

CENSORSHIP, POLITICS AND SEXUAL IMAGERY IN THE WORK OF JEWISH-AMERICAN FEMINIST ARTISTS

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Looking at the social and political context, this article examines sexual imagery in the visual art of nine Jewish-American feminist artists from the 1960s through the 1980s: Judith Bernstein, Judy Chicago, Martha Edelheit, Eunice Golden, Joyce Kozloff, Joan Semmel, Nancy Spero, Anita Steckel and Hannah Wilke. It draws parallels with the work of Jewish-American women in the theater, from Sophie Tucker to Eve Ensler. The activism of these feminist artists fits in with the heritage of Jews, who, motivated by their belief in social justice and desire for political reform, turned to radical politics, first in eastern Europe and then in America. Some of this sexually explicit work has provoked attempts at censorship, disregarding the frequently metaphoric force of the subject. The works of art and the struggles summarized in this paper should heighten awareness that the drive for free expression in art is intimately linked with women's quest to claim their sexuality, agency and power, and that Jewish women have been among the pioneers in that quest.

Women's Sexuality in the Work of Jewish-American Feminist Artists

"It must have been done by Jewish women; it's so blatantly sexual," was typical of responses to *The Dinner Party* (1979) by Judy Chicago, in which so many of the place-settings feature vulvate forms.¹ Chicago's "vagina" plates awed some viewers and shocked others, setting off a new chapter in the backlash against sexually explicit art in the U.S. Yet Chicago's works are not unique in this regard; they are contextualized by the new openness about the female body and sexuality manifest from the 1960s through the 1980s in



Figure 2: Joan Semmel, *Red, White and Blue* (1973). Oil on canvas, 46" × 54". Collection of the artist.



Figure 3: Joan Semmel, *Intimacy/Autonomy* (1974). Oil on canvas, 50" × 98". Brooklyn Museum.

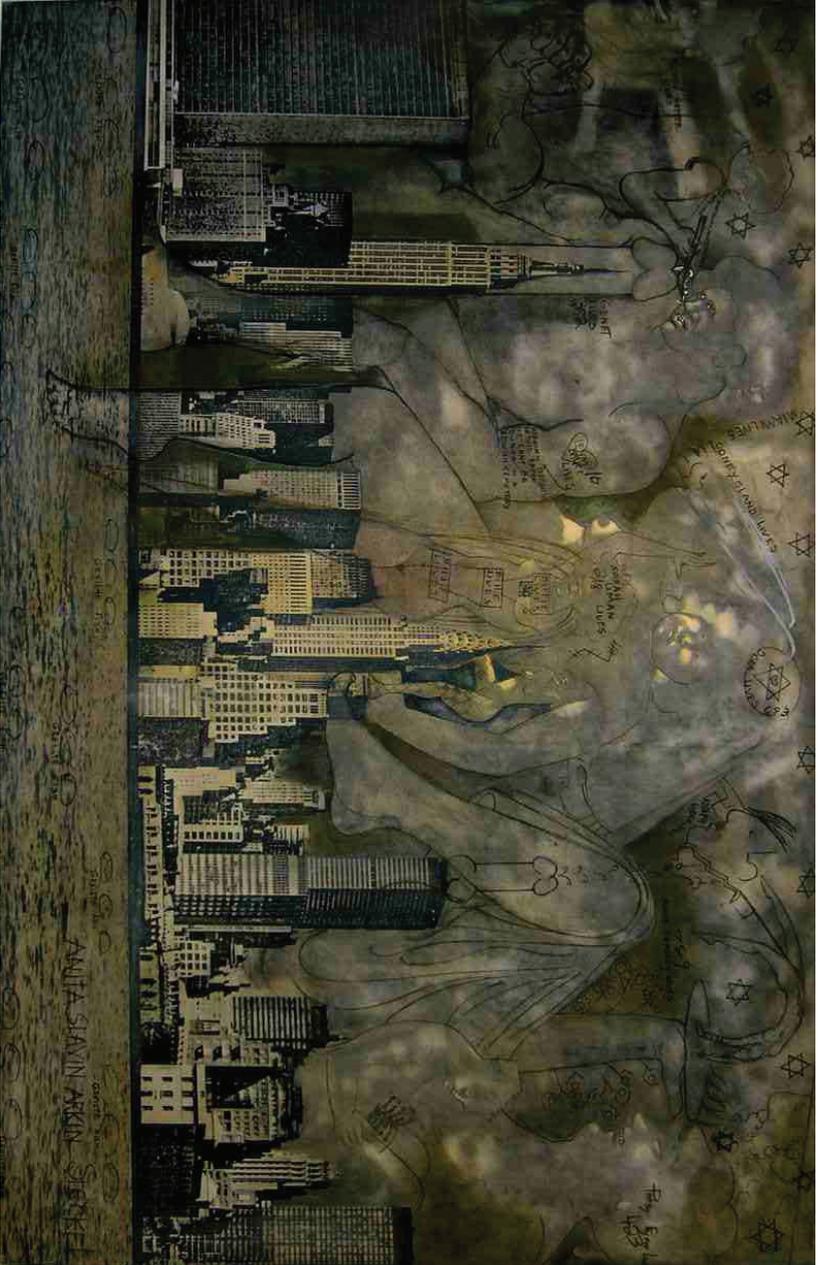


Figure 4: Anita Steckel, *Inner Landscape on New York #3* (1973). Charcoal and acrylic on photo-silkscreen on canvas, 63" x 100". Collection of the artist, courtesy Mitchell Aligus Gallery, New York.

the work of other Jewish-American feminist artists, such as Judith Bernstein, Martha Edelheit, Eunice Golden, Joyce Kozloff, Joan Semmel, Nancy Spero, Anita Steckel and Hannah Wilke.

Are Jewish women artists especially likely to engage creatively with sexuality, or is this a stereotype? “The reputed sensuality of the Jewish woman provides an endless source of inspiration for playwrights,” wrote Ellen Schiff in her essay “What Kind of Way is that for Nice Jewish Girls to Act?”² Hints of a stereotype appear already in the early twentieth century, when a Russian-born Jewish immigrant, Sophie Tucker (1884–1966), established herself as a vaudeville and cabaret performer with the slogan “Last of the Red Hot Mamas,” implying that there had been others, hence an expectation and a traditional type. Be that as it may, Tucker performed songs like “I May Be Getting Older Every Day (But Younger Every Night),” which challenged codes of morality and presented an image of women’s sexuality that clashed with America’s puritanical mores. Tucker was able to get away with her subject matter—talking of sex in marriage and of men and women who were unfaithful to their spouses—by doing so as a comedienne. She mocked old-fashioned marriage and presented “song pictures” of sexual women, always from a moral position and in a comic vein. Tucker encouraged women to hold on to their men by becoming more physical and men to treat their women “right,” implying that marriage should be gratifying sexually and personally for both men and women.³

More overtly political and ideological, the Jewish anarchist and feminist Emma Goldman (1869–1940) demanded equality and independence for women, including absolute freedom of expression, sexual freedom and the right to birth control, which was then illegal. Goldman, born like Tucker in the Russian Empire, emigrated to the United States in 1885 at the age of sixteen, only to be deported in 1919. Lecturing on sex, she challenged the Freudian theory that creativity was linked to sexual repression. “The creative spirit is not an antidote to the sex instinct,” she proclaimed, “but part of its forceful expression. . . . Sex is the source of life. . . . Where sex is missing everything is missing.” She insisted that “sexual sensibility [is] greater and more enduring in woman than in man.”⁴ In her essay “The Hypocrisy of Puritanism,” published in 1917, Goldman argued that the Puritanism the forms a strong element in American culture “is based on the Calvinistic idea that life is a curse, imposed upon man by the wrath of God. In order to redeem himself man must do constant penance, must repudiate every natural and healthy impulse,

and turn back on joy and beauty.”⁵ She quoted the American sculptor Gutzon Borglum, then gaining renown for his images of saints and apostles for New York’s new Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, denouncing Puritanism in relation to American art: “Puritanism has made us self-centered and hypocritical for so long, that sincerity and reverence for what is natural in our impulses have been fairly bred out of us, with the result that there can be neither truth nor individuality in our art.”⁶

Whether and how the Puritan tradition continues to affect trends in modern American art is worth a study in its own right, but women like Tucker and Goldman did not have it in their ethnic background. Scholars have barely begun to consider the representation of sexuality by feminist artists who happen to be Jewish.⁷ Among women artists in America, a small but vocal number make feminist art. Some of these define their feminism through sexual content, which, depending on the cultural matrix of the artist, ranges from self-torment to celebration. Jewish feminists’ use of sexual imagery often celebrates both sexuality and female agency.⁸

Images of female anatomy and nudity are often misread as merely erotic. But to a feminist in the early 1970s, the political issue of female identity often trumped other meanings. “Much of feminist art that has been labeled ‘erotic’ because it depicts or alludes to genital images is nothing of the sort,” argued Barbara Rose in her 1974 article, “Vaginal Iconology”:

It is designed to arouse women, but not sexually. . . . Judy Chicago’s yoni-lifesavers [*Pasadena Lifesavers*, 1969–1970] are all vaginal or womb images. What is interesting about them is the manner in which they worshipfully allude to female genitalia as icons—as strong, clean, well made, and whole as the masculine totems to which we are accustomed.

