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and sagacity of the businessman, the (male) artist and the lady shared an exclusive social sphere outside the mainstream of pedestrian activity. Contemporary attitudes on the nature of their inner make-up may have strengthened the artist's tendency to identify with woman. The male artist was seen as having a feminine orientation, since those qualities viewed as inherent in the creative personality—inwardness, subjectivity, and intuition—were essentially regarded as those of the delicate sex. Like woman, the artist was believed to possess an "intimate" personality, and like her his essence was ultimately "inexplicable."<sup>36</sup>

Due to similarities in their social situations and perceived affinities between their interior dispositions, the artist and the lady were intimately linked to the world of art in the late-19th century. John White Alexander's iconography seems to give expression to these correspondences, with the female functioning as the muse for art and, perhaps, as metaphor for the artist himself. •

Research for this article was supported by fellowships from the University of Minnesota and the Smithsonian Institution. For her continued willingness to answer questions about Alexander's art, I thank Irina A. Reed, the artist's granddaughter.

- Lloyd Goodrich, *Three Centuries of American Art* (New York: Praeger, 1966), 48. Unless indicated otherwise, all references to Alexander's writings and the criticism of his art are from the John White Alexander Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; gift of Irina A. Reed.
- Arthur Jerome Eddy, *Cubists and Post-Impressionism* (Chicago: McClurg, 1914), 189-90.
- The iconographic significance of the interior in European symbolism is well documented in two exhibition catalogues by the Brooklyn Museum, New York: *Belgian Art: 1880-1914* (1980) and *Northern Light: Realism and Symbolism in Scandinavian Painting, 1880-1910* (1982). For parallels between symbolist literary and visual motives of the interior see Sarah Burns, "A Symbolist Soulascape: Fernand Khnopff's 'I Lock My Door Upon Myself,'" *Arts Magazine* (January 1981), 81-86. Celia Betsky persuasively argues that the theme of the interior reflects a growing privatization of sensibility in American culture at the turn of the century in "In the Artist's Studio," *Portfolio* (January/February 1982), 32-39. Related issues were discussed in her paper presented at the 1981 meeting of the College Art Association, "Inner Visions, Inner Rooms: The Meaning of the Interior in Late 19th-Century American Painting."
- Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*, Daniel Russell, trans. (New York: Orion, 1969), 157.
- See Henry R. Poore, *Pictorial Composition and the Critical Judgment of Pictures: A Handbook for Students and Lovers of Art* (New York: Putnam, 1903; rpr. 1937), 123-29.
- "Need Good Digestion to Appreciate Beauty," *New York Evening Mail*, December 10, 1910.
- Theodore Child, *The Desire for Beauty* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1892), 51.
- On the revival of Vermeer's art and his impact on Dewing, see Judith E. Lyzcko, "Thomas Wilmer Dewing's Sources: Women in Interiors," *Arts Magazine* (November 1979), 152-57. On Dr. Mitchell's rest cure, a treatment he administered to Edith Wharton, Jane Addams, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and other accomplished women of the period, see Ann J. Lane's introductory notes to *The Charlotte Perkins Gilman Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 1980).
- Quoted in J. Walker McSpadden, *Famous Painters of America* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1916), 369-70.
- Sandra Leff first notes the title's allusion to Aethlia in her catalogue, "John White Alexander" (Graham Gallery, New York, October 21-December 13, 1980), 28.
- For an excellent discussion of fin-de-siècle mirror symbolism,

