

EDITED BY
HILARY ROBINSON & LARA PERRY

Feminisms/ Museums/Surveys

AN ANTHOLOGY



ARE YOU BRAZILIAN?
OH,
I LOVE BRAZILIAN
WOMEN

WILEY Blackwell

Feminisms/Museums/Surveys

Feminisms/Museums/Surveys

An Anthology

Edited by

Hilary Robinson

Lara Perry

WILEY Blackwell

Copyright © 2025 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. All rights reserved, including rights for text and data mining and training of artificial technologies or similar technologies.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, (978) 750-8400, fax (978) 750-4470, or on the web at www.copyright.com. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permission>.

The manufacturer's authorized representative according to the EU General Product Safety Regulation is Wiley-VCH GmbH, Boschstr. 12, 69469 Weinheim, Germany, e-mail: Product_Safety@wiley.com.

Trademarks: Wiley and the Wiley logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and/or its affiliates in the United States and other countries and may not be used without written permission. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty: While the publisher and author have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives or written sales materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a professional where appropriate. Further, readers should be aware that websites listed in this work may have changed or disappeared between when this work was written and when it is read. Neither the publisher nor authors shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

For general information on our other products and services or for technical support, please contact our Customer Care Department within the United States at (800) 762-2974, outside the United States at (317) 572-3993 or fax (317) 572-4002.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic formats. For more information about Wiley products, visit our web site at www.wiley.com.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data applied for

Paperback ISBN: 9781119897576

Cover Design: Wiley

Cover Image: View of exhibition "Feminist Histories" (2019) at MASP, including the artworks "Brazil" (2016-2018) © Santarosa Barreto, and "Wedding Dress" (2006) © Daspu. Photo: © Eduardo Ortega. Collection of Research Center of MASP - Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand

Set in 9.5/12.5pt STIXTwoText by Straive, Pondicherry, India

Contents

Acknowledgements *xi*

On Feminisms, Museums and Surveys: An Introduction *1*

Hilary Robinson and Lara Perry

1 Life Actually *8*

Life Actually; the Works of Contemporary Japanese Women – Love and Solitude, and Laughter for Survival in Japan *9*

Kasahara Michiko

2 La Costilla Maldita *26*

The Accursed Rib *27*

Margarita Aizpuru

3 Konstfeminism: Strategier och effekter i Sverige från 1970-talet till idag *36*

Introduction *37*

Louise Andersson, Magnus Jensner, Anna Livion Ingvarsson, Anna Nyström, Barbro Werkmäster, and Niclas Östlind

4 The Eighth Square: Gender, Life and Desire in the Arts since 1960 *44*

The Eighth Square: Observations on an Exhibition Experiment *45*

Frank Wagner

5 WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution *60*

Art and Feminism: An Ideology of Shifting Criteria *61*

Cornelia Butler

6 Global Feminisms *68*

Curators' Preface *69*

Maura Reilly and Linda Nochlin

7 Kiss Kiss Bang Bang: 45 Years of Art and Feminism *72*

Kiss Kiss Bang Bang: 86 Steps in 45 Years of Art and Feminism *73*

Xabier Arakistain

- 8 **Intimate Distance: Indonesian Women Artists** 78
Intimate Distance: Tracing Feminist Discourse in Indonesian Art 79
Wulan Dirgantoro
- 9 **A Batalla dos Xéneros/Gender Battle** 86
The Benefit of Discord: Apropos of Gender Battle 87
Juan Vicente Aliaga
- 10 **elles@centrepompidou: Women Artists in the Collection of the Musée National d'Art Moderne** 114
"elles@centrepompidou": Addressing Difference 115
Camille Morineau
- 11 **Rebelle: Art and Feminism 1969–2009** 122
Introduction 123
Mirjam Westen
- 12 **Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe** 138
Proletarians of All Countries, Who Washes Your Socks? Equality, Dominance and Difference in Eastern European Art 139
Bojana Pejić
- 13 **Modern Women: Women Artists at the Museum of Modern Art** 158
The Feminist Present: Women Artists at MoMA 159
Cornelia Butler
- 14 **DONNA: Avanguardia Femminista Negli Anni '70 dalla Sammlung Verbund di Vienna** 170
The Feminist Avant-Garde: A Radical Transformation 171
Gabriele Schor
- 15 **Med Viljann ad Vopni – Endurlit 1970–1980** 180
The Will as a Weapon – Review 1970–1980 181
Hrafnhildur Schram
- 16 **Žen d'Art: The History of Gender and Art in Post-Soviet Space: 1989–2009** 188
The History of Women's Art: Archives, Theories and Actual Artistic Practice 189
Nataliya Kamenetskaya and Oksana Sarkisyan
- 17 **Dream and Reality: Modern and Contemporary Women Artists from Turkey** 194
Dream and Reality: Modern and Contemporary Women Artists from Turkey 195
Levent Çalikoğlu
- 18 **Matronita: Jewish Feminist Art** 202
Tzena Ure'ena 203
Dvora Liss

- 19 This Will Have Been: Art, Love and Politics in the 1980s** 214
This Will Have Been: Art, Love & Politics in the 1980s 215
Helen Molesworth
- 20 Contemporary Australia: Women** 240
Here and Now 241
Julie Ewington
- 21 Women Adventurers: Five Eras of Taiwanese Art, 1930–1983** 248
Women Adventurers: Five Eras of Taiwanese Art, 1930–1983 249
Yi-ting Lei
- 22 The Beginning Is Always Today: Contemporary Feminist Art in Scandinavia** 266
The Beginning Is Always Today: Contemporary Feminist Art in Scandinavia 267
Karin Hindsbo
- 23 Where We're At! Other Voices on Gender** 278
Joining the Ranks of the Invisible Struggle 279
Christine Eyene
Our Sister Next Door 284
Christine Eyene
- 24 East Asia Feminism: FANTasia** 292
East Asia Feminism: FANTasia 293
Kim Hong-hee
- 25 All Men Become Sisters** 302
Imagination Machine 303
Joanna Sokołowska
- 26 M/A\G/M\A: Body and Words in Italian and Lithuanian Women's Art from 1965 to the Present** 316
MAGMA: A Revolt for Us 317
Benedetta Carpi De Resmini
The Singing Revolution Continues 321
Laima Kreivytė
- 27 We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85** 324
Introduction 325
Catherine Morris and Rujeko Hockley
- 28 Being Her(e): Meditations on African Femininities** 330
Curatorial Statement 331
Paula Nascimento