Rose understood that women’s images that “glorify vaginas . . . attack one of the most fundamental ideas of male supremacy—that a penis, because it is visible, is superior.”⁹

Women artists’ images of female genitalia have often been rejected as shameful by art critics and laypersons alike. Yet many of the same art critics have deemed acceptable male artists’ images of phalluses, some as thinly veiled or metaphoric as Constantin Brancusi’s *Princess X* or Claes Oldenburg’s giant lipstick; or of female genitalia, from Gustave Courbet’s *The Origin of the World* (1866, Musée d’Orsay, Paris) to Marcel Duchamp’s *Given: 1. The*





Figure 8, above left: Martha Edelheit, *Quintuplets* (1964). Watercolor and ink, on rice paper, 9" × 12". Collection of the artist.

Figure 9, below left: Martha Edelheit, *View of the Empire State Building from Sheep Meadow* (1970–1972). Acrylic on linen, 76" × 94". Collection of the artist.

Figure 10, above: Joyce Kozloff, *Smut Dynasty Vase* (1987). Watercolor on paper, 22" × 22". Collection Terry Stept.

Figure 11, below: Nancy Spero, *Chorus Line I* (1985). Collage on paper, 20" × 110". Private collection.



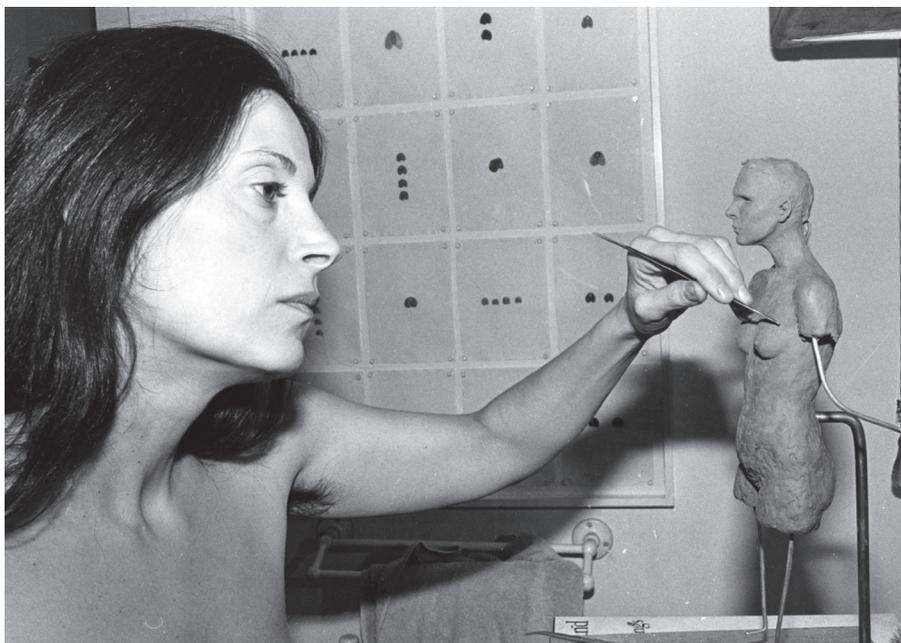


Figure 1: Hannah Wilke with *Venus Pareve* (1982). Photo © Donald Goddard (2007). Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York.

Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas (1946–1966, Philadelphia Museum of Art). Since Duchamp designed the latter work to be viewed through peepholes in a wooden door, the viewer must act as a voyeur and engage in an exercise intended to titillate.

A notable case of a male critic's double standard is that of Robert Hughes, who attacked Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party*: "To represent Virginia Woolf as a clump of pottery *labia majora* is on a par with symbolizing Mozart as a phallus."¹⁰ Yet Hughes singled out for praise Henri Gaudier-Brzeska's head of Ezra Pound, while noting its "outrageous phallic pun"; and he extolled David Smith's "phallic virtues."¹¹ In reviewing the Brooklyn Museum's Courbet exhibition of 1988, Hughes focused on the artist's *Origin of the World* as "the surprise of the show," calling it "by far the most 'transgressive' image of nineteenth-century painting" and describing it as "a frontal view of a woman's pubes, painted with vast enthusiasm: the symbolic climax, one might say, of the series of dark caverns Courbet painted in his native countryside, *The Source of the Loue*."¹²

A feminist agenda targeting just such double standards motivated Hannah Wilke (1940–1993), who performed a striptease behind Duchamp’s *The Large Glass* on June 15, 1976, at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Wilke removed an elegant white fedora and suit, satirizing the notion of a fashion model with her exaggerated primping and posing, and challenging the erotic representation of women in popular culture and in the history of art. She expressed the second meaning of Duchamp’s punning pseudonym, “Rose Selavy” (*Eros c’est la vie*, “Love, that’s life”), insisting: “‘Eros affirms life,’ but *The Large Glass* does not.”¹³

By then Wilke had already produced vaginal imagery, beginning with her terra cotta sculptures in the early 1960s, which she showed in New York in 1966. For Wilke, the vagina was a symbol of strength:

Nobody cringes when they hear the word phallic. You can say that Cleopatra’s Needle outside the Metropolitan Museum of Art is a phallic symbol and nobody will have a fit. You can say a Gothic church is a phallic symbol, but if I say the nave of the church is a really big vagina, people are offended.¹⁴

Since Wilke aimed to preempt the site of the traditional male gaze upon the female nude, she presented herself nude in her art, now controlling what the view would be. She also put her Jewish heritage expressly into some of her work, most notably in *Venus Pareve*, which she produced as a three-dimensional self-portrait of her body in chocolate in 1982. A photograph by her husband, Donald Goddard, depicts her carving a model for *Venus Pareve* in their New York loft, where she stands in the bathroom, observing herself in their only mirror (Fig. 1). Both the metaphoric title and the medium of this work suggest pleasure associated with the body and with Venus, the goddess of love, and that this pleasure, like *pareve* food, has no restrictions. For someone who keeps kosher, the *Venus Pareve* can be consumed with either milk or meat.

Wilke, who was born and raised Jewish, recalled that her parents met on New York’s Lower East Side, an immigrant neighborhood then populated by Jews from Eastern Europe, whence her grandparents had come.¹⁵ She was nothing if not outspoken: “I made up my own religion, feminism for the survival and regeneration of life.”¹⁶ But she was deeply attached to her mother, whom she described as “a great beauty,” and told of going to the synagogue to pray for her after she died. Of her childhood, she wrote:



Figure 15: Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party* (1979). Mixed media, 48' × 48' × 48'. Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, Brooklyn Museum.



Figure 15a: Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party* (1979), detail (Judith plate).

As an American girl born with the [family] name Butter in 1940, I was often confused when I heard what it was like to be used, to be spread, to feel soft, to melt in your mouth. To also remember that as a Jew, during the war, I would have been branded and buried had I not been born in America. Starification-scarification/Jew, Black, Christian, Moslem.¹⁷

In her *Starification Object Series* (1974), Wilke attached vaginally shaped pieces of chewing gum to her body like scars, while she posed seductively for photographs like a starlet.

Wilke insisted on “self-realization with respect to the physical superiority of woman as the life source”:

To get even is to diffuse the dangerous power of male separatist religious ideals; the virgin as superior being, the nun, the celibate priest, the bleeding Christ—a female fertility figure in disguise. . . . recognizing the marks, the wounds, the suffering, the pain, the guilt, the confusion, the ambiguity of emotions.¹⁸

Emphasizing “the feelings of the flesh, its inspiration, its advice, its warning, its mystery, its necessity for the survival and regeneration of the universe,”¹⁹ Wilke intuited a fundamental difference between her own work and the art of some leading Christian feminists.

