Cover of *Spinning Off*. March 1980. The newsletter features *Art of the Woman's Building 1893–1980: Graphics, Performance and Video*, organized by Arlene Raven with Sheila de Bretteville, Jerri Allyn, Nancy Angelo, Cheri Gaulke, and Sue Maberry for Artemisia Gallery, Chicago, March 1980. The cover image is the frontispiece from the book *Art and Handicraft in the Woman's Building* (1893). Woman's Building Image Archive, Otis College of Art and Design.

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FICTIVE FAMILIES OF HISTORY MAKERS: HISTORICITY AT THE LOS ANGELES WOMAN'S BUILDING

Michelle Moravec

> Since at least the eighteenth century, feminism has used history in different ways at different times as a critical weapon in the struggle for women's emancipation. Feminism's History has offered demonstrations, in the form of exemplary instances from the past, of women's worthiness to engage in the same activities as men (wage-earning, education, citizenship, rulership). It has provided heroines to emulate and lineages for contemporary activists—membership in fictive families of history makers. Feminism's History has exposed as instruments of patriarchal power stories that explained the exclusion of women as a fact of nature. And it has written new histories to counter the "lie" of women's passivity, as well as their erasure from the records that constitute collective memory. —Joan Wallach Scott, "Feminism's History"[1]

As Joan Wallach Scott notes, the past has inspired feminists in myriad ways—justifying women's activism, documenting heroines, providing intellectual lineages, exposing women's exclusion from power structures, and finally, creating new histories that include women. However, none of this useful past was available to 1970s feminists. Indeed, as members of radical social movements, feminists seemed a group unlikely to go foraging about in the past. The infamous injunction of the era to "never trust anyone

over thirty" attests to the tendency to avoid crossing generational divides.[2] However, among the ruins of a Whig history, fragments of a usable past gradually emerged and feminist activists began to discover the liberating power of their grandmothers' history.

Robin Morgan coined the neologism "herstory" in her influential anthology *Sisterhood is Powerful* to imply that women's versions of history would differ significantly from male narratives.[3] "Herstory" may grate on the ear now, but in its day the assertion that women had a history was a radical act. References to history dot the landscape of the early women's movement. A group of women who participated in a 1967 march against the Vietnam War called themselves the Jeannette Rankin Brigade, after the first woman elected to the House of Representatives and the only member of Congress who had the distinction of voting against both world wars. When feminists marched in New York City in 1970, they picked August 26 as the date, commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of women's suffrage. The early 1970s also saw the revival of International Women's Day, which was first celebrated in the early twentieth century by radical female labor activists.

Digging a little deeper, the thread of history is revealed as a crucial warp in the weave of the new fabric of feminism. Fundamental differences between ideologies in the women's movement in large part came down to different understandings of history. Socialist feminists well versed in Marx and Engels's analysis of the role of family in formulating capitalism emphasized the historical origins of women's oppression.[4] Radical feminists argued that women's oppression preceded class formation; instead they referenced a "pre-historical," matriarchal past.[5] Arguments over the primacy of oppressions led to a rift between radical feminists, who argued women's oppression must be seen as primary, and feminist activists who remained more tied to the Left and contended that the socialist overthrow of capitalism would also end women's oppression.[6] History, it seemed, did matter.

In this essay, I will explore the multiple uses of the past at the Woman's Building, a public center for women's culture founded in Los Angeles in 1973. The very name, which commemorates the 1893 Woman's Building at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition, hints at the centrality of history to the endeavor. Although pavilions devoted to women had appeared at previous world's fairs, such as the Centennial Exposition of 1876 in Philadelphia, the original commission anointed by the United States Congress to organize the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago included not a single woman. Despite lobbying by prominent women's activists, including Susan B. Anthony, Congress refused to appoint a woman to the commission. Instead, Congress authorized a Board of Lady Managers, which was comprised of the wives of influential men; no doubt they expected that it would be a largely ornamental and non-functional body. However, the men had not reckoned with the force that was the redoubtable Bertha Honoré Palmer, wife of the richest man in Chicago, patroness of the arts, as well as a major mover and shaker in reform circles. Despite the size and

prominence of the 1893 Woman's Building, by the 1970s it had all but disappeared, both materially and historically.[7]

What is most interesting about the use of the past by feminist artists in the 1970s is that they could not allude to a glorious epoch. Women had been so systematically excluded from the art historical record that a female student could receive an entire college education in the arts without learning about a single woman artist.[8] As New York feminist artist Therese Schwartz bluntly put it, male art historians had "built women a bad art history."[9] A large part of the feminist art movement of the 1970s involved rectifying that error.

History making occurs in many ways. Most simply, history involves constructing linear narratives connecting the past to the present. However, in the process, branches get pruned in order to create a single story. Determining what gets cut and what remains involves far more complicated processes than simply putting events in chronological order. Some events, people, and things are classified as historical. That is to say, in a tautological fashion, these people, events, and things are worthy of historical attention simply by virtue of being included in the historical record. Thus taxonomy, the classifying process, is critical to history making because it determines what makes history. By reading back taxonomically, however, we can also arrive at a genealogical understanding of history making. I mean to imply both senses of the word genealogy. The more common usage refers to tracing lines of ancestry. The other, which draws on Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault, takes the emblematic element of the first sense—the tree—to explore how histories are branched as opposed to singularly unified. Reading genealogically, we find what was left behind in the creation of a seamless narrative about a complicated past that was never so irreducibly simple.

In constructing a better account of the past for themselves, members of the Woman's Building engaged a variety of strategies. These efforts initially took the shape of taxonomical interventions, by which they reclaimed some artists, artifacts, and events as art historical. In the process, new genealogies were created. At times these lineages became highly personalized. Furthermore, in reclaiming women artists of the past as ideological foremothers, the members of the Woman's Building created tangled genealogies in the secondary sense of the word, as evidenced by the way they manipulated the boundaries of time and space to craft a past to suit their present needs.

The members of the Woman's Building focused on retrieving women artists lost to art history. However, finding women artists who have been "hidden" from history only affirms the traditional art historical narrative, by merely inserting women into it. Other efforts by members of the Woman's Building served to disrupt the narrative of art history itself. For example, some women became interested in recuperating traditionally female art forms and having them aesthetically reappraised. The chronological narrative was further interrupted by the translocation of historical events, such as the 1893 Woman's Building, which challenged the story of art as a continuous

narrative. Finally, members of the Woman's Building took on the fixed subject positions implied by the traditional narrative of art history—woman as muse, model, and handmaiden to male genius, but never as artist—by regenerating the figure of the artist to include women.

Mind the Gap

From its inception, history lurked in the background of the feminist art movement. In the late 1960s, Judy Chicago's reading of emerging feminist history provided inspiration for the feminist art program at California State University Fresno.[10] Later, Paula Harper, a trained art historian, joined Chicago on the faculty of California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in Valencia.[11] Arlene Raven and Ruth Iskin replaced Harper at CalArts and founded the Center for Feminist Art Historical Studies at the Woman's Building. For female artists, finding their foremothers provided an important way of legitimizing themselves as artists. If art history exists by sorting things into two categories, those people and items worthy of aesthetic appreciation and those without such redeeming features, then a survey of art history in the early 1970s revealed women artists to basically be without a history.[12] Thus retrieving women "hidden from history" proved to be the first task of the taxonomical effort.[13] Art historian Raven remembered searching in used book stores for nineteenth-century documentation of "women artists [who] had fallen again into obscurity in the early twentieth century."[14] She describes her relief at discovering that, despite a discipline that claimed women could be at best mediocre copyists, there had been successful women artists in the past.

