

# HONORING FEMINIST PATHS: THE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

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## SHAPING THE IDEAL

For over 25 years, the Lifetime Achievement Awards for Women in the Arts have been the single most important annual event sponsored by the Women's Caucus for Art (WCA). Conceived in the late 1970's, at a time when women's outstanding achievements went largely unnoticed by the public, the awards were meant to fill a void. The organization's first president Ann Sutherland Harris, who also chaired the first selection committee, clearly stated their mission to the broader membership—they wanted "to publicly recognize exceptional women artists while they were still living."<sup>1</sup> There was no formal age restriction for the award; however, all of the first year's honorees were over 75 years of age. Their names—for example Georgia O'Keeffe and Louise Nevelson—now spill off the lips of just about any well-educated college freshman. Yet at the time, they were virtually unknown. While women in the visual arts have gained numerous sources of public recognition over the years, the awards' parallel function—as an embodiment of the collective spirit of the WCA—continues to this day.

Since the awards' meteoric beginning at the Carter White House in 1979, every year (but two) a select group of eminent artists and scholars from within the WCA has chosen an equally select group of honorees.<sup>2</sup> In metaphorical terms, these new honorees join with those of the past to collectively form the ideal WCA membership. Usually each woman comes to the award with a national reputation for excellence in her field (at least among her women peers, if not her male counterparts or the larger public), and each honoree has built a career on feminist principles to the profound benefit of the broader community. The honorees' 150+ names line the backs of WCA membership forms and fill the WCA website as promotional propaganda. This is the case even though most of these women had lost touch with the organization or were unfamiliar with it, at least until they were swept up into the maelstrom of the awards ceremony, and WCA newsletters began arriving on their doorstep—a benefit of the free lifetime membership granted with each award. But this personal disconnection with the WCA holds little importance. Their legacies embody the collective aspirations of all WCA members, and their risk-taking and candor in the face of opposition and opprobrium inspire younger women. This is the case even though being a feminist in 2007 means something radically different from what it meant to women in the activist 1970s, or during the conservative backlash of the 1980s, or even for women making their way in the global 1990s.

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### BAROMETER OF POLITICAL TRENDS

Over time, the ceremonies have served as both barometer and bellwether of political trends in the WCA. The venues chosen for the awards, the individuals and events associated with the ceremony, and the press surrounding it change each year, yet they necessarily combine to reflect the ambitions, energy, and focus of the WCA. The first ceremony—strategically staged at the White House in conjunction with the College Art Association (CAA) and WCA annual conferences held in Washington DC that year—was the most highly visible of all. The next year offered starkly different circumstances—the Caucus was in turmoil over whether to attend the CAA conference in New Orleans, Louisiana—a state flatly refusing to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). A small but radicalized group of WCA members, committed both to making their feminist presence known at CAA and steadfastly protesting the ERA’s demise in Louisiana, attended the New Orleans conference under the condition that no money be left in the state by a feminist. That year in New Orleans, the WCA presented awards to five artists: Bauhaus textile designer Anni Albers, sculptor Louise Bourgeois, social satirist Caroline Durieux (from Louisiana), and abstract expressionists Ida Kohlmeyer (from Louisiana) and Lee Krasner. Refusing to go to New Orleans altogether, another group of the WCA leadership organized an alternative awards ceremony, again in Washington, DC, and this time focusing on high profile feminists who did not necessarily have deep roots in the visual arts. This essay will briefly trace events during these two pivotal early years in the awards’ history in an effort to uncover their larger implications for feminist interventions on the national front.