Sexuality is also central to the work of Joan Semmel, born Jewish in the Bronx in 1932. In her analytic study “Sexual Imagery in Women’s Art,” she discusses many Jewish women but never identifies any of them as Jewish.²⁰ In the early 1970s, she painted couples making love. Later, in an allusion to both patriotism and censorship, she gave the title *Red, White, and Blue* to a depiction of male and female figures intertwined against a red background (Fig. 2; see p. 64). Next, she produced monumental, realistic nude portraits and self-portraits, depicting herself with her male lover as seen from her own unromantic point of view, looking down upon her body, as in *Antonio and I* (1974), *Intimacy/Autonomy* (1974, Fig. 3; see p. 64), and *Touch* (1977), which shows her as half of a couple lying in bed, apparently just after making love.

“My work is engaged in trying to change women’s lives and how they perceive themselves,” comments Semmel. “The sexual relationship of men and women tended to set the stage with male domination precluding female aspirations in other arenas.”²¹ She views women’s sexuality—like their

intellectuality—as something men have “suppressed and then denied. Religion and art have come together to create the idealization of the ‘virgin’ birth and the ‘pure’ woman. The male has had free reign to invent sexual mythology in terms of his own fears and fantasies.”²²

Semmel recalls her mother’s “earthiness” and comfort in discussing her own sexuality.²³ Nonetheless, if her parents, immigrants to New York from Eastern Europe, found her early, abstract paintings puzzling, they were appalled to see her produce recognizable figurative paintings of sexual scenes. Semmel’s mother, who kept a kosher home and retained some traditional notions of modesty, remarked of her daughter’s new art: “I never used to know what it was about—better I shouldn’t know.”²⁴ Semmel, however, was determined to “deal with sexuality the way a woman would experience it.” Having lived in Franco’s Spain from 1963 to 1970, she explained, she was reacting to the government-sponsored cultural repression she had observed there.

Semmel might have been describing a wish for her own work, which has yet to get the attention it merits, when she wrote about Louise Bourgeois: “It was only after politicization of the issue that restrictions on sexual content in woman’s art began to lift enough for her work to receive the acceptance and acknowledgment it long deserved.”²⁵ Speaking out about the repression of female sexuality from the woman’s point of view became a kind of political activism for Semmel and other women artists of her generation, many of whom, like her, were Jewish but not ritually observant. They voiced their protest through the “Fight Censorship Group,” originally organized by Anita Steckel and eventually including not only Semmel and Bourgeois, but also Judith Bernstein, Martha Edelheit, Eunice Golden, and Joan Gluckman (now deceased) as well as Hannah Wilke.

Steckel was born in New York City to Russian immigrants who spoke Yiddish at home. She recalls her family as permeated by Jewish culture although not religiously observant, with her father playing klezmer music on his banjo and working as a cantor on Jewish holidays. Her parents’ experience of injustice against Jews and of the hardships suffered by immigrants encouraged dissent. Steckel commented recently: “When you come from a culture that has been the underdog in a very brutal way, you tend to speak out against injustice.”²⁶ Sexual censorship of her work provoked Steckel to political action. Her 1972 show at Rockland Community College, in Suffern, just north of New York City, included female and male nudes, some of them sexually explicit. Officials threatened to close the entire exhibition unless she removed the offending works. She refused and organized “Fight Censorship.”

Steckel has often dealt with images of sexuality and with political and gender issues. She held a show of “Mom Art” in 1963, intended to send up the sexist imagery characteristic of Pop Art. Of note in our context is her *Inner Landscape on New York #3* (1973, Fig. 4; see p. 65), in the *Skylines of New York* series begun in 1970 and continued into the next decade. Jewish stars fill the sky, and schools of oval *gefilte* fish swim in the Hudson River. Against the skyline, a muscle-man is spoon-fed his own sperm by his Mother, who tells him: “Eat your power honey before it grows cold.” The Empire State building is equated with his giant phallus. A tattoo on his arm reads: “Lenny Bruce Lives,” a reference to the notorious Jewish comedian who challenged standards of free speech; below it, Steckel writes: “Because of this tattoo, he cannot be buried in a Jewish cemetery” (Jewish law prohibits tattoos; cf. Lev. 19:28). Other graffiti-style labels include “Coney Island Lives” and “Miami Lives,” referring to locales (then) known for their Jewish communities, where Steckel had spent time as a young girl. On the right side, Hitler (labeled “Adolph six million”) is depicted as a patriarchal menace with his throat being sliced by a nude female figure wielding an ax between her legs. In the river among the *gefilte* fish, the artist signs her name: “Anita Slavin Arkin Steckel.”

When Eunice Golden joined “Fight Censorship,” she had also run into trouble over her use of erotic imagery. In *Rape # 1* (1973, Fig. 5), she parodied René Magritte’s *Rape* (1934), which depicts a woman’s breasts, navel and pubic hair as her facial features.²⁷ Golden’s version shows a face with male breasts as eyes and an erect penis and testicles where the mouth and nose should be. In the early 1970s, Golden depicted many male nudes and produced close-up views of male genitalia in various guises. *Landscape # 160* (1972, Fig. 6, overleaf) is a view of a male nude with legs spread in the guise of mountains and hills.

Golden grew up in a kosher home in Brooklyn, the child of a religious father who fled Russia at the age of twelve,

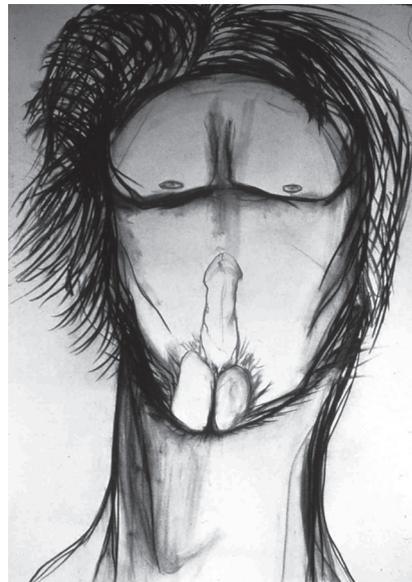


Figure 5: Eunice Golden, *Rape # 1* (1973). Charcoal on paper, 48" × 36". Collection of the artist.



Figure 6: Eunice Golden, *Landscape # 160* (1972). Mixed media on paper, 26" × 51". Collection of the artist.

following a pogrom, and an American-born mother whose immigrant parents also came from Russia. Rebelling against her father's patriarchal views, Golden wanted to demystify the male nude and sexuality.²⁸ Of her experience in "Fight Censorship," she wrote:

We proposed to inform the art world that our "Erotic Art" was a celebration of sexuality and should not be confused with pornography, which denigrated and exploited women. We shared a common vision, which was to uphold a consciousness about our art that was primal in nature and autobiographical in its source.²⁹

As an activist, Golden joined groups that picketed the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney for showing too few women artists.³⁰ In a 1981 article, she insisted:

Women must take control of their own image-making processes; they must become aware of the dialectics of eroticism and power and why such imagery is taboo. . . . There should be a place in women's art where intimacy can be defined in terms that are very broadly sexual; a prophetic art whose richness of fantasy may unleash a healthy appetite for a greater sense awareness as well as unmask the fallacies of male power.³¹

Golden not only paints but also works in film and photography. She became known for her film *Blue Bananas and Other Meats* (1973), a recreation of the famous surrealist dinner in which a woman was offered up on a dining room table. Substituting a man, Golden carefully arranged the fruits of the feast to incorporate his genitals.

Creating male forms also appealed to Judith Bernstein, born in 1942 and raised in a kosher home in New Jersey. She began to make sexual images as a graduate student in the late 1960s at Yale, where her teachers were all men. She recalls Jack Tworikov, who headed the program, commenting on the ability of Yale graduates to get teaching positions and adding: “We just can’t place women.”³² Bernstein told me how her images emerged out of her earlier “calligraphy paintings,” done in the early 1960s. Then came her graffiti paintings, which she described as “both political and sexual in nature, done on grayed canvas. The images were very graphic. The cock, war and masculinity were used synonymously.”³³ She found her inspiration on the walls of the men’s room in the graduate school at Yale. Her giant charcoal drawings of screws evolved from being “cool and architectural” to being “progressively more massive, anatomical and biomorphic.”³⁴ Her technique, both expressionist and kinetic, achieved an emphatic result.

