was rewriting the play so I would have an interesting role. What was in it for me if I didn't? Why should I be a supporting player in somebody else's script?

Rewriting the script is not a comfortable way to proceed. For one thing, it demands a great deal of work. Appearing in the unexpected place means you have to defend your right to be there. If you're successful, people turn to

that place expecting to see you but you aren't there. You shout, "Over here, now! Behind this bush, to your right." "What are you doing *there*?" they shout back, a little annoyed. "We're having a picnic here, in *your* place. We've come to keep you company." If you're really skillful, you convince them to join you in the new place. Perhaps you remain for a few hours. You don't like to be lonely. You're tired. Hungry. But all the time you're restlessly looking for an escape. When they least expect it, you make your getaway. Then you appear a good mile off, sitting in a tree and they're angry. How do you seduce them into coming to the new place, they've just settled down into the old one. It has all the charms of home. There's a map.

Perhaps you think you don't need or want them to join you. What they do is their business. You will be a hermit sitting there in your tree. You can listen to the birds, watch the change of seasons. If that's what you want, you had better choose a new profession. Art is the most communal activity in the world. It may be a small community, but without it there isn't any art. You won't have the energy to keep it up.

Real artists recognize this. They are practical. So most of them opt for the discreet career. They learn the proprieties in school. They look for a small room in a tall apartment building and move in. It's a way of doing. It has all the comforts and privileges of tribal living. Above all, it is respectable. I have never had any talent for the discreet career. When I was studying to be an actress years ago, my teacher, Tamara Daykarhanova, made the accusation against me that if I had to pick my nose on stage, rather than stick my finger up my nostril in the shortest, most natural manner, I would twist my arm around the back of my head to reach my nose. That was 20 years ago. I know now that my major vice is my major virtue. Perhaps I acknowledged this out of desperation. I really don't think I had any choice.

Eleanor Antin

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March 14, 1974

### Letter to a Young Woman Artist

Dear friend, your letter moved me to think about my own youth when the turmoil of my emotions propelled me in so many directions, and when I sought confirmation (and consolation) assiduously. I have never found it easy to speak *ex cathedra*, although over the years I have undoubtedly accumulated many significant experiences. But in the arts, somehow, there

is never a surcease of doubt, and never a place to arrive. I sensed as a young woman — and I still believe — that the quest itself is the most important experience of all, and that there are no “answers.”

When I was a student I read omnivorously. Many years later I encountered the writings of a great 20th century French philosopher, Gaston Bachelard, who pointed out that reading itself was a form of self-confirmation, and that we all tend to read “that which concerns us.” If I think back, I realize that Bachelard was right. I used to read that which concerned me even in books which by subject might not seem to concern me at all. It is in the isolated phrase, the quick insight, the indelible form of a few significant words that the residue of all that reading remains. But it remains.

Even for the visual artist, the word remains. There has never been an epoch in art history when there was not a verbal accompaniment to the visual. This goes by the name of criticism, but that need not put you off. It’s really just the musing which anyone moved by the visual experience undergoes. And I have been musing all my life.

Your letter, as I said, moved me back into my own youth and I decided to give myself the pleasure of returning to a book that, as a very young woman, had inspired and sustained me. I wanted to see if I could still be moved by what moved me then. Perhaps it is a measure of my unchanging temperament, perhaps a measure of my reverence for the past, but I found, more than twenty years later, the same quickening effect; the same grateful response that had once bestirred my thoughts and emotions. Perhaps it will “concern” you. It is Rainer Maria Rilke’s “Letters to a Young Poet,” and I would like to cite a few passages which still concern me:

*You ask whether your verses are good. You ask me. You have asked others before. You send them to magazines. You compare them with other poems, and you are disturbed when certain editors reject your efforts. Now (since you have allowed me to advise you) I beg you to give up all that. You are looking outward, and that above all you should not do now. Nobody can counsel and help you, nobody. There is only one single way. Go into yourself. Search for the reason that bids you write; find out whether it is spreading out its roots in the deepest places of your heart, acknowledge to yourself whether you would have to die if it were denied you to write. This above all — ask yourself in the stillest hour of your night: must I write? Delve into yourself for a deep answer. And if this should be affirmative, if you may meet this earnest question with a strong and simple ‘I must’, then build your life according to this necessity; your life even into its most indifferent and slightest hour must be a sign of this urge and a testimony to it.”*

A few months later Rilke wrote to the same very young poet:

*There is no measuring with time, no year matters, and ten years are nothing. Being an artist means, not reckoning and counting, but ripening like the tree which does not force its sap and stands confident in the storms of spring without the fear that after them may come no summer. It does come. But it comes only to the patient, who are there as though eternity lay before them, so unconcernedly still and wide. I learn it daily, learn it with pain to which I am grateful: patience is everything!*

He also had something to say to the artist who was a young woman:

*And perhaps the sexes are more related than we think, and the great renewal of the world will perhaps consist in this, that the man and the maid, freed of all false feelings and reluctances, will seek each other not as opposites, but as brother and sister, as neighbors, and will come together as human beings, in order simply, seriously and patiently to bear in common the difficult sex that has been laid upon them.*

Rilke also urged his young friend not to be bewildered by surfaces, for “in the depths, all becomes law.” You must remember that Rilke did not mean to turn the young artist away from his living experience, but only away from dependence on the passing velleities and on the views of others. He himself was notably open to new experiences; new loves. And you’ll remember that Duino, where he lay in a bed facing Picasso’s wonderful painting of the family of saltimbanques, he composed his elegies, gathering up the experience Picasso had offered him and making with it a work of art “in the depths.”

I realize, young friend, that to your ear, Rilke’s admonitions may sound a bit romantic, even old-fashioned, but they would gain stature if you would read his whole oeuvre. I know that it is difficult to accept his greatest advice: to learn to live in solitude. And I know it is difficult to imagine that today when so much of our lives is turned outward, and when so many experiences are magnified through too much printed matter, too much propaganda, too much frenetic activity, too much cultivated detachment— I know it is difficult to cultivate solitude. And yet, I believe that I have learned, with the help of Rilke and so many other artists who have told us the same thing, that the inward-turning quest is the supreme value of being an artist.

I hope, when you have a chance, you will share your thoughts with me.

Cordially,  
Dore Ashton



May 17, 1974

Dear Miriam Schapiro, Sherry Brody, and the Feminist Art Program,  
Thank you for writing to me about expressing my ideas for your catalog:  
Dear Young Woman Artist.

I am glad you are joining the art world. I will put you on my growing list of young women painters. I will pass the word.

I am assuming that, for you, art will come first, and that you will fit in other things around it. Nevertheless, it will take a long time to get even the reward of the approbation of your peers. Usually, about twice as long as for a man. But the world is changing; we hope we are changing it.

What can we do for each other as women artists? We must write to each other and about each other. We must get our existence into old archives or new ones that we create.

What does being an artist mean? When I decided at age five to be one, I didn't know all the problems. But I had a good idea about the life in the work. My moments of ecstasy have the same feelings now as then.

I believe that one should search all things and work toward a personal style and evolve from that.

Work without ceasing, be sure of yourself and become wise in the ways of the world. In that order.

All the best,  
Alice Baber

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## WESTERN UNION MAILGRAM

THE FEMINIST ART PROGRAM  
CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF THE ARTS MCBEAN PARKWAY  
VALENCIA CA 91355

YES THERE IS A SHARED FEMALE SENSABILITY, WOMEN  
WANT TO PLEASE. WOMEN ARE ARTISTS, THEREFORE  
WOMEN MAKE ESPECIALLY PLEASING ART. I ESPECIALLY  
LIKE FEMALE ART.

LYNDA BENGLIS

14:20 EDT  
MGMLSAT HSB

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Letter to a Young Woman Artist:

(I have just made a friend of a "young woman artist", in her 20's, and visiting in her home she showed me a sheaf of poems, later saying I was the first person to whom she had shown her work. I spent one night with these, marked possible deletions from lines, and we discussed each poem most intensely the following morning. I will, for this reason, address my "letter" as to Sandra.)

Dear Sandra:

You came to the door. Such a small girl, I thought; and could you be my friend? who wrote with such clear sentences, in trained and spontaneous directness.

You let me stay in your house, left me there as you went to class, and on your desk poems I was to read. The next night, the feminist question came up — a kind of attack and defense.

In the first place, I do not look upon you as a "woman", not in any general way, but as an artist. It is the gift of women to be of a kind of earthiness that becomes... "living" art, which all women have, an adaptability to a combined ethnic romanticism and reality. From which the practicing artist (as woman) must come — not losing one's self in the "idealism" (static ideas) of what it is to be in the field that is heavier than professional-ism.



The woman bleeds. This keeps her close to the earth. The woman accepts the man; in that 'acceptance', as act, she maintains his innocence — and her own. She bears children, that physically come from her; and as the composition of her body insures a child in health, the temper of her mind shapes and secures the life after — her own, her husband's or the man she loves. Life itself grows from her

and I am not being "poetic" in this definement. She must accept the man, for only in this way can she be woman; how this is accomplished, and how done so naturally, is the fine point of difference in all of us and may occupy her until death.

From this emerges an art that no one can define. And one writing poetry, which is an art, or practicing the graphics of painting (direct) and further a suggestiveness (a body thing) in sound — which is music in a way that is different from the music of language — she, this plagued or gifted "creature or female" person

ah, it is as though she has a tiger living in the house. She must pet it, she must feed it, obey it . . . curse and despise it in love! but know that the "gift's" source is the very earth-thing that holds and makes her woman.

As artist, she must ask no . . . edge. Muster all she can accomplish (and not consider the end as accomplishment) on the equal terms of what "art" is and what writing (in this case) is to her. Any writer worth his salt puts a high demand upon himself — it is the nature of what he considers the demand that differentiates. But art grows from life and only by living fully (in whatever way we live) does the man or the woman . . . fulfill himself (or herself). Let us not always want to be first! but have a little grace — and that is our advantage. A singular place, loved by men . . . do we not want to be loved by men? and we are so loved only as we remain women — in the most basic terms. For over 12 years, we (Roy and I) had two little animals, coatis (the coati mundi), one male and the other female. But, of course, you can learn the same thing having children — if you have them of both sexes. A primary difference

and need

that society does not make and that has nothing to do with justice (or the unjust). Pursue your art with that awareness, respecting it . . . yet art is an inhuman, a transposed pursuit, always (for men and for women); and knowing that may be the reason few women are so willing to

storm the gates of  
heaven or hell . . . to get what never gives warmth to our feeling as simple love from one or a few or some persons absorb from and into us.

Any anti-feminist attitude I may have (or show, carelessly) is for the over-play of a kind of aphrodite-ness. Imagine Frieda (Lawrence) having to write to prove her reality! she lives and breathes a woman — and how to be both I do not know. Yet, that very Earthi-ness, I believe, is as protection an essential part of this new age (or survival) — and the sensibleness of women one quality to help keep us all with our feet on the ground.

Love,  
bess

besmilr brigham  
route # one  
horatio, arkansas

71842

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Dear Feminist Art Program,

I am sending along a Catalog of my current show at the University Museum at Berkeley. You are welcome to use my quotes or information in the catalog.

In addition all I can say is work very hard, listen to your "interior" self, and only compete with yourself.

Good luck with the Women's Art Festival.

Sincerely,  
Joan Brown

Quotation from catalog by Brenda Richardson of the Joan Brown Exhibition, University Art Museum, Berkeley. 1974.

*"In the fall of 1964, I started feeling a great need for a change in my paintings. I was feeling restless and felt there was more than what I knew about. So in January of 1965 I decided to take a new step forward. I put away all my palette knives and trowels, and decided to do some small still lifes in subtle color. I wanted more conscious control of my work at this point. Staempfli couldn't understand why I would want to change since my paintings were selling well, I was showing steadily in New York and L.A., and people were taking notice of my work. I tried to explain that I didn't want to show for awhile, that I wanted to pursue this new direction. He didn't agree, so then I realised that we must part ways. I never regretted it, either."*

RHYS CAPARN Route 1, Taunton Hill Road, Newtown, Connecticut  
06470

# LETTER TO A YOUNG WOMAN ARTIST

March 8, 1974

Many years ago my teacher, Alexander Archipenko, spoke of his belief in the great contribution that women would make to the arts of sculpture and painting, through their special sensibilities and perceptions.

The work of the best men artists has had a convincing splendour, an evident vitality which has caused attention and study. There is a sense of public confidence. The enduring energy of women can be quite private and still in its manifestation in art, and is often overlooked. Its different complexities demand an unhurried audience.

We all know of the difficulties women have had in finding the time to work absorbedly, and in being taken seriously. Before this century, with rare exceptions, women of leisure painted in a cocoon of amateurism. The unleisured were absorbed by the repetitive minutiae of the home, from which there was no escape. The suspicion of non-professionalism remains, as shown by the failure of federal and state commissions to women artists. The number of women sculptors and painters given great prominence is growing, but remains token in its recognition of achievement. I know of too many especially fine women artists who, bypassed and virtually ignored, have worked silently in poetic seriousness, sometimes destroying their work at the end for lack of a responsive audience.

Men and women artists' images and visions overlap in many ways; nor should there ever be insistence on a separation. However, I believe that the special experiences of women, the quality of their life in the world which has affected their imaginations, has not been fully expressed in the plastic arts. This source can enrich everyone.

I am glad that in this period of combat for equal rights young women artists are so positive in their claims. You must believe in yourself, and in other women as artists. This conviction is the first and most important step in building a strong identity for women in art.

RHYS CAPARN

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March 12, 1974

To The Feminist Art Program:

What can I tell you? From experience I would say — put your energy at the *center* — way into yourself . . . that will sustain you through all . . . then, let it reflect, inspire, and guide you . . .

Don't worry about what "to do" or "technique" — ever — and stay away from expectations, ambitions, and involvements outside your own fulfillment and expression.

Also dream a little . . .

Good luck and best wishes.

Vija Celmins

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March, 1974

Letter to a Young Woman Artist:

What does it mean to be a young woman artist today?

It means that you will have to choose between affirming the culture or challenging it.

It means that you will have to choose whether to make art out of your own experience as a woman or **within** the structure of "important art ideas".

It means that you will have to choose whether to work within a male-dominated institution or to establish alternatives.

If you work inside a male-dominated institution, you will have to choose whether or not to try to change it.

If you choose to change the institution, you will have to struggle with men.

If you choose to struggle with men, you will be using your energies to affect men rather than women. This means that you will be affirming male dominance, and hence the culture as it is, because using your energies to change men means that you think that men are more important than women and deserve more of your energy.



If you choose to establish an alternative, it means that you will have a space in the world which men do not define.

You will be choosing to act independently from men and in a way that does not allow male culture to benefit from your energies.

Establishing an alternative means directing yourself entirely toward women. This means affirming yourself, your experience, your life, your art. And this means that your art, because it affirms your experience as a woman, will differ. It will be made from your own, unique, female perspective. It will convey a way of being in the world and of living in a culture which you have not fully participated in shaping. It will express the concept and the human substance of non-dominance.