- see Jeffery Howe, "Mirror Symbolism in the Work of Fernand Khnopff," *Arts Magazine* (September 1978), 112-18.
- Camille Mauclair, *Nouvelle Revue* (Paris), May 15, 1896.
  - Henri Pène du Bois, *New York Journal*, November 28, 1902; Sadakichi Hartmann, "A Painter of Women," *The Stylus* (January 1910), 3.
  - George Coes, *The Spiritual Life: Studies in the Science of Religion* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1900), 236-43.
  - Havelock Ellis, *Man and Woman* (1894; rpr. New York: Arno, 1974). See, in particular, chapters 11 and 12: "Hypnotic Phenomena" and "The Affectability of Women."
  - Octave Uzanne, *The Modern Parisienne* (English ed., New York: Putnam, 1912), 226. On women and music see E.A. Randall, "The Artistic Impulse in Man and Woman," *The Arena* (October 1900), 415-20. Randall's argument—that woman's emotional depth makes her appreciate and interpret music well, but that she lacks the ability to compose—is repeated in much of the period literature.
  - "Women and Art," *The Plain Dealer* (Cleveland), February 22, 1914.
  - The Leader* (Pittsburgh), December 12, 1913.
  - Mauclair's comment is in reference to Albert Besnard's feminine imagery (*Albert Besnard: L'Homme et L'Oeuvre*, Paris, 1914). Cited and translated from the French in Denny Carter, "A Symbolist Portrait by Edmond Aman-Jean," *The Cleveland Museum of Art Bulletin* (January 1975), 9.
  - "Women of Leisure," *The Century Magazine* (August 1900), 632-33.
  - Edgar Saltus, "The Mystery of Beauty," *The Cosmopolitan* (December 1899), 148.
  - Théophile Gautier, *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835; English ed., Joanna Richardson, trans., New York: Penguin, 1981), 39.
  - Emily Burbank, *Woman as Decoration* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1917), xiii, 13-20. Burbank also illustrates Alexander's portrait as an example of decorative line and color (pl. XVI).
  - For examples of his male portraits see those of Thomas Nast (1887), Mark Twain (c.1903), and Booth Tarkington (1906-1907) at the National Portrait Gallery, Walt Whitman (1889), Metropolitan Museum; August Rodin (1899), First National Bank, Chicago; Chester A. Arthur (1907) and Grover Cleveland (1911), New York Chamber of Commerce. Although he accepted portrait commissions from women, female family members and friends, actresses, and sometimes professional models posed for his "ideal" pictures.
  - For diagram of "Hogarth's Line of Beauty," see Poore, *Pictorial Composition*, 1937 ed., 124.
  - "Woman Developing Mannish Figure While Man is Becoming Effeminate," *New York Evening World*, November 23, 1910.
  - Grant Allen, "Woman's Intuition," *The Forum* (May 1890), 334.
  - Quoted in Paul Jordan Smith, *The Soul of Woman* (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Co., [1916]), 24-25. Other evidence, however, supports Strindberg's misogyny. In his review of Michael Meyer's 1985 biography, *Strindberg*, *New York Times Book Review*, September 1, 1985, 3, 21, Eric Bentley quotes the playwright: "Woman, being small and foolish and therefore evil should be suppressed, like barbarians and thieves. She is useful only as ovary and womb." Ed.]
  - Henry James, *The American Scene* (New York, 1907), quoted in Milton A. Mays, "Downtown with Henry James," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* (Spring 1972), 114.
  - That the male artist has an "intimate" personality and "inexplicable" essence is asserted by Child, *Desire for Beauty*, 30. His possession of feminine intuition is mentioned, for example, in Allen, "Woman's Intuition," 339-40. Henry James also seems to have recognized the feminine components of his temperament, as Lisa Appignanesi argues in *Femininity and the Creative Imagination: A Study of Henry James, Robert Musil and Marcel Proust* (London: Vision Press, 1979). For illuminating comments by James, see, in particular, 32-23.

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## The Nude Photograph: Some Female Perspectives

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When in the late 1960s and early 1970s women began again to question their roles in society, so too did they challenge images of themselves in art and commercial media. Women not only imputed the way men viewed them, they questioned the way they viewed themselves. As a result, we see changes in the way women photographers portray themselves, other women, and female relationships. The influence has extended as well to men photographing the female nude and has made the male nude a more frequent subject for both men and women.<sup>1</sup> Further, for many photographers of the nude, sexuality, whether from a heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual perspective, is a primary issue; what seems to be important, however, is not what direction sexuality takes, but the energy it releases.<sup>2</sup>

Current attitudes toward nude photography are rooted in the work of European and American performance and body artists and those creators of happenings in the late 1950s and early 1960s who began questioning the separation of art activities from daily life and affirmed the body itself as a valid art instrument. American performers Carolee Schneemann, Lucinda Childs, and Joan Jonas, among others, aided in the evolution of the female image from a carrier of purely physical allure to a thinking, active artist. An interest in the autobiographical, subjective, and ritualistic aspects of art emerged in works performed throughout the 1970s by Ulrike Rosenbach and Rebecca Horn in West Germany, Ulrike Pezold in Austria, Gina Pane in Italy, and Hannah Wilke and Mary Beth Edelson in the United States.

One of the first books to deal specifically with photography by women was *The Woman's Eye* (1975), edited by Anne Tucker.<sup>3</sup> In the same year one of the first exhibitions of women's photographic works, "Women of Photography: An Historical Survey," was held at the San Francisco Museum of Fine Arts.<sup>4</sup> Anthologies of women's photographs, including *Women See Woman* (1976)<sup>5</sup> and *In/Sights* (1978),<sup>6</sup> dealt specifically with how women felt about themselves. A section on photography was included in the first large European exhibition of women's artwork, "Kunstlerinnen International 1877-1977," held in Berlin.<sup>7</sup> Anne Tune's book, *Körper, Liebe, Sprache* (Body, Love, Language),<sup>8</sup> an anthology of women's art addressing eroticism, and the traveling photographic exhibition,



Fig. 1. Elsa Dorfman, *Myself at the Park Lane* (1979), black-and-white photograph, 3½" x 5".

