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# **Transmission and Gender. Women Artists as Teachers in the XXth Century**

Déborah Laks, Natalia Sassu Suarez Ferri

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Edited by  
Déborah Laks and Natalia Sassu Suarez Ferri

# Transmission and Gender

## Women Artists as Teachers in the XX<sup>th</sup> Century





Transmission and Gender  
Women Artists as Teachers in the XX<sup>th</sup> Century

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FOUNDED BY THOMAS KIRCHNER

EDITED BY PETER GEIMER

Edited by Déborah Laks and Natalia Sassu Suarez Ferri

# Transmission and Gender

## Women Artists as Teachers in the XX<sup>th</sup> Century



DEUTSCHES FORUM  
FÜR KUNSTGESCHICHTE  
CENTRE ALLEMAND  
D'HISTOIRE DE L'ART  
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# Introduction

## De maîtresse à élève, le genre en question dans l'enseignement de l'art

Déborah Laks et Natalia Sassu Suarez Ferri

Penser l'enseignement artistique sous l'angle du genre, c'est aborder un sujet doublement frappé de silence. Dans la mesure où c'est la création qui définit un artiste, l'enseignement ne peut être qu'une activité annexe, empiétant sur le temps et l'énergie à consacrer à l'activité principale. Enseigner est une manière de sacrifier aux nécessités, qui révèle en creux un manque de succès. C'est surtout après Mai 68 que cette attitude apparaît. Les événements de mai cristallisent en effet une défiance vis-à-vis de l'enseignement comme pratique et du corps enseignant comme groupe social. En s'y opposant, la jeunesse en fait les tenants de l'ordre et du passé, et s'affirme elle-même comme avant-garde. Le prestige de la position du maître ou de la maîtresse, la possibilité de faire école et de laisser ainsi sa marque perd alors de son intérêt : dans la lutte qui fait rage pour la jeunesse et la nouveauté, l'enseignement est du côté des perdants.

La recherche sur l'enseignement des artistes au xx<sup>e</sup> siècle hérite de cette position : mis à part pour quelques trajectoires exemplaires, c'est un sujet très peu traité. Ce relatif silence s'épaissit lorsque l'on s'intéresse aux artistes femmes enseignantes. On connaît les mécanismes idéologiques, historiques et finalement historiographiques qui ont conduit à la mise de côté des artistes femmes.

La recherche depuis les années 1970 a notamment étudié leur manque de représentation institutionnelle et de soutien par le marché, l'importance de leur entourage et de leur lien à des artistes hommes, leur marginalisation, leur cantonnement à des rôles techniques comme autant de mécanismes entrant en jeu dans leur absence ou retard de reconnaissance. Le champ de l'enseignement se féminise malgré tout avec constance jusqu'à aujourd'hui. L'école peut-elle être considérée comme une part de l'institution plus à même que d'autres d'accueillir les femmes, si ce n'est de leur donner une visibilité ? Lorsqu'il leur est associé, l'enseignement semble pourtant confirmer sa force paradoxale de déclasser. Choix alimentaire, renoncement à une carrière d'artiste, le travail d'enseignement devient aussi, dès lors qu'il est exercé par des femmes,

le lieu d'une réaffirmation de stéréotypes de genre et du mépris qui leur est associé. Valorisée pour les hommes, cette activité est le plus souvent perçue comme le renoncement à une « véritable » carrière artistique pour les femmes. Une des conséquences de cette dépréciation est le peu d'informations dont on dispose sur leur rôle dans les écoles d'art et de design. Cette discrétion imposée par les structures et les hiérarchies, au sein des écoles et dans le monde de l'art en général, l'est aussi par les archives. En effet, si le travail sur l'enseignement artistique en général est rendu plus difficile par le caractère pour le moins parcellaire des archives, celui sur les artistes femmes enseignantes est d'autant plus complexe que la patrimonialisation, voire la simple conservation privée suppose la valorisation de l'activité décrite dans les documents en question. Alors que l'importance des professeurs semble majeure, qu'ils marquent par leur enseignement des générations de jeunes artistes, et bénéficient pour leur propre production de l'émulation du groupe, quelle place est réservée aux artistes femmes dans les écoles d'art ? La reconnaissance sociale qui est associée à ces fonctions est-elle la même pour les artistes femmes que pour les artistes hommes, et comment la penser aussi en dehors de cette binarité du genre ? Les questions du choix, de l'accessibilité et de la valorisation de cette carrière doivent être soulevées. Le bénévolat et la précarité, largement féminins, sont ainsi à repenser comme des interstices depuis lesquels les femmes exercent une influence qui pour être discrète et en décalage avec la hiérarchie, n'en est pas moins réelle.

L'historiographie existante sur l'enseignement artistique au xx<sup>e</sup> siècle s'intéresse peu au cas particulier des artistes femmes. Elle se concentre principalement sur quelques établissements qui, à l'image du Bauhaus ou du Black Mountain College, font rupture et s'affirment comme des lieux de l'avant-garde, laissant dans l'ombre la plus grande part des écoles, le rythme de leurs évolutions et les luttes qui s'y jouent. Plus généralement, le contenu des cours, les dynamiques de transmission et le fonctionnement des groupes demeurent eux aussi mal connus. Le manque de sources constitue l'une des difficultés majeures auxquelles se heurte la recherche pour envisager les méthodes d'enseignement. Il en va de même pour la féminisation des groupes et la manière dont elle modifie les rapports de force, de projection, ainsi que l'imaginaire et les récits mis en œuvre dans l'enseignement.

L'ambition du colloque qui a donné lieu à cette publication était donc d'interroger le rôle historique des artistes femmes dans les mutations de l'enseignement artistique au xx<sup>e</sup> siècle. Cette question suppose la conviction d'une spécificité liée au genre, non pas du point de vue d'une quelconque essence, mais bien de celui d'un groupe social supposant des stratégies, des schémas de carrière, de parole et de présentation comparables et liées par un ensemble d'assignations et d'expériences communes. L'enseignement artistique porte sur trois points principaux : l'œuvre – que créer et comment le faire, la personne – trouver sa voie propre, la carrière – comment la construire et la

développer dans un milieu de l'art donné. Sur ces trois points les expériences féminines peuvent différer de celles des hommes. Les carrières et les réseaux des femmes suivent souvent des schémas alternatifs. L'exploration et la construction de soi dans le cadre d'une société patriarcale et normative ne suppose pas les mêmes efforts, défis et écueils selon qu'on se trouve appartenir au premier ou au deuxième sexe. L'œuvre enfin s'enracine dans un parcours de vie, des références et une construction esthétique et sémantique nécessairement incarnés. Dans quelle mesure un enseignement dispensé par des artistes femmes intègre-t-il ces questionnements, et en quoi la réflexion collective sur ces derniers lors du processus de transmission est-elle un élément important de l'enseignement ?

Plus largement, l'attention portée aux trajectoires d'artistes femmes ainsi qu'au contenu de leur enseignement donne à penser non seulement les structures hiérarchiques sous-jacentes des différentes institutions de l'art mais aussi les voies de leur progressif renouvellement au cours du xx<sup>e</sup> siècle. Certaines artistes ont été durablement associées à cette pratique, c'est le cas d'Anni Albers, Marianne Brandt, Lygia Clark, Doris Stauffer, Gina Pane, tandis que pour d'autres, cette activité demeure un pan peu connu de leur carrière, comme pour Maria Lassnig, Lea Lublin, Annette Messager par exemple. Ces artistes pédagogues ont ouvert des brèches dans le continuum d'une histoire faite de verticalité, de transmission à sens unique et de déférence. Des méthodes issues de pratiques militantes féministes, la distribution et la circulation de la parole, la valorisation de l'expérience personnelle et le recours à une approche analytique critique ont ainsi pu être des outils particulièrement opérants pour cette entreprise. C'est ainsi que les écoles d'art et de design ont pu devenir les sites privilégiés de la lutte pour la visibilité que mènent alors ces artistes. Théoriquement hors du marché, les écoles constituent des laboratoires où les personnalités autant que les pratiques se cherchent, s'affirment et se renouvellent. Le temps passé dans ces ateliers demeure un moment particulièrement important pour les jeunes artistes comme pour les professeur·e·s : les expérimentations, la liberté, la communauté des étudiant·e·s, contribuent à créer un environnement où idées, formes et partis-pris sont sans cesse mis en question et discutés. C'est en ce sens que nous proposons d'envisager l'enseignement comme le moment d'une décomposition critique, d'une modification et dans une certaine mesure aussi d'une cristallisation des dynamiques de genre au sein du monde de l'art.

Ce colloque marque un moment de la recherche sur le sujet de l'enseignement dispensé par des artistes femmes. D'une part l'absence d'étude spécifique sur le sujet a été mise en lumière, tout comme la difficulté de trouver des sources, souvent non conservées, ou non existantes dans le cas d'enseignements strictement oraux. D'autre part nous avons noté la richesse des recherches qui ont été menées depuis quelques années sur un certain nombre de personnalités et de notions clés pour notre sujet. La discussion collective menée lors du colloque nous a conduit à explorer un champ de recherche situé au croisement

de l'histoire de l'art, de la théorie du genre, de l'histoire, de l'histoire sociale et culturelle, dont la richesse a été confirmée au fil des interventions et dans les contributions réunies ici. Ce volume a pour ambition d'ouvrir une réflexion et de proposer des pistes pour des recherches et des réflexions futures.

Ce colloque a regroupé les contributions en quatre grands thèmes : institutions, enseignement/apprentissage, nouveaux modèles et pédagogies émancipatrices. Les actes de cette publication circulent entre ces thèmes et présentent trois méthodologies principales : approche par l'enquête / historiographique, approche par l'étude de cas individuels, et approche féministe / activiste.

Les auteures qui ont choisi une approche par enquête fournissent des informations historiographiques sur des thèmes généraux sur lesquels la documentation et les publications sont insuffisantes et contribuent ainsi à nous fournir accès à ces domaines. Le premier exemple en est l'étude d'Alexandra Panzert sur les écoles qui avaient l'ambition de réformer l'art sous la République de Weimar, au moment où les écoles d'art traditionnelles fusionnent avec des écoles d'arts appliqués. Le cas le plus emblématique du Bauhaus, est discuté en parallèle à d'autres exemples, notamment ceux de l'École d'arts appliqués de Berlin, de l'École des arts et métiers de Cologne et du Burg Giebichenstein d'Halle. Les informations factuelles à disposition sur les femmes enseignantes et étudiantes dans ces institutions attirent l'attention sur les écarts de rémunération entre les sexes, encore trop actuels, ainsi que sur les hiérarchies des différentes formes d'art dans le contexte du modernisme. Hana Chebbi explore la féminisation de l'art et de son enseignement en Tunisie en s'intéressant à la pratique d'artistes enseignantes dont Safia Farhat, Leila Menchari, Aicha Fileli, Sadika Keskess et Feryel Lakhedher. Leur combat pour la visibilité dans la société arabe et musulmane conservatrice du début du <sup>xx</sup><sup>e</sup> siècle est discuté en relation avec les approches de l'enseignement de l'art en Tunisie du <sup>xxi</sup><sup>e</sup> siècle, soulignant l'impact de ces artistes en tant que pionnières, facilitatrices et modèles pour les nouvelles générations de femmes. Également focalisé sur les récits plus larges de visibilité / invisibilité et les stratégies contre la nature genrée des formes d'art, le chapitre de Laura Leuzzi étudie les pionnières de la vidéo au Royaume-Uni et aux Pays-Bas. L'introduction des enregistreurs vidéo portables et de la vidéo comme nouvelle forme d'art est présentée comme une opportunité pour les femmes de créer dans un domaine (encore) libre de traditions dominées par les hommes. De la même manière que l'étude des écoles réformatrices de l'art à Weimar et de la féminisation de l'enseignement en Tunisie, ce texte se veut une première enquête sur un sujet peu documenté.

Des exemples allant des vidéastes féministes britanniques Catherine Elwes, Elaine Shemilt et Elsa Stansfield à la réalisatrice et poétesse canado-suédoise Antonie Grahamsdaughter, nous emmènent à la découverte de la création de plateformes d'*empowerment* (capacitation) destinées aux femmes à Farnham, à la Slade School of Art, à la Winchester School of Art, à la Jan Van Eyck Academie de Maastricht et à l'Université Konstfack d'art, artisanat et design de Stockholm.

La section suivante, axée sur des études de cas individuelles, est dédiée à des enquêtes sur trois artistes modernistes et leurs expériences en tant qu'enseignantes. L'imbrication de l'enseignement, de l'apprentissage et des pratiques artistiques est un fil conducteur tout au long de cet ouvrage, mais se manifeste particulièrement dans cette section, où l'enseignement s'avère faire partie intégrante de la production artistique de Sophie Taeuber, de Gego et de Denise Scott Brown. L'étude de Talia Kwartler sur Sophie Taeuber en tant que professeure à l'École des arts appliqués de Zurich et en tant qu'étudiante en pédagogie de la danse à l'École de l'art du mouvement de Rudolf von Laban offre un véritable aperçu du rejet des hiérarchies et des différenciations exclusives entre disciplines et techniques. Taeuber est étudiée en tant que professeure d'art, danseuse et dadaïste. Si certains aspects de sa pratique ont été soigneusement documentés et étudiés, son rôle d'enseignante reste un champ d'investigation substantiel qui n'a pas encore été entièrement exploré. De même, la Vénézuélienne d'origine allemande Gego a été abondamment étudiée et publiée en tant qu'artiste qui renverse les idées et les définitions traditionnelles de la sculpture, bien que rarement dans ses méthodes pédagogiques, comme le montre Natalia Sassu Suarez Feri. Comme dans le cas de Taeuber, l'expérience de Gego en tant que professeure a fortement influencé son art. Son enseignement au Neumann Design Institute de Caracas est examiné à travers le travail de ses étudiants et replacé dans le contexte de l'important récit moderniste du cinétisme au Venezuela. L'architecte américaine Denise Scott Brown, présentée par Laurie Gangarossa, a des points communs avec Gego : la formation en architecture, l'approche de l'enseignement axé sur l'apprentissage plutôt que sur l'enseignement, et la volonté de remettre en question la tradition de l'enseignant en tant qu'autorité au profit d'un enseignant qui devient un facilitateur de dialogue. La nature transnationale de la pratique de Gego s'avère être un autre point commun avec Scott Brown, puisque son travail est discuté dans le contexte de Johannesburg, Londres et Los Angeles, entre autres villes. Scott Brown est ici présentée sous l'angle de ses pédagogies subjectives et de son ambition d'établir l'apprentissage comme activité d'autoréflexion et d'identité, où la connaissance peut être produite à partir de l'expérience.

La dernière partie des actes de ce colloque présente la transmission et le genre sous l'angle féministe, grâce à des contributions d'historiennes de l'art (Aline Derderian et Adélie Le Guen) et de praticiennes / enseignantes (Marijke Appelman et Ariel Dougherty) et permet de confronter des exemples historiques et documentés d'enseignement féministe aux approches et expériences pédagogiques de deux de nos auteures. Aline Derderian explore le programme d'art féministe de la fin des années 1960, en se focalisant sur la manière dont l'histoire de l'art peut être révisée du point de vue des femmes grâce à des pédagogies inclusives et émancipatrices et à l'introduction de l'autoréflexion, du dialogue et des processus créatifs corporels. S'éloigner impérativement des systèmes éducatifs et des pédagogies patriarcales constitue une problématique actuelle dans la

présentation de Marijke Appelman des défis qu'elle a dû relever pour désapprendre ces systèmes et passer d'une tradition d'enseignement / autorité à des pratiques d'apprentissage transformatrices fondées sur l'autoréflexion et la pratique. L'exemple de ses *Infinite Paper Meetings* nous incite à réfléchir à l'agencement de nos voix et de nos silences. Le désapprentissage est également essentiel dans l'analyse d'Adélie Le Guen sur l'enseignement de l'art lesbien par Terry Wolverton dans le Woman's Building. Le programme d'éducation saphique est un exemple éclairant de nouveaux modèles institutionnels, axés sur la sensibilisation / l'éveil de la conscience. Wolverton illustre une fois de plus l'imbrication entre étude, enseignement et création, ainsi que l'importance de la création de réseaux. Nous clôturons cette publication avec Ariel Dougherty, notre conférencière principale, qui nous fait part de son expérience personnelle en tant que réalisatrice, enseignante et défenseuse des médias communautaires. Elle nous fait découvrir ses pédagogies et pratiques féministes, depuis son expérience de sa Second Wave experience of Women Make Movies jusqu'à des projets plus récents, en soulignant l'importance de la création de communautés et de collaborations entre femmes. Son appel à une réévaluation de l'équilibre entre l'individuel et le collectif, à un soutien pour nourrir et construire des institutions féministes, et à une résolution des problèmes de documentation, d'attribution erronée et de financement de l'art des femmes sont des préoccupations partagées dans l'ensemble des conférences et inspirent de nouvelles réflexions sur la transmission et le genre.

Ce colloque a bénéficié du soutien et de l'expertise de l'association AWARE : Archives of Women Artists, Research and Exhibitions, de l'École nationale des chartes et du CNRS. Matylda Taszycka (AWARE) et Stéphanie-Emmanuelle Louis (ENC) ont été des partenaires de premier plan, et nous souhaitons les remercier très chaleureusement de leur confiance et de leur soutien. Nous remercions aussi les membres du comité scientifique : Lucile Encrevé (École nationale supérieure des arts décoratifs) a apporté une expertise fondée sur sa recherche pionnière sur les artistes enseignantes à l'École nationale des arts décoratifs, Charlotte Foucher-Zarmanian (CNRS) par son travail sur les historiennes de l'art, a mis en lumière des schémas communs dans les trajectoires, Camille Paulhan (École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts de Lyon) a éclairé les discussions grâce à de son expérience de première main dans des écoles d'art et son travail sur différentes artistes femmes, Elvan Zabunyan (Université Rennes 2) nous a aiguillées grâce à sa profondeur de vue sur l'histoire du genre et ses dynamiques interpersonnelles. Leur compagnonnage intellectuel a été précieux pour le colloque et la présente publication. Nous tenons aussi remercier le Centre allemand d'histoire de l'art et son directeur, Thomas Kirchner, ainsi que de l'ensemble du service des éditions, en particulier Markus A. Castor et Christine Haller pour avoir accueilli dans leurs collections les actes de ce colloque et nous avoir accompagnées avec enthousiasme et rigueur dans cette publication.

# From Teacher to Student: Questions of Gender in the Teaching of Art

Déborah Laks and Natalia Sassu Suarez Ferri

To consider artist-teachers through the lens of gender is to address a subject that has been doubly silenced. Insofar as it is creation that defines an artist, teaching can only be an ancillary pursuit, one that encroaches on time and energy to be devoted to the principal activity. Teaching is therefore a sacrifice to necessity, signalling a lack of success. It was especially after May 1968 that this attitude appeared. The events of May indeed crystallized a mistrust both of teaching as a practice and of the teaching body as a social group. In opposing these, the youth rendered them the upholders of order and of the past, thereby also asserting themselves as avant-garde. The prestige of the position of the instructor, the possibility of setting an example and thus of leaving a mark, lost its allure: in the raging struggle for youth and novelty, education was on the losing side.

Research on the teaching activity of twentieth-century artists has inherited this position: apart from a few exemplary cases, the subject has been very little studied. This relative silence deepens when we consider women artists who taught. We are aware of the ideological, historical, and ultimately historiographical workings that have led to the side-lining of women artists. Among the mechanisms that come into play in their absence or delayed recognition, research since the 1970s has examined in particular their lack of institutional representation and support by the market, the impact of their entourage and their connections to male artists, their marginalization, and their relegation to technical roles. Despite all this, the field of teaching has long been feminized and remains so today. Can the school be seen as an area of the institution better able than others to welcome women, if not to give them visibility? In association with women, teaching nevertheless seems to confirm its paradoxical power to decommission. When exercised by women, choices born of necessity, including perhaps the renunciation of an artistic career and the work of teaching, become loci for the reaffirmation of gender stereotypes and the disregard entailed therein. Valorized in the case of men, teaching is for women most often perceived as a renunciation of any 'real' artistic career. One of the consequences of this depreciation is the little information available on the role of women in schools of art and design. This erasure, imposed by structures and hierarchies

in schools and in the art world more broadly, is likewise effected by archives. Indeed, if work on artistic instruction in general is made difficult by the piecemeal nature of the archives, that on artist-teachers who are women is all the more complex, seeing as patrimonialization – and even conservation in the private sphere – is premised upon the valuing of the activity in question within the relevant documents. While major importance is assigned to male teachers, seen as marking generations of young artists through their instruction and, in terms of their own production, benefitting from the emulation of the group, what place is reserved for women artists in art schools? Is the social recognition associated with these functions the same for female artists as for their male counterparts, and how might we also approach this beyond the gender binary? Questions concerning the choice, the accessibility, and the valuation of this career must be taken into account. Largely feminine, voluntary work and precariousness are thus to be rethought as interstices from which women exert an influence that, for being discreet and out of step with the hierarchy, is no less real.

The existing historiography on artists as teachers in the twentieth century pays little attention to the specific case of women artists. It centres mainly on a few establishments, like the Bauhaus or Black Mountain College, that distinguish and assert themselves as sites of the avant-garde, leaving unexamined the majority of schools, the rhythm of their evolutions, and the struggles played out therein. More generally, course content, the dynamics of transmission, and the functioning of the groups also remain poorly understood. The lack of sources represents one of the major challenges encountered in research on teaching methods. The same goes for the predominant number of women in such groups and the way in which it alters the relations of power and projection as well as the imaginary and the narratives enacted in teaching.

The objective of the conference from which this publication emerged was to investigate the historical role of women artists in the transformations of artistic instruction during the twentieth century. This question presupposes a specificity linked to gender, not from any essentialist point of view but rather from that of a social group assuming strategies and patterns in career choice, speech, and presentation that are comparable and linked by a set of attributes and common experiences. Artistic education concerns three main factors: the work (what to create and how to go about it), the person (finding their own way), and the career (how to build and develop it in a given art environment). On these three points, women's experiences may differ from those of men. The careers and networks of women often follow alternate patterns. The exploration and construction of oneself within the framework of a patriarchal and normative society entail differing efforts, challenges, and pitfalls depending on whether one happens to belong to the 'first' or the 'second' sex. Finally, the work is rooted in one's life course – and is thus necessarily embodied – including references as well as aesthetic and semantic orientations. To what extent does teaching offered by women artists integrate these questions, and how important an element of

teaching is collective reflection on them during the transmission process? More broadly, the attention paid to the trajectories of women artists as well as to the content of their teaching points not only to the underlying hierarchical structures of the various art institutions but also to the modes of their progressive renewal over the course of the twentieth century. Some artists have been permanently associated with this practice, as is the case for Anni Albers, Marianne Brandt, Lygia Clark, Gina Pane, and Doris Stauffer, whereas for others this activity remains a little-known aspect of their career, as for example with Maria Lassnig, Lea Lublin, and Annette Messager. These artist-pedagogues opened breaches in the continuum of a history constituted by verticality, one-way transmission, and deference. Methods drawn from feminist militant practices, the distribution and circulation of speech, and the merit of personal experience, along with the use of a critical-analytical approach, have proven to be particularly effective tools towards this end. This is how art and design schools were able to become the privileged sites of the struggle for visibility consequently undertaken by these artists. Existing in theory outside the market, schools are laboratories in which personalities and practices are sought out, asserted, and renewed. The time spent in these workshops remains a particularly important stage for young artists and for teachers alike: the experimentation, the freedom, and the community among students all contribute to creating an environment where ideas, forms, and biases are constantly questioned and raised for discussion. It is in this sense that we propose a consideration of teaching as a locus in which gender dynamics within the art world are critically deconstructed, modified, and to a certain extent also crystallized.

This conference marks a critical juncture in research on the subject of teaching performed by women artists. The lack of specific attention to the topic has already been underscored, as has the difficulty of locating sources, which are largely not preserved or, in the case of strictly oral instruction, never existed. However, we note the wealth of research carried out over the past few years on certain personalities and notions key to our subject. In the course of the conference, the collective discussion led us to explore a field of research situated at the intersection of art history, gender theory, and history, as well as social and cultural history; the richness of that research is attested in the interventions brought together here. This volume aims to open up a reflection and to propose avenues for future research and thinking.

The conference grouped the papers into four general themes: institutions, teaching and learning, new models, and emancipatory pedagogies. The texts included in this volume, however, move across these. They utilize three primary methodologies: historiographical surveys, individual case studies, and feminist and activist approaches. Accordingly, the volume proceeds in three parts.

Authors taking the first approach contribute to our access to their respective fields by providing historiographical overviews on relevant topics lacking documentation and literature. Exemplifying this approach is Alexandra Panzert's

study of the merging of traditional art academies with schools of applied arts in the Weimar Republic. The case of the Bauhaus is discussed alongside lesser-known examples, including the Berlin School of Applied Arts, the Cologne School of Arts and Crafts, and the Burg Giebichenstein in Halle. The documentation on women teachers and students in these institutions calls attention to the still-current gender gap in pay, as well as to the hierarchies of art forms in the context of modernism. Hana Chebbi explores the feminization of art and its teaching in Tunisia through the practices of artist-teachers like Safia Farhat, Aicha Fileli, Sadika Keskes, Feryel Lakhder, and Leila Menchari. Their fight for visibility in the conservative Arab-Muslim society of the early twentieth century is seen alongside twenty-first-century approaches to teaching art in Tunisia, highlighting these artists' impact as pioneers, facilitators, and role models for new generations of women. Equally centred around broader narratives of visibility/invisibility and strategies of countering the gendered nature of art forms, Laura Leuzzi's chapter addresses women forerunners of video in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. It presents the introduction of portable video recorders and of the medium of video art as opportunities for women to create in a field free from male-dominated traditions. Like the preceding two contributions, this one offers an initial survey of a poorly attested topic. Through examples ranging from the British feminist video artists Catherine Elwes, Elaine Shemill, and Elsa Stansfield to the Canadian-Swedish filmmaker and poet Antonie Grahamsdaughter, we learn about the establishment of empowering platforms for women in Farnham and at Slade School of Art, London; Winchester School of Art; Jan Van Eyck Academie, Maastricht; and the University of Arts Crafts and Design, Stockholm.

In the next section of the volume, which focuses on individual case studies, we find investigations of three modernist artists and their experiences as teachers. Though a common thread throughout the publication, the interweaving of teaching, learning, and art practices becomes particularly apparent in this section, in which teaching proves to be an integral part of the artistic production of Sophie Taeuber, Gego, and Denise Scott Brown. Talia Kwartler's consideration of Taeuber as a teacher in the Applied Arts Department of Zurich's trade school and as a student of dance in Rudolf von Laban's School of the Art of Movement gives us valuable insight into the rejection of hierarchies and differentiations among disciplines and media. Taeuber is approached as an art teacher, a dancer, and a Dadaist. While aspects of her practice have been thoroughly documented and examined, her role as a teacher remains yet to be fully explored. Similarly, the German-born Venezuelan Gego has been prolifically studied for her inversion of traditional ideas and definitions of sculpture, but rarely for her pedagogical methods, as Natalia Sassu Suarez Ferri shows. As in the case of Taeuber, Gego's experience as a teacher heavily informed her own art. Her instruction at the Instituto de Diseño de Caracas is examined through the work of her students and set against the backdrop of the prominent modernist

narrative of kineticism in Venezuela. The American architect Denise Scott Brown, introduced in this volume by Laurie Gangarossa, shares commonalities with Gego: her education in architecture, her approach to teaching as learning-focused rather than teaching-focused, and her will to challenge the tradition of teachers as authorities in favour of a new model in which teachers become facilitators of dialogue. The transnational nature of Gego's practice provides another point of connection with Scott Brown, as the latter's work is discussed in the contexts of Johannesburg, London, and Los Angeles, among other cities. Scott Brown is seen here through the lens of her subjective pedagogies and her ambition to establish learning as an activity of reflexivity and identity formation, in which knowledge can be produced from experience.

The final part of the volume interrogates transmission and gender through a feminist lens, with contributions from art historians (Aline Derderian and Adeline Le Guen) and teachers (Marijke Appelman and Ariel Dougherty) alike. Their analyses allow us to view historical examples of feminist teaching alongside the pedagogical approaches and experiences of our two practitioner-authors. Aline Derderian studies the Feminist Art Program of the late 1960s, with emphasis on the ways in which art history can be revised from the points of view of women through inclusive and emancipatory pedagogies as well as through self-reflection, dialogue, and body-oriented creative processes. Marijke Appelman underscores the urgent necessity to move from patriarchal education systems and pedagogies in her account of her own challenges in unlearning those systems and moving from a tradition of teacher-as-authority to transformative learning practices rooted in self-awareness and learning by doing. The example of her Infinite Paper Meetings prompts us to recognize the agency of both our voices and our silences. Unlearning is also key to Adeline Le Guen's discussion of Terry Wolverton's teaching of lesbian art at the Woman's Building. The Sapphic Education Program is an illuminating case of new institutional models, with a focus on raising consciousness. Wolverton once again illustrates the interweaving of teaching, studying, and creating and the importance of building networks. We close the volume with a text by Ariel Dougherty, our keynote speaker, who describes her personal experience as a filmmaker, teacher, and advocate for community media. She walks us through her feminist pedagogies and practices, from her involvement with Women Make Movies during the second-wave era to more recent projects, highlighting the significance of forging communities and collaborations among women. Her call for a re-evaluation of the balance between individual and collective, for support in nourishing and building feminist institutions, and for a resolution to the problems of the documentation, misattribution, and funding of women's art speaks to concerns shared across the volume and inspires new reflections on transmission and gender.

The conference benefitted from the support and expertise of AWARE: Archives of Women Artists, Research and Exhibitions, the École nationale des

chartes (ENC), and the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS). Matylda Taszycka (AWARE) and Stéphanie-Emmanuelle Louis (ENC) have been first-rate partners, and we thank them most warmly for their trust and support. We also express thanks to the members of the scientific committee: Lucile Encrevé (EnsAD: École nationale supérieure des Arts Décoratifs) contributed expertise based on her pioneering research on teaching artists at the EnsAD; through her work on women art historians, Charlotte Foucher-Zarmanian (CNRS) brought to light common patterns within the trajectories in question; Camille Paulhan (École nationale supérieure des Beaux-arts de Lyon) informed the discussions with her first-hand experience in art schools and her work on various women artists; Elvan Zabunyan (Université Rennes 2) steered us with his deep insights into the history of gender and its interpersonal dynamics. Their intellectual camaraderie has proven invaluable to the conference and to the present volume. We would also like to thank the German Center for Art History Paris and its director, Thomas Kirchner, along with its entire publications unit and, in particular, Markus A. Castor and Christine Haller, for welcoming these conference proceedings into their series and for collaborating with enthusiasm and rigor on this publication.

# I - Cultural milieu



# Art-School Reform of the Weimar Republic: Change as Chance for Women Artists as Teachers?

Alexandra Panzert

The history of art education is characterized by a constant succession of crises and reforms. Especially since the nineteenth century, artists have recurrently asked how art should be taught and whether it *can* be taught at all. During the 1920s, artistic training went through major changes all over Europe. This paper focuses on Weimar Republic Germany, where long-discussed ideas around art-school reform, such as the implementation of craft, were put into practice in a new democracy, and women were finally granted the right to vote as well as access to universities.

Gender played an interesting role in this history. Schools of applied arts were the first public schools of art in the nineteenth century to admit women, much earlier than the academies.<sup>1</sup> However, those women were often accused of dilettantism, which had effects on the schools' reputations; research on women artists is in agreement that the decorative arts have historically been linked to women and that this is one reason for their devaluation in contrast to the fine arts.<sup>2</sup> But what happened in the 1920s, when some schools of applied arts in the Weimar Republic merged with academies of fine arts or introduced traditional artistic disciplines into their curricula as a result of art-school reforms? Was it an opportunity for women? Did they obtain teaching positions? Here, I ask what insights can be gained about the constellation among applied arts, women, and schools and whether teaching was an opportunity, or perhaps even paved the way, for establishing women at schools of art.

Research on artistic training is generally not very advanced, with the exception of that concerning certain specific institutions.<sup>3</sup> Particular interest has been

- 1 Here, I use "applied art," "decorative arts," and "crafts" synonymously as descriptive terms.
- 2 Judy Attfield and Pat Kirkham (eds.), *A View from the Interior. Feminism, Women and Design*, London, 1989; Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art, and Ideology*, London, 1982; Sigrid Schade and Jennifer John (eds.), *Grenzgänge zwischen den Künsten. Interventionen in Gattungshierarchien und Geschlechterkonstruktionen*, Bielefeld, 2008.
- 3 Carola Muysers, "Eine verrückte Teegesellschaft. Die Zulassung der Künstlerinnen zu den deutschen Akademien um 1919," in Peter Schneemann, (ed.), *Kunstausbildung. Aneignung und Vermittlung künstlerischer Kompetenz*, Munich, 2008, pp. 63–72; Dietmar Fuhrmann and Klaus Jestaedt, "...alles Das zu erlernen, was für eine erfolgreiche Ausübung ihres Berufes von ihnen gefordert wird... Die Zeichen- und Malschule des Vereins der Berliner Künstlerinnen," in *Profession ohne Tradition. 125 Jahre Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen*, Dietmar Fuhrmann and Carola Muysers (eds.), exh. cat., Berlin, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin, 1992, pp. 353–366.

taken in the Bauhaus, though the training of women in this context is also rarely researched. More broadly, aside from some individual cases, the question of teaching methods in this period cannot be fully answered, as hardly any material is available on the subject.<sup>4</sup> This paper considers the share of women in selected schools of decorative arts in the Weimar Republic and their fields of learning and teaching, aiming to show what conditions had to be fulfilled to bring women into teaching positions in this period of change.<sup>5</sup>

### Art-School Reform

The term “art-school reform” describes anti-academic tendencies in the first third of the twentieth century geared towards a renewal of the training of artists, applied artists, and architects. One important claim was to a basic practical education: craft became of great importance, as it was considered the foundation of all artistic practice. That meant a call for apprenticeships in craft workshops for textiles, metalwork, carpentry, pottery, wall painting, printmaking, and glass production. It also meant that students would become involved in co-operations between art schools and industrial companies and in related private and public commissions. Other claims staked by art-school reformers were to the equality between the fine and applied arts, the status of architecture as a uniting discipline, and the necessity of preliminary courses. Among reform schools, the Bauhaus stands out as the most famous example, although other institutions had quite similar programmes. In Weimar, Berlin, Karlsruhe, and Frankfurt, art academies merged with schools of arts and crafts. Meanwhile, schools of applied arts established courses in the fine arts, such as painting and sculpture, that had previously been restricted to an academic tradition. Those schools were open to and attractive for women, since they promised a solid education with (social accepted) job opportunities to follow and lesser costs than private schools.<sup>6</sup>

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4 Many women teachers did not receive sufficient recognition during their lifetimes, and as a result their artistic and literary estates were not preserved. An exception are female students at the Bauhaus, where sources have been preserved at the Bauhaus-Archiv in Darmstadt since the 1960s. The data on women for this research is gathered from the archives of successor institutions and former administrations in charge of the educational system. For a more detailed survey on the situation of women at the schools, yet-unknown private estates need to be researched.