Yet, in the early years of the movement, art history was not merely the purview of trained academics. While searching for props to use in *Womanhouse* (1972), a project of CalArts' Feminist Art Program that involved installations about domesticity and femininity in an old house, student Nancy Youdelman found a catalog of the 1893 Woman's Building. It was one of those fortunate happenstances that make history.[15] Flabbergasted to learn that not only had women artists existed in the past, but also that they had organized to exhibit their work, Youdelman brought the book back to the Feminist Art Program, where students and teachers alike pored over its pages. After that initial, exciting discovery, the memory of the Woman's Building lingered. In the spring of 1972, student Janice Lester delivered a lecture on the Woman's Building at a feminist art conference at CalArts.[16] In January of 1973, Womanspace, a feminist cooperative gallery in Los Angeles (which later moved to the Woman's Building), celebrated its opening with, among other things, a lecture by Arlene Raven about the 1893 Woman's Building.[17] The event's description places Womanspace in the direct lineage of the original Woman's Building, describing the original "Woman's Building, [as] the first "Womanspace."[18] When Chicago, de Bretteville, and Raven decided to locate their independent art program for women—the Feminist Studio Workshop (FSW)—in a site containing other feminist organizations, Raven suggested the name

the Woman's Building as "an act against the historical erasure of women's art and an acknowledgement of the heritage we were beginning to recover."[19] The inspiration members of the Woman's Building felt to their predecessors made them determined to rescue the 1893 Woman's Building from historical oblivion.

The recovery of that hidden history proved central to the mission of the Woman's Building. Initially Raven and Iskin hoped to involve FSW students in the Center for Art Historical Research. However, according to Raven, most of the students lacked the necessary research skills.[20] Nevertheless, according to Iskin, a "sense of the importance of history, that what we were doing was something that was history" pervaded the Woman's Building. Therefore, while making art and running an organization, members did their best to document their historical contributions. These efforts led the members to keep as much ephemera as possible in a now mythical closet at the Woman's Building, which eventually became the Woman's Building Collection at the Archives of American Art in the early 1990s.

Inclusion in a lofty institution like the Archives of American Art represents an achievement in rewriting the story of art. The many boxes of well-cataloged material provide scholars with a wealth of information to use as they build on the work of that first generation of art historians and critics, many of them participants in the feminist art movement, who successfully illustrated that women had been more than muses, models, or handmaidens in the service of great art. Initially, feminist art activists argued that women artists of the past simply needed retrieval and reinsertion into the art historical record. This approach reached its apotheosis in the sweeping exhibition "Women Artists: 1550–1950" (1976), curated by Linda Nochlin and Ann Sutherland Harris, which created a canonical, albeit female, version of art history.[21] In this essay, however, I am interested in the uses of the past that occurred in far less formal ways. These efforts not only attempted to rectify art historical omissions, but more importantly, provided women artists with an immediate sense of empowerment. As Harper explained, feminist art history provided "a continuous tradition within which they could see their own lives and work."[22]

In an effort to create a "continuous tradition," members of the Woman's Building mounted many exhibitions that attempted to retrieve from obscurity women artists of the past and to locate them as particular foremothers. For example, in 1975 Sheila de Bretteville arranged for an exhibition of the work of modern architect and designer Eileen Gray to travel to the Woman's Building. Gray was an Irish expatriate living in France whose life, as the *Los Angeles Times* review of the show notes, could easily pass for Hemingway's. Yet she never achieved a high degree of fame, despite her achievements.[23] "Beyond the Femininity of Eileen Gray" at the Woman's Building marked the first exhibition of her work in the United States.

The Gray exhibition took on added significance as it occurred during a landmark conference at the Woman's Building called Women in Design: The Future

Entry to the Woman's Building during the "Women in American Architecture" exhibition, April 1978. Woman's Building Image Archive, Otis College of Art and Design.

(March 1975). The architects and designers who attended the conference found Gray's example so inspiring that a few conference participants set out to find women, like Gray, who had fallen through the cracks of history. Susanna Torre, a friend of de Bretteville, eventually created "Women in American Architecture" (1978), a traveling exhibition sponsored by the Architectural League of New York for which de Bretteville designed a catalog.[24] In a sort of boomerang effect, the exhibition then traveled to the Woman's Building, the site of its original inspiration. As de Bretteville worked to "imbue it with the Woman's Building spirit,"[25] she recalled that "it brought back some of the people who had been in the Women in Design Conference...to the Building."[26] For de Bretteville, finding these women artists in the past was not about illustrating that women could be great architects. Instead, she wanted to ask larger questions about how history happens, including: "Why don't we know more about them. Why was their work not developed, why did we never hear of them? What didn't happen?"[27] In particular, de Bretteville wondered about Sophia Hayden, designer of the original Woman's Building and the first female graduate in architecture of Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her work never developed because, after receiving the commission for the 1893 Woman's Building in a competition restricted to female applicants, she never found employment again in her field.

Blanks in the historical record not withstanding, the connections between the exhibition and the earlier conference were emphasized, as revealed by a photograph that features at center left the 1975 Women in Design conference poster and the 1978 "Women in American Architecture" exhibition poster. Tellingly, these two efforts to draw narrative lines between contemporary women designers and architects and female architects of the past were posted below a painted sign enjoining the viewer to "support our community." For a moment in 1978, an alternative timeline was created by de Bretteville based on her historical antecedents and her current community.

Early taxonomical efforts to reclassify previously excluded women such as Gray and Hayden led to deeper taxonomical interventions, such as arguing for inclusion of different art forms. A few years later, members of the Woman's Building connected formally trained women designers and architects to a still unknown artist, Grandma (Tressa) Prisbrey, who created structures out of found objects in her *Bottle Village*, located in Simi Valley, California. Suzanne Lacy initially brought Prisbrey to the Feminist Studio Workshop to speak to the students in January of 1976. Nancy Angelo, Barbara Bouska, Cheri Gaulke, and Linda Norlen, all students in the FSW, became intrigued by her.[28] They saw Prisbrey's materials, "the cast-offs of women's lives—dolls, empty bottles, broken pencils, frayed toothbrushes,"[29] as uniquely feminine and argued that her work belonged "in the tradition of quilts and crafts."[30] (The quilt became the emblematic object of feminist artists' taxonomical efforts in a hugely successful rehabilitation effort. Other women's media such as china painting and various kinds of needlework were also reclaimed as "art.") Prisbrey's *Bottle Village* had not received the same degree of recognition as other built environments made from found objects, such as Simon Rodia's Watts Towers. As Gaulke explained, "We have a very phallic culture that likes those kinds of protrusions [found at Watts Towers]. Grandma Prisbrey had never been taken seriously because she had made round structures that you had to go inside to experience the beauty, and that was all very sort of vaginal and very female."[31] The four students therefore decided to honor Prisbrey with a one woman show at the Woman's Building, which they curated, installed, and documented.

While Prisbrey would seem a somewhat anomalous peer for Gray and Hayden, all three joined a mélange of references for a 1978 issue of *Spinning Off* (a monthly newsletter of women's culture at the Woman's Building). The issue was devoted to the topic of "space" and occurred in conjunction with the "Women in American Architecture" exhibition. Images from the Prisbrey exhibition accompanied quotations that highlighted the meanings of space for women, information about the exhibition, details of lectures by Raven and Iskin about Sophia Hayden, and architect and urban historian Dolores Hayden's work on feminist architecture.[32] The inclusion of Prisbrey illustrates the way that members of the Woman's Building created chains of historical connection that progressed through a feminist lineage rather than the usual classifications of art history, which revolve around genre, style, medium, or school. The

differences between Hayden's grandiose 1893 Woman's Building, Gray's sleek interiors, and Prisbrey's humble bottle village were inconsequential; what mattered was that all these women created structures. A feminist interpretation of space connected women ar-chitects and designers to a found object artist.

