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BLAZE: Discourse on Art, Women and Feminism

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“Report on the History of the Women’s Caucus for Art”

The History of the Women’s Caucus for Art

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The Women’s Caucus for Art was born in anger and nurtured by challenge and innovation for many years thereafter. Following a series of major upheavals in Europe and the United States, never-ending wars, “police actions” and war protests left wide-spread feelings of dissatisfaction with the conditions of life that previous generations had been willing to fight for. The Civil Rights movement, begun to end racial discrimination in America, had raised awareness of many other kinds of discrimination in the educational system, employment, and housing, and in the military forces where racial segregation both of the African Americans and the Japanese Americans had forced them into concentration camps on doubts of their patriotism. These movements raised questions of many other forms of discrimination, such as when women were forced to give up their war time jobs as men returned from the battlefields.

¶After a century of turmoil, women had finally gotten the right to vote in 1920, but this did not greatly change their conditions of living. As signs warning “Whites Only” vanished, women realized there were just as many unwritten signs repressing them. Jobs were listed separately for “men” or “women” in ads in the papers. A married woman could not get a credit card without her husband’s permission. Unmarried working women could not get bank loans or mortgages without a co-signer. In 1953, in Tennessee, I could not have willed my own property without the permission of my father or husband. Women earned 59 cents for every dollar a man earned. Abortions were illegal, and birth control might not be legal or available. These conditions changed slowly as women began to realize that what was “normal” was completely wrong; the women in art and in academic fields realized that they too were oppressed.

¶Only recently had the most prestigious Ivy League universities admitted women as students or employed women as faculty. Ann Sutherland Harris noted,

Distinguished women scholars retired with the rank of Associate Professor; few were even awarded tenure at the most famous universities until women at Colombia, Chicago, Harvard and elsewhere started to ask questions in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s and documented the impressive numbers of women who had earned the necessary degrees to teach at serious universities. In the UK, women had to found their own colleges at Oxford and Cambridge in order to hold fellowships and be able to work, and women only got proper degrees at both places after WW II. . . my husband got a job at Columbia, we both moved to New York City, where I was lucky enough to get an appointment at Barnard and Colombia in 1966. That’s where I discovered the glass ceiling for women faculty there -- Assistant Professor OK but tenure -- hardly ever. Later I testified before Edith Green’s Subcommittee on Higher Education in Washington about this widespread pattern of discrimination against women in higher education.¹

One woman made a major change in this pattern. Bernice Sandler, in Washington, had realized that two Executive Orders of President Johnson that forbade discrimination by race or sex by federal contractors meant

¹ Ann Sutherland Harris, e-mail to author. October 26, 2006.

that millions of dollars in federal grants could be denied to academic institutions that received federal funds that discriminated against women. Our statistics proved that Columbia University (and others) did and had for years, and she sued them and succeeded in holding up millions in funding! That really opened the floodgates and made many women and men begin to realize how unconsciously yet pervasively women were seen as lower class citizens not entitled to the benefits, status, salaries, pay, and so forth of men.²

§Disregarded

By the mid twentieth century, there were 105,000 artists and art teachers in the United States. However, although by any standard-- numbers, training, skills, quality-- about 35 percent of trained US artists were female and 44 percent of trained art historians, but less than 11 percent were art teachers, only 12 percent were invited to exhibit their art, 7 percent got fellowships and grants, and less than 4 percent were included in the important art textbooks.³ Especially problematic to women art pr historians was Professor H. W. Janson whose authoritative textbook *The History of Art of 1962* proclaimed his belief that an artist's work must "have changed the history of art"⁴ to be worthy of inclusion in his tome. His compilation of "3,000 artists from the Old Stone Age to the present" included no women artists – and no black or Latin artists either.⁵ Surprisingly, he was highly regarded in the major organization for professionals in the visual arts, the College Art Association (CAA), and served on its board of directors. After its appearance, his book was the required textbook for most introductory art history classes in the United States, and had a discouraging effect on the young female artists and art historians who were trained by it.

¶Women art historians had dual concerns: reexamining the accepted importance and power of individual inventiveness and competition of the artists and the accompanying progression of the "right" artistic ideas over past errors. Norma Broude commented that

"underlying both of these influential ideas – the mystique of the innovative avant garde and the paradigm of art history as a sequence of styles that vanquish and supersede each other – is the psychosexual model of heroic patricide, the competitive revolt of the sons against the fathers."⁶

In many and varied ways women historians saw art as a tool for change and hungered for the opportunity to change the "litany" of art from the "universal value" espoused by Kenneth Clark. Brice Marden, quoting Cezanne said, "The subject matter became irrelevant – what he was really doing was making the paint."⁷ The women felt that there was always an intent and philosophy behind the artist's work and that the meaning and content were of much greater importance than the unique style or individual technique. At the CAA, Conference in New Orleans in 1980, Alessandra Comini said, "Art can deny reality, it can transform, it can almost move reality. Art can deal with private or metaphysical problems or -- it can go public and comment on society."⁸ The Women's Movement in art was the force that abolished the tyranny of technique in American painting that had reigned in the 1950's and 60's.

² Rosalind Rosenberg, "The Woman Question," *The Colombia History of the 20th Century*, Richard W. Bulliet, Columbia University Press, 1998.

³E.C. Dickinson, "U. S. Census," *Statistics: Discrimination in the Art Field*, State of California Commission on the Status of Women, Los Angeles, CA, Feb. 24, 1987; and CWAO Panel, College Art Association, Feb.15, 1990.

⁴E. C. Dickinson, "Interview with H. W. Janson, Feb. 1, 1979," College Art Association, Women Artists News, September - .Oct. 1979. p.12.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Norma Broude. *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, Harper & Row, Publishers, New York. 1982: p.15.

⁷ Brice Marden. Wall comments, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. 2007.

⁸ E.C. Dickinson. audiotape of lecture by Alessandra Comini, WCA Conference Address. Sony TC-D5M (audiocassette), (Los Angeles, CA. Feb. 13, 1985.)

In northern and middle California the female visual artists were feeling challenges of a different nature. Interactions and experimentations began among them that would spread across the nation and completely change the way women related to one another. Where once it was grudgingly accepted that if one woman was asked to be in an exhibition no others would be -- tokenism was unnamed and tolerated -- a change came. Joyce Aiken had taught art at the California State College Fresno since 1961, bringing her creative talents into the classroom. Judy Chicago arrived in 1970 as a sabbatical replacement to teach outdoor site sculpture, but changed the course (during which she identified strong female students) to an investigation into feminist art. Held off-campus, this was the first course like this in the country⁹ and it started a fire. As Nancy Youdelman said, "We felt a special sense of risk and importance and a freedom from history."¹⁰ When Chicago left a year later, first Rita Yokoi and then Joyce Aiken continued the class with innovative teaching methods until Aiken retired in 1992. Students from these classes, such as Suzanne Lacy, Nancy Youdelman, Cay Lang, Laurel Glick, and others carried their enthusiasm throughout the community starting performances, and exhibits.

§Something New

In the spring of 1971 Judy Chicago and Mimi Schapiro held a new type of class for women artists featuring panels and skits. Rita Yokoi, Patricia Tavenner and Jeannie O'Conner attended this class then returned to Oakland and Berkeley where they organized a picket of the University of California at Berkeley's University Museum, and formed many consciousness-raising groups with the help of West-East Coast Bag (W.E.B).¹¹ Credit for the structure of these groups must go to Joyce Kozloff, who came from New York, and had joined the first Bay Area group bringing all her skills of organizing and sense of unity and sisterhood to the subsequent groups.¹²

At this time in New York, many groups had developed to support civil rights and to protest political events, the anti-war movement, and the lack of women in museum shows. In 1970, Dorothy Gillespie was instrumental in founding the Women's InterArt Center, "the first alternative feminist space."¹³ The groups included were: WAR = Women Artists in Revolution (against the Whitney Museum's lack of women in their Annual Exhibition), the Art Workers Coalition (protesting the invasion of Cambodia, the Kent State killings, and violence in Mississippi), WSABL (Women, Students and Artists for Black Art Liberation) demanding quotas in art, the Ad Hoc Group (against discrimination in the Whitney Museum Annual Exhibitions), WIA (Women in the Arts) for an exhibition of 500 women, and many others.¹⁴ These groups surprisingly did not join together in common cause but often formed even more protest groups against yet another perceived evil.

Chicago, taking many of her Fresno students with her, then worked with Schapiro at California Institute of the Arts in Valencia developing the Feminist Art Program there (skeptical faculty at that time included Nam June Paik, John Baldessari, Allan Kaprow and Herb Blau). This program dramatically showed the difference between the training of male and female art students from mentorship to myth. "the myths of (male) genius and mastery deemed as necessary to the making of art."¹⁵ A three-day Women in Art Conference was organized in

⁹ The first formal course in the U.S. on woman's history was offered at U.C.L.A. in 1970, (Margaret Staabel, Indiana University Press, 1999).

¹⁰ Fresno Art Museum, "A Personal Perspective: the First Feminist Art Class," Fresno State College, 1970-1971, (Eighteen Profiles. © 2006.)

¹¹ Joyce Kozloff. "W.E.B - west east coast bag." (Newsletter, New York. - June, 1972). 1. Ibid. p.5.

¹² Jo Hanson and Patricia Tavenner. "Video and dramatization of the origins of the WCA," NCWCA The Early Years, The University Museum, University of California, Berkeley, California - March 23, 2000.

¹³ Judith Brodsky, "Exhibitions, Galleries, and Alternative Spaces:" *The Power of Feminist Art*. P. 106.

¹⁴ Faith Wilding, "The Feminist Art Program:" *The Power of Feminist Art*, Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, (©Harry N. Abrams, Inc. New York, 1994), p.32 - 47.

Judith Brodsky. *In Passionate Pursuit: exhibition*, (Douglass Library, Rutgers. Sept. 12, 2006).

¹⁵ Arlene Raven, "Womanhouse," *The Power of Feminist Art*, p. 58.