- 29 Corpo a Corpo – Body to Body** 334
Body to Body: What Is Left? 335
Paola Ugolini
- 30 Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985** 346
Introduction 347
Cecilia Fajardo-Hill and Andrea Giunta
- 31 Trigger: Gender as a Tool and a Weapon** 352
Irreconcilable Difference 353
Johanna Burton
- 32 Women House** 360
From The Housewife to the Nana-Maison: Domesticity as a Key Theme for Women Artists 361
Camille Morineau and Lucia Pesapane
- 33 Collective Women: Feminist Art Archives from the 1970s to the 1990s** 366
Texts from the Auckland Art Gallery 2017 367
Clare McIntosh
- 34 Unfinished Business: Perspectives on Art and Feminism** 372
Unfinished Business 373
Max Delany
Blak Female Futurisms and Yte Feminism Waves 379
Paola Balla
- 35 Bread and Roses: Four Generations of Kazakh Women Artists** 382
Gender, Empire and Decolonisation: Four Generations of Kazakh Women Artists 383
David Elliott
- 36 Niepodległe: Kobiety A Dyskurs Narodowy** 398
Niepodległe: Women, Independence and National Discourse 399
Magda Lipska
- 37 The Medea Insurrection: Radical Women Artists Behind the Iron Curtain** 402
Why the Insurrection, Medea? 403
Susanne Altmann
- 38 Paint, Also Known as Blood: Women, Affect and Desire in Contemporary Painting** 418
Rippers: Women, Affect and Desire, Between Figuration and Abstraction 419
Natalia Sielewicz

- 39 Kiss My Genders 428**
Kiss My Genders: A Conversation 429
Vincent Honoré with Ajamu, Travis Alabanza, and Victoria Sin
- 40 Her Own Way: Female Artists and the Moving Image in Art in Poland: From 1970s to the Present 436**
Her Own Way - Female Artists and the Moving Image in Art in Poland: From 1970s to the Present 437
Okamura Keiko
- 41 Women's Histories, Feminist Histories 444**
Feminist Histories: Artists After 2000 445
Isabella Rjeille
- 42 Feminnale: 1st Feminnale of Contemporary Art 452**
Feminnale: 1st Feminnale of Contemporary Art 453
Bishkek Feminist Initiatives Team
- 43 Masculinities: Liberation Through Photography 456**
Performing Masculinities 457
Alona Pardo
- 44 Earthkeeping/Earthshaking: Arte, Feminismos e Ecologia 468**
Earthkeeping/Earthshaking: Art, Feminisms and Ecology 469
Giulia Lamonì and Vanessa Badagliacca
- 45 Know My Name: Australian Women Artists 1900 to Now 480**
Foreword 481
Nick Mitzevich and Natasha Bullock
Guiding Principles for Gender Equity 483
Nick Mitzevich and Natasha Bullock
- 46 Female Identities in the Global South 484**
Contemporary Female Identities in the Global South 485
Bronwyn Law-Viljoen
Liminal Identities in the Global South 489
Clive Kellner
Modernist Identities in the Global South 497
Clive Kellner
Historical Background 503
Clive Kellner

- 47 I Remember Therefore I am. Unwritten Stories: Woman Artist Archives** 506
- I Remember, Therefore I Am** 507
Andra Silapētere
- 48 Who Will Write the History of Tears: Artists on Women's Rights** 512
- About the Exhibition** 513
Magda Lipska, Sebastian Cichocki, and Łukasz Ronduda
- 49 Declaration: A Pacific Feminist Agenda** 514
- Declaration: A Pacific Feminist Agenda** 515
Ane Tonga
- 50 Empowerment: Art and Feminisms** 524
- Empowerment: Art and Feminisms – Introduction** 525
Andreas Beitin, Katharina Koch, and Uta Ruhkamp
- 51 Women in Revolt! Art, Activism, and the Women's Movement in the UK 1970–1990** 534
- Introduction: The Personal Is Political** 535
Linsey Young
- Index of Curators** 546
- Index of Artists** 549
Áine McKenny and Marlous van Boldrik
- Index** 588

Acknowledgements

The editors offer their thanks to all the curators, assistant curators, museum front of house workers, educators, and artists and other workers whose labour is represented in these pages: before we started researching this we hadn't understood the breadth and depth of the commitment to the intersection of feminism and art that has been demonstrated around the world.

The editors would also like to thank our respective institutions, Loughborough University and the University of Brighton for supporting the creation of the artist index, and Marlous van Boldrik and Áine McKenny for completing the work.

We are grateful to acknowledge our circle of local feminist friends, writers and readers whose ongoing interlocation on matters pertaining to art, feminism and exhibitions have been an important impetus for this book:

Althea Greenan

Alexandra Kokoli

Amy Tobin

Catherine Grant

Ceren Özpınar

Felicity Allen

Helena Reckitt

Jo Stockham

Lenka Vrábliková

Lina Dzuverovic

Lucy Reynolds

Oriana Fox

And finally huge thanks to Rachel Greenberg, Sarah Milton, Alta Bridges, Liz Wingett, Umar Saleem, Juhitha Manivanaam and their teams at Wiley for the excellent production of a complex volume.

Sources

The editors and publisher gratefully acknowledge the permission granted to reproduce copyright material in this book:

Chapter 1

Kasahara Michiko (also author) and Yonezaki Kiyomi (curators), “Life Actually, The Works of Contemporary Japanese Women,” 15 January–21 March 2005. Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 2

Margarita Aizpuru (curator and author), “La Costilla Maldita (The Accursed Rib),” 25 January–27 March 2005. Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, Gran Canaria, Spain / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 3

Louise Andersson, Magnus Jensner, Anna Livion Ingvarsson, Anna Nyström, Barbro Werkmäster, and Niclas Östlind (curators and authors), “Konstfeminism: Strategier och effekter i Sverige från 1970-talet till idag,” 14 October 2005–22 January 2006. Dunkers Kulturhus, Helsingborg, Sweden. Reproduced with permission of Atlas and Dunkers Kulturhus.

Chapter 4

Frank Wagner (curator and author), “The Eighth Square: Gender, Life and Desire in the Arts since 1960,” 19 August–12 November 2006. Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany. Reproduced with permission of Hatje Cantz Verlag GmbH.

Chapter 5

Cornelia Butler (curator and author), “WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution,” 4 March–16 July 2007. Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, USA / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 6

Linda Nochlin and Maura Reilly (curators and authors), “Global Feminisms,” 23 March–1 July 2007. The Brooklyn Museum, New York, USA. Reproduced with permission of Merrell Publishers.

Chapter 7

Xabier Arakistain (curator and author), “Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang: 45 Years of Art and Feminism,” 11 June–9 September 2007. Museo de Bellas Artes Bilbao, Spain. Reproduced with permission of Xabier Arakistain.