As Mary Garrard noted in her essay on the WCA in *The Power of Feminist Art* and Eleanor Dickinson has reiterated in her history of the WCA, the Caucus rapidly gained strength in the late 1970s, evolving from its tumultuous birth as a renegade CAA affiliate group of feminist art historians to an independent non-profit organization with local chapters throughout the nation. While the WCA founders were historians, their first awards were made exclusively to artists. Their concern that women of the past were not adequately represented in the annals of art history was to be rectified with women artists of the present. Today, local chapters consist primarily of artists, with a smattering of scholars, critics, and museum professionals among their ranks. While art historians cease to lead the WCA, the current leadership has honored their groundbreaking work, along with that of women critics and writers, through a steady stream of Lifetime Achievement Awards.<sup>3</sup> It is my hope that this essay, like their provocative accomplishments, will challenge assumptions about our feminist past and stimulate discussion about how best to honor future-wave feminists in an environment where the feminist project has gained iconic status, and as some would argue, has diluted power. Yet feminism’s radical nature has surely helped transform the field of art history with its new focus on visual studies and cultural theory. The tactics first conceived by our older sisters in the

1970s have also been reshaped by a myriad of critics and artists—male and female—eager to assert their identity at the turn of the twentieth-first century.

#### 1979: THE WHITE HOUSE AWARDS

Each of the first four WCA presidents—Harris (1972-1974), Garrard (1974-1976), Judith Brodsky (1976-1978), and Lee Anne Miller (1978-1980)—nurtured close alliances with women in government. With those connections, Miller was the first to establish the annual tradition of an exhibition and ceremony to honor senior women artists.<sup>4</sup> At that time, Joan Mondale was the nation's leading spokesperson for the arts and a vocal supporter of women artists. In 1978, Mondale had attended the convocation for the WCA conference in New York City under Brodsky's tenure,<sup>5</sup> and she was instrumental in presenting the first Lifetime Achievement Awards with Miller in the following year.<sup>6</sup> While a committee of highly visible scholars within WCA had selected the recipients long before the first ceremony,<sup>7</sup> the WCA leadership preferred that someone who might bring even more publicity to the Caucus actually present the awards.<sup>8</sup> Rosalynn Carter was glad to do it, but she felt that if she did, the story would appear on the women's page, whereas if Jimmy did it, the story would be front-page news.<sup>9</sup>

After months of back-door negotiations with the Office of the Vice-President and the First Lady, President Jimmy Carter agreed to honor the five outstanding women artists selected the year before, but he could not commit to a definite date or time because of meetings with the Chinese. So everyone had to wait until the last minute to establish the precise day and time. When the WCA conference program director Charlotte Robinson finally received the green light, she notified the senior art critic for *The Washington Post* Paul Richard, as well as the honorees: social realist painter Isabel Bishop, African American painter and sculptor Selma Burke, portrait painter Alice Neel, sculptor Louise Nevelson, and painter Georgia O'Keeffe (who was awarded in absentia). The ceremony took place in the Oval Office, and it was very impressive.<sup>10</sup> The White House staff was cordial, and photographers from *The Post* were there to cover the story. The President's staff had allotted 30 minutes in his schedule for the ceremony, but Carter kept them there for close to an hour, taking his time to give the awards. Miller had someone in her school hand print scrolls that President Carter presented to each honoree, after Joan Mondale read the award citation. The only members of the WCA present were Miller, Harris, and Robinson.<sup>11</sup> Immediately following that heady yet intimate ceremony, there was enough afternoon light for photographs bundled in coats on the White House lawn. Later that day, the WCA leadership staged a larger, more public ceremony at the Embassy Row Hotel where members of the selection committee read the honorees' citations for the crowd and younger women artists presented each honoree with an artwork.<sup>12</sup> The room was filled to capacity with “wildly enthusiastic Caucus members.”<sup>13</sup> While the President was absent from the hotel, both Joan

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Mondale and Mary Ann Tighe, Deputy Chair of the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) attended the public awards ceremony. Later that evening, the Middendorf/Lane Gallery on P Street threw a spectacular opening for an exhibition of the honorees' works.<sup>14</sup> On the following day, *The Washington Post* ran a feature-length article on the events surrounding the Coalition of Women's Art Organizations (CWAO) and WCA conferences held in conjunction with the White House awards ceremony.<sup>15</sup>