That concept of space was of crucial importance at the Woman's Building, and was highly informed by history, albeit of the more genealogical sort. If radical feminism finds it origins in the work of Simone de Beauvoir, then certainly Virginia Woolf stands as the grandmother of the feminist art movement. The spatial antecedent most frequently invoked was Virginia Woolf's concept of a room of one's own. From the beginning of the Southern California feminist art movement, the idea that women artists needed to take themselves seriously enough to acquire space dedicated to making art was paramount. The physical spaces became progressively larger, from a studio in Fresno, to CalArts' *Womanhouse*, and finally, the entire Woman's Building.

Judy Chicago read Woolf, as did her students at Cal State Fresno. The women eagerly absorbed Woolf's ideas, and used them as justification for their endeavors. Fresno student Janice Lester explains,

> The large expanse of the studio allowed us to expand our goals. We couldn't have thought about making ten-foot square paintings in a nine-foot square bedroom, and we couldn't have thought about making environments in a two-room apartment. More important was the fact that this was the first time we had a place devoted exclusively to making art. It forced us to make a commitment to ourselves as artists. Virginia Woolf said for a woman to write she must have a room of her own; we discovered that in order for us to make art we had to have a studio of our own.[33]

Miriam Schapiro, who founded the Feminist Art Program at CalArts with Chicago, saw Woolf as "a genuine kind of myth for women who were at that time being so conscious of the fact that they were women, and that they had a history. We needed to have role models. Everything came together at the same time: Art and consciousness, myth and reality."[34]

Thus one genealogical origin, based on blending myth and reality into a serviceable form of history, starts with Virginia Woolf. A letter inviting women to the Feminist Studio Workshop explicitly invoked Woolf: "Join us in the creation of the community of learned women Virginia Woolf believed was possible. Not the daughters of educated men, but the educated women themselves controlling their private and professional lives according to their values, sensibility and womanity."[35] To the financial independence and privacy Woolf demanded, the pioneers of feminist art education added a supportive female community and a new education for women artists.

Curators Nancy Angelo, Barbara Bouska, Cheri Gaulke, and Linda Norlen with the artist, Grandma Prisbrey in her installation in the Woman's Building gallery, March 1976. Photograph by Sheila Ruth. Woman's Building Image Archive, Otis College of Art and Design.

At the same time as feminist literary critics reclaimed Woolf for the canon, feminist artists placed her into their ancestry. Faith Wilding noted years later, "In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf...suggests women create female histories by 'writing' the work of other women artists and practitioners into their own work through quotation, reference, appropriation, and fictional reconstruction."[36] Deena Metzger, who led the writing program in the FSW, approached Woolf in just such a fashion. She was drawn to "Virginia Woolf's intuitive understanding of the cyclical aspect of women's experience" even while recognizing "that if you read her books, you would not say this is women's writing."[37] Metzger found in Woolf resonances with contemporary feminism. "Suddenly I really saw it. And saw the way she wrote about the small and the domestic and what profound meaning it had and the way she was interested in relationship." In writing their own history, linking themselves aesthetically and theoretically back to Woolf, as well as to Gray, Hayden, and contemporary artists like Prisbrey, members of the Woman's Building created an alternative chronological history for themselves.

Their conceptions of history, which spiraled or curved, bent concepts of time and space.[38] This approach became particularly apparent in the extensive uses of the 1893 Woman's Building, an equally significant genealogical starting point and one

"The Woman's Building 1893, Historical Handicrafts," March–May 1976. Installation view at the Woman's Building. Woman's Building Image Archive, Otis College of Art and Design.

connected by members of the Woman's Building to Woolf. If Woolf demanded space for women's art, the 1893 original was the exemplar of that space in the past. In rediscovering a comprehensive organization so similar to what they envisioned for themselves, members of the Woman's Building found a lasting source of inspiration, but also a cautionary tale about history. The flip side of celebrating the 1893 Woman's Building was the haunting realization that the same fate could befall their organization. It could easily become another dead end of history, just as the original 1893 incarnation had disappeared, despite its elaborate national network, its leadership by powerful and influential women, and its remarkable achievements. Iskin described this phenomenon as the "doubled edge of recognition."[39] The threat of their own historical eradication was more than theoretical or based on fears derived from the past. They were aware that *Womanhouse*, perhaps the best-known exemplar of the seventies feminist art movement, had not been preserved.[40]

Iskin and Raven traveled several times to Chicago in search of the archival past of the 1893 Woman's Building. However, very little physical evidence remained. Undaunted, in 1976, Raven and Iskin curated "The Woman's Building 1893–". The exhibition consisted of reproductions of plates from the original Woman's Building catalog, and provided little more information than could have been found by perusing the 1893 catalog. However, the greatly enlarged images stretched from floor to ceiling, which gave viewers the sense of entering the original Woman's Building. Viewers were invited to imagine themselves within an approximation of the original space, which provided a means for a highly personal interpretation.

Items in a concomitant exhibition, "Historical Handicrafts," stood among the panels that documented the 1893 Building.[41] Various ephemera of the era, including "laces, costumes, watercolors, books and baskets," stood alongside an actual artifact from the 1893 Woman's Building—the first-prize winning quilt—and folk art made by a California Native American woman celebrated in the early twentieth century for her "primitive art."[42] The rather curious pairing of random Victoriana, artifacts, and Native American art was not intended to offer an exhaustive historical exploration, or even an attempt at recreation, but rather to capture the zeitgeist. Postcards of the original Woman's Building furthered a sense of the viewer being on a touristic voyage back in time. Taxonomically, the exhibition related to efforts to redefine what counted as art in order to incorporate forms dominated by women.

The exhibition also highlighted the similarities between the first and second Woman's Buildings. In discussing the art of the original Woman's Building, Raven remarked, "It is a source of pride to us that these women were able to command the kind of studio, the kind of physical strength, and the skill to be able to carve these enormous marbles."[43] While not much sculpting of monumental pieces occurred at the 1973 Woman's Building, the women who worked and studied there did, in fact, learn skills that were considered as masculine in their day as the use of the mallet and the

chisel were in the time of nineteenth-century women artists. Similarly, when explaining the significance of handicrafts at the original building, Iskin pointed out that appreciation of "the so-called crafts and the so-called minor arts in the nineteenth century was very similar to the new consciousness that has been building up through the feminist movement in the twentieth century."[44]

In the minds of the 1970s feminists, the original Woman's Building was transformed into something of a proto-feminist organization. Arlene Raven claimed that the members of the 1893 Woman's Building believed "that women had a unique sensibility and point of view," which is almost exactly how she and her colleagues described their own search for a female aesthetic and efforts to contribute to women's culture. The use of the word "sensibility" would have been immediately recognizable to members of the larger feminist art movement, because the Woman's Building was allied with one side of a heated debated about the existence of a female aesthetic, which was often called a "feminine sensibility."[45]

A subsequent exhibition that used some of the same documentary panels of the 1893 Building further emphasized parallels between the Woman's Buildings. "The Art of the Woman's Building 1893–1980" appropriately appeared in 1980 at Artemisia Gallery in Chicago, the city that was the home of the original Woman's Building. The exhibition offered historical information from "The Woman's Building 1893–" alongside a retrospective of art from the first seven years of the 1973 Woman's Building.[46] As the en dash joining the two buildings in the exhibition title indicates, the curators placed the two buildings on a continuum of women's art history that traveled around the gallery walls, allowing the members of the 1973 Woman's Building to become part of the history of the 1893 Building. Similarly, in an essay about the exhibition, Raven lists in one column the names of the organizers of the 1893 Building followed by ellipses. She begins the next column with a list of the founders of the Feminist Studio Workshop, and continues with a litany of participants in the 1973 Woman's Building. Thus, she symbolically bridges the eighty years between the organizations. At least for a moment, the members of the Woman's Buildings past and present existed in one seamless timeline. This positioning created an alternative history that existed not continuously, but by leaping over the lacunae to find what remained.