One cannot speculate about what your art will look like.

One can only know that if you choose to direct your energies toward women, your art will change the world.

In Sisterhood and Struggle,

Arlene Raven

Judy Chicago

\*\*\*\*\*

Sheila de Bretteville

WORKS

architecture and design

672 S. Lafayette Park Place

Los Angeles

California 90057

213 388 0331

13 March 1974

Dear Women in the Feminist Art Program at the California Institute of the Arts,

Thank you for your invitation to contribute a *letter to a young woman artist*. I was initially startled by your description of me as a 'model' — but it feels good — and felt strained by the thought of writing a public letter rather than talking to any or all of you face to face. But this is another opportunity to make my ideas and needs known, to enter into relationship . . .

I am assuming that there are other letters asking you to continue to ask questions and challenge existing attitudes, to focus on your experience as women and look for ways to externalize that experience, making it accessible to others.

I am assuming that you are already looking for ways to validate women's experience trying to understand the forces which coalesce to restrict the positive ways of being — nurturing, cooperating, accommodating, participating — associated with women and the devalued female role.

I am delighted, encouraged and energized by knowing that you are organizing your thoughts and yourselves in an effort to create ways of affecting the dominant culture.

So, I feel the permission to make known in this context my need — my need for young women artists to look at the restricting boundaries that exist in our lives, our work and our institutions between the activities of Art and Design.

As the separations between Male and Female, Public and Private limit our choices and make unavailable other modes of behavior, so does the separation between Design and Art. Once we begin to question the ways in which these bounded relationships and intentionally loosen the boundaries, we begin to make the characteristics of one available to the other.

As a woman designer working with women artists, I am particularly aware of the ways in which our culture and our educational institutions reinforce these restricting separations, (while my classes in the School of Design include both men and women — I took the Women's Design Program out of Cal Arts and into the alternative context of the Feminist Studio Workshop in the Woman's Building — only women from the School of Art have taken classes in the School of Design). Being a designer means to me that my creation — if I am to combine social responsibility with individual creativity — must finally be a highly intentional act. It seemed that artistic expression was allowed to be self-indulgent but design had to be other-directed. This dovetailed with my acceptance of female role — the parts of female role that I felt were good, good for me as the way to be in the world. Design meant being sensitive to others' needs, helping, helping others. And because it made me feel good to do it, to design — to help others, I do it! But I felt brutalized by the denial of self involved in the act. I felt oppressed because the 'others' that designs 'help' are so often just those organizations in the dominant culture that oppress us! I looked for ways to put myself back into my work while keeping the sensitivity to others that my acculturation as a woman and definition as a designer had given me.



In teaching and working with colleagues I wanted to bring this new found integration into a larger context. I found design students and design professionals more accepting of the old definitions, struggling to have careers and work that validated their commitment to doing design. So I come finally to what is the force behind me causing me to take the time to write this letter to you.

It seems that it is women artists who are sufficiently alienated from the dominant culture, and willing to focus on the expression of female experience in work who must work for this change. So I am asking you to help blur the boundaries between Art and Design. To take the validated self-involvement from Art and combine it with the social responsibility and preoccupation with the processes of reproduction from Design and do Work which expresses the self — the female self — projecting it into the dominant culture. If you create an idiom capable of projecting the positive aspects of female role, validating it and making available to society at large perhaps we may have social change!

But until then, I believe that the work of designers — male and female — will continue to support the very institutions and attitudes that oppress us, and the work of artists — male and female — will continue to reach only the art appreciating, and art acquiring elite.

Be a 'model' for me, a model of what may be in the future so that your 'personal vision and achievements' will combine with mine and other women working.

With much love and hope,  
Sheila de Bretteville

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[Mary] Madeline DeFrees  
Department of English  
University of Montana  
Missoula, MT 59801

Letter to a Young Woman Artist

Dear sister,

After thirty-five years of writing in necessary or self-imposed isolation, it is hard to believe that anybody really wants to hear from me or that what I have to say is important. So my responses to your letter were: first, pleasure in your assurance that my work had been helpful; second, encouragement in the new solidarity we are experiencing as women; and third, the old fears, hesitations, disclaimers, the utter conviction that I'll never be able to bring it off. And yet the typewriter, quiet during a week of vicious domestic and curricular activity, stands before me now to take the beating I have deferred while the pressure built up in the vacuum out of which I write.

I went into the convent just out of high school at sixteen, persuaded that in doing so, I sacrificed a promising literary career to some nobler calling. All through the early years in that rarefied atmosphere I stole writing time from a schedule that allowed none. I learned to revise poems to the swish of a broom down unlit corridors. On my knees, I polished the lines clean as I dusted a flight of stairs and tried to chase them from my head while I meditated in a draughty chapel shortly after five each morning. To clear my head for the next stanza, I scribbled the first on a used envelope after dormitory lights blinked out at 9:25 p.m. I walked from convent to classroom, comatose, looking for a better word, a truer image. I pecked at an antique typewriter during infrequent hours when the others watched a movie certified suitable for nuns in the common recreation room. At intervals I timidly broached the subject of my buried talent and tried to accept the need to make pedagogy a prior concern. Between times I reflected on Hopkins' elected silence and wondered when conscience or counsel would force me to fall mute.

After a long time in that slow-moving system I achieved enough seniority to make a few requests: for postage, magazine subscriptions, summer courses or writer's workshops. I tried my hand at fiction, as an outlet for things I couldn't put in the poems, a means of maintaining sanity. I knew my writing was more than the pious love lyrics of religion in its springtime. In some desperate and critical way I needed to write to retain a sense of myself in that anonymous surround.

When I began to publish — at first only in the Catholic magazine — the very name I appended to my poems was one I had been assigned. Perhaps that was right, for the poems of Sister Mary Gilbert were still the work of someone trapped, like many of my sisters, in an assumed name. By the time I was ready to resume the name my parents had given me the signature had a little more character. I could have signed myself "A Sister of the Holy Names" in the great communal tradition of the Middle Ages still observed

by most members of my order. Or I could have been **Madeline DeFrees** making a snare of evasion, but I believed that if my poems were good enough and I made no secret of being a nun, readers might question the stereotypes created by O'Malley cartoons and Hollywood nuns.

Alas for youthful idealism! I had not counted on the vested interest in commercialized nostalgia and pious propagands. My superiors complained that because there wasn't "a true Religious" in my stories, people might think nuns were like that. An agent questioned how one of my more ironic characters could last for twenty years in the convent. A University student insisted my fictional Sisters should be more like those in "Green Pastures." But Markham Harris praised a story, Charlotte Kohler bought it and Martha Foley anthologized it.

Once every five or ten years somebody proved that s/he had read my stories and poems and gave me courage to write others. In the intervals I tried to maintain belief in my own work against heavy odds. When I wrote about nuns, the only people I really knew, some editor was sure to say that nothing happened in the story except that a couple of birds got into a chapel, and that wasn't worth fourteen pages. If I turned inward and wrote of my own most painful experience I was sure to be told that my poems weren't really about anything. Even the people who said they liked what I wrote often treated me like a pet penguin.

"Imagine a penguin who has learned to fly," a radio announcer would burble. "What ever made you think of flying?"

If I suggested that flying seemed a logical extension of having wings, albeit reduced to flippers, he would ask what **kind** of flying I did. When I told him that was his problem and how about a demonstration, he would pretend to be attentive as I headed into a kamikaze over the dark continent while he murmured abstract nonsense about the nun-poetess soaring perpetually over the Holy Land.

In 1959 I met Karl Shapiro. He was under no such illusion. He told me to publish a book of poems. I said it was necessary to appear in the quarterlies first. He said, "Do it," and promised to take some poems for *Prairie Schooner*. That summer Nelson Bently of the University of Washington gave me a big boost on the road to publication, and a year or two later, Father Michale McAniff helped me along with reading and repeated assurances that the emergence of woman was the greatest single phenomenon in three hundred years. It's more important than the atom bomb, he used to say, and much more far-reaching in its implications. Mother Mary Joan, a sympathetic provincial superior, who might have been a writer herself had she been given the opportunity, urged me to keep on writing, and Bernadette Carlson, a poet in her own right, reinforced my determination in her

triple role as friend, superior, and college president.

By the time Warren Carrier, then chairman of the University of Montana English department, invited me to replace Richard Hugo during his absence on a Rockefeller grant, I was ready to move out of the sanctuary and see where the flippers would take me. I think that I did reasonable well that first year in Montana trying to fill Hugo's legendary shoes — well enough, anyway, to know that I wanted to stay when he returned and well enough to be invited to do just that. Six years later I realized that the wings had grown; that they were taking me farther and farther out, and that I couldn't agree to have them clipped back just because I was afraid. I tried to say it in "With a Bottle of Blue Nun to All My Friends." A year of struggle and psychiatric counseling issued in my decision to leave the order rather than fall back into a dependent role. I still suffer from the disabilities that are in me, regardless of where they come from in the first place: negative feelings, mountains of self-doubt, prolonged dry periods. For a while I labored under the fear that becoming better adjusted would put an end to the poems. My anxiety was justified to some degree, for I recognized the exiled and lonely place the poems came from.

I remind myself of the way I am classified in *No More Masks!* Entombed with ceremonial reverence among the poets of a bygone era, notable for their accommodation to male-dominated modes, singular in their silences as in their spinsterhood. I realize that I am somewhat out of phase at a time when most women are fighting for sexual liberation, for, at fifty-four, I still experience the need to accept my sexual identity and to have it accepted by others. The temptation to force heterosexual relationships in order to test that acceptance could be disastrous. I watch myself pass uneasily from the role of alienated woman writer and stereotyped-nun-writer to the equally unattractive one of older-woman-writer in a culture that, perhaps, overvalues the young. In an age of rising feminism, radical literary experiments, and uninhibited early productivity, I do not need to be reminded of the ten-year interval between my books of poems. Fifteen months of waiting for an editor to refuse a manuscript and another eight or nine preparing for a second rejection make it hard to keep faith in the poems. Now, at last, acceptance of a poetry manuscript with another extended delay until publication.

I remind myself that I am at least on the borderline. If I were two years younger I would qualify for "The Will to Change." Sometimes it seems to me that I have already made such staggering changes that few persons inexperienced in convent life can imagine their magnitude. After leaving my order, I wrote some stories for the first time in seven years. I felt that there had been a subtle, subliminal censorship, a role identification that made certain subjects taboo. And although I do not regret the years I spent in



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the convent, nor the many rich friendships formed there, I revel in my newfound breadth of interest and range of feeling. I realize, too, that my previous experience had developed a certain kind of toughness and resilience that shows only when need overpowers misgivings. I am still very much alive, still convinced that creativity must extend to all areas of experience. Surely anyone with an imagination flexible enough to withstand all the obstacles placed in its way can contrive a path through the density of the multitudes and the opposition of the threatened. My emergence is, after all, not essentially different from that of women everywhere. We are coming out of the walls. We are reclaiming the names we were born to.

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#### For Cal Arts Cat., Letter to a Young Woman Artist

I would address you not simply as young women artists, but as human beings endeavoring to realize yourselves as free individuals in the world at large. The galleries, museums, magazines, art schools, life-styles and talk styles of the art world are geared to the cultivation and merchandizing of one's personal ideas or sensibilities; and in the dynamics of the art market system, in which all efforts are finally and inevitably weighed, even social consciousness may end up as ideological packaging for saleable commodities: the newest art. Moreover, in the over-heated atmospheres of the art world, where any idea becomes fuel for generating creative energy, social reality is easily distorted. Unless we **want** to merchandize the idealism and social aspirations of the women's movement, we must think through its implications and what it means to those who work in the arts.

What are those ideals? Movement women, both within and without the art world, often speak of the women's movement as a force that will significantly change the real social relations that shape our lives. It is frequently argued that to break out of the roles that sustain the conventional family is to strike a blow at the existing social order. Many women maintain that the very spirit of movement experience, in-so-far as it is cooperative, will eventually effect changes in the competitive relations that permeate our society; or, that by rehabilitating and legitimizing the so-called "feminine" side of human nature — those feelings and experiences that are systematically devalued and repressed by society — the movement will gradually discredit the patriarchal values that sanction present inequalities. To win one's individual freedom from traditional domestic roles, and to help others to do this, is thus seen as a contribution to basic social change.

But are women's demands for personal freedom and economic self-determination on an individual basis really **social** aspirations? Can the extension of individual, bourgeois freedom to women and other culturally "invisible" groups really lead to fundamental social change? Consider those ideals as they are manifested in the art world. Women artists and art teachers are largely concerned with developing in themselves and their students a strong personal identity — and often — a highly personal art. They are also determined to expand the esthetic notions that now reign in museums and galleries to include the products of women who consciously refuse to work in accepted modes or materials. There is nothing very social or political in this. These are the proper concerns of realistic professionals. They are dealing with the problems of making objects with professional conviction and the task of articulating and promoting in the art market an ideology that will validate (i.e., make valuable) those objects as art-commodities. One hears little or no protest about the existence of the art world itself as a separate, specialized sector of culture irrelevant to the lives of most people, nor about the monopolistic confinement of human creativity in general to its narrow sphere. That not everyone may have the freedom and leisure to enjoy or create art, that not everyone can choose the pleasures of middle-class life, that art may serve the social ambitions and not merely the esthetic interests of those who acquire it — rarely are such issues raised. The effort is to become participants in the established market system, to modify that system only to the point where it will include women's art products. Feminists in the art world are thus in accord with the main thrust of the women's movement everywhere. Most of them middle class, movement women are rejecting the service-oriented psychology that perpetuates the nuclear family and are acquiring both the professional skills and middle-class ideology of individualism previously encouraged only in white males. One might still argue that despite its ideology, the movement will effect social change: would not the dissolution of the nuclear family alone alter the fundamental patriarchal relations that govern our society? That question depends on whether or not these features are basic to advanced capitalism. It occurs to me that the conventional family is breaking down not **because** of the women's movement, but because its usefulness to advanced capitalist society is beginning to end. The middle-class mainstream of the women's movement, far from being a radical source of change might be simply a timely campaign to re-integrate women into capitalist society at its most advanced and efficient level. Historically, in western liberal society, increased individualism has been the corollary of increased state power. The ideology of the women's movement, in-so-far as it confines itself to the demand for individual freedom, could well rationalize a society of atomized individuals with unlimited "personal freedom", but with no more power to change the real political and economic conditions



of their existence than we have now.

In the past, art movements with social ideals have ended up as objects in museums — Futurism, Constructivism, Surrealism, etc. — and artists with causes have become trademarks for their own commodities. It may not be possible to resolve the contradiction between the professional realities artists face today — tied as they are to a market system — and their social ideals; but it is possible to clarify and untangle them, to think beyond the self-promoting rhetoric of the art world and to recognize the difference between modifying an established market system and actively working for a society organized to serve the genuine human needs of everyone, female and male.