The highly visible and politicized awards of 1979 were the culmination of two years of intense national lobbying to build support for ratification of the ERA and to urge the NEA to include more women on their panels.<sup>16</sup> Members of the CWAO—a political entity cleverly designed by Brodsky to combine the collective forces of the WCA (its primary institutional member) with the full diversity of United States women's arts organizations—and the Washington Women's Art Center (WWAC) had grown savvy to Washington insider politics in their efforts to lobby Congress for the ERA.<sup>17</sup> As Ellouise Schoettler, Executive Director of the CWAO, put it to *The Post*'s art critic in January 1979, "We've done Jimmy Carter a favor, and we know it. We allowed him to follow the firing of Bella Abzug—an insult to all women—with an action wholly safe."<sup>18</sup> A pat on the back for women artists, particularly elderly ones, lets him appear gracious, loving, sensitive—and a little patronizing too."<sup>19</sup> Robinson iterated that "Things work that way in Washington. He lends us the White House and national attention. Perhaps we help him, too."<sup>20</sup> As Garrard noted in *The Power of Feminist Art*, it is a mistake to assume that Carter bestowed the awards on these women—rather they were awards given to women by women.<sup>21</sup> Ultimate responsibility for the awards fell on the WCA selection committee: Harris and Linda Nochlin who co-curated the groundbreaking exhibition "Women Artists 1550-1950" at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1977, critic Lucy Lippard, and professors Athena Tacha, Eleanor Tufts, and Ruth Weisberg.

### 1980: DEEP DIVISIONS, COMMON GOALS

The following year the WCA was pitted against itself. The Caucus had gained from 1977 to 1979 the clout to get into White House and wanted to keep that momentum going in New Orleans in 1980, but important members were steadfast in their refusal to visit an un-ratified ERA state. As Garrard who helped organize the alternative DC conference looked back on it, "I wish I could say that the spirit of complementarity and sisterhood prevailed; in reality, there was a great deal of anger, suspicion, and mistrust on both sides."<sup>22</sup> Since 1977, women's organizations including the powerful CWAO "had made an all-out effort to ratify the ERA through an economic strategy that almost worked: for over three years, they sustained a national boycott of un-ratified states."<sup>23</sup> As early as 1977, the WCA had petitioned the CAA to move the New Orleans conference to another city in an ERA ratified state, yet the CAA board chose to honor its contractual agreements over the strong

objections of its female members. Without the same financial restraints, the WCA board was faced with a dilemma—follow the parent organization and mount a viable convention as the women of New Orleans, the Florida chapter, and the Southeast Women’s Caucus for Art (SWCA) strongly urged them to do; or fully maintain the national boycott that the CWAO and WWAC had worked so hard to enforce. A majority of the WCA board voted with the CAA, despite many members’ adamancy that the national boycott not be broken. That decision was reached with stipulations that 1) they sustain a modified boycott in solidarity with their southern sisters, and 2) that they vocally protest in favor of the ERA while in New Orleans. Ultimately, however, two competing WCA conferences and awards ceremonies were held in 1980.

In New Orleans in late January, the awards ceremony was staged rent-free in Gallier Hall, while the WCA conference panels took place in the Hyatt hotel booked by the CAA.<sup>24</sup> Miller presented awards to five older artists as part of a highly radicalized conference staged in association with a number of performance artists including Suzanne Lacy.<sup>25</sup> Performance art was chosen as a political vehicle in New Orleans for its immediacy, and because it fit with the indigenous traditions of Mardi Gras and jazz processions.<sup>26</sup> Participants created large banners to publicize their support of the ERA, decorated umbrellas to represent women artists of the past, and constructed two 13-foot street puppets to bob among the crowd of men and women who gathered at high noon for the awards ceremony. With agitprop in tow and local TV cameras trained on them, they marched with the New Orleans jazz band “The Third Line” from the CAA conference hotel to Gallier Hall.<sup>27</sup> Mildred Jeffrey, National Women’s Political Caucus Advisory Board Chair, and Helen Milliken, National Co-chair of ERAmerica, positioned themselves front and center with WCA president Miller.<sup>28</sup> The marchers paused to circle and dance in front of Gallier Hall, and once inside, the music and dancing continued.