Tworikov and Bernstein’s other teachers, Al Held and Irving Kriesberg, seemed at once horrified and amused by her giant images of phallic screws and of women with their legs spread. Bernstein admits that some of her graffiti-inspired imagery was “pretty raw — against the war in Vietnam.” These images included her *Union Jack-Off* series (1967), which, as critic John Perrault put it, protested the war by “underlining the sexual basis of irrational aggression.”³⁵ In *The Fun Gun* (1967), the penis becomes a 45-caliber pistol with a scrotum full of real bullets. Cindy Nemser praised the work for its unrelenting elucidation of “the connection between male chauvinism and superpatriotism.”³⁶ Bernstein now says that she chose the penis as her subject matter because she viewed it “as a symbol and as a metaphor for power, which women want.” She was not just painting sexual content, but meant the penis to be seen as a symbol of getting “screwed in Vietnam.”³⁷ The chairman of Yale’s art department nonetheless pressured Bernstein to remove her painting of a penis from a student show.

Thus, Bernstein was eager to join “Fight Censorship.” She again ran into trouble when she was chosen by Nemser, one of the jurors, to be in the Focus Show entitled “Women’s Work—American Art 1974,” held at the Philadelphia Civic Center.³⁸ Of the 170 works by 86 artists, only Bernstein’s entry prompted John Pierron, the executive director of the Civic Center, to demand it be excluded. He rejected *Horizontal* (1973, Fig. 7; p. 78), her monumental (9' × 12.5') drawing of a penis-like screw, after having seen it in a photograph documenting its previous installation at A.I.R., the women’s co-op gallery

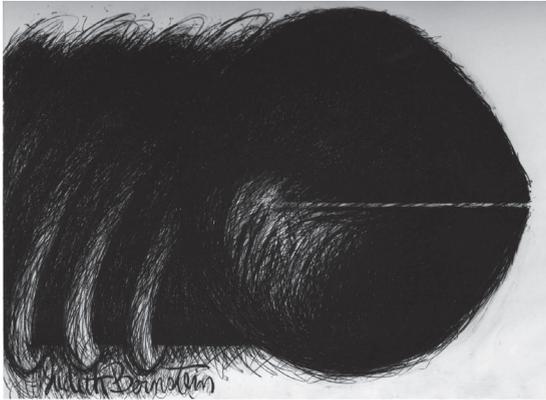


Figure 7: Judith Bernstein, *Horizontal* (1973). Charcoal on paper, 9' × 12.5'. Collection of the artist.

in New York. “The scale of Bernstein’s seven new drawings, *Phallic Screws* [begun in 1969], made Claes Oldenburg look like a miniaturist. . . . The blatant equation of screw and phallus went beyond metaphor to create a new hybrid icon,” wrote Laurie Anderson after seeing the work at A.I.R.³⁹ The “potent irony” seen by Anderson escaped Pierron, who claimed that the work had no “redeeming social value.”⁴⁰ A petition protesting censorship of Bernstein’s work included signatures by Lawrence Alloway, Dore Ashton, John Coplans, Clement Greenberg, Linda Nochlin, John Perrault, Barbara Rose, Irving Sandler and many others, but to no avail. Bernstein decided not to try to get the show canceled, since opportunities for women to show were too rare.

Bernstein followed these monumental male forms with renditions of *Anthurium Thru Venus* (1981–1984), combing a primitive figure of Venus with forms of an anthurium, a waxy tropical flower with a large flat petal and a long, distinctive stamen. Other forms were based on cacti, but the overall result was allusion to sexual forms. “Venus with a penis,” recalls Bernstein. All of these biomorphic forms communicated sexuality, physicality and fertility.

Also attracted to “Fight Censorship” was Martha Edelheit, who grew up Jewish in New York City and attended the High School of Music and Art together with Joan Semmel. Though she was at the school as a music major, she studied life drawing with Peggy Bacon at the Art Students League.⁴¹ Edelheit’s grandparents were immigrants from Romania, but although her maternal grandmother kept a kosher home and spoke Yiddish, her parents were secular in their outlook. She recalls that the two New York communities in which she spent her childhood—Sunnyside, Queens, and, from the age of ten, the Bronx—were

populated by anarchists, Communists and Socialists. She, however, remained aloof, a self-described “cynical political idealist,” who recalls being “dragged kicking and screaming” to her first feminist meeting.⁴²

Edelheit began to work with sexual content in 1960. Her watercolor *Quintuplets* (1964, Fig. 8; see p. 68) depicts two nude women sporting tattoos, including female figures and an American flag. “The title for *Quintuplets* came out of the tattoos I was painting on these Marilyn-Monroe-like ladies,” she recalled. “It amused me that if you had a portrait tattoo on you it could be considered another person. . . . There are two women and three ‘portraits’ on them.”⁴³ Edelheit recently reflected on the political content of her image:

Of course it was just after the Kennedy assassinations . . . and the world was falling apart. (As it has been since my childhood). This was so long before the feminist movement that just doing these drawings was a political act. . . . It went against everything going on in the art world. Nobody was showing nudes, (no one I knew was painting them).⁴⁴

In 1965, at the Byron Gallery on Madison Avenue, Edelheit showed more than 45 sexually explicit watercolors and five or six wall-size male and female nude paintings. “All my nudes had genitals and pubic hair,” she recalls:

Even Leo Castelli and Billy Kluver blushed at the opening!!! John Canaday (then head art critic of the NY Times) refused to review the show (after spending 2 hours looking at it, according to [gallery owner] Byron)—referring to me as “that obscene lady”—and reviewed a show of miniature landscapes by some male painter in the back room!⁴⁵

Artist Allen Kaprow wrote about Edelheit’s work:

Female art in general plays no games as men’s art does, no one wins, there are no victims or protagonists. . . . Female fantasy is pervasive, boundless, unconcerned with definitions and measure. When sex is its primary involvement the involvement is total and therefore shameless. It is for this reason terrifying to men, not because it implies the loss of their status, but because it implies the loss of the game (which is their life).⁴⁶

In her *View of the Empire State Building from Sheep Meadow* (1970–1972, Fig. 9; see p. 68), Edelheit depicted a fantasy view of two men and two women lying nude in the grass in Central Park. Phallic skyscrapers loom in the distance, metaphorically contrasting with the men's flaccid penises in this parody of Edward Manet's *Dejeuner sur l'herbe*. "I am not a realist," she insists. "I use people as models, real land/cityscapes, real and invented fabrics and space, color as statements."⁴⁷ Edelheit says that she was inspired in the 1950s by the "formal and elegant eroticism of Japanese pillow books," but her imagery looks more political than formal.

Sexual imagery appealed to Joyce Kozloff for a different reason: "to revitalize ornament and decoration."⁴⁸ Though Kozloff, born in 1942, grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home in New Jersey, she, too, leads a secular life. As she puts it, she has sought to "decontextualize pornography into a decorative context." Kozloff drew upon classical Greek vases in some of the watercolors included in her "Patterns of Desire," a cross-cultural and witty exploration of sexuality. She alternately mixed figures from a Greek red-figure amphora with Chinese imagery on a Chinese-shaped vessel that she called *Smut Dynasty Vase* (1987, Fig. 10; see p. 69). By combining the classical with Asian motifs, Kozloff asserted the universality of Eros, commenting specifically on the male point of view in the history of art with titles such as "Big Boys: Palladio, Veronese, Picasso et. al."⁴⁹ All the while, Kozloff has been attracted to activism. She protested against the war in Vietnam; against discrimination of women artists by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1970; and, recently, against the war in Iraq.⁵⁰

The pattern of the Jewish feminist artist and activist who has made sexually explicit imagery also applies to Nancy Spero. Her grandfather had designed embroidery in eastern Europe, where prayer shawls and Torah mantles were religious uses for craft.⁵¹ Born in 1926 in Cleveland, Ohio, Spero has drawn upon diverse sources of inspiration, including the archaic erotic imagery of ancient Greek sculptures and vases. In *Chorus Line I* (1982, Fig. 11; see p. 69), primitive female figures grasp at their large vaginas. Spero said:

In making a statement about women's bodies I want the idea of a woman's body to transcend a male ideal of woman in a male-controlled world. . . . What I suppose might be most subversive about the work is what I am trying to say in depicting the female body; that woman is not the "other," that the female image is universal.⁵²