Chapter 8

Wulan Dirgantoro (curator and author), “Intimate Distance: Exploring Traces of Feminism in Indonesian Contemporary Art,” 1–10 August 2007. Galeri Nasional Indonesia / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 9

Juan Vincente Aliaga (curator and author), “A Batalla dos Xéneros (Gender Battles),” 13 September–9 December 2007. Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela, Spain / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 10

Camille Morineau (curator and author), “Elles@centrepompidou,” 27 May 2009–27 February 2011. Centre Georges-Pompidou / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 11

Mirjam Westen (curator and author), “Rebelle: Art and Feminism 1969–2009,” 30 May–23 August 2009. Museum voor Moderne Kunst Arnhem, The Netherlands / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 12

Bojana Pejić (curator and author), “Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe,” 13 November 2009–14 February 2010. Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna, Austria. Reproduced with permission of Bojana Pejić.

Chapter 13

Cornelia Butler (curator and author), “Modern Women: Women Artists at The Museum of Modern Art,” 18 December 2009–2 May 2011. Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 14

Gabriele Schor (curator and author), “Donna: Avanguardia Femminista Negli Anni '70 dalla Sammlung Verbund di Vienna,” 19 February–16 March 2010. Galleria Nazionale D'Arte Moderna, Rome, Italy. Reproduced with permission of Gabriele Schor.

Chapter 15

Hrafnhildur Schram (curator and author), “Med Viljann ad Vopni – Endurlit 1970–1980 (The Will as a Weapon – Review 1970–1980),” 8 May–7 November 2010. Listasafn Reykjavíkur, Reykjavík, Iceland / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 16

Nataliya Kamenetskaya and Oksana Sarkisyan (curators and authors), “Žen d'Art: The Gender History of Art in the Post-Soviet Space: 1989–2009,” 11 September–31 October 2010. Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Russia / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 17

Levent Çalikoğlu (also author), Fatmagül Berktaş, Zeynep İnankur, and Burcu Pelvanoğlu (curators), “Dream and Reality: Modern and Contemporary Women Artists from Turkey,” 16 September 2011–22 January 2012. Istanbul Modern, Turkey / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 18

Dvora Liss (also author) and David Sperber (curators), “Matronita: Jewish Feminist Art,” 27 January–1 April 2012. Mishkan Le'Omanut, Museum of Art, Ein Harod, Israel / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 19

Helen Molesworth (curator and author), “This Will Have Been: Art, Love and Politics in the 1980s,” 11 February–3 June 2012. Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, USA / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 20

Julie Ewington (curator and author), “Contemporary Australia: Women,” 21 April–22 July 2012. Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 21

Yi-ting Lei (curator and author), “Women Adventurers: Five Eras of Taiwanese Art, 1930–1983,” 22 June–29 September 2013. Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taiwan / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 22

Karin Hindsbo (curator and author), “The Beginning Is Always Today: Contemporary Feminist Art in Scandinavia,” 21 September 2013–19 January 2014. SKMU Sørlandets Kunstmuseum, Kristiansand, Norway / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 23

Christine Eyene (curator and author), “Where We’re At!: Other Voices on Gender,” 18 June–31 August 2014. BOZAR, Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels, Belgium. Reproduced with permission of Silvana Editoriale S.p.A.

Chapter 24

Kim Hong-hee (curator and author), “East Asia Feminism: FANTasia,” 15 September–8 November 2015. SeMA: Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, South Korea. Reproduced with permission of Kim Hong-hee.

Chapter 25

Joanna Sokolowska (curator and author), “All Men Become Sisters,” 23 October 2015–17 January 2016. Muzeum Stuki, Łódź, Poland 2018. Reproduced with permission of Sternberg Press.

Chapter 26

Benedetta Carpi De Resmini and Laima Kreivytė (curators and authors), “M/A/G/M/A: Body and Words in Italian and Lithuanian Women’s Art from 1965 to the Present,” 14 April–4 June 2017. Lithuanian Art Museum/National Gallery of Art, Vilnius, Lithuania. Reproduced with permission of Quodlibet srl.

Chapter 27

Catherine Morris and Rujeko Hockley (curators and authors), “We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women 1965–85,” 21 April–17 September 2017. Brooklyn Museum, New York, USA / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 28

Refilwe Nkomo, Thato Mogotsi, Paula Nascimento (also author) and Violet Nantume (curators), “Being Her(e): Meditations on African Femininities,” 10 May–9 June 2017. Constitution Hill, Johannesburg, South Africa. Reproduced with permission of Paula Nascimento.

Chapter 29

Paola Ugolini (curator and author), “Corpo a Corpo (Body to Body),” 22 June–24 September 2017. Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Roma, Rome, Italy. Reproduced with permission of Silvana Editoriale S.p.A.

Chapter 30

Cecilia Fajardo-Hill and Andrea Giunta (curators and authors), “Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985,” 15 September–31 December 2017. Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, USA. Reproduced with permission of Penguin Random House.

Chapter 31

Johanna Burton (curator and author), “Trigger: Gender as a Tool and a Weapon,” 27 September 2017–21 January 2018. New Museum, New York, USA / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 32

Camille Morineau and Lucia Pesapane (curators and authors), “Women House,” 20 October 2017–28 January 2018. 11 Conti, Paris, France. Reproduced with permission of La Monnaie de Paris.

Chapter 33

Catherine Hammond, Caroline McBride (curators), and Clare McIntosh (author), “Collective Women: Feminist Art Archives from the 1970s to the 1990s,” 25 November 2017–30 June 2019. Auckland Art Gallery Toi O Tāmaki, Auckland, New Zealand / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 34

Paola Balla, Max Delany (also authors), Julie Ewington, Annika Kristensen, Vikki McInnes, and Elvis Richardson (curators), “Unfinished Business: Perspectives on Art and Feminism,” 15 December 2017–25 March 2018. Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, Australia / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 35

David Elliott (also author), Almagul Menlibayeva, and Rachel Rits-Volloch (curators), “Bread and Roses: Four Generations of Kazakh Women Artists,” 25 September–20 October 2018. Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin, Germany, in co-operation with the National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Momentum Berlin. Reproduced with permission of David Elliott.

Chapter 36

Magda Lipska (also author), Annett Busch, and Marie-Hélène Gutberlet (curators), “Niepodległe: Women, Independence and National Discourse,” 26 October 2018–3 February 2019. Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Poland / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 37

Susanne Altmann (curator and author), “The Medea Insurrection: Radical Women Artists Behind the Iron Curtain,” 8 December 2018–31 March 2019. Lipsiusbau – Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Germany. Reproduced with permission of Buchhandlung Walther König.

