

"Clamor," she says "Ah, yes ... glamor" I think Yes, sleek, that's what it's about That's what it is really about Not the sleazy life Five children Remorse Weyare macarone About glamostr Dumpy passel swatches Clumsy angles Childish application Different-colored splotches On cheeks and forehead A spineless window frame Bo Read from a distance not for The nonanalytic focus Spello Glamor.



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This book is published on the occasion of the retrospective exhibition of Martha Rosler's work. The exhibition was organized by Elizabeth A. Macgregor, assisted by Natasha Howes, at the Ikon Gallery, in collaboration with Sabine Breitwieser, assisted by Hemma Schmutz, at the Generali Foundation. The Ikon education programme was organised by Debbie Kermode assisted by Nichola Bowen and Neil Jones. The Generali Foundation education programme was organized by Andrea Überbacher in collaboration with Karin Schneider and Bärbl Zechner.

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MIKON BABLLIOREKA

Instytutu Historii Sztuki Uniwersytetu Warszawskieg

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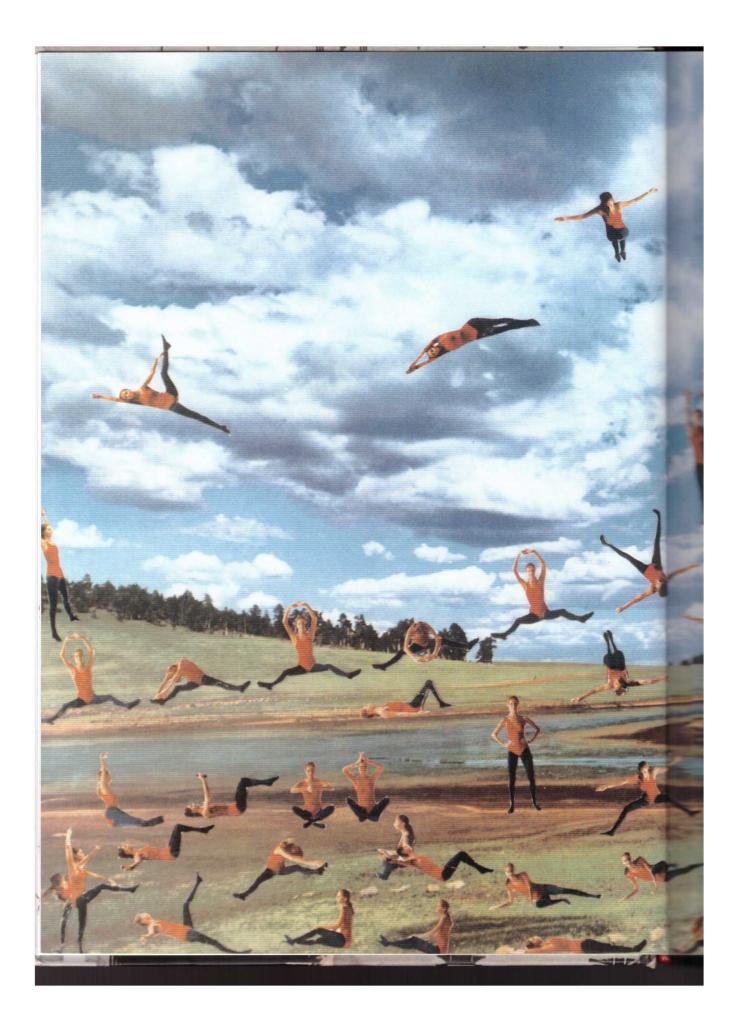
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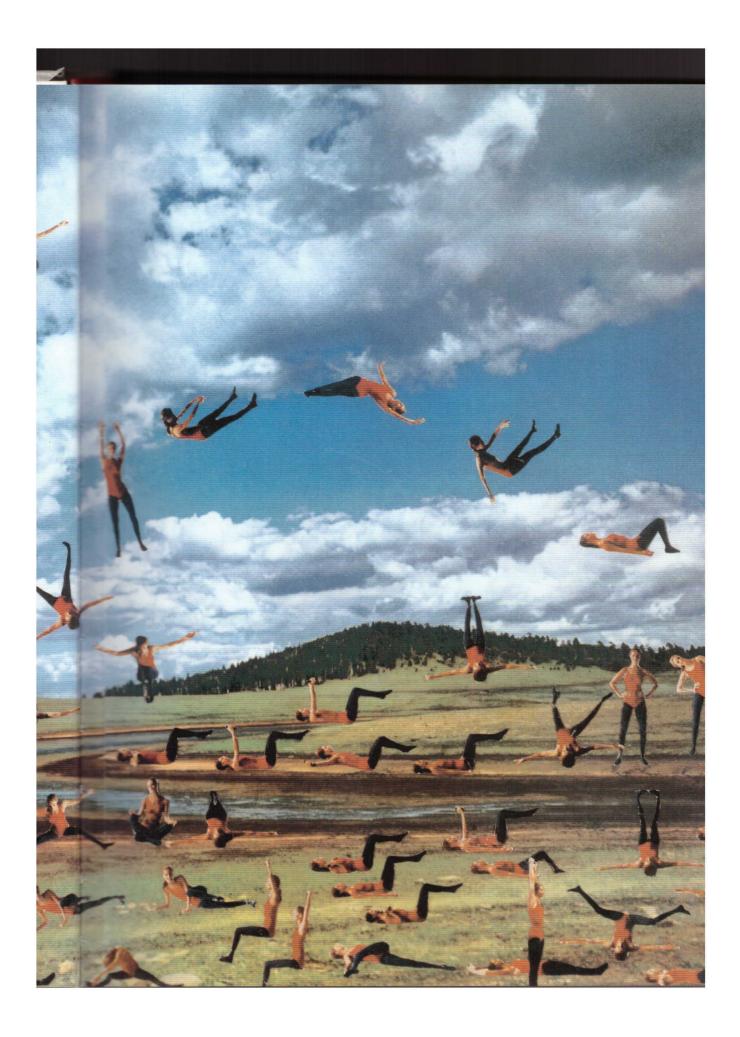
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Foreword

This publication has been produced to accompany the first retrospective of the work of Martha Rosler, one of the most influential artists of her generation. Since the early 1970s, she has produced seminal work in the fields of video, performance, photography, critical writing, and theory. Indeed, her work has helped redefine the categories of art. Her incisive, often humorous and transgressive, renderings of the social scene reflect her strong commitment to an art that engages with wider publics beyond the privileged spaces of the art world. Accessibility has always been a major concern of hers, as is the role of the viewer in constructing the meaning of the work. She presses viewers to rethink the boundaries between the public and the private as well as the social and the political.

Like an archaeologist, Rosler peels back the layers of common sense, public discourse, and daily experience to reveal the complex realities behind social myths. She brings a critical eye and deadpan wit to bear on aspects of ordinary life and the political world, with particular emphasis on the impact of patriarchal culture. From "Bringing the War Home," the biting yet beautiful series of photomontages that were generated by her outrage over the Vietnam war to the ambitious and innovative curatorial project "If You Lived Here," addressing homelessness, housing, and urbanism, Rosler has taken on some of the most pressing issues of our times. Both these projects demonstrate Rosler's wish to find different ways of communicating and to avoid having her work hampered by commodification, to assist in re-creating the categories of art production and reception. The photomontages were intended for publication in the alternative press. "If You Lived Here..." took place in a gallery but extended the idea of what a public exhibition might be. Over six months there were three presentations of work by a large number of artists and other individuals and groups concerned with linkages between art and activism, as well as public forums, film and video screenings, poetry readings, and workshops.

The present exhibition brings together all aspects of Rosler's work in video, photography, performance, and installation. Included are most of her videotapes from the early works of the seventies, including the feminist classics *Semiotics of the Kitchen* and *Vital Statistics of a Citizen, Simply Obtained*, up through the works of the nineties, such as *Seattle: Hidden Histories*, short television spots made with Native American residents of that city, and *Chile on the Road to NAFTA*, which might be considered Rosler's (politicized) version of a music video. Represented also are installations such as *A Gourmet Experience* (1974) and *Fascination with the (Game of the) Exploding (Historical) Hollow Leg* (1983), on nuclear war preparedness, and documentation of performances such as *Watchwords of the Eighties*, performed at Documenta 7 and elsewhere. Most of

her major photo-montage and photographic work is represented as well, from the classic work *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems* (1974/75), which defines a crossroads between documentary and conceptualism, to more current photographic series, including "In the Place of the Public: Airport Series," an investigation of the airport and air travel as the grand model of postmodern public space; "Rights of Passage," panoramic landscapes of congested roads and highways; and "Transitions and Digressions," whose themes including fragmentation and desire as glimpsed in commercial displays and public places. For the first time, viewers will have the opportunity to see the extraordinary range of work of Rosler's work, which, when considered as a whole, forms one of the most striking, influential, and effective bodies of work of the past thirty years.

Such an ambitious project has required dedication from many people. We must first thank the artist. This project was an immense undertaking, and we are very grateful to her for allowing us access to so much material and for her contributions to the exhibition and this publication. Catherine de Zegher has been closely involved in this project since its inception. We are grateful for all her efforts toward its development as well as for her insightful editing of this book. We also wish to thank Alexander Alberro, Benjamin Buchloh, Silvia Eiblmayr, Jodi Hauptman, Annette Michelson, and Catherine de Zegher for their illuminating contributions to the publication. Sheena Calvert, Cynthia Madansky, Kelley Simons, of parlour design in New York, assisted by Melissa Nascimento, have our gratitude for their superb design of the book and for their work on the design of the documentation and text elements of the exhibition.

We thank Jay Gorney, Rodney Hill, and Beth Miller of Gorney Bravin and Lee gallery (New York), Stephen Vitiello of Electronic Arts Intermix (New York), Galerie Anne de Villepoix (Paris) and Galerie Christian Nagel (Cologne) for their assistance in preparing the exhibition. We thank also the directors of the museums that will take the exhibition: Jean Louis Maubant at L'Institut d'Art Contemporain in Villeurbanne–Lyon, Manuel Borja-Villel, assisted by José Lebrero Stals, at the Museu d'Art Contemporani in Barcelona, and Dan Cameron at the New Museum in New York. We would like to thank The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and its director, Pamela Clapp, for its generous support of the exhibition and publication. Ikon would like to thank John Leslie for his initial suggestion of an exhibition of Martha Rosler's work. We are delighted that it has finally come to fruition in such a powerful way.

The artist would like to add her thanks to ours. She also offers profound thanks to her assistants Mary Kosuth, Michael Lantz, and Melissa Cliver, and above all to Kerry Tribe, an energetic and skillful "chief of staff" whose acumen and organizational talents are rivaled by her video skills. She also thanks the intrepid staff at Aurora Color Labs, especially the fine printer Pedro Ceballos, the

redoubtable Laurie Korowitz, and proprietor Thomas Csiha; paper conservator Andrea Pitsch; and the following people and institutions for their assistance in readying the video portion of the exhibition: in New York, in addition to the staff at Electronic Arts Intermix, Dara Meyers-Kingsley and Vidipax, and Michael Eisenmenger and Randi Cecchino of Paper Tiger Television; in Chicago, Kate Horsfield and Mindy Faber at the Video Data Bank; and Brian Dyson at the Alberta College of Art. She especially wishes to thank Nancy and Joel Portnoy of New York and the Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum in Graz, Austria, for their kind willingness to lend works to the exhibition.

Elizabeth A. Macgregor Director, Ikon Gallery

Sabine Breitwieser Director, Generali Foundation

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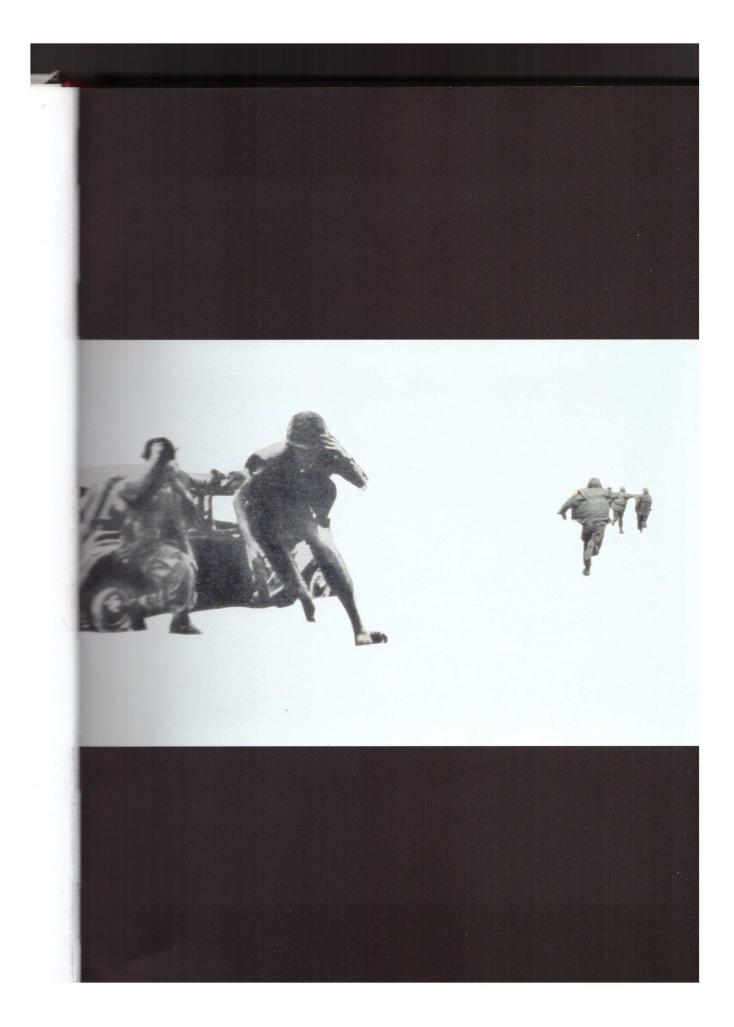
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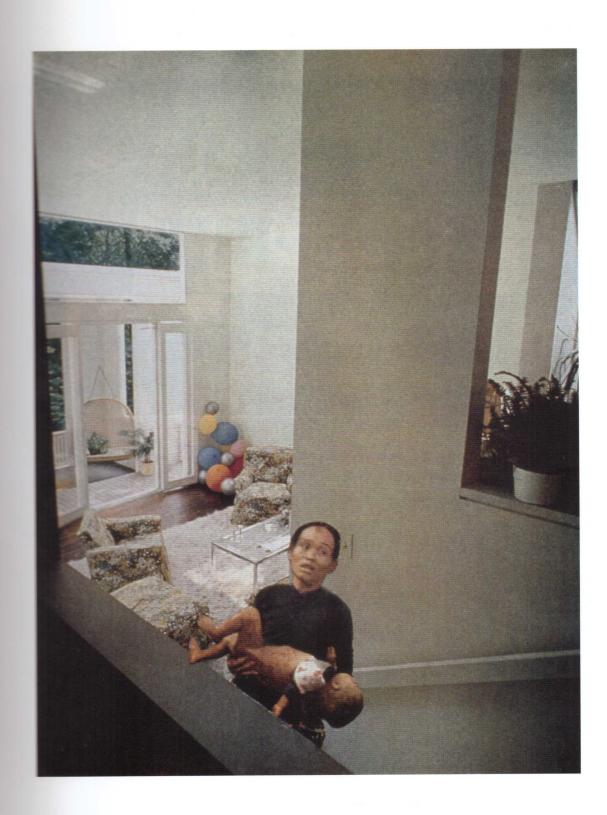
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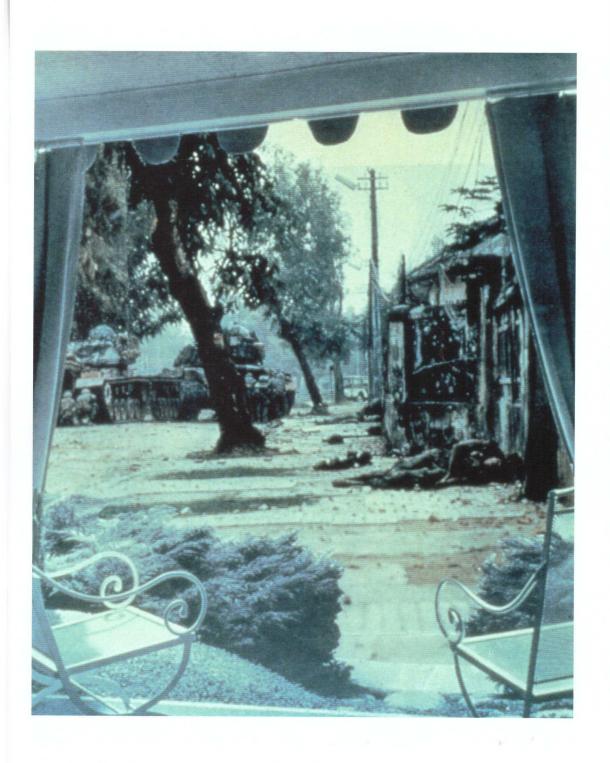
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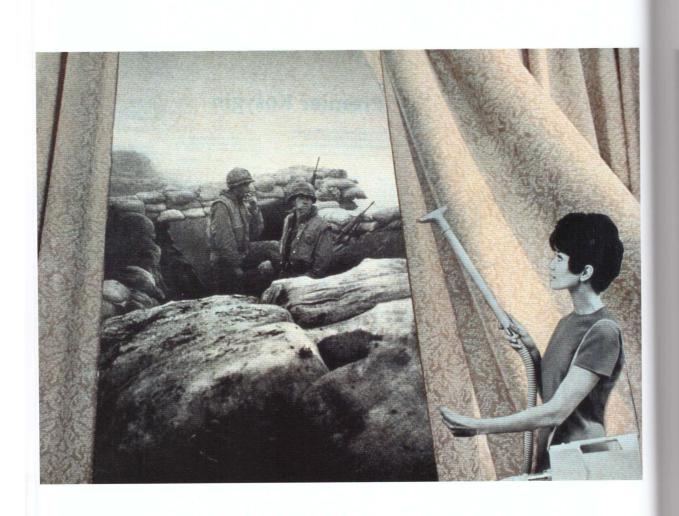






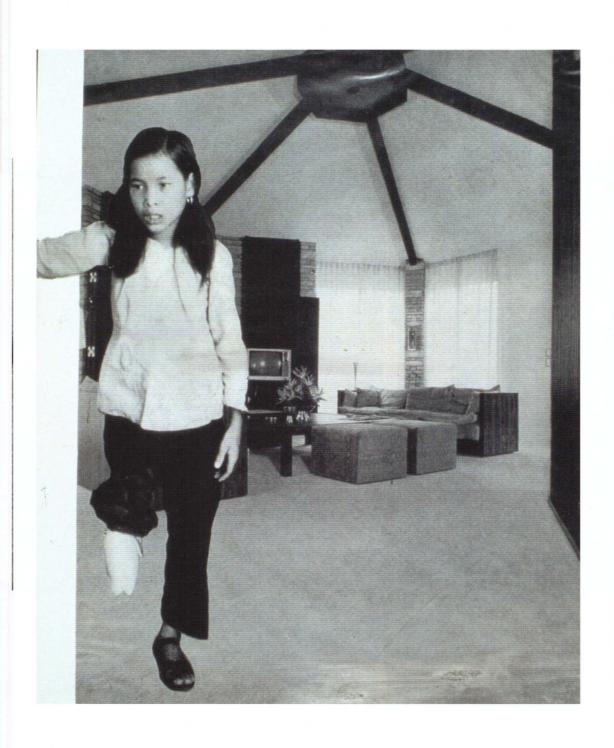


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spot, privacy isn't a problem, so you go all out with glass, for view, light, and visual spaciousness. Simple or no-pattern coverings, soft colors, and specific privacy isn't a problem, so you go all out with glass, for view, light, and visual spaciousness. Simple or no-pattern coverings, soft colors, and specific privacy isn't a problem, so you go all out with glass, for view, light, and visual spaciousness. Simple or no-pattern coverings, soft colors, and specific privacy isn't a problem, so you go all out with glass, for view, light, and visual spaciousness. Simple or no-pattern coverings, soft colors, and specific privacy isn't a problem, so you go all out with glass, for view, light, and visual spaciousness. Simple or no-pattern coverings, soft colors, and specific privacy isn't a problem, so you go all out with glass, for view, light, and visual spaciousness.



Benjamin Buchloh: A Conversation with Martha Rosler

- What do you consider the beginnings of your work as an artist?
- I studied painting at the Brooklyn Museum Art School, and I studied with Jimmy Ernst and Ad Reinhardt at Brooklyn College.
- Did you work with Reinhardt? Was he your teacher?
- Ten—he would show slides of Asian art and say, "Here is one and here's another, and another..." There was great interest at that time in Eastern philosophies and their reflection in a certain kind of artistic understatement. That went well with, not renhardt's cartoons and drawings with their forceful attitudes, but with his paintings. Eventhing was very... silent, and concentrated. I found his paintings astonishing.

 But I was soon tossed out of the abstract expressionist mentality by pop and fluxus and so on. And, as you know, I hung out with the poetry avant-garde.
- I don't know that. You were not aware of or involved with the New Left?
- indeed. It was really the Vietnam War that pushed me decisively to the left, and in my mid-teens I was already involved with civil rights and antinuclear protests.
- 1 think it's interesting to ask how a person in the early 1960s would have moved toward the left, after the destruction of left culture in the United States.
- A whole generation moved to the left! In any case, left culture hadn't been totally destroyed—I grew up in New York, where there was a fairly active non-CP [Communist Party] left, and it included young people. Despite my early religious schooling, by high school I had friends involved in various forms of activism. American ideals of inclusiveness and democracy led to the movements of the sixties. I naturally gravitated to the left, first over inequality and injustice—reinforced by those reisous values—then over the nuclear threat. But by the mid-sixties the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley and the anti-war movement began to have a tremendous effect at all U.S. colleges.
- How did your aesthetic interests form at that time—before encountering Reinhardt?
 Were you aware of the moment in painting in New York in the forties and fifties?
- The time: I was much too young. My family had always designated me as the artist," not necessarily in a positive way—from the earliest grades I got in trouble for drawing in class. I was convinced I would grow up to be either an outlaw or an artist—and that they were very similar. Later I would to go to MoMA and the Whitney, which was attached to it, although so much art gave me a headache after an hour.

 I wrote a paper in high school—where I majored in art, by the way—on Giacomo Balla.

 I was fascinated by futurism and surrealism—an early painting of mine showed a rairoad train and tracks in the sky. Another was a watercolor of a girl looking out a day window over roofs—very much ashcan school. That lineage of American resentation—George Bellows, George Tooker, Jack Levine, Charles Sheeler, the ever-popular Edward Hopper—interested me. You can see what direction I was going in But I didn't like the Soyers—too sentimental. I didn't much like Käthe Kollwitz for the same reason, and also for her expressionism. They were favored by the left,

but it was not possible to be anything but an abstractionist at the time. When I started painting seriously, of course, I turned my attention to the abstract expressionists.

- **bb** So at that point there was no photographic culture in your horizons?
- mr Photos were everywhere. I was, in fact, taking pictures. But many artists did.
- **bb** Were these pictures preparatory for painting or separate?
- mr Street scenes. They had nothing to do with my painting.
- **bb** Did you study photography at Brooklyn College?
- mr No, but I used the darkroom, which was run by students of Walter Rosenblum.
- **bb** Oh, so you were in the right hands. That is important to know. So what did he teach? The thirties, the forties, the New York school?
- mr He embodied New York photography, the Workers' Film and Photo League. His darkroom advocates were the vehicle by which his ideas reached me: gritty subjects, tough life out of doors. But New York was full of photographs: Manhattan scenes, classy celebrity portraiture, magazine photojournalism. Everyone subscribed to Life magazine. But even though I was interested in photography, I had my eye on something else.
- **bb** How did the street photography that you practiced fit in?
- mr It was street photography, but not of people. It was photography of streets and vehicles—although I also took pictures of natural subjects, like mushrooms in the woods. I wasn't much interested in making pictures of people, yet I remember one photograph of people sitting on garbage cans on the Lower East Side, signs of poverty. Photography was, the art world told us, of a lesser order, mired in temporality as opposed to the transcendent world of painting. So you could deal with it as a practice less mediated, more immediate, than the one the art world had mulled over so intensively. It was accessible and vernacular, and it was low key...as far as I knew then, photography had no critical history. I didn't feel I needed to engage with large questions.
- **bb** Were you a writer as well at the time, in addition to doing photography and painting?
- mr I'd been writing from an early age.
- **bb** Writing criticism or poetry?
- mr Poetry, short stories; I even won the literary prize at my yeshiva.... Later, I published a critical piece on James Joyce's *Ulysses* in the college journal—on mirrors and photographs in *Ulysses!* In any medium there was an underlying search for an authentic voice—that was, I think, the common theme, inflected by French Existentialist despair. It led to my initial rejection of pop art as a form of distracting cynicism. I'd had to fight for a voice, since I was often accused—wrongly, of course—of copying pictures I'd drawn and stories and poems I'd written. My teachers and my family found it inconceivable that such an uncompliant child could produce anything original.

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Untitled, c. 1964. Black-and-white photograph.



in a continuation of thirties' Popular Front cultural politics, the question of authenticity for the left centered on popular culture, asking, is this the authentic voice of "the folk," or just a corporate substitute or overlay? Folk music, blues, Woody Guthrie, were favored musical forms, and avant-gardism in all media was regarded with suspicion. This was important to me. But my friends in art and poetry were not involved with mose questions.

I remember discussing pop's legitimacy with the poet David Antin—David and Elly Antin were like a second family for me in New York, even before we all moved to San Diego. I was asking, in effect, what about Oldenburg, Rosenquist, Warhol? David replied, abstract expressionism is dead-it's played out, it's boring; there's nothing left. I asked myself over and over, how does an artist develop a style and how does an artist change that style-How can you ever stop doing one thing and start doing something radically different? Antin's reply brought home that not only do styles change but the entire paradigm changes.... It was like someone opening a door I didn't know existed. I had naturally dealt with question of style in literature, but it hadn't occurred to me that the search for stylistic appropriateness wasn't necessarily linked to a palpable seriousness and to the private self. That a kind of unyieldingly ironic, deceptive wit could be another engine of production. I likened my realization of the possibilites to my sudden comprehension of the physical concept of acceleration in calculus: that speed relates to motion but acceleration is the rate of change of that rate; it's a metaconcept that is subject to mathematical operations. I blinked and said, that's right! Although I continued to paint abstractions, pop pointed me toward direct use of massculture imagery, the things that had intrigued me in old magazines, cheap advertising, and so on. I made assemblages and began to make photomontages with quasi-surreal memes, mostly using images of women, from Joan of Arc to the happy housewife.

- 50 your first photomontage would be 1966? Without any knowledge of John Heartfield?
- Look know, I think it's not possible to know nothing of him.... My initial influences, included Max Ernst's surrealist collage novellas and other surrealist works, and the quirky San Francisco artist Jess. But collage was obviously the medium of the medium of the century.

- **bb** What about Rauschenberg, did he give a license for photomontage?
- mr His work was too painterly. In photomontage I wasn't interested in painterly effects. Quite the opposite. Who are the collage artists in pop? Not Warhol but Rosenquist and Wesselmann. I was interested even though I didn't particularly like what they were doing. Putting elements together by painting fragments was much more interesting than pasting things onto a painted canvas. Rosenquist was more interesting than Rauschenberg. His work was, on balance, more metonymy than metaphor. pop was more interesting in visual art than in poetry, however. Here are people like Gerard Malanga and others associated with Warhol and pop, making poems out of snippets of popular music and jingles—analogous to pop collage, but I was much less accepting of it in poetry, probably because I thought there was still room for complexity of expression.
- **bb** What kind of poetry were you looking at, Beat poetry?
- mr To begin with, as a beatnik teenager I was, but my older poet friends were dismissive of Beat literature as uncontrolled expression. My new friends were of the cool school—the New York school. It's difficult when your friends are talking about Black Mountain and Cage and aleatory principles and you like Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg. But I learned to pay more attention to the more controlled language traditions. I had already read the earlier predecessors—Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams, Gerald Manley Hopkins, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, Pound and Eliot, and so on—and I'd seen the Living Theatre's productions of Bertolt Brecht, Eugene Ionesco, Luigi Pirandello, and Samuel Beckett.
- **bb** Warhol would be an interesting connection, in a sense, because he does link the Stein tradition with the photographic tradition with the Pop tradition. Do you remember your first encounter with Warhol?
- mr It was, oddly, through *Time* magazine; they reviewed the Brillo box show. I kept the article for years. For *Time* it was a total spectacle and hype...which it clearly was, but it also had a significance that eluded them. So there is Warhol, throwing a wrench in the works and I'm thinking...if this can be done, then what am I doing? What was immediately interesting about Warhol was that he was a total work of art. He wasn't a man who pushed his work forward with a stick and said, "Now I will explain why this is so offensive." He had a persona that went with the work. Of course, so do most artists, but his was an obvious provocation. At the same time I was going to Happenings. That posed a problem: on the one hand you have Happenings and on the other you have Warhol. These two things don't go together.
- **bb** Neither does the Living Theatre.
- mr But the Living Theatre made a kind of bridge the way Happenings did, and Carolee Schneeman—you have remnants of abstract expressionist "acting out," but there is also an engagement with a political text, with real events. It's not about Zen Cold War aestheticism, like Cage. An interesting thing about Warhol that seemed to establish a continuity with the Black Mountain school and Cage was his dandyism, the cool removal.
- **bb** You didn't see Warhol's shows?

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- I was still too young. I felt you needed a very large admission ticket to enter the
- is there already a feminist component in the complexity of that moment, along with the political dimension?
- Feminist, yes, but not in art. The "woman question" has been around forever, and much discussed throughout the fifties—certainly on the left, although that's not where I encountered it. But there was no such thing as a feminist art, as far as I knew.
- But Carolee Schneeman? Did you see her perform?
- That was a bit later, probably '65 or '66. But was that work feminist?
- mere you aware of Eva Hesse at that time? Did you see her work?
- and I think I was subsequently influenced by her strangely repellent organic forms, but I was more interested in Robert Morris at the time. In the early seventies, when I made Michael Fried's 1967 essay "Art and Objecthood" in Gregory Battcock's book I make I thought it was a good analysis, although he was taking the wrong side. I was red it in '68. I was very interested in the idea of presentness, sharing an anal physical space with your audience, and how that smashes the modernist paradigm.
- The modernist paradigm of pure visuality.
- What I liked about Morris' work was the finish and control, the wit, the lack of interiority—all of which, I suppose, is properly described as theatricality. What I didn't like was that it shared a deflated, down-to-earth approach with Pop without any of the engagement with social imagery. It seemed to be occupied with the de-transcendentalization of art without replacing it with anything but form, which struck me as a bat sad. But still interesting.
- Like Stella paintings?
- actually liked those because there was an uncertain element to them; they were not as uncompromising as three-dimensional objects, with defined edges. The fact they were black was itself very interesting. I saw them as relating in some way to Reinhardt.
- Later, Stella admitted he was trying to make a fusion between Rauschenberg and Reinhardt. What interested me about pop was that it was directly engaging with the imagery, rather than with the objects. That's why Warhol was more interesting than Rauschenberg.
- It got rid of the nostalgic element.
- But you didn't see the affirmative dimension involved; you thought it had a critical dimension?
- I saw it as critical. I wrote an unpublished essay against Lawrence Alloway's insistence

that there was no critique in pop. I was less concerned with Warhol as a direct model, though, than with other elements of pop, because it seemed to me that Warhol was his own best follower. Of course, at the other extreme of criticality one knew Richard Hamilton, but the problem was that he was not rigorous like Warhol, whose works were reproduced, they were gridded, and they were all totally visible—there was no confusion about what was at stake. You didn't have little pieces of things aesthetically juxtaposed to other little pieces. The problem with, Kurt Schwitters was arrangement. Warhol wasn't interested in arrangement, nor was I.

- bb You sound like Donald Judd when he said in the sixties that European painting is dead because it is all composed; it is always balancing one thing against another. So, what is so great about centrality and anti-compositionality from that perspective at that moment?
- mr It is seizing control of the discourse, the reading, and focusing attention: "Look here now!" Don't look here in order to go somewhere else in your mind. I thought if you are going to engage with everyday life, you have to be very careful about selecting what is to be looked at.
- **bb** Isn't that like an advertisement slogan, "Look here now"?
- mr Indeed.
- **bb** So, pure affirmation. It hails you, like ideology, to say "Look here now."
- mr Why pure? What does a person bring to looking? And what is the intention of the person that is asking you to look? I think it's the same problem with photography. It took a while for me to understand that just because you are looking at something doesn't mean you understand the historical meaning.... You need other information. The thing about Warhol was that he made you focus on the bad Other, by affirming all the "plastic" values that intellectuals and artists claimed to despise, that even the culture at large claimed not to want. It seemed like a logical development of the many critiques of mass culture and modern American life of the fifties, like Henry Miller's Air-Conditioned Nightmare and Paul Goodman's indictment of the entire educational system for training people to enter the corporate rat race.
- **bb** What about Clement Greenberg's "Avant-garde and Kitsch"? You must have read that.
- **mr** Yes, I did. And Harold Rosenberg's *Tradition of the New,* another defense of so-called advanced art, and in some sense more interesting. But Greenberg was problematic because, first, he was writing in the thirties and, second, he was the promoter of the people we were hoping to replace, the high modernist painters. I read that essay very critically.
- **bb** The essay dates from his highest moment as a leftist.
- mr As a Trotskyist. That's not the popular-culture left, that's the other left!
- **bb** The aristocratic left. So what trajectory represents the popular-culture left of America?
- Folk music and documentary. There was a simultaneous cherishing of the traditions of past masters of art—museum works—and of classical music, but there was a strong

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distinction between popular culture (good) and mass culture (bad). In music, no lover of rock n' roll could quite agree, but in respect to advertising, it was easy. Warhol, by focusing your attention on mass culture, could only, I felt, be pointing to its artificiality and its arbitrary and corporate nature—especially from the standpoint of the indigenous popular culture it was supplanting.

- bb If you go back for a moment to the poets and Gertrude Stein and to their emphasis on a low-key, formal approach to language—that was certainly not oriented at popular culture?
- mr | wasn't so interested in popular culture per se; | was interested in critique.
- There is an interpretation of Warhol as an American artist who wants to resuscitate existing traditions of residual popular culture. Would you have seen it in those terms at the time?
- mr I saw it as sheer critique without offering any alternative. Not even necessarily engaging in critique but *representing* critique. It was sheer negativity.
- bb What was your relationship to fluxus?
- I knew of their work, largely through the Antins, but wasn't that deeply into it, since they didn't then seem to offer me a direct model. Fluxus seemed systematic and anti-institutional and rational, pervaded by a kind of European irony. That was another element in my reception of people like Warhol, that he was a weird outsider looking at America and musing about its implacable façade.... Living in San Diego, I truly realized how insufficient that was, that even irony is insufficient. Because critique has to be...there has to be a thread to pull. The very totalization of the simulacrum that Warhol had engaged in made it inaccessible to people who didn't grasp the possibility that it might *embody* critique. As a result, I started to think about what photography might do, especially with careful text or context, since it can engage so easily with experience.

But in San Diego I also continued with abstract painting, very dark in palette and low key. Eventually I began to feel alienated from this work, which I loved to do, by my political priorities, which by then included feminism. By the time I entered the university, I was already working with women artists, often on collective exercises, and also with a politically oriented women's liberation group. My feminist concerns led me to sculpture—I saw that the reason I wanted the work to be in the room, as opposed to on the wall, had to do with the representation of a physical presence, a physical body, and often a woman's body. So I went from making hanging canvas structures to objects stuffed with cotton batting—generally old clothes or cheesecloth. About then I was reading the Fried essay. To me the soft sculptures paradoxically seemed to be getting closer to what photography does—say, street photography: the representation of bodies in space, not as a sculptural element, of course, but with direct reference to time and place.

- bb When you talk about street photography, about whom are you actually speaking? Garry Winogrand?
- Mr Oh, say, the Hungarians in Paris in the twenties, the Film and Photo League, of course Walker Evans and Robert Frank, perhaps Helen Levitt, a certain kind of generic fifties magazine work, and so on. Winogrand was a fairly negative example.



clockwise from top right:
Phil Steinmetz, Martha Rosler, Allan
Sekula, and Fred Lonidier at Martha
Rosler's house, Del Mar, California,
c. 1976. Photo by Phil Steinmetz.

- **30**: 31
- **bb** Even though I know that photographers of your peer group have referred to him as a crucial breakthrough moment of looking at American pop culture from a different angle.
- mr That is not me. I saw that kind of difference first in Robert Frank's *Americans* and then in Lee Friedlander, whom I also saw as a bridge to abstract expressionism and pop. He did a book with Jim Dine called *Work from the Same House.*¹
- **bb** Were you increasingly aware of agitprop traditions, and when did you become aware of Soviet culture and the legacies of Russian and Soviet constructivist productivism?
- mr That interest was reawakened through Godard. And, I suppose, it brought to mind that whole tradition of Soviet film that I used to see in New York. The Trotskyist Young People's Socialist League, or YPSL, held cultural events. They often showed Eisenstein's Potemkin, and the first time I saw it I was probably 15 years old. I think I saw Strike also.
- **bb** The same way the Film and Photo League showed the first Soviet films in the thirties and forties in New York to photographers like Helen Levitt.
- mr Sure. I didn't know Dziga Vertov's work, which Godard took as his model by the early seventies, but I certainly saw what Eisenstein was interested in and that montage constituted the work. By the end of the sixties, nothing was more important than film for what I and many other people were doing.

¹ Robert Frank, *The Americans*, First U.S. Publication, 1959; Lee Friedlander and Jim Dine, *Work from the Same House* (London: Trigram, 1969).

- Flashback to Russian film, more so than any other practice of the Soviet avant-garde.

 The was film in the early phase.
- well, I was also interested in Russian photography, theory, painting, design, posters everything, since it was geared at a mass audience. Actually I'd always been interested in Russian painting—Malevich, Rodchenko, Popova. Malevich's work seemed related in some respects to both Rothko and Reinhardt.
- But nobody recognized that or wanted to say that. Seeing Soviet films when you are 15 years old and reconciling that with Ad Reinhardt in '65 is a long stretch.
- in the sixties, film—the history of film and contemporary European, so-called art house film—was essential to every artist and intellectual's education. Furthermore, I spent a childhood in the local movie theater. But maybe it's the Eisenstein-influenced side of me that started doing those political photomontage works. By the mid-sixties, many people were interested in relationships among film and photography, sculpture, and what is on the canvas, the wall, the page. The incipient collapse of high modernism people are acting audiences. At that point everything was "heterodox": there is no one source of knowledge, there is no one line of production.
- s not so evident that there was heterodoxy if you look at the homogeneity of your peers or predecessors by one generation. For them—e.g., Carl Andre—in spite of a similar horizon of historical awareness, to come up with the fully resolved, integrated, homogeneous work of art was the *sine que non*. What has made the reception of your work difficult for a long time is its heterodoxy, a model that allowed for a broad range of writing, collage, montage, film, video, photography...that heterodoxy suddenly and not be readable anymore.
- are talking about artists who were championed by that institutionalized art world and is publicity organs. But there were so many other artists doing other things in the late sixties and early seventies, rejecting the traditional routes and even the mastering a medium. One development was conceptualism. For my work that diseasely of production you refer to was crucial. Everything I have ever done I've to f'as if": Every single thing I have offered to the public has been offered as a second of work. Now "as if" is club lingo, the verbal equivalent of a shrug. The nothing like what I mean by "as if," which is that my work is a sketch, a line talking, a possibility.
- But not in terms of a voice generalizing the possibility of "everybody becoming an artist."
- that seemed ridiculous...that is what I disliked about Beuys and about the Cagean the transformation of everyday life into a series of aesthetic encounters. That is a series of aesthetic encounters.
- tantamount to saying that this condition would be an ideal state to achieve.

 The exploded would become an artist. That is why that is such an insane statement.

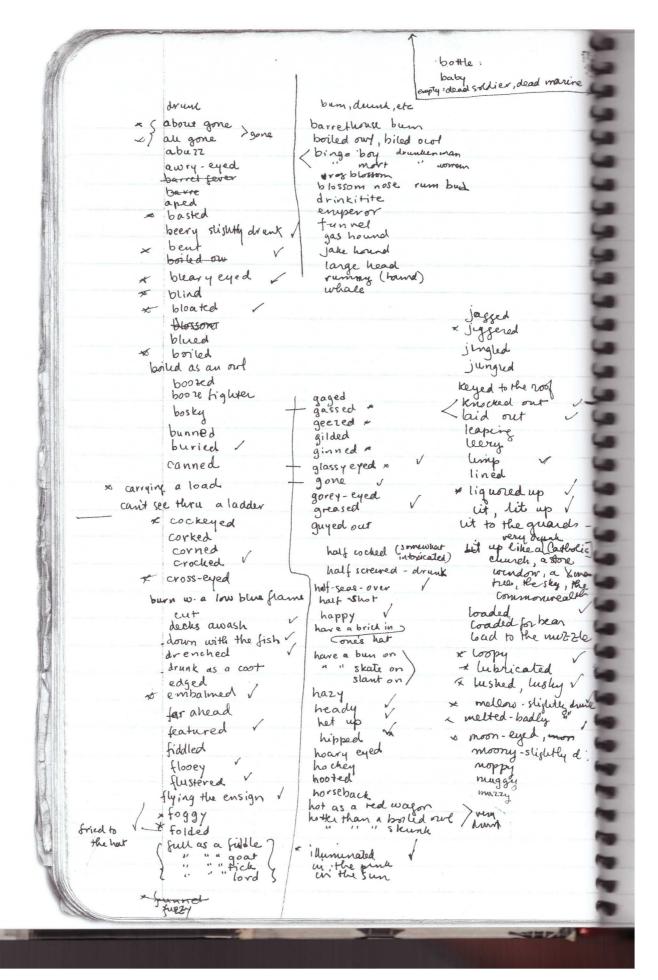
- bb I would like to discuss your photo/text work *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems*.² But before that I would like to talk about two other elements, by going back to the subject of San Diego. How did the photographic aesthetic of your group peer group come about? All of a sudden there was a whole photographic aesthetic, as though it had come from nowhere. It's going a bit too fast.... All of a sudden everybody around you is practicing a certain type of politicized photo-documentary approach that is very much geared toward a critique of the present and seemingly no longer engaged in aesthetic questions at all.
- mr We were engaging with aesthetic questions, but that wasn't the main business. And I'd started doing political photomontages in New York years before I ever heard of any of these people. I said before that what was interesting about Warhol was that everything was flat and on the surface, that everything was clear and carefully gridded so that you understood exactly what was being addressed. So on the one hand I was fascinated by the systematicity of the grid and on the other hand I was taken with collisions that yielded a certain elusive third effect, the legacy of Surrealism that had intrigued me from high school.
- **bb** Fred Lonidier's *Twenty-nine Arrests* responds in a very explicit way, not only to one particular artist, namely, Ed Ruscha,³ but to a certain type of conceptual art, offering a very critical countermodel. What was your relationship to the photographic practices of Conceptual Art at the moment, and how did you position yourself in regard to those? And within that process of developing a countermodel to Conceptual Art, how did you receive social documentary photographic practices of the 1930s? Is there a link between those two, and if so, how did that happen? Or did it happen separately or simultaneously without a direct causal connection?
- mr Speaking about myself, as we've established, although I began with painting, I have always looked at photographs. When I went to grad school, I got together with that group of people we were discussing, who were mostly photographers: Fred Lonidier, and then Phil Steinmetz, Brian Connell, and Allan Sekula. There were a few other people in our group, Steve Buck for a while, and later Adele Shaules and Marge Dean, but I worked most closely with the first four. Everybody had an interest in critique, but we had various degrees of direct political activism and orientation. We met virtually every week for several years and considered ourselves in many ways a working group, batting ideas around—the film critic and painter Manny Farber, for whom I was a teaching assistant, called us "that cabal down there" in the darkroom. We were all quite aware of photographic conceptualism. We read political theory and art and film theory and criticism, especially Screen magazine, discussed contemporary work, talked and argued with David Antin, met with a literary group organized by Fred Jameson, and interacted with Herbert Marcuse and his students—who included Angela Davis—in class situations and in conjunction with the constant protest events. To return to Fred, about whom you asked specifically, like the rest of us he was politically active and saw photography as usefully integrated into his activities as a form of political work.
- **bb** So one could say that was the communicative dimension of photography that attracted him?

32: 33

² The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems, black-and-white photographs and text, 1974/75.

³ Twenty-nine Arrests: Headquarters of the 12th Naval District, May 4, 1972, San Diego, black-and-white photographs, 1972.

- mr Yes, but again like all of us, he didn't, for example, think "I will be a photojournalist for the left"—it wasn't as simple as that.
- bb But you didn't think "I am going to do the same thing as Douglas Huebler," either. So, what kind of photography did conceptual art represent to you all at this time?
- mr We saw photographic conceptualism—unlike the basically formalist nonphotographic conceptualism of, say, Kosuth—as a version of pop art, though there was also the other dimension of photographic conceptualism that is a version of systems theory: Photography would then be seen as a system of representation that you bring to bear on other systems.
- bb While eliminating narrative and traditional forms of social representation.
- Yes. It was idealist, formalist. That's not what we had in mind, any of us, since representing the social and even employing narrative was our intention. Certainly we were uninterested in the traditional single-print aesthetic, where you have a bounded field as the arena of operation. But what made us different from other people, like Dan Graham or perhaps even Doug Huebler, was that we were interested in developing an aesthetics of photography that rejected formalist modernism while still believing in the power of the formal elements. At the same time, we would use photography at will, without necessarily valorizing it. We wanted to be documentarians in a way that documentarians hadn't been. For example, most of us (certainly I did) avidly attended the endless screenings of films on campus, from Michael Snow and structuralist film to new feminist films to European and Latin American film to gangster films and wanted to produce photo sequences that looked like exploded films. As viewers of Godard, we wanted to parasitize all forms—and foreground the apparatus. As readers of Brecht, we wanted to use obviously theatrical or dramatized sequences or performance elements together with more traditional documentary strategies, to use text, irony, absurdity, mixed forms of all types....
- **bb** As opposed to post-pop conceptualism?
- **mr** Well, much of that seemed self-referential or nihilistic, constrained and stingy or just plain irrelevant.
- **bb** Conceptual photography has a pretty complicated photographic aesthetic, with fairly complex theoretical and aesthetic underpinnings.
- mr Partly because it engages in a form of deception. It pretends.
- **bb** That is not what they thought. They thought they were giving you the most honest account without any pretenses.
- mr But how can you be blind to a medium? To mediation?
- **bb** By using a cheap portable camera with no conventions involved at all. The deskilling of photography takes place programmatically in conceptual art. It rejects all of modernist photographic aesthetics with a Duchampian approach, saying that a photograph is a mere indexical trace recorded by an optical chemical system. And if



objuscated spifflicated " the blink Steamed up organized steeped ~ ossified stewed, stewed to the gills out like a light out of the picture * stiff over shot - badly in * Stinko over the bay * stuccoed, owled swacked owl-eyed ! * tanked, tanked up paralyzed teald up passed out [cold] three sheets in the wind * tight as a niente pie-eyed piffed top heavy pifflicated tuned piped under the table up to the gills x plastered ploughed vulcani zed podgy walled - eyed polished up wapsed down polluted well fixed preserved wet woozy primed Zig - Zagged rileyed rosined rum dumb atholic Shit faced rummed Bore saturated scammered screeching scrooched seeing makes wzzle served up shagged shellacked shicker polished up shined, slewed, sloughed stopped over stopped to the ears stopped up sloppy Diary Notes for The Bowery in two Snotted inadequate descriptive systems, snott snozzled ~ soapy . leged

you take a photograph of a gas station, that is worth as much as everybody else being photographed on earth. There is no hierarchy at all. I don't want to go into this, but there is a fairly complex set of terms operating in conceptual photography.

- mr Why is that complex?
- **bb** In its prohibition of narrative, in its prohibition of referentiality, in its prohibition....
- mr It is photography degree zero. But that is hardly complex. It is a little blind.
- **bb** Degree zero is a pretty complex model and it has haunted us for a long time.
- mr And it continues to do so.
- **bb** So you oppose conceptualism's photography degree zero with your photography model, which rediscovers American traditions of the 1930s, namely FSA photography.⁴
- mr I came at it using two different models. On the one hand there was the argument you've just invoked, that photography is nothing; and there is no skill involved. We take it to the corner drug store—and in fact I did. But then I didn't, because I came to accept that it's not possible to hide who took the picture, especially when it is an artist who already has a developed aesthetic sense. It seemed, also, that one could try to develop new aesthetic means by looking at the history of photography. I was looking at people like Robert Frank, August Sander and Erich Salomon, Weegee and Arbus, Friedlander and Winogrand, Danny Lyon and Larry Clark, even Elliott Erwitt, but not necessarily as direct models. But that was the moment in which the FSA photographers were being named and differentiated. But surely you can see the remnants of my own interest in that conceptual tradition in all my photography, including *The Bowery*.
- **bb** Is that when you discovered the FSA history? Because we are talking about the early seventies, a moment when this was not yet a common discussion. The history of FSA photography was written later.
- mr Not too much later. The books I knew of in that period were William Stott's Documentary Expression and Thirties America, Hurley's book Portrait of a Decade, and Roy Stryker's In This Proud Land.⁵ It was the Photo League's history that was harder to find. I was already interested in Walker Evans, having read Let Us Now Praise Famous Men with intense interest years earlier. I saw Evans too as something of a dandy, and I was interested by the powerful aestheticism of his approach.
- **bb** What about his *Crimes of Cuba?* Why would he be a dandy doing that type of work? I thought that the leftist dimension of his work might have been attractive to you.

⁴ The photographers of what became the Historical Section of the FSA, or Farm Security Administration, organized by Roy Stryker of the Roosevelt Administration in Washington, operated from 1935 to 1943. In that period, about 270,000 images were produced. The first three people hired were Carl Mydans, Walker Evans, and Ben Shahn. Next were Dorothea Lange and Arthur Rothstein, followed by others.

⁵ William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (London, Oxford, and New York: Oxford University, 1973); F. Jack Hurley, *Portrait of a Decade: Roy Stryker and the Development of Documentary Photography in the Thirties* (Baton Rouge: University of Lousiana, 1972); Roy Stryker and Nancy Wood, *In This Proud Land, America* 1935–1943 as Seen in the Photographs. (New York: Galahad Books, 1973).

F3A 1935 - 1943 By Styker, Rexford Tugwell

Luce Delans, Dorothea Lango, Walker Evans, John Vachon, Russell Lee, Marion Post Wolcott, John Collier, Jr, Carl Mydans, Gordon Parks, Ben Shahn, Arthur Rothstein

- I didn't know that work in particular, but some Cuba photos were important elements in American Photographs. His basic dandy aesthetic of detachment and disdain could actually be bent to convey a political dimension. Compare him to the more overheated metorical turns of partisan photography of the thirties, for instance, including the Film and Photo League-which I also admired, but it didn't seem like the kind of hybrid I was after. A strong aspect of Evans's American Photographs (and later of Frank's Americans) was its powerful sequencing—so much of the meaning of the work is in the interstices. And remember that in the early seventies the whole photo world was operating on the single-print modernist aesthetic. Now, if you compare Ed Ruscha's Twenty-six Gasoline Stations [1963] with American Photographs or The Americans, can see that they have structural elements in common: the structured image itself and the sequencing. Yet they are opposites. In Twenty-six Gasoline Stations the sequence is one plus one plus one, and it is simple accretion that makes the point. In Evans and Frank, it is one plus two plus three plus four, so the actual sequence and the content make a difference. Yet they both depend on seriality, something that the shoto world did not permit. Of course, I was also interested in Walker Evans's notion of the urban. I didn't see very much of it in the other FSA photographers, because the Farm Security Administration was, of course, primarily focused on the rural.
- What about Dorothea Lange's urban photographs?
- wes, but they concentrated on the people more than the setting. Lange, for all her strengths, focused on human interest, even a monumentalization of the poor and of the unorganized. Not a model I would be comfortable in adopting. There are no saints in my religion. Bourke-White, on the other hand, not an FSA photographer but an important photojournalist, was too professional, her work too controlled and formalized. Shahn and Delano were terrific, but again, focused on the portrait, the narrative incident, and Shahn's wonderful photography nevertheless seemed searingly misanthropic. Actually, we didn't get to see that much of Jack Delano's work. Russell Lee's strength and weakness were his wry clownishness, Rothstein was interesting and a focus of controversy, but later a commercial entity, like Lee. I was interested in John Vachon and John Collier for their anthropological rationalism, but I saw so little of their work that it could hardly make a great impression. Marion Post Wolcott's work seems to have been largely suppressed, because all we ever saw was her rather fabulous depictions of the good life in postwar Florida. Evans's career, however, was not circumscribed by his relatively brief stint with the FSA but went far beyond it, from his Cuba photos to his FSA and Fortune work to Let Us Now Praise Famous Men to the subway photos of Many Are Called, which I did not accept.

Nevertheless, although I was deeply affected by *American Photographs* and the complexity of Evans's vision, his cooled-down echoes of Paris street photography and Russian constructivist photography, I didn't take Evans as the man to emulate, and his work didn't have the same sort of productive influence on me that, I think, Godard's did. But Evans provided a certain revelation that was similar to what I've said about Godard and the urban. A direct homage is visible in one of my Bowery photographs: I was very struck by a picture Evans had taken of a store front with a bunch of hats piled up against a window. It seemed like a Bohemian inversion of the received discourse of the urban: for him the street was the safe and known place, and the shop interior is presented as a glimmering shadow, a semi-dangerous, unknown space. That's what I think that photo is about—the essential unknowability or undisclosability of this interior space.

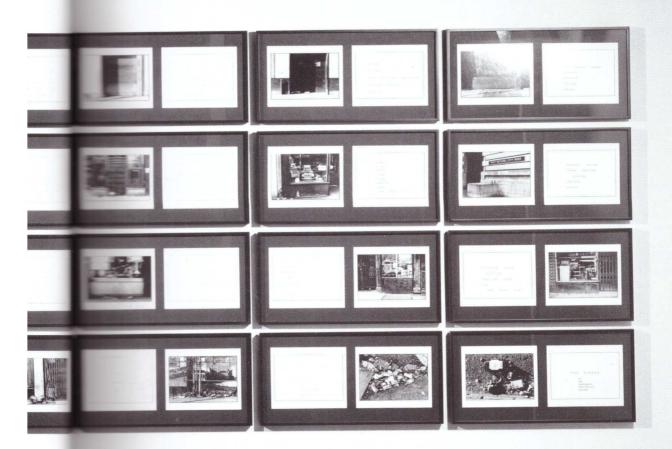
- **bb** What about Berenice Abbott?—her work focused totally on urban subjects.
- Mr Yes, but her work is pretty cold. Crisp, jewel-like, detached. It doesn't suggest a political awareness the way Evans's work seemed to, even without overt partisanship. Paul Strand is miraculous, but mostly his work from the twenties. One of the things that was both appealing and problematic was his Third Worldism—we were seized by a tremendous Third Worldism in the seventies, yet also critical of it. But I did see Strand as being the person who began to move American photography from pictorialism to modernism, an inestimable advance. I admired his film work, the way he employed his still photography's modernist, constructivist, Russian-formalist style, as in *The Plow that Broke the Plains* —basically a government propaganda film. But I think that he has been discounted and his work has been looked at only sporadically because of his political sympathies.
- bb How does your reorientation toward that history of photography come about when it is clearly not motivated exclusively in the rediscovery of that history but also served as a construction of a license for a different type of photographic aesthetic that is both anti-pop and anti-conceptual? You discovered aspects of photography history as tools for projects for which there was hardly any legitimizing basis evident. And it allowed you to construct an opposition to pop art, and to Warhol, and it allowed you to construct an opposition to conceptual art. After all, you must have been aware of its California variety; Huebler and Ruscha in particular must have been on everybody's mind, because they were very visible in California at that time.
- mr Well, we were not in Los Angeles, but you are basically correct, although Ruscha was much more visible than Huebler. And locally in San Diego, don't forget John Baldessari. He came from National City, California—he wasn't from the upper West Side, or the Lower East Side. He was an American! In 1968 his work provided the first time I saw a photograph exhibited as a nonvalorized object. It was painting on canvas that was, I think, a faithful rendering of a photo with a guy leaning against a pole smack in the middle, with the word "wrong" at the bottom. That is metadiscourse; I had never seen photographic meta-discourse before. Not only did he use a dumb photo, he made a point of it by sticking a word on it, because of course words were forbidden in photography.

⁶ Directed by Pare Lorentz for the Resettlement Administration Unit, 1936. The Resettlement Administration was the predecessor to the Farm Security Administration (FSA).

martha rosler: positions in the life world

- **bb** Was he one of your teachers?
- mr No, but when I moved there in '68 I got to know everybody socially, through the Antins. By the time I became a student in '71, John had left for Cal Arts. I think Allan Sekula had taken courses with him.
- bb So how does one get to your work from the photography history that you had rediscovered? When you produced *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems* in 1974, it appears as a project of historical archaeology of sorts. But it is also a project which constructs a new photographic aesthetic, an alternate aesthetic altogether.
- mr Photography allowed me to generate an image and not to have it be a representation of my own interiority. And also it solved for me the paradox of style I have mentioned already. I could break the box of interiority, subjectivity, and authenticity.
- bb Was that not what conceptualism had proved to some extent?
- mr You mean inadvertently proved...it demonstrated it.
- bb Was The Bowery's relationship to Walker Evans very self-conscious at the time?
- mr If so it's primarily because he provided the least time-bound—and the least Norman Rockwell-like because least small-town oriented—of that lot. Who else did I have as a model?
- Well you didn't do *Twenty-nine Arrests*, as Fred Lonidier had done. You don't directly relate two conceptual practices anymore in the *Bowery* piece. You are going to Walker Evans, not to Ruscha or Baldessari, and that is a very peculiar shift, even though you are clearly coming from a post-conceptual aesthetic that makes the photographs and the textual elements equivalent. But you reclaim American photographic history with a social or a social documentarian agenda at the very moment when the subjects and forms of that practice were clearly discredited. You reclaim that legacy as a foundation or legitimization for your work.
- I see reflections of my reading of Walter Benjamin's "Short History of Photography" there, including his discussion of the caption. And of Roland Barthes and the Birmingham Cultural Studies approach, as in Stuart Hall's articles on the meaning of news photographs. These authors, and Debord and situationism, and film theory and the French and Latin American film makers, were far more directly influential than, say, Ruscha. I had been very impressed by futurist poetry and its typographic experiments, and I was well acquainted with concrete poetry, having already had Ian Hamilton Finlay and others in Pogamoggan, the poetry magazine I had helped Lenny Neufeld and Harry Lewis publish in the mid-sixties in New York. I was also in close contact with some of the Art & Language group in New York at the time I developed the Bowery work, in 1974: Ian Burn, Carole Conde and Karl Beveridge, Terry Smith, Mel Ramsden... all the non-Americans. I'd even put my friendship with Elly Antin in the mix, and Hans Haacke, ahead of more visible contemporary conceptual work. I was interested in something more than just an oblique relationship to life as lived. But I must say that when I decribed my plan for the piece to a close collaborator, he said it sounded stupid. My guess is that it seemed to him too static and without internal development;





The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems, 1974/75. Photo/text installation.

in other words, it was missing the basics of traditional documentary—narrative and people. In fairness, though, I have to say that when it was finished, he took back his criticism.

The Bowery was in a sense genealogical. It looked back to a history that was decrepit and said, there is a reason for its decrepitude, but it's a mistake to throw this away. It is not simply a set of dismissive quotations, as one might say about some of the appropriation artists' subsequent take on photographic history, and yet it is a set of rough quotations of a style, for want of a better word. It also demanded, much as you may disagree, a new look at the urban at the depth of New York's fiscal crisis. The work intended a structural critique, yet without high drama or human actors. Only banks, storefronts, and empty bottles. The photos are really deadpan in that the building fronts are mostly totally flat against the picture plane, and perhaps that is derived from looking at Hilla and Bernd Becher, and Evans, if not the *Twenty-six Gasoline Stations* approach.

- bb Seriality and a kind of strangely punning quotation even of the technique of the documentary photograph as an attempt to really internalize it or make it the standard of your own work—even on that level it is a quotation. The black-and-white formality is very emphatic and at the same time casual, but it is not totally deskilled like a photograph by Huebler or Dan Graham. It plays between skilling and deskilling in a much more complicated way than conceptual photographers ever had.
- mr I try to approach that interplay in everything. That's part of the "as if" idea.

bb The linguistic dimension turns conceptual aesthetics completely upside down because you introduce almost an Artaud-type language model as opposed to a tautological, self-reflexive, self-referential, analytical-language model. Suddenly language is directly somatic and physically motivated again. All the terms complementing your photographs are slang terms of the body and the social descriptions of drunkenness. So that language model that you introduce is as anti-conceptualist as the language model of the postcard pieces was anti-conceptual in its explicit reference to actually existing social reality on the level of the most banal everyday conditions. So you establish a radical countermodel, both on the level of language and on the level of photographic practice.

But why the photographic history of social documentary and Walker Evans is reclaimed is still not clear to me. What do they represent? You say that they had failed. It was clear that they had failed. But do they represent an American model of a politically conscious artistic practice that you wanted to bring closer to your own horizon? That you thought it was better to refer to Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange and the Farm Security Administration than to Heartfield and the Russians?

- mr I took for granted that as a person interested in redescribing American life, I should try to draw on my predecessors. But I think we should refer here to the leavening of playfulness and humor, of poetry and stand-up comedy, that the language provided. It also was unauthored, collective, historical, vernacular, and nuanced. It had many attributes I wanted photography, and art in general, to have.
- **bb** The fact that photography seemed to have provided openings for women artists in the twenties, thirties, and forties when the visual arts had not provided them—that must have been an additional interest.

I was passingly familiar with that work, and of course I knew Dorothea Lange, Margaret Bourke-White, and Berenice Abbott, as I've suggested. The question had been, "What is it about a camera?...well, maybe that is what women can do." My answer was that painting was giant and male and heroic and photography was small and go-aboutyour-business and do good work. Once I decided that photography (which as I said I always was doing even while I saw myself as a painter) was a good thing and an important thing, it did make a difference. And I was rather distressed and annoyed by the masculinism of the students of Walter Rosenblum, the idea of going out on the street and rescuing images of the down and out. In the seventies - not the sixties -I did think that there was a kind of documentary that was interesting, in addition to Latin American film like The Battle of Chile, Vidas Secas, or La Hora de los Hornos, there was in the States the photo work of Ken Light and Earl Dotter, Steve Cagan and Mel Rosenthal, Barbara Koppel's great film Harlan County, USA, and the ground-breaking film With Babies and Banners, people working with labor without being deeply polemical, all these people who knew the labor movement and photography but who haven't made a career in the art world. Their work was interesting and complex and, like Fred's, it was both used within the labor movement and was in dialogue with aesthetic traditions—like the Film and Photo League, these are organic intellectuals. They don't see their primary audience as an art audience or their primary mode of circulation as publications for the middle-class world-yet some of them were quite interested in affecting art discourse or at least reaching the art audience-remember that we are dealing, overall, with the first generation in which people with all sorts of political and social aims for their photo work went to art school. For many subjects I didn't look too hard at whether the makers were male or female; I was intent on looking at the work.

bb So photography as a model became attractive at the moment when you and your peers in the early seventies were trying to reconsider or reconstruct a different type of cultural production and trying to ground it in local traditions rather than looking at Heartfield or looking at Russian and Soviet artists, who would have been other examples in the 1920s.

I can't speak for what my peers were thinking. When I did look at Heartfield, I thought he was a master of something I was only fooling around with. His work was more sophisticated, with a highly developed sense of how to mix together irony and newspaper quotations, various forms of text and imagery. I was glad to know he existed—and surely I was subsequently influenced by his work. But, to answer your question, it seemed more important to work with indigenous or local traditions. That just seemed like a logical outgrowth of the scene and situation we found ourselves in. Why reject the FSA or Lewis Hine or the Film and Photo League? So much of the Film and Photo League—Lou Seltzer, Sid Grossman, Arthur Leipzig, Bernard Cole, Dan Wiener, Sol Libsohn, Bill Witt, Morris Engel, Ruth Orkin, Lester Talkington, and of course Walter Rosenblum—were of that New York milieu that I shared. Their work evidenced some of that Popular Front sentimentalism, but they were not after abjection but rather exhibiting working-class vitality, and for some even a Jewish self-help tradition.

To bring it home, so to speak, and say there is a tradition here that has to be reactivated and reconsidered?

Mr Absolutely. The American left has always been divided about whether to love or hate the USA. The fact is that wholesale cultural import is cruel, dishonoring the work of

people who came before you. I thought it was important to reclaim important but abandoned practices, to show that others had gone before. I was, after all, making an argument about a native tradition, not about Soviet or German prewar work. For *The Bowery* I thought Evans was the person who knew the urban scene the best. He knew how to represent something about the ways in which the shop, the street, and people passing by form a unity. That allowed me to extract the people and still have the landscape of the city street, partly because the ghosts of the people are there, if you will allow me. Partly because they are in Evans's photographs, but also because we already understand what a city street is and what the Bowery represents and so on. At the same time I couldn't rest with photography alone because I didn't want to re-valorize the silent image or the single image. And that is why that work took the form of a grid, straight from conceptual art or minimalism. The title, "The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems," is as important or unimportant as the rest of the piece. It is actually part of the piece.

- bb "Inadequate" to what?
- **mr** A descriptive system; descriptive systems are inadequate to experience. But then the question is, what is experience?
- **bb** You are using two descriptive systems. So they are both inadequate.
- mr Well, aren't they?

- **bb** So that is a double critique of conceptualism in its two-pronged radical approach.
- mr I think it was in a sense more of a critique of humanism—yes, perhaps of conceptualism, but what was moving me more was the underlying humanist notion of the commensurability between representation and experience and even its optimistic view of progress.
- **bb** So *The Bowery* is not a utopian piece but a work defined by double negation?
- mr That is correct. But that doesn't mean that I wasn't in some strong sense a utopian. Remember that this was a gallery work—it had a rather specific task.
- bb Was it shown? When was it shown first?
- mr I don't keep such records, but perhaps at the 1975 show "Information," at the San Francisco Art Institute or the 1977 show there called "Social Criticism and Art Practice." Possibly in late '75 at the Whitney Museum Downtown. Certainly at the Long Beach Museum in '77, in a solo show David Ross gave me when he was the director there, and in a solo show at and/or in Seattle in '78. I showed it at A-Space in Toronto. And I think I showed it at Véhicule Art in Montreal. It may have been shown at one or two other places in the seventies, and it was shown at the Vienna Secession in 1981 around the time the book you published came out. Of course it has been shown quite a few times since, and copies are owned by several museums. I was glad to put it in a book, but I still had to think twice. I didn't, like you, see a book as its logical home. I saw it as a gallery work, hanging with other artwork. I was doing different kinds of

⁷ Martha Rosler: Three Works (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art & Design, 1981).

work with different audiences. The postcard works were to be mailed out, and it was an entirely different mode of address.

