

Wave / Lengths in Lucy Lippard's *I See/You Mean*

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Le seul roman publié par Lucy Lippard, *I See/You Mean*, est intimement lié aux expériences de Lippard dans le monde de l'art contemporain, au mouvement féministe naissant et au désir de l'artiste d'explorer son rapport à ces deux domaines. Dans son roman, elle s'éloigne des modes conceptuels d'appréhension du monde pour se tourner vers des modes sensoriels plus terre à terre, brouillant ainsi les complexités de son identité d'écrivaine, de critique et de femme. Cet article, qui explore le développement du collage en tant que méthodologie dans les écrits de Lippard, propose la « grille sensorielle » comme nouveau cadre pour contextualiser l'approche de l'artiste envers sa propre pratique et souligne l'importance de l'écriture fictionnelle dans le travail du critique.

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“Recognizing the power of the erotic within our lives can give us the energy to pursue genuine change within our world, rather than merely settling for a shift of characters in the same weary drama.” —Audre Lorde¹

“Minimalist language is not totally devoid of figurative content, nor is it without erotic implications.” —Lucy Lippard²

Lucy Lippard has played an influential role as a curator, critic and collaborator in the development of a number of key movements in postwar art—among them, Minimalism, Conceptualism, and Feminist Art. Her writing in this capacity helped to vocalize and concretize the themes, concerns, and concepts central to these movements, to promote and disseminate the work of artists involved, and to help bring numerous important projects and exhibitions to fruition. She consistently worked towards blurring the boundaries between the role of the curator, the artist, and the activist, most often using her writing—in her book projects, catalogues, and exhibitions³—as a way to productively “exacerbate this confusion.”⁴ With her only published novel, *I See/You Mean*,⁵ written and rewritten over the course of nearly a decade between 1970 and 1979,⁶ these distinctions became all the more unfixed.

The novel is a sensual and provocative self-exploration, one that reflects Lippard's growing desire to understand what it meant to identify as a writer, a critic, and, most importantly, a woman in the mid-1970s. Lippard wrote it using a collagist's methodology, interweaving sections of fictional, diaristic and appropriated text with written descriptions of photographs and theoretical meditations on different forms of perception—objective and subjective, intellectual and intuitive, scientific and metaphysical—to create a loose narrative arc between four characters: A, B, D and E. These characters are also collages; they are amalgams of real people that both hide and reveal a particular network of kinship between Lippard and other artists, writers, and curators. Lippard connects these four people through a series of literal and metaphoric currents, using water, waves, and wavelengths as settings for action, symbols of interaction, and schema that explicitly trace connections. The character A, a writer, is continually exploring her relationship to sexuality and her body, and finds undulating forms to be major turn-ons. D, her lover, is a photographer, and a big-shot in the art scene. B is a

model-turned-businesswoman. She is also bisexual. E, a gay man, becomes a successful actor.

A, B, D and E are part of an energetic system, a latticework of emotions that Lippard refers to in her dedication of the novel to Susanna Torre as the “sensuous grid,” a network or structure that merges the organization and constraint of minimalist and conceptual art practices with more erogenous, esoteric, even erotic forms. As Lippard drafted the book, she was drastically shifting her aesthetic and political sensibilities towards feminism: to curating women-only exhibitions; writing about and promoting women’s art; and to initiating alternative publication and distribution channels for feminist cultural production of all kinds. *I See / You Mean* is intimately tied to this shift and is a pivotal work in the writer’s career.

The book is neither straightforward nor linear. Instead, it is a combination of inspirations and influences that informed Lippard’s work. In its form and content, the novel as a collage reveals a great deal about how Lippard was “seeing” herself and the different spheres of the art world she was enmeshed with. I believe her effort here was not only to compile and merge these things together, but also to work out what happens when they do. In that way, I read *I See / You Mean* as a rhizome, a nonlinear network that “connects any point to any other point.”⁷ Mobilizing this concept, which belongs to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, allows me to follow the multiple, non-hierarchical trajectories into and out of the novel, to trace the numerous, overlapping networks present within the book, and to capture the methodology of collage employed within it.

In writing this article, I acknowledge it as a point of process in my own research. I share these ideas and threads as a way of working through some of my nascent ideas about this book and test the ways in which they begin to braid together. I start by first by sketching out some of the main elements Lippard uses to structure the book: I outline the plot and character development and I trace the roots of her collage technique back to some of her early writing projects. I then turn to Lippard’s concept of the sensuous grid, and two ways Lippard uses it to soften the hard edges of the minimalist grid: the first being her embrace of the erotic potential of water and waves as a motif and metaphor in the book, and the second being the way she combines esoterica—horoscopes, tarot pulls, handwriting analysis, colour tests, palm readings and the I Ching—with tropes of minimal and conceptual art. By focusing on one particular esoteric element of the book, Lippard’s deployment of astrology, I am able to show how she has created, in *I See / You Mean*, a unique portrait of a particular network of people within her social and intellectual sphere. I make use of Lippard’s personal archive⁸ to do so, highlighting the relevance of her source material to these relationships. I then fold together these two motifs—waves and astrology—to show how they reveal one specific relationship between Lippard and artist Lee Lozano. Lippard and Lozano are two women who took very different approaches to their gender, to the limitations of the minimalist and conceptual art, and the macho energy that were prevalent within the New York art scene. I believe

1. Audre Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power,” *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, Revised edition (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007), accessed via https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e7cf4825b02c00b6a142f0c/t/5f4bee98ceb27e4af-e99bd7c/1598811800640/audre_lorde_cool-beans.pdf

2. Lucy Lippard, “Eros Pre-emptive,” in *Minimal Art: a Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 209.

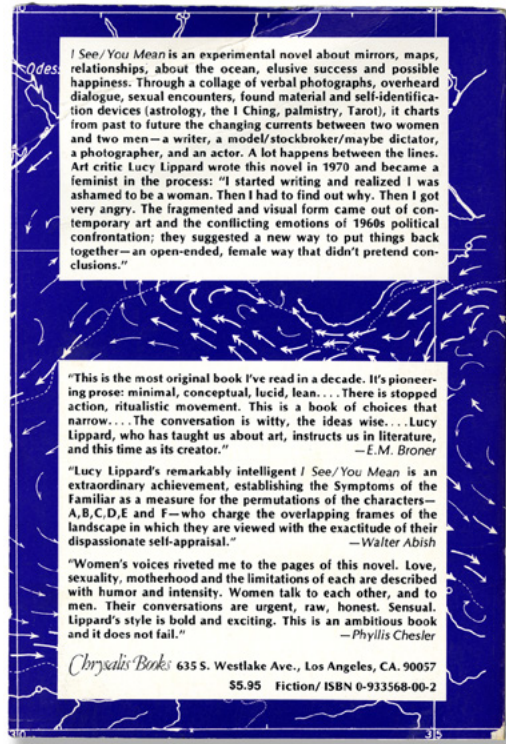
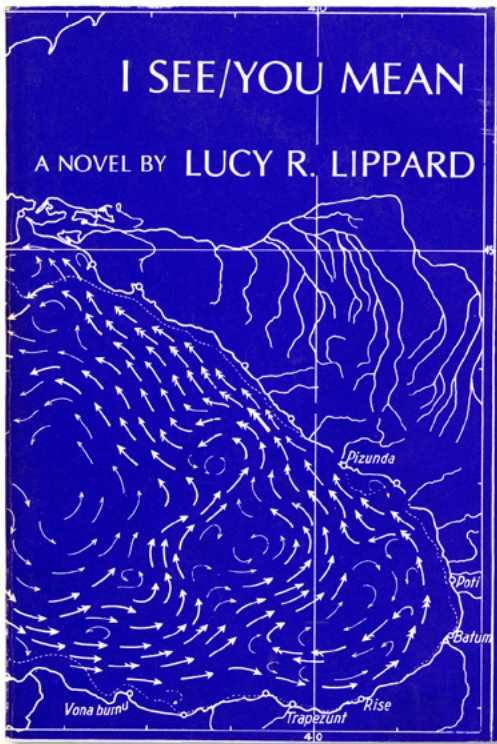
3. She was also instrumental within the world of art publishing as a co-founder of Printed Matter, The Heresies Collective and journal, and the collective PADD (Political Art Documentation/Distribution) and its journal, Upfront, among others.

4. Lucy R. Lippard, “Curating by Numbers,” *Tate Papers* 12 (Autumn 2009), accessed April 2019, <https://www.tate.org.uk/download/file/fid/7268>.

5. Lucy Lippard, *I See / You Mean* (Los Angeles: Chrysalis Press, 1979).

6. It was first published in 1979 by Chrysalis Press Los Angeles in an edition of 2000. Chrysalis experienced significant financial hardship soon afterwards and distribution of the initial edition was severely limited. This also impacted the critical reception of the book in a detrimental way. *I See / You Mean* was re-edited and republished by New Documents Press, Los Angeles, in 2021. Part of my continued research is to explore the book’s contemporary reception.

7. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (1980; University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 21.



that Lozano’s presence in *I See/You Mean* is but one example of how Lippard’s book not only expresses the aesthetics, philosophies, and politics that were top-of-mind in her circle, but also provides insight into the way she attempted to write *herself* through them.

Plot Points

Published by Chrysalis Press in 1979, *I See/You Mean* is a slim, 151-page book bound in a matte purple cover, with the title and author announced in white sans-serif font. The illustration on the front is a simplified German map, also in white, of currents in the Black Sea, around the inlet between Pinzunda (Pitsunda) and Trapezunt (Trabzon) | fig. 1 |. The book is typeset using a ten-point Theme bold font and each paragraph is separated by equal spacing. The book contains no illustrations or images—its only visual component, aside from the cover | fig. 2 |, is a black-and-white photograph of the author on the final page. Wearing a simple striped blouse, looking down and away from the camera, Lippard has a typewriter beside her and avoids eye contact with the photographer.