Instead of a convocation speech, Barbara Rowe offered a very moving portrayal of nineteenth-century civil rights leader and suffragette Susan B. Anthony—a delegate to a much earlier political convention—weeping that the male delegates would not even let her speak. The Mayor of New Orleans, Ernest N. Morial, welcomed the participants to the ceremony, and Milliken gave an address in which she made the point that “The combination of art, politics and the Equal Rights Amendment may seem, on the surface, to make strange bedfellows.”<sup>29</sup> But the conference was timely, and she iterated, “As organizers, as artists, as professionals, as supporters of the ERA we need to look at the lessons of the past, to re-define the goals and our strategies and to move ahead with renewed energy.”<sup>30</sup> Like in Washington, D.C. the year before, to celebrate passing the torch from one generation to the next, an admiring younger artist or student presented each honoree with an artwork.<sup>31</sup> The First Lady of New Orleans, Sybil Morial, who co-chaired the New

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Orleans Arts Policy Task Force, closed the ceremony. Similar to the year before, the Bette Clair McMurray Foundation sponsored an exhibition of honorees' work in conjunction with the conference.<sup>32</sup>

In the weeks prior to the 30 January to 2 February New Orleans conference, local women procured an empty house that was soon to sold or redecorated and placed mattresses on the floor for their visiting sisters who refused to leave their money in the state. Swatting cockroaches in a vacant house was preferable to staying in hotels. A few restaurants graciously offered free meals to the women participants and agreed to donate the money that would have been paid to them to the ERA campaign. To draw more attention to their cause, some Caucus members also entered non-participating restaurants, plastering their menus with bright red stickers—"No Sale Until ERA Passes!" and "We're not eating here!"<sup>33</sup> Shop storefronts were also easy targets for the bright red stickers, and the friction mounted. When their actions began to hurt business, local wealthy women contributors with a stake in the community threatened to pull their promised donations for the conference expenses.<sup>34</sup> The related CAA New Orleans conference was framed on feminist ground as well—as Garrard remembers it, Alessandra Comini delivered the CAA convocation address "with characteristic style and iconoclastic humor, sharply challeng[ing] the 'holy cows and pure bull' of the traditionally phallocentric profession of art history."<sup>35</sup>

The group that refused to break the national boycott of non-ratified ERA states organized a more solemn and dignified awards ceremony on Sunday, 13 January 1980 in the Corcoran Gallery of Art auditorium.<sup>36</sup> The Alternative Conference, *Social Change Takes Courage*, was dedicated to another set of honorees. In line with the broad-based movement to ratify the ERA, these "women of courage" were selected and hailed for their efforts in catalyzing profound change across the entire fabric of American society.<sup>37</sup> The Alternative Conference and related awards were held in the nation's capital—a city not known for marrying art and politics—yet on neutral ground "where voices would be heard, in full and unequivocal support of the ERA effort."<sup>38</sup> The conference was co-sponsored by the CWAO, with the support of the Arizona chapter and the Marxist Caucus.<sup>39</sup> While the New Orleans conference was designed to make a local impact, the Washington conference was to draw attention to the national ERA campaign and the efficacy of a "total economic boycott as a tool to bring about its passage."<sup>40</sup> Norma Broude iterated the conceptual framework for the conference and awards with a public statement: "We as artists see a relationship between the social acts of these women of courage and feminist art performance. We are identifying an aesthetic component in their social and political acts."<sup>41</sup>