In a highly imaginative artist's book made in 1975, *The Woman's Building Chicago 1893/The Woman's Building Los Angeles 1973–*, Maria Karras went even further to create a virtual community that ignored the eighty years between the two Woman's Buildings.[47] For the cover, Karras revised a well-known image from the 1893 Woman's Building catalog by inserting herself.[48] The original image contains a female figure in the foreground holding a palette and brushes, surrounded by various items representing women's art and handicrafts, such as a spinning wheel, several books, quill pen, vase, drawing table, and neo-classical statuette mounted on a pedestal. Despite the brush and palette in her hands, the artist is not engaged in the act of painting, but rather

Centerfold image from Maria Karras's artist's book *The Woman's Building Chicago 1893/The Woman's Building Los Angeles 1973*. © 1975 Maria Karras.

looks out to the viewer.[49] In Karras's book cover collage, this artist is no longer posed in front of the original Woman's Building, which now appears as a painting. Instead she is standing outside the 1973 Woman's Building, which is in the background, along with some palm trees that highlight the California location. Karras poses as the photographer of the woman's artistic efforts, replicating the role she played frequently at the 1973 building. In this collage, past meets present and the two become part of the same community, at least pictorially.

The collaged images throughout Karras's book create an even larger imagined community that traverses the boundaries of a linear, historical narrative. Portraits of the 1893 Board of Lady Managers and busts of prominent suffragists from the 1893 exhibition catalog are interspersed among pictures of members of the 1893 Woman's Building.[50] On the steps of the 1973 Woman's Building stand visitors to the 1893 Woman's Building, taken from a picture of the west entrance of the original Woman's Building. In Karras's collages, people from the nineteenth century are invited to participate in her twentieth century Woman's Building.

Like previous uses of the 1893 Woman's Building, Karras also emphasized the parallels between the two buildings. For a young, aspiring artist like Karras, the 1973 Woman's Building provided a "space to experience ourselves in our art and our work in

building and extending our community."[51] The example of the 1893 Woman's Building provided the inspiration for this community because "women knew then as we know now what aliveness there is for us in validating ourselves and making a space to turn our gifts outwards in a place we choose to create."[52] Tellingly, her book title ends with an en dash, suggesting perhaps that this 1973 Woman's Building will have an endless history.

The gaps between eras were also bridged via episodic, often intensely personal encounters with previous generations of women artists. This contact with living women artists provided another sort of lineage for emerging feminist artists, one that offered more genealogical options. Paula Lumbard's academic interest in surrealism eventually became the basis for an important personal relationship. After writing a master's thesis on the women of surrealism, Lumbard wanted to find Leonora Carrington.[53] The feminist scholar Gloria Orenstein facilitated their introduction, and Lumbard eventually spent a week and a half with Carrington in New York. Lumbard recalls the importance of her time with Carrington:

> She took me to the bookstores she went to and showed me books and bought me a book about Wicca, but she also cautioned me not to source my life out of that place. I asked why? She replied that it can be a crutch. You cannot identify so singly in that way. You have to live in the larger world.[54]

After returning to Los Angeles and the Woman's Building, Lumbard retained ties to Carrington. She curated a show centered around Carrington's work, which she exhibited alongside four artists from the Woman's Building.[55] "Artist as Magus" (1980) created "a collection of works by women who merge art, life and a female spirituality."[56] Included in the show was Lumbard's close friend Tyaga, with whom she had engaged in collaborative painting practices. At the opening, Lumbard invited her thesis supervisor, Faith Wilding, to perform *Invitation to a Burning*. Lumbard explained in an earlier article, "I use mediation and ritual...and it is from that place I receive my images; and I think it is also from that place that these women [of the surrealist movement] found their images, their symbols."[57] She also asserted, "There are parallels between the women at the Woman's Building and the visionaries of the 1930s. Each of those women sought out her own education...At the Woman's Building we are educating ourselves and each other."[58] Through the exhibition, Lumbard created a nonlinear, intricately personal narrative of women's art history based on the connections she felt to other women artists.

Different women artists filled the personal and art historical gaps for other Woman's Building members. For example, Susan King met Georgia O'Keeffe in 1970 when she was a student at the University of New Mexico. O'Keeffe was a relatively obscure artist in the 1970s; at the time she was best known for her association with the

photographer Alfred Stieglitz. King, along with her friends Kristy Cruse and Cheryl Swannack, who also eventually came to the Woman's Building, spent an entire day with O'Keeffe. King became intrigued with O'Keeffe and returned with Raven for a second visit in the early 1970s. Initially, King intended to write a traditional art historical exploration of O'Keeffe, but she found formal writing unsatisfying. Instead, she began reinterpreting O'Keeffe's work from a personal point of view. She created a map of O'Keeffe's travels across the United States, and then charted the parallels with her own journey. The project lay dormant at that stage for eight years. In 1983, King received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and worked with the writer Eloise Klein-Healy to complete the book *Georgia*. It traces the impact of her visits with O'Keeffe in a series of prose poems that reveal how King felt emotionally inspired by O'Keeffe's lifetime of art making. As King explains in one of the prose poems, "For each year a card, tape carefully to the wall. Your life from books. My life from memory. A map with no color, only thin black borders. Both our lives drawn across the continent. And back. Your life a line. Mine still only dashes."[59]

Dashes. Again, like the en dashes in "The Art of the Woman's Building 1893–1980" and "The Woman's Building 1893–," and Raven's ellipses, we find the effort to use punctuation to unite disparate things, which here expresses King's desire "to place and read two stories on the same plane."[60] King's conundrum, how to tell two stories simultaneously, points to the complexities of using history. These tangled family trees, like King's and Lumbard's, propose alternate paths of history through the imaginative rather than the linearly reconnected. Finding specific women, filling in blanks, and imagining where necessary allowed feminists to find meaning in the past. In the hands of seventies feminists, history was transformed into examples that could justify their efforts. Through linguistic constructions that emphasized similarities, exhibitions that juxtaposed the two buildings, and photographic representations that pictorially joined the two organizations, the members of the Woman's Building incorporated the past into their own history. Ellipses and dashes—efforts to bridge the gaps in knowledge—testify to the inability to create a seamless linear narrative. Instead, like the quilt makers they so loved to reference, the members of the Woman's Building made do with what was at hand. Out of the scraps of the past, they constructed a useful historical account, but not one without complications.

Why Feminists Need(ed) History

> Feminism's History is both a compilation of women's experiences and a record of the different strategic interventions employed to argue women's cause. It can, of course, stand on its own, but it is best understood as a doubly subversive critical engagement: with prevailing normative codes of gender and with the conventions and (since

> history's formation as a discipline in the late nineteenth century) rules of historical writing. Feminism's History has been a variable, mutable endeavor, a flexible strategic instrument not bound to any orthodoxy. The production of knowledge about the past, while crucial, has not been an end in itself, but rather (at certain moments—and not always in the service of an organized political movement) has provided the substantive terms for a critical operation that uses the past to disrupt the certainties of the present and so opens the way to imagining a different future.[61]

As Joan Wallach Scott suggests, the "doubly subversive critical engagement" of feminism's history involves challenging what counts as history, while at the same time attempting to revise history. Members of the Woman's Building engaged in just such a twinned effort. Through taxonomical interventions, they sought to bring women artists, aesthetic objects, and historical events into the art historical narrative. At times these "strategic interventions" took the form of traditional art history, rewriting narratives. At other moments, members engaged in complex taxonomies that linked seemingly disparate individuals, events, and objects through a common thread of feminism. In the process of intervening into the historical, members of the Woman's Building not only created their own alternative lineage of feminist artists, but also created tangled genealogies that traversed temporal boundaries. They proposed multiple starting points, and picked from the past women artists to serve as foremothers.