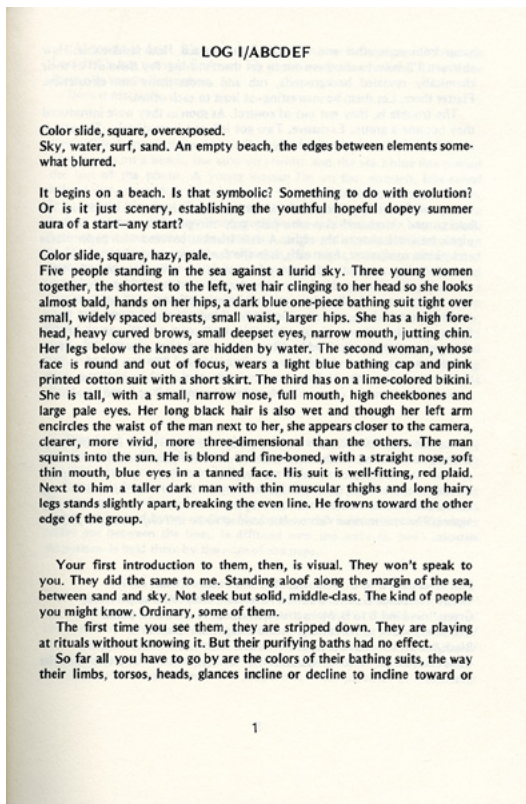
Rather than using traditional chapters, Lippard has divided the book into a series of Logs, each labelled in order with roman numerals. Mimicking the officiality of a ship’s captain recording events, these logs set up a technicality, a distancing, a systematization of the observations that might

8. The basis of my archival research here comes from the extensive notes Lippard kept while writing *I See/You Mean*. Those papers, as yet not formally archived, reside with New Documents Publishing in Los Angeles. I was granted access to them by publisher Jeff Khonsary. Khonsary came into the possession of these papers directly from Lippard, as they worked together on the republication of *I See/You Mean* (2021) as well as a forthcoming edited volume of Lippard’s other experimental writing (2023). I began working digitally with Khonsary and this material in 2021 and travelled to Los Angeles in 2023 to complete my research. For the purposes of this paper, I credit them as Lucy Lippard, *I See/You Mean* papers, New Documents, Los Angeles. In directly quoting from these notes, I have kept Lippard’s shorthand and punctuation intact.

Opposite (left)
Figure 1. Lucy Lippard, *I See/You Mean* (Chrysalis Books: Los Angeles, 1979), front cover. Photo: author.

Opposite (right)
Figure 2. Lucy Lippard, *I See/You Mean*, back cover. Photo: author.

Right
Figure 3. Lucy Lippard, *I See/You Mean*, p. 1. Photo: author.



be transcribed within them. The association of her book's form with that of a journal recorded while afloat at sea sets the aquatic tone of the book. Consequently, we might assume that its contents reveal the musings of a writer who is exploring the ocean. The first page opens on a shoreline: "... a beach. Is that symbolic?"⁹ The narrator asks us to consider the setting, but is it meaningful, or mere scenery? Perhaps our narrator has become shipwrecked.

This, however, is not the case. Lippard begins the book with two written descriptions of photographs: one, a colour slide that is overexposed, depicting "sky, water, surf, sand."¹⁰ The second colour slide contains an image of five people, three women and two men, grouped standing in the water at the shore's edge. There are sixty-one written descriptions of photographs placed throughout *I See/You Mean*, each treated in a similar way | **fig. 3** |. Each is announced by their physicality, slide or print, as well as their chromatic features, colour or black and white. As in this first set of images, Lippard writes these descriptions with an economy of means: straightforward language, few adjectives, and no subjective embellishment. In this first beach scene, Lippard gives us precise details about the shapes of the subjects' faces and bodies, their hair, the tone of their muscles, the colour of their bathing suits. One woman has her arm around the waist of one man; she has a lime-green bikini, long dark hair and high cheekbones; he is

9. Lippard, *I See/You Mean*, 1.

10. *Ibid.*, 3.

blonde, has blue eyes and is fine-featured. We experience this scene through three other photographs: two black and white and another colour slide. Each is taken at a different time, capturing a different moment, and offers slightly different visual information about the people within them. The characters' physical relationships to one another are also described: which person is taller, closer to the camera, touching someone else. The details we are given are precise, but not interpretive. They are to the point and simple, like a diagram, a schema, a system of bodies in relation to one another.

The narrator's voice—which we may assume to be that of Lippard—breaks the fourth wall early in the book and speaks directly to the reader: “Your first introduction to them, then, is visual.”¹¹ Revealing her intention to cut the characters off their “chemically revealed backgrounds”¹² in order to get them moving, the first appearance of the narrator's voice sets another tone for the book—that the process of its making will not be obscured, but rather made apparent as we move through its pages. The narrator continues: “As soon as they were introduced, they became a group. Exclusive. Two got left out immediately. The others carried on. And not as rhythmically as the waves.”¹³ The group on the beach thus becomes a focal point for the book, their interrelations now enmeshed. Our understanding of who each of these characters are hinges on how they relate to one another within this set-up, one that is specifically contrasted against the cadence of the sea.

Initially, six characters appear as subjects of the book, but, as the narrator noted, two are soon omitted with little explanation. Each person is identified by a single letter, rather than a proper name: A, B, C, D, E, F. These letters also appear variously as subtitles for each Log, depending on which person appears in the section. Lippard reveals their full names only once, parenthetically, on page three: “(A's name is Ariel, B's name is Beata ... C's name is forgotten. D's name is Daniel. E's last name is Endman. F's name was probably Fred. They chose these silly names themselves.)”¹⁴ C and F are not mentioned again after this first log.¹⁵

A is the central character. Her relationship with D is the main thread through the novel, while secondary relationships between A and B, E and B, E and D, and A and E weave in and out of the story line. The plot unfolds roughly from 1967 to 1970 and is based primarily in New York City.¹⁶ A is a writer, D is a photographer, E is an actor, and B is a model-turned-stock broker. D is putting out monographs of his photographic work, A is trying to write a novel. E becomes a successful actor, and B shirks the patriarchy by rejecting her beauty and embracing business. Early in the story, the group decides to have a foursome. This affair returns as a plot point several times throughout the novel and the narrative continues to play out through the relationships of the bodies of these four characters. A and D eventually have a child together but break up. A moves to Spain to write and, while she is away, D commits suicide. The book has three potential endings that contain projections for the outcome of the groups' relationship. None of them, however, offer a tidy conclusion.

11. *Ibid.*, 1.

12. *Ibid.*, 2.

13. *Ibid.*, 2.

14. *Ibid.*, 1.

15. When we meet them for the first time, on a beach, a fifth character, F, is also present. F has come along with E, and although he is introduced by name on page 3, he does not appear again after page 9. He is a vehicle to introduce E's homosexuality. C is never again in the book.

16. These are the earliest and latest dates referenced in the book.

Collage and Compilation as Methodology

The methodology of *I See / You Mean* is decidedly collage-based. Julia Bryan-Wilson has written eloquently and thoroughly about this aspect of *I See / You Mean* in the context of Lippard's feminist labour.¹⁷ Bryan-Wilson's is one of the few published studies of this novel that situates its formal qualities within the broader context of Lippard's critical and curatorial work. I build on Bryan-Wilson's approach through the incorporation of newly sourced archival material and reposition the novel as one that is equally as sensory as it is political. By overlaying the concept of the sensuous grid onto this research, I reveal a new nuance inherent within the novel.

The years between the book's first and final drafts were immensely impactful for Lippard, in terms of her writing and working style as well as her social and political positions. *I See / You Mean*, as Bryan-Wilson affirms, is integral in this shift. For my part, I am interested here in Bryan-Wilson's interpretation of Lippard's collagist methodology as politically motivated. In the late 1960s, Lippard had been experimenting, to a great extent, with the form and content of her writing. Straddling and often deliberately complicating the boundaries between the roles of artist and critic and curator, Lippard's writing reflected and was consistently inflected by the "linguistic basis of conceptualism [that] expanded the parameters of what 'art work' might be."¹⁸ Equally important, Bryant-Wilson argues, were the political situations to which Lippard was exposed, including travel to Argentina in 1968, which further propelled her interest in textual collage and the subversive potential of written information as artistic practice, and her involvement with the Art Worker's Coalition—a group of artists that fought for artists' rights, against the Vietnam War, and against other social oppressions like racism and sexism—which prompted her to think about the political potential of collage as a way of eschewing the hierarchical relationship between the writer and the reader.¹⁹

There are numerous instances where the collage aesthetic manifests in Lippard's practice. We can turn, as Bryan-Wilson does, to Lippard's contribution to the catalogue for the landmark 1970 *Information* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (curated by Kynaston McShine), in which she devised a complex, arbitrary system to create a conceptual index of the artists in the exhibition. This text came out of the "more open form of criticism ... that ... required the interpretive connections be made by the viewer, rather than articulated," and was a "logical outgrowth of minimalism and conceptualism's notions of democratizing the art world."²⁰ Lippard's use of unbound index cards as the catalogues for her "Numbers" exhibitions (1969–74) took this further by doing away with the traditional curatorial essay and instead allowing the reader to create their own narrative arc through the list of works. We can also, of course, turn to the book *Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972*, in which Lippard exhaustively compiled a chronology of artist statements, lists, quotations, and written excerpts from conceptual works over the titular period.²¹ This book enacts Lippard's most sustained effort at publicly "compiling" artistic information, and was meant

17. Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (California: University of California Press, 2009), 127–72.

18. *Ibid.*, 151.

19. See Bryan-Wilson for a full account.

20. *Ibid.*, 151–52.

21. Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972* (1973; repr., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 75. The full subtitle of the publication is: *A cross-reference book of information on some esthetic boundaries: consisting of a bibliography into which are inserted a fragmented text, art works, documents, interviews, and symposia, arranged chronologically and focused on so-called conceptual or information or idea art with mentions of such vaguely designated areas as minimal, anti-form, systems, earth, or process art, occurring now in the Americas, Europe, England, Australia, and Asia (with occasional political overtones) edited and annotated by Lucy R. Lippard.*

to be more of a source book for a mass audience than a critical reflection on the works contained within it.²²

However, by the time that this book was finished, Lippard was already feeling disenchanted with the way that “although the forms [of conceptual art] pointed toward democratic outreach, the content did not. However rebellious the escape attempts, most of the work remained art-referential, and neither economic nor esthetic ties to the art world were fully severed.”²³ While for her collage was initially a format that might activate the reader into forming their own opinions out of an uninterpreted mass of information, in the early 1970s, she began to question the true accessibility of some of these artworks.

Groups and/of Images

Part of that reconsideration stemmed significantly from the results of one of her own collage-based projects. In 1969, Lippard was invited to participate in David Askevold’s Project Class at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD). The impact of Askevold’s Project Class on the writing of *I See/You Mean* is foundational. Askevold began teaching at NSCAD in 1968 and developed the concept for the Project Class the following year. He was driven to take advantage of the number of prominent international artists that had been travelling to the school at the time.²⁴ He worked initially with Lawrence Weiner on the idea for the course: to have artists submit a proposition that the students would then create. Serving as a moderator or intermediary for the projects, he had originally hoped that the artists would physically visit the school to oversee their projects. However, the cost of doing so eventually meant that many of the projects were communicated via mail or the telephone and then completed under Askevold’s supervision. Many of the projects were submitted on typewritten or handwritten index cards and outlined instructions for the students to complete in collaboration. Lippard’s interest in blurring disciplinary fields, as well as her collagist’s working methodology, were heightened in this environment.

For her contribution to the class, Lippard gave straightforward written instructions to a series of artists and students to photograph the same group of five to fifteen people at the same time each day for two weeks. A written description of each photograph should also be completed. The printed photographs and descriptions were then to be combined, either both in chronological order, or in a scrambled form, where the precise image and caption may not match. As Regine Elther has written, Lippard “was interested in confronting all participating artists with an identical situation and task. The photographs and texts on a common theme ... were meant to demonstrate, through comparison, how verbal and visual statements differ from one another.”²⁵ Such a strategy was evidence of what Lippard described in *Six Years* as an artistic desire to “restructure perception and the process/product relationship of art [by using] information and systems [to replace] traditional concern of composition...systems were laid over life the way a rectangular format is laid over the seen in paintings, for focus.”²⁶ Lippard’s system here,

22. One could also consider her work compiling the AWC Hearing for print publication as well, here.

23. Lippard, *Six Years*, xvi.

24. Bruce Barber, *Conceptual Art: The NSCAD Connection, 1967–1973* (Halifax: Anna Leonowens Gallery, 2001), 42.

25. Regina Ehleiter, “Lucy Lippard: Groups,” *Camera Austria International* 147 (September 2019), 50.

26. Lippard, *Six Years*, xv.

of dislocating descriptions from their images was a way for her to make visible the difficulty of writing about what one sees—the loss inherent in that process, and the always already impossible nature of the critics' task of doing so.

Lippard used the same strategy and set of instructions for her own course at the School for Visual Arts (sva), New York, also in the fall of 1969. The final result of the sva version of this experiment was the magazine-based exhibition *Groups*, published in *Studio International*.²⁷ Lippard was, however, deeply unsatisfied by the layout and typesetting of the printed project, as well as the overall final effect, something she has repeated numerous times.²⁸ “I realized after the fact that the project itself was unnecessarily complicated and could have been practically anything.”²⁹ While *Groups*, in the end, may have represented, for Lippard, merely another instance of the conceptual “fascination with pseudo-scientific data and neo-philosophical gobbledygook,”³⁰ it was nevertheless a significant stepping stone in the writing of *I See / You Mean*.

The original draft of *I See / You Mean* was intended to build off the exhibition's premise, and the early manuscript contains a series of written descriptions of imagined photographs with a scrambled set of numbered captions. Lippard has described it as “nothing but descriptions of photographs with an index...I'd planned the book as a rather contrived conceptual game, very much influenced by the art I was writing about at the time.”³¹ Without narrative context, the reader was then to make their own way through the book and create their own associations between image and text.

A trip to Spain in early 1970 allowed Lippard physical and emotional space from her work in the art world, as well as time to rethink what *I See / You Mean* could be. Having just curated her landmark exhibitions 557,987³² in Seattle and 995,000³³ in Vancouver, as well as having helped to organize the Art Workers Coalition open hearing and its subsequent publication, Lippard took her son to stay in the house of Jean Clay, whom she had met in Argentina several years prior. This is a period of reflection for Lippard, as she remarks numerous times in the notes that she keeps while working there. For her, the boundaries between critic, curator, and writer were always already blurred, but this time away solidifies that conviction. She also reflects that this is the period she “began to write for myself rather than for some imaginary male audience and, by extension, I began to write for women.”³⁴ She has also acknowledged that one of her characters, A, was someone she began to closely identify with.³⁵ We know from the exceptional work that has already been done by Julia Bryan-Wilson, Cornelia Butler, Catherine Morris and Vincent Bonin, and Susan Stoops (among others),³⁶ that the period between late 1969 and late 1970 marks an exceptional shift in Lippard's consciousness and attunement to feminist issues, as well. The systematic thinking that led to her *Groups* project was starting to show its limitations, politically and creatively. And so *I See / You Mean* became a way for Lippard to reassess, reimagine, and reconstruct her roles as a writer, critic and woman.

27. Lucy Lippard, “Groups,” *Studio International* 179 (March 1970), 93–99.

28. Sharon Zane, *The Museum of Modern Art Oral History Program Interview with Lucy Lippard* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, December 21, 1999), https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/learn/archives/transcript_lippard.pdf.

29. Lippard, “Groups,” 93.

30. Lippard, *Six Years*, xvii.

31. Quoted in Hans Ulrich Obrist and Lionel Bovier, *A Brief History of Curating* (Zurich: JRP / Ringier, 2008), 203. In interviews with both Hans Ulrich Obrist and Jarrett Earnest, she repeats a similar narrative about *I See / You Mean*'s inception and her present-day view on it. With Earnest, she says that “the experimental novel was an unreadable conceptual artwork—descriptions of photographs and an index with clues to the ‘plot’... trouble is, I really didn't enjoy reading experimental novels, and I finally decided that I didn't want to spend my life writing something I wouldn't want to read myself.”

32. September 5–October 5, 1969.

33. Jan 13–Feb 8, 1970.

34. Lucy R. Lippard, *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art* (New York: Dutton, 1976), 4.

35. “There was a character I definitely identified with. As I was writing her, or she was writing me, which is what it felt like, a lot of stuff started to seep through the cracks...” As quoted in Korczynski, 34. Lippard is quoted similarly in Cornelia Butler, *From Conceptualism to Feminism: Lucy Lippard's Numbers Shows*, 1969–74 (London: Afterall Books, 2012), 116.

36. Butler, *From Conceptualism to Feminism*; Susan L. Stoops, ed., *More than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the '70s*, exh. cat. (Waltham, MA: Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, 1996); Catherine Morris and Vincent Bonin, *Materializing Six Years: Lucy R. Lippard and the emergence of conceptual art* (Cambridge, MA, and Brooklyn: The MIT Press; Brooklyn Museum, 2012).

The Sensuous Grid

I want to use the next section of this article to think through one form of this personal reassessment in *I See/You Mean* by reflecting on Lippard's notion of the sensuous grid. I am interested in this concept as emblematic of the way Lippard has continuously engendered a resistance to hard-edged categories—formal, ideological or otherwise—in her practice. In *I See/You Mean*, I see the sensuous grid as manifesting in the relationships between Lippard's characters, and the way that she connects them through a network of energetic pathways. Using water and its wave patterns is one way that Lippard inflects the grid with a sensuous quality, while her incorporation of esoteric elements in the book is another. I explore instances of both here, to think through how these aesthetic and extra-aesthetic elements come together in *I See/You Mean* as manifestations of the sensuous grid.

The narrative in *I See/You Mean* plays out through the relationships between the bodies of the four characters. A is continually exploring her relationship to sexuality and her body: how she relates to men, to women, to becoming a mother, and to herself. Sexuality and the emotions bound up in it figure prominently in the plot. B is bisexual. E is gay. As mentioned, the group decides to have a foursome early in the story, and this affair inflects the book's elaboration of each of their sex lives; A uses it as a way of working through her changing perceptions of sex; D and A seem to have sex only ever after they have fought; B and A have sex together once, halfway through the book; E and B remain very close friends, but never couple; D represses any sexual desire between he and E, though the tension between them remains constant. Lippard charts these relationships—emotional and physical bonds—using a series of written schematic diagrams that appear throughout the book. The first, presented on page two, reads:

Blue lines bind E to D. Distance. Men don't make friends easily.
Yellow lines bind E to A. Warmth. Affection. Respect. Exasperation.
Green lines bind E to B. More than Friendship. A symbiotic bond.
Red lines bind A to D. Testing. Erotic antagonism. Euphoria.
Black/Brown lines bind D to B. Reticence. Attraction. Some mistrust.
Violent lines bind A to B. Glassed-over feelings. Neither one is a feminist yet.³⁷

The coloured lines correspond to the particular moods or states that link one character to another. In the second diagram, on page eighteen, Lippard refers to these lines as specifically "currents felt only in terms of energy."³⁸ This strategy—to draft the characters' connections in a diagrammatic fashion—recalls the instructions for wall drawings used by her friend and colleague Sol LeWitt. Beginning in 1968, LeWitt began to write a series of guidelines and simplified instructions for others to complete his geometric line drawings, first on paper then directly onto the gallery walls, using graphite and, later, pencil crayons. Using an economy of language, his early pieces called for "A wall divided horizontally and vertically into four equal parts. Within each part, three of the four kinds of lines are superimposed" (#11, 1969); or "A wall divided vertically into six equal parts, with two of the four kinds of line directions superimposed in each part" (#19, 1969). In *I See/You*

37. Lippard, *I See/You Mean*, 2.

38. *Ibid.*, 18.