Spero, who shared her political activism with a supportive husband, the late artist Leon Golub, made art that protested against the war in Vietnam, including *The War Series: Bombs and Helicopters* (1966–1970, Fig. 12). She explained: “The Bombs are phallic and nasty, exaggerated sexual representations of the penis; heads with tongues sticking out, violent depictions of the human (mostly male) body.”⁵³ Spero was active in a number of groups such as Women Artists in Revolution (WAR), with whom she picketed the Whitney Museum of American Art, protesting that only 4% of the artists represented in its 1970 Biennial were female.⁵⁴

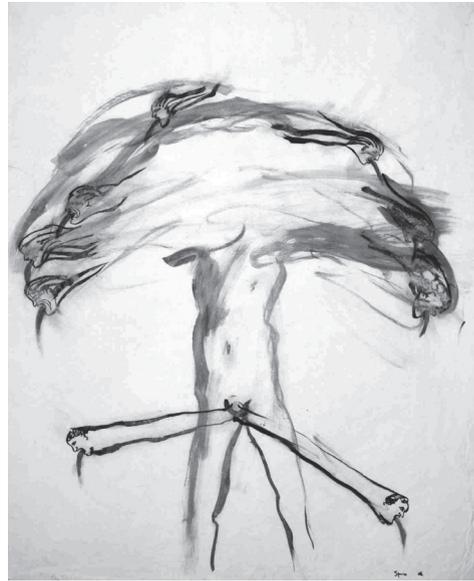


Figure 12: Nancy Spero, *The Bomb* (1968). Gouache and ink on paper, 34" × 27.25". Collection the artist.

The activism of these feminist artists fits in with the heritage of Jews who took part in radical politics, first in eastern Europe and then in America.⁵⁵ Significant numbers of Jewish immigrants brought with them their belief in social justice and political reform. Finding harsh conditions in the New World, they felt compelled to continue the struggles begun in Europe. Women participated fully, taking part in strikes for better working conditions and wages. Women’s activism in the Jewish immigrant community led to notable protests, including the kosher meat boycott of 1902, the garment strike of 1909, rent strikes, and strong support of women’s suffrage.⁵⁶

Experience with speaking out may have encouraged Jewish women to express themselves more freely than others on issues of sexuality. Judith Bernstein, for example, sees herself as having the outspoken, direct quality of the women in Jewish culture who sought more control over their lives. Hope Sandrow, an activist artist still in her mid-fifties, attributes her own willingness to speak up to the influence of her Jewish Sunday school teachers in Philadelphia,⁵⁷ all Holocaust survivors, who taught their students to take action against injustice. Moreover, notwithstanding the diversity of religious observance

and family and regional backgrounds among Jews of east European descent, their daughters may have been influenced by ethno-cultural attitudes towards female sexuality, which as historian Susan A. Glenn has pointed out,⁵⁸ were unfettered by Victorian ideals of women's purity and piety.

The Case of The Dinner Party

These threads of Jewish sexual attitudes, feminist art and social activism provide a context for Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party*, a work that both typifies aspects of the feminist movement and takes them to monumental proportions. Born Judith Sylvia Cohen in Chicago in 1939, Chicago absorbed through her father the principles of her paternal grandfather, a rabbi from Lithuania who belonged to the Musar Movement, which stressed the ethical strain of teaching and preaching in Jewish tradition.⁵⁹ His son Arthur, Judy's father, rejected religious practice but advocated the ideal of making the world a better place. A Post Office employee and labor organizer, his refusal to sign the postwar loyalty oath required of federal employees drew the attention of the FBI, leading him to resign from government employment. His resulting depression led to an early death,⁶⁰ when his daughter was only thirteen. By then, however, he had impressed upon her his ideals.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, second-wave feminism stirred many women to assert their sexuality. However, Judy Chicago's involvement with the struggle for women's rights arose directly from her work, while still a student at UCLA in the late 1950s, with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP),⁶¹ then viewed as a radical organization and considered subversive by the UCLA administration.⁶² This involvement readied her to absorb Shulamith Firestone's 1970 book, *The Dialectic of Sex*, which declared women's need to "face their own oppression." For Firestone, a Canadian-born feminist, the involvement of white women with the movement for black civil rights represented their "closest attempt since 1920 to face their own oppression":

To champion the cause of a more conspicuous underdog is a euphemistic way of saying you yourself are the underdog. So just as the issue of slavery spurred on the radical feminism of the nineteenth century, the issue of racism now stimulated the new feminism; the analogy between racism and sexism

had to be made eventually. . . .
And if racism was expungable,
why not sexism?⁶³

In Chicago's case, growing feminist consciousness led her in the course of the 1970s to transform her artistic production from abstraction to stylized representation and from individual isolation to the communitarian organization that produced *The Dinner Party*. Already by 1964 (then known by her married name, Judy Gerowitz), Chicago had produced and exhibited a painted clay sculpture of a vagina-like opening set in a curvilinear structure, which she called *In My Mother's House*

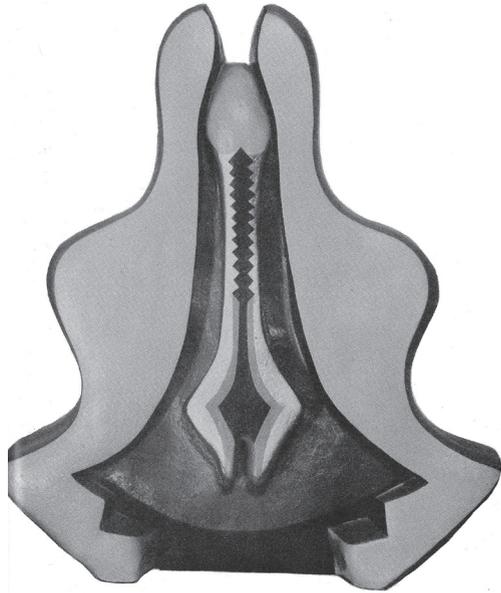


Figure 13: Judy Chicago, *In My Mother's House* (1963 or 1963). Painted clay, approximately 16" × 24" × 10", lost.

(now known only from its published reproduction in *Artforum*, Fig. 13). The title derives from the Song of Songs, considered by many to be "the most erotic text in the Jewish tradition."⁶⁴ In the verse to which the title alludes, the Song's female narrator says of her lover, "I held him fast, I would not let him go / Till I brought him to my mother's house" (Song 3:4). Chicago's metaphorical reading of "mother's house" as "vagina" echoes the interpretations of Jewish writers such as Judah Leib Ben-Ze'ev (1764–1811), who read this verse as describing vaginal penetration.⁶⁵

Scholars took many more years to acknowledge Chicago's interest in either Jewish culture or feminism, leading them likewise to overlook that three-part abstract sculpture that she first named *Lilith* (Fig. 14), exhibited in Los Angeles in 1966 and reviewed in *Artforum*.⁶⁶ Since ancient times, Lilith figures as a night demon in Jewish lore, appearing in the Bible as a screech owl or "night monster" (Isaiah 34:14). Feminists were drawn to the tale of Lilith as told in an anonymous medieval text, "The Alphabet of Ben Sira," which describes her as Adam's first wife. After Adam rejected her demand for equality in sexual positions, she deserted him and went on to mate and procreate with demons.⁶⁷



Figure 14: Judy Chicago (as Judy Gerowitz) with *Zig Zag* (destroyed; on the left) and *Lilith* (1965). Canvas, plywood and sprayed lacquer, base 60" × 128" × 63". Collection of Glenn Schaffer. Photograph courtesy of Through the Flower Archives.

Responding to Adam's plea to bring her back, God sent three angels in pursuit. She refused to return, announced her role of smiting human infants and accepted the punishment of having a hundred of her demon children die each day—but swore not to harm infants who were protected by an amulet invoking the three angels. Thus, Chicago's three-part sculpture.