5 This paper presents outcomes from my research for my doctoral dissertation, *Bauhaus in Context. Comparing Weimar Republic's Art and Design Schools*.

6 Ingrid von der Dollen, *Malerinnen im 20. Jahrhundert. Bildkunst der 'verschollenen Generation.'* *Geburtsjahrgänge 1880-1910*, Munich, 2000, p. 28.

## Women, Applied Arts, and Art Schools: Positions

Since women artists and the applied arts are complexly interwoven, I wish to rehearse some positions important to this matter. They concern theories about the fine and the decorative arts and about the gendered nature of these fields, theories that had a major impact on German schools of applied arts, for example on the topic of what classes were seemingly suitable for women. Since the Renaissance, art education had developed from craft-based workshops to academies, and this history came along with a division between the fine arts and the decorative arts.<sup>7</sup> We must bear in mind just how powerful this distinction was. It originated in conjunction with the separation of theory from practice, still relevant today, with theory being assigned a higher status than work done with one's hands. But it was also connected with attitudes towards women, being "one of the most important aspects of the history of women and art, the intersection in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of the development of an ideology of femininity, that is, a social definition of women and their role, with the emergence of a clearly defined separation of art and craft."<sup>8</sup> This meant that women were assigned to artistic practices deemed to be more about handicraft than the fine arts and that these two fields of art were no longer seen as belonging to the same league.

Two other important aspects at the intersection of gender and applied arts pertain to the emergence of an industrial society and the increasing separation between one's workplace and one's living space. With the development of industrialization especially in the nineteenth century, craft came to be seen as a less important form of work. Especially in a bourgeois environment, it was treated as a pleasurable hobby, outside the world of paid labour. As unremunerated work, it was suddenly more accessible to women, whose crafts were in turn devalued as the fruits of a private pastime.<sup>9</sup> A hierarchy emerged, linking value to the place where products were created:

For in fact what distinguishes art from craft in the hierarchy is [...] also where these things are made, often in the home [...]. The fine arts are a public, professional activity. What women make, which is usually defined as 'craft,' could in fact be defined as 'domestic art.' The conditions of production and audience for this kind of art are different from those of the art made in a studio and art school, for the art market and gallery.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Parker and Pollock, 1982 (note 2), p. 50.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 58.

<sup>9</sup> Pat Kirkham, "Women and the Inter-war Handicrafts Revival," in Attfield and Kirkham, 1989 (note 2), pp. 174–183, here p. 175. See also Megan Marie Brandow-Faller, *An Art of Their Own. Reinventing Frauenkunst in the Female Academies and Artist Leagues of Late-Imperial and First Republic Austria, 1900–1930*, unpubl. thesis, Georgetown University, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Parker and Pollock, 1982 (note 2), p. 70.

The assigning of value based on where work took place contributed to a further feminization, and a related devaluation, of the applied arts.

The development of an industrial society also brought new working conditions and a new field of activity within the applied arts: industrial art, or *Kunstgewerbe*. As the so-called Arts and Crafts movement spread all over Europe, the applied arts gradually received a higher status. This movement was connected not only with crafts but also with technology, the latter belonging to the field of theory. And it was not labelled as female. In fact, the artists working in this field professionally were mostly men.

Craftswomen and female designers crop up, especially starting in the early twentieth century, prominently at the Wiener Werkstätten – albeit limited to gender-specific areas or ‘suitable’ fields: textiles, pottery, graphic arts, and bookbinding.<sup>11</sup> Men also worked in these fields, but mostly as designers, not as craftsmen. In 1913 there were around a hundred female members of the Deutscher Werkbund, which corresponded to a share of around 8%.<sup>12</sup> Private schools for applied arts, such as the Debschitz School in Munich and the Reimann School in Berlin, enjoyed a very good reputation for innovation and had many female students. Reform schools of the Weimar Republic, where various fields of art were supposed to be equal, reflect the growing appreciation of applied arts in the wake of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

The historical relations among women, applied art, and artistic education are complex and, at first glance, even contradictory. Griselda Pollock and Rozsika Parker – authors of *Old Mistresses: Women, Art, and Ideology*, a ground-breaking and now classic book of feminist art history – write about the connection between women and crafts, while others like Renate Berger point out that it was not easy for women to acquire an education in the applied arts because many schools did not accept women.<sup>13</sup> Schools of decorative arts that did accept women were often ascribed a negative reputation based on a suspicion of dilettantism. Moreover, some organizations for women artists, including the Association of Women Artists Berlin, did not accept applied artists. What happened when the fine and applied arts merged in reform schools? Did this fusion have an impact on the women artists who were active at those institutions? And what was the situation for women teachers at reform schools?

11 Magdalena Droste, “Beruf: Kunstgewerblerin. Frauen in Kunsthandwerk und Design 1890–1933,” in Angela Oedekoven-Gerischer (ed.), *Frauen im Design. Berufsbilder und Lebenswege seit 1900*, Stuttgart, 1989, pp. 174–202.

12 Despina Stratigakos, “Women and the Werkbund,” in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 4, 2003, pp. 490–511, here p. 493.

13 Renate Berger, *Malerinnen auf dem Weg ins 20. Jahrhundert. Kunstgeschichte als Sozialgeschichte*, Cologne, 1982, pp. 90–95.

## Women Teachers at Reform Schools

Between 1900 and 1920, most German academies were beginning to accept women.<sup>14</sup> In this period preceding the establishment of the Weimar Republic, other options for an education in the arts – especially for women – included private schools and schools of applied arts, both of which were more expensive than the academies. Schools of applied arts had been accessible to women from early on, as they often struggled to find apprenticeships in craftsmen’s workshops and turned to these schools for professional training.<sup>15</sup> In Germany before the Weimar Republic, women taught at many schools of applied arts, mostly in textiles.<sup>16</sup> The next section of this essay investigates reform schools of the 1920s in which applied and fine arts were taught – namely in Berlin, Halle, Cologne, and Frankfurt, along with the Bauhaus in Weimar and Dessau.<sup>17</sup> What opportunities did women teachers have? How many women were actually teaching?

In 1924 the School of Applied Arts in Berlin (Unterrichtsanstalt des Kunstgewerbemuseums) merged with the Academy of Fine Arts (Hochschule für die Bildende Kunst) to form the new Associated State Schools for Fine and Applied Arts (Vereinigte Staatsschulen für freie und angewandte Kunst). Only four female masters of craft taught there, in ‘female’ subject areas: Melitta Feldkircher (embroidery), Frieda Bastanier (enamel), Ms. Huhn (bookbinding; full name unknown), and Johanna Rapmund (fashion). This was out of around fifty-six teachers in total, and none of the four was a professor.<sup>18</sup> Still, for the first time, women were able to teach at an academy.

At Burg Giebichenstein in Halle, a school of applied arts with a strong craft tradition, many women artists taught: Maria Likarz (“Kunstgewerbliche Frauenarbeiten,” a women’s arts and crafts class that included painting, graphic arts, textiles, fashion, and enamel), Johanna Schütz-Wolff and Benita Koch-Otte (textiles), Lili Schultz and Klara Maria Kuthe (enamel), Friedel Thomas (book printing), Anna Simons (typography), and Marguerite Friedlaender (pottery). In 1927, out of fifteen teachers, five were women. With the exception of Simons, all of the women listed led workshops and courses over a period of at least one year. The classes led by women artists were the most successful at the school, meaning their products were of much interest in exhibitions and commissions.<sup>19</sup>

14 Muysers, 2008 (note 3), pp. 63–65.

15 Correspondence Kölner Werkschulen / Ministry of Trade and Industry, *Briefwechsel über Probleme mit der Ablegung der Gesellenprüfung* (1923), Secret State Archives Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, Berlin, I. HA Rep. 120 E X Nr. 242.

16 Droste, 1989 (note 12), p. 179–181.

17 These were not the only schools where women taught. At the School of Applied Arts in Kassel, Julie Katz-Aereboe led the textile class and had the first title of professor in 1923.

18 Stefanie Johnen, *Die Vereinigten Staatsschulen für freie und angewandte Kunst in Berlin. Kunsthochschulgeschichte zwischen Weimarer Republik und NS-Diktatur*, Berlin, 2018.

19 Katja Schneider, *Burg Giebichenstein. Die Kunstgewerbeschule unter Leitung von Paul Thiersch und Gerhard Marcks 1915 bis 1933*, Weinheim, 1992, pp. 160–166.

On the one hand, director Paul Thiersch was very supportive of women: when the ministry in Berlin argued against too many female students in school, doubting they could effectively find a job, Thiersch ignored these suggestions.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, women did not receive the same pay as their male colleagues. Indeed, there was an official gender pay gap of 10% in most Prussian schools of applied arts.<sup>21</sup>

At the Cologne School of Arts and Crafts or Cologne School of Crafts (Kunst- und Handwerkerschule Köln or Kölner Werkschulen) in 1925, we find five women artists working as teachers: Johanna Rapmund and Karla Ruland (fashion), Margarethe Seel (textiles), Dorkas Reinacher-Härlin (pottery), and Alexe Altenkirch (drawing as well as painting and its application in textiles) (fig. 1). They had the same salary as their male counterparts, and starting in 1925, one was a professor: Alexe Altenkirch.<sup>22</sup> In 1926 four out of twenty-four teachers were women. During the era of the Weimar Republic, this was the maximum number of female employees found at this school at one time.

At the Frankfurt Art School (Frankfurter Kunstschule), three women were teaching in this period. Margarethe Klimt led the fashion class with great success (fig. 2). This course of study was supposed to enable students to obtain leading positions in the fashion industry. Meanwhile, Marianne Uhlenhut and Anne Wever were heads of the textile-printing and -weaving workshops, respectively.

At the Bauhaus, at first glance there are quite a few female teachers: Anni Albers, Otti Berger, Helene Börner, and Gunta Stölzl (all weaving), Gertraud Grunow (“Theory of Harmony”), Dora Wibiral (typography), Marianne Brandt (metalwork), Karla Grosch (gymnastics), and Lili Reich (weaving and interior design). However, except for Stölzl, Grunow, and Börner, none of them was active as a teacher for more than one or two semesters, meaning that they were not permanently employed but rather worked as assistant teachers in workshops.<sup>23</sup> The number of female teachers varied. In 1926 only one in ten teachers was a woman – namely, Gunta Stölzel – and in 1931, three out of fifteen.

## Students

The number of female students at schools of applied arts has been quite significant since the nineteenth century. The Unterrichtsanstalt des Kunstgewerbemuseums

20 Correspondence Ministry of Trade and Industry / Paul Thiersch, *Betrifft die Einrichtung einer Fachklasse für kunstgewerbliche Frauenarbeiten an der Kunstgewerbeschule Halle 1916*, Archive Burg Giebichenstein, University of Art and Design Halle.

21 Bund der Kunstgewerbeschulmänner, *Bericht über die [...] Besprechung zwischen Vertretern des Landesgewerbebeamtes des preußischen Ministeriums für Handel und Gewerbe und dem I. Vorsitzenden des Bundes der Kunstgewerbeschulmänner* (12.7.1920), Secret State Archives Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, Berlin, I. HA Rep. 120 Ministerium für Handel und Gewerbe E X Nr. 20, pp. 72–73.

22 In 1925 this title was generally introduced in Cologne.

23 At the predecessor school Henry van de Velde, there were also four women teaching permanently: Helene Börner (weaving and embroidery), Li Thorn (carpet-knotting), and Dora Wiribal and Dorothea Seligmüller (enamel).

- 1 Alexe Altenkirch, Design for a Library for House Zanders (Bergisch-Gladbach), shown at the "Women's House" at Werkbund-Exhibition in Cologne, 1914



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- 2 Works from the Fashion Class of Margarethe Klimt, Frankfurt Artschool (Frankfurter Kunstschule), 1927

Berlin counted around 70% of its student body in 1900 to be women.<sup>24</sup> At the schools considered in this study from the time of the Weimar Republic, this number is far from equal but also far from insignificant. In most schools, we find one third to one half female students, as the following chart lists:<sup>25</sup>

**Number of students (female) par year at schools of applied arts**

| School  | 1919   | 1924                              | 1927/28     | 1931/32     |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Berlin, School of Applied Arts (Unterrichtsanstalt des Kunstgewerbemuseums) and Academy (Hochschule für die Bildenden Künste), after 1923 Associated State Schools (Vereinigte Staatsschulen für freie und angewandte Kunst)</b> | 210 (87 f)<br>Sc.o.<br>Appl. Arts<br>98 (5 f)<br>Academy | 376 (155 f)                       | 311 (113 f) | 439 (117 f) |
| <b>Cologne School of Arts and Crafts (Kunst- und Handwerkerschule Köln / Kölner Werkschulen)</b>  | 204 (81 f)   | 158 (90 f)                        | 197 (81 f)  | 165 (65 f)  |
| <b>Burg Giebichenstein – Werkstätten der Stadt Halle</b>  | 88   | 51                                | 171         | 84 (40 f)   |
| <b>Bauhaus</b>  | 165 (84 f)   | 87 (27 f)<br>other:<br>(80, 45 f) | 166 (41 w)  | 197 (53 f)  |

Compared to female students, the proportion of female teachers was smaller. But we must still note: there *were* women teaching at reform schools – almost one third of the teaching staff at Burg Giebichenstein in Halle and less than one tenth

<sup>24</sup> Von der Dollen, 2000 (note 6), p. 33.

<sup>25</sup> Ministry of Trade and Industry, *Overview of Students Numbers at Schools of Decorative Arts 1919–1929*, Secret State Archives Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation Berlin, I. HA Rep 120 E X Nr. 54; Statistics of School Attendance, United State Schools Berlin 1924–26, Archive Berlin University of the Arts, Inventory 8/312; Folke F.: Dietzsch, *Die Studierenden am Bauhaus. Eine analytische Betrachtung zur strukturellen Zusammensetzung der Studierenden, zu ihrem Studium und Leben am Bauhaus sowie zu ihrem späteren Wirken*, unpubl. thesis, Hochschule für Architektur und Bauwesen Weimar (today Bauhaus-University Weimar), 1991; Ministry for Trade and Industry (1931/32), *Overview of Number and Educational Background of Students at Schools of Applied Arts and Crafts and Similar Technical Schools*, Secret State Archives Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation Berlin, I. HA Rep. 120 E X Nr. 59; Statistical Office of the City of Cologne, *Statistical Yearbook of the City of Cologne, 1919–1933*, [http://www.digitalis.uni-koeln.de/Statkoeln/statkoeln\\_index.html](http://www.digitalis.uni-koeln.de/Statkoeln/statkoeln_index.html) [accessed 12.03.2020].

in Berlin, where the school was founded from a union between an academy and a school of applied arts; the other schools fall somewhere in between. Fewer women taught in schools with stronger academic traditions, and when they did they mostly taught in fields labelled as ‘female,’ especially textiles.

The Bauhaus is no exception in this matter. Here, as in other reform schools, women faced discrimination.<sup>26</sup> The schools were a reflection of Weimar Republic society, but those with no academic tradition – like Halle and Cologne – seemed to offer women greater access, especially as students. And though the women were mostly active in the textile departments, they did appear in other fields. In general, with the exception of the Bauhaus, the agenda of each school towards women – whether as students or teachers – remains to be investigated in detail.

The facts listed above demonstrate that schools of applied arts, and thus also the reform schools, were important in enabling women to gain academic teaching positions. It was via a limitation of their fields – namely to textiles – that women were given the chance to teach in the first place. This phenomenon did not begin in the Weimar Republic, and it did not considerably increase in these seemingly progressive years; the reform schools continued a development that had already begun in schools of applied arts. Nonetheless, reform schools of the Weimar Republic represent a step towards wider recognition of women in art because those schools taught fine and applied arts side by side. At the schools of applied arts newly founded in the nineteenth century, there had been doubts as to whether women would actually practice after their training, and especially once they got married.<sup>27</sup> What seemed important was an education of taste: women were supposed to help guide their husbands and be tasteful shoppers. This changed at the reform schools of the 1920s. Concerns about women’s ability were not completely eliminated, but female teachers were proof that women could make a living with a profession in the applied arts. This proof came not only from their teaching positions but from other modes of activity in their fields, for example working with companies or taking commissions in their own studios.

The devaluation of applied arts that began in the academies in the eighteenth century did not stop with the Arts and Crafts movement nor with the establishment of schools of applied arts.<sup>28</sup> This devaluation had not so much to do with the applied arts being considered female as with the division between practice and theory, the latter being more highly valued. Even women practitioners in the fine arts did not wish to be identified with the applied arts, as the Association of Women Artists Berlin shows.<sup>29</sup> Precisely because of the lesser status assigned

<sup>26</sup> Anja Baumhoff, *The Gendered World of the Bauhaus. The Politics of Power at the Weimar Republic’s Premier Art Institute 1919–1932*, Frankfurt am Main, 2001.

<sup>27</sup> Von der Dollen, 2000 (note 6), p. 20–23.

<sup>28</sup> Kai Buchholz, Justus Theinert, and Silke Ihden-Rothkirch (eds.), *Designlehren. Wege deutscher Gestaltungs- und Ausbildung*, Stuttgart, 2007, p. 15.

<sup>29</sup> Cornelia Matz, *Die Organisationsgeschichte der Künstlerinnen in Deutschland von 1867 bis 1933*, unpubl. thesis, Eberhard Karls University, 2001, p. 179.

to applied arts, it was possible for women to gain access to professionalization. Within the field of the applied arts, women were included, though there was a division between 'male' and 'female' subject areas. However, women's leading of textile courses was a first step towards other areas. In contrast to the fight about access to the academies, this was a revolution from within. Therefore, despite being largely limited to specific areas, women were in no way "insignificant"<sup>30</sup> in this context but found their place in the magazines and exhibitions alongside their male counterparts.<sup>31</sup> The applied arts were gendered in a different way than the fine arts were.

Because of their merging of fine and applied arts, the reform schools of the Weimar Republic were, in turn, stages on which women could gain access to academic teaching. Indeed, art schools of the Weimar Republic gave women options – albeit rare and limited – for a career teaching art either at a public school or an academy. These reform schools were indeed a chance for women artists as teachers.

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30 Other than suggested in: Parker and Pollock, 1982 (note 2), pp. 44–50.

31 Especially in German art magazines such as *Kunstblatt* or *Dekorative Kunst*.

# Artistes-enseignantes en Tunisie au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle : l'impact de la féminisation de l'art et de son enseignement

Hana Chebbi

De Safia Farhat à Sadika Keskes en passant par Aïcha Filali, Feryel Lakhdar ou encore Leïla Menchari, la liste des femmes artistes nées au xx<sup>e</sup> siècle et issues de l'École des beaux-arts de Tunis est longue. Elles ont marqué l'art tunisien, non seulement par leurs œuvres et par leurs travaux, mais aussi en devenant des modèles à suivre pour les générations à venir. En effet, ces plasticiennes et designers du xx<sup>e</sup> siècle ont contribué à modifier la scène tunisienne par la transmission de leurs connaissances, de leurs philosophies, de leurs arts et de leurs visions à leurs étudiants et disciples dans les écoles d'art tunisiennes ou dans leurs ateliers<sup>1</sup>.

Ces pionnières ont instauré, par leur présence et par leur travail, une voie progressiste dans une société tunisienne conservatrice et patriarcale. Safia Farhat, l'une des rares femmes à prendre part au mouvement artistique de l'École de Tunis, a ainsi joué le rôle de modèle pour de nombreuses autres artistes. De même sa participation à la réforme de l'enseignement de l'art a laissé une empreinte indélébile qui permettra aux femmes de Tunisie d'y jouer désormais un rôle.

Cependant pour beaucoup d'artistes femmes, la marginalisation est de mise. Tenues à l'écart de la société, cantonnée à un rôle parfois technique, ces femmes souffrent de l'absence de reconnaissance. Comme les écoles d'art et de design constituent des échappatoires dans lesquelles elles peuvent s'imposer et développer leurs personnalités, beaucoup de femmes artistes tunisiennes choisissent l'enseignement. Cette orientation représente une manière de gagner une reconnaissance institutionnelle et sociale, une possibilité de transmission du savoir et de la pensée, et ainsi un rôle autre que technique, mais, surtout, une certaine visibilité sur le marché<sup>2</sup>.

1 *Femmes d'images. Espace privé*, vol. 2, éd. par Michket Krifa, cat. exp. Tunis, musée de la Ville, Palais Kheïreddine, Tunis 2007, p. 32.

2 Annabelle Boissier, « La négociation entre art et politique. Les artistes contemporains et la bureaucratie tunisienne », dans M'hamed Oualdi, Delphine Pagès-El Karoui et Chantal Verdeil (éd.), *Les Ondes de choc des révolutions arabes*, Beyrouth 2014, p. 202.

L'impact de ces pionnières sur l'enseignement se ressent au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle. En effet, la féminisation de la transmission de l'art est devenue irrévocable. Néanmoins, cette féminisation actuelle de la transmission de l'art, fruit en partie du travail de ces pionnières, constitue-t-elle aussi une chance pour les artistes-enseignantes tunisiennes actuelles d'acquiescer davantage de visibilité ?

Cet article présente une historiographie de ces femmes tunisiennes artistes au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, et plus précisément de leur place dans l'enseignement de l'art et du design en Tunisie. Il présente aussi une réflexion sur l'impact de ces dernières sur le rôle actuel joué par les femmes dans l'enseignement et l'art dans la Tunisie post-révolutionnaire.

### **Les pionnières. Enseignantes et artistes en Tunisie : entre marginalisation et confirmation d'un statut social**

Pour qui s'intéresse à la féminisation de l'art en Tunisie au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, Safia Farhat tient une place primordiale. Elle est certes peintre, tapissière, céramiste et dessinatrice, mais elle a aussi été l'une des étudiantes à l'origine du mouvement artistique de l'École de Tunis de Pierre Boucherle vers la fin des années 1940. Ses œuvres se distinguent par des contours noirs et une omniprésence de la faune et de la flore. Une touche identitaire est aussi présente dans ses toiles et tapisseries représentant des femmes parées de khôl et de henné ou encore des hommes en jebba<sup>3</sup> (fig. 1).

Elle a par la suite enseigné à l'École des beaux-arts de Tunis dont elle fut diplômée. Ses expériences professionnelles ont fait date. En effet, elle a été en 1960 l'une des premières artistes tunisiennes à avoir réalisé l'exposition de ses travaux<sup>4</sup>. Six ans plus tard, elle a été la première directrice d'une école d'art en Tunisie, l'École des beaux-arts de Tunis, celle-là même où elle fut étudiante.

C'est aussi l'engagement de Safia Farhat pour la cause féminine dans un pays en reconstruction après l'indépendance qui fait d'elle une pionnière. Sa contribution à la réforme de l'enseignement de l'art lors de l'instauration de l'école publique gratuite est la pierre angulaire de son engagement social. Mais son parcours se distingue aussi par la fondation, en 1959, du premier magazine pour les femmes en Tunisie, *Faïza* (« celle qui réussit »). En outre son parcours féministe est aussi marqué par sa participation à la fondation de l'Association tunisienne des femmes démocrates, qui a continué à défendre le statut des femmes tunisiennes même après la révolution de 2011. Le Centre des arts vivants, qu'elle a créé avec son mari dans sa ville natale de Radès, dans la

3 Aïcha Filali, *Safia Farhat. Une biographie*, Tunis 2005, p. 17.

4 Annabelle Boissier, « L'art contemporain tunisien en révolution. Continuité et discontinuité des trajectoires face à l'événement », dans *L'Année du Maghreb* [En ligne], 16 | 2017, mis en ligne le 7 septembre 2017, URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/anneemaghreb/3120> [dernier accès : 03.12.2020].



1 Safia Farhat, *La mariée*, 1963, tapisserie, 172 × 100 cm, Centre des arts vivants de Radès

banlieue de Tunis, et qu'elle a légué à sa mort à l'État, demeure une de ses dernières empreintes laissées dans l'art tunisien.

Leïla Menchari n'a pas quant à elle été enseignante, mais son parcours international l'a rendue incontournable pour les artistes et les designers tunisiennes. Après son cursus en tant qu'étudiante à l'École des beaux-arts de Tunis, elle a entamé une carrière de décoratrice, de designer et de scénographe pendant plus de cinquante ans au sein de la maison Hermès. Ses vitrines enchanteuses ont fait sa renommée internationale et lui vaudront le surnom de « Reine Mage d'Hermès » dans les médias. Elle est une véritable icône en Tunisie. Sa carrière artistique internationale constitue ainsi un précédent, et fait d'elle un exemple positif pour de nombreuses étudiantes.

Ce courage de quitter la Tunisie dans les années 1940 encore très conservatrices a sans doute été puisé dans le soutien offert par sa mère. Leïla Menchari est en effet la fille de Habiba Menchari, féministe socialiste tunisienne qui a combattu pour l'émancipation des femmes dès les années 1920.

L'une des héritières les plus importantes de Safia Farhat est sa nièce, Aïcha Filali. Fille de l'un des premiers ministres postindépendance, Mustapha Filali, elle est enseignante et maîtresse de conférences à l'École des beaux-arts de Tunis. Aïcha Filali est spécialiste en arts plastiques et en histoire de l'art. Elle est connue en Tunisie à la fois pour ses cours, pour son encadrement d'étudiants en master et doctorat et pour ses productions artistiques. Elle a en effet été lauréate du prix Unesco de l'artisanat pour les pays arabes en 1994 et a encadré les premières thèses de design en Tunisie. Elle se démarque dans ses expositions et dans ses œuvres par une critique sociale fondée sur la dualité design/patrimoine<sup>5</sup>. Cette directrice du Centre des arts vivants, légué par son aïeule, critique la société tunisienne tout en montrant ses beautés dans le quotidien, comme avec cette œuvre issue d'un chiffon de cuisine sur lequel elle a simplement brodé : « Je l'ai acheté de Halfaouine qui m'a plu<sup>6</sup>. » (fig. 2)

Issue de la même École des beaux-arts de Tunis qu'Aïcha Filali, Sadika Keskes est une artiste souffleuse de verre. Elle enseigne sa technique et partage ses connaissances dans les facultés tunisiennes, mais aussi au cours de formations dispensées en dehors de la sphère académique. Au-delà de son engagement à promouvoir l'art du soufflage de verre, elle tente de démocratiser l'accès à la création en multipliant des initiatives pour les femmes, pour la société civile et pour la mise en valeur de l'artisanat.

Sadika Keskes est ainsi considérée comme un modèle en raison de l'équilibre trouvé entre sa carrière d'enseignante et d'artiste, mais aussi pour son engagement dans des causes essentielles en Tunisie. En effet, Sadika Keskes passera du verre soufflé au design social, surtout après la révolution. En 2011, elle lance

5 Laetitia Deloustal, *Le Nouveau Paradigme de l'art à l'épreuve de la création contemporaine féminine en Tunisie*, Perpignan 2018, p. 54.

6 Marché populaire de la médina de Tunis.



- 2 Aïcha Fileli, *Halfaouine*, 2017, broderie sur tissu, 30 × 35 cm, exposition “Parterres”, collection particulière

un mouvement intitulé « Femmes, montrez vos muscles ! », qui deviendra une association un an plus tard. Pour le mettre en œuvre, elle entame une tournée sur le territoire tunisien pour appréhender et comprendre le travail et les conditions de vie des artisans du pays. Elle constate que « 10 % de la population était constituée d’artisans dont 80 % étaient des femmes travaillant principalement dans le tissage<sup>7</sup> ». De ce fait, elle fera un premier investissement équitable à Foussana (ville au centre-est de la Tunisie), où elle achètera de la laine pour la distribuer aux artisanes et les accompagner dans le processus de création.

Feryel Lakhdar, la dernière figure de notre historiographie, incarne une nouvelle lignée d’artistes qui ont entamé leurs parcours à la fin du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Ayant suivi une formation en architecture et en arts plastiques à Paris, elle fait partie de la génération qui, grâce au départ de Leïla Menchari en France, a pu rêver d’une carrière internationale. Elle profite assurément d’un statut de femme artiste émergente. Même après être revenue s’installer à Tunis, elle a continué à exposer son travail en France, au Portugal et en Italie, ainsi qu’au Liban et aux Émirats arabes unis. C’est cette reconnaissance internationale qui lui permet de mettre en œuvre sa vision de la femme comme dans *Miss Alkitab*, une sculpture d’une femme ronde lisant installée devant une grande librairie de Tunis, et commandée par Al Kitab, l’un des plus vieux libraires privés du pays<sup>8</sup> (fig. 3).

7 Raouia Kheder, « Femme du mois : Sadika Keskes, du verre soufflé au design sociétal », dans *Femmes de Tunisie*, Tunis, mai 2021, URL : <https://femmesdetunisie.com/femme-du-mois-sadika-keskes-du-verre-souffle-au-design-societal/> [dernier accès : 05.04.2022].

8 Laetitia Deloustal, « Figurer la féminité. Narration ou revendication ? », dans *Rives méditerranéennes* [En ligne], 52 | 2016, mis en ligne le 15 mai 2018, URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/rives/4997> [dernier accès : 03.12.2020].



3 Feryel Lackdar, *Miss ALKITAB*, sculpture, 2018, 120 × 70 × 180 cm, La Marsa

C'est avec l'appui de son mari et des artistes du mouvement de l'École de Tunis que Safia Farhat a pu faire figure d'exception au cours de ce siècle en tant qu'artiste et enseignante en Tunisie. Au-delà des difficultés, ces soutiens lui assurent aussi une certaine reconnaissance après sa mort. Un même contexte familial émancipé a permis à Leïla Menchari et à Aïcha Filali de réussir leurs carrières artistiques. Plus que le contexte familial, c'est le changement sociétal et juridique après l'indépendance de 1956 qui a soutenu le parcours de ces femmes. La société tunisienne arabo-musulmane du début du xx<sup>e</sup> siècle était conservatrice : les femmes ne devaient pas travailler, elles restaient contraintes dans leurs mouvements et globalement dépendantes des décisions du système patriarcal.

En effet, les réformes entamées par Habib Bourguiba, premier président après l'indépendance du pays, portent essentiellement sur l'enseignement, la santé et la libération des femmes. Avec le Code du statut personnel promulgué en 1956, celles-ci obtiennent des libertés et des droits comme le droit de travailler, de disposer de leur argent, de divorcer, ainsi que la liberté de se déplacer. À la

même période, la priorité donnée à l'enseignement par l'État et la société offre aux enseignants un statut possédant une certaine sacralité, quel que soit leur genre.

### **L'impact des pionnières sur les enseignantes et artistes du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle**

Ces appuis contextuels et familiaux offrent une possibilité de créer et d'enseigner à ces femmes artistes et enseignantes. À leur tour ces pionnières deviennent des facilitatrices pour les générations suivantes, pour trois raisons principales. Du point de vue du statut d'abord, ces artistes ont été associées à celui d'enseignante, d'où une perception moins marginale et bohème de la fonction d'artiste dans une société qui demeure conservatrice malgré son évolution. D'autre part, la reconnaissance de ces artistes valorise l'art, l'artisanat et le patrimoine tunisien à l'international. Elles prennent aussi part à des engagements sociétaux pour les femmes, la formation et l'économie du pays. Ceci n'empêche pas une marginalisation, toujours présente quoique moins accentuée. Enfin, elles constituent des modèles pour celles qui veulent suivre une carrière d'artiste. En effet, elles ont laissé une panoplie d'exemples de parcours que les jeunes femmes peuvent reproduire, améliorer ou encore utiliser comme argument pour convaincre leur entourage de la pertinence de leur choix.

Ce statut d'enseignante représente un certain nombre d'avantages pour les artistes, puisqu'il offre une reconnaissance via un statut social et institutionnel, ainsi qu'une stabilité économique qui permet à la fois de rassurer l'entourage conservateur, mais aussi d'avoir un appui personnel pour produire les œuvres. Les ateliers et les cours deviennent une aubaine pour pouvoir transmettre du savoir, de la pensée et un style artistique. Enfin, ce statut conduit à une certaine visibilité et suscite des effets de réseau entre enseignants et étudiants, qui serviront à l'entrée de ces derniers sur le marché de l'art.

La diffusion de ces modèles est aussi mesurable en termes de chiffres. En effet, en 2020, avec cinq écoles d'art et de design sur huit dirigées par des femmes, 65 % du corps enseignant et 72 % des étudiants en arts et en design sont des femmes, selon les chiffres du ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche scientifique relatifs à la rentrée 2019/2020. Le processus de la féminisation de l'enseignement de l'art et du design en Tunisie est ainsi bien avancé.

Au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, le statut des artistes dans une société arabomusulmane encore conservatrice demeure très fragile, et la place réservée aux femmes presque inexistante. C'est grâce à l'appui d'une famille libérale que les premières artistes comme Safia Farhat et Leïla Menchari ont pu s'émanciper, devenant par la suite des modèles et des enseignantes. En outre, des femmes telles que Sadika Keskes et Aïcha Filali assurent la continuité de ce statut de femme artiste et enseignante grâce aux acquis de la génération précédente,

mais aussi grâce aux réformes postindépendance. Les nouvelles générations, incarnées par exemple par Feryel Lakhdar, jusqu'à celles aujourd'hui en formation, bénéficient donc de possibilités de carrières plus ouvertes et rendues moins épineuses par les valeurs conservatrices, en partie grâce à ce statut d'enseignante, ainsi qu'aux modèles et aux travaux des pionnières<sup>9</sup>.