To maintain the CWAO's focus on ratification of the ERA, and to move beyond the usually insular goals of artists and art historians coming together in a professional organization, the honorees were chosen for their visibility in the larger

feminist movement and in the fight for civil rights. Bella Abzug had served in the House of Representatives from 1971-77 and was the underdog whose firing as head of the President's Advisory Committee for Women perhaps stimulated Carter's participation in the awards ceremony the previous year. Lynn Campbell had founded Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media and helped organize the first "Take Back the Night" march in San Francisco. Sonia Johnson had been excommunicated from the Mormon Church for her efforts to nationally organize in support of the ERA. Sister Theresa Kane had aggressively advocated for women's ordination in the Catholic Church. Jewish writer Grace Paley was a prominent anti-Vietnam war activist and had staged an anti-nuclear demonstration at the White House the previous fall. Rosa Parks had indelibly marked the civil rights movement, and Gloria Steinem had founded *Ms.* magazine. Similar to the year before, a prominent and admiring woman artist gave each honoree an artwork in tribute to her accomplishments. Both Neel and Bishop who were honored by President Carter offered their works for the ceremony.<sup>42</sup> The public awards ceremony was followed with a speak-out on the ERA, led by Carol Bellamy who was then president of the City Council of New York.

As Garrard has pointed out, the mood of the two conferences could not have been more different, despite their common goals. The DC conference and awards were held in a bastion of institutional power; while the New Orleans group hooked up with street musicians on the fly and slept on the floor with cockroaches.<sup>43</sup> Years later, Garrard was able to clearly distinguish the benefits of their polar opposites:

But I cannot entirely condemn the controversy as wasteful, because it generated on each side a determination to prove itself right to the other, a desire to gain the other's respect. And out of that strange competitive tango came two feminist art performances that had value in themselves. Framed in self-consciously differing terms, each was addressed not only to its immediate audience, but also to the other, each speaking a different theme of feminism to those who would best understand.<sup>44</sup>

Garrard's ability to look beyond the political infighting that infected the protest in New Orleans and so quickly eroded established bonds between women in the DC and New Orleans groups is both remarkable and important for future feminists to consider.

#### CONCLUSIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Many of the circumstances of the late 1970s have irrevocably changed, and over the years, there have been ups and downs in the awards. When Native American artist Charlene Touchette served as chair of the selection committee, there was a concomitant rise in the number of Native American and Latino honorees. With the

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near collapse of the WCA in its financial crisis of the late 1990s, awards and annual conferences were foregone altogether for two years. In that void of national leadership, members of the Los Angeles chapter took it upon themselves in 1999 to host a conference and honor women with more ties on the west coast than in the east. Yet each of those honored had been instrumental in shaping feminist visions worldwide, and all expanded what we have come to know as the field of art.<sup>45</sup> In 2000 under Magi Ammi's tenure as the 16<sup>th</sup> president of the WCA, Eleanor Dickinson, as chair of the awards committee, established specific rules for selecting honorees to insure the awards' feminist integrity, to safeguard their diversity across disciplines in the visual arts, and to further breakdown old racial divides.

The present Lifetime Achievement Awards selection committee consists primarily of past honorees, and most of the members of the early selection committees have since been awarded. The events of the late 1970's are also riddled with inconsistencies—for example, the most visible ceremony was the first, held shortly after the WCA membership had expanded nationally. Its visibility in large part was due to the concurrent highly politicized drive to ratify the ERA. Even so, if we are interested at all in basing future behavior on lessons learned in the past, the events and emotions of these two pivotal years in the history of the awards might offer some useful insights. Indeed, Garrard has spent time reconsidering the events of 1979 and 1980, and many of my conclusions here were prompted by her comments in a recent telephone interview.<sup>46</sup> Garrard's bridge to the past (through her lived experience that I as a younger historian cannot share) puts her in a unique position to see the larger implications for our current practice. Her comments from 1979 remind me that those of us in the arts “are in a unique position to dramatize the feminist issues of our time, through our artistic talents and our great numbers. We are also in a unique position to recognize the powerful role played by aesthetic rightness in courageous and influential social acts.”<sup>47</sup> I think she would agree that vision is critical to our success. We must continually ask ourselves:

- What ideals do we want to embody?
- What purposes do our organizations fulfill?
- What change must be impacted?
- What tools would be most effective to impact that change?