Carol Duncan

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Martha Edelheit  
1140 Fifth Avenue  
New York, N.Y. 10028  
March 10, 1974

Dear Sister Artists,

Enclosed are notes from my Daybooks that I extracted from my journals and printed for my show at Artists Space in October 1973. You are welcome to use any or all of it in your catalogue.

The following are some additional observations and recent thoughts.

My downs are terrible and more frequent than my ups. My personal demons pursue me relentlessly and many mornings are aching disasters.

My highs come with seeing . . . really seeing . . . walking on a sidewalk that suddenly explodes into dancing diamonds haloing me, an acid-sharp blue day, crying at the Goyas in the Prado, the shape inside a bent arm, trying a new color, dreaming over a blank canvas.

I feel lucky if I can touch one person with what I feel, think, do, make.

Failures occur many more times than successes in the work.

Often, what is successful for others isn't for me.

I don't think there is any equation between making art and "making it".

Sometimes they coincide, mostly they don't.

We live with instant coffee and redi-whip and push button everything . . . but making art is something else . . . a millisecond between zero and the

universe. You have to be cagey about snaring the highs . . . and stubborn. Stubbornness is an invaluable piece of necessary equipment.

So is; questioning everything, including the things you are doing right now, were taught or will be tomorrow, are in love with. Suspect, track down, try out, trust, discard. every vision/idea. There are no rules, except for making business.

Love . . . what you do, and think and see . . . the process . . . really love doing the work . . . enjoy the boredom.

We're entering the end of the 20th century. "Modern Art" is 74 years old. It is 90% 19th century thinking pasted on to 20th century technological devices.

The Egyptians had Nut and Ra, Nephrite and Akhnaton. The Greeks . . . Athena and Zeus, Agememnon and Helen. The Romans . . . Jupiter and Venus, Caesar and Cleopatra. The Middle Ages . . . Christ and Madonna, King Arthur and Elinor of Aquitaine, Unicorns and Grails.

I do not think that I.T.&T., Coca Cola or even Marilyn Monroe are significant analogues.

I believe there are equivalents, pervasive ways of looking at and understanding the world in storytelling terms, mythic derivatives of the visions and actions of Marx, Freud, Einstein, Hitler, Gandhi. The lives of our heroes and villains. Maybe Amelia Earhart, Mme. Curie, Indira Gandhi, and Gertrude Stein will have a stronger place in the pantheon with the ending of the Victorian infestation.

We create in response to the myths and legends we take for granted.

Best Wishes and Good Luck,

Martha Edelheit

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Dear LELIA, LINDA, SUSAN, AMY, BARBARA, IDA, RIKKI, CYNTHIA, JILL, CONSTANCE, VICTORIA, MOLLY, SYDNEY, NATASHA, RENA, SUSAN S., TERI, AND SHERRY,

If I have any message to you, it is this: While you are in school, learn, absorb, enjoy periods of insight, all you can. Savor every plastic experience. Discuss the possible meanings of them with one another. Gather strength and knowledge from your very able and talented teacher, Miriam Schapiro. Pursue this course unceasingly, for whether you do so with a career as your goal, or education as your goal, you cannot lose.

The only danger as I see it, lies in the idea of "Self-expression". This is a misnomer, anyway, and quite redundant . . . If one does it, it *is* self-expressive.

There is a vast difference between Expression, and Self-expression. Expression, which is at once the basis and the end of Art, involves knowing your medium . . . it is Universal. Understanding and practising the laws that are involved here do not confine or bind. On the contrary they make you free. They involved for instance recognizing the *first plane of the picture: Color Equivalences* (this is a really tough one); *Intuitive* expression through Scale (very important): etc., etc. The alternative to this, mere self-expression, can be likened to the art of children . . . charming, sometimes, but fleeting, because there is no substance behind it, no welding of medium or a means to expression which would make it Universal and lasting . . . a mere whim.

Perle Fine

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SIV CEDERING FOX  
POLLY PARK ROAD  
RYE, NEW YORK 10580

RIDING WEST/Letter to a young Woman

My friends and I are putting on cowboy hats and shirts with mother-of-pearl buttons, Western boots and red bandanas. We rent horses at the horse-rental stables in the park, and we ride, up to those fancy high-rise apartments, tell the door-man to hold the reins, while we rise in elevators to tell our city friends GOOD-BYE!

It is a good day dream. Can't you see us? riding across the George Washington Bridge as the sun sinks in the West and the commuters drive home, bumper to bumper? We lift our cowboy hats and wave to them: GOOD-BYE!

There is a reason for this day dream, more than the fun I see in it. It has to do with the elements in those romantic old songs. Have you listened to them? They are all about heart and love, moon and wind and trees. But don't bury my heart on the lone prairie, yet. Let me continue. I am thirty-five years old. I have three children, one husband, and I write. I travel. I sometimes give readings, I sometimes teach. And more and more often I notice that after the poem is technically analyzed, after the surface questions are answered, I come to what seems to me to be The important elements of the poem: love, birth, death.

For those are the important elements of life. Often, very often, I am surprised to receive the same question: "How can you have children and write too?" The assumption seems to be that you can't travel and play, spend time with your mother, visit your father, wrestle with your son, gossip with you daughters, talk to you friends and be serious about your writing at the same time. It is as if someone has started a notion that writing comes out of solitude. And yes, it does. The solitude is necessary, at times, but somewhere there has to be that life that the writing *really* comes from.

I want to tell every young woman: Get to know both your mind AND your body. The mind without the body is idea without image, theory, no poem. Your body is the Wild West you must travel through, sense love in your nipples, feel life itself stirring in your belly and tearing out of you, know the whirling of the winds of creations in your fingertips, as the Indians say, the galaxies of your mind, the spaces of you hands. Time? Yes, it takes time to, say, have children. It takes time to get a Ph.D. Which is more valuable? No one can speak for anyone else. I know what is more valuable to me.

Perhaps good writing comes out of a totality, or a search for that totality. Perhaps it is a territory not quite explored, not quite claimed. Ride West, my sister, ride West.

Siv Cedering Fox  
3/15/74

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California State University, Fullerton "Letter to a Young Woman Artist"  
Fullerton, California 92634

Dear Ms. Miriam Schapiro

Recently on television an authoress was being interviewed and at the close of the program was asked if she had any further special message for her feminine viewers. Her exuberant reply was "yes, you can do it, you CAN do it". That is a very special and important message, one which was expressed simplistically but emphatically and one with which I totally concur.

Use your inborn courage, tenacity and personal confidence to express your inner feelings both verbally and creatively. If you have that inner conviction and will convey it to others honestly and directly they cannot help but listen. Don't be discouraged if the moon isn't yours in a day, just keep trying and don't permit pressure by art politics or social sources to force you to make esthetic compromises. However, at the same time, be willing to listen in an objective way to any constructive criticism or suggestion then act on it or not act on it according to your own inner convictions. Have courage; work hard, nothing comes easy to anyone and permit yourself to continue to learn and grow.

Warm regards,  
Dextra Frankel  
Gallery Director

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Hermine Freed 333 E. 30 St. New York, N. Y.

March 7, 1974

To a Young Woman Artist:

Were I to write this letter to a young woman lawyer, doctor, architect, executive, accountant, would it be the same letter? On one level, yes. To any young woman I would say, "Proceed in your career realizing that your life depends on it." Whether you marry or not is irrelevant. To be with a man who is wealthy, famous, good at his work has nothing to do with your goals. Be clear about what your goals are. To do good work? Then concentrate on the work. To be wealthy? Then make your own money. At the same time, learn about the ways of the world. Keep your ideals, but without naivete.

As for being a woman artist, you needn't concern yourself with following historical models or worrying about whether your work is male or female. Make art that comes from you — your thoughts, feelings, life. It will be

honest work, original work, woman's work. You are a woman.

Best of luck to you. I am envious of the differences in our ages, and wish that I had been given positive advice by the generation before me.

Have a successful festival.

Best,  
Hermine Freed

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Dear Young Woman Artist,

Every thinking person must support feminist goals of social justice and the overthrow of barriers that prevent women from functioning fully as artists.

How central this question is to each of us, however, remains an individual matter. For myself, I have not found the problem of feminine identity to be the crucial one in my work. Every human being faces problems on many levels which are absorbed into the texture of one's life. To what extent and how one's life history are interconnected is difficult to say.

But in any case I don't believe that women's aspirations as artists need await the solution of women's identity problems. Art is a mysterious flower which often grows as well in a crack in the sidewalk as in a hothouse. The history of art is filled with the example of rejected, despised, neurotic misfits who were brilliant artists. So, to tie one's work irretrievably to one's fulfillment as a woman seems to me a cop-out.

I also have serious doubts as to the wisdom of turning one's work into a weapon of propaganda for any social cause however worthwhile. It seems to me a heavy burden for one's work to bear and in the end self-defeating.

Yours sincerely,  
Jane Freilicher

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To succeed professionally a woman must turn herself into a Legend:

Edith Sitwell  
Marie Laurencin  
Eleanor Roosevelt  
Whistler's Mother

This Legend demonstrates her agility in public relations, rather than the gravity or quality of her work.

There is another point I believe that should be made: the world must form an **attachment** to her, as in the case of several tragic and notorious women, form an attachment with her in order for her work to find its audience — or as a painter to command in the market a six figure sum.

So far we have not extended our dimensions beyond a Nobel Prize for Pearl Buck, whose reward was for philanthropic rather than an artistic endeavor. So far we are not permitted to be **ordinary**, i.e. human beings like men with undiscovered, unexamined frailties and desires, unless we wish to fall by the familiar wayside of neglect and abandonment.

A woman must inflate herself to billboard size in order to experience the admiration, desire and money so much more readily and easily acquired by the male.

Grotesque, eccentric, egomaniacal, aggressive, active victim — these are the descriptions applicable to the women who are foremost in their field. And let us not forget the lady Saints who were elevated for their martyrdom.

Barbara Guest

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April 14, 1974  
Route 2, Box 63B  
Hoosick Falls, N.Y. 12090

To a young woman artist,

Give to yourself a space,  
a physical space and a space of time,  
to make visible your ideas and vision.

Keep a stubborn insistence upon your own work.

Push your work to extremes,  
beyond the edge of what you know  
This is where discovery happens.

Carol Haerer

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## AMERICAN ACADEMY IN ROME

Via Angelo Masina, 5 - (Porta S. Pancrazio) - 00153 Rome

March 14, 1974

Dear Feminist Art Program, and Mimi in particular;

Your letter made its way to me in Rome, arriving today, March 14— thus far too late for me to write anything for your catalogue. The mail here is quite hopeless, or I would try a late letter even now. This is just to let you know that I had no intention of ignoring your request, and that I am truly sorry not to contribute. Perhaps I was not the ideal person in any case. I started out as an artist with three children and switched mid-career to the history of art, which turned out to be vastly easier since it required less of that sort of non-verbal commitment which painting requires (though plenty of hard work). I really seem to have had a lot of luck all along the way; people have generally been good to me; and I have rarely thought about being a woman or not being a woman — just about doing what I wanted to do. That, of course, meant refusing to let people take advantage of me, but in the crunch I think I usually got my way by standing my ground or walking out, always smiling. That is not much in the way of advice, but I doubt if I could have done better with more time and thought.

At the moment I am wallowing in the pleasures of a Residency at the American Academy in Rome. It is the first time since I was twelve that I have not had to look after someone else. Here I am fed and cared for and have no responsibilities to anyone but myself. It is a glorious luxury which will end when I return to Yale in July and to the chairmanship of my department. That is the bad side of people finding out that you like to work!

I do hope that your festival is a success, and I am sorry I couldn't have helped. Good Wishes!

Sincerely,  
Anne Coffin Hanson

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Dear Seventeen Young Women Artists in the Feminist Art Program:

Thank you for your letter of February 25. The combination of flattery with an invitation to write a letter (which I enjoy doing) was irresistible. But I do not enjoy writing to a concept — a young woman artist — so I will address it to all of you instead. Make it eighteen if Sherry Brody is in this with you too!

I decided not to become an artist, but not because I was a woman. I was always dead set against being a full-time wife and mother, partly because I sensed that my own mother was neither happy nor fulfilled by that role. I always believed that she had great artistic potential. Her sister became a marvelous illustrator of children's books. Her father was a painter. But she just does extraordinary things with flowers, and with spaces and shapes when decorating rooms. I painted and drew as long as I can remember and always was given A in art classes, right through high school. But there were always other people around — and now I reflect, they were all women — who were better than I was technically. I came to think of myself as gifted artistically but not sufficiently so to make a success of a career in such a risky, competitive profession. In retrospect, I wish I had known about Nicolas Poussin, who was still learning to draw in his early thirties, or Paul Cezanne, whose clumsy productions in his late twenties suggest that he became the artist he did through sheer hard work rather than natural talent. In other words, what I think I lacked were not women artists as role models but something to explode the myth that all artists are born geniuses. But by the time I learnt about Poussin and Cezanne, I had discovered Art History.

This may sound as if I became a professional without any female role models. I did not and I know they were important but I wish I had had more of them and more encouragement from the rare woman scholars I encountered. Instead I had (and still have) a wonderful aunt, who is not married and who represented something very important in the "feminist mystique fifties", when I was a teenager, namely that you do not have to be married to be happy. Thus I did not regard the fact that I finished college without finding a husband as a tragedy but I was certainly not as aware as you are of the opportunities that single independence represented. I think for a while I expected to give up my career if I married, but as it happened, I have never had to make a choice between the two. In retrospect I envy you your awareness of what it has meant and still means to be a woman in a patriarchal society. My rebellion was mostly unconscious. I was lucky. But most of my contemporaries were trapped by marriage and child rearing. They think they chose to do what they did; I may think I chose my profession. But I do not think our generation did choose in the way that you are able to do. I do not want to suggest that you face rosy,

easy futures as women artists because I know you do not. But never underestimate the self-confidence that your feminist self-awareness brings.

If the woman who is serious about a career is seen as less of an eccentric now than she was in the fifties and sixties, total acceptance of the right of a woman to dedicate herself and make personal sacrifices in order to become a great artist or a great anything is far from usual. Such total dedication involves a degree of selfishness that, while tolerated for men, is seen as inconsistent with woman's role. Women traditionally have been required to sacrifice themselves for others — for their children and for their husbands. Maybe men believe unconsciously that if we cease to play this role, it will be harder for them to achieve greatness. The wife who relieves her husband of all the petty worries of daily life, enabling him to think only about "serious" matters, to be duly thanked in book prefaces and in his obituary, will indeed die out as a species as the women's movement penetrates the consciousness of more and more young women. But was such sacrifice ever necessary? I know men and women who believe that it is, that serious career women also need "wives", but I disagree. I know many marriages besides my own which provide a two-way traffic in mutual support, and there are many other ways of providing the encouragement we all need from time to time. Your group program does that, and I know other women artists who are setting up cooperatives and galleries which provide a similar service — practical help and shared moral support.