Enfin, si les empreintes artistiques et stylistiques de ces femmes sont indélébiles sur la création tunisienne de leur époque et sur celle d'aujourd'hui, ce sont leurs rôles d'enseignantes, ayant le pouvoir de transmettre la connaissance, qui ont mené à une moindre marginalisation de leur statut par la société. Cependant ce statut d'enseignante possède lui aussi ses contreparties : n'empiète-t-il pas sur le temps de travail consacré à la production artistique ? D'autre part, on s'interrogera sur l'avenir de ce statut privilégié d'enseignante en Tunisie : protège-t-il aujourd'hui ces artistes, dans le contexte fragile qui fait suite à la révolution de 2011 ?

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<sup>9</sup> Rachida Triki, « Pratiques picturales des femmes en Tunisie », dans Sophie Ferchiou (éd.), *Femmes, Culture et Créativité en Tunisie*, Tunis 2001, p. 271-275, ici p. 273.

# "She became my teacher and mentor."

## Uncovering the Legacy of Women Video Pioneers in Art Schools and Academies in Europe<sup>1</sup>

Laura Leuzzi

The introduction of the portable video recorder enabled women artists of the 1970s to experiment with a medium that was considered easier and cheaper to operate than film as well as free from the heavily male-dominated imprint of traditional artistic practices. Video allowed for immediacy and intimacy, facilitating performances that featured nudity and the body.<sup>2</sup> This benefited the work of many women artists, whether those involved in feminist movements and collectives or those who were independently exploring themes and issues that had arisen from second-wave feminism.

Over the years, the contribution of women artists to the development of video as an art form has been deeply marginalized and under-researched. Particularly little, if any, investigation has been conducted on those women artists who started teaching video in the 1970s and 1980s, their impact on students, and their legacy as it survives today.<sup>3</sup> Other overlooked aspects of the

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1 I would like to thank for their help, encouragement, and contributions: Steven Ball, Ivor Davies, Kathy Deepwell, Catherine Elwes, Antonie Frank Grahamsdaughter, Oliver Grau, Chris King, Madelon Hooykaas, Federica Marangoni, Stephen Partridge, Lydia Schouten, Elaine Shemilt, Emile Shemilt, Felicity Sparrow, Anne Tallentire, Maria Vedder, Hagen Verleger, and Kathleen Wentrack. I also thank the online communities of the Video Circuits and Media Art Histories Research Facebook pages. A prior version of this chapter was awarded a prize in the essay competition "Feminist Art in an International Art Curriculum" and published on the Advance HE Connect website, in the section Resources for Feminist Art in an International Art Curriculum.

2 I conducted an initial reflection upon this theme in my research on the AHRC-funded research project "EWVA European Women's Video Art in the 70s and 80s." See Laura Leuzzi, Elaine Shemilt, and Stephen Partridge (eds.), *EWVA European Women's Video Art*, New Barnet, 2019. The author wishes to build upon this preliminary investigation in the coming months.

3 No specific study has been dedicated to the subject to date. Nonetheless, brief comments on the role of women artists who teach or direct video programs can be found in histories of video art as well as in biographies dedicated to specific artists. An example of this can be found in Jennifer Steetskamp, "Looking Back: The Roots of Video Production at the Jan van Eyck Academie," in *Jan van Eyck Video Weekend* [online], Maastricht, 2017, pp. 1-7, here pp. 4 and 5, [https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/4166820/75975\\_Looking\\_back\\_The\\_roots\\_of\\_video\\_production\\_at\\_the\\_Jan\\_van\\_Eyck\\_Academie.pdf](https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/4166820/75975_Looking_back_The_roots_of_video_production_at_the_Jan_van_Eyck_Academie.pdf) [accessed 30.11.2021].

history of the period include the challenges and obstacles that young and early career women artists encountered when they approached the medium within the remit of the art school, with very limited support and models.

This chapter will focus on these issues through an analysis of case studies from the United Kingdom and the Netherlands – two countries in which video was particularly advanced as an art form – providing an initial survey on the topic in the service of larger studies in the future. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the methodology utilized in this study has incorporated networking data from social media and mailing lists. This bottom-up approach has allowed for further knowledge to be gleaned on the topic based on empirical evidence concerning the relevance and legacy of women artists-teachers.

In several countries in the 1970s, the U.K. among them, numerous women video pioneers were enrolled as students in fine art and sculpture departments that were marked by a strong male culture and where most of the teachers and students were men.<sup>4</sup> At the time, many art schools would offer access to the video apparatus, but no training was available. Therefore, artists tended to adopt a hands-on approach, teaching themselves how to use video. They considered peer-to-peer feedback and knowledge-sharing essential, but there were few opportunities in which to receive such feedback, especially from women artists who worked with video.

Interviewed on the issue, renowned British feminist video artist and author Catherine Elwes reported a similar situation at Farnham<sup>5</sup> and, later, at the Slade School of Fine Art where, she states, “all the studios were run by men.”<sup>6</sup> Though there were very few women among the part-time tutors at the Slade, some were able to offer valuable feedback during Elwes’ first year, in which she was still making objects, before her transition to performance and then video. However, none of the women specialized in video or performance during this period when Elwes was exploring new art forms.

In our conversations, Elwes remarked in particular upon the importance of being able to show autobiographical materials to those tutors and share details of her personal experiences. Indeed, her personal life was having a major impact on her feminist practice, in adherence to the contemporary motto “the personal is political.”<sup>7</sup> In Elwes’ own recollections, the support and mentorship of the women tutors at the Slade, although limited, offered significant guidance

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4 This can be observed, for example, in several interviews collected during the EWVA project available at [www.ewva.ac.uk](http://www.ewva.ac.uk) [accessed 30.11.2021], including those with Catherine Elwes and Elaine Shemilt.

5 Later, Farnham School of Art and Guildford School of Art merged to form West Surrey College of Art and Design.

6 Elwes discussed her views and experience on the topic in the paper “The Feminist in Art School – A Re-View,” presented at *From Art School to Public Programme. A Symposium on Art Education*, DRAF, London, 6 May 2014. For the quote, cf. Laura Leuzzi, email interview with Catherine Elwes, 16 November 2020.

7 Ibid.

and reinforcement to the young artist and her female colleagues alike.<sup>8</sup>

Elwes' experience as a student at the Slade demonstrates the importance, for many feminist artists of the 1970s and 1980s, of mentorship relationships allowing for intimacy, respect, and in some capacity a sentiment of 'sisterhood.' For Elwes' practice, it was key that her tutors be aware of current feminist discourse and recognize the position of privilege that the patriarchy retained – something she believed unlikely to be acknowledged by her male tutors.<sup>9</sup>

In 1979 Elwes complained about the male-dominated culture and lack of women tutors at the Slade. In response, and in an altogether unprecedented way, British performance artist Stuart Brisley gave Elwes – still a student at the time – access to the entire budget for the visiting-lecture programme for the rest of the year. This allowed Elwes to invite as guest lecturers feminist artists such as Rose Garrard and Tina Keane, who were working with video, as well as Rose Finn-Kelcey, who was using the moving image in her practice. In a 1979 article entitled "The Feminist in Art School – A Recent View," which appeared in the first issue of *Feminist Art News*, Elwes reports that, unfortunately, the programme did not "radically alter the balance of power in the school."<sup>10</sup>

Internationally renowned British artist Elaine Shemilt recalls a similar situation at the Winchester School of Art: between 1973 and 1976, while she was a student in the Sculpture Department, there were no female instructors and just three fellow women students. In 1974 Shemilt began incorporating video into her installations and performances, and in 1975 she was selected to present at the famous *Video Show* at the Serpentine in London. In that period of her early experimentation with video, she considered the medium to be an ephemeral part of a more complex process, such that the lasting legacy of the videos would be seen as lithographic prints, etchings, and screen prints.

Like many of her generation, Shemilt points out that the department provided no training but did allow students to independently use its Sony Rover Portapak. She notes that, later on, when she became a student at the Royal College of Art (RCA), Susan Hiller came as an invited lecturer. Hiller made a profound impression on the students, and Shemilt remembers receiving some encouraging, positive feedback from her.<sup>11</sup>

While at the RCA (1976–1979), Shemilt began teaching printmaking herself. Analysing the nature of her practice – which consisted in incorporating different media, such as video and film – we can infer how it influenced deeply her teaching. On this issue, Shemilt has commented: "My approach was for students to abandon the idea that they were sculptors or painters or video artists/

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8 Ibid.

9 This aspect was discussed by Elwes at *From Art School to Public Programme. A Symposium on Art Education*, DRAF, 2014 and previously in Elwes, "The Feminist in Art School – A Recent View," in *Feminist Art News* (FAN) 1, 1979.

10 Elwes, 1979.

11 Laura Leuzzi, email interview with Elaine Shemilt, November 2020.

whatever [*sic*]. The important issue was to think of themselves as artists first and foremost. Technique is just technique at the end of the day.”<sup>12</sup> This approach, namely considering video as part of a more complex and integrated artistic practice that could encompass film, photography, performance, printmaking, painting, and sculpture, was shared by several early video pioneers in the 1970s. Maria Gloria Biccocchi – founder of the famous video production centre art/tapes/22 in Florence (1973–1976) – notes, for example, that many Italian conceptual artists came to occasionally experiment with video, not defining themselves as video artists but taking video as another medium or technique with which to develop their artistic research.<sup>13</sup>

It was only in the early 1980s that courses and programmes incorporating video art gradually developed in Europe, and on a few – but very significant – occasions, women artists took the lead in such programmes, and many were invited to teach. One of the most significant examples of this change can be found in the Netherlands, where, in 1980, the Scottish video pioneer Elsa Stansfield was invited to create the Audio/Video Department for Time Based Media – soon renamed the Time Based Arts Studio – at the Jan Van Eyck Academie in Maastricht. The Academie was structured as an ‘open workshop’ for artists who had already received professional training, granting them access to workshops in which to develop a project for a period of one to two years.

In establishing the Audio/Video Department, the Academie relied heavily on Stansfield’s international reputation and authority in the fields of video and media. Stansfield was a video artist who had pioneered the medium in the 1970s as part of the duo Hooykaas/Stansfield and had showed in international exhibitions. In 1978 she had received the first video award from the Arts Council of Great Britain at the Maidstone College of Art, in Kent, England, a prize established by British video art’s ‘godfather,’ David Hall.

Stansfield built a postgraduate programme into the department, offering a framework in which students – or “participants” as they were called – were invited to develop independent projects. As outlined in a leaflet from 1987, time-based media included: “film/performances, video tapes and installations, audio works and installations using any of these media individually or combined with any other media.”<sup>14</sup> In this brief description, it is interesting to note that the department adopted an expanded notion of time-based media, one that encompassed a range of moving-image art forms as well as performance and installation in order to pursue “their integration with Fine Arts.”<sup>15</sup>

The Audio/Video Department was intended to welcome artists who wanted to “work with these media, equally in the areas of research and production.”

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Biccocchi discusses these perspectives and approaches at length in Cosetta G. Saba and Mirco Infanti, “art/tapes/22. Conversation with Maria Gloria Biccocchi,” in Laura Leuzzi and Stephen Partridge (eds.), *REWINDItaly Early Video Art in Italy*, New Barnet, 2015, pp. 96–97.

<sup>14</sup> *Time-Based Media*, leaflet, March 1987, Madelon Hooykaas Archive, Amsterdam.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

In Stansfield's view, these media would in the future offer a breadth of opportunities for professionals and artists alike to reach new publics: "via cable, local radio/television stations and also through presentations of interdisciplinary work to not exclusively art-oriented audiences."<sup>16</sup> The department fostered production and distribution of these media, and starting in 1980 it collected participants' works in a dedicated video/audio archive.

At the Academie, one key improvement – in comparison with what had existed previously at other institutions – was in the availability of technological knowledge, namely the range of skills taught to the students. Technicians likewise offered participants high levels of assistance, enabling them to develop original solutions and to explore their intuitions in individually booked studios.

The Video/Sound Department offered a rich programme of screenings and seminars, providing participants with precious opportunities to view, discuss, and analyse pioneering work in the field – at a time when access to such work was still rare and limited. The selection of artists presented on those occasions shows a good gender balance and a great variety in the approach to the medium. As part of the programme, trips to relevant exhibitions and museums in Germany, the Netherlands (the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, for example), and Belgium were also organized.

Among these offerings were recurring guest lecturers. Thanks to her international network of artists and institutions, Stansfield was able to invite some of the most prominent video and media artists of the time from Europe and America. Renowned names include Julius, Dutch video pioneer Madelon Hooykaas, Ulrike Rosenbach, Joan Jonas, John Latham, Marina Abramović, Nan Hoover, and many others.

Moreover, Stansfield co-ordinated international gatherings at the Academie, which became occasions to invite *la crème de la crème* of the European and American video community. For example, in 1981, she organized *Maart 1981* (March 1981; fig. 1), an occasion that included video installations, single-channel videos, performances, discussions, and lectures. In a brief introduction to the event published in an accompanying leaflet, Stansfield underlined that video was still in an early phase in the Netherlands and had not yet had the chance to develop fully. This stood in contrast with nearby countries, such as the U.K. and Germany, where artists had begun experimenting with the medium in the previous decade. Stansfield explained that the situation was partly due to the complete lack of specialized departments and programmes within the country as well as to the scarcity of equipment. Video, she recalled, was usually seen "as an extension of some other department and rarely as a fine art option."<sup>17</sup> She praised the "foresight" of the Academie, which had invited her to establish a video department in 1980, the video studio opening in September of that year.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> *Maart 1981*, leaflet, March 1981, Madelon Hooykaas Archive, Amsterdam.



1 Maart 1981, 1981, poster, Jan Van Eyck Academie, Maastricht

Only six months after the inception of the department, the exhibition *Video Maart* was organized partially by its participants, who had the opportunity to show their works – the fruit of those early months in the Audio/Video Department – alongside some of the most pioneering practitioners from the U.K., Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands. The invited video artists included Lydia Schouten, Lili Dujourie, Mick Hartney, Ursula Wevers, and David Hall (fig. 2).

Those invited also gave lectures and led discussions with the aim of sharing their approaches and views on video art for the benefit of the participants. In the abovementioned context of the Netherlands, where the chance to view video art, and in particular video installations, was rare, *Video Maart* acted as a catalyst for the contemporary debate around the medium and as a key resource for the students' practice. Other renowned events organized by Stansfield – which saw the participation of several international pioneers of the medium –

"She became my teacher and mentor."



2 Photo of the participants of Maart 1981, 1981, Jan Van Eyck Academie, Maastricht, 24-28 March 1981

include a symposium at the Academie to accompany the germinal exhibition *Het Lumineuze Beeld* (The Luminous Image, 1984) at the Stedelijk.

From interviews and statements available in the Academie's promotional material, it is interesting to note that Elsa Stansfield saw her role as department head and educator as an integral part of her practice. In 1988, in her text for the exhibition *Het magnetische beeld* (The Magnetic Image), she commented: "Over the past seven years, beside the production and presentation of my own art,

which I have done in collaboration with Madelon Hooykaas; I have tried to give navigational directions to those artists at the Jan Van Eyck who have undertaken an uncharted journey across the magnetic field of the time-based media.”<sup>18</sup> Two powerful metaphors are employed in this passage: the navigational directions for her teaching style, and the journey into uncharted territories for the careers embarked upon by her students. In my view, these metaphors represent vividly Stansfield’s approach to teaching, her way of cultivating her students’ independence – very much in the spirit of the Jan Van Eyck Academie itself.

In an interview, Hooykaas touched on this matter: “Elsa Stansfield had an unusual way of tutoring the participants. She let them feel equal and often did not comment on the work but asked questions.”<sup>19</sup> Hooykaas’ words echo Stansfield’s own: her method was to guide the students to arrive at solutions on their own through a sort of Socratic process. It seems therefore that Stansfield treated students with a profound respect and consideration as professionals-in-training and promoted a non-hierarchical approach by regarding them as peers. In 1991 Stansfield left the Academie, and in 1992 it was reorganized into three departments – Fine Art, Design, and Theory.<sup>20</sup>

The work of Elsa Stansfield seems to have left a significant impression and legacy on the video artists who attended the Academie in the 1980s. For example, the Swedish video artist Antonie Frank Grahamsdaughter recalled the favourable gender balance and the attention paid to women video artists in that context. In particular, she commented that “Elsa Stansfield was aware in a way I had not encountered before, of lifting and supporting female students.” Moreover, she noted, “I felt that it was important as inspiration and identification to have a female teacher,”<sup>21</sup> elaborating on this as follows:

It was absolutely crucial that I was assigned a place and was admitted to the Time-Based Art Program at Jan Van Eyck Academie [...]. Elsa Stansfield had deliberately created a generous significant platform with a strong female influence. I think the new medium meant a lot to me and to be able to shape my stories but also the female identification and inspiration based on the fact that my teachers were women and worked with video art, the female language, the female narrative and the gaze. I felt that we started from the same experiences as women in our stories, in our portrayals.<sup>22</sup>

From these quotes, we observe the central role played by Stansfield in the young Grahamsdaughter’s artistic development and training and can infer her

<sup>18</sup> *Het magnetische beeld*, leaflet, 1988, Madelon Hooykaas Archive, Amsterdam.

<sup>19</sup> Madelon Hooykaas, personal communication, email, 23 November 2020.

<sup>20</sup> See Steetskamp, 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Laura Leuzzi, email interview with Antonie Frank Grahamsdaughter, 24 November 2020.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

wider impact upon the generation of women video artists who attended the Academie in the 1980s. Stansfield not only stood as a significant role model herself – as an accomplished, internationally renowned artist – but also promoted and encouraged young women artists by creating a programme that inspired and supported them with a feminist perspective and that was open to contemporary approaches.

Stansfield's work was particularly influential for Grahamsdaughter: referring to Hooykaas/Stansfield's famous installation *Compass* (1984), she spoke of this inspiration in terms of how video could be used in relation to space. This aspect can be observed, for example, in Grahamsdaughter's installation *Transit* (1986). Moreover, she recalls the positive impact upon her practice of the established female artists and role models to whom Stansfield gave her access through the guest lectures at the Academie: "I still carry with me many of these experiences such as the workshop with Elsa Stansfield & Madelon Hooykaas's workshop, and with Marina Abramović."<sup>23</sup>

Later, Grahamsdaughter became a teacher at the University of Arts, Crafts, and Design in Stockholm, where she organized the first International Video Art screening. As part of her teaching approach, she found it important to introduce her students to video artworks by women pioneers, following the path outlined by her mentor Stansfield. Some years after being a student at the Academie herself, Grahamsdaughter visited the school with her own students and reconnected with her teacher.

Among the contributors to the Academie's programme, it is notable that Lydia Schouten, who had participated in the *Maart 1981* programme, later undertook a career as a teacher, starting at the ArtEZ University of the Arts in Arnhem, the Netherlands, in 1988.<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, Schouten comments that her approach to teaching was characterized by showing her students different ways of working with video. This reflected the way in which several women pioneers had used video in the 1970s and 1980s as part of performances and installations: often this was a single, ephemeral element of a larger and more complex work.<sup>25</sup> Schouten had experienced this first-hand, in engagement, for example, with the American video pioneer Joan Jonas and the German performance, installation, and video artist Ulrike Rosenbach, both of whom Schouten had seen at De Appel, and with the American composer and performer Laurie Anderson, who performed at MIXAGE, an international festival of performance, expanded cinema, and installation held in Rotterdam, Utrecht, and Breda, the Netherlands, which Schouten co-organized with Gea Kalksma and Rob Baard in 1980.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Laura Leuzzi, email interview with Lydia Schouten, 26 November 2020.

<sup>25</sup> Laura Leuzzi, "Embracing the Ephemeral: Lost and Recovered Video Artworks by Elaine Shemilt from the 70s and 80s," in *Arabeschi. Rivista internazionale di studi su letteratura e visualità* 7, 2016, <http://www.arabeschi.it/embracing-the-ephemeral-lost-and-recovered-video-artworks-by-elaine-shemilt-from-70s-80s/> [accessed 28.11. 2021].

Even this brief analysis of the selected case studies makes clear the importance of the under-researched contributions made by women pioneers to the development of video as an art form, specifically in their capacities as educators and initiators of educational programmes. In particular, some recurrent elements were outlined: the relevance of having empowering role models and mentors for women students, including being encouraged by women teachers to explore the new medium from and with a feminist perspective; an ‘expanded’ approach to video art as an art form encompassing single-channel video, performance, and installation; the ease with which women students could share with women teachers their personal experiences, in line with the motto “the personal is political,” which was at the centre of many feminist artworks; and a feminist approach to treating students as equals and peers.

From an initial survey, it appears that there are many other key examples of women pioneers in video art who made significant contributions to teaching in this field, such as British artist Tamara Krikorian, who taught at Maidstone and Newcastle, and German artist Maria Vedder, who taught electronic media at the University of Cologne from 1979 to 1989.<sup>26</sup> Another aspect that has been particularly marginalized is the work of women pioneers in the inception and development of video- and media-art programmes in Europe. One example of this is Italian video artist Federica Marangoni, who put Angiola Churchill from New York University in contact with the Centro Video Arte in Ferrara in order to create video studios for American students in Italy. Marangoni – a video artist herself – taught glass and fine arts in the programme for many years.<sup>27</sup> The author of the present essay believes that future research can shed further light on these activities, fully retracing and reassessing these materials, in order to inform our understanding of the histories of video art and related pedagogies.

In 2017 artist and researcher Hagen Verleger developed a collaborative art and research project with the aim of problematizing issues of gender representation and gender equity in institutions. With a feminist approach, he developed a programme across the Jan Van Eyck Academie, which he renamed the Margaret Van Eyck Academie. The studios, all of which had been named for men, were newly designated: Anne, Elsa, Luzia, Thérèse, and Wilhelmina. The names were retained until April 2020.<sup>28</sup> Hagen thus created, even if only for the duration of the project, a parallel world.

<sup>26</sup> Maria Vedder, *All the Time in the World*, Berlin, 2020.

<sup>27</sup> Federica Marangoni, personal communication, email, 26 November 2020.

<sup>28</sup> Hagen Verleger (ed.), *Margaret van Eyck—Renaming an Institution, a Case Study*, ## vol., vol. 1: Research, Interventions, and Effects, New York, 2018.

## II - The Artist as Pedagogue



# Teacher as Student: Sophie Taeuber in Zurich, 1915–1920

Talia Kwartler

In order to better understand women artists of the twentieth-century avant-garde, we must look at them not merely in the context of standard narratives of art history but also in relationship to the different cultures within which they were living, collaborating, and making art. As an artist based in Zurich working as an art teacher, a dancer, and a Dadaist, Sophie Taeuber is a prime individual to study through this approach.<sup>1</sup> In this essay, I explore the relationship between Taeuber's pedagogical work in the Applied Arts Department of Zurich's Trade School, Rudolf von Laban's dance pedagogy at his School of the Art of Movement, and the evolving Dada circle in Zurich. Taeuber was one of a number of women artists active in the twentieth century who worked concurrently as teachers, from Anni Albers to Faith Ringgold to Amy Sillman. With the substantive body of research presented in the major retrospective *Sophie Taeuber-Arp: Living Abstraction* (2021–2022), now is a particularly rich moment to reconsider these interwoven aspects of Taeuber's art.<sup>2</sup> Vividly tracing Taeuber's abstraction across media, the exhibition made clear that both her production and her teaching in the applied arts were central to her artistic practice.

I expand on this connection by focusing attention on how Taeuber's work as a teacher of the applied arts, as a student of dance, and as a practicing visual artist speaks to the multiple circles in Zurich within which she operated between 1915 and 1920. While engaged with the Laban School simultaneously as a student and a performer, Taeuber was also active as a teacher at another institution. In recent scholarship, studies have more often examined Taeuber's engagement with dance than her pedagogical work. This includes Nell Andrew's chapter on Taeuber's dance practice in her *Moving Modernism: The Urge to Abstraction in Painting, Dance, Cinema* (2020). Andrew expanded on how Christine Macel and

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1 I refer to Sophie Taeuber deliberately by her family name, rather than as Sophie Taeuber-Arp. As she did not marry her husband Jean Arp until October 1922, this is how she would have been known during the period in question.

2 The exhibition was shown at the Kunstmuseum Basel (20 March–20 June 2021), Tate Modern (15 July–17 October 2021), and the Museum of Modern Art (21 November–12 March 2022). The accompanying publications include *Sophie Taeuber-Arp: Living Abstraction*, Anne Umland and Walburga Krupp with Charlotte Healy (eds.), exh. cat., New York, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2021; a German-language edition of that catalogue, *Sophie Taeuber-Arp: Gelebte Abstraktion*, Anne Umland and Eva Reifert (eds.), exh. cat., Basel, Kunstmuseum Basel, Munich, 2021; and *Sophie Taeuber-Arp*, Medea Hoch, Bettina Kaufmann, and Natalia Sidlina (eds.), London, 2021.

Emma Lavigne contextualized Taeuber in the exhibition *Danser sa vie* (Dance Your Life; 2011), which shone a spotlight on dance as a medium for the avant-garde.<sup>3</sup> There still remains much to be addressed regarding the interrelationship between Taeuber's dance and pedagogical practice, and this has been made easier by new materials presented in *Sophie Taeuber-Arp: Living Abstraction*.<sup>4</sup>

While involved with the Laban School, Taeuber was both a practitioner of the applied arts and a member of the burgeoning avant-garde. However, her colleagues at Zurich's Trade School so disapproved of her collaborations with the Dadaists that she opted to use a pseudonym when she danced.<sup>5</sup> The Dada circle in Zurich centred around the Cabaret Voltaire, a performance venue founded in February 1916 by Hugo Ball and Emmy Hennings, and later around the Galerie Dada, which opened in 1917. It was at the Cabaret Voltaire that Taeuber first performed with the Dadaists, including Jean Arp, whom she would marry in 1922, Tristan Tzara, and Marcel Janco. Between 1918 and 1919, Francis Picabia and Gabrielle Buffet, his wife, were also based in Switzerland, and they travelled to Zurich in early 1919.<sup>6</sup> Buffet would later write an important essay on Taeuber's work.<sup>7</sup> Although the anarchic and irreverent activities of Dada in Zurich would seem at odds with a pedagogical practice, Taeuber found a distinct way to merge them through her art.

### Sophie Taeuber as Student

Sophie Taeuber first attended Rudolf von Laban's School of the Art of Movement in Zurich in the summer of 1915. There, she would meet the dancers Mary Wigman, Katja Wulff, Suzanne Perrottet, and Maja Chruszcz.<sup>8</sup> All of them later performed together at either the Cabaret Voltaire or the Galerie Dada.

3 See Nell Andrew, *Moving Modernism: The Urge to Abstraction in Painting, Dance, Cinema*, Oxford, 2020; this chapter was published earlier as Nell Andrew, "Dada Dance: Sophie Taeuber's Visceral Abstraction," *Art Journal* 73/1, 2014, pp. 12–29. Also see Christine Macel and Emma Lavigne, *Danser sa vie: Art et danse de 1900 à nos jours*, Paris, 2011; Mark Franko, "The Choreographic Imaginary: Between Expressionist Dance and Visual Abstraction," in *Sophie Taeuber-Arp*, New York, 2021 (note 2), pp. 92–94; Flora L. Brandl, "On a Curious Chance Resemblance: Rudolf von Laban's Kinetography and the Geometric Abstractions of Sophie Taeuber-Arp," *Arts* 9/1, 2020, p. 15; and Jill Fell, "Zurich Dada Dance Performance and the Role of Sophie Taeuber," in Elza Adamowicz and Eric Robertson (eds.), *Dada and Beyond*, vol. 2: Dada and Its Legacies, Amsterdam and New York, 2012, pp. 17–32.

4 See Walburga Krupp, "Beautiful, Perfect Things: Sophie Taeuber-Arp's Early Applied-Arts Career," in *Sophie Taeuber-Arp*, New York, 2021 (note 2), pp. 30–33.

5 Naima Prevots, "Zurich Dada and Dance: Formative Ferment," *Dance Research Journal* 17/1, 1985, p. 4.

6 Rachel Silveri, "Pharamousse, Funny Guy, Picabia the Loser: The Life of Francis Picabia," in *Francis Picabia: Our Heads Are Round so Our Thoughts Can Change Direction*, Anne Umland and Cathérine Hug (eds.), exh. cat., New York, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2021, p. 318.

7 See Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, "Sophie Taeuber-Arp" (1948), in *Rencontres avec Picabia, Apollinaire, Cravan, Duchamp, Arp, Calder*, Paris, 1977, pp. 123–128,

8 Laura Braverman and Walburga Krupp, "Chronology," in *Sophie Taeuber-Arp*, New York, 2021 (note 2), p. 305.

Taeuber explored Laban's technique in greater depth in 1917 at the artist commune Monte Verità in Ascona with a group of dancers that included Wigman and Perrottet. Earlier that year, Taeuber had led an evening programme organized by the Laban School at Zurich's Kaufleuten Hall.<sup>9</sup> Buffet would later describe how Taeuber "attended Laban's expressionist dance school, of which she was one of the best students, and discovered a sense of rhythm as real in time as in space."<sup>10</sup> Laban's methodology focused on the idea that dancers could heighten their physical sensitivity through movement, emphasizing the power of the body within choreographed forms. Through bodily sensation and improvisation, Laban encouraged dancers to reconfigure movements and dance patterns to achieve their own "dance sense."<sup>11</sup>

A photograph of a masked dancer (fig. 1) performing in an elaborate costume has come to occupy a central place within the Dadaist origin myth. Many scholars have characterized this snapshot by an unknown photographer as one that captures Taeuber dancing. The date (whether 1916 or 1917), location (whether the Cabaret Voltaire or the Galerie Dada), and even the designer of the costume (whether Jean (Hans) Arp or Marcel Janco) are all contested.<sup>12</sup> What is relevant here regarding these uncertain circumstances is that they are a reminder of the lack of clarity that the historical record offers about Taeuber's work as a dancer. As Mark Franko has written: "Historians of dance face an impossible task in assessing Sophie Taeuber-Arp's activities as a dancer and choreographer in the 1910s on the basis of visual documentation alone."<sup>13</sup> The archival record offers this one unidentified photograph, likely from the Galerie Dada in 1917, along with an evocative anecdote from Hugo Ball. Writing of Taeuber's dance titled the "Song of Flying Fish and Seahorses," which she

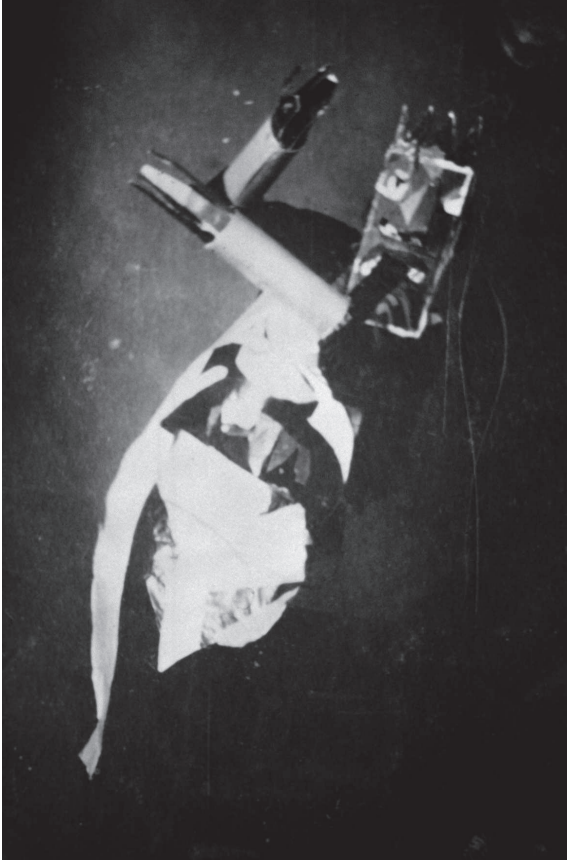
9 Ibid., p. 306.

10 Buffet-Picabia, 1977 (note 7), p. 125. Original French: "Elle suit l'école de danse expressionniste de Laban, dont elle est l'une des meilleures élèves, et se découvre un sens du rythme aussi réel dans le temps que dans l'espace" [author's trans.].

11 Rudolf Laban [1920], quoted in Sarah Burkhalter, "Kachinas and Kinesthesia: Dance in the art of Sophie Taeuber-Arp," in *Sophie Taeuber-Arp: Today Is Tomorrow*, Thomas Schmutz and Friedrich Meschede (eds.), exh. cat., Aarau, Aargauer Kunsthaus, Zurich, 2014, p. 227.

12 There are multiple viewpoints to this history. Naima Prevots described the photograph as Sophie Taeuber dancing in a costume by Jean Arp in Zurich, 29 March 1917, Prevots, 1985 (note 5), p. 4. In contrast, Hal Foster proposed that the image captures Sophie Taeuber performing in a mask by Marcel Janco at the Cabaret Voltaire in 1916; see "Dada Mime," *October* 105, 2003, p. 170. Macel and Lavigne publish the same details in Macel and Lavigne, 2011 (note 3), p. 308. Fell also characterizes the photograph as documenting Sophie Taeuber at the Cabaret Voltaire in 1916, Fell, 2012 (note 3), p. 21. Returning to Prevots's identification, Walburga Krupp discusses the photograph as a performance at the Galerie Dada on 29 March 1917, in a costume and mask by Jean Arp; see "'Real Indians': Sophie Taeuber-Arp's early work with regard to foreign cultures. Following the trail," in *Dada Africa: Dialogue with the Other*, Ralf Burmeister, Michael Oberhofer, and Esther Tisa Francini (eds.), exh. cat., Zurich, 2016, p. 52. Andrew affirmed Prevots's and Krupp's readings and explores the complexity of the photograph in Andrew, 2020 (note 3), pp. 81–82. Mark Franko most recently wrote of the photograph as pertaining to a performance at the Galerie Dada, reproduced with an image caption that is appropriately circumspect: "Figure thought to be Sophie Taeuber dancing at the opening of the Galerie Dada, Zurich, 1917," Franko, 2021 (note 3), p. 92.