- 50 the postcard pieces8 were never shown in galleries?
- Yes they were, but a little later, and they were also published as the book *Service*, at the initiative of Printed Matter in 1978, when it was publishing artists' books and not simply distributing them.
- What about Tijuana Maid?
- Sure. That was the third postcard novel, in Spanish—but they've all been shown in galleries. But the works' primary mode of distribution was ineluctably the mail, and when they are shown in art-world institutions, they are representing themselves as mail works. But from its inception I felt that *The Bowery* was a work for art galleries and museums. I have to stress that one critic has attacked me for showing and selling this work, and that is really a misunderstanding—people now think it was originally a book work, since you published it at Nova Scotia. It was meant as an art work, hanging on the wall—why else would I bother calling it "inadequate"? Who cares about inadequacy of representation? The general public doesn't care about inadequacy, the art world and artists care about adequacy of representational systems. The title showed that whatever other people might make of the work, its primary audience was the person interested in the production of meaning through art or language, or poetry.
- mbat is the implication of what could be adequate? Activism?
- Activism is not a representational system. You have to ask yourself, and the answer is the fundamentally there is an incommensurability between experience and language.

 I don't think that any system of representation is adequate.
- But the whole rediscovery of social documentary photography was partially a critique, as a repositioning of an established model whose boundaries had been ascovered. I know you are responding to it. You are replacing it, for example by doing work. Is that less "inadequate"?
- but it is better in some ways because at least people move and speak and area fixed into icons. But there aren't any people in that piece because how do you are represent the experience of other people? That was the main problem.
- The critique that you formulated in the essay "In, around, and afterthoughts..."9

 The historical model points in various directions. It points to the limitations of

 The black-and-white photograph, it points to the limitations of the melioristic approach

 The deployed in the state interest. It points to the rupture between actual social

 The black-and the representation of that social existence. Is this a critique of the model

 The black-and ust been reintroduced by you into aesthetic discussion?
- But at the end of the essay, which, I wrote to accompany the work itself in the Nova book, I say in effect, this isn't a massacre of the documentary possibilities but

^{(1974),} McTowersMaid (1974), and Tijuana Maid (1975).

The Works, op. cit.

Well for one thing, we can't simply follow the work of the past—that is inadequate! For another, the new representational technologies quite possibly are better. They are certainly more up-to-date, such as working on the web. Or maybe they should work in conjunction. For example, to stick with my San Diego friends, Fred Lonidier's photo works on labor issues are often accompanied by video interviews. Also, using several different types and levels of written text, it's as though he was foreshadowing the interactive computer piece. We all shared an impulse to develop more complex ways of address—the opposite of the "parachuting photographer," who would go somewhere, take pictures of some crisis, and get the hell out, which resulted in the valorization of the photographer, anyway. We all made use of pre-existent forms and moved them toward some other meaning. I've referred to my own work as a type of decoy. Fred's decoys were didactic license-plate holders, T-shirts, or snapshots about labor issues meant to speak directly to the assembly-line workers making them. Phil Steinmetz made beautiful, sardonic photo albums that in effect deconstructed his inland-California working-class family. Allan Sekula devised conceptually rigorous and formally inventive photo narratives and has made significant contributions to photographic history and theory. Brian Connell made ferociously brilliant videotapes, one of them about another decoy, the fake islands in Long Beach Harbor that hide oil-drilling rigs. Adele Shaules did video interviews of women about soap opera before it was a popular academic subject and also made a tape about her three sisters who were Paulist nuns. None of us wanted to reduce the engagement of art with real-world issues but rather to try to figure out how to renovate and reinvent forms. The group also felt that since Allan and I seemed to be able to write, it would be useful to write about what was, in effect, our collective labor of investigation and redefinition.

One of the things I have never wanted to do, and I hope I never have done, is to tell people what to do. I'd rather be saying, "Here is the problem—why don't you come up with a solution?" In *The Bowery* I was suggesting some possibilities, but I wasn't offering a formula for how to go forward. Because, in fact, the *Bowery* piece was about stopping, not going forward. But if someone shows you where the door is and points to the handle, they are saying that it may be closed, but you can open it and walk through, and maybe you'll be able to do something really great.

bb How does one get from the Bowery piece to *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, ¹⁰ for example, as a spectator who is confronted with your work for the first time? There is a link, of course, and there is a project, however, and that is not obvious.

mr One obvious similarity is that in each I am working with the notion of a grid and the interplay between subjectivity and forms drained of subjectivity, dehumanized—which, you could say, is something of what I was getting at with the quotations of documentary: that they have been drained of real meaning. I probably shot the photos for the *Bowery*, and shot the videotape within a week or two of each other, in the late fall of 1974. So I was thinking of them virtually simultaneously.

bb There is also a connection between the postcard pieces and the *Semiotics of the Kitchen* in terms of a reorientation of the subject matter toward the sphere of the

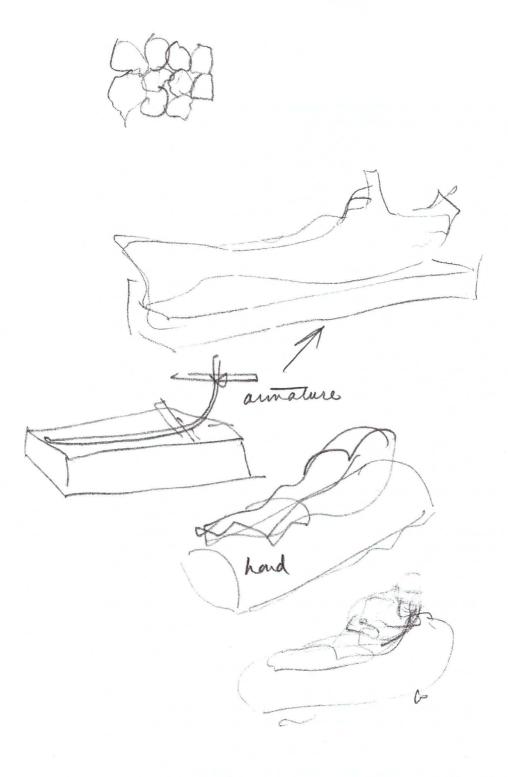
¹⁰ Black-and-white videotape, 1975.

domestic. Clearly the beginning of a feminist approach is already evident in the postcard pieces, perhaps earlier than that. To my knowledge those are the first pieces that indicate a very specific feminist orientation of your work. Yet, even in "Bringing the War Home," the focus on the home and the sphere of domesticity as the sphere supposedly disconnected from politics was already foregrounded to some extent.

- Actually it already was in the photomontage series "Body Beautiful, or Beauty Knows No Pain"—I made the first one in that series about 1965, but I picked up the phrase "beauty knows no pain" from a somewhat later film of that title by Elliott Erwitt. It is uttered by the leader of a group of Texas cheerleaders he was filming. This series of mine, which hasn't yet been widely seen, perhaps, is mostly about representations of the feminine in advertising and art. The antiwar series "Bringing the War Home" carried forward some of the feminist concerns in the other photomontages—which, by the way, I continued to make. All of them invoked the domestic interior, specifically, representations of the domestic interior, and the construction of separate categories and thus separate spaces. The subject was "photos of," rather than simple experience. And Semiotics of the Kitchen, which I made when I was back in New York in 1974/75, is about "television representations of." For Semiotics I had to use someone's loft because the kitchen wasn't supposed to look like a suburban kitchen. It had to look like some kind of strange set—a sign for a kitchen. The work I did using clothing was about domesticity and the feminine. But I realized that the strategies I used in "Bringing the War Home" were more compelling to me than stuffing clothing. I thought it was better to get away from the materiality of sculptural objects.
- I saw references to it before, but I don't know what "stuffing clothing" was as an activity. You stuffed clothes to make sculpture out of them? In San Diego, with the garage sales?¹¹
- mr Earlier than the garage sales, but the garage sales were part of that impulse to take the clothing of "just yesterday," with the ghosts of people still in them, and to d enaturalize them in some way so that they told a social story rather than an individual story. There were a couple of works using clothing that were specifically political, namely, *Diaper Pattern* and *Some Women Prisoners...*, in the mid-seventies. ¹² But I decided that photography did better what I needed to do than an object situated in a room.
- bb But the garage sales were also performance pieces. Those were a very peculiar and unreadable kind at the time, I suppose.
- mr Why?
- bb You told me that most of your fellow students criticized them.
- mr It was the Marcuse contingent—his students in the philosophy department. The art students understood it well enough! A Marcusan wrote a polemic against the work in the university newspaper: how could I have actual objects, *such* objects, for sale in an art gallery? We wound up having a public discussion with Marcuse and a few other people about the role of art, what is an appropriate art object....

Monumental Garage Sale, performance and installation, 1973; Traveling Garage Sale, 1977.

Diaper Pattern, installation with diapers and text, 1975; Some Women Prisoners of the Thieu Regime at the Infamous Poulo Condore Prison in South Vietnam, installation with stamped clothing and barbed wire, 1972.



Notebook sketches for Stuffed Sculpture, c. 1970.

- bb But the *Garage Sale* was also a peculiar type of performance work, right? There is a paradigmatic shift in defining that as a performance work as opposed to say—Carolee Schneeman, or Joan Jonas, or Vito Acconci doing performance work in the late sixties. And suddenly you are doing a Duchamp ready-made on a grand scale—dealing with objects, dealing with consumption, domesticity, you are not dealing with that definition of the body. Even though later on in *Vital Statistics*¹³ the body comes into your work, in a major way.
- mr Vital Statistics and the Garage Sale were both done in 1973.
- **bb** So there again we have heterodoxy in its utmost form. It is not easily correlated, but ultimately one senses that there is a link.
- Again, it is the question of the setting versus the figure in the setting. In the *Garage Sale* there was a note on a blackboard at the back that said, maybe the garage sale is a metaphor for the mind. I'm constantly setting up works where you think you are dealing with one thing but maybe you are dealing with something else. So I might say, "Don't look at the person, look at the object." In *Vital Statistics*, I don't look at a physical setting but at the person. But it is always dialectical. It is always x plus y—the person and the setting, what do they mean? Can we distinguish them? How does one shape the other? How much of this is determined not by the individual who has owned these objects but by a society that offers certain fixed paths? Is the mind I'm referring to a kind of universal structure or one shaped by particular social formations? In *Vital Statistics* of course, there was a paradox of an individual person's being a representation of a system not only of physical regimes but also of a system of ideas about appropriate bodies—whether racial or gendered—and how this creates subjects.
- bb Had you read Foucault by that time?
- mr No, I had never even heard of him. I cannot explain this.
- The tape is clearly not a Marxist feminist tape alone. But *Semiotics of the Kitchen* also engages, by its title, then-current theory formations. Criticizing them, or undermining them, in the very same way conceptual art was questioned in the *Bowery* piece. So there is a dialogue with theoretical and artistic practices governing the moment of the late sixties and early seventies. I always thought of the *Garage Sales* as major responses to a certain type of performance aesthetic of the sixties.
- Yes, it is anti-expressionist, and that's why I said I was never a fan of Antonin Artaud.
- But what is the subject conception of expressionist performance that is opposed? It almost seems that you propose a Foucauldian conception, rather than a Marxist subject conception.
- And maybe I could have done better if I'd read Foucault or even heard of him. But actually I think the influence was more likely Debord or Henri Lefebvre—and you can't say that Lefebvre was not a Marxist, though maybe not the usual kind. He showed how even the most ordinary conditions of modernity produce a subjectivity that internalizes the regimes of surveillance. But feminism itself provided sufficient impetus. It's odd to hear you talk about these works as heterodox, since they seem

so all-of-a-piece to me. You yourself sketched out the way they follow a certain form, in that I pick a model of art production or some mode of theoretical address and say, "Look there!" I was quite interested in deprivileging modes of production. At a work's inception, I would try to figure out what was the best mode of production for its idea. But then I might use the text of a postcard novel or a performance of a written piece as a videotape, not simply let it rest.

- **bb** Then there is another element entering the work at a slightly later moment again—as, for example, in *Secrets from the Street*. ¹⁴
- mr That is considerably later—1980.
- **bb** Secrets from the Street foregrounds, for the first time, your interest in public space and architecture and the structure of urban social context.
- mr Every time I moved to a city, I did work about city streets. When I made *The Bowery* I had just returned to New York for a while. When I made the videotape *Secrets from the Street*, I had moved to San Francisco. When we talk about my living "in San Diego," for that period I lived in small beach towns, sometimes on dirt roads, once on an avocado ranch. San Diego anyway wasn't a city—it was some weird hybrid—an abandoned downtown of disused buildings and then zillions of suburbs. All my work there about urban space took place in my dreams: I would dream about sidewalks—literally. So as soon as I moved back to a city I naturally started working about cities again.
- **bb** But to me the *Bowery* piece was primarily about photography and secondarily, if at all, about urban space. That might have been a misreading on my side.
- mr How does anybody know that, though? A concern with space so clearly shows up in the airport photographs. The Bowery photos and the airport photos¹⁵ are both about the production of space in light of particular social forms. And they both use language to try to de-authorize photography while still not disclaiming it. They aren't about the people in the space but about the space itself as a product of a social system. One of the first photomontages I ever did, on a 4 foot x 8 foot Masonite sheet, was called *International Style* or *International City*, in about '65. Its size was ambitious, and it was about urbanism, on the ground and in the air. I find, looking back, a great concern on my part with questions of space. I see much of "Bringing the War Home" as trying to solve the riddle of segregated representations of clean spaces and dirty spaces of human habitation.
- **bb** But *Secrets from the Street* struck me when I saw it for the first time particularly because it seemed to recognize that public urban space is totally opaque and not penetrable by analytic theoretical insight based on representation.
- mr Doesn't The Bowery say that as well, right in its title?
- **bb** Yes, I guess it does. So "inadequacy" in that title also meant the inability to represent the actual underlying social structures of those spaces.
- mr Yes.

¹⁴ Secrets from the Street: No Disclosure, color videotape, 1980.

^{15 &}quot;In the Place of the Public," color photographs and text, 1990–98.

- **bb** But *The Bowery* it is so confined and so closely inscribed into the photographic legacy, whereas the San Francisco tape is really raw, and seemingly unformed.
- mr Yes, it's a videotape. But it is like a surveillance film, and it was shot on film. The tape opens with the focusing of the film camera, but that is followed by a series of still photographs. In the editing, I stopped the film often. The frame goes slightly dark and you have, in effect, photographic stills. The construction of the piece is a hybridization of still photography and moving images. Think about Chris Marker's La Jetée, which was very important for me. People rarely talk about Marker, but he was very important for Godard as well. But at the time I made Secrets from the Street there was no real video tradition, the foundational history was still being laid down, so it was easy not to engage with video history the same way I had engaged with photographic tradition.

In *The Bowery* I was trying to work out some way of incorporating photography into my work while showing that I had a critical relationship to it. But that doesn't exhaust its subject. It invokes humanism and its failures and it invokes social space. I didn't realize the degree to which that figured in it for me until somewhat later, but I think now it is quite clear. I keep doing the same works over and over again, only about different things! The airport and the road photographs¹⁶ both engage with questions of space and also with photography and the photographic apparatus and what it can do. What is figurable, what is not, what is considered a "snapshot" and what is an aesthetic image—what is photographic form?

legitimacy of anybody's quest for unity or continuity at this time, anyway? Why do I insist on the question of heterodoxy when, let's say, the Seattle¹⁷ piece that you did follows the Baby M¹⁸ piece? How do they relate? And how does the feminist agenda of your work situate itself with regard to the work's urbanist agenda? And how do they get reconciled, if at all? Where is the structuralist critique as one methodological model or the critique of structuralism as another methodological model? Where does that link up with the re-enactment of a production that does not presuppose the inability to represent or construct historical narrative? So every time one looks at the work another set of questions seems to come in. They are linked but they do not appear to be part of an easily identifiable over-all project. But perhaps that quest is in and of itself flawed—to want to have an over-all cohesive project when we look at the work of an artist.

Perhaps one should recognize that it is precisely destabilization that it wants to generate. If one would compare your work for example to say, Cindy Sherman's, that difference would become instantly obvious: same generation, same history, an American woman artist growing up in the seventies being educated in a fine art department in a university, coming into the public in the late seventies and early eighties.

Don't you think one of the main projects of the feminist critique of modernism was to challenge the idea of the artist as some kind of coherent subjectivity who has got his thumbprint on every work? I don't want people to engage with the persona of the creator. It's a complete bore, and it trivializes the work. You can't get it away from

^{55 &}quot;Rights of Passage," panoramic color photographs, 1995-97.

Seattle: Hidden Histories, 1991–95.

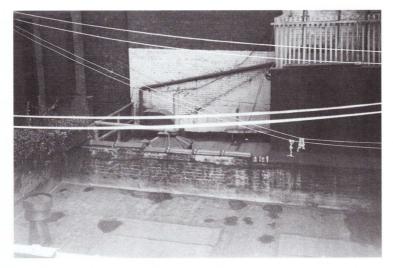
Born to Be Sold: Martha Rosler Reads the Strange Case of Baby S/M, color videotape co-produced with Paper Tiger Television, 1987.













Untitled, 1964. Black-and-white photographs.

yourself; it is stuck to you. It is always in your face that you always have to be the creator of a product line with a signature style. And as I said earlier, I had evaded the question of authenticity by deciding that it was the wrong question. Since I came of age in the period of Duchamp and conceptualism, I thought what really unites these things is my perspective, my version of deep structure, and I couldn't help it if it wasn't apparent. And the word "style" was replaced by the word "strategy." Why should an artist stick with one thing? We are not a craft.

- bb How would one describe your position, say, from the writing? After all, we haven't talked about the critical writing's being a major element of your work—going from that all the way to a project that engages with environmental and ecological questions, as in the *Greenpoint* piece, for example. Doming from an explicit feminist position, as in the early work *Vital Statistics, Semiotics of the Kitchen*, to *Baby M*, and in the urban pieces, in particular addressing aspects of class. So does your heterodoxy have to do with the complexity of the model of Marxist theory that you introduce into the work—since it has become infinitely more complex? I think would it be possible to go about it in those terms—namely, to say, well, there is just no homogeneous theoretical position available for anybody, either as an intellectual or as an artist at this moment. Unless you want to have certain things imposed on you. That is one of the problems—the degree of specialization imposed on cultural producers has become such that it is basically unthinkable not to deliver one product consistently.
- **mr** How did this happen to us, though? We were supposed to be destroying all that. And you know the pop model...
- **bb** You know, paradoxically, Warhol is kind of the figure for that in a sense. He delivered a homogeneous product, ultimately.
- mr But he can also be taken as the model of somebody who didn't. Somebody who insisted on working in film and with multiples and prints and with ateliers and performance and writing. You can hold up Warhol as the model of serial production, and I can hold him up as the model of a producer who refused—in fact, specifically took on—questions of mastery and questions of a product line. His work is constantly in dialogue with those issues. And I do see him as an important model in that regard, someone who said, "You have to follow me, I am not following your dictates."

I think what was formative for me was the development of the artist's space's in the late sixties and early seventies: artists get to decide what art is—not dealers or museums or even critics. "Heterodoxy," or hybridity, is another way of proclaiming your independence from the idea of the romantic artist who is, as the romantic movement claimed, a pipe played by the winds of genius. Only now, the winds of genius are the winds of the market. Duchamp said, in effect, "I am calling the tune and I am playing the tune, and I play it in this medium or that medium." I write critical essays, but I am not a critic. I don't have the training, my historical knowledge is too spotty, I am insufficiently scholarly. But I write criticism the same way I do art, on that same model of "as if." I'm not against specialization, but it's very powerful to tell people they don't have to see themselves as passive audiences instrumentalized by their position. I never want to make the audience feel that I am a magician—quite the opposite. I would rather have them think of me as a ham-fisted person who is trying something that they

(the audience) could do better. If people think, "There's something there, but I could do that better"—well, wonderful—do it! "I can make a better videotape" or "I could do a better performance," well, please do it!

- **bb** The work, because of that, is not didactic and impositional but dialogic and activating.
- mr My work seems didactic, but if you try to figure out what the message is, I don't think it's so clear. Take Secrets from the Street, for example, or Domination and the Everyday.²⁰ They have a really strong text, but in each case it repeats. It's a text. It loses its force as the text, and becomes a text. By the second time around, the viewer is saying, "Wait a minute..." Then you are grounded in your own space. The first time around you are straining, the second time around you are already standing back in your world and you think, "Now I can think about this!"

I was influenced by Brecht's *Lehrstücke*. I get to pose the questions. But I feel it would be self-defeating for me also to generate the answer. I may have an answer, but there is more to the world than me. It is very likely that the answer that you generate will be a better answer than my answer, so why should I presume to tell you what my answer is?



The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems



loopy groggy boozy

tight steamed up bent

folded flooey

muddled

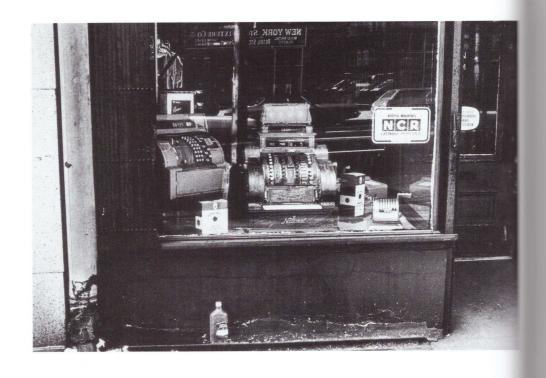
fuddled

flustered

lushy

sottish

maudlin





stewed
boiled
potted
corned
pickled
preserved
canned
fried to the hat

comatose unconscious

passed out knocked out

laid out

out of the picture

out like a light

lush wino rubbydub
 inebriate
 alcoholic
barrelhouse bum

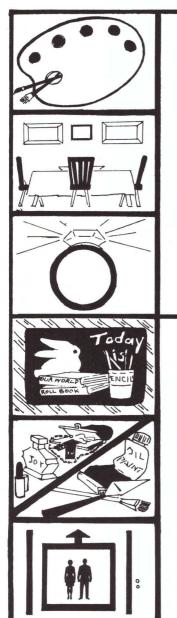




$T \ H \ E \qquad B \ O \ W \ E \ R \ Y$

in two inadequate descriptive systems

A New-Found Career



You know, I always secretly wanted to be an artist. While I was still a teen-ager I did a lot of drawing and some painting but I was shy about showing my work to people. People did admirate, though, and my family had some of the paintings framed and hung them in the dining room. I took some art courses at school and did well enough but nobody really raved...I mean, they all said I was talented but nobody came pounding at my door with a scholarship or anything. Anyway, I got busy with other things—dating and running around, you know what I mean.

In college I had to pick a major, and I decided on ed, with a minor in art history. It never really occurred to me that I might major in art. I also took a lot of lit courses. I didn't really respect the girls who filled up their time with a lot of pre-school ed, waiting to catch husbands and flash their diamond rings in the cafeteria, or maybe just drifting into teaching because it was so easy, and had short days and long vacations—though I admit that made it pretty attractive! A lot of my friends weren't ed majors at all. I really enjoyed the art history courses I took and did well in them. The few studio courses I took were all right—nothing special, though. I used to go to the museum school on Saturdays, and I liked that better—it seemed more serious.

I thought of teaching art but decided to concentrate on the lower grades. I really liked working with little kids. My parents were really supportive people. They thought that teaching was a fine career for me, and they gave me all the help they could. When I got my credential I started teaching in a nearby school. I was 22 already, but nobody was worried yet. I was known as a pretty independent girl. A couple of years later, though, my parents were getting anxious—you know how things were then—and it didn't help when I got a place of my own with another girl. I wasn't worried, really. I was having a good time, and a lot of my friends weren't married yet, either. We used to go away together. By the way, I was still painting. I used to go to the Art Students' League and took it very seriously, imagining myself half a bohemian.

It so happens that on one of my vacations I met a man, Jeff, and we hit it off right away. After the usual formalities, we got engaged and then we got married. My parents were very pleased, to say the least. He was an up-and-coming lawyer with an elevator corporation. Even though we didn't really need my salary, we agreed I'd keep working as long as I felt I enjoyed it.

Martha Rosler

Jeff encouraged me to keep on with my art. He was really supportive, though he did grow less tolerant of what he considered those bohos at the League--though he would never have put it that way! We had our ups and downs like any couple but basically we loved and understood each other. After three years we figured it would last and decided it was time to begin our family.

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We bought a house and moved up to Riverdale. I stopped painting, I guess because I was so busy with the house, and it was too far to the League. Fixing up the house was fascinating -- it was a challenge to design the rooms and pick out fabrics and furniture. They say women are nest builders, and I believe it. A woman's creativity, her very self, can be expressed in the environment she creates for herself and her family...or so we believe. There is something powerful in actually getting to pick things out instead of just dreaming your way through Better Homes and Gardens or House Beautiful.

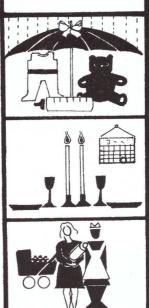
When I became pregnant one of the girls at my farewell shower told me I should have a boy so he could inherit my talent and become a famous artist. How pleased that made me then! I knew I'd get back to my own artwork eventually, but right then I was too busy--or so it seemed.

3

Jeff and I were ecstatically happy. He became really attentive again, almost like a lover, and I stopped worrying about being unattractive with my big belly. I spent a lot of time that summer on little candelight dinners for two. We both knew without saying that soon that kind of thing would end for us.

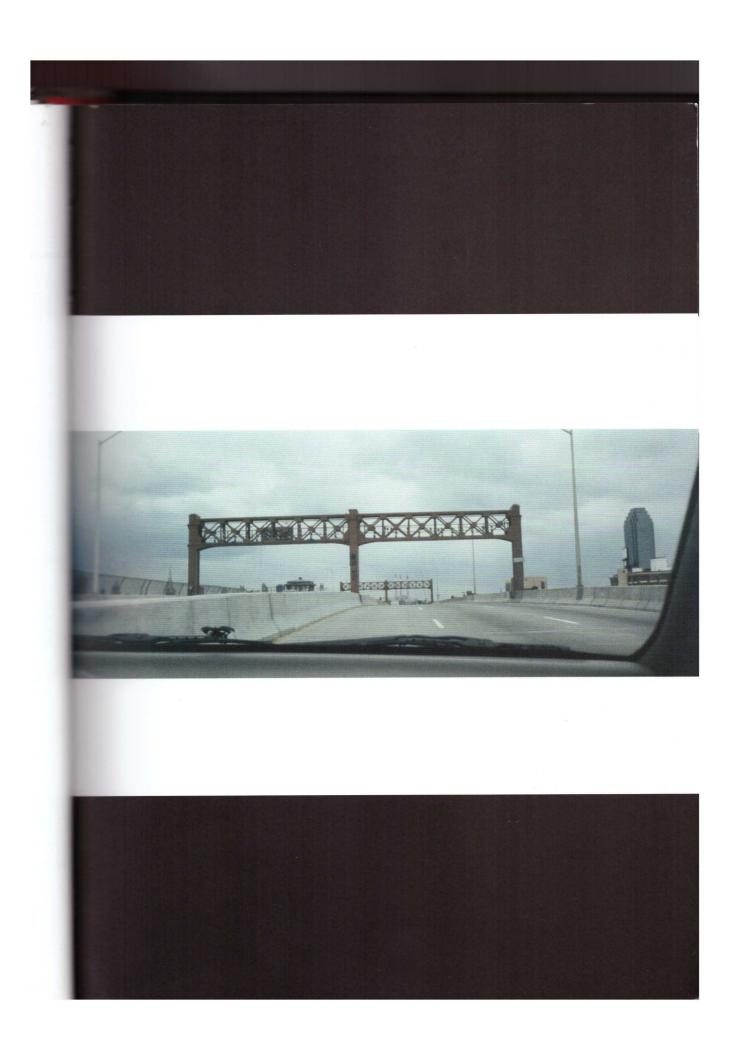
Jeff helped me with childbirth training, and the birth wasat too bad--you know, they're never anything to rave about, I zess, and this one was no different. The baby, our daughter byn, was healthy and beautiful. We had wanted a boy first weren't disappointed for more than a second--once we saw her we had to love her! The name would've been the same but spelled with an "i." She sure kept me busy! No matter what we read about motherhood, you never know what it's really Tike until it hits you -- and then you still can't believe it.

Meedless to say, I didn't have time to paint; we even had a come once a week to help out. Some women farm their kids while they're still tiry and go back to their precious but I didn't believe in that. But we settled into a roufinally, and I used to sketch while Robyn slept.



Excerpt reprinted from Journal of the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, 1977.

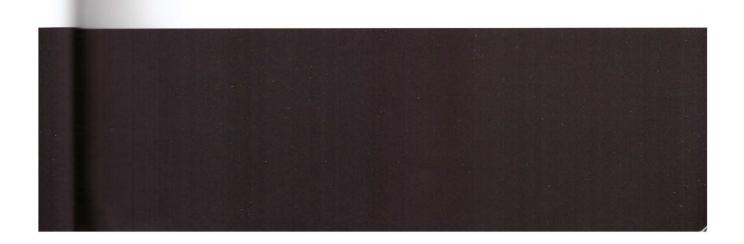


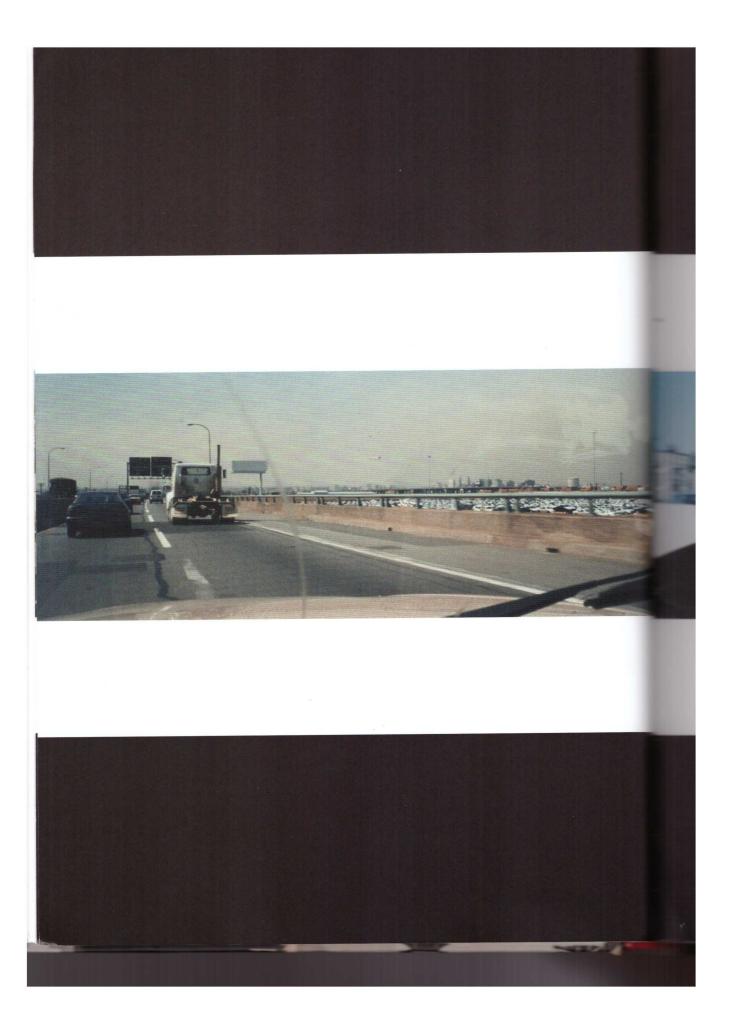






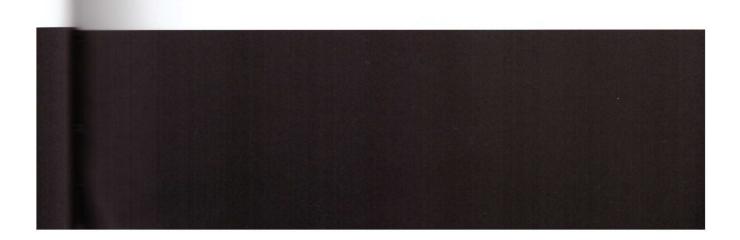


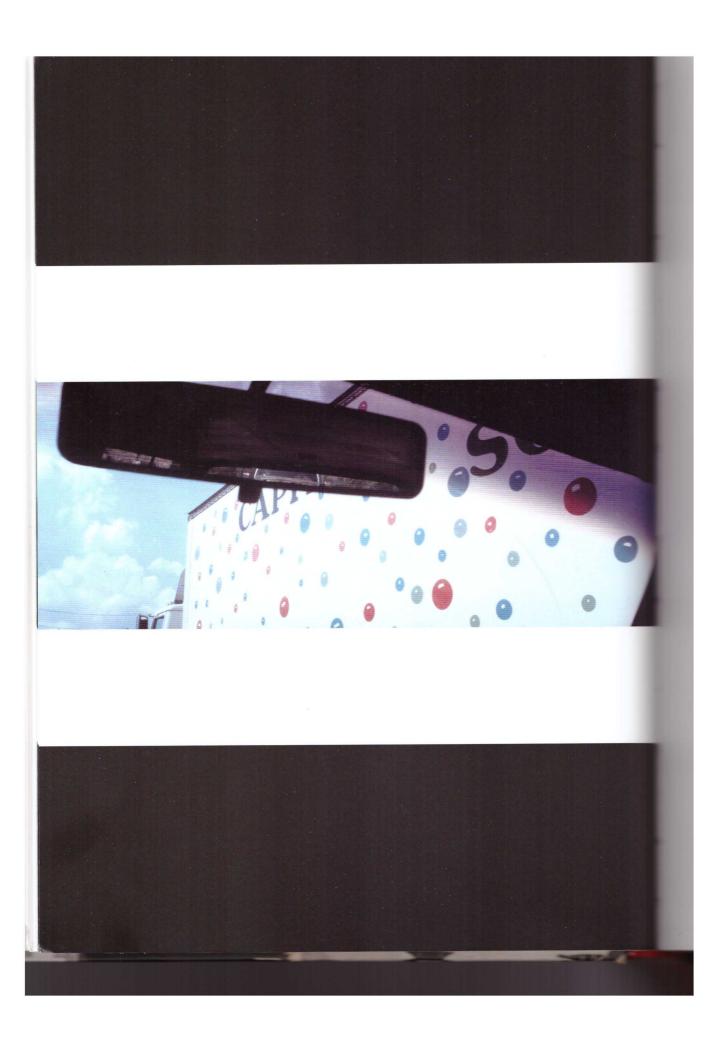












Long & lonerome road

Long & winding road

I've been travelin so long

I've been ramblin so long

I've deen ramblin so long

I've qot to stop this roamin

Lead me to your door

Your towns & your cities

They all look the same

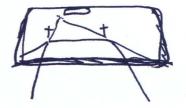
Only difference between them

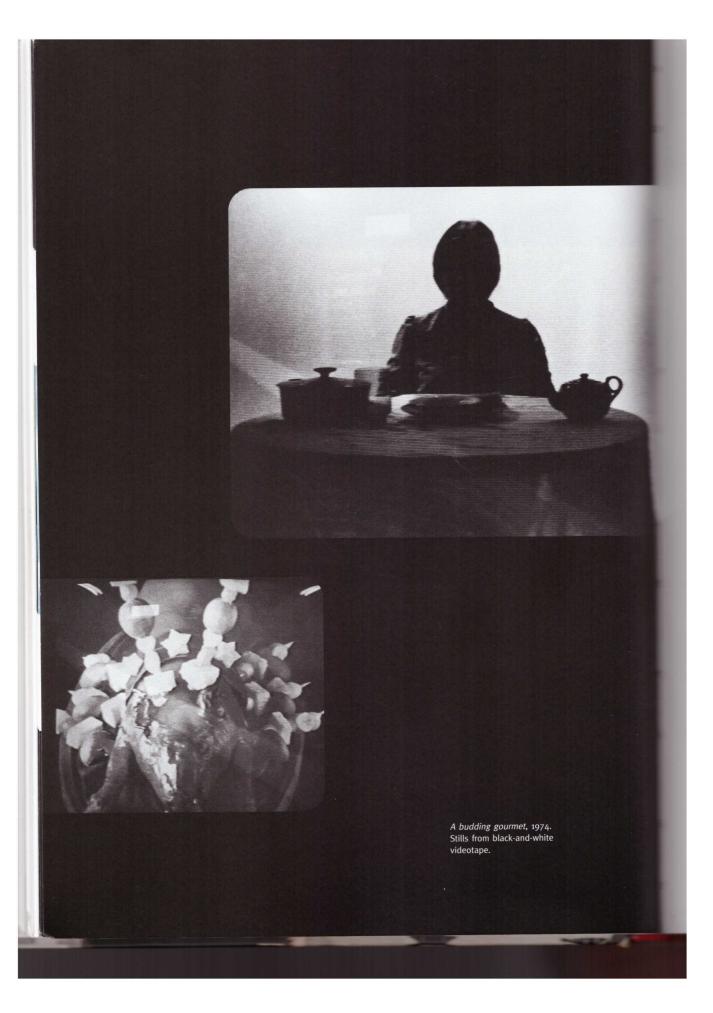
Is in their names

I've been travelin hown this

Vong lonesome highway

Just movin on





Alexander Alberro

The Dialectics of Everyday Life: Martha Rosler and the Strategy of the Decoy

Difficulties are not mastered by keeping silent about them. Practice demands that one step should follow another; theory has to embrace the entire sequence. The new subject-matter constitutes the first stage; the sequence however goes further. The difficulty is that it is hard to work on the first stage (new subjects) when one is already thinking about the second (humanity's new mutual relationships).... [A]rt follows reality.... Only a new purpose can lead to a new art. The new purpose is called pedagogics.

Bertolt Brecht¹

The study of everyday life affords a meeting place for specialized sciences and something more besides; it exposes the possibilities of conflict between the rational and the irrational in our society and our time, thus permitting the formulation of concrete problems of production (in its widest sense): how the social existence of human beings is produced, its transition from want to affluence and from appreciation to depreciation.

Henri Lefebvre²

"A cook can't just slap things together," a woman's unrefined, Brooklyn-accented voice intones over glossy images from magazines of gourmet food, wine, travel, and leisure. "You need to have the principles in mind. It's like a secret ingredient, a certain spiritual quality. The best cooks are like magicians. Chefs are like orchestra conductors. Taste, mastery, and magic are things that need cultivation. Art is not an accident." The videotape of which this is a part, A budding gourmet (1974), Martha Rosler's first use of this medium, is a sardonic sixteen-minute odyssey into the world of gourmet food production and consumption. The work employs a form of pedagogy, adopting the style of popular television cooking shows to educate the spectator, not in the art of gourmet cooking, but on a broad range of issues that encompass feminism, class, world politics, and the work of art.

A budding gourmet, whose text is drawn from one of Rosler's postcard novels, embodies many central themes and production strategies that characterize her entire *oeuvre*. To begin with, the entire videotape can be read as a metacommentary on artistic production: from the gendering of the art world—true artistic geniuses are male, females are at best derivative—to the philosophical, formal, and stylistic practices surrounding the art object. Its strange, unpolished

¹ Bertolt Brecht, "On Form and Subject-Matter" (1929), in John Willett, ed. and trans., *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), pp. 29–30.

² Henri Lefebvre, Everyday Life in the Modern World, Sacha Rabinovitch, trans. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1971; originally published in French in 1968), p. 23.

Quoted from the text of the postcard novel A budding gourmet, as republished in Martha Rosler, Service: A Trilogy on Colonization (New York: Printed Matter, 1979), p. 9. For an interesting early discussion of the distinctiveness of Rosler's voice in her videotapes, see Amy Taubin, "And what is a fact, anyway? (On a Tape by Martha Rosler)," Millennium Film Journal, No. 4/5 (Summer/Fall), 1979.

appearance results not from a lack of technical sophistication but from the strategic decision to draw attention to the constructedness of the work of art. This work, like its predecessor postcard work, makes use of a medium hardly granted consideration in the established art world of the time, when video, like mail art and certain other forms, were adopted by artists eager to abrogate the market, museum, and critical domination of the distribution of the work of art and even its definition. Video, by the very unsatisfactoriness of its image quality compared with film, offered artists the possibility of forging a new "cool" anti-aesthetic along with the capacity for multiple reproduction, self-distribution, and low cost of the ultimate work—a set of "cheap media" possibilities also suggested to some by non-fine-print photography. For Rosler it also offered an engagement with the vernacular, namely, broadcast television, in a critique informed by an array of social and political factors, including feminism.

On the level of its text, also, *A budding gourmet* is informed by feminism, implying a critique of the tyranny of the kitchen, of the baroque relationship between women and food. In addition, the work is about class—not only how class is inculcated in a woman's physical appearance, values (identified through consumption), and labor (family and home maintenance) but also about the fact that gourmetism requires both financial resources and leisure time. Furthermore, the work addresses the distinction between private and public, reflecting on the irony that whereas in the private sphere of the home the preparation of food is the duty and drudgery of the housewife, in the public realm it is a highly celebrated male domain—indicated in the videotape by a series of images of magisterial male chefs in their deluxe restaurants.⁴ At another level, the work exposes the concrete structures of imperialism, as the videotape's "persona" suggests that Westerners can bring Third World exotica home, where it can be packaged and presented better than even in its indigenous locale.

In formal terms, as I have suggested, *A budding gourmet* reinforces Rosler's thematic deconstruction of society's myths. In this tape, food preparation provides not only an instance of woman's work but also a characteristic re-presentation of a seemingly natural and biological dimension as a fully socialized and socially determined aspect of life. In a hermeneutic approach grounded in dialectical materialism that recalls the working method of Walter Benjamin, Rosler moves from the smaller unit of meaning, monad, or fragment to connect to the tremendous prevailing edifices of myth, ritual, and social and economic practices.⁵ This strategy of layering interpretation and moving centrifugally away from the center or axis dominates the operation of Rosler's work.

⁴ In 1974, when the tape was made, virtually all the world's master chefs were male.

In particular, Benjamin's uncompleted Passagenwerk project set out to examine images, texts, and objects from everyday life in order to produce out of the fragments a philosophy of history grounded in the dialectical image of historical materialism. For a detailed examination of Benjamin's Passagenwerk, see Susan Buck-Morss, The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT, 1989).



Untitled, c. 1966. Oil on canvas.

Rosler's body of work is not limited to any one medium or genre—a characteristic that is a direct consequence of her interest in eluding pre-existent art-world definitions—yet a consistent ideological core is distinctly evident. As a young painter she had produced large, often expressionist abstracts in the legacy of Mark Rothko or mid-period Philip Guston. Out of her disquiet with painting's established position in high art and culture, however, she began to produce provocative assemblages of found objects, in her first movement away from the modernist repertoire. The assemblages were small, flimsy environments in the legacy of Kurt Schwitters and Joseph Cornell, as well as of her childhood dollhouse, never quite relegated to the trash. Magazine images, photographs of interiors, newspaper items, as well as dime-store favors, were placed inside cardboard food containers, medicine cabinets, toy refrigerators. The more immediate context of Rosler's assemblages was, of course, pop art. Pop's emphasis on the significance of framing, and its suggestion that by recontextualizing naturalistic images one could produce insights about the habitual and the ordinary, had a significant impact on Rosler's early work. It is precisely this reliance on everyday objects to produce a form of political critique that resonates with my second epigraph, from Henri Lefebvre's 1968 book Everyday Life in the Modern World, which calls for a practice that will "attempt a philosophical inventory and analysis of everyday life...expos[ing] its ambiguities—its baseness and exuberance, its poverty and fruitfulness-and by these unorthodox means release the creative energies that are an integral part of it."6

Rosler's conception of "the everyday" stems in part from her background and training in literature. With an undergraduate degree in English, as well as graduate study in linguistics, in the mid-1960s she was actively involved in New York's downtown poetry circles, collaborating in publishing a poetry magazine. Rosler's participation in this milieu was important to the development of her artistic

strategies. The world of poetry and poetry journals brought questions of distribution and audience to the fore; but the literary context was deeply influential for her work as a whole. Poetic and incantatory lists appear throughout her work, and there are naturalistic elements of language and setting. But perhaps a more dominant strand in Rosler's work from the mid-1960s on is distantiation. The theory of *ostranenie*, "a device for making strange," articulated by the early twentieth-century Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky, posits that literature breaks naturalistic images, recontextualizing them and allowing readers to reevaluate or rethink their previous conceptions. In Rosler's case the strangeness effect first engaged her interest through its derivatives in modernist poetry, theater, and literature, as well as Japanese Haiku (including its influence on the development of montage). P

For Rosler this formalist strategy is mediated by the theory of aesthetics advanced by Bertolt Brecht, for whom, as outlined in the first epigraph above, it was imperative that art address contemporary issues, since its primary mission is to educate the public. Brecht's development of the *Lehrstück* ("learning-play"), in particular, had a powerful effect on Rosler's influential performance-based work (including some of her videotapes), a connection I explore further below. Throughout her production, we see evidence of Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* ("alienation effect"), which aims to prevent spectatorial identification (and thus catharsis) through a variety of methods of acting, staging, and narrative. This stylized, anti-expressionist, and anti-naturalist theatrical tradition is married to a strong cultural strain of Jewish comedic *shtick* and raconteurism in Rosler's work, resulting in a kind of deadpan wit in which gestures and poses vie with language as the primary carrier of meaning.

Before the full assimilation of Brechtian strategies, Rosler was employing the distantiation of surrealist and other montage techniques. Emerging directly out of her experiments with assemblage, Rosler's earliest photographic collage works were fashioned on uncut Masonite sheets (about 4' x 8'). In one, *International*

⁷ It seems appropriate here also to mention Rosler's training in textual exegesis and hermeneutics that lay at the heart of her yeshiva education, as well as her decade-long employment in the publishing industry beginning in 1965.

⁸ For Shklovsky's notion of ostranenie ("making strange," "unfamiliar"), crucial for the analysis presented in this essay, see "Art as Technique," in Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, eds., Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska, 1965), pp. 11, 12. I have also found particularly useful the discussion of this concept in Frederic Jameson, The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University, 1972), pp. 50–54, 58–64, and 69–75.

⁹ Particularly important for Rosler were American writers such as Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, and Gertrude Stein; deep-image poetry, and even aspects of the work of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Allen Ginsberg, e.e. cummings, and the English Romantics; and writers such James Joyce, Joseph Conrad, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Ivan Turgenev, Richard Wright, the Beats, and William S. Burroughs. She was also an avid reader of science fiction, where the strangeness effect is a dominant rhetorical strategy and which is often critical or utopian or both. Indeed, the invocation of space travel and colonization is evident in the subset of her photomontages entitled "House Beautiful: The Colonies."

Style, or International City (c. 1967), featuring a juxtaposition of images taken from National Geographic and other magazines, an array of long shots of cityscapes from around the world forms an enormous panorama of a universalized, uninhabited, other-worldly city, with a labyrinthine freeway system breaking the picture plane in the center. Above the multitude of high-rises and highways is a patched-together sky full of airplanes and clouds. Already, then, by 1967 one finds in her work a preoccupation with such themes as urbanism, transportation modalities, and the relationship between the individual and the totality in the city—concerns that will become central preoccupations in works and projects as disparate as The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems (photo/text, 1974/75), Secrets from the Street: No Disclosure (video, 1980), A Simple Case for Torture, or How to Sleep at Night (video, 1983), "If You Lived Here..." (curatorial project, 1989), "In the Place of the Public" (photo/text, 1981-98), and "Rights of Passage" (photo, 1995-97).

Another of the early photo-collages, *Operation: Surveillance* (1967), focuses on medical practices, suggesting a relationship between medicine and surveillance, and by implication, surveillance and social practices at large. In the foreground a large, omniscient eye is superimposed on an X-ray screen, while behind it is a vast operating theater, full of apparatuses and phalanxes of surgical teams surrounded by medical students in the distant "peanut gallery." At the center, virtually invisible under the medical drapes, is the patient. Here, the object of Rosler's critique is the medical establishment that, through a variety of methods of control, transforms the human subject into an object. This problematic of surveillance as a social practice of control particularly of women is frequently visited in her work, such as in photomontages (*Vanity Eye*, c. 1972), performance (*Vital Statistics of a Citizen, Simply Obtained*, performance 1973; videotape, 1977), video (*Born to Be Sold: Martha Rosler Reads the Strange Case of Baby \$M*, video, 1988), and installation (*Fascination with the [Game of the] Exploding [Historical] Hollow Leg*, 1983).

Rosler's move to Southern California in 1968 coincided with an important shift in her artistic career. Whereas she had exhibited paintings in New York at a couple of small galleries in the 1960s, it was in California that she first began to put her work into the public sphere in relationship to antiwar and protest journalism. San Diego was geographically distant from the New York "scene" and had a thriving political and artists' culture with a tenuous relationship to the art magazines and to New York. Although Rosler was back in New York for several months in 1969, and again in 1974/75, her strongest involvements centered on her life in California until the end of the 1970s.

Her move to San Diego had coincided with the emergence of the era's women's movement. Even before entering the University of California, San Diego (UCSD)—she began graduate school there in the fall of 1971—Rosler became actively engaged in feminist politics, joining a women's group with student and

nonstudent members, a group of which she remained an active member during her graduate career. It would be difficult to overemphasize the effect of the women's movement on Rosler's work as she reconceptualized herself as a political and social entity. Questions of oppression and resistance, long central to her thinking, acquired concrete application in relation to herself for the first time, as feminism clarified the direct links between everyday life, anti-war work, and struggles for civil rights and political and social transformation. It was a matter of separate and unequal spheres—the political and the abstract versus the management of the mundane—that needed to be united.

It was also during those years that Rosler started to develop her own relationship to audiences and spectators, partly influenced by her interest in questions of subject positions. In addition to continuing her anti-war work, she began speaking at high schools and informal community groups on questions of feminism; she also joined with others at her workplace (a Del Mar-based publisher of a national magazine) and at the university to organize a child-care center at each locale. Working in loose collaboration on performance sketches and other exercises with a group of San Diego women artists, Rosler began exploring themes of transformation and identity. She also formed close relationships with Los Angeles feminist artists, such as Nancy Buchanan and Suzanne Lacy, and with other women at the Women's Building there, an outgrowth of the Feminist Art Program at the California Institute of the Arts.¹⁰

Rosler's formal affiliation with the university was also critically important, for it gave her the resources of an institutional context. At UCSD, Rosler came into regular, nonclassroom contact with left-wing intellectuals such as Herbert Marcuse, Fredric Jameson, and Herbert Schiller, as well as visiting faculty Louis Marin, Jean-François Lyotard, Erving Goffman, and others. Film maker Jean-Luc Godard, whose deconstruction of narrative technique and experiments with sound and image (*sonimage*) would become vitally energizing for Rosler's video work, also visited the UCSD art department several times, as did other influential film makers, such as Roberto Rossellini. She also formed a productive relationship with a small group of like-minded artists and photographers, both students and junior faculty. A newly developed emphasis on the potentials of reproductive media, particularly photography, film, and subsequently video, as well as an interest in film theory and the powerful new forms of film emerging in Latin America, was an

¹⁰ Rosler explored some of her thoughts on feminism, performance and the Women's Building in her important essay "The Private and the Public: Feminist Art in California" (Artforum, September 1977).

This group, which met on a fairly regular basis, c. 1971 to 1978, included, initially, junior faculty members Fred Lonidier and Phil Steinmetz, along with graduate, undergraduate, and former students Rosler, Allan Sekula, Brian Connell, and Steve Buck, and subsequently, Adele Shaules and Marge Dean. The members came together over an interest in the relationships among art, theory, politics, and activism and were especially attracted to photographic media and performance as a means of developing new forms of address and building new audiences. The group had an ambitious interest in redefining and rewriting the critical discourse surrounding these issues.

outgrowth of these years. Film was particularly attractive for its complete lack of constraint by art-world dictates. But the determination of this group of artists to evade the gallery-cash-magazine nexus, looking for alternative forms, alternative venues, alternative modes of production, and alternative audiences, has had the predicted consequences. Rosler's rather vigorous self-marginalization, which includes her continuing practices of critical writing and her widespread lecturing, along with her refusal to base a career on the development of a signature style or even to maintain allegiance to a medium, has rendered her perpetually somewhat invisible to the institutionalized art world and its collectors and critical apparatuses, despite the fact that her work has been widely noted, studied, and discussed by a couple of generations of young—particularly feminist—artists on several continents and often studied in academic settings.¹² At the same time, the social and political focus of her work has provoked the ire or disdain of some commentators.

Rosler's highly successful critical photomontages—the "Body Beautiful, or Beauty Knows No Pain," and the "Bringing the War Home" series, each comprising twenty or more images—were for the most part produced in California and disseminated in local underground newspapers, particularly feminist ones. The early works in the "Body Beautiful" series, which began in 1965 (in New York), surrealistically depict women in out-of-context settings or offered altered advertisements. The viewer is thus prompted to reconsider the use of women as signs for domesticity, docility, sexuality, and the circulation of commodities. An early example features the transported *Joan of Arc* of Jules Bastien Le Page (prominently displayed at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art) resituated among Tiffany art-glass, a robin, and a tiny nineteenth-century tintype. A later work of the series is a multicolored *pompier* effusion consisting of a sea of reclining *Playboy* nudes (c. 1972). The series as a whole parodically fetishizes the female body and its parts while defetishizing the object quality of the art work or the Madison Avenue image.

Starting in 1967, Rosler began to insert images of the war in Southeast Asia, such as shell-shocked and maimed Vietnamese women and children, into entirely other sorts of pictures, those of American home interiors. She was, in effect, making concrete "the war abroad, the war at home," produced by the mass media

¹² Laura Cottingham, in "Martha Rosler: Crossing Borders," *Frieze* (Nov/Dec. 1993), pp. 52–55, notes that Rosler has, in the past 25 years, spoken about her work or critical subjects at perhaps 500 schools, museums, conferences, and other sites.

In Rosler's contribution to a symposium on the art world, "Money, Power, Contemporary Art." *Art Bulletin* (March 1997), she quotes an art dealer as saying that the art world takes care of its own. Indeed, her essay can be seen as further reflections on the audience segmentation she first explored in "Lookers Buyers, Dealers, and Makers" (*Exposure*, Spring 1979; republished in *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, Brian Wallis, ed. [New York and Boston: The New Museum and David R. Godine, 1984]; see note 22). In recent years, Rosler has entered the gallery system, on the theory that with the virtual collapse of the "alternative space" movement in the United States, it was necessary to find a foothold within the more traditional institutions while continuing to work outside them. Her decision has increased her visibility and acceptance within that world.

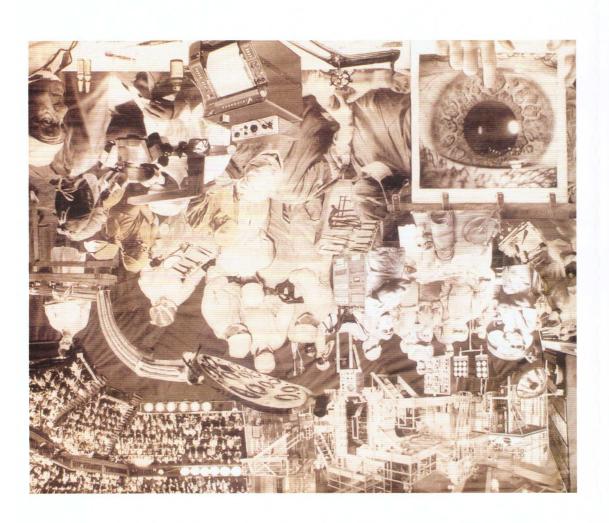
that imported images of death and destruction from Vietnam into U.S. homes every evening. In one such work, young American boys play in their bedroom as older ones are caught up in a riot outside the window; in another, Pat Nixon stands like a wax doll in the White House under a picture of actress Faye Dunaway machinegunned in Arthur Penn's film Bonnie and Clyde. Altogether, the operative principle within Rosler's collaged series is montage. In this sense, the works evoke such pop artists as Jess, James Rosenquist, and, especially, Richard Hamilton. But in Rosler's work, as in the work of contemporaries such as Øyvind Fahlström, that neo-avantgarde tradition is fused with the European Marxist tradition of montage as political critique practiced throughout the century by Sergei Eisenstein, John Heartfield, Walter Benjamin, Hannah Höch, and some of the surrealists in the 1920s and 1930s. In other words, whereas the juxtaposition of disparate images and contexts in this series seems related to works such as Hamilton's Just What Is It That Makes Today's Home So Different, So Appealing? (1956) and Rosenquist's painting F-111 (1965), for Rosler montage required a dialectical synthesis where new meaning would be produced—one imbued with a sharp political critique. Unlike the work of some her predecessors, Rosler's principle of montage also required the creation of the illusion of a coherent new physical space, simplifying and rationalizing the image structure and lowering the emotional temperature from hot to cool. She did not, however, include texts with these images; that would come later.

In these years, again challenging the heroic modernist work of art, Rosler made sculptures using stuffed clothing. The influence of pop, in this case the soft sculpture of Claes Oldenburg, is here refracted by a feminist interest not only in cast-off clothes but also in soft materials and organic forms reminiscent of Eva Hesse. The sculptures consisted of highly abstracted human forms made up of old clothing or cheesecloth stuffed with varying amounts and configurations of cotton batting (traditionally used to stuff quilts) and other materials. In some instances, Rosler combined canvas and clothing to produce a type of relief sculpture, such as *Twelve Love Affairs* (1972), made up of twelve pairs of Jockey underpants stuffed with white cotton padding and sewn in contrapposto poses onto a length of gessoed canvas and hung from a wall like an unstretched painting.

In a characteristic move, Rosler soon fused her interest in cultural forms, such as the way that clothing delineates a social persona, with her preoccupation with political forms. Some Women Prisoners of the Thieu Regime at the Infamous Poulo Condore Prison, South Vietnam (1972) consisted of rows of women's clothing hung from wires suggesting clotheslines and surrounded by rolls of barbed wire. In an intermediate work, in an installation playing on shamanistic ritual, she had stretched old clothes between trees. But in Some Women Prisoners, there is neither a hint of ritual nor the standardization and anonimity of the stuffed work. These clothes were not stuffed; rather, Some Women Prisoners depended on personalization. Each garment was stamped with the name, serial number, and date of

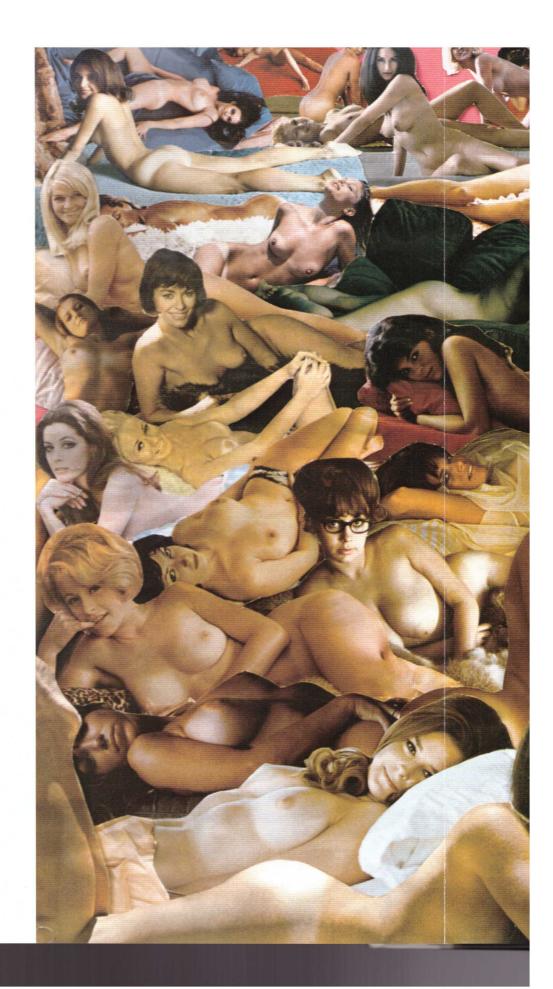


Greetings, 1965. Collage. Original 4' x 8' on Masonite sheet, lost.

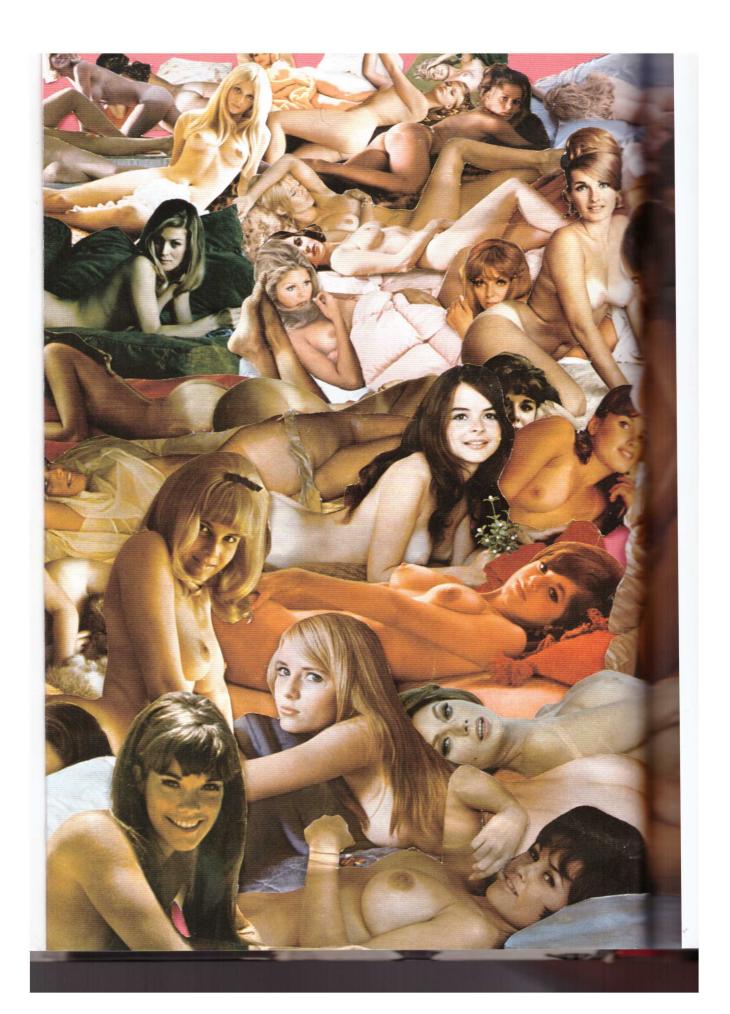


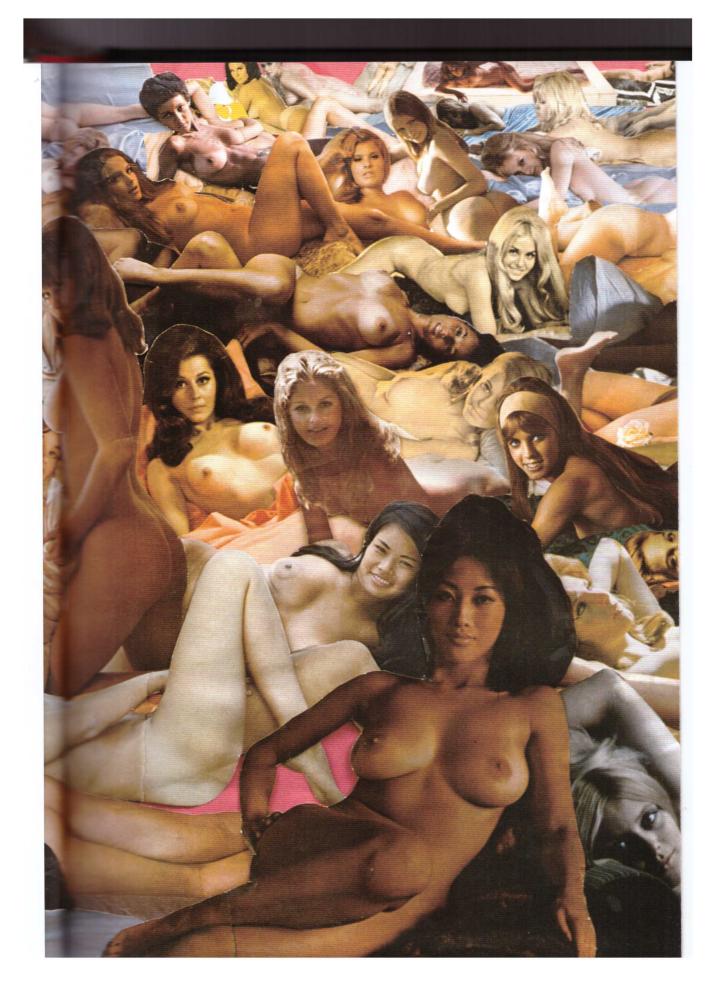


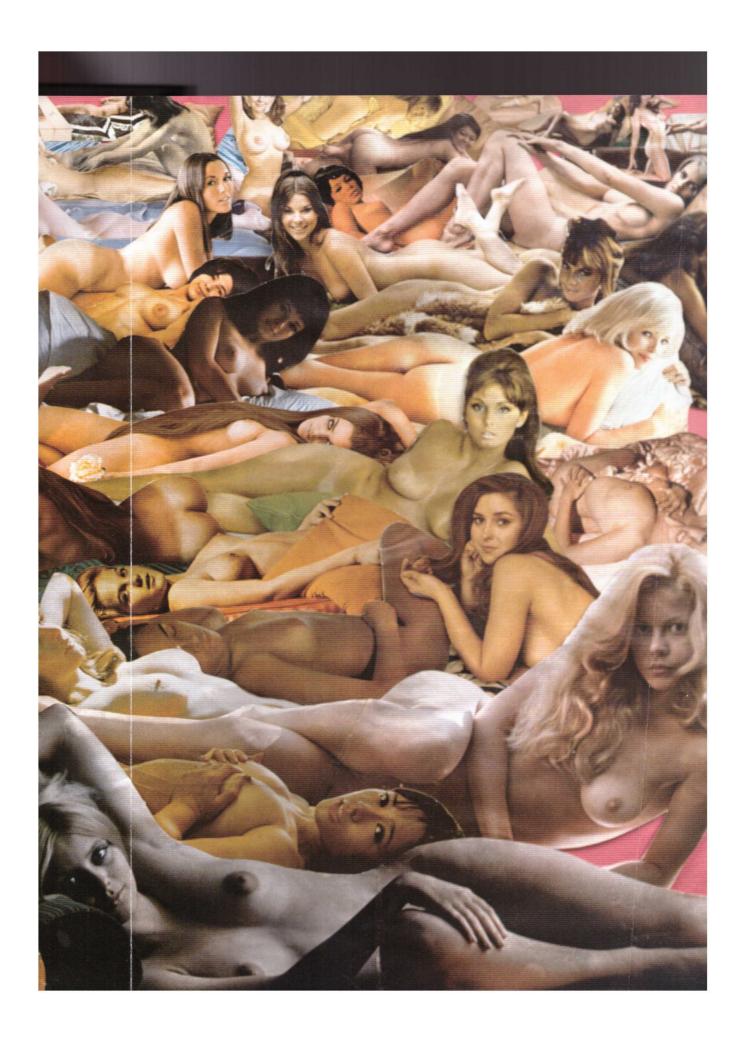
Medical Surveillance, 1967. Collage.