Another reason I did not try to become an artist, once I found my talents worked well in art history, was that I was not sure I had anything special to say. Sixteen was too young to know that. Had I been touched by the women's movement then, maybe I would have changed my mind. It must be enormously stimulating to challenge the aesthetic value system that says big is good, small is bad, strong and tough is good, delicate and sensitive is bad, bold primary colors are good, soft pastel colors are bad, even though we know that there have been male artists like Joseph Cornell and Milton Avery who did not subscribe to them and good women artists who did. I have been excited by the variety of styles and media being used by women, by the freedom from stereotypes which seems to be the only characteristic they share. Some works seem to have feminist content — either in the images chosen or in the use of materials (silk and satin) and techniques (sewing) traditionally associated with women. I thought Woman House was an extraordinary achievement which should have been preserved. I envy you the experience of working in such a ferment of self-discovery.

I am embarrassed that you should call me a role model. If I were a young woman artist today, I would find knowledge of figures like Louise Nevelson, Kathe Kollwitz and Georgia O'Keeffe tremendously inspiring. I never reached the point of needing to know that there were great women artists.

But their existence has to mean more to you than the work of women art historians reconstructing the past history of women artists and working to create fair job opportunities for women in colleges and universities. I hope you will not be insulted if I say that I doubt you meant your compliment very seriously. Or rather, that I would be worried if I thought you did. But thank you anyway, and I look forward to meeting all of you individually and collectively before too long.

Ann Sutherland Harris

560 Riverside Drive, #17 P  
New York. N.Y. 10027

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1701½ Eastern Ave.  
Baltimore, Md., 21231  
March 4, 1974

Dear members of the Feminist Art Program,

At the opening of my last exhibition in Detroit my gallery dealer's young son said, "I think you are the best woman painter in America." I said thanks but how about the 21st best painter in America. He thought a minute and said, "23rd."

Often, with both men and women, the conversation has revolved around just why there haven't been more significant painters, sculptors and architects who are women. We have and have had great poets and writers—one of the latter, Virginia Woolf, told young women who wished to write that they needed a room of their own and an independent income. The income part is all very fine, but the "room" of one's own implies a private secret activity, cloistered, requiring only the materials of pen, typewriter, paper. The execution of the visual arts is a more BULKY pursuit, requiring tools and a large work space. The works themselves state, and demand attention. There's no slipping a 10' x 15' painting under one's pillow. And undeniably this activity is construed as aggressive and egotistical that's not considered becoming to the female. And aside from the physicality and just plain work mess of this pursuit, how about the equally thought to be unbecoming desire for fame and immortality?

Virginia Woolf said, "It is in vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquility. They must have action and they will make it if they cannot find it. Women are supposed to be very calm generally but women feel as men feel, they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do. They suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation precisely as men would suffer."

For myself, I have never felt that my femininity was a barrier, on the contrary, I have always thought of it in terms of riches: a treasure of feelings, observations and special intellectual insights. I know no mind more supple than that of a woman's, no sensibility more fine, no judgement more fair.

As time goes on many of you may become "artistic" women. The world loves such women with their taste, sensitivity and discriminating joys of the visual. Some of you may become artists. To you I say, good luck my sisters.

Grace Hartigan

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March 10, 1974

Letter to a young woman artist;

I write poetry  
I'm not a poet  
I inscribe marks  
onto pieces  
and pieces  
of paper  
I open up  
a funny vent  
and out pour  
all the oozings.

I write poetry  
I'm not a poet  
Gary Snyder is a poet  
Michael McClure is a poet  
they write  
of poetic images  
they write  
of lyrical images



they write  
 of gentle pain  
 they write  
 of gentle loneliness  
 they write  
 of manly things  
 they write  
 of oil tankers  
 they write  
 of motorcycles  
 they write  
 of ranger stations  
 they write  
 of Buddhist temples  
 they must be poets.

You say you want a letter from me — my experiences, feelings, advice; something sort of uplifting and inspiring, I guess. And instead, I write a poem? — about Gary Snyder and Michael McClure? What have they got to do with young women artists? Well, you see, they have this thing called “permission”. It would be really nice if I could offer you a pat formula, neatly tied, beautifully packaged, ready to be hung on your studio wall.

But that doesn’t exist. What it’s really all about in some way is “knowing” — knowing in a strange kind of sense that you have this funny relationship to this thing called art. And it’s never going to be the same relationship that the male artist has — he received his permission to go his way from the day of birth. But your permission will have to be fought for — by standing upright, beating your chest, and screaming, “I have the right”. After all, if you’re going to get beaten and bloodied, why not stand up each time and scream, “I have the right”. And then you’re going to have to repeat this process until they out there begin to hear you and begin to believe you, and what’s really interesting is that you yourself begin believing it.

Actually, it was only about 5 years ago that I first tried to stand erect and give myself “permission”. At first I tried to do it sort of reasonably, but that didn’t work. So I had to go mad for a while. Now I’m neither reasonable nor mad — instead I have this idea that I’m an artist — not a painter, not a sculptor, but generically speaking an art maker. And there is this system out there that says I must keep making my moves in the old prescribed ways. Now that’s what’s so funny — that if I did, I would be occupying a glass enclosure again, room 313, psychiatric ward, Mercy Hospital, San Diego, California.

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Ida Horowitz

Letter to a young woman artist . . . before I say anything, I have to define my terms to tell you my frame of reference to let you know where I come from.

I have to think back, to put the film of years through the moviola, run it past my eyes of today, evaluate retrospectively.

My role models were elegant, vain women, timorous, frivolous, cunning, and sometimes despotic; I sensed that what was wanted of me was to be amorphous, ornamental, and skilled at pleasing others; foredoomed to dependence and make the most of it.

There were times when I remember being frightened or arrogant; when I obediently suffered oppression called discipline and felt chained by conventions. Eventually I rebelled — flunked in the role that society has destined me for; I refused to be a “thing” . . . my failing their expectations was a success of sorts but this failure and success coexisted side by side heavily laced with guilts . . . At this point I should mention the other half of the equation and that relates to the home I grew up in. There, the password was achievement and the only recognized means to acceptability, a serious involvement with the arts. We all want love and acceptance — but if being a woman excluded achievement, how does one reconcile these opposites? How can a non-person create?

So, I set myself the task of redirecting my life; I strove for ten years to learn to absorb, to build, to try and become someone worth respecting in my own estimation. I attempted to become an artist. One day I had to face the truth: that I did not measure up to my own standards, that the conflicts were too great, that I could not resolve them and that art mattered too much for me to be able to do it on a part time basis.

This struggle however, evolved into a metamorphosis and I emerged with the identity I had been searching for; I guess if your heart is pure, even if your name isn’t Sir Lancelot, you win something and nothing is ever totally lost.

Eventually I found another avenue to serve art — to express my passion for it — to work with and for artists — and what I had experienced proved invaluable in my new incarnation. Having learned first hand what one needs to become an artist, I could better understand the people I worked with; my deep admiration for them, their life, their work helped me feel part of them rather than the outsider that took their wares to the marketplace. This is why I presume to tell you now what I feel are the “ingredients” necessary for an artist: Personhood — Strength — Patience — Courage — Self-assertiveness — Persistence — Ego. To be an artist, male or female, I think demands a resolved identity that permits an individual perception which in turn produces an individual statement. It demands that one be true to oneself —

not sway with the winds of fashion or the exigencies of the marketplace; remember I am trying to define becoming an artist, not a commercial success.

It demands, in addition to certain acquired crafts and techniques plus information garnered about the rhythms of the past, an ability to stay in touch with one's instincts and to know how to listen to the voices of one's silence.

It demands hard work, determination, a stubbornness and steadfastness akin to spiritual dedication — a beautiful madness blended into a healthy ego.

Make art if life has little meaning without it — if it brings you joy as well as despair — do it if you are able to get high on it even if no one else understands. Do it if you feel it is important to state your point of view, your vision, your feelings, your way of perceiving. Do it because you love doing it.

It is as close to immortality as any of us ever get. To create means to retain a link with innocence, with endless beginnings. To create is never to finish; to create is to play till the day we die. And don't ever take advice without questioning it seriously . . .

Josine Ianco-Starrels

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Collette Inez  
5 West 86 Street  
New York, New York 10024  
March 24, 1974

Dear Miriam Schapiro,

First, it was a move from Orangeburg to Manhattan. Then a reading tour in Wisconsin, Minnesota and South Dakota. No sooner had I returned from that, I was off to do missionary work for poetry in Binghamton, New York.

In short, as much as I wanted to write a "letter to a Young Woman Artist", there wasn't time.

My best wishes to you and the new spirit. The most precious asset of any woman, artist or no, is that real estate inside her skull.

Other advice: stay away from shit. It clogs all enterprises of the mind and heart.

Cheers and Write on.

Colette Inez

Quote: *Conversation with Colette Inez*, from "A Magazine of Poetry."

C.I. I, too am becoming increasingly irked by the new segregation and I look forward to the day when toilet facilities and book reviews will both say "HUMANS ONLY". But I confess to ambivalence. And handling the question of "womanness" in poetry is something like wrestling with feathers on a windy day. There are women writing out of particular female experiences, a sisterhood of darkness which brilliantly records its pain. Plath, Sexton, and to a lesser extent Diane Wakoski. Then there are others whose work is sexually neutral. Nobaby fat in Marianne Moore, no menstrual moons in Emily Dickinson. Adrienne Rich and Denise Levertov explore political terrains as well as the inner landscapes of their own response. Women and men are both writing a wide spectrum of poetry. Surely we have been drugged into thinking of "womanness" in a perjorative light and "maleness" (see James Dickey, Mailer, Hemingway) as the ne plus ultra of desirable traits.

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Letter to a young woman artist,

From my perspective as an art historian studying women's art, it seems to me that women artists cannot but create from their own experience, whether they choose to explore it, or to deny it. When a woman artist denies her different cultural experience in the world, she creates art out of self-negation. To create art of one's own experience does not automatically mean better art, nor does it mean dealing with what society, including some feminist art circles, term stereotypical female experience. But, to be able to free oneself from a need to deny one's identity, and to build one's own image as a capable creator, is the first step in becoming a person who can creatively contribute to society and culture. If you are, in addition, a feminist, in the sense that you are concerned with the growth and development of all women, you will devote some of your energies not only to perfecting your own art, but to making the fruits of your own struggle available to younger women. If you decide to stay in your studio and devote yourself to your own work only, you may still be a valuable role model and a symbol of how a woman can make it, but you will essentially



not actively participate in contributing to the struggle of younger women, and you will simply be another professional woman artist.

If you are a feminist artist you will address yourself in your art to explorations of woman's experiences in our society in the broadest sense, thus contributing to an enlarging of a feminist point of view in a culture which generally denies its validity or categorizes it as parochial from its own biased standards; you will in addition also devote meaningful thoughts and energies as to how to assist other women to become feminist artists. To be a feminist artist also means to create art for non-traditional patrons. If you create art which is directed primarily to the established art patronage, then your art is usurped by dominant culture rather than reaching a feminist audience. In order to make your art available to the class whose consciousness you share, you may decide to exhibit in new contexts, or, you may think about different modes of making art, which are geared to reach your sisters in struggle rather than the dominant white male class. The kind of publication which you are producing by requesting these letters, is, I think, a good step in this direction.

Ruth Iskin  
Los Angeles, California

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ART . . . for its self  
its own sake  
whose, my own?

Aesthetics of art and self fusing and workable in a structure changing.  
No answerable truths but a truthful process is the response.

Responding to art  
self  
life

Past Memories — woman, man identities identifying woman, women, man,  
men.

Present alternatives alter the future past comprehension.

To do — art —

considering art is art

woman is woman

woman artist

making womens' art or

women making art for artists

for women  
for oneself as  
artist as a  
woman.

Altering — aesthetics

life

self

things

to become Active from Passive  
to seek alternative identities  
to again encounter oneself  
to make art again and  
again and  
again.

Regressive progression toward

the long and only lasting loving identity — artist.

Give me the vocabulary

visibility

understanding to understand

What I Am

Who I am

Artist — Woman — Human

I only know that I am

I make art

I love

I am unable to account the happenings to me and by me as a woman artist. They are both too numerable and painful to objectively communicate with the printed word. I am negative and at war with myself, my identities and my world. Ironically I seek peace.

I learned to compete, to cover myself, to hide, and the consequence of these charades are bittersweet and melancholic becoming misidentified and feeling bitter defeats.

At one time when I was crawling on my hands and knees in excruciating pain, unable to work, two children, alone, I decided that never again would I bring myself to this situation. I never wanted to be vulnerable again. I owe a great debt to Joyce Kozloff and many women thereafter who helped to alleviate the wallowing self pity and encourage repairs to heal. But, the scars persist.

I am not a good model. My mistakes are too great and I have too many opposing values constantly at war within myself. I have had perseverance and strength to continue making art, to raise my children, to live no matter the givens, but I can not undo what has been done.

Therefore I escape within a world of my own, a fantasy. A place where all is beautiful, loving, harmonious and safe. No pain or cruelty. I function in the outside world to the best of my ability. Peace and tolerance is the ideal, but it will be slow in coming and there is bigotry and intolerance to deal with. Time, work, thought, reflection that begins implosion to explosion to begin the cycle again.

The hope of change lies within you.

Respectfully,  
Jessica Jacobs

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March 4, 1974

Dear Young Woman Artist,

And I am young too, my years as a woman are more than yours, but my age as an artist is the same as you. To become entire artists we have to be more than dedicated. We can ask from ourselves as women artists: a sureness of vision, knowledge, ambition. Our best work is a promise for better work. To be great we must be obsessed — always, with the learning of our art and the quality of our lives.

With love,  
Vaughn Rachel Kaprow

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gere' kavanaugh/designs  
12228 selby avenue  
los angeles, california 90024

March 19, 1974

"Letter to a Young Woman Artist"

Be single-minded about your career as an artist, for as an artist you will be giving the world and yourself a vision that has not been exposed before. This should not be fractured by anything, for it is a gift, and always treat it as a precious gift that must be shared.

My advice is simplified by a Cherokee prayer: "May God grant I learn as much as I can that I give as often as I can and I love as deeply as I can."  
Gere Kavanaugh

GK:jg

telephone 213 826-5215

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"Letter to a Young Woman Artist"

I think all of us are young women artists. I have periods when I feel as if I've never painted before, as if I have no skills at all, as if I'm floundering. Making art requires a crazy kind of perseverance — there are no formulas or rules, except the ones you want to break. I don't feel different from you except for the mundane fact that I've been doing it longer. I'm a restless artist who is rarely satisfied. Often, I feel very depressed and even bored when the work isn't going well, and then, suddenly (and for completely unknown reasons), I'll get all excited and the painting will catch fire and come alive. And for that, I can endure weeks and even months of "nothing feelings".

I'm sorry this letter isn't more romantic. I don't believe in an "artist's life-style" or being a genius or any of that. I do believe in women's movement and supporting one another, and I feel very excited about work women are doing and about work we women will be doing in the future.