Chicago made an early decision to deploy what she has called the "butterfly/cunt" motif—butterfly and flower motifs that evoke the vulva. "The female artist's obsession with vaginas," she declared, "represents her attempt to get in touch with who she is." In the course of a decade, as she worked toward the ultimate design of *The Dinner Party*, she repeatedly refined and explained her project. At a Catholic institution for women, the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, Minnesota, her reception was a far cry from the fulminations against sexuality of the city's eponymous saint. She described one of her porcelains as "Fecundity as an Image of Creativity (or the female artist producing ideas in the form of eggs)."⁶⁸ Recalling the experience, Chicago later wrote: "To me, the butterfly is a symbol of freedom, and liberation. And when I was in

Minnesota at the College of St. Catherine, I was told by the nuns there, who were absolutely stunned and wildly enthusiastic about my work, that the butterfly has traditionally been a symbol of resurrection in the church.”⁶⁹

In her home city to promote her first book, *Through the Flower: My Struggles as a Woman Artist*, the artist described herself as “a nice Jewish girl from Chicago,” only to add what was sure to provoke: “My vagina is a metaphysical question.”⁷⁰ She had been rejected, she said,

as a woman, because I am aggressive, outspoken. I’ve been rejected as an artist because my subject matter has been considered nonessential. We’ve had to deal with rejection much too much, especially women. I want to affirm the female experience, to tell women that their point of view is vital and all-important in this society, whether in art or in everyday life.⁷¹

In her imagery, as in her life, Chicago was determined to prioritize women’s pleasure and agency. Her imagery was meant to convey an active female role: “We’ve always been imaged by males as a passive hole. What I’ve wanted to create is a new, active sense of womanhood.”⁷² One local female journalist understood Chicago’s invention of “the butterfly vagina . . . as an early primitive form of femaleness. In this series, this image metamorphoses into a butterfly goddess—an active, positive, female force.”⁷³

To another interviewer, Chicago complained:

Now people want to diminish my art by saying, ‘Well, it’s only a bunch of vaginas,’ which it is not. I’m not involved in that. I’m involved in metaphysical art. I think [Georgia] O’Keeffe must have experienced a similar thing when people were doing all this Freudian analysis on her work and she said, “I’m a painter; I’m an artist.” . . .

We live in a period in which an historic silence is being broken. We’ve never been able to see the world through women’s eyes. It’s really an opportunity for women to give a tremendous gift to the culture.⁷⁴

Given the recent institutional acceptance of *The Dinner Party*, Chicago’s 1978 comment to Judy Anderson appears prescient: “People say to me, ‘what will happen to you after the times change and social conditions change?’ I say that I just hope people will look at my work and see how beautiful it is.”⁷⁵ On another occasion, she said:

When confronted with the plates in my *Dinner Party*, many people think that they have “seen” them when they have merely “identified” them as vaginas. They have not even begun to comprehend the images, but rather only named the outline of the form. It is like saying that [Josef] Albers’ paintings are “squares” and thinking that that is properly understanding the complexity of his work. The vaginal form in my work is simply the framework for a series of ideas.⁷⁶

As finally completed and shown, *The Dinner Party* consists of a great triangle, about forty-eight feet on each side (Fig. 15; see p. 72). The metaphoric connection with the triangular Greek letter delta, which itself was widely employed to symbolize the vulva, was also a link to Chicago’s mentor, Anais Nin, who wrote a series of connected erotic stories called *The Delta of Venus*.⁷⁷ On the triangle’s three arms or wings are 39 place settings for female figures from myth, legend and history,⁷⁸ each represented by a ceramic painted or sculpted plate, resting upon a runner designed by Chicago (often in dialogue with others) and executed in needlework of various techniques by many others. The 39 placeholders are linked to the names of a further 999 women inscribed in gold on the porcelain-tiled “Heritage floor,” chosen for having made “a mark on (male) history” or “a contribution to her own sex.”⁷⁹ The research for *The Dinner Party* as well as its execution was the result of the efforts of some 400 people, mostly volunteers, who worked on and contributed to Chicago’s design.⁸⁰

Chicago has always said that she was inspired by the theme of “The Last Supper,” which, according to the synoptic gospels, was a Passover seder. In making the plates in the third and chronologically latest wing rise up into three dimensions, Chicago created a metaphor for women’s liberation. Thus, the entire work echoes the theme of the Passover seder—liberation—but it represents the emancipation of women rather than of the Jews.⁸¹

If feminist artists’ treatment of female sexuality reached monumental proportions in *The Dinner Party*, so did the controversy stirred up by the work. Thus, the neoconservative Hilton Kramer, writing in the *New York Times*, bemoaned what he identified as:

an insistence and vulgarity more appropriate, perhaps, to an advertising campaign than to a work of art. Yet what ad campaign, even in these

liberated times, would dare to vulgarize and exploit imagery of female sexuality on this scale and with such abysmal taste?

He went on to criticize the variations of the “genital organs of the female body,” claiming that they were “not without a certain ingenuity, to be sure, but it is the kind of ingenuity we associate with kitsch.”⁸² He asked: “Is ‘The Dinner Party’ art? Well, I suppose so. After all, what isn’t nowadays?” Ellen Willis answered him in the *Village Voice*:

Cunt phobia rides again. In a culture where female genitals are still widely regarded as ugly and/or dangerous—a deficiency no self-respecting woman would voluntarily call attention to, a mysterious, dank morass in which the unwary penis gets lost, or perhaps bitten off—it is inherently tasteless to presume to consider the vulva as legitimate a subject for formal and metaphorical elaboration as any other.⁸³

When museums declined to exhibit the piece, the work’s clear feminist message and its resulting rejection by the “establishment” prompted grass-roots groups (composed mainly but not entirely of women) to organize around the country with the aim of bringing *The Dinner Party* to their respective cities, including Houston, Boston, Cleveland and Atlanta. In New York, a group of politically well-connected women raised money and arranged for the piece to be shown at the Brooklyn Museum.⁸⁴

The tempest stirred by *The Dinner Party* peaked with the successful attempt to stop Chicago from giving it to the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) in 1990. The vision for the gift originated with university trustee Patricia Mathis, a Washington businesswoman and former civil rights worker, who saw it as bringing together the struggles for freedom by both women and African-Americans, who were the university’s primary population. *The Dinner Party* was to take its place as part of a growing collection of art that would focus on work by African-Americans but already included some art by Euro-Americans. The art collection, which was part of a plan to raise an endowment for UDC, was to be housed in the university’s Carnegie Library, located at the foot of the Mall, across from Washington’s Convention Center.

The UDC trustees accepted the gift of *The Dinner Party* by unanimous vote, and the City Council approved a \$1.2 million bond bill from the university’s

capital budget to restore the library and prepare it to show *The Dinner Party*. However, the socially conservative right-wing press, especially the *Washington Times*,⁸⁵ picked up on the story, provoking student demonstrations and a strike. Because the District of Columbia's budget appropriation is approved directly by the U.S. Congress, the controversy led to congressional debates and the adoption by the House of Representatives of an amendment to the city's appropriation bill, deleting \$1.6 million from UDC's 1991 budget⁸⁶—the figure reported in the press as being targeted for renovating the Carnegie Library. The Senate Appropriations Committee voted to restore the money, and Senator Pete Domenici, a Republican from New Mexico, spoke out: "I believe the cause of art and artists everywhere suffers when members of Congress seek to let their personal tastes determine funding levels for cities and programs that deserve funding."⁸⁷

But after 200 students took over two university buildings, listing as one of their demands that UDC not expend funds to house *The Dinner Party*, Chicago felt that she had to withdraw her gift. She protested to *Art News* when it repeated "the torrent of misinformation launched first by the right-wing *Washington Times*":

The Dinner Party has triumphed over art world resistance, lack of support, misrepresentation and prejudice. It stimulated an unprecedented, world-wide grass-roots campaign which succeeded in exhibiting it more often than I'd intended and it entered art history. It could not triumph, however, over the ferocity of the assault mounted against it by the right wing, the media and the Congress. Was it censorship? Absolutely.⁸⁸

A few months later, legal scholar and author Riane Eisler wrote:

I am convinced that what the battle over *The Dinner Party* reflects is that we are living in a time when more women and men than ever before are questioning the inevitability of a dominator model—specifically of the domination of man over woman and nature, of race over race, and of nation over nation. But as long as this questioning remains a fringe phenomenon, it can simply be written out of what is "significant" in both history and art.⁸⁹

Ultimately, it may have been partly the notoriety and resultant resonance through time of the butterfly/vagina motifs that enabled *The Dinner Party* to survive and win its place at the Brooklyn Museum. On March 23, 2007, it went on permanent view in the new Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art.