1972 at Womanhouse, a 17 room abandoned house on Mariposa Avenue in Hollywood, lent by the City of Los Angeles, which became a famous landmark for the unprecedented performance art of subjects dealing with women's roles. Performances were of mopping, ironing, birthing, waiting and rape. In one piece women stood in the doorway of a small room, "Leah's Room," watching with tear-streaked cheeks as the woman seated inside at the mirror laboriously put on careful makeup, then removed it, then put it on again, then removed it again, then Faith Wilding performed an intense "Waiting: 'waiting to get pretty – waiting to get married – waiting for my baby to be born - waiting for my children to grow up – waiting to get ugly – waiting for a visit from my children --'"¹⁶

¶What began in Fresno was echoed across the country with an exuberance that transcended time and place. For the next 35 years – and counting – women in art stepped forward and changed the art world: not counting the credit but gladly working with each other again and again, changing roles, learning new skills, calling each other "sister" with an almost religious fervor.

Changes

Personal art became political, as women's experiences became the stuff of performances around the world. Moreover, the question asked changed from "Who am I?" to "Who are we?" according to Norma Broude and Mary Garrard.¹⁷ Womanhouse of 1972 inspired the Los Angeles Woman's Building, "the public center for women's culture," founded in 1973 by Arlene Raven, Judy Chicago, and Sheila de Bretteville based on Paula Harper's idea.¹⁸ This housed many women's organizations, galleries, workshops and a bookstore. Two national conferences there brought together such artists as Yvonne Rainier, Martha Rosler, Eleanor Antin and Pauline Oliveros who joined with Los Angeles artists Barbara Smith, Nancy Buchanan and Rachel Rosenthal and catalyzed the work of Suzanne Lacy and Leslie Lebowitz. A new approach was the feminist use of media to reach mass audiences, often with subjects such as woman as victim. One of Chicago's pieces, *Ablutions*, used images of bondage, abuse, rape, fertility, cleansing and healing. One of her prints, "Red Flag," featured a hand pulling a bloody Tampax from a vagina. This emphasis on insistently female imagery shocked New York male artists and triggered debates for years thereafter as to whether there was – **or ought to be** – feminist subject matter.

§Recruitment

In 1971, Chicago and Schapiro had made lecture trips to New York connecting with Lucy Lippard, Marcia Tucker, and Ellen Lanyon. W.E.B emerged as an international network and spread to 20 states and other countries: "our second class citizen ratings were all too clear."¹⁹ Linda Nochlin had just published her famous essay in *Art News*, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?"²⁰ which shocked and galvanized all women artists. Nochlin followed this by "organizing a session the following year at the annual CAA conference titled "Eroticism and the Image of Woman in Nineteenth-Century Art" which addressed the issue of sexism in art."²¹ W.E.B. groups were an effective tool in response. It was apparent that often-isolated women artists and writers had a great deal in common with each other; consciousness-raising groups exploded throughout New York and the San Francisco Bay Area. Some W.E.B. meeting topics were: each woman must speak, don't give

¹⁶ Patricia Tavenner and Jo Hanson. "The Early Years: History and Performance." NCWCA *The Early Years*, The University Museum. March 23, 2000.

¹⁷ Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard. "Introduction." *The Power of Feminist Art*. (Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers. 1994). p.22.

¹⁸ Arlene Raven. "Womanhouse." *The Power of Feminist Art*. p.48.

¹⁹"WEB" June, 1972. p.1.

²⁰ ARTnews, 1969, #9.

²¹ Linda Nochlin. "Starting from Scratch: the Beginnings of Feminist Art History." *The Power of Feminist Art*. p.135. Marilyn Stokstad, *Art History Revised Edition Volume Two*, (Prentice Hall, Inc. and Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1999).p.1146.

advice or therapy, pick topics such as “How was your education affected by your sex?” “How have you been encouraged to be an artist/creative? Discouraged? By whom?” “Are you competitive with other women? With men?”²² The trust that was developed by these groups was of enormous importance in solidifying unity, certainty, and freedom for radical experimentation; unifying all was the surprising similarity of the problems encountered. The continuation of these weekly groups was difficult and took daring in the face of angry husbands’ objections.

²² “WEB” June, 1972. p.1.

§Tools for Change

Hunger for more knowledge of women artists of the past required art history slide registries that developed in 1971 by Lucy Lippard, proliferated through W.E.B. groups. Jo Hanson photographed the work of many Mexican women artists; Kate Delos and Eleanor Dickinson photographed women's art on view in European museums (there wasn't much); and Tavenner's friend at the Walters Museum gave her slides of art by women. Even poor slides were copied and recopied to feed the hunger for images by their ancestors.

¶In Los Angeles in 1960 June Wayne had founded the Tamarind Workshop, revitalizing printmaking in the United States as well as abroad. To accomplish this, she had to create a "print ecology" that reached from artists and the training of master printers into the art market at large: the manufacture of paper, presses, inks = everything needed for the creation of graphics. Along with this she urged colleges and universities to include arts management in their curricula and published business studies of art galleries, magazines and the economics of printmaking. In 1971 she organized a ten-week seminar in her studio called "Business and Professional Problems of the Visual Artist," nick-named "Joan of Art," teaching women artists how to cope with their professional problems. This was a "seminal movement to break away from behaving like mommies working on the dining room table to being professionals," according to June. After this training each artist had to give the seminar to others, thus creating a whole business infrastructure in the arts and greatly assisting artists (men as well) to handle their precarious relations with dealers, curators, and collectors as well as in the art education job market. "Artists should never forget that theirs is niche ecology and is subject to distortions and pressures that gravely deviate from the norm of most societies."²³

¶The 1971 Corcoran Biennial in Washington, D.C. aroused fury and resolve when Washington artists learned that no women had been included in this prestigious exhibition. They organized a major forum, The Conference of Women in the Visual Arts in 1972, at the Corcoran, which featured feminists from California and New York such as June Wayne, Miriam Schapiro, Linda Nochlin, Judy Chicago, and Adelyn Breeskin. Mary Garrard said, "Many of the women who came together in Washington were radicalized on the spot."²⁴ One was Washington artist Charlotte Robinson who, with Dorothy Gillespie and Alice Baber, "decided to ask women artists to design quilts as a way of celebrating the year 1975, designated as the International Year of the Woman by the United Nations,"²⁵ as Judith Stein declares "subverting the myth of isolated genius" in an early merging of the fine and decorative arts. In New York, following political actions such as W.I.T.C.H. (Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell) in 1968, and Redstockings (Sisterhood) in 1969, Dorothy Gillespie and Alice Baber developed a somewhat more formal course at the New School of Social Research called "Functioning in the Art World." Baber and Gillespie organized the first women's show in New York at the InterArt Center. Artist Sylvia Sleigh and art writer Lawrence Alloway were very supportive assisting both with the art and with critical writing.

²³ June Wayne, interview Dec. 3, 2006, e-mail to author, Dec. 5, 2006.

²⁴ Mary D. Garrard, *The Power of Feminist Art*, "Feminists Politics," 1994. p.93.

²⁵ Judith E. Stein, Quoted in *The Power of Feminist Art*, "Collaboration," 1994. p.245.

§Revolution

This simmering cauldron of awareness and frustration came to a head in 1972 when the largest professional art organization, the CAA held its 61st conference for the first time in San Francisco. Founded in 1911, the Association is composed of scholars, artists, art historians, teachers, critics, museum curators, and so forth – that is all practitioners, interpreters and conservators of visual art and culture. The CAA’s aim is the “understanding of art as a fundamental form of human expression.”²⁶ Fresh from the expanding enthusiasms of the women’s movement all over the country, it was frustrating to view the predominantly male board of directors (one woman among 24 directors) and to listen to the papers and presentations chosen by mainly male chairs of male-dominated panels.

On Jan. 28, 1972, “Several women on both coasts contacted CAA Executive Director Rose Weil about holding a meeting for women members concerned about these issues; it was publicized by posting some signs at the conference Hotel”²⁷ (the Hilton). “Thanks to ground work laid by art historian Ann Sutherland Harris, the San Francisco meeting drew an overflow crowd.”²⁸ When the meeting room proved too small the number of angry women grew larger and larger, and they opened the doors to double the space: all who had experienced gender discrimination in art told and retold their stories. Ann Harris said, “. . . discrimination against women artists, past and present, must have made it difficult, if not impossible, for their gifts to be discovered, supported and written about . . . why not twice as many Rembrandts, Vermeers, Michelangelos?”²⁹ The art historians met the studio artists, the writers met their subjects, curators met the craftswomen and all found common ground in understanding their unjust obliteration. Ann Harris, who had testified in Congress regarding the negation of professional women, was very impressive to women who had not ever had female art teachers other than Sister Mary Corita.³⁰ Harris said, “. . . at least 300 women came with stories of gender discrimination and the energy and willingness to set up a Women’s Caucus of the CAA.”³¹ Thus the Women’s Caucus of the College Art Association was born, possibly to the great surprise of the CAA.

¶A formal organization was decided upon; it was felt that the women in art must organize very well -- and quickly. Ann Sutherland Harris was chosen as the first Chair/President from 1972 to 1974: “We passed the hat and I went home with 300 names and addresses and maybe a couple of hundred dollars to get things going.” At first, as Harris says, she ran the fledgling organization from one drawer in her desk with help from Linda Bantel sorting out the financial records as the first de facto WCA Treasurer.³² She set up an organization and planned dues, a newsletter, referrals, and publication of various books and articles such as “The Second Sex in Academe,” compiled by Harris and Barbara White, listing the lowered status of women art historians. Nancy Spero and Joyce Kozloff created the “Rip-Off File” of horror stories. Norma Broude and Meredith Johnson set up the WCA Job Roster.³³ Broude became the first Affirmative Action Officer and worked hard identifying affirmative action concepts, contacting major universities, advising them of their statistics and pointing out that they were in “violation of national affirmative action mandates.” When they were put on notice that they were being watched, a lot of defensive responses arose. That gave momentum to the WCA’s ongoing effort to monitor and publicize delinquent schools³⁴ based on various surveys and statistics from June Wayne, Eleanor Dickinson, the WCA and a new CAA Committee on the Status of Women, constituted by the CAA in 1972. This Committee was first chaired by Linda Nochlin in 1972 and again in 1974 to 1978, and by Ann Sutherland Harris in 1973. “The Committee has acted in part as liaison between the WCA

²⁶ College Art Association, Mission Statement, 2006.

²⁷ Ann Sutherland Harris, e-mail to author, Oct. 26, 2006.

²⁸ Broude and Garrard, *The Power of Feminist Art*, (Abrams, ©1994).

²⁹ Ann Sutherland Harris, e-mail to author, Oct. 24, 2006.