Joyce Kozloff

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March 13, 1974

Marlborough Gallery Inc.  
40 West 57th Street  
New York, N.Y. 10019

Dear Ms. Schapiro:

Lee Krasner has passed on to me your letter of February 14th and in reply Ms. Krasner asked us to make the following quotation which we hope you will find useful and relevant for publication in your "Letter to a Young



Woman Artist":

*"On a questioning of my newer work being more organic and close to nature images, I think for every level you go higher, you slip down one or two levels and then come back up again. When I say slip back, I don't mean that detrimentally. I think it is like the swing of a pendulum rather than better or back, assuming that back means going down. If you think of it in terms of time, in relation to past, present and future, and think of them all as a oneness, you will find that you swing the pendulum constantly to be with now. Part of it becomes past and the other is projection but it has got to become one to be right now. I think there is an order, but it isn't better, better, best. I don't believe in that kind of scaling."*

Kindest regards.

Sincerely yours,  
Donald McKinney,  
President

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MAXINE KUMIN  
40 BRADFORD ROAD  
NEWTON HIGHLANDS, MASS. 02161

15 March, 1974

Dear Sisters:

What can I say to you that will not sound didactic or pretentious? To be a writer is to be with a large chunk of one's life a solitary. To be a writer is to undertake a balancing act, somehow to juggle daily concerns with the inner life. To be a woman writer is simply to raise these conditions to the Nth power.

I don't really want to speak to the special problems of the woman as writer; I want so much to see the stereotypes erased, the sexist differentiations blurred as I think they gradually are being. Of course, it is a struggle but the loneliness of writing, the terror of the page knows no gender. I go often to Rilke, who is something of an antique curiosity in today's world of letters for consolation. If you will overlook the implications of helpless maidens and rescuing heroes and let the truth shine through, I hope it will speak to you. It is from his LETTERS TO A YOUNG POET:

*And if only we arrange our life according to that principle which counsels us that we must always hold to the difficult, then that which now still seems to us the most alien will become what we most trust and find most faithful. How should we be able to forget those ancient myths that are at the beginning of all peoples, the myths about dragons that at the last moment turn into princesses; perhaps all the dragons of our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us once beautiful and brave. Perhaps everything terrible is in its deepest being something helpless that wants help from us.*

With every good wish for the time of your festival and beyond.

Maxine Kumin

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FAY LANSNER 810 BROADWAY NEW YORK 10003

Dear Mimi and Colleagues,

Enclosed is a paper for the Feminist Art Program. I hope it is not too long. . . . Thank you again for asking me.

Best in Perserverence,  
Fay Lansner

The Hansa Gallery was the most exciting young co-operative gallery in the early fifties. Our artistic, moral, and ethical responsibilities were carefully articulated. Our ideals were to art, not the commercial world of art. Our aim was to explore, and we were imbued with the rigor of pursuing individual aesthetic aims and assured of the respect of our fellow members who gave each other support.

The only other female artists were Jane Wilson and Jean Follett; one day I introduced Lily Brody and nominated her for membership. She was accepted with a majority vote. We held meetings every three weeks where all of us, male and female, discussed shows, painted the gallery for the next exhibition, looked at new work, and sent out mailings.

All of this was accomplished in the most relaxed manner with great jokes, teasing, clowning, and general exuberance. As we became more seasoned through 1955-1960, the art world was beginning to develop a politics of its

own. This was reflected by the Stable Gallery around the corner that had been conducting its famous annuals through the fifties.

We were all friends with the Abstract Expressionists (it was one art world then), and at the same time aware that Johnny Meyer's group were our peers. Johnny showed Larry Rivers, Helen Frankenthaler, Grace Hartigan, Bob Goodnough, and Jane Freichlicher. Allan Kaprow, George Segal, Myron Stout, Jan Muller, Miles Forst, Lily Brody, Wolf Kahn, Jane Wilson, Jean Follett, and I formed a rival group. Our dues were 30 dollars a month which paid the rent; commissions were 23% for the gallery and 10% for the directors, Richard Bellamy and Ivan Karp. The rent was 125 dollars a month. The gallery was always in the red. We often brought beer to the meetings, and sometimes Lily Brody brought box lunches and fed everyone; she was referred to as "mother." Jane was very beautiful, very talented, and very shy and could not hurt a fly. Everyone respected her dignity and strength. I was insecure, but had several good men friends in the group. We had a good deal of respect and admiration for each other which was crucial in our productivity, and some of us had had long friendships starting with the Hoffman School in the late forties and early fifties. It was the beginning of the "beat" culture, and certain members of the group already looked and dressed like the "hippies", years in advance of the flower children, buying their clothes at the Salvation Army. It was real poverty, not affectation.

By 1954, the "beats" in the Gallery had already found their life-style — dancing, drugs, and sexual permissiveness. People slept around out of curiosity and pleasure. It was an open, warm, and confused time. I envied the drug-taking, but was too moralistic and puritanical to undo my whole background. It was enough of a rebellion to be a painter, and I wanted to concentrate all of my revolutionary fervor in art.

Pretty soon, despite our constitution and our rules, I was becoming aware that our meetings were not the spontaneous affairs I had always supposed, but carefully planned moves decided in advance by a clique that met before the meeting. It made me quite uncomfortable when I went to the meetings because I realized our democratic structure was in reality false. My vote served no purpose there if all was decided in advance. There hardly seemed to be any covert attempt to hide the evidence of those behind-the-scenes meetings, but I felt humiliated and resentful because I was never asked to them. Neither were Lily, Jane, or Jean who must have felt equally ashamed because we never spoke of it to each other. The members were voted in by a majority vote. There was great prestige in being attached to the Hansa Gallery; all the young artists wanted to join. We were very proud of each other and our record of individuality. At one meeting it was announced that the members would like to take a new vote on the established member-

ship. This created a furor that was the start of a shake-up. I realized it had been sprung in the pre-meeting to which the women of the gallery were never asked or allowed to come, or informed about. I can still feel my cheeks flushed with shame, embarrassment, and rage. It was a conspiracy; we could not challenge them. We had been officially voted in, but because of the violation of our rights, it was not really bona fide. No one was an official officer; we had no president or vice-president, but now it was decided to have them. Stankiewicz was "elected" president and Jean Follett secretary. Apparently, the women were fantasized as secretaries, mothers, or whores, and not full and equal members.

The voting was heavily opposed in public because it was humiliating to vote on ourselves openly. We had already been elected members. There were long discussions on whether to have open or closed ballots. Finally, we stupidly voted closed because everyone was either ashamed or guilty. Yet this move did indicate the discontent of the people who were afraid to make their accusations in the open. Everyone began to feel threatened, but the "vote of confidence", as it was euphemistically called, had been decided. The ridiculous result was that Jacques Beckwith and Jane Wilson were not re-elected which meant that they had to leave the Gallery. Jane quietly withdrew to greater honors. But Milac Andreyvic and Jacques Beckwith fell out.

After that, confidence was broken. Stankiewicz had elected himself "president" because he was making the first real sales. Therefore, he reminded us often that he was "supporting us" since his commissions were enlarging the Gallery's coffers.

One Sunday afternoon while we were painting the walls of the Gallery for a new show, he said to me, "What are *you* doing here?" "I have as much right to be here as you do," I said. "You have no rights," he said, "since you don't sell and I am supporting you" (meaning his commissions were the real earnings for the Gallery).

I naively thought that our dues were supporting us as a group. With our extra duties of gallery-watching, painting the walls, sweeping the floor, taking mailings to the post office, we earned our keep. I did not intend to feel intimidated, but instead of feeling angry, I felt squelched.

After the shock of the first "vote of confidence" and the departure of several early members, it was decided to have a new "vote of confidence" including our directors who existed on non-existent commissions.

The pressure for money and success was beginning to undermine the group spirit and new group alliances formed. When we counted this vote, the shocking result was that we had destroyed ourselves as a group and as a



gallery. Ivan and Dick were voted out as were half the members. It was summer, and towards the early fall, everyone began to panic. The season was beginning, and we had no plans or shows scheduled or space picked out. Our directors and half our members had departed. Haunted by our lack of prudence, we got together once more in September in Bellamy's loft to open up the issues. It was five flights up and I was just one week out of the hospital after giving birth to Erica, my second daughter. I was pale and in pain, but I could not miss the meeting. I was bleeding profusely and all my senses were dulled. It was announced that the members would like to open the gallery. They were ashamed of their actions in the spring and needed a director immediately. "Why was the meeting in Bellamy's studio," I thought, "and why was Karp not there?" My questions were not answered as they were silent ones; I knew very well that they would not be answered.

One by one each member got up, made a speech, apologized to Dick, and asked his forgiveness and asked him to come back. It felt like the Moscow trials. He sat there very still in his silent, deliberate way and gave no hint of how difficult it all was. When it came my turn, I thought I would faint from loss of blood ( I really should have been at home recuperating); everyone had made a speech and the vote was unanimous. I knew he would come back, but I could not make it to my feet, or even speak up—I was too weak.

Dick came back, and it was our last year. Confidence in the co-operative had been lost. Early commercial success had spoiled some and won others, but we felt separate instead of all together. The Gallery closed; I was not invited to the Green Gallery; and Jean Follett did not come back to New York.

Fay Lansner  
317 W. 80th St.  
New York City, N.Y.

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JOANNE LEONARD 1318 JOSEPHINE STREET BERKELEY, CALIF.  
94703

LETTER TO A YOUNG WOMAN ARTIST April 12, 1974

Dear friend:

What I would wish for you so that you find your way in the world of art —

a large amount of confidence in yourself, strong conviction about your work and the energy to keep going.

I would also hope that you would be able to weather the discouragements when these important assets fail you, as they will. Some of the time. They certainly have for me.

I would hope that you will have a generous share of those incredible high moments one gets when the work goes well and you feel great and inspired, ready to tackle all challenges. When I have these experiences, it puts all the difficult times in their place. Life and work seem very worthwhile.

Groups of women today are getting together, helping sustain each others confidence, helping women to become more visible in the arts, providing opportunities for exposure, criticism and affirmation. That is fabulous and truly helpful.

But also, it is not enough because ultimately the making of art is so damn personal and private and takes such inner resources. Therefore it is terribly important that you be fair to yourself as you set out on your life as an artist. You have decisions to make about your life that will or won't provide you a situation in which you can work. It is your choice. You have to come to terms with your own energy level and capacity for hard work and your own most important desires; for family, for art. Perhaps you will manage all that you might desire. Perhaps sacrifices will have to be made. You will have to work out a balance, or decide on a different focus than art.

Perhaps you are not ready to plan and decide. But you can test your energies and convictions, set yourself some goals, weather the ups and downs, and get somewhere in the direction you want to go.

There is a selfishness involved in providing yourself the necessary climate for your work. A selfishness and self directed quality more accepted in men, more part of a man's social training than a woman's. As women we have a somewhat bigger task in keeping our own goals in mind and putting ourselves in the right places so those goals remain attainable. That task has been one of the biggest struggles.

More than anything, I hope you will find your inner strengths, support from your close friends and success on your own terms — all the best wishes on this venture,

Joanne Leonard

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BELLA LEWITZKY DANCE COMPANY

3594 Multview Drive, Hollywood, Calif. 90068

Dear Sister Artist,

March, 1974

Yours is an exciting frontier. Woman's intelligence, creativity and competency needs to be nurtured and made available.

You have asked me for advice. I am complimented but feel uncertain about giving advice. May I, instead, offer the following thoughts. Remember that you and I have inherited generations of prejudice. Generations have proclaimed us as emotional instinctive beings — defined us as possessions, dolls, "earth mothers". We are thought of as impractical, childlike and unstable. The list is interminable. It has been compiled and perpetuated by our male-dominant society. It even is voiced by respected historians, scholars, philosophers and artists. Remarkably absent from these lists are the qualities by which a nation's leadership is defined: Intelligence, creativity, rationality, individuality and the rest of the highly prized qualities reserved for men only. This image of woman has been so long in the making and so convincingly put forward by otherwise intelligent people, that it even becomes poisonously persuasive to those of us who know better. It takes a great deal of courage to go against the mainstream of society. It takes strength to actively oppose the entrenched portrait of female frailty. Perhaps more importantly, it requires confidence and security in our belief. The kind of confidence which makes both "over-reacting" unnecessary and challenge as natural to us as to our men.

Perhaps through the organized effort of women, history will begin to record woman's name.

Cordially,  
Bella Lewitzky

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March 6, 1974  
138 Prince St.  
NYC 10012

To a Young Woman Artist,

I'm sorry this has to be so short, because I have a lot I'd like to talk about with you, but try to read between the lines. I hope you're angry but get it over with fast and use it while you've got it. I hope you don't stop being angry now and then until things are better for all women, not just artists; I hope you're working from yourself and know how to fuck the art world pressures when you get out there; and I hope you're working for everybody else too; I hope you'll be the one to figure out a way to keep art from being

used the wrong way and for the wrong things in this society; I hope you make your art accessible to more people, to all women and to everybody; I hope you think about that **now** and aren't waiting till you make it, because that's likely to be too late. I hope you remember that being a feminist carries with it a real responsibility to be a **human**. I hope and I hope and I hope . . .

love,  
Lucy Lippard

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LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90036

Having not been a vocal participant in the Feminist movement yet I experience its benefits. The assumption of genuine sexual equality influences every person; it calls for deep psychic readjustment to our society. To an extent far surpassing comparable movements for social change, visual artists have contributed powerful insight and commentary revealing our awakening feminist consciousness. The difficult catalytic work of exteriorizing this radical perception has by no means been left to women journalists or fiction writers. Artists and art historians, some of whom are responsible for the present Women's Art Festival, have contributed to a startling awareness of differences between male and female image-making. The possibility for full identified feminine expression is available because we are shown its reality. Women in the arts no longer automatically emulate men; above all we need not any more compete with men to earn self-esteem.

If I were to proffer "advice" to a young woman artist it would perhaps be to not belabor these realizations. It would be to proceed from here to heightened individual accomplishment. I intuit a short-term danger of "over-feminization" in the sense of self-conscious contrivance of those form- or image-types perceived as sex-derived. To be a serious artist implies, I cannot help but say even if rhetorically, a special responsibility. It requires particular freedom from collective sanctions of any kind. If someone objects that the goal of complete feminization is not quite attained, that we need still further to establish our mutually supportive stance, I reply that we must move past this hesitation, for we have reached full awareness sooner than we bargained for. We can scarcely absorb this breathtaking, liberating resolution of the feminine dilemma, of the conflict between our professional/ artistic and our "domestic" selves (it has existed for so many generations). The thing is to accept our newly won status.

Jane Livingston



*Letter to a Young Woman Artist*

There is no formula to becoming an Artist  
There is no reason to be anxious to become an Artist  
There is a reason to give meaning to a life  
There is a reason to make a life lively  
If a life is lively by making Art  
Then be eager to make it. Sylvia Mangold

Box 71, Callicoon Center, New York 12724

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Dear Friends in the Feminist Art Program,

I have wanted to write something for your publication and tonight is the exact time to try it. I'm waiting for Bella's dress rehearsal and it is running late.

I was at dinner with friends a few nights ago. We talked about certain teaching methods that we now use with our students. Non-punishing methods. Methods of teaching techniques of precision but methods which never exact from the kids the price of fear to learn those techniques.