Mean, Lippard's linking of her characters through these networked diagrams intimately recalls a project she and LeWitt completed in 1976, titled *Walls, Rooms, Lines*.³⁹ In that magazine piece, three pages of her fiction are overlaid by linear compositions by LeWitt. For me, the first page is most interesting in the context of *I See/You Mean*—here LeWitt connects all the words “yours” and “you” with straight lines; all the “I” and “my” words are linked by wavy lines, and then all of these four words are connected back to the “we” words through dashed lines. In this way, Lippard and LeWitt create a connective network between the singular and the collective persons in the text. The relational aspect of this project echoes the technique Lippard uses in *I See/You Mean* while assertively blurring the lines between author and artist.

The colour-coded diagrams in *I See/You Mean* are also based on the colour theory established by Max Lüscher, who believed that subjective emotional states and personality traits could be revealed through objective colour tests and selections.⁴⁰ This schematic motif becomes increasingly knotted as the plot progresses; eventually the “lines” fade away and the characters are joined by pure chromatic connections. Lippard warns us early in the book that the grid will not remain stable, writing that “...the vibrations will change. the lines will tangle. The serial possibilities of lateral relationships between four people at any given moment are numerous, even if role-changing is not a favourite game, tool, obsession, trap or necessity for any of them.”⁴¹ Lippard's use of Lüscher's pseudo-psychological assessment of internal states creates an emotional network between these characters. Even as she uses this theory to create diagrams of lines, the emphasis on colour softens the grid, dissolving it into chromatic fields that are continually reconfigured into various permutations as their platonic and romantic dynamics ebb and flow throughout the book | fig. 4 |.

Lippard renders the oscillation of these relationships by imagistically linking them to the movement of the ocean—its undulations, currents and tides. Signalling the place of water in the book with its cover design of current patterns in the Black Sea, Lippard uses the sea as both an object, a setting, and a metaphor for the way her characters relate to one another. As she writes, self-reflexively, “I need the sea to be the book's armature; no—its medium.”⁴² She incorporates water into the book by collaging sections of text from books like *Waves and Tides* by R. C. H. Russell and D. H. Macmillan and *Wind Waves: Their Generation and Propagation on the Ocean Surface* by Blair Kinsman, along with daily weather reports and tide measurements gathered over the time of the book's writing. The coastline is a regular setting for action between characters, or the subject of photographs in the book. When A moves to Spain, she lives near the sea, and describes many walks there. There is a strong difference, however, between the way Lippard uses the more data-driven meteorological reports and the subjective, sense-based descriptions of the ocean; that which is seen, or experienced visually, rather than mapped or measured. That which can be calculated, predicted, or systematized remains in tension here with that which is sensed, felt, or experienced corporeally.

39. Sol LeWitt and Lucy R. Lippard, “Walls, Rooms, Lines,” *Unmuzzled OX* 4, no. 1 (1976), 69–71.

40. Max Lüscher, *The Lüscher Color Test* (New York: Random House, 1969).

41. Lippard, *I See/You Mean*, 11.

42. *Ibid.*, 44.

Giggling, resettling, picking up the fallen crackers, watching everybody carefully, curious about our bonds, relieved.

B can feel E expanding inside himself. She sees that the time has come for him to make the break. She understands that he will be very good at what he wants to do. She has always been the star. Now what?

D puts his arm around A. Sudden solidarity. We're a couple. You're not. Does being a couple have to mean ambivalence, rivalry, sex?

D avoids touching E. He touches B only humorously. He likes to be close to A even when they are fighting; they sit knee to knee and argue. Sometimes they laugh. B and E rarely touch but they move in the same rhythms; they are not a couple; they can afford to be close.

Peers. Friendship among peers. Insurmountable extraordinary exhilarating exhausting painful impossible hard work worth it. Women do it better.

One catches up, another falls behind, the leader flags, the others wait, places are exchanged, swiftly, gradually. How large can the spaces between them get? How far can the bonds be stretched before they snap? Nobody knows.

Wind waves on the surface of the sea are extraordinarily complex. Waves can vary from a glassy calm with perhaps long, low undulations from a distant source present under light wind and stable atmospheric conditions, through a general calm punctuated by scattered gusts that raise 'catpaws' and on through local, short, choppy wind, sea a few feet to 5 or 10 feet high, to, finally, the mountainous seas near the center of a tropical hurricane or in a fully developed extra-tropical cyclone over the ocean.

A red line is drawn from A to D. Anxious anger.

A violet line is drawn from D to B. Truce.

A blue line is drawn from A to E. Affection.

Gray lines are drawn from B to D and E. Emotion neutralized by oppositions.

A violet line is drawn from B to A. Worry.

A yellow line is drawn from D to A. Emotion.

A blue line is drawn from E to A. Compassion.

Currents felt only in terms of energy.

How do people control their own images? Superficially—with clothes, accents, gestures, anecdotes, glances, style. In a public sense—with jobs, husbands and wives, addresses, organizational associations. In a broader

Figure 4. Lucy Lippard, *I See/You Mean*, 1979, p. 18. Photo: author.



Figure 5. Cover layout ephemera for *I See/You Mean*, ca. 1979. Lucy Lippard, *I See/You Mean* papers, New Documents, Los Angeles. Photo: author.

I see Lippard starting to think through this difference in her preparatory notes for *I See/You Mean*. There, she writes that she wants to have three main themes in the book: “a woman’s liberation, the sea, photography & images.”⁴³ In these notes, Lippard says that she wants to use “the sea as network of relationships—there has to be a clear re. betw. the sea part and the human world of people meeting knowing telling screwing...”⁴⁴ In the same notebook, she wonders if the characters A and D are “a single wave—the whole is rel’ship to everything and the whole sea or are A or D each a diff type of wave.”⁴⁵ Later in the notes, she identifies A as being a writer, associated with ocean waves, while D, the photographer, is associated with light waves and that a “wave is asymmetrical in shallow waters and if more than one frequency is present and if waves intersect at diff angles.”⁴⁶ She toys numerous times with calling the book *I/see/sea* or *Sea/see/si* as a way of capturing the overarching themes of the individual, the ocean, and perception that run through it | fig. 5 |. Lippard writes that she wants to think about waves and water as holding the qualities of being both “endless eternal vs temporary erratic” while all the other “jagged little pieces—political commentary, comics, descripts etcs are the ENVIRONMENT in which these lives take place. (space) the sea is the 3-d lattice [and] the people are the points on it.”⁴⁷ In these notes, I see her ruminating on different kinds of intersections and interactions between people, the way they might crash or connect with one

43. Lucy Lippard, *I See/You Mean* papers, New Documents, Los Angeles, n.p..

44. Lippard, *I See/You Mean* papers, n.p.

45. *Ibid.*

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Ibid.*

another, and the ripple effect of those interactions. She seems to understand that each character will influence the others and is trying to work out how their waves, their vibrations, and their frequencies will change those of the other characters they encounter. We might imagine, then, that the coloured lines that connect her characters in the written diagrams are not plotted on a planar surface, but in a more net-like fashion, woven together to float atop these waves.

The particular connection between A and B in *I See/You Mean* highlights the energetic, emotional, and sensual nature of water that Lippard uses to link her characters together. As the two female-identified characters in the book, A and B represent two different approaches to femininity. A, the central figure, and a surrogate for Lippard herself, experiences a wide range of personal discovery as the narrative unfolds: she questions her relationships with men as her consciousness is opened to the possibilities of second-wave feminism; her writer's block doubles as an equal lack of confidence in her physical body; and single motherhood gives her strength and perseverance. B is A's best female friend, flamboyant and confident.⁴⁸ Her free spirit is matched by her understanding of her power as a woman: she travels, marries for money, and remains staunchly independent. Log VII begins with dialogue between the two women—B is adamant that the two women should have sex. She wants A to be open to the idea, to trust her own feelings, to enjoy her body and not wait for a man's permission. A resists, saying "I've always felt like making love to another woman would be an obscure kind of self-worship."⁴⁹ B retorts, saying, "and you call yourself a feminist. You don't trust your own feelings or the feelings of another woman."⁵⁰ The tension between the two women build, and A announces she has to leave to meet an editor.

Lippard cuts the scene, and splices in dialogue from B's appearance on a talk show, some of her biographical information, and an old magazine photograph of her posing in an erotic magazine. Through these collaged fragments, we find out more about B, her career history as a model, celebrity, and then financial tycoon, as well as her defiant nature. She chides the tv host for his sexist comments on her appearance; she learned "tips on using men who wanted to use you"⁵¹ from her mother. We also learn that A is her only female friend. Lippard then advances the relationship between the two women with a prelusive tarot card reading and intersperses a series of tarot⁵² card descriptions with text from the Radicalesbians 1977 manifesto *The Woman-Identified Woman*⁵³ | **fig. 6** |. The tone of the visual descriptions of the cards—their characters, motifs and simple details—is drastically contrasted with the assertive, self-assured proclamations from the Radicalesbians, a group that advocated for the importance of lesbians to the women's liberation movement.⁵⁴ The Radicalesbians (formerly the Lavender Menace) called upon women to "see in each other the possibility of a primal commitment which includes sexual love," and to denounce a self-definition that was based on male acceptance.⁵⁵ Clippings from their text interwoven with the descriptions of the tarot cards—the Magician, The Moon, The Tower,

48. In her notes, Lippard considers the possibility of "B representing all my female friends."

49. Lippard, *I See/You Mean*, 91.

50. *Ibid.*, 92.

51. *Ibid.*, 99.