³⁰ Patricia Tavenner, Telephone interview with author. July 23, 2006.

³¹ Ann Sutherland Harris, E-mail of Oct.26, 2006 to author.

³² Ibid.

³³ Broude and Garrard, *Power of Feminist Art*. P.94

³⁴ Mary Garrard, e-mail to author. Oct. 9, 2006.

and the CAA, which has often given its moral support and financial assistance to Caucus projects. Its primary concern has been the gathering of statistical information.”³⁵

§Growth

With the initial enthusiasm growing new groups began to be formed as women from the CAA Conference spread out all over the country. Following extensive picketing of New York museums by Women in the Arts (WIA) for showing so few women, an important and first exhibition “Women Choose Women” was held in New York in 1973 at the New York Cultural Center.³⁶ By 1974, women’s studies courses were in 1000 US colleges and universities across the country. At that time Ann Harris asked Mary Garrard to continue the Caucus and Garrard became its second president (1974-1976).³⁷ Garrard set up a national advisory board and “gave structure and stability to a rapidly expanding organization.”³⁸ Mary Garrard requested that the CAA provide regular meeting times and spaces for meetings and workshops during the annual CAA meetings. Ellouise Schoettler provided vital organizing skills as the Secretary.

As enthusiasm for the Caucus spread the executive board of the CAA seemed more and more uncomfortable with the size and energy of this new association. This came to a head when the CAA Attorney Gil Edelson became worried about liability for the legal activities of Caucus supporters all across the country and suggested setting it up as an affiliate organization.³⁹ Therefore, on July 23, 1974, Mary Garrard saw to the organization incorporating legally as the Women’s Caucus for Art, while maintaining its relationship with the CAA.⁴⁰

¶Under Garrard’s leadership Lee Ann Miller set up the first official regional WCA chapter in 1974 in Kansas City.⁴¹ Other early chapters – each claiming to be the first -- were New York (1972), Northern California (1972), and the Miami chapter “WAIT” (in 1971) which changed its name to WCA in 1973. The Northern California Chapter was organized from the earlier W.E.B. groups by Patricia Tavenner, Susan Perkins and Theresa Heyman, Oakland Museum curator. At the first Bay Area meeting art historian Wanda Corn reported on the National College Association. There was little support for women or the Caucus from museums other than Oakland.⁴² Performance groups developed using autobiographical work by Bonnie Sherk, Linda Montano, and Lynn Hershman. In 1977 Hershman created the Floating Museum, which presented shows using the facilities of other institutions in unusual locations such as inside San Quentin Prison. One such exhibition was H’ERRATA, her correction of an (H)error, with Jo Hanson as curator.⁴³

§Women’s Groups

The WCA differed in almost every respect from the previous miscellaneous organizations of women artists across the country. Most of these were composed of groups whose primary purpose was to organize and present exhibitions for the members. These were groups like the Allied Artists, the Watercolor Society, Western Society of Artists, the Association of Women Artists, and the Ceramic Society. There were also semi-professional groups whose members were a mixture of professional artists and their supporters. One such group was the San Francisco Women Artists, a very old group established in 1880 as the Sketch Club, which had a membership of 500-600 women who met monthly to hear lectures on art and hold a yearly art exhibit at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Only 130 of their membership were considered “Professional,” defined by acceptance

³⁵ Sheila McNally, “CAA Committee on the Status of Women,” WCA Newsletter, Vol.VIII, 1978. p.17.

³⁶ Dorothy Gillespie, Telephone interview with author, Sept. 29, 2006.

³⁷ Broude and Garrard, *Power of Feminist Art*. p.94.

³⁸ Mary Garrard, e-mail to author. Oct. 9, 2006.

³⁹ Gil Edelson, Legal Counsel to the CAA, Telephone interview with author, April 29, 2006.

⁴⁰ Letters of Incorporation, National Office, WCA, N.Y.

⁴¹ Lee Ann Miller, Telephone interview with author, Dec. 3, 2006.

⁴² Patricia Tavenner, Telephone interview with author, July 23, 2006.

⁴³ Jo Hanson, “The Early Years: Origins of the WCA,” University Museum, March 23, 2000. p.12.

in at least one juried show anywhere.⁴⁴ The San Francisco Art Association also had a membership of 500-600 artists who had to prove their professionalism by a series of requirements yearly to be eligible for the various shows and traveling shows.⁴⁵ A group with a long and distinguished history is the National Association of Women Artists which was founded in 1899 and is still mounting exhibitions. Another category was groups organized around exhibiting special skills or interests of members such as the California Watercolor Society, the Color Print Society, Painters in Casein and Acrylic, and the Hayward Art Association. Some were galleries specializing in certain media such as the Drawing Center and Photography Society. Many of these groups are not limited to women artists but the preponderance of members is women. There also were and are political groups whose membership is not involved in showing art but who wish to change society to a more just arena for artists such as the Artists Equity Association, California Lawyers for the Arts, and some artists' unions.

The characteristics of these groups are important to understand. They spoke of promoting individual careers, were often started by friendship groups and their primary benefit was the psychological support and networking offered to isolated artists. As exhibiting venues they were mostly ineffective in promoting art careers due to inexperience of members and unwillingness to be tough in critiquing art. There was little background in problems of money management, public relations, contracts or professional training. They usually existed on the sufferance of an organization such as a museum, gallery or commercial enterprise, which enjoyed the changing shows of art that would not disrupt the community. These powerless groups were either unable or unwilling to change, unaware of their problems or strengths, and inexperienced in aggressive activities or tactics. Common to many such women members was early family training in passivity; they were often either poor or with no control over money so they gravitated to these groups in the hope of their art finding an important audience. This seldom happened. They spoke of promoting art, were often started by friendship groups, and their primary benefit was the support and networking offered to isolated artists.

The advent of the WCA was like a violent wind that devastated the ordered landscape. The shocking art and artists of the 1970's demolished all previous definitions of "women's art," and, with its emphasis on content and social commentary, helped to end the domination of Modernism and Abstract Expressionism. The new emphasis was on group actions, and on using personal experience to critique political agendas asserting, "The personal IS the political!"⁴⁶

§Education

Urged on by the many historians within the new Women's Caucus, research on women artists was promoted, as was the inclusion of feminist perspectives in art; many women's studies courses were developed. The WCA published *Women's Studies in the Arts* by Athena Tachs Spear; this was later edited and reissued by Lola Gellman, Elsa Honig Fine, and Judy Loeb as *Women's Studies in Art and Art History. Slides of Works by Women Artists: A Sourcebook* (1974), and was published by Mary D. Garrard. The year 1976 saw the production not only of the book *Women Artists: Recognition and Reappraisal from the Early Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* by Karen Petersen and J. J. Wilson but also four sets of slides of the works featured in it. In 1978, Elsa Honig Fine published *Women and Art: Women Painters and Sculptors from the Renaissance to the Twentieth Century*, and in 1980 she began a magazine of art history, the *Woman's Art Journal*, featuring often-unknown women artists; it is still published maintaining the highest standards of scholarship. In 1979 Eleanor Munro published *Originals: American Women Artists*. Garrard and Broude's 1994 *The Power of*

⁴⁴ The San Francisco Women Artists. By-laws and Board materials, history. Donated to the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian, by E.C. Dickinson. 1970.

⁴⁵ The San Francisco Art Association. By-laws and Board materials, history. Donated to the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian, by E.C. Dickinson. 1980.

⁴⁶ Garrard and Broude, Introduction, *Power of Feminist Art*, 1994. p.29.

Feminist Art is an essential reference for any study of the history of women in the visual arts.⁴⁷ Eleanor Tufts published the first important listing of *American Women Artists, Past and Present*. The *Heresies* journal with inventive group editors had a different theme for each issue; it was published 1977-1996 by Lucy Lippard and May Stevens, Harmony Hammond, Joyce Kozloff, Mary Beth Edelson and others. *Chrysalis*, a quarterly journal, began in Los Angeles in 1977, and only survived until 1980; it had exceptionally high editorial standards. *Women Artists News* and other excellent publications were produced by Cynthia Navaretta at her Midmarch Art Press. Cindy Nemser, as Editor with Pat Mainardi and Irene Moss, brought out the *Feminist Art Journal* 1972-1977. *Womenart* was published from 1976-1978 and *Helicon Nine* was published from 1979 to 1989.

¶The Caucus urged members to conduct education and discrimination surveys in its new role as gadfly to the CAA.. Especially important was a study of MFA programs; this was done by the WCA's Janice Koenig Ross, and published by the CAA. Following the lead of June Wayne's research in "Sex Differentials in Art Exhibition Reviews"⁴⁸ published at Tamarind, Eleanor Dickinson compiled, and in 1973, published "Statistics: Discrimination in the Art Field" which is still updated yearly.⁴⁹ One target of the WCA was the CAA Board of Directors: of 24 directors only one was female (five years later there were eleven women.) The CAA board soon had three female presidents: Ruth Weisberg, Judy Brodsky and Anne Coffin Hanson (1972-74). Fortunately Norma Broude, as WCA correspondent to the CAA's *Art Journal* and the *CAA Newsletter*, could check on the CAA position listings.

The WCA's third president and the first artist was Judith K. Brodsky (1976-78.) She published the discrimination guide, "Anger to Action."⁵⁰ Brodsky also added 15 more WCA chapters during her term of office. She was particularly interested in mounting exhibitions of contemporary women artists in each city where the CAA Conference would be held. In Los Angeles in 1977 came the first of many such shows, the WCA's first national exhibition at the first annual conference. The important historical exhibition "Women Artists: 1550-1950," (with the book of the same name) curated by Linda Nochlin and Ann Sutherland Harris, was held at that same time at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and drew women from around the country for this first major documentation of the hitherto forgotten, hidden or successful-but-ignored Old Mistresses of Art, thus providing ancestors for women artists.⁵¹

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⁴⁷Judith Brodsky, *In Passionate Pursuit*: Rutgers, 2006. p.49.

⁴⁸ June Wayne, *Sex Differentials in Art Exhibition Reviews*, "Tamarind Issues Bias Report," *Feminist Art Journal*, (April 1. 1972).

⁴⁹ E.C. Dickinson, *Statistics: Discrimination in the Art Field*, © 1972 –2007, to present.

⁵⁰ "The Woman's Caucus for Art: Purpose and History," (National WCA, New York.©1992). 2pp.