13 Franko, 2021 (note 3), p. 92.



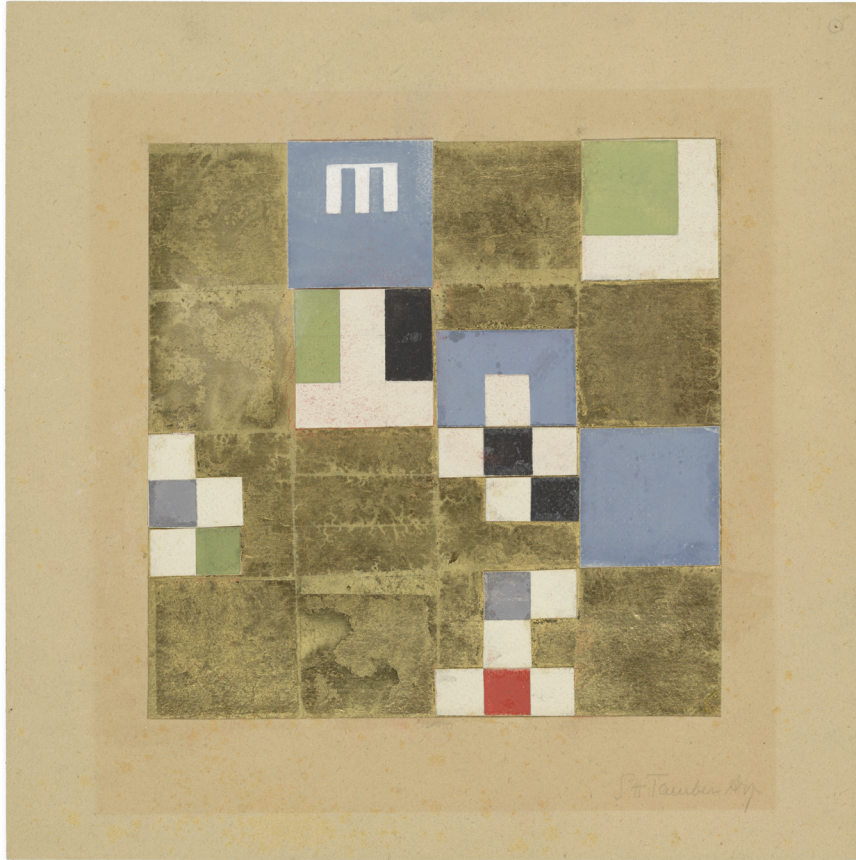
- 1 Unknown photographer, photograph of a dancer thought to be Sophie Taeuber at the Galerie Dada, Zurich, 1917, Berlin/Rolandswerth, Stiftung Arp e.V.

performed at the Galerie Dada in 1917, Ball describes “a dance full of points and fish bones, full of flickering sunshine and glare and a piercing acuity. The lines shatter on her body. Every gesture is subdivided a hundred times, sharp, bright, pointed.”<sup>14</sup> Ball’s account creates a parallel to how Taeuber’s geometries operate in her contemporaneous artworks, such as *Composition verticale-horizontale à éléments d’objets* (Vertical-Horizontal Composition with Elements of Objects; 1919/1938) (fig. 2), with its squares of paint and cut-out paper that dance across a pictorial plane of shimmering gold leaf. It was through dance that Taeuber learned how to translate and interpret corporeal forms into abstractions.

Notably, Taeuber was the only woman Dadaist who was also working as a teacher. Even so, there has not been substantive research on her pedagogy in the Applied Arts Department of Zurich’s Trade School. Beginning in May 1916, Taeuber taught design and embroidery in the department, instructing students in how to work with media that were central to her own development of abstract

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<sup>14</sup> Hugo Ball [1917] quoted in Burkhalter, 2014 (note 11), pp. 228-229.



- 2 Sophie Taeuber, *Composition vertical-horizontale à éléments d'objets* (Vertical-Horizontal Composition with Elements of Objects), 1919/1938, gouache and pencil on cut-and-pasted paper on gold leaf on board, 30 × 30 cm, Berlin/Rolandswerth, Stiftung Arp e. V.

forms. She would teach these disciplines in the Applied Arts Department until March 1929.<sup>15</sup> Although there are records of Taeuber's teaching, the archival documents related specifically to her work during the years of Dada in Zurich are insubstantial. This absence makes it all the more necessary to consider the centrality of both dance and textile arts to Taeuber's Dadaist production. She used woven textiles and beaded embroideries to push her visual subjects toward abstraction and brought the languages of dance and the applied arts into the realm of fine art. While Taeuber was working as a teacher, she was using the exact same media to inform her artwork that was shown in more avant-garde contexts.

<sup>15</sup> Braverman and Krupp, 2021 (note 8), pp. 305, 308.

## Sophie Taeuber as Teacher

An archived timetable for the Applied Arts Department shows that Taeuber taught collaboratively alongside a number of other teachers, including Alice Frey-Amsler and Berta Bär. Taeuber's students produced a range of embroideries, beadworks, and objects, from a cloth bordered in flora and fauna to an ornately beaded box to designs on lace to ornamental trim for fabric.<sup>16</sup> During the same period, in more public contexts, Taeuber exhibited her own work in these same media. In November 1918, for example, she showed with the artists' association *Das Neue Leben* (The New Life) at the Kunsthalle Basel alongside an international group of avant-garde artists, in a presentation that rejected hierarchies between disciplines and media.<sup>17</sup> Taeuber collaborated again with this association in January 1919 and January 1920, showing a group of artworks that included a beaded necklace and embroidered pillows.<sup>18</sup> Taeuber's art demonstrates a clear relationship to works by her students, as can be seen in beaded purses by Lucie Turel-Welti.<sup>19</sup> Although research remains to be done on the dialogue between Taeuber and her students, one aspect of this pedagogical interplay is of particular relevance here: the relationship between her simultaneous work as a teacher and a student and how this shaped her approach to her materials. Taeuber's abstract forms interact fluidly within her compositions, a lesson she would have absorbed as a student of dance and brought to her work in the applied arts.

After her Dada period, Taeuber published two pedagogical texts in German. The first, which translates in English as "Remarks on Instruction in Ornamental Design," was published in December 1922 in a teachers' association journal.<sup>20</sup> Taeuber wrote: "Always distinguish between the essential and the inessential. The object and its purpose are a primary thing. Give this object a simple and functional form. Ornament must in every case be subordinate to form. Try [...] to comprehend the nature of the material."<sup>21</sup> Taeuber's second pedagogical text, published in 1927, was a drawing manual for female textile students and teachers, which she co-authored with Blanche Gauchat, a colleague in the Applied Arts Department. Diagrammatic didactic exercises accompanied

16 The "eMuseum" of the Museum für Gestaltung Zürich (Museum of Design Zurich), Archives of the Zurich University of the Arts, contains a number of interesting examples of works by Taeuber's students, which can be found under the search term "Taeuber," <https://www.emuseum.ch/search/taeuber/objects/images?page=1> [accessed 14.07.2021]. I am grateful to Laura Braverman for drawing my attention to this important digital resource.

17 Braverman and Krupp, 2021 (note 8), p. 306.

18 Ibid.

19 These works by Lucie Turel-Welti can be viewed in the "eMuseum" of the Museum für Gestaltung Zürich (note 16).

20 Braverman and Krupp, 2021 (note 8), p. 307.

21 Sophie Taeuber-Arp, "Remarks on Instruction in Ornamental Design" (1922), trans. John Gabriel, in *Sophie Taeuber-Arp: Avant-Garde Pathways*, Estrella de Diego (ed.), exh. cat., Málaga, Museo Picasso Málaga, 2009, p. 163.



- 3 Sophie Taeuber and Blanche Gauchat, *Zeichnen für textile Berufe (Dessin pour les métiers textiles)*, 1928, Zurich, Schul- und Büromaterialverwaltung der Stadt Zürich, Archives of the Zurich University of the Arts

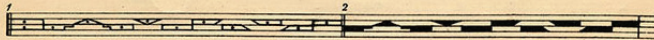
by various written descriptions (fig. 3) were “intended [...] as suggestions for further work [...] [to] increase students’ expressive abilities in form and colour, as different as their innate talents may be.”<sup>22</sup> Although these writings are outside the chronological scope of this essay, they are important to consider in relationship to contemporaneous pedagogical writings and dance diagrams by Taeuber’s own teacher, Laban.

Taeuber’s body of work stands as an especially important point of connection between Laban and the Zurich Dadaists. Although Taeuber was studying at the Laban School of Movement, her body of work begs the question: Who was really teaching whom? Weaving these threads together, we can better explore Taeuber’s engagement with pedagogy across media. Doing so allows for a clearer understanding of how her different identities as an artist, a teacher, and a student all contributed to her singular vision of Dada. Naima Prevots has

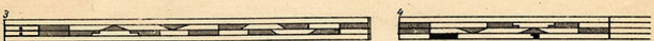
22 Sophie Taeuber-Arp and Blanche Gauchat, “Guidelines for Drawing Instructions in the Textile Professions” (1927), trans. John Gabriel, in *Sophie Taeuber-Arp*, Málaga, 2009, p. 170. The original text, *Zeichnen für textile berufe (Dessin pour les métiers textiles)* (Zürich: Schul- und Bureaumaterialverwaltung der Stadt Zürich, 1928), is preserved in the Archives of the Zurich University of the Arts.

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# ORTHOGRAPHIE




1. Die gewöhnliche Übertragung nach vor, seit-links, rück, seit-rechts, am Platz, links-schräg-vor, rechts-schräg-vor, links-schräg-rück, rechts-schräg-rück, am Platz.  
2. Tiefe Übertragungen (leicht gebeugte Knie).



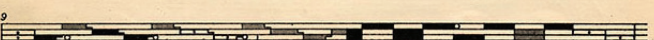
3. Hohe Übertragungen (auf Zehenspitzen).  
4. Auf beiden Fußspitzen stehen. Gewicht auf das linke Bein übertragen und hohe Übertragungen.



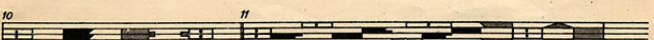
5. Übertragung über tief nach hoch, links-schräg-vor, rechts-schräg-vor, heranziehen. Pause. Übertragung über hoch nach tief, rechts-rück, links-rück, vor mit Wechsel zwischen hoch und tief.  
6. Die halbe Übertragung (Gewicht auf beiden Beinen). — Das Gewicht bleibt auf dem rechten Bein — (Pause) — wird aber zur Hälfte auf das linke in der Schrittrichtung übertragen. — Die halbe Übertragung kann natürlich auch tief oder hoch sein.



7. Bein-Geste und Übertragung getrennt durch Pause. — Zeitunterschiede: lange Geste ( $1\frac{1}{2}$ ), kurze Übertragung ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ), kurze Geste (1), lange Übertragung (2).  
8. Kraftunterschiede. — Im Bogen geführte Geste.



9. Übertragung mit Unterbrechung (Sprung). Beide Beine in der Luft. Übertragungen tief, mittel, hoch. Dann mit beiden Füßen abspringen (vom Boden), mit beiden Füßen auf- (auf den Boden) und wieder abspringen, mit dem rechten Bein auf- und abspringen, tief; mit beiden auf- und abspringen, hoch; links mittel aufspringen, rechts heranziehen.



10. Unbetonte Gesten im Sprung können weggelassen werden. — Mit beiden Beinen links-schräg-vor-tief springen, mit beiden nach vor-hoch, nach rück-mittel.  
11. Sprung mit Geste (betont) des Schwebebeins zur Mitte auf das rechte Bein tief. Sprung aufs rechte Bein tief-vor, linkes Bein tief heranziehen; Sprung mit Geste beider Beine links-rück-hoch, mittel aufspringen; Geste beider Beine seit-hoch, hoch aufspringen.

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4 Rudolf von Laban, excerpt from *Schrifttanz* (Script-Dancing), 1928 Vienna, Universal Edition

argued that Taeuber “brought to the dance classes her own comparable artistic search for basic forms and structures.”<sup>23</sup> Even though Laban never performed with the Dadaists, he is known to have been a regular visitor to the Cabaret Voltaire.<sup>24</sup> He developed an abstract language for dance that he documented in his diagrammatic system known as “Labanotation.” While Laban was

<sup>23</sup> Prevots, 1985 (note 5), p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Trevor Stark, *Total Expansion of the Letter: Avant-Garde Art and Language after Mallarmé*, Cambridge, Mass., 2020, p. 221.

developing this system in Zurich, Taeuber was expanding her own vision of abstraction across a variety of media.

Given the lack of archival records addressing the pedagogical relationship between Taeuber and Laban, we can take their writings as their own kind of evidence. Notably, Laban only published his first book, *Die Welt des Tänzers* (The World of the Dancer; Stuttgart, 1920), after his exposure to the Cabaret Voltaire and the Galerie Dada. Prevots has argued that in the absence of concrete documentation regarding Laban's involvement with the Dadaists, this chronology emphasizes the importance of Dada to the development of his ideas.<sup>25</sup> It was only later in the 1920s, after Laban had returned to his native Germany from Switzerland, that he published his theories and diagrammatic systems for teaching dance. He included various diagrammatic illustrations in *Choreographie* (Choreography; Jena, 1926), among them a schematic rendering of a dancer's limbs shifting between numbered points indicating directional movements. The year after Taeuber and Gauchat published their manual of drawing instruction, Laban presented a more substantial corpus of dance diagrams, including those in *Schrifttanz* (Script-Dancing; Vienna, 1928) (fig. 4). These dance notations – published ten years after the heyday of Dada in Zurich – can be read as a response to the relationships between forms within Taeuber's abstractions.

The similarity between Taeuber's and Laban's teaching diagrams reveals the connection between their pedagogies across media. And this overlap emphasizes that the teaching – particularly regarding the language and nature of abstraction – was clearly flowing in both directions. Buffet later wrote about how dance was one of the most all-encompassing means by which Taeuber arrived at abstraction. For Buffet, Taeuber's art existed in “a mysterious domain, of the same order, that we perceive without being able to express it and where there is maybe the only real *raison d'être*, the key to the mystery of any artistic invention.”<sup>26</sup> That ability to perceive and see without knowing the formula came as much from Taeuber's intuitive understanding of the interwoven iteration of textile patterns as from her own “dance sense.” In Taeuber's work, there is a clear fluidity across media and artistic identities, as she engaged simultaneously as a teacher, a dancer, and an avant-garde artist during the years of Dada in Zurich. Taeuber's pedagogical work reveals the connections between the realms of fine art, the applied arts, and the performing arts in her larger body of work. Of course, it also provided Taeuber and her partner Jean Arp with something more utilitarian: a consistent income that allowed them to pursue their audacious artistic endeavours.

<sup>25</sup> Prevots, 1985 (note 5), p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Buffet-Picabia, Paris, 1977 (note 7), pp. 128–129. Original French: “un domaine mystérieux, du même ordre, que nous percevons sans pouvoir le formuler et où se trouve peut-être la seule réelle raison d'être, la clef du mystère de toute invention artistique” [author's trans.].

*I would like to thank Anne Umland, the Blanchette Hooker Rockefeller Senior Curator of Painting and Sculpture, and Laura Braverman, former Curatorial Assistant, both of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, for their support and encouragement of my research. I also extend my thanks to Jana Teuscher, Curator, Stifting Arp e.V., and Rolf Wolfensberg, Archivist, Zurich University of the Arts, for sharing images as well as helpful insights.*

# Gego's Teaching Practice between Geometrical Rigor and Experimentation

Natalia Sassu Suarez Ferri

The German-born Gertrud Goldschmidt, known as Gego (1912–1994), is recognized as one of Venezuela's key modernist artists. Upon the emergence of Venezuelan democracy in the late 1950s, Gego's sculptures contributed to the country's modernist turn and search for a national identity.<sup>1</sup> Her focus on geometry and her experimental attitude were not exclusive to her art; they were equally at the core of her pedagogical aims. Gego's engagement with teaching is often mentioned but has rarely been explored in the literature. This paper considers the ways in which Gego's teaching methods help us understand her role in promoting a new modernism in Venezuela at the intersections of art and science, modernism and postmodernism, Europe and Latin America.

Gego was a teacher for nearly twenty years, from 1958 to 1977, and across different disciplines, including design, sculpture, and watercolour. Her own education, however, had been in architecture and engineering. She graduated from the University of Stuttgart in 1938, just one year before leaving Germany, at a time when university programmes were increasingly affected by Nazi interventions. As a Jewish woman, she departed Germany mainly due to antisemitism, and her arrival in Venezuela in 1939 was not by choice: it was the first country to welcome her after a series of failed visa requests. While in the 1940s she focused on design and architecture, in the early 1950s she started experimenting with figurative art, mainly on bidimensional supports. Her focus on three-dimensional forms began in 1956, and her first teaching position as Professor of Sculpture at the Escuela de Artes Aplicadas Cristóbal Rojas in Caracas was prompted by the kinetic artist Alejandro Otero only two years later (1958–1959). During the same period, Gego was also Professor of Watercolour and Gouache for the Basic Art Course of the Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo at Universidad Central de Venezuela (UCV).

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1 The rise of modernism in the context of emerging democracies and newly independent countries after colonialism is a known narrative in Latin American art and a complex process that encapsulates the diversity and multiplicity of cultures and expressions of the continent. For a comprehensive, continental overview of the key modernist expressions in Latin America, see *Inverted Utopias. Avant-Garde Art in Latin America*, Mari Carmen Ramírez and Hector Olea (eds.), exh. cat., Houston, Museum of Fine Arts, New Haven/London, 2004. For the Venezuelan context specifically, see *Alfredo Boulton and His Contemporaries: Critical Dialogues in Venezuelan Art 1912–1974*, Ariel Jiménez (ed.), New York, 2008.

Gego's most significant classes, however, were aimed at architects and designers. Between 1960 and 1967, she taught the Basic Composition I and II courses in the School of Architecture at UCV.<sup>2</sup> Between 1964 and 1977, Gego taught Modelling and Three-Dimensional Forms, Two-Dimensional Forms, and Spatial Relations at the Neumann Design Institute in Caracas.<sup>3</sup> It is on this last position, and specifically the Spatial Relations course (1971-1977), that this essay focuses. While Gego had been extremely limited by the methodologies of the university, at the design institute she had the freedom to create her own curriculum.<sup>4</sup>

The rigor and rationality that we see in Gego's art are also reflected in her systematic record keeping of her teaching processes, now preserved in the Documentation Centre of Fundación Gego in Caracas. Thanks to her approach, we know the aims of her courses, her proposed learning outcomes, and even specific exercises that she asked students to undertake in her classes. Here, Gego's teaching methods will be analysed through the eyes of four of her students, based on the following sources. Curator Ruth Auerbach discussed Gego's teaching methods in a text published in 2003.<sup>5</sup> Designers Leonel Vera and Pedro Mancilla published Gego's teaching materials in *Space, Volume, Organisation* (1976), which they co-wrote with her.<sup>6</sup> Finally, an analysis of Eugenio Espinoza's formal choices clarifies the impact of Gego's tutelage on Venezuelan contemporary art.<sup>7</sup> These four students were enrolled in Gego's Spatial Relations course at the Neumann Institute, the first design institute in Venezuela and the third in Latin America, after the Di Tella Institute in Buenos Aires and the Design Institute of Rio de Janeiro. Gego was one of its co-founders, consequently playing a crucial role in providing access to education for graphic designers in Venezuela.

It is important to note the exceptionality of Gego's teaching experience in a broader discussion of gender and transmission. She was employed as an instructor in sculpture only two years after she had first approached sculpture herself, and she went on to co-found the Neumann Institute, where she then taught.

2 *Gego: Obra Completa, 1955-1990*, Museo de Bellas Artes and Fundación Cisneros (eds.), exh. cat. Caracas, Fundación Cisneros, Caracas, 2003, p. 361. For detail on the Basic Composition courses, see Ruth Auerbach, "Gego, Constructing a Didactics," in exh. cat., Caracas, 2003, p. 409.

3 Exh. cat., Caracas, 2003 (note 2), p. 416.

4 Auerbach, 2003 (note 2), p. 410.

5 Ibid. (note 2), pp. 406-412.

6 Gego, Leonel Vera, and Pedro Mancilla, *Espaciovolumenorganización*, Caracas, 1976. Leonel Vera and George Dunia, both students in Gego's Spatial Relations seminar, realized a digital version of this publication in November 2016 (available at [https://issuu.com/mobius.george/docs/1\\_espacio\\_01](https://issuu.com/mobius.george/docs/1_espacio_01) [accessed 05.04.2022]). While this book was co-written with Gego, Vera and Mancilla then wrote a second volume with fellow student Ruth Auerbach, in which they took Gego's teaching as a starting point for their own exercises on geometry. The book was authored by them but supervised by Gego: Leonel Vera, Pedro Mancilla, and Ruth Auerbach, *Espaciovolumenorganización 2*, Caracas, 1979 (available at <https://issuu.com/mobius.george/docs/espaciovolumenorganizacion2> [accessed 05.04.2022]).

7 Espinoza acknowledges the impact of Gego's teaching in the video interview: <https://fundaciongego.com/en/eugenio-espinoza/> [accessed 05.04.2022].

We must therefore see her case as extremely rare and privileged in its lack of entanglement with the gender inequalities that most women artists and teachers had – and still have – to face.

### **Gego's "Spatial Relations" Seminar at the Neumann Design Institute (Caracas, 1971–1977)**

Gego's curriculum for the Spatial Relations seminar at the Neumann Design Institute was strongly informed by her previous teaching experience, and it was structured around one single element and its potential for the creation of spatial forms: the line.<sup>8</sup> This clearly demonstrates the overlap between her practices as a teacher and an artist. Indeed, the use of line as a sculptural object was the main way in which she sought to redefine sculpture in her work.<sup>9</sup> In Gego's seminars, lines were first studied as concepts and then translated into spatial forms.

A crucial starting point for Gego's classes was *Order in Space*, a 1969 book by the English researcher Keith Critchlow. Its focus on the geometry of solids allowed Gego to support her views on the creative potential of lines by grounding them in mathematical and scientific theories.<sup>10</sup> Auerbach recalls that Gego referred to this text as the "Bible,"<sup>11</sup> while Vera and Mancilla published certain exercises that the artist had derived from this source.<sup>12</sup> Vera's and Mancilla's publication, co-written with Gego, demonstrates the rigor of the artist's pedagogical methods. In particular, it shows the emphasis of Gego's workshops on reticular structures and the transformations of surfaces and planes into polyhedrons, beginning with simpler forms and advancing to Platonic and Archimedean solids.<sup>13</sup> Gego was very rigid in her teaching of geometry, expecting high standards of precision in students' use of geometric forms in their exercises. Her pedagogical methodology was rooted in the belief that it is impossible to teach a student how to become an artist, whereas technique can certainly be taught: "You cannot teach art; technique, yes: how to paint, how to

8 Auerbach, 2003 (note 2), p. 411.

9 Gego, "Testimony 4: You Invited Me (1966)," in Maria Elena Huizi and Josefina Manrique (eds.), *Sabiduras and Other Texts by Gego*, Houston and Caracas, 2005, p. 167. Gego wrote this text for a talk at the Tamarind Lithography workshop in Los Angeles. The literature has focused on the centrality of lines in her work: *Questioning the Line: Gego in Context*, Mari Carmen Ramírez and Theresa Papanikolas (eds.), exh. cat., Houston, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2003; *Gego 1957-1988. Thinking the Line*, Nadja Rottner and Peter Weibel (eds.), exh. cat., Karlsruhe, ZKM Karlsruhe, Ostfildern-Ruit, 2006; *Gego, Line as Object*, Lisa Le Feuvre et al. (eds.), exh. cat., Hamburger Kunsthalle, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Henry Moore Institute, Ostfildern-Ruit, 2014.

10 Keith Critchlow, *Order in Space. A Design Source Book*, New York, 1970.

11 Auerbach, 2003 (note 2), p. 410.

12 See note 6.

13 Platonic solids feature all identical faces and are known as the five regular polyhedrons (tetrahedron, cube, octahedron, dodecahedron, and icosahedron). Archimedean solids are thirteen semi-regular polyhedrons. Their faces are not identical and can feature different types of regular polygons. Their vertices, however, are all identical.



1 Gego with students at the Neumann Institute, Caracas, ca. 1971

mix, how to use color, but art...I cannot.”<sup>14</sup> In other words, in order to have the freedom and ability to create intuitively, students must first achieve technical mastery. They were asked to experiment with geometry by constructing artworks based on set combinations of geometric forms (fig. 1). After presenting their work to the class, students would then engage in a discussion. Her students came to see fixed instructions not as barriers to their creative freedom, and the fact that Gego helped them reach this conclusion through their own experience was in itself a fundamental and innovative pedagogical tool.

For each of her courses, Gego wrote summary reports in line with what is known as “reflective writing,” a pedagogical approach where educators reflect on their practice, analyse their methods, evaluate the impact of these methods

14 Gego, “Testimony 8: Sometimes It Is an Advantage (1981)” in Huizi and Manrique (eds.), 2012 (note 9), p. 196. This text is the transcript of an interview that the Venezuelan cinema and television director José Antonio Pantin conducted with Gego in Caracas. The interview was originally planned as part of a series of documentaries on Venezuelan artists organized by the Galería de Arte Nacional but was aired for the first time in 2001 (Caracas, Museo de Bellas Artes). María Fernanda Palacios, “A Conversation with Gego,” in Rottner and Weibel (eds.), 2006 (note 9), p. 220. Palacios was Gego’s colleague at the Neumann Institute (1967–1973). Her interview was originally published in *Iddeas: revista de diseño y comunicación visual* 3, May 1972, pp. 22–27.

on student learning, and produce an action plan to improve on the results when necessary.<sup>15</sup> The artist also kept notebooks with detailed comments about individual students' interests, skills, and progress. As Auerbach, her former student, recalls, Gego was convinced that “whether or not education transcended depended on the personality of the instructor more than on any given program”:<sup>16</sup> for Gego, the identity of the teacher and the ways in which teachers interact with students were crucial to student learning.<sup>17</sup>

In 1962, two years before taking up her position at the Neumann Institute, Gego undertook a comparative study of architecture-related pedagogical methods at institutions in England, Germany, Switzerland, and the United States, in order to then apply her findings to her teaching in Venezuela. She concluded that there were three main trends in university institutions in the early 1960s: “1- Curricula deeply rooted in traditional programs and methods, which included limited contemporary theories and practices; 2- Curricula that focused on innovation at the detriment of traditional structural and functional elements; and 3-curricula that focused on the systematization of planning, functions of space and human actions.”<sup>18</sup> Her own methods clearly fall into this last trend, where the systematization of knowledge is seen as the necessary starting point for personal and artistic development. Nevertheless, in Gego's words, “the goal itself – creativity – cannot be imprisoned in a fixed schedule and syllabus.”<sup>19</sup>

Gego's students, and Auerbach in particular, argue that it is precisely because Gego's methods were not centred on imposing her own ideas, rather being focused on the learner, that we do not find a recognizable style in the legacy of her teaching.<sup>20</sup> From this, we can deduce that her pedagogical methods were learning focused rather than teaching focused. In other words, she created a learning environment that was not centred around the teacher – and in her case, around the famous artist imparting knowledge upon students – but instead around giving students the tools to develop their own ideas in a learning environment characterized by exchange, collaboration, and dialogue. On the one hand, she made sure that students were provided with a rigorous methodology rooted in geometry and mathematics. On the other, once students had mastered those components, Gego gave them the space for spontaneity and creativity

15 Paul Ashwin et al., *Reflective Teaching in Higher Education*, London, 2015. Annetta Tsang, “Personal Reflection: Reflective Learning as a Student and an Educator: Connecting the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning,” in *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 3/2, article 29, 2009 (available at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/ij-sotl/vol3/iss2/29/> [accessed 01.09.2022]).

16 Auerbach, 2003 (note 2), p. 408.

17 The importance of these is discussed in Ashwin, 2015 (note 15), pp. 3–20.

18 Auerbach, 2003 (note 2), p. 408. Ahead of her official report, Gego outlined her findings in a letter to her UCV colleague Oscar González: Gego, “Testimony 10: Dear Oscar (1964)” in Huizi and Manrique (eds.), 2012 (note 9), pp. 207–211.

19 Gego, “Testimony 2: The History of Art Schools (1964)” and “Testimony 3: I Believe It Is Necessary (1964–1977),” in Huizi and Manrique (eds.), 2012 (note 9), pp. 159, 161.

20 Auerbach, 2003 (note 2), p. 406.



2 Gego, Caracas, 1975

in their own experimentations by asking them to construct artworks based on specific geometric solids. While they all had the same assignment of recreating the given geometric form, each was pushed to use that form to express their own individual creativity. Gego's works from the 1960s and 1970s demonstrate how she was experimenting with geometric structures herself, along the same lines as the exercises she was proposing to her students (fig. 2).<sup>21</sup>

### Opening Paths for Alternative Venezuelan Modernisms

One of the most authoritative voices in Latin American modernisms, the academic and curator Mari Carmen Ramírez, identifies experimental attitudes as one of four common aspects of Latin American modern and contemporary art.<sup>22</sup> Such an experimental attitude was a key component of Gego's workshops,

21 Iris Peruga mentions Gego's *Troncos* and *Esferas* as indicative of her research alongside her students. Iris Peruga, "From Matter to Space: The Game of Creation or Creation as Game," in exh. cat., Houston, 2003 (note 9), p. 67.

22 Mari Carmen Ramírez, "A Highly Topical Utopia. Some Outstanding Features of the Avant-Garde in Latin America," in exh. cat., Houston, 2004 (note 1), p. 5.

in which she encouraged students to use the simplest materials (thread, straw, wire, etc.) because these allowed them to work with their hands. In her art as well as in her teaching, Gego emphasized the connection between art and nature, admitting that while nature's structures are perfect, artistic ones are inevitably imperfect.<sup>23</sup> This focus on human imperfection contrasts with notions of machine-like and machine-made perfection in kineticism, the official modernist narrative in Venezuela in that period.

Following a series of dictatorships, the country's emerging democracy in 1958 translated into a new effort towards the expression of national identity through the arts. In specific, Venezuela was coming out of the regime of Marcos Pérez Jiménez, who had used modernist architecture to demonstrate the efficiency of dictatorship in providing the nation with visible infrastructural improvements and a façade of modernity.<sup>24</sup> The bipartisan nature of the new democracy, in combination with the oil boom of the following decade, meant that the government found in Venezuelan kineticism a useful vehicle for their messages of progress and modernity. For several non-kinetic artists, this was proof of the equivalency of kineticism with an official state art, in which the machine-made precision of artworks conformed to European criteria.<sup>25</sup> Gego's art and teaching contributed to an inversion of this official narrative by demonstrating that the precision of geometry could be connected to nature's structures and that, by preserving the handmade quality of art, modernism and its utopian ideals could include a poetic element. Without getting involved in confrontational attitudes or statements, Gego proved to the Venezuelan public that scientific approaches to art were not exclusively in the hands of men and machines: works like her *Bichos*, *Chorros*, and *Reticuláreas*, each organic and playful, were equally the result of scientific research.<sup>26</sup>

23 Auerbach, 2003 (note 2), p. 408. Peruga, 2003 (note 21), p. 53. Guy Brett, "Gego's Force Fields," in exh. cat., Houston, 2003 (note 9), p. 153. For a historical source on Gego's mixture of intuition and logic and on her approach to nature, see Marta Traba, "Gego," in Rottner and Weibel (eds.), 2006 (note 9), pp. 210–214, originally written for Gego, Hanni Ossott (ed.), exh. cat., Caracas, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Sofía Imber, Caracas, 1977.

24 See Lisa Blackmore, *Spectacular Modernity: Dictatorship, Space, and Visuality in Venezuela 1948–1958*, Pittsburgh, 2017.

25 For example, see Angel Rama, "Of Terrorism in the Arts (Antología de El Techo de la Ballena)," in *Contesting Modernity. Informalism in Venezuela, 1955–1975*, Mari Carmen Ramírez and Tahia Rivero (eds.), exh. cat., Houston, Museum Fine Arts Houston, Houston, 2018, pp. 249–251.

26 Calls for viewing Gego as a "counter-figure" to kineticism are expressed in Mari Carmen Ramírez, "Reading Gego Between the Line," in exh. cat., Houston, 2003 (note 9), p. 27, and in Luis Pérez Oramas, "Gego y la escena analítica del cinetismo," in *Heterotopías: medio siglo sin lugar, 1918–1968*, Mari Carmen Ramírez and Hector Olea (eds.), exh. cat., Madrid, Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid, 2000, p. 248. For discussions on the tensions between Gego's European and Latin American influences and a contextualization of her work as an alternative to kineticism, see Marta Traba, "Gego: Caracas tres mil," in *Mirar en Caracas*, Caracas, 1974, pp. 51–59, republished in English as "Gego: Caracas year three thousand," in Jiménez (ed.), 2008 (note 1), pp. 289–294. Luis Pérez Oramas problematizes Traba's understanding of Gego's organic approach in her *Reticuláreas* in his text "Abstraction, Organism, Apparatus: Notes of the Penetrable Structure in the Work of Lygia Clark, Gego, and Mira Schendel," in *Modern Women: Women Artists at the Museum of Modern Art*, Cornelia Butler and Alexandra Schwartz (eds.), exh. cat., New York, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2010, p. 325.