52. In her preparatory notes for the book, Lippard leaves a note to herself, which says, "ask Susana to read my cards." This could again be a reference of Susana Torre, to whom the book is dedicated.

53. Lippard, *I See/You Mean*, 99–104.

54. Linda Rapp, "Radicalesbians," *GLBTQ Encyclopedia*, 2004, http://www.glbtaarchive.com/ssh/radicalesbians_S.pdf

55. *Ibid.*

The consequences of internalizing this role is an enormous reservoir of self-hate. This is not to say the self-hate is recognized or accepted as such; indeed most women would deny it. . . . Women resist relating on all levels to other women who will reflect their own oppression, their own secondary status, their own self-hate. For to confront another woman is finally to confront one's self—the self we have gone to such lengths to avoid. And in that mirror we know we cannot really respect and love that which we have been made to be.

VI: A flesh-colored cloud out of which emerges a yellow-winged cupid with bow and arrow pointed at a standing couple below. Their right hands are joined and their bodies lean toward each other. The man looks at the woman (he wears a blue, red, and yellow tunic and red pants); she looks at the ground (in a yellow blouse, red overskirt and blue petticoat). At their right an old man leans on a staff with both hands; he has a blue hat, brown cape, and yellow stockings. He stares intently at the couple.

X. A naked woman with long brown hair, blindfolded, a blue drapery thrown across her belly, turning a blue-spoked wheel balanced on the edge of a yellow precipice by two tree-like supports from the base of which a rose bush grows. Riding the top of the wheel is a couple holding hands, facing each other. The man waves a top hat and looks up; the woman looks down. Her long yellow skirt billows over the abyss, into which is falling a second man with both hands outspread below him.

XII: A man hanging by one foot from a bar supported between two tree trunks. His arms are tied behind him and his head, twisted at an odd angle, touches the ground. He wears red pants; one leg is bent at the knee and hidden. His jacket is green with yellow decoration, his collar is red and his eyes are closed.

Should a woman confront herself by confronting another woman, there are fewer rationalizations, fewer buffers by which to avoid the stark horror of her dehumanized condition. Herein we find the overriding fear of many women towards exploring intimate relationships with other women: the fear of being used as a sexual object by a woman, which not only will bring her no male-connected compensations, but will also reveal the void which is woman's real situation.

XX: A flesh-colored cloud with a cupid blowing a red horn. Below are four dancing figures, nude except for blue draperies here and there—a bearded man, a woman, a youth with one hand to his head and the other

Figure 6. Lucy Lippard, *I See/You Mean*, p. 103. Photo: author.

raised to the sky, a second woman seen from the rear. All the figures have brown hair. A red club lies on the ground to the left.

I have to admit I'm staggered. I didn't really expect you . . . to . . .

I guess I got mad at you for pressuring me. My adrenalin was up. Then all of a sudden being mad just changed into the most overwhelming desire . . . to comfort you, or something. A strange emotion. I don't recognize it. I think I really wanted to hurt you. I was going to give you a little peck on the cheek and walk out and refuse to let you ever bring up the subject again. Now that I look back on it, I guess the whole conversation was, well, erotic, but I just ignored it until it . . . I never know what I'm going to do in situations like that.

How do you feel now?

Awkward, but idiotically—sort of proud of myself. I suppose it makes sense after all that it's you. I don't feel as unsafe as I thought I would. Do you still feel like a shell? You don't to me.

Hand me a cigarette. You know, you're different in bed. I would have expected you to be more aggressive.

Sometimes I am. Were you disappointed?

Not in the least. It's not an issue, between women. There doesn't have to be any of that split-down-the-middle role-playing.

There doesn't have to be with men either. But it's odd. If I'd allowed myself to fantasize about this at all consciously, I would have pictured myself in the male role. I mean the possibility of a reversal like that has always scared me.

Well, I seduced you. Another time it may be reversed. . . . What's the matter?

Another time. I don't know if there'll be one. I don't know how much was only curiosity. . . . Jesus, and just when I thought I was getting it all together. On top of everything, I'm pregnant.

What? How did that happen?

Don't ask. But the weird thing is, I'm terribly excited, and losing it seems like the worst thing in the world that could happen.

What about D?

He's . . . I don't know how to explain it. He's in such odd shape now. I think underneath he has that awful male pride that he could knock me up, and to hell with the consequences. But we're on such shaky ground it's hardly an auspicious moment.

Do you think it's his?

Yes.

Figure 7. Lucy Lippard, *I See/You Mean*, p. 104. Photo: author.

The Lovers, Wheel of Fortune, Hanged Man, and Judgement—form a radical response to the question “does this relationship have a future?” Here, Lippard’s collagist technique combines esoterica with radical activism and creates what I read as a new form of personalized political agenda, one in which one’s attunement to forces outside of oneself inflects one’s participation in social change. The lines of energy that connect these two elements creates an equalizing force between intuition and action and suggests the generative implications of both.

Following a description of the Judgement card, dialogue begins again, with B saying, “I have to admit I’m staggered. I didn’t really expect you...”⁵⁶ We find out through their conversation that the two women have just had sex | fig. 7 |. As readers, we understand now how weighted the dynamic between the tarot card descriptions and the manifesto was—not only a juxtaposing of ideas, but also the coming together of two different bodies. As readers, we are not privy to any details or descriptions of the encounter—we experience it through the dialogue of these two women as they reflect upon and process their interaction. A admits she was both curious and tired of being pressured, while B is impressed with how unguarded A let herself be. The dialogue mirrors the sentiments presented in the Radicalesbian’s text, with A being unsure of how she could see herself in relation to another woman, and B proclaiming that there do not have to be defined roles or power structures in intimacy between women. When A reveals that she is pregnant, the conversation almost too quickly turns from the possibility of motherhood to B asking A to tell her what her turn-ons are. A replies, “Well, if I think about the ocean, something cool and clear and wet and all-enveloping. Sound of waves breaking, the rhythms all the same but all different, crossing each other, and endless.”⁵⁷ B replies, “I can see that. Oh yes, The sensual curve of a wave, like a body, the build-up. I’d never thought of it as directly erotic.”⁵⁸ The sensual moving, rolling, changing, heaving quality of waves is what both calms and excites A: “It has to do with stretching, relaxing, how much room there is to move while the surface itself is somehow comforting because of its sameness.”⁵⁹ Recalling Lippard’s interest in the sea as an undulating lattice that her characters are connected within, knowing that waves are a turn-on for A gives further dimension to their connective potential.

Waves, wavelengths, line of energy and exchange, undulation and curving forms are descriptors that also figure into some of Lippard’s most important early curatorial and critical writing. Between 1965 and 1967, Lippard wrote four essays⁶⁰ in which she worked through the visual and material properties of a new kind of “abstract” art that she was seeing develop in New York. Ultimately, her desire was to find artists working in a more “sensual” vein than the hard-edged literalist objects being made by minimalists like Donald Judd and Robert Morris. For the sake of space, I focus here on Lippard’s essay “Eccentric Abstraction,” a text that accompanied her exhibition of the same name. In her book *Radical Eroticism: Women, Art, and Sex in the 1960s*, Rachel Middleman notes that the discourses surrounding “Eccentric

56. Lippard, *I See/You Mean*, 104.

57. *Ibid.*, 105.

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Ibid.*

60. Those texts were “Third Stream: Constructed Paintings and Painted Structures” (1965); “An Impure Situation” (1966); “Eccentric Abstraction” (1966); and “Eros Presumptive” (1967)

Abstraction” are often ones that highlight its important articulation of post-minimalist aesthetics, but that the “issue of eroticism [in this text] has not been sufficiently explored.”⁶¹ I would argue that reflecting on the way Lippard mobilizes eroticism in *I See / You Mean* is one way of doing so.

Lippard’s writing in “Eccentric Abstraction” focused entirely on the sensual, rhythmic aspects of the work of then relatively emerging artists like Eva Hesse, Louise Bourgeois, Claes Oldenburg, and Yayoi Kusama, and represent early attempts by the writer to define her critical take on works of art that, at that time, did not fit into standard categories of medium or style. Writing about these works as being “nonsculptural,” “nonformal,” “nonstructural,” and even “non-literary,” Lippard asserts that the works she is writing about can ultimately be described as sensuous.⁶² According to Lippard, these artworks produced, in the viewer, “indirect sensations” of identification, meaning that the viewer could stand in front of the work and imagine the touch and texture of the work, which would in turn lead to an imagined sensation in their body. This was different than overtly sexual figurative art where the viewer was explicitly shown imagery or forms that could be none other than sexual. As Lippard described, these artists did not use biomorphic forms linked to sexual imagery, but rather employed, for example, “a long, slow, voluptuous but also mechanical curve, deliberate rather than emotive, stimulating a rhythm only vestigially associative—the rhythm of postorgasmic calm instead of ecstasy, action perfect, completed and not yet reinstated.”⁶³ Lippard lingers often on words like “rhythm,” “energy,” and “anticipation” in this essay. She describes Eva Hesse’s work as possessing “vulnerability” and “tension” where “energy is repressed, or rather imprisoned, in a timeless vacuum tinged with anticipation.”⁶⁴ Similarly, she writes of Louise Bourgeois’ work: “her mounds, eruptions, concave-convex reliefs and knot-like accretions are internally directed, with a suggestion of voyeurism.”⁶⁵ Provoking an indirect sensation of identification, or what Bachelard called a “muscular consciousness,”⁶⁶ Bourgeois’ works “imply the location, rather than the act of metamorphosis...are detached...and provoke the part of the brain, which activated by the eye, experiences the strongest physical sensations.”⁶⁷ Furthering her argument with examples of work by other artists such as Frank Lincoln Viner, Harold Paris, and Don Potts, Lippard clarifies that in these eccentric abstraction works, “energy in any active, emotive sense is anathema to most of these artists, they have not rejected the idea of change, but systematized it, suggesting the force of change rather than showing its process.”⁶⁸ The idea of force can also be analogous with the idea of energy—rather than visualising the after-effects of an event, or the change in process, these artists were concerned with the energy of change, and the exchange of that energy.