⁵¹ "The Woman's Caucus for Art:" National WCA, N.Y.. ©(1992). 2 pp.

§Other Organizations

CWAO

In 1977, the Coalition of Women's Art Organizations (CWAO) was formed as a political arm of the WCA. The CWAO president and executive director served on the WCA Board as ex-officio members. It was proposed by Judy Brodsky, cofounded by Cynthia Navaretta, and the first chairperson; Ellouise Schoettler. Susan Schwab and Charlotte Robinson joined in urging women all over the country to go to Houston as part of the (continuing) International Year of the Woman (IWY). The State Department gave them space to organize at this first National Women's conference. Joyce Aiken was named CWAO president, and Ellouise Schoettler was named director: - Joyce lived at Ellouise's for a year to get it organized. Linda Cunningham designed the structure and wrote the by-laws before the first national meeting in New York in January, 1978. The Women's Caucus was a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit organization and as such was legally limited to 20% spent on any political activities both in time and cost. The Coalition, however, was set up as a 501(c)(6) organization which allowed unlimited political activities. One such activity was a national boycott of Dr. Janson's book in 1979; in that same year the CAA awarded Dr. Janson a top honor, "Distinguished Teaching of Art History Award,"⁵² to the frustration of CWAO members. Other political actions included lobbying Congress and testifying on arts legislation and the publication of statistics on sex differentials in employment and in exhibition opportunities.⁵³ Later in 1984 Dorothy Provis became CWAO president and Kyra Belan became director: Eleanor Dickinson often served as vice president. A great many women's organizations throughout the country became CWAO members for a \$25 yearly fee and received constant notifications of political actions that they should support.

¶ This feisty group also became an affiliate organization of the CAA and as such received free space for meeting and a regular panel that was used to describe all the political issues of importance to women. Frequently these subjects covered the business of art, and were useful in educating women artists in the practical problems of an art career.⁵⁴

COLLEGE ART ASSOCIATION

Some women art historians and artist members of the College Art Association began to feel disconnected from the lively members of the Women's Caucus. Often their interests were more academic; they were employed by the various colleges and universities of the United States and cherished their hard-earned status, especially if they were on the "tenure track." Their colleges often paid them to attend the CAA, expected them to work while there – either interviewing prospective instructors, delivering papers, or attending meetings. They were expected to profit from their attendance and shed glory on their college by the honors received or the positions attained. Although many art historians valued the association with artists in the WCA, others did not and had trouble justifying taking even more time off from teaching to attend not only the CAA conference but also the WCA conference. Usually they had to pay for the additional days at the hotel themselves as well as the conference fees. The artist members of the WCA had a different life style: staying with friends or sleeping in a car for them was reasonable and expected; not so the historians and museum managers. Since the professional women of CAA felt the same discriminations that the artists did, they wanted a voice of their own within CAA, which by now had many more women members.

⁵² Emmanuel Lemakis, College Art Association, e-mail to author, Dec. 1, 2006.

⁵³ Dickinson, E.C. *Statistics*, (1978.) CWAO NEWS, August, 1985.

⁵⁴ The Coalition of Women's Art Organizations, Material furnished to officers, 1977. "Papers of Eleanor Dickinson," Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/dickin00.htm#top

* see Essay by Susan Obarski for a complete listing of WCA Award recipients.

CWA

In 1980 the board of the College Art Association responded by appointing a CAA Committee on Women in the Arts, but with definite limitations. The committee chair as well as members of the committee were appointed by the president of the CAA Board with a three year limit. They had no budget, few ways of staying in touch between yearly conferences, and little clout. They did receive a meeting room for three hours for the yearly meeting and the chair could attend the yearly CAA board meeting. Considering these limitations, common to all CAA committees, this committee has done a great deal: publishing statistics of racial discrimination and persisting over years in pressuring the CAA board to set up standards for ethical treatment of Adjunct instructors, 57% of whom are women.⁵⁵ Since the CAA sets the standards for the art/art history colleges to follow, this committee's pressure is important. For example, with the WCA's help, one member, Eleanor Dodge Barton, pressured the TIAA-CREF company which provides the Annuity Insurance pension plan for most art/art history instructors in the U.S. to equalize their rates and schedules for the female as well as male instructors.⁵⁶ The CAA Committee on Women began to give annual awards in 1996 to scholarly women of great achievements. The CAA took notice also of the explosion of interest in women's studies courses: by 1974 there were over 1000 such classes in the colleges and universities of the United States; 80 institutions had these classes.⁵⁷ Unfortunately, although the CAA Strategic Plan for 2005-2010 notes that the "CAA is made stronger by its very diverse membership," it fails to identify the areas of gender, race and geography in which it is certainly not diverse.⁵⁸

ART TABLE

In 1980, ArtTable, a national organization for professional women in leadership positions in the visual arts, was founded by twelve women, headed by Lila Harnett. This organization was limited to women in the art professions: curators, directors, dealers, educators, and art advisors because it was felt that the women artists and feminist art historians "had already achieved certain successes," but these other women "were given little recognition or support." Today this group has 1,600 members around the country and their positions have changed from subordinate roles to "more and more assuming positions of command." This group is supportive and encouraging and "provides a forum for the exchange of ideas, experience, and information." ArtTable launched the Distinguished Service to the Visual Arts award in 1993, honoring Kitty Carlisle Hart, Chairman of the New York State Council of the Arts for twenty years. Previous award winners have included Elizabeth C. Baker 2004, Editor of *Art in America*; Linda Nochlin 2003, Lila Acheson Wallace Professor of Modern Art at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University; Iris Cantor 2002, Chairman and President of the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Foundation; Paula Cooper 2001, gallery owner; Marcia Tucker 2000, Founding Director of the New Museum of Contemporary Art; Lucy Lippard 1999, critic; Stephanie French, 1998, former Vice President, Corporate Contributions, Philip Morris Companies Inc.; Joan Mondale 1997, arts advocate; Dianne Pilgrim 1996, former Director of the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum; Emily Rauh Pulitzer 1995, curator and Pulitzer Foundation Director; and Agnes Gund 1994, President Emerita, Museum of Modern Art.⁵⁹ In 2006 another effort was the ArtTable Chronology Project which involved gathering all possible data on the various women active in the early "waves" of Feminism and ascertaining the dates they were active with a view to publication.⁶⁰ ArtTable has

⁵⁵ Dickinson. "CAA Survey," *Statistics*, (1998.)

⁵⁶ Mary Garrard. *The Power -*, p.94. 1994.

⁵⁷ CAA Committee on Women in the Arts, Material furnished to members of the Committee. 2002-2006.

⁵⁸ CAA Board, "Strategic Plan 2005-2010," 7/20/2005.

⁵⁹ Diane B. Frankel, Pres.2005. *ARTTABLE: Changing the Equation*. ©2005ARTTABLE. 25 year history of the organization. Judith K. Brodsky, Pres. 2003. Diane B. Frankel, Pres.2005

⁶⁰ Editor Randy Rosen; Barbara Love, Correspondence, 7/17/04. *Feminists Who Changed America*, University of Illinois Press. (2006.)

four chapters: New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.⁶¹) plus regional alliances in the Northwest, Southwest, Texas, and New England. These award choices identify very important and influential women in these professions. ArtTable appears to cater to the administration and working professional women side of the art world, not collectors or trustees,⁶² operating rather like a social organization. One Founder commented that it “was not a feminist organization;” others disagree. Many women artists such as Judy Brodsky, Ruth Weisberg and Lee Anne Miller are members of both WCA and ArtTable. The dues are \$125 to \$225 for regular members per year (with some higher rates and some awards for lower rates) and artists are not admitted to membership (unless they also hold administrative, curatorial or other managerial positions.) It seems to be an empowering network; most members view it as an arts advocacy, networking and mentoring organization. Members function as mentors for career changes and as role models for new PhDs.⁶³

NMWA

In 1987, begun by passionate collectors of women’s art, the National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA) opened in Washington, DC. Wilhelmina Cole and Wallace F. Holladay had been collecting art by women since the 1960s, impressed by the lack of works by women in most museum collections and exhibitions. They founded this private museum dedicated to the collection and exhibition of important women artists from all ages in 1981 and lent or donated their collection to the new museum. The Award-winning building opened in 1987 with the first exhibition curated by Dr. Eleanor Tufts and has presented a comprehensive exhibition-and-study program of works by women ever since. Presently the collection contains work by over 800 women artists. The Library and Research Center has extensive files on more than 18,000 women artists of all periods and nationalities and approximately 18,500 volumes of books and exhibition catalogues. The museum has been criticized for its alliance with volunteers and donors from the moneyed classes, which is surely a strange criticism that could be leveled at every museum in this country. Over 200,000 people have joined the museum as members and donors both in Washington, DC and in every state through state organizations set up by the museum. The NMWA received a major grant to build web-based access to its database of more than 16,500 historic and contemporary women artists.[⁶⁴] In 2001 the Women’s Caucus for Art honored Wilhelmina Cole Holladay with its Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of her lifetime of dedication to the study and exhibition of work by women artists.

§Growth and Honors

Lee Anne Miller was the WCA’s fourth president (1978-1980). She continued the efforts to gain more awareness of the WCA through both public speaking and issues such as the ERA and artist’s rights. Norma Broude and Ellouise Schoettler proposed giving national achievement awards to various important women in the arts, building on extensive activity of the Washington, D.C. area women artists; efforts to hold an annual Honor Awards Ceremony for Lifetime Achievement in the Arts was begun.* The first awardees were chosen by Ann Sutherland Harris, Lucy Lippard, Linda Nochlin, Athena Tacha, Eleanor Tufts, Mary Mellon, Arthur Kittredge, and Ruth Weisberg. In June the Caucus sent a delegation to the White House to propose a national

Eleanor Dickinson
Comment:

⁶¹ Ibid. “ARTTABLE: *Changing the Equation.*: ©2005 ARTTABLE. *25 year history of the organization.* Judith K. Brodsky, Pres. 2003. Diane B. Frankel, Pres. 2005

⁶² Ann Karlstrom. letter 2 to Dickinson. 10/24/06.

⁶³ Ann Karlstrom. Letter to Dickinson. 10/24/06.

⁶⁴ The National Museum of Women in the Arts. Material furnished to donors and members. 2006.