## Traces of Gego's Teaching in the Work of Her Student Eugenio Espinoza

The emphasis Gego placed on mathematical rigor and creativity is reflected in the work of her design student Eugenio Espinoza, who bases a good portion of his artistic proposals on the grid.<sup>27</sup> One of Espinoza's most significant series, *Impenetrables*, reveals the impact of Gego's teaching on her students in their attempts to invert the course of official modernism in the country. The title *Impenetrables* is in clear reference to one of Jesús Rafael Soto's most notable series, the *Penetrables* (1967–2005), a kinetic artwork that invited audiences to walk through its sequence of strings. The goal for Soto was to create visual vibrations that would change the ways in which viewers interacted with art and space, providing experiences rather than “imposing” artworks to be viewed by mere spectators. Our freedom of movement in Soto's works is based on a study of colours and materials as well as of the distance between these strings. The optical illusions of vibration in his art are rooted in scientific study.<sup>28</sup>

Espinoza's series *Impenetrables* is equally based on a rigorous mathematical study, derived from his education with Gego. *Impenetrable* (1972, fig. 3) consists of a large, white canvas installed against the floor of a gallery on a wooden stretcher, such that its dimensions depend entirely on those of the room in which it is installed. The grid painted on the canvas shows the same geometric abstraction favoured by the kinetics, but in the case of Espinoza the viewer has no physical access to the work, and the work even impedes access to the gallery in which it is installed. While kineticism centred around interaction, *Impenetrable* – preventing us from having the same participatory experience – can be read as a conceptual work about the obstacles and limitations of institutional modes of display and institutional choices about what is and is not displayed. And while kineticism had a democratic scope and promoted ideas of equality by providing experiences that were accessible to everyone regardless of class, education, or gender, Espinoza's work highlighted the disconnect between this utopian ideal of government-promoted art and the reality of life in Venezuela in the 1970s. The *Impenetrable* series was conceived during Espinoza's time studying under Gego, the first work of the series being created in the institute's workshop.<sup>29</sup> It reflects how lines create surfaces, how surfaces create grids, and how geometrical structures seem endless, without a beginning, a middle, or an end.

27 For further reading on Espinoza, see *Eugenio Espinoza: Unruly Supports (1970-1980)*, Jesús Fuenmayor et al., exh. cat., Miami, Pérez Art Museum, Miami, 2015. Eugenio Espinoza and Madeline Murphy Turner, “Off the Grid: A Conversation with Eugenio Espinoza,” <https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/571> [accessed 01.09.2022].

28 For further reading on Soto, see Ariel Jiménez, *Jesús Soto in Conversation with Ariel Jiménez*, New York, 2012; *Soto*, Ariel Jiménez, Jean-Paul Ameline, and Nathalie Ernoult (eds.), exh. cat., Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 2013. *Soto: la cuarta dimensión*, Manuel Cirauqui, Monica Amor, and Jean Clay (eds.), exh. cat., Bilbao, Guggenheim Bilbao, Bilbao, 2019.

29 <https://fundaciongego.com/en/eugenio-espinoza/> [accessed 05.04.2022].



3 Eugenio Espinoza, *Impenetrable*, 1972, acrylic on unprimed muslin, wood, London, Tate

Students in Gego's workshops were constantly asked to come up with artworks based on the potential of geometrical structures, and the shift towards conceptualism here exemplifies one of these possibilities. In the *Impenetrable* series, grids also became part of performances, and they were sometimes exhibited in open spaces, whether urban or rural.<sup>30</sup> Espinoza embodies what Auerbach identified as Gego's key impact on her students: method and discipline; experimentation; the manual element of the work; the importance of both traditional and contemporary influences and knowledge (seen here in the coexistence of geometric abstraction and conceptual art); and the social responsibility of the artist in challenging established ideas.<sup>31</sup>

Gego paved the path to a new understanding of modernism in Venezuela by propagating an alternative narrative to the preference for technology put forth by the government. She helped her students and audiences alike question whether technology was truly the only way to embody the newly achieved modernity of the country. Gego demonstrated that an emphasis on the handmade was in no way less modern, less rational, or less scientifically based than kinetic art. Instead of using her privileged position to impose her knowledge and expertise through her teaching or writing, Gego prioritized access to education, openness to dialogue, and social consciousness in her pedagogical methodology, making her contributions to education and art all the more extraordinary and worthy of further recognition and research.

<sup>30</sup> For example, *Impenetrable*, 1972 (photographed by Claudio Perna in the dunes of Coro, Venezuela) and *Participations*, 1973 (black-and-white photographs, edition of 10).

<sup>31</sup> Auerbach, 2003 (note 2), p. 411.



# Denise Scott Brown, enseigner l'architecture à la première personne du singulier

Laurie Gangarossa

## Pionnière

« Pionnière », tel est le qualificatif couramment associé au parcours de Denise Scott Brown. Un attribut dont le sens étymologique n'est pas sans lien avec sa discipline d'appartenance. En effet, un pionnier désigne un ouvrier terrassier, celui qui prépare la voie aux autres, qui stabilise les sols et les fondements. Cette dimension constructive accompagne nombre des représentations de Denise Scott Brown, comme en témoigne l'un de ses portraits datant de ses années de formation. Elle y est saisie à l'ouvrage, son visage et ses mains gantées émergeant d'un mur monté au cordeau (fig. 1).

Denise Scott Brown est une architecte-urbaniste et enseignante américaine aujourd'hui âgée de 91 ans, née en 1931 en Rhodésie du Nord, en Afrique australe, et dont la formation embrasse l'échelle de trois continents. Elle commence par étudier durant quatre ans l'architecture à l'université du Witwatersrand à Johannesburg, en Afrique du Sud. Elle intègre ensuite l'Architectural Association School of Architecture de Londres. Ces trois années à étudier se doublent d'autant de temps à travailler et à voyager entre l'Europe et l'Afrique. En 1958, elle émigre aux États-Unis pour y effectuer un double diplôme – en urbanisme, puis en architecture – à l'université de Pennsylvanie. Une trajectoire qui, jusqu'à ce stade universitaire, fait écho à celle de sa mère, Phyllis Lakofski, qui avait été elle-même étudiante en architecture. Cependant, au bout de deux ans et après s'être mariée, celle-ci avait dû mettre fin à ses études, qu'elle ne parvenait plus à financer. C'est donc à la fille que revient le dépassement de cet empêchement dicté en partie par le genre. De fait, à la suite de ses études, Denise Scott Brown fait le choix, dès l'âge de 29 ans, de rester aux États-Unis pour y exercer et y enseigner. Sa carrière d'enseignante s'étend de 1960 à nos jours. Un temps long où elle déplace ses savoirs en différents territoires et établissements, affirmant progressivement son statut d'enseignante. D'institutrice à assistante à la Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, puis enseignante invitée à l'université de Californie à Berkeley, elle devint ensuite professeure associée à la Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning, sur le campus de l'université de Californie à Los Angeles (UCLA). On lui confia alors pour la première fois le

développement de ses propres matières et des responsabilités de direction d'enseignements. Sa carrière l'amena enfin à être professeure invitée à l'université Yale et à l'université Harvard. Depuis sa retraite, Denise Scott Brown n'a cessé de faire résonner une voix distincte au sein de l'actualité de la recherche architecturale. Ce fut notamment le cas durant la construction de cet article où l'architecte-urbaniste a bien voulu compléter les sources mobilisées par le biais d'un entretien.

D'autre part, cette mobilité professionnelle et cet engagement intellectuel tenus sur le long terme génèrent autant d'occasions de contribuer à des projets collectifs au sein de communautés étudiantes et enseignantes élargies. Cette posture soulève la question de la place du « je » dans le « nous », dans un milieu où les figures féminines sont minoritaires. La trajectoire de Denise Scott Brown soulève la question des modalités d'enseignement de l'architecture à la première personne du singulier. Par quels moyens partager son expérience et se raconter en tant que femme architecte-urbaniste et enseignante, tout en existant pour ce que l'on est ou ce que l'on fait, plus que pour ce que l'on représente?



1 Denise Scott Brown, bricklayer on a student building project, Wits University, 1949, photograph by Clive Hicks

## « *Learning from*<sup>1</sup> »

Commençons par une spécificité : Denise Scott Brown a renouvelé le regard sur sa discipline et a produit de la connaissance en tant qu'enseignante, sans que cette vocation ne l'ait jamais conduite à faire son deuil d'une pratique de maître d'œuvre. L'architecte-urbaniste a en effet inauguré de nouvelles manières d'approcher, de penser, de représenter et de concevoir les territoires contemporains : des territoires où se déploie un imaginaire de grande vitesse, anthropisé et mondialisé, où l'ordinaire n'est plus jugé indigne d'intérêt. Pour en saisir les spécificités, notamment politiques, économiques et sociétales, elle met en place un protocole de recherche interdisciplinaire et immersif jusqu'alors inédit dans le contexte universitaire américain. Ce faisant, elle réinterprète la culture pédagogique alternative proche du *deweyism* qu'elle a expérimenté durant son cursus en Afrique du Sud.

Elle fait ainsi sortir les étudiants de leurs studios, les éloignant un temps de leurs tables à dessin (fig. 2). Dans cette nouvelle pédagogie, l'arpentage est favorisé, privilégiant des captations embarquées et faisant la part belle aux outils cartographiques et photographiques. Car pour l'enseignante, l'apprentissage du projet urbain et architectural est avant tout une question de regards renouvelés, d'inventions d'outils et de modes de représentation de la complexité du réel.

Denise Scott Brown inaugure ces fameuses méthodes pédagogiques dès 1958 et les pousse à leur paroxysme à partir de 1968, au sein de la Yale School of Architecture and Planning. Dans ce cadre, elle fait équipe avec deux autres architectes et enseignants – Robert Venturi et Steven Izenour – au sein d'un studio dont le nom devint célèbre : « *Learning from Las Vegas* ». Ces travaux précurseurs donnèrent lieu à une publication du même nom en 1972<sup>2</sup>, laquelle compte désormais parmi les fondamentaux de la littérature architecturale et urbaine.

Derrière la formule du « *learning from* » s'affirme l'idée de l'autonomie des étudiants, incités à apprendre davantage des terrains d'études que des modèles d'autorité de leurs enseignants et à se détourner du traditionnel diptyque maître-élève. Ce mode d'enseignement dit du « *learning from* » fait depuis école, et sa formule titre régulièrement les syllabus d'enseignements en école d'architecture autant que les publications<sup>3</sup>. Il invite à produire de la connaissance à partir d'expériences situées. De ce fait, le territoire d'études vient infléchir les conventions de représentations autoérigées par la discipline telles que la manipulation des échelles, des signes ou la relation texte/image.

1 Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown et Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1977.

2 Ibid.

3 Par exemple : Pierre Frey (éd.), *Learning from Vernacular : Pour une nouvelle architecture vernaculaire*, Arles 2010.



- 2 Denise Scott Brown teaching Fair Mount in the Cultural Landscape, an architecture studio she conducted at the University of Pennsylvania, 1983, photograph probably by Steven Izenour

### Expression du « je »

Cet engagement à enseigner autrement se double chez Denise Scott Brown d'une motivation à porter témoignage de ses expériences vécues en tant qu'architecte-urbaniste et enseignante. Elle mobilise pour cela une démarche d'archiviste et ce par le biais de deux outils, l'un photographique et l'autre littéraire. Dans un cas comme dans l'autre, elle affirme son propre point de vue. En photographie, elle est derrière comme devant l'objectif. Sa pratique récurrente de l'autoportrait en témoigne. En littérature, c'est elle qui prend la plume et dit « je », à la fois autrice, narratrice et personnage principal. Ainsi, comme l'exprime l'auteur et collaborateur de Denise Scott Brown, Jeremy Eric Tenenbaum :

« Her stories show herself as an active and central character, but she relates them for instruction nor vanity. She tells stories to make theory personal and concrete, to show origins and connections and possibilities<sup>4</sup>. »

Ses écrits ponctuent toute sa carrière et affirment en effet une écriture à la première personne du singulier. Ce registre autobiographique est émancipateur,

<sup>4</sup> Jeremy Eric Tenenbaum (éd.), *Your Guide to Downtown Denise Scott Brown*, Zurich 2019 (Hintergrund 56), p. 39.

en ce qu'il défend l'audibilité d'une voix de femme au sein d'une discipline tenue majoritairement par les hommes. Néanmoins, l'emploi du « je » est régulièrement mis en tension par la présence d'un « nous », sous l'expression familière « *Bob and I* » et dont la règle grammaticale fait repasser une figure masculine au premier plan. En effet, ce positionnement littéraire à exister en tant que « je » autonome s'explique au regard du couple qu'elle forme avec Robert Venturi, pareillement architecte et enseignant. En effet, dans ses écrits, Denise Scott Brown décrit son mariage comme un point de basculement dans sa propre exposition à des actes de discrimination :

« Most professional women can recount horror stories about discrimination they have suffered during their careers. Mine include social trivia as well as grand trauma. But some less common forms of discrimination came my way when, in mid-career, I married a colleague and we joined our professional lives just as fame (though not fortune) hit him. I watched as he was manufactured into an architectural guru before my eyes and, to some extent, on the basis of our joint work and the work of our firm. [...] The first indication of my new status came when an architect whose work I had reviewed said, "We at the office think it was Bob writing, using your name"<sup>5</sup>. »

Un tournant qui coïncide aussi avec le milieu de sa carrière. En effet, tous deux enseignent ensemble dès l'année 1960, l'un et l'autre assurant à tour de rôle des semestres consécutifs de cours sur les théories de l'architecture. Quelques années plus tard, en 1966, Denise Scott Brown invite Robert Venturi à composer le jury de son studio dédié au territoire de Santa Monica à l'UCLA. Elle lui propose de l'accompagner sur le futur site envisagé pour son projet : il s'agit du Strip de Las Vegas. Ils se marient l'année suivante, en 1967, et s'associent au sein de l'agence porteuse de leurs deux noms, Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates, devenue, au moment de leur retraite, VSBA Architects & Planners. Située à Philadelphie, la structure est encore active aujourd'hui. Et bien que Denise Scott Brown ait toujours gardé son premier nom d'épouse, elle est régulièrement amalgamée à l'identité de son conjoint via la formule consacrée « The Venturis ». Et ce, sans compter sa relégation au rang de « femme de » ou d'éternelle seconde, suivant un schéma sociétal bien connu.

L'épisode le plus cuisant et polémique de cette inégalité de reconnaissance au sein du couple atteint son paroxysme en 1991, lors de la remise du prix Pritzker. Ce sésame, extrêmement valorisé au sein de la discipline, récompense le seul Robert Venturi, alors que leur production d'agence, mais aussi leurs travaux pédagogiques et littéraires, étaient difficilement dissociables. En guise

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5 Denise Scott Brown, « Sexism and the Star System in Architecture », dans Denise Scott Brown, *Having Words*, Architectural Association, Londres 2009, p. 79.

de protestation, Denise Scott Brown resta symboliquement à la maison lors de la cérémonie officielle.

Cette injustice sera a posteriori publiquement dénoncée. Récemment encore, en 2013, des étudiantes de l'université Harvard créèrent le groupe Women in Design et lancèrent une pétition pour décerner rétroactivement le prix à l'architecte-urbaniste, en reconnaissance de son œuvre. Face à cette demande de réparation, l'institution du Pritzker resta imperturbable. La galerie des personnalités consacrées par le prix demeure quant à elle révélatrice en termes de représentation du genre, malgré l'entrée dans ce panthéon d'une femme architecte, Zaha Hadid, générant en 2004 une première exception.

L'épisode de 1991 eut pour autant le mérite de marquer l'émergence d'un militantisme féministe au sein de la profession et notamment parmi les rangs des écoles d'architecture.

### **Pédagogie subjective**

C'est notamment dans ses propres enseignements que Denise Scott Brown trouve un cadre propice à l'affirmation de soi. Sa pédagogie revendique une fine articulation entre savoirs théoriques, expérimentations en immersion dans les territoires et récits d'expériences vécues. En effet, pour l'architecte-urbaniste, postures intimes, sociales et professionnelles vont de pair, la conduisant à assumer la ressource autobiographique comme productrice de connaissances. Ainsi, pour reprendre ses propres mots :

« I write from the front line, as a woman on the ramparts, but I am also a worker in the trenches and a worm near the ground. And I use my life as a quarry. This is a trick I learned while teaching – students understand better and can take possession of knowledge and skills more easily if you share with them your experiences in acquiring them<sup>6</sup>. »

Son enseignement remet ainsi en question l'objectivité qui a valeur de norme dans l'environnement universitaire. Comme en écho aux théories féministes du *standpoint* – alors émergentes dans les années 1970 – l'architecte-urbaniste prend son expérience personnelle comme point de départ épistémologique, invitant les étudiants à en faire de même.

Le matériau subjectif devient donc collectif au sein du studio. Denise Scott Brown sensibilise ainsi les étudiants au fait qu'ils perçoivent, projettent et représentent, en tant qu'architectes, le monde de manière orientée : une vision bien loin de l'idéal de neutralité promis par la rationalité, notamment moderne.

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6 Denise Scott Brown, « Afterword », dans Denise Scott Brown, *Having Words*, Londres 2009, p. 157.

Elle leur transmet que du choix même des formes de points de vue dépend la réception critique des projets d'architecture et d'urbanisme. De ce fait, les conventionnelles représentations en plans, coupes et façades sont questionnées pour ce qu'elles déterminent du projet et pour ce qu'elles conditionnent dans la réception du public, tant sachant que néophyte.

## Formes d'expériences

Dans les dernières années de sa carrière, et en s'appuyant sur un projet de rétrospective, Denise Scott Brown a restitué des fragments choisis d'expériences sous deux formes complémentaires. La plus récente est une exposition monographique nommée « Downtown Denise Scott Brown », réalisée en 2018 à Vienne<sup>7</sup>, et ayant donné lieu à une publication du même nom<sup>8</sup>. L'événement met au premier plan, par son titre même, le nom de l'architecte-urbaniste et enseignante seule. Neuf années plus tôt, le recueil de textes *Having Words* fut publié<sup>9</sup>. Par son jeu de mots, le titre revendique une lutte engagée. « *Having words* » possède en effet un double sens : « avoir la parole » et « se battre ». Car, comme le justifie Denise Scott Brown elle-même : « Bon nombre de mes mots sont des mots de combat<sup>10</sup>. » Ainsi, le recueil compile des écrits inédits autant que des publications attestées, en donnant notamment une plus large diffusion au texte *Sexism and the Star System in Architecture*. C'est grâce à ce dernier que Denise Scott Brown devient l'une des porte-parole des femmes de sa discipline, sans toutefois tomber dans une opposition de genre. Écrit en 1975, il fut pour la première fois publié en 1989, après un temps d'autocensure, avoué par l'architecte-urbaniste elle-même, au vu des incidences qu'il aurait pu avoir sur son agence<sup>11</sup>. Il a par ailleurs été largement redécouvert en France via la traduction intégrale du document portée par Valéry Didelon et Françoise Fromonot dans la revue *Criticat* en 2012<sup>12</sup>.

Ces récents apports témoignent du fait que Denise Scott Brown a su prendre place dans un milieu universitaire et professionnel où les personnalités féminines font figures d'exceptions – aussi peu visibles sur le terrain que dans l'histoire de l'architecture – en s'emparant activement des questions de genre.

Dans *Sexism and the Star System in Architecture*, elle a ainsi décrypté lucidement

7 « Downtown Denise Scott Brown », exposition, sous le commissariat de Jeremy Eric Tenenbaum, Architekturzentrum Wien, Vienne 2018-2019.

8 Tenenbaum, 2019 (note 4).

9 Scott Brown, 2009 (note 5).

10 Commentaire formulé par Denise Scott Brown à Laurie Gangarossa, le 13.12.2021, lors de la rédaction de cet article.

11 Denise Scott Brown, « Room at the Top? Sexism and the Star System in Architecture », dans Ellen Perry Berkeley et Matilda McQuaid (éd.), *Architecture : A Place for Women*, Washington 1989, p. 237-246.

12 « Denise Scott Brown : Sexisme et *star system* en architecture (1975) », dans « Ce que les femmes font à l'architecture », débat, *Criticat*, n° 10, 2012, p. 64-74.

son propre environnement, en faisant entrer ses lecteurs dans les coulisses des établissements où elle a enseigné et où des injustices en termes de parité étaient à relever. Elle cherche à nommer les formes élitistes de communautés masculines – « meute », « caste », « club », « happy few » ou « privilégiés » – révélant à leurs têtes des figures de « gourous ».

Elle y égraine les inégalités qui se glissent dans la hiérarchie des postes et des carrières, mais aussi les a priori d'autorité et de légitimité académique. Elle revient également sur les rites de reconnaissance à l'œuvre et notamment sur les stratégies d'affichage de signatures. Habitée aux erreurs d'attribution de contenus et aux omissions de citations, elle raconte comment elle a été dépossédée d'un certain nombre de ses réflexions. Cette injustice intellectuelle a motivé au sein de son agence le recours à l'outil de « la note d'information », accompagnant toute transmission d'éléments pour diffusion afin de préciser l'identité de l'autrice ou de l'auteur, sans que cela soit néanmoins suffisant. De plus, elle considère l'enseignement comme une pratique, mais aussi comme une institution, sans ignorer ses dérives hiérarchiques et ses jeux de pouvoir. Elle décortique le système éducatif global sous l'angle de situations localisées et d'anecdotes qui, par leur répétition, deviennent des phénomènes de masse. Ces phénomènes débordent souvent très largement de l'université et du cadre professionnel strict, comme lorsque Denise Scott Brown évoque la situation des « dîners d'épouses » entre collègues.

Enfin, la manière dont ces situations individuelles vécues participent à un phénomène de masse transparait lorsqu'elle témoigne publiquement de son expérience. Elle rapporte à ce titre une conférence donnée en 1973 à New York pour le mouvement Alliance of Women in Architecture où, plutôt que d'en décrire le contenu, elle rend compte d'effets de reconnaissance. Sa voix est comme augmentée par les réactions d'identification qui s'élèvent dans l'auditoire et qu'elle cite sous forme directe :

« The hundred or so women identified strongly with my experience; “Me too!” “My God, you too?” echoed everywhere. We were soon high on our shared woe and on the support we felt for and from each other<sup>13</sup>. »

Aussi, plutôt que de la décourager, ces injustices intellectuelles répétées n'ont eu de cesse de la motiver davantage.

### **Icône générationnelle**

Ces formes de prises de position et leurs expositions sur la scène culturelle contemporaine ont contribué à faire de Denise Scott Brown une icône.

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<sup>13</sup> Scott Brown, 2009 (note 5), p. 82-83.

L'actualité de deux documents majeurs au sein de la discipline, sortis en 2018, en témoigne en plaçant l'architecte-urbaniste à l'affiche. Le premier est le documentaire *Rêveuses de villes* où Denise Scott Brown est l'une des quatre « pionnières » de l'architecture aux côtés de Cornelia Hahn Oberlander, Blanche Lemco van Ginkel et Phyllis Lambert<sup>14</sup>. Le second est l'ouvrage *La Voix des femmes*, qui réunit des figures de la scène du design et de l'architecture du xx<sup>e</sup> et du xxi<sup>e</sup> siècle bénéficiant jusque-là de différents niveaux de visibilité<sup>15</sup>.

Et comme une icône est avant tout une image, il est intéressant de noter la mobilisation systématique de la même photographie de l'architecte. Sur ce cliché choisi de 1966, on perçoit clairement la posture de Denise Scott Brown comme une attitude proprement de campement corporel : pieds solidement ancrés, regard frontal et mains sur les hanches (fig. 3). Une posture doublée d'une dimension territoriale, puisque l'architecte se met à l'échelle du skyline de Las Vegas, son environnement pédagogique. Enfin, cette mise en scène a une valeur de contre-citation puisque Denise Scott Brown « usurpe » la symbolique d'une photographie célèbre représentant l'architecte Robert Moses posant devant la silhouette urbaine de New York<sup>16</sup>. Elle détourne ainsi cet emblème de toute-puissance de création et d'autorité masculine, en critiquant une certaine idée de la planification du territoire américain.

Creusant un sillon, cette figure pionnière d'architecte-urbaniste et enseignante (fig. 4)<sup>17</sup> a servi de modèle à des générations d'étudiantes. Un rôle dont Denise Scott Brown assume la maternité :

« So the accounts of my life are not autobiography but parable. And gathering their words is what old people do. [...] Yet this book may constitute a living will – not the new type that describes how you want to die but the old one that guide your children (my architectural grandchildren) in how they should live. The idea is to help architecture be well set for the future<sup>18</sup>. »

Cependant, et alors même qu'un basculement générationnel a eu lieu dans les promotions d'étudiants – aujourd'hui en France, plus de la moitié des étudiants en architecture sont des étudiantes –, les architectes-enseignantes restent minoritaires. Et l'idéal de parité s'amenuise encore plus considérablement

14 Joseph Hillel, *Rêveuses de villes*, Couzin Films, Québec 2018, 80 minutes.

15 Libby Sellers, *La Voix des femmes*, Pyramid, Paris 2018.

16 Commentaire formulé par Denise Scott Brown à Laurie Gangarossa, le 13.12.2021, lors de la rédaction de cet article.

17 Ce triptyque, réalisé par Laurie Gangarossa dans le cadre spécifique de cet article, vient réinterpréter les trois photographies originales présentées dans les précédentes figures. Cette création rappelle que toute icône appartient au champ des représentations et se décline relativement à des documents d'archives antérieurs ayant valeur de références culturelles.

18 Scott Brown, 2009 (note 6), p. 157.



3 Denise Scott Brown, Las Vegas Style on The Strip, 1966, photograph by Robert Venturi

dès lors que l'on considère les statuts d'enseignants titulaires et les postes d'enseignement du projet. Un fait révélant combien la position minoritaire et les questions de hiérarchie salariale et de précarité demeurent toujours intimement liées pour les femmes architectes et enseignantes.



4a Laurie Gangarossa, *Une figure de pionnière*, 2021, encre sur papier



4b Laurie Gangarossa, *Une figure d'enseignante dans et hors les murs*, 2021, encre sur papier



4c Laurie Gangarossa, *Une figure de prise de territoire*, 2021, encre sur papier



## **III - Feminist Practices**



# Performer et bâtir à la fin des années 1960 : pratique d'un discours corporalisé au sein du Feminist Art Program

Aline Derderian

Le Feminist Art Program (FAP), créé par Judy Chicago à la fin des années 1960, est porté par une conjoncture politique et artistique spécifique. D'une part, le mouvement de libération des femmes aux États-Unis, le Women's Liberation Movement, proteste contre le sexisme qui oppresse et restreint l'émancipation de ces dernières. D'autre part, on constate la perpétuation d'un système patriarcal dans l'industrie de l'art – depuis les écoles où celui-ci s'enseigne jusqu'aux institutions dans lesquelles il s'expose<sup>1</sup>. Cette conjoncture marque un point culminant de l'histoire de l'art et des féminismes, grâce aux « conv-actions » d'artistes qui sont parvenues à développer un discours de lutte, sinon contre les hommes, incontestablement en faveur des femmes<sup>2</sup>. Au FAP, l'apprentissage des arts enseignés et produits par des femmes – dont les valeurs féministes se véhiculent tant par le style de vie que par les pratiques artistiques – va de pair avec des méthodologies, des pédagogies et des esthétiques perçues comme radicales, et dont le déploiement se fera en miroir d'un chamboulement social aux États-Unis.

Nous tenterons dans un premier temps de démontrer comment les enseignantes-artistes du FAP ont instauré un processus créatif que nous qualifierons de « corporéel », c'est-à-dire un dispositif qui a favorisé l'apprentissage de nouvelles techniques pratiques et pédagogiques, dans le but de construire un espace dans lequel les étudiantes purent s'exprimer librement, se confier, et produire des travaux mêlant l'intime à l'universel. Cristallisant le slogan caractéristique du mouvement des femmes « le personnel est politique » par la création artistique, Judy Chicago, Miriam Schapiro et leurs étudiantes ont

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1 Pour une chronologie du Women's Liberation Movement aux États-Unis voir : Carol Hanisch, « The Personal Is Political », dans Shulamith Firestone et Anne Koedt (éd.), *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation, Major Writings of the Radical Feminists*, New York 1970, URL : <http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PersonalIsPol.pdf> [dernier accès : 14.03.2022].

2 Néologisme issu de la contraction des termes « conviction » et « action ».

effectivement révisé l'histoire de l'art selon leurs propres codes<sup>3</sup>. Le projet *Womanhouse*, de 1972, sera d'ailleurs considéré comme l'aboutissement des premières années de l'éducation artistique féministe californienne du FAP. Cette exposition-installation s'envisage comme le détonateur de carrière pour certaines des protagonistes grâce auxquelles elle a vu le jour. C'est le cas de Faith Wilding. Étudiante auprès de Judy Chicago à la California State University de Fresno puis au California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) en 1971, sa pratique des arts visuels revalorisant l'artisanat féminin en miroir de la montée des nouvelles technologies l'a conduite à être considérée comme une figure majeure d'un art féministe, multidisciplinaire et en prise avec le contemporain. Wilding a été chargée des cours de performance à CalArts à la demande de Chicago. Il s'agira dans un second temps de souligner son apport caractéristique à la pédagogie du FAP.

Cette recherche a privilégié des documents d'archives au plus près de la date de création du FAP, de manière à examiner spécifiquement le dispositif innovant pensé par le binôme Chicago-Schapiro, ainsi que son élaboration théorique et pratique. Quelles stratégies ont été mises en place dans le but de rassembler une communauté de femmes désireuses de faire de l'art leur métier, ainsi que de rompre avec l'isolement causé à la fois par un système pédagogique excluant et par la cellule familiale ? Par le prisme de *Women in the Arts*, série de cinq sessions radiophoniques diffusées sur KPFK Pacifica Radio en novembre 1971, nous verrons comment s'est opéré le transfert du FAP de Fresno à CalArts et de CalArts à *Womanhouse*.

CalArts est l'une des écoles qui posent les jalons d'une approche de l'enseignement avant-gardiste et propre à la région sud-californienne, notamment grâce à une équipe pédagogique constituée à l'origine de personnalités telles que l'artiste expressionniste Paul Brach ou encore Allan Kaprow<sup>4</sup>. Clara Guislain dépeint un projet pédagogique fortement inspiré du Black Mountain College ou du mouvement Fluxus, dans un cadre qui, de par sa position décentralisée dans la vallée de Santa Clarita, se voulait à la fois lieu de vie, de savoir et studio de création. Le décroisement des pratiques, une éducation antiprogrammatique et la responsabilisation des étudiantes et des étudiants grâce à une relation collaborative avec les enseignantes et enseignants-artistes y étaient privilégiés. Judy Chicago et ses étudiantes, qui s'étaient elles-mêmes surnommées « Miss Chicago et les California Girls », furent embrigadées par la peintre canadienne

3 Françoise Picq, « Le personnel est politique, féminisme et for intérieur », dans *Le For intérieur*, Paris 1995, URL : <http://francoisepicq.fr/site/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/le-personnel-est-politique-f%C3%A9minisme-et-for-int%C3%A9rieur.pdf> [dernier accès : 15.03.2022].

4 « Inspiré par le modèle des industries hollywoodiennes et par celui du California Institute of Technology, le "Cal Tech" auquel renvoie le nom de l'école, Disney eut l'idée de créer un institut de formation et de recherche pluridisciplinaire. » Clara Guislain, « Collaborer sur les frontières : CalArts et l'expérience du collectif », dans *Marges* [En ligne], 30 | 2020, p. 4, mis en ligne le 2 janvier 2020, URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/marges/1964> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/marges.1964> [dernier accès : 10.06.2021].

Miriam Schapiro, l'épouse de Paul Brach, après une visite à l'université de Fresno<sup>5</sup>. Chicago y avait déjà depuis un an mis sur pied un programme d'éducation féministe (*feminist art education program*) qui sera déplacé à Valencia, près de Los Angeles, en 1971. Avant la délocalisation du FAP, ou sa « dis-location » pour reprendre les termes de Michel Briand, la charte pédagogique de CalArts s'inscrivait donc déjà dans une éthique de multidisciplinarité et d'effacement hiérarchique<sup>6</sup>. Les cours proposés étaient envisagés comme des possibilités laissées à la responsabilité des étudiantes et étudiants-artistes en fonction de leurs parcours et de leurs besoins singuliers. Une attitude dite « autoréflexive » inspirée de l'art conceptuel était sollicitée de chacun et chacune<sup>7</sup>.

À l'écoute de la première session de *Women in the Arts* (KPFK Pacifica Radio, novembre 1971), nous apprenons comment un voyage aux allures d'enquête de terrain entre Los Angeles, San Francisco et San Diego a permis au duo Chicago-Schapiro de vérifier que, malgré l'insuffisance voire l'absence d'œuvres d'artistes femmes dans les différents lieux de diffusion, il ne manquait pas de praticiennes. Dès cette première session nous entrevoyons trois enjeux féministes qui visent à se réapproprier les valeurs que CalArts véhicule, mais qui ont pour ambition de s'articuler en dehors de ses locaux. Premièrement, aller à la rencontre des artistes en lançant des appels à participation par le biais d'une émission radiophonique, et ainsi leur permettre d'échanger sur leurs travaux. Deuxièmement, rassembler ces participantes en une communauté de femmes artistes au sein de laquelle la relation professeur·e-étudiant·e s'efface en faveur d'une approche collaborative. Enfin, ne pas reproduire le schéma qui a longtemps laissé les étudiantes sans supervision ni suivi de la part de leurs enseignants hommes, qui détenaient le pouvoir de juger leurs travaux en fin de cursus et par conséquent celui de valider ou non l'obtention du diplôme. À travers ces paramètres formulés dès le départ, nous voyons comment le projet des enseignantes-artistes fut influencé par leurs expériences passées, qui allaient bientôt faire d'elles des facilitatrices (*facilitators*<sup>8</sup>) ou des références (*role-models*<sup>9</sup>), plutôt

5 « Miss Chicago and the California Girls », dans *Everywoman Newspaper*, vol. 2/18, Judy Chicago Art Education Collection, Collection 9028, Special Collections Library, The Pennsylvania State University, 1971, [couverture du magazine conservé boîte 7], URL : <https://digital.libraries.psu.edu/digital/collection/judychicago/id/12775/rec/1> [dernier accès : 25.11.2021].

6 Michel Briand, « Danse et politique contemporaines. Radicalités esthétiques, philosophiques et sociales en danse », dans *Recherches en danse* [En ligne], *Actualités de la recherche*, mis en ligne le 6 juillet 2015, URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/danse/1034>; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/danse.1034> [dernier accès : 04.06.2021].

7 « Le suivi des cours n'était pas obligatoire et les étudiants étaient poussés à suivre l'enseignement de plusieurs artistes, sans engagement exclusif, en fonction de leurs problématiques du moment. » Guislain, 2020 (note 4), p. 11-12.