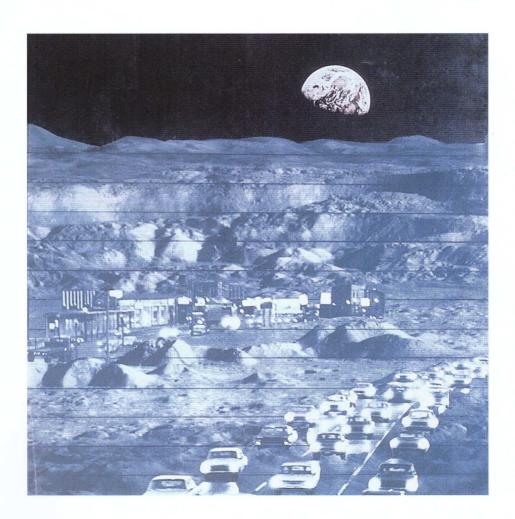


Untitled (Playboy), c. 1972. Collage.



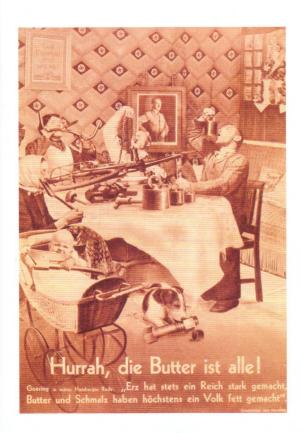








Frontier, from "House Beautiful: The Colonies," 1966–72. Photomontage. John Heartfield, Hurrah, die Butter Photomontage in A Zeitung (AIZ).





John Heartfield, Hurrah, die Butter ist alle!, 1935. Photomontage in Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung (AIZ).

Red Strip Kitchen, from "Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful," 1966–72. Photomontage. birth of a Vietnamese woman locked up for political offenses.¹³ The clothes were decidedly American (Vietnamese were generally seen in American media in peasant dress, "black pajamas"), which, while suggesting American culpability in the women's imprisonment, was intended to bridge the gap of Othering, linking the lives and subjectivities of Americans to those of people dehumanized in the time of war: "the Vietnamese enemy." *Diaper Pattern* (1975) is a large quilt of thirty used diapers (her son's cast-offs) sewn together at the corners and hung from the ceiling like a curtain, away from the wall. In the folk tradition of group commemorative quilts, phrases are inscribed on each square. "One of the best things about the air war in Vietnam," reads a typical text, "was you could drop lots of bombs...on lots of gooks and never see their gooky faces." The operative principle, it seems, is that shit is not confined to diapers.

What I want to emphasize, however, is not simply the similarity between *Some Women Prisoners* and *Diaper Pattern* and Rosler's "Bringing the War Home" series but even more the increased reliance on specificity and documentary-style evidence in the form of images, text, and facts that characterize the works. An engagement with traditions and practices of documentary and their ability to impart information, as well as the sorts of information imparted, becomes central both to Rosler's writings and her photographic and video work from the 1970s on.

In the early 1970s, along with her other strategies for evading modernist form, Rosler began to present public performances in which her own body became the text. This turn to performance is directly linked to Rosler's involvement in the Southern California women's movement. The problematization of the body and its relation to questions of social roles versus gender essentialism was central to feminist representations of the self, in body art, performance, and such new media as video in the 1960s and early 1970s. Consonant with these feminist performance and body art strategies was Rosler's adoption of a variety of roles with a fairly ephemeral presence, a path also followed in many of her performances, scripts, and postcard works.

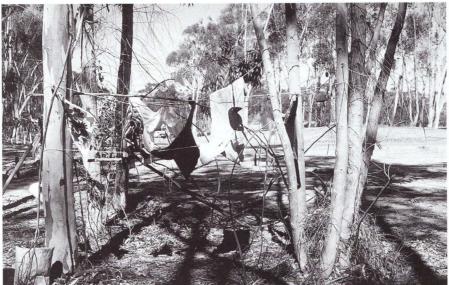
Rosler's first performance/installation was *Monumental Garage Sale* (1973), held in the UCSD art gallery. Garage sales are a prototypical form of social relations in a suburban culture such as that of Southern California. Typically, every family tries to encapsulate itself into an economic unit and to reconvert its assets into cash, in order to be able to continue the cycle of consumption. Inevitably, the garage sale

¹³ The information was obtained from a human-rights organization.

¹⁴ These themes recurred in different forms in Rosler's work at the time, as she even experimented with organic materials such as with *B-52* in *Baby's Tears* (1972), in which a 3′ x 3′ agricultural flat of the vine called baby's tears bore the "shadow" of a B-52 bomber, a featured performer in Vietnam, cut into the middle.

There is a direct link between New York School Happenings and California feminist performance in the person of Allan Kaprow, who joined the faculty at the California Institute of the Arts in Los Angeles in the early 1970s and worked with many of the women in the Feminist Art Program. Feminist performance therefore transmits and mediates Kaprow's legacy in Rosler's work.





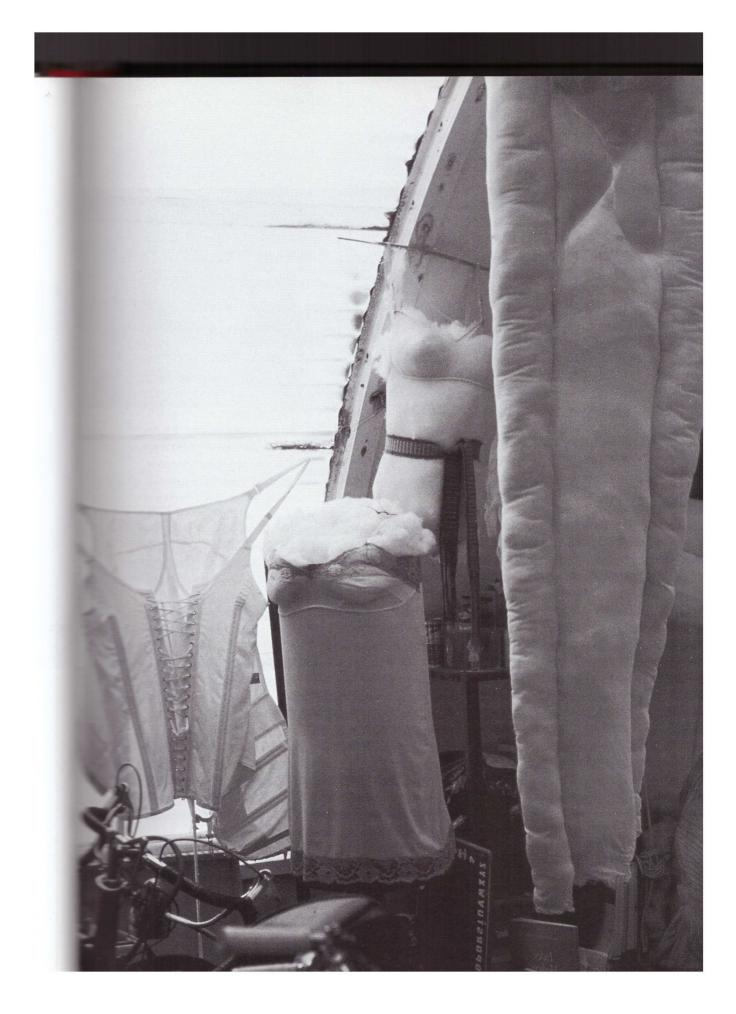
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top: Some Women Prisoners of the Thieu Regime in the Infamous Poulo Condore Prison, South Vietnam, 1972. Installation with clothing and barbed wire.

bottom:

Untitled (Shaman's Clothesline), 1971. Installation with clothing and ribbon.

right:
Untitled (Stuffed Sculptures), 1970–73. Artists studio.





Monumental Garage Sale, 1973. San Diego, California.



Traveling Garage Sale, 1977. San Francisco, California. Multi-media installation and performance with clothing, objects, texts, and audio elements.

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and its goods become a portrait, and even elements of a self are seen as commodities ultimately recuperable within the cash economy.

At her garage sales, Rosler carefully arranged the objects so that the more desirable ones (paintings, good-quality clothes and toys, and the like) were installed in the clearly lit foreground and the less desirable or more "secret" objects (e.g., used clothes, personal letters, family photographs, and even *Playboy* centerfolds) were situated toward the back. In the darkest area were empty welfare-food cartons, notes on lovers, and other elements relating to the most private self. The event was simultaneously advertised in flyers and the local "shopper" as an ordinary garage sale and in local newspapers as an art event, offering a further instance of Rosler's overlapping of categories—in this case garage sales and art galleries, mundane objects and art works, everyday life and high art—as a strategy for widening the audience for art.16 Perhaps most significantly, the Monumental Garage Sale represents the first time that Rosler included herself in one of her works. Traces of autobiography are suggested in such earlier works as the medicine-chest type of assemblages, yet none of those fragments of everyday life was claimed—no personal imagery, no snapshots, or anything pointing to a particular individual's life were included, in direct contrast to the Monumental

¹⁶ Her notes for the work list "supermarket ads, shopper's papers, direct mailing, and dual newspaper ads, 'straight' and 'art-oriented." The sale of everyday items in the art gallery prompted an indignant letter, published in the school newspaper, from the camp of Herbert Marcuse's graduate students, with a lengthy rejoinder by Rosler. A subsequent meeting between Marcuse and Rosler's supporters pointed up the degree to which the young artists rejected Marcuse's left-Hegelian aestheticism.



Garage Sale.¹⁷ In this instance, the persona that Rosler adopted was that of a single mother surviving on a shoestring, which had resonance with her everyday reality. (This kind of playful tampering with the "truth" also began to characterize some of her other works, such as the postcard novels.) Thus the focus in Rosler's work on global politics such as the war in Southeast Asia was now doubled with a personal politics, encompassing both sides of the contemporary debate about what constitutes "politics."

In addition to politicizing the personal, *Monumental Garage Sale* constituted an important step in the development of Rosler's theory of artistic production; we can say that emerging here formally as well as structurally is the Brechtian didactic or pedagogical strategy that will characterize much of Rosler's work. ¹⁸ A blackboard at the back of the installation bore the following note: "What if the garage sale is a metaphor for the mind?" A tape recorder at mid-installation played a meditation in the first person about the suburbia-cash nexus. In its repeated use of the first-person pronoun "I," the monologue evoked the notion of the construction of the self as a social actor and spoke of a social process in which economic relations substitute for human relations. ¹⁹ These two forms of message are important because they help determine the meaning of the work and guide the audience toward certain avenues of thought.

Rosler had, as noted, been looking for ways to bend the fences of the art world, slip past its boundaries, and fill its silences. Artistic production engaged her primarily in terms of posing questions and making arguments. To pursue a practice of art as an investigative endeavor, she would have to reconsider a number of artistic conventions, including not only the way art works operate but also the way they circulate. The first of these artistic traditions that would have to be reevaluated was the notion of closure. As we have seen, the investigative method that Rosler took up touched on Brecht's concept of *Lehrstück*. In accord with Brechtian strategies, Rosler saw her role as an artist as open, and she sought to produce works able "to move consciousness forward, or to move people toward...the idea of political action," as she explained to Craig Owens in an important 1986 interview. However, whereas Brecht was still rooted in traditional narrative forms, such as parable, Rosler adopted the more contemporary strategies of avant-garde theater, film, Happenings, and performance, which unraveled conventional

¹⁷ In fact, Rosler had solicited cast-offs from friends at the office where she worked and elsewhere. Despite many clues that not all the objects for sale could belong to one person, such as widely disparate shoe sizes, Rosler's "persona" tacitly claimed it all as her own.

¹⁸ Brecht, too, had relied heavily on the use of slides, posters, recordings, and banners with slogans to supplement his theater productions. These various forms of media served to reinforce, explain, and instruct the audience in his finer theoretical points.

¹⁹ In 1977 Rosler mounted the Traveling Garage Sale, a variant, in the garage of the San Francisco alternative space La Mamelle. In this later version, Rosler included, along with the pseudo-autobiographical audiotape, slides of a San Diego family purchased at a garage sale of the effects of a man who had recently died.

²⁰ Craig Owens, "On Art and Artists: Martha Rosler," Profile (Chicago: Video Data Bank), Vol. 5, No. 2 (Spring 1986), p. 22.

narrative structures and representational forms.²¹ All of this led Rosler to further questions concerning the make-up of her audience and the role its members played, and in a larger sense, to a further reconsideration of the notion of a public. Insofar as the Monumental Garage Sale drew an audience with little or no relationship to the university in which it was staged, it brought several significant characteristics of publics to the surface.²² If it made manifest that publics are social entities that one has to construct, it simultaneously revealed that it is through the active construction of publics that an oppositional public sphere could be formed.²³ Rosler's didactic and expository artistic practice, which had eventually led her to disregard the modernist dictum of working in a given medium, led her as well to work against the idea that every work of art is supposed to move toward some notion of mastering, whether of audience, form, or genre. Highly suspicious of anything relating to mastery, her working method resonates with Benjamin's infamous axiom that "the finished work is the deathmask of its conception."24 Instead of pursuing mastery and completion, for Rosler art is a continuous and ongoing practice, a conversation in which images, text, and fragments all take part.

Her refusal of resolution in the work of art is manifest on the formal level by the constant foregrounding of the means of production—whether it be by such clues as the visible folded and stapled seams on appropriated magazine illustrations or audio and video disjunctions or unexpected photographic maneuvers. Simply put, a crucial pursuit is making the means of representation transparent—even to the point of producing works that agitate, that often appear irritating, unpolished,

²¹ Here we can add the playwrights Stein, Ionesco, Pirandello, and Beckett to filmmakers Marker, Godard, and Rainer, among others, as significant sources for Rosler's interest in transgressing traditional narrative form.

²² Rosler writes extensively on the issue of "audiences" in her "Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, and Makers: Thoughts on the Audience" (*op. cit.*), in which she segments the "types" in audiences and proposes that an audience is composed of people of different strata who do not recognize each other. In "'Video Art,' Its Audience, Its Public" (*The Independent*, December 1987), she draws a distinction between the midcentury liberal paradigm of public and audience in which the public is constituted by active members of a polity whereas an audience is seen as a relatively passive recipient of entertainment versus the newly emergent paradigm of the audience as the active and socially empowered sector while the public has receded into a vague and amorphous grouping. See also Rosler's contribution to "Radical Attitudes to the Gallery," *Studio International*, 1980.

¹ am using the term "oppositional public sphere" here in the sense that it has been conceived by Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt. Negt and Kluge argue that the bourgeois public sphere has been transformed into a new industrialized public sphere that exploits the individual to an even greater extent than ever before. This exploitation, however, potentially provides the basis for an oppositional public sphere. Cinema presents itself as one alternative in restructuring the concept of production. Kluge argues, "The concept of production not only includes the manufacturing of the film but also its exhibition and appropriation by the imagination of the spectator. One might even reverse this argument: it is the spectator who actually produces the film, as the film on the screen sets in motion the film in the mind of the spectator." (Kluge in Michael Dost, Florian Hopf, and Alexander Kluge, Filmwirtschaft in der BRO und in Europa: Götterdämmerung in Raten [Munich: Hanser, 1973], cited in Miriam Hansen, "Cooperative Auteur Cinema and Oppositional Public Sphere: Alexander Kluge's contribution to Germany in Autumn," New German Critique, No. 24/25 [Fall/Winter, 1981–82], p. 39). Rosler cites Kluge on this point in her essay "'Video Art,' Its Audience, Its Public" (op. cit.). Though specific to film, for that is Kluge's primary medium of representation, this notion can be productively extended to other art.

²⁴ Walter Benjamin, Gesammelte Schriften, Vol. IV, p. 107, as cited in Buck-Morss, Dialectics of Seeing, op cit., p. 19.





top:

If It's Too Bad to Be True, It

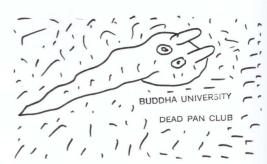
Could Be DISINFORMATION, 1985.

Still from color videotape.

bottom: A Simple Case for Torture, or How to Sleep at Night, 1983. Still from color videotape.



Martha Kosler 109 St. Marks Place NYC, NY 10009



Ray Johnson.
Postcard, front and back,
c. 1973.

a strategy she has felt compelled to adopt in an effort to negate the slickness of the mass media.²⁵ Rosler's strategy of self-reflexivity and negation is an implicit critique of the high level of mastery demanded by the commodity, whether the work of art or the product of the information/entertainment industry.

This stress on exposing the method of production is consistent with the political dimension of her work and directly related to her over-all strategy of metonymically going from the fragment to the whole. The fragmentary life of modernity can produce only fragmentary representations of life, and although artists have the same fragmentary relation to production as do producers of other commodities, it is crucial for art to obscure its commodity status under the cloak of creativity. (And the more successfully art claims creativity, the more its commodity value increases.) But whereas capital seeks to erase all evidence of labor, Rosler persistently counteracts and demystifies this process of fetishization by accenting the labor of production of her work.

Unlike the anti-naturalism of critical modernists such as filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard, formal negation for Rosler is always paralleled by a negation within her subject matter as well. For instance, in DISINFORMATION, a work about the mass media's extraordinary ability-indeed, tendency-to distort truths and manufacture consent, the viewer confronts a television news barrage. The information conveyed in this partially (and randomly) erased tape is constantly interrupted by exaggerated static, making any knowledge impossible to glean from the actual show, even though its content is redoubled by words that roll up and repeat the remaining fragments of text. Just as the viewer settles into the tape's discontinuities, seamlessness is restored with a clip of a Reagan speech. Similarly, the extreme self-reflexivity of A Simple Case for Torture, a videotape that promises a consideration of the unpleasant subject of torture, continuously frustrates the viewer, refusing to give in to the idea that the subject matter—media representations versus realities of Third World terrorism and barbarity—is more important than the means by which it is generated, both in the news media and in the tape. Her underlying strategy in this tape bears some similarity to that evident in her collages and photomontages, for once again by juxtaposing media

PEANUT BUTTER & JELLY SANDWICH

Butter 2 slices of bread. Spread one slice generously with peanut butter and top with a layer of jelly. Cover with remaining slice of bread, cut in half. Serve with a large glass of milk for a hearty lunch.

Sweep the kitchen floor. scrub

wax and polish

We like breakfast served at----.

Have you ever shopped in a supermarket?

EMPAREDADO DE JALEA Y MANTE-QUILLA DE CACAHUATE

Unte de mantequilla 2 rebanadas de pan. Unte generosamente una rebanada con mantequilla de cacahuate y luego con la jalea. Cúbrala con la otra rebanada de pan y corte a la mitad (diagonal). Sirva con un vaso grande de leche.

El libro contiene una lista de frases en inglés y en español:

Barra el piso de la cocina. Estregue Encere y saque brillo

Nos gusta que nos sirva el desayuno a las ----. Ha ido usted al super-mercado?

etcetera, etcetera, y contiene una frase que ofa siempre:

Will you cook a Mexican dinner for us sometime? Nos cocina una comida mexicana para nosotros alguna vez?

per novel, about \$1; English versions hq the artist & Moonlite

Blue, La Jolla.

available

Bien cocina la moza, pero mejor la bolsa. The maid cooks well, but the pocketbook cooks better. -- Mexican saying, quoted in Elena's Mexican Cookbook

TITLE: Tijuana Maid, food novel 4

COST: postcards

paper \$10.77

postage \$300

20 5

printing miscellaneous

SOURCES: Women's stories as represented in articles by Laurie Becklund in the San Diego Evening Tribune of Oct. 10 & 11, 1973; talks with Josefina Foulks, Laurie Becklund, Cecilia Duarte, Iris Blanco & others on both sides of the mistressservant relationship, some of whom can't be named; many "Mexican" cookbooks for Americans, such as George Booth's Food & Drink of Mexico & Elinor Burt's Olla Podrida; Home Maid Spanish.

ATTRIBUTIONS: Margaret Storm & Elsie Ginnett, Spanish Cook Book, Apron Pocket Press, La Jolla, 1968.

Homage to Ousmane Sembene's film Black Girl (Senegal, 1966).

Translated with Oscar Chavez, Victor Zamudio, & Norma Peters, and Cecilia Duarte, Alda Blanco & Iris Blanco.

> "Recent converts to the Chicano movement, like gringos, want to learn tortilla making from a cookbook recipe. Impossible! -- José Angel Gutierrez, Gringo Manual on How to Handle Mexicans.

Tijuana Maid, 1975. Installments #4 and #12 from serial postcard novel. February 2, 1977

noon to two o'clock

wednesday

Brochure for an evening of performances at the Women's Building, Los Angeles, 1977, in which Rosler participated.

presentations (news articles here rather than images) she produces a synthesis that yields a political truth, as it were, against the intentions of its creators. Yet, strikingly, here as the metropolis, in its sheer physicality, is also presented as a text.

Each work informs the next, building on the issues raised, engaging in intertextual dialogues, all equally ambitious and open-ended. Scripts such as "The Art of Cooking: A Mock Dialogue Between Julia Child and Craig Claiborne" (1973), or magazine pieces (Losing: A Conversation with the Parents, 1976) and postcard novels such as A budding gourmet, Tijuana Maid, or McTowersMaid, lead to performances (A Gourmet Experience, 1974) and videotapes (A budding gourmet, 1974; Losing: A Conversation with the Parents, 1977), and even film (Tijuana Maid, unfinished film, 1978) all of which are among the body of works exploring Rosler's concerns with the social, cultural, and political uses of food. The theatrical-style performance Vital Statistics of a Citizen, Simply Obtained (1973), at which people moved through choreographed maneuvers, leads to the production of the videotape of the same name (1977), which the voice-over introduces as "an opera in three acts." Photo/text projects such as The Bowery and In the Place of the Public (1983-98) lead to full-fledged essays, in the first instance on documentary practices, in the second, on airports and air travel as constituting a new, postmodern social space, while a talk on motherhood and representation leads to the videotape Born to Be Sold. Some of these works are further considered below.

This point about the movement of Rosler's practice from one project to the next bears elaborating. It can be productively addressed by a focus on the work she produced in the 1970s employing the unlikely medium of postcards. These works signify her aspiration to reach beyond the limits of aesthetically enfranchised high art publics to a wider audience, for postcards offer the possibility of reaching larger

Martha Rosler

requests the honour of your presence

at a

Gourmet Experience

to be held on Thursday, April twenty-fifth

nineteen hundred and seventy-four

Art Gallery, Humanities Library
5:30 p. m. University of California, San Diego
at La Jolla

A Gourmet Experience, 1974. Invitation to performance/installation. Dear
Today it is fine, I cut
my arm but not badly.
I am reading Berlin's
KARL MARX. I must go
grade the Buddhist Art
exams now. I'll have
to pick up some \$ over

Untitled, 1973.
Postcard (incomplete example)
from mail novel.

Write soon, why don't Your Love,

Love, MARTHA

> publics than more conventional art media. Already by the late 1960s, in a fluxustype move away from gallery-bound situations, she had exchanged written correspondence with mail artist Ray Johnson. She followed this a few years later with a one-card postcard narrative. This first, untitled "novel" (1973), featured only text—no images. The message on the postcard, laboriously produced with a child's stamp kit, begins with reflections on economics and working ("Prices are skyrocketing so I have to take another job") and ends with the personal ("I cut my arm, but not badly"). The text thus inverts the structure of narrative, the order of significance of the information conveyed, as all becomes relativized.

> In 1973, contemplating how to present another text-based work, this one focusing on a woman wishing to become a gourmet as part of her effort to elevate her family's class standing, she returned to the medium of postcards for a project that, as mentioned above, was entitled *A budding gourmet*. This work of twelve postcards was mailed to over three hundred people, one card every five to seven days. Once again, the installments were entirely textual. Each card was inscribed in very small type (in fact, on a slide-library typewriter), the complete opposite of the overly personal self conveyed in the text and the opposite of the handwriting style used in women's confessional narratives of the period. Furthermore, whereas the forwarding addresses were hand-written, the return address was institutional (UCSD), stamped with an impersonal rubber stamp. Thus, in a variety of ways the

martha rosler: positions in the life world





GRATER

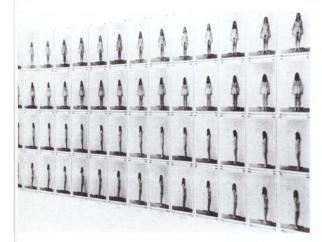




top: Grater, 1976.

bottom: Untitled, 1977.

From the series of Holiday Cards From Our House to Your House," mailed annually, 1974 to 1978.



Eleanor Antin, *Carving: A Traditional Sculpture*, 1972.
Photographs and text.



Eleanor Antin, 100 Boots On the Road, 1971-73. Photos by Phil Steinmetz c. 1976.

cards moved in and out of the notion of a centered subject and of production as an impersonal process. Rosler followed this postcard novel with another, *McTowersMaid* (1974), about a fast-food worker, and *Tijuana Maid* (1975), in Spanish, about a domestic worker in San Diego.²⁶ A fourth such mail novel, *A New-Found Career* (1977), initially mailed only to women, was about a woman making the transition from unpaid work to art-world professionalization.²⁷

The cards that make up the series of "Xmas cards," "From Our House to Your House" (1974–1978), add image to text. These mass-produced cards bear the preprinted messages, in happy script, that are some version of "From Our House to Your House" and typically included a family photo and a personalized message. Four of the five cards in the series depict Rosler awkwardly situated in a kitchen: In the first, dressed in California (and performance) white, she is squeezed between stove and refrigerator, next to a big plaster chili pepper, while the text reads "5'4" By 128 Pounds At Home In Kitchen." The next, bearing the same message, presents her dressed in New York black, leaning on a tenement stove. The third, a production still from the videotape *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, simply says "Grater," after the implement she is holding. In another California kitchen scene she stands morosely in an extravagant wedding gown. The last installment, dispensing with the preprinted form, is a still of Rosler, naked, being measured in the videotape *Vital Statistics*. A label on the front reads "5'4" x 119 lbs. under scrutiny," and the name "martha rosler" is stamped at the bottom.

²⁶ These three postcard works on food are collected in Service, op. cit.

²⁷ A New-Found Career was published, accompanied by small drawings, in the LAICA Journal.

²⁸ There are two different versions of this card.

The postcard works were watershed pieces. First, their mode of distribution was inherent to their material form. Second, in the case of the "novels," the cards had a temporal dimension that functioned not only in terms of the time it took the reader to process the internal operations of the narrative but also in terms of the intervals around each installment of these novels—"time," Rosler writes, "in which the communication could unfold and reverberate." The Xmas Cards combined two forms of representation basic to most of Rosler's later work; text and image.

In these Xmas Cards, the correlation between text and image is fairly direct, although their relation to their basic form, the seasonal message, is not. A salient characteristic of her subsequent work, however, is a disjuncture between the two modes of communication. As in many experimental films of the fifties and later and most importantly for Rosler, those of Chris Marker, Godard, Yvonne Rainer, and Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, where the sound track is not wedded to the visual images, creating a gap, so too in the postcards a gap between the visual and linguistic is created. An explosive instance of this rupture is evident in Rosler's videotape Domination and the Everyday (1978). Here, the Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet appears along with family photos and banal magazine advertisements. A text about forms of domination in everyday life crawls across the screen (twice) as the sound track presents Rosler's interaction with her small child in their kitchen while a female radio host interviews a gallerist about the art of the Sixties. The essential aim of this strategy of producing works that are not seamlessly sutured but rather emphasize their constructedness is to expose the gaps where-according to a growing chorus of poets, writers, dramatists, and filmmakers and theoreticians like Godard, and Rosler—politics can enter.30 For just as the visual image on a postcard or videotape can never fully represent the "whole picture," the limited, circumscribed space left for writing or dialogue can never adequately convey a detailed message. The spectators are left to fill in the dots, to complete the text/image with their own experience. In Domination, the barrage of auditory, textual, and visual elements itself offers a concentrated chunk of the common experience of everyday life.

In this connection, it is as interesting as it is elucidating to note that rather than metaphor, the operative rhetorical device in Rosler's work is metonymy. Her work reveals a high degree of skepticism about the operation of metaphor, especially the way metaphor sublimates things away from concrete reality into more stratified and generalized universalism. By contrast, insofar as the work always keeps part of the original signifier or particular material element within view, it is closer to the operation of metonymy. Of course, this characteristic is related to her commitment to the open, rather than closed, work of art. Instead of trying, as many artists do, to come as close as possible to a simulation of what she is trying

²⁹ Introduction to Service, op. cit.

³⁰ For a discussion of Godard's theory of politics and film production, see Colin MacCabe, ed., *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1980).





to represent, Rosler continuously draws attention to the inadequacies of all forms of representation.

Having insisted on this point, which I regard as fundamental, I now want to suggest that one of her main impulses behind foregrounding the process of representation is to resolve the tension concerning the limits of representation with accounts of the everyday reality of politics. For example, Losing: A Conversation with the Parents employs professional actors and constructs an obviously fictional interview with the parents of a victim of self-starvation, anorexia nervosa.31 The anti-naturalism is revealed in a number of ways. The characters are situated uncomfortably in the frame, as, for instance, the stationary camera occasionally moves clumsily and rests, cuts awkwardly, pans down to an unthinkable shot of people's knees and the table, on which rests a family photo album. The viewer of Losing is constantly made aware that these are actors, not people in a real situation. They act in a stagy manner, each adopting a certain social gestus in an adaptation of Brecht's alienation effect. Brecht suggests the following acting technique: "When performing a Lehrstück, you must act like pupils. The pupil will use a particularly clear manner of speaking in order to run over a difficult passage again and again so as to get at its meaning or fix it in memory. To show the typical gestures and manners of speech of a man trying to convince somebody, one has to apply the art of acting."32 In addition, the parents speak too calmly and improbably about their recently deceased child. Rosler has taken this issue up in subsequent reflections on this videotape. Speaking to Jane Weinstock in a 1981 interview, she notes that "if these people were really bereaved, if their daughter had starved

³¹ The term *anorexia nervosa* never appears in *Losing*, since it was as yet unfamiliar to the general public in 1976 and 1977, when the text was published as a magazine work (in *Criss Cross Double Cross* [Los Angeles], Fall 1976, and *Studio International*, March 1977), and still when the videotape was made. The subject of starvation as a personal, familial occurrence and a deeply world-political process is, of course, an inverse development of Rosler's work on food.

³² Bertolt Brecht, "On Form and Subject-Matter" (1929), in Brecht on Theatre, op. cit., p. 33.



left:

Domination and the Everyday, 1978.

Stills from color videotape.

Visual Studies Workshop,

Rochester, NY.

right:
Losing: A Conversation with the Parents, 1977.
Still from color videotape.



herself to death, the chances of their talking in that way about world starvation on a TV interview would be very slim. What you have is neither parody nor burlesque, but rather contradiction. My work is a series of decoys; a work briefly masquerades as one thing, following a given form, until_you soon realize that some-thing is amiss. I tried to do it internally [within the apparently cohesive narrative text] in *Losing*."³³

Losing initially appears to be a documentary about anorexia, dealing with the notion of a person making a choice to destruct slowly, and the responsibility within the family for that choice, but it also deals with food as a political weapon and the responsibility of industrialized countries like the United States for starvation in the Third World. Here we see Rosler's strategy of going from specific, contemporary phenomena and linking it to more general world politics while at the same time casting this process of construction itself into stark relief. And as the economy of the society that prompts an American adolescent from a comfortable middle-class family to starve herself to death is dialectically linked to economies of the Third World, disasters such as malnutrition and famine—not to mention Nazi concentration camps—are denaturalized. Losing thus fulfills the description of her work as functioning metonymically, as a decoy attracting the viewer only to send him or her somewhere else, to another issue or set of concerns; this essentially dialectical strategy of layering of levels of interpretation and analysis, as I have argued, runs through her work. At the same time, however, Losing functions as a biting critique of the ideology of television documentary, and in particular, of the personal interview format conventionally presumed to provide direct and unmediated, though emotionally loaded, truth about a situation.

Thematically, both *Losing* and *Domination* take on impersonal social controls particularly over women, which Rosler had previously addressed in the live performance of *Vital Statistics of a Citizen*, *Simply Obtained* at UCSD in 1973.

³³ Rosler, in Jane Weinstock, "Interview with Martha Rosler," *October*, No. 17 (Summer 1981—"The New Talkies"), p. 82.

alexander alberro: the dialectics of everyday life



Vital Statistics of a Citizen Simply Obtained, 1977. From the series of Holiday Cards "From Our House to Your House," mailed annually, 1974 to 1978.

martha rosler

98:99

Rosler played the role of a woman who, at the bidding of medical functionaries, gradually disrobes so that all of her measurements can be taken in an effort to categorize her body. In this sense, the work is about the social construction of subjectivity and its relationship to the body. *Vital Statistics* focuses on the power, coercion, and instrumentality of the scientific medical establishment and the extent to which society has licensed this institution to objectify its citizens. It also shows how popular wisdom and scientific paradigm creation are both capable of implacable oppression of women, and people generally, simply by controlling the definitions of categories, leaving no room for self-definition.

The limitation of the live performance was that the presence of a naked woman in the room added another level of objectification and voyeurism. This prompted Rosler to seek a higher level of mediation, which led to the reconception of the project for video in 1977. Once again in the casting she sought a kind of slippage, employing friends and acquaintances to don white coats and play the roles—including, in this version, a trio of women functioning as a sort of Greek chorus by using toy noisemakers to punctuate each bodily measurement. But if as a performance *Vital Statistics* was a strip-tease in which, in a room full of spectators, a man directed a woman to remove her clothes, as a videotape it adopted the long shot, the stationary camera, and a 20-minute take as well as various voice-overs, constantly reminding viewers that the scene before them was taking place at a distance. Two additional framing sequences follow—one silent, one composed of documentary slides of women and children being measured while the narrator lists a series of "crimes against women." Thus, in each of its two forms,

live performance and as a videotape, *Vital Statistics* appeared at an opposite pole of presentation: physically close and conceptually removed.

The videotape of *Vital Statistics* opens with a blank screen and a voice-over commentary that begins: "There's no image on the screen just yet." According to Rosler, the strategy underlying this opening sequence was "to point out that neither photography nor science nor data-gathering were the villains of the piece, that social practices determined how these elements of human knowledge would be deployed in the formation of the categories 'woman' and 'other." ³⁴ In other words, the passage served to emphasize that no practice or technology can be understood outside of its social matrix.

It is in the context of this type of questioning that Rosler has interrogated photographic practices. Drawn to the medium from the moment of her early uses of the camera even while she saw herself as a painter, and underscored by her practice of producing photomontages, she has been at one and the same time aware and highly critical of the powerful uses of photography in areas of domination, normalization, surveillance, and control—issues that she discusses in depth in her 1981 essay "in, around, and afterthoughts (on documentary photography)."35 In particular, documentary photography has all too often become a vehicle for professional advancement at the expense of the photographer's subjects. The challenge she set for herself was that of trying to rethink the role of documentary photography while not becoming complicit with the bourgeois mode of quiescence masquerading as change. For instance, in her powerful photo/text piece The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems, she plays off two completely separated forms of discourse in photography—the actual context from which the photograph is extracted and the discourse around the image itself. The work takes the documentary as an enterprise not just with a social location but a historical and genealogical trajectory. With the presumed object of interest being the drunken residents of the Bowery, Rosler implicitly criticizes the tradition of documentary rescue that transforms victims into heroes by refusing to represent iconically any people at all.

By displaying the work in a grid format, she challenged the single-image protocol then prevalent. Unlike the mail works, however, or even the videotapes, *The Bowery* was intended to be hung in an art gallery or museum, as an art decoy, as it were. The images included in *The Bowery* primarily depicts frontal views of stores in Manhattan's "skid row" district, while the typewritten words and phrases present idioms, from the familiar to the archaic, describing alcoholics, inebriation, and alcoholism. The format of the text and the image panels is identical; each consists of a photo print with a black border. The formal effect is that the words appear not as captions floating on a page but rather as bounded images, just like

³⁴ Rosler, in Steve Edwards, "Secrets from the Street and Other Stories," *Ten-8 Magazine*, Winter 1989/90, pp. 42–43. Interview.

³⁵ In Martha Rosler: 3 Works (Halifax, N.S.: Nova Scotia College of Art & Design, 1981).



above:

Myth Today: Edited for Television, 1985.

Billboard, Minneapolis.

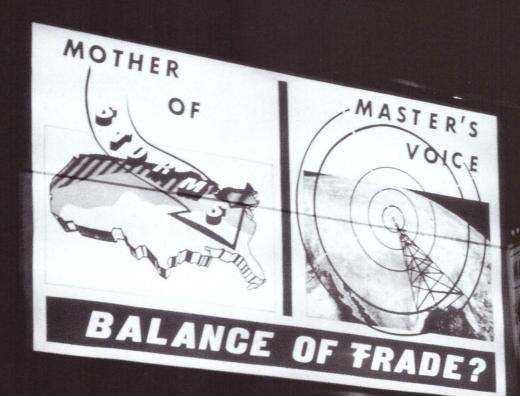
Photo by Sandy Maliga, Minneapolis.

Balance of Trade, 1985. Billboard, Toronto.

100:101

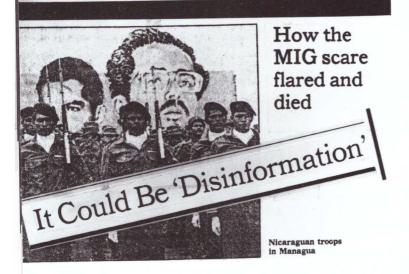
the photographs. Taken as a whole, the text is a poetry of drunkenness that is particular and universal in an ironic sense. Whereas at one level it takes its origin from the street, from the most deauthorized people in society, at another it belongs to every stratum of Western culture. Some of the words refer to alcoholism in its advanced stages as something ugly and brutal, which the unpopulated images with their emptiness cannot affirm or deny. The two "descriptive mediums," one linguistic and one visual, bang up against each other, each emphasizing the other's fundamental inadequacy. In a further sense too, these interstices of representation at once deauthor the image and interpellate the viewer, endowing her or him with the task of completing the work.

The strategy of troubling the adequacy of the authoritative image, with its totalizing capacity and apparent objectivity, is one that runs throughout Rosler's work. Sometimes, as in *The Bowery* or, for example, *She Sees in Herself a New Woman Every Day* (photo/audio, 1976), it is primarily a formal element such as serial imagery that displaces the author. Other times, such as in the videotape *If It's Too Bad to Be True, It Could Be DISINFORMATION* (1985) and the billboard *Myth Today: Edited for Television* (1985), or the (suppressed) movietheater intermission card *Lesson for Today* (1996), a collaboration with her son, Joshua Neufeld, the formal components operate much more closely in tandem with the subject matter of the work to question authoritative images or messages.



If It's Too Bad to Be True,

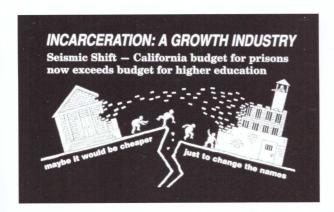
If It's Too Bad to Be True It Could Be DISINFORMATION, 1985. Installation with videotape and photostats.



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In *The Restoration of High Culture in Chile* (1977), a photo/text work, a text handout begins with a third-person narrative about a visit to the home of wealthy Mexicans that is the lead-in to a consideration of the role of symbolic capital in the 1973 fascist coup. On the wall are photographs of record-album covers and, unexpectedly, of some rather indistinct fish. What at first can only seem a metaphor for the role of the coup plotters or perhaps of hidden revolutionaries is revealed in the text as a literal representation of the exotic tropical fish at the home of the narrator's Tijuana hosts. Yet another approach is found in the 1967 collage *Greetings*. In this large collage on Masonite, a series of news photos show political figures—John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Barry Goldwater, the Pope, government officials, military officers—shake hands and smile, as wives and daughters look on. Rosler "defaces" the politicians with make-up, presenting them as "cosmeticized" representations not of leadership but of the pose of leadership, prompting the viewer to look behind the seamless and flat "Big Brother" image. This defacement appears as well in the "Body Beautiful" series.

In *Greetings*, as subsequently, the work does not articulate a resolution to the problems it poses and instead attempts to activate the audience to arrive at its own answers. The process of resolution, then, is ultimately located within each viewer, a process allied with Rosler's belief that "what is in the work becomes socially real as it becomes part of the actually stated discourse between people." ³⁶ Of course,



Lesson for Today, 1996 (with Joshua Neufeld). Movie-theater intermission slide projection (suppressed).

this perspective is fundamentally at odds with one of the art world's central myths, the axiom that rather than determining content, art discourse is a secondary reading of the subject matter resident within the work. Indeed, this level of importance attributed to discourse in the construction of meaning has led her to see her art making as inextricably linked to her activities as a writer, teacher, and public speaker.

Rosler's emphasis on the building of publics, and their importance in constructing the meaning of her work, makes her mindful of her exhibition contexts. Invited to exhibit or give a talk, she often invokes local conditions and events or topical questions. Born to Be Sold: Martha Rosler Reads the Strange Case of Baby \$M (1988),³⁷ for instance, saw its first incarnation in 1987 as a keynote speech for the Society for Photographic Education, sponsored by the Women's Caucus. To honor the caucus Rosler gave her talk on motherhood and representation, focusing on the unfolding case of contested surrogate motherhood known as "Baby M." The talk prompted Paper Tiger Television, a New York-based public-access television collective focusing on the media, to invite her to work with them on the subject.³⁸ The resultant tape addresses moral and ethical questions concerning scientific and legal intervention in reproductive processes, examining the industrialization of motherhood fueled by the market and by the efforts of patr-iarchy to reassert itself under postmodern conditions of fragmented identity. As Rosler once explained, in a way that links Born to Be Sold to such earlier works as Vital Statistics, "[Born to Be Sold] yokes science and patriarchy, with the media and the judiciary playing supporting roles."39

Works such as Secrets from the Street: No Disclosure and Unknown Secrets (The Secret of the Rosenbergs) (1988) were also produced for specific exhibition

³⁷ The title of this tape is rendered as either "\$M" or "S/M."

³⁸ Rosler had previously worked with Paper Tiger, at its inception in 1982, on the live broadcast (taped during the broadcast) Martha Rosler Reads Vogue.

³⁹ Rosler, in Edwards, "Secrets from the Street and Other Stories." op. cit.





Secrets from the Street: No Disclosure, 1980. Stills from color videotape contexts. The former was initially commissioned for a show entitled "Public Disclosure: Secrets from the Street," to be held simultaneously at San Francisco City Hall and in the Museum of Modern Art. A flyer for the show bore a picture of a street sweeper and the slogan, "It's trash on the street, it's art on the walls." In Secrets from the Street, a Super-8 film camera records, surveillance style, from inside a car as it drives through the city's Mission District. From its initial focusing of the camera to its frequent freezes to its audio peculiarities—and its unexpected conclusion with a cable-TV data stream about Vancouver, where the work was edited on video-the viewer is made aware of its recording and editing. Thematically, the work addresses the schism that exists between "a culture in the streets" and "a culture behind closed doors" in class societies. "You can't know a culture by coming to visit," states the narrator (Rosler). "You can see its facts but you cannot see its meaning. There is no universal meaning. We share meaning by living it." Thus, the tape at once highlights the tour guide's expected, but generally unstated, position as outsider and problematizes the proliferation of signs that circulate in everyday life by presenting two possible interpretations of one image. For Rosler, then, as for Benjamin before her, the streets provide a glimpse of "the dwelling space of the collective": "The collective is an eternally restless, eternally moving essence that, among the facades of buildings endures [erlebt], experiences [erfährt], learns and senses as much as individuals in the protection of their four walls."40

The installation Unknown Secrets (The Secret of the Rosenbergs) was produced for an exhibition of art addressing the tragic case of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. The Rosenbergs were tried and executed in the early 1950s for conspiracy to provide the "secret" of the atom bomb to the Soviets. The work's central element is an eight-foot-high canvas with a life-size black-and-white enlargement of a magazine photograph of Ethel Rosenberg drying dishes in her shabby tenement kitchen. The photo is surrounded by a number of silk-screened images from popular U.S. magazines of the period. They range from advertisements for products promising to make home life easier, such as one of a woman opening a self-defrosting refrigerator under the caption, "Be Free," to contingency maps for the invasion of Europe during a war with the Soviets; from a Playtex advertisement showing women in girdles jumping in a block of ice to Time magazine's photo of the Rosenbergs in their coffins; from exaggerated fashion shots to news photos of the principals in the case. Next to this large tableau is a towel rack with a dish rag stenciled with a letter from President Eisenhower to his son serving in Korea explaining why he would not commute Ethel Rosenberg's death sentence (saying, in effect, that of the two Rosenbergs, Ethel was the more dangerous). On top of the rack sits a box of JELL-O, the seemingly innocuous household staple made sinister

⁴⁰ Walter Benjamin, Gesammelte Schriften, Vol. V, p. 994, as cited in Buck-Morss, Dialectics of Seeing, op. cit., pp. 304–305.



Fascination with the (Game of the)
Exploding (Historical) Hollow Leg, 1983.
Multi-media Installation, detail.
Boulder, Colorado.
Photo by Barbara Jo Revelle.

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by trial testimony that Julius had spontaneously torn such a box in two, each half to serve as a recognition device for the atom spies.

These two elements are accompanied by a 14-page text, written by Rosler, detailing the long history of U.S. nuclear threats—the United States insisting all the while that all negative cold war momentum had derived from the Soviets. The text also comments on the trial and its surrounding reportage, from 1951 to 1953. Thus, in both Secrets from the Street and Unknown Secrets there is a double play on the term "secrets," which refers both to private lives and to government lies—the decoy at work.

Rosler's site and context specificity has sometimes provoked controversy and censorship. For instance, a billboard project for the city of Minneapolis, Minnesota, *Relax, No Enemy Foot Steps Here!* (1985), was suppressed by Film in the Cities, the organization that had commissioned it in the first place. Research for this work had led Rosler to discover that the twin cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul and all of the surrounding Ramsey and Hennepin counties were off-limits to Russians. In response to her inquiries, the U.S. State Department would say only that these restrictions were often a tit-for-tat gesture. The department sent her a map of the Soviet Union, inspection of which showed that the twin cities of Noril'sk and Dudinka, and the nearby Yenisei River, were closed to foreigners. On each end of her maquette, therefore, she placed a map—of Soviet Central Asia on one side and

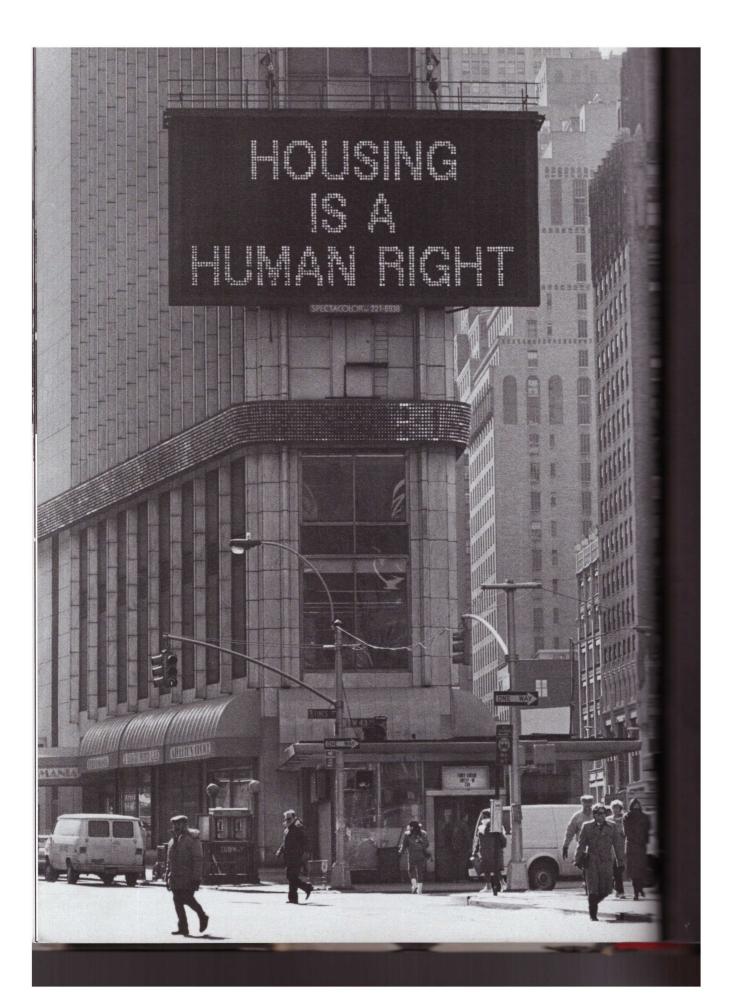
of Minnesota on the other, with the words "Twins Twinned" bridging them.⁴¹ Parallel texts on either side read "Minneapolis-St. Paul, Ramsey-Hennepin, and the entire Mississippi River, Closed to Russians," and "Dudinka and Noril'sk and the entire Yenisei River, Closed to Foreigners." Film in the Cities' rejection was triggered, she discovered, not by the work's critical aspect but by its uncomfortable specificity. Invited to submit another proposal, she took a different tack. Since her billboard site was directly opposite a local television studio with its own billboard of its news anchors, she produced a montage in which the view through the window of a luxury high-rise was replaced by television images of Earth. This was accompanied by a phrase directly out of Roland Barthes: "Myth Today: Edited for Television." The sponsors, evidently finding the critique abstract enough for their criteria, accepted this work.

In addition to politically committed members of the general public, a constant sector of Rosler's audience is made up of like-minded artists. These groups are often separate, a divide she has sometimes attempted to bridge. In 1988, she was invited by the Dia Art Foundation⁴² in New York to have a solo exhibition; the plan was for her to produce a new installation on homelessness on the model of her complex, multi-part installation Fascination with the (Game of the) Exploding (Historical) Hollow Leg, which she had mounted in 1983 in the art gallery of the University of Colorado at Boulder. Fascination, characteristically for Rosler, was both local and topical, taking on issues of atomic-weapons production and the masculinism of the early warning system at a time of great Cold War tension. The exhibition site was very close to the Rocky Flats nuclear installation as well as to the headquarters of the North American Radar Air Defense system (NORAD), located in a hollow mountain in Colorado Springs. The work was a rough simulation of a war room, with "adjusted" and annotated maps, enlargements of newspaper collages, military clothing from local thrift shops, and military recruiting material from the Boulder campus all pinned to the wall. There was an audio tour of NORAD headquarters and a slide show of local, national, and European antiwar protests. A video loop, featuring palm-sized video war games, played continuously on multiple monitors placed on desks from Rocky Flats. There was also a small library of books. Overhead were two enormous army-surplus cargo parachutes. During the course of the exhibition, Rosler worked with students to present a performance and reading on war, and she also organized a forum with local Central American and peace activists.

All the elements in *Fascination* were made or gathered by Rosler. For the 1989 Dia exhibition, however, Rosler decided that there had been so much work done—and there was so much information available—on homelessness, its causes,

⁴¹ The term "twins" is a multiple referent: to Minneapolis—St. Paul, to the local baseball team, to Dudinka-Noril'sk, and to the twinned sets of these twin cities.

⁴² Now the Dia Art Center.









Housing Is a Human Right, 1989. Times Square Spectacolor Signboard animation.

left: Photo by Oren Slor, New York. and potential solutions, that she would turn her show into a curatorial project. Moreover, rather than organizing the exhibition around homelessness per se, she divided the project into three discrete shows. The project, entitled "If You Lived Here...," began with Home Front, an exhibition on contested housing. Only in the second exhibition, Homeless: The Street and Other Venues, did homelessness take center stage. The third show, City: Visions and Revisions, dealt primarily with international architectural schemes, fantasies, commentaries, utopias, and dystopias. In addition to the exhibitions, there were four forums: one corresponding to each exhibition and a separate one on artists' housing. Together, the shows and forums, whose participants included artists, film- and videomakers, homeless and underhoused people, neighborhood advocacy groups, artist collectives, squatters, elected representatives, activists, and advocates, were concerned with the interrelationships among housing, gentrification, art, and homelessness. The shows and forums brought together a variety of separate publics and constituencies. During the six-month period of the exhibition cycle, Rosler addressed an even more general audience with Housing Is a Human Right, an animation work sponsored by the Public Art Fund for the Spectacolor sign in New York's Times Square. The short animation piece addressed gentrification and abandonment, and the near-total withdrawal of Federal funds from low-income housing construction by the Reagan administration, resulting in nearly three million homeless in the United States.

In "If You Lived Here..." Rosler's intermingling of the work of activists and artists was remarkably successful in forging a community or oppositional public sphere. Accordingly, the project as a whole not only participated in but also helped build the idea of collective and activist work. And rather than restricting its strategy to agitation for change, in retrospect it is clear that "If You Lived Here..." while building on the work of her friends in Group Material, helped set the context for a whole array of 1990s work involved in community and social change.⁴³

In the 1990s, she has continued to map social and political space, especially by using photography and video to explore public space as a physical landscape and space of desire. Returning to themes that have long preoccupied her—themes articulated in some of the early photomontages, such as the "House Beautiful: The Colonies" series (1966–1972); *The Bowery*, "If You Lived Here...," and *Secrets from the Street*—Rosler has produced a number of photographic series, some of her strongest work to date. This photographic work, with and without text, builds up representations of space abstract and concrete. In the long-standing project "In

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⁴³ Rosler's emphasis on context specificity also led her to turn aside the Washington University Gallery of Art's request simply to exhibit a section of "If You Lived Here...," on the grounds that a St. Louis version of this exhibition would require local research and material. For the show and discussion that she ultimately organized in 1992 as part of the exhibition "Green Acres: Neo-Colonialism in the U.S.," curated by Chris Scoates, she worked with local people and local issues that were considerably different from those in New York, such as the hyper-segregation that exists in St. Louis.



Housing Is a Human Right, 1990. Outdoor poster project at Oxford, England.

the Place of the Public," airports function as representations, even metonyms, of postmodern space, as disarticulated by the economics of late capitalism and the demands of a consumer economy. The intriguing photographs in this work have been produced while she circulates in the increasingly nationalized and internationalized art world. In this series, two different texts accompany the images. Phrases and sentences placed on the wall near the photos build up a phenomenological picture of the transition through airports and in airplanes ("whitenoise hiss"; "imperceptible airflow"; "hospital regime") and point to underlying structures ("mergers and acquisitions"; "total control"; "displace-ment"; "infinite deferral") or to a larger vision of the postmodern world "I don't say map, I don't say territory." Along the floor there is a baseline list of more traditional structures and institutions by which we have marked our collective life: "A tree, a rock, a brook... a hut, a home, a temple, a dome... a barracks, a brothel, a bank, a concert-house... a chapter, a book." This text line concludes with the transformation from presence and passage to "flow, transmission, data, bit, byte." The photographs themselves offer views of terminal hallways, walkways, and atria as well as plane interiors, lit in strange colors, pointing in relentless one-point perspective down vast passageways, or panning across impassive spaces, often devoid of people, or with people wrapped up in fulfilling the exigencies of passage. One sentence of the posted phrases sums up the implied world picture: "There are only no fragments where there is no whole."44

In a smaller, equally compelling series, "Rights of Passage" (1993–97), which harks back to her 1960s collage *International Style* (as well as to early, unpublished street and car photos), Rosler provides panoramic views, taken with a toy camera, of urban and interurban roads and interstates, as she commutes in the congested New York area. The images rush in a band across the space of the photo, while large white margins are retained above and below these human-made, car-made, landscapes, as though containing the zones of ordered disorder. The view from the a driver's seat reveals the complex welter of physical disruptions, signage, and flows

⁴⁴ In the Place of the Public has recently been published in book form in English and German, with a long essay, "In the Place of the Public: Observations of a Frequent Flyer," by Rosler and an introductory essay by Anthony Vidler (In the Place of the Public: Observations of a Frequent Flyer, An der Stelle der öffentlichkeit, Beobachtungen einer Vielfliegerin. Ostfildern, Germany: Cantz, 1998).

that is completely familiar yet made unsettlingly unfamiliar, at once banal and compelling. Consistent in these photographic series is the way in which promises of fulfillment through the movement of bodies are shown to be ultimately and inevitably blocked by the rapid congestion of the routes and carriers over road and air, as the visions of modernity give way to the nightmares of postmodernity.⁴⁵

In "Transitions and Digressions," a more casually organized series of street photographs, the city streets, and occasionally the car and the subway, and even the museum, are shown to be collectors of our ideas of the body and of pleasure as reflected in everyday accourrements. Most of the images in this unsettling series are of shop windows, many of them displaying clothing, thereby connecting the series not only to *Some Women Prisoners* and the stuffed work of the early 1970s but also to *The Bowery* and many of her other works about public space and collectivities. In *Transitions and Digressions*, the fragmentariness and uncanny nature of the photographic image is reflected in the fragmentations of lifelike mannequins and disturbing photos presented frontally in store windows in the United States, Western Europe, and Russia. Here the melancholia of the street view, remarked on by Benjamin, is also attached to the melancholic fragments of bodies.⁴⁶

Indeed, the scope of Rosler's work has in many cases been underappreciated despite its resonance in widely disparate fields. Her work has been regarded as innovative and influential in a number of disciplines, including art theory and criticism, photography, video, performance, and installation. Today, it is discussed not only in an art context but also within a remarkable array of academic fields, including art history, architecture and urbanism, women's studies, sociology, cultural studies, theater, and video.

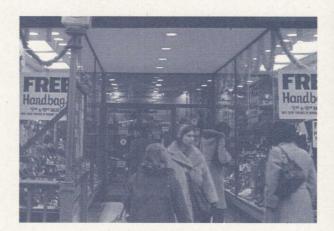
From the gendered production of food to the production and consumption of all cultural activity, from the disjunct formal means of communication to the dissonant barrage of mass communication, from the down-and-out streets to the interiors of privilege, there is always a dialectic operative in Martha Rosler's work. In working out this dialectic, the first term, that is, the particular instance, functions as a decoy triggering a relation to the social totality, the second term of the dialectic, as well as to time in history. In this sense, the whole is detected in the fleeting, particular instance. By the same token, however, Rosler has been consistent in steadfastly refusing to bypass the notion of the quotidian in the pursuit of abstraction. The everyday thus remains the gateway to the totality rather than the passive object of light shed by the latter.

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⁴⁵ See Rights of Passage (Kortrijk, Belgium: Kanaal Art Foundation, 1997).

This is a theme Rosler articulates—especially in relation to the photographic images of women in pornography and advertising—in "The Body in Pieces," a slide lecture she gave numerous times in the mid-to late 1970s; this theme recurs as a subtheme in the videotape *Domination and the Everyday* and much more explicitly in *Martha Rosler Reads* Vogue (1982), the first of the two tapes she made with Paper Tiger Television.

increase en Assemble texts: installation and photo/text work



1975 three portraits : millie



When I went to pay for the shoes the woman said to pick out a bag, the store was giving away free handbags "with every purchase." Surprise must have come through in my voice, asking which were the free ones, because after she answered "any one" we found ourselves having a conversation about the store. She seemed surprised that I didn't know about the sale, so I told her I was from out of town. "What are you doing here?" "For my aunt's fiftieth anniversary she's restaging her wedding," I said, "and I need shoes with low heels that won't kill me, so I've had to go to a lot of stores." She said the giveaway brought in a lot of business. More women came in to buy shoes, which helped the salesmen, who worked on commission, as well as helping the management (of course), but what, she asked, did it mean to the women behind the stocking-and-bag counter, like her, on fixed salaries? Nothing but trouble and extra work. The store, I knew, was part of a city-wide shoe chain, all with women behind the counter and men selling the shoes.

The salesmen were an odd pair; unlike the woman behind the counter they had to put on acts, be a little kinky or something to sell shoes. She sold bags and stockings, they were selling themselves. The older, Jewish guy had a Florida tan and kept up a continuous line of patter like a borscht-belt stand-up comic. This guy was in his sixties, at least; the other guy was a Latino, Puerto Rican, I guess, suave, chubby, kind of quiet. The woman seemed like family to me, like one of the many "cousins" who populate my mother's side. She wore a pin-on watch that made me think of my aunt. She looked healthy but tired. All the bags were similar cheap plastic totes. I didn't really want one, but maybe, I thought, it would be handy for the week I was in town. She and I pretended to be wrapped up in the bag decision while we kept talking about the work. She said the boss asked her to stay an extra hour every day without pay to handle the extra business. She couldn't arque with him--she motioned uptown with her head--when he said business was bad in the whole city. "He's telling me?!" She tossed her head. Worse for her than for him, we agreed. She leaned over, our heads bent together across the counter. Her voice dropped lower. "But don't you see, the whole idea of a bag giveaway was to boost sales, so the boss wouldn't have to lay people off, he told me, not to force him into paying overtime. So what could I say? Believe me, I know how shifty this is--but I'll retire in a few more years. Meanwhile my husband isn't a well man, and I can't even think about leaving now. So I work extra to keep the job. " I asked about a union. "Union? Are you kidding? Listen, things are bad all over the city, what can the union do?" She leaned closer, glancing around and smiling publicly. She continued with stiff lips, low: "I used to be in the furriers' union, now, that used to be a union! I helped organize. That was a long time ago--nowadays, what

does a union do for you? They don't do a thing for the working person, believe me."

I was getting excited. She asked my name and told me hers. I asked if maybe I could take her picture? Could I meet her somewhere and ask her some questions about her job and so on? "No!" she puts out her hand. I tell her I'm interested in talking with women about their work. She looks over at the salesmen, lounging against the shelves of shoes across the room. "Say hello to your aunt Hilda for me," she says loudly, sending a charged look in my direction. She hands me a bag over the counter: "This one is very nice." I nod. She puts it in a paper bag and starts to wrap up the shoes I've bought. She drops her voice again. "Oh, I have such a big mouth...My big mouth always gets me into trouble." "Wait, I say, I don't want to get you in trouble or make you upset."

"If the boss ever found out he'd fire me, I know it," she says.

"What if I make it so you can't be identified? Transcribe the tape or something? It wouldn't be used here in town anyway...."

"He'd know. He'd know it was me; who else? she intones. Then, "Well, come back next week and maybe...."

"I'm leaving Sunday."

"Come back Friday, then and we'll see. Don't forget your shoes. Have a good time at the wedding. And say hello to your aunt for me."

When I come back on Friday she is still afraid. She is friendly, though, she seems glad to see me, and I can see she is still trying to make up her mind. She wants to share her consciousness of exploitation, but she is too aware of what happens to "troublemakers." "How was your aunt's wedding" she asks for the sake of cover. "Let me tell you about how my grandchildren are doing." In a more private voice she says, "If he ever found out—don't ask me how he would, but he would—I'd get fired and my husband wouldn't get the care he needs....Just a few more years....No, I can't." We part with good feelings, and with regret on both sides.



I called you today, we spoke a long time ago, you and I. You were in a good mood, a mellow one. You'd just seen your sister, your brother-in-law was having his eighty-first birthday. Your sister was married to him for 49 years this January. You asked me how my new house was, how my job was, did I have enough money. Somewhere in the conversation you said, "After all, you're standing on your own two feet now..."You said it, you said I'm standing on my own two feet...I remember when I was little, I'd want to stay home from school-I hated the yeshiva, I hated it for eight years, in the fourth grade I said, thank you God, thank you God, only four more years of this - I used to want to stay home but you wouldn't let me. Daddy would let me stay home...but he would never want to tell you. He would tell me, "A lie of omission is not the same as a lie of commission." You used to come home from teaching school at three o'clock in the afternoon, but the yeshiva didn't let out until 4:30. You used to come in and go out again because you were very busy - you

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were a very busy woman-you had a lot to do. So-Daddy had a very simple solution. At five to three I would hide in the closet in my bedroom. He would hide me in the closet. I would hide there until almost four o'clock. I would hide in the closet so you wouldn't know I wasn't in school. The closet had a closet inside it - I know this is very peculiar now, but I didn't know it then. In the front part of the closet were a lot of clothes, and my father's graduation picture, his graduation from law school: St. Lawrence University, Brooklyn Law School, 1932. That meant he went to law school at night. I used to look at his picture in the closet—his diploma too—and wonder why it was there. In the front part on the closet with his picture were a lot of clothes. And in the back, past the first clothes rack, was a smaller closet, a creep-in closet. And in between the two, on a kind of sill, were a lot of shoes, old shoes. Your old shoes. You used to wear really serviceable, cheap shoes when you taught. Every day you wore sensible, cheap, serviceable and sturdy shoes,

but in the closet there were wonderful shoes — silver dancing shoes with high heels and buckles, silver dancing shoes from the 1920s or 30s, laced with thin silver laces. I used to wonder what they'd be like on your feet — you had such sturdy legs, sturdy, serviceable, sensible legs...I'd hide in the closet, and I'd look at your shoes, and I'd sit down among them and wait for you to walk out the door.

You always thought that dressing up was very important. I'm sure you believe that clothes make the man and the woman - but I always felt that shoes made the woman. You'd always dress me up for photos, in costumes that other people gave you. I always wore everyone else's handme-downs, it was such a sensible thing to do. You'd dress me up for photos, I remember. I remember one — I still have it, or you do — I was wearing a scotch plaid dress, a little blond jewish girl with a dutch haircut in a scotch plaid dress - you made me hold it out in a semicircle as though I were square-dancing -







and on my head was a little scotch cap. I was smiling. I had a tooth missing. I was wearing plain brown shoes, laced oxfords. You were not very interested in the shoes I wore for these photos. You always insisted I had to get sensible ones, so my feet would grow right, and I always wore Stride Rite shoes. But once you took me, when I was five or six, to get a pair of mary-janes that had - a buckle. Two buckles - that's it, they had two straps and two buckles. And the two straps lay across my feet like two hard fingers gripping them, in such a way that the bone between them was pressed upward. They pressed on this bone in the most peculiar way and I'd say, "mommy, mommy, mommy — these're, these're pressing on my feet, they're pressing on my feet and my feet are getting to be shaped funny." You said, "No these shoes are good. They're expensive shoes. These are good shoes. These shoes are good for you." And so I have, on each foot, a bone that protrudes on the top, because of these shoes that pressed my feet into a funny shape.