*See Susan Obariski’s essay for a complete listing of WCA award recipients

honoring of women in the arts; approval was finally given.⁶⁵ Charlotte Robinson and Joan Mister had contacted Joan Mondale, an artist and wife of Vice-President Walter Mondale, who also became involved.

¶In 1980, the first WCA award ceremony was held in the Oval Office in the White House. The Caucus and President Jimmy Carter recognized Isabel Bishop, Selma Burke, Alice Neel, Louise Nevelson (in absentia), and Georgia O'Keeffe (all over 75 years old) to great public acclaim and publicity. President Carter “acknowledged and expressed understanding of the lack of opportunities that women artists have faced and the difficulties they have experienced in achieving recognition.”⁶⁶ Charlotte Robinson’s notes read,

Joan Mondale, the Vice-President’s wife, took each of the scrolls from me (read them aloud) and then handed them to President Carter. He, in turn, gave them to each of the women along with a few words of compliment about their work and distinguished career. Each of the women responded with a joke or a few words. We were worried that Alice Neel would say something off color or anti-establishment as that is her usual behavior – but she refrained. It was a beautiful ceremony. Afterwards we went to the Embassy Row Hotel (site of the WCA Conference) where we had another ceremony so that all the Caucus members could see the distinguished women.⁶⁷

¶WCA President Lee Anne Miller introduced Joan Mondale, as an artist, wife of the Vice President and also as Honorary Chair of the Federal Council of Arts and Humanities at the public ceremony. The honorees were presented works of art as gifts from other women artists and the citations on the scrolls were read. Louise Nevelson (who was ill) sent a message: “Today is a very important day for women not only in America, but all over the world – and I don’t say it lightly.”⁶⁸

Charlotte Robinson had arranged for an eager gallery, the Middendorf Lane Gallery, to give an elaborate exhibition of the work of the awardees. Ms. Lane even paid for the catalog for the honor ceremony. The Washington Women’s Art Center produced a huge number of volunteers to run the conference and did so much fund-raising they were able to give a profit to the National WCA afterwards.⁶⁹

§Testing

Lee Anne Miller also presided over two national conferences in 1980. Despite great pressures on the CAA to change the site of their yearly conference away from New Orleans in Louisiana, a state that had not ratified the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), the CAA could not change due to legal and financial commitments. The WCA then voted to go to the official Conference “under protest conditions.” Eleanor Dickinson was Affirmative Action Officer at that time and made extensive plans to

leave no money in Louisiana. We succeeded in this with a great deal of effort, sleeping in the homes of WCA members and eating only at restaurants that promised to send our money to the ERA as a donation. We left a strengthened and enlivened local WCA chapter behind us, particularly happy over the awards given to Ida Kohlmeyer, Louise Bourgeois, Anni Albers, Carolyn Durieux and Lee Krasner.

Several caucuses in the South had banded together as SEWCA (South East WCA) and presented an impressive large regional exhibition in the French Quarter. Suzanne Lacy staged an “expanded performance. . . . The conference opened with a potluck meal that brought together five hundred ethnically diverse women to celebrate their southern heroines.”⁷⁰ Other WCA Board members chose to set up a second, alternative conference in Washington, DC for members wishing to honor the boycott of non-ratified, ERA states. They

⁶⁵ Lee Anne Miller, e-mail to author. Dec. 3, 2006.

⁶⁶ WCA, “Newsletter,” Vol. VIII, number 2-3, Spring, 1979.

⁶⁷ Charlotte Robinson, letter describing the ceremony, Jan. 1979.

⁶⁸ Ibid. Louise Nevelson. 1979.

⁶⁹ Charlotte Robinson, Telephone interview with author. Sept. 29, 2006.

⁷⁰ Judith E. Stein, “Collaboration: *The Power of Feminist Art*, Broude and Garrard, 1994,” p. 235.

gave alternate honorary awards to Bella Abzug, Rosa Parks, Sonia Johnson, Sister Theresa Kane, Grace Paley, and Gloria Steinem, non-artists but great contributors to the dignity of women.

¶ In the late 1970s many WCA members around the country wished to hold regional events and meetings between the annual conferences to network, train members, share information, hold exhibitions, develop slide registries, hold studio visits, and pursue the aims of WCA through events on a smaller scale that more members could attend. This helped to form many early WCA chapters --often in cities, but many times within a region or state, allowing for better relationships and joint projects. These efforts reached many arts professionals who worked outside academic or institutional settings, and accounted for a rapid growth of WCA membership across the country, expanding the WCA network in both breadth and depth.⁷¹

¶ The WCA began to sponsor or mount regional exhibitions. The first was "Women Artists '77" in Kansas City organized by Lee Anne Miller; the second was "Women Artists '78" of work from New York, New Jersey and Connecticut chapters held in New York City at the City University of New York. Other organizations and galleries developed at this time, such as the Washington Women's Art Center in 1976. Working with these groups, Washington artist Nancy Cusick spurred the participation of women artists around the world in various United Nations Women's Conferences such as the "Mid-Decade Conference" in Copenhagen, "The Decade of the Woman" in Nairobi, the "1985 An American Album," Focus International, American Women in Art, United Nations World Conference, Kenya (and touring), and, in 1995, "Global Focus," UN World Conference, Women," Beijing, China, Moscow, Russia which was co-sponsored by the National Museum of Women in the Arts.⁷²

§ Organization and Expansion

The WCA's fifth president, S. DeRenne Coerr, (1980-82) registrar of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and the first museum professional to head the organization, tackled the hard job of accommodating the increasing demands of a growing national association, which expanded from 18 to 23 chapters during her term. As the Caucus grew larger and more ambitious its records grew more and more voluminous, and were shipped from president to president every two years. The resulting confusion made it obvious that a national office of some kind was badly needed. Coerr's main contribution was to regularize and organize the internal procedures of the WCA. Chapters had been founded with no controls, no national standards (example: for usage of the WCA name), and no agreement to send a share of dues collected to the central organization. The worst habits of small local arts groups had sometimes been adopted and the image of an important women's movement was in danger of being forgotten.

¶ President Coerr said,

As a volunteer I was responsible for two national conferences, two annual Honors Ceremonies and exhibitions, 16 to 20 page newsletters three or four times a year, and ongoing chapter relationships, in a time with no personal computers, no email, no word processing, nor internet sites, etc. Cash flow was variable following receipt of the newsletters."

Coerr received help from newsletter editor Suzaan Boettger and other officers and the Board, but only limited support from her museum, highlighting the need for institutional backup for the WCA presidents.⁷³ Membership lists were being kept by a paid mailing house; addresses came in paper labels to be put on by hand and at least one-third were erroneous. Coerr hired the first operations officers of the WCA, Katy Dickinson and later Denise Schultz. They regularized the membership roster and prompt forwarding of chapters' lists, set standards for dues collections (ending the practice of allowing local members to join only a chapter and not also the National

⁷¹ The Woman's Caucus for Art: Purpose and History," National WCA, N.Y.©(1992). 2 pp.

⁷² Nancy Cusick, Telephone interview with author, Sept. 29, 2006.

⁷³ DeRenne Coerr, e-mail to author, Dec. 6, 2006.

WCA), handled accounts payable, and did their best to correspond with members.⁷⁴ Coerr worked with an attorney to rewrite the bylaws for Board consideration.

¶With the growth of chapters continuing, most WCA members were studio artists with local or regional interests who needed the focus of a national Board with a continuing business manager. The assistance of the local chapters in each conference city was invaluable; conferences could not always be led nationally. Ann Sutherland Harris presented the goals of the WCA Five Year Planning Committee, set up in 1981 by the National Advisory Board, which included establishment of a permanent office for a National WCA headquarters, along with plans for a \$1,000,000 Endowment fund.

¶Awareness of this need for centralization continued with artist Muriel Magenta, the sixth WCA President, (1982-84) who hired the WCA's next business manager and treasurer Beatrice Weinstein. In 1983 Magenta obtained a permanent inexpensive office space at Philadelphia's Moore College of Art. Under Magenta's leadership, the WCA also published the first of its biennial membership directories, increased its fundraising, and revised its newsletter to a magazine format, renaming it *Huepoints*.⁷⁵ A national exhibition was held at Lehigh University. As a skilled media artist Magenta established the World Wide Web of Women in cyber space and presented the first international showcase of the work of women entitled, "The World's Women On-Line."⁷⁶

§Broadening the Membership

Under the seventh WCA President Ofelia Garcia (1984-86), a Cuban-American artist and administrator as President of the Atlanta College of Art, the programs of the WCA were broadened, encouraging the membership of women of color. The position of vice president for minority affairs was set up, first held by artist Faith Ringgold, and conference publicity was extensively promoted to artists of all backgrounds. During this time a "president's assistant" was hired to assist with all the office work; this became a regular item in the WCA budget. The annual recognition of important Mid-Career Women in the Arts was also begun at this time as the "President's Award"; the first honorees were Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin.⁷⁷

¶During the administration of historian and eighth WCA President Annie Shaver-Crandell (1986-88) WCA membership benefits were increased to include optional hospitalization insurance. As an art historian she also worked to secure the historical record of contributions by women to the arts by setting up the WCA Archives at Douglass College, Rutgers University, under WCA archivist, Janet Miller, National Administrator (1984-1986). Shaver-Crandell and Assistant Carol Grape created a national celebration of women's contributions to the visual arts in September 1986, with "WAVE II: Now You See Us," observed from coast to coast with 16 chapters participating and aimed at museum practices that discriminate against women.⁷⁸ Her special thrust was to insist on affirmative action within the Caucus for implementation of positive inclusiveness. In 1987 Mary Hopkins became national administrator, with Essie Karp as assistant administrator.

¶These efforts were continued under art historian and educator Christine Havice (1988-90), the organization's ninth president, who attempted to reach out to other women's professional organizations to improve national communication and inter-chapter collaboration. Working with other national organizations such as Artists' Equity Association the WCA organized national lobbying efforts in support of artists' tax rights and freedom of expression. By 1990, there were 37 chapters; the WCA was a founding member of the National Network of

⁷⁴ Katy Dickinson. Telephone interview with author, Oct. 1, 2006.

⁷⁵ "The Woman's Caucus for Art: Purpose and History." National WCA, NY© (1992).

⁷⁶ Muriel Magenta, e-mail to author, Oct. 25, 2006.

⁷⁷ "The Woman's Caucus," National WCA ©(1992).

⁷⁸ Ibid. A History.