8 « Chicago's pedagogy begins by replacing the traditional teacher/student relationship with a less hierarchical structure in which the teacher becomes facilitator rather than an authority figure. » Karen Keifer-Boyd, « From Content to Form: Judy Chicago's Pedagogy with Reflections by Judy Chicago », dans *Studies in Art Education*, 48/2, 2007, p. 134-154, ici p. 138-139, URL : <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25475816> [dernier accès : 19.11.2021].

9 Beth Bachenheimer, Everett Frost et Miriam Schapiro, *Women in the Arts*, (Episode 5/5), KPFK Station, Pacifica Radio Archives, Los Angeles, 29 novembre 1971, URL : [https://archive.org/details/pacifica\\_radio\\_archives-BC0453.05](https://archive.org/details/pacifica_radio_archives-BC0453.05) [dernier accès : 29.06.2021].

que les détentrices d'un savoir essentiel à la poursuite d'une carrière artistique inatteignable<sup>10</sup>.

Lors des deux premiers jours de circuit à travers les trois villes, seuls deux ateliers sur seize visités n'étaient pas rattachés au domicile des femmes rencontrées. Se dresse alors une énième preuve de l'opposition des sexes par les lieux de fabrication de leurs arts. Les hommes ont fait d'un atelier bien rangé ou d'une *warehouse* (entrepôt) sans âme l'espace représentatif du travail, d'après une idée préconçue selon laquelle il faudrait quitter la maison et s'isoler pour parvenir à la création. Les activités qui ne parviennent pas à se détacher de l'expérience quotidienne ne peuvent être considérées comme de l'art. Au contraire, les femmes, dont la pratique est intégrée aux conditions de vie, disposent généralement d'une pièce du domicile conjugal, ou bien d'une dépendance rattachée à la maison, qui fonctionne pour elles comme un espace affecté à la création. En développant leurs productions au cœur même de leur lieu de vie, perçu comme le domaine de l'intime et du subjectif, les femmes font ainsi face à des normes forgées et diffusées par des hommes, lesquels mettent d'emblée en question la légitimité de leur statut d'artiste. Tandis qu'ils peignent, sculptent, dessinent dans des espaces vides de quartiers commerciaux, des femmes telles que la peintre Judith Linhares, citée par Miriam Schapiro durant le premier épisode de l'émission, convertissent leurs appartements en de véritables sanctuaires aux allures d'installations. Pour prouver que les techniques artistiques des femmes ne peuvent être détachées de leurs expériences quotidiennes, Schapiro relate sa visite chez l'artiste. Les fauteuils brodés, les photographies burlesques de femmes des années 1920 posées sur la cheminée, les dessins d'enfant placardés dans la cuisine, et autres posters de félins, révèlent une continuité voire un effacement des limites entre l'art et la vie de Linhares par une attitude « immersive<sup>11</sup> ». Qu'il s'agisse de femmes nues affairées à des tâches ordinaires comme dans *Flower Drama*<sup>12</sup>, près d'un feu, dans *Saturday Morning*<sup>13</sup>, à dos d'animaux sauvages, ou bien de bouquets de fleurs sur fonds de couleurs psychédéliques, à l'instar de *Small Blue Flowers*<sup>14</sup>, les œuvres sont intrinsèquement liées à leur lieu d'émergence. Le paysage quotidien est intégré au travail plastique de manière symbolique.

Comme l'expliquent Judy Chicago et Miriam Schapiro dans les enregistrements, toutes deux envisagent de produire et de présenter des œuvres dans les deux ans à venir. C'est donc par l'identification des contraintes imposées par l'environnement créatif dont les artistes femmes disposent que le désir

10 « Feminist art education begins with each person's individual voice and builds both individual and collaborative art making out of those issues expressed by many different voices. » Jill Fields, *Entering the Picture: Judy Chicago, the Fresno Feminist Art Program, and the Collective Visions of Women Artists*, New York 2012, p. 25.

11 Schapiro, 1971 (note 9).

12 Judith Linhares, *Flower Drama*, 2005, huile sur toile, 55,88 × 101,6 cm.

13 Judith Linhares, *Saturday Morning*, 2017, huile sur toile de lin, 152,4 × 180,34 cm

14 Judith Linhares, *Small Blue Flowers*, 2017, huile sur toile de lin, 30,5 × 40,6 cm.

de valoriser certaines techniques et activités pratiquées depuis leur foyer va donner naissance à *Womanhouse*. En d'autres termes, la réhabilitation d'une maison abandonnée dans le nord de Hollywood, et son détournement en un espace artistique alternatif qui leur serait consacré, naît au contact de la réalité du travail des artistes femmes. Dans ce désir de fédération d'un collectif de praticiennes californiennes, un travail important a porté sur l'instauration d'un système de libération de la parole qui s'est matérialisé par des *consciousness-raising classes*<sup>15</sup>. L'enjeu était d'abolir le format du cours magistral en faveur d'une participation orale active des étudiantes, qui donnerait naissance à des processus créatifs, à la recherche de thématiques à traiter, et à l'écriture de performances. La fin de la première émission nous apprend d'ailleurs que des entrevues dans les maisons des unes et des autres, pour discuter de leurs travaux dans un contexte moins formel que celui de l'école, furent organisées en dehors des cours.

Dans un entretien mené par Lynn Hershman Leeson en 1990, Faith Wilding revient sur son arrivée à Fresno avant la création du FAP<sup>16</sup>. Elle y témoigne du contexte social agité face à l'administration conservatrice de Ronald Reagan, alors gouverneur de Californie, qui vit émerger un esprit contestataire menant à la formation de nombreux collectifs et autres groupes de protestation dans les milieux artistiques, intellectuels, militants et étudiants. C'est aux côtés de Suzanne Lacy, entre autres, que Wilding rejoint le Second Sex Group, décrit comme un groupe d'éveil de conscience formé de soixante-dix étudiantes de la California State University de Fresno. Celles-ci se réunissaient de manière hebdomadaire pour des soirées durant lesquelles l'école se mêlait à la vie par la découverte, par l'étude ou par la relecture d'une littérature féministe, notamment française. Ces rendez-vous féminins hors campus constituent l'une des marques de fabrique de l'enseignement artistique activiste féministe dont Judy Chicago s'inspira pour structurer la technique pédagogique du FAP<sup>17</sup>. Ces discussions collectives devenues une discipline au même titre que d'autres matières telles que la peinture ou la sculpture permirent aux artistes qui intégrèrent le cursus de recevoir des crédits de la part de l'institution<sup>18</sup>. Les séances avaient lieu dans

15 Ces *consciousness-raising classes* désignaient des ateliers de prises de conscience qui s'articulaient sous forme de conversations en cercle sur des sujets tels que le viol, le sexisme ou encore la sexualité féminine.

16 « Interview with Miriam Schapiro and Faith Wilding 1990 May 30 », dans Lynn Hershman Leeson, *Women Art Revolution: Videotape Interviews 1990-2008*, Stanford University Libraries. Department of Special Collections and University Archives. URL : <http://purl.stanford.edu/nv433zv1179> [dernier accès : 29.06.2021].

17 Tout juste embauchée comme enseignante à la California State University de Fresno et après sa rencontre avec Faith Wilding, à qui elle propose rapidement un poste d'assistante.

18 À l'occasion d'une conférence en ligne de la série « Hey teacher! Art, Education and Politics », le 8 novembre 2021 par Margarita Brito Alves et Giulia Lamoni, dans le cadre de leur projet de recherche ARE, *Artists and Radical Education in Latin America (1960s-1970s)*, nous avons posé la question des critères d'évaluation des étudiantes pour l'obtention du diplôme à Faith Wilding qui a répondu que le fap à CalArts était un programme en pleine élaboration et que *Womanhouse* fit office de projet de fin d'études à évaluer par les enseignantes.

un vieux théâtre que les étudiantes trouvèrent, rénouvèrent et s'approprièrent – et dont les travaux nécessitèrent l'apprentissage de techniques de maçonnerie, de plomberie ou de menuiserie par exemple, domaines jusqu'ici très largement masculins<sup>19</sup>. Par l'enseignement de savoir-faire essentiels à la production et à l'accrochage d'une exposition, les *facilitators* ont permis aux participantes de bâtir une structure dans laquelle elles pouvaient librement verbaliser leurs désirs, leurs craintes, ou leurs révoltes. Somme toute, il s'agissait de délocaliser le domestique et l'intime pour en faire un domaine de création émancipateur requérant une formation à des activités qui sollicitaient les corps des femmes de manière inédite.

Cette approche pédagogique, tant théorique que pratique, envisage le personnel dans son potentiel artistique, esthétique et de manière collective. Ce laboratoire créatif, défini comme un « think tank » par Faith Wilding, fait preuve de radicalité dans le contexte des années 1960, mais affiche surtout la nécessité de produire un art spécifique aux problématiques féminines et de l'exposer<sup>20</sup>. Qu'elles soient plastiques ou de l'ordre de la performance, des œuvres comme *Waiting*<sup>21</sup> ou *Cock and Cunt Play*<sup>22</sup> osèrent mettre des corps de femmes en scène pour dénoncer ou caricaturer les rapports de couples hétéronormés dans un espace ouvert au public.

Comme le précise Wilding, l'apprentissage de nouvelles techniques de construction, la revalorisation de celles considérées comme relevant du *low art* telles que le tissage, la couture, la poterie, mais aussi la révision de l'histoire de l'art et de la littérature du point de vue des femmes, sont autant de facteurs qui permirent aux initiatrices du FAP de reprendre possession de leurs représentations, de leurs expériences et de leur intimité, tout en s'inscrivant dans ce qu'elles considéraient être l'héritage des femmes artistes<sup>23</sup>. D'autre part, certaines des méthodologies encore mobilisées dans des formations comme le *Performance: Design and Practice* de Central Saint Martins (University of the Arts London) prouvent bien son influence sur l'enseignement et l'apprentissage des arts<sup>24</sup>. Ce programme revendique, depuis sa création dans les années 2000, l'expérience individuelle de l'artiste comprise au cœur d'une communauté dont

19 Moira Roth, « Oral History Interview with Suzanne Lacy », dans *Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution*, 16 mars 1990, URL : <https://eastofborneo.org/articles/suzanne-lacy-on-the-feminist-program-at-fresno-state-and-calarts/> [dernier accès : 25.11.2021].

20 « This was all experimental and unorthodox. Now it seems like nothing but then it was very radical. » Wilding/Hershman Leeson, 1990 (note 16).

21 Faith Wilding, *Waiting*, 1972, performance réalisée dans *Womanhouse*, Los Angeles.

22 Janice Lester et Faith Wilding, *Cock and Cunt Play*, 1972, performance réalisée dans *Womanhouse*, Los Angeles.

23 Amy Jin Johnson, « Interview with Faith Wilding by Amy Jin Johnson on “Womanhouse” », 19 avril 2012, Pembroke, Brown University, Rhode Island, URL : [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50oc4e3S3\\_Y&t=1437s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50oc4e3S3_Y&t=1437s) [dernier accès : 01.07.2020]

24 Central Saint Martins est l'une des six écoles rattachées à l'université des Arts de Londres au Royaume-Uni. Le département, créé en 2007, succède à celui de *Theatre Design: Design for Performance* lui-même inauguré en 1989 après une vingtaine d'années sous l'intitulé *Theatre Design*.

les productions informent et incarnent les motivations sociales, culturelles, esthétiques, politiques ou encore identitaires de chacun et chacune<sup>25</sup>. Cette transmission pédagogique et théorique fait de l'histoire du FAP un des modèles de pédagogie artistique inclusive et éternellement radicale mis en œuvre par des femmes artistes et enseignantes.

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<sup>25</sup> Pour une histoire de l'enseignement de la performance, voir Gaye Leigh Green, « The Return of the Body: Performance Art and Art Education », dans *Art Education*, vol. 52, no 1, National Art Education Association, 1999, p. 6-12, URL : <https://doi.org/10.2307/3193779> [dernier accès : 14.03.2022].



# Room for Silence: Voice in the Feminist Classroom

Marijke Appelman

In the Dutch art-school system, the artist-teacher – teaching alongside their own precarious artistic practice – is expected to bring to the classroom their experiences and perspectives as a self-employed artist. Being an artist myself, I had few pedagogical tools when I began my career as an educator. Therefore I was forced to develop these skills by mimicking my own educational upbringing – in learning by doing. Later, after completing substantial hours in the classroom, I was able to slowly evaluate my teachings through consideration of my ‘successful’ endeavours, as well as my conflicts and confrontations with both students and colleagues. It was then that I was able to create room to critically question what it is we do in our classroom and in art school in general.

My own arts education, undertaken in a western European school system, was dominated by white, male, Western viewpoints. This left me with an inability to refer outside of this specific framework and thus with an involuntary tendency to perpetuate a discourse of exclusion. It was this realization that led me to view my teaching as a form of counter-teaching and, ultimately, to discover the feminist classroom. This meant believing that the content of our teaching at (art) school could be approached otherwise: focusing more on women’s lives and experiences in the art world, without being solely about feminism or activism, and seeking neither to nullify existing narratives nor to simply add names to the curriculum. We are all aware of the continuous under- and misrepresentation of women artists, artists of colour, and nonbinary and genderqueer artists. In art schools, the classroom is largely dominated by men, not in terms of student bodies – given the significantly higher number of female students in each classroom we enter – but rather in terms of the ideal values that are attributed to cisgender men.

Within our art schools, we have to continuously acknowledge that there exists no single model for ‘producing’ a good artist. Each individual student needs to explore what school can offer them and how they can personally benefit from their time in the academy. Since there is no all-encompassing formula, self-representation is an important tool in students’ individual journeys to becoming art practitioners. In order for students to navigate their academic trajectories and to cultivate and share their practices, art school should be an affirming space for everyone present.

Unlike educational models that place an emphasis on competition, solitary study, and the teacher’s authority (the model I was brought up in), feminist

pedagogy centres transformative learning as well as building a progressive curriculum that welcomes multi-disciplinarity and gives rise to new modes of critical seeing, thinking, and making. In addition, it aspires to include all voices, to empower individuals, and to stimulate peer-to-peer exchange within group dynamics, seeking thereby to create a consciousness that may lead to future change or novel approaches – in this particular case, with regard to art and the art world context. Feminist pedagogy allows women’s lives, experiences, and methods to become an active part of the curriculum, with social transformation as a goal. This includes introducing themes such as the acknowledgement of privilege and power as well as building consciousness of present and potential future processes of marginalisation. Learning takes the form of making-oriented activities using other(ed) materials in order to build a praxis that values contributions, lives, and histories and aims to create an emancipatory experience for students in a classroom that is a cooperative community.

The development and equal distribution of voice are central themes in feminist theory and therefore became one of the four focal points of my research.<sup>1</sup> This means looking at the students’ voices as tools with which they can respond, speak for themselves, and bring questions and perspectives to the classroom, connecting inner and outer worlds. The feminist emphasis on voice stems from a history – reflective of tendencies still normalised today – in which women have been silenced and overpowered. Personally, when looking back at my education, I recognise this very need to find a voice, which was later amplified by the overall absence or one-sided representation of women’s voices (and stories) in the art world and still leaves me feeling muted by default.

In order to research how students experience voice in the classroom, I organised two focus-group activities called the Infinite Paper Meetings. There, I invited a small group of female and nonbinary students to talk about their experiences with using (their) voices in the classroom. The students were invited personally, followed by an exchange of emails to set a date that would suit everybody. Making it a voluntary activity allowed me to depend on the trust and investment of students whom I had previously had the pleasure of teaching. For the first meeting, I chose students based on their classroom participation, selecting one who was usually ‘silent’, one who was usually ‘loud’, and one who was ‘outspokenly critical’ and therefore represented a middle ground. For the second meeting, I invited two students who participated in numerous extra-curricular activities. I decided to openly share with the students the reasoning behind my selection. I knew this might prescribe their role in the conversation, but this was a risk I was willing to take in an attempt to keep all communication honest and open.

Although I wanted the conversations to be fluid, I used the following questions to guide us when needed:

1 Marijke Appelman, *A Pedagogy-in-Process, The Artist Teacher in the Feminist Classroom*, unpubl. thesis, Piet Zwart Institute Rotterdam, 2020.

- Are you aware of your contributions to classroom conversations?
- Are you aware of how often you are speaking?
- Do you make an effort for other people to speak, especially when you notice they haven't spoken much?
- Do you find it important to listen to others wholeheartedly?
- Do you feel you are learning to understand other people through the exchange that takes place in the classroom?
- Are there any topics that are off-limits for you?

These are loosely based on a series of questions from the *Intersectional Feminist Discussion Toolkit*,<sup>2</sup> created for activists wanting to facilitate a discussion group on intersectional feminism. They turned out to be very helpful, not only in terms of the conversations they provoked during the meetings but also, during all my classroom interactions.

Both Infinite Paper Meetings began with an activity based on the work *Caminhando* (Walking) by the Brazilian painter, sculptor, and artist-teacher Lygia Clark (1920–1988). This is a work that must be experienced through direct action: the cutting of a Möbius strip with a pair of scissors (fig. 1 & fig. 2). This (infinite) paper cutting is a simple task, a 'mindless' activity; as Clark puts it, it "breaks our spatial habits: right-left, obverse-reverse, etc. It makes us live the experience of a limitless time and a continuous space."<sup>3</sup> The collective execution of this work served as the backdrop to our conversation, and it equally brought us into dialogue with a strong role model who has been overlooked in the European art discourse. It engaged the participants in the process of making, the basis of all our educational endeavours within art school as well as within feminist thinking: "It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories."<sup>4</sup> Pedagogy, and particularly the feminist kind, is an embodied and sensuous work, in which materialities are utilised to activate thoughts just as much as the other way around. By using our hands while talking, we simultaneously self-express through the direct action of cutting the piece of paper and through our voices and words.

Although during both meetings there was a collective sense of urgency to share experiences, at times I got the feeling that participants were speaking about subjects for the sake of meeting my expectations. In general, this is something I struggle with in the inherently authoritative role of teacher. Students think of me as being 'politically correct' and try either to please me by being so,

2 Annie Lisle, *Intersectional Feminist Discussion Toolkit*, Camperdown, 2018, p. 5.

3 Lygia Clark, *Caminhando*, Tres Ríos, 1964, pp. 2–3.

4 Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble, Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Durham and London, 2016, p. 12.

- 1 Marijke Appelman, *Cutting Clarks Möbius strips*, 2020, analogue field note photograph from a cutting session with Kamali van Bochove in Rotterdam (NL)



- 2 Marijke Appelman, *Infinite Paper Meeting with Denise and Suelae*, 2020, private 35mm photo documentation at the Willem de Kooning Academy in Rotterdam (NL)

too, or else to annoy me by not. Aside from that fact, it is the predictability of the groups' answers that proved me they suffer similar ways of being silenced and heard. "Coming to voice is not just the act of telling one's experience. It is using that telling strategically – to come to voice so that you can also speak freely about other subjects."<sup>5</sup> The two questions "Are you aware of how often you are speaking?" and "Do you make an effort for other people to speak, especially when you notice they haven't spoken much?" elicited very different answers from each group. In the first group, composed of photography students, not everybody made a conscious effort to allow space for others to speak, but they all agreed that it was important to do so. The fine-art students who made up the second group interpreted speaking as an active interest in the subject of art or the artwork at hand. They suggested that being silent when discussing someone's work amounted to not being interested, and accordingly they preferred more aggressive participation in critique sessions, with emphasis not on who was speaking but on what was being said. I wonder if this has to do with the competitive nature of art in the Western mainstream and the way in which we are taught to assign meaning to works by analysing them.

During the meetings, the participating students moved through subjects and anecdotes quickly, leaving me with a transcription that at first glance lacks any structure. Without me bringing up the subject, the use of mobile phones in the classroom is raised. How could I forget that phones are part of our classroom conversations? Allowing for quick internet searches for information and opening conversations with an 'outside' world, they become significant portals and witnesses. "I am on my phone often. I'm really addicted to my phone." In both conversations, grading systems come up and are critically discussed. Grading is something that I value differently as a teacher compared to when I was a (research) student. I saw the strong influence grades had on my self-esteem and motivation as a student, but from the teacher's perspective I note how they influence and construct power structures – seeming to themselves function as opinionated voices. I have difficulty teaching when it becomes solely about testing.

The conversation lingers, and there is a moment where the participants switch from discussing classroom experiences to a gym visit detailing an encounter with mansplaining. I am happy to hold onto the questions I prepared, but I also feel I should let the conversation evolve. "Listening encompasses unpredictability: to listen, to see, to experience, without making preconditioned judgments, interpretations, or analyses. We could say that the act of mutual listening directs us to that which we do not already know: to listen for the unexpected."<sup>6</sup>

It was within the meetings that I was confronted with my blind focus on helping students find, awaken, and uncover voice. "As artists and educators, we

5 bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, New York, 1994, p. 148.

6 Petra Bauer and Sofia Wiberg, *Rehearsals – On the Politics of Listening*, in Meike Schalk, Thérèse Kristiansson, and Rumia Mazé, *Feminist Futures of Spatial Practice: Materialisms, Activisms, Dialogues, Pedagogies, Projections*, Baunach, 2017, p. 202.

need to assume a much more activist stance and actively build spaces for the articulation of complex, partially unknowable, difficult, painful, deep, rich, felt, and embodied experiences of diverse perceptions of humanity.”<sup>7</sup> Acknowledging voice as power, I began to consciously manage each student’s equal access to that power through equal opportunities to speak and to therefore influence and participate in the classroom. After instating this equal distribution of voice in my own classroom, I soon found myself going even farther by stressing its importance when working with guest lecturers as well as in conversations with colleagues about planning and evaluating lessons. This was a fruitful process in which I learned to stand up for myself – developing my own voice – and to question existing structures, for example, why women were always tasked with taking notes at our staff meetings.

“I don’t think all students want to talk” was, for me, one of the most striking comments made during the Infinite Paper Meetings. This point stands out to me most because it conflicts with my theoretical sources and my newfound belief, to quote Audre Lorde, “that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood. That the speaking profits me, beyond any other effect.”<sup>8</sup> But in this comment I also recognise myself as a student, always trying to be present but not always being able, or even willing, to speak and share.

While I test notions of speaking and silence in the classroom on friends, colleagues, and strangers, I started to realise am so committed to the Western idea of ‘power through speech’ that I have developed a brand-new blind spot. I focus on equal distribution of voice, but what if not talking is just as valid as talking? How do I distribute silence, or simply give room to be still? What about the students’ “right to opacity?”<sup>9</sup>

The articulation between silence and powerlessness is almost common sense within Western culture, an assumption that is reified across literary, progressive academic, and activist contexts. Its equation presumes a political imperative: for an individual or group who is silenced to gain power, they must activate voice in order to resist and transform the conditions of their oppression.<sup>10</sup>

The Infinite Paper Meetings helped me realise that my actions in distributing voice failed to promote the history and culture of students who are (more) intro-

7 Anniina Suominen and Tiina Pusa, “FAQ What? What the FAQ? Where are Feminism and Queer in Finnish Art Education?” in Anniina Suominen and Tiina Pusa (eds.), *Feminism and Queer in Art Education*, Helsinki, 2018, p. 19.

8 Audre Lorde, *I Am Your Sister, Collected and Unpublished Writings of Audre Lorde*, New York, 2009, p. 56.

9 Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, Ann Arbor, MI, 1997.

10 Aimee Carrillo Rowe and Sheena Malhorta, *Silence, Feminism, Power. Reflections at the Edges of Sound*, London, 2013, p. 18.

vert. The equality of quiet students was being denied through my approach. This is something that is becoming more urgent in education today:

Staff/student ratios have progressively worsened. Introvert students are thus forced into large-scale, party-like, company-suffocating classrooms where their voices are often drowned out by loudmouthed Extrovert-Supremacists. This is an ideological attack on the preference for small company by Introvert peoples in an attempt to disempower us.<sup>11</sup>

Speaking is never without fear, but it may also be courageous to choose silence. "From the feminist concept of place, voice and silence must be seen as dynamic and relational. Voice and silence will emerge within the individual as a function of their historical and cultural place and their individual history of specific interactions with specific others."<sup>12</sup>

As I was forced to rediscover and carefully consider silence, the Infinite Paper Meetings surpassed my goal of facilitating a conversation that would not take place otherwise. Silence can be salvation, and teachers should take care when planning voiced participation:

We should not force the pupils to participate in the discussions in our terms, but through ways they are comfortable with. Having personal experience of a certain issue does not mean that a pupil should be obligated to actively participate in discussing that issue, as, for example, marginalized pupils will certainly not reveal their experiences in the spirit of 'sharing'.<sup>13</sup>

We, as teachers, should be aware of the constant (power) imbalance in our classroom and never force students to speak. Silence and voice are equally flexible in their uses, whether in space, as part of teaching, or in conversation. A silent revolt – of not wishing to be seen or to express oneself in words – is not to be confused with absence. To do so would be a mistake comparable to looking at the existing canon of art history and assuming that there have been no women artists: in fact, they are there; they are not absent. To allow them to be there – or maybe rather, to trust that they are there – in silence, is already a lot. Voice and silence do not cancel each other out.

Silence can be a plan rigorously executed

the blueprint of a life

11 Hamjad Ahsan, *Shy Radicals: The Antisystemic Politics of the Militant Introvert*, London, 2017, p. 72.

12 Robyn Fivush, *Voice and Silence: A Feminist Model of Autobiographical Memory*, Atlanta, 2002, p. 8.

13 Larissa Haggrén, "Through Uncertainty and Discomfort. The Struggle of Searching for Anti-Oppressive Practices for Art Education," in Suominen and Pusa (eds.), 2018 (note 7), p. 149.

It is a presence  
it has a history a form

Do not confuse it  
with any kind of absence.<sup>14</sup>

I value how the Infinite Paper Meetings allowed me to test theories and to question assumptions in a series of conversations that gave everybody – including myself – room to wonder. It made me more conscious about creating space for more quiet students either to talk or, from now on, to be silent together. “Silence allows us the space to breathe. It allows us the freedom of not having to exist constantly in reaction to what is said.”<sup>15</sup> And as our understanding develops, so should our syllabi. I will continue to work through my blind spots and actively ask, What are we missing here, at art school today? In an increasingly interconnected and complicated world, we must choose to be intellectually humble and curious people. I believe education can be a vehicle for social change by fostering new habits and sensitivities, and I hold onto an overarching believe we can and must actively create space for everything and everyone within our (class)rooms.

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<sup>14</sup> Adrienne Rich, *The Dream of a Common Language*, Poems 1974-1977, New York, 1978, p. 17.

<sup>15</sup> Rowe and Malhorta, 2013 (note 10), p. 2.

# L'enseignement de l'art lesbien par Terry Wolverton au Woman's Building

Adélie Le Guen

« Il n'est pas de recherche ou d'enseignement sur les femmes qui n'engagent la vie de celles qui y sont impliquées, professeuses, chercheuses, étudiantes... et la vie est plus qu'une vue de l'esprit<sup>1</sup>. »

Nicole Laurin-Frenette (1981)

Défini comme un « centre public pour la culture des femmes » et formé en non-mixité, le Woman's Building se constituait, entre 1972 et 1991, de manière subversive au sein du courant artistique dominant. « Les femmes déclaraient vivre dans une culture différente de celle des hommes, limitée non seulement par la position et les opportunités sociales, mais aussi par des préoccupations, valeurs et visions du monde divergentes<sup>2</sup> », explique Terry Wolverton dans ses mémoires. Fondé en 1973 à Los Angeles par l'artiste Judy Chicago, la designer graphique Sheila Levrant de Bretteville et l'historienne de l'art Arlene Raven, le lieu était aussi décrit comme « une collision de l'histoire, la politique et l'art<sup>3</sup> ». Il offrait trois espaces de galeries consacrés à l'art des femmes (le Womenspace, Grandview Galleries et Gallery 707), une librairie féministe (Sisterhood Bookstore), trois groupes de théâtre (LA Feminist Theater, Women's Improvisational Theater et Women's Performance Project), le National Organization for Women (NOW), un café, et Womantours, une agence de voyages. L'un des objectifs fut de créer un programme alternatif pour l'éducation artistique des femmes. Le Feminist Studio Workshop (FSW) offrait des opportunités à travers divers champs artistiques : écriture, design graphique, impression, performance, vidéo et arts visuels. Au sein de ce programme, les multiples projets développés étaient réunis autour d'une question clé qui orientait leurs créations : « Que souhaites-tu dire en tant qu'artiste et à qui souhaites-tu t'adresser<sup>4</sup> ? » Plongées dans un monde de l'art alors largement préoccupé par des problématiques formelles, les participantes se voyaient

1 Nicole Laurin-Frenette, « Présentation. Les femmes dans la sociologie », dans *Sociologie et Sociétés* 13/2, 1981, p. 3-18, ici p. 7.

2 Terry Wolverton, *Insurgent Muse. Life and Art at the Woman's Building*, San Francisco 2002, p. XV.

3 Ibid., p. 5.

4 Ibid., p. XVI.

encouragées à produire des œuvres inspirées de leur vécu et à communiquer efficacement un message. Ce programme prit fin en 1981 pour des motifs budgétaires et en raison des bouleversements sociaux ayant suivi l'élection du président Ronald Reagan. Poursuivant malgré tout autant que possible la création artistique, les expositions et l'éducation des artistes femmes, le Woman's Building ferma ses portes en 1991<sup>5</sup>.

Née en 1954, Terry Wolverton est l'auteure de dix livres dans les domaines du roman, de la poésie et de la non-fiction. Figure majeure du Woman's Building, elle y consacre treize années de sa vie, entre 1976 et 1989. D'abord étudiante au FSW puis enseignante, directrice de programmation, artiste, publiciste, typographe, elle dirige également le développement de l'activité de l'institution, notamment à travers un travail acharné de collecte de fonds. Selon elle, ce lieu avait une charge symbolique et politique significative :

« Le Woman's Building offrait une étincelle et ceci était son message dans sa lueur : que vous, en tant que femme, vous pouviez aussi être une artiste, et que votre vécu de femme – quelles que soient ses particularités – pouvait attiser votre art, et qu'en retour, l'acte de la création artistique enflammerait cette vie, et enfin, qu'une communauté de femmes, engagées dans ces actes similaires de création et de changement de vie, transformerait les miroirs de la culture en fenêtres à travers lesquelles vous voleriez toutes, comme des étincelles, dans le ciel nocturne<sup>6</sup>. »

5 Ayant peu de ressources, peu d'accès au pouvoir, et faisant face à un déclin de l'intérêt pour la cause féministe, les organisatrices ont, lors des dix dernières années, cherché à faire évoluer le lieu. De plus, menacées par la restructuration de l'édifice pour répondre aux normes antisismiques et par l'augmentation des prix de l'immobilier, Sue Maberry et Terry Wolverton ont envisagé l'achat d'un nouveau bâtiment, qui aurait nécessité la collecte de trois millions de dollars. Malgré l'engagement de Terry Wolverton, et les différentes stratégies mises en œuvre, comme par exemple la sous-location de locaux ou la baisse des effectifs de l'équipe, ce but n'a pas été atteint. Les successeurs au poste de Terry Wolverton n'engagèrent pas une politique aussi poussée de collecte de fonds et diminuèrent peu à peu le budget. En dépit de ces difficultés, les artistes recevaient un soutien permanent dans leur production et leur recherche de solutions. L'entraide permit, même après la fermeture physique du lieu, de maintenir une cohésion des forces et de la création. La constitution d'archives a également été immédiatement mise en place grâce au don de 10 000 diapositives d'œuvres et de documentation historique à l'Otis Art Institute, d'archives vidéo au Long Beach Museum of Art, et de 88 boîtes de documents aux Archives of American Art de Washington. Par ailleurs, dans la continuité du Woman's Building, Terry Wolverton engagea assez rapidement une pensée de la « médecine » par la création, l'amenant à louer un espace en 1997, dont elle décrit ainsi la nature : « un espace pour les écrivain-es pour créer un lien, un laboratoire pour l'invention et le risque » (Wolverton, 2002 (note 2), p. 237). Elle souligne également la volonté d'autres artistes ayant perpétué ces projets de collaboration : Cheri Gaulke, Sue Maberry, Vicki Yerman, Sondra Hale, Betty Ann Brown, Eloise Klein Healy, Sheila Levrant de Bretteville, Suzanne Lacy, Linda Vallejo, Deena Metzger, Arlene Raven.

6 Ibid., p. 6. « The Woman's Building offered up a spark, and this was the message in its glow: that you, a woman, could be an artist too, and that your woman's life – whatever its particulars – could kindle your art, and that in turn, the act of making art would ignite that life, and finally, that a community of women, engaged in the twin acts of making art and making a new life, would transform the mirrors of culture into windows through which you all would fly, like sparks, into the night sky. » (Sauf mention contraire, les traductions ont été réalisées par l'auteure.)

À son arrivée à Grand Rapids au Michigan en 1975, sa scolarité fut complexe et l'adaptation au milieu universitaire difficile. Pour l'aider dans ce qui représentait pour elle une épreuve, elle rechercha une communauté de femmes dans un catalogue, découvrant ainsi un « Feminist Center<sup>7</sup> ». Avant son arrivée à Los Angeles, l'art l'aidait à avancer, mais entretenait aussi à ses yeux certains aspects oppressifs de la société, rendant plus difficile l'affirmation de son identité : « Les arts étaient toujours mon radeau de sauvetage, mais les mers étaient hostiles à mon féminisme, à mon lesbianisme. Je craignais que ces identités ne doivent être jetées par-dessus bord si je voulais rester à flot<sup>8</sup>. »

À 21 ans, après avoir constaté l'incompatibilité entre son identité (femme, féministe et lesbienne) et l'enseignement artistique réactionnaire du Michigan, et après une nouvelle tentative de suicide, elle décide de déménager à Los Angeles en octobre 1976 et de s'investir dans le FSW au Woman's Building. Elle rêve de ce lieu où « femme » et « artiste » n'entrent pas en contradiction, où féminisme et culture constituent des concepts compatibles<sup>9</sup>. Cette nouvelle perspective de création en total accord avec ses attentes lui redonne le souffle pour vivre et la pousse à travailler dur pour payer les frais d'inscription au FSW : « De cette façon, la survivante en moi a vaincu celle qui était si déterminée à mettre fin à sa vie<sup>10</sup>. » De cette renaissance ou « résurrection<sup>11</sup> », elle put redéfinir son passé et changer le cours de son existence en proposant sa contribution à la pédagogie, un an après son arrivée au Woman's Building.