I cannot help but return to the scenes between B and A described above. If the wave is a manifestation of Lippard’s “sensuous grid” and can be considered a source of erotic potential, I am curious about the way it can also embody the latent energetic exchange between Lippard’s characters in *I See / You Mean*. Not only is A aroused by the same types of sensual aesthetics that

61. Rachel Middleman, *Radical Eroticism: Women, Art, and Sex in the 1960s* (California: University of California Press, 2018), 127.

62. Lucy Lippard, “Eccentric Abstraction,” *Changing: Essays in Art Criticism* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1971), 98–111.

63. Lippard, “Eccentric Abstraction,” 111.

64. *Ibid.*, 100.

65. *Ibid.*, 101.

66. *Ibid.*, 102.

67. *Ibid.*, 101–102.

68. *Ibid.*, 106.

are present within Lippard's definition of eccentric abstraction, but the way that Lippard treats the scene between the two women, one that also suggests a force of exchange rather than demonstrating its process, relates to the qualities seen in many of the artists she selected for her exhibition. Many female-identified artists that Lippard worked alongside at this time, as Middleman writes, were working to destabilize traditional notions of heterosexuality and heteronormativity and to transform ideas about heterosexual sex "from the irreducible 'act' of intercourse to a more opened-ended and varied kind of encounter."⁶⁹ Lippard's sensuous grid likewise suggests the potential of blurring and intertwining energies rather than an encounter between opposed binaries. In "Eccentric Abstraction," Lippard's writing explored the sensuality inherent to blurred boundaries and, in *I See/You Mean*, I read additional ways she continued to work through sensuality's latent power—I would argue that we can read sensuality here as a reassertion of that energy within Lippard's politics as well. Whether the energy is erotic or political (if the two can even be separated), waves are Lippard's primary motif for exploring energetic exchanges between her characters.

What's Your Sign? Astrology as a Sensuous System

If waves and water are a lattice that binds her characters together, *I See/You Mean* also represents a similar network of real-world connections for its author, a manifestation of the sensual grid in Lippard's own life. Esoterica played a large part in the creation of this network. In her notebooks, Lippard writes that she wants to use other devices such as horoscopes, tarot, and colour tests in *I See/You Mean* as a way to obliquely describe the personality traits of her characters. These "self-identification devices"⁷⁰ were one way Lippard believed she could access deeper understanding of people's character. In this final section, I turn my eye to astrology, one of the esoteric elements in *I See/You Mean*, showing how its inclusion in the book not only reveals a particularly sensuous system in the novel, but also an alternative network of inspiration and insight in which Lippard was engaged.

Like the other clippings and photographs in the book, astrological horoscopes are physically positioned within the narrative in a collage-like fashion. In "Log III/A (with D)," "Log IV/D," and "Log V/E (With D, With B)," astrological readings are inserted into the flow of the text as separate paragraphs. These three Logs are each devoted to a single character, and they are where Lippard gives the reader information about who that character is. Rather than describing A, D or E directly, Lippard used systems of self-identification, like astrology, to stand for and tell the reader who each character "is." Announced with capitalized letters, the horoscopes are set in the same font as the rest of the narrative text. There is no explicit language to indicate that this is the horoscope of the subject of the Log. However, because of the Log's title and the first-person narrative used throughout these Logs, in each different characters' voice, I am confident we can interpret these horoscopes as such.

In Log III, we find out that A is Aries with rising sign Leo; in Log IV, we find out that D is a Scorpio with Capricorn rising; and in Log V, we learn that

69. Middleman, *Radical Eroticism*, 25.

70. A term Lippard uses on the book jacket of *I See/You Mean*.

E is Taurus with Pisces rising. These identifications also included detailed readings about each sign's personality traits. A's Aries sun indicates "...you know how to persevere; your enthusiasms are hard to dampen. The intransigence of your character which hates half measures and compromises may deprive you of support which could be helpful..."⁷¹ As a Taurus, E has "a richly endowed nature indeed...under the influence of Taurus you lunge into a world of concrete values which satisfy your realistic turn of mind..."⁷² — while D, a Scorpio, is said to have "unappeased appetites [which] may lead you to a ghost-filled world of fantasy, which you would leave even more crushed and hurt..."⁷³ Each horoscope occupies one half to a whole page, and includes information like the characters' Venus and Mercury placements, as well as a list of assets and weaknesses. Through these horoscopes, the reader gains a great deal of intimate information about these characters. And yet, the horoscope as an object remains a distinct entity, in and of itself, within the text.

Lippard has copied these readings from a series of horoscopes that were generated by the AstroFlash computer. AstroFlash was the first digitized astrological computer system. It was developed in France between 1966 and 1967 as a venture between Roger Berthier⁷⁴ and the astrologer André Barbault. As a system of self-identification, astrology can give insight into the inner workings of a person's mind and motivations. Inherently linked to introspective psychology, astrology is a tool or system for going inward, and a system for understanding the self in relation to the larger whole.

The creation of the AstroFlash computer was spurred on by a growing resurgence in popularity of the practice of astrology, which has waxed and waned considerably. Treading a line between the sciences and the occult, astrology has been variously accepted and ostracised depending on different social, political, and cultural factors. In the 1960s and 1970s, with the rise of the counterculture movement, coupled with a rise in other New Age practices, astrology was becoming increasingly popular. Books on the topic, like Linda Goodman's *Sun Signs* (1968) and Robin MacNaughton's *Sun Sign Personality Guide* (1977) became mass-market successes. It was also around this time that more general sun sign horoscopes began appearing as a regular feature in American newspapers, tabloids, and women's magazines.⁷⁵

In New York, Lippard and her circle of friends and artists were taking a great interest in the way that computers could offer detailed interpretive astrological readings. AstroFlash had expanded its operations to New York City, and in 1971 it installed the AstroFlash2 computer in the Great Hall of Grand Central Station. Travellers could submit their birth information, which was then punched into an IBM card and run through the computer. An on-site dot-matrix printer issued upwards of fifteen or more pages of interpretive data and various forms of analysis and predictive information, depending on the price one was willing to pay. These readings were contained within a blue paper folder with the company's futuristic logo embossed on the front and a description of the service on the back: "Viewed

71. Lippard, *I See/You Mean*, 47.

72. *Ibid.*, 71.

73. *Ibid.*, 53.

74. "Barbault, André (1921–)," *Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology*, Encyclopedia.com, accessed October 28, 2022, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/science/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/barbault-andre-1921>.

75. Gina Renee Misiroglu, *American Countercultures: An Encyclopedia of Nonconformists, Alternative Lifestyles, and Radical Ideas in U.S. History* (London: Routledge, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315706580>.

76. According to the company website, the number of daily AstroFlash customers circa 2012 was around 100 to 200, or approximately 70,000 people per year, not including mail orders. See: https://www.astroflash.com/astro2012en/reference_hist.php3.



Figure 8. Astroflash folder, recto. Lucy Lippard, *I See/You Mean* papers, New Documents, Los Angeles. Photo: Jeff Khonsary.

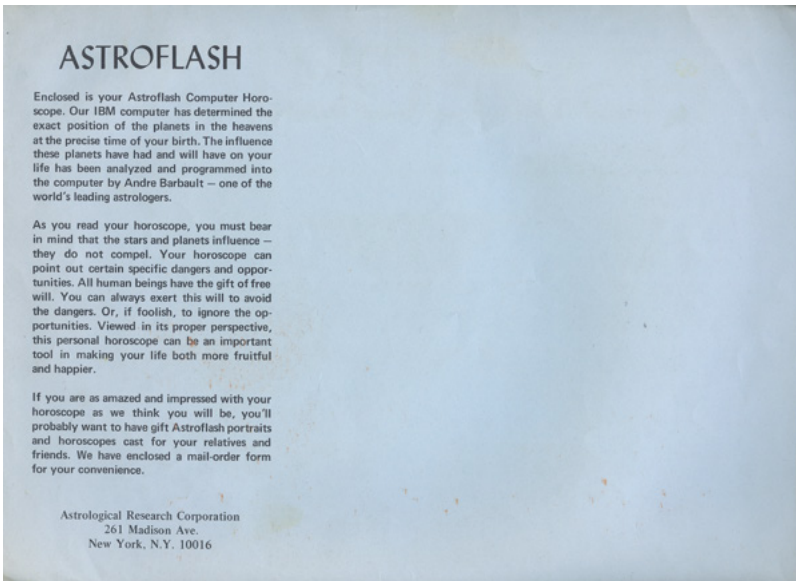


Figure 9. Astroflash folder, verso. Lucy Lippard, *I See/You Mean* papers, New Documents, Los Angeles. Photo: Jeff Khonsary.

in its proper perspective, this personal horoscope can be an important tool in making your life both more fruitful and happier.”⁷⁶ | **figs. 8-9** |

A number of these horoscopes are contained within Lippard’s research archive for *I See/You Mean* | **figs. 10-11** |. From the birthdates and notations made on the original printouts, I have determined that these horoscopes belong to, among others, conceptual artists Dan Graham, Kes Zapkus, and Lee Lozano, artist Charles Simonds (her lover), and art critic Ted Castle.⁷⁷ Several were prepared and dated 1969, and thus would have been sent away for and created by the Paris computer, while others dating 1971 and 1972 are stamped with the New York AstroFlash address. Graham’s reading is one of the readings dated 1969. Lippard’s archive also contains a letter from Graham about this reading, as well as a copy of his reading from the Time Pattern Research Institute. Time Pattern was a New York-based astrological corporation, founded in May 1967, which used an IBM 360-30 computer in conjunction with well-known astrologer Katina Theodossiou.⁷⁸ The company used department stores as their outlets and provided individualized horoscopes that ran upwards of ten thousand words and included personal-ity analysis as well as future predictions. In the letter from Graham, which is undated, he writes to Lippard about his different opinions about the Pattern chart, as opposed to the AstroFlash version, and speaks about spending \$25 for a good computer chart, which he felt to be very accurate.⁷⁹ He also asks what Susan Torres’s sign was.