"Typisch Mann? Frauen fotografieren Männer" (Typical Man? Women Photograph Men), circulated in the following years as did an issue of France's *Photo* magazine devoted to nude self-portraits by women.<sup>10</sup>

Gay and lesbian photographers have encouraged a wider range of sexual awareness and, since the late 1970s, bisexuality and androgyny have been openly included as possible channels for erotic energies. Femininity and femaleness and masculinity and maleness are receiving new connotations which break down old conventions. The collaboration of Judy Dater and Jack Wellport on *Women and Other Visions*<sup>11</sup> and the mutual influence in the works of Swiss artists Manon and Urs Lüthi are but two examples of male/female exchanges occurring today in nude photography.

### WOMEN VIEW THEMSELVES

Self-portraits from the early years of the women's movement often depict pensive women peering into mirrors. This subject not only provided a way to solve the technical problem of the photographic self-portrait, it also reflected an effort on the artist's part to discern her "true self." For example, in several of her images from the mid-1970s, Linda Benedict-Jones (American, b. 1939) stares blankly into mirrors hung on stark walls, and, in Elsa Dorfman's (American, b. 1937) *Myself at the Park Lane* (1979; Fig. 1), the artist appears as a modern version of Willendorf, warm and soft, far



Fig. 2. Manon, *Self-Portrait with Sandro Salamandro*, from 36 Sleepless Nights Series (1979), black-and-white photograph, 40 x 30 cm.

from the sleek fashion-model ideal. In Erica Lennard's (American, b. 1950) *Self-Portrait, New York City, Autumn, 1974*, the artist is again alone. The photograph is cut, leaving a torso with no face to express a personality. One hand covers the pubic hair, giving the image an "I-want-to-look-at-myself-but-I-don't-dare-to" feeling.

An early European experiment in self-portraiture was the small book, *La Femme et...* (1975), by Annette Messager (French, b. 1943).<sup>12</sup> Messager used her body as experimental material, in one image transforming her pubic hair into a man's beard and her breasts into eyeglasses. In another she "pierced" her breast with an inked-on diaper pin to denote the binding commitment of childbirth.

Self-exploration continues in the work of Toto Frima (Dutch, b. 1953), whose subject is herself exclusively. Asked if she ever tired of her model, she replied firmly, "No." For Frima the end product is less important than the process: "I don't try to improve my work by working hard and thinking more, but I try to improve myself by doing better pictures. . . . I myself am more important than my pictures."<sup>13</sup> During three one-year periods—1972-73, 1977-78, and 1982-83—Friedl Kubelka-Bondy (Austrian, b. 1946) created *One-Year Self-Portraits*.<sup>14</sup> She made daily images of herself and at the end of the year mounted them together on large sheets of paper, creating a record of her changing emotions, including indifference, anger, and boredom with the project itself. Many, but not all, of the self-portraits are nude. The result is an unusual view of a moody young woman growing as a wife, mother, and professional photographer.

In a 1979 self-portrait Judith Black (American, b. 1945) opens her bathrobe to reveal to the viewer a tiny, sagging breast. The bags under her eyes, tousled hair, and drawn mouth depict her early-morning weariness as a working mother.

## ROLE-PLAYING

Playing with identity, changing guises, experiment-

ing with new possibilities—these themes have been present in women's photography since the onset of the women's movement. In self-portraits from 1978 Jacqueline Livingstone (b. 1943) and Karen Plezur (n.d.), both Americans, show their dissatisfaction with the traditional plight of womanhood, sometimes known as the "3-K's"—*Kinder, Kirche, Küche*. Livingstone's photo of a woman defecating in front of a TV set and a sleeping child declares brutally that this is all a pile of shit, while Plezur's image of a woman folded like sheets in a linen closet attests to the laming effects of an all-too-narrow spectrum for female behavior. Jo Spence (British, b. 1934) and Terry Dennett (British, n.d.) reverse the social stereotypes in "work of an . . . instructively political nature."<sup>15</sup> They produced in the 1980s a series of image-pairs called *The History Lesson: Self as Image Series*. One set, entitled *Industrialization*, juxtaposes an outstretched idealized female nude in the shade of a tree on a misty field with a standing, wrinkled, not-so-perfect naked female facing a landscape blighted with electrical poles. Susan Butler wrote of these images:

One cannot from this juxtaposition easily derive the familiar myth of woman-as-nature which so often underlies and motivates the photographic image of woman (twentyish, 36-25-36)-in-nature. Rather, one is forced to question whether it is possible for landscapes to be "natural" anymore, and to ask what possible place woman can occupy in a world increasingly dominated by a largely male-produced technology.<sup>16</sup>