I remember once, the teacher called you from the school and said, "Her boots don't fit." And you said, "But they're new boots." But those boots — those boots were someone else's boots, they were hand-me-down boots. I think they were hand-me-down boots. They were size 8. You always bought me things very large, so I would grow into them. Now you want me to dress my child in enormous clothing, so he'll grow into it. These boots were size 8. I

wore size 4. "Never mind," you said, "you'll grow into them." I wear size 6 today. But you were sure I'd grow into those size 8 red rain boots. The teacher called to say, "She can't walk in her boots, they keep doubling up under her feet every time she takes a step; maybe she's got the wrong boots. You'd better come get her, it's raining out and she needs her boots."

There were times that I recall being at your feet, on my hands and knees. From the time I was about 10, you and I used to be alone all week in the country house together, in your sister's country house, while Dad worked in the city. I'd always want to stay up at night and read. I read a lot, I loved to read. It was my one chance for privacy. All day I was away, swimming. I'd swim in the lake from early morning to lunch, hop out, climb up the bank, eat some lunch, and hop back in. Creeping, as it were, past you, doing the crawl. But I'd have to come out at dinnertime and endure all through dinner. In the evening I just wanted to read. But you always wanted to go to bed early. There were four bedrooms in the house, but you always insisted that we sleep in the same one, so as not to get the others dirty. You always reminded me that it wasn't our house. So, at about 9:30 or 10 we'd have to get into bed, you into yours and I into mine, and turn out the light and go to sleep. But I'd never be tired. So I'd lie there, and count your breathes: Listen and listen, and listen and...I'd sli-i-ide down the side of my bed, cre-e-ep on my hands and knees holding the book, trying to get out the door and into the bathroom, where I would read by the nightlight you always left burning. MOST of the time, though, you'd gave a start and: "what's that, what's that?" You'd get up, see me, grab me, and knock me around. You used to threaten to get your shoe, but you always made do with your fist, sometimes you'd choke me a bit. When I got a little older I wasn't so interested in reading; I'd set my hair every night with bobby pins and little rollers, the way my girlfriend Rosemarie taught me. On warm evenings we'd pretend to take a walk together but really we'd stand by the side of the road, in the driveway, with our chests puffed out and our bellies sucked in, in short shorts and clingy jerseys, barefoot or in sandals. We'd strike bathingbeauty poses and stand stock-still, waiting for the boys in their lowslung souped-up cars to drive by and whistle and leer and make the sound of kisses.

I remember once seeing your shoe, as it came up to hit me in the ear. I was about 17, and I thought you were out of the house. I was on the telephone to my girlfriend. She was somebody I liked a lot but I was kind of afraid of her because she went to the High School of Music and Art where I'd wanted to go but you wouldn't let me because it was too far away - and you were probably right — it was too far away - to travel from Brooklyn almost to the Bronx - or so it seemed, that it was too far - anyway, I was on the phone, and I thought you had stepped out, and I was lying on the floor in my room, talking on







my phone. It was my phone because once my brother called up to speak to me and Daddy answered the phone and he didn't know who it was, and he said, "Who is this?" and Larry, realizing that he didn't know it was his own son, said, "Is Martha home?" And Dad said, "WHO IS THIS?? WHY DO YOU WANT TO SPEAK TO HER? WHADDOYOU, WHADDOYOU WANT WITH HER?"...And so Larry got me a phone; he was upset by that kind of behavior. He thought it was an invasion of privacy. I thought it was normal. Anyway...so there I was, on my phone, on my floor, smoking a cigarette. See, that was the kicker - I was smoking a cigarette. I was forbidden to smoke. I can understand, I'm a mother too, that you were protecting my health. Anyway, you came in and you saw me lying on the floor and you kicked me in the head. I'm sure you were aiming at the cigarette, but you got me right in the ear. Luckily, I wasn't deafened. However, I never spoke to that ...friend again.

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I used to really believe that shoes made the woman. I would buy a new pair of high-heeled shoes, you know the kind that people — that women —wore when I was growing up, do you remember those? Very high, very high pointy spike heels with pointy toes? And I'd buy 'em and I'd think, "Tonight's the night.a date... romance dance..." and I'd go out. And they'd be fine. They'd be fine for a while and then I'd realize they were pressing on a nerve; they always pressed on a nerve. They were fine in the shoe store, and I always thought, "These

are better, these are different, these really feel fine," and I'd make it about, oh, a quarter of the way through the evening and I'd have to take my shoes off. Now, if there's one thing that a woman wasn't supposed to be, it was flat-footed on her own two feet; I mean, flats were for lowerclass girls; nobody wore flats. And nobody walked around without their shoes, not if you wanted to keep your reputation. So there I was, spending the evening at a dance without my shoes and having to go home, through the streets of New York City, freezing cold in tattered stockings and I'd say..."I made that mistake again"

Cinderella was oppressed; she was treated badly. She was given only crusts and scraps to eat and old cast-offs to wear. Often she had to go without shoes. She had to perform endless household chores. The chill and the lack of food made her light-headed. She was very unhappy and could only escape through daydreams. Nobody thought of training her to be a lady.

Her stepsisters were given all the advantages; their every move was scrutinized and corrected, their diets were watched. They had the fanciest clothes, the most fashionable little slippers and boots. Their mother planned to make them ladies who would rise above her own station.

When the prince came around with the slipper, the elder sister took it to her room, but she couldn't get her big toe into it. Her mother handed her a knife saying, "Cut the toe off; when you are Queen you won't need to go on foot." The girl cut her toe off, forced her foot into the

shoe, swallowed the pain, and went out to the King's son. He out her on his horse and rode off. But as they passed the grave of Cinderella's mother, two doves on the hazel tree cried:

Turn and peep, turn and peep, There's blood within the shoe, The shoe it is too small for her, The true bride waits for you.

Seeing the blood, the prince turned his horse around and took the false bride home. The other sister got her toes safely into the shoe, but her heel was too big. Giving her the knife her mother said, "Cut a bit off; when you're Queen you won't have to walk." She cut a bit off; squeezed her foot in, swallowed the pain, and went to the prince. But as they rode past the tree the little doves cried:

Turn and peep, turn and peep, There's blood within the shoe, The shoe it is too small for her, The true bride waits for you.

Seeing the blood, the prince turned back. "Don't you have another daughter?" he asked. "No," said the man, "Just a stunted little kitchen wench my late wife left behind, but she couldn't possibly be the bride." But Cinderella sat on a stool and put on the shoe which fit like a glove. And when she got up, the prince recognized his beautiful dancing partner and put her on his horse. As they passed the hazel tree the two white doves cried:

Turn and peep, turn and peep, No blood is in the shoe, The shoe is not too small for her, The true bride rides with you.

Know Your Servant Series #1

North American Waitress, coffee-shop variety

HAIR neat, simply arranged, not highly lacquered; no scented hair spray. Shorter than shoulder length or tied back or held by invisible hair net. Her hairdo is not more stylish than yours. May be wearing special cap or "bandette."

Probably wearing lipstick, of moderate shade and conforming to natural lip line. Any other make up is discreetly applied. Not wearing pancake make up, heavy mascara, or false eyelashes. Brows not completely shaved off and redrawn. No obvious rouge spots on cheeks. She is not more glamorous than you.

Is not chewing gum, sucking candy, eating or smoking.

Is not wearing earrings, with possible exception of tiny gold posts.

is not wearing cross, star of David, ankh, peace symbol, or other necklace.

May be wearing plastic sign on chest stating first name and Management's name, symbol, and/or slogan. You may address her familiarly, but she cannot address you familiarly.

Garment is a dress, probably one piece, belted or cinched at waist; knee length or shorter, often mid-thigh if age 30 or below; sleeves short or possibly three-quarter length; of common material, such as cotton or synthetic, and no more expensive than yours; of solid white or black or pastel color, and no more attractive than yours. May have collar of contrasting color, probably edged or bound. Clean and unwrinkled; no rips or parted seams. All buttons present and buttoned.

Is wearing an apron, perhaps tied with a large bow. The time-honored mark of her servitude to you.

Slip is not showing.

Is wearing a brassiere and possibly a girdle.

Hands clean. Nails clean and short. No colored nail polish. No rings other than standard wedding and/or engagement rings.

Is not wearing bracelet(s). May be wearing conservatively styled watch. Has no adornments to compete with yours.

Is wearing patternless, transparent stockings or pantyhose, free of wrinkles and runs, and of a color close to that of her skin or slightly darker.

Shoes not stylish. No high heels. Clean, neat, well-polished, in good repair.

All body hair is removed, including underarm and leg hair.

Has no discernible body odor. Not wearing cheap perfume. Not wearing expensive perfume. Has no attractive odor to compete with yours.

REMARKS: Conversation is pleasant, short, impersonal. Voice neither loud nor soft. Stands neither close nor far away. Does not solicit opinions, except about the food. Does not interrupt but listens attentively. Eases your decisions by making appropriate suggestions, with reserved appeal, stating choices clearly and slowly. Glance meets yours without shifting. Fills requests promptly. Disturbs you as little as possible when serving you.

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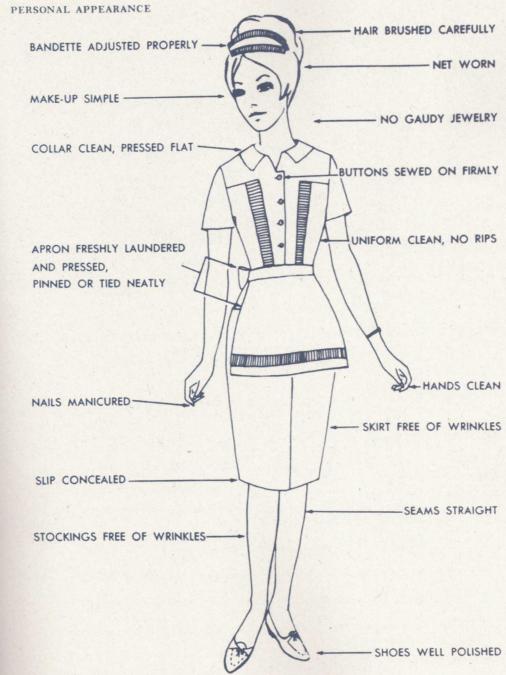
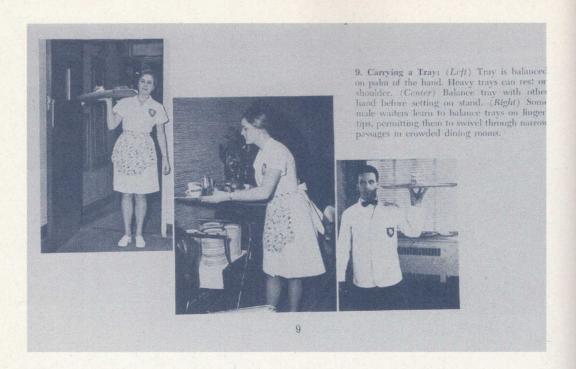


Fig. 2:5 Waitress Check List.

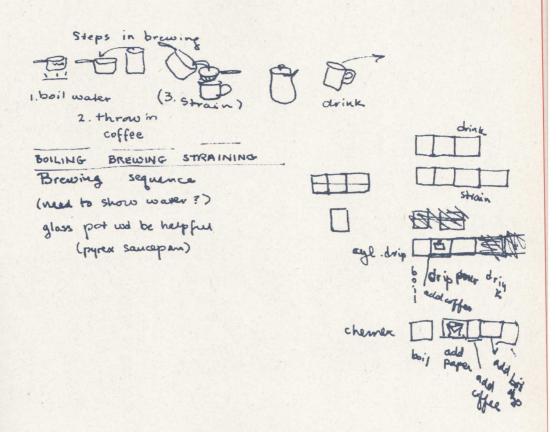


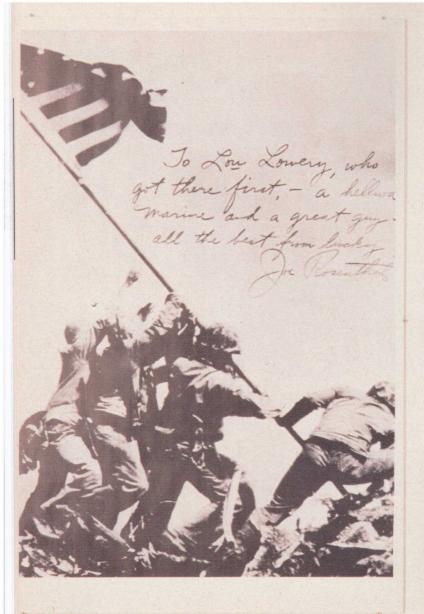
When you find it difficult to be at your best with difficult customers, try to remember the following:

THE CUSTOMER

- 1. He is the most important person in our business, the life-blood of every food establishment.
- 2. He is not dependent upon us; we depend upon him.
- He is not an interruption of our work; he is the purpose of it.
- 4. He does us an honour when he calls; we are not doing him a favour by serving him.
- 5. He is part of our business, not an outsider.
- 6. He is a human being with feelings and emotions like our own.
- 7. He is not someone with whom to argue or match wits.
- 8. He deserves the most courteous and attentive treatment we can give him.

--Ellen Adeline Harris, Professional Restaurant
Service (New York, Toronto, London & Sydney:
McGraw-Hill Company of Canada Limited, 1966),p.3.







At Norad's Space Command Cetrying to preserve their shrinking ing some of their formidable week





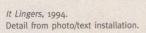












THE RESTORATION OF HIGH CULTURE IN CHILE

martha rosler

1977

She has a friend who visits her every so often, a charming, quirky man, a music critic for a large Eastern paper. He does a good bit of traveling, to conferences and seminars. The last time he visited, he was on the way to something in San Francisco and had just come back from a month at a castle in Salzburg. She is not part of his world, and probably because he is a bit unreal to her, his middle-aged gallantry strikes her as pleasant more often than it irritates her. Well, he's a romantic and a lover of good times, good company, good music, and he'd had a wonderful time in Austria. He'd been entranced by a young singer named Norma; her rich voice, as he describes it, matches her dark beauty and radiant warmth. It is especially wonderful to him that this young woman has married an old friend of his, Bill, an electronic-music composer at one of the large Midwestern departments. The critic and Bill had been out of touch, and the critic was delighted to find Bill transformed, humanized. In his telling of it, Norma's brunette generosity has thawed and tempered Bill's Nordic reserve. The pair had produced a child, Maria Flena, at 9 months the darling of the festival. The critic explains that their loving, indulgent ways with her captured the hearts of their musical colleagues and helped the community feel itself as one. At month's end, Norma pressed the critic to visit her mother and brother on his way through San Diego. She promised a warm welcome and wrote Mama immediately.

The critic is a bit shy; he interrupts his story and looks She realizes then that the story is instrumental He asks, will she come along to visit Norma's family? He has phoned ahead and been urged to come that evening. She discovers that the family lives in Tijuana. She searches her memory of the previous moments of talk but finds no clue. The international character of concert music, she thinks. The family, it develops, is indeed Mexican. They live in Tijuana and control the operation of the manufacturing concern that Papa, now dead, had established there. Her curiosity defeats her reticence; she

will go.

That evening she and her friend buy Mexican car insurance and cross the border. Her friend doubts her answer of 500,000 for Tijuana's population--almost as big as San Diego?! They follow Mama's directions to a part of the city she's never seen before. Norma's family lives near a large international hotel displaying huge posters welcoming one of the candidates in Mexico's forthcoming election. They park. They walk up and back, looking for the house number. They enter and ask the clerk, in poor Spanish, does he know the family? Next door, he says in English. There's only a brick wall, they say. The gate is around the corner, he responds. They almost circle the block to find it. They ring; the gate unlatches. They walk up the path in the gloom and are met on the porch by the family, the mother round, small. dark, carefully coiffed, cordial; the brother tall, quiet, dark-haired but pale, with the almost muscleless look

some people have. Their clothing is that of the established Mexican bourgeoisie: expensive, tasteful rather conservative--maroon double-knit sweater and skirt, lightgray suit. All glide into a dim house, a dim parlor. Red velvet drapes and sofas, dark wood cabinets, books, an oil portrait--Papa. On the coffee table a photo of Norma, smiling, in brown velvet evening gown, holding a longstemmed red American Beauty rose. Polite conversation over good sherry. The family's English is fluid. Mama and the critic speak warmly; she and brother lean silently back in their seats. She fingers her camera, takes no pictures. Periodically she notices, across the dark room, something ghost white jumping silently in a tank. Mama speaks with controlled verve about Norma and Bill, their music, precious Maria Elena. Talk lulls. Brother opens a brief consumer's discussion of cameras. He seems gentle, earnest. She asks about the thing in the tank. A rare African catfish, he explains with the same pride touched with embarrassment with which he spoke of cameras. The fish can no longer be imported, and he has learned from the director of the San Diego zoo that there may be

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none left in the States.

They rise for dinner. The servants are out, of course. They emerge onto the porch. Brother gets the dark-green Mercedes; she sees within the garage a Volvo wagon and a Porsche with American plates. Brother has gone to college in San Diego. His English is more American than Mama's in accent and idiom. Driving loosens him up; he talks confidently as he drives to a favorite restaurant nearby. It is attached to a tawdry motel. Inside, Tijuana wrought iron, huge paper flowers, American tourists, high prices. The waiters, dressed to remind one of vaqueros, are very gracious to her hosts. All the entrees are meat; she chooses something with organs and entrails. The food and wine are very good. Conversation centers on music and art and-a gesture to her-on films. Norma's family shows itself to be comfortably wellbred, refined, sensitive, cultured. Brother unbends some more. He becomes animated about the humanitarian virtues, the sheer magnetic power of Jimmy Carter; he wishes fervently for his election. Watergate has been such a blow. He follows the campaign through North American television and newspapers. Are not they, too, convinced of Carter's ethics and charisma? She recalls the election posters on the hotel and thinks of asking about Mexico's elections but she knows nothing at all about the race, the parties, the issues, and does not ask after all. Brother has gotten his degree in philosophy, from the University of San Diego, a large Catholic university. He develops aloud for them his system of moral philosophy, the most speculatively Idealist, the least attached to real life, that she has ever heard from a living being. It is personalistic and seems to rest on some notion of selfcontrol. She and her friend shift in their seats. They discuss his ideas a bit, uncomfortably. Mama is silent, smiling vaguely; this is not one of Mama's topics. She feels suddenly that the abyss they've been skirting is closer than it had seemed.

Talk falters, dessert arrives, a frothy house specialty with liqueur and egg white. Over Courvoisier talk resumes. Mama picks up the thread; she tells stories. She loves traveling, she says; all agree on its pleasures. She sighs that she prefers to travel light but Norma and Bill! How difficult to tour with electronic-music equipment! Norma and Bill took so much baggage on their South American tour! But it was so marvelous, she exclaims, so successful, Norma's singing and Bill's music were so warmly received-Rio, Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Santiago de Chile...Santiago? she hears herself ask. Yes, Mama responds, she sang in the best hall in Chile. You know, it was only three days after the coup! Everyone was so excited! (Her friend squeezes her arm.) There were concerts so soon? Oh yes, it was the liberation, everyone was so happy. The nightmare, the reign of terror, had been ended. There was no longer any freedom, you know, under Allende, you couldn't buy so many things. The housewives had to go on strike. They had to wait all night long for black-market toothpaste, there was no soap, meat became hard to get, there was even talk of rationing. No, the people were not sorry to see it all gothey were jubilant. Norma's repertoire of German lieder and Bill's electronic compositions met with triumphant acclaim. Civilization had been restored.

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Her friend helps her out. He moves the conversation onto safe ground. The rest of the visit has a different quality for her.

11

She has ceased to keep up her part of this particular conversational fiction. Even her clothes remind her of the gulf between them. It was one of those carefully nurtured confusions that has led her to imagine that her culture intersected meaningfully with that of the other three. She thinks

People have said that you can't elect socialism. Well, People have said that Chile had too many economic problems. Well,

People have said that Allende mismanaged things. Well, People have said that Allende was Castro's tool. Well, People have said that socialism is frustrating. Well,

People have said that the left will always have warring factions. Well,

People have said that the government overthrew itself. Well, People have said that Allende was a Marxist devil. Well, People have said that you can't expect people to give things up. Well,

People have said that people wouldn't stand for it. Well, People have said that it was foolish to think that the United States would stay out of it. Well,

People have said that they knew the rabble would ruin things. Well.

People have said that Allende was too interested in bourgeois legalisms. Well.

People have said—the Chilean left has said—that the Unidad Popular government fell because it failed to arm the working people and the peasants. Well.

People have shown that the United States spent \$7 milson to back opposition candidates in Chile, such as Eduardo Frei, and, when that failed, it backed a proposed coup to prevent Allende from taking office.

According to the U.S. Senate assassination report, on Sep. 15, 1970 (11 days after Allende's election and before he

took office), Pres. Nixon told C1A director Helms than an Allende regime would not be acceptable and instructed the C1A to play a direct role in organizing a military coup.

People have shown that U.S. money and advice backed Chilean right-wing agitation and terrorism designed to promote the overthrow of the elected UP government:

CIA deputy director Tom Karamessines told the Senate; "I am sure that the seeds that were laid in that effort in 1970 had their impact in 1973."

People have shown that Chile is a classic example of a subject state, forced to yield its resources to foreign interests, mostly U.S.-owned multinationals, and to import finished goods at inflated prices.

People have shown that such companies, including ITT, Anaconda, and Kennecott Copper, conspired with the Nixon government and its covert policy makers in the "40 Committee" to engineer the "destabilization" and overthrow of the elected UP government.

People have shown that as a subject state Chile was always greatly in need of foreign monetary aid: U.S. and other tax dollars must prop up the economies and thus the governments of the subject states so that the multinationals can continue to draw their huge profits. People have shown that the U.S. engineered an "invisible blockade" of Chile under the UP, cutting off vital consumer goods and all economic aid, from its own monies and from international funds under its control, which Chile had received in huge amounts all through the '60s despite its very poor credit ratings.

Before Allende's election. U.S. ambassador to Chile Edward Korry warned then-president Frei "not a nut or a bolt will be allowed to reach Chile under Allende....We shall do all within our power to condemn Chile and the Chileans to utmost deprivation and poverty."

People have shown that the class differences in Chile have been systematically misrepresented in the U.S.

People have shown that the "strikes" and refusals by the Chilean entrepreneurial associations have been called "trade-union strikes" in the U.S. press, covering over the fact that working people were their victims and thus opposed them.

People have shown that the "truckers' strike" of October '72 was a strike of truck owners, shopkeepers, and professionals and that workers and students joined together to set up other ways of distributing goods and food, rather than joining the strike, as the strikers had imagined they would.

People have shown that 60% of Chileans suffer from malnutrition.

People have shown that the UP government, by more equitable distribution of food, was trying to end hunger and was beginning to succeed.

People have shown that the "March of the Empty Pots and Pans" in December '71 was not even a general middle-class action but a demonstration by the richest women of Santiago, enraged over their loss of established privilege, and organized by the extreme right. One of its strategists, a Brazilian male, said: "Women are the most effective political weapon."

People have shown that U.S. dollars backed these right-

wing middle-class moves, pouring into Chile via the black market for the first time since Allende's election. People have shown that entrepreneurs withdrew goods from stores and channeled them into the black market. People have explained that Chile has had to rely heavily on imported consumer goods and even food. Before UP, the wealthiest 20% of the population drew 461/2% of the income and consumed 42% of imported goods. People have used beef as an example: In 1969-70 beef was available only half the days of the month, but the wealthiest 25% of Santiago families consumed 54% of the prime beef. Under UP, beef imports increased, but so did shortages. Why? Because workers' salaries rose, allowing them to buy more beef. Before UP, it took 5 hours' labor to buy a kilo of beef; under UP, 2 hours'. So the rich got a smaller share.

People have shown that in an opinion poll published in '72 by the opposition magazine Ercilla, 75% of lower-class households said essential products were easier to find, but 77% of middle-income and 99% of higher-income families said they were less accessible.

People have shown that the strategists of the entrepreneurial associations, including the key man, Orlando Saenz, worked closely with businessmen and others who had left Chile upon Allende's election (such as Augustin Edwards, head of Chile's most powerful economic empire, who moved to the U.S. upon Allende's election and became an international v.p. of Pepsi Cola), flying to the U.S. several times a year.

People have shown that the CIA spent millions to back anti-Allende propaganda, including \$1.6 million simply to back the opposition paper El Mercurio, the largest and most important channel of such propaganda, which cried freedom of the press--the single most important theme in the international ant-UP campaign--whenever the government protested.

People have shown that under the fascist generals torture, repression, book burning and spying are business-as-usual, and all civil liberties have been suspended for the great bulk of the people, along with freedom of speech and of the press. But El Mercurio and a few other journals continue to publish.

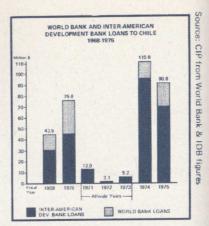
People have shown that the Chilean air force, which bombed the presidential palace in the final hours, was trained, aided, and outfitted by the United States.

People have shown that in the first days of the coup, the junta's sound trucks warned the people to report the presence of foreigners, whom they identified as "Communists," especially people with last names ending in berg.

People have shown that the U.S. restored massive economic aid to Chile as soon as the junta took control, and such aid continues to flow in under a variety of rubrics.

For 1976-80 the minimum amount of "gross external financing" needed will be approximately \$3.2 billion in medium- and long-term loans and another \$150 million for short-term expenses.

People have shown that inflation continues out of control despite the assistance of Nixon adviser Milton Friedman and "los Chicago boys."



People have shown that under the fascist generals, although the rich have had their privileges restored, the rest of the Chilean people are poorer, more disease-ridden, and hungrier than ever. For example, one-quarter of the population is now out of work.

People have used milk as an example: Despite the \$57.8 million received through only one of the many monetary-aid channels, the Title I loan program of "Food for Peace" (the rest of Latin America together received \$9 million) in '75, the junta removed price restrictions on milk, and consumer prices rose 40% while the price paid producers dropped 22%. There are over 10,000 producers in Chile but only 2 processing companies, which control the market.

People have shown that the repression and torture routinely carried out by Latin American and other governments friendly to the U.S have been systematized with U.S. help and training, such as that provided by the U.S. International Police Academy.

People have shown that thousands in Chile have been kidnapped, tortured, imprisoned, and murdered for their support of the Popular Unity government, its programs, or its ideals, or for any suspected criticism of the junta and its programs and goals, and that there is no end to this in sight.

People have shown that Jimmy Carter has curiously refused to criticize the junta for its program of violation of what Carter refers to as human rights.

People have shown that opposition to the fascist takeover was most successful and most prolonged in the places where the workers and peasants had armed and organized themselves into militias. Well, she thinks

III

When she is alone and the need for a politely composed face is past, her anger rises. She thinks. After the election of the Unidad Popular, the Popular Unity, government, the people of some of the Santiago shanty-towns, the poblaciones, made some changes. The government helped arrange for adequate food and other necessities, and the people banded together to help themselves. The people of Ranquil changed the name of their

poblacion to Nueva Habana. They built houses, and for the first time in perhaps generations they had decent housing and nutrition. They set up a school, teaching reading and writing to those who hadn't learned them, children and adults. They were very proud of their studies, which put great emphasis on the history of Chile's working classes. They put on white shirts to show the world a new front, to signal their pride in taking charge of their destinies and also of their history. Throughout Chile working people were discovering their own culture and developing their own voice, their own

Victor Jara, for example, a well-known stage director who'd become part of the new Chilean popular-song movement in the late '60s, left the theater and devoted his time to writing and singing songs that differed greatly from the packaged culture that had flooded Chile via the foreign-controlled mass media. He wrote songs, sang Latin American folk songs, put Neruda's poems to music:

Yo no quiero la patria divida Cabemos todos en la tierra mía Y los que se creen prisoneros Se vayan lejos con su melodía. Siempre los ricos fueron extranjeros, Que se vayan a Miami con sus tías....

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I don't want my land divided.
There's room for all of us here in my country.
And those who feel that they're in prison
Should go a long way off to play their tune.
The rich have always been foreigners,
They should go to Miami to join their aunties....

Neruda died. Jara died, the people of Nueva Habana died, all in their own ways. The junta comes on television after the coup—so says the New York Times—to remind the people of Chile, or those who get to see television at least, "Remember, you can be replaced." After the coup some bulldozers came—there weren't many bulldozers or even tractors in Chile because the foreign-owned automobile industry found passenger cars more profitable, so perhaps these were lent by newly resumed U.S. aid—the bulldozers appeared and flattened Nueva Habana and other poblaciones. As the foreign journalists said, one evening there were the new little towns, the next morning there was nothing but the raw, track-crossed earth.



She thinks, there is another story about a concert, one not drawn from the classical repertoire, one that took place not to great acclaim in the best hall in Chile but to jeers and threats in Santiago stadium. The stadium is where all the suspected dissidents, Communists, and troublemakers were put in the first weeks of the coup, thousands packed in, kept until their interrogation, their torture, or their executions were accomplished. Victor Jara was put there. He sang to and with the other prisoners. He was ordered to stop, he refused to stop. They took away his guitar and cut off his fingers. They machine-gunned him to death, like Allende, like many, many others.

She imagines the bulldozers knocking down the houses and muddying the white shirts of the people of Nueva Habana. She imagines she hears the rich contralto of Norma, in a brown velvet gown, an American Beauty rose in her hair, singing German lieder, drowning out the songs and then the cries of Nueva Habana. She imagines the synthesized music of Norma's tall blond husband, American Bill, drowning out the songs of Victor Jara and then his screams and the sound of machine guns, in Santiago stadium. She imagines their music drowning out the grinding of the bulldozers as they remove Nueva Habana, its schools, its history lessons, and its people from the face of the Chilean earth.

She imagines a photograph, an impossible photograph. It shows a new concert hall, the new best hall in Chile, above the tracks of bulldozers marked CAT, and in the tracks are the severed fingers of Victor Jara strumming the earth of Chile. His mouth, buried, is filled with earth, it is true, but his voice is not stilled but muted. It resonates deep under the Chilean ground.

EL PUEBLO UNIDO JAMAS SERA VENCIDO

Sources: Varied, including direct and reported experiences:

— publications of the North American Congress on Latin

America, International Bulletin; two U.S. Senate publications:

Alleged Assassination Plots and Covert Action in Chile 1963-1973; and Orlando Letelier, "Economic Freedom's Awful Toll," in The Nation, Aug. 28, 1976.

GARAGE



GOOD STUFF & JUNK! STRANGE ITEMS! LOTS OF ART! CONTAINERS! RECORDS! BOOKS!

CONTINUES: DAILY

& WED.

ENDS- SAT.

OPENS -> FRI JAN. 19

8 - 10 PM

JAN. 27

STUDENT GALLERY GRAD. LIBRARY (HL, ROOM 1254)

COME & SEE!

COME EARLY!

Traveling Garage Sale

MARTHA ROSLER * LA MAMELLE * SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA * OCTOBER 1 & 2, 1977

The Traveling Garage Sale was held on Saturday and Sunday, October 1 and 2, 1977, in La Mamelle's garage. In keeping with its dual status as both a real sale and an exemplary work, it was advertised locally, in newspapers and papers, as a garage sale and to the art community as an "event." The "persona" I assumed for the work was that of a Southern California woman, a mother, with roots in the counterculture, dressed in a long India-print pinafore.

With the help of the gallery assistants, as well as of Judith Barry and, throughout, that of Diane Germain, racks were hung from the ceiling and tables were set up to hold clothing, books, records, toys, jewelry and household goods. The lighting progressed from bright to dim; the merchandise decreased progressively in quality, with the newer, more salable, more socially acceptable items-including pornographic magazines, used diaphragms, underwear—toward the back. The racks and tables impeded progress through the long, narrow space, slowing people down and intensifying the sense of being "stuck" amidst commodities.

At the rear an audiotape played. Slides were projected on the wall, "found" artifacts (bought at a garage sale) showing the ceremonial occasions of a white American family. The tape consisted of a meditation spoken by the garage-sale persona. Her musings express contradictory positions about things relating to the sale: exchange-value versus use-value of material goods, social relations and their partial obfuscation by commodity relations, the origins of commodity fetishism, the conflicting emotions of desire and shame evoked by the prospect of selling one's cast-aways to friends and strangers, the fear of being judged on the evidence of one's "things." She asks questions about social forms and social relations, ranging from trivial to the transcendent:

What is the value of a thing? What makes me want it?...I paid money for these things—is there a chance to recuperate some of my investment by selling them to you?...Why not give it all away?...(quoting Marx:) 'A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing...in it the social character of a person's labor appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labor.'...She wonders, is it sacrilege to sell the shoes her baby wore? ...She wonders...Will you judge me by the things I'm selling?

She speaks at one moment with the voice of an entrepreneur, at the next with that of the wage earner trying to supplement wages of ever-decreasing buying power; she reproduces the fragments of the ideologies of positions within different social classes.

The slides, the tapes, the accretion of things suggested a "portrait" of a personality and a family history. The arrangement of items, the gradually diminishing illumination, became a metaphoric representation of the mind, in which one "fronts" with one's best attributes, and private musings and memories reside in the mind's "recesses." (Alternatively, in a more Freudian formulation, we may think of the forefront of the mind-the conscious-as dominated by the socially coauthored self and the less acceptible parts of the psyche as inhabited by more private elements.) Many of the participants asked, in innocent search of the voyeuristic frisson provided by a brief excursion into someone else's life, whether all those things were really mine. The Garage Sale highlighted the dubious proposition that one is what one appears to own.

The Garage Sale, in a larger sense, addressed questions of representation. The persona was tenuous: during her meditation she referred to herself sometimes as "I," sometimes as "she"; she couldn't be seen in the slides; the people didn't seem likely as her family. It should have become clear that not only was I not simply capitalizing on my status as an artist to make an autobiographical work out of a garage sale, there was no real biography at all being offered. The industrial rather than residential nature of the setting was clear; the shadowiness, or superimposed quality, the theatricality, of the organization of the space and the things in it, as well as of the slides and tape, pointed to matters of representation. At issue was the representation not only of a type of event, a garage sale, but also of a mental history and a way of thinking about the world, which is of course something under social rather than personal control—in this case, a way of thinking about society in which social relations embody commodity relations and thus rest on wages, prices and profit. —Martha Rosler

Martha Rosler

MARTHA ROSLER

What would you need to protect yourself from the sky, the ocean, air, wind, space. how to protect yourself from protecting yourself from birds, blips, atmospheric disturbances, storms, stars, shooting stars, asteroids, planets, galaxies. from drugs, fear, craziness, paranoia, neurosis, loss of vigilance, loss of interest, sabotage. from loners, spies, assassins, inventions, terrorism. how to wait, how to stay in place, how to keep place.

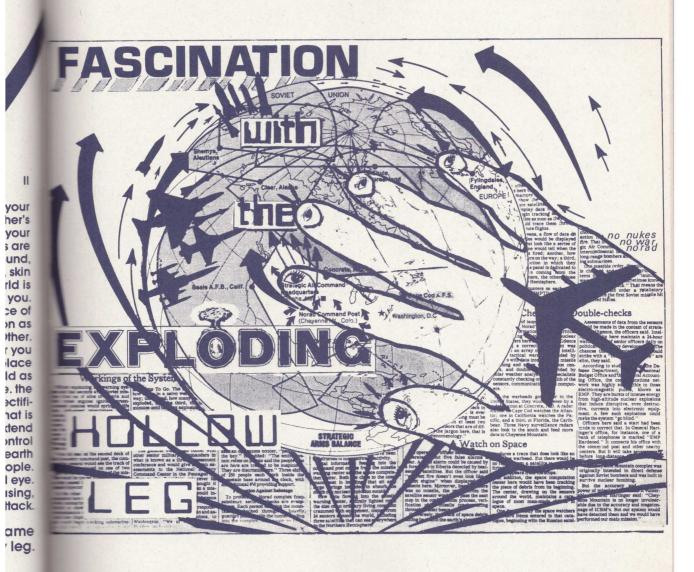
imagine a mound. tumulus. a burrow under the earth. you watch the depths of the air, water, sky, space; from under the earth you look above, looking for fire. burrow under to look above. you make all your senses one: sight. you put your eyes everywhere. you hide to be safe.

in your mother's body your senses are touch, sound, taste, smell, skin sense. your world is your network is you. what is the price of separation, of separation as rejection? you create an Other. you erect dualisms wherever you go. make all your senses give place to sight. you create the world as picture. invent linear perspective. the objectification of the world. the objectification of the Other (of the Mother?). what is the cost of control as domination? extend yourself over oceans, set up a network of control over lives, labor, places, materials. subjugate earth and people.

the cost of control is the armed eye. (fratricide, decapitation, hardened silos, racecourse basing, dense pack.) launch on warning. launch under attack

the cost of control of global reach is fascination with the (game of the)(exploding)(historical) hollow leg.

30



The secret is

We imagined we had the world on a platter. We thought the Russkies were so backward we could just wipe them out before they could develop the bomb.

T

The extreme secrecy shrouding the Manhattan A-bomb project at Los Alamos was largely to deter German spies. But after the German surrender, secrecy intensified. Secretive behavior, such as preventing American and British project scientists from attending a scientific ceremony in Moscow in 1945 certainly tipped off our Russian allies. An American scientist later testfied before the Senate Atomic Energy Committee:

I believe that these attempts to maintain secrecy resulted in giving to the Russians the very information which the army most wished to keep from them. Any sensible Russian scientist...would have believed that we were developing an atomic bomb and were keeping it secret....

Los Alamos' scientific director, J. Robert Oppenheimer, believed that the U.S. should, with a system of controls, offer free exchange of information, emphasizing the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Many project scientists, including Leo Szilard, also tried to head off the use of the bomb against Japan, warning it would provoke an arms race with the Soviets. On June 11, 1945, several of them presented a report to Secretary of War Henry Stimson:

In Russia, too, the basic facts and implications of nuclear power were well understood in 1940, and the experience of Russian scientists in nuclear research is entirely sufficient to enable them to retrace our steps with-

in a few years, even if we should make every attempt to conceal them. ...it might take other nations three or four years to overcome our present head start, and eight or ten years to draw even with us if we continue to do intensive work in this field.

But the President, in his own words, "regarded the bomb as a military weapon and never had any doubts that it should be used."

Yet a major reason for dropping the bomb was not military at all but diplomatic: It had been clear for three months before Hiroshima that Japan was ready to surrender. Admiral Leahy said:

It is my opinion that the use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender....

The Air Force generals believed that the bomb wasn't necessary to win the war or to preclude an invasion. The U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey concluded:

Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated.

Churchill wrote:

It would be a mistake to suppose that the fate of Japan was settled by the atomic bomb. Her defeat was certain before the first bomb fell.

Truman and his advisers (especially Stimson and Secretary of State-designate James F. Byrnes), however, had other goals. They intended to drop the bomb "to make Russia more manageable" as Szilard reported about discussions with Byrnes two months before Hiroshima.

Even before the bomb was proved, Truman was determined to put it at the center of U.S. foreign policy. He delayed his trip to Potsdam, for the meeting of the "Big

Three" (the U.S., England, and the Soviet Union) that would determine the shape of the postwar world, until the bomb had been tested. The bomb was detonated at Alamogordo on July 16, 1945; the Potsdam conference finally began on July 17. Truman's strategy there wholly depended on the singular possession by the United States of the bomb. According to Lord Alanbrooke, Churchill, too, "was completely carried away":

We now had something in our hands which would redress the balance with the Russians...; now we could say, "If you insist on doing this or that, well..." And then where are the Russians!

Although Truman and his advisers considered the possibility of sharing the technical information on atomic energy, by August 6, 1945, the day the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Truman publicly stated his resolve not to do so: "It is not intended to divulge the technical processes of production or all the military applications." On August 9 he told the nation: "The atomic bomb is too dangerous to be loose in a lawless world. ...We must consider ourselves trustees of this new force." The War Department soon after released a long report claiming:

The best interests of the United States require the utmost cooperation by all concerned in keeping secret now and for all time in the future all scientific and technical information.

Secretary Byrnes believed that we could maintain the nuclear monopoly for at least seven years.

In 1946 Truman asked the physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer when he thought the Russians would get the bomb. The scientist replied that he had no idea and asked when Truman thought they'd get it. "Never," he answered.

Manhattan Project scientists continued to assert—now publicly—that no amount of secrecy would allow the U.S. to retain ex-

clusivity. They lobbied for an international agreement to ban the bomb. Many repeatedly predicted, with wide publicity, that the Soviets would develop the bomb in 3 or 4 years.

The consensus of the scientists who made the bomb is that the Russians can make them in five years or less.

Robert Hutchins, president of the University of Chicago, 1946

We have all heard about the secrets of the atomic bomb, how they were guarded, and how important it is to keep or not to keep them to ourselves. ...If there was one great secret, we gave it away in July 1945. It was that a chain reaction is possible and that it can be used to make a bomb.

biophysicist Selig Hecht, Explaining the Atom (Viking, 1947)

The laws of nature, some seem to think, are ours exclusively, and...we can keep others from learning by locking up what we have learned in the laboratory....

It is sinister indeed how one evil step leads to another. Having created an air of suspicion and mistrust, there will be persons among us who think other nations can know nothing except what is learned by espionage. So, when other countries make atom bombs, these persons will cry "treason" at our scientists, for they will find it inconceivable that another country could make a bomb in any way except by aid from Americans.

Physicist Edward U. Condon, "An Appeal to Reason," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (March 1946)

Nevertheless, much of the public, the press, and Congress continued to regard the bomb as an American secret. Despite the flood of testimony, memos, and articles by scientists, America was obsessed with secrecy. The bomb was our precious purse in danger of Russian plunder—and none too safe with our scientists, the trustworthiness

with politics and the public world in general, the province of men, it followed from the topsy-turvy logic by which Communists, like all demons, must be bound, that the Communist wife must be worse than the husband and that attachments to children must be either absent or unnatural. The Rosenbergs were accused both of disregarding their children and of exploiting them. As to Ethel's character, the slanders centered on a perceived lack of... docility.

On January 14, 1953, the nightclub musician Christopher Emanuel Balestrero was arrested in Queens for twice robbing an office of the Prudential Insurance Company of America, two blocks from his home, an office at which he had frequently done business. Despite his protestations of innocence, Manny Balestrero was positively identified by the Prudential clerks. During police questioning, Manny was directed repeatedly to write out the text of a hold-up note used by the gunman. In the half-dozen times he complied, he once misspelled a word just as it had been in the real note. After some months of investigation, Rose Balestrero, a housewife and mother of two young boys, apparently a strong and cheerful woman, collapsed from illogical feelings of guilt and had to be hospitalized.

Manny Balestrero went on trial on April 21 and was again positively identified by witnesses. On the fourth day of the trial, a juror became disruptive and a mistrial was declared. During the night of April 29th, a man was arrested in the course of a holdup and confessed to the Prudential robberies. Balestrero, confronting the man in the police precinct, asked, "Do you realize what you have done to my wife?"

On May 20, 1953, Pres. Eisenhower and the Joint Chiefs approved the use of nuclear weapons against China if the Korean War worsened. If the Soviets intervened, SHAKEDOWN, all-out nuclear war, would be set in motion.

On May 25, 1953, the Supreme Court refused for the third and final time to hear the Rosenberg case. The New York Times's banner headline read, "Rosenberg Appeal Denied for 3D Time by Supreme Court—Stay of Execution for Spies Va-

cated—Mercy for Couple Hinges on Their Talking." The Rosenbergs were scheduled to die on June 18, 1953, their fourteenth wedding anniversary.

On May 29, 1953, Tenzing Norkey, a Sherpa of Nepal and Edmund Hillary, a New Zealand bee keeper, reached the summit of Mount Everest.

On June 16, 1953, President Eisenhower wrote to his son John in Korea:

To address myself ... to the Rosenberg case for a minute, I must say that it goes against the grain to avoid interfering in the case where a woman is to receive punishment. Over capital against this, however, must be placed one or two facts that have greater significance. The first of these is that in this instance it is the woman who is the strong and recalcitrant character, the man is the weak one. She has obviously been the leader in everything they did in the spy ring. The second thing is that if there would be any commuting of the woman's sentence without the man's, then from here on the Soviets would simply recruit their spies from among women.

Many years later, in 1986, Richard Nixon, in "Lessons of the Alger Hiss case," on the New York Times's Op-Ed page, commented about Priscilla Hiss:

In the case of Communist couples...the wife is often more extremist than the husband.

This is the fearful patriarchal imagination at work: Communism is the destroyer of men's authority over women—patriarchy dethroned—and the loss of the "world's greatest secret" is rape.

On June 17, 1953, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas granted a stay of execution on the grounds that the Rosenbergs may have been tried under the wrong law and the death sentence therefore ille-

gally imposed by the judge without jury recommendation. He then left for summer recess. Attorney General Herbert Brownell requested Chief Justice Fred Vinson to reconvene the Court. Vinson did so for the next day—only the third time that the Court had been so recalled.

In the morning, at a White House meeting, it was decided that the President should read a statement "emphasizing that the free world had an interest in the proper handling of the case." This statement was read after the justices vacated the Rosenbergs' stay of execution. Eisenhower said:

I am not unmindful of the fact that this case has aroused grave concern both here and abroad in the minds of serious people.... In this connection, I can only say that, by immeasurably increasing the chances of atomic war, the Rosenbergs may have condemned to death tens of millions of innocent people all over the world. The execution of two human beings is a grave matter. But even graver is the thought of the millions of dead whose deaths may be directly attributable to what these spies have done. When democracy's enemies have been judged guilty of a crime as horrible as that of which the Rosenbergs were convicted; when the legal processes of democracy have been marshalled to their maximum strength to protect the lives of convicted spies; when in their most solemn judgment the tribunals of the United States have adjudged them guilty and the sentence just; I will not intervene in this matter.

The Rosenbergs' attorneys, futilely, telegraphed the White House to remind the President that the Supreme Court had never reviewed the case. A defense attorney asked Judge Kaufman to postpone the executions because they were now scheduled during the Sabbath. Judge Kaufman replied that he and Attorney General Brownell had spoken about the matter. What Brownell had done was to move up the time of execution by several hours, so that it would take place before, not after, sundown on the 19th.

The Rosenbergs remain the only people ever condemned to death for espionage by a civil court in the United States.

On the day after the executions, Jean-Paul Sartre wrote in Libération:

You, who claim to be masters of the world, had the opportunity to prove that you were first of all masters of yourselves....By killing the Rosenbergs you have quite simply tried to halt the progress of science by human sacrifice. Magic, witch hunts, auto-dafés, sacrifices—we are here getting to the point: your country is sick with fear... you are afraid of the shadow of your own bomb....

The New York Times, on the other hand, editorialized:

In the record of espionage against the United States there has been no case of its magnitude and its stern drama. The Rosenbergs were engaged in funneling the secrets of the most destructive weapon of all time to the most dangerous antagonist the United States ever confronted—at a time when a deadly arms race was on. Their crime was staggering in its potential for destruction.

On June 29, 1953, Life magazine reported the execution of the Rosenbergs and the scaling of Mount Everest—and also the story of Manny and Rose Balestrero and their two sons. Manny Balestrero, in reflecting on his ordeal, commented, "Before you accuse anyone you should think—because you can destroy a family, physically and mentally, like mine would have been destroyed." Rose Balestrero remained hospitalized for over a year. Alfred Hitchcock made a movie out of the Balestreros' experience, called The Wrong Man.

On August 13, 1953, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Nathan F. Twining submitted a secret report arguing that the U.S. would soon be in a "militarily unacceptable" position Spain, and the British-held island Diego Rivera—all without the knowledge or consent of the governments involved. The New York Times of Jan. 17, 1988, in "117 Secret U.S. Atomic Tests Are Indicated in Seismic Data" described evidence of deception in the number of underground tests since 1963. But the grossest deception, as I've indicated, has lain in our nuclear-weapons policies.

American strategic forces do not exist solely for the purpose of deterring a Soviet nuclear threat or attack against the United States itself. Instead, they are intended to support U.S. foreign policy, as reflected, for example, in the commitment to preserve Western Europe against aggression. Such a function requires American strategic forces that would enable a president to initiate strategic nuclear force for coercive, though politically defensive, purposes.

Colin Gray wrote those words in "Victory Is Possible," published in Foreign Policy in 1980. Colin Gray, and other members of the ultra-hawkish Committee on the Present Danger-founding members Eugene Rostow and Paul Nitze, and members William Casey, Richard Perle, Richard Allen, Richard Pipes, Geoffrey Kemp, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Fred Iklé, and William Van Cleave-soon became members of the Reagan Administration. The Committee's guiding idea is that, in the words of Eugene Rostow, we are in "a prewar phase." The intent of the new cold warriors has been to establish irrevocably—through Star Wars and otherwise, and despite arms control agreements, and despite repeated exposés of the impossibility of anti-nuclear shields or other voodoo defenses—the apparatus to initiate and win a protracted nuclear war.

Secrecy is hardly compatible with democracy. But the unimaginable reality of nuclear weapons, the terrible death by invisible radiation, predisposes not only to secrecy but to State terrorism—of the home population above all—and to dark fantasies of nuclear rape, whether by the Soviet Evil

Empire or by Third World terrorists. Nuclear realities diverge completely from the public myths invented to obscure them.

The secret is that there is no secret.

The secret is that the cold war is the secret.

The secret is the arrogance of power.

[excerpt from a 14-page handout, 1988]

Texts #1 (above photos)

(black vinyl wall lettering)
G futura demi bold 21/211 cap

There are only no fragments where there is no whole.

I don't say map, I don't say territory.

institutional façade

brightly lit atrium

half-lit tubules

white-noise hiss

imperceptible airflow

trace odors of stress and hustle

blind turns

infinite deferral

bright image of displacement

elsewhere and otherwise

destinations always approached, never achieved

boulevard or intestine?

containment

containment and control

vagina or birth canal?

mergers and acquisitions

capital costs

hospital regime

simplify and minimize

infantilize

total surveillance

total control

every module repents of meaning

There are enly no fragments where there is no whole.

containment and control

blind turns







white-noise hiss

Flow, transmission, data, bit, byte

A crossing, a sighting, a sight, a site. A museum, a bar, a concerthouse, a beer garden

Installation at Jay Gorney Modern Art, New York, 1993.

Texts #2 (below photos)

(grey vinyl wall lettering)

futura demi bold 13/4" cap height

A tree, a rock, a brook; a forest, a mountain, a river; a crossroads, an avenue, a customs house

A hut, a home, a temple, a dome; a barracks, a brothel, a bank

A tablet, a paper, a parchment; a palimpsest, a pamphlet, a book

A passage, a passageway, a journey; a boundary, a crossing, a milestone; a landmark, an outpost

A view, a vista, a vision, a destination, an end. A crossing, a sighting, a sight; a site. A museum, a bar, a concerthouse, a beer garden

A chapter, a book, a block, a border, an edge; an armory, a castle, a classroom, a courthouse

A gathering, a meeting, a conversation, an argument, a session, a contest, a party

Flow, transmission, data, bit, byte

[notes for walltext of first installation of the *Airport Series*, 1981–98]

THE GARDEN SPOT OF THE WORLD: GREENPOINT IN TRAFFIC, TRANSIT, FLOW

Oil Plume

OIL PLUME UNDER GREENPOINT

In 1978 the Coast Guard discovered a huge pool, or "plume," of oil under Greenpoint.

17 million gallons—more than the Exxon Valdez spill or the Braer spill of Jan 1993—apparently was spilled during the 1950s by Mobil Oil.

Mobil and Amoco have been pumping out the oil since 1980. So far they have recovered

Bhopal in Brooklyn?

only 2.2 million gallons.

In 1984 a terrible accident at a pesticide plant in Bhopal, India, killed 2,500 people and maimed 200,000. Could it happen in New York?

A Hunter College environmental unit, CEHC, chose to study Greenpoint-Williamsburg-

District 1:

The area has the highest percentage of industrial land of any city district, and the residents have a history of environmental activism.

percent of industri	al land
New York City	1.9
Brooklyn	2.2
Greenpoint-Williamsburg (Community District 1)	12
Greenpoint	40

121 companies reported handling large quantities of hazardous chemicals.
31 reported storing chemicals on the U.S. "extremely hazardous" list.
That is more than twice as many such companies as anywhere else in the city.

The Hunter environmental unit focused on 11 of these companies. Five are in Greenpoint. The largest number are in the electroplating industry, the others make dyes, cosmetics, pigments, cleaning products, and adhesives.

Some of the "extremely hazardous" chemicals are:

ammonia nitric acid
cadmium oxide phenol
dimethyl-phenylenediamine potassium cyanide
formaldehyde sodium cyanide
hydrochloric acid sulfuric acid
hydroquinone

Their proximity to residences increases their potential hazard.

GAS AND OIL

Greenpoint-Williamsburg was New York's oil-refining center. There is no longer any oil refining in the area, but Greenpoint-Williamsburg remains a major site of petroleum and natural gas storage. Newtown Creek, along which most oil and gas storage sites sit, is terribly polluted and spreads its pollution into the East River.

The 16 largest facilities store 89 million gallons of oil and gasoline 32 million cubic feet of natural gas

20 million gallons of liquefied natural gas (LNG).

Eleven are in Greenpoint. Three of these—Brooklyn Union Gas, Con Edison, and Mobil Oil—can each store more than 20 million gallons of fuel products.

Eleven are closer to residences than is allowable elsewhere.

The Liquefied Natural Gas facility was opposed by the Fire Department and lacks currently required safety measures.

Most of these facilities are connected to interstate pipelines running under Greenpoint.

Some move many thousands of gallons a day by truck through the city streets.

The only licensed nuclear-waste facility in the city is in Williamsburg.

hazardous waste

400,000 gallons of contaminated waste oil from New Jersey-illegally dumped-lie in a hole at the abandoned Manhattan Adhesives Plant, near the Greenpoint Avenue Bridge.

The Stench Is Not to Be Believed

By far the largest sewage -treatment plant in New York City is located in Greenpoint, on Newtown Creek.

The Newtown Creek Sewage Treatment Plant last was last upgraded in 1967. It is the most outdated plant in the city. Its discharge hasn't passed federal standards for 20 years.

Capacity: 310 million gallons per day

Intake in June 1991: 317 million gallons per day

(The Times says it is 23 million gallons a day over capacity)

Wards Island, 250 (266) million gallons per day The next largest plants: Hunts Point 200 (157) million gallons per day

North River (Harlem), 170(190) million gallons per day

It has a 32-acre site in Greenpoint.

It processes one-fifth of the city's waste water and serves a 24-square mile area:

the West Side of Manhattan below 14th St. the East Side of Manhattan below 72nd St.

Brooklyn north of Eastern Parkway and part of Queens.

All waste from these areas flows to Greenpoint. When someone on Sutton Place flushes the toilet, the waste flows to Greenpoint. When someone on Delancey Street takes a shower, the water flows to Greenpoint. When a storm drain fills up in Soho, the waste flows to

Greenpoint. A state judge ruled against the plant in 1988 and ordered an \$850,000 Environmental Benefits Program to support citizens' environmental efforts. The city continues to plan the plant's expansion and to build the new Navy Yard incinerator, demanding that the citizens' groups focus on smaller-scale problems.

In the late 1980s the Newtown Creek plant began emitting a noxious odor that blanketed the entire neighborhood.

A community group forced the city and state environmental agencies to monitor and regulate the plant. It forced a temporary halt in the city's planned expansion of the plant.

Irene Klementowicz, community activist: How long do you want me to stand still while you are peeing in my shoes?

What's that Ash All over the Street?

"We are becoming the garbage dump of the city." - Elizabeth Roncketti, community activist

The city operates a huge incinerator in Greenpoint which burns 8 percent of the city's trash. The Greenpoint Incinerator violates state and federal environmental standards and has had no license since 1984. The city will not release figures on its waste volume. It is thought to burn 1,000 tons of garbage a day. The ash leaves by barge.

Even leaving aside the illegal dumps of asbestos under the Brooklyn Queens Expressway, too much garbage flows through Greenpoint. Many private carting companies are based there.

Residents discovered a sudden proliferation of "waste-transfer stations"—38 in 1989. Increased dumping fees in the metropolitan region led to their creation. Garbage is brought to transfer stations for short periods before going to a permanent site. The garbage trucks increase air pollution and accident risk; the facilities occasion noxious odors, illegal dumping and burning, and other infractions.

Community pressure, and the end of the mid-80s building boom, has caused some abate-

ment of the problem.

Many men have been lured from Poland with the promise of jobs removing asbestos for forty dollars an hour. Such wages do not exist, but asbestos removal is a common occupation for Polish residents, legal and illegal. Not long after being heralded for their initiative, the principals of Greenpoint's Hudson Asbestos Training Institute were indicted for selling illegal asbestos-removal licenses, bogus social security cards, and so on. This particular "Institute" is now closed, but illegal activity—including the sale of papers—continues.

Lots of People, Lots of Poison

Greenpoint-Williamsburg has the highest rate of stomach cancer in the city. Rates of leukemia and of nervous-system cancer in boys are among the highest.

Residents are 50% more likely to contract these cancers than other city residents.

Greenpoint may well be the most toxic community in New York City. A thousand firms spew hundreds of tons of toxic pollutants into the district's air. Almost 3 million pounds of regulated toxics were emitted in 1987.

Toxics are recorded only by the figures that businesses report to the city, according to a selected list.

Small firms arnd those only partly located in the area are excluded.

The city's Newtown Creek Sewage Treatment Plant and the city's Greenpoint Incinerator, are exempt from reporting.

Also excluded is vehicular pollution from the area's very heavy traffic.

Only smoke-stack emissions are regulated. But fugitive emissions, occurring near ground level, are 10-40 times more harmful. Fugitive emissions result from leaks, spills, or production processes, or through ventilation systems.

Even with these significant exclusions:

- •Reported emissionswere 60 times greater than the U.S. average. Population density is 400 times the average.
- •In 1987, 11 companies reported emitting 220 thousand pounds of toxic chemicals.
 •In 1988, 11 companies reported emitting 253 thousand pounds of toxic chemicals.
- •In both years only 13 % were deliberate stack emissions; 87 % were "fugitive" emissions.
- •In 1987, 61% of the regulated emissions were carcinogens or reproductive toxins.

•In 1988, 78% were carcinogens or reproductive toxins.

•An additional 190 companies in two zip-code areas reported annual stack emissions of almost 352 pounds of toxic chemicals.

•An estimated total emissions of 2.9 million pounds were released.

"the garden spot of the world"

	Population per square mile	Toxics per sq. mi.
United States	64	75 lbs.
New York State	371	2,001
New York City	23,416	4,182
Brooklyn	31, 872	9,292
Greenpoint-Williamsburg	28,400	44,099 lbs.
estimated actual total:		580,000 lbs.

If You Lived Here...

The Mespaetches-or Canarsie?-Indians, of the Algonquian Nation, lived along the Maspeth Kills. In 1638 or 1647, the Dutch West India Company traded them goods for a parcel

Dutch sailors named the area Green Hoek, or Green Point.

Greenpoint attained village status 200 years later and was annexed to Brooklyn in 1855. Brooklyn was absorbed into New York City in 1898.

The area was laid out into streets in 1832. A new highway and ferry service served the resulting population influx. The population was 300 in 1838, 15,000 by 1855.

The first residents were Dutch and Huguenot (French) farmers. The establishment of shipyards in the mid-19th century attracted English, German, and Scottish workers. Irish and German people soon came as well. The East River shipyards were rivaled in size only by those on the Scottish Clyde.

Shipbuilding was succeeded by pottery, glass, porcelain, and brass making. Charles Pratt established America's first modern refinery, Astral Oil Works, in Greenpoint in 1867. In 1886 Pratt built a model tenement for his workers, the Astral, which is still inhabited today. Many other industries came and went.

Little Poland

By the turn of the century many Poles settled in Greenpoint, to work in local industries. The term "Little Poland" stems from this period. St. Stanislaus Kostka, built in 1896, is said to be the largest Polish church in the country.

Imigration from Poland dramatically increased, particularly after the imposition of martial law there in the early 1980s. Many men came to work awhile, save money, and go home. Now that pattern is likely to be changing.

There are about 15,000 Poles in Greenpoint, in a total population of 35,000.

Greenpoint's residents are largely working class and semi-skilled.

median inc	ome		
	1980*	1990	
Greenpoint-Williamsburg Brooklyn New York City	\$19,420 24,377 29,016	\$23,497 31,980 37,891	
*adjusted by national cost	of living	inflator 1.71	

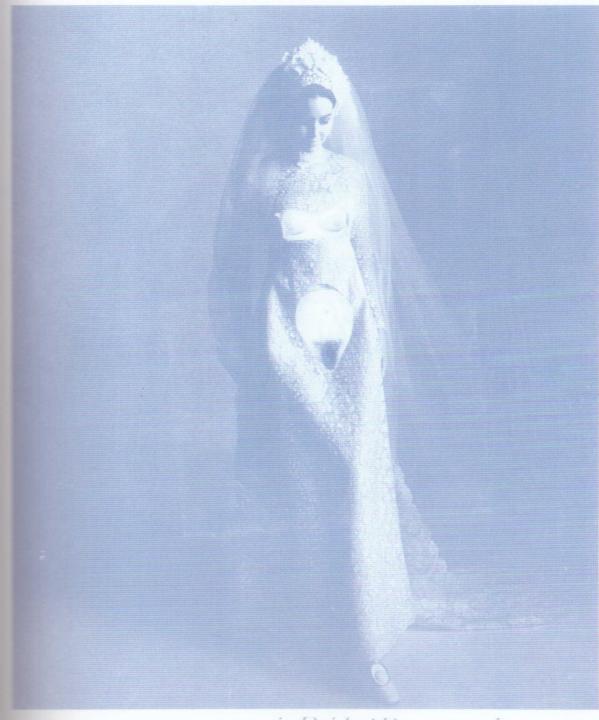
[excerpt from 6-page handout, 1992]



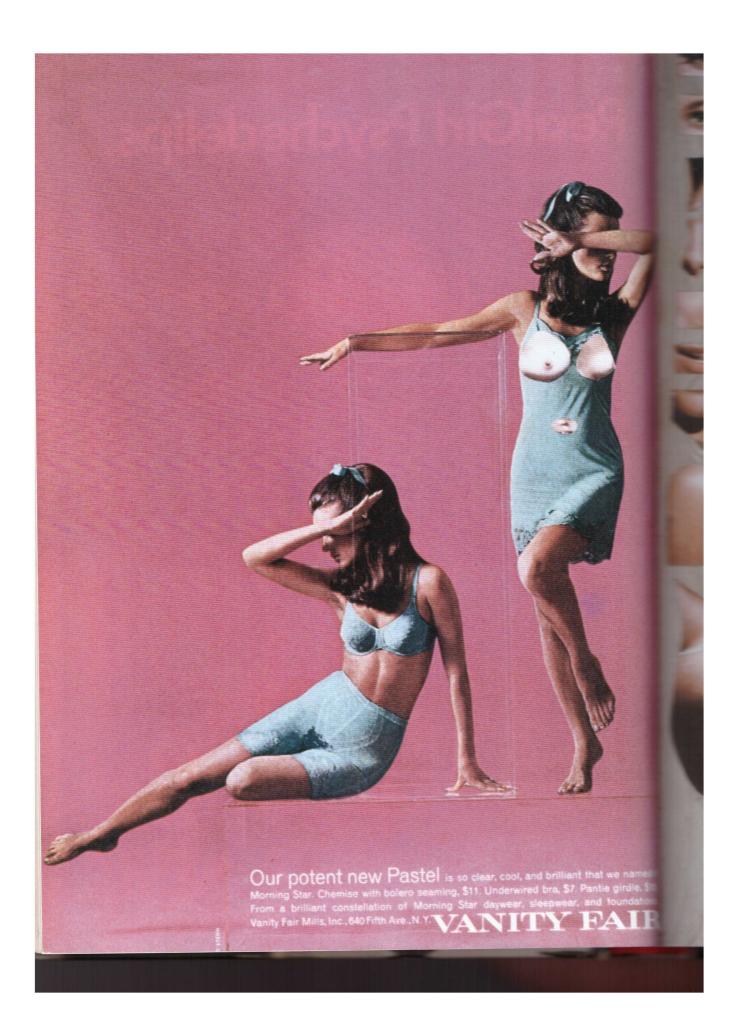
Diaper Pattern, 1975. Installation with text on cloth diapers.