This was not my experience in learning to act, ever. I learned this late in my acting life (from women teachers by the way, although I'm not making a case, it just so happened) I learned what it is to be liberated from a technique that binds and terrifies you and I learned to embrace a technique that serves and liberates you.

Regrets, a contained bitterness, a bit only, rueful, maybe, what's the word for that feeling you have when you finally learn something you needed desperately to know but it was a long time ago and there was no knowing it then?

A young man, visiting, a friend of my son, said, "So what? You learned it. So what if you learn it at one age rather than another? You learned it and you're passing it on."

I remember years ago in the early 60's wondering about art and the woman and about marriage and art and the woman. We didn't have a name for it then and it was almost ten years before women's liberation came into our consciousness. No regrets. It came when it came. The thing is to enjoy it, to use it, to love being liberated and to liberate others and for me, at least, to hope to liberate myself into pure discipline and pure service.

Best Wishes, Beatrice Manley

The life of an artist is inspired, self-sufficient and independent (unrelated to society).

The direction of attention of an artist is toward mind in order to be aware of inspiration.

An artist's life, following inspiration, unfolds free of influence.

Finally, the artist recognizes himself in the work and is happy and contented.

Nothing else will satisfy an artist.

An artist's life is unconventional.

It leads away from the example of the past.

It struggles painfully against its own conditioning.

It appears to rebel but in reality it is an inspired way of life.

Agnes Martin

I didn't receive your letter till March 16. So I guess I didn't make the deadline. It is a long time since I lived on South St.

Thank you for your letter,

Agnes Martin

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Deena Metzger  
4230 Bellingham Avenue  
Studio City (Los Angeles)  
California 91604

## LETTER TO A YOUNG WOMAN ARTIST

Dear Sister:

I received your warm letter the very afternoon that I had taught a session of the Woman's Literature Class during which it seemed that all of us in the class were sitting in each other's lap. I had come-away from the class with a deep sense that women indeed did things very very differently AND THAT WE DID THEM INFINITELY BETTER . . . and then your letter came . . .

The following, then, is the beginning of a response not only to your letter but also to the class.

Sisters:

We come together to open all the doors that have been traditionally locked against us: the door into ourselves, the door into our body, the door between us, and the door out into the world. Art is the key.

Eve is the first. When she is in The Garden, she is locked into a terrible solitude: the solitude of asexuality, of uniqueness, of singularity and perfection. Though she appears to be with Adam, in actuality they remain apart. If she carries his rib within her, she experiences only a vague sense of another; it is only memory. What does Eve feel in The Garden? Loneliness and isolation. And how does she respond? With desire.

She moves toward the apple, she moves toward knowledge, she moves toward others, toward Adam, toward connection.

She is open. She is the first.

Adam is afraid to move out of The Garden; he resents being wrested from his innocence; but Eve is not afraid. She moves toward the body, earth and life.

Eve, then, is the best teacher — for she warns us to be satisfied neither with innocence nor with isolation.

Art is a way that woman extends herself in the world. The woman artist is centered in her body, in her womanness, in her woman strength, and she moves out from that knowledge. She creates images, not for their sake alone, nor for her sake alone, but as a bridge to others and between others. Woman's art is often open, because it desires a response — it is a conversation with the world.

This is not the place to argue why woman's experience, work and expression is so different from man's. Perhaps we were simply fortunate enough to have certain values relegated to us. We have been oppressed; but we have not been deprived of our humanity. We retain our strength. Whatever the cause, we can find joy in our sensibilities.

We recognize that we do not erect monuments to solitude, we do not create the forms of alienation, we do not create hierarchical orders, we do not insist upon competition, we are not elitists, we do not create classes and roles, we do not demand power relationships. We have not created inequality, we have not created exploitation, we did not create slavery. We do not send our sons or daughters to die. We did not and we do not and we will not make war.

As we oppose these values of distance, of separation, of isolation, we oppose the entire social order and all the oppressive means and structures and goals which result from it. Woman's values are of connection, cooperation, relationship. And woman's art reflects that commitment, that necessity.

Is it ironic, then, that women seem to separate themselves now from society? No. When women come together now, when they meet in the Womanlife, in the Womanhouse, when they create the Womanart, it is not to separate themselves — it is not to perpetuate separation — it is to find each other — to find *communitas*. It is a first step.

It is like Eve's step out of The Garden. She was pursuing her vision. She stepped out first and alone, and then Adam reluctantly followed.

Eve is our good sister. This time we step out together. Let Adam follow.

With revolutionary love  
Deena Metzger

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## LETTER TO A YOUNG WOMAN ARTIST

It's hard to know what to say to any artist, young or old, Feminist or not. Being an artist is a constant confrontation with the unknown: causing something to come into existence which has not existed before. And you find out who you are through what you cause to exist and how it then appears to you when it is no longer something you are working on. Then there is an additional confrontation: if you are a woman, having this whole process warped, as it always has been in the past, by the almost absolute certainty that the world will not allow life to your work, will not allow it to speak.

This, I think, has left us with a legacy of paralysis starting at the end "success" and working backwards towards the real beginnings: ourselves. It has always seemed to me that the internalized weapon, directed against our own creativity, is a special kind of standard: one for my work, absurdly high, impossible to reach, always unsatisfied, and one for the work of the rest of the world, secure and humane enough not to demand the impossible. Well, with a double standard like this, you can not think of "success" without becoming entirely unable to work. I resolved this problem by working in a current style, Minimal Art, only to discover that it was no great satisfaction to be one of the boys — even if it spelled success. And finding in the development of Feminism in many area of life the promise of a recognizable identity as an artist, I allowed expressions that have wanted to emerge all these years.

The experience of freedom is truly internal, I think. Not something that can be given from the outside. And it is terrifying. And it is worth pursuing to the ever receding end of yourself. Always it seems the great leap forward has been completed and in the morning I discover that it was only another step. Always I wonder where will I be going from here — or will I be moving at all. And then the next concept comes and I can't complete the work fast enough. The whole process is maddeningly slow.

The hurdles of the past drove me to write on various topics of art, trying to think it out what it was all about and gaining a measure of recognition in this field — which was not without humor since it was not what I was after in the first place. Never mind. I enjoyed widening my horizon and I was fortunate enough to teach and love teaching and all this reading and writing has made me a better teacher.

Hard to tell what to share with a young artist because the world has changed so much. I think I may recently have become a young artist myself. Perhaps I was an old artist when self doubt was the loudest voice of my inner vision. I hope that young women who are becoming artists now are spared this particular form of agony that was assigned to women artists in the past.

What you have to remember is to make not what you think will be acceptable to others, but what you know is acceptable to yourself. The inner eye is the only judge worth listening to. And then you have to demand the perception of your inner vision from the outer world. Because you deserve it.

Not that recognition matters that much. The recognition that really counts has to come from you. But, I guess, you might have to go through the outer affirmation to discover the inner experience. Either way — work toward you commitment. It might not have the exact results you are hoping for now. But, in one way or another it has its compensations. It won't fail you.

Ursula Meyer

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Letter to a Young Woman Artist:

Do see the work of your own great teacher, Beatrice Manley Blau!

Truly,  
Josephine Miles

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## A LETTER TO A YOUNG WOMAN ARTIST

From Cindy Nemser

As far as I can see success in the art world is achieved by a combination of real talent and determined stick-to-it-ness. For a short period a great hustler with little creative ability may make a flash but it won't last. On the other hand, a fine talent with little promotional skill behind it can be overlooked indefinitely — especially if that talent belongs to a woman.

There is no specified plan for "making it" but I have observed that many established artists follow certain precepts and patterns of behavior. I would like to pass them on to you in the form of a series of do's and don'ts. Make of them what you will.

1. Do get as close to the center of art world activity as possible. You are much more likely to be noticed in New York, San Francisco, or Los Angeles than in Podunk U.S.A.
2. Do show your work to as many people as possible. You never know who you may turn on and who that person knows.
3. Don't be afraid to call critics, curators, collectors, etc. and try to interest them in your work. These people are much more accessible than you think they are.
4. Do send thank-you notes to critics who give you nice reviews. Good manners really don't offend those who are well disposed towards you.
5. Do get to know people at the top of the art world on a social basis if you possibly can.
7. Don't underestimate people who are sensitive and intelligent because they are not in top positions. These kind of people are rare and will eventually rise to positions where they can help you. They will remember you fondly as someone who was kind to them before they "made it".
8. Do try to speak to people at the top when you can. Remember she or he is the one who has the power to make the decisions.
9. Do try to make things happen for yourself if others aren't doing it for you: i.e. create your own gallery, organize your own group exhibition, write your own promotional material. It's better to have your work up on a wall than stuck away in a closet.
10. Don't put too much energy into non productive actions. Decide what your goal is and work towards it.
11. Don't present your art or yourself in a slipshod styleless way. If the surroundings are depressing and the presentation confusing, no one will stick around to look at your work or to get to know you.
12. Don't work so hard at maintaining an image that you forget to maintain your self.
13. Don't be afraid to stand up and ask for what you want. You have nothing to lose and if you don't get it in one place you may get it in another.
14. Don't be afraid to stand up for your own rights. If you lose your self respect what else of any importance can dealers, critics, curators, etc. take away from you?

15. Do know what is going on in the art world as to avoid being derivative without even knowing it.

16. Do become involved with other artists and people on your own wavelength; you can help one another.

17. Do stick to your own vision no matter how tempting the bandwagon of the moment may be. If you can do that, you will have little need of all the other do's and don'ts.

Best wishes,  
Cindy Nemser

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**VASSAR COLLEGE**  
POUGHKEEPSIE - NEW YORK 12601  
Department of Art

Letter to a Young Woman Artist:

The first thing you need of course is strength. I speak, of course, not from the vantage point of an artist but from that of a woman in a related field, but I think that primary, all-encompassing requirement is probably the same. Strength means that you don't demand pity or special consideration from others or indulge too often in self-pity either; that you look firmly outward when you most want to collapse squashily inward; that you don't take over stereotypes or counter-stereotypes in your work or in the way you think about yourself and the world; that you stop caring about what a relatively abstract, but sometimes painfully concrete, entity called "men" may think of you or your work; that you realize that you are fully entitled to failure; that you are deeply aware that "success" as the world, the media, or even many of your friends and supporters may define it may not really be success at all. Perhaps some of these points may seem far from the initial requirement of "strength", but somehow I find them related. It might also be helpful to read the English novelist, Dorothy Richardson's article "On the Conflicting Demands of Humanity and Art" in the 1925 *Vanity Fair*. The article may seem somewhat outdated, but what she has to say still rings true, still raises a major dilemma confronting many women: perhaps as women artists you will have ultimately, to redefine both humanity and art — no small undertaking.

Good luck and bonne courage.  
Linda Nochlin



March 15, 1974

Dear Feminist Art Program:

Your collective response and personal potential is welcome to a ragged traveler on a patchy road:

*"Fox was the only living woman. There was no earth. The water was everywhere. 'What shall I do?' Fox asked herself. She began to sing in order to find out.*

*'I would like to meet somebody,' she sang to the sky. Then she met Coyote.*

*'I thought I was going to meet someone,' Fox said.*

*'Where are you going?' Coyote asked.*

*'I've been wandering all over trying to find someone.'*

*'I was worried for a while.'*

*'Well, it's better for two people to go together . . . that's what they always say.'*

*'OK but what will we do?'*

*'I don't know.'*

*'I got it! Let's try to make the world.'*

*'And how are we going to do that?' Coyote asked.*

*'Sing!' said Fox."*

Translated by  
Pauline Oliveros

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March 4, 1974

Dear Miriam Schapiro

I've written several articles going into the special dynamics and the particular pain of being an artist who is a woman, the most recent experience which I've written about is the enclosed piece. You are welcome to include it in your catalog. Much excellent investigative and profound psycho/sociological writing is/has been done about women and their problems in sexist culture, and I feel that the piece I'm giving to you is not redundant to what has already been said over & over again in so many books & magazines, now we must tell what happens, as we are in the process of making art, in my

case making plays and being in the middle of production activities and problems.

I look forward to hearing from you

Best,  
Rochelle Owens  
606 West 116th Street  
New York, N.Y. 10027  
212-UN4-4374

WOMEN ARE STRONG!

Quotation from:

"Observations of a Woman Playwright" by Rochell Owens

*Despite all essential good that attended the production of my play, there were a couple of incidents that I know are emblematic and clarify a prevailing attitude towards women artists. A recent example was Phyllis Newman's appearance on the Tonight Show; in the course of her banter with Johnny Carson, Phyllis fervently stated her identification with the Women's liberation movement and began to chat about the tour, mentioning the male director's name and the name of the male composer but neglecting to give the female author's name, mine. After my initial feeling of exasperation, the matter struck me as just another aspect of the damage our endemic sexist culture inflicts on its women: sexism wills and condemns women, alas, to be invisible and alienated from each other. What disappointed me most about Phyllis' attitude was its obliteration of the professional and artistic rapport we had shared.*

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March 15, 1974

Letter to a Young Woman Artist:

There can be no doubt that, even today, a young woman artist faces far greater obstacles to obtaining exposure and acceptance for her work than does her male contemporary. Galleries and museums expect a higher degree of achievement from a woman before they will show her work; critics all too often discuss a woman's work (if they do so at all) by comparing it to work of other women rather than to works of the particular school or movement to which she belongs. I therefore welcome the emergence of groups such as the Feminist Art Program, to help women artists achieve the recognition which is rightfully due them.

I would, however, like to express a word of caution. While it is proper that women artists work together to secure recognition of their achievements, it is essential that they not adopt the attitude that it is **as women** that they paint, sculpt, or otherwise create their work. Just as true creativity knows no barriers of time or place, so it cannot be bounded by gender. A great work of art is one which, if unsigned and seen by a viewer who is unfamiliar with it, is no identifiable as having been created by a man or by a woman.

In sum, I would advise the young woman artist to work for fair recognition as a woman, but to come to her work simply as an artist.

Sincerely yours,  
Deborah Remington

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Dear Miriam Schapiro,

March 8, 1974

I am sending you a typescript of a piece I wrote for *Art Now* in 1972.

What, if any, advice it contains must be dredged individually.

Sincerely yours,  
Jeanne Reynal

240 W.11 St.  
N.Y. 10014 NY

Quotation from *Art Now*, 1972, Volume four, number one:

*Asked why do I work with stones, glass, nails, struggle with cements, adhesives, labor with armaments. All the toil inherent in my clumsy medium . . . mosaic. I answer . . . thus my heart performs its excretory work.*

*The recent work of free forms, or sculpture, allowed me to talk silently on the subject of Africa to Africa, prolonging for me a great experience of animals, landscape and men. At Work ideas about the meaning of life obsess me. Without work, I wonder why man chooses to live.*

*At present, I develop another dimension of a free form upon which my tesserae of glass, horn and mother of pearl shells draw upon a rounded form, which in turn lies upon a flat surface, which is either background or foreground of a free standing object. Thus we have that unreasonable attraction that drives the creative person to continual creation.*

March 15, 1974

My Dear:

I really can't limit this letter to young women artists. Women of all ages are discovering a new life and a new young spirit. The **essence of youth** is ageless.