Chapter 38

Natalia Sielewicz (curator and author), “Paint, Also Known as Blood: Women, Affect and Desire in Contemporary Painting,” 7 June–11 August 2019. Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Poland / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 39

Vincent Honoré (curator), in conversation with Ajamu, Travis Alabanza, and Victoria Sin, “Kiss My Genders,” 12 June–8 September 2019. Hayward Gallery, London, UK / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 40

Okamura Keiko (also author) and Marika Kuźmicz (curators), “Her Own Way: Female Artists and the Moving Image in Art in Poland, From 1970s to the Present,” 14 August–14 October 2019. Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 41

Isabella Rjeille (curator and author), “Histórias feministas: Artistas depois 2000 (Feminist Histories: Artists After 2000),” 23 August–17 November 2019. MASP, Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Brazil / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 42

Altyn Kapalova, Zhanna Araeva (curators), and Bishkek Feminist Initiatives Team (author), “Feminale: The First Feminale,” 27 November–15 December 2019. Gapar Aitiev Kyrgyz National Museum of Fine Arts, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Reproduced with permission of bishkekfeminists.org.

Chapter 43

Alona Pardo (curator and author), “Masculinities: Liberation through Photography,” 13 July–23 August 2020. Barbican Art Gallery, London, UK. Reproduced with permission of Penguin Random House.

Chapter 44

Vanessa Badagliacca and Giulia Lamoni (curators and authors), “Earthkeeping/Earthshaking: Arte, Feminismos e Ecologia,” 25 July–4 October 2020. Gallerias Municipais: Galleria Quadrum, Lisbon, Portugal / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 45

Jacqueline Millner (curator), Nick Mitzevich (author), and Natasha Bullock (author), “Know My Name: Australian Women Artists 1900 to Now,” Part One: 14 November 2020–9 May 2021; Part Two: 12 June 2021–26 June 2022. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 46

Clive Kellner (curator and author) and Bronwyn Law-Viljoen (author), “Female Identities in the Global South,” Part 1: Contemporary Female Identities in the Global South (16 September 2020–30 January 2021); Part 2: Liminal Identities in the Global South (29 June 2021–29 January 2022); Part 3: Modernist Identities in the Global South: Frida Kahlo, Amrita Sher-Gil, Irma Stern (15 October 2022–22 February 2023). Joburg Contemporary Art Foundation, Johannesburg, South Africa / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 47

Andra Silapētre (curator and author), “I Remember Therefore I Am,” 14 November 2020–24 January 2021. Latvian Centre of Contemporary Art, Riga, Latvia / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 48

Magda Lipska, Sebastian Cichocki, and Łukasz Ronduda (curators and authors), “Who Will Write the History of Tears Artists on Women’s Rights,” 26 November 2021–27 March 2022. Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Poland / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 49

Ane Tonga (curator and author), “Declaration: A Pacific Feminist Agenda,” 26 March–31 July 2022, Auckland Art Gallery Toi O Tāmaki, Auckland, New Zealand / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 50

Andreas Beitin, Katharina Koch, and Uta Ruhkamp (authors), “Empowerment: Art and Feminism,” 10 September 2022–8 January 2023. Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany / reproduced with permission.

Chapter 51

Linsey Young (curator and author), “Women in Revolt! Art, Activism, and the Women’s Movement in the UK 1970–1990,” 8 November 2023–7 April 2024. Tate Britain, London, UK. Reproduced with permission of Tate Publishing.

On Feminisms, Museums and Surveys: An Introduction

Hilary Robinson and Lara Perry

While artists, curators and other art professionals have been working with feminist ideas and practices for over fifty years, a notable shift has happened in this field since the early twenty-first century: feminist art and feminist exhibitions specifically themed through feminism have occupied a significant space in the core activities of several major museums and galleries. Art informed by feminism has been transformed from a minor or silent voice in such art institutions to a featured curatorial focus at diverse institutions all around the world, with headline exhibition projects in many established collections and galleries. Both separately and together, each of these exhibitions have aspired to communicate a spirit of the relationship between art and feminism. What is also striking, although perhaps less surprising, is the diversity of the approaches, themes and strategies that have been developed in order to visualise through curatorial projects the cultural work that emerges at the intersection between feminist thinking and art. As in feminist political movements themselves, art made by feminists and then encountered, collected, interpreted, exhibited, preserved – and curated – has innumerable dimensions.

This book is an attempt to present to readers, both new to and familiar with this development, a synoptic overview of some of its major landmarks. The aspiration to assemble such a diverse set of practices into a single volume requires, at the outset, a comment on the terminology that we are using as editors. While some of the essays and exhibitions refer to ‘feminist art’, we avoid that term for three reasons. The first is to avoid the assumption that ‘feminist art’ constitutes a tidy category in the discipline of Art History, when in fact the use of such a term does not conform with normative categorisation methods of Art History, such as geography, date, style, and materials. Second, there can be assumptions about what is recognised as ‘feminism’ (both feminist activism and analysis), while feminist positions are contingent on sociopolitical factors that are historically and culturally specific.¹ Because of these specificities, what might constitute ‘feminist art’, therefore, would also be contingent: the term would not mean the same thing at different times and places – and, indeed, it might mean different things at different points in the oeuvre of individual artists. Third, and emerging from the former points, the deployment of the term ‘feminist art’ as a compound noun to describe certain practices might well, in its assumptions and reductiveness, exclude or be antagonistic to much of the art that is being discussed in this book.² Therefore, we prefer to use formulations such as ‘art informed by feminism’ or ‘art made by feminists’ or even ‘art responding to feminism’. It is a little more awkward, perhaps; but in its lack of ease also lies its resistance to assimilation into an unquestioning or simplistic category. We reserve ‘feminist art’ for moments when we are trying to critique it as a dominant term.

Perhaps because 'feminist art' is in itself such a richly unstable category, it has increasingly been deployed by curators and institutions who have worked to create room for artists and practices that are identified with feminism. Following from this, practitioners and scholars of curating have begun the work of evaluating and synthesising the different approaches that individual curators and institutions have taken in developing feminist practices of curating, and its corollary, practices relating to the curating of art informed by feminism. We are distinguishing here between feminist practices of curating, which may or may not focus on art by feminists; and the curation of art by feminists, which may or may not be done by feminist curators. The critical and historical writing on this topic often references the high-profile exhibitions that have taken place in prominent institutions, but, in other cases, addresses those projects that have been less visible in the national and international (often anglophone) art press. The exemplars have often been identified in relation to exhibition titles that declare 'feminism' or 'women' or 'gender' as a framing context for the exhibited work. The conversations that are taking place in relation to feminist curating have been concerned with investigating and arguing for specific forms of curatorial activity that are more or less aligned with the political goals of feminism as a broader movement. Complex discussions about what forms of curatorial practice, as well as what objects of curatorial attention, constitute the most appropriate deployment of feminism have become more frequent and intense. In the year 2000 the available writing on feminist practices in art curating were extremely sparse, but over the last two decades there has evolved a substantial literature that provides a framework for investigating both the work of curating art related to feminism and feminist practices of curating.³ It can be seen that the curatorial essays we have brought together in this volume respond to, and feed into, those critical debates as well as representing the curatorial practices with which they engage.