Looking back on the initial uproar over Chicago's vagina plates and over expressions by other women of female sexuality in art, the positive response to *The Vagina Monologues*, by Jewish-American feminist Eve Ensler, appears to mark a sea change in public attitudes. In this award-winning play, first performed in 1997, women recount their feelings about their private parts and their sexual experiences. Echoing earlier expressions by the feminist artists described above, Ensler said of her experience:

It's like flying through the sound barrier. It's almost unbearable to go through the taboo, but then you discover this unbelievable grace, power, joy and sexuality that isn't tainted. You know that if you just go there it will be okay. It's a place we haven't been before. It's what it will look like when women are in power.⁹⁰

Ensler's play caught on to such an extent that she was encouraged to initiate "V-Day" in 1998 to combat violence against women. According to Jerry Lynn Fields, executive director of the V-Day movement and a former rape crisis center manager, *The Vagina Monologues* has been performed in more than 81 countries and earned more than \$30 million, used to fund anti-violence organizations. At Georgetown University, which is Catholic, Aartie Manansingh, who produced the play, emphasizes its influential role on college campuses:

It breaks the silence that surrounds violence against women and girls. On a college campus, there seems to be an attitude where issues of relationship violence and sexual assault are taboo, and people don't talk about them unless they're personally affected.⁹¹

But *The Vagina Monologues* and V-Day, too, have elicited a backlash, particularly among "social conservatives"—those in the United States, often on the far right of the political spectrum, who promote sexual codes that reject divorce, common-law and same-sex marriage, abortion and euthanasia. Administrators of some Catholic colleges have recently acted to ban productions of Ensler's

play on their campuses. In an announcement that stirred protests and counter-protests from students, President Rev. Brian Shanley, president of Providence College, declared in January 2006 that the play contradicts Catholic beliefs and degrades female sexuality: "Far from celebrating the complexity and mystery of female sexuality, *The Vagina Monologues* simplifies and demystifies it by reducing it to the vagina"⁹² The previous year, the campus V-Day production had earned \$2,000 for the local Sojourner House women's shelter and Sisters Overcoming Abusive Relationships.

Today, a huge divide has emerged between the proponents of an open, liberal society with equality for women, and social conservatives who would impose severe limits on women's attire, occupations, power and freedom of choice in such vital areas as whom they can marry, the right to abort a pregnancy, where they can go and what they can say. For Jewish women in the arts, the right to make their own work say what they want is hampered by moves to limit freedom of expression, particularly where it comes to discussion of women's sexuality. On occasion, efforts to stifle sexually explicit work have generated anti-semitic remarks about visual art and theatrical productions made by Jewish women. The art work and the struggles summarized in this paper should serve to heighten our awareness that the drive for free expression in art is intimately linked with women's quest to claim their sexuality, agency and power, and that Jewish women have been among the pioneers in that quest.

Notes

1. This comment, overheard by Diane Gelon, administrator for *The Dinner Party*, was reported by Letty Cottin Pogrebin in "Anti-Semitism in the Women's Movement," *Ms.* (June 1982), p. 66; reprinted in eadem, *Deborah, Golda, and Me: Being Female and Jewish in America* (New York: Crown, 1991).
2. Ellen Schiff, "What Kind of Way is that for Nice Jewish Girls to Act? Images of Jewish Women in Modern American Drama," *American Jewish History*, 70/1 (September 1980), p. 106.
3. See Lewis A. Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 197-199. See also Armand Fields, *Sophie Tucker: The First Lady of Show Business* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2003).

4. Quoted in Candace Falk, *Love, Anarchy, and Emma Goldman* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984), p. 160.

5. Emma Goldman, "The Hypocrisy of Puritanism," in eadem, *Anarchism and Other Essays* (New York: Dover, 1917; reprinted 1969), p. 167.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

7. Lisa E. Bloom touches upon this issue in her essay "Ethnic Notions and Feminist Strategies of the 1970s: Some Work by Judy Chicago and Eleanor Antin," in Catherine M. Sousloff (ed.), *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 135–166. Jewish feminists' frequent use of sexual subject matter may have prompted Bloom's mistaken inference that the American artist Carolee Schneemann is Jewish (as Schneemann confirmed to me in an interview, she grew up Protestant in a Quaker household). A performance artist who explores female sexuality through art-making, ritual and culture, Schneeman is best know for *Interior Scroll* (1975), a video of her extracting a scroll from her vagina. See also Lisa E. Bloom, *Jewish Identities in American Feminist Art: Ghosts of Ethnicity* (New York: Routledge, 2006). In a public discussion of a paper by gay art historian Richard Meyer on feminism's importance for gay male identity, at the conference "A Feminist Future" (Museum of Modern Art, New York, January 2007), Bloom asked why so many of the artists under discussion were Jewish, but no answer was proposed.

8. One may speculate about the reasons for the openness of Jewish women artists to the use of sexual imagery. The Puritan ideology has deep roots in Christian tradition. The apostle Paul notoriously advised: "He who marries his fiancée does well; and he who refrains from marriage will do better" (I Corinthians 7:9), an attitude echoed down the centuries by the fathers of the Church. Jewish tradition, on the other hand, holds a husband responsible for his wife's sexual satisfaction, condemns the choice of a celibate life and emphasizes sexual pleasure within marriage. According to Orthodox scholar Maurice Lamm, "God did not plan the reproductive organs as strictly mechanical means for the production of new life; God constructed the human being to appreciate the physical and soulful ecstasy of the sexual art" (*The Jewish Way in Love and Marriage* [New York: Harper & Row, 1980], p. 135).

9. Barbara Rose, "Vaginal Iconography," *New York*, 7 (February 11, 1974), p. 59.

10. Robert Hughes, "An Obsessive Feminist Pantheon," *Time*, December 15, 1980, p. 85.

11. Idem, *Nothing If Not Critical: Selected Essays on Art and Artists* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), pp. 177–178. See also, for example, Hilton Kramer's positive comments on Duchamp, Brancusi, Courbet and Oldenburg's lipsticks in *Revenge of the Philistines: Art and Culture, 1972–1984* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), p. 277, in sharp contrast with his dismissal of Chicago's *Dinner Party* cited further on in this essay.

12. Hughes, *Nothing if Not Critical* (above, note 11), pp. 99–100.
13. Hannah Wilke, quoted in Joanna Frueh, “So Help Me Hannah,” in Thomas H. Kochheiser (ed.), *Hannah Wilke: A Retrospective* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989), p. 35.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 48, quoting from a 1985 interview .
15. As confirmed to me by Wilke’s sister, Marsie Scharlatt, on January 10, 2007.
16. Quoted in Frueh, “So Help Me” (above, note 13), p. 71.
17. Hannah Wilke, “Intercourse With . . .,” in Kochheiser, *Hannah Wilke* (above, note 13), p. 139; the essay was originally written in 1976 as an application for a Guggenheim Memorial Foundation grant.
18. Eadem, “Visual Prejudice,” in *ibid.*, p. 141.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Joan Semmel and April Kingsley, “Sexual Imagery in Woman’s Art,” *Woman’s Art Journal*, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1980), pp. 1–6.
21. Author’s interview with Joan Semmel, November 29, 2004.
22. Joan Semmel, “Imaging Eros: The Politics of Pleasure,” unpublished essay.
23. Author’s interview with Joan Semmel, December 31, 2007.
24. Joan Semmel to the author, January 3, 2007.
25. Semmel and Kingsley, “Sexual Imagery” (above, note 20), p. 1. Louise Bourgeois is not Jewish but was married to a Jewish man, the late art historian Robert Goldwater.
26. Anita Steckel to the author, January 7, 2007.
27. See Carol Jacobsen, “Redefining Censorship: A Feminist View,” *Art Journal* , 50/4 (Winter 1999), pp. 42–55.
28. Eunice Golden to the author, January 9, 2007.
29. Eadem, “Sexuality in Art: Two Decades from a Feminist Perspective,” *Woman’s Art Journal*, 3/1 (1975), p. 14.
30. Eunice Golden to the author, January 9, 2007.
31. Eadem, “The Male Nude in Women’s Art: Dialectics of Feminist Iconography,” *Heresies*, 3/4 (May 1981), p. 42.
32. Judith Bernstein, interview with the author, January 4, 2007.
33. Quoted in *Judith Bernstein: Drawings 1966–1976* (Boulder, CO: University Museum, 1976), unnumbered.
34. *Ibid.*
35. John Perrault, “Judith Bernstein,” in *Judith Bernstein* (above, note 33).
36. Cindy Nemser, “Four Artists of Sensuality,” *Arts Magazine* (March 1975), p. 74.
37. Judith Bernstein, interview with the author, January 10, 2007.
38. Other curators included Adelyn Breeskin, Lila Katzen, Anne d’Harnoncourt and Marcia Tucker, then a curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art, who resigned

from the Philadelphia project over the censorship issue. See Nemser, "Four Artists" (above, note 36), p. 74.