As Scott notes, feminism's engagement with history has not been simply to "produce knowledge about the past" but rather has always been part of an activist project that uses the past to open the way to a different future. It turns out that sometimes looking back is the only way forward. What the critic Joanna Frueh wrote in her review of the show "The Art of the Woman's Building 1893–1980" could easily apply to the usage of history at the Woman's Building as a whole. It "is about heritage—remembered, invented, and because the artists of the Woman's Building think not in simplistic chronologies but timeless patterns, prophesied."[62] Members of the Woman's Building felt free to invent, imagine, and yes, even prophesize when it came to history. The importance of the past lay not in the details, but in the women. In freeing themselves from "simplistic chronologies," the members of the 1973 Woman's Building created a "heritage" that justified their current activism. And that, in the end, was what they really wanted from the past.[63]

However, entering history brings consequences. What gets remembered and how it gets remembered are important aspects of history. In their focus on the struggles of women artists in the past and the startling parallels to their own present situation, the members of the Woman's Building sometimes glossed over the less glorious aspects of the 1893 original. They did not grapple directly with the disparities of race

Above: **"Georgia O'Keeffe," an installation about the artist by Susan E. King.** June 1974. Feminist Studio Workshop's Group Show. Woman's Building Image Archive. Otis College of Art and Design. Photograph by Sheila Ruth.

Right: **Paula Lumbard and Jane Thurmond, Signage wall for the exhibition "Artist as Magus,"** 1980. © 1980/2010 Deborah Roundtree.

and class at the 1893 Building.[64] They did not critique the vision of womanhood that the Victorian-era Woman's Building represented, nor did they attack the imperialist aspects of a World's Fair dedicated to Columbus's "discovery" of the Americas.[65] These omissions resulted from their desire to emphasize parallels between the two Woman's Buildings. However, parallelism denies one of the fundamental premises of historical narrative: Change unfolds over time. Parallelism also makes it difficult to draw conclusions from the past, to learn the lessons, so to speak, that our predecessors have to teach. In delving into that blend of myth and reality, in bending the timeline into a more circular form that emphasized continuities, change over time got lost.

For the remainder of this essay, I want to return to the history of the Woman's Building by reading back in that second sense of genealogy, in which histories are branched as opposed to unified. I want to briefly explore the dead ends of the Woman's Building history. I look at these not as prescriptive routes that could have been taken but in the spirit of genealogies as pruned ends. For example, in privileging the women of 1893 as their primary antecedents, members of the Woman's Building rejected other options. As Jennie Klein shows in her essay in this volume, the members of the Lesbian Art Project looked back to another sort of space for a role model—not Woolf's room of one's own, or the 1893 Building—but to the salon created in the home of expatriates Natalie Barney and Romaine Brooks.

Other, more immediate precursors to the 1973 Woman's Building existed right in Los Angeles. In many ways, the far more obvious choice of a predecessor was the Chouinard Art Institute. As Jenni Sorkin notes in her essay for this collection, this influential Los Angeles art school was founded in 1921 by a woman—Nelbert Chouinard. The first Woman's Building was located in the former site of Chouinard. In fact, the connections ran deeper. Chouinard merged with the Los Angeles Conservatory of Music to form CalArts in 1961. CalArts was the first degree-granting institution of higher learning in the United States created specifically for students of both the visual and the performing arts. CalArts opened at its present campus in Valencia, California, in No-vember 1971.[66] In an ironical, historical twist, the founders of the Feminist Studio Workshop later negotiated with CalArts to lease the space that FSW used to split from CalArts and form the Woman's Building.[67]

Origin stories have consequences for history. In choosing to trace their roots back to the 1893 Woman's Building, members of the 1973 space picked a past that celebrated what they hoped to achieve themselves—a *public* center for *women's culture*. The vision of the Woman's Building as a visible space dedicated to celebrating women's art drew heavily on the 1893 Woman's Building for aspects that could not be found in a co-educational art school like Chouinard, or a private space like Woolf's room.

Other origin stories involved women who went on to participate in the Woman's Building. In 1970, the Los Angeles Council of Women Artists (LACWA), which included de Bretteville, formed to protest the exclusion of women from an

exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum (LACMA).[68] LACWA conducted a survey of works by women in the LACMA collection, which lead to an extended dialogue with the board of trustees of the museum and ultimately resulted in the corrective exhibition, *Women Artists: 1550–1950*, which first appeared at LACMA in 1975, then traveled throughout the United States. In 1972, some of the women who participated in LACWA formed Womanspace, the first women's gallery in Los Angeles. Members of both groups became part of the Woman's Building when it opened. In fact, the first manager of the Woman's Building was not one of the three founders of the Feminist Studio Workshop, but a Womanspace member, Edie Gross, whom Judy Chicago credits with first proposing that the gallery and the new art school share a location.[69] However, the relatively short duration of each of the contemporary groups—Womanspace closed after only a year at the Woman's Building, and LACWA existed only to protest the LACMA exhibition—meant that history now records the founders of the Feminist Studio Workshop as *the* founders of the Woman's Building.

In fact, Chicago, Raven, and de Bretteville resisted the role of running the entire building, as they disdained administration. They reached back into history to formulate a way to jointly administer the Woman's Building. Despite the obvious fact that different attitudes towards gender roles, sexuality, class, and ethnicity separated the two eras, the parallels between the two buildings struck the 1970s feminists as quite literal. Art historian Iskin recalled, "I had spent many hours pouring over the minutes of the Lady Board of Managers from 1893, which [was] fascinating because some of the same problems and issues they were dealing with, we were dealing with."[70] Despite awareness of the difficulties faced by the original Board of Lady Managers, in 1974 the Los Angeles Woman's Building created their own Board of Lady Managers. However, they infused the nineteenth-century model with feminist principles such as egalitarianism and decision-making by consensus. Each tenant or group at the Woman's Building received one seat on the board. Still problems arose as competing visions of the Woman's Building vied for dominance. Meetings of the Board of Lady Managers often devolved into angry shouting matches, unfortunately mirroring the conflicts that often occurred within the original Board of Lady Managers. Within a year, the 1973 Woman's Building abandoned the Board of Lady Managers. Nevertheless, the use of the concept of the Board of Lady Managers reveals a great deal about how seventies feminists viewed the 1893 Woman's Building. They were not deterred by the difficulties they knew had existed among members of the original board. They did not feel constrained to adopt their predecessors' ideals, which were hierarchical in the extreme. They used the name because they liked the sense of connection it gave them to the past, but they felt free to create their own modern, feminist take on it, which involved far more egalitarianism that Chairwoman Bertha Honoré Palmer would have found comfortable!

In retrieving the 1893 Building from obscurity and turning it into an origin

point for their own organization, members of the Woman's Building made their own choices about what to take from the past, which served more frequently as inspiration than as instruction. Sometimes the result was an uncritical celebration of women's past artistic and organizational achievements. When Raven wrote about the 1893 Woman's Building in 1980, she posited what now seems an overly optimistic celebration of the "sisterhood [that] abounded" among "queens, peasants, factory workers, matrons," and outlined a "radical spirit of sisterhood" that underlay the creation of the original Woman's Building. She claimed that a unity of women "of different nations, classes and races" came together to make the Woman's Building.[71] In reality, organized African American women sought a seat at the table with the 1893 Board of Lady Managers, but the single-minded focus on celebrating the achievements of a womanhood privileged gender over all other aspects of identity, leading Chairwoman Palmer to refuse anything more than the role of secretary to the board for black women. The issue divided the black community, with some prominent leaders like Ida B. Tarbell and Booker T. Washington organizing a boycott of the fair. During the 1970s, scholars of women's history and feminist art history began addressing these exclusionary policies.[72] However, the emphasis on sisterhood and, it must be admitted, a similar commitment to celebrating the achievements of "women's" art, allowed members of the 1973 Woman's Building to miss for a long time the racial and class-based exclusions of groups of women from the original Woman's Building.