In any age, social change takes courage. And in the arts we have honed the special skills to understand dramatic gestures—performative acts and political tactics—on aesthetic grounds. The aesthetic effectiveness of those acts contributes to their political effectiveness. And conversely, their political power increases their aesthetic significance.

In the late 1970s, the WCA was effective in spearheading the national drive for ratification of the ERA—the primary national political agenda of the late 1970s.

To do it, the Caucus went directly to the seat of power. We might learn from them that the large caches of money that drive our late capitalist economy and are now sought by national non-profits were not a defining factor in their groundbreaking efforts—rather their power rested in their resistance to spend money. It also rested in harnessing the political strength that is gained with a popular movement, in effectively organizing volunteers into networks for communication and change, in building their connections to government officials, and in performing courageous acts far beyond the halls of power.

Money was again an issue when the WCA came back from the cliff of bankruptcy from overspending in the late 1990s. With renewed solvency, a new wave of feminists is now reconsidering how to consolidate their WCA efforts with those of other arts organizations to maximize the potential for broader social change.<sup>48</sup> These dynamics have clear parallels in the past. Perhaps the more diffuse feminist goals of the early twenty-first century (and the globalized marketplace in which we operate) cause us to suffer from nostalgia for the apparent clarity and singular mission of those earlier years. Yet in the turbulent moments of the late 1970s, did our older sisters feel as united in purpose as we would like to so fondly believe? Rather than feeling nostalgia for what has been lost to time, we might do better to gain from the shared aspects of our experience.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Mary Fish, “WCA Announces Presentation of First Annual Awards to Five Distinguished Women Artists in Washington, DC,” *Women’s Caucus for Art Newsletter* 8, no. 1 (1978): 1.

<sup>2</sup> Awards were not given in 1998 and 2000, a period when the WCA was reconsolidating its focus. Usually five to six women are honored each year. However, in 1984 only one woman was honored—Barbara Morgan, famous for her photographs of Martha Graham and other dancers.

<sup>3</sup> Alessandra Comini received the award in 1995; followed by Elsa Honig Fine in 1996; Miora Roth in 1997; Linda Frye Burnham and Arlene Raven in 1999; Thalia Gouma-Peterson in 2001; Linda Nochlin and Marilyn Stokstad in 2002; Suzi Gablik, Grace Gluck,

and Eleanor Munro in 2003; Garrard and Harris in 2005; Elinor Gadon in 2006; and Wanda Corn and Lucy Lippard in 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Judith Brodsky, “Exhibitions, Galleries, and Alternative Spaces,” In *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact*, eds. Norma Broude and Mary Garrard (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), 116. While Brodsky gives Miller credit for initiating the awards, Brodsky, Norma Broude, Cynthia Navaretta, and Ellouise Schoettler have all been credited with forming the idea for such a tradition.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>6</sup> Fish, “First Annual Awards.” 1. Carter had recently appointed the wife of the Vice President as honorary chair of the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities.

<sup>7</sup> Harris, then Chair for Academic Affairs at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, headed the first selection committee. Other members of the committee included art critic Lippard; Nochlin, then Mary Conover Mellon Professor of the History of Art at Vassar College; Athena Tacha, then Associate Professor of Sculpture, Oberlin College; Eleanor Tufts, then Professor of Art History, Southern Methodist University; and Ruth Weisberg, who remains Professor of Art, University of Southern California and serves as a member of the 2007 selection committee.

<sup>8</sup> Charlotte Robinson, telephone conversation with author, September 2006. I also thank Ellouise Schoettler for her insights given in a telephone conversation, September 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Robinson, telephone conversation.

<sup>10</sup> My account of the White House ceremony is from Robinson.