En dialogue avec Arlene Raven (1944-2006), Terry Wolverton trouve une alliée dans l'affirmation de son identité lesbienne, ce qui lui permettra d'évoluer plus sereinement tout au long de son parcours au Woman's Building. En 1977, Arlene Raven présentait, lors d'un workshop d'une journée, ses recherches sur l'histoire de l'art lesbien, mettant en avant de nouveaux modèles et présentant la vie, les œuvres et l'impact culturel global de ces artistes lesbiennes. Romaine Brooks constituait la pierre angulaire de ses cours<sup>12</sup>. Deux mois plus tard, lors d'une réunion organisée chez elle, Arlene Raven annonçait les débuts du Lesbian Art Project (LAP), dans lequel l'étude de la sensibilité et de l'histoire de l'art lesbiennes prendrait toute son ampleur. Elle y rallia un groupe de femmes, dont Terry Wolverton qui, tout en adhérant dès le départ au projet, participait également à la création et à l'exécution des workshops<sup>13</sup>. Ensemble, elles élaborèrent un programme éducatif complet autour de divers sujets introspectifs

7 Ibid., p. 10.

8 Ibid., p. 14. « The arts were still my life raft, but the seas were hostile to my feminism, my lesbianism. I feared these identities would have to be cast overboard if I were to stay afloat. »

9 Ibid., p. 23.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., p. 24.

12 « Lesbian Vision of Romaine Brooks Research Project », Terry Wolverton Papers, Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA Library.

13 « An Open Letter to Lesbian Creators », Terry Wolverton Papers, Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA Library.

et de groupes autoréflexifs : « coming out », « qui est une lesbienne ? », « l'amour et la sexualité lesbiens », « les lesbiennes et d'autres féministes dans le mouvement des femmes », « l'homophobie », etc.<sup>14</sup>. Avant de pouvoir entamer un tel processus sous forme d'exutoire, les multiples questionnements de Terry Wolverton ont été particulièrement révélateurs du sentiment de vulnérabilité ressenti par les femmes arrivant au FSW :

« L'une de nous est-elle équipée pour entreprendre cela ? Sommes-nous suffisamment honnêtes avec nous-mêmes, avons-nous suffisamment confiance les unes envers les autres ? Sommes-nous capables de lire le contenu de nos interactions au moment même où nous nous y engageons ? Et si c'est le cas, comment une telle observation étudiée modifie-t-elle le contenu de nos comportements<sup>15</sup> ? »

Néanmoins, ayant intériorisé la devise féministe « le personnel est politique », Terry Wolverton souligne au sein du collectif le besoin primordial d'« utiliser nos propres vies comme une base à l'introspection, nos propres expériences en tant que lesbiennes comme fondation de notre théorie<sup>16</sup> ». Au gré d'expérimentations artistiques et éducatives alternatives, la mise en commun des échanges entre Arlene Raven et Terry Wolverton a donné lieu à un sens du désapprentissage, de la déconstruction et de la recherche de nouvelles représentations identitaires.

### **Désapprendre grâce au Program of Sapphic Education : un enseignement mutuel**

Des introspections menées par Arlene Raven et Terry Wolverton émergent en particulier le sentiment d'étrangeté ou de bizarrerie (« *feeling of queerness* ») et celui d'isolement face aux oppressions vécues au sein de la société hétérosexiste. Pour cela, l'enseignement défendu permettra d'accompagner les jeunes artistes dans leurs explorations et de les amener à se réclamer de la communauté queer, qui transforme en une force le sentiment d'exclusion engendré par la société. Cette revendication du mot « queer » permet de nommer le problème pour pouvoir en discuter. « Pour embrasser cette étrangeté (ou « *queerness* ») il faut embrasser l'isolement, la marginalisation et l'exil<sup>17</sup>. » Terry Wolverton

14 « Some Topics for Lesbian Consciousness-Raising Groups », Terry Wolverton Papers, Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA Library.

15 Wolverton, 2002 (note 2), p. 61. « Are any of us equipped to undertake this? Are we sufficiently honest with ourselves, do we have enough trust in one another? Are we capable of reading the content of our interactions at the same moment we are engaging them? And if so, how does such studied observation alter the content of our behaviors? »

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid., p. 67.

en tire une certaine forme de résilience et de fierté, rendue possible grâce à la création d'un collectif de confiance, qui s'est avéré une aide précieuse pour surmonter la haine de soi-même, l'homophobie intériorisée et ainsi pouvoir affirmer pleinement son lesbianisme. Il s'agit aussi de dépasser les peurs et les incompréhensions créées par le monde extérieur, en prenant plus de responsabilités et d'autonomie. La mise en place de projets au LAP, vécue par Terry Wolverton comme une « mission », un « objectif »<sup>18</sup>, a contribué au renversement des manières de faire, tant au sein de l'administration que de la création. Dans sa recherche de nouveaux modèles institutionnels et de pouvoir, l'idée de désapprendre le fruit de longues années d'enseignements exclusivement masculins se fait jour. Le désapprentissage (« *unlearning*<sup>19</sup> ») passe par la prise de conscience que les hommes ne sont pas les seuls architectes de l'histoire, de la culture, de la philosophie et de la science, mais que les femmes jouent un rôle majeur dans le développement de la civilisation et qu'elles sont capables de tout. En ce sens, le terme « queer » fut très rapidement employé au LAP, dès 1976. Selon Cheri Gaulke, il correspondait à ce besoin des artistes de « redéfinir les choses, de rompre avec les moules et sortir des vieilles définitions<sup>20</sup> ». En juillet 1978, Terry Wolverton précise :

« L'éducation féministe est le rétablissement de cette amnésie qui a effacé la femme de notre cosmologie. Une fois que nous avons éliminé ces erreurs, nous découvrons de nouvelles informations sur la conscience féminine. En récupérant notre héritage, nous découvrons des sources de sagesse ancienne : le pouvoir de la connaissance intuitive et la valeur d'apprendre de notre expérience subjective<sup>21</sup>. »

Il s'agit de dessiner de nouvelles conclusions et cela ne sera possible que dans un espace intime et sécurisé, que propose notamment le Program of Sapphic Education. Ce dernier s'inspire du modèle ancestral de Sappho, qui créa, à Mytilène, ville de l'île grecque Lesbos, une école pour les femmes « impliquant le développement personnel par la créativité, l'élaboration d'une communauté et la célébration du savoir et de la sensibilité des femmes<sup>22</sup> ». Terry Wolverton s'est appuyée sur cette structure éducative totale et a ainsi élaboré plusieurs

18 Ibid., p. 68.

19 Terry Wolverton, « Feminist Education », dans *Spinning Off*, vol. 1, no 6, 1978, s.p.

20 « Dyke Talk, or "Political Lesbianism" and Queer Feminist Art (History). Amelia Jones in Dialogue with Cheri Gaulke, A.L. Steiner, and Terry Wolverton », dans Amelia Jones et Erin Silver, (éd.) *Otherwise. Imagining Queer Feminist Art Histories*, Manchester 2016, p. 160-174, ici p. 160.

21 Wolverton, 1978 (note 19), s.p. : « Feminist education is recovery from that amnesia which has erased female from our cosmology. Once we have shed these fallacies, we discover new information about feminine consciousness. As we reclaim our heritage, we uncover sources of ancient wisdom: the power of intuitive knowledge and the value of learning from our subjective experience. »

22 « The Lesbian Art Project. Program of Sapphic Education, 1978/79 », dans Woman's Building Records, Archives of American Art, boîte 10 dossier 40 : « A school for women involving self-development through creativity, building community, and celebrating female knowledge and sensibility. »

« positions et fonctions archétypales », des sortes de guides déterminants pour remplir les missions de ce projet : l'Organisatrice, la Visionnaire, l'Artiste, la Mentor, la Mère et l'Amoureuse (fig. 1). Ces six idéogrammes représentent une « tentative d'articuler une nouvelle vision de la communauté lesbienne,



1 Terry Wolverton, *Les six idéogrammes pour le Program of Sapphic Education*, 1978

de définir les rôles apparents et nécessaires pour rendre possible le travail du groupe<sup>23</sup> ». Aussi, Terry Wolverton cherche, tout en les encourageant, à structurer cette « famille alternative », nommée aussi « communauté utopique », afin que chacune puisse y trouver sa place<sup>24</sup>. Le groupe se compose de Terry Wolverton, Arlene Raven, Cheryl Swannack, Bia Lowe, Nancy Fried, Clusf, et Jere Van Syoc, qui sont toutes spécifiquement rattachées à ces figures archétypales par Terry Wolverton dans ses mémoires<sup>25</sup>. Le Program of Sapphic Education met en œuvre et développe les compétences et les processus créatifs du groupe tout en s'attachant à inventer de nouveaux modèles et concepts, qui suivent le cycle saisonnier de la Terre<sup>26</sup>, comme pour suivre le rythme des corps : à l'automne, « découverte de soi et soi en communauté » ; à l'hiver, « travail en développement – recherche – étude – renforcement des compétences – apprentissage » ; au printemps, « manifestation » ; et à l'été, « plonger dans le monde »<sup>27</sup>. Chacune de ces périodes thématiques se déploie à travers une pluralité d'activités comme des workshops, des séances de *consciousness-raising*<sup>28</sup>,

23 Wolverton, 2002 (note 2), p. 66.

24 Ibid., p. 72.

25 Ibid., p. 70.

26 « The Lesbian Art Project. Program of Sapphic Education, 1978/79 », (note 22) et Wolverton, 2002 (note 2), p. 69. « We've adopted a model of seasonal education first developed by artist Jere Van Syoc and philosopher Linda Smith in the Women, World, and Wonder program at Thomas Jefferson College, wherein the activities of learning are geared to the mood or meaning of the time of year. »

27 « The Seasonal Approach », Terry Wolverton Papers, Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, ucla Library.

28 Grâce aux séances de *consciousness-raising* qui prennent forme au Feminist Art Program, les fondatrices et enseignantes proposent un premier procédé libérateur et moteur de la création. Il s'agit d'un processus de communication au cours duquel les femmes s'assoient en cercle et où chacune prend la parole de façon équitable, sans interruption, pour exprimer son expérience, pendant que les autres participantes écoutent attentivement. Les groupes sont la plupart du temps sans hiérarchie, sans directrice, privilégiant ainsi « une responsabilité équitable pour le développement du groupe ». Au sein de cette atmosphère

des cours d'écriture, d'éducation féministe à l'histoire de l'art, la pratique du graphisme ou de la vidéo.

Terry Wolverton créa plusieurs cours consacrés à l'écriture lesbienne, des workshops, comme *An Oral Herstory of Lesbianism* (commencé en hiver et produit au printemps) et *Steppin' with the Stars/Feminist Astrology*<sup>29</sup>, des dialogues sur le féminisme et le lesbianisme, des rituels magiques, des partages d'œuvres et toutes activités structurées autour de la question « qu'est-ce qu'un art lesbien ? ». Projet se déroulant sur une durée de un an, ce programme a été organisé par Terry Wolverton, endossant le rôle de l'Organisatrice, celle qui élabore le calendrier et les budgets, prévoit les événements et écrit les communiqués de presse, mais aussi celle qui s'inquiète<sup>30</sup>. Plus qu'un enseignement, le Program of Sapphic Education a été le lieu d'un dépassement des principes patriarcaux. Les femmes ont mis en place un accompagnement non hiérarchique où la prise de risque et la vulnérabilité engagent sensiblement leur combat contre les discriminations lesbiennes. Terry Wolverton nomme cette communauté holistique « *peership*<sup>31</sup> », une alliance caractérisée par l'entraide et la solidarité. Elle permet aux femmes de se confronter à leurs déformations patriarcales induisant une vision erronée de leur identité, ainsi que de passer par la rage individuelle pour progresser vers la synergie et la survie du groupe.

### **La communauté lesbienne dans l'exécution : *An Oral Herstory of Lesbianism***

Les performances encourageaient les femmes à explorer des personnages alternatifs pour réinventer leurs représentations d'elles-mêmes au monde. Terry Wolverton explique notamment qu'elle avait besoin au cours de sa deuxième année au FSW de se masculiniser (« *butch up* ») pour être prise au sérieux<sup>32</sup>. Deux photographies de 1977 montrent cette identification de l'artiste à ces représentations iconographiques de la « *butch*<sup>33</sup> » et de la femme « *fem* » (abréviation de « *feminine* »). Elles émergent dans les années 1940 dans les bars lesbiens de la classe ouvrière aux États-Unis pour désigner les lesbiennes masculines et féminines, mais répondent également à une vogue des garçons

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sans jugement, les femmes prennent conscience des points communs des oppressions vécues, ce qui leur permet d'analyser les causes et les effets de cette oppression à une échelle sociale et non plus seulement personnelle. Se trouvent ici les racines du slogan « le personnel est politique », qui marque les années 1970. Voir Wolverton, 1978 (note 19), s.p.

29 « lap Program of Sapphic Education », in *Woman's Building Records*, Archives of American Art, boîte 10 dossier 40.

30 Wolverton, 1978 (note 19), p. 70.

31 Terry Wolverton, « Lesbian Art Project », dans *Heresies* 7, 1979, p. 14-18, ici p. 17.

32 Wolverton, 2002 (note 2), p. 46.

33 Dans la sous-culture lesbienne, « *butch* » est un terme pour désigner une femme lesbienne aux traits, aux comportements, aux perceptions de soi ou encore aux styles apparentés à une manière masculine.

en France dans les années 1920, des femmes androgynes (Mathilde de Morny (1863-1944) ou Radclyffe Hall (1880-1943)) et des lesbiennes féminines (Djuna Barnes (1892-1982) et Natalie Barney (1876-1972)). Auteure étatsunienne et créatrice d'un théâtre personnel sur la sexualité lesbienne<sup>34</sup>, Natalie Barney avait rassemblé à son époque une communauté de femmes artistes indépendantes – pour la plupart lesbiennes. L'intersubjectivité qu'elle explorait inspira les cinq artistes du Lesbian Art Project<sup>35</sup>. Regroupées sous le nom de « Natalie Barney Collective », elles performant sous des aspects contrastés l'image de la lesbienne : d'un côté la représentation de la *butch* et de l'autre de la *fem*, dont les sujets sont identifiables par leurs tenues vestimentaires, leurs positions et leurs attitudes. Au cours d'une séance photographique, les artistes explorent leur sensibilité de femmes lesbiennes, appliquent leur vision, leur esprit critique et théorique sur leur identité propre. Comme le mentionnait Judith Butler dans son ouvrage *Trouble dans le genre* : « Dans le cas des deux identités, butch et fem, l'idée même d'une identité originale ou naturelle est mise en question<sup>36</sup>. » Les participantes poussent ainsi les stéréotypes lesbiens à leur paroxysme pour les plier et se les approprier. Mais surtout, elles affirment la volonté de pouvoir produire un art audacieux qui leur correspond, d'être comprises et entendues à une période où même certaines lesbiennes féministes ne croient officiellement pas à l'identité *butch/fem*<sup>37</sup>. Terry Wolverton tire de cette expérience un enseignement essentiel : « Il est clair que nous ne nous contenterons pas d'étudier simplement l'esthétique des lesbiennes ; nous sommes également déterminées à exercer notre influence sur elles<sup>38</sup>. »

Le Natalie Barney Collective s'achève en 1978, sans pour autant marquer la fin des événements organisés par le groupe. Le cycle de performances *An Oral Herstory of Lesbianism* est ainsi créé en mai 1979. Douze participantes y ont contribué sous la direction de Terry Wolverton. Sur l'affiche, créée par l'artiste graphique Bia Lowe, les femmes articulent les lettres du mot « LESBIAN » comme pour « articuler leur identité<sup>39</sup> » (fig. 2). Bia Lowe voyait également, à travers cet acte, une manière pour elles de faire leur coming out<sup>40</sup>. Prémisses de la performance, l'affiche annonce la couleur en montrant les façons singulières dont les femmes s'approprient ce terme. Au cours des dix semaines de workshops préparatoires à l'hiver 1978, Terry Wolverton a dirigé un enseignement orienté vers le

34 Sue-Ellen Case, *Feminism and Theatre*, Basingstoke 1988, p. 50.

35 Wolverton, 2002 (note 2), p. 57. « An endeavor consisting of equal parts art historical research, community building, activism, group therapy, heavy partying, and the kind of life-as-art performance sensibility inherited from the Fluxus artists and so prevalent in southern California art of the 1970s. »

36 Judith Butler, *Trouble dans le genre*, Paris 2005, p. 241.

37 Wolverton, 2002 (note 2), p. 60.

38 Ibid., p. 59. « It is clear that we will not be content to merely study the aesthetics of lesbians; we are determined to wield our influence over them as well. »

39 Ibid., p. 83.

40 Entretien de Bia Lowe par le Otis College of Art and Design pour l'exposition « Doin' It in Public: Feminism and Art at the Woman's Building » (1973-1991) à la Ben Maltz Gallery, 1<sup>er</sup> octobre 2011-28 janvier 2012 : « The experience of coming out, it seems like the poster would do that. »



développement des compétences et des techniques performatives, la relation de confiance entre les participantes<sup>41</sup>, et l'exploration des oppressions vécues via le partage de leurs histoires personnelles<sup>42</sup>. L'artiste avait déjà expérimenté ce processus féministe collaboratif au théâtre, à Toronto, lorsqu'elle fonda le Toronto Feminist Theater Group. Tout au long des trois mois de préparation, les étudiantes Jerri Allyn, Nancy Angelo, Leslie Belt, Cheri Gaulke, Chutney Lu Gunderson, Brook Hallek, Sue Maberry, Louise Moore, Arlene Raven, Catherine Stifter, Cheryl Swannack et Christine Wong ont sondé leur identité à travers des rituels, des jeux théâtraux d'improvisation, des fantômes guidés, des exercices d'écriture et des séances de *consciousness-raising*<sup>43</sup>. Terry Wolverton parle dans ses mémoires d'un exercice en particulier au cours duquel chacune d'elles, individuellement, devait s'identifier à une partie du corps, puis réfléchir collectivement à la représentation de leur corps commun. À partir de leurs réflexions et de leurs expérimentations, l'objectif de ces exercices était de constituer une matière artistique et politique afin d'écrire une narration cohérente lors des performances produites au printemps 1979<sup>44</sup>.

Les performances associaient des monologues, des dialogues, et des pièces d'ensemble minutieusement chorégraphiées. Elles ont été des occasions pour évoquer le sentiment de marginalisation, le coming out auprès de leur famille (Sue Maberry, *Coming Out to Mother*; Arlene Raven, *On Coming On*), la vie en communauté dans les bars lesbiens (*Bar Scene*), le sport (*Athletic Girls*), les défis d'une relation intime (Sue Maberry, *High School Crush*; Jerri Allyn, Cheri Gaulke, Brook Hallek, *The Ice Queen*), les abus sexuels (Leslie Belt, *Jump Rope/Incest*) ou encore les clichés sur le lesbianisme (*Standards/Acceptance*). Autant de représentations et d'histoires qui, comme sur l'affiche, marquent les portraits et les identités des femmes (fig. 3). Participant à l'étendue des significations et des sensibilités lesbiennes, elles étaient toutefois conscientes de ne s'adresser qu'à une petite partie de cette communauté, majoritairement blanche et de même génération. La mutualité de ces dialogues et de ces expériences contribuait à transmettre à chacune un enseignement, en interchangeant les rôles de mentor et d'élève.

41 Wolverton, 2002 (note 2), p. 108.

42 Terry Wolverton et Christine Wong, « An Oral Herstory of Lesbianism », dans *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies: Lesbian History* 4/3, 1979, p. 52-53, ici p. 52. « We began the project with a series of ten workshops which were designed to teach performance skills and techniques, create group trust and bonding, and explore issues of lesbianism by examining our own experiences, out of which we could generate material for the play. The wide range of opinions and experience shared in this supportive environment expanded our own views of lesbianism, and hence, the knowledge of ourselves that we wanted to share with our audience. »

43 Wolverton, 2002 (note 2), p. 84.

44 Ibid., p. 108.



3 *On Coming On*, écrit par Arlene Raven. De Gauche à droite : Cheryl Swannack, Cheri Gaulke, Nancy Angelo, Chutney Lu Gunderson et Jerri Allyn. Pour *An Oral Herstory of Lesbianism*, produit par Terry Wolverton, mai 1979. Los Angeles, Otis College of Art and Design Library, Woman's Building Ephemera

À travers une pratique de « théâtre personnel<sup>45</sup> » tel qu'il a été nommé par Sue-Ellen Case, il s'agissait donc de briser le silence<sup>46</sup>, d'entendre la voix des lesbiennes, très longtemps ignorées, discriminées et supprimées du champ artistique, afin d'inspirer d'autres femmes lesbiennes. Finalement, ces performances au Woman's Building s'apparentent à une véritable stratégie de survie. Associant leurs énergies individuelles, l'intersubjectivité a conduit les artistes à développer leurs consciences lesbiennes, à créer les bases d'une nouvelle vision artistique sans hiérarchie et à diffuser activement les théories féministes de l'époque. Imprégnée du modèle saphique, Terry Wolverton pousse l'idée jusqu'au mythe : « Nous sommes engagées à créer un mythe de la lesbienne en tant qu'artiste, et [...], étourdies par l'énormité, l'excentricité et la joie de notre

45 Case, « Personal Theatre », 1988 (note 34), p. 46. « It's a dialogue built on mutuality and intersubjectivity, eliminating any sense of formal distance or representation. Personal dialogue is not removed from life, so it operates not by mimesis but by enactment. It is an engaged dialogue, rooted everyday life, rather than a mimetic dialogue, aimed at lasting repetition. »

46 Wolverton/Wong, 1979 (note 42), p. 53.

tâche, nous vivons à l'intérieur de ce mythe<sup>47</sup>. » En soi, ce fut une manière d'étendre la critique à « l'hétérosexualité imposée » dont parle Adrienne Rich, déplaçant l'image des lesbiennes « de la marge au centre » de la société<sup>48</sup>. Ce travail de sensibilisation, de désapprentissage et d'encouragement à la création pour guérir de ses maux, Terry Wolverton le poursuit toujours, non plus dans l'art de la performance, mais grâce à la poésie et au roman<sup>49</sup>. Elle diffusa ainsi tous ses enseignements du Woman's Building auprès des personnes marginalisées (communauté LGBT, personnes racisées, personnes pauvres et de la classe ouvrière, victimes d'inceste) dans la constitution d'ateliers d'écriture. Le langage perpétue le travail de guérison de soi, participe à la mémoire et au partage d'expériences tout en dispensant une « médecine de l'encouragement<sup>50</sup> ».

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47 Wolverton, 2002 (note 2), p. 83. « We are engaged in creating a myth of the lesbian as artist, and for that afternoon, giddy with the enormity and eccentricity and joy of our task, we are alive inside that myth. »

48 Cité dans Case, « Radical Feminism and Theatre », 1988 (note 34), p. 75, 79.

49 Wolverton, 2002 (note 2), p. 237.

50 Voir Terry Wolverton, « Medecine, 2001 », 2002 (note 2), p. 235-240.

# Community-Based Feminist Film Teaching in the 'Long Seventies'

Ariel Dougherty

Community-based media and its teaching are global phenomena, really a movement. As a teacher-practitioner, I have been directly involved with and have observed this movement since 1969 largely in the U.S. While still in college, I used my newly learned film skills to teach kids in an after-school film workshop. One of the most dynamic leaders in this community-media movement, DeeDee Halleck, has created an interactive map marking where many different types of community-media efforts have cropped up around the globe.<sup>1</sup> My own early involvement with community media paralleled the emergence of the Women's Liberation Movement. Participation in and exposure to the emergent feminist culture have framed my thinking as a filmmaker, teacher, and advocate of community media.

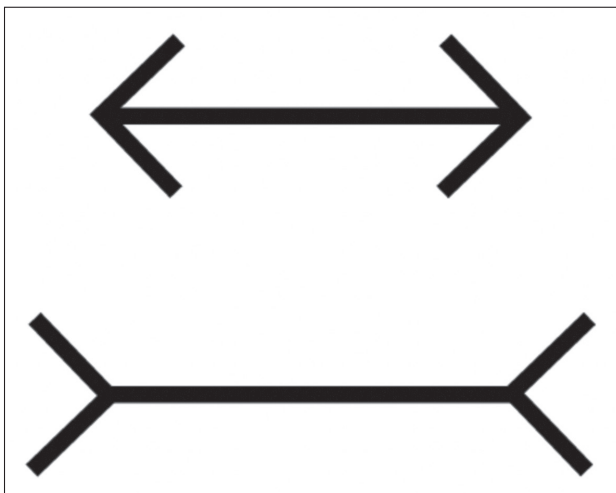
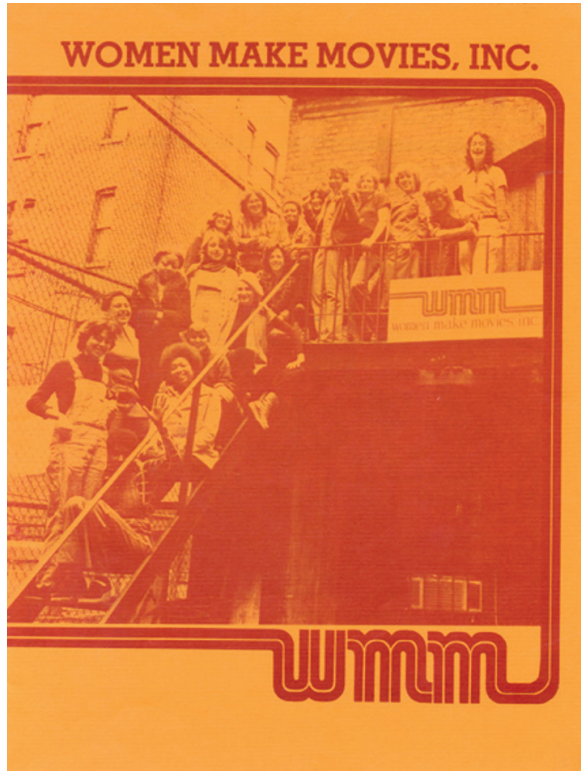
This essay – due to time and travel limitations – focuses on the girl/woman/lesbian-centred film teaching programmes that have cropped up in the United States since the late 1990s. I also look back at 1970s media initiatives for women. In one such programme, Women Make Movies, I was centrally involved. I have conducted scores of oral interviews with many of these organizations' founders, among others around these groups and a few funders. In conclusion, I present brief examples of community-media programmes in the global context and refer to a few media-policy efforts in other countries, an area where the U.S. lags dreadfully behind (fig. 1).

Visual perception in humans is our most developed, or heightened, sense. Babies see their world, recognize the important people in their lives, long before they formulate words. Heavy emotional lessons are visually absorbed if we see our father strike our mother. In a world where nearly all filmic images reflect the constructs of white, Western, male thinking, power relationships, and dominance, as well as masculine interactions and fantasies, to see views of women by women is radical and radicalizing (fig. 2).

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1 Waves of Change global community-media map, <https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?ie=UTF&msa=0&mid=1IsP9fVyndWihHTf3G3njf6jHO6g&ll=-10.338945349568741%2C25.844588841981327&z=2> [accessed: 23.02.2022].

- 1 Cover of the 1976 Women Make Movies, Inc. catalog. The 1975 photograph taken by Arlene Gottfried on the steps and balcony of WMM's hayloft workshop, shows the enlarged participation within the community film teaching organization. Outreach to the National Black Feminist Organization had occurred as WMM hoped to collaborate on a film with the group. Collection of Ariel Dougherty



- 2 The Muller-Lyer visual illusion dates back to 1889, when the German psychiatrist and sociologist first published an article in *Archiv für Anatomie und Physiologie, Physiologische Abteilung*. One line due to the placement of the arrowheads appears longer while in actuality they are the same

## The Women's Liberation Movement

Cultural bias shapes our interpretation of what we perceive. Westerners tend to read the first line in the above graph as being longer. Those from cultures that do not use right angles (i.e. non-carpentered cultures) are not as easily fooled by such an illusion. A classic study by Segall et al. (1963) underscored these cultural perceptions.<sup>2</sup> Making films is not a panacea for all women's economic, social, and cultural ills. But the creation of cinematic stories that have women at their centre and show a fuller, more accurate engagement with women in society can have a large impact on the success of women's changing roles in a culture.

When the Women's Liberation Movement began to flourish in the early 1970s, all kinds of women-oriented teaching programmes emerged in the U.S. and especially at women's centres: auto mechanics, karate classes, and silk-screening, just to name a few. For those of us who were artists, teaching other women artistic skills was intuitively natural. Teaching the many art forms via new feminist cultural initiatives in existing venues where we had already been working came initially from conviction. Soon, however, it became clear that the need for women-designated spaces was paramount.

Among the many feminist cultural entities,<sup>3</sup> the Woman's Building (WB) and its myriad of programmes are best known *because they are best documented*. A cadre of WB participants actively created histories – videos and books – about a decade ago in conjunction with Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles. A series of their testimonials on video are available on YouTube.<sup>4</sup>

WB initiatives actively used the early half-inch portapak to make videos as part of consciousness raising, a core component of their Feminist Studio Workshop's teaching. Taking video recordings of events was central to their work. Feminist art critic Lucy Lippard called the WB “the capital of cultural feminism, where the spiritual and political met and rowdily merged.”<sup>5</sup>

The actual teaching of video production in its own right came a bit later, in 1976, under a new, affiliated group, the Los Angeles Women's Video Center (LAWVC). LAWVC was founded by Nancy Angelo, Annette Hunt, and Candace Compton. Jerri Allyn joined the collective a year later, in 1977. Through 1980, video workshops were offered at the WB in summer and extension

2 Segall et al. (1963) cited in Simon Barthelme, “Culture and Perception, Part II: The Muller-Lyer Illusion,” in *International Cognition and Culture Institute*, 2009, <http://cognitionandculture.net/blogs/simons-blog/culture-and-perception-part-ii-the-muller-lyer-illusion/> [accessed: 23.02.2022].

3 In the early 1980s at Women's Studio Workshop, where I worked 1979–1987, we did a survey of the approximately 350 U.S. feminist cultural/media groups. Cf. <https://www.scribd.com/doc/139761091/A-Women-s-Arts-NEA-Early-1980s> [accessed: 23.02.2022].

4 Deena Metzger, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, “Woman's Building History,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52ZvbZNnMMI> [accessed: 23.02.2022].

5 Lucy Lippard, “Introduction,” in Sondra Hale and Terry Wolverton (eds.), *From Site to Vision: The Woman's Building in Contemporary Culture*, Los Angeles, 2011, p. 12.

programmes,<sup>6</sup> as well as within the Feminist Studio Workshop, a college-accredited programme.

Some of LAWVC's video teaching centred around taping activist performances like *In Mourning and Rage*, a dramatically staged performance on the steps of Los Angeles's City Hall highlighting escalating violence against women, and *Record Companies Drag Their Feet*, an action against billboards and record covers depicting demeaning images of women. Various members participated with International Videoleters, a news and cultural exchange among feminist media groups largely from nine U.S. communities.<sup>7</sup> Other productions, such as *Nun and the Deviant* (1976), presented a mix of autobiography, expansion of one's personae, and assertions of a new identity for women.<sup>8</sup> During the period when the WB had contracts through the Comprehensive Educational Training Act, in 1978 and 1979, LAWVC produced several public service announcements that were considered far "too creative." Participants in LAWVC during this period also made three documentaries on different Los Angeles women's organizations.

Crafting the principles of feminist education was an essential development that evolved within and drove the WB programmes. In 1977 Faith Wilding, a multi-disciplinary artist and a founding member of the Feminist Art Program, the precursor to the WB, created this list:<sup>9</sup>

- 1) Consciousness raising
- 2) Building a feminist context and environment
- 3) Female role models
- 4) Permission to be themselves and encouragement to make art out of their own experiences

She later added:

- 5) Collaborative and collective work
- 6) Exploring the hierarchies of materials and high/low art practices, as well as recovering the positive values of denigrated and marginalized practices.

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6 Extension programmes are university classes offered for community members interested in learning new skills or advancing their knowledge and are not directed towards a degree.

7 Ariel Dougherty's "Learn/View/Document" is an ever-evolving compilation of participating groups and currently known tapes that have survived of the experimental video-exchange project International Videoleters (1975-1977). Cf. <https://www.scribd.com/document/228461838/International-VIDEOLETTERS-Learn-View-Document-Study> [accessed: 23.02.2022].

8 A more extensive list of tapes from LAWVC with some short descriptions can be viewed in the 2011 presentation "Doin' It on Tape: Video from the Woman's Building." Cf. <https://www.alternativeprojections.com/screening-series/doin-it-on-tape-video-from-the-woman-s-building/> [accessed: 23.02.2022].

9 Marguerite Elliot and Maria Karas (eds.), *The Woman's Building and Feminist Art Education, 1973-1991*, Los Angeles, 2011, p. 40.

Such feminist pedagogy emerged from practice. Jerri Allyn emphasized: “We were so about form and content, like, looking at whatever you’re doing. What’s the most appropriate form? Where’s the most appropriate place? [...] especially based on who you want to reach.”<sup>10</sup>

About 350 videotapes existed when the WB closed in 1991. Having been housed for almost two decades in a member’s home, the tapes were literally out on the curb for trash pick-up when the final word came that the Getty Research Institute had accepted the WB materials into their collection. Not all of the 350 reel-to-reel, half-inch tapes survived the decades intact to be successfully transferred into digital formats.