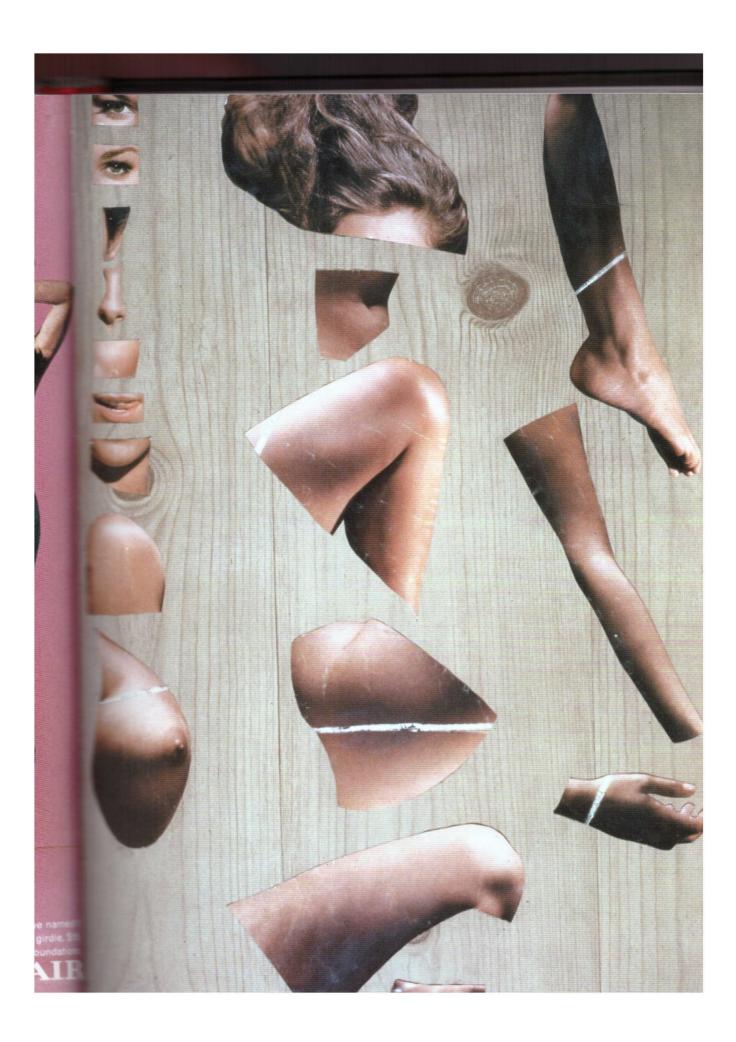
Body Beautiful, or Beauty Knows No Pain **146**: 147

Bianchi



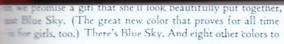
...is Brides' Romance Language



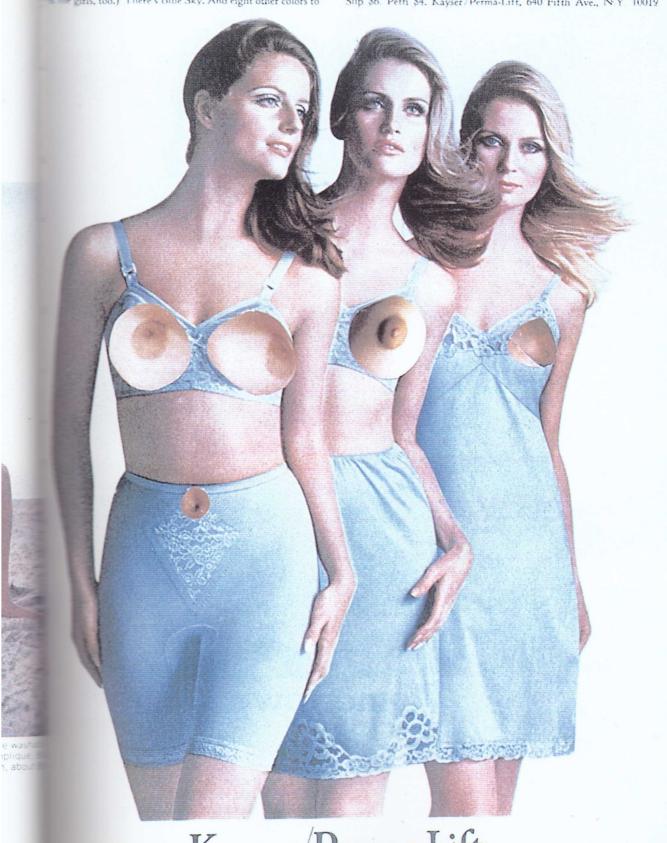




Mini-shift plus bikini pants by Yolande in lush, care-less, machine watricot of Celanese Nylon Decor: hand-run Alencon lace, satin appliqueach or lime. Small, medium, Jarge. About \$9. Also waltz-length, about surrious waltz length coat ensemble, about \$22



coordinate with. Everybody appreciates a girl that's well put together. And we're doing our part. Bra \$4, Panty girdle in Lycra spandex \$9. Slip \$6. Petti \$4. Kayser/Perma-Lift, 640 Fifth Ave., N-Y 10019



Kayser/Perma-Lift



Silvia Eiblmayr: Martha Rosler's Characters

In *Semiotics of the Kitchen*¹ Martha Rosler begins her demonstration of kitchen utensils in alphabetical order (from "apron" to "tenderizer") in the style of a seemingly straight TV feature. The work then tips over into a performance whose critical edge results not only from the artist's precise analytic and emphatic understanding of the matter but from the formal structure of her acting. In her subtly anarchic and comical presentation of the tools, Rosler addresses the aggressivity that is inherent in "the Woman in the kitchen"—from outside as well as from inside. She stabs the air with a fork (in the direction of the viewer) and dumps the virtual contents of the ladle into the space beside her. In demonstrating women's instrumentalized position, Rosler, within the logic of her alphabetical order, finally turns into a tool herself. Yet she is not personifying another utensil but the letter itself: U, V, W, X, Y, Z become written by her body, which in turn means that her body becomes written by them.

In her (staged) subjection to the "insistence of the letter" Martha Rosler clearly shows that it is not only a role her "characters" are subject to, an ascribed social role that could and should be changed. She also shows that the structures of power, domination, and submission and their ideological ramifications have to be detected and analyzed not only within the economic, social, and political realms but also within the system of language and signs itself that constitutes the order of the Symbolic.

Hence, Rosler's artistic and theoretical work and the interrelation between her aesthetic strategies and her political critique go far beyond a "socialist" program: Her striking analyses of social and economic conditions and their class specific and gendered effects and consequences always include the text of the unconscious that surfaces in the symptom.

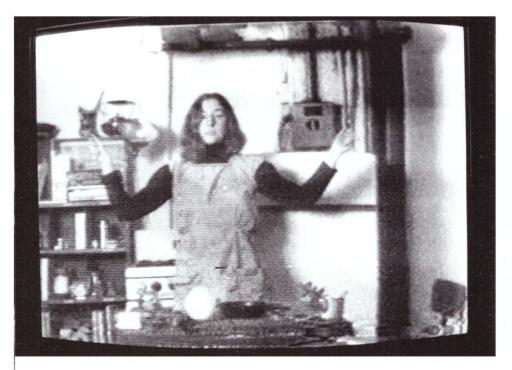
Rosler has, throughout her research on specific topics, her investigations of how the system of a male, white, capitalist-dominated culture permeates everyday life, in her theoretical writing, her textual and visual works, her performances and videotapes, followed one principle as artistic strategy: In order to "bring conscious, concrete knowledge to your work,...you had better locate yourself pretty concretely in it."³

The "functions" through which Rosler involves herself in her artworks are manifold. She invents and outlines all kinds of "characters," with whom, in

1 Semiotics of the Kitchen, 1975. Black-and-white videotape, 6 min.

3 Rosler, in Martha Gever, "Interview with Martha Rosler," Afterimage, Vol. 9, no 3 (September 1981), p. 11.

² Jacques Lacan, "L'instance de la lettre dans l'inconscient, ou la raison depuis Freud," in Écrits (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966). In the German and in some English translations "instance" is not understood as "agency" but as das Drängen, "insistence." See Lacan, Schriften II (1975), Norbert Haas, ed. (Weinheim and Berlin: Quadriga, 1986), p. 15. Haas, who translated "L'instance de la lettre" into German, mentions two English-language publications using the word "insistence": Yale French Studies, No. 36/37 (1966), p. 112, and Jacques Ehrmann, Structuralism (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1970), pp. 101–137.



Semiotics of the Kitchen, 1975. Still from black-and-white videotape.

shifting roles, she temporarily appears to identify. For example, in her postcard novels she takes on first-person fictional roles, as "Tijuana Maid," as "McTowersMaid," as "a budding gourmet" and as the emerging artist in A New-Found Career. She does so as well in the installation/performances A Gourmet Experience (1974), Monumental Garage Sale (1973), and Traveling Garage Sale (1977); and in the performances Vital Statistics of a Citizen, Simply Obtained (1973), Getting the News (1978 and 1979), Watchwords of the Eighties (1981–82), and Optimism/Pessimism: Constructing a Life (1981); and of course in many of the videotapes, from Semiotics of the Kitchen to Secrets from the Street (1980). Hence, Rosler has, in a sense, been active as analyst and analysand at the same time, in both confronting the symptom and subjecting herself to it. Her lucid and subversive strength lies in the fact that she seems to have followed the

The videotape Born to Be Sold: Martha Rosler Reads the Strange Case of Baby S/M⁵ condenses Rosler's art and its critical stance in a way both stringently

4 Slavoj Žizěk, Liebe Dein Symptom wie Dich selbst! Jacques Lacans Psychoanalyse und die Medien (Berlin: Merve, 1991).

imperative: "Love your symptom as you love yourself!"4

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⁵ Born to Be Sold: Martha Rosler Reads The Strange Case of Baby S/M (with Paper Tiger Television; color videotape, 35 min., 1988; transcript in Subjects/Objects (Providence), Spring, 1988, pp. 20–33. The videotape deals with the case of the "surrogate mother" Mary Beth Whitehead, who had withdrawn her promise, laid down in a contract, to hand out her baby after birth to the couple Elizabeth and William Stern. Mrs. Whitehead had been fertilized by Mr. Stern's sperm. "S" stands for Sarah, the name the Whiteheads had given the infant, "M" for Melissa, the name given her by the Sterns, who had successfully claimed her in a lawsuit. A main argument in the case—though never stated as such—was that Mr. Stern was the "owner" of one half of the baby and, thanks to the contract, had purchased the other half. (The "S/M" in this tape's title is also written "\$M").

convincing and histrionic. Rosler combines her keen sense of analysis and emphatic partisanship for the loser in a paradigmatic case of male/class-specific dominance and injustice with a theatrical performance in the best tradition of American comedy. Her montage of live-TV footage alternating with the transformation of herself into the different characters involved in the case (including "Baby M" and—as an ironic quotation—a personification of a sperm, a metonym for Mr. Stern), is both extremely comic and outrageous at the same time. Rosler highlights the most bizarre and crucial topics in this instance of patriarchal body politics exerted on a lower-class woman by the representatives of the wealthy middle class.

Her strategy recalls Brecht's (Marx-influenced) suggestion for a dramaturgy of "realism": "Creep inside your man and get comfortable there....Try out his intestinal system and see what his heart can bear.... Eat with him, applaud his little thoughts, look outside through his eyes." However, Rosler, in the specifically "Brechtian" case of "Baby S/M," subverts Brecht's moral by incor-porating a successful element of popular culture, something that bears greater resemblance to a Marx Brothers comedy—which she, however, inverts from a feminist stance. What has been said about them seems applicable to Rosler's approach: "The settings have a kind of abstraction...and have recognisable affinities with life of the time.... The Marx capers derive their strength from contrasting with this monotonously sane, pompously narrow and petty-minded background, and their madness is real, not for dreams."

The baby figure that escapes its literal splitting in Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle* through the renunciation of the "true" mother, the "good character," remains split in Rosler's "Strange Case." Rosler's aim is not the fantasy of saving the baby or the "woman" from being "split," to reify a humanist subject, but revealing the symptom around "S/M": the token function of the child within an ideologically power-invested apparatus geared to denying any splitting, to granting the patriarchal, bourgeois family the fetishistic fantasy of "wholeness." This is guaranteed, as Rosler exemplifies, not by the mother but by the law of the phallus exerted by the father⁸ and his "brothers" (the men in power, the judge, the lawyer, etc.) at the cost of the Other, the less powerful, embodied by the Woman.

The careful dramaturgy of Rosler's work can be read along the lines of Freud's reading of the structure of dreams. She develops her piece as a sort of interpretation of dreams reversed when the former, apparently "normal," socially reasonable situation—in the case of "Baby S/M" an economic deal between three

⁶ Bertolt Brecht, "Aus einer Dramaturgie," in Über Realismus (Leipzig: Reclam, 1968), p. 10.

⁷ Allen Eyles, The Marx Brothers: Their World of Comedy (London: Tantivy, 1966), p. 151; Eyles here makes a comparison of the Marx Brothers' "world" to that of Lewis Carroll.

⁸ It is not by chance that the example Lacan gives in "The Insistence of the Letter" in order to define the notion of the metaphor—namely, a verse by Victor Hugo—refers to the "the promise of a future fatherhood." The verse goes: Sa gerbe n'etait ni avare ni haineuse.... (Lacan, Schriften II, op. cit., p. 33).





Born to Be Sold: Martha Rosler Reads the Strange Case of Baby S/M, 1988. Still from color videotape (with Paper Tiger Television).

people—turns into a comic, grotesque, as well as tragically cruel plot whose dubious, inert laws of class struggle and sexism become evident.

In her visual, textual, and theoretical methods of dealing with the symptoms of everyday life, in her simultaneous use and critique of the images and strategies of mass culture, Rosler brings home Lacan's statement that it was Marx, before Freud, who invented the notion of the symptom.9 In "The Sublime Object of Ideology," Slavoj Žižek describes the "fundamental homology between the interpretive procedure of Marx and Freud"—more precisely between their analysis of commodity and of dreams:

In both cases the point is to avoid the properly fetishistic fascination of the "content" supposedly hidden behind the form: the "secret" to be unveiled through analysis is not the content hidden by the form (the form of commodities, the form of dreams) but, on the contrary, the "secret" of this form itself ...why have the latent dream-thoughts assumed such a form, why were they transposed into the form of a dream? It is the same with commodities: the real problem is not to penetrate the "hidden kernel" of the commodity...but to explain why the work assumed the form of the value of a commodity, why it can affirm its social character only in the commodity-form of its product.¹⁰

⁹ Jacques Lacan, "Seminar of 21 January 1975" (translated by Jacqueline Rose), in Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, eds., Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne (New York and London: Norton and Pantheon, 1985), p. 166.

¹⁰ Slavoj Žižek, "How Did Marx Invent the Symptom?," chapter 1 of *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 11; emphasis in the original.

At this juncture Rosler's theoretical and artistic approach converges not only with her interrogation of social phenomena, their class-, race-, and gender-specific implications and capitalist politics, but also with her questioning of the ideological and institutional status of the art work. In her thorough recognition and critique of pop art, "The Figure of the Artist, the Figure of the Woman," Rosler acknowledges "pop's great break" resulting "from its perception of the qualitatively different array of social factors that dictated its new answers." In an era of "consolidated capitalism" and the "humanization of the commodity," writes Rosler, "Pop evidences no alarm or opposition to everyday life": Pop art's "reconstitution of the work of art as a discourse of images banished affect and consigned the unconscious to muteness; the unconscious became unrepresentable in a society that attempted to replace it with behavioristic reflexes conditioned toward ownership." Pop art did away with the myth of an "authentic" (male) subject and of the "original" art work. "Identity" became replaced by "role." However, in this new "de-heroized" field, notes Rosler, "there was no space for women": "In pop, the female appears as a sign.... The figure of the woman was assimilated both to the desire attached to the publicized commodity form and to the figure of home."12

Hence, for feminism in general and Rosler's "socialist feminism" in particular, the impact of pop art was both an important and critical point of departure: "Feminism, like pop, articulated the social character of the self and of private life. Unlike pop, feminism and feminist art insisted on the importance of gender as an absolute ordering principle and also on the politics of domination in all social life, whether personal or public."¹³

Rosler, in her critical understanding that art had to be renarrativized, took up "pop" issues in order to break the fetishism of the sign/image/commodity and to speak of the context underlying the "general ideas" informed by the media. Within this logic, Rosler's text through which the "ordinary" woman is speaking is as much a pop issue as an underwear ad.

In the video *A budding gourmet*, again conceived in the form of a short TV feature, Rosler assumes the role of a woman who tells about her aim to become a gourmet in order to "become a more valuable person," to transcend her class limits in the end—a text that reads also as a metatext on art, the artist, and their audience. In the work *Untitled (S,M,L)*, from the series "Body Beautiful," she subverts the authoritative impact of the underwear ad (stylishly chaste models

¹¹ Martha Rosler, "The Figure of the Artist, the Figure of the Woman" (1983), unpublished manuscript of a paper given at the conference "Die Andere Avantgarde," held at the Brucknerhaus, Linz, Austria, in 1983.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

⁴ A budding gourmet (black-and-white videotape, 15 min., 1974).

¹⁵ Body Beautiful, or Beauty Knows No Pain," 1966–1972; in these montages of found images Rosler inserts bodies or body parts (nudes, breasts, pubic hair) taken from pornography magazines into ads for women's underwear, swimsuits, etc.

with the line "everybody appreciates a girl that's well put together") by letting repressed pornographic desires surface as montaged body parts (breasts, pubic hair) taken from porn magazines. Both works are charac-terized by a strong affinity to the genre, playing on the media-calculated naiveté and the alleged innocence of the persons involved, the concerned, well-meaning "want-to-be gourmet" or the "chaste" underwear model whose standardization Rosler underlines by means of the letters S, M, L.

Rosler's method of montage and narration, the reflective structure of both her textual and visual works, do not, as has been noted already, reflect a surrealist stance.¹⁶ Rosler's approach (and her concept of the unconscious) is Freudian in the sense that her political critique focuses on the "normal," the norms of the "psychopathology of the everyday." And, as mentioned above, it is here where she meets with the civilizational critique that she concedes to pop art, yet with the specific aim of allowing pop's "unrepresentable unconscious" to reappear. Thus, in her taking pop's language of signs seriously, Rosler from her early works on has practiced a specific critique of the media, thereby undermining the documentary "truth" of photography: The disturbance she produces resembles a Freudian slip, often with streaks of a sort of hidden, sometimes malicious, wit. By combining two different media genres in "Body Beautiful," advertising photography and pornography, or, in the series "Bringing the War Home,"17 war photography and the photography of life-style journals, Rosler creates a "de-suturing" effect of sudden displacement, of a visual "error." Formally speaking, she is not fabricating an "anti-pop" image but one that is very near, perhaps even too near, to the "normal" fiction of the media. In both series Rosler not only reframes America's dialectics of consciousness and denial (about the on-going war in Vietnam, violence, and sexuality); She also uses the image to reveal the implicated relations between life style and the art world. (Two examples of her deliberate and artful choice are an emaciated Giacometti sculpture in a "House Beautiful" montage that seems to be walking outside to join the dead war victims in front of the house and the dotted textiles in Woman with Cannon [Dots] that appear as a clumsy Roy Lichtenstein quotation.)

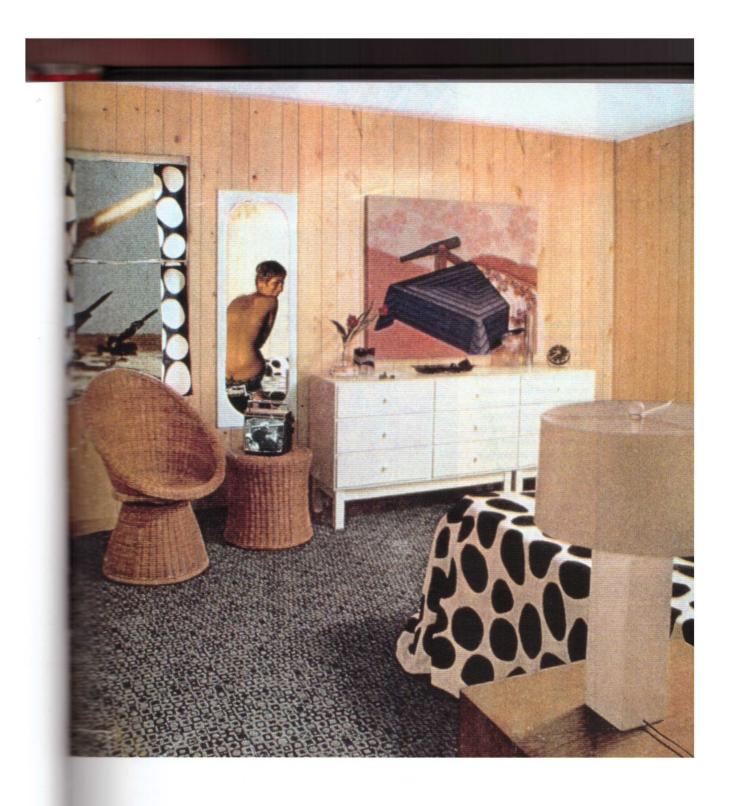
In an interview done in 1981, Jane Weinstock criticized Rosler for "not addressing the unconscious of the viewer" and that she was "ignoring sexuality" in her work.¹⁸ This sounds rather astonishing, especially because the theorists Weinstock is referring to are Freud and Lacan. Rosler's point in this interview is very clear: She wanted to avoid a psychoanalytic discourse in art with the resulting

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¹⁶ Laura Cottingham, "The Inadequacy of Seeing and Believing: The Art of Martha Rosler," in M. Catherine de Zegher, ed., Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of Twentieth-Century Art, in, of and from the Feminine (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT, 1996), p. 157.

^{17 &}quot;Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful" and "Bringing the War Home: In Vietnam," 1967-72.

¹⁸ Jane Weinstock, "Interview with Martha Rosler," October No. 17 (Summer 1981–"The New Talkies"), pp. 88 and 91.



Woman with Cannon (Dots), from "Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful," c. 1972. Photomontage.





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academization of "questions of every day life, of meaning, of interaction, and social change." What she was interested in was what she called the "psychosocial or...the ideological." ¹⁹

Rosler's critical understanding of psychoanalysis prevents her from doing what Weinstock is reproaching her for failing to do, namely, to deliver a psychoanalytical framing of her own issues. Her strategy lies in the visual and linguistic structuring of her issues. She shows how the different "I's" or "she's," personalities she gives a place to speak in her texts and images—for example, the woman in the kitchen, the woman who "sees in herself a new woman every day," the reader of *Vogue*—are culturally defined.²⁰ By precisely describing their "behavioristic reflexes" she also takes their (and her own) desires seriously. This enables her to expose the ideological norms internalized by the individual and exerted by a controlling bureaucracy, by industrial production, or by the media.

There seems to be no need for Rosler to invent her "characters" and images—they are already there. Her artistic strength is her epistemological intelligence to see and frame the given. She does not claim to tell the "truth," but, on the contrary, to work on the "inadequacy of descriptive systems."²¹

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 92–93. Rosler: "Differences between uses of 'I' and 'she' interest me. When 'she' is used in performance, the resulting self-distancing inclines the work toward an illustration; it's not so much an individual story. With 'I,' one directly confronts a self, one tends more to quarrel with what is said."

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 90; In the photo/text work *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems* (1974–75), Rosler parallels a text page of synonyms or attributes for drinking or for the marginalized alcoholics with an image page of detail views of the Bowery, mainly storefronts, sometimes litter on the street, all of them semiotically and semantically charged. None of the photographs shows a human being.

far left: *Untitled*, c. 1971. Stuffed sculpture.

left:
She Sees in Herself a New
Woman Every Day, 1976.
View of photo and audio
floor installation.

right:
Barefoot #2, 1983.
Color photograph.



Rosler is not idealizing the issues of women, or the "Woman," as cultural feminism has on occasion done. Her activist energy involves aggression that she dialectically situates around women as its subjects and objects at the same time. Her early sculptures, "untitled stuffed works," mostly consist of women's garments stuffed with cotton. They depict a fragmented female body with an uncanny, repulsive, and simultaneously comical appearance. In her audiotape soliloquy in the work *She Sees in Herself a New Woman Every Day* (1976), Rosler, speaking as "I," refers to her childhood, addressing her mother who had a closet full of "wonderful shoes," a closet in which the child Martha was hiding from her. She describes the typical oppressive style in which mothers treat their daughters (playing on the ambivalent Cinderella-stepmother-"real"-daughters syndrome).

In this twelve-part photowork, placed on the floor, she takes an estranged look at herself. She directs the camera at her feet while wearing different pairs of shoes in each photo, thereby expressing uncomfortable nearness and distance at the same time. In this work, as in many others too, the artist reveals in a more personal way her own idiosyncrasies, her humor, sensitivity, and vulnerability, which underlie all of her work.



On June 16, 1953, President Eisenhower wrote to his son John, serving in Korea:

To address myself...to the Rosenberg case for a minute. I must say that it goes against the grain to avoid interfering in the case where a woman is to receive capital punishment. Over against this. however, must be placed one or two facts that have greater significance. The first of these is that in this instance it is the woman who is the strong and recalcitrant character, the man is the weak one. She has obviously been the leader in everything they did in the spy ring. The second thing is that if there would be any commuting of the woman's sentence without the man's then from here on the Soviets would simply recruit their spies from among women.

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Unknown Secrets (The Secret of the Rosenbergs), 1988. Details of installation with photo silkscreen, towel rack, JELL-O box, and text handout. Photos by Eric Weeks, New York.



This dialectic of identification with and distancing from her personae is a basic means that she applies on the textual as well as on the visual level. Her concern about food and food production (which also stems from her personal experience as a mother)²² is instrumental in recognizing the collective syndromes of a society. A shop window in Kassel, Germany, showing a smiling "housewife" kept in place by coffee pots labeled "insulating" proves to be an unintentionally awkward scenario of society's desire to encase women. The bigger the imagined threat, the harsher the reaction: Rosler's work on the Rosenberg case, *Unknown Secrets*,²³ reveals the "secret" of a national Cold War hysteria against "Communism" fed by (unconscious) fear of women. Ethel Rosenberg, the housewife in the kitchen (the conspicuous knives—familiar to us from Hollywood movies—are seen in the background) represents the "enemy" who was sentenced to death. (It is a logical and tragic coincidence that Wilhelm Reich, the author of the theory of "character armor," became a victim of the same politics.)

What has prompted me to use the notion of "character" in this text is the plural and shifting meaning of this term, which itself has become a metaphor in the description of an artist and her artistic project—a project that is, as Rosler has stated herself, marked by "two poles, the literal and the metaphoric." Yet, Rosler continues, "both of them are in a sense themselves blinds. They suggest that I am dealing with a kind of humanistic enterprise or a very literal one that seems all meaning as emanating from the self. But in fact, my characters tend to be cardboard, unidimensional, so that you don't become involved in biography. On the other side, the analysis that seems to flow from their particular situations is a puzzle. It isn't an analysis; it's the suggestion of direction for analysis."²⁴

By using the metaphor "character," I have attempted to follow her suggestion in order to describe the political, ethical, and thoroughly poetic dimension of her project. Rosler shows that cultural history can emerge through a single letter as in her videotape project *Seattle: Hidden Histories*. In the first of this series of short "public service announcements," the corruption of the indigenous name "Se?ah," pronounced, approximately, "si:ash," into "Seattle" reveals the corrupt underside of America's (colonial) history.²⁵

Thanks to the Reference Room of the Generali Foundation in Vienna for their generosity in allowing me to use their Martha Rosler archive in preparing this essay.



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²² Martha Rosler, in Craig Owens; "On Art and Artists: Martha Rosler" (interview), *Profile*, (Chicago: Video Data Bank), Vol. 5, No. 2 (Spring 1986), p. 23.

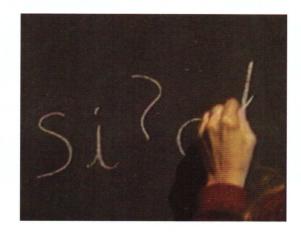
²³ Unkown Secrets (The Secret of the Rosenbergs), (1988). A less threatening manifestation of the same syndrome, the fantasized destructive "nature" of "Woman," is represented both by the Bikini girl and the "motherly" woman who, at the occasion of an official celebration of nuclear tests in 1946, is cutting a cake in the form of an atomic mushroom while she is wearing a hat of the same design (see photo on left).

²⁴ Martha Rosler, interview with Craig Owens, op. cit., p. 24.

²⁵ Seattle: Hidden Histories (videotape series of Public Service Announcements sponsored by the Seattle Arts Commission, 1991–95). In the videotape a woman explains that for reasons of pronunciation the name of chief "Se?ah" became "Seattle," and the town was so named as well.



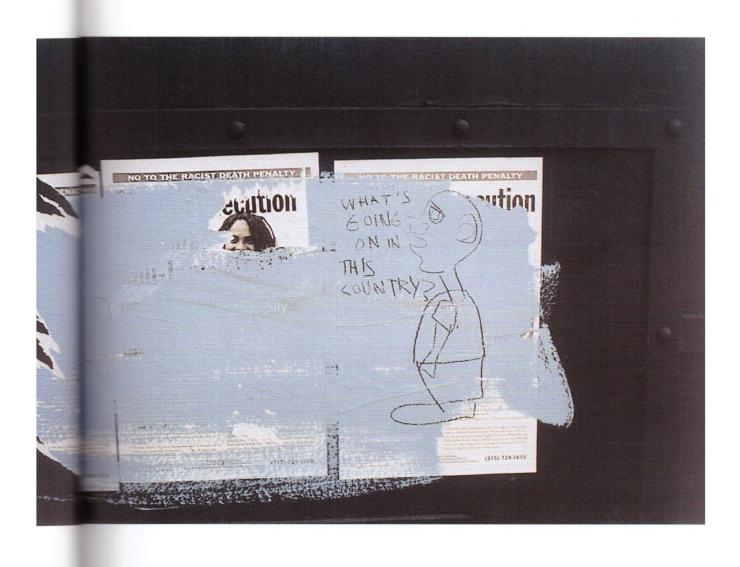


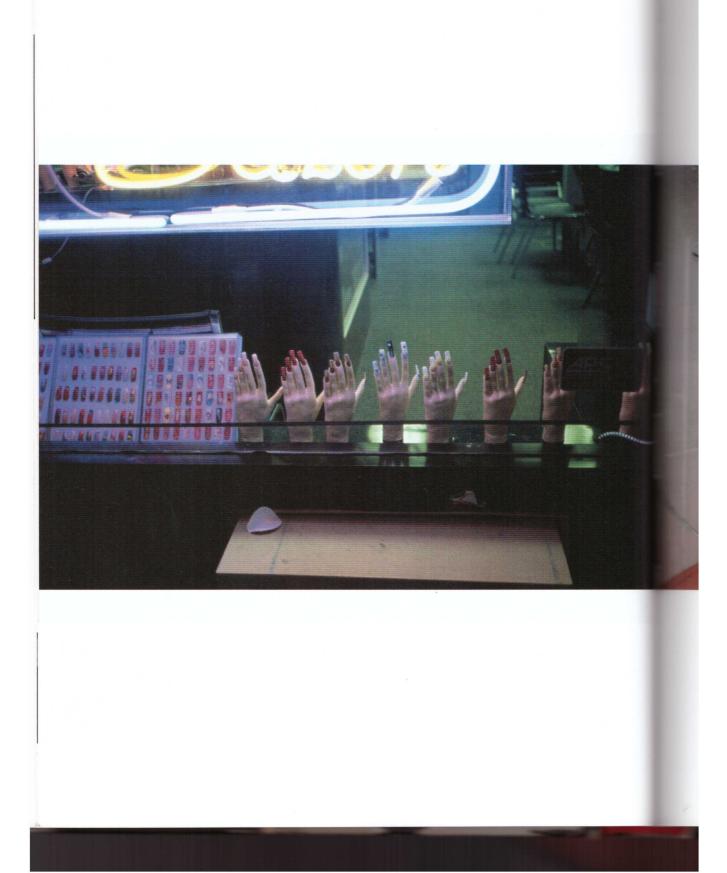


Seattle: Hidden Histories, 1991–95. Stills from color videotape.



166: 167 Transitions and Digressions













Walk through any city these days and you are likely to see people living in the streets. No matter how clean, stylish, or well-swept the city, it is likely to have a street population. When we talk about homeless people and urban shanties, we no longer mean only those in cities like Lima or Soweto. We might be talking about any city in post-Reagan America or in Thatcherite England—or, thanks to recent liberalizations, we might be thinking of Budapest or Moscow. It is an inescapable fact that at the end of the twentieth century many people around the world are forced to live in the streets. How could such a thing be happening—particularly now, as the Western mass media are gloating over the collapse of the Soviet model of communism and the victory of "our way of life"? And why are we—at least, here in the United States—putting up with it (or allowing it to happen, colluding with it)? And what can be done?

In order to address these questions, we must confront the social space in which homelessness occurs—the city. We must consider the city both materially and as a set of processes and governing concepts. The city, any city, is a set of relationships as well as a congeries of built structures; it is a geopolitical locale. More than simply an array of conflicting representations, a city is a site of production of productive significations. [...]

The city, which at first might appear to be an unplanned welter of heterogeneous structures with streets and avenues threaded throughout, itself encodes an image of the economic realities of the society that produced it. In the past couple of decades, the U.S. has witnessed the return of sweatshops and "home work" by indentured people, often immigrants—most of them women—and child labor, while modern mega-corporations have begun to engage in runaway-shop practices on a global scale, moving their productive sites here and there, their assembly sites somewhere else, wherever labor is cheapest and tax breaks, health and safety laws, and other conditions are most favorable. Networks that unify the globe in terms of information flows simultaneously facilitate the fragmentations and discontinuities of processes of production and physical structures, including residential communities. This pairing of linkage and dispersal has produced the exaggerated urban fragmentation so characteristic of postmodernism and has cast irony on the once obvious slogan "The Streets Belong to the People." Today, the street has been rendered an imaginary domain.

Postmodern discontinuity, like scattered sites of industrial and image production, is also manifested as a blurring of boundaries between public and private life.... Intentionally or not, this blurring serves the interest of greater but less confrontational social control....the sophisticated solution has been the evapora-

¹ Martha Rosler, Introduction to If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism. A Project by Martha Rosler. Brian Wallis, ed. (New York: New Press; originally published by Bay Press, 1990), pp. 15–43.

tion of sites of what formerly passed as a public world. Urban fortresses now encompass not just single buildings but entire areas (Bunker Hill, Battery Park City) or downtowns (Atlanta), and their fortress character is not immediately apparent, having melted innocuously into the city plan, the glorified façade, or the palm court with its invisible crowd-control techniques. [...]

The creation of "waste space" is as much a part of the social production of signification in modern life as the built environment. It is this "empty" space, to which the destitute are relegated, that is increasingly identified with—or as—"the street." The waste space resides where society used to stand.

Formerly public spaces have thus been recoded as architectural interiors, overblown atria of Portmanesque hotels and of corporate headquarters, often incorporating lavish interior jungles and elaborate, full-time video surveillance systems. Similarly, the shopping mall, suitably internationalized (Benettons everywhere) and removed from its physical locale, has become the center of social life, despite the fact that it is a space emphatically removed from the public sphere, patrolled by private police and without benefit of, say, the right to freedom of speech or assembly. Sites of public entertainment are also increasingly commodified and restricted: stadia, "theme parks," and, preeminently, television. [...]

The Picture of Homelessness

Homelessness, like all social problems, exists in a stream of conflicting representations. The image of the homeless person has undergone several metamorphoses over the past couple of decades. Indeed, a displaced person was not thought of as a "victim of homelessness" or an instance of the homeless until the crystallization of this idea and the dissemination of the term in the early 1980s. Americans soon began to recognize homelessness as a problem, and by mid-decade its dimensions were laid out in newspapers, on television, on talk shows. But in general, attitudes toward homeless people have been changeable, myth-ridden, and not especially benevolent.

Until recently, people who lived on the streets were labeled tramps, bums, vagrants, and derelicts. Depression imagery prevailed. The stereotypical "Bowery bum" was perceived as an alcoholic male transient of no particular race (though in fact such a person was overwhelmingly likely to be Caucasian). By the turn of the 1980s, the stereotypical street denizen had become a deranged hebephrenic bag person, smelly and threatening, a person evicted from a state-run mental institution. Lone homeless women, or "bag ladies," became a familiar mass-culture image: Lucille Ball played one on television.

As the decade progressed and homelessness became endemic, the image of homelessness, instead of gaining depth, was broadened to cover a more varied population, including displaced, primarily black, inner-city down-and-outers and vets; then inner-city mothers and children; then refugees form the rust belt and the for

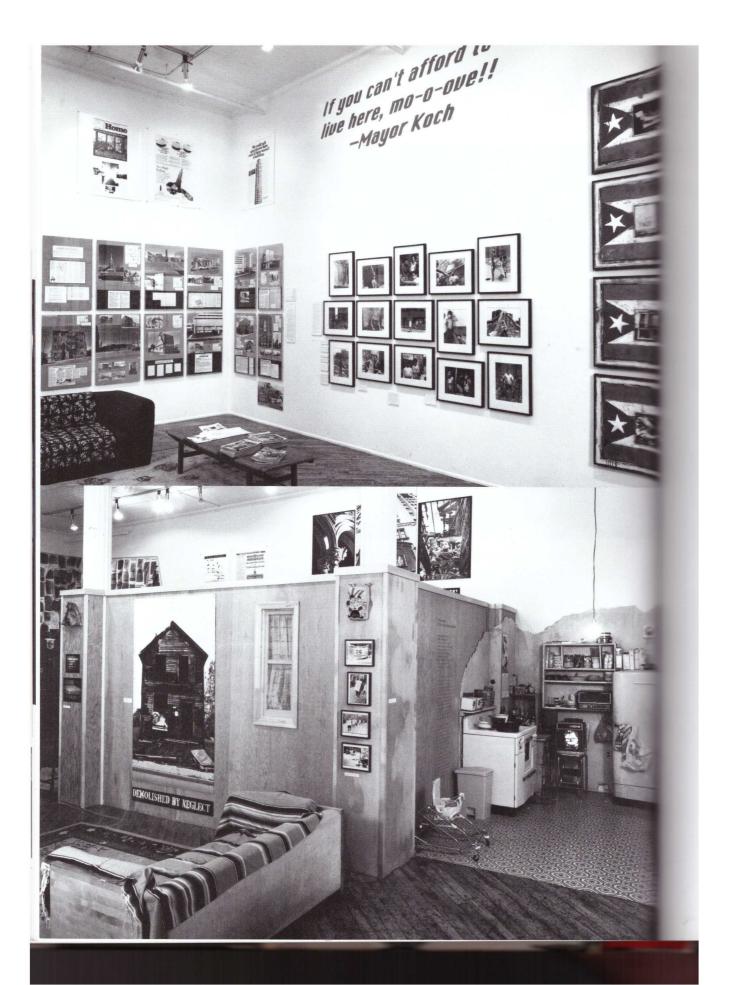
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Madhousers' hut on bulldozed site in Lower Manhattan, in conjunction with the exhibition *Homeless: The Street and Other Venues*, 1989.

closed family farm—including family groups now perceived as possibly white. When the media discovered the homeless, it was this last group whom they discovered: white homeless families adrift in Middle America.

The actual dimensions of female homelessness are lost in the current image of homeless women as deranged, as mothers, or as prostitutes (and therefore as crack-addicted or a source of HIV addiction). The homeless New York woman Joyce Brown, using the street name "Billie Boggs," became a celebrity-for-a-day in the late 1980s (and even addressed a Harvard audience before returning to the street) after her case occasioned a landmark legal decision preventing the forced eincarceration of homeless people in shelters or mental facilities. But little in-depth coverage was devoted to the lack of care such facilities offer to people like Billie Boggs to ameliorate mental or physical disabilities or to find permanent housing, or to the particular vulnerability of homeless women.



The single male (urban) homeless person—not to mention the black homeless person—was often forgotten or desubjectivized. The homeless person has become a specter of the age, a figure manipulable as a concentrated representation of a shared paranoia once justifiable through recourse to the Red Menace or earlier to the Yellow Peril. Occasionally someone will stop and give spare change to a panhandler; but the tender sentiments of such gestures are apparently revocable. As a young, white, privileged person remarks about the homeless in a recent videotape, "Well, maybe they used to be people...."

Conservative forces attempt both to manipulate estimates of the number of unhoused people and to blame them for their predicament.... Public sentiments toward government aid to the homeless have swung back and forth. In the United States, as in England, homelessness is perceived as a social threat and perhaps a moral evil—a sore on the body politic; but the trend toward privatization and the inability to locate a public sphere have made the middle classes, themselves financially squeezed by stagnant wages, reluctant to call on the state for solutions. The reality that most of those made homeless were members of the urban working class and that many continue to hold jobs but simply can't pay the rent is apparently not of interest to the public. There is nothing new about "out of sight, out of mind"; it has nothing to do with postmodernism. Giving homeless people one-way bus tickets out of town or criminalizing homelessness preserves the view—but it doesn't solve the problem of "the street." [...]

Artists in the Cities

What variety of means is available in the effort to persuade and convince? How can one represent a city's "buried" life, the lives in fact of most city residents? How can one show the conditions of tenants' struggles, homelessness, alternatives to city planning as currently practiced—the subjects of "If You Lived Here..."? These have been the central issues shaping this project. Its forums, of course, provided an opportunity for direct speech. The three shows, however, also features varieties of "direct evidence" and argumentation about the grounding of urban life. Artists, community groups, and activists made their points through an array of materials, from videotapes, films, and photographic works to pamphlets and posters to paintings, montages, and installations.

Certainly the conventionalized picture of the postmodern city, with its fortresses and deeply impoverished ghettos, with its epidemics of drugs and AIDS, reinforces the imagery of the urban frontier and discourages even partial

Home Front, 1989. In the exhibition cycle "If You Lived Here...." Detail views. Photos by Oren Slor, New York. approaches to poverty and homelessness. For artists, the image of the city's means streets may feed a certain romantic bohemianism. Yet, because artists often share city spaces with the underhoused, they have been positioned as both perpetrators and victims in the processes of displacement and urban planning, They have come to be seen as a pivotal group, easing the return of the middle class to center cities. Ironically, however, artists themselves are often displaced by the same wealthy professionals—their clientele—who have followed them into now-chic neighborhoods.

Irrespective of public or corporate commissions, artists have always been capable of organizing and mobilizing around elements of social life; the city is art's habitat. But how do artists address directly the issues of city life and homelessness in which they are implicated? Most directly, of course, many artists engage in activism. [...]

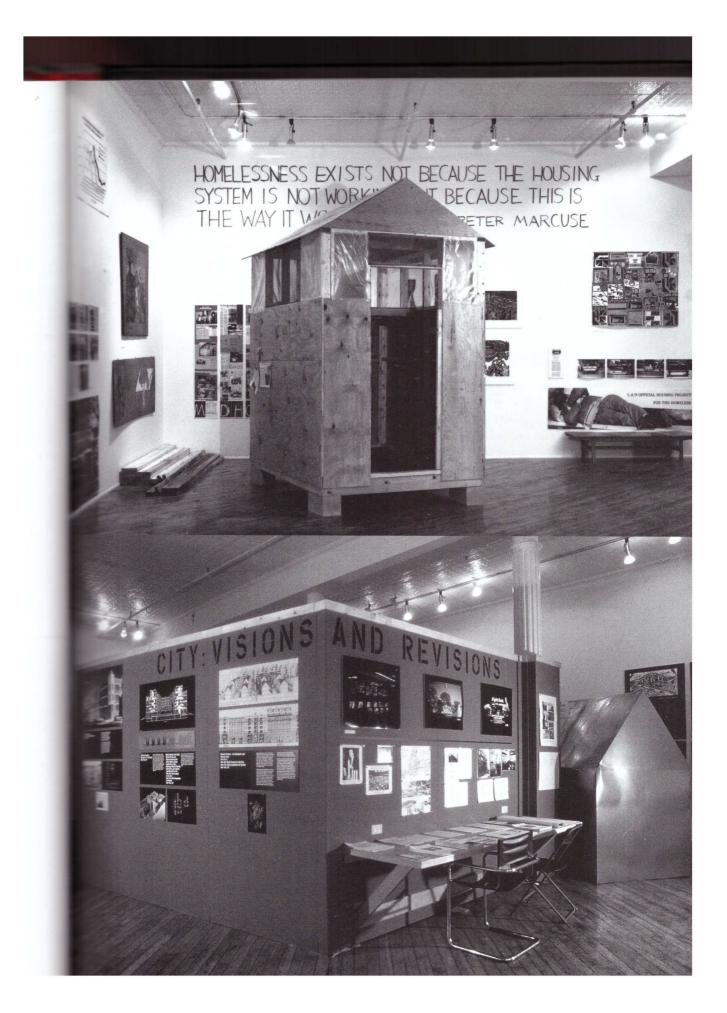
Ultimately, there's no denying that no matter how the works in "If You Lived Here..." originally were woven into the social fabric, the venue of the exhibitions, was an art gallery, even if partly "transformed." The idea of these shows wasn't simply to thicken the context for the reception of "photographs of the Other." It was, first, to allow for a consideration of an underreported, underdescribed, multidetermined set of conditions producing simple results: homelessness and sadly inadequate housing. Perhaps no less importantly, the project intended to suggest how are communities (might) take on such questions. Since the problem of homelessness exists among a welter of representations, it is not possible to change social reality without challenging its simplifying overlaid images. That was a main task of "If You Lived Here." [...]

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top: Homeless: The Street and Other Venues, 1989.

bottom: City Visions and Revisions, 1989.

In the exhibition cycle
"If You Lived Here...."
Detail views.
Photos by Oren Slor, New York.







How Do We Know What Home Looks Like?, The Unité d'Habitation of Le Corbusier at Firminy, France, 1993. Stills from color videotape.

Annette Michelson: Solving the Puzzle

"The familiar is not necessarily the known," said Hegel. Let us go further and say that it is in the most familiar things that the unknown—not the mysterious—is at its richest, and that this rich content of life is still beyond our darkling consciousness, inhabited as it is by impostors and gorged with the forms of Pure Reason, with myths and their illusory poetry.

Henri Lefebvre¹

Firminy

In 1993, Martha Rosler was invited to join a group, internationally composed, of forty artists in reflection on and documentation of a major housing project, the last and largest of Le Corbusier's *Unités d'Habitation*, completed in 1967, two years after his death. Their work was to form an exhibition, conceived and curated by Yves Aupetitallot, presenting their individual views of a project that had become the focus of intense debate and of struggle. Within and around its precincts, since accorded the status of an officially designated monument, a drama of utopian theory and social praxis had been played out with results and implications that were drastic for its inhabitants and more generally of concern to a wide range of economists, urban planners and developers, architects and social theorists.

Firminy, the small town near the mining center of Saint Etienne in central France, once the site of developmental ambition, had not fulfilled the hopes and promise of the previous decade. This *Unité* had been designed as part of a larger plan for development of the hillside on which it was set. The plans for housing included a school and a church. Launched by its liberal mayor, Claudius Petit, in the hope of attracting industrial production that would provide employment for a depressed mining community, the project did not elicit the anticipated response, and the change of administration that came with new local elections initiated debates as to the future viability of the *Unité*. Rosler's response to the curatorial invitation took the form of documentation in a video work: *How Do We Know What Home Looks Like? The* Unité d'Habitation *of Le Corbusier at Firminy, France* (1993). At the time of shooting, the northern half of the project had been closed for about ten years. The group commission was the occasion for a critical reappraisal of Le Corbusier's project, and of the notion of large, low-cost housing projects altogether.

In 1965 Jean-Luc Godard had begun his meditation on the urban development then taking off in France. It was to culminate in two films that were exactly contemporary with the construction of Firminy's *Unité d'Habitation: Alphaville* (1965) and *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle*, (*Two or Three Things I Know About Her*, 1966). In the first of these works, his densely structured allegorization

¹ Henri Lefebvre, The Production of Space, Donald Nicholson-Smith, trans. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).



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Jean-Luc Godard, Two or Three Things I Know About Her, 1966. Still from color film.

of a future already inscribed within the present was extended to both the location in which it was shot—a Paris moving, as Godard saw it, toward the desolate future of cultural and social deep freeze—and to its very language. Speeding through the "outer regions" of The City of Dreadful Night that this Paris has become, the protagonist's guide (Eurydice) explains to him that the large stretches of building passed en route to the Center are *hôpitaux des longues maladies* (hospitals for incurable diseases), a verbal play on the *Habitations à loyer modique* (lowcost housing projects) known as the HLMs, construction of which had been begun in the late 1950s in an effort to solve the housing crisis of the post-war period, the gravest of the century. An entire emerging generation of young adults was condemned to two decades of life in cramped and shabby hotel rooms or servants' quarters, to the cuisine of the Bunsen burner, and the personal hygiene of the public bath.

In the second of these two films, Godard resumed and extended the thematics of prostitution² that were to become central to his filmic enterprise: locating its generalized practice within the structure of the HLM as necessarily and radically

² Prostitution is the theme first explored in both fictional and documentary mode, of his film *Vivre sa vie* (1962).

emblematic of the condition of the consumerist dynamic of French capitalism's accelerated drive toward modernization through hyperindustrialization.

The struggle to maintain the *Unité* of Firminy, the attachment of its remaining inhabitants to the ideal of a large, communally conceived project, are documented in Rosler's exploration of both the abandoned apartments and the remaining inhabited quarters of the project. Her documentation of the empty apartments —of the modest decoration of their papered and poster-filled walls³—precedes a tour of the halls and corridors that provided play spaces and tricycle paths for children, her interviews with tenants—with mothers and children, with activists fighting to maintain the life of the *Unité*.

To outsiders, such as many of the artists commissioned, the project appeared constraining in a number of ways, and most certainly acoustically oppressive in its lack of soundproofing. Listening, one recalls the savage attack on Le Corbusier launched from the Left by the Lettrist International which began with the following invocation:

In these times of growing repression, there lives a singularly repellent man, of clearly more than average cop mentality. He builds cells that are housing units, he builds a capital city for the Nepalese; he builds vertical ghettoes, morgues for an age that puts them to good use, *he builds churches*.

The protestant modulor, the neo-cubist dauber runs "the machine for living" for the greater glory of that God who has created corpses and corbusiers in his own image.⁴

And Henri Lefebvre had observed, somewhat more temperately, that "it is arguable, for instance, that Frank Lloyd Wright endorsed a communitarian representational space deriving from a biblical and Protestant tradition, whereas Le Corbusier was working towards a technicist, scientific and intellectualised space, which is to say an "abstract" space. Lefebvre, whose meditation on urban planning was undertaken in the immediate aftermath of World War II had gone on to offer a critique of modernist architecture's 'abstract space' as a "tool of domination."

To the tenants of Firminy, however, *l'Unité* appears to be, generally if not entirely, a place of comfort and community. And it is the context of the housing shortage into which this generation had first emerged into maturity that must be kept in mind. To none of those interviewed by Rosler did it seem truly oppressive. The sense of constraint, when expressed, was tempered by a certain pride in the nature and prestige of the project, expressed in two touching forms of testimony, among others: a striking inscription among the graffiti: *Nous aimons vivre au*

³ The vogue of Vasarely's "op art" was noted in the French press.

⁴ My translation. For the full text of this excoriation, see "Les gratte-ciel par la racine," signed collectively by the Internationale Lettriste, in Guy Debord, ed., *Potlatch* 1954–1957 (Paris, 1997), pp. 37–38.

⁵ See Lefebvre, The Production of Space, op. cit., p. 302.

⁶ Ibid., passim.

annette michelson: solving the puzzle

Corbu ("We like living in the Corbu") and the refutation by one woman of the accusation of "terrorism" leveled against Le Corbusier: he rather "prevents you from consuming like idiots." One gathers, moreover, that the sense of community had been reinforced by the common struggle to preserve their homes.

Rosler's work on Firminy appears, at first viewing, neither typical nor representative of the full scope of her enterprise. In this tape she is silent, neither performer nor narrator. It lacks the frontally shot, discursive address to the viewer; it does not have the openly and admittedly didactic character of her videography. Its rather unusual sound track opens with fragments of Satie's score for *Mercure* (1924)⁷ I shall want, however, to claim that this somewhat eccentric work does nonetheless provide one with a fresh and feasible path of entry into Rosler's efforts as a whole, that its documentation of a struggle for the preservation of conditions of possibility for community issues from a sense of an unachieved totality that informs her enterprise. I understand this sense as a center, the axis about which her work revolves, and shall try to indicate some of the ways in which those conditions of possibility are articulated through a critique that establishes the continuum, the network of interpenetration between the facts of the individual quotidian, the domestic, and the issues of international capital in crisis.

The Food Chain

Rosler's work first gained attention in the 1970s through its especially forceful presentation, in both performance and videomaking, of a feminist thematics of the period: domestic servitude, anorexia, the especial demands and constraints imposed upon women through the dynamics of the fetishism of commodities. The intensity of an informing rage, heightened by the strength of her own presence as performer, was very quickly transformed into the analytic sharpness of attack, a thinking through of the sources and the dynamics of domination.

Between 1974 and 1977 she produced three works that we might group under a rubric that I shall call "The Food Chain": A budding gourmet (1974), Semiotics of the Kitchen (1975), and Losing (1977). The axis around which these work turns is that of consumption of food and the way in which it engages, metonymically and metaphorically, varied registers of feminist protest and claim. The work of 1975, although offered as an exercise in semiotics, has rather the form of a lexicon. It does not involve the order, the diachronic and synchronic axes, along which a "system of objects" or utensils might be employed, nor does it establish a functional syntax. Rather, Rosler presents a lexicon of cooking utensils, recited in alphabetical order and in frontal position in the manner of a store demonstration or television program. But this is a demonstration with a difference,

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⁷ Mercure, the ballet commissioned by Diaghilev, was the collaborative work of Satie, Picasso (for the decors) and Massine (for the choreography). Its curious history of attack from the surrealist left and subsequent apologetic withdrawal is recounted in Anne Rey, Erik Satie (Paris, 1974), pp. 143–148.

that of utensils as instruments of domestic servitude, each one converted by the force of the presenter's gesture and demeanor into an instrument of aggression.

Rosler was from the first, however, concerned with the fuller range of repression, with the manner in which a critique of everyday life within capitalism, of the fetishism pervading every register of existence within the capitalist social formation, can be seen as part of a continuum involving the larger spectrum of repression of needs, wants, desires. Thus, for example, *A budding gourmet* is the merc lessly witty bourgeois housewife's monologue on "self-enhancement" and upward mobility through consumption of "the finer things of life," through the consumption of foreign and exotic cuisine. The notion, advanced by the speaker, of the chef as analogous to the orchestra conductor heightens the sense of an enabling class distinction, and of cuisine as a pathway to social mobility. Here in this parable on colonialism as ingurgitation, the *bourgeoise* sees herself as the possessor of a truly international culture, as a citizen of the world. A discourse of cultural bulimia presented as a policy of "creativity," celebrates the manner in which "in the USA we can take the best of all times and places and make them our own."

Losing, A Conversation with the Parents is the scripted performance by professional actors of the work of mourning for a dead, anorexic daughter. One might say that Semiotics of the Kitchen forms a mean register of discourse between A budding gourmet and Losing. The anorexic child, who had been in all respects "perfectly normal," well brought up and "eager to please," and the culturally bulimic housewife define the limits of woman's servitude within which both self-imposed privation and excess of appetite must be seen in relation to a hungering elsewhere, that of mass famine in what is known as The Third World.

Losing is cast in the form of conversation similar to that of an interview or counseling session. The picture of the dead girl projected is one of the adolescent, instructed by the media in the requirements of the canon of beauty as to height and weight, not, like her brother, "pushed" by parental ambition into a college education, eager to please, envisioning a possible future as a photographic model (pleasing as profession) and no doubt convinced, like her parents, that "every goal in life involves some sacrifice." It does occur to the bereaved and mourning protagonists that feminine rage, unlike that of the adolescent boy, may be projected against the self, that the criteria of ideal femininity involving standards of weight and height as defined and propagated by the media might serve as conditions of possibility for the self-inflicted deathly dialectic of bulimia and anorexia.

⁸ The subtle accuracy and wit of this monologue is comparable to the more recent performance work by
Anna Deveare Smith. One wonders, however, if it might possibly have been inspired by the effort of gracious
acknowledgment made by Mrs. Richard Nixon to the head chef responsible for the sumptuous banquet
served in the Great Hall of the People on the occasion of the presidential visit to Peking. Mrs. Nixon's words,
reported in the New York Times, were: "I want you to know that I have eaten Chinese cuisine in just about
every country you could possibly name, and this is really the best I've ever had!"

⁹ The sound track carries quotations from the movement of Schubert's String Quartet in D minor, constructed as a series of variations upon the theme of his song, "Death and the Maiden."



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And it is borne in upon one that if food and its deprivation can figure as a self-inflicted weapon, then we must, indeed, consider its aggressive potential in other contexts: that of the politically motivated hunger strike, or that of a politics of deprivation, as directed, for example, through restriction to a diet of 300 calories a day of the Jews of the Warsaw ghetto. And there is finally the concrete and drastic sense in which hunger is a massively deployed political weapon in the subjection of whole populations through starvation.

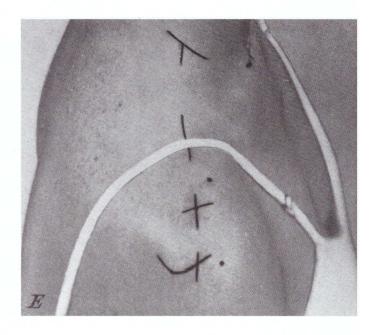
Dismemberment

It is this sense of the manner in which an issue whose consideration originates in the local requires extension to the analysis of its further, more general implications that characterizes Rosler's method. As we shall see, it is the woman's body as site of domination from which the larger, fuller range of domination emerges clear to the view. And central to the way in which Rosler develops the theme of the woman's body as the site of domination is what me might term its *dismemberment*, the multiple procedures by which representation of the female body is defined as composed of parts. This violation of the living body's experience of itself as a whole entity is the core and the foundation of the problematic of fragmentation/totality that runs through her work, and it leads, in a manner, characteristic of her method, to the analysis of the quotidian as implicated in the larger fetishistic determinations of human agency and condition within the capitalist social formation.

One divines this thinking behind the inquiry into the idealizing analytic of the body that impels the adolescent's mortal struggle to conform to the standards

martha rosler: positions in the life world

left and right: Vital Statistics of a Citizen, Simply Obtained, 1977. Stills from color videotape.



of fashion. Rosler's most developed inquiry is, however, *Vital Statistics of a Citizen, Simply Obtained* (1977). This complex and major tripart work on has been excellently described and analyzed by Amy Taubin with a meticulousness that befits the structure and texture of the obsessive character of its theme. ¹⁰ I shall therefore confine my remarks to a few of its salient conceptual aspects. It centers on representation of the technique of measurement as applied to the woman's body *in its every part*, down to the joints of fingers and toes. (That this obsessive preoccupation with the female body is not limited to our single culture we know from the description of the cleansing and purification of women as required and performed in the ritual bath of the *mikveh* within the Jewish Orthodox tradition. This procedure, following the menstrual period, entails the cleansing and inspection of every part and orifice.)

In *Vital Statistics* we find the development of Rosler's premises and the guiding principles of analysis; the notion of measurement as informative of a truth of the self, the imposition of measurement as technique of normalization and subjection, the subject's internalization of imposed standards.

The contexts, implications, and concrete results of these premises involve the questioning of testing procedures and the training of individuals to conform to places and positions decreed as proper, of the socialization and integration of working populations within the framework decreed by the scientificity of design and of planning.

¹⁰ Amy Taubin, "And what is a fact anyway? (On a tape by Martha Rosler)," Millennium Film Journal, No. 4/5 (Summer/Fall), 1979.

annette michelson: solving the puzzle

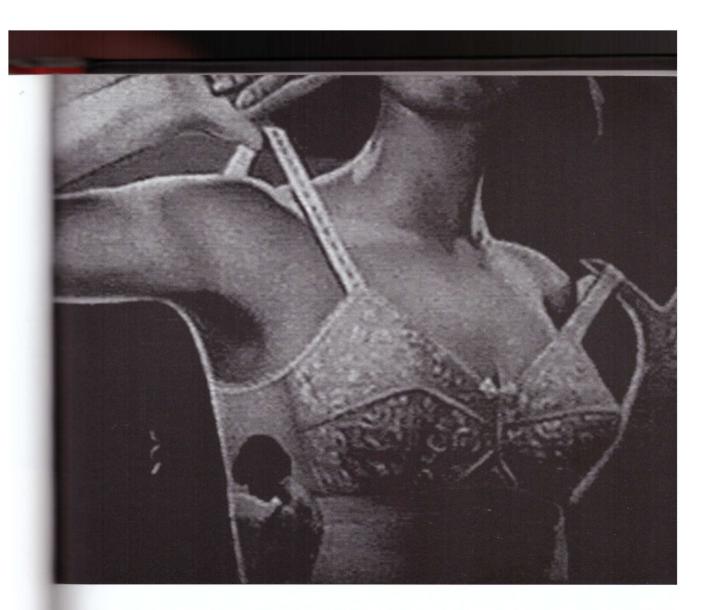


left and right: Jean-Luc Godard, A Married Woman, 1964. Stills from color film.

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Since the process requires that the female subject internalize the processes involved in domination, she "learns to think of her body as having parts." Here we touch on a conceptual root of Rosler's work: the awareness of a fracturing that begins with a body in pieces, with the loss of a sense of intimate wholeness of the body and extends to the fracturing of the social body. It is, in fact, the technique of domination that requires and forces, on every parameter of existence, the fracturing of the sense of wholeness. The subjection of women—a multicultural phenomenon indeed—thus facilitated is characterized by Rosler through a long litany of its forms; it includes, among many others, immolation, infibulation, clitoridectomy, prostitution, slavery, sterilization, illegal abortion. And in Vital Statistics, we can indeed follow the working of a strategy of radical dismemberment of the female body through measurement that becomes increasingly prevalent in the dissemination by the print and electronic media. Henri Lefebvre has remarked that in the space of abstraction "an anaphorization occurs that transforms the body by transporting it outside itself and into the ideal/visual realm. "It is there that we also encounter a strange substitution":

The space where this substitution occurs, where nature is replaced by cold abstraction and by the absence of pleasure, is the mental space of castration (at once imaginary and real, symbolic and concrete): the space of a metaphorization whereby the image of the woman supplants the woman herself, whereby her body is fragmented, desire shattered and life explodes into a thousand pieces. Over abstract space reigns phallic solitude and the self-destruction of desire. The representation of sex thus takes the place of sex itself, while the apologetic term "sexuality" serves to cover up this mechanism of devaluation.¹¹



Confined by the abstraction of a space broken down into specialized locations, the body itself is pulverized. The body as represented by the images of advertising (where the legs stand for stockings, the breasts for bras, the face for makeup, etc.) serves to fragment desire and doom it to anxious frustration, to the non-satisfaction of local needs. In abstract space, and wherever its influence is felt, the demise of the body has a dual character, for it is at once symbolic and concrete: concrete, as a result of the aggression to which the body is subject; symbolic, on account of the fragmentation of the body's living unity. This is especially true of the female body, as transformed into exchange value, into a sign of the commodity and indeed into a commodity *per se*. 12

Thus, the protagonist of Godard's *A Married Woman* (1964) has indeed internalized the sort of standards portrayed in *Vital Statistics* as she measures her breasts (and their distance from each other) against the norms provided by the magazines and billboards that had increasingly come to dominate the imagery of the Fifth Republic, even as her lover keeps count, with a pedometer, of his ambulatory mileage.



YOU CAN BE REPLACED



Domination and the Everyday, 1978. Stills from color videotape.

The Puzzle

Born to be Sold: Martha Rosler Reads the Strange Case of Baby S/M (1988) is Rosler's vivid and trenchant analysis of the overdetermination of surrogate pregnancy's most highly publicized case history. This is an analysis that, through a videographic collage of TV documentation, interviews, and performance by Rosler, whose ebulliently satiric intensity recalls the style of American television's celebrated program Saturday Night Live, does justice to the complexity of a problematic that compounds issues of gender and class. The battle waged around the womb for hire generates further consideration of the concentration upon body parts and the way in which they produce "a vision of the world as made up of incommensurabilities, a puzzle whose pieces can't fit together to make a whole." This mystified belief will, of course, most generally and effectively impede analysis of conflicts of class, race, and gender, and it will block efforts to resolve or eliminate them. Recognition of this and of a body in pieces as the locus of domination has implications whose analysis provides the force and the especial clarity of Rosler's work, haunted throughout by a vision of totality.

The works on tape which I select as illustrative in this regard (others are possible) span two decades of Rosler's production: Domination and the Everyday (1978) and Chile On the Road to NAFTA, Accompanied by the National Police Band (1997). As this volume goes to press, we commemorate the defeat in Chile of the progressive Allende regime by the fascist coup d'état of 1973. Chile on the Road to NAFTA, made twenty-four years later, offers the image of a pacified populace as audience at a public concert of a medley of John Williams' Star Wars suite, offered by the Police Band, to the music of which a small boy in shorts, son of a band member, dances. And the image track cuts repeatedly to the lone salience along the highway to Chile: the emblem of economic and political hegemony, the monumentally scaled arm and hand grasping the ubiquitous Coca-Cola bottle. The role of the U.S. in the coup of '73, its complicity with the insurgent forces of fascism supported by an international bourgeoisie, had been documented in detail by Patricio Guzmán's film The Battle of Chile, (1978). Rosler evokes the passing of the "Free Trade" Act under the Clinton administration, and of the U.S.' projected relocation of industry to areas of "cheap labor" that was contested by the American labor movement. It is emblematized, as it were, by the scale and dynamism of the horrific object emerging from the flat terrain of the highway along which the car-mounted camera travels to reach the performance in the heart of Chile.

Domination and the Everyday, made almost two decades before, which is to say, in the immediate wake of the fascist coup, is, in its form a literalization of the intersection, or rather the conjunction, of the political and the everyday. Its structure is one of a thoroughgoing superimposition, on image and sound track, of three parameters: that of the image track, involving continuity of textual analysis, and two-track sound, involving a radio or TV interview with the director of an art





Chile on the Road to NAFTA, Accompanied by the National Police Band, 1997. Stills from color videotape.

gallery and the dialogue of mother and child involved in the chatter of daily routine. The acoustic level of mother and child dominates that of the interview, which takes on the quality of a continuous vague patter, continuing even over a temporarily vacant screen preceding display of stills of Chilean fascists and titles. The layering of sound and image tracks establishes, nonetheless, in its juxtaposition of the child's voice and the textual declaration, the complicity of the United States with an international bourgeoisie which sanctioned the repression through torture, starvation, and death. This attitude is crystallized by the statement, culled from a Chilean TV address: *Remember, you can be replaced*. And the truth of the statement is validated, as it were, by a situation in which the issue is that of domination of a single class.

Rosler's project in this particular work was not to articulate the conjunction of personal, daily regimens of existence with the political, but to invent the multi-layered structure that would allow her to affirm that in the U.S., "where there are layers of illusion masquerading as fact," we forget about domination and its control of culture and of our knowledge of the world, like other products of the market place, and, further, that "when we raise our eyes from the smallest routine of the home and family life, we find an already prepared world." "We are sleeping and dreaming with our eyes open, imagining that the layer upon layer of facts, truths, explanations...are...adequate to explain all the important truths about ourselves...." There follows a still photograph of that central totalizing group, the family, admissible within the already prepared and fragmented world of human labor. Its caption reads, "We like to think of you as a corporation."

Marx's term for this register of discourse was that of the "hieroglyphic." Rosler's videography works toward its decoding, toward the solving, the restoration of coherence, to the puzzle of the social text.