<sup>11</sup> According to Robinson’s personal notes regarding the 1979 awards, “Joan Mondale, the Vice President’s wife took each of the scrolls from me and then handed them to President Carter. He, in turn, gave them to each of the women along with a few words of compliment about their work and their distinguished career. Each of the women (Bishop, Burke, Neel, and Nevelson) responded with a joke or a few words. We were worried that Alice Neel would say something off color or anti-establishment, as that is her usual behavior, but she refrained.”

<sup>12</sup> Tufts read Bishop’s citation, and Ora lerman presented her with an artwork. Tritobia Benjamin read Burke’s citation, and L. Thomas presented her with an artwork. Harris read Neel’s citation, and Pat Mainardi presented her with an artwork. Tacha read Nevelson’s citation and presented her with an artwork. Weisberg read O’Keeffe’s citation and presented her with an artwork.

<sup>13</sup> Robinson, personal notes.

<sup>14</sup> Palmer Lane, a young woman who co-owned the new Middendorf/Lane Gallery with her husband Cris Middendorf, instigated the exhibition. While she had not been involved in the women’s movement, Lane recognized the political significance of mounting the exhibition. Lane and Middendorf underwrote the costs associated with producing the catalogue and the gallery opening, as well as shipping and insurance for the works shown.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Richard, “Women in the Arts,” *The Washington Post*, 31 January 1979. While Brodsky and Navaretta conceived and formed the CWAO as a vehicle for the political lobbying not allowed to the WCA or other women’s arts organizations as non-profit groups, the organization remained necessarily distinct from the WCA. CWAO officers included: Joyce Aiken, President; Schoettler, Executive Director; Weisberg, Vice President for Programs and Goals; Linda Cunningham, Vice President for Membership and Nominating;

Muriel Magenta, Vice President for Publicity and Communications; E. Dickinson, Vice President for Finance; Susan Chaires, Treasurer.

<sup>16</sup> Mary Garrard, “Feminist Politics: Networks and Organizations,” In *The Power of Feminist Art*, 98.

<sup>17</sup> Richard, “Women in the Arts.” Highly visible, the CWAO was said by Richard to represent 60,000 American women among its institutional members. Richard numbered the membership of the WWAC at 700. WCA/CWAO promotional materials from the 1980 Alternative Conference indicate that the CWAO represented 75,000 individuals from 85 national women’s arts organizations, and that the WCA had 4,000 members. (Documents related to the 1980 Alternative Conference were provided to me by Garrard and Broude.)

<sup>18</sup> Because of her outspoken stance, Carter was forced to fire Abzug as head of the President’s Advisory Committee for Women. Lynda Johnson Robb replaced her.

<sup>19</sup> Richard, “Women in the Arts.”

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Garrard, “Feminist Politics,” 98.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>24</sup> Gallier Hall was located at 545 St. Charles Ave.

<sup>25</sup> According to the conference program, the concept and design of the conference were the responsibility of Miller as WCA President and Lacy as Conference Performance Designer. To live out a celebration of Judy Chicago’s *The Dinner Party* on local terms, Lacy organized an enormous potluck and communal performance, *River Meeting: Lives of Women in the Delta*, to open the four-day conference. Mary Beth Edelson led a performance ritual during the *River Meeting* dinner. Eleanor Antin performed *Battle of the Bluffs* at the Contemporary Arts Center. The Feminist Art Workers—Nancy Angelo, Cheri Gaulke, Vanalyne Green, Laurel Klick, and Sue Mayberry—performed *Bill of Rights*, the first in a series of 15 staged in non-ratified states. Betsy Damon and Marsha Grubb performed *The Blind Beggar Woman and the Virgin Mary* for three days at a busy New Orleans intersection. Leslie Labowitz, Barbara Smith, and Faith Wilding performed *The Hunger Strike* at the CAA hotel site. In the CAA registration area, Poppy Johnson performed *This Work is this Work*. Katy Dickinson (who served as the first WCA national administrator under fifth president Susan DeRenne Coerr and was present in New Orleans) provided insights on the New Orleans conference in a telephone conversation with me, 8 January 2007.