There is an old song:

*Someone's in the kitchen with Dinah.*

*Someone's in the kitchen I know.*

*Someone's in the kitchen with Dinah . . .*

Time to come out of the kitchen Dinah. Not only black women or young women but older women who have bided there in the kitchen or the bedroom or the nursery. Time to come out. I'm not putting down the kitchen or the bedroom or the nursery, creativity happens there too. It's just that there are other rooms. Special secret rooms within ourselves.

The most important thing, I feel, is to discover who we really are, what we're about, what we want to contribute, what we want to share, and what we want to keep.

The much scoffed at "woman's intuition" is a strong ally in self-discovery. The more we use it, the stronger it becomes, and it **never** lies.

Once we realize who we are in our deepest self and hold onto that realization, the doors begin to open.

*Sail on Silver girl*

*Sail on by!*

*Your time has come to shine*

*All your dreams are on their way*

*See how they shine.*

*If you need a friend*

*I'm sailing right behind. \**

Love,

Betye Saar

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\**Bridge Over Troubled Water*, Paul Simon. Copyright 1969



5 March 1974

Dear Miriam Schapiro, Sherry Brody:

I'm sending quite a few writings, I hope you will make selections among:  
*Parts of a Body House Book* . . .

In any case all my writing has been implicitly or — more recently — explicitly addressed to unknown "young women artists", which has been a persistent and desperate need on my part, to serve as possible precedent since my own were a private company of suicided or demeaned historical women . . .

Every good wish for the Feminist Art Program and my thanks.

Carolee Schneeman  
RD 2 270 Springtown Rd.  
New Paltz, N.Y. 12561

Quotation from *Parts of a Body House Book*, March 1972 (One Day's Sampling, Oct, 1971) *Missing Gender*. . .

*MISSING GENDER — a random sampling which shows — what women know — that men when they are writing address their "voice" to other men. Unconscious, reflexive, secure in the very grammatical umbrella of masculine gender. The usage is automatic. In "Earth Household", Snyder posits "the muse remains a woman" and identifies the muse by the neutral gender "it": "Be it a mountain range, a band of people, the morning star or a diesel generator", then extends the insight to unify cosmic and natural forces: "but this touching-deep is as a mirror, and man in his sexual nature has found the clearest mirror to be his human lover." Female gender is still "other" outside the voice. We are on-lookers, observers to our given definitions, our own integration. The struggle, the disintegration persists in the very language attempting to bring male and female energies into unity.*

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31 III 74  
(my birthday)

"Letter to a Young Woman Artist"

. . .

And what shall we do with our new "feminine sensibility?"

Shall we risk it — who we are

and where we've been and who we are to be

in the presence of those

who are not yet prepared to hear

and unprepared to see

and who may

trample

that very sensibility

underfoot?

Yes:

Art is a risk

To love is a risk

To decide is a risk

Each time it may be a mistake.

So banish the mistake

And grow strong again!

In Women Artists in Revolution we took risks. Our very name was a big risk! Some said, "you sound too militant" (that was before they knew how unyielding is the enemy!) We decided. We took a stand. We did battle. We made mistakes. We won a victory. We were largely responsible for the birth of the Women's Interart Center. We lost our separate identity. We maintained our separate identities. We regrouped with other women on other fronts. We remained strong.

The Interart Center has made mistakes. Of those who founded it, most all have gone. Some do not wish to recognize mistakes. Some fear there will never be another spring. They can not let go of their mistakes. I was expelled because I pointed to the mistakes.

An artist is ultimately

an anarchist

No system

No structure

No organization

can command her

ultimate loyalty.

Not mine.

One must remain  
free to decide.

Women also make mistakes.  
We are not all sisters  
bound by love — not yet (ever?)  
Some feed on the  
weaknesses of others  
Some play on the  
socialized feelings of dependency  
and inadequacy of others.  
Some proclaim their superiority  
for taking away responsibility from others,  
their freedom to decide.  
Some play "big daddy" in drag and usurp freedom  
Some willingly abdicate  
their freedom to others  
Neither are artists.

Before you abdicate  
responsibility  
measure carefully  
what you are losing!

. . .

#### Epilogue: The Present Struggle: A Brief Report

The Creative Women's Collective came together to continue the work of the Collective Graphics Workshop and to expand its work into the community. We began as three — Rosalie Schwartz, a jewelry maker, Sophie Newman, a painter, sculptor and printmaker, and myself — artistvideo-tapersociologist in October of 1973. Our vision is that of a collective of women who work together part of the time to create or teach art meaningful to the Chelsea community in which we are located in New York City. . .

. . .

May you learn from my mistakes  
and celebrate with me my victories  
and my joy.

Jacqueline Skiles

\*\*\*\*\*

March 14, 1974

Dear Miriam Schapiro,

Thank you for asking me to make a contribution to your Women's Art Festival and the section called "Letter to a Young Woman Artist." I enclose a statement which I hope will be suitable and useful. I hope I have sent it in time. I hope the Festival will be a great success and I'm sure that it is an excellent thing to do.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,  
Sylvia Sleigh

#### STATEMENT

The importance of the women's movement cannot be exaggerated as far as I am concerned. My confidence was reinforced, which gave me the strength to work harder and the courage to tackle more complex themes and larger canvases. A heartening result of the movement is the trust and friendship of women artists and critics. Two painters who have been a great source of help and comfort to me are Nancy Spero and May Stevens. We three belong to women's co-operatives, Nancy to A.I.R., May and I to SoHo 20.

The co-op experience is both stimulating and exhausting. We have gotten to know many other women artists and found how pleasant it is to be with women. This is not to say that we do not have our arguments, but we are all working together towards the same goal, the real equality of women. I think the important thing to remember when working in groups is to decide everything together openly, so that no one suspects the formation of cliques making decisions without consulting everybody. Being democratic may take longer but it is worth it for the sake of the identity and happiness of the group. A sensible idea rationally explained is often unanimously agreed upon. This may appear self-evident, but sometimes the more active members become impatient with the others and don't bother to explain things. Or worse they hope to make a *fait accompli* of matters under discussion.

I do not hate men, or wish to punish them for their past behavior. Both sexes are victims of society and, at our worst, men and women alike are self-seeking and power-loving. I think we should learn by male mistakes and not retaliate but work with men to make a more harmonious society. As far as my own work is concerned, I suppose I was always ambitious, but hopeful rather than confident. I felt the most difficult



thing to do was to paint large canvasses of figures in an environment, History Painting as it was called. I was taught that this was the highest form of art, and the most unlikely for a woman to do. "Why don't you paint flowers, darling?" my mother said. I did paint flowers, but as preparation for History Paintings.

I am very interested in painting nudes. For me it is the most challenging and rewarding subject. This is the first time in history that it is not difficult for a woman to paint a male nude, so recently I have done more and more and been encouraged by the pleasure of other women.

SYLVIA SLEIGH

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#### Letter to a Young Woman Artist.

While I feel honored to write such a letter as this, it is also a responsibility, so I feel it is necessary to make a disclaimer. This letter must be considered in a personal sense. Coming from one person and based on my own experiences. Any generalizations I make must be considered in that light.

In a way I feel the young women artists of today are fortunate in that I can see the accomplishments of the women's movement in their behalf. For now at least there is a place for you in the scheme of things as artists. That's an enormous advantage which while incomplete will nevertheless not make the step into the art world one which you must incessantly justify to yourself or make so blindly at the risk of great personal sacrifice and loss. I am not saying that the road will be easy. It probably never will be, and in my case it has been very hard indeed. There always will be problems and struggle, only now they will be somewhat different ones.

To be an artist is a great thing, a gift of vision and insight, and you may at first begin as I did with a feeling of awe and joy in the beauty and thrill of it, feeling a tremendous pleasure in the sheer making and sharing of that which you produce. And then you may find the social, economic, personal and emotional pressures on you make the road harder and harder. Would that the joy and peace could remain.

There are many ways to approach art and ultimately the choices are personal, must be. Whether you work from an historical concern and perspective or in terms of a given material or medium or perceptual, space or time concerns, or from a need to synthesize meaning and use any suitable medium as I do, I believe art is a spiritual endeavor and comes from the inner life force itself. I see at least two needs in this regard. They are to make evident the need for ART in general in this culture so that it is clear that without art there is no culture or growth of culture. Secondly it is important to make clear what the role of the artist is and thereby how to value art. To me artists are the pointers, the signifiers, the tapers, the spiritual or philosophical visionaries, the revealers of the human condition and potential, the visualizers of the culture and that is her/his contribution. It is evident to me that this country and all people have a conscious or unconscious desire for this vision. They need spiritual awakening of life and hope. I take a risk in saying this because many do not feel art has such spiritual or life content, but I do. It is often hard to "read" in art and harder still to find in the culture and often can be demonstrated only by its absence. This may or may not have to do with the goals of everyday life. In any case attainable and satisfying goals are changing for everyone. What is to come will be novel and hopefully enriching of human values and opportunities.

We are in a new time, the excitement of the 60's has been sobered by a realization of the difficulties arising out of change and reaction. Strangely enough just when women have claimed the right to an active public life, the complexities of modern civilization may make one of our greatest tasks ahead to learn to find meaning in less aggressive activity or to put it differently, increased leisure. If this situation persists, art will be of fundamental importance, art activity as a vehicle for recording meaning.

Beyond all this I know there will be times when you think you cannot endure or go on another moment and have no one to turn to. And for those moments I have not much to offer for I know of no formula or pattern that can help except to endure.

One of the greatest difficulties for me has been the relationship of my work to a satisfying private life and in misinterpreting information and advice. In many ways, this is a purely personal thing made of my own needs and neurosis, however, I have found that for me no amount of respect, attention or acclaim given to me in the professional world can compensate for an unsatisfying private life. So one task before me is to find a way as a woman artist to have deep human relationships and not sacrifice the one for the other.

I do know that art can be produced from nearly every state of mind, elation or depression, love or hate, chaos or peace, security and insecurity, meditation and transcendence. Mood need not detain you. All art I have ever made has begun as a risk and has been a venture into the unknown. I do not see how it could be otherwise. Within this there are endless pursuits ranging from those where you exercise complete control to very little.

There is a great notion that the artist must be isolated and insecure to produce good art. I do not believe this is so. While most often lately I have felt myself to be this way, I recall times when art was an expression of happiness, joy, and delight with the world and the people in it. I feel that what I produced then was as good or better than anything else I have done. Decisions come easier, one is not preoccupied and in pain, and vision is clear. The art is the risk, all else need not be. Therefore for me I am not necessarily going to pursue the available or inevitable path to more visibility. For in the balance of things, the art is the thing where one can do it best. If the stated path leads to the sacrifice of one's own life, I'm not sure it's worth it.

I recognize there is a *cause* and each person must enter it and fight it as they feel it. Perhaps what I am recommending for myself is a cop out to others. But I doubt causes that do not conform to personal intent, i.e. in this case the personal desire to perform, to be, to do in the culture. Once one has found some accessibility the task then remains to do the art, the job itself and share whatever help you can to those around you. It is difficult here to express what I have to say. Only that a cause can only be a part of your sensibility and it is dangerous for the art to get consumed by it. For some the cause and the art and the being can be one thing and that is good. Perhaps for me it was only that when I began there was no cause but me and my naivete and optimism. Now the situation is shared by many and I am recoiling because I went through it blindly and alone.

It is most important to listen to your inner voice and that means disregarding both criticism and admiration to take care of the child-like essence that permits the art. And if toughness is necessary that is what toughness is for. This is where your integrity lies and needs no explanation any more than your art needs explanation. People always want to know, they want an easy way seeking to go through you to get it. Merely standing by the art itself and putting the question back to them is best, for your reasons have not much to do with theirs. What is important is the way you provide for them to see themselves.

After mailing this I know I will suddenly wish I'd added or deleted something. But this is it. You will have friends more interesting than most, and experiences. It is always easier to imagine doing a piece than doing it. That's what initiative is about. It may take many years before anyone *sees* what you do. Friends help. All I can add is that if you are an artist you probably have little choice about it as it will nag at you all the time. Responding is worth it.

Best of luck,  
Barbara T. Smith

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March 11, 1974

Dear Women of the Feminist Art Program,

Last year, Miriam Schapiro asked me to run for the Board of Womanspace. I could not attend the membership meeting the evening of the elections because of a teaching commitment, so Miriam asked me to post my qualifications upon the bulletin board, along with a picture of myself. I hung up the phone, marched over to the typewriter and banged out the following poem, which I offer to you now as the most concise resumé of everything I believe and am. I would be happy if you wish to publish it in your catalog.

#### Curriculum Vitae

I was named for my grandmother, Clara Toumin.  
My mother told me  
that the Toumin family has a full page  
in the Jewish Encyclopedia,  
being descended from a line of rabbis stretching back  
to the thirteenth century.

No one knows about the women.

Clara came from Roumania and did not have a lot  
of education,  
but my mother told me  
how she helped my grandfather Louie in his dry-goods store  
in Columbus, Ohio, and everyone loved her  
because she always had time to listen  
to the customers' troubles.  
When she was forty-eight she died because  
a doctor did not understand  
the seriousness  
of her gall-bladder disease.



In school I learned that ecology is  
the most subversive  
of all the doctrines, so  
now I am  
a gardener and, like Brecht, I water  
not just the flowers but  
the weeds and the naked earth as well.

When you know who you are, you know what to do.

Respectfully submitted

Clare Spark-Loeb

June 7, 1973

P.S. *Note:* Ecology does not mean the same to Brecht and Theodore  
Roszak. I recommend reading *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*  
for explanation.

\*\*\*\*\*

When I received your request for a letter I burst into tears — a complicated  
mixture of feelings and thoughts brought these tears —

It is stunning to me to realize that there are now numbers of young women  
venturing into a land where I have for so long felt a lonely stranger — with  
few female models as colleagues —

The tears are many things — joy — and anger — and pain —

Pleasure at being in the unique and wonderful position to help make change  
by simply being.

The anger and pain are vestiges of the years of being known as “an eccen —  
tric — a rebel — a freak — a deviate — a WOMAN ARTIST”

The problems of women artists are multiple — political and personal —  
compounded by the complexities of particular personalities and histories —

Though all humans are exquisitely original and different than one another —  
women have always been expected to be alike, nearly interchangeable,  
books known by their covers, “artistic” yes — gently religious yes —  
supportive yes — but not serious, obsessed, joyous, strong, imperfect —  
short sighted — lusty — HUMANS.

I think that there is a way of being an artist that goes so deep, there is no  
choice as to commitment. Class, race, sex, and even talent do not seem to  
limit the artist’s need to be an artist.