### The Women's Video Festival

In New York City in 1972, Steina Vasulka tasked Susan Milano with creating a women’s video festival.<sup>11</sup> As the female third of the founders<sup>12</sup> of The Kitchen – the hot spot where video-art exhibition first emerged in the U.S. – Vasulka was alarmed that women’s work was not getting shown. Men with their video works were rushing to present their visions in this new art form. Meanwhile, women seemed to be holding back their tapes. “By Steina Vasulka’s estimate at least a third of the people making video in the early seventies in New York were women.”<sup>13</sup>

Over the seven days of this first festival, all twenty-five of the works that had been submitted were presented;<sup>14</sup> Milano felt a selection process to be superfluous.<sup>15</sup> Among the attendees was Margot Lewitin, one of the founding members of the Women’s Interart Center (WIC), a multi-disciplinary arts spot located in the Hell’s Kitchen neighborhood, far west on 52nd Street. Lewitin snagged Milano to come and teach video at WIC. In her teaching, Milano underscored the “temperamental nature of the electronics [...]. You had to be very mindful of 1/2” videos quirks!” As a result, students in WIC video workshops did monthly equipment-maintenance checks (fig. 3). As Milano recalls:

In the first programme, we focused on atypical work situations for women. Lewitin joined the class. There was a woman who worked at TV Guide.

<sup>10</sup> Ariel Dougherty, audio interview with Jerri Allyn, 11 November 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Ariel Dougherty, audio interview (via phone) with Susan Milano, 12 October 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Shridhar Bapat and Woody Vasulka, Steina’s husband, were the other two founders.

<sup>13</sup> Alexander Keefe, “Aleph Null: Shridhar Bapat’s Undergrounds,” in *Bidoun*, 2010, <https://www.bidoun.org/articles/aleph-null> [accessed: 05.03.2022].

<sup>14</sup> Catalogue of the September 1972 Women’s Video Festival, in *Electronic Arts Intermix*, <https://www.eai.org/webpages/1174> [accessed: 05.03.2022].

<sup>15</sup> Dougherty/Milano, 2016.



- 3 Christine Noschese (left) and Susan Milano (right) run a test with the ½" video equipment prior to a production shoot in a video class at Women's Interarts Center, 1973, Photo by Ann E. Volkes

A number of that first group were feminist activists. Ann Volkes was also in that class, as was Tracy Fitz. Oh! And Carolyn Kresky.<sup>16</sup>

*The Priest and the Pilot* was the video they produced out of the first year's programme. The tape focuses on Jeannette Piccard and Helen Jost, who were each pursuing careers which were, at that time, considered unusual for women.

1976 was the last year in which Susan Milano taught video at WIC. All this time, she was organizing and curating the annual Women's Video Festival. The last was in 1980. Wendy Clarke, daughter of filmmaker Shirley Clarke, taught next at WIC. From her classes emerged a series of dynamic installations. Milano was emphatic:

*What's on Tonight?* was, in my opinion, the most wonderful installation ever put on in New York City, that only very few people ever saw. In 1975, during the festival, we screened the first set of International Videoleters.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Carolyn Kresky did a great video taking one week of CBS News shows (circa 1973 or 1974?), editing the two and one-half hours down to just the segments that discussed women. It was very short! I have not seen this eye-opening piece emerge in any screenings of today.

At WIC, we held these monthly screenings for about two years. That was one of the most innovative, amazing video projects of the period.<sup>17</sup>

Milano and I have recently discussed how relevant much of this 1970s work is today. For instance, Rochelle Shulman's *Women Who've Lived through Illegal Abortions* (1973, 15m), shown at both the 1973 and 1976 Women's Video Festival, presents testimony by women in New York State, aiming to prevent the repeal of the newly liberalized abortion laws. Today, the U.S. Supreme Court could benefit from a screening. *Lesbian/Feminism* by Norma Pontes and Rita Moreira (1974, 30m), Brazilians who were living in New York, was shown at the festival in 1975. It offers a political synthesis of the Women's Movement in New York, exploring the relationship between lesbianism and feminism.<sup>18</sup> Milano has retained dozens of these videos from the festivals because they were selected for tours in the period. She is actively working on their restoration and on future screenings.

### Women Make Movies

From 1969 to 1972, in the first phase of Women Make Movies (WMM) – which we saw as a ‘production arm’ of the Women's Liberation Movement – Sheila Paige and I produced four films.<sup>19</sup> We earned our livings through teaching youth filmmaking at the Young Filmmakers Foundation. A considerable perk was that we had access to the upright moviolas, used for film editing, on nights and weekends.<sup>20</sup> Especially with our quirky six-minute dramatic short *The Trials of Alice Crimmins*, we went out into neighborhoods in Brooklyn and Queens to reach the public. We set up a small screen on sidewalks and showed the film as people came home from work. When an educational distributor told us that “women are not an audience,” Sheila and I decided it was time to bring our media teaching to women and distribute to a national and international audience the films made by women that encompassed women's visions.

In incorporating WMM in 1972, Sheila and I had two purposes. One was to encourage a broad range of community women to tell their own stories in motion pictures. The second, because we knew feminism would not always be ‘fundable,’ was to establish distribution as a critical earned-income programme in order to sustain WMM over time.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Rita Moreira, now back in Brazil, has posted this and other videos she made with Norma Pontes on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vgp5NpFGmRA> [accessed: 20.09.2022].

<sup>19</sup> Dolores Bargowski was a third founding partner in this early, pre-incorporation phase. She left New York City in October 1970, and her involvement with WMM ended. WMM's first film, *Mother America*, was released at the very end of that year.

<sup>20</sup> See the image halfway down in Chris Dresser, “Confessions of a Technophobe: Part 50,” <https://www.exotech.bm/confessions-of-a-technophobe/confessions-of-a-technophobe-part-50/> [accessed: 05.03.2022].

At WMM we worked with women of all ages – from youth workers to a retiree who had been a Women’s Army Corps ferry pilot during World War Two. For every three women who came into the workshop, one would stay to make a movie. When possible, we reached out to other venues within the community, like the mothers’ room at the local public elementary school, P.S. 33. With newly gained skills, our media makers worked with Stewardesses for Women’s Rights to create an educational training video for women who worked in the air.

Jean Shaw was a 29-year-old secretary at a local settlement house when she came to the WMM’s workshop. Raised in Oklahoma, she came to New York City to study acting. In her interview, she described the making of her short film *Fear* (B&W, 1973, 6m; fig. 4):

This was unique because it was something I had never experienced before, a real community, a real fellowship of women, a supportive environment, [...] it was a community of people working on a task together, to learn how to make a movie [...]. I was told, “well, the only requirement really to be involved is you have to commit to completing the film that you make.” [...] I had never created something out of my own experience and completed it.<sup>21</sup>

In 1975 WMM reached out to the National Black Feminist Organization<sup>22</sup> to engage them in a film project, as we had done with Stewardesses for Women’s Rights. Structural changes within both parties, though, ended this collaboration. Sheila and I stepped down as co-directors in 1976, with bravery and naivete, handing the organization to the women we had taught. With the completion that year of *Healthcaring*, the first educational film, distribution became a larger focus. As the 1970s closed, teaching shifted to a series of skill-building workshops for a growing group of activist women with social media concerns who sought out WMM as a support base. WMM, too, like the WB and many operations throughout the country, had contracts through the Comprehensive Educational Training Act, a federal programme to provide jobs during the recession of the 1970s. Under the first contract, a tape on battered women, *Why Women Stay*,<sup>23</sup> and a video on older women, *Well, We Are Alive*,<sup>24</sup>

21 Ariel Dougherty, video interview with Jean Shaw, 4 April 2014.

22 This organization was short lived. Cf. “National Black Feminist Organization (1973-1976),” in *BlackPast*, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/national-black-feminist-organization-1973-1976/> [accessed: 05.03.2022]. Some of its members would go on to found the now-better-known Combahee River Collective. Cf. “Black Feminist Organizations,” in *Black History in Two Minutes*, <https://blackhistoryintwominutes.com/black-feminist-organizations/> [accessed: 05.03.2022].

23 This tape by Jacqueline Shortell-McSweeney and Debra Zimmerman remains in WMM distribution. Cf. <https://www.wmm.com/catalog/film/why-women-stay> [accessed: 05.03.2022].

24 A half-inch, reel-to-reel copy of this work is in the hands of one of its co-director, Greta Schiller. She recently transferred it to digital. In June 2022 I showed it with other WMM works in Taos, NM to a very enthusiastic audience. The transfer is brilliant.



- 4 Image from the Fall 1973 Women Make Movies, Inc. distribution brochure. Late 1972 production still from the final shoot in Jean Shaw's film, *Fear* (7m, B&W, 1973). Linda Fulhaber (left), Bill Stavers, and Jean Shaw (right) with hand on tripod. Photo by Susan Meiselas. Collection of Ariel Dougherty

were produced. A second contract, in 1979, called for the presentation of these and other women's media in the Chelsea neighborhood and other communities in New York City. By my tally, between 1970 and 1980 WMM was involved in launching forty productions, a remarkable record and body of work in feminist media-making. Representing a particular (and singular) theoretical genre of feminist media-making in the period, these productions combined offer a unique view into the lives, hopes, and visions of some women in the 1970s.

As a matter of economic survival, the WMM Board of Directors in 1980 voted to concentrate solely on distribution. The active filmmaker membership was soon dismantled. Celebrating its fiftieth anniversary in 2022, WMM is today the world's largest distributor of women's films and one of the most self-sustaining organizations to have emerged from the Second Wave.

As women artists, we did not know – while engaged in our nascent, dynamic, original, and often collective cultural activities in the 1970s – that we were joining an artist workforce whose proportion of women had increased at a rate of two and a half times that of women in all occupations of the U.S. civilian labor force. This radical cultural shift in the U.S. was unheralded! This significant

data, gathered by the National Endowment for the Arts Research Division<sup>25</sup> and still little cited, came just at the time when women's cultural funding was being curtailed at the federal level.<sup>26</sup> Women's funds failed to pick up the slack. The Ms. Foundation for Women, an early national funder of women's programmes, had established a policy in 1976 that would frame most feminist funding for decades: they declared they would not provide funds for women's media or feminist arts. They did not consider media or the arts "survival" issues.<sup>27</sup>

Such a significant, historic cultural shift as three women to every man becoming an artist during the 1970s can never be duplicated – at least in the U.S. Where is all that art today? What groups have survived until now? Which ones have maintained a radical purpose and still do community-based teaching (fig. 5).

### Feminist Media History

Sculptor and installation artist Janine Antoni, a MacArthur Foundation 'Genius' Grantee in 1998, was in graduate school in 1989 at the Rhode Island School of Design. When her professor noted that her performance work followed in the footsteps of Carolee Schneemann, Ana Mendieta, and Hannah Wilke, Antoni ran to the school's library; but there was nothing there, nothing on any of these artists.<sup>28</sup> I literally gasped when I heard her recount this experience as I watched an early edit of Lynn Hershman's documentary *!Women Art Revolution*. It was horrifying to hear that in 1989 – twenty-two years after the start of publications like *Heresies* – that women's cultural work was not included within major academic and educational infrastructures.

As a result, ruefully, over these decades some art curators and academics have gotten a lot of feminist media history wrong as a result, even attributing women-made works to men, or omitting the history altogether. Of course, there is regrettably a long history of this, centuries old, even! Aren't some Rodin sculptures actually the work of Camille Claudel? Too infrequently documented, feminist artist-teachers get short shrift because we are wearing so many hats: working on institution building as well as teaching, plus trying to do our own

<sup>25</sup> National Endowment for the Arts Research Division, note 4, 4 July 1983.

<sup>26</sup> Ariel Dougherty, "Testimony to Congress on Reauthorization of the Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1985." Cf. with analysis, "B. WOMEN'S ART and NEA Early 1980s," <https://www.scribd.com/doc/139763195/B-Women-s-Art-NEA-Early-1980s> [accessed: 05.03.2022], pp. 6–7. This shows a decline of support for women's arts organizations.

<sup>27</sup> Ms. Foundation for Women, "Are You..." brochure in the Ms. Foundation for Women Papers in the Sophie Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass., ca. 1976, p. 1. Employment, healthcare, physical safety, childcare, and non-sexist/multi-racial school curricula were the only issues they defined as "survival issues."

<sup>28</sup> Janine Antoni recounts her experience in Lynn Hershman's film *Women Art Revolution!* at 1:06:22. Ariel Dougherty was a producer on the production and raised a single \$100,000 contribution for the film.



- 5 Mothers in the Mother's Room at Public School 33 in the first session of a Women Make Movie outreach video program the author taught in the Fall of 1972 into the Spring of 1973. Regretably a copy of the video, *La Muchacha Solitaria*, made in this program, has not been found. Photo by Lori Schwartzman. Collection of Ariel Dougherty

work, resurrecting women's lost histories. The old boys' reward system is too unifocal, lacking a wholistic view.

### **Women's Film Groups Today**

Chica Luna (2002–2009) formed to give young Latina women filmmaking experience so that they could build a professional reel. It was 2006 when I was first exposed to their work. This was the media group that showed me there was a new trail of women film teaching groups. I was enthralled to learn that producing dramatic, narrative works was their focus. Through their processes, in pieces, I saw again my own film-teaching experience from the 1970s. Their signature, “F-Word: Media Justice Film/Video Program,” enabled Latinas, and other women of colour, to create their own film reels. They demonstrated professionalism all the way, but with a community commitment to justice.

“They did a lot of work around privilege and internalized oppression,”<sup>29</sup> Lillian Jiménez, the media-literacy teacher and later part-time director, reported:

Chica Luna’s stature rose in certain communities because of the very progressive stand that they took as feminists and feminists of colour. Excellent at promoting their work, they were the darlings of the funding community. A lot of young women went through that programme. The budget was approaching \$250,000. Then in 2008 the markets crashed. The funding dried up.<sup>30</sup>

The once highly successful organization operation was forced, in summer 2009, to close. This is not just.

As the programme’s director, Karly Beaumont, told me: “Running through Chica Luna and running through the F-Word there was this sense of family and community. We were really, truly, truly there to empower women, to lean on one another. That was the fabric of Chica Luna.”<sup>31</sup> Lillian lauded the impact that Karly’s film *I’m Not Here* had for the organization. A short film, just four minutes long, it is a heart-wrenching picture about child sexual abuse. It was part of the official selection at the 2006 New York International Latino Film Festival.

When I initiated a deeper study into the contemporary girl/women/lesbian-focused community film-teaching groups, at first I thought there were twelve or so. Today I have found twenty-six throughout the U.S. This is a movement. Just recently, I may have found a twenty-seventh! Already more than half of these groups have closed shop. But the films remain and are in need of archiving and preservation, processes that are way beyond the scope of my research. I do write about what I have been able to see. The films need to be collected, shown, *and enjoyed*. And studied, too. As well as cherished. New groups still emerge because the need remains. Sometimes, the groups are difficult to find because they are largely local, specifically serving their own communities. Yet their purpose is universal. Making a film, telling a story visually, is empowering. But the lessons girls are learning in these programmes are larger than making a movie. Girls learn leadership. They learn organizing skills, how to budget time and manage resources. Most of all, they learn collaboration and teamwork. These are vital skills they will carry into adulthood in any endeavour.

The challenges are many. They start with money. Support for all kinds of women’s and girls’ projects is presently at a miserable 1.6% of all philanthropic giving.<sup>32</sup> Media funding barely exists, and forget any major support for teaching

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29 Ariel Dougherty, audio interview (via phone) with Lillian Jiménez, 12 February, 2017.

30 Ibid.

31 Ariel Dougherty, audio interview (via phone) with Karly Beaumont, 1 March 2017.

32 This data comes from a recent campaign launched by Women Moving Millions, 2020; cf. <https://womenmovingmillions.org/get-equal-campaign/> [accessed 05.03.2022].

media in community settings. Leadership transitions in these groups is especially difficult because of the multiple hats a founder must wear. Finding an appropriate mix of skills and drive in a new leader is, indeed, tricky. Such leadership transitions were ultimately the demise of the Seattle-based Reel Grrls,<sup>33</sup> after nineteen years, as well as Beyond Media Education,<sup>34</sup> which had prospered in Chicago for fourteen years.

The successful impact of a project and the subsequent pressure from funders to scale up bring new difficulties. Various steps in development, outreach, and advancement and growth in a teaching mode are all factors that do not necessarily lend themselves to scaling up (fig. 6).

The operational pressure is huge – especially when the emphasis is primarily on *teaching*. Administering such organizations demands a complex set of skills, along with persistence *and capacity*. The stress when money is so unavailable is great. Such efforts, too, are compounded when unexpected responsibilities are added to regular tasks, as happened to Arab Women Active in the Arts and Media. This Brooklyn-based group had to take on a city-wide organizing and publicity campaign in support of the appointed principal of the first U.S. Arabic-language public high school.<sup>35</sup> The extra work for the staff caused burnout, and the organization closed in the wake of the effort. An added component for all these teaching groups is the dynamic of founders being artists – desiring to create their own work in addition to running an organization and teaching. It is very complex. This needs deep examination, and relief processes, like staff sabbaticals, should be put in place. This can only happen with vastly increased funding, more sensitive academic study, and visionary development processes. Last, the COVID-19 pandemic could put some of these groups out of existence, like what happened to Chica Luna after the market crash in 2008.

As in the 1970s with programmes like Les Insoumuses, Vidéo Out, Vidéo 00, Les Cents Fleurs, and Vidéa – all in France – projects exist today in many corners of the globe. Some have been temporary, like Global Crescendo. In 2008 the International Rescue Committee hired author and photojournalist Ann Jones to lead a four-nation series of photography workshops in Africa. The aim was to give voice to women and girls in conflict zones. Using digital still cameras, many visualized their concerns from their own points of view. In mastering technical

33 While the organization has folded, many of their videos are on YouTube; cf. <https://www.youtube.com/user/reelgrrls> [accessed: 05.03.2022].

34 Beyond Media Education founder and teacher extraordinaire, Salome Chasnoff, did a Zoom session with Media Burn on 29 October 2020. That session can be viewed here: <https://mediaburn.org/events/10-29-20-virtual-talk-with-video-activists-salome-chasnoff/> [accessed: 05.03.2022]. The collection will be housed at Media Burn.

35 One of only a few articles on Arab Women Active in the Arts and Media is Grace Smith, “Media Savvy Arab Girls Respond to the Mainstream,” in *Youth Media Reporter*, 2007, <http://www.youthmediareporter.org/2007/11/14/media-savvy-arab-girls-respond-to-the-mainstream/> [accessed: 05.03.2022].



- 6 Cover of the 2010–2015 report on the evolution of the project Girl Tech within New Mexico Media Literacy Project. It's a great summary of the development and success of the program. Unfortunately the mother organization closed and the project was not continued. Collection of Ariel Dougherty

skills and speaking publicly with their photographs, the women and girls gained stature in their communities.

A more long-term project is the Deccan Development Society (DDS) initiative in Pastapur, India. It serves poor, rural women farmers in a region considered by the Indian government to be especially backwards. When DDS started in the 1970s, its goals were sustainable development, inclusion, and participation. The organization's director, P.V. Sateesh, stated in a 2007 interview: "When later we analysed the impacts of globalization on the poor, we added [...] market autonomy and autonomy over media [...]. [W]e started using video and then radio".<sup>36</sup> (fig. 7)

To achieve media autonomy, the DDS women added the learning of film and radio skills to their craft-making. They began to carry their cameras with them into the fields and the markets. Making their own media allowed them to tell their own stories. Women at DDS collaborated on films to show where a canal should be constructed or about their millet cultivation. One young woman, Mayuri Masanagari, daughter of one of the DDS women, by age ten had already made several films about principles of farming, documenting her own unschooled elders. At age eleven, Masanagari travelled to Indonesia to present her documentaries to delegates from various countries gathered to discuss climate change and crops.<sup>37</sup> In 2019 the DDS women were honoured by the United Nations Development Programme for their contribution to ecology and their innovations in rain-fed millet production. Masanagari, who speaks English, attended the delegation in New York to serve as a translator.<sup>38</sup> The making of their films and radio programmes have given these rural women stature and improved their economic lives as they bring to a wider audience, through their media community, knowledge about their sustainable farming and bounty.

### The Need for Media (Cultural) Policy

Cultural and media policies are vital to achieving equity for women. Patriarchy dominates within all mainstream institutions. The Global Media Monitoring Project in its Learning Resource Kit lists media-policy initiatives from Albania to Zimbabwe.<sup>39</sup> Through the efforts of the Women's European Audiovisual

<sup>36</sup> Alfonso Gumucio-Dagron, "Women of Pastapur," in *Communications for Social Change*, 2007, <http://archive.cfsc.org/photogallery.php%3Fid=390.html> [accessed: 05.03.2022].

<sup>37</sup> Prabalika M. Borah, "Cameraman Mayuri tho...", *The Hindu*, 2012, <https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-features/tp-metroplus/cameraman-mayuri-tho/article12541508.ece> [accessed: 05.03.2022].

<sup>38</sup> "Hyderabad: 10-yr US visa for 3 women awardees," in *Deccan Chronicle*, 2019, <https://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/current-affairs/170919/hyderabad-10-yr-us-visa-for-3-women-awardees.html> [accessed: 05.03.2022].

<sup>39</sup> "Learning Resource Kit for Gender-Ethical Journalism and Media House Policy," in *Who Makes the News*, 2012, <https://whomakesthenews.org/3655-2/> [accessed: 05.03.2022].



7 Screen grab by the author from a Deccan Development Society film

Network, policy issues are being addressed in the European Union to assure women are awarded an equal share of all audiovisual funds.<sup>40</sup> Sweden has led in these efforts, including on the governmental level through the leadership of Anna Serner, CEO of the Swedish Film Institute, which launched in 2012 the “Fifty/Fifty by 2020” programme.<sup>41</sup> In the Swedish private sector, Ellen Tejle started the programme A-Rating in 2013 based on the Bechdel-Wallace Test. The point was to raise consciousness about women’s roles in film. Today, this successful self-initiated model is practiced in ten countries and thirty theatres throughout Sweden.<sup>42</sup>

In the U.S., the failure to struggle for media and cultural policy with a gendered lens might be the most glaring misstep of the women’s movement. As

40 Unidentified author, “Declaration on gender equality in European film industry adopted at conference during Sarajevo Film Festival”, on the Sarajevo Film Festival website, 12–19 August, 2019, <https://www.sff.ba/en/news/10231/declaration-on-gender-equality-in-european-film-industry-adopted-at-a-conference-during-sarajevo-film-festival> [accessed: 05.03.2022].

41 Unidentified author, “Toward gender equality in film production”, a chronology of press releases at events with pictures and or videos, published by the Swedish Film Institute, 2016–2022, <https://www.filminstitutet.se/en/about-us/swedish-film-institute/gender-equality/> [accessed: 05.03.2022].

42 The Bechdel-Wallace test: 1) Are there two named female characters? 2) Do they talk to each other? 3) About something more than men? Cf. <http://www.a-listfilm.com/> [accessed: 05.03.2022]. The same test has been applied to other marginalized peoples.

the U.S. has no cultural minister post, there is no centre point around which to address the myriad of media issues. Despite a cacophony of Hollywood women complaining about dire behind-the-camera numbers, the exhibition of existing women-directed works is far worse. In the U.S., only 2.75% of screens show women-directed films.<sup>43</sup> No national women's group or even coalition of groups exists to work on a national feminist media policy. This is indeed antithetical in a country where our major foreign export is commercial Hollywood cinema.

We must support and build our feminist institutions and nourish them with recognition and money, allowing them to flourish and prosper. We need to aggregate our strength through a network. A collective voice fortified with feminist visual, visionary imagery can shatter the patriarchy. Central to women's – and all people's – autonomy, self-determination, and liberation is our ability to control our own narrative, history, and future. As we dig deeper into our consciousnesses and intuitions and impact more girls at early stages in their development, women will be guided to a better-sustainable collective and just commons.

When feminists discuss artistic teaching in non-hierarchical ways, crafting teamwork and collaboration and evolving group consciousness, we must also examine the impact of the mainstream, dominant culture that promotes stars, the ranking of 'best,' competition models within capitalism, and how that mitigates all our efforts. The glorification of the individual over vital collective struggle needs serious examination. It is holding back the necessary change all oppressed people seek. Paromita Vohra, the Mumbai-based film teacher of the joint New York City–Mumbai project Gurlz Media Group, states: “It is about mutually finding a new language for us to express the complexities within – that mutuality is called conversation.”<sup>44</sup>

A new generation of teacher-leaders – Madeleine Lim, founder and Artistic Director of Queer Women of Color Media Arts Project; Alicia Rascon, founder and Executive Director of Latinitas; and Tani Ikeda, a Reel Grrls graduate and now Hollywood camerawomen and founder of ImMEDIATE Justice – are bringing far more developed experiences and strategies to their programmes. Their efforts, and the films that come out of them, will impact more and more people. The combined effect of their students' films will create a tableau of feminist vision. This work, if widely seen, can be an impetus for change over the next decades. Our job is to ensure that these groups thrive – and that the works get widely seen. Vohra, as a sister feminist filmmaker and teacher from India, further explains: “[...] push for the unverifiable veracities of creativity. Art

43 Deb Verhoeven, “Redistributing Gender,” in *Kinomatics*, 2016, <https://kinomatics.com/redistributing-gender/> [accessed: 05.02.2022].

44 Paromita Vohra, “Separation Anxiety: The Schisms and Schemas of Media Advocacy,” in *Signs* 33/2, 2008, <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/521059> [accessed: 05.03.2022], p. 20. (Paromita sent me a private copy of the article. As I do not have access to the online version, I use pagination from this printed, double-spaced version.)

becomes a meaningful political space only if it is emotionally viable to people – and it is so only *if it is a place where they can make meanings of their own* [my emphasis], instead of merely consuming those that they are given.”<sup>45</sup>

Vohra continues: “We need to allow art to fill us with a sense of possibility, *the easier to imagine a different world and fantasize the details of how this world will be* [my emphasis].”<sup>46</sup> There is so much to teach. To create. And learn.

Background video material that is available online as examples of topics raised in this paper:

- 1: Dougherty clips, trailers, and compilations,  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIDBWTmFmH1kCDewLghEEmg>  
[accessed: 06.03.2022].
- 2: DOMESTIC TRANQUILLITY director Harriet Kriegel (1973, 7m)  
A Women Make Movies Production, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1hY5nTVGpA&t=12s> [accessed: 06.03.2022].
- 3: HEY THERE LONELY GIRL by the Middletown Girls Film Club  
(1970, 8:25m), DeeDee Halleck, teacher, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2s189uGbh2w&t=101s> [accessed: 06.03.2022].
- 4: IN MOURNING AND RAGE, Woman’s Building, Los Angeles, directed  
by Suzanne Lacy, Leslie Labowitz, and Bia Lowe (1977, 8:05m),  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idKo2tPdYVo&t=9s>  
[accessed: 06.03.2022].
- 5: Women’s Video Festival catalogue 1976,  
<http://www.vasulka.org/archive/ExhFest6/Women’sVidFest/WVF005.pdf> [accessed: 06.03.2022].
- 6: SHY GIRL by Girls Club of the Lower East Side (2017, 4:20m),  
<https://vimeo.com/212807167> [accessed: 06.03.2022].
- 7: LAS MUJERES DENTRO DE MI / THE WOMAN INSIDE ME, director  
anonymous (2013 4:54m), Girl Tech, a project of the New Mexico  
Media Literacy Project, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OyOzBrGpTqQ> [accessed: 06.03.2022].

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>46</sup> Vohra, 2008.

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**Marijke Appelman** is an artist, facilitator and co-founder of *The Young Petanque Club Rotterdam*. Alongside these artistic practices she has been working as an art educator teaching both fine art and photography for ten years. In 2020 she graduated from the *Piet Zwart Institute's* Master Education in Arts with a research project focused on feminist pedagogies.

**Hana Chebbi** est docteure en design produit et le comportement du consommateur. Elle est enseignante en histoire de l'art et du design à l'université Ibn Khaldoun de Tunis depuis 2020 et a enseigné à l'institut des Beaux arts de Sousse. Elle a développé des recherches sur les expériences de l'enseignement du design en Tunisie. Elle est consultante sur des projets culturels et artistiques.

**Aline Derderian** chorégraphie et danse notamment au sein de CONSENSUS. Elle obtient un MFA chorégraphie du Trinity Laban en 2018 et enseigne au Central Saint Martins jusqu'en 2020. Aline a soutenu sa thèse de doctorat en arts plastiques (recherche-crédation) en novembre 2022 à l'Université Rennes 2. Sa recherche questionne les liens entre chorégraphie et performance en diaspora arménienne, en miroir des pédagogies radicales californiennes de la fin des années soixante. Elle est chargée de cours d'histoire de la danse et de la performance ainsi que d'ateliers chorégraphiques (ex : Université Rennes 2, UCO Angers).

**Ariel Dougherty** is a cultural worker, centred in the feminist artistic community. Teacher, filmmaker, producer, mentor, curator, administrator, writer and policy wonk, her many hats, hopes and visions give her a wide view of the cultural horizon across, especially, the United States. In 1972 she co-founded Women Make Movies, Inc. *Arbitrary & Capricious* (2021, 11:45m) is her most recent film.

**Lucile Encrevé** docteure, est professeure à l'École nationale des Arts Décoratifs. Elle travaille sur les liens entre art et arts décoratifs (notamment textiles). Ses recherches portent également depuis 2019 sur la place et les expériences des femmes à l'École des Arts Déco : elle a récemment cocréé le site [cherestoutes.fr](http://cherestoutes.fr) rassemblant de nombreux entretiens menés avec des actrices de l'EnsAD.

**Charlotte Foucher Zarmanian** est chargée de recherches au CNRS, affiliée au Laboratoire d'études de genre et de sexualité (LEGS, UMR8238). Docteure en histoire de l'art, elle a soutenu une thèse sur les femmes artistes dans les milieux symbolistes qui a été récompensée du Prix du musée d'Orsay et publiée en 2015. Ses recherches portent également sur les interactions entre musées et genre, et sur les historiennes de l'art en France (XVIII<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècles).

**Laurie Gangarossa** est architecte HMONP et co-fondatrice de l'atelier incipit à Lyon. Maîtresse de conférences dans le champ Villes et Territoire à l'ENSACF, elle est membre permanente de l'UMR Ressources. Son goût pour l'écriture soutient son doctorat en architecture. Effectué à l'OCS (UMR AUSser 3329, Université Paris-Est), il prend pour sources les récits autobiographiques des architectes.

**Talia Kwartler** is a curator and art historian based in Berlin. She received her PhD in the History of Art from University College London where she wrote her doctoral thesis on Suzanne Duchamp. Previously, she worked at MoMA on *Francis Picabia* (2016–2017) and *Max Ernst* (2017–2018). She holds a bachelor's degree in Art and Archaeology from Princeton University and a master's degree in the History of Art from the University of Oxford.

**Déborah Laks** est chargée de recherche au CNRS, au laboratoire LIR3S de l'Université de Dijon où elle consacre ses recherches à l'histoire de l'enseignement artistique au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Elle a aussi travaillé sur l'utilisation de déchets comme matériau artistique dans les années 1960 et sur l'artiste Daniel Spoerri dont elle a récemment publié une anthologie des textes aux éditions des Beaux-arts.

**Adélie Le Guen** est chercheuse indépendante, critique d'art et fondatrice du podcast ARTISTES MANIFESTES. Spécialisée en art contemporain à l'université Rennes 2 et en arts du spectacle à l'université Paris 8, elle a réalisé un mémoire sur les pratiques performatives et collectives créées au Woman's Building de Los Angeles dans les années 1970-1980.

**Laura Leuzzi** is an art historian and curator. She is the author of articles and essays in books and exhibition catalogues, with her research focused on video art, feminism, activism and new media. She is co-editor of *EWVA European Women's Video Art in the 70s and 80s* (John Libbey 2019). Currently she is Honorary Fellow at RGU, Aberdeen, and Researcher at Sapienza University of Rome.

**Stéphanie Louis** est docteure en histoire contemporaine. Elle a soutenu une thèse sur la patrimonialisation du cinéma en France entre 1944 et 1968, publiée à l'AFRHC en 2020. Parallèlement, dans le cadre de ses activités de chargée de mission à la Direction de la recherche à l'École nationale des chartes, elle coordonne le programme de recherche Histoire de la pédagogie de la création artistique et travaille sur les sources audiovisuelles pour l'histoire des écoles d'art.

**Alexandra Panzert**, art historian. Since 2022 working for the German Research Foundation, Bonn. 2016-2022 research associate at University of Applied Sciences and Arts Hannover. 2022 doctoral thesis is on the topic "Bauhaus in Context. Comparing Weimar Republic's Art and Design Schools". 2013-2015 employee at Bröhan-Museum, Berlin, curating and organizing several exhibitions on art and design around 1900. Master's degree in Dresden in 2012.

**Camille Paulhan** est historienne de l'art, critique d'art et enseignante. Elle a soutenu en 2014 une thèse de doctorat dédiée au périssable dans l'art des années 1960-1970. Membre de l'AICA-France, elle publie régulièrement dans des revues papier et en ligne, spécialisées comme généralistes. Elle enseigne l'histoire de l'art à l'École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts de Lyon.

**Natalia Sassu Suarez Ferri** is a Lecturer (Education Focused) at the University of St Andrews. Her research focuses on the transnational links between Latin America and Europe, Kinetic and Op art, and the work of the Venezuelan artist Carlos Cruz-Diez. For her study of Cruz-Diez's early abstraction, see <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/32/carlos-cruz-diez-physichromies>.

**Elvan Zabunyan**, historienne de l'art contemporain, est professeure à l'Université Rennes 2 et critique d'art. Ses travaux croisent depuis plus de vingt-cinq ans les problématiques raciales, postcoloniales et féministes dans l'art. Elle a récemment codirigé *Constellations subjectives*, pour une histoire féministe de l'art (Ixe, 2020) et *Decolonizing Colonial Heritage, New Agendas, Actors, and Practices in and beyond Europe* (Routledge, 2021).







While the field of art education is slowly but surely feminizing, the specificity of women's trajectories and their effects on transmission and creation are at the crossroads of several fields and open up a plurality of questions. What does a woman's career look like, how are institutions modified by the arrival of women? How are hierarchies rethought, is the field of reference of students evolving, what do the new methods developed allow? The articles gathered in this volume highlight individual trajectories and broader debates taking place in art schools, all tracing the evolutions that the teaching by women artists reveals, prepares or accomplishes in the field of contemporary creation.



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