Graham’s penchant for astrology is well-documented, and he was known for exposing other artists and colleagues to its possibilities.⁸⁰ In 1969, Graham completed *Likes*, a “Computer-Astrological Dating-Placement Service,” which anticipated online dating services by using a computer algorithm to match potential partners based on astrological signs, physical appearance, and relationship priorities. The program even incorporated user feedback, via newspaper advertisement, on the success or failure of matches already made. His interest in systems of self-identification, and the questionnaire as a form of gathering and presenting information, seem influential in the way that Lippard approached the creation of *I See/You Mean*.

Lippard makes use of Graham’s Astroflash horoscope, as well as most of the others contained in her archive, in *I See/You Mean*. She has taken the original horoscopes and recombined sentences and sections from them to construct personalities that represent combinations of many people in her close circle. Sun signs are mixed with the rising signs of others, as are assets and weaknesses. In her notes for the book, there are places where Lippard works out how these combinations should come together, and which astrological traits she wanted to see in her characters. There are instances of her diagramming different permutational sets of sun and rising signs in her notebooks. In this way, Lippard was not only using new digital technologies to derive information for the book, but also employing similar types of computational strategies to generate fictionalized characters. This process was also a way for her to include her personal network of colleagues in the book while also creating a taxonomy of generic types of people from the art world.

77. Determined from the date of birth listed on each AstroFlash printout.

78. “Time Pattern Research Institute,” *Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology*, Encyclopedia.com, accessed October 30, 2022, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/science/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/time-pattern-research-institute>.

79. Lippard, *I See/You Mean* papers.

80. See Joey Frank, “Don’t Talk Astrology in Glass Houses: Dan Graham with Joey Frank,” *Intercourse Magazine* 4 (2016), 56–69.

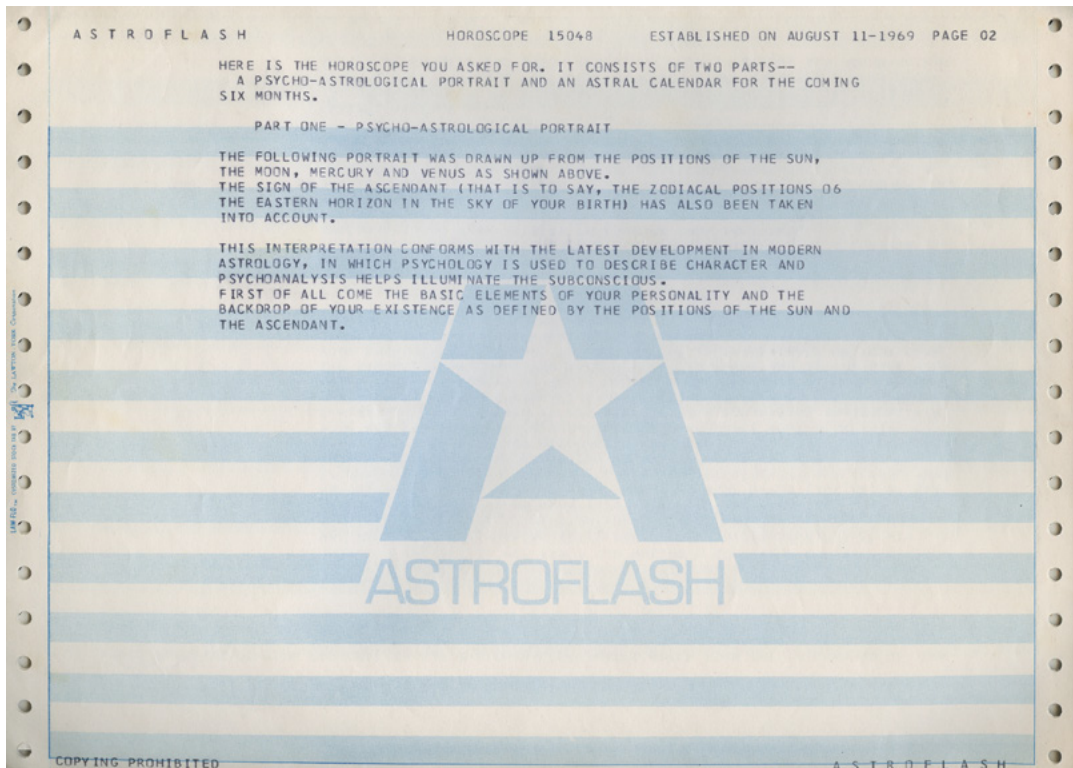


Figure 10. Print-out of Astroflash reading, ca. 1969. Lucy Lippard, *I See/You Mean* papers, New Documents, Los Angeles. Photo: Jeff Khonsary.

TAKING THE POSITION OF THE SUN AND THE ASCENDANT INTO CONSIDERATION, WHAT FOLLOWS REPRESENTS THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF YOUR PERSONALITY AND THE CHARACTER TRAITS WHICH FORM THE BACKGROUND OF YOUR EXISTENCE.

SUBJECT'S SIGN OF BIRTH= ARIES
SIGN OF HIS ASCENDANT= CAPRICORN

YOU ARE THE PLAYGROUND OF AN INTERNAL CONTRADICTION WHICH YOU MAY HAVE DIFFICULTY OVERCOMING. PART OF YOU CONSISTS OF A SPONTANEOUS AND GENEROUS INSTINCT. SEEN FROM THIS ANGLE YOU ARE FRANK AND GUILTESS. ON THE OTHER HAND, PART OF YOUR NATURE IS MADE UP OF CAUTION, A SORT OF DEFENSIVE EGOTISM. YOUR PHLEGMATIC INDIFFERENCE IS REFLECTED. THUS THOUGH PASSIONATE AND IMPULSIVE YOU MAY ALSO BE THE COOL MASTER OF YOURSELF. ONCE YOU HAVE DISCOVERED THE GOAL TOWARD WHICH YOU MUST AIM, YOUR ABILITY TO THINK CLEARLY WILL HELP MODERATE YOUR AGGRESSIVE TRAITS AND CHANNEL THEM TO THE BENEFIT OF A DOMINATING AMBITION. NEVERTHELESS, AT TIMES YOUR LIFE WILL BE INTERRUPTED BY UNTOWARD TURNS WHICH WILL NOT ALWAYS BE THOSE OF THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE. LUCKILY YOU ARE STRONG. DEEP DOWN, YOU KNOW HOW TO PERSEVERE AND AT THE SAME TIME YOUR ENTHUSIASMS ARE HARD TO DAMPEN. THE INTRANSIGENCE OF YOUR CHARACTER WHICH HATES HALF-MEASURES AND COMPROMISES MAY DEPRIVE YOU OF THE SUPPORT WHICH COULD BE HELPFUL.

YOUR ASSETS -
- ESSENTIALLY WILL-POWER. YOU MUST CULTIVATE PERSEVERENCE TO REMAIN CONSTANTLY IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF ACTION AND ENTHUSIASM.
- INTELLECTUAL FACULTIES CONSISTING OF CLEARHEADEDNESS, A CERTAIN SHREWNESS AND YOUR ABILITY TO CONQUER YOUR EMOTIONS.

YOUR WEAKNESSES -
CAN BE FOUND THE EXPRESSION OF A VERY PERSONAL AMBITION MARKED BY LACK OF GENEROSITY. YOUR AGGRESSION AND CRITICAL SPIRIT MAY DEVELOP TO A DANGEROUS DEGREE IF OBSTACLES ARE PLACED IN THE PATH OF YOUR WAY TO POWER.

SEEKING BALANCE -
THE SLOW MELLOWING OF YOUR NATURE SHOULD WIN THE FIELD IF IT IS NOT BLOCKED BY AN ATTITUDE OF NEGATION WHICH MIGHT PARALYZE A VERY DEEP-SEATED GENEROSITY AND WHICH GRATES ON YOUR IMPETUOUS AND HARUM-SCARUM

Figure 11. Print-out of Astroflash reading, ca. 1969. Lucy Lippard, *I See/You Mean* papers, New Documents, Los Angeles. Photo: Jeff Khonsary.

One particular relationship revealed through my archival research around these horoscopes is that between Lippard and Lozano. Lozano's horoscope is dated July 7, 1971 (the birth date reads November 5, 1930) and is annotated in Lozano's infamous all-caps block lettering. Lozano offers her own interpretations of the reading, responding with her characteristic matter-of-factness. For example: "WATCH OUT FOR THE PROGRAMMER'S PROGRAMMING: BEHIND ALL 'FACTS' ARE A HUMAN'S VALUE JUDGMENTS." Lippard appears to have been asking her friends to send her their AstroFlash horoscopes, and I am assuming, here, that she did the same with Lozano. Graham and Lozano's relationship—intellectual, artistic and intimate—is also well documented,⁸¹ and that may have also been how Lozano became involved in the project. Like Graham, Lozano was heavily interested in astrological birth charts and the effects the cosmos have on people here on earth. Her notebooks often contain the sun sign of the people she is writing about. David Askevold remembers that "Both Dan Graham and Lee Lozano were interested in and worked with astrology...I don't think [Dan] really 'believed in' things as much as Lee did."⁸² Lozano left a great deal of her decisions up to mathematics, or at least to permutational computational chance. She was also a devoted practitioner of the I Ching, the Chinese divination system that was developed to understand the nature of change and how humans can best respond to it.

Lozano's work had moved through highly sexualized figurative drawings, then sleek and mathematical abstract paintings, to an extended series of *Pieces*: instruction-based works that would see her daily life turned into works of art. Handwritten in all-caps block letters, and usually dated, Lozano's *Pieces* consisted of physical, emotional, or psychological experiments or actions she would undertake, and then observe her reactions under those conditions. The instructions usually remained the only evidence of these works.