But social pressure, disgrace, and loneliness, have driven all but a few  
women artists — crazy or underground —

When I was a child my family believed that I had an imaginary friend  
named Gertrude — that was not quite so — my mind’s friend was Gertrude  
Stein — the only female artist in any field I had ever heard of — I always  
held her in my heart and mind as the one example of the slight, slim,  
possibility that — MAYBE - by some breath taking slip of chance —  
IN THIS LIFE — IN THIS WORLD — IN HISTORY —

I too could become an artist —

Now when I look at all the young “Gertrudes” emerging, I want to dance,  
and clap and sing — and say — please, please — survive and emerge — and  
make this place more real — less lonely —

I need you

Pat Steir

March 1974

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March 16, 1974

Dear Feminist Art Program:

It is very uncomfortable to be put in the position of sage, advice-giver.  
If the work speaks to you, if we could talk, that would be great.

My feeling at the moment is that it is better now for women artists than it  
was when I started. I feel good about what’s happening. I hope our gains  
will be solid enough, real enough, to stand the reaction, the counterrevolu-  
tion, the putdown with a vengeance that is sure to come. Some people have  
not been touched by the movement — may never be; some are hurting and  
are waiting for their chance to strike back. So I feel good — but wary.

My very best wishes,

May Stevens

97 Wooster

NY NY 10012

March 15, 1974

Dear Feminist Art Program:

I would very much like to respond to your request in the affirmative. I am very much supportive of women artists and especially would like to encourage those younger than I.

However, your request (received two weeks ago) does not allow enough time to write something new. I have a very heavy teaching load in addition to shows coming up.

If you wish, I give you permission to reprint the last section of an article I wrote for a book titled "Art and Sexual Politics" edited by Tom Hess and Elizabeth Baker, published by Collier Books, (p. 94), the section titled: "A Woman's history as Artist and being great."

I believe this statement of mine to be applicable and encouraging to young women artists.

Best wishes for great success with your Women's Art Festival.

Sincerely,  
Marjorie V. Strider

"A Woman's History as Artist and Being Great" from *Art and Sexual Politics* by Marjorie Strider:

*Out from underneath to the outside . . . from being thought odd to being realized . . . from being an object to being a being . . . from great effort forced out to breaking out with ease . . . from not participating in political tactics to doing it with great work . . . from not sensitizing the public with cries for male chauvinism to blasting the public with terrific sculpture . . . out from subservience to serving and being served . . . from being whistled at on the street to doing the whistling yourself . . . out from society's disapproval to your own approval is all that matters . . . out from the need of escorts to going anywhere . . . out from sex as a barter system to sex as pure enjoyment . . . out from being unable to support yourself to teaching other artists . . . going out with society as it becomes more free into women being a part of that freedom . . . out from feeling maligned by society's restrictions to feeling joy at being able to break barriers . . . out from being one of a few into being the best of many . . . to break through being a woman with the only proof that you are equal — great work, great work, great intellect . . . from being set*

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*free by certain aspects of women's liberation to disagreeing with most tactics being used . . . out from being a woman into pride at being a woman . . . out from under "I thought a man did it" to it doesn't make any difference who did it . . . from being dainty and delicate to being what you are . . . from difficulties with society's disapproval with the way you live your life to realizing that some men are oppressed to realizing it's all becoming easier . . . from ignoring the facts so that you can do your work to being able to admit them and still come through . . . from being small to being large and always moving only out and up . . . the motion being one huge expansion.*

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Dear Sisters,

March 26, 1974

I believe we can only learn from our own experiences. I can communicate feelings about my experiences rather than relating events. My feelings about being a woman and being an artist are positive ones. I like being both. My moments of self doubt are few and I am always absorbed in my work. I never had problems with my inner world, I feel it is limitless, only in the outside world have I encountered difficulties and boundaries. Times have changed. We have made them change. Today awareness of individual uniqueness allows greater opportunity for its expression. Our chances now as women have come because humanity has need of that special creativity and because we fought for our independence. We must continue to assert that right. We each have a vision of our own to express, we must take risks, transgress boundaries, listen only to ourselves and remember that as artists and women we can accomplish anything that we want.

I celebrate with you.

Michelle Stuart

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Deborah Sussman & Co. graphics plus,  
1651 Eighteenth Street  
Santa Monica, California 90404  
(213) 829-3337

Letter to a Young Woman Artist

Be Caring  
Open  
Aware  
Generous  
Alert  
Devoted  
Concerned  
Tough  
Dogged  
Flexible  
Brave  
Questioning  
Involved  
Helpful  
Inspired  
Strong  
Honest  
Hardworking  
Growing  
Not easily discouraged  
Unbitter  
Be Yourself

Love,  
Deborah Sussman

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART  
Founded 1930 by Gertrude V. Whitney  
945 Madison Avenue at Seventy-Fifth Street  
New York, New York 10021 (212) 249-4100

March 25, 1974

To a Young Woman Artist:

As a young woman artist you will face extraordinary hardships and frustrations. Ultimately, however, you must seek those responses to your work that your work merits, regardless of gender.

I, myself, tried for years to become an artist and abandoned painting at last because I believed that I could never be a really good painter. It is an extremely precarious position, being an artist — and it is, in a sense, an absurd activity — that is, an activity which is impractical as well as lonely. Most artists are unable to support themselves solely by means of their work and must spend valuable time doing other things to earn a livelihood. If you are a woman, this means that you find a secretarial job of one kind or another, or — if you're more fortunate than most — you may teach. Men, on the other hand, are taught certain skills in school (or in the service) that are as unpleasant, but pay more than typing — they can do plumbing, wiring, carpentry and other kinds of manual labor. Therefore, I urge all women artists to learn a skill, or more accurately, a trade, that will provide you with work that you can do independently and outside an office. These skills will also be of use to many of you in your work as artists; it is especially important to demand that your school provide such courses for you, if they don't already do so.

You will also have difficulty with other people's attitudes, especially those who expect of you what the world at large has, in the past, expected of you. Consequently, you will have to defend yourself if you do not wish to be a wife or mother — and to defend yourself if you do; you will be forced to struggle with people who do not take you or your work seriously because you are a woman (and this is especially so if you happen to be young and attractive); you will have to fight to be paid equally for your work, or to command equal prices for your art; you will have to be tough, express anger, insist on your personal and civil liberties: the right to your own time, your own work, your own money, your own choices, your privacy; you will have to learn to be selfish in order to become generous.

On the other hand, the world has changed very much for us, as women, in the past five years, and the difficulties I encountered as a female curator

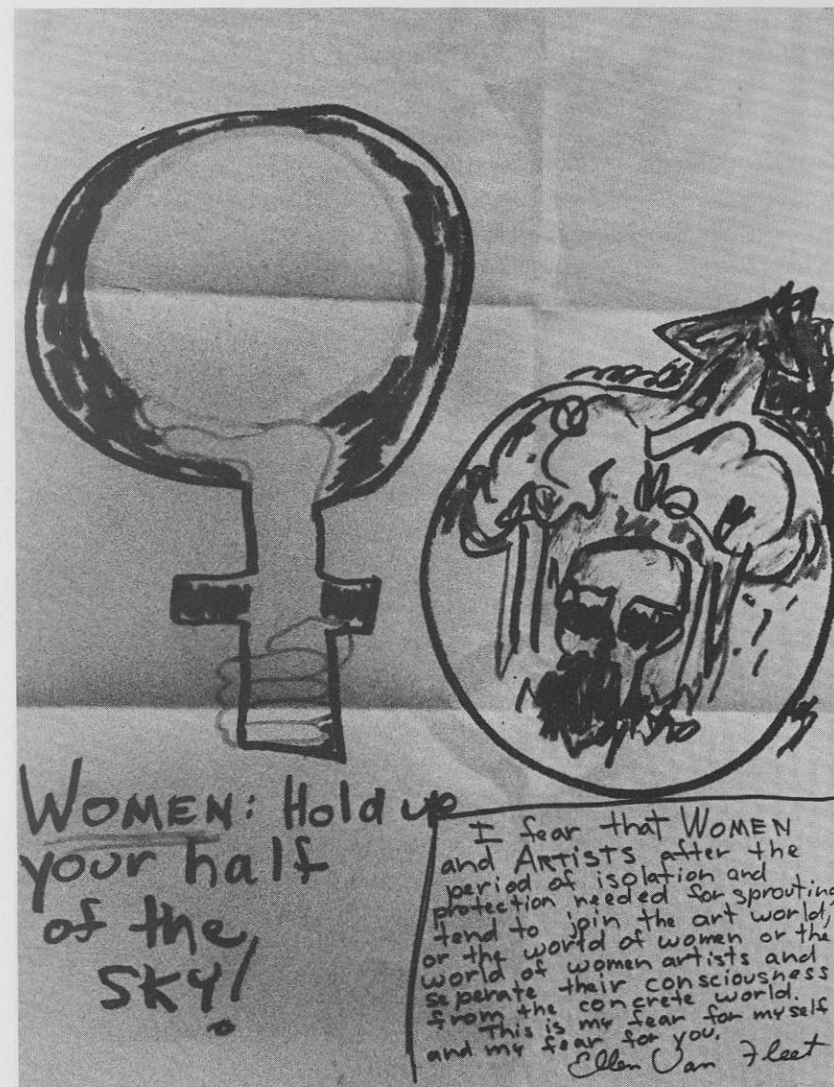
when I began working in a museum in 1969 are no longer — or at least rarely — present. Similarly, the prejudice I encountered (and briefly, although unwittingly, shared until I became a feminist) against women artists has lessened to a point where it is manageable, and often rectifiable. But we haven't come all **that** far.

Our biggest struggle is still to become invisible personally, so that it is our work which is dealt with, and not us. But we **do** have prototypes, and we do have a situation today where a great number of well-known and respected artists are also women. Moreover, older women artists, with long-established reputations, are beginning to tell us honestly what they had to face, personally and professionally, as a consequence of being female. Today there are many women artists in museums, galleries, private collections. Equally important, women are creating alternate structures in which to present their work, rather than being swallowed up by bitterness because a male-dominated art world has neglected them. There are women's cooperative galleries and womens study courses, and women are teaching each other the skills we have and need. There are more of us in positions of power or responsibility than ever before, and more of those women are aware of the hardships we all face; consequently, there are increasing numbers of us who are committed to rectifying injustices and to establishing our criteria solely on the basis of a person's work.

I hope you will learn to face discouragement with courage and energy; to rely on other women for support and love, but even more important for honest, tough criticism of yourself and your work; and finally, that you will insist, for yourself and all of us, that the only way to change our situation is by fulfilling our best potential and struggling, before all else, to achieve excellence in whatever we do.

Sincerely,  
Marcia Tucker  
Curator

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THE UNIVERSITY OF SANTA CLARA - CALIFORNIA 95053  
de SAISSET ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM

April 5, 1974

Dear Young Women Artists:

In New York, at the time I was a student at the Art Students League, and thereafter, an apprentice to Hans Hoffman, it was my great good fortune to have been in the center of a milieu of an exciting, now historic, time.

Peggy Guggenheim, and her Art of the Century; Frederica Monti Beer, Director of the Artists' Gallery in New York City, whose contribution to the Wiener Werkstatte (the Viennese Workshop for artists and craftsmen of exceptional skill and mastery, such as, Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele) was a vital force in the Austrian Expressionist Movement; Marion Willard, Betty Parsons, and Maya Derin were women working in the studios, or supporting an art movement as yet unknown, and often derided. Their value judgments stand as major concepts in the art world today. Clearly then, I brought these concepts and precepts with me.

As the Director of the de Saisset Art Gallery and Museum at the University of Santa Clara, it comes almost as a contradiction to be working within the context of the Jesuit Order. The Jesuits are men whose very tenets are at first glance seemingly contradictory to a feminist cause. Yet, they are men who are supportive and forward thinking of my programs. I find I have been accorded a peer group situation that has been rewarding.

My many good wishes to you. And I am grateful for the opportunity to relate, albeit briefly, a portion of my experience.

Sincerely,  
Lydia Modi Vitale  
Director

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Dear Sisters:

March 11, 1974

I know you intend to honor me by asking me to write A LETTER TO A YOUNG WOMAN ARTIST. Frankly, I'm not honored: a shove into a wheel chair is how it feels to me.

By my lights, most of you are pretty old — too old to call yourselves "young women artists". The phrase smacks of special pleadings and self

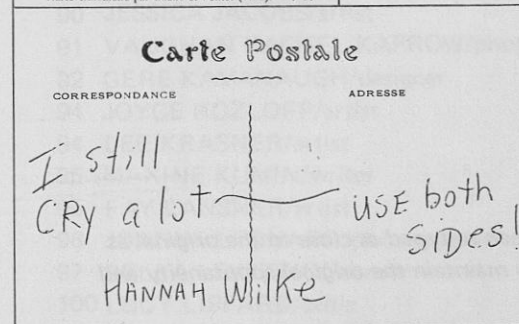
pity. Anyhow, I'm not your grandmother: I'm not even your predecessor but, more appropriately, your contemporary. As history is writ, a couple of decades doesn't mean a thing.

Each life is its own age. To die at 18 is to be terminal at 17, so how old is Nevelson? O'Keefe? Neal? Eva Hesse was older than they and who would have thought it? Knobs and wrinkles that appear (uninvited) never invade one's **REAL** self. This rubbery machine, this sweaty apartment on which we pay rent and upkeep like the tenants we are, will have its utilities cut off in one swoop or in a long attrition by a landlord who has no respect for clauses in a lease. So don't seek advice from a "model", however charismatic, who hasn't herself figured out how to beat the landlord to a draw.

Best regards,  
June Wayne



16. Anonyme de SAINT-DENIS, 4<sup>e</sup> siècle.  
Marse Antoinette par Goult et Feliol (1765). — J. F.



March 16, 1974

Dear Women of the Feminist Art Program,

After all that's gone down: the movement, the workshops, the galleries for and of women, studies addressed to and offered by women, the articles, the media, novels, the introspection of speculums, consciousness-raising, Ms. magazine, heroines, panels, after all of it — I have but this to submit:

Believe in yourself; you come first. Fight for what you want, know that you deserve it. Only in feeling self-respect can you help anyone else. Too much healthy aggression has been hidden under Feminist cloaks; too often, it seems, in the guise (albeit unconscious) of helping one's "sisters". Fess up to how big a piece of the pie you want, and then you can go for it.

Best to you,  
Barbara Zucker

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*(The previous letters have been re-typed as close to the original as possible; this, in an effort to maintain the original spontaneity and intimacy.)*

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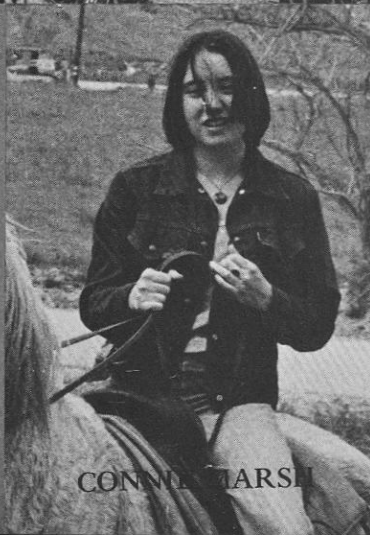
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