One of the pressing questions that is debated within this field is the impact of major institutions collecting art relating to feminism. Whereas art made by feminists has always challenged the conventions of art practice as they have been formulated through the collections and displays of major national museums (through form, content, and sometimes modes of practice and exhibition) some major museums are now seeking to integrate this body of work into their collections. This activity represents a significant shift in how art made by feminists sits in relation to the hegemonic narratives of Modern Art. While the forces that lay behind this development are a matter for speculation, it is urgent to consider the impact of such activities. Museums are a key gateway through which art and artists enter the wider frame of art criticism, art history, art collecting and all the domains in which knowledge of art is developed and exercised. Sometimes, a major survey exhibition has been the prompt for systematic research into the material existence of works which have had limited presence in the commercial art market, and a number of these projects have prompted the collection of works by the exhibited artists for the first time. The impact of this activity is felt by a wide range of stakeholders: artists and their careers; those who have encountered, exhibited, bought and sold their work, often in small or 'alternative' galleries; the museums themselves and their audiences; art critics; and the legacy resources that exhibition research – often captured in catalogues – provide for specialist investigation of art and its histories.

This book was prompted by the desire to collate and make accessible the wealth of knowledge, understanding and interpretation that has resulted from the work undertaken in relation to these curatorial projects. While we cannot reprint the catalogues in their entirety, in this volume we have gathered the introductory essays that present the curatorial imagination that underpinned each project. In particular, we have sought to broaden and deepen, but also focus, the range of examples that are frequently cited within the field of feminist curatorial studies. In 2007–10 three high-profile survey exhibitions of art by feminists and women were put on in major Western cities: WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution in Los Angeles (2007) and Vancouver (2008); Global Feminisms in

New York (2007) and *elles@centrepompidou* in Paris (2009–11). These exhibitions are often referenced as evidence of a new, or renewed, twenty-first-century curatorial interest in art by feminists – but such evidence could also be found in exhibitions organised concurrently or a little earlier such as *Life Actually: The Works of Contemporary Japanese Women* (Tokyo, 2005); *Konstfeminism* (Helsingborg, 2005); *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* (Bilbao, 2007); and *Intimate Distance* (Indonesia, 2007), amongst others. Exhibitions themed around art and feminism, usually on a smaller scale and more focused in their scope, have been a regular feature mainly of smaller, non-collecting, museums since the 1970s. Exhibitions of women artists' work have been a feature of the exhibition landscape for much longer – at least since the 1850s. What changed around the year 2005 was, first, the scale of the ambition which emerged in museums to mount survey or synoptic exhibitions of 'feminist art' as such; and, second, that this aspiration began to take form in major collecting institutions including those that operate as national or equivalent organisations. What has been less often recognised in the critical literature that has emerged around these practices is that there has been a pattern of similar exhibition-making in many parts of the world, from Australia to Iceland, Brazil to Japan – where surveys of art informed by feminism were also being staged in major museums.

While there have been many more exhibitions, and catalogues, of art and feminism than we have included in this book, we had four guiding principles that we used in our selection of exhibitions. First, we looked at exhibitions that were held in major national or regional museums, normally public (state-funded rather than privately funded) institutions because of public institutions' importance to dissemination, research, and their canon-forming role through their embodiment of hegemonic cultural value and authority.⁴ Second, we looked for exhibitions that were explicitly and determinedly informed by feminist thinking and/or art practices, usually but not always declared in the exhibition title. Third, we selected exhibitions that were surveys rather than focused on single or a small number of artists. Fourth, we selected exhibitions whose primary focus was on art that falls in the period normally deemed as contemporary (from the 1960s on) in order to sustain a reasonable degree of focus on the range of art being considered and the historical issues that might be considered in its curation.

We have treated the above criteria as guidelines rather than over-determining rules in recognition that each of those criteria also sustains colonial privilege and dominance of Western institutions and artists within the art world broadly understood. This was particularly so of the first two criteria. With the first, a focus on what might be termed the canon-forming art museums: by 'canon-forming' we mean art museums whose scope of activities and status in the national and international exhibiting and collections landscape means that their work serves to establish norms, if not ideals, by which artworks and artists are identified and recognised as being central to the artistic production of an era, nationality or movement. Museums and art galleries play a significant part in this process by contributing their own version of the selection that stands as the representative of art more broadly, one which is reinforced by the presence of museum collections in art historical accounts in textbooks, classroom teaching (including the perpetuation of the discipline in universities) and tourist guides. The value of, structures of and need for canons in art history have been debated in scholarship over the last several decades, with Griselda Pollock making a notable contribution. Her book *Differencing the Canon* (1998) identifies the exclusion of women artists as a central operation of art historical canon formation, and offers varied models through which feminist art historians can engage with the role of actual women and constructions and representations of the feminine through art's history. The generative potential of feminist thinking for reformulating art historical selections, narratives, explanations and concerns have been realised not only in academic art history but also in the curatorial projects from which we have selected the essays contained in this book. Being too rigid about the selection of exhibitions on the basis of

being hosted in collection-holding, canon-forming, state-supported museums would have constrained us from representing activities in regions where such institutions are thin on the ground; we looked for exceptions where the national or regional infrastructure is not that of the dominant canon formation of contemporary art. For example, continental Africa does not have many such museums. The two surveys that we have identified from Africa, *Being Her(e): Meditations on African Femininities* (Constitution Hill, Johannesburg, South Africa and Galeria do Banco Económico, Luanda, Angola, 2017–18) and *Female Identities in the Global South* (Joburg Contemporary Art Foundation, Johannesburg, South Africa, 2020–3) happened in non-museum settings over two and three smaller exhibitions respectively.

Our approach to the second criterion, selecting exhibitions informed by feminism, did not necessarily mean exhibitions of art by women or even art that is explicitly aligned with feminism. For example, *Masculinities: Liberation Through Photography* (Barbican Centre, London, 2020) is included. This was an exhibition informed by intersectional sexual politics, including feminist thinking. It displayed art that explored and challenged masculine gender identities and included art by artists who have not identified as feminist. We have selected the sections of the catalogue essay that reflect the relationship between these practices and feminism. There are also some exhibitions selected that use a longer time frame than our fourth criterion (focus on the contemporary as it is normally understood) such as *Bread and Roses: Four Generations of Kazakh Women Artists* (Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin, Germany, 2018). Where such exhibitions are included, they are characterised by a clear focus on the work of contemporary artists as part of a longer historical conception of feminism. These exhibitions have been selected because of their framework of feminist thinking; and also because we recognise that ‘feminism’, especially in relation to art practice, does not always align with the narratives of feminism that prevail in the anglophone and western European regions. Much of the ‘feminism’ that is in this book is determined by Western definitions and histories, although in some cases the curatorial conception directly addresses the consequences of that emphasis. For example, the curatorial conception for the exhibition *Unfinished Business: Perspectives on Art and Feminism* (Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2017) explicitly addresses the disparities between Indigenous and settler artists within feminism, and we have highlighted this in our text selection.