Instead, the "double edge of recognition" that Iskin spoke of became the dominant lesson gleaned from the past: the delight in learning about the extensive efforts of feminist artists in the past, and the horror of realizing that they had been eradicated from the art historical record. Raven once remarked, "The great work of our 19th century sisters *and* the eradication of their efforts had enlarged our aspirations and sharpened our own instincts for personal and historical survival."[73] The past served not just as a template, but also as a warning. Indeed, Raven seems almost prescient, as the turning tide of feminist theory in the 1980s did increasingly consign the Woman's Building and its artists to a marginal position. Younger art historians and critics firmly relegated the Woman's Building to the "bad" camp of so-called "seventies essentialist feminists." Historians lumped them in with groups responsible for the apolitical turn taken by the women's movement.

Because of the inextricable link between the study of women's history and feminist activism, without a historical consciousness we are doomed to perpetually reinvent. Such moments of repetition have become depressingly familiar. For example, in 1989 Cynthia Navaretta, an influential 1970s feminist art activist, saw a poster about art world sexism created by members of the feminist art group the Guerrilla Girls. Navaretta recalled that the poster interested her "because it was almost identical to something we had done thirteen years before."[74] Some time in the 1980s, the members of the Woman's Building, in collaboration with Women's Caucus for the Arts,

produced a flyer on blue cardstock entitled "Why are these women blue?" The flyer recounted the shockingly dismal statistics about women in the arts; its text was surrounded by the faces of famous women artists.[75] Years later, a similar technique was adopted by the Guerrilla Girls. Navaretta copied the original document and sent it off to the Guerrilla Girls with a note asking, "Had you ever seen this before? Did you know that we were active many years ago—we who are now aged and no longer go around pasting things up on walls?"[76] She received a response from a member of the Guerrilla Girls that they knew nothing of the feminist artist movement of the 1970s. I note the absence of historical memory and its consequences not to denigrate the efforts of more recent activists, but rather to point to the pitfalls of endless cycles of similar protests if we don't heed the oft-quoted advice of George Santayana, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

As a graduate student in 1993, I was hired to conduct an oral history project with members of the Woman's Building, which eventually became the topic of my dissertation. By the time I came along, members of the now defunct Woman's Building were surprised to find a young feminist interested in them and grateful that I wanted to write about the topic. Slowly, I discovered other young feminist scholars working on the feminist art movement.[77] Eventually, both Fresno and CalArts organized symposia on their campuses about the 1970s feminist art programs, which included panel discussions by participants.[78] Yet the Woman's Building still suffered from what Sondra Hale called the "book end" approach to Los Angeles feminist art, which focused on *Womanhouse* (leaving out its predecessor program at Cal State Fresno) and ending with Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* (leaving out, well, most of the history of the Woman's Building, which didn't open until 1973).[79] Even *WACK!*, the recent monumental show on the seventies feminist art movement, had a hard time figuring out what to do with the Woman's Building.[80]

Histories have histories. Official versions of the Woman's Building were produced over the years, for anniversaries, at the building's closing in 1991, in my oral histories, and increasingly in the memoirs of participants and in the scholarship of academics like those included in this collection. But for each woman, a highly personal, idiosyncratic history also exists, which is as it should be for a place that offered all women, regardless of talent or training, the opportunity to be what might be described as an artist, but which was really much more.

At the very end, after the Woman's Building had been closed and the remaining staff relocated to an office in the 18th Street Arts Complex of Santa Monica, the active members reached into the past once more for their final Vesta Awards ceremony in 1991. The Woman's Building began the Vesta awards, which were given annually to prominent women in various aspects of the arts, in 1981. Their inspiration once again came from history, this time reaching back into Roman mythology to Vesta, "the Roman goddess who was keeper of the flame, a woman dedicated to her work."[81] Every

detail of this final Vesta awards ceremony was coordinated and executed with loving care. It was what the Woman's Building did best, paying tribute to women in a world that so frequently overlooked their contributions. Even as it exists today—in the archives, on the many academic panels comprised of alumnae, in a Facebook group, and in the many past members who continue to teach and work in the arts—the Woman's Building celebrates the ability of women to achieve their dreams, no matter what form they might take.

Notes

1. Joan Wallach Scott, "Feminism's History," *Journal of Women's History* 16.2 (2004): 10–29.

2. This slogan has been attributed to Jack Weinberg in 1965. Suzy Platt, *Respectfully Quoted: A Dictionary of Quotations* (New York: Barnes & Noble Publishing, 1993), 343.

3. Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Random House, 1970).

4. Classic socialist feminist writings include Juliet Mitchell, *Woman's Estate* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971); and Chicago Women's Liberation Union, Hyde Park Chapter, *Socialist Feminism: A Strategy for the Women's Movement*, 1972 (pamphlet), available at http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/wlm/socialist/ (accessed December 20, 2007). Heidi Hartmann's article "The Unhappy Marriage of Feminism and Socialism" inspired an entire volume devoted to discussions of socialist feminism, with contributions from many of the major socialist feminists theorists. See Lydia Sargent, ed., *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981). Many early statements of socialist feminism are collected in Zillah Eisenstein, ed., *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979).

5. Classic radical feminist texts include Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York: Bantam Books, 1970); and Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1969). For an excellent treatment of the concept of matriarchy in prehistory see Cynthia Eller, *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory: Why an Invented Past Won't Give Women a Future* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).

6. The classic articulations of this position are Robin Morgan, "Goodbye to All That," *Going Too Far: The Personal Chronicles of a Feminist* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 121–130; and Marge Piercy, "Grand Coolie Damn," in *Sisterhood is Powerful*, 473–493. A fine analysis of the rift between socialist feminists and radical feminists is found in Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967–1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1991).

7. The most complete history of the 1893 Woman's Building can be found in Jeanne Madeline Weimann, *The Fair Women* (Chicago: Academy Chicago, 1981). According to Weimann, a fire destroyed most of the art from the

Woman's Building in 1895 and the building itself was demolished in 1896. The Woman's Building had not been constructed of permanent building materials. It was a façade meant to last only the six months of the exposition. That, in and of itself, makes an interesting metaphor for thinking about the perceived significance of the endeavor at the time.

8. In 1968, Joyce Kozloff and Nancy Spero began circulating accounts of art world sexism in a newsletter format called *The Rip-Off File*. These accounts were eventually compiled in Kozloff and Spero, eds., *Rip-Off File* (New York: Ad Hoc Committee of Women Artists, 1973). See also Lucy Lippard, "Sexual Politics, Art Style," *Art in America* 59 (1971): 19–20; Cindy Nemser, "Analysis: Critics and Women's Art," *Women and Art* (1971): 1–2; and Diane G. Cochrane, "Women in Art: A Progress Report," *American Artist* 36 (1972): 52–56, 71–73.

9. Therese Schwartz, "They Built Women a Bad Art History," *Feminist Art Journal* 2.3 (1973): 10–11, 22.

10. Judy Chicago, *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 163.

11. Paula Harper, "The First Feminist Art Program: A View from the 1980s," *Signs* 10.4 (1985): 777–781.

12. Not too surprisingly, this idea was held by many male members of the art establishment. More surprising, however, was the "greatness" debate set off when art historian Linda Nochlin published "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" in *Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness*, Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran, eds. (1971; reprint, New York: New American Library, 1972), 480–510. While Nochlin's article attracted considerable attention, in reality she had simply posed more provocatively a question that earlier feminists had addressed. Virginia Woolf, for example, had pointed to societal barriers to women's quest for independence in the creative world and explored the limiting stereotypes of femininity, as did Tillie Olsen in *Silences* (New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, 1978).

13. Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden from History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It* (London: Pluto Books, 1973). Here I purposefully reference Rowbotham's work, which is similar in its efforts to retrieve women for a different historical narrative, that of "western civilization." Fittingly, it was first published in 1973, the year of the Woman's Building's founding.