Women's Caucuses and Organizations. More exotic groups had developed that kept the fires alight for social change: the witty Guerrilla Girls, the satirical Sister Serpents, the Women of Color Caucus (WoCA), and *Vistas Latinas*, the later two both demanding racial as well as gender parity. In 1990, Flo Oy Wong and Betty Kano co-founded the Asian American Women Artists Association (AAWAA) in Northern California, which eventually led to the founding of another fiery group called "Godzilla" in both New York and San Francisco.

After the unfortunate death of tenth WCA President Carol Neiman in March 1990, artist Iona Deering of Dallas (1990-1992) became the organization's eleventh president. She worked with Board member Helen Solomons to develop and strengthen the WCA Board of Directors and the internal structure with aims of inclusivity and a better financial base. The important development of a "Board Manual" standardized procedures for all chapters. She implemented organized lobbying against censorship, and promoted support for the National Endowment for the Arts. Many young women were now refusing to call themselves "feminists," especially in the art schools. The feeling that all the problems had been solved was now linked with a backlash; often the young women felt they would not be shown in the mainstream art galleries if they proclaimed their feminist sympathies.

§Expansion:

With the twentieth anniversary of the WCA in 1992, the twelfth president artist Jean Towgood (1992-94) urged a recommitment to the feminist ideals that marked the organization's founding. Other groups such as the dynamic Women's Action Coalition and NOW tackled the non-art social problems of women with increasing fervor. Jo Hockenhull, national vice-president, said, "I recall the 90's as an exciting and experimental time. The presidents and Boards were very ambitious for the Caucus. We took risks that in the long run enriched many lives and brought to light amazing artworks."⁷⁹ Muriel Magenta called on teachers in art schools to start WCA Student Chapters on their campuses. Several were formed; many members were enthusiastic, especially as the student members moved into the regular chapters. As student members paid lesser dues, however, the WCA Board felt they were not paying their way and in 2001 cancelled all student chapters.

¶Towgood's leadership goals included greater visibility as an organization and a membership whose diversity reflected national demographics. She increased the number of women of color in leadership positions. Imna Arroyo assumed the position of Vice-President of Women of Color in 1993.⁸⁰ The WoCA (Women of Color in the Arts) slide series, curated by prominent arts professionals, was realized after years of effort by Flo Oy Wong and Eleanor Merritt.⁸¹ This was a very expensive project published (paid for) by the Universal Color Slide Company in 1997 with the WCA paying \$3,000. for the services of eight curators as jurors. This was intended for sale to teachers, museums and artist slide companies; few purchased the series initially but sales continue each year.⁸² Wong noted that a primary result of WoCA was the formation of many groups of women of color such as the Asian American Women Artist's group, and the empowerment of various communities such as Mexican-Americans and Latinas. She said, "The dialogue began. We had to help each other before we joined the larger group. WCA was very instrumental in bringing women artists to the consciousness of the art public."⁸³ The Board worked hard to attract more working class women and women of color to its leadership; they brought with them diverse views and perspectives.

¶Foreign travel became an exciting way to increase international activism in the WCA with a trip to the 1995 International Conference on Women and NGO Forum of the United Nations in China, the Fourth World Conference on Women. Chaired by Jo Hockenhull, and led by artist and educator Helen Klebesadel, the thirteenth president (1994-1996), this trip of 99 women and one man (from the United States, Canada and Mexico) traveled across China, meeting with Chinese women artists, and not come. Flo Oy Wong was invaluable in advising on cultural issues and language; she moderated one panel "Asian-American Women

⁷⁹ Jo Hockenhull. Email to author. May 31, 2007.

⁸⁰ Susan Platt. Email to author. May 30, 2007.

⁸¹ Ibid. "A History of WCA Presidents," (1998).

⁸² Essie Karp, National Administrator (1987-1997), Telephone interview with author, Nov. 19, 2006.

⁸³ Flo Oy Wong. Interview. Jan. 3, 2007.

Artists” and co-curated the WCA exhibition there with Joyce Koskenmaki.⁸⁴ All 100 members of the Caucus on this trip came together for the NGO forum, joining 35,000 other women and men from across the globe dedicated to recognizing women’s rights as human rights. Many presented papers, workshops, performances, shows and events on human rights issues.⁸⁵ Jaiyi Ling, WCA student member, was invaluable in keeping communications flowing. This was an exciting and important moment for the Caucus! The outcome of the global connections can be documented in the amazing number of regional conferences, exhibits, lectures and other events held in the U.S. after the UN/NGO Conference in China.⁸⁶

¶Noreen Dean Dresser noted that “the volunteer WCA Board spanned the country and only met twice a year. While new ideas and energy were evident in the fresh vision, the careful follow through of advanced fundraising, hiring of experienced staff and financial prudence was not.”⁸⁷ Margaret Litze elaborates that: “there were 3300 members at that time; the budget was \$130,000.”⁸⁸ Inflated figures showed that \$175,525 was budgeted but losses were \$27,000 and budgets were over run, especially the annual conference. A new computer system was installed in the office to deal with an increased membership. The chapters now numbered 30 (plus three remaining Student Chapters) and the membership hovered between 3,000 and 6,000. The annual budget averaged \$100,000.⁸⁹ President Arroyo cautioned, however:

“There was a problem with inefficiency with the accounting system in the national office. . . There was also a problem getting accurate membership numbers because of the way the national office functioned.”⁹⁰ “The reports were never accurate because of the way we collected the dues. National did the bookkeeping by hand and sent the information to the company. So we never had accurate accounting of the money or the membership. Moreover, an outside accountant had not audited the WCA for over 15 years. . . The first order of business I did was to hire a bookkeeper to begin to create categories and in-put the expenses and generate the reports.”⁹¹

The long-term treasurer, Sandy Knell Tamny (1989--1995) resigned.

§Troubles and Challenges

A very difficult period almost ended the existence of the Women’s Caucus. National officers felt strongly and worked hard to increase the demographic and socio-economic diversity of women on the Board of the WCA, even some with no experience in the WCA or any similar boards but who had credibility with under-represented constituencies. Dresser commented that “feminist ideals fueled inclusion and prompted solidarity, but Board members failed to track expenses against income in their idealism.”⁹² Some members that would experience financial hardship were paid to attend Board meetings and WCA national conferences; many expenses and phone bills were reimbursed; committees had large budgets. One of the major on-going expenses of the organization was its annual National Honor Awards given out at the annual conferences. As the only organization recognizing outstanding women in the arts the WCA was committed to honoring senior United States women artists and art historians with a major exhibition, an extensive catalog and an awards ceremony. The national honorees (usually six) and their companions were honored and their expenses paid including air

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Susan Platt. Email to author. June 3, 2007.

⁸⁶ Jo Hockenhull. Email to author. May 29, 2007.

⁸⁷ Noreen Dean Dresser. Email to author. May 29, 2007. Appendix B

⁸⁸ Margaret Lutze, WCA Treasurer 2000 – 2007, interview with author, July 28, 2006. Appendix B

⁸⁹ WCA Balance sheets 1994-5. Appendix B

⁹⁰ Imna Arroyo. Email to author. May 31, 2007.

⁹¹ Imna Arroyo. Email to author. May 30, 2007.

⁹² Dresser. Email to author. May 29, 2007.

travel and hotels.⁹³ This was a major financial burden for WCA, which was not always offset by the income from the conference. This Annual Conference in 1995 was budgeted at \$46,015 and over-ran that by a third.⁹⁴

This period was a coming of age for the WCA, and a major test of a women's organization to face extreme problems and overcome them. A national Board with little experience in management of money or organization but with strong desires to help others can cause havoc in a short time. The national administrator said "it was frightening to see how fast the money went!"⁹⁵

¶ Artist Imna Arroyo was elected the fourteenth president (1996-1998). She said,

"When I became President I inherited an organization that was spending beyond its means, living very much hand to mouth in that all the revenue that came in was used to pay bills and other obligations which the previous administration's policies had instituted (such as Honoree expenses, Board reimbursements etc.) The organization had become bloated with expenses, and was teetering on the edge of insolvency well before I took over. . . . Because I did not have financial expertise, I recruited Matilde Bingemer to join the Board. She was a senior executive at Chase Bank, an experienced financial analyst and volunteer. Her main job was to look at the organization's finances and plan for the short and long term financial security of the WCA. She recommended that the WCA get a financial audit from a CPA firm. . . . she prepared standard financial reports such as Profit and Loss Reports, Account Balance sheets, etc. Further, Matilde was the first person to sound the alarm about the financial state of the WCA at the Boston Conference. She told the entire Board. . . . I went to work on moving the office, standardizing the WCA accounting practices and planning the conferences."⁹⁶

An Endowment Fund of \$10,000 was established as proposed by Susan Gabel, president of the New York Caucus, and chair of the 1994 national conference in New York. "We sold art at the conference to fund it."⁹⁷

¶ The 1997 National WCA Conference was held in Philadelphia with no local chapter in charge. The two Conference coordinators had little prior experience on how to organize it, and worked with Essie Karp as the new director of special events (fund raising.) Plans had been made in 1995 to hold a shorter conference celebrating the twenty-fifth birthday of the WCA since the annual CAA Conference would be held in New York that year; this made it difficult for academic members to attend both events.⁹⁸ As a result of trouble with the Philadelphia printer, no fall conference announcements, labels or membership applications were sent out to the membership; when they were mailed just before the February conference it was too late: few came. It was a disaster. The WCA had signed contracts with the hotel, the caterer, and the printer, and had all the costs of a conference but few attendees to pay the bills. The long-time WCA administrator Essie Karp said she felt forced out.⁹⁹ Matilde Bingemer, the financial specialist, and a volunteer, was chosen to replace her.¹⁰⁰ Susan Gabel, a Board member, and also a volunteer then became the treasurer to replace Sandy Tamny. The Board insisted on proceeding with the Toronto conference, with Susan Platt as the chair, and tried to raise money in various ways to cover a minimal conference.¹⁰¹

⁹³ WCA 1994-1995 Budget, July 20, 1995 Appendix B

⁹⁴ Essie Karp, National Administrator, Telephone interview with author, Oct. 24, 2006.

⁹⁵ Ibid. Appendix B

⁹⁶ Arroyo. Email to author. May 30, 2007.

⁹⁷ Susan Gabel, Telephone interview with author, Jan. 1, 2007.