The texts in this book are all presented in English. It is remarkable that only three were not already translated into or written in English as part of their original publication; another instance of a structural domination within the art world that often goes unremarked. Almost all of the catalogues were bilingual when English was not the dominant language of their venue: they were published in the dominant local language, with translations into English supplied (the versions we present here have been lightly edited to correct spelling and other matters of presentation, but we have otherwise preserved the character of the texts as translated for the original publication). The aim, presumably, was to allow for ease of international dissemination of the work. (Conversely, those produced in the Anglosphere – e.g., UK, USA, Australia, etc. – had texts only in English.) But it was also clear that despite the provision of translations into English, many of the catalogues, with the information, discussions, artists, practices and histories explored in them, were not much known outside the immediate circles of the host institution. Generally, museum catalogues are produced in limited print runs, and are not always distributed internationally. National structures of library collection (for example, legal deposit libraries) focus on national interest, including primary language, and reflect publishers’ markets. Many of the catalogues had not been collected by major art libraries to which we had access, and thus would also be largely inaccessible to artists, curators and other scholars, even if they knew about the exhibitions in the first place.

Collecting these texts together therefore also allows for a wider transnational spread of the curatorial thinking outside of the Anglosphere, and the record of the labour they hold. We hope that our research on the possible works to include has been adequate to the task of providing a foundation for curatorial and critical debate about how art by feminists and art addressing feminist issues is being introduced to museum audiences in the first decades of the twenty-first century. It is also inevitable that we would have missed some exhibitions; right up to final production deadlines we were finding examples to consider.

The texts appear in the volume in the chronological order of the dates in which the exhibition opened, so the earliest texts appear at the beginning of the book and the most recent at the end. The texts are typically included without significant changes to their content. Any exceptions to this are noted in the brief introduction that appears before each text, which also notes the dates and locations for each exhibition and the number of artists included. The number given for 'artists' indicates solo producers of the work on exhibition; the number given for 'groups' indicates where the exhibition's catalogue states that two or more artists (named or not) have been involved in creating the work on exhibition. The aim of these short introductions is to orient the reader in relation to the scope and scale of the exhibition, as well as to point to important curatorial themes addressed in the essay.

We have typically excluded from the reproduced material any detailed lists or descriptions of artists whose work was included in the exhibition in order to retain the focus on the curatorial vision. We have, however, provided two appendices to support the use of this volume in answering questions about how these exhibitions have drawn on the work of individuals. One appendix is a list of the curators who contributed to each exhibition; the second appendix is an index of artists which is a finding aid not only for the individual exhibitions, but also to look across the exhibitions to see which artists' work appears with more or less frequency. This will allow the reader to use the book not only to understand the ways in which feminist practice is emerging in the hegemonic spaces of the art museum, but also to understand that there may be another contentious canon formation underway, of artists who are most or least associated with what is increasingly recognised as a distinctive and significant contribution to the art of recent decades. This is a further example of the tension between the structures and canons of art history, and feminist critiques of, and resistances within, such disciplinary practices.

Our aim in assembling this volume is to support ongoing developments of feminist curatorial work and its critical and historical interpretation, and to offer a context for the interpretation of the unique projects that have been sponsored by an international range of exhibiting institutions. By anthologising the curators' essays we seek to demonstrate the diversity of feminisms at work in the art world globally. We also aim to make visible the work that has been done within institutions to do justice to art that, en masse, critiques the founding principles of those very institutions, their definitions of who could be an artist and what artwork constitutes the canon. As this anthology and its appendices demonstrate, the work being produced by artists, curators and their colleagues in museums and galleries around the world is impressive in its scope, ambition and volume. Assembling this collection has revealed a humbling amount of work that has been committed to the presentation of art that is by feminists, embodies or is informed by feminist thinking and, at the same time, it has revealed silences and scarcities that can also be read as an eloquent and ongoing critique of those same principles. While we state at the outset of this introduction that these exhibitions demonstrate that a 'notable shift has happened', the extent to which this shift will result in an enduring or structural change is still to be seen.

Notes

- 1 One of the current editors, Hilary Robinson, has expanded our understanding of the complexity of the landscape of feminist practice and praxis in art through different volumes of the *Feminism–Art–Theory* readers. Published first in 2001 (covering 1968–2000) with a second edition published in 2015 (extending the period covered to 2014), these anthologies collect and help to interpret large numbers of written texts that have been significant for art and feminism in those time frames.
- 2 The resistance of art informed by feminism to the established categories of art criticism and history is a point highlighted in the introduction and structure of the *Feminism–Art–Theory* volumes.
- 3 Significant contributions to this literature include *n.paradoxa*, 18, special issue on Curatorial Strategies (July 2006); Griselda Pollock, *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum: Time, Space and the Archive* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007); Malin Hedlin Hayden and Jessica Sjöholm Skrubbe, eds., *Feminisms Is Still Our Name: Seven Essays on Historiography and Curatorial Practices* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010); Katrin Kivimaa, ed., *Working with Feminism: Curating and Exhibitions in Eastern Europe* (Tallin: TLU Press, 2012); Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry, eds., *Politics in a Glass Case: Feminism, Exhibition Cultures and Curatorial Transgressions* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013); Elke Krasny and Frauenmuseum Meran, eds., *Women's:Museum Frauen:Museum* (Vienna: Löcker Verlag, 2013); Jessica Sjöholm Skrubbe, ed., *Curating Differently: Feminisms, Exhibitions and Curatorial Spaces* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016); *OnCurating*, 29, special issue on Curating in Feminist Thought (May 2016); Jenna C. Ashton, ed., *Feminism and Museums: Intervention, Disruption and Change* (Edinburgh and Cambridge MA,: MuseumsEtc Ltd, 2017); Agata Jakubowska and Katy Deepwell, eds., *All-Women Art Spaces in Europe in the Long 1970s* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018); Maura Reilly, *Curatorial Activism: Towards an Ethics of Curating* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2018); *OnCurating*, 52, special issue on Instituting Feminisms (November 2021); Elke Krasny, Sophie Lingg, Lena Fritsch, Birgit Bosold, Vera Hofmann, eds., *Radicalizing Care: Feminist and Queer Activism in Curating* (New York: Sternberg Press, 2021); Elke Krasny and Lara Perry, eds., *Curating as Feminist Organizing* (London and New York: Routledge, 2023); Elke Krasny and Lara Perry, eds., *Curating with Care* (London and New York: Routledge, 2023).
- 4 Public or state-funded museums are intended to operate in the public service and are therefore considered more impartial than private institutions, although Nizan Shaked's recent work *Museums and Wealth: The Politics of Contemporary Art Collections* (2022) has challenged the premise of this distinction.