14. Arlene Raven, interview with Cheri Gaulke, New York, September 19, 1992, Woman's Building Oral History Project.

15. This account is drawn from Faith Wilding, *By Our Own Hands* (Culver City: Peace Press, 1977), 61; and the author's correspondence with Nancy Youdelman and Judy Chicago.

16. Program from the West Coast Women Artists' Conference held at CalArts, January 21–23, 1972. Box 3, Folder 3, California Institute of the Arts Feminist Art Materials Collection, California Institute of the Arts Library, Valencia, California.

17. Arlene Raven, "The Art of the Woman's Building: Graphics, Performance and Video," *Spinning Off* (March 1980), 1. Raven recalled this event as her first presentation of her research into the original Woman's Building.

18. "First Calendar of Events," *Womanspace* 1.1 (1973): 25.

19. Arlene Raven, *At Home* (Long Beach: Long Beach Museum of Art, 1983), 25. The idea of naming an organization for the Woman's Building was by no means unique to Los Angeles women. Many women's buildings sprang up in the early twentieth century. See for example, Karen Blair, "The Limits of Sisterhood: The Women's Building in Seattle, 1907–1921," *Frontiers* 8 (1985): 45–52. In the 1970s, a women's building also existed in San Francisco, where it still stands today.

20. Arlene Raven oral history. There were, of course, exceptions. Some of their students went on to become professional art historians. Raven recalled that Charlotte S. Rubinstein, author of two surveys about women, attended her classes at Womanspace, while Ruth Iskin taught Diane Gelon, the lead researcher on the *Dinner Party* at UCLA in the early 1970s. Paula Lumbard wrote a thesis about women in the surrealist movement, and published one of the first scholarly articles on Dorothea Tanning. (Paula Lumbard, "Dorothea Tanning: On the Threshold to a Darker Place," *Woman's Art Journal* 2.1 [1981]: 49–52.) However, most history making at the Woman's Building occurred as the members themselves made history. Sometimes that took formal shape in the articles about performance art authored by Cheri Gaulke. At other times, it consisted of self-documentation in periodicals such as *High Performance*, *Heresies*, and *Frontiers*.

21. Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists: 1550–1950*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1976).

22. Harper, 775. Strangely, Harper writes about the program at CalArts without ever mentioning its successor, the Feminist Studio Workshop.

23. John Pastier, "Beyond the Femininity of Eileen Gray," *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 1975, E1–2.

24. Susana Torre, ed., *Women in American Architecture: A Historic and Contemporary Perspective* (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1977).

25. Program for West Coast Women Artists' Conference, n.p.

26. Sheila de Bretteville, interview by the author, August 8, 1992, Los Angeles, CA.

27. Jocelyn Paine, "Hidden History of a Profession," *Los Angeles Times*, April 30, 1978, H22.

28. "Grandma Prisbrey's Bottle Village Preserved," *Spinning Off* (December 1979), 2.

29. WCA program / WB calendar, n.d., circa January/ February 1977.

30. "Grandma Prisbrey's Bottle Village Preserved," 2.

31. Cheri Gaulke, interview by the author, August 6, 1992.

32. *Spinning Off* (April 1978).

33. Janice M. Lester, "Building the Studio," *Everywoman* 2.7 (1971): 13.

34. Miriam Schapiro, interview by Ruth Bowman, September 10, 1989, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/schapi89.htm (accessed June 16, 2010).

35. Letter dated April 15, 1975, to prospective students of the Feminist Studio Workshop (FSW) from the staff of the FSW. Possession of the author.

36. Faith Wilding, "Don't Tell Anyone We Did It!" *Documents* 15 (1999). Available at http://faithwilding.refugia.net/ (accessed June 16, 2010).

37. Deena Metzger, interview with the author, March 24, 1994.

38. This bending reflects a similar sort of circularity noted by Alexandra Juhasz and the repetition discussed by Vivien Green Fryd in their essays for this collection.

39. Ruth Iskin, interview with the author, April 25, 1993, Los Angeles, California, Woman's Building Oral History Project.

40. The fate of *Womanhouse* is detailed in Sandra Sider, "Womanhouse: Cradle of Feminist Art," Art Spaces Archive Project, circa 2004, http://as-ap.org/sider/resources.cfm (accessed June 16, 2010).

41. Raven, *At Home*, x.

42. On this framing of the teleological narrative of primitive to modern see Laura R. Prieto, *At Home in the Studio: The Professionalization of Women Artists in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 125–135.

43. Quotations are drawn from Ruth Iskin and Arlene Raven, *1893 Historical Handicrafts Exhibition*, 1976. Videotape produced by the Woman's Building. Long Beach Museum of Art Video Archive, Getty Research Institute. Transferred by the Long Beach Museum of Art Foundation and the City of Long Beach, 2005.

44. Ibid.

45. See Miriam Schapiro and Judy Chicago, "Female Imagery," *Womanspace Journal* 1.3 (1972): 11–14. The strongest challenges to the idea of a female sensibility came from the editors of the influential *Feminist Art Journal*. They depicted the advocates of a female aesthetic as opportunists, feared that the idea created a new stereotype of women's art, and decried the essentialism at the heart of this proposed aesthetic. See Patricia Mainardi, "Feminine Sensibility: An Analysis," *Feminist Art Journal* 1.1 (1972), and 1.2 (1972): 9; and Cindy Nemser, "The Women Artists' Movement," *Feminist Art Journal* 2.4 (1973–1974): 8–10.

46. No catalog exists for the exhibit, which ran from March 28 through April 19, 1980. A double-sided sheet that was presumably distributed at the show documents the works included. The credits are listed as follow: "The Art of the Woman's Building: Graphics, Performance and Video curated by Arlen Raven, essay by Arlene Raven, printed in *Spinning Off, a monthly newsletter of women's culture at the Woman's Building*. Installation by Sheila de Bretteville, Sue Maberry, Cheri Gaulke, Cheryl Swannack, Jeri Allyn, and Arlene Raven." "Performance at the Woman's Building selected by Cheri Gaulke" and "The L.A. Women's Video Center selected by Nancy Angelo." Original document in the possession of the author.

47. Maria Karras, *The Woman's Building Chicago 1893 / The Woman's Building Los Angeles 1973–* (Los Angeles: Women's Community Press, 1975).

48. The original image, which appears to be by Madeleine Lemaire, is shrouded in confusion. It is often described as the frontispiece, but it seems clear that at least the 1893 first edition featured it as the cover. (Maud Howe Elliott, *Art and Handicraft in the Woman's Building of the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893* [Paris, New York: Boussod, Valadon & Co., 1893]). (Viewable on the IAWA image bank, http://imagebase.lib.vt.edu/view_record_test.php?URN=IAWABK0002. Accessed June 16, 2010.) Cheaper editions that appeared subsequently do not seem to have featured it (Maud Howe Elliott, *Art and Handicraft in the Woman's Building of the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893* [Boston and New York: Rand McNally, 1894]).

49. Dennis B. Downey, *A Season of Renewal: The Columbian Exhibition and Victorian America* (Westport: Praeger, 2000), 125. Although she is clearly an artist, she remains determinedly feminine. No artist's smock obscures her skirt and fashionable, puff-sleeved shirtwaist with deep ruffle and cascading sash. She seems in all respects to be little more than an emblematic Gibson girl, the archetype that bridged the gap between the Victorian lady and the New Woman. The Gibson girl represented no threat whatsoever to the established order, representing as she did the female ideal of beauty, not independence. While the figure may appear innocuous, members of the Woman's Building had a more radical reading of her because, as Arlene Raven pointed out, it was quite unusual to see a depiction of a woman artist at all.