192:193

scripts: video and performance











excerpts from

THE ART OF COOKING: A MOCK DIALOGUE BETWEEN JULIA CHILD AND CRAIG CLAIBORNE

- (Scene, first dialogue: A bus depot. Wooden benches. A man and a woman wearing overcoats and with luggage at their feet sit facing each other.)
- Julia: Craig, my dear--you know, we all know that cooking is an art, but how did it get to be one, I wonder? I mean, after all, most of what we think of as art hangs on the wall or sits out in a courtyard--
- Craig: Well, Julia, I know what you mean, yet obviously there are arts that do not do that. Aside from cooking, there are music, the theater, dance--
- Julia: Yes, Craig, but those haven't any use: I mean, how serious are we about cooking as art? It gets used up rather quickly, you know....
- Craig: Yes, I do know--"Cooking is an ephemeral art. The painter, the sculptor, the musician may create enduring works, but even the most talented chef knows that his masterpieces will quickly disappear. 'A bite or two, a little gulp, and a beautiful work of thought and love is no more,' as the British author Sybil Ryall notes."
- Julia: Yes, I see what you mean. But I am a bit confused still. You mention masterpieces and talent and beautiful work, but isn't cooking primarily a matter
 of taste?
- Craig: Yes, of course, but isn't art a matter of taste as well?
- Julia: Yes, but... this is confusing.... Are they the same kind of taste?
- Craig: Julia, I'm sure--"Classic French cooking is a fine art, as surely as painting and sculpture are. Its great works, such as poularde a la Neva and filet de boeuf Richelieu, are masterpieces designed to enchant both the palate and the eye. And the classic French cuisine implies as well the careful planning of a menu to insure a felicitous blend of textures, colors, and flavors; it means sparkling crystal, gleaming silver, and immaculate napery. When all these come together, it is one of the glories of the civilized world."²
- Julia: Now you mention sculpture, the blending of textures and colors, painting—

 But painting usually signifies a concern with representation, doesn't it? Well,

61

Cr.

Te: 1

Crai

Juli

art or cooking, excerpt, page Z
perhaps the formalist outlook has been so strong these past hundred years
that that can be overlooked.

Craig: Julia, haven't you ever heard of abstract art?

Julia: Now, Craig, you needn't be patronizing. Just because we are going slowly, that doesn't mean I'm ignorant. I just feel there's more in metaphor that we usually notice, and if people are making claims for cooking as art and doing it on analogy with other arts, then we need to pay very close attention to the metaphors.

Craig (smiling): Julia, dear, forgive the tease. I think you are a dear, sweet, cultivated lady and I never really meant to imply--

Julia (slightly sharp): And you are such a suave, cosmopolitan Southern gentleman, Craig.

...Now, as I was saying, painting often connotes representation, though currently it may not do so as strongly as it once did. But many comparisons between painting and cooking were made before abstract art came into vogue. In Pleasures of the Table, published in 1902—a very popular book—the epicure George Ellwanger repeatedly compares painting and cooking. To take just one instance, he says:

[The] French have been to cooking what the Dutch and Flemish schools have been to painting—cookery with the one and painting with the other having attained their highest excellence. Rubens, Rembrandt, Teniers, Jordaens, Ruysdael, Snyders, Berghem, and Cuyp may be paralleled in another branch of art by Carême, Vatel, Beauvilliers, Robert Laguipière, Véry, Francatelli, and Ude. But as in painting during its earlier stages Flanders and the Netherlands owed much to the Roman and Venetian schools, so in cookery the French are vastly indebted to their predecessors and former masters the Italians, who, if less distinguished colourists, were not to be despised as draughtsmen, and who if by instinct not as skilled in the chiaroscuro of sauces,

Craig: I hardly know what to make of "the chiaroscuro of sauces" and the reference to draughtsmen. That is itself a poetic metaphor, it seems. I suppose when he mentions chiaroscuro he more likely means a contrast of tastes in the sauces with the substance in the dish rather than an actual contrast of dark and light colors. Draughtsmanship, on the other hand, may be a reference to how the dish looks. And "colourists" can be either. The man's ideas are half-baked.

Julia: 7. ... The gourmet chef Dione Lucas mentions painting. She cautions pupils that

Good cooks have a reverence and respect for their tools, as any craftsman must. These are the implements by means of which a cook creates what amounts to works of culinary art.... The complete kitchen should be thoroughly stocked with ingredients as well as tools. Just as an artist's studio is equipped with a variety of paints, to be used with the brushes and canvas,

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art of cooking, excerpt, page 3

so the cook's studio--the kitchen--should contain a broad spectrum of the raw materials out of which dishes are created.4

- Craig: I feel that way mwself. To continue our investigation, you know that cooking is often compared with still lifes. I find that funny, because most still lifes are paintings of food anyway. That makes the comparison a bit like comparing a person with his own portrait or photo. And people do say, "She's pretty as a picture."
- Julia: Now you are discussing representation! But I think the issue there is one of approaching the ideal—for most of the past few centuries, painting was involved with visual allure and the portrayal of things in their ideal states. Also, painting is a matter of composition and arrangement, both, you'll agree, so important in preparing food. But the comparison with painting does, I'm starting to think, seem to rest primarily on the mixing, blending and arranging of flavors and forms
- Craig: You mentioned "formalism" before. Is that worth looking into?
- Julia: Depends on how philosophical you want to get. To my way of thinking you couldn't seriously make an analogy between food and arts like painting, poetry, and music unless you were in the habit of ignoring content and attending to the manipulation of form. That is, if you see all content as basically equal, and think of it as essentially a set of elements (such as visual or "design" elements or melodic or rhythmic ones), then it hardly matters whether the elements are the flesh of animals, roots pulled from the earth, and edible leaves, or sounds made by drawing a bow across a wire and by the human voice, or shapes made with pigments spread on a cloth in certain arrangements, or combinations of words.
- Craig: You mean, I gather, that one feels free to focus on the relationships of the parts--notes to other notes, themes to themes, sounds to sounds, words to words, shapes to shapes, and so on--keeping what they are "about" in the background?
- Julia: Surely. You don't even have to forget about "subject" entirely; you just have to focus more on form. Remember, earlier, I said that Walter Pater

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was of the opinion that all art aspired to the condition of music? Here's another interesting idea of his. He writes in The School of Giorgione, written in 1877:

Art is always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception, to get rid of its responsibilities to its subject or material; the ideal examples [are] poetry and painting [In which] the constituent elements are ... welded together.

that's quite a bit like Kant in <u>The Critique of Judgment</u>, where he sees art as not "saying" anything but just appealing to taste. He finds that if you get any sense of "truth" from the content of art it is rather incidental and arises from the independent but simultaneous working of the faculty of reason or logic while you are experiencing the art.

Julia: The most influential painting critics today are descended straight from Kant.

They too are concerned solely with taste.

Craig: With respect to food, though, we wouldn't want to maintain either that form was all or that classic cookery appeals only to reason or logic.

We'd both agree, I'm sure, that the eye and the palate must both be pleased—but I'm sure we'd also agree that there's no use trying to appeal to an undultivated apalate. Furthermore, there's no use trying to appeal to an uncultivated eye, either, and that applies to art as well as to food. Connoisseurs of fin food are not consumers of gaudy wedding cakes and other pastry horrors.

Julia: Wedding cakes! What about them? How do they fit into this? They are architectural or sculptural creations in pastry.

Traig: In and of themselves they do not constitute elegant art. They are probably the debased remnants of the long-standing tradition of decorative pastry set pieces we discussed earlier. They are usually overdecorated with scrollwork and sugar flowers, swans, hearts, bells, icing filigree, cupids and Venuses and other statuettes, and who knows what other motifs developed out of ancient and medieval ornamentation. And often gaudily tinted in pastel shades. Ugh!

[...] I think you'll go along with me when I say that a formally beautiful dish [...]

[excerpt from a 30-page original]

KITCHEN ECONOMICS:

the Wonder of (white) Bread

1

Cost to Bakers of	a One-Pound	Loaf
	1972	1974
Flour	\$.0416	\$.0741
Other ingredients	.0211	.0260
Wrapping materials	.0115	.0108
Labor	.0344	.0387
Other manufacturing expenses	.0145	.0145
Sales & advertising expenses Administrative	.1054	.1193
expenses	.0123	.0140
Total expenses Pretax profit	\$.2408 \$.0065	\$.2974 \$.0084

source: New York <u>Times</u>, Oct. 20, 1974 data supplied by the American Bakers Assoc.

2

Pale hands reached for the bread. Tell me, granma, why we love bread. Honey, our bread is a great monument. In the olden days bread was hard and coarse and often moldy and sometimes had to be cut with an axe. The triumph of bread occurred because it gave more calories for the money than anything else. For centuries most people ate between a pound a half and three pounds of bread a day. Bread made up the bulk of the diet and at least half the expenditure of poor people. There were many grades of bread. The best, white bread, was developed early in France, exclusively for the rich aristocrats, with their elegant, refined tastes. In the 17th and 18th centuries the typical form of social protest was the food riot. People acting together often forced wheat dealers and bakers to sell at reasonable prices. On one bad day, May 2, 1765, Louis XIV had to address an angry crowd of 8,000 hungry people. The Queen cried and the King didn't go hunting that day. The Revolution itself began with "flour wars" and bread riots.

The conquering armies of Napoleon spread this "precious commodity" throughout Europe, and the revolution of white bread was gradually achieved, complete by about 1850. Today we in America have raised high the standard that France, in her decline, has dropped. Today our bread is truly a work of art.

Pale hands paused. Art, granma?

Yes, in itself the slice of bread is beautiful: its pure white field is marked off by a thin outer frame of even burnt-gold. Its form is a triumph of rationality and technological ingenuity. Its ethereally refined taste has made it the ideal base for every taste experience, from the canapé to the baloney sandwich. It is the marriage of profit and mathematics, the epitome

of commodity. Why, the loaf of bread is the emblem of our culture, as the grain of rice is of the East. Each slice is measurable in terms of profit and loss. It is a unit in a uniform whole and can be analyzed for labor invested, cost of materials, and nutrient content. Bread is tied to a natural need, yet it allows for endless substitution and variation of ingredients. Its quality and status value depend on what people are willing to pay, its numbers on the size and strength of demand.

3

Granma, tell me what bread is made of?

Well, sugar, it's not the old-fashioned ball of dough it used to be. Why, even in the old days bakers adjusted their profits by adding chalk or alum. Bread baking is a chemical art. White bread is an official Standardized Food Product, honey, and it can have all kinds of wonders inside that don't have to be listed on the label.

Like what, granny?

Well, cookie, like flour, for one, which can have potassium or calcium bromate or dicalcium or tricalcium phosphate to bleach and "age" it instantly and improve its baking power, and (2) water and (3) salt, of course; and (4) shortening, which can have added emulsifiers, such as lecithin, monoand diglycerides, diacetyl tartaric esters of mono- and diglycerides, or propylene glycol mono- and diesters of fatty acids; (5) milk or a milk product, such as skim milk, nonfat dry milk, possibly with carrageenan to thicken it, buttermilk, cheese whey, or milk protein; (6) liquid, frozen, or dried whole egg, yolk, or white; and (7) a sugar such as cane or beet, molasses, honey, corn syrup, or invert sugar.

Well, that's nice, granma: flour, water, salt, fat, milk, egg, sugar. And now the art, sweetie:

8. something to change starch into sugar and dextrin, such as diastatically active malt syrup or malted wheat flour or enzymes from microorganisms or pineapple

9. dried yeast

- 10. lactic-acid-producing bacteria
- 11. corn, potato, or rice flour or wheat, corn, or potato starch, possibly partly dextrinized

12. ground dehulled soybeans with enzymatic activity

13. yeast food: calcium salts of lactate, sulfate, or carbonate; dicalcium phosphate; ammonium salts of phosphate, sulfate, or chloride

14. aging and bleaching agents, such as potassium or calcium bromate, potassium or calcium iodate, calcium peroxide (or sometimes acetone peroxide), azodicarbonamide (with tricalcium phosphate to prevent caking), but not agene (nitrogen trichloride), which was used in 80-90% of flour until 1946 when it was revealed that it made dogs go mad or die.

15. mold inhibitors: vinegar, calcium or sodium propionate, sodium diacetate, or lactic acid (the last two must be listed)

16. L-cysteine, together with aging agents

17. spice

18. dough conditioners, such as calcium or sodium stearoy1-2-lactylate, lactylic stearate, sodium stearyl fumarate, succinylated monoglycerides, ethoxylated mono- and diglycerides, or polysorbate 60. These make the dough drier and easier to machine and more palatable and slow down staling, which increases shelf life and saves bakers money.

19. wheat gluten

The marvel of these ingredients, little fruitcake, is their substitution of industry for unreliable, expensive, and contingent natural substances. Bread is above natural disasters and economic crises. Bread baking is a financial art, and inflation inflates corporate bakers' profits. Why, I read in the New York Times that the price of flour rose 80 percent between 1972 and the start of 1974. The average cost for the baker of a loaf of bread rose almost 25 percent, from 24 cents to 29 cents, but the retail price of bread today is. 85 percent higher than it was two years ago. Often when people died of famine in the past it was not because there was no flour or bread--it was because they didn't have the money to buy them. In the 18th century the nobility and the new middle class, in their increasing refinement, distilled their edibles, producing little dishes of incredible expense. Twenty hams, for example, would be reduced to an ounce of "essence" while the poor people starved for bread. An Italian visitor to Versailles, the home of the French king and his Court, said that in France 90 percent of the people were dying of hunger and 10 percent of indigestion. That can never happen here. There will always be enough bread for all.

Our democratic commercial bread provides sustenance and jobs for millions, from the workers in the fields to the giants of Agribusiness, from the breadman to the industrial chemist to the president of ITT, America's master bread baker. Merchandisers and advertisers exercise their creative talents on bread. America's future is built on a foundation of bread, its future generations are nourished on bread. Now stop

your wafflin', sugar, and eat up.

Pale hands finished reaching for the bread in the plastic wrapper, pale fingers squeezed and kneaded a piece into a little doughy ball and popped it between pale lips. Granma told good stories.

> TITLE: KITCHEN ECONOMICS: the Wonder of (white) Bread food novel 3

COST: unknown RESEARCH SOURCES:

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0 1975 martha rosicr

Apron

Bowl Blender, broiler

Cup Can-opener Cleaver, Chopper cutting/board

Dish

Egg beater

Grater

Hetpad : harnfunger press

Icepick

Juicer

Knife

Ladle

suring implements Mixer, Meas spoons, Meas . aug

Nutcracker

Que ? Opener

pot, potholder, pan peppermill

- quart both

Range, roaster, rotisseria, refrigerator, rolling pin Sancepan, stove, sharpener (spoon) sieve, strainer

Tourderizer

U

Whish (why, wirewusk)

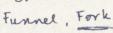
acossed fortes knives

raised knives

Zorro gesture











62

JAE

Shot 1 from above -

1, LS bride walking quickly from u.vt to l. left

of frame. Shot from above.

2 LS Cut to shot of her from ground level, walking same direction. Now noticeable are the groom somewhat behind ?,

a reasonable distance behind them,

bridesmaids, an usher or two.

She has her head tucked somewhat down. She raises her eyes to the camera she second, mayber to roof. She slows in her walking but keeps her eyes on unknown object. Others with her do not ustice.

A lound shot sounds.

Bride drops

3. OUT to overhead shot, original position of camera.

Bride drops. Dress billows out. Hold. Other

people freeze

4. CUT to shot of man with a rifle bearing a bit over roof.

eft

Shots 1-4
music
cuts in
herecello
or viola,
solo or

Opening shot: bride in white satin, short veil, walking fairly quickly from upper right to lower left of screen. Her head is tucked somewhat downward. At her elbow, lagging slightly behind, is the groom, in a traditional dark suit or tux. Who thing is shot from above, medium distance in the air. A reasonable distance behind them are a couple of bridesmaids in pink, and an "usher" or two.

start -

20

picks up Speed

music stops

chamber

music

Medium fast zoom out, as couple still walk. They are making slow progress toward the lower part of the frame. A loud shot sounds. Bride drops. Camera steady. Dress billows out.

(quick transition)

Pull back or cut to nearby roof of building which would be in foreground. Man with rifle, also shot from above.

or series of jump cuts

5, Cut to subjective shot, from foof, of the parking lot-groom is bent over the bride, crouched down, obscuring much of her, but of course her dress is bellowed out. Other people have rushed up or are still rushing up.

(distantiation)

- Bride looks (is) dead. Blood flows/has flowed from her temple, is on her gown, on the ground. The blood is plausible looking.

 Possibly blood on the groom's jacket.
- 7 Cut to roof. Eye-level shot of killer, young man, rather neat but not markedly of any particular group or class.

 Off-camera voice (quite low and quiet): Why'd you shoot her?

matter of factly but slowly

Sniper: She. . . I was standing here with the gun looking to

see. . . she was so visible. So pretty . . . a bride.

A bride looks fresh. The dress was so white. Clear. If trails of stack over.

I needed to find out. . . . A woman. So easy to hit.

i needed to find out. . . . A woman. So easy to hit.

45 sec to 1 min

(CUTANIETO) Shot from overhead (same as shotb) voice confinnes

back to shot 7 It's easy to hit a woman. I thought I would aim at her ... wasy to hit. The dress would billow out. A brodge is like an angel. I would like to touch an angel. Now she'll never get up. Never get..to do it—make love. Or have her honeymoon. Buying the furniture was the next step. Or the first. Soon the dream is over. Kids. .. hard work. I saw them walking across the lot. She was like a prize, alovely prize. .. homecoming queen.

bending down toward ground to keep her in the loower half of flame. Camera stops when only her upper torso and head are in frame. It lingers to provide the idea that sine is dead. The groom and others look up at camera and stop touching her. They shrink away somewhat. She is lying stretched out, somewhat twisted, with her head on the pavement.

level drops

music stops

Off-camera voice: Why do you think this happened?

Bride opens her eyes., matter of-factly. She sits up, quite bloody. She touches her head or her hair, inda vague smoothing gesture, not too emphasized.

Bride: I dont-know. (pause) I was quite happy, going to be $\qquad \qquad \text{quite happy.} \quad \underline{\text{Al and I}} \text{ were quite happy.} \quad \text{We were}$

starts morning back out, if necessary

) Planticly

[. . .]

WHAT'S YOUR NAME, LITTLE GIRL?

fitte on screen: hermeneutics OF THE NAME or what's in it

Naming is a minimal art, an abstract art, no, a mannerist art, a symbolist art. It is art based on representation, on meaningful words, but it denies its meaning, it is supported on a web of style and association and rejects, is embarrassed by, the specifics of what it denotes. Naming is a poetics of sound and social reference subject to all the shifts of fashion. Naming is an art of dress, of giving the new person or person-to-be, the future adult, a permanent social suit as characterizing as Joseph's coat or dungarees.

What is the rhetoric of the name?

The name announces the person to the social world, to the group. It claims the person for the group and ties her/him to it. It makes the following cuts into the total pattern of identity: strongest of all is gender, and then ethnic group, plus era of birth and often religious, social class and race, and also the fictional, political, or religious heroes and heroines, the sensibility, or the cloddish-

ness of the parents or other namers. [THE: Naming as an abstract, denotative art. Names as an abstract, denotative art. Where orthography first and calligraphy second take on the role of the rococo curlique, the lacy frill. It is in the substitution of "y" for "i" or "ye" for "y" as in Sadye and Bettye and even Robyn; in the multiplication of letters to pad the name, flesh it out, soften it, a correlative to the extra flesh imagined to be essential to the image of woman: Elynne, Lori, Vivienne, Louisetta The orthographic flourishes, the rounding of letters, Deanne. the fifties' fad of dotting "i"'s with small circles, little bubbles of emptiness, symbolic, some say, of womanhood. The orthographic and the calligraphic in opposition to the "masculine" standard -- rectilinearity, firmness, boldness, being pared down: John, not Johnne, Spell war Lenny not Lennye or Lennie, Sam not Samme, Jack not Jacqueline.

voiceoner

FITLE

Names have a private function

a familial function

a social function

a political function

TITLES
more up, one
une at a time

Names are functional entities in language. Their message is directed in part outward, toward the family, the group and the culture at large, and in part inward, toward the bearer of the name.

A personal name has several areas of signification, the least of which is the literal meaning of the words and particles that constitute it.

What is the public function of a name? Your name identifies you to civil authorities of all kinds, but your name is "soft," not an absolute identity, unlike a number, which is "hard." But names are easily supplemented by a number or numbers and other even more absolute identifying characteristics, such as fingerprints and voiceprints. The public "meaning" of your name is its virtual identity with you, and your name is sufficient identification for most purposes in daily life.

What is the private function of a name?

Your name also identifies you to yourself, starting from the time your identity keep first begins to form. We consider names to be part of the "self." Advertisers have developed the theory of the name as the aura of the thing to the point of madness, spending jillions The figuries out the magical name to the cap off the "image" they want their product to project. The reality of the thing retreats into an afterthought in the face of the power of the name and its associated trappings. Advertisers see name as part of the soul of commodities. We have learned to see names as part of the soul of people. Washington is solid and dependable, Samantha is romant to Ramon and the soul of participation of the solid and dependable, Samantha is romant to Ramon and the soul of people.

she Women's names:

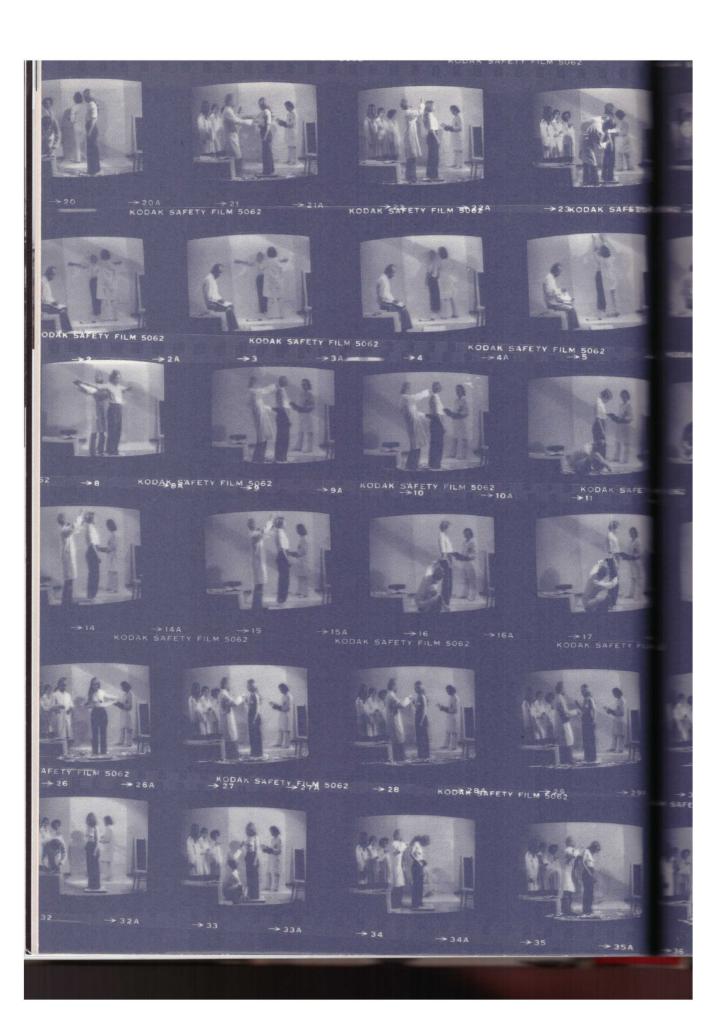
- He How to make a woman's name. Find a man, a real one or a religious hero or some thing like that and do something to his name that makes it seem "feminine." Feminize 1t. Add a, ine, ina, ette, etta, ita, etha, itha, elle, ella, ille, illa, inde, inda, ie, ye ye or ia or take a man's nickname and to the same. Farmerette. Georgette, Josephine.
- She Rudolphia, Rudolpha, Rudolphine, Rudolphina, Rudolphette, Rudolphetta, Rudolphita, Rudolphetha, Rudolphitha, Rudolphelle, Rudolphella, Rudolphila, Rudolphila, Rudolphina, Rudolphina, Rudolphia, Dolphia, Dol
 - Rudowlph means "name wolf." We have forgotten that. But we don't forget that Rudolpha or Rudolphine mean little Rudolph.

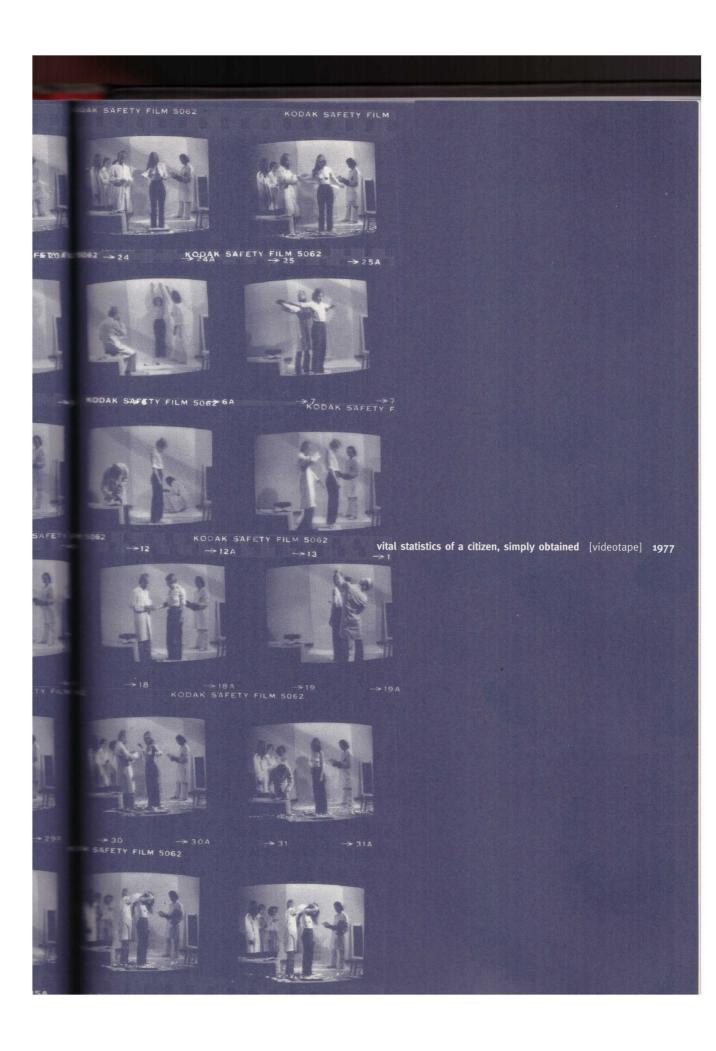
 NILL Willie Mae, Tina, Fifi, Lulubelle, Lexie, Loula, Tansy, Sissie,

 Angelica, Fritzie, Winnee, Tildy, Tiny, Chrissie, & Chatty: We command you'd learn to be "feminine," subordinate and smalle or do they experience a sense of dissociation from what is taken to be part of the self? Will Georgette's gragons be yellowed sheets while

 George's dragons are located in the public world? Note this least of personal markers joinswith stronger cultural clues to teach constitute. Prudence, Patience, Meroy, Melody, Howmonys girls what they are and must be. Piety, Charity, Hope Joy.

Comen's names. One thing is certain rabout women's names. If they are attached to famous women, they will be forgotten a lot faster than the names of famous men. It takes an act of rebellion to remind everyone that the famous Sophonisba Anguissola, Rosalba Carriera, Sojourner Truth, Carbarana and Managarana and Managara





Color bor : hold 1212CS . HELL FEMALE VOICE OV

Inch o black.

This is an opera in three acts. (pause)
There is no image on the screen just yet. It
isn't about the perception of small facts. It
isn't about the physiology of perception. It
is about the perception of self. It's about the
meaning of truth. (pause) The definition of fact.

This is an opera in three acts. Or it's a kind of opera in about three acts. This is a a work about being done to. This is a work about learning how to think.

This is an opera in three acts. The first act is in real time and ends in a montage. Act Two is symbolic: What is the same, what is different. What is outside, what is inside. Like Nana's chicken--only here we deal with eggs. Act Three is tragic, horrific, mythic. It is a documentary record. It is about scrutiny on a mass level. About what has been and what could be. I needn't remind you about processing and mass extermination. You remember about the scientific study of human beings.

This is a work about coercion. Coercion can be quick, and brutal. That is the worst crime. Coercion can also extend over the whole of life. That is the ordinary, the usual crime. Bureaucratic crime can be brutal or merely devastating. We need not make a choice. Sartre says, "Evil demands only the systematic substitution

QUICK FADE IN TO TITLE: VITAL STATISTICS OF A CITIZEN SIMPLY OBTAINED [Hold 10 secs.]

SVILL * (FADE TO BLACK)

* (FADE IN LONG SHOT: white room, harsh light, strong shadows. EXAMINER, in white lab coat, on stool at SCREEN LEFT, before boxlike table with implements. The ASSISTANT, another white-coated voice breaks in here) and subject peoples regman, stands BACKGROUND CENTER, before large blank sheet of paper on wall. EXAMINER looks up) This is a work about the tyranny of expec-EXAMINER: Next....

(The SUBJECT, a young woman, enters SCREEN LEFT, AMINER-SUBJECT interchange*) in gray pants, pale-yellow shirt. She passes before table and sits in a heavy chair, as EXAMI-NER indicates. He makes notations on a clipboard as SUBJECT responds to his questions.)

EXAMINER: Sex?

SUBJECT: (almost inaudibly): Female.

EXAMINER: AGE?

SUBJECT: Thirty-three.

EXAMINER: Race?

SUBJECT: Caucasian.

EXAMINER: Ethnic background?

SUBJECT: Austrian and Russian.

of the abstract for the concrete." That is, it demands only the de-realization of the fully human status of the people on whom you carry out your ideas and plans. (pause)

Statistics.

For an institution to be evil it need not be run by Hitler. As Stephen Kurtz has observed, it need only be run by heartless people, *sometimes called intellectuals or scientists. In the name of responsibility native peoples have been colonized and enslaved, the lives of women, children, workers (EXAMINER'S ulated in every degree, "for their own good."

tation. (no pause between VOICE OVER and EX-

ver arms in that position.) ASSISTANT: Up on your toes,

(SUBJECT complies; he marks the position of the top of her head.)

ASSISTANT: Reach up again.

(SUBJECT complies; he draws the outline of her arms in that position. When the outlining is done, EXAMINER looks up from his chart and instructs her.]

*EXAMINER: now return over here.

ISUBJECT returns to EXAMINER and stands waiting near the desk. He adjusts her body as he wishes it, then picks up tape measure and measures from her hairline to her chin.)

*EXAMINER: Face forward. Face, 7 inches. (He speaks throughout in a casual, uninvolved voice on the edge of boredom. Throughout, he writes on his clipboard chart as ASSISTANT notes the figures on the wall chart as well.)

EXAMINER (measuring width of SUBJECT'S mouth): Mouth, 22... (SUBJECT cranes her neck to look at wall chart. EXAMINER measures the width of one of her eyes.)

EXAMINER: Width of one eye, 11/2 inches.

(EXAMINER measures subject's neck, from under the chin to trunk.)

EXAMINER: Neck length, 4 inches.

EXAMINER (swings her around to measure her shoulders): Shoulder span's 15.

SUBJECT complies, and he draws the outline of state of culture as opposed to a being in a state of nature. How to measure oneself by the degree of artifice: *The remanufacture of the look of the external self to simulate an idealized version of the natural.* How anxiety is built into these looks. How ambiguity, ambivalence, uncertainty are meant to accompany every attempt to see ourselves -- to see herselfas others see her.

> This is a work about how to think about yourself. *It is a work about how she is forced to think about herself. How she learns to scrutinize herself, to see herself as a mapa terrain, a product constantly re-creating itself inch by inch, *groomed, manufactured, programmed, reprogrammed, controlled; a servomectanism in which one learns to utilize every possible method of feedback, to reassert control.

*Read from a work on cybernetic servomechanisms, read from a work on self-abuse, read from a list of items for the trousseau, a list of gifts for the wedding guests to choose from read from a list of do's and don't's, read from a list of glamorous make-overs, read from a list of what men do and what women do, read from a list of girls' toys and of boys' toys. Read from a list of average incomes of men and of women. Read from a book of resignations and defeats.

Read from a manual on revolutionary society

Trumpet call continues over the first few slides and ends abruptly.

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pering, then speaking a loud. As she reads the following list, some of the items are accompanied by an echo, and some are obscured by feedback): Femi cide Femicide Crimes against women Clitoridectomy Brutalization

Pornography Sterilization Forced motherhood Outlawed abortion Illegal abortion Woman battering Assault Insult Loathing Derogation Victimization Depredation Deprivation Femicide Femicide (Feedback swells) Crimes against women Bound feet, bound bodies, bound images Bound feet, bound bodies, bound images (feedback ends) purdah Immolation Suttee Starvation Infibulation Servitude Domestic servitude Forced labor Unpaid labor Chat telization Prostitution Objectification Slavery Domestic slavery Wage slavery Madnesss Madness (feedback strong) Psychological assault Psychological brutality Childbirth torture Enforced docility (feedback sswells) Branding Abuse Beating Scorn Divisiveness Fear Femicide (echo and feedback swell'

[excerpt from a 26-page original]

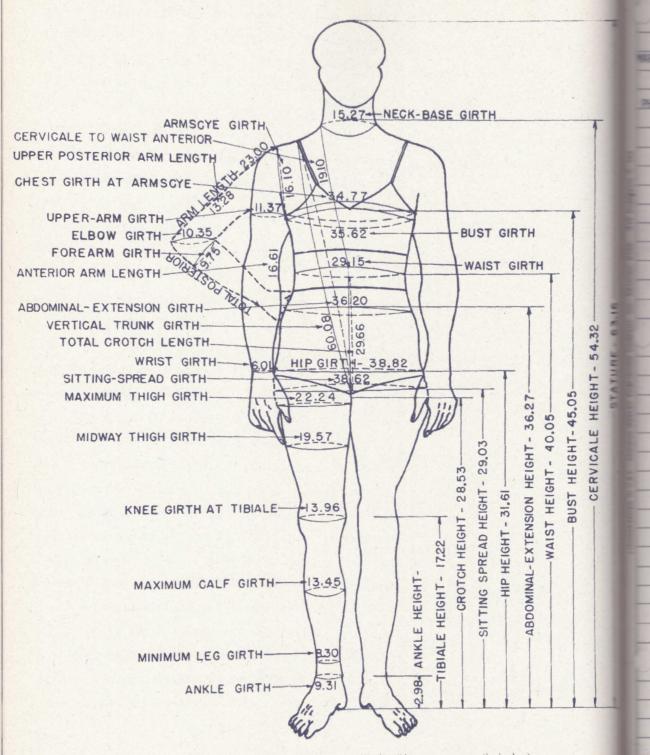


FIGURE 4. The average (arithmetic mean) woman, showing 34 measurements (in inches).

THA V	walks in and faces examiner, PHIL.	Phil looks	at her,	then down	at his b	bard,
	prepares to write. Asks:					
HIL:	SEX? (writes answer on sheet)					
	AGE?			N. T.		
	RACE?			of a second	and the Control	
	ETHNIC BACKGROUND?					7
	"Remove your shoes and stand again:	st the wall	, please.	li li		
	"Stand up straight, please."		DARRELL	traces ou	tøline i	n GREEN
	"Raise your arms"		п	" an	ms	n n
11	"Stretch them out, please,"		Ü		, ii	* n
	Stand on tiptoe"		н	marks he	ad height	10
	"Now raise your arms again."		ii 🦂	mark fin	gertib he	ight "
	Please return to me." "Good."					
	MEASURING BEGINS. Phil takes meas	surements,	calls the	em out, DA	RRELL mar	ks them in G
		surements,	alls the	em out, DA	RRELL mar	ks them in G
		surements,	calls the	em out, DA	RRELL mar	ks them in G
	hairline to chin	surements, (calls the	en out, DA	RRELL mar	ks them in G
	hairline to chin	surements,	calls the	em out, DA	RRELL mar	ks them in G
	hairline to chin mouth width width of one eye		calls the	em out, DA	RRELL mar	ks them in G
	hairline to chin mouth width width of one eye neck length, front	(n)	calls the	em out, DA	RRELL mar	ks them in G
	hairline to chin mouth width width of one eye neck length, front shoulder to shoulder (Shoulder spa	(n)	calls the	em out, DA	RRELL mar	ks them in G
	hairline to chin mouth width width of one eye neck length, front shoulder to shoulder (Shoulder spa	(n)	calls the	em out, DA	RRELL mar	ks them in G
	hairline to chin mouth width width of one eye neck length, front shoulder to shoulder (Shoulder spa shoulder to waist, from back of ne waist to heel, from back inner leg foot length	un) eck	calls the	em out, DA	RRELL mar	ks them in G
	hairline to chin mouth width width of one eye neck length, front shoulder to shoulder (Shoulder spa shoulder to waist, from back of ne waist to heel, from back inner leg	(n)	calls the	em out, DA	RRELL mar	ks them in G
	hairline to chin mouth width width of one eye neck length, front shoulder to shoulder (Shoulder spa shoulder to waist, from back of ne waist to heel, from back inner leg foot length	un) eck	calls the	em out, DA	RRELL mar	ks them in G
	hairline to chin mouth width width of one eye neck length, front shoulder to shoulder (Shoulder spa shoulder to waist, from back of ne waist to heel, from back inner leg foot length head height on tiptoes	un) eck	calls the	em out, DA	RRELL mar	ks them in G
	hairline to chin mouth width width of one eye neck length, front shoulder to shoulder (Shoulder spa shoulder to waist, from back of ne waist to heel, from back inner leg foot length head height on tiptoes fingertips to feet, on tiptoes	un) eck	calls the	em out, PA	RRELL mar	ks them in G
	hairline to chin mouth width width of one eye neck length, front shoulder to shoulder (Shoulder spa shoulder to waist, from back of ne waist to heel, from back inner leg foot length head height on tiptoes fingertips to feet, on tiptoes arm span (stretched sideways)	un) eck	calls the	em out, PA	RRELL mar	ks them in G
PHIL	hairline to chin mouth width width of one eye neck length, front shoulder to shoulder (Shoulder spa shoulder to waist. from back of ne waist to heel, from back inner lec foot length head height on tiptoes fingertips to feet, on tiptoes arm span (stretched sideways) hand length	an) eck				ks them in G
PHIL	hairline to chin mouth width width of one eye neck length, front shoulder to shoulder (Shoulder spa shoulder to waist, from back of ne waist to heel, from back inner leg foot length head height on tiptoes fingertips to feet, on tiptoes arm span (stretched sideways) hand length middle finger length	an) eck				ks them in G

martha rosle domination & the every day

(SLIDE 1 - (hold 30 secs), fade in from black)

This guy is a Chilean gorilla...you know... a thug...not a "guerilla."

He and his friends are props for U.S. interests, for the interests of
the international bourgeoisie...though we in the States can afford the
luxury of despising him. But what I want to tell you about him right
now is that he (2) represents naked force, the dropping away of the civility that often masks reactionary economic, social, and political
ideas. He represents the raw fact of domination repression
torture starvation and death (GO TO BLACK)

This man told the Chilean people, through the medium of television. "Remember, you can be replaced." (SLIDE BACK ON)

We won't stop to ask who watches (3) television in Chile...(STOP WORD ROLL A COPULE OF SECS) the people it was meant for (4) those not among the thousands killed, imprisoned, or made to disappear -- got the message:

All people, all individuals, are "expendable" when the issue is preserving the domination of one economic class over all others, retaining its inbridled sway over society (5)

able for us; indeed, everything is already known.(USECAPS) (13) Both ART and CULTURE are designed to tell us that what they provide is the only true knowledge. (SLOW CRAWL:) "Ideology is split into the photograph of stubborn life and the naked lie about its meaning--which is not expressed but suggested and yet drummed in" (HOLD) (15) we look beyond and find THE NEWS, a bland curtain of excuses for domination.

Here in the United States, we are not at a level of consciousness of social reality where we might need "gorillas" to keep us in our place. We are sleeping and dreaming with our eyes open, imagining that the layer upon layer of facts, truths, explanations (26) that are borne in on our realities are -- must be -- adequate to explain all the important truths about ourselves -- everything else must us must be too personal to matter--or something shameful (30) The great gulf between the REALITY of our life experience and what it is supposed to feel like increases our confusion and our vulnerability. (34) (SET AS QUOTE:) "There is no longer any form of linguistic expression which has not tended toward accommodation to dominant currents of thought (30?) We understand that we have no control over big events; (31) we do not understand HOW and WHY the "small" events that make up our own lives are controlled as well, and by the same class that controls the economy, (BRIEF HOLD) the mass media, (BRIEF HOLD), and cultural values (BRIEF HOLD) We don not yet understnad -- as the workers and peasants of CHILE well understood -- the fact of dominance, of class against class. It is only when we finally begin to take back some of the real power and the wealth that rightfully belongs to us, who produced it, it is only then that we reach the level of this naked truth: (2) IN THE BYES OF EACH OF US CAN BE REPLACED THOSE WHO CONTROL SCCIETY,

It is in the marketplace alone that we are replaceable, because interchangeable and until we take control we will always be owned by the culture that imagines us to be replaceable. (3) (BLAC K) The of course, truth/is that NO ONE can be replaced...but there will always be more of us, more and more of us, willing to struggle to take control of our lives, our culture, our world... which, to be fully human, we must do and we will

SECRETS FROM THE STREET: NO DISCLOSURE

The secret is

The secret is

that secrets are one-sided

The secret is that to know the meaning of a culture you must recognize the limits of your own. You can't know a culture by coming to visit-you can see its "facts" but you cannot see its meaning. There is no universal meaning—we share meaning by living it. The picturesque signs of commercial decoration form one pole of this culture's meaning. The secret is that the other pole, the one on which your eyes cannot linger or focus—cannot focus—is the pole representing the secret of life—as-lived.

The secret is that there is no universal culture; you must remember time and place: San Francisco 1980. A Manhattanizing city. A gentrifyi city. A condominiumizing city. A speculating city. Secret words pointing to secret facts of urban planning. Can you locate the intersection of race, culture, and class? The secret is that culture is a secret in divided societies. That culture is a secret in class societies. There is a culture in the streets and a culture behind

Rosler SECRETS p. 7

closed doors. It is a privilege to close doors. From the street the closed-door culture is all glamor, all mystery. From behind the windows of the closed-door culture the culture of the streets is all tinsel, all exotica. From behind the windows, the culture of the streets SEEMS LIKE TRASH.

The secret is about the battle over who owns the streets, who writes on the streets, naming oneself and one's friends in lieu of society pages to disclose one's affairs...Who publicizes one's struggles in the streets because direct mailings are unthinkable and because one's greatest available resource is not money but energy and commitment. The secret is, who uses the streets as forum, like "democracy wall," because others control the "legitimate" media of public disclosure?

The secret is that there is more than one public...the public forced to exhibit its private life in the street and the public that calls the police to clear the streets...

Which class finds its forum on the street? Whose children find their playground on the street? On whose back is BART / the subway/ indeed erected? Whose demonstration is spied upon by whose unfriendly eyes? Who stencils "Philip Agee CIA Diary" on a painted wall? And who tries

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to keep Agee from public disclosure? Who writes "CIA Out of El Salvador" and who put the CIA in El Salvador? Whose poster remember Chile and Guatemala, who writes "FSLN Is Gonna Win" and who secretly hopes and plans that it won't? Who writes "Free Dessie Woods" and "Stop Legal Lynching" and who votes for the death penalty for the poor? Who are the Midnight Dusters and the Precious Few? Whose wedding party passes in '58 Chevies down Mission Boulevard and whose is covered by the press on Treasure Island?

Shopping trips with stolen glances will unravel no secretssecrets that are not secret to those looking up from below
but public knowledge. The secret is that trash in the street
means cultures at war; and the culture of the streets paints
"Limpie Su Calle"--Clean Your Street--in the street to keep
its own house in order. The secret is that there is no
secret. The secret is that "trash" is a word used also for
those without money or power.

ophinism/pessimism: constructing a life

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It is true that he, and he, and he have learned a lot about How To Think Treat

About Women and How to *** Women or more realistically, How to Seem As

Though You Are Thinking About Women. The truth is, the truth is, it is

hard to make changes. Yet things change, all things change. Pessimism

of the intellect, optimism of the will, Gramsci ** Slogan, becomes a

consolation, too.

Carole King sings Doesn't anybody stay in one place any more? Lovers artists college grads discover flying. People move. There is the question of ego. "Mobility", The development of self. The self, which learns to cut itself off from others, looks about for its best settingm like a jewel.

This self, this valuable self, cannot be constructed the way you construct a house.

The womn in the ad proclaims IAm My House. Of course; Homan thehome, woman the hearth, woman the nest builder. Antinomies of home and world. A dynamic of ambivalences, lists of order and distorder. How to deal with the economic order, economic warfare? What about, say, "inflation in the necessities"? When she first moved to California, brown rice was 14 cents a poind. Now its about 75 cents. If brown rice is too organic for you, most beans were about 12 cents a pound; now they're 65 to 75 cents. Rice and beans -- the staples of most Mexicans and Chicanos. And people like her. She moved to California to find a breathing space, a temporary vacation from city struggle, dirt, pollution, high rents. Had to deal with "escalating real estate values," condominiumizing. high rents, pollution, urbanization. Impossible rents, hard even to find a place. People commit themselves to live together. Has that idea lost fashion? Sharing your self lessesm times get rough. Maybe it comes back when times get rougher: we'll see. So you make a house, with yourself, with others, you apportion tasks, make things rational, explicit, spelled out. But the self is not rational, as women learn if they didn't remember it from before. Easy to console yourself with certain ideas, mt, frightened, bored, angry. When change is demanded by your friends, when accommodation is necessary. Or-let's mome to the point--when change was demanded by his lover, he found it easiest to repress. The point is that men and women are still Men. And. Women. She becomes worried, agitated. He represses. He sees things in the past tense, suddnely. It is over, it is no longer occurring; she feels pain and uncertainty now, in the context of continuation, he writes a letter using the past tense. He moved to California to make changes but he doesn't know quite how or in what. A new beginning.

It is worthwhile, she thinks, to rumange through their unspoken deal. He was polite, rational, a reformed male. A sensitive lover. He had a certain chivalry of the left that is lovely when it works--does it work? Still, his supportiveness was meant to substitute for intimacy. She never heard of such a thing. No, that's not true--she just didn't believe it could apply to her?

Thinking about <u>freedom</u>. In terms of the self, it is "personal freedom."

The freedom to move about, and also the freedom to break tiea and break promises? Probably. Men leave women and their own shildren. Women leave also. She does not understand. It would be better if she did. Now, the old values, bourgeois morality notwithstanding, create a certain selfishness embedded in hypocritical selflessness. He could not negotiate a dialectic of change that insisted he learn how to be more selfish to make him less inconsiderate. He did not see himself as inconsiderate; when he did it was too much. His irrational self prevented him from seeing that he was be ing asked to be more rational. His rationality was meant to comer up his irratinality. He waites: "Things obviously would have been a lot better if I could have been more direct. I just don't seem to be able to do that. I withdraw to lick my wounds and practice growling."

On the cusp of the 80s sail along sail along....

You've got no one to sing to

Noone to sing -> but the whole world hears you

Young girls in Havana in Guayaquil in Mexicali
in Sauto Domingo in San Salvador
in Leon in Santiago de Chile and Trinidad...

Were gonna have shoes like we never had before were gonna have shoes like we never had before oirls in Lima in Caracas in Cuzco in Bahía
Boys in Valparaiso in Miami, in the South Bronx

in Capetoun, in Brazzaville girk in Seville in Marseille in Djibouti in Dar Es Salaam

in Jerusalem

In Tipana the kind government came and buildozed the houses in the riverbed under the tourist's feet they kindly removed all the refrigerator-carton dwellers and cemented over the river bottom; In Chie the government buildozed over the worden houses the worker's built in place of sharter and refrigerator cartons. In the kitchen debate the U.S. beat the Soviets - Nixon put it to him, touther old khrushcher. The US blockade puls it to the Cubans, and refrigerators from the Soviet Union cat them to prove about a grand.

Let's punish those Cubans, make 'em flee to America, where refrigerators are cheap, and food is divine solvene, divine

Go go go Ronnie 50 Go go go Romne go

[speak, mimic | America's divine plan.

On the cusp of the 80s we have a divine plan. Says the President of the New and the Old and the Intermittent and Everpresent Right, of the inthoral Majority, that immoral minority, of the fringe and the KKK of the book burners and briblestompers ... MILLIONS STAND BEHIND ME . (2) Millions of dollars. Millions of dollars are our divine plan.

Divine for bankers, not for you baby. Divine for the successors to the Shah of Iran in other countries, like Chile, Guatemala, El Salvador, Paraguay, Uruguay,
Not Nicaragua, Not in Nicaragua

the Philippines, South Africa. Not divine for me, baby

We are the one we are the one

you are not the one, take pride in Vietnam, the war we weren't "allowed" to win, take pride in Watergate shemaniques that we almost succeeded in pulling off, whomas succeed in lagar a paramilitary government, take pride in watts take pride in Detroit take pride in Newark take foride in redlining taken pride in the South Brown take pride in the Lower East Side take pride in urban removal in Chicago in san Diego in San Francisco the gentry take over. Millions, they stand. to gain . millions

In Cuba they dore to take the time to think about a more universal art while having to keep on in the face of the imperator, arm themselves against arson and sabotage exported out of small and brigger businesses and banks in Union City. Which union? ... What union? It's cold in Union City when it's mild in Trinidad, in Vedado, in Camaginey. There is dancing in the ballet school in Camaginey, in the plaza at night in Trinidad. There is dancing and walking

in the plaza at might in January while jowly men in grim Union City are very serious about murder.

what this country needs, Mr. President, is the old and besmirched Imperial Presidency ... teads the banner on the cover of the magazine of the New York Times. It should know. It fulminated about Grenada, dangerous Grenada, some socialist, all 100 thousand are now our exemics. The magazine chirps - and chirps again - "ONE KISSINGER is worth two BRZEZINSUS" Henry, it seems, is a dinner party charmer, while Zbiz is not. With the Times we welcome a return to the fabrilous fifties, the end of ideology, Lécade of motorcycle gangs and fithy little wars of mental manias and potted beatniks and togetherness and lipstick and mink coats and monomania and no race problem and Roy Rogers and Washington parties and Negroes and classless stratification and bowling leagues and pincurls and poodle cuts and cabale and government by and for big. while. Protestant. Male. Neanderthal. Racist. Militarist. Imperialist. Warriors.

The generation of the left 30s its survivors, comes up again for air, gulpring in the interested gaze of the generation of the 60s. (This time around what will it be?) So they turn out to be hometown folks, not pod-driven clones grations of red-menace thick lipped Soviet gorilla cells who bite babies necks and such out their minds... Yet who could love Stalin and remain alive inside?

The question is how do we learn to think straight when all invention is bent to the logic of commodity? Coke-Repsi? Pepsi-Will we sing more nationalist anthems to Chevy, Ford, and Chrysler? to GE?

Do you know the man we elected? Asks the paper? The man from GE? you? Know? KNOW? Man We? We? we? we?

I tell you what you know: You really know you are smoking. WHOOF WHOOF. What we feel, is a 6+ of rage The man, the man, everybody angry at the man at the man

Everybody angry at the man. OR: Is the man angry at everybody else? (Bomba chica Bomba chica Bomba chica)

Puerto Ricans are angry Blacks are angry Jews are angry whites are angre Mons and Pops are angry Chinage are angry

- Colu

Mexican Americans Japanese - Americane are anguy native Americans are VERY angry Haitiane are augry Salvadors are dying anaternalaus are dying Projectinians are dying Rolivians have died Chileans have died Bankers are happy Real estate men dire heppy Corporation presidents are happy Officers are happy, managers are happy Generals are getting happoner Do you know the man 2 the man, the man, the man? women are angry

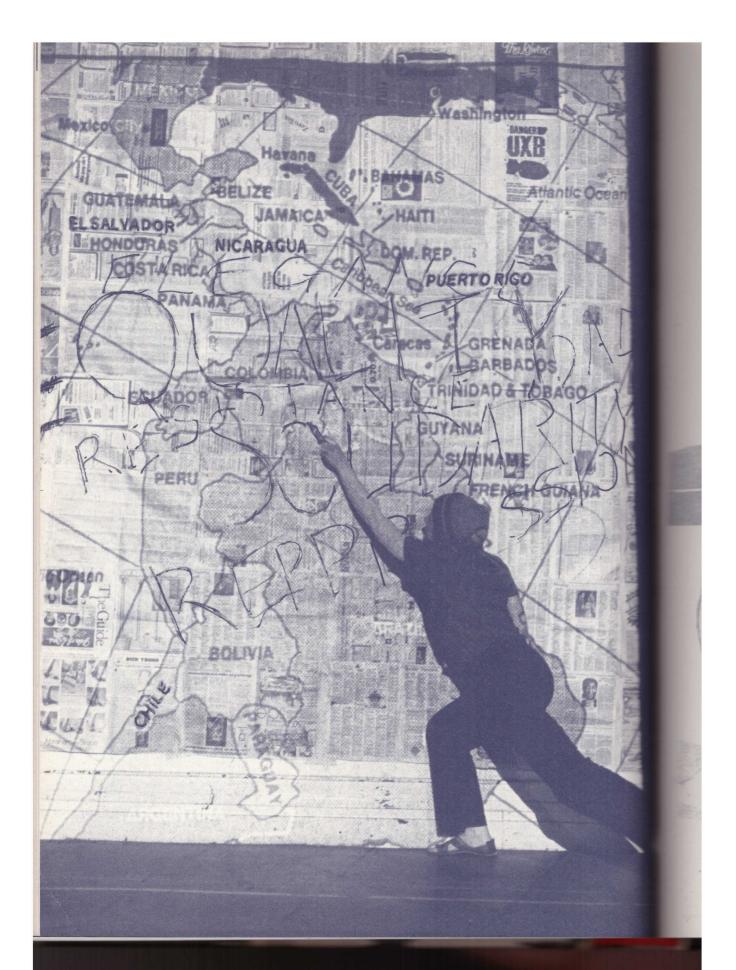
Men are angry.

Children are angry

Can't see my brother can't love each other to beat up on someone go steal some gold chains and buy a cassette correct and some running slows Go rob a bank.

hillions stand behind me! Millions Stand behind me.

This man's house is made of sweat. This womans house is not made yet.



what is Vogue? What is fashion? It is glamar, excitement, romance, drama, wishing, dreaming, winning, success. It is luxury, allure, wystery. romance, excitement, love, splendor. It is fashion, clothes, exepcises, diet, accessories! It is loving and losing, loving and is winning! It is career and it travel, it is knowing how and knowing he improved the second seco

is thank fascination, desire, and identification. It is narcissitic or sadistic lesbianism, it is pornography and threat, it is seduction, destruction, amd death. It is triumph and power, it is the fantasy possession of the phallus in lieu of wellath, power, luxury, and it is self as object, as sampleme, as creation.

prestige. It is submissiveness in the guise of witch power over men, over women, over careers, over the private world. It is VOGUE

It is the pose, the look, the skin of narcyssism, of the sex hidden under veils and swathes and ropes and strands of pearls and power and money. It is the new face uder the old face, it is the power of the pehilus to transform, it is the power of the phallus to fascinate and the woman to fascinate the phallus. It is Vogus

At least, Iakew a private side to him that was incongruent with his public face.

He was a kind, gentle, tolerant man. He had no hubris, no dishonest tracks, no vanity, and there was nothing mean, cruel, violent, vicious or bitchy about him...He was not a snob, although most of his friends and associates were, He never behaved in a condescending or patronising memory to mayone...Above allelse, he was a man who loved womfiel. This austere-looking, sedate, fastidious, impeccably manneared, dignified man, treated with deference by everyone, was perhaps the most deeply sensual person. I have ever known. To put it bluntly, he was cunt-crazy. Heloved to taste it, smell it, feel it, look at it, above all, fuck it. He didn't give a hoot for conventional discretion, a sometimens disconcerting attitude. Once, in a taxi, he suddenly lifted my skirt, removed his pance-nex glasses and, holding them aloft, proceeded to go down on me. ...

Cartianly I've never known a man who savored sex more raptly.

It was his primary interest in life and he purused it with wholehearted, shockproof, uninhibited enthisiasm. That he appeared exactly to be/the opposite probably lent a piquancy to an affair with him because it was all so unexpected. It didn't really matter to him of the women were duchesses or call girls, socialites, actresses, models, waitresses, salesclerks, manicurists, or what, as long as they were good looking.

pp 58-60 Stranger at the Party A Memoir, Helen Lawrenson Random House, N.Y. 1972

The Search for Terror

1/ When the economy shrinks

The whole world shrinks,

Darkness and chaos press in all around.

Light is threatened
Safety is threatened
Security threatened
Surety threatened.
The future is threatened
the present is threatening
the past is forgotten.

No room for those who are burdens on the State, No room for those who cannot pull their weight No room for those who will not pull their weight No room for those who have made big mistakes.

We all smiled when the sun was shining But that can't be helped There's less to go around.

We're shill Nature's children - animals, that is. The sun's not out much these days—

What light there is is the color of gold what's nice about gold is how solid it is thow sure it is, how certain it is.

How expensive it is.

How undemocratic.

3/ Gold is the color of taxirides, brief coses.

briefcases,
tickets to heaven & faraway places.

Gold is the color of smiles on our faces
Fancy living, fancy women, fancy children.

Gold is the color of concerts and parties. Gold is the color of peace, private peace. Its complement is the color of blood
Rich royal red, almost maroon Red is the color of blood from the heart.
The colors of the poor are brown & black.

Remember your place, it's better that way.

Take only the best, you earned it, it's yours

It's easy to tell why the poor remain poor—

They haven't learned how to get a foot in the door.

You've got to want it to get it

You've got to learn how

Learn how to earn

Earn the right to learn.

Look out for your money, your kids, and your wife.

If you don't want to worry the rest of your life.

Money money money money money.

Green is gold, gold is green.

No rate of profit is really obscence.

As long as I can get it.

Gold is the color of all the best things.

Gold is the color of oil.

And big paintings.

In the forest of dreams in the jungle of dreams hight is just a memory Thought is just a memory The sun is just a wish, a dream. Thought is just a dream. What we see are shadows of beasts Durselves among them.

We fill the shadows with our dreams. The law of business is jungle law too.

Shadows of tolems awash in gold Gold is the color of bulls, lions, bears But death is the color of sheep.

It's easy to know why the poor are sheep.

The jungle of night is the color of death the color of sheep, the color of terror The jungle of night is the color of terror The pain of fear is the color of death.

We cannot tell ourselves from our enemies.

Jungle dwellers, creatures of night,

Stealers of sight, crude destroyers.

No room for those who make big mistakes.

When power and place are at stake

When dreams are at stake

When money is at stake

When gold is at stake

I want to kill those who want to take it away.

Their pain is like a fence around my dreams.

It takes a worried man to sing a worried song.

Order is more important than law.

Law is more important than justice.

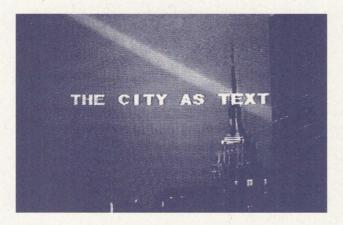
Security is more important than freedom.

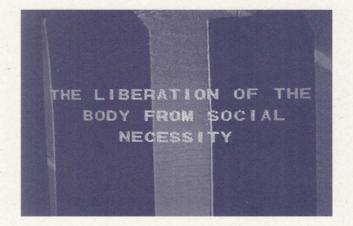
Money is more important than mercy.

My pleasure necessitates your pain

and death is more important than change.







A Simple Case for Torture, or How to Sleep at Night, 1983. Stills from color videotape.

The sovereign was present at the execution not only as the power exacting the vengeance of the law, but as the power that could suspend both law and vengeance.

In every offence there was a crimen majestatis and in the least criminal a potential regicide. And the regicide, in turn, was

the total, absolute criminal

had to constitute

the summum of all possible tortures,

For the execution of

*: airelo Ravaillac the form of the ceremony had to be invented, by combining all the cruellest tortures then practised in France. . . .

Torture was so strongly embedded in legal , because it revealed truth and showed the operation of power. It assured the articulation of the

investigation on secret on the public, the reproduce the crime on the visible body of the criminal; in the same horror, the crime was the confession; it the body of the condemned man manifested and annulled and Was the place where the vengeance of the sovereign was applied,"

The truth-power relation remains at the heart of all mechanisms of

punishment. # **
The Enlightenment was soon to condemn public torture and execution as an 'atrocity' The atrocity that haunted the public execution pro-

vided the spectacle with both truth and power;

The fact that the crime and the punishment were bound up in the form of atrocity was the effect of

an armed power whose functions of maintaining order were not entirely unconnected with of a power that had to demonstrate not why it enforced its laws, but who were its enemies;

recharged in the ritual display of its of a power reality as 'super-power'. In the ceremonies of the public execution, the main character was

he people. the people had to bring

its assistance to the king, especially when enemies were to be found

18 27

among the people.

- But In these executions, which ought to snow only the terrorizing power of the prince, there was a whole aspect of the carnival, in which authority mocked and carnival, in which heroes. . . . But above all, and this criminal made was why these disadvantages became a political danger Tihe people never felt closer to those who paid the penalty than in those rituals intended to show the horror of the crime and the invincibility of power; never did the people feel more threatened, like them, by a legal violence exercised without moderation or restraint. The solidarity of a whole section of the population with was constantly petry offenders -

And it was the breaking up of this solidarexpressed: ity that was becoming the aim of penal and police repression. Yet out of the ceremony of the public execution, solidarity much more than the sovereign power that was likely to emerge with redoubled strength. The reformers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were not to forget that the executions did not, in fact, frighten the people. One of their first cries was to demand their abolition.

Vidal Haquet quote

Throughout the greater part of human history punishment was not imposed because one held the wrongdoer responsible for his deed, rather, as parents still punish their children, from anger

modified by out this anger is

the idea that every injury has its equivalent the pain of the culprit.

even if only idea of an equivalence between injury and this primeval in the contractual relationship pain between creditor and debtor,

could inflict every kind of indignity and torture upon the body of the debtor; for example, cut from it as much as seemed commensurate with the size of the debt-and everywhere

one had legal evaluations, of the some limbs and parts of the body,

in. horrible and minute detail. Let us be clear as to the logic of this form of compensation:

the creditor receives in place of literal compensation a recompense in the pleasure—the pleasure of being allowed to vent form of -

his power freely upon one who is powerless, the enjoyment of In "punishviolation.

ing" the debtor, the creditor participates in a right of the masters: or if the actual power and administration of punishment has already passed to the "authorities," to see him despised and mistreated. The compensation, then, consists in a warrant for and title to cruelty.

ECS 90	LOG GLOBAL TASTE	FINAL	Sept.
,	Manhattan Landing	1 86 31/29 - 36 576	quich fade & x 300 0 78
	Denny's	3 500 273401 -	cut shorter than rough
	Kraft dressing	8, 49"40"	boost sound
	Raisins	9 865 (58 18)	
	Florida O.J.	9,460 (2.4)	
	Dipps, Halloween	9, 497 (27)	
	Everything yogurt	8,170 7	
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	Apple-Raisin crisp	6, carry (1) 19	
	Pillsbury	6, 260 [11 kg	
	Hungry Jack	13, 756 48 40	
	Velveeta	8, 863 (58 ^{rr})	reverse cuts
	Le Menu	6, mid [[65]]	
	Solgar	9, 335 [16]	?
	Mon Cheri	9, 365 [17]	?
	English muffin	5, 840 56	
glitch _	Louis Rich Turkey	5, 780 (30)	
	Chicken nuggets	5, 555 (31")	reverse cuts
	Wesson	5, 815 (53")	
	Whipps	3, 525 (28")	shorten?
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[excerpt from video log]





martha rosler

An empty space in Ottensen,

Toxic space, contaminated with history, capital, and asbestos.

(THE CONTESTED CEMETERY)

Appropriate headgear: dust mask

yarmulke schtraumel

schtraumel

pointed yellow hat much like a coolie hat (see picture)

tools:

a clock

[Drive to the closed Spanish-Portuguese Jewish cemetery on Königstrasse. Get out and walk to the fence. Distribute the cemtery rules in German. Allow some time to pass. NARRATOR BEGINS TO READ THE TEXTS.]

2. The right to be buried on "Jewish ground"

For the Jews, burial of their dead on their own site became a privilege to be earned. Initially Jews had to be buried on Christian or unconsecrated ground. Jews were recognized in death (given the right to separate burial facilities) only because of the economic benefit they brought the city: A German Jew wrote in 1948 that during the 17th century when the Sephardic Jews arrived, refugees from the Inquisition, "the public renown rose, since they were intelligent merchants and bankers. This was the reason why they were given the right to bury members of the community on separate grounds."

- 3. "The Jewish quarter, even before the days of the compulsory ghetto, seems to have grown up round the synagogue, which was the center of Jewish life locally as well as religiously. A common feature of all ghettos was the cemetery, a communal responsibility to which unusual sentimental interest was attached." (Louis Wirth, "The Ghetto," 1927)
- 4. read cemetery rules (all pareticipants)

[Board the bus and drive to Ottensen. Hand out the remaining texts to the participants. Leave the bus and walk to the high-street side of the abandoned department store. Begin to read. After the first text, the narrator asks the participant with each successive number to read her or his text.]

8. Ottensen

The toxicity of history is marked by an abstraction; bones of dead Jews. The privileged burial versus the ash heap: The loss of cultural memory converts a burial space into a heap of incidental old bones. Who gets to "people" this space and construct it from nothing?

15. Where are the bones?

[Narrator begins to lead the participants around the shopping street to the back, where the cemetery site is exposed. Stop at the posted photos of the Chasidim protesting on site. Walk the group back and forth across front of the site, along the fence.]

16. Things of which we do not wish to be reminded wear out their welcome soon after their occurrence. Fifty years may seem too long, but fifty days no doubt did as well. Time and space

- 21. The Nazis, after closing the Jewish cemetery in Ottensen and moving some of the gravestones (but almost no bodies!) to the immense Ohlsdorf cemetery, built air-raid shelters in Ottensen without regard to the graves. According a survivor of the Hamburg air raids, underground bunkers were buried 3 to 6 feet below the surface of the earth, and each consisted of 2 to 4 large tubes about 150 feet in length connected only by fireproof doors.
- 22. Operation Gomorrah July 24-25, 1943, 30,000 deaths. The British attacked by night, the Americans by day, aiming for more precision.

 Irmgard Burmeister, a survivor, testified: "The bombing was intensified from July 23 to Aug. 3, 1943. During this time, one part of the city after another was systematically wiped out. We became very bitter. Bombs were dropped on the helpless civilian population. Residential areas were their sole targets, and it was obvious that this strategy had nothing to do with any military targets, it was

23. Radical view of city planning
"The bombs killed 52,000 civilians but in one sense were a blessing in disguise," I was told by the city planning officer, Egbert Kossak, "for they enabled us to rebuild with much less congestion. Previously, many poorer areas housed 200-300 people per acre; now it is 40 to 60 people, and fewer still in the better districts. We have one of the lowest densities of any big European city." (John Ardagh.)

