
Editorial Introduction

The essays in this issue share only two things – they are written by women and give substantial places to women art-makers. The first is by way of an “accident” in the sense that the call for contributions elicited no texts written by men. Anything but accidental is the second shared characteristic; although the title of this issue, *Producing Women / Ces femmes qui produisent...*, was and remains intentionally ambiguous, the call for contributions sought texts with an emphasis upon women as art-makers rather than “woman” as she has been represented in art.

The decision to install women art-makers at the centre of this issue arises from our concern that much feminist art history privileges the deconstruction of images of women. This is understandable; the critique of representation, the scrutinizing of its operations, has been and will continue to be an important and necessary form of political intervention. A focus on representation also permits feminists to acknowledge post-modernist critiques of authorship while avoiding the problematics of broaching, however tentatively, the writing of “a subject.” Few feminists want to replicate the production of “the artist” as traditionally conceived in the discipline, even though, as Lynda Nead has pointed out forcefully in “Seductive Canvases: Visual Mythologies of the Artist and Artistic Creativity,” such outmoded constructs have not lost their cultural potency.¹

Yet, we need to ask whether “Picasso” ever die if scholarship continues to privilege discussions, however critical, of “his” production? More importantly, if “Picasso” refuses to die, does that mean that women art-makers should not live? *Producing Women / Ces femmes qui produisent...* is based on the conviction that individual female women art workers must be pulled out of the archive, debated, discussed and entered into the literature.

We hoped to encourage art historians to discuss the indi-

vidual female producer as one who is located within and formed by a specific cultural and political location – however, we also wanted to acknowledge agency, even if that agency is inscribed by location. Thus, we agree with historian Judith Walkowitz: “That individuals do not fully author their texts does not falsify Marx’s insight that men (and women) make their own history, albeit under circumstances they do not produce or fully control. The historian’s task still remains to explain cultural expressions in terms of ‘historically situated authorial consciousness’ and to track how historic figures mobilized existing cultural tools.”²

Everyone understands that this is not an easy enterprise, and each of the essays here approaches the task in a different way, with no guarantee that any one contributor would agree with the approach of the others. Furthermore, it is to be hoped – and in fact it is inevitable – that each reader will replicate the kind of viewer experience Griselda Pollock articulated in her essay on 1970s art: “Creative writing produces in public form the author’s own fantasies, but this does not lead us back to the author as exclusive origin of the fantasy. Rather the contingency of personal material maps on to psychic structures and scenarios through which we all are formed as sexed subjects. Thus the viewer draws on her own materials to remake the proffered fiction/history meaningful for her.”³

Notes

- 1 Lynda Nead, “Seductive Canvases: Visual Mythologies of the Artist and Artistic Creativity,” *Oxford Art Journal*, XVIII, 2 (1995), 68.
- 2 Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago, 1992), 9.
- 3 Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (London, 1988), 182.