50. While Karras's inclusion of suffragists may seem an unusual choice for an artist, it reflects the commitment of feminists at the Woman's Building to claim a broad feminist heritage for themselves. Raven went so far as to assert that Susan B. Anthony was "the true instigator of the 1893 Woman's Building," arguing that only her association with the controversial suffrage movement kept her from taking a more prominent position in the organizing of the Woman's Building. If suffragists were accorded only a limited organizational role, they were amply represented, albeit silently, in the Hall of Honor, which featured sculpted busts of Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who stood beside the younger generation represented by Lucy Stone and Harriet Beecher Stowe. Suffragists were most visible in the World's Congress of Representative Women that occurred from May 15 through 21, 1893, which drew many famous American suffragists such as Susan B. Anthony, Jane Addams, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Lucy Stone. This led Raven to conclude that the Woman's Building "became an important political gathering space for women." By showing that explicitly political women, and you could not get much more radical than suffrage in the late nineteenth-century, were involved in an endeavor like the 1893 Woman's Building, the 1970s feminists laid claim to that same radical tradition. (Raven, "The Art of the Woman's Building," 1.)

51. Karras, *The Woman's Building*, n.p.

52. Ibid.

53. Paula Lumbard, "Visionaries of the Wicca: The Women of Surrealism," Master's thesis, Goddard College, 1980.

54. Paula Lumbard, interview with the author, March 6, 2009, Los Angeles California.

55. In the late 1970s, Carrington's work was rarely exhibited in the United States, although she continued to be shown in her native England and her adoptive home of Mexico.

56. Paula Lumbard, "The Artist as Magus," *Spinning Off* (March 1980), 13.

57. Paula Lumbard in conjunction with Geraldine Hanon, "Vision and the Artist," *Spinning Off* 2.16 (1979): 1.

58. Ibid.

59. Susan E. King, *Georgia: A Series of Prose Poems on Georgia O'Keeffe* (Los Angeles: Paradise Press, 1985), n.p.

60. Ibid.

61. Scott, 18.

62. Joanna Frueh, "The Women's Room," *Chicago Reader* (n.d.), 40.This undated press clipping from the Woman's Building Archives is a review of the exhibition at Artemisia Gallery. (It is presumably circa March 1980, concurrent with the exhibition. But I have been unable to date it precisely because this alternative newspaper is not indexed, cataloged or microfilmed prior to 1988.)

63. I do not in any way mean to impugn the scholarship of any art historian associated with the Woman's Building. Raven herself admitted that she had taken the path towards art criticism that led away from traditionally academic art history. Lise Vogel outlined the difficulties faced by feminist art critics and the extent to which they are forced to work outside academia. Vogel, a truly remarkable scholar, became so disenchanted with the field of art history after completing a doctorate in art history at Harvard that she returned to graduate school to earn a second doctorate in sociology from Brandeis. See Lise Vogel, "Fine Arts and Feminism: The Awakening Consciousness," *Feminist Studies* 2.1 (1974): 3–37. Raven was a well respected art critic who published three highly influential critical anthologies. See Arlene Raven, *Crossing Over: Feminism and Art of Social Concern* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988); Arlene Raven, *Art in the Pubic Interest* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989); and Joanna Frueh, Cassandra L. Langer, and Arlene Raven, eds., *New Feminist Criticism: Art, Identity, Action* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1994). A sort of follow up to the kind of research as excavation that Raven and Iskin practiced in the 1970s can be found in Charlene G. Garfinkle, "Lucia Fairchild Fuller's 'Lost' Woman's Building Mural," *American Art* 7.1 (1993): 2–7; and Carolyn Kinder Carr and Sally Webster, "Mary Cassatt and Mary Fairchild MacMonnies: The Search for Their 1893 Murals," *American Art* 8.1 (1994): 52–69.

64. Early treatments of racism at the 1893 Woman's Building include Ann Massa, "Black Women in the 'White City,'" *Journal of American Studies* 8.3 (1974): 319–37; and Erlene Stetson, "A Note on the Woman's Building and Black Exclusion," *Heresies* 8 (1979): 45–47. A more complicated consideration can be found in Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). Finally, Christopher Robert Reed documents participation in the World's Fair in "All the World Is Here!" *The Black Presence at White City* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

65. The dominant interpretation of imperialism at the 1893 World's Fair is Robert Rydell's *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) and the work he did for the Smithsonian exhibition in Robert Rydell and Carolyn Kinder Carr, eds., *Revisiting the White City: American Art at the 1893 World's Fair* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1993). Erik Larson offers a riveting account of gender at the World's Fair in *Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair That Changed America* (New York: Crown, 2003).

66. http://calarts.edu/aboutcalarts/history

67. Raven, *At Home*, 29.

68. This history of the early feminist art movement in Los Angeles is drawn from Wilding, *By Our Own Hands*.

69. Chicago, *Through the Flower*, 201.

70. Ruth Iskin, interview with the author, April 25, 1993.

71. Raven, "The Art of the Woman's Building," 1.

72. Two of the earliest such pieces appeared in the influential feminist art journal *Heresies*. See Terree Grabenhorst-Randall, "The Woman's Building," *Heresies* 4 (1978): 44–46; and the response to her by Stetson, "A Note on the Woman's Building and Black Exclusion." See also Joelynn Snyder-Ott, "Woman's Place in the Home (That She Built)," *Feminist Art Journal* 3 (1974): 7–8; and Frances K. Pohl, "Historical Reality or Utopian Ideal?" *International Journal of Women's Studies* 5 (1982). An excellent review of recent literature on the 1893 Woman's Building can be found in T.J. Boisseau, "White Queens at the Chicago World's Fair, 1893: New Womanhood in the Service of Class, Race, and Nation," *Gender & History* 12.1 (2000): 33–81. Along with Sondra Hale, I have written about the complex issue of race at the 1973 Woman's Building in "'At

Home' at the Woman's Building, But Who Gets a Room of Her Own?: Women of Color and Community," in *From Site to Vision: the Woman's Building in Contemporary Culture*, Sondra Hale and Terry Wolverton, eds. (Los Angeles: Woman's Building and Otis college of Art and Design, 2011.)

73. Raven, "Art of the Woman's Building," 1.

74. "'Visual Arts' Leader Cynthia Navaretta, Rapporteur: Leslee Corpier," in *The Stubborn Green Bud: Women's Culture at Century's Close*, Kathryn F. Clarenbach and Edward L. Kamarck, eds. (Metuchen, N.J., London: The Scarecrow Press, 1987), 99.

75. Cheri Gaulke recalls the flyer being made for "the Women Artists Visibility Event (WAVE) produced by the Southern California Women's Caucus for the Arts, co-directed by Cheri Gaulke and Carol Newman." Author's correspondence with Sue Maberry, February 8, 2010.

76. "'Visual Arts' Leader Cynthia Navaretta, Rapporteur: Leslee Corpier," 99.

77. At the time I was aware of Denise Bauer, Jennie Klein, and Margo Hobbs Thompson.

78. In 1998, CalArts hosted "F-word" to explore the Feminist Art Program. In 2007, a student-organized event entitled "Exquisite Acts & Everyday Rebellions" again reflected on the feminist past at CalArts. In 2009, at California State University Fresno, Laura Meyer organized the exhibition "A Studio of Their Own: The Legacy of the Fresno Feminist Art Experiment."

79. Sondra Hale, "Power and Space: Feminist Culture and the Los Angeles Woman's Building, a Context," in *From Site to Vision*, 68.

80. In March of 2008, the Bronx Museum exhibition *Making It Together* corrected some of these omissions by including the work of important collaborative art groups from the Woman's Building, such as Mother Art, the Feminist Art Workers, the Waitresses, and Sisters Of Survival (www.bronxmuseum.org/content/080102_Making_It_Together.pdf).

81. Terry Wolverton, *Insurgent Muse* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2002), 180.