Life Actually

15 January–21 March 2005

Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan

Curators: Kasahara Michiko and Yonezaki Kiyomi

Number of artists: 9 + 1 group

This exhibition was the 2005 iteration of the annual survey exhibitions held by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo. The essay is by Kasahara Michiko, the museum's curator. She starts by setting the conversation in the context of anglophone popular culture: the UK film version of *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2002) and the American TV series *Sex and the City* (1998 onwards). She contrasts the different attitudes of the film and series' protagonists to sex and a normative heterosexual partnership, and uses this to frame discussion of the subject matter of the exhibition's works. She follows a common introductory format of attending to each of the artists in turn, gathered under four subheadings: 'Representations of sexual pleasure', 'An exhilarating solitude', 'Family troubles and war', and 'Individualised subjectivity'. Notably, Michiko does not address the cultural and historical differences between the UK, the United States and Japan, nor the resulting differences in sexual politics, which indicates the problematic dominance of anglophone culture. However, these are implicit throughout; particularly as Michiko's conclusion returns to *Sex and the City*, and indicates women's changing conditions and consciousness in Japan.

1

Life Actually; the Works of Contemporary Japanese Women – Love and Solitude, and Laughter for Survival in Japan

Kasahara Michiko

Introduction

In *Bridget Jones's Diary*, the film version of the best-selling British novel, the heroine exclaims, "I suddenly realized that unless something changed soon I was going to have a life where my major relationship was a bottle of wine and I'd die fat and alone and be found three weeks later half-eaten by Alsatians. Or I was about to turn into Glenn Close in *Fatal Attraction*."¹ The novel and film both give a lively account, humorous and ironic, of the everyday life of a single woman in her thirties living in London. This hit comedy attracted an empathetic response from many women throughout the world.² The original book and screenplay were both written by a woman in her thirties, and one might expect that the text reflected her true feelings ... Bridget anguishes and rejoices as she deals with the problems of love, work, friendship, diet, and family, getting through each day, even when things are not going as she hopes, with "love and laughter." Many readers and moviegoers saw themselves in Bridget. After watching the movie several times, I also recognized it as an accurate recreation of the voice of a thirty-something woman from the point of view of a woman of the same age, but there was one thing about it that bothered me. Bridget is blessed with a job, friends, family, and health, but she believes her life is wretched just because she does not have a boyfriend who might marry her, and no one around her disagrees with her view of things. This seems like a simple throwback to traditional ideas about the role of women. To a ludicrous extent, Bridget has internalized the fantasy that she will live happily ever after if she meets "Mr. Perfect" and enters into a monogamous relationship.

A quite different situation is presented in the American television drama, *Sex and the City*. A hit when first aired on the cable channel HBO in the United States in June 1998, it has run for six seasons. It has been shown in many other parts of the world, including Europe, Asia, and Oceania, developing a cult following and winning Emmies and other awards. The main characters of this series are women in their thirties, just like Bridget Jones, and the theme is similar. It depicts the lives and frank conversations of four young women of different types living in New York. The groundbreaking thing about *Sex and the City* (which also makes it a target of criticism) is that it allows women to express their real feelings and opinions about a variety of sexual issues through the semi-public medium of cable television. The women have sex with many different kinds of men, but their active sex life is not labeled negatively as "loose," "wanton," or "selfish." Instead, it

is assumed that the search for sexual pleasure is a woman's right, in fact, a basic human right.³ It is treated throughout as something positive and praiseworthy. The topics treated quite openly include women's orgasms, masturbation, oral sex, sadomasochism, adult toys, the clitoris, the penis, impotence, premature ejaculation, lesbianism, homosexuality, bisexuality, monogamy and alternative forms of pairing. Because the show is a comedy, the freewheeling conversations may be exaggerated, but these women laughingly demolish all the myths about women's sexuality constructed by men.

What especially differentiate themselves from Bridget Jones is that they do not make a direct connection between their relationships with boyfriends and marriage, even if pregnancy is involved. Still, they are not entirely free from the romantic ideology constructed by the modern family system, i.e., "meeting Mr. Right, marrying, and living happily ever after." Even Samantha, the most sexually liberated of the four, is trying to build a relationship with a compatible partner (not necessarily a man), and the other three do seem to want to find the right man, get married, and live happily ever after. Of course, these women sometimes use sex for the purpose of creating a relationship with a man, but they do not fall into despair if the relationship fails and they get hurt. They pick themselves up and find somebody new, continuing the search for "true love." At the same time, they are well aware that "true love" and "a happy marriage" are fantasies and myths. They have a dispassionate appreciation of the reality behind "happy marriages." They do not get upset when fantasy does not become reality. They see marriage as just one possible option in a relationship. The four best friends doll themselves up in the classical fashion of women who are trying to attract men. They pluck their eyebrows and keep their nails well manicured, wear low-cut designer brand dresses and fashionable high-heeled shoes. Their ideas, however, are radical: "Maybe we could be each other's soul mates. And then we could let men just be these great nice guys to have fun with."⁴ In addition, they do not have the "fear of success"⁵ internalized by women up until recent times, the fear that men will not love them if they succeed at work or gain position and wealth. They achieve success both at work and in their friendships, lifestyle, sex, love, and marriage as the result of their own choice. They are not afraid of failure. They take responsibility for failures that are the result of their own choice. They are portrayed as mature adult women who are psychologically and economically independent. Work, lifestyle, friendship, family, and lovers are just as, or more, important to them than marriage. Unlike Bridget Jones, they are not afraid to be alone and do not consider the single life "wretched."

Representations of Sexual Pleasure

The system of marriage has many aspects, but it is mainly a contract under which the partners agree on a mutual restriction of sexuality. This contract is supposedly applied to both the man and the woman, but in practice, throughout the ages, it has only restricted the freedom of the woman. Recently, however, while the contract entered into at marriage is accepted as a contract, in reality, women's sexual freedom, like that of men, is no longer restricted in the same way. Up through the 1980s, there was a taboo against single women thinking of their bodies as sexual entities, whatever may have been the situation of men. Now, it is regarded as natural for single women to be as sexually active as men. "Life has become much easier for single women now that the three pillars of the modern family – marriage, sex, and reproduction – have crumbled and not being married is no longer equated with not having a sex life."⁶

Sex and the City vividly portrays the changes occurring in sexuality, and the sexual freedom granted to women's bodies today, through the medium of television. So then, how is women's sexuality represented in contemporary art?