⁹⁸ WCA Officers. "Summaries of Mid-Year Board Reports." July, 1995. p.17.

⁹⁹ Essie Karp. Telephone interview with author. Oct. 24, 2006.

¹⁰⁰ Karin Luner, Margaret Lutze, and Ruth Waters, interview with author, July 28, 2006.

¹⁰¹ Susan Gabel, Telephone interview with author, Jan. 1, 2007.

¶The chapters felt overlooked and neglected as the National WCA now looked to New York believing “the action was there.”¹⁰² President Arroyo proposed and the Board agreed to give up the national office (\$250. month) at Philadelphia’s Moore College of Art; the College wanted this space back for renovation. The choice for WCA was elsewhere on the campus, Philadelphia, New York, or where? Arroyo described, “The CAA Conference was taking place every other year in New York, so it made sense to have the organization close by to support the annual meeting.”¹⁰³ Increasing the prestige of being a national organization, the Board had announced to the membership their future access to a gallery in New York. The Board voted to move to a New York space at 625 Broadway, Suite 810 (at \$750 month).¹⁰⁴ The announced “gallery” was an unsupervised long hallway outside the office. The Board did have two exhibitions there of small works for sale by members as a donation to help the WCA, as there was now substantial rent to be paid monthly. Fortunately there were many sales.

A great deal of “stuff” was trucked to New York, especially old catalogues. Many were packaged together and mailed out to the membership. After this move, almost all the library, the archives, files and records of the WCA were at first dumped temporarily in a storage room, with Essie Karp commenting that “the office looked ransacked.”¹⁰⁵ Among these records were three boxes containing the research of the Lifetime Achievement Awards Committee.¹⁰⁶ In the midst of the chaos of moving, organizing a new office, and setting up the new computer, the Board and President needed to hire a new national administrator and turned to one highly recommended by a New York Agency. This person was careless at best and had unfortunate associations at the worst;¹⁰⁷ under her supervision a large number of things were stolen. All the computers were taken from WCA, and other businesses in the suite, along with two disks of the entire database of the WCA, assorted software, Filemaker Pro software, records of credit card information, keys, access codes, about \$5,000 and 30 checks from members –everything of value.¹⁰⁸ Reluctant to follow recommendations of the bank, landlord and Board, Treasurer Bingemer first confirmed the facts with the administrator, then informed her that she was fired, took her keys and searched a folder from her bag as she was leaving; she discovered therein a large amount of WCA mail, forms, and other valuables! The police were called and given a long list of the missing items.¹⁰⁹ To compound this tragedy, when her final check was withheld the administrator sued the WCA for her pay!

§Retrenching

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Inna Arroyo. Email to author sent by Susan Platt. May 30, 2007.

¹⁰⁴ Essie Karp, Telephone interview with author, Oct. 24, 2006.

¹⁰⁵ Karp, Telephone interview with author, Nov. 19, 2006.

Luner, Waters, Lutze, WCA Board, interview with author, July 28, 2006.

¹⁰⁶ Charleen Touchette. Telephone interview with author. 2001

¹⁰⁷ “Sarah Caruth Agreement with WA,” New York Dept. of Labor Authorization, 8/22/97. Appendix C

¹⁰⁸ Matilde Bingemer, “Letter to State of New Jersey, 11/25/96,” and “Letter to Dept. of Labor, “ New York, 2/24/97.

App.C

¹⁰⁹ Matilde L. Bingemer. “National Office situation,” WCA Memorandum. Nov. 14, 1996. Appendix C

A new national administrator was needed.¹¹⁰ Grabel said, “Isis (Mattei) was hired after the disastrous experience with the previous administrator, when WCA needed someone they could trust in a hurry. (Mattei had worked as President’s Assistant to Arroyo (her mother) so was trustworthy and familiar with the WCA.) We spent a lot of time and effort reconstructing the chapter lists and inputting the 1997 and 1996 financial records.”¹¹¹ Denise Mumm was hired on a part time basis.

¶With almost all of the treasury spent, little left of the office, business and membership records gone with the computer, most bills unpaid, insurance unpaid (so there was no coverage for the thefts,) no money to pay the rent, and lots of debt owed to creditors, the national office was closed.¹¹² A crisis meeting of the executive committee of the Board (Imna Arroyo, C.J. Lori, Sharon Vatsky and Isis Mattei) was held on March 28, 1997, to decide what to do next. After meeting with an accountant and restructuring the accounts, they were urged to contact the creditors and call the VLA to arrange a consultation.¹¹³ The June Board meeting had to decide now whether to shut down the WCA, declare bankruptcy, or rescue the organization. A decision was made at first to choose to go bankrupt. Arroyo called past presidents for their advice: some said “Let it go: it’s fulfilled the mission.” The next day after careful discussion of the benefits and difficulties – and what would be lost if the WCA collapsed - this was reversed. They decided to try to rescue WCA. Gail Tremblay proposed an auction and was given six months to do it working with Bernice Steinbaum.

Pres. Arroyo said,

All the decisions that were made during my time as President were made in good faith. They were transparent, information was communicated to the Board. . . There was nothing done that was not done with the WCA’s well being at heart and at mind. We operated with integrity and dignity at one of the most difficult times in our professional histories because we believed in the WCA; we were devoted to its missions and because we were determined to keep it alive.¹¹⁴

¶Susan Grabel obtained an attorney through Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts (VLA), Giorgio Bovenzi of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher and Flom, LLP (a major restructuring law firm) who negotiated with all the creditors and worked out a repayment schedule. The Toronto Conference was changed by Susan Platt to a new model of working with Canadian groups such as Women’s Art Resource Center with support from the Ministry of Culture in Canada plus contributions to avoid the usual costs of a conference.¹¹⁵ “The Executive Committee did an enormous amount of work paying the bills, the lawyer and moving. Imna Arroyo, C.J. Lori, Sharon Vatsky and Susan Grabel worked for months on day-to-day stuff. I was on the phone every day to the attorney,” said Grabel. She added “He had a lot of experience; he was able to calm down the creditors. He got an 80 percent reduction from the printer and 30 percent from the others; and we were able to pay back salaries to Karp and Mattei.”¹¹⁶ Imna Arroya elaborates, “Then a transitional group was created to empower the membership to change from a centralized organization to decentralized chapters; a website was set up for communication instead of newsletters.”¹¹⁷ “Gail Tremblay and others (Klebesadel and Amy Bethel) sent out desperate letters to the membership to help!”¹¹⁸ Arroyo led a trip to Mexico, and Tremblay led one to China, as fundraisers, but they only broke even. At that time, the organization was \$40,000 in debt. Grabel said,

Denise Mumm, the new National Administrator, and I worked together to finish entering the 1996 books toward the goal of getting audited books (a necessity for getting grants). We spent hours and hours

¹¹⁰ Susan Grabel, Telephone interview with author, Jan. 1, 2007.

¹¹¹ Grabel. e-mail to author, Jan. 17, 2007.

¹¹² WCA balance sheets, statement of the WCA Treasurer, 1998.

¹¹³ Grabel, e-mail to author, Jan. 18, 2007.

¹¹⁴ Arroyo. e-mail to author. May 30, 2007.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. email to author. June 3, 2007.

¹¹⁶ Susan Grabel, Telephone interview with author, Jan. 1, 2007.

¹¹⁷ Imna Arroyo. Telephone interview with author. June 1, 2007.

¹¹⁸ Essie Karp, Telephone interview with author, Oct. 24, 2006.

culling the ledgers. . . the books were as good as was possible under the difficult circumstances. Many members helped.”¹¹⁹

In October 1997, Gail Tremblay organized an auction at the Fiddlehead Restaurant in Portland, Oregon, which raised \$6,483. Many chapters held fund raising events to help National. The WCA Board held an auction November 7, 1997, at the Bernice Steinbaum Krauss Gallery in New York organized by Gail Tremblay¹²⁰ and thereby raised \$19,000. Many artists who donated works to the auction were famous women such as Jaune Quick-to-see Smith and Elizabeth Catlett showing their thanks to the WCA for all that was done toward making women artists of color better known in the art world. Another \$16,000 was raised through direct contributions. “The Endowment was used also ”to pay expenses and creditors in the last months of the crisis.”¹²¹

¶This period of financial crisis for the Caucus was a dark moment of the soul, even for the great numbers of members across the country who were unaware of the problems faced by a volunteer national Board. Certainly they were tested by fire – and the consequences were not play money. Few Boards, even with experience, could have overcome the triple threat of a financially disastrous national conference, a sudden and expensive move of the national office, and theft of all of the organization’s business records, membership records, archives, checks and computer equipment, leaving the whole organization deeply in debt. In debt financially, yes, and yet this volunteer Board chose to deal with the problems, to acknowledge the debts, and to save the honor of the organization.

§Recovery

Upset and uncomprehending, nevertheless the WCA members rallied to the organization’s defense and sent in money and offers of help. Board members Magi (Bollock) Amma, Catherine Carilli, and Amy Bethel initially, along with Gail Tremblay and new member Margaret Lutze, formed a Transitional Leadership Committee. The last creditor would be paid off on February 15, 1998.¹²² Amma was the first president-elect and she and Tremblay worked as transitional leaders. Then artist Gail Tremblay was appointed by the Board as the fifteenth president (1999); her job was to try to resuscitate the WCA. The membership demanded answers and many refused to renew their memberships; however, under Tremblay’s leadership slowly things began to turn around. There was a great reservoir of trust in the membership, which sensed the importance and integrity of the WCA.

¶In 1999 the Annual Conference was scheduled to be held in Los Angeles concurrent with the CAA Annual Conference. With the national office in disarray Jean Towgood flew to New York and told the Board that the Los Angeles WCA Chapter would take on the responsibility of mounting the next National Conference in Los Angeles under President Ada Brown. The burden of this was enormous: the whole chapter worked hard at raising money and planning all aspects of an elaborate conference in a very short time. To establish credit (with the hotels, the printers, the restaurants . . .) Jean Towgood even mortgaged her home to guarantee the bills! The Chapter decided to nominate Lifetime Achievement Awardees of their own choosing as there was no longer a National Committee (or records) in place to do this. They mounted such an elaborate conference that they even made a profit on it and sent a donation of \$3,000 to national WCA to help them out financially.