27. "Many of the shop windows ... are dazzling, especially in the five big new shopping arcades near the Binnenalster, among the most stylish and opulent in Europe. All were built since 1979 and are doing quite well despite the mild recession..."

Does Ottensen need a luxury shopping center?

35. Typical menu for Rosh Hashanah

sheer terror.

Appetizer: Gefilte fish garnished with Beet Horse-radish Soup: Chicken soup with Noodles or Farfel Entree: Roast Turkey, Chicken or Capon (with Stuffing) Vegetables: Carrot and Sweet Potato Tzimmes Salad: Tossed Salad of Lettuce, Tomato, Cucumber, Radish Side Dishes: Taiglach, Apple Slices and Honey, Honey Cake, Fruit Compote Beverage: Tea, Hot or Iced

- 36. "St. Pauli's... Hafenstrasse, high... above the Elbe, has... achieved notoriety.... In the mid-1980s some of its...old houses were occupied by squatters who formed a militant commune and violently resisted all police attempts to evict them. The conflict dragged on for years, making national headlines.... Most Hamburgers were furious at the 'damage' done to the city's image.... But the SPD rulers refused to act toughly with the squatters. The latter painted provocative murals and slogans on the blind walls ('We Unite in the Struggle against Renovation, Fascism and the Police State') clearly visible for any ship entering port. These Leftists were crusading against moves to redevelop this prime site above the river by removing its old working-class inhabitants and building expensive flats and offices. Finally in 1991... they lost ... the last of their legal appeals...."
- 37. A television commentator recently offered sentimental remarks on buried New York cemeteries, claiming that people want to save them to maintain a link with history. But all his examples were in low-income, often "minority," neighborhoods. This strife is often over unwanted and hazardous facilities (such as a garbage incinerator) or loss of parkland, or gentrification. The Ottensen cemetery, lost to Jewish memory, was made an issue by the local Greens in precisely this fashion. It is this point—that the dead are the troops of the living—that this sentimental commentator, blinded by his desires, cannot see. Gentrification is a word that does not pass his lips.

40. Who Owns the Dead? Who Has the Right to Memorialize?

42. The African Burial Ground may be the earliest known American colonial graveyard. No remains were thought to exist, but in 1991 the bones of 420 slaves were found under a parking lot being excavated for a Federal building. When backhoes unearthed bones, they were removed by archaeologists. The African-American community protested, claiming that their ancestors' graves, which evidence African burial customs, were being desecrated. The bones have been removed for

study to the premier African American university. The remains disprove the popular idea that there were no slaves in colonial New York.

the 1000

6

- 46. In United States, especially in the West, the discovery of native American—or Indian—burial sites during excavations regularly causes building projects to be halted. This is especially inconvenient in a land that claimed until recently to be an empty continent. Important land claims are being pressed by living Indians. There is also the added inconvenience that museums must now consider giving back relics and sacred objects captured from native peoples over the centuries.
- 48. In Fürstenberg, near Berlin, after German unification, town leaders approved plans to build a supermarket on the site of the Ravensbruck concentration camp. The majority of victims at Ravensbrück were women and children. Although it is true that women, often with children, are the primary food shoppers, the international community did not think that the market and a car dealership were appropriate memorials. The Furstenberg officials had claimed that the Ravensbrück site had been used primarily for propaganda purposes. No doubt they preferred the silent propaganda of commerce. The Brandenburg government stepped in and decreed that the site should be devoted to something more dignified, such as a library or conference center.
- 51. The aggrieved dead can always be conscripted into an army. They are mobilized by the living to support territorial claims. But not any dead can serve this function. It is the dead of the victim peoples who must be called to combat, even those who died peacefully within the bosom of their own culture.
- 52. The social distance expressed horizontally between subject peoples and the dominant culture is also expressed vertically when the dominant culture overruns the burial grounds of the dispossessed. It is this vertical distance that must be abrogated.
- 53. The Jews of Germany, as opposed to the Chasidic visitors, say that a deal is a deal and let the cemetery go. But it is not the past but the present and future that is under siege in Ottensen. It appears to be a question of whether one group of people can engineer the reorganization of space to drive out the Others—who are not, in this case, the Jews.
- 54. The bones of these Jews have been recast as tragic when they were merely ordinary, because as a historical subject, Jews became in recent memory the subject of genocide. Let the bones rest as a a tithe on space in lieu of time, a ransom paid by living Germans to expiate recent sins against the dead—other dead. The memory of bones becomes a symbolic exchange. Meanwhile, social class, always left out of such solemn discussions, is the bone of contention in Ottensen, and the Others in Ottensen are no longer Jews but Turks.

[Narrator now leads the participants back to the bus. During the return journey, hand out photos of Ottensen, of other burial sites, copies of the Chasidic tale "Jew, Go Back to the Grave!" and the following recipe]

Traditional Rosh Hashanah Honey Cake (Lekach)

4 cup sifted flour 3/4 cup coffee (black)
3 tsp baking powder 4 eggs
1 1/2 tsp baking soda 1/4 tsp ground cloves
1 cup sugar 1/4 tsp ground nutmeg
1 cup honey 1/4 tsp cinnamon

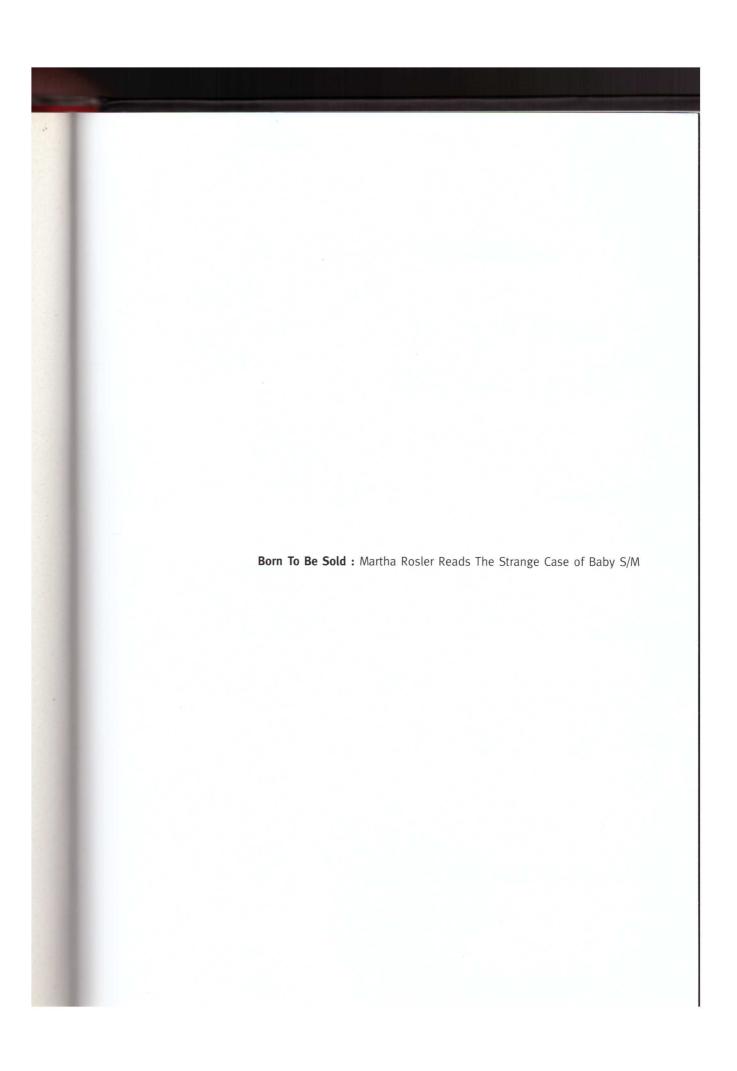
1/2 cup oil or melted shortening 1/2 cup chopped walnuts and 1/2 tsp almond extract seedless raisins (dark)

Cream eggs and sugar; beat until light and fluffy. Combine honey and coffee. First add shortening to egg mixture, then stir in honey and coffee. Sift flour again, adding baking powder, baking soda, spices and nuts and raisins. Combine with mixture and beat until completely blended and smooth. Add almond extract. Grease a square or oblong pan about 14 x 10 inches, pour batter into it, and bake in a moderate oven of 325 degrees F. for 1 hour. Cut into squares and serve with a topping of whipped cream, with a little cinnamon and sugar sprinkled in while whipping.

[As the participants of the bus leave the bus, say the following]

HAPPY NEW YEAR 5754.

[excerpts from a 13-page original]



public body of Mary Beth Whitehead. She was portrayed in open court-the judge, whose abuse of her in his decision matched that offered in any testimony, reportedly sought but failed to have the trial closed to the public-she was portrayed in open court as ignorant, untrustworthy, unstable, and profoundly deceitful and manipulative, with a fundamental, inability to understand and tell the truth

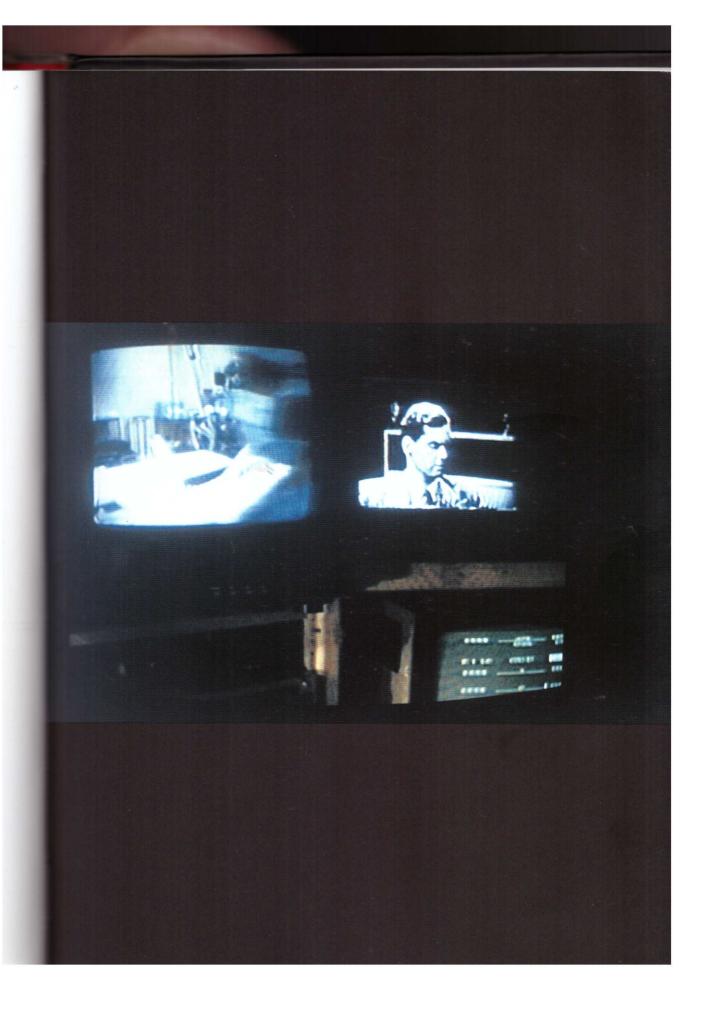
She was called by the famous child psychologist Lee Salk-who never met or interviewed her-"not a mother but a rented uterus." Salk himself was the victor in a reportedly ugly child-custody suit in his own divorce ease Mary Beth Whitehead became the imaginary representative of all women, all mothers, all of us uteri, all of us creatures of deceit, all hysterics. Her husband, in this case reduced to a mere attribute of herself, is a vasectomized-read castrated-and now twice cuckolded Mama's boy; he is also, famously, a garbageman, a Viet vet with a drinking problem. She is the inevitable high-school drop out and go-go dancer, teen bride and teen mother. She is the acted upon-the recipient of Yuppie sperm-who broke the rules and tempted fate by daring to take on the role of actor, denying the identity ascribed to her by class history and patriarchy.

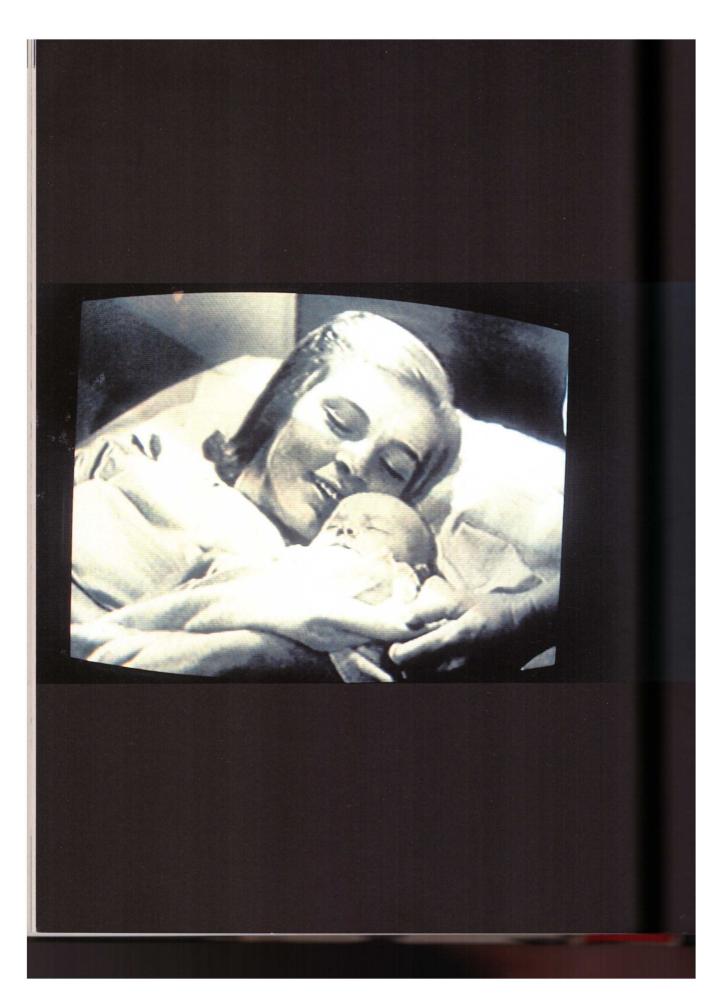
Consider the theater of naming: On the one side we have Mr. and Dr. Stern, proverbial yuppies, he a biochemist, she a pediatrician. On the other side, we have Mary Beth Whitehead, or simply Mary Beth, as she was called by the media. Then we have the baby, baptized Sara Elizabeth Whitehead by the Whiteheads, named Melissa Elizabeth Stern by William and Elizabeth Stern. When the Sterns took Mrs. Whitehead to court to force her to give them the baby, the Sterns' lawyer used the name "Baby M," for Melissa, and it was accepted by the court. We might say that the acceptance of this name by Judge Sorkow was a good indicator of the way this case

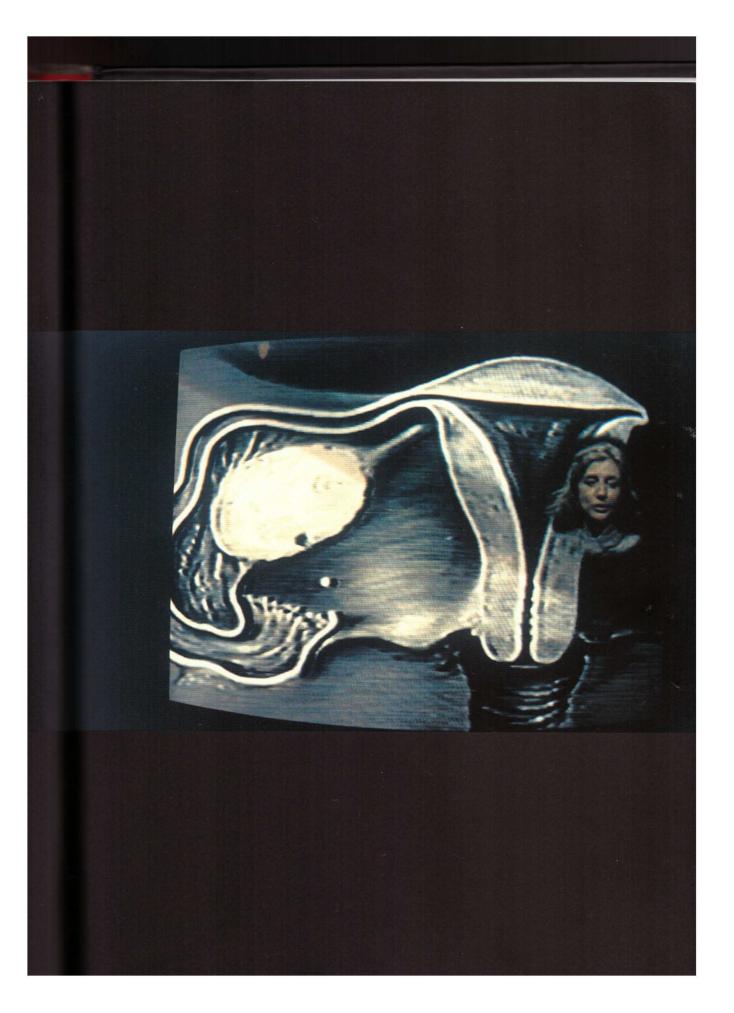
was going to go.

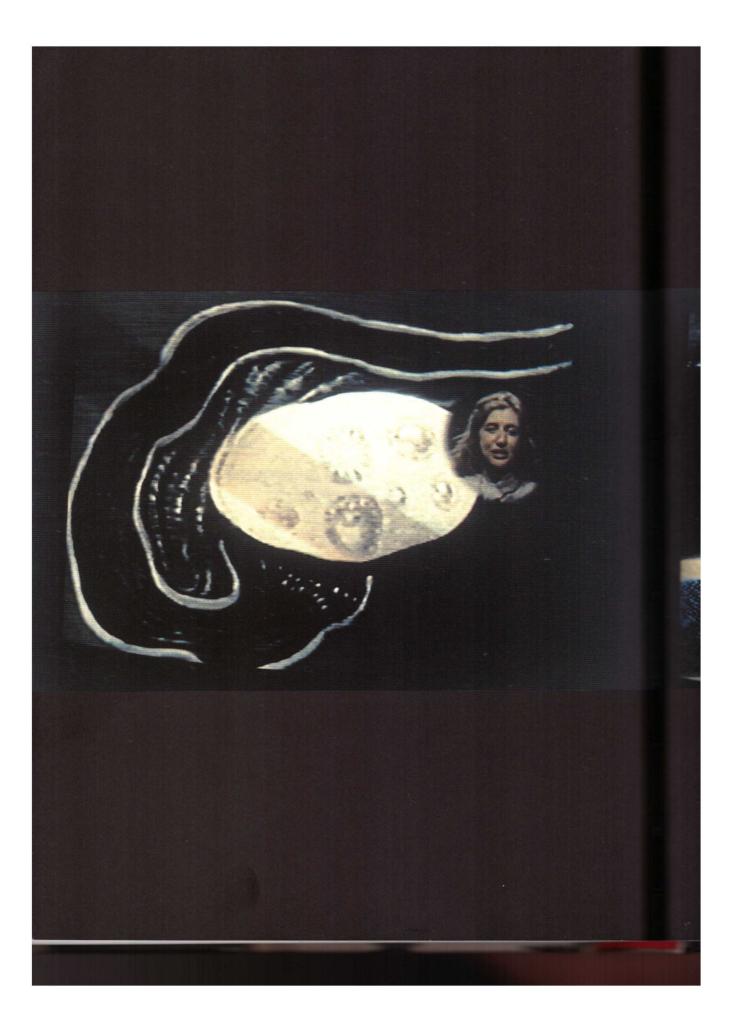
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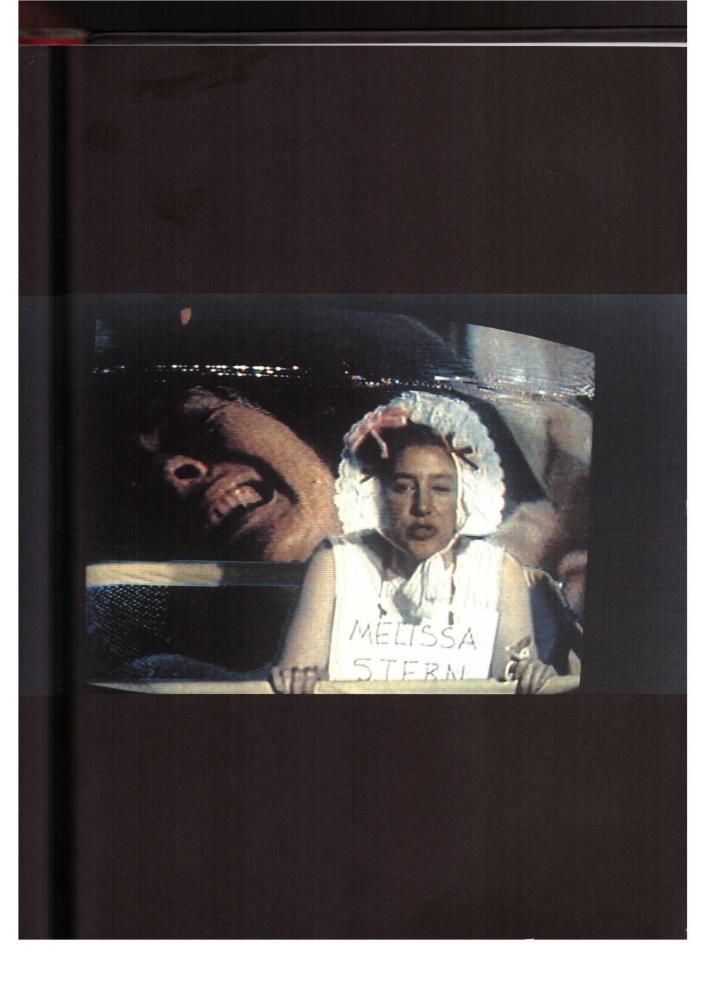
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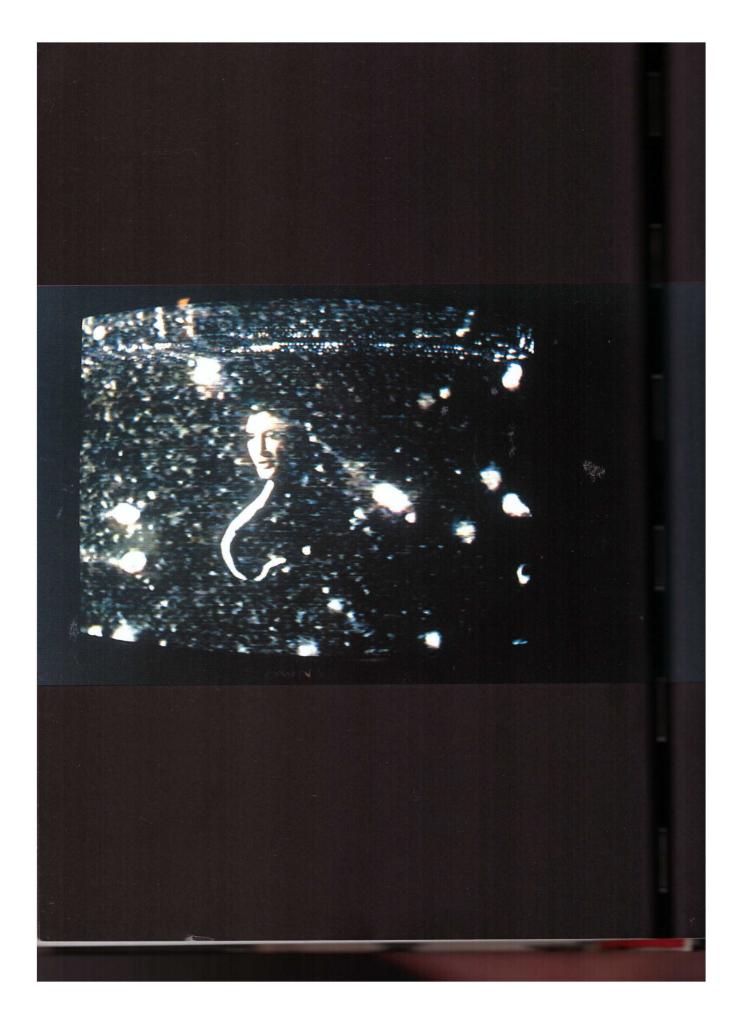


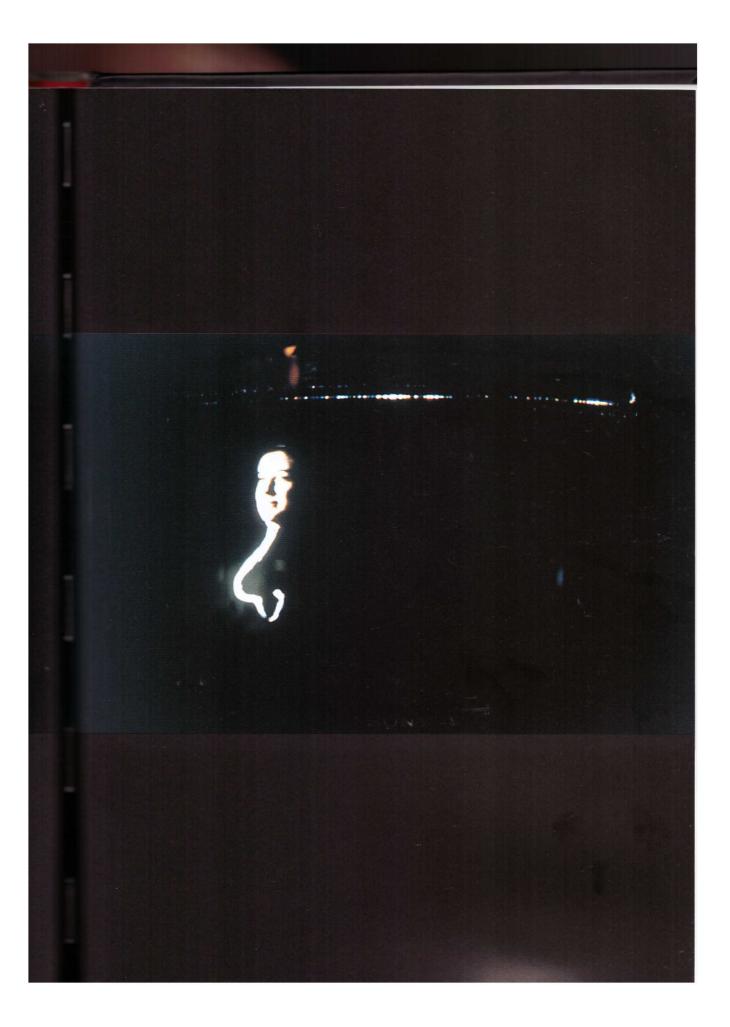














Untitled, from "In the Place of the Public : Airport Services", 1992. Color photograph.

A film begins with the sounds of footsteps tap, tap, tapping on terrazzo floors, and with shots of long fluorescent-lit corridors, men in uniform, and groups of figures rushing by. Reminiscent of a variety of anonymous public spaces and institutional settings, this place that is anywhere and nowhere does have a name: it is Paris. In his 1967 film Playtime, Jacques Tati transforms this city of romance, history, and light into the generic modernist metropolis of steel, chrome, plastic, and transport and mirrored glass. Our welcome to this particular Paris takes place in the airport. As we watch a group of chattering American tourists file through and out of the airline terminal and into a bus, we might begin to anticipate the kind of comedic antics familiar from Tati's earlier films, taking place this time around the place de la Concorde, at the top of the Eiffel Tower, and in and around the pews of Notre Dame. We are soon, however, both disappointed and entranced: Tati's Parisian playground looks like any other glass-and-steel city—the director presents it as an extension and replica of the airport. We do, at moments, catch glimpses of the Eiffel Tower in a tourist poster, or of the Arc de Triomphe as reflected in a building's plate-glass windows or doors, but for the most part Paris's landscape is shown as a series of generic and indistinguishable high-rise structures, their inhabitants circulating through streets and offices like items on a conveyor belt. For Tati, the contemporary city has become the nowhere of the airport.

In an ongoing series of photographs taken in airport terminals beginning in 1979, and in an essay on the issues they address, artist Martha Rosler reinforces Tati's view of the airport as a place emptied of content and experience. And although Rosler makes no direct connection between the city and terminal, as Tati does in the opening scenes of *Playtime*, her pictures and text offer the airport as the site of a transmission and flow echoed not only in the workings of production in advanced industrialized countries but in our characteristic experience of other public—and for my purposes urban—spaces.² Rosler's 1993 installation *In the Place of the Public* defines airport and city as similar transfer stations, connector points in a world increasingly conceptualized as a series of tangled networks. As electronic links between and within urban centers continue to expand, the communal and memorial purposes of the built environment rapidly alter. And when we make actual visits to these places, we often barely pass through.³ These new

¹ Excerpt from Jodi Hauptman, "Imagining Cities," in Museum of Modern Art, *Léger* (New York: The Museum, 1998), pp. 97–104. Courtesy of Museum of Modern Art, New York.

² Martha Rosler, "in the place of the public: observations of a frequent flyer," 1993, p. 2. This essay was written to accompany Rosler's series of photographs "In the Place of the Public." A revised version of this essay was published as "In the Place of the Public: Observations of a Traveller," *Architectural Design* (London), Vol. 64, No. 5/6 (May/June 1994), pp. 8-15. [The most recent version of this essay, entitled "In the Place of the Public: Observations of a Frequent Flyer," is incorporated with a German translation, in Rosler's recently book of the same name (Ostfildern and Frankfurt: Cantz and Museum für Moderne Kunst, 1998.]

³ Airports and, increasingly, businesses are often located far outside cities, allowing us to avoid the urban center in our travels.

cities, Rosler writes, transform the "public" from "collectivity to surveyed transience," and airport travelers and other kinds of traffic are "constituted only as a regulated flow."⁴

What, then, does Rosler have to say about this situation? The airport, she explains, "suggests the meeting point of theories of time and space, of schedules and layouts."5 As a result of her own journeys, Rosler became interested in "the movement of bodies through darkened corridors and across great distances," and also in how air travel empties out actual experience. She began to take color photographs with a pocket camera whenever she traveled.⁶ Made in many different countries and terminals over a number of years, the photographs present two distinct types of view: the first is a long shot in deep space, showing hallways and corridors, sites of circulation and transfer—the very activity that both characterizes and activates the airport terminal; the second compresses depth into a flat picture plane, and the subject matter shifts to advertisements, posters, maps, and other kinds of airport signage. Rosler does not rephotograph these posters at random but selects those in which pictures, text, media, or communications systems either allude to the circulation of travel or point to still other kinds of flow. Photographs of banks of telephones suggest auditory communication and traffic; shots of advertisements of televised and textual news and information sources like CNN and the Wall Street Journal, and of vending machines from which the bored can purchase a daily paper, support Rosler's belief that in airports the movement of information parallels the passage of bodies. In the airport, Rosler writes, "Desire is always infinitely deferred, and meaning is elsewhere and otherwise." Hence the artist offers glowing maps for plotting journeys, and banks of light boxes displaying other travel possibilities, all infinitely tantalizing and enticing. At the airport, travelers are never where they want to be; they are always on their way, and there are always better places to go. Thus not only travelers but desire the perpetually circulates.

Rosler exhibits these photographs both individually and as elements in an installation. In the gallery, black and gray vinyl lettering mounted directly on the wall initiates a dialogue with the pictures. Sentences, phrases, and single words in different type sizes make a "white-noise hiss" that Rosler equates with perpetual din of even the quietest airport. These texts refer to the airline terminal's typical architectural details—its institutional façade, its brightly lit atrium—and call attention to sensory experiences that cannot easily be captured by photographs: trace odors of stress and hustle (olfactory), background noise (auditory), and imperceptible airflow (touch). They also make metaphors out of airport travel, likening its passages, plaza, and expanses to boulevards, intestines, vaginas, birth canals, and hospitals. Longer texts connect this contemporary form of circulation to more

⁴ Rosler, "In the Place of the Public," p. 13.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

traditional flows and sites of movement, including the river, the brothel, the parchment manuscript, the border, the meeting, and the conversation, all of which look rather charming and harmless in comparison with Rosler's more current vocabulary ("capital costs," "mergers and acquisitions," "total surveillance") and her photographs' neon-red passageways, ice-cold gray-and-white marble floors, and greenishly glowing fluorescent-lit rotundas.

For this project's theoretical framework Rosler turns to the French writer Henri Lefebvre, who analyzed spatial relationships in the city and concluded that capitalism was to blame for a shift from what he termed "real space" to "abstract space."8 For Lefebvre, banks, businesses, the world of commodities and their related structures—airports, motorways, information lattices—have created overarching and infectious networks that obscure history, wealth, and accumulation. We increasingly integrate our homes into such systems of networks, so that as the language of urbanism develops it is progressively more characterizable by Rosler's lexicon of "flow, transmission, data, bit, byte." Nor is Lefebvre the only thinker to report on the extension of networks and the loss of the metropolis's history and center. Jameson, David Harvey, and Edward Soja have all offered a variety of terms equivalent to Lefebvre's "abstract space": urban sprawl, hyperspace, exopolis, edge city. 10 Describing the transition from public plaza to airport, from machine city to cybercity, M. Christine Boyer argues that "electronic telecommunications have reformulated our perception of space and time, so that we experience a loss of spatial boundaries or distinctions, so that all spaces begin to look alike and implode into a continuum, while time has been reduced to obsessive and compulsive repetitions."1 And Mark C. Taylor and Esa Saarinen, arguing that "the modern metropolis is being displaced by the postmodern netropolis [as in the Internet]," have envisioned computer cyberspace as a city.12

⁸ See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Donald Nicholson-Smith, trans. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991). Rosler uses a quotation from Lefebvre on a photostat in her installation and as an epigraph to her essay on air travel. The quotation, from Lefebvre's "Space: Social Product and Use Value," in J. W. Freiberg., ed., *Critical Sociology* (New York: Irvington, 1979) pp. 285–295, reads, "Capitalism and neocapitalism have produced an abstract space that is a reflection of the world of business on both a national and international level, as well as the power of money and the 'politique' of the state. This abstract space depends on vast networks of banks, busineses, and great centers of production... There is also the spatial intervention of highways, airports, and information networks. In this space, the cradle of accumulation, the subject of history, the center of historical space, in other words, the city, has exploded."

⁹ Words from Rosler's wall text, in the place of the public, Jay Gorney Modern Art, (New York, 1993), and subsequent installations of this work.

¹⁰ See Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" New Left Review (London), No. 146 (1984), published in expanded form as Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (Durham, N.C.: Duke University, 1991); David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); and Edward W. Soja, Postmodern Geographics: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory (New York: Verso, 1988). For a feminist response to theses authors, see Rosalyn Deutsche, Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1996).

¹¹ M. Christine Boyer, *Cybercities: Visual Perception in the Age of Electronic Communication* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), p. 19.

¹² Mark C. Taylor and Esa Saarinen, quoted in Boyer, op. cit., p. 228. See Taylor and Saarinen, Imagologies (New York: Routledge, 1994).

All of these theorists exploit objects and real situations to make their arguments if Jameson's monument to simulation is the Bonaventure Hotel, Soja focuses on Orange County, California—but it is in the realm of fantasy and science fiction that we see ideas about networks, data, and transmission most fully (and admittedly hyperbolically) played out. The inventor of the term "cyberspace" is science fiction writer William Gibson, who, in his 1984 novel Neuromancer, not only created a neologism but crystallized a new genre of writing: cyberpunk. Neuro-mancer takes place in the twenty-first century, when the value of information has replaced that of money. The plot maps two simultaneous planes of existence, the real and the virtual; but these are so intertwined that it is impossible to tell them apart. True, the "virtual" world of cyberspace is accessible only by "jacking in" to computer terminals, and the mind can move freely there without the hindering weight and substance of the body; but despite this distinction between body and mind, real and virtual, both spaces, both cities, are equally disorienting, making it almost impossible to measure space or locate place. ("Real" urban centers have become megasprawls, with names like "BAMA" and "Freeside.")13 And both are characterized by simulation: Neuromancer is full of descriptions of "futuristic" visual expression appearing in both worlds—translucent planes of color, screen travel, holograms, parasitic structures, identical towers of data, neon molecules, and ghost hieroglyphs, to name just a few.¹⁴ In Gibson's view, urban space mirrors the electronic spaces of information and circulation; the city, in Neuromancer, is an "endless neon haze of data."15 And even with its talk of megabytes and novas, Gibson's cyberspace is not so far from Lefebvre's abstract space. The cities of Neuromancer are ruled by giant corporations that own the data—and as in the invisible financial networks of our own day, in cyberspace data functions as currency.¹⁶

In her essay on airports, Rosler offers her own, more basic version of virtuality. The words "virtual reality" evoke complex computer programs, ravishing graphics, electronically wired masks and gloves, and visual pleasure. The experience demands saying goodbye to the body; this glide through space and time is mainly optical. But while virtuality generally requires sophisticated equipment and software, there have long been other—albeit more primitive—ways to achieve the sensation of rapid, disembodied travel. A method described by Rosler is a favorite of New York City children, who can press their faces against the front window of subway cars to imagine traveling through mysterious (virtual) worlds. Jammed

¹³ William Gibson, Neuromancer (New York: Ace Books, 1984). The acronym "bama" stands for the single city running the length of the eastern U.S. seaboard, comprising the former individual cities of Boston, Atlanta, and Manhattan. "Freeside" Gibson describes as "brothel and banking nexus, pleasure dome and free port, border town and spa. Freeside is Las Vegas and the hanging gardens of Babylon, an orbital Geneva and home to a family inbred and most carefully refined" (p. 101).

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 61, 225, 241, et passim.

Neuromancer begins, "The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel."

¹⁶ For more on Gibson's novel and on cyberspace generally, see Scott Bukatman, Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction (Durham, N.C.: Duke University, 1993), especially chapter 2, "Terminal Space."

against the pane of glass, one feels the long subway car as more an extension of the body than a vehicle in which to travel, and, for brief moments between the rapidly appearing stops, one becomes a cyborg moving through space. Defined only by pinpoints of light, the subway tunnel transmutes into a starry sky or a science fiction city, resembling designs for computer and video games. Most amazing is the way the very structure of Manhattan disappears; there is no sense of being on a train lodged below a working city. And the path down which the former-body/now-cyborg moves is not straight; it is closer to the multiplied paths of cyber-space. In New York City, then, there is a second metropolis, perhaps the unconscious of the first, that does not echo the flat grid above ground but replaces it with a three-dimensional one and adds curves and twists, all allowing swift passage without traffic and crowds. Visitors to this below-ground municipality experience the instantaneity of circulation rather than the *durée* of wandering through parks, plazas, and streets.

It is with this image of "effortless, unencumbered...flight" on subway trains that Rosler begins her analysis of airports and airline travel. While her childhood memory of the New York City subway might initially seem irrelevant to the high-speed, technically elaborate airplane, an understanding of the potential "virtuality" of the subway experience—its "flight," "circulation," "power"—makes it clear that the two share much in common. In *Neuromancer* we see a hyperbolized version of Rosler's childhood train rides: having leapt from subway to airplane, it is just another short jump to the travels of the novel's protagonist, Case, jacked into the computer. The city, in all cases, is reduced to a virtual passage through light and sound, a bodiless journey. While there is certainly pleasure in these rides, Rosler warns us of the dangers of complete submission to virtuality: the losses of history and community, to name only two. In one of her photographs, an illuminated bill-board (an advertisement for the *Wall Street Journal*) exclaims, without a trace of irony, "Maybe there is a substitute for experience."

While Rosler's conception of the airport and her memory of the subway bear a similarity to Gibson's cyberspace, her ideas can also be related to the writings of French theorist Paul Virilio, whose texts often verge on science fiction. Virilio has been investigating shifts in urbanism's space and time. Inventing a new term for the city, "overexposed," he focuses on its simultaneous dispersion and concentration.²¹

The airport is a perfect example of what he means by "overexposure": concentrated within its bounds is an entire city (malls, restaurants, hotels, childcare),

¹⁷ The cyborg—an amalgamation of flesh, metal, and sensors or eyes—is the perfect term for the result of this transformation. See Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the 1980s," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 149–181.

¹⁸ Rosalind Krauss defines *durée* as "the kind of extended temporality that is involved in experiences like memory, reflection, narration, proposition." See her article "Rauschenberg and the Materialized Image," *Artforum* (New York), Vol. 3, No. 4 (Dec. 1974), p. 37.

¹⁹ Rosler, "in the place of the public," p. 1.

²⁰ Even a traditional communication device such as the newspaper is infected with the lure of virtuality.

²¹ Paul Virilio, "The Overexposed City," in Lost Dimension (New York: Semiotexte, 1991), pp. 9-27.

but its function is to funnel people continuously through hallways and terminals and send them on to the next transfer station. Just as technology is hidden outside the windowless corridors of airports, the overexposed city's transformations are "disguised by the immateriality of its parts and networks." The metropolis is thus an interface in which an "electronic topology" replaces urban property, "near' and 'far' simply cease to exist," "telematics replaces the doorway," the "opening of city gates" become "the opening of shutters and televisions," and "public greeting" becomes "audiences and surveillance." In this urban environ there is no chronological or historical time, but only that of the instant. As in the airport, people in the Overexposed City "occupy transportation and transmission time instead of inhabiting space.... With the new instantaneous communications media, arrival supplants departure; without necessarily leaving, everything 'arrives."" 24

Rosler's view of the airport—which functions also as a kind of representation of the city—is mediated by computer codes, television screens, and global networks. These are what characterize movement, stimulation, and action not only in airline terminals but in all public and even private spaces. Rosler's aim in this body of work is not merely to research the history of airports, or to examine the kinship between air travel and cyberspace, but to search for public space, to identify the factors that have resulted in our "terminal" condition, our crises of space and time, our finding (or losing) ourselves in a placeless place, both anywhere and nowhere. Searching for what can be found "in the place of the public," Rosler finds only "blind turns" and "infinite deferral."25 Describing her search as a journey in a short wall text that accompanies her installation (a text written in a style closer to science fiction than to her typically weighty prose), the artist elaborates, "We reached a terrain unlike any we had seen before. It was composed of rubble and bits of unfamiliar stone.... The air was still and crystalline.... Certainly there was a glare overhead that made raising the eyes difficult. Thus it was that I could not discern whether I was indoors or out, whether it was truly day or truly night.... Although I felt a humming in the air, I realized eventually that I was hearing only my blood pulse."26

With virtuality replacing structure, and travel over optic fibers taking place of movement down streets, public space and the feeling of being a part of a community have disappeared. In the airport, Rosler explains, "Everything and everyone is weightless, anomic, and the appeal is to consumerism, not to sociality. There is no middle ground between imperial citizenship and the vacuum." Citing the comment by Walter Wriston, former CEO of the banking company Citicorp, that "the 800 telephone number and the piece of plastic [the credit card] have made

²² Ibid., p. 13.

²³ Ibid., pp. 12-14.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 14-15.

²⁵ Words from Rosler's wall text for "In the Place of the Public."

²⁶ Statement on wall board in installation at Jay Gorney Modern Art, (1993) and elsewhere.

²⁷ Rosler, "In the Place of the Public," op. cit., p. 22.

time and space obsolete," architect and critic Michael Sorkin also mourns the loss of public space: "Computers, credit cards, phones, faxes, and other instruments of instant artificial adjacency are rapidly eviscerating historic politics of propinquity, the very cement of the city.... Obsessed with the point of production and the point of sale, the new city is little more than a swarm of urban bits jettisoning a physical view of the whole, sacrificing the idea of the city as the site of community and human connection." metaphor for this new, dispersed and asocial city is the theme park. Characterized by "ageography," surveillance, and simulation, the city-as-theme park "presents its happy regulated vision of pleasure... as a substitute for the democratic public realm, and it does so appealingly by stripping troubled urbanity of its sting." 29

Sorkin is not alone in turning to the amusement park in order to explicate urbanism; about seventy years earlier, Léger had presented the circus as a carnivalesque twin of the quotidian city. In his *Deux Acrobates* ("Two Acrobats," 1918) and *Cirque Médrano* (1918) we see the spectacle of *La Ville* costumed and intensified. Urban wanderers became acrobats, city streets transmute into rings and trapezes, while crowds are unchanged: they remain spectators. "Go to the circus," Léger implores, for its "rotation of masses, people, animals, and objects." From his description of the circus's "dynamic aggression of a collective mass that assaults the spectator," its "nebulous, inconsistent crowd," and its "persuasive" gate money, however, we learn that we don't really have to go to the circus; in the city its dynamism is all around us. Léger writes, "Our modern space no longer looks for its limits; from hand to mouth it is obliged to accept a domain [like the circus] of unlimited action. We plunge into it, we live in it, we have to survive in it."

The imagery of theme park and circus returns us once again—with a circulating force and flow characteristic of both airports and cyberspace, of networks, currencies, and codes—to Tati's Paris. The director conceives of the city not only as an airport but as a theme park or carnival for "play." Rosler's search for the public cannot end in Paris, for here space itself has been reduced to beautiful but deceptive reflections. What can be found, however, is resistance—in the very body of Tati. And perhaps resistance is all Rosler can ask for.

²⁸ Michael Sorkin ed., Variations on a Theme Park, The New American City and the End of Public Space (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), pp. xi, xiii.

²⁹ Ibid., p. xv.

³⁰ Léger, "The Circus" (1950), in Functions of Painting, p. 172.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 174, 175, 175.

³² Ibid., 177.

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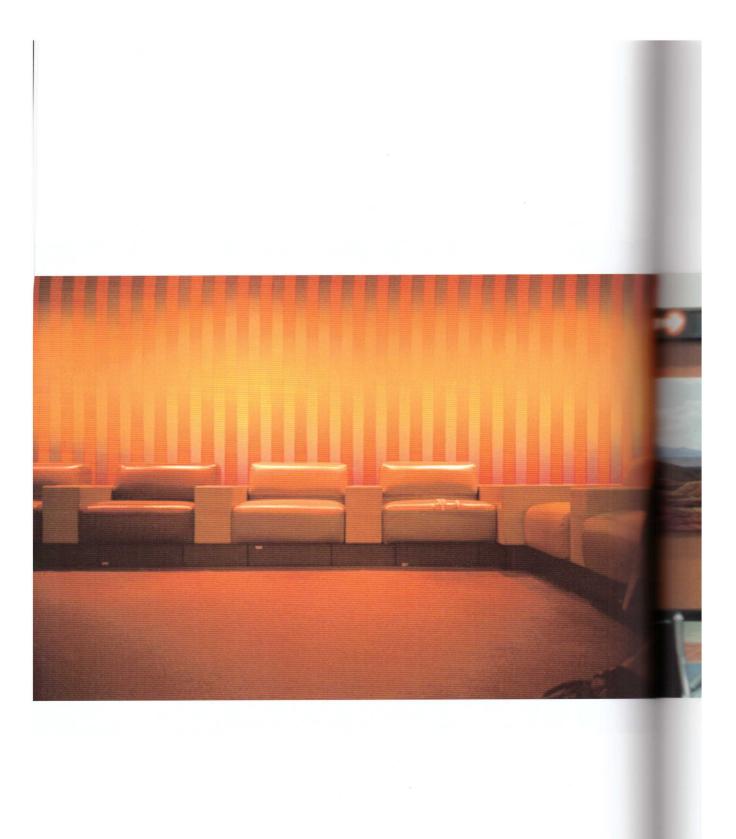
³¹ Ibid., pp. 174, 175, 175.

³² Ibid., 177.

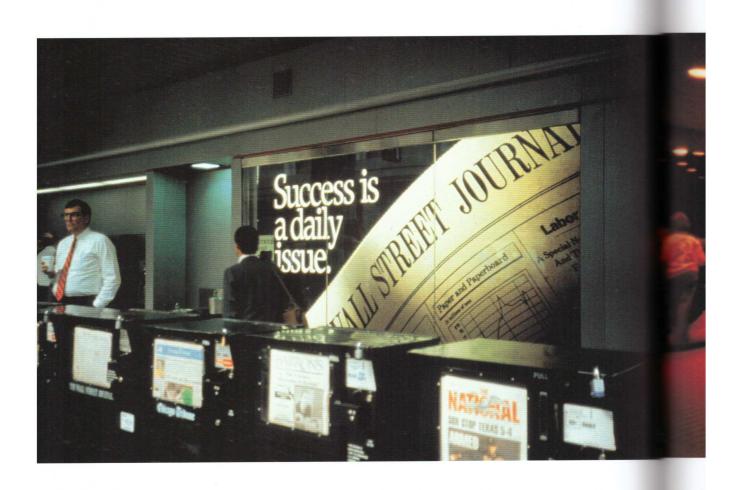


In the Place of the Public : Airport Series













The horror of airports: strange atmosphere;

the horror of airports: strange atmosphere;

bureaucratic reality of mythological image

of personalization yet company representativeness;

long lenes, surly people

Derealization of the plane & of flight—

the plane shrouded in the ramp (most

airports) smile after smile; miniaturization

to suffest control

(there in fact economically dictated)

signs of efficiency counterbalanced by supportion

of confort—texage doth-mother - style

pactile for







: 267

Catherine de Zegher

Passionate Signals: Martha Rosler's Flowers in the Field of Vision

I feel so much more at home even in a scrap of garden like the one here, and still more in the meadows when the grass is humming with bees than at one of our party congresses. I can say that to you, for you will not promptly suspect me of treason to socialism.

Rosa Luxemburg¹

Or the Repressed Aesthetics of Martha's Floweryard.

Somewhat fading by now, though still beautiful, the poppy red, primrose yellow, fuchsia, and orange colors of what gradually appears to be a striated flower field fill the projection screen showing one of Martha Rosler's first super-8 films of the early seventies. Against a white-clouded blue sky, the large, parallel bands of color follow the rolling land-scape. Picturesque and sublime, the landscape bears the imprint less of arcadian nature than of careful cultivation. The long duration of the shots lures the spectator into the magical and fictional frame of mind on which the motion picture medium largely depends. As if anticipating—or, perhaps, literally participating in—this projective consciousness, the camera lens suddenly zooms in, keeping in focus the myriad flowers first seen from afar but now revealing the many migrant workers who, for a meager wage, tend these immense flower fields of Encinitas, California.

As I was watching the seven-minute rushes of *Flower Fields* (1975), I realized that this remarkable *courtmétrage* had never left the artist's house and over the years had only rarely been projected, in a small circle of family and friends. Although the silent movie uncannily announces the most important concerns of Rosler's *oeuvre*—such as her concern with the underlying socio-political interests and economic influences of blinding representation, in an effort to reveal the meaning and role of visual icons—the film never went public. Why was it held back? Even the strategy of the zoom-in, especially insofar as the focus on a detail in the film triggers a critique of the whole, correlates with her photomontage technique in the contemporaneous series "Bringing the War Home" (1967-72) and "Body Beautiful, or Beauty Knows No Pain" (1965-72), where collaged fragments deconstruct the image. At the core of her analytic work are issues of exploitation, oppression, gender, and class, as she documents a "social landscape" developed to promote endless consumption, particularly on the part of women: the ideal house (with impeccable kitchen and grand living room as illustrated in design and

¹ Rosa Luxemburg, *Letters from Prison*, translated from the German by Eden and Cedar Paul (Strand and London: The Socialist Book Centre, 1946), p. 16. The letter, dated Wronke, May 2, 1917, is addressed to Sonja Liebknecht, the wife of Karl Liebknecht, with Luxemburg the co-leader of the Spartacist party.



Untitled, 1996. Color photograph.

fashion magazines), the incredible laundromats, the beauty parlors, the shopping malls, and the like. But why was the landscape of flower fields (as a record of "the beauty of nature," a selected text of the human organization of space, or a historical construct of production) not included?

While I was further reviewing her film, video, and photo work for this retrospective book, more flowers fell into my hands. Slowly I realized that, from the outset, along with the social and political subject matter in her work, Rosler had filmed and photographed flowers in landscapes and city scapes of different places sometimes far away, wherever she was traveling, sometimes in her own backyard. The colorful shots of flowers, always represented in "collectivized" contexts (e.g., floricultural fields, flower markets, flower parades, or flower beds in public gardens or private yards), picture miscellaneous assemblages in luminous sceneries. Others range from images of freshly washed laundry hanging above a bed of tulips, bleeding hearts, irises, lupines, and hyacinths, to families posing amid blooming magnolias in the Queens (New York) botanical garden, to lush bouquets besides scarlet corsages and lipsticks in shop windows. In these photographs—as is evident in the candid picture of a person in fancy dance frock, winding like a dark pinkish rambler on the pergola of a rose garden, while being photographed by a friend-Rosler's sharp questioning of the stereotypical takes over the impartial documenting of the natural. By literalizing "femininity" she ironizes the disguised connotation of consumable goods, flowers, and women. Carefully archived in boxes, negatives and prints of the flower photographs remained on the shelves. Flowers, insistently held to be "a woman's theme," were obscured from the outside world, awaiting a future unveiling to the public.

Rosler's photomontages, assembled from images taken from *Life*, *House Beautiful*, and other mainstream American magazines and then rephotographed, were published meanwhile in California-based alternative journals. Conceived at the time of increasing U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, "Bringing the War Home" inserts the found images of maimed and mutilated Vietnamese war victims amid the luxury designer furniture and spacious living quarters of the upper mid-

dle class represented on the pages of "up-scale" magazines. Cut out, displaced, glued, and photographed to be reintroduced in current periodicals, the collaged elements *uncover* what underlies the imagery of consumption. Beneath the polished surface of beauty and comfort, the precise juxtaposition points to the violence—a violence occurring elsewhere—necessary for maintaining this "quality of life." Although Rosler makes little effort to efface the edges and seams of the collaged elements in her pictures, their material traces diminish through the rephotographic process, thus pointing to the loss of the material connection between consumerism and imperialism, as it was repressed and denied in television and print news media. Miming the obfuscation in American popular consciousness by means of a self-reflective reproduction technique characterized by excess, the artist paradoxically brings forward the hypocritical split of socio-political, domestic and economic relationships.

Along with the anti-war and civil rights movements, the women's liberation movement of the late sixties and early seventies also had a tremendous impact on Rosler's art practice. Referring to the fragmentation and dismemberment of the fetishized, and, above all, silenced woman as sign, the passive and abject image of woman subjected to the mastering gaze became one of Rosler's primary objects in her manufacturing of sexual difference in "Body Beautiful, or Beauty Knows No Pain." Female body fragments cut out of pornographic magazines are collaged like partial objects onto models wearing indispensable lingerie or promissory bridal dresses in fashion magazines. By copying Western male discourse, she articulated the problematics of bodies reduced to fetishized parts (such as breasts, nipples, and genitalia), which indicate a woman as either a lost (original) whole or a final totality in the making.2 In the series, aesthetic negotiation of the subject mirrors back to the viewer an imaginary bodily unity—as Other—exposed, shattered, and collaged in pieces, reiterating a fantasy of a chaotic body, fluid and fragmentary, both producer and consumer of desire and drives. According to Jacques Lacan, the ego fears most the return of this prior stage, when the body was still in pieces, and reacts aggressively against the chaotic world within and without, against that stranger and all others who seem to represent this chaos and strangeness. Even if Lacan does not specify his theory of the subject as historical, Hal Foster following Michel Foucault and Klaus Theweleit-believes that such a "traumatized, armored, and aggressive subject is not just any being across history and culture: it is a theory of the modern subject as fascistic subject."3 To disarm and challenge this holistic subject, Rosler, in a way that recalls the work of artists such as Hannah Höch, Claude Cahun, Carol Rama, and Louise Bourgeois, celebrated

² See also my introduction to Inside the Visible. An Elliptical Traverse of 20th Century Art, in, of, and from the Feminine (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT, 1996), pp. 24–27.

³ Hal Foster, "Postmodernism in Parallax," October No. 63 (1993), p. 8. On this subject see Klaus Theweleit, Male Fantasies (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982; translation of Männerphantasien [Frankfurt: Verlag Roter Stern, 1977]).



the "dark" forces that most threaten it—sexuality, jouissance, the unconscious—surrendering it to fragmentation. What "Body Beautiful" displays in a very risqué way is the commercialization of the flowering and also the "deflowering" of the libidinal body. To conceive, however, of part-objects as grouped and related fragments without neutralizing them in a totality, the photomontages propose the concept of "multiplicity," which refers neither to an incompleteness nor to a unity. Similarly, the flower photographs in their distinctive mapping of a collectivity, a Deleuzian "subject-group"—unlike Neue Sachlichkeit and avant-garde images of singular flowers mostly portrayed on a dark background, or eccentric images of flower arrangements, such as the 1931 Composition nature morte by Florence Henri, or the stylized phallic flowers featured in Robert Mapplethorpe's mid-1980s Calla Lily, and Orchid—bring about this nontotalizing multiplicity constituted of differences between all separate parts. As Rosler phrases it, "Every gardener knows that a flower bed is composed one by one by one by one...."

Or Picking a Violet between the Teeth.

The association of flowers with the cycle of life (seed, blossom, splendor, and decay), and in particular with the generative power of women is deep-rooted. Similarly, a latent connection of sublime beauty to concealed acts of domination and violation is lasting.⁶ If beauty is passionately desired, Georges Bataille states, it is in order to profane it, "and to despoil is the essence of eroticism." Such a search after beauty entails an effort to escape from continuity, a transgression resulting from profanation. Although "flower" in the Indo-European languages refers to "swelling," a physiological phenomenon experienced by both genders, the connotation was more specifically related to female genitals. Taking possession of the rose was already described repeatedly in thirteenth-century verse romances, such as the Roman de la rose of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meung. At the same time, the flower/vulva was a strong apotropaic sign warding off evil. As Paul Vandenbroeck has demonstrated, "the widespread use of the flower as a decoration pattern first started around 1500, in the period of the so-called original accumulation (in the development of capitalism), and ran parallel to its internationalisation," possibly exploiting the consumer's attraction to the florid, ornamented commodities by linking it to the

⁴ As developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Helen R. Lane, Robert Hurley, and Mark Seem (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1983; originally published as *L'Anti-Oedipe* [Paris: Minuit, 1972/1973]), pp. 42–43. See also Deleuze and Guattari, *Mille Plateaux* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), pp. 14–16, 38–52.

⁵ The artist in conversation with the author, July 1998.

⁶ In two recent videotapes, both made by women artists, the witticism concerning the subject of flower/woman and beauty/violence is striking: *Je te donnerai toutes les fleurs de mon jardin, si tu prends celle-ci avec tes dents* (1989), by Franciska Lambrechts, and *Ever Is Over All* (1997), by Pipilotti Rist.

⁷ Georges Bataille, *Erotism, Death and Sensuality*, translated by Mary Dalwood, (San Francisco: City Lights, 1986), p. 145.



André Kertész, Melancholic Tulip, 1939. Black-and-white photograph.

"male" vision of women as obtainable sexual objects. Conversely, Norbert Schneider argues, that "if aesthetic interest in flowers grew noticeably during the late fifteenth century, this was due in great measure to the fact that the vanitas symbolism consistently associated with them in the Bible corresponded to the needs of a new consciousness within commercial bourgeois society." In the face of flowers as symbols of transitory life, of passage from materiality to immateriality, the insatiable acquisition of luxury goods seemed senseless. The development of scientific and encyclopedic interests also stimulated the depiction of floral still lifes, as, for example, in the seventeenth-century paintings of Jan Brueghel the Elder. Very often these still lifes depicted a variety of vermin, dragonflies, grasshoppers, and even lizards, as signs of decline in the otherwise unblemished flowers in full bloom.

It is not my intention to offer a historical survey of floral paintings but rather to question why the flower is still considered the quintessence of contemplative beauty and why an artist like Rosler, well-known as a documentary photographer, ventures around that representative object in a most ambiguous way. Whenever this subject has been broached in contemporary art it has quickly—too quickly—been identified in a highly judgmental way with a sense of trivial decoration or a reactionary attitude reflecting a generalized process of return to traditional bourgeois themes and reductive aestheticism. Nevertheless, flowers, appearing to be the perfect representative object of perceptual mimesis, have been depicted for centuries by numerous artists.¹¹ According to Elaine Scarry,

⁸ Paul Vandenbroeck, "Catharina Y.," in An Unexpected Journey. Woman and Art (Antwerp: Gynaika, 1996), p. 304.

⁹ Norbert Schneider, "The Early Floral Still Life," in *The Art of the Flower. The Floral Still Life from the 17th to the 20th Century* (Bielefeld and Kilchberg/Zurich: Bielefeld Kunsthalle and Edition Stemmle, 1996), p. 15.

¹⁰ According to Norbert Schneider, "it is not at all surprising that the first (almost) autonomous floral still lifes appeared on the backs of portraits meant to capture a fleeting moment in the life of the subject, as in Hans Memling's depiction of a majolica vase with lilies, irises and columbine." Ibid., p. 16.

¹¹ In the nineteenth and twentieth century alone, painters range from Gustave Courbet, Berthe Morisot, and Odilon Redon, Georgia O'Keefe to Andy Warhol and Gerhard Richter and photographers from William Henry Fox Talbot, Anna Atkins, Tina Modotti, Imogen Cunningham, and Karl Blossfeldt to André Kertész.



Rembrandt Tulips and Bleeding Heart, 1998. Color photograph.

[T]he imaginability of the flower can in part be attributed to its *size*, which lets it sit in the realm in front of our faces and migrate into the interior of what Aristotle called "our large moist brains." [Second,] it can in part be attributed to the flower's cuplike *shape* breaking over the curve of our eyes, whether in actual acts of seeing or in mimetic seeing. A third feature is its intense *localization*. The experimental literature in cognitive psychology suggests that "there is only a limited amount of energy or 'processing capacity' with which to construct images," with the result that a smaller image will also be a more "filled-in image"... We might call this the ratio of extension to intensity.... A fourth feature is the gossamer quality of many flowers (columbine, campanula, foxglove, sweet pea, rose of Sharon), the thinness and transparency of the petals (that lets one see the sunlight through them or see the shape of another overlapping petal coming from behind), that gives them a kinship with the filmy *substance*, the substancelessness, of mental images.¹²

Almost by definition in a state of passage between the material and the dematerialized, flowers illuminate the process of imagination—namely, the felt experience of image-making all the more.

¹² Elaine Scarry, "Imagining Flowers: Perceptual Mimesis (Particularly Delphinium)," in *Representations*, No. 52 (Fall 1995), pp. 97–98, 101–102. The author illustrates the "ratio of extension to intensity" by the very small series of oils, mostly of sprigs of lilac in a water glass or vase, sometimes of roses and other flowers, that Manet painted during the last months of his life in 1883 as well as in periods of illness and weakness during the two years before that.



Tina Modotti, Roses, 1924. Platinum print.

Or the Flower as Exemplary of the Sans of the Pure Cut13.

Rosler picks up the (easily imaginable) flowers by photographing them but then drops and subtracts them by putting the photographs aside, keeping them close to herself. Her alternation between attraction to and rejection of floral tableaux seems to result from a desirous apprehension of the index of natural beauty, in which the dichotomous relation to finality-without-end is revealed. According to Immanuel Kant, the flower, in particular the wild tulip, is exemplary of this without-concept of finality (*Zweckmässigkeit ohne Zweck*), of this useless organization, without goal, gratuitous, out of use.

Everything about the tulip, about its form, seems to be organized with a view to an end. Everything about it seems finalized, as if to correspond to a design, and yet there is something missing from this aiming at a goal—the end. The experience of this absolute lack of end comes to provoke the feeling of the beautiful, its "disinterested pleasure." ¹¹⁴

Following Kant, Jacques Derrida continues:

There must be finality, oriented movement, without which there would be no beauty, but the orient (the end which originates) must be lacking. Without finality, no beauty. But no more is there beauty if an end were to determine it.... The being cut off from the goal only becomes beautiful if everything in it is straining toward the end. Only this absolute interruption, this cut which is pure because made with a single stroke, with a single *bout* [blow] produces the feeling of beauty. If this cut were not pure, if it could (at least virtually) be prolonged, completed, supplemented, there would be no beauty. ¹⁵

¹³ Taken from a chapter in Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod, trans. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 83, footnote 21, and p. 89: "Literally, 'The without of the pure cut', but the homophony with *sang* (blood) is important, as is the affinity with *sens* (sense[s], direction[s])."

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 85-86.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 87.

A finalized useful object like an artifact (*Kunstwerk*), even when out of order and thus lacking any determinable goal, does not provoke any feeling of beauty because it can virtually be repaired, or symbolically continued: the finality is given its end back. Taking into account that an adequation of natural beauty and art(ifice) is supposedly no longer the right base of discussion, it can still make us understand that as long as there remains an "adherence"—the possibility of continuation—between "the detached end and the finalized organization of the organ, between the end and the form of finality," as long as there is not "a pure cut," there is no beauty. "So it is the without that counts for beauty; neither the finality nor the end, neither the lacking goal nor the lack of a goal but the edging in *sans* of the pure cut, the *sans* of the finality-sans-end." The pure cut, the discontinuity, the stain: all provoke beauty while profaning it.