Lippard and Lozano were linked both professionally and socially, yet little has been written about their mutual influence upon one another. This is one line of energy that my research continues to follow. I am curious to rethink their relationship through the lens of what I see as Lozano's place in *I See/You Mean*, and by doing so, show how Lozano was perhaps more influential on Lippard than has previously been understood. Lozano showed her first *Piece* in one of Lippard's early anti-Vietnam War exhibitions in 1969, in which she set herself the task to pile "ALL PRINTED MATTER RELATED TO THE ART SCENE." Lippard included Lozano's *Grass Piece* (1969) and *No Grass Piece* (1969)—in which Lozano tracked her daily habits, conversations and reactions while smoking marijuana for thirty-three days straight, and then spending the same amount of time not taking the drug—in her *Number 7* exhibition at Paula Cooper Gallery in 1969.⁸³ Lippard praised Lozano's work in her introduction to *Six Years*, writing:

...in terms of actual Conceptual Art, the major female figure in New York in the 1960s was Lee Lozano, who had shown her huge industrial/organic paintings at Dick Bellany's cutting edge Green Gallery. She was making extraordinary and eccentric

81. Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer, *Lee Lozano: Dropout Piece* (London: Afterall Books, 2014).

82. Adam Symczyk, ed., *Lee Lozano: Win First Don't Last Win Last Don't Care* (Basel/Eindhoven: Kunsthalle Basel and Van Abbemuseum, 2007), 178.

83. May 18–June 15, 1969.

84. Lippard, *Six Years*, xii

art-as-life Conceptual works in the late Sixties: a “general strike piece,” an “I Ching piece,” a “dialogue piece,” a “grass piece,” and “infictions.”⁸⁴

The two women also shared an affinity for Ted Castle’s writing.⁸⁵ Lippard and Lozano were both involved in the Art Workers Coalition, along with Graham and Castle, where Lozano famously called herself an “art world dreamer”⁸⁶ and launched a personal strike against the art world beginning in 1969.

The paintings Lippard writes about above—the “industrial/organic” canvases—are Lozano’s last two-dimensional works, her *Wave* paintings (1967–70). Concerned with optics, physics, mathematics, and a marked form of sensuality, I am drawn to reading these paintings as related, in form and content, to the sensual grid of *I See/You Mean*. Lozano’s *Wave* painting series was derived from a preconceived set of rules and constraints. Taking the height of each canvas as the starting point, she calculated the even factors of that number (two, four, six, eight, twelve, sixteen, twenty-four, thirty-two, forty, eight, ninety-six) and each canvas was given one of those factorials. To determine the length of the wave that would run vertically up each panel, she divided the height of the canvas (96 inches) by that factorial. As such, in *Two Wave* (96/2), the undulations ran forty-eight inches long; in *Four Wave* (96/4), the waves were twenty-four inches; and in *Ninety-Six Wave* (96/96), the wavelengths tightly crashed one after another at one-inch intervals. Limiting each canvas to an individual muted, monochrome shade of Shiva oil paint, Lozano created the wave pattern using a three-inch wide brush, surfing it across the canvas in an exacting vertical motion. The result of this programmatic approach meant that, as the panels were completed, they became exceedingly more detailed and challenging. Insisting that she complete each painting in a single session, as the wavelengths became shorter and tighter, the painting sessions became longer and larger tests of endurance. The final piece in the series, which Lozano decided to complete after finishing the other ten, was *128 Wave*, where she multiplied the height of the canvas by a factor of two, creating intensely vibratory undulations that took her upwards of three days straight to finish. The paintings were intended to be shown leaning against a black wall, with the gallery lights raking them in such a way that the iridescent, shimmering, and progressively more intricate columnar waves would undulate at increasing frequencies as one moved around the room. Angling the works on the wall would also allow for the waves to extend both above and below each canvas, as though one might be able to conceive of the waves of the electromagnetic spectrum extending all around them, a lattice of undulating energies connecting all who move within them.

I cannot help but read Lozano’s *Wave* series as a visual manifestation of the waves of energies present in *I See/You Mean*. In the context of how I am thinking through the sensuous grid, these mathematically generated images visually manifest the opposing and synergistic energies that build, swell, and contain Lippard’s characters. As Lozano described the works:

I was trying to combine science and art and existence. One thing I always liked was this idea of energy that is not contained by the edges of the canvas. It’s like a close-up of a huge thing that wouldn’t even be a structure of human size. It would be

85. Jo Applin, *Lee Lozano: Not Working* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018), 107. Ted Castle was close enough to Lippard that he also read drafts of *I See/You Mean* for her, in January and July of 1973. Her archive contains ten single-spaced pages of notes from Castle, in which he offers his very strong opinions about the novel. He also makes comments that insinuate Lozano’s “portrayal” in the book.

86. Lee Lozano, “Statement for Open Public Hearing,” in *Art Workers Coalition Open Hearing transcript* (New York: independently published), 92. Also available as a free PDF from Primary Information, New York, <https://primaryinformation.org/product/art-workers-coalition-open-hearing/>.

87. Lozano, as quoted in *Lehrer-Graiver*, Lee Lozano, 25.

something imagined, some energy that took on solidity. [...] The pictures refer to energy and they were brought into being with a great amount of energy.⁸⁷

The tactility and luminosity of these paintings also meant they resisted any experience of them that was not direct, not physical—she wanted their energy to encapsulate the viewer, and to create a responsive energy field within the gallery space. As Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer describes, paraphrasing Lozano, “The series sends ripples through language: making waves—causing trouble and attracting attention; ‘whackoff wavecomes’—gendered, menstrual, hormonal and orgasmic; ‘wavelength’—tuned in, radio-like and hippiestyle; and waving goodbye—a gesture made toward painting, the Whitney Museum and ultimately the art industry in general.”⁸⁸ Lozano’s insistence on embodied perception eschewed the cool, detached neutrality of many of her male counterparts, and it is not hard to see why Lippard would have praised her work. The energy emanating from these paintings is synergic with the lines of energy that connect Lippard’s characters in *I See/You Mean*, and I read them as another layer of sensuality interwoven into the book.

I am imagining Lippard in front of these paintings and envisioning the process they may have sparked for her. I am drawn to the relationship between these two women because they seem to represent two wavelengths of a particular artistic spectrum; this relationship is also, in my mind, an entry point into the other networks within *I See/You Mean*. I was initially drawn to Lozano’s horoscope in Lippard’s archive, not only because it was annotated and clearly showed Lozano’s direct involvement in Lippard’s process, but also because of the date it was produced. July 7, 1971 was amidst Lozano’s strike against the art world, and only three weeks before she decided to undertake her *Boycott Women Piece*, for which she would no longer speak to or interact with any females. As Helen Molesworth has noted, Lozano’s journals at the time include entries on “her boredom and dissatisfaction with a subcommittee meeting of women involved with Art Workers at Lucy Lippard’s loft.”⁸⁹ Lippard is in fact the first woman mentioned in the beginning of Lozano’s boycott: “THROW LUCY LIPPARD’S 2ND LETTER ON DEFUNCT PILE, UNANSWERED,” she wrote in her notebooks in the first week of August 1971. Therefore, her place in *I See/You Mean* complicates this rejection for me. Lozano was contributing to Lippard’s initial research for *I See/You Mean* and, as I have shown, remains as a presence in the finished novel. Were Lozano’s actions hurtful or inspirational to Lippard? To what extent did Lippard see Lozano’s “escape” from the artworld as insulting or exciting?

If I think more about Lippard’s desire, in *I See/You Mean*, to work through a woman’s liberation, the ocean, and perception, then I cannot help but see Lozano’s self-ejection from the art world and the waves of energy she emitted while doing so as tied up within this book. My process of unravelling this rhizome continues (as does my work on the corporeality of Lippard’s practice), as I unpack the complexities that I see remaining in *I See/You Mean*. Nevertheless, by allowing myself to speculate on the relationship between Lippard and Lozano, the lines that bind them become clearer to me.

88. Lehrer-Graiwer, *Lee Lozano*, 24.

89. Helen Molesworth, “Tune In, Turn On, Drop Out: The Rejection of Lee Lozano,” *Art Journal* 61, no. 4 (Winter 2022), 68, doi:10.1080/00043249.2002.10792137.

I See/You Mean is a nodal point in Lippard's career. In it, I see her definitively moving away from conceptual ways of experiencing the world into a sensorial, sensual mode. Through this novel, she continued to blur the boundaries between her identity as a writer, critic, and woman, questioning the (im)possibility of critical distance. Ultimately, I see the sensuous grid as a new lens through which we might re-read much of Lippard's production, and re-centring *I See/You Mean* within that work is crucial. Reading this book as both a creative outlet and a historical document—one that ties together a specific network of influences and relationships within Lippard's life—places it within the context of what Lauren Fournier calls autotheory: “the integration of the auto or ‘self’ with philosophy or theory, often in ways that are direct, performative, or self-aware—especially so in those practices that emerge with postmodernism.”⁹⁰ For Fournier, autotheory is inherently interdisciplinary, and reflects the practices of those cultural workers that move between making, writing, producing, researching and teaching in and around the arts and literature. It can either be a way of entering into concerted dialogue with the “master discourse(s),”⁹¹ or, more productively (in my opinion), “as the work of making theories—in relation to their experiential, affective lives and embodied, relational practices as human beings in the world.”⁹² I have shown that Lippard is certainly a cultural worker in Fournier's sense, and that her movement between the realms of writing, producing, thinking, and researching about the art and artists around her is evidenced in the collage methodology used in *I See/You Mean*. In so doing, I assert that fiction played a much larger role in Lippard's work than has previously been acknowledged, as is only now beginning to be understood. ¶

90. Lauren Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2021), 6.

91. *Ibid.*

92. *Ibid.*