¶In 2000-2002 artist Magi Amma became the sixteenth president for a complete two-year term and embarked on a massive effort to rebuild the Caucus, especially reinstating the Lifetime Achievement Awards. This involved an enormous amount of work on her part with the help of an invigorated dynamic Board and the scrupulous financial control by this Board that reviewed all financial reports. A Website was continued with on-

¹¹⁹ Grabel, Telephone interview with author, Jan. 1, 2007.

¹²⁰ Susan Grabel, “1997 WCA Fiscal Crisis Summary,” WCA National Office. 1997.

¹²¹ Susan Grabel, e-mail to author, Jan. 4, 2007.

¹²² Susan Grabel, “1997 WCA Fiscal Crisis Summary,” National Office. 1997.

line news notification and the newsletter was restarted.¹²³ The lifetime achievement awards were reinstated after a gap of a few years with a large complete list of potential honorees over 70 years old. A new National Office was set up temporarily in Santa Cruz, California, and a new National Administrator (Dana Spanierman) was hired to develop computer databases.¹²⁴ The WCA maintained its NGO status with the United Nations. Eighteen members paid for and went on an exciting (and fundraising) trip to Nepal and Northern India managed by Helen Newman.

§Restructuring

After two strenuous years of Amma's presidency she left the office with the Caucus in the black, having – amazingly -- a treasury of \$30,000. In 2002 artist and administrator Noreen Dean Dresser became the seventeenth President (2002-2004). It was decided by Dresser with Board approval to move the national office back to New York. Space was rented there and a new national administrator, Karin Luner, brought professional computer organization to the office. It took some time to get, and update, the files from the California office.¹²⁵

¶President Dresser set up, with the Board's approval, many internal controls so that no national officer would receive compensation of any kind: travel and Board costs were an individual's responsibility. Matching funds for multi-chapter and regional projects were doubled. Fund raising for the national awards and special projects was made a group responsibility, both for chapters and the Board. Dresser said she "pushed for involvement and recognition of younger women both in her Board appointments and committee assignments. Dr. Laurie E. T. Hall was appointed to the NGO and international committee of the United Nations." Visiting every region at her own expense, Dresser promoted changes "bringing credibility to the national office. The planned Matrix Project was an especial focus, using the unique quality of the chapters to encourage members to understand the business of art."¹²⁶

¶The work and talents of the WCA National Administrators have been an essential and valuable force in the constant reorganization of the WCA. Chosen for her skills and moral trust, Karin Luner in 2002 commented "there were 750 paying members . . . it was sheer mayhem." She pushed to "have the organization function again in its infrastructure, reestablishing trust between the chapters and national, establishing new lines of communication, creating a file system that worked." She "made the databases, got health insurance, made the "Artlines Newsletter" and "Catalogue" and saved the organization thousands of dollars." As with other National Administrators she "sat on the pulse of what was needed to move the WCA forward."¹²⁷

¶Dena Muller, a young professional arts manager, was chosen to become the eighteenth President (2004-06). She brought special skills to this office as Director of the A.I.R. Gallery in New York, well-known as the first artist-run, not-for-profit gallery for women artists in the United States. Muller and Luner concentrated on reforming the structure of the WCA, expanding membership benefits, and improving the content of the "Artlines Newsletter" and the national Website. The Endowment continued its growth and potential for Caucus stability. Muller established a formal collaboration with Rutgers University including housing the WCA national office on their campus. Once again placed solidly within the current feminist agenda, Muller made bold moves into the future such as developing an alliance with the CAA Committee for Women in the Arts to co-host the annual

¹²³ Magi Amma, e-mail to author, Nov. 27, 2006.

¹²⁴ Ruth Waters, Margaret Lutze, Nat'l Administrator Karin Luner, interview with author, July 28, 2006.

¹²⁵ Margaret Lutze, Telephone interview with author, July 28, 2006.

¹²⁶ Noreen Dean Dresser, e-mail to author, Nov. 16, 2006.

¹²⁷ Karin Luner, National Administrator WCA, e-mails to author, Oct. 30, 2006 to Nov. 2, 2006.

awards ceremonies of both groups in 2007. At this time there were 30 active chapters with 90 percent of the 1430 members within a chapter.

¶The present leader of the WCA is the nineteenth President, educator Jennifer Colby, (2006-2008). She has a doctorate in humanities, a master's degree in art, and a Master's Degree in theology. Jennifer was director of the Bade Museum, and is lecturer at California State University, artist, gallery owner and co-founder of the Monterey Bay Chapter. The focus of her presidency is to bring the WCA and all the chapters up to date in non-profit management practices.¹²⁸ The 20th President (2008-10) will be Marilyn J. Hayes, artist and manager. Trained in the social sciences, she put her skills to work for many years managing programs and staff at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. A special need and skill was "empowering people to successfully embrace change." She served as an effective president of the Washington, DC WCA chapter and will focus her future efforts as National President of the Caucus on developing additional sources of income and effective partnerships with other organizations. The Caucus is once again in unusually talented hands.

¶The chapters of the WCA had discovered that mounting exhibitions was a useful way to build up membership, especially among younger artists, hungry for recognition. WCA exhibitions continue to differ greatly from the exhibitions of the genteel ladies' groups in the 50's and 60's. They tend to have a political point or moral emphasis such as a recent one proposed by Rusty Cantor and toured by NCWCA called Violence Against Women – Women Against Violence, saying, "We are concerned deeply with the violence that permeates all aspects of our lives."¹²⁹ The chapters also had stringent rules against censorship and presented work that more timid galleries and museums avoid.

¹²⁸ Jennifer Colby, Telephone interview with author, Nov. 10, 2006.

¹²⁹ Northern California WCA publicity card, Louie Meager Art Gallery ©Ohlone College. 2006.

§The Leaders

The Presidents of the WCA have been a very interesting group: professional, passionate feminists at a high level of achievement in their profession, whether studio art, art history, teaching or writing. Their enthusiastic leadership and their enormous passion for justice and parity in the arts have made the difference in the longevity of this unusual organization, sustaining it for over 35 years.

§The Future

Looking back at 35 years since the WCA began in the anger and frustration of an ignored, yet important – even majority – group within the art world, we can say that it has achieved and surpassed its goals of that time. As it tackled its major aim – to monitor and change the patterns of gender discrimination in the field of art and especially art history – it also found it urgent to present and reassess the achievements of women artists of the past and to determine if their contributions differed in some fundamental way from the achievements of male artists of their period. And as these goals were being met by art historians and artists working together, it found another more fundamental reason for being. Its purpose now was to gather together to train, foster and develop professionalism, pride, and respectful collaboration in all women artists and art historians so that our past may be prologue to the new challenges of our chaotic world and nation.

APPENDIX

A. ANN S. HARRIS: (who was it who told them “The only position for women in this movement is prone!”?) [Stokely Carmichael, 1964.] I think that factor must be mentioned. Then the anti-Vietnam war riots at Columbia & elsewhere in 1968 also usefully disturbed the status quo by making everything about a privileged university open to question. I was one of a small group of women activists there who called ourselves Columbia Women’s Liberation, who in 1969 prepared a statistical examination of available pools of women with PhDs by field and generation proving that there were sufficient qualified women that Columbia could not justify excluding them systematically from employment except at low levels (part-time up to Assistant Professor). We distributed copies to the newly-founded University Senate, and sent a copy to the New York Times, which picked it up and ran the story in the Sunday edition. Thus we made contact with Bernice Sandler in Washington, who had realized that two Executive Orders of President Johnson that forbade discrimination by race or sex by federal contractors meant that millions of dollars in federal grants could be denied to academic institutions that received federal funds that discriminated against women. Our statistics proved that Columbia (& others) did and had for years, and she sued them, and succeeded in holding up millions in funding! That really opened the floodgates and made many women & men begin to realize how unconsciously yet pervasively women were seen as lower class citizens not entitled to the benefits, status, salaries, pay etc. of men (back then it was 59 cents for every \$1 earned by men . . .). Later I testified before Edith Green’s Subcommittee on Higher Education in Washington about this widespread pattern of discrimination against women in higher education. [I had a lot of help from others putting together that material . . .]. That made me a logical person to head up an organization intended to eliminate discrimination against women in the visual arts professions.”

B. Some had overseas travel paid, some volunteers were paid. The payroll included the Executive Director, the Administrative Assistant, an Assistant to the President and payroll costs to a total of \$35,396 for the 1994-95 year alone. The WCA President had \$4,000. budgeted for travel. Committees and special projects had large budgets (Publicity Committee \$310, Honors Committee \$500, Chapter Development \$250, Exhibitions Committee \$500, NGO Representative \$900, Beijing Conference Committee \$500, WoCA Comm. \$4,400, International Liaison Committee \$300, Conference Consulting \$500, Honor Awards Retrospective Committee \$200, Fundraising Committee \$500, etc.)¹³⁰

C. The Administrator Bingemer wrote the state of New Jersey, “30 checks have been stolen from our offices. Nine of these have been cashed for a total amount of approximately \$5,000. Two disks containing the entire database of our organization have disappeared. Records containing confidential credit card information had been taken home by Ms. C. We have therefore been advised to discontinue employment pending an investigation currently underway.” Also to investigators, “ We have since been collecting additional evidence and are working with Detective Wich from the 6th Precinct in Manhattan who is investigating this matter.”¹³¹ Ms. C. filed a Notice of Discrimination with the INS.¹³²

Bingemer checked with the landlord James Rodriguez who reported, “S. entertained friends, including her boyfriend in the office several times and left these individuals alone in the office. . . ; she left her car keys to her boyfriend and attached to them were the office keys and the mailbox key . . . ; the individuals that had visited the office looked ‘very undesirable.’”¹

¹³⁰ WCA 1994 -1995 Budget. July 20, 1995.

¹³¹ Matilde Bingemer, Letter to State of New Jersey. Nov. 25, 1996. and Letter to Dept. of Labor, New York, Feb. 24, 1997.

¹³² U. S. Dept. of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service application by Sarah Caruth. 3/11/97.

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ABSTRACT of *BLAZE: Discourse on Art, Women and Feminism*, Cambfidge Scholars Publishing:

A fascinating thirty-five year history of the Women's Caucus for Art, the foremost professional organization for women artists, historians, curators and teachers in America today. At the annual Conference of the College Art Association in San Francisco in 1972 the primacy of white male scholars and artists was painfully obvious. The angry female artists and art historians began a revolution which demolished the male domination of the art world.