39. Laurie Anderson, "Judith Bernstein (AIR)," *Art News* (December 1973), p. 94.

40. Judith Bernstein to the author, January 10, 2007, recalling a quote in an article in the *Philadelphia Daily News*.

41. Peggy Bacon taught at the Art Students League from 1949 to 1951. See the chronology in Roberta K. Tarbell, *Peggy Bacon: Personalities and Places* (Washington, DC: National Collection of Fine Arts, 1975), p. 62.

42. Martha Edelheit to the author, January 8, 2007.

43. Martha Edelheit to the author, January 22, 2007.

44. *Ibid.*.

45. Martha Edelheit to the author, January 8, 2007.

46. Allen Kaprow, "Speak out on the Art of Female Art: No Games," *Village Voice*, April 28, 1966, p. 12. My thanks to Joan Semmel for bringing this review to my attention.

47. Martha Edelheit, quoted on the website of Davis Art, as of January 22, 2007: http://www.davis-art.com/portal/dai/SlideSets_Default.aspx?curPage=ProductDetails&ModelNumber=8-386.

48. Joyce Kozloff to the author, December 21, 2006.

49. See eadem, *Patterns of Desire* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1990), pp. 30 and 52.

50. Eadem, interview with the author, December 21, 2006. Kozloff was a founder of the Los Angeles Council of Women Artists, founded in 1969 to protest the omission of women in the show "Art and Technology."

51. Nancy Spero to the author, November 11, 2004.

52. Nancy Spero in an interview with Jeanne Siegel, "Nancy Spero: Woman as Protagonist," *Arts Magazine* (September 1987), quoted in Jon Bird, Jo Ann Isaak and Sylvère Lotringer, *Nancy Spero* (London: Phaidon, 1996), p. 134.

53. Nancy Spero, quoted in Bird, Isaak and Lotringer, *Nancy Spero* (above, note 52), p. 124.

54. See *ibid.*, p. 120.

55. See Gail Levin, "Beyond the Pale: Jewish Identity, Radical Politics, and Feminist Art in the United States," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 4 (July 2005), pp. 205-232.

56. See, for example, Paula Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), pp. 112-113.

57. Hope Sandrow to the author, December 31, 2007.

58. Susan A. Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 10-11.

59. Levin, *Becoming Judy Chicago: A Biography of the Artist* (New York: Harmony Books, 2007), p. 10. Her grandfather was said to have represented the twenty-third generation of rabbis in the family line, going back beyond their ancestor, the Vilna Gaon.
60. *Ibid.*, pp. 36–42.
61. For the frequency of this pattern, see Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979).
62. See Levin, *Becoming Judy Chicago* (above, note 59), pp. 55–57.
63. Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1970), p. 29.
64. David Biale, *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), p. 31.
65. See *ibid.*, p. 161.
66. Chicago forgot the original name she had chosen for her sculpture with its three forms, which, ironically, she renamed *Trinity* when she showed it in the minimalism show at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles in 2004. See also Levin, *Becoming Judy Chicago* (above, note 59), p. 122. Peter Plages discussed *Lilith* in his review in *Artforum*, 4/8 (April 1966), p. 14.
67. See Biale, *Eros and the Jews* (above, note 64), pp. 83–84.
68. Judy Chicago, quoted in Mary George-Geisser, “Judy Chicago: Artist and Feminist,” *Gold Flower*, 6/7 (February 1975), p. 1.
69. Haider, “Chicago’s Butterfly,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, June 19, 1975, Section 2, p. 81.
70. Judy Chicago, *Through the Flower: My Struggles as a Woman Artist* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1975); Haider, “Chicago’s Butterfly” (above, note 69).
71. Haider, “Chicago’s Butterfly” (above, note 69).
72. *Ibid.*
73. *Ibid.*
74. Paul and Catherine Wood Sutinen, “Judy Chicago Explodes Feminine Mystique in Art,” *Willamette Week*, week ending September 8, 1975, p. 12.
75. Judith Anderson, “The Ultimate in Female Art,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 13, 1978, p. 21.
76. Judy Chicago, “A Date with Judy: A Dialogue with Judy Chicago, Suzanne Lacy and Faith Wilding,” ms. for article in *Images and Issues*, p. 2, in the Judy Chicago Collection, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard University.
77. Anaïs Nin, *The Delta of Venus* (New York: Harcourt, 1969).
78. Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party A Symbol of Our Heritage* (New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1979). The first wing features five divinities: the abstract primordial goddess, the fertile goddess, Mesopotamian Ishtar, Indian Kali, and the tantalizingly

elusive Serpent Mistress of Crete; two legends: Sophia (personified “wisdom”) and the Amazon female warrior; and six historical figures, including Egyptian Queen Hatshepsut and the Hebrew Judith (Fig. 20) who beheaded her people’s foe. The second arm stretches from the beginnings of Christianity through its turbulent Reform, including such figures as Marcella, Christian teacher and organizer of women, and Christine de Pisan, author of *The Book of the City of Women*. The third wing reaches from the American revolution to the women’s revolution of modern times and ranges from Anne Hutchinson, non-conformist daughter of a father who dared denounce a corrupt church, to the abolitionist Sojourner Truth and the feminist Susan B. Anthony, ending with two particular emblems for Chicago: writer Virginia Woolf and painter Georgia O’Keeffe.

79. Arlene Raven and Susan Rennie, “*The Dinner Party Project: An Interview with Judy Chicago*,” *Chrysalis*, 1/4 (1977), p. 97. For a complete list, see Levin, *Becoming Judy Chicago* (above, note 59), or Chicago, *The Dinner Party* (above, note 78).

80. My research and the many interviews I conducted to investigate the controversy that arose in the 1970s over Chicago’s use of volunteers to execute *The Dinner Party* demonstrated that, despite rumors to the contrary, almost all of the workers, paid or unpaid, felt that they benefitted from working with Chicago on the project. See Levin, *Becoming Judy Chicago* (above, note 59), pp. 250–303. Some students at CalArts who worked on *Womanhouse* with Chicago and Miriam Schapiro resented being put to restoring the house for the group project, when they preferred to be “making art.”

81. See Levin, “Beyond the Pale” (above, note 55), pp. 205–232, and eadem, *Becoming Judy Chicago* (above, note 59), pp. 6 and 251. Chicago treasures a photograph of her father at about age thirteen, at his family’s seder.

82. Hilton Kramer, “Judy Chicago’s ‘Dinner Party’ Comes to Brooklyn Museum,” *The New York Times*, October 17, 1980, p. C1.

83. Ellen Willis, *Village Voice*, November 5–11, 1980, p. 32.

84. See Levin, *Becoming Judy Chicago* (above, note 59), pp. 315–317.

85. The *Washington Times*, founded in 1982, is published by News World Communications, a subsidiary of the Unification Church, and is currently overseen by the Rev. Chung Hwan Kwak, a close adviser to the church’s founder, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon. See David Ignatius, “Tension of the Times,” *The Washington Post*, June 18, 2004, p. A29; and see the *Columbia Journalism Review* website, as of June 20, 2006: <http://www.cjr.org/tools/owners/newsworld.asp>.

86. See the Parris amendment in the *Congressional Record—Daily Digest*, July 26, 1990, D 506, p. 19742.

87. Pete Domenici, quoted in Katie Hickox, “Work by Santa Fe Artist Stirs Congressional Fray,” *The Santa Fe New Mexican*, July 28, 1990, p. A1.

88. Judy Chicago to the Editor of *Art News*, December 18, 1990.

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89. Riane Eisler, "Sex, Art and Archetypes," *The Women's Review of Books*, 8/6 (March 1991).

90. Eve Ensler, quoted in Megan Rosenfeld, *The Washington Post*, February 11, 2001, reprinted in Karen E. Duda, "Eve Ensler," *Current Biography Yearbook* (New York: H.W. Wilson Company, 2002), p. 145.

91. Zachary A. Goldfarb, *The Washington Post*, March 8, 2006, p. C1.

92. President Rev. Brian Shanley, quoted in Stu Woo, "No Stage at PC for 'Vagina Monologues,'" *The Brown Daily Herald*, February 6, 2006.

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