<sup>26</sup> Ruth Iskin, *Artweek*, 22 March 1980.

<sup>27</sup> A vivid description of the march and subsequent awards ceremony is provided by Suzaan Boettger, “Art, Politics, Equal Rights,” *Women’s Caucus for Art Newsletter* 9, nos. 3-4 (1980): 10.

<sup>28</sup> E. Dickinson donated an edited videotape of the New Orleans conference to the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. On another occasion with video camera in hand, she spontaneously followed a marching band through the French Quarter as they played funeral dirges in the wake of a hearse carrying the casket of a local jazz great.

<sup>29</sup> Boettger, “Art, Politics, Equal Rights,” 11.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. Mary Jane Jacob read Albers's citation, and Harris presented her with an artwork by Judith Shahn. Weisberg read Bourgeois's citation written by Lippard, and Barbara Zucker presented her with an artwork. Marilyn Symmes read Durieux's citation, and Sue Hirtzel presented her with an artwork. Harris read Kohlmeyer's citation written by Luba Glade, and Ellen Lanyon presented her with an artwork. Audrey Flack read Krasner's citation and presented her with an artwork by Fay Lansner. Three of the honorees were not present due to illness. Katherine Weber of the Albers Foundation accepted the award on behalf of Annie Albers. Susan Witig, Dean, Sophie Newcomb College, accepted the award for Caroline Durieux. Gail Levin of the Whitney Museum accepted the award for Lee Krasner.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. The exhibition was held at the E. Lorenz Borenstein Gallery on Royal Street from 31 January to 16 February 1980. The WCA published an awards catalogue.

<sup>33</sup> Eleanor Dickinson, telephone conversation with author, 2 September 2006.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Garrard, "Feminist Politics," 99.

<sup>36</sup> Garrard and Broude provided me with documents related to the 11-13 January 1980 Alternative Conference. Conference events also took place at the WWAC offices at 1821 Q St. NW, lower level and D.C. Space at 443 7<sup>th</sup> St. NW.

<sup>37</sup> Panel topics at the conference included: "How artists change the community;" "The great women artists' issue: A reappraisal, eight years later;" "The old and new past: Perspectives on teaching and art history;" "The new future: Feminist art education;" and "Feminist performance and social change."

<sup>38</sup> WCA/CWAO, "Details of the Conference," 11-13 January 1980.

<sup>39</sup> Garrard, "Feminist Politics," 99.

<sup>40</sup> WCA/CWAO, "Details of the Conference."

<sup>41</sup> From documents related to the Alternative Conference.

<sup>42</sup> Bishop, Brodsky, Vivian Brown, Neel, Miriam Schapiro, May Stevens, and June Wayne offered their works to the honorees.

<sup>43</sup> Garrard, "Feminist Politics," 99.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> In keeping with the Los Angeles conference, a number of the 1999 honorees were selected to focus attention on Southern California as a nucleus for the early feminist movement. They included muralist Judy Baca for her groundbreaking work with the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) in Venice, CA; artist Judy Chicago for her contributions in establishing the feminist art movement on the West Coast; Los Angeles performance artist Linda Frye Burnham for founding the critically acclaimed High Performance Magazine; African American artist Evangeline Montgomery for fostering cultural diversity in arts diplomacy abroad; writer Arlene Raven for bringing a critical voice to the feminist movement; and Los Angeles-based performance artist Barbara T. Smith for her innovative and collaborative works.

<sup>46</sup> Garrard, telephone conversation with author, 6 October 2006.

<sup>47</sup> Garrard, "Conceptual Ideas about the 1980 Women's Caucus for Art (WCA) and the Coalition of Women's Arts Organizations (CWAO) Alternative Conference, Washington, DC, January 11-13," (personal papers, photocopy).

<sup>48</sup> Discussion centered on this topic at the WCA annual board meeting held at the Graymoor Spiritual Center, Garrison, New York, 23-25 July 2004 under the direction of WCA president Dena Muller.