As documents of "free beauty" Rosler's flower photographs seem to record this trace of the *sans*, which does not give itself to any perception, since it has nothing to do with sight, with the visible, sensible, perceptible. This does not mean that ignorance is required to relate to beauty. But in the predication of beauty, a "nonknowledge" intervenes in a decisive way with regard to the end, "somewhere in the middle, dividing the field whose finality lends itself to knowledge but whose end is hidden from it." Kant defines "free beauty" (*pulchritudo vaga*) or "vague beauty" as free of all adherent attachment, of all determination: "not suspended from a concept determining the goal of the object." If, however, the artist as a fierce gardener or botanist accedes to the flower's vague beauty by recognizing in it the plant's organ of fecundation and according it a (metaphorical) place in the seminal cycle, she attaches the flower to its end, to its destination. While remaining sufficiently anatomically potent to enter into the cycle of regeneration, "the tulip is beautiful when cut off from fecundation": a *sans* without negativity and without signification. Still, according to Derrida,

Negativity is significant, working in the service of sense... The *without-goal*, the *without-why* of the tulip is not significant, is not a signifier, not even a signifier of lack... As such, a signifier, even a signifier without signified, can do anything except be beautiful. Starting from a signifier, one can account for everything except beauty, that is at least what *seems* to envelop the Kantian or Saussurean tulip.¹⁸

From the moment it is possible "to complete the object with a knowledge, supplement it with a thesis or a hypothesis," it is in Kant's terms to be defined as 'adherent beauty' (*pulchritudo adhaerens*). "Vague beauty," he writes, "presupposes no concept of what the object should be; adherent beauty does presuppose such a concept and, with it, an answering perfection of the object. Those of the first kind

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 95.

are said to be (self-subsisting) beauties of this thing or that thing; the other kind of beauty, being attached to a concept (conditional beauty), is ascribed to Objects which come under the concept of a particular end."19 Where, then, to situate Rosler's few photographs juxtaposing elegant women, strolling shoppers, happy tourists, or even signboards, next to ravishing flowers? By inference the beholder starts to make judgments about the completion of the flower, about its use, its purpose, its end, and about the intention of the photographer and her object. A history, a sociology, a psychology, a political economy are constructed. A concept thus always provides a supplement of adherence. And here Rosler's flower photographs —the plain scenes of vague beauty on the one hand, the few photographs of adherent beauty on the other-unfold the basic question about the definition of art. "How could productions of art appear to us as finalities without end? As nonsignifying? Cut from their goal?"20 If her flower photographs are beautiful without signifying anything, how can they be considered as art? And if they signify, do they not betray the free beauty of flowers? Do they not instrumentalize a vague beauty that touches us in art also? Caught in the opposition between "the errant and the adherent, the sans and the non-sans, the without-end and the not-without-end, that is also the opposition of non-sense and sense," Rosler's photographic work featuring flowers got stuck, stored and (perhaps temporarily) neglected. By negating or postponing its end as publicly exposable work, it seems that Rosler has also guaranteed the sans of the pure cut of vague beauty, the value of which will construct "the opposition between mercenary art and liberal art, the latter being the only one which is fine art inasmuch as it plays and is not exchanged against any salary."21

Apparently, from the beginning, this attitude has reflected Rosler's steadfast refusal on a more general scale to integrate her photographic and filmic *oeuvre* in any commercial system, such as the gallery or the art market, and her consistent questioning of the various production and distribution systems. After all, she had been a practicing artist for more than a quarter century before she accepted gallery representation in 1993. At the same time, since the late Sixties the heterodoxy of her political work has evaded the traditional categories, be they social, philosophical, or aesthetic. As sublimation, her intelligent creation always assumes a value in the social field. If a creation of desire, as Sigmund Freud declares, takes on a commercial value, "it is because its effect has something profitable for society: it elevates the mind, it encourages renunciation," which at once indicates its function as *dompte-regard*, a taming of the gaze ("that is to say, that s/he who looks is always led by the work to lay down her/his gaze").²² The *dompte-regard*, which is also presented in the form of *trompe-l'oeil*, is already clearly announced in Rosler's photomontages.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 93-94.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

²¹ Ibid., p. 102.

²² Jacques Lacan, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller and translated by Alan Sheridan (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1981), p. 111.



Untitled, 1994. Color photograph.

Or the Narcissus in the Split between the Eye and the Gaze.

Everyone knows the legend of Narcissus, the extraordinarily beautiful young man who went every day to contemplate his beauty reflected on the surface of a pool. So fascinated was he with his own image that one day he fell into the pool and drowned. On the shore of the pool, precisely where he fell into the water, a flower suddenly grew that was then named "narcissus" after him. But this is not the way that Oscar Wilde finishes the tale in his "poem in proze" *The Disciple*:

When Narcissus died the pool of his pleasure changed from a cup of sweet waters into a cup of salt tears, and the Oreads came weeping through the woodland that they might sing to the pool and give it comfort.

And when they saw that the pool had changed from a cup of sweet waters into a cup of salt tears, they loosened the green tresses of their hair and cried to the pool and said, "We do not wonder that you should mourn in this manner for Narcissus, so beautiful was he."

"But was Narcissus beautiful?" said the pool.

"Who should know that better than you?" answered the Oreads. "Us did he ever pass by, but you he sought for, and would lie on your banks and look down at you, and in the mirror of your waters he would mirror his own beauty."

The pool answered, "But I loved Narcissus because, as he lay on my banks and looked down at me, in the mirror of his eyes I saw ever my own beauty mirrored."²³

In a world that is all-seeing, the light-sensitive flowers may be ocelli or the mimetic manifestations of the function of the eye, whereas the artist's camera can be considered an eye reflecting "in and about." In our visual relation to things, writes Lacan, "something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always to some degree eluded in it—that is what we call the gaze."24 At the level of the scopic field, he goes on to argue, the drive is manifested in the split between the eye and the gaze. Correlative with apprehension and consciousness in their relation to representation, I see myself seeing myself establishes "that bipolar reflexive relation by which, as soon as I perceive, my representations belong to me."25 As soon as the gaze appears, "the subject tries to adapt himself to it, he becomes that punctiform object, that point of vanishing being with which the subject confuses his own failure. Furthermore, of all the objects in which the subject may recognize his dependence in the register of desire, the gaze is specified as unapprehensible."26 Why does Rosler photograph flowers? Why does Choang-tsu dream he is a butterfly? "It means that he sees the butterfly in his reality as gaze."27 But in seeking the gaze in the photograph, it disappears. Although as subject, one is literally called into the picture, where a desire is caught and fixed: "The picture certainly is in my eye. But I am not in the picture.... And if I am anything in the picture, it is always in the form of the screen, or as stain," which is an adaptation in mimicry.²⁸

To imitate is to inscribe the subject in the picture, to reproduce an image. "It is, for the subject, to be inserted in a function whose exercise grasps it."29 By picturing, by photographing, Rosler is mapping herself as subject, as gaze, and it is as such "that the artist intends to impose herself on us." Certainly, in the exhibited photograph "something of the gaze is always manifested." 30 Though it would be wrong to suggest that the photographer wishes to be looked at, she transforms herself into a picture under the gaze—a gaze that is external to and yet determines the subject. "It is through the gaze that I enter light and it is from the gaze that I receive its effects. Hence it comes about that the gaze is the instrument through which light is embodied and through which," following Lacan, "I am photo-graphed."31 And what, if the flowering blossom symbolized woman, represents the woman photographer? Could the flower photograph be considered as a self-portrait of Rosler, concerned as she is with the challenge of the mastering gaze, the relationship of the representation of woman's identity and the virulent, aggressive function of the eye? Could it portray one of her many "characters" that she displays and sometimes ironizes?

²⁴ Lacan, op. cit., p. 73.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 81.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 83.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 76. 28 Ibid., p. 96-97.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 100. 30 Ibid., p. 101.

³¹ Ibid., p. 106.

Man Ray,

Moving Sculpture, 1920.

Black-and-white photograph.



Or the Photologics of Flower Petals and Drying Laundry.

Etymologically, photography is derived from "photo" (light-thus, nature), and "graphy" (to write-thus, culture). As the developing process whereby light draws an image on celluloid in the camera obscura to be transferred onto photo-sensitive paper in the darkroom, photography discloses the properties of materials, their beauty as physico-chemical and experimental products. It records and inscribes the appearance of this immaterial energy, which is light, on the blank page—a process described by the nineteenth-century proto-photographers as "drawings made by nature." Critical of the "myth" of photographic transparency and objectivity, however, Rosler figures this process of registration in her photographs of laundry hanging on clotheslines, pinned to the line like sheets of photographic paper hung up to dry. Outlining procedures of photography, as opposed to the photographic meditations on sculpture suggested by, for instance, Man Ray's Moving Sculpture (1920), Rosler's photographs of backyard flower gardens reflect the unread alchemical changes that occur daily in our existence. Continuously taking place (especially with the labor of women), though often invisible on account of their mundane familiarity, are a panoply of transformations: food is prepared, laundry is washed, children are nurtured and raised, flowers are grown. The unastonishing subject of such transformations is also depicted in some of Rosler's other early super-8 films, such as Backyard Economy I and II (1974) about sprinkling and mowing a lawn. Involved in a process of ephemerality and dislocation, the watered and cultivated flower, more than any other plant, reflects the structure of the surrounding world.

Aware of the similarities in function between the camera and the ocular bowl (in which light is refracted and diffused), Scarry, following Rainer Maria Rilke and Charles Darwin, also points to "the petals' sensitivity to light and touch as precocious of our own perception."32 Flower, film, photo, their common membranous texture seems to relate directly to the human eye and its inscriptions of the imaginary in the act of interiorization: the making of a residual image. In this sense, every petal of the flower aligns itself, reinstates or reassures our image-making power. Following Scarry, I would argue that therefore the photographer in particular seizes upon the flower "as the proper object of the imagination, because it expresses the distinct quality of cognition at work in imagining,"33 and, I would add, at work outward in photographing and filming. The formal properties of the interior act of imagining and the exterior act of fixing on celluloid are displayed in the content of its object. Connecting to the "gaze-and-touch," or "the touching gaze," and to "the mental retina" (as perceived in the flower's petals), it is with her extreme sensitivity for the surrounding "life world," for the manifestations in a "social landscape," that Rosler as documentary photographer and filmmaker pursues her critical work. Unfolding and rolling back, the multiple petals of a hibiscus seem to hold the foreimage of perception or the afterimage of photography and film. Captive also of the flower's circular and layered structure, this essay can be considered a first attempt on the basis of theory and history to analyze Rosler's invaluable work—particularly her tableaux of field flowers or flower fields—that scrutinizes the real, imaginary, and symbolic in relation to the gaze: "how the subject is caught, manipulated, captured in the field of vision."

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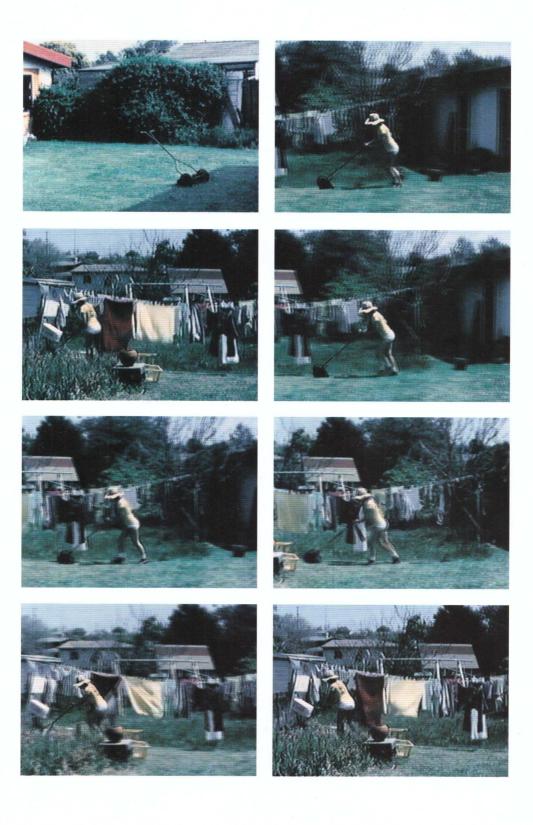
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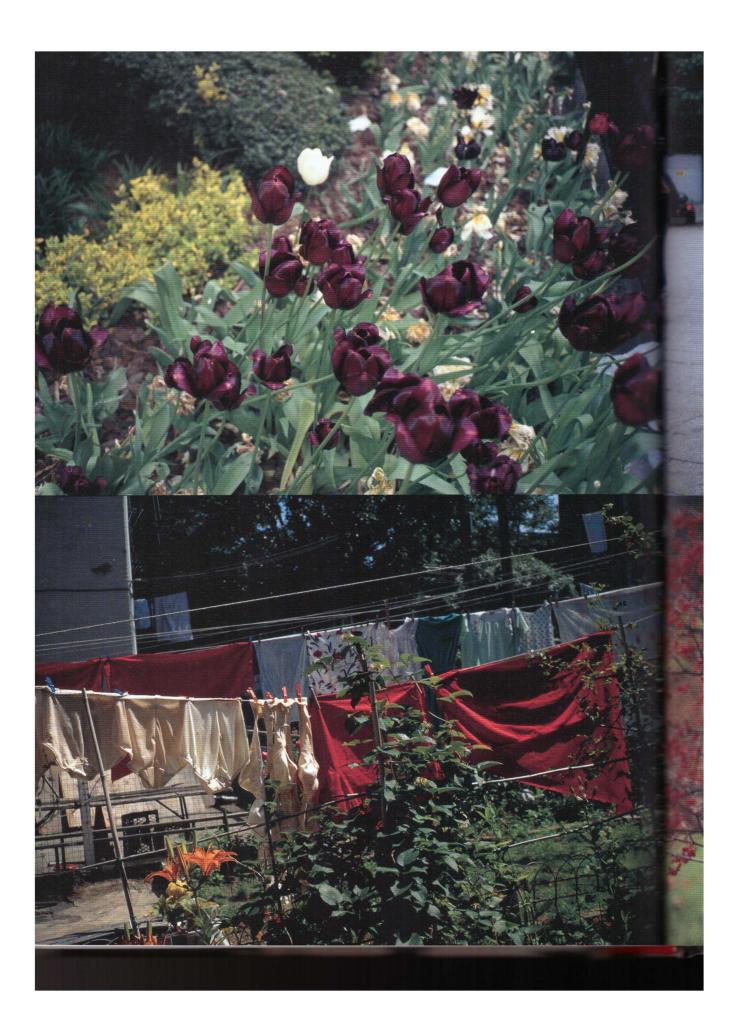
Backyard Economy II
(Diane Germain mowing)
c. 1974.
Stills from super-8 film.

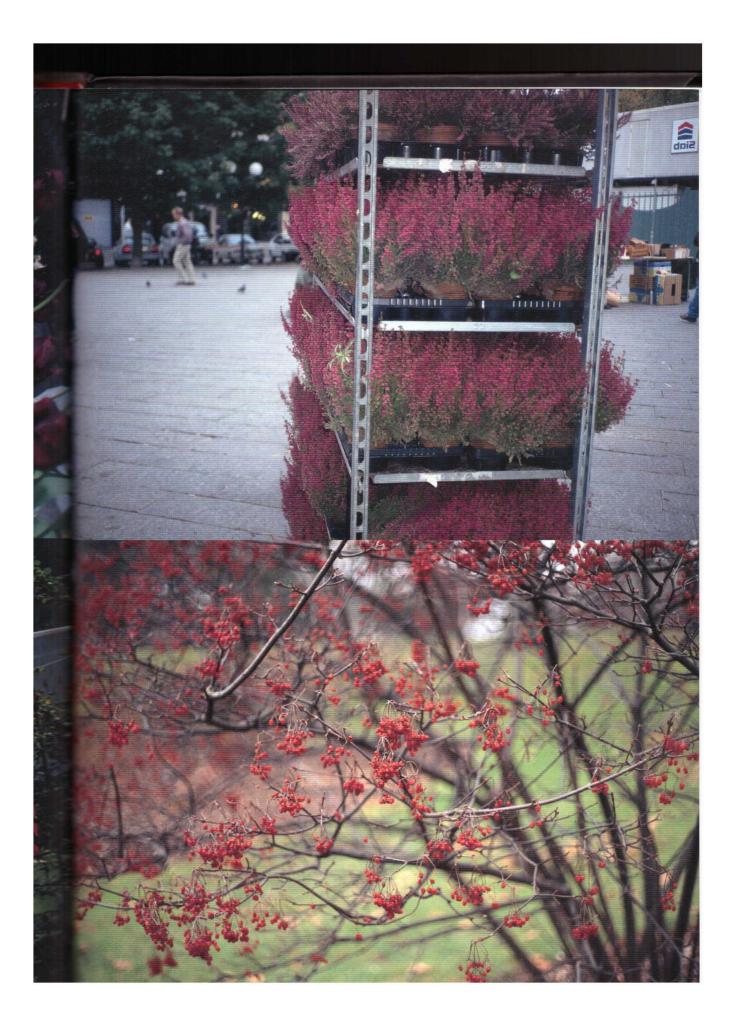
following pages: *Untitled*, from "Passionate Signals", c. 1990–94. Color photographs.

³² Scarry, op.cit., p. 108

³³ Ibid., p. 106









Immigrating, 1975

For the first six months I sat around with the baby while Lenny went to grad school—pushing the stroller up the hill to moon over the sun-glazed water, eating lots of oranges and fresh vegetables, learning about health foods. I pulled a lot of crabgrass, planted and tended lots of plants. I lay around on wall-to-wall carpeting or on dichondra lawn, doing free-lance editing, wandered through Fed-Mart, avoided the freeway, looked at all the funny houses, walked on the beach. I had come there hoping for "peace."

There was a wild overgrown garden within 15-foot-high hedges on the adjoining lot. I planted and shifted bulbs, pruned a huge knobby hibiscus bush, smelled the damp moss. Our landlord was a skinny young guy who worked in a machine shop. When we moved in he and his wife went on a three-week vacation with a rented camper shell on the back of his truck and a cycle on the front. I'd never seen a camper up close before. He and his wife lived in the garage he'd fixed up behind our little house, and he rode an enormous Kawasaki to work. He came around one day to tell me not to go to Mexico because a friend's sister had vanished off the street of TJ and was found abused and demented in a Mexican jail months later. He said his wife had never been down there and he didn't plan to let her. He seemed like a gentle guy and pretty nice.

On a Sunday morning a small bulldozer removed the old garden. The land-lord explained that he's decided to expand. He had big plans for the future. Two men came daily in a pickup truck to build a "duplex." In the following weeks I traded pleasantries with them during their breaks. One night I dreamed that one of them had been killed on a motorcycle. A few days later the young landlord told us that one of the carpenters had been riding his cycle out East on a road through the scrubby hills on his day off and had been hit by a car and killed. The other carpenter, his brother, had to finish the framing alone.

Lenny and I split up and I took the baby back East to the Lower East Side to an apartment where lead-paint dust filtered through the rooms and hundreds of cockroaches made their home, and the duplex was finished. The plans and a chunk of the financing were provided by an enterprising and jovial contractor and his wife. He worked for the county during the week and she took care of business, and on weekends they both oversaw their projects. They were sure they would get rich, and they had seemed confident and well fed, proud to show me some of their other multiple concrete dwellings surrounded by black asphalt on that very street, alternating with the older single-family houses.

The landlord moved into one of the two apartments in the duplex and rented out the other, as well as the house we had lived in and the fixed-up garage. His wife was pregnant. Six months later I moved back to the area, to a spot in Pacific Beach hemmed in by Navy housing. A year later I fled up the coast, 25 miles north to Leucadia. I got a tiny cement cottage for \$100, at the end of a row of ten

wooden garages, in a largely Mexican enclave on a dirt path. In one of the houses was an old Polish widow who used to own all the houses and thought she still did. She baked bread for the man who'd bought them, until she died. A few surfers had an unofficial business making surfboards in some of the garages. My little boy found a best friend, José, in one of the houses and his mother Maria and I became friends. We are the same age. Maria was learning English from the TV. Her husband, Pascual, worked in a flower-growing factory in Solana Beach. Our landlord was a smiling professional of some kind of enlightened liberal opinions; he became a McGovern campaign worker. He had a big house on the cliff facing the ocean and rented out a small apartment in it. My rent was lower than in Pacific Beach, which satisfied the welfare worker, and I liked the place because it was semi-rural and rather peaceful. I stayed on after I got a job and went through grad school. Pascual went to jail for a year for drunken driving.

One day a fence was put across the path, separating us from the dirt lot lying between our houses and the paved street, where our mailboxes are. We could drive home only through a long narrow dirt alley off IOI. The family who came to build the fence, a pinched-looking Anglo woman, a Chicano man, and their three kids, told me that they'd just bought the lot and would probably put apartments on it soon, when they got financing. The fence stayed for awhile but finally one of the surfers ripped it down in the middle of the night. The fence was soon rebuilt; it stayed a few months and someone else ripped it down, maybe me. A chain-link fence was set in cement. My landlord said he was sorry he hadn't bought that lot. He was thinking of putting apartments on the whole plot and was worried about street access. He has regretfully raised my rent 45% in four years. He says houses are uneconomical and ecologically wasteful. He's just repainted the dead widow's house and rented it for triple the rent to a young couple with dogs and a lot of plants. The chain-link fence is still up, and occasionally I see people pacing out the long empty piece of land behind my house. Pascual is out of jail.

All kinds of people want to move ahead in Southern California.

Biography/Bibliography

	Education
1965 1974	Bachelor of Arts, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York Master of Fine Arts, University of California, San Diego
	Selected one-person shows, projects, performances, and screenings
1998	In the Place of the Public. Frankfurt Airport, sponsored by the airport and the Museum für Moderne Kunst
1997	Martha Rosler. INIT: Kunsthalle, Berlin Transitions and Digressions. Jay Gorney Modern Art, New York Rights of Passage. Galerie Anne de Villepoix, Paris
1996	Everyday Objects: Videotapes by Martha Rosler. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
1995	Martha Rosler. Segundo Bienal de Video. Museo de Arte Contemporáneo,
1994	Santiago, Chile In the Place of the Public. Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati
	Videotapes of Martha Rosler. Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels
1993	In the Place of the Public. Jay Gorney Modern Art, New York
	Monográfico de Martha Rosler. Institut Valencià de la Dona
	An Empty Space in Ottensen, Contaminated by History, Capital, and Asbestos.
	In the series "Stadfahrt (City Tour)", Hamburg
	Seattle: Hidden Histories. Public art project in the series In Public.
1991	Martha Rosler, screenings in "The Machine Wreckers: The Lady Luddites"
	Third Frauen Film Festival, Femme Totale im Rivier, Dortmund
1990	Housing Is a Human Right. Project on housing and homelessness in the city of Oxford and Oxfordshire. Public sites in the city and at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford
1989	If You Lived Here Dia Art Foundation, New York. Six-month project of shows and public forums. A version also presented at the Museum of Washington University, St. Louis, 1993
	Housing Is a Human Right. Times Square Spectacolor animated signboard Public Art Fund Messages to the Public series, New York
1988	Martha Rosler: Four Works. "Viewpoints on Video" Cable Series organized by the Long Beach Museum of Art. Broadcast throughout California
	American Film Institute Video Festival, Los Angeles. "Premiere" screening of Born to Be Sold
1987	Focus: Martha Rosler. Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston
1907	Global Taste: A Meal in Three Courses. Video installation at Cornell Cinema, Ithaca 1986 Los Angeles Center for Photographic Studies and EZTV, Los Angeles San Francisco Camerawork Electronic Arts Gallery, Minneapolis
1985	University/Community Video, Minneapolis
1983	Fascination with the (Game of the) Exploding (Historical) Hollow Leg. Sibell-Wolle Fine Arts Gallery, University of Colorado, Boulder
1981-82	Watchwords of the Eighties. In "Acting Out: The First Political Performance Series"
2,02 02	Curated by Lucy Lippard. Elisabeth Irwin High School, New York; Documenta 7, Kassel; Oberlin College Art Museum, Ohio; Mercer Union Gallery, Toronto; Dance Theatre Workshop, New York
1981	American guest, Grierson Seminar. Ontario Film Society, Niagara–on–the Lake Optimism/Pessimism: Constructing a Life. Los Angeles–London Performance Exchange. Franklin Furnace and Just Above Midtown/Downtown Gallery, New York
1980	Sketch for a Ritual of Mutual Atonement: For Alice. Interaction Arts, New York Anna Leonowens Gallery, Nova Scotia College of Art & Design, Halifax (with Allan Sekula)
1979	Getting the News. Alberta College of Art, Calgary

	A-Space, Toronto
	University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley
	Institute of Contemporary Arts, London
1978	Against the Mythology of Everyday Life. and/or Gallery, Seattle
	Martha Rosler. Video Free America, San Francisco
	Domination and the Everyday. Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art (LAICA)
	Getting the News. In "What's Cooking II" University of California, San Diego
1977	Martha Rosler. "New American Filmmakers" Series, Whitney Museum of American Art Foul Play in the Chicken House. Long Beach Museum of Art, California
	What's Your Name, Little Girl? CLOSE Artists' radio, KPFK Los Angeles
	Traveling Garage Sale. La Mamelle Gallery garage, San Francisco
1976	Parachute Center for Cultural Affairs, Calgary
1975	The Kitchen, New York (with Allan Sekula)
1974	A Gourmet Experience. University of California, San Diego
1973	Monumental Garage Sale. University of California, San Diego Vital Statistics of a Citizen, Simply Obtained. University of California, San Diego
	Selected group exhibitions
1998	From the Body: Allegories of the Feminine. Museo de Bellas Artes de
	Caracas, Venezuela
	<i>Idea de lugar: Vídeos sobre Latinoamérica.</i> Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid
	In Site 98: Mysterious Voyages: Exploring the Subject of Photography. The Contemporary Museum, Baltimore
	Fast Forward: Trade Marks. Kunstverein in Hamburg
1997	Airport. Photographers' Gallery, London; Nederlands Foto Instituut, Rotterdam Surveying the First Decade: Video Art and Alternative Media in the United States. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; American Museum of the Moving Image,
	New York; and traveling
	Public Service and Other Announcements. Philadelphia Museum of Art
	Artists' Videos from the Late 6o's to the Early 7o's. Kunstverein in Hamburg Multiple Identity. Amerikanische Kunst 1975–1995 aus dem Whitney Museum of American Art. Kunstmuseum Bonn
	Luces, Cámara, Acción, () Corten! (Videoacción: El Cuerpo y Sus Fronteras) IVAM
	Centro Julio González, Valencia
	Views from Abroad III. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Selections from the Whitney Permanent collection made by the Tate Gallery, London
	Defining Eye: Women Photographers of the Twentieth Century. Saint Louis Art Museum
1996	Views from Abroad II. Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, and the Whitney
	Museum, New York. Selections from the Whitney Permanent collection made
	by the Museum für Moderne Kunst
	Inside the Visible. Curated by Catherine de Zegher. Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; National Museum of Women, Washington; Whitechapel Gallery, London;
	Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth
	Art at the End of the Twentieth Century. Selections from the Whitney Museum of
	American Art. National Gallery and Alexander Soutzos Museum, Athens. Traveling
	Incandescent. Curated by Laura Cottingham. Louisiana Museum, Humlebaek, Denmarl
	System Aesthetics: Works from the Permanent Collection. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
	Projections. Nine Artists: Yong Soon Min, Pat Ward Williams, et al. Organized by
1005	Karen Atkinson and Sylvia Bowyer. Pasadena Theaters
1995	25 Years of Video Art. Curated by Barbara London. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Traveled under the auspices of MoMA and the American Federation of Arts
	Africus Biennale. Johannesburg, South Africa
	Public Information: Desire, Disaster, Document. San Francisco Museum of
	Modern Art. Inaugural Exhibition
	Lesezimmer II. Kunstpresse Österreich. Grazer Kunstverein

1994	WarWorks: Women, Photography, and War. Nederlands Foto Instituut, Rotterdam; V & A, London; Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham; The Royal Armouries, Leeds; Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, Ottawa
	Corpus Loquendi: The Body for Speaking. Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax. Traveled to four Canadian venues
	From the Collection: Photography, Sculpture, and Painting. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
	Rudiments d'une musée possible. Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain (MAMCO), Geneva. Inaugural Exhibition
	TV/Media/Science Gobbledegook. Walker Art Center, Minneapolis
1993	The First Generation: Women and Video, 1970–75. ICI traveling exhibition, twenty-one venues in North America and Europe
	Firminy Project. Organized by Yves Aupetitallot. Unité d'Habitation de Le Corbusier, Firminy, France
	The Decade Show. Organized by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo
	Krieg. Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum and Forum Stadpark, Graz
	Desmontaje: Film, video/Apropiación, reciclaje — Demontage: Film, Video/Appropriation, Recycling. IVAM, Valencia. Traveled to five
	European venues
1000	In Transit. The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York
1992	Mistaken Identities. University of California, Santa Barbara. Traveled to five European and US venues
	Video: Two Decades. The Museum of Modern Art, New York Imágenes de Guerra. Centro Cultural Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City
	Wasteland: Landscape from Now On. Fotografie Biënnale Rotterdam III
	Video and Women. Patronato Municipal Cultura de Sebastián, San Sebastián, Spain
1991	Reframing the Family. Video Data Bank Touring Exhibition. Four US venues The Family Show. Artists Space, New York
	Consumer Tools: Personal Visions. The Museum of Modern Art, New York
	S & L: Transactions in the Post–Industrial Era. San Francisco Art Institute
	Artists of Conscience: 16 Years of Social and Political Commentary. The Alternative Museum, New York
1990	The Decade Show. The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York IV Foto Bienal. Vigo, Spain
	My Country 'Tis of Thee, American Museum of the Moving Image, Astoria, New York Video and Myth. The Museum of Modern Art, New York
	Critical Realism. Gallery Perspektief, Rotterdam
1989	Whitney Biennial. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
	A Different War: American Art and the Vietnam Experience. University of Western Washington, Bellingham. Traveled to fourteen venues
	The Fukui Video Biennale. Venues in Japan
	Panorama Video Section, fifth Montréal International Festival of Films and Videos by Women. Cinéma Parallèle, Montréal
	Videotapes from the Whitney Biennial. Exhibition traveling under the auspices of American Federation of Arts
	Making Their Mark: Women Artists 1970–1985. Cincinnati Art Museum; New Orleans
1988	Museum of Art; Denver Art Museum; Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts *Unknown Secrets: Art and the Rosenberg Era.* Organized by ICI. Traveled to eleven US venues
	Committed to Print. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Traveled to five North American venues
	Signs. Traveling photographic exhibition organized by the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
987	Videotapes from the Whitney Biennial. Exhibition traveling under the auspices of
	American Federation of Arts to 21 North American and European venues Terrorising the Code: Recent U.S. Video. Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney.
	Traveled to five Australian and New Zealand venues

Sexual Difference: Both Sides of the Camera. Curated by Abigail Solomon-Godeau. four US venues The Arts for Television. Organized by the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Traveled to eleven other US and European venues Surveillance. Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) Gallery, Los Angeles Whitney Biennial. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York Social Engagement: Women's Video in the 80's. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York National Video Festival. American Film Institute, Chicago 1986 II Bienal de la Habana. National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana Public Address. Billboard project and gallery exhibition, A-Space, Toronto 1985 New York: Ailleurs et Autrement. ARC, Musée de l'Art Moderne à la Ville de Paris Brennpunkt: Kunst mit Eigen-Sinn. Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna Disinformation: The Manufacture of Consent. The Alternative Museum, New York Artside Out. Billboard project organized by Film in the Cities. Billboards in downtown Minneapolis and photographic exhibition at the Pillsbury Center The Art of Memory, The Loss of History. New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York New American Video Art: A Historical Survey, 1967-1980. Whitney Museum of 1984 American Art, New York, and traveling to seven North American and European venues Mediated Narratives. Traveling under auspices of New England Foundation for the Arts Content: A Contemporary Focus, 1974-1984. Hirshhorn Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC Women Artists/Filmmakers. Weatherspoon, University of North Carolina, Greensboro Women and the Media: New Video. Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio Difference: On Representation and Sexuality. New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; Renaissance Center, University of Chicago; Institute of Contemporary Arts, London Videotapes from the Whitney Biennial. Traveling exhibition under the auspices of 1983-85 the American Federation of Arts. Traveled to seventeen North American and European venues Video of the Seventies-The Greatest Hits. Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston 1983-85 Traveling under auspices of the New England Foundation for the Arts 1983 Whitney Biennial. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York Mediated Narratives. Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston Festival Andere Avant-Garde, Brucknerhaus, Linz, Austria Shared Realities: A Cultural Cable Series. Long Beach Cable, California Video Art: A History, Part II. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Traveling Ars '83. Helsinki Athenæum, Finland 1982 Documenta 7. Kassel, Germany Seventy-Fourth American Exhibition. The Art Institute of Chicago Books by Artists. Organized by Tim Guest. Winnipeg; Ottawa; Museum of 1081 Contemporary Art, Montréal: Vancouver; and elsewhere Libres D'Artista/Artists' Books. Centre de Documentaçió D'Art Actual (CDAA), Barcelona Erweiterte Fotografie (Extended Photography). Vienna Secession A Decade of Women's Performance Art. Sponsored by the National Women's Caucus 1980 for Art. Contemporary Art Center, New Orleans, and traveling Public Disclosure: Secrets from the Street. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and City Hall National Video Festival. American Film Institute. Kennedy Center, Washington, DC Issue! Curated by Lucy Lippard and Sandy Nairne. Institute of Contemporary Arts, London Videotapes by Women from the Los Angeles Women's Video Centre. Traveled to 1979 five Australian and New Zealand venues

Second Australian Video Festival. Chauvel Cinema, Sydney. Touring with preceding

Whitney Biennial. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
Southern California Photography Invitational '79. Fischer Gallery, University of
Southern California, Los Angeles

Social Works. Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art (LAICA)

Selected Performance Tapes from the Southland Video Anthology. Traveled to five US venues

Out of the House. Whitney Museum Downtown Gallery, New York

Selected reviews and interviews

1978

Laura Cottingham, "The Inadequacy of Seeing and Believing: The Art of Martha Rosler", in M. Catherine de Zegher, ed. *Inside the Visible*. Boston: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1996. pp. 157–163. First published as "Martha Rosler: Crossing Borders", *Frieze* (Nov.–Dec. 1993).

Therese Lichtenstein, "Beyond the Frame: An Interview with Martha Rosler." Photography (Center Quarterly no. 55), Vol. 14, No. 3.

Marjorie Welish, Interview, Bomb magazine 1993

Frits Gierstberg, "Strategieën voor een nieuwe architectuurfotografie," *de Architect* (The Hague), No. 51 (May 1993), pp. 32–42. Special issue on architectural photography.

Virginia Carmichael, "Martha Rosler's *Unknown Secrets,*" in *Framing History: The Rosenberg Story and the Cold War.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1993. pp. 206–211 *et passim*

Brian Wallis, "Living Room War." Art in America, February 1992

Rosalyn Deutsche, "Alternative Space," in *If You Lived Here*, Brian Wallis, ed. Seattle: Bay Press, 1991. pp. 45–66

Steve Edwards, "Secrets from the Street and Other Stories." *Ten-8 Magazine*, Winter 1989/90

Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "From Gadget Video to Agit Video: Some Notes on Four Recent Video Works." *Art Journal*, Fall 1985 (published 1986)

Abigail Solomon–Godeau, "Photography after Art Photography," in Brian Wallis, ed., Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation. New York and Boston: New Museum and Godine, 1984

Craig Owens, "The Discourse of Others: Feminism and Postmodernism," in Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti–Aesthetic: Postmodernism and Culture.* Port Townsend, Washington: Bay Press, 1983. Reprinted in Owens, *Beyond Recognition.* Berkeley: University of California, 1992

Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art", Artforum, September 1982. Reprinted in Open Letter, Summer–Fall 1983. Special issue, "Essays on [Performance] and Cultural Politicization", Bruce Barber, ed.

Jane Weinstock, "Interview with Martha Rosler". October, No. 17, Summer 1981 ("The New Talkies")

Bruce Barber and Serge Guilbaut, "Interview with Martha Rosler". *Parachute*, October 1981

Martha Gever, "Interview with Martha Rosler". *Afterimage*, September 1981 Micki McGee, "Narcissism, Feminism, and Video Art: Some Solutions to a Problem of Representation." *Heresies*, No. 12 (Vol. 4, No. 3), 1981

Allan Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)," in *Photography*, special issue of the *Massachusetts*

Review, Winter 1979. Reprinted in Sekula, Photography Against the Grain. Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art & Design, 1982

Amy Taubin, "And what is a fact, anyway? (On a Tape by Martha Rosler)", *Millennium Film Journal*, No. 4/5 (Summer/Fall), 1979

Word works and photo/text publications

- "A budding gourmet." Serial postcard novel in 12 parts. First mailed Jan-Apr 1974 Republished in Service (see Books section, below), 1978
- "McTowersMaid." Serial postcard novel in 15 parts. First mailed Sep-Dec 1974 Republished in Service (see Books section, below), 1978 Republished in Socialist Review, No. 58, 1981
- "Immigrating." LAICA Journal (Journal of the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, Spring 1975
- "Kitchen Economics: The Wonder of (White) Bread." In Jessica Jacobs, ed., Word Works Too. San José State University, Spring 1975
- "The Art of Cooking: A Mock Dialogue Between Julia Child and Craig Claiborne." Excerpted in Crawl Through Your Window (San Diego) No. 1, Spring, 1975
- "Tijuana Maid." Serial postcard novel in 12 parts. First mailed Oct. 1975-Feb. 1976 Republished in Heresies, No. 1, 1977
 - Republished in Service (see Books section, below), 1978
- "Losing: A Conversation with the Parents." In Criss Cross Double Cross (Los Angeles), Fall 1976 Republished in Studio International, March 1977
- "A New-Found Career." Serial postcard novel in 12 parts. First mailed Nov. 1976–Apr. 1977 Republished in the LAICA Journal, Oct. 1977, with cartoon illustrations
- "She Sees in Herself a New Woman Every Day." Photographs and text
- First published in Heresies No. 2, 1977
 - Republished in Shoes & Shit: Stories for Pedestrians, Geoff Hancock and Rikki Ducornet, eds., Toronto: Aya Press, 1984
- "Know Your Servant Series, No. 1: North American Waitress, Coffee-Shop Variety." Photographs and text. First published in Entropy (Los Angeles), No. 1 Republished in Impressions (Toronto), No. 24/25, Spring 1980
- "The Restoration of High Culture in Chile." Photographs and text
 - First published as gallery handout
 - Published (text only) in The Minnesota Review, Spring 1979
 - Republished in 3 Works (see Books section, below)
- "Letters on Abusing Women and Trying to Blame Them for It." Serial letter work, mailed in conjunction with "Social Works" show, Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, (LAICA), Sep/Oct 1979
- "Optimism/Pessimism: Constructing a Life." Excerpt from performance text first published in the "Documenta 7" exhibition catalogue. (Kassel: Documenta, 1982)
 - Republished in Heresies No. 20 (Vol. 5, No. 4), 1985
 - Republished in Blasted Allegories, Brian Wallis, ed. New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1987
- "The Opportunity for World Brands," The Art of Memory, the Loss of History. New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1985
- "Martha Rosler Reads Vogue." Transcript of videotape text. In *Profile*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Fall, 1986) Issue devoted to Paper Tiger Television
 - Republished as "Always in Vogue." In Alternative Media (New York), Winter 1986
- Republished as "Always in Vogue." In Utne Reader (Minneapolis), No. 17, Aug/Sep 1986 "The Scope of the Early Warning System." Map and text. In Surveillance (exhibition catalogue). Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), 1987
- "New U.S. Video: If It's Too Bad to Be True, It Could Be DISINFORMATION." Artlink (North Adelaide), Vol. 8, No. 1 (March-May) 1988
- "Born to Be Sold: Martha Rosler Reads the Strange Case of Baby S/M." Subjects/Objects (Providence), Spring 1988
- "The Secret of the Rosenbergs." Gallery hand-out, 1988
- "Brunch á la Loft," in Art Creating Society, Control (London), No. 14 (Sep.) 1990
- "Bringing the War Home," in Reframings: American Feminist Photography, Diane Neumaier, ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994)

Books

Service: A Trilogy on Colonization. New York: Printed Matter, 1978

3 Works. Halifax, N.S.: Nova Scotia College of Art & Design, 1981

If You Lived Here.... The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism. Brian Wallis, ed. Seattle: Bay Press, 1991

Rights of Passage. Kortrijk, Belgium: Kanaal Art Foundation, 1997.

With essays by Alexander Alberro and Anthony Vidler

In the Place of the Public: Observations of a Frequent Flyer. Ostfildern: Cantz, 1998
With essays by Rosler and Anthony Vidler. Sponsored by the Museum für Moderne Kunst,
Frankfurt, and Flughafen Frankfurt

Selected critical writings and catalogue statements

"Lee Friedlander's Guarded Strategies." Artforum, April 1975

Republished in *The Camera Viewed,* Peninah Petruck, ed., Vol. II. New York: Dutton, 1979 Republished in *Modern Arts Criticism,* Joann Prosyniuk, ed. Detroit: Gale Research Press, 1991 Republished in *Photography 1900, to the Present* Diana Hulick, ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice–Hall, 1997

"Under the Rug." In The Fox, No. 3, May 1976

"Moving the Goods." In Artweek, August 1976. In Artforum, September 1977

"Radical Practice." Proceedings of the Caucus for Marxism and Art, 1978. The Caucus, 1979

"Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, and Makers: Thoughts on Audience." *Exposure,* Spring 1979
Republished in *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation,* Brian Wallis, ed.
New York and Boston: The New Museum and David R. Godine, 1984

"For an Art Against the Mythology of Everyday Life." LAICA Journal, June—July 1979
"I'm Thinking of Making Art about Life...." "Social Works" exhibition catalogue, LAICA, 1979
Untitled. In the "Issue!" exhibition catalogue, Institute of Contemporary Art, London, 1980
Untitled contribution to "Radical Attitudes to the Gallery." Studio International, 1980

"A Revolution in Living Color: The Photojournalism of Susan Meiselas." In These Times, June 17–30, 1981

"The System of the Postmodern in the Decade of the Seventies." in *The Idea of the Post–modern:*Who Is Teaching It? Seattle: Henry Gallery, University of Washington, 1981

"Photography Meets the Art World, Professional Rationalization, Academic Marginalization, Quality of Life, and the Economic Crisis." In *Teaching Photography*, Thomas Neff and Tony Frederick. eds. Denver: The Society for Photographic Education and the University of Colorado, 1981 Simultaneously published as *Exposure*, Vol. 18, Nos. 3 & 4

"La fotografia como instrumento de lucha." In Hecho in Latinoamérica II. Segundo coloquio latinoaméricano de fotografía. Mexico City: Consejo de Fotografia, 1981

"Theses on Defunding." In Afterimage, Summer 1982

"Politische Aspekte der Dokumentarfotografie/Political Aspects of Documentary Photography."
In Camera Austria, No. 10, 1982

"Notes on Quotes." Wedge, No. 2, Fall 1982

Republished in *Open Letter* (Toronto), Summer–Fall 1983, special issue, "Essays on [Performance] and Cultural Politicization," Bruce Barber, ed.

"Some Contemporary Documentary." Afterimage, Summer 1983

Contribution to "A Critics' Forum." Art Papers (Atlanta), Vol. 9, Nos. 1 & 2 (Jan/Feb & Mar/Apr 1985)

"Video: Shedding the Utopian Moment." In *Vidéo*, René Payant, ed. Montréal: Artexte, 1986 Also published in *Block* (London), No. 11, 1985/86

Republished in *Reading Video*, Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer, eds. Millerton, N.Y.: Aperture, 1991 Excerpted in the *Next Five Minutes Zapbook*. Amsterdam: Paradiso, 1992

Republished (edited) in *Theories and Documents in Contemporary Art,* Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz, eds. Berkeley: University of California, 1995

- Republished in The BLOCK Reader in Visual Culture, Jon Bird, ed. Routledge: London and New York, 1996
- Translated in Vidéo: Guide de l'Étudiant en Art, Nathalie Magnan, ed. École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, 1997
- "The Birth and Death of the Viewer: On the Public Function of Art." In Art and the Public Sphere, Hal Foster, ed. Seattle: Bay Press, 1987. Dia Art Foundation Discussions in Contemporary Culture No. 1. Proceedings of panel discussion with Thomas Crow and Craig Owens
- "Video and Its Audience." Photofile (Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney), Vol. 5, No. 2 (Spring 1987)
- "Video Art,' Its Audience. Its Public." The Independent, December 1987. Somewhat revised version of the preceding
- "Image Simulations, Computer Manipulations: Some Ethical Considerations." In Digital Photography: Captured Images/Volatile Memory/New Montage. San Francisco Camerawork, 1988. Catalogue essay for traveling "Digital Photography" exhibition (1988: S.F. Camerawork, University of Texas, Arlington; Houston Center for Photography; 1989: CEPA Gallery, Buffalo) Republished in Women Artists' Slide Library Journal (London), No. 29 (June/July 1989) Special issue on technology
- Republished as "Image Simulations/Computer Manipulations" in The Techno/logical Imagination: Machines in the Garden of Art, Neil Sieling, ed. Minneapolis: Intermedia Arts, 1989 Published for an exhibition held by Intermedia Arts and the Minneapolis College of Art and Design "American Art Scene After the Election." F.Y.I. (New York Foundation for the Arts),
- lanuary 1989
- "Contribution to "The Global Issue: A Symposium." Art in America, Vol. 77, No. 7 (July 1989)
- "In, Around, and Afterthoughts: On Documentary Photography." In The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography, Richard Bolton, ed. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990 Originally published in 3 Works (see Books section, above), with additions
- "Teaching Photography: The Critical Issue." New Art Examiner, September 1989. Special issue on art education
- "Image Simulations, Computer Manipulations: Some Considerations." Afterimage, Vol. 17, No. 4 (November 1989). Revised and expanded version of "Image Simulations" (1988) Republished (abridged & slightly revised) in Ten-8 (Birmingham, England), Fall 1991
- "Contribution to "Making Art, Making Money." Art in America, Vol. 78, No. 7 (July 1990), pp. 133 ff. Interviewed by Lilly Wei
- "Matters of Ownership and Control." Artist Trust (Seattle), Autumn 1990 Republished as "The Repression This Time: On Censorship and the Suppression of the Public
- Sphere," in Release Print (Film Arts Foundation), Vol. XIII, No. 10 (Dec/Jan 1990–91) "On the Suppression Agenda for Art." In Social Control and the Arts: An International Perspective, Susan Suleiman, Alice Jardine, Ruth Perry, and Carla Mazzio, eds. Boston: Agni and Boston University, 1990

List of Works

1965 Greetings.

Collage. Original 4' x 8' on Masonite sheet, lost. Political men meet and greet, smiling and shaking hands, while their women hover in the background.

International Style, or International City.
Collage. A dystopian vision of a gigantic
city as an aerial view of airports and new
downtowns.

1966-72 Beauty Knows No Pain, or Body Beautiful.

Series of about 30 photomontages, primarily "adjusted" advertisements and other images of women. Sizes variable.

House Beautiful: The Colonies.

Five photomontages with planetary or otherwordly themes.

1967 Medical Surveillance.

Collage. A panorama of surgical teams, medical apparatuses, student observers, and a patient in the center completely swathed by medical drapes.

Indian Country.

Collage. A welter of small planes hanging low in the sky over mounted cowboys and cowgirls.

1967–72 Bringing the War Home.

Series of twenty photomontages. News photos of war combined with images from architectural and design magazines. Originally disseminated in underground newspapers and on flyers.

Bringing the War Home : House Beautiful. Fifteen photomontages.

Bringing the War Home: In Vietnam. Five photomontages.

1970-73 Untitled (Stuffed sculptures).

Cheesecloth or cast-off clothing stuffed with cotton batting and sewn onto canvas or made into sculpture.

1972 B-52 in Baby's Tears.

Installation with agricultural elements in wooden crate. The shadow of a B-52 bomber (in wide use in Vietnam) cut into a flat of the tender vine called Baby's Tears—.

Some Women Prisoners of the Thieu Regime in the Infamous Poulo Condore Prison, South Vietnam.

Installation with clothing and barbed wire. American women's clothing stamped with the names, dates of birth, and serial numbers of Vietnamese women political prisoners.

Untitled (Playboy).

Collage.

Obsession.

Photomontage. An expansive living room looks out on a plethora of bathrooms.

Big Labor Salutes.

Photomontage. Nixon, brooding alone in the Oval Office, floats above a crowded Chicago convention.

1973 Monumental Garage Sale.

Multi-media installation and performance, held at the gallery of the University of California, San Diego. A garage sale of items including clothing, letters, papers, and art works, advertised in the local papers but held at an art gallery. With an audiotape "meditation" on the garage sale as a capsule image of domestic life in Southern California.

Vital Statistics of a Citizen, Simply Obtained.

Performance. The part-by-part measurement of a woman by men in white coats as she gradually undresses. She then dresses again in a little black dress and leaves the set.

Untitled postcard narrative.

A first-person novelette about everyday life in Southern California.

1974 A budding gourmet.

Serial postcard novel. First-person narrative in 11 parts of a woman who wants to learn gourmet cooking to improve her social standing.

A budding gourmet.

Black-and-white videotape, 16 min. A silhouetted woman describes her efforts to improve herself and her family through gourmet cooking; interspersed with slides of want and plenty, of producers and consumers. martha rosler: list of works

A Gourmet Experience.

Installation at the University of California, San Diego, with video, photo, audio, and slide elements. A sound-and-image shadow banquet with slides of cookbook images, a printed dialogue about gournet cooking, a cooking class, cookbook readings, and a videotape, all divided into "courses" providing food for thought.

The Art of Cooking : A Mock Dialogue Between Julia Child and Craig Claiborne.

Film/video script. Food in its cultural incarnations as an allegory for art making. A work composed almost entirely of quotations from cookbooks.

1974/75 The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems.

Installation with black-and-white photographs and photographed texts. A walk down The Bowery, New York's archetypal Skid Row, represented in a grid of photographs and texts that challenges the representations of the Other and their uses in the art system.

1974–78 From Our House to Your House.

Series of holiday cards, mailed annually. The artist in kitchens and elsewhere, with various impersonal "personalized messages."

1974-79 Backyard Economy, I and II.

Four super-8 films. c. 1974. Watering, mowing, hanging the laundry, in the cycle of domestic life.

Flower Fields. c. 1975.

Minimal painting in the fields, with a glimpse of the stoop labor that makes it possible.

Mission District.

San Francisco, c. 1979. A car ride through the Latino district, viewing cultural and political manifestations.

1975 Diaper Pattern.

Installation with text on cloth diapers. Text composed of real and imaginary remarks by U.S. observers and combatants in Vietnam.

McTowersMaid.

Serial postcard novel. First-person narrative in 14 parts of a woman who starts as a hamburger unwrapper dreaming of bettering the food and ends with a plan to make revolution from a hamburger stand.

Tijuana Maid.

Serial postcard novel. First-person narrative in 11 parts of the experiences of a woman from Mexico who works as a maid in Southern California and who turns to cooking as a way to escape household bondage. In Spanish, with English translation.

Immigrating.

Short text, published in the LAICA Journal (Journal of the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art). A first-person narrative of a displaced New Yorker living with her infant in southern California.

Semiotics of the Kitchen.

Black-and-white videotape, 6 min. An unsmiling woman, the antithesis of the perfect TV housewife, demonstrates some of the hand tools of the kitchen, replacing their domesticated "meaning" with an alphabetic lexicon of rage and frustration. These securely understood signs of domestic industry are redefined by the artist's gestures as vehicles of violence or instruments of mad music.

1976 Losing: A Conversation with the Parents.

Two-page magazine spread with photos and text, in *Criss-Cross Double Cross*. Text with production stills, in *Studio International*. A mock "home Q & A" interview with the parents of a girl who has starved herself to death. The discussion strays into world hunger and political power.

A New-Found Career.

Serial postcard novel. The wife of a rising elevator-company executive talks about her transition from unpaid domestic labor to the world of professionalized art production

"Tijuana Maid."

Film script. The experiences of an 'undocumented" worker from Mexico and her life in the household economy of Southern California.

Know Your Servant Series, No. 1: North American Waitress, Coffee-Shop Variety. Black-and-white photographs and text. Text, along with images from real life and from books, that show you how to differentiate yourself from the waitress.

1977 A New-Found Career.

Serial postcard novel published with cartoon illustrations in the *LAICA Journal*.

Kitchen Economics: The Wonder of (White) Bread.

The social and political history of (white) bread emerges in a kitchen table discussion between grandmother and grandchild.

Three Portraits.

Black-and-white photographs, texts, and a plastic sandal tell three stories of women.

She Sees in Herself a New Woman Every Day. Photo and audio floor installation. Color photos of a woman's shoes and legs arranged in a grid, accompanied by an audiotape of a woman having an imaginary conversation with her mother about "standing on your own two feet."

Traveling Garage Sale.

Multi-media installation and performance with clothing, objects, audio, and slide-projection elements. Held at the garage of La Mamelle gallery, San Francisco.

A portable version of **Monumental Garage Sale** (see above, 1973), with additional slides bought at a garage sale of the effects of a recently deceased man.

The Restoration of High Culture in Chile.
Black-and white photographic installation with text handout. Photos of record albums and of exotic fish accompanied by a story of a trip to Tijuana that reveals the cultural ramifications of the fascist coup in Chile in 1973.

What's Your Name, Little Girl?

CLOSE artists' radio performance, KPFK, Los Angeles. A genealogy of names shows most women's names to be modifications, from short to fanciful, of men's names.

The East Is Red, the West Is Bending.
Color videotape, 20 min. A madly literal reading of a booklet for the new electric wok that instructs the users on how to transform themselves into connoisseurs of exotic foreign cuisines.

From the PTA, the High School, and the City of Dol Mar

Color videotape, 10 min. An exploration, by a squabbling woman and child, of the contents of a Christmas charity basket provided them by a wealthy community.

Losing: A Conversation with the Parents.
Color videotape, 20 min. A distanced narrative, between soap opera and TV interview.
Bereaved parents confront two means by which food is used as a weapon: the internalized oppression of self-starvation (anorexia nervosa); and starvation because of poverty and economic domination.
(See 1976 entry.)

Vital Statistics of a Citizen, Simply Obtained. Color videotape, 40 min. An "opera in three acts." The first is the part-by-part measurement of a woman by men in white coats who record her measurements while a chorus of women produce musical tones in response. A voiceover outlines the processes of internalization by which women and Others are socially constructed. In the second act, a woman breaks eggs into a bowl. In the third act, photos of women and children being measured are accompanied by a litany of crimes against women.

Wedding Day.

Script for film/video. A sniper's shooting of a bride at the church steps occasions a meditation on romance and its domestic sequels.

1978 Domination and the Everyday.

Color videotape, 32 min. An "artist-mother's This is Your Life," this fractured barrage is an inquiry into the relation between the corporation, the media, the state, and the family. As a woman feeds her small son, a radio host interviews an art dealer. Family photos and ads are juxtaposed with a written crawl text based on Frankfurt School analyses compares life in Chile with life in the United States.

1980 Secrets From the Street : No Disclosure.

Color videotape, 12 min. A look at the intersection of cultures and classes in the street life of San Francisco's Mission District, whose stores and restaurants, and the flamboyant Low Rider car culture, attract tourists. This videotape, done for an exhibition held jointly at San Francisco's City Hall and its Museum of Modern Art, argues that accounts of cultural life which omit the question of social power are mythical: The real secret is the obscured relations of economic and political domination.

martha rosler: list of works

Sketch for a Ritual of Mutual Atonement : For Alice.

Performance. A Yom Kippur performance at Interaction Arts, New York, evoking the memory of a dead childhood friend and memorializing the deaths of Palestinian and Israeli children and the on-going war.

1981 De-democracy.

Large two-panel cartoon on paper shows a hulking gorilla in a cowboy hat wielding a big stick over Central and South America.

Optimism/Pessimism: Constructing a Life. Performance. A reassessment of the attempts of the feminist movement to renegotiate gender, sexual, and domestic arrangements between heterosexual couples in relation to external and internal pressures.

1981-82 Watchwords of the Eighties.

Performance at Documenta 7 (Kassel, Germany) and at U.S. and Canadian sites. A silhouetted figure of ambiguous identity, in street gear and carrying a giant boom box, scrawls messages of resistance on projected slides of Reaganist imagery and on an annotated map of Central and Latin America.

1982 Martha Rosler Reads Vogue.

(with Paper Tiger Television). Color videotape, 28 min. A live performance on a public-access cable program deconstructing the messages in *Vogue* and its advertising. Looks at the institutional slants of the magazine industry and the fashion industry's reliance on sweatshops.

1983 A Simple Case for Torture, or How to Sleep at Night.

Color videotape, 62 min. Identifies the totalitarian implications of an argument for torture as it appears in the pages of *Newsweek* magazine. Voiceover analysis and a shuffling of news articles, on geopolitical and domestic subjects, implicate the U.S. government in the support of regimes systematically using torture. Despite its overwhelming barrages, the press is forced to disgorge the facts concealed by its own complicity with repression by being read against the grain.

1985 Balance of Trade.

Billboard (Toronto, A-Space). "Mother of Storms" on the left side and "Master's Voice" on the right represent, respectively, Canada and the United States with the help of weather maps and a broadcasting tower.

Fascination with the (Game of the) Exploding (Historical) Hollow Leg.

Multimedia Installation with performance elements. A simulated war room with altered maps, nuclear-weapons descriptive material, recruitment posters, military clothing, a slide show of U.S. and Euro-pean protest marches and posters, giant newspaper collages, a video loop, an audio tour of North American Radar Air Defense, a library of books on war, and more—all topped by two giant cargo parachutes. A forum on activism and a group reading on World War Two accompanied the installation at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

Global Taste: A Meal in Three Courses.

Three-channel video installation. On one monitor, a cornucopia of TV food ads, precocious children, talking animals, and cute foreigners. On the center monitor, a lecture on cultural imperialism. On the third monitor, an audition for a singing commercial with a baseball theme, for a cola drink.

Relax, No Enemy Foot Steps Here!

Billboard, Minneapolis (suppressed). Maps of Minnesota and of Soviet Central Asia bracket the ends of a billboard. The text explains that Soviets are excluded from the Minneapolis—St Paul area and foreigners are barred from the Soviet region.

Myth Today : Edited for Television.

Billboard, Minneapolis. A photomontage of a luxury high-rise living-room's wrap-around couch backed against windows whose view has been replaced by televised images of the earth.

If It's Too Bad to Be True, It Could Be DISINFORMATION.

Installation with videotape (see below) and photostats of news articles on the suspected government-concocted fiction about MIG fighters in Nicaragua.

If It's Too Bad to Be True, It Could Be DISINFORMATION.

Color videotape, 17 min. The title of this videotape, "If It's Too Bad to Be True, It Could Be DISINFORMATION," was drawn from a *New York Times* article associated with the MIG story that is the primary news subject of this work. The condition of the randomly erased image provides a formal analogue for the role of broadcast television in governmental disinformation and, most particularly, its banally hypnotic, systematic quality.

martha rosler: positions in the life world

1988 Unknown Secrets (The Secret of the Rosenbergs).

Installation with photograph and silkscreen on canvas, wooden towel rack with stenciled towel and JELL-O box, and text handout addressing the notorious case of the convicted "atom spies" Julius and Ethel Rosenberg set against the backdrop of Cold War hysteria and U.S. nuclear belligerence. The work also reveals the special demonization of Ethel Rosenberg as a dangerously unfeminine renegade.

Born to be Sold : Martha Rosler Reads the Strange Case of Baby S/M [or \$M].

Produced by Paper Tiger Television. Color videotape, 35 min. Examines the notorious "Baby S/M" case of "surrogate motherhood," in which a birth mother tried to retain her child. The artist assumes the roles of the various participants, demonstrating how systems of class and gender are played out on the body of the woman.

Three posters for a political convention. He's Not an Actor, But He Plays One on TV. Yuppie Feminism: Kind of Like Rambo. If Pigs Had Wings....

1989 "If You Lived Here...."

Multi-part curatorial project. A project, held at the Dia Art Foundation in New York City, comprising three exhibitions (Home Front; Homeless: The Street and Other Venues; and City: Visions and Revisions) on housing, homelessness, and architectural planning, with work by artists, film-and videomakers, homeless people, squatters, poets and writers, community groups, schoolchildren, and others. With four forums featuring the lparticipation of artists, activists, advocates, elected representatives, academics, and community members.

Brunch à la Loft.

Photomontage in the "Money" series. Dwellers in an art-embelished loft look out over a devastated urban scene.

Housing Is a Human Right.

Times Square Spectacolor Signboard animation. Sponsored by the Public Art Fund. A cartoon animation detailing the drastic cuts in federally funding low-income housing construction in the U.S. accompanied by a steep rise in homelessness.

1990 In the Place of the Public: Airport Series.

Installation with color photographs and texts. First displayed as an ensemble in 1990, but with photos extending as far back as the early 1980s, and in subsequent versions, up to 1998. An exploration of the system of air travel and its associated spaces, primarily the air terminal, as the quintessential space of postmodern life, with texts circumscribing Western cultures, traditional landmarks, and structures by which it has constructed physical and social space.

1991-95 Seattle : Hidden Histories.

Color videotape, 13 min. Compilation of Public Service Announcements, sponsored by the Seattle Arts Commission. One-minute talks by Native Americans in the Seattle area, discussing land, language, religion, and other issues.

An Empty Space in Ottensen, Contaminated by History, Capital, and Asbestos.

Performance. A bus tour, in the project "Stadtfahrt," of the sites of two Jewish cemeteries in Hamburg, Germany, in which the tour members, each reading a paragraph, construct a complex mosaic of texts about land ownership and use, Nazi and other persecutions, shopping centers, bones buried and exhumed, and historical contaminations. Performed during the Jewish High Holy Days.

In the Place of the Public : Airport Series.

Two-channel video installation of terminals and runways. Exhibited primarily as a component of the photo/text installation of the same title (see 1990).

How Do We Know What Home Looks Like? The Unité d'Habitation of Le Corbusier at Firminy, France.

Color videotape, 30 min. A tour of the *Unité*, concentrating on the wing of apartments closed for ten years and on interviews with current residents.

1992 Greenpoint, Garden Spot of the World.

Installation with computer animation, maps, books, photographs, and text handout. A tour of the history and toxic hazards in the artists' home community in Brooklyn, New York, with books suggesting how to fight polluting industries.

martha rosler: list of works

1994 It Lingers....

Installation with color photographs, text, and photocopies. A tableau of photographs of representations of various modern wars, from World War Two to the Gulf War to Bosnia, drawn from newspapers, movies, drawings, and other sources, accompanied by a series of tiny maps of conflict zones from the daily paper.

1995–98 Passionate Signals.

Color photographs of flowers, floral displays, and cultivated landscapes with photos from c. 1986 to the present.

Rights of Passage.

Panoramic color photographs. Road photos of the congested New York metro-politan area, taken from behind the wheel of a car with a damaged windshield and a toy skeleton on the dashboard.

1996 Lesson for Today (with Joshua Neufeld).

Movie-theater intermission slide projection for Santa Monica, California (suppressed). A cartoon shows bricks flying off a schoolhouse and building up a prison, illustrating that the California state budget for prison construction exceeds that for college construction.

1997 Transitions and Digressions.

Color photographs taken in public places, of shop-window mannequins, street posters, museum displays, and subways that reveal the projections of desire, despair, and wry humor. With photos from 1981 to 1997.

Chile on the Road the NAFTA, Accompanied by the National Police Band.

Color videotape, 12 min. Twenty-five years after the fascist coup, Chile is hailed by some as an economic miracle on the fast track to admission into the North American Free-Trade Association. But in view of its recent history of vicious political repression, this news provokes skepticism. In this "music video," the police band plays *Star Wars* while street musicians play popular songs. A gigantic upraised fist turns out to be a Coke billboard, and relatives point to names on the new memorial to victims of the fascist coup.

1998 Rosinenbomber (Candy Bomber and Order Reigns in Berlin).

An installation for the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Berlin Airlift and in consideration of the site of the exhibition in an abandoned supermarket next to a pocket park bearing an East German monument to the Spartacists. This work combined a machine throwing candy with a video installation onto a heap of sand with text by Rosa Luxemburg, cofounder of the Spartacists, and accompanied by one third size models of the Spartacist monument.

martha rosler: positions in the life world

Photo Credits

front cover:

Cargo Cult, 1974. Photomontage.

opposite title page:

Martha Rosler and David Antin learning video production at the University of California, San Diego, Medical School facility, c. 1973.

between title page and introduction:

Nature Girls (Jumping Janes), c. 1967. Photomontage.

permissions:

- p. 41 Courtesy Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.
- p. 8 of gatefold © 1998, John Heartfield, Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.
- p. 94 Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York.
- p. 101 Courtesy A-Space, Toronto.
- p. 103 Courtesy Side-Street Projects, Santa Monica, California.
- p. 124 Courtesy Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz.
- p. 176 Courtesy Dia Art Center.
- p. 179 Courtesy Dia Art Center.
- p. 182 Courtesy Museum of Modern Art, New York.
- p. 188 Courtesy Museum of Modern Art, New York.
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- p. 279 © 1998, Man Ray, Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

photo essays : captions
(in order of appearance)

Bringing the War Home

1966-1972. Photomontage series.

Scatter, Bringing the War Home: In Vietnam Giacometti, Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful Balloons, Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful Patio View, Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful Empty Boys, Bringing the War Home: In Vietnam Cleaning the Drapes,

Bringing the War Home : House Beautiful Vacation Getaway, (newspaper version),
Bringing the War Home : House Beautiful Tron (Amputee), (newspaper version),
Bringing the War Home : House Beautiful

Rights of Passage

1995-1998. Color Photographic series.

Pulaski Bridge, Queens-bound, 1994 Donuts, New Jersey Turnpike, 1995 Delancey & Bowery, New York, 1995 Routes 1 and 9, New Jersey, 1995 Prospect Expressway, Brooklyn, 1995 Leaving the George Washington Bridge, 1997

Body Beautiful

c. 1966–1972. Photomontage series.

Bianchi Bride Transparent Box (Vanity Fair) Wallpaper Baby Dolls (Isn't it Nice?) Untitled (S, M, L) Bowl of Fruit

Transitions and Digressions

1981–1997. Color photographic series.

Philadelphia, 1995 New York City, 1995 Moscow, 1990 Broadway, New York, 1996 Frankfurt Subway, 1983 Madison Avenue, New York, 1996

In the Place of the Public : Airport Series 1981–1998. Color photographic series.

Untitled, O'Hare, 1986 Sea-Tac, Seattle, 1990 Untitled, Salt Lake City, 1983 Untitled, O'Hare, 1989 JFK, TWA terminal, New York, 1990 O'Hare, Chicago, 1994

Colophon

This book was designed in the fall of 1998 in New York, London and Belgium. The book was printed in Brussels by Arteprint.

The typefaces used are Meta, designed by Eric Speikermann, and Sabon, designed by Jan Tschichold. The paper used is Arjo Satimat 135gms. The sections of the book with scripts from installation, photo/text work, video and performances are printed onto 100 RC offset, 90gms.

Ikon Gallery

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Intergalactic sphehod space Will he solve the problem Hurtling toward the sun A nova, of course Out of the Haward catalog Properly pedigreed Time warp jump He, alone, missalculated Or, take two, the computer did it Or an allen kenne hidden absard Anyway, solving the problem is the thing Figuring out the secret To win back to life To fly back to planetfall And get married the And lead a happy life, Skipper

art, photography, video, feminism

interview by

benjamin buchloh

essays by

alexander alberro silvia eiblmayr jodi hauptman annette michelson catherine de zegher



In her diverse work, be it photography, installation, performance, video, critical writing or fiction, Martha Rosler constructs incisive social and political analyses of the myths and realities of a patriarchal culture. Articulated with deadpan wit, Rosler's work investigates the socioeconomic realities and political ideologies that dominate ordinary life. Presenting astute critical analyses in accessible forms, her inquiries are didactic but not hortatory.

"I want to make art about the commonplace, art that illumines social life. I want to enlist art to question the mythical explanations of everyday life that take shape as an optimistic rationalism and to explore the relationships between individual consciousness, family life, and the culture of monopoly capitalism."



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DIKON GALLERY

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