Women's sexual freedom is a basic right that has been pursued by the feminist movement since the 1960s. It goes without saying that women have not been able to control their own erotic life. It has been constructed, idealized, skewed, and mythologized by men, according to what they imagine it to be or want it to be. The search for women's sexuality by women began with the early feminist slogan: "Our bodies, our selves." It was based on a belief later set out in the theories of Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous: "If women are to discover and express who they are, and if they are to reveal what has been repressed in them by patriarchal history, they must first begin dealing with their own sexuality. Women's sexuality emerges from women's bodies, from the differences that separate women's genitalia and libidos from those of men."⁷

From the late 1960s to the present, such pioneering artists as Hannah Wilke, Judy Chicago, Miriam Schapiro, and Ana Mendieta have continued to explore women's sexuality. Hannah Wilke in particular, from early in her career to just before her death, used her own body to deal with types of eroticism that were previously taboo to women. *Intra-Venus* (1991–2), which was her last work, vividly expressed the fact that a woman's desires do not decline just because of old age or sickness. This is perfectly obvious on reflection, but it is something that was not recognized in the past.⁸

Although such male artists as Robert Mapplethorpe and David Wojnarowicz have produced extensive treatments of gay sex, there have been surprisingly few artworks depicting the sexual acts or pleasures of women. The work of Nan Goldin and Sam Taylor-Wood is an exception.

An example in this exhibition is *My lover shoots his load inside me. The sperm flows in my body. It is this moment when I feel most alive* (2004) by Mizoguchi Akiko OIC. As the title intimates, this sound and light installation directly depicts a woman's sexual pleasure. Bright red light is emitted from a tower four meters high equipped with more than 15,000 LEDs in 360 circuits. Sounds of breathing and heartbeat accompany the movement of the light, "flashing and fading like heartbeats"⁹ to represent the momentary and repeated pleasure of sex. The sounds of breathing and pulse and the directness of the title are counteracted by the effect of the moving lights, which look like living creators as they are projected from the tower onto the screen mounted around it, creating a vivid non-everyday space that recalls the experience of sex. The sounds and lights slow down and speed up, resonating with the breath and heartbeat of the viewer to create an experience that evokes a strong sense of being alive.

This work was produced as an experimental group project with the aims as an example of decentralization and de-essentialization in art by shifting the focus away from the individual artist. Mizoguchi Akiko, who is given the appellation OIC (organizer/interlocutor/critic), is listed as the artist. She is the organizer of the work but did not actually participate in the actual making of it. Technology was handled by Katori Akihiko, scenography, design, and concept by ZAPPA, and sound by Marc Boucrot. This decentralization of production gave more importance to the work itself than to the artist.

The sex portrayed by Mizoguchi Akiko OIC is not limited to the fantasy of an exclusive pair or a restricted relationship. It is an act carried out between people in an equal and symmetrical relationship. This collaborative production, which does not give prominence to any one individual, is appropriate to a pure tribute to the pleasures of sex.

An Exhilarating Solitude

In Japan today, many single people, myself included, are often subjected to the half-threatening, half-sympathetic comment: “If you stay single, you will be lonely, especially when you get old.” Is the single life as wretched or lonely as Bridget Jones, and many other people, think? Is solitude something to be feared? In reality, isn’t being single fun? I seriously doubt that being single means being lonely. But even if a single person feels lonely from time to time, I believe it is possible for solitude to be pleasant or even exhilarating. I sense the presence of this kind of solitude in the work of Ikemura Leiko and Watabiki Nobuko.

Young girls are the subject of Ikemura’s recent work. They are shown lying or standing along a single ray of light running along the horizon in a black space. In *Double Lying* (2000), two girls embrace, as if one of them were the alter ego of the other. In *Over the Gugliano* (1999), a girl holds a cat in the darkness. In *Standing in Blue* (1999), girls stand against an ultramarine background. The bronze girl (*Dolores*, 1998–9) covering her face with both hands in a work whose Spanish title means “pain” appears to be hurt and falling down but not dissolving in tears or indulging in suffering. She is silent and thoughtful, letting her body rest, sometimes dancing in the darkness even while remaining in a reclining position. The atmosphere is one of quiet resignation.

These are “mature girls” with intelligence, purity, and strength of spirit. They may represent the artist; I cannot help but see a self-portrait of Ikemura in them. As many critics have written,¹⁰ Ikemura’s experience of living overseas for some 30 years has had a decisive influence on her work.

Ikemura was born in the city of Tsu in Mie prefecture. She studied at Osaka University of Foreign Studies but left before graduating in 1972. She traveled to Spain the next year. After completing her studies at the art academy of Seville in 1978, she moved to Zurich, Switzerland, her husband’s hometown, in 1979. Ikemura soon received international recognition for paintings and sculpture that are silent meditations on her own inner state.

Living in a foreign country provides many opportunities for self-examination, both in the course of everyday life and in making art. While making art under such conditions, the self is defamiliarized. Encounters with different people and values and a different culture and language inevitably entail a confrontation with one’s self. No matter how well one adapts to a foreign environment or becomes skilled in a foreign language, a certain amount of ambiguity and insecurity remains. Living overseas, Ikemura became “mature” in spite of her small stature. She says of her art, “Rather than a self-portrait, there should be a ‘picture’ that visually shows an inner aspect of something at the core of myself.”¹¹

There is no trace of human presence in *yoru no umi* (2003–4), and a single shaft of light pierces the darkness in *In Black* (1999). These paintings present scenes of emptiness or some sort of unknown presence that hovers vaguely before our eyes. It can be seen as an irrepressible natural force or fate. Ikemura’s pictures are the products of a strong spirit, resolutely confronting and entering into realms of solitude, an infinite abyss that most people are afraid to look into. Her art is “quiet and invigorating.”¹²

In the work of Watabiki Nobuko, a sense of the uncanny is added to “exhilarating solitude.” *Be Revealed Nothingness* (2002) is dominated by a “black hole” in the shape of an onion. A single eye like that of a cat peers toward the viewer from the bottom of the hole. In *I Believe Both in Freedom and Resignation* (2000), a large black hole is depicted inside a green face with a red mouth and eyes that are turned upward, showing the whites. In *Space That Cannot Be Filled* (2003), a black space like a crater on the moon is shown against a UFO-like blue circle. Watabiki paints delicately with oil pastels on Japanese paper. “The slightly protruding fibers of the Japanese paper give