Swiss photographer Manon (b. 1946) also works with role-playing, using herself and others as models. In her numerous portraits and self-portraits from the series 36 Schlaflose Nächte (36 Sleepless Nights), Ball der Einsamkeiten (Ball of Lonelinesses), and in her 1981 book *Identität, Selbstdarstellung, Image* (Identity, Presentation of Self, Image),<sup>17</sup> she experiments with eroticism, writing:

I see one of the great opportunities of our generation in men as well as women increasingly living out their "opposite-sex" characteristics. Psychological emphases which until now have been perceived as sex-specific are slowly being blurred. This is expressed in an equalization in optical presentation. Through this, erotic tension could become subtler; mutual understanding could become more possible.<sup>18</sup>

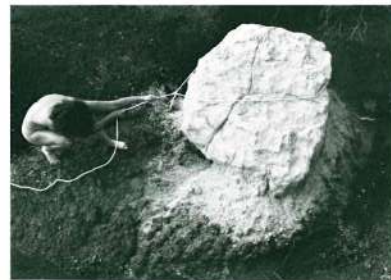


Fig. 3. Judy Dater, *Self Portrait with Rock* (1981), black-and-white photograph, 40 x 30 cm.

In the double *Self-Portrait with Sandro Salamandro* (1979; Fig. 2) from the 36 Sleepless Nights Series, Manon switches the traditional male artist-female model roles. As the clothed artist on the right, she faces only herself as nude model, but as the nude model on the left, she carefully scrutinizes her clothed self with the nude male, whom she appears to be holding not in tenderness, but in restraint. The harsh light creates sharp shadows, which become the only relief in the stark setting.

Americans Cindy Sherman (b. 1954) and Judy Dater (b. 1941) rely on props and accessories (with only hints of nudity) in their photographic role-playing. Playing ambivalently with American starlet and schoolgirl images of the 1950s and early 1960s, Sherman, in more than 125 large-format color images, is both personal and personifying in her admiration for the security these roles afford while simultaneously doubting their validity. *Untitled #103* (1982), for example, portrays the suffering face—unrequited love?—of a blonde Sherman wearing a saten, lace-edged slip which has fallen down to just above her nipples. But the great technical quality of the photograph preempts its sleaziness. The viewer is left to wonder if Sherman identifies with or is mocking her B-movie role.<sup>19</sup>

Dater's role-playing self-portraits include a *Cibachrome* series from 1982-83, which includes *Leopard Woman*, a blonde in tight-fitting spotted jumpsuit unzipped to the waist and *Ms. Clingfree*, a brunette carrying the accoutrements of the perfect housewife—broom, Ajax, dustpan—while wearing a pink tutu, an image that hints at the titillating "French maids" of pornographic photography's past. But Dater refuses to titillate, even to make a point. Nor does she hide behind the images, as does Sherman.

## RITUAL

The double self-portraits of 1978-82 by Dutch artists Diansa (Blok) (b. 1952) and Marlo (Broekmans) (b. 1953) have provoked controversy in Europe because of their energy, aggression, and blatant sexuality. In 1982, when the pair began to work separately, Marlo produced *The Fall Series*, which incorporated a healing ritual similar to those described by Joan Halifax in *Shamanic Voices*.<sup>20</sup> Halifax describes rituals that attempt to dissolve sexual differences in an effort to bring the world from a state of disturbance to a state of balance; for example, male shamans in Siberia transformed through ritual into "soft men" or androgynes, and a "man-like" woman of the northwest American Kutenai tribe metamorphosed into a warrior. Using surprisingly similar language, Marlo writes of her own transformation during the making of the series:

I use my naked body as a symbol of the naked soul moving into that state of innocence that makes the way for communication with devil or god. It is like being a warrior without armour. I am doing the ritual of the first woman creating the second with whom to relate, becoming the divine twin, the schizophrenic. The acts are sexual in this sense of desire for reunion. . . . My work can be seen as alchemical research. . . . Whereas I am the medium of artistic energies flowing through me, the camera is my medium because it deals



Fig. 4. Daniela Zehnder, *Untitled* (1984), black-and-white photograph, 30 x 40 cm.

directly with reality, manipulates it; photography is for good reasons seen by "primitive people" as magic.<sup>21</sup>

Judy Dater used ritual in her series of nude self-portraits from 1980. In *Self-Portrait with Rock* (Fig. 3), for example, she faces the Promethean task of wrestling with a large rock, alone, under the hot sun. This aggressive interaction with the environment emerged from a process which, according to Dater, began with more passive, hesitant works. She wanted her

body to express through its posture and relationship to various forms found in nature a sense of what I was thinking and feeling. This was partly motivated by a direct need to make pictures of nude women (in this case myself) that were not passive and not the classical object of male-dominated desire. I wanted to create a monumental heroic if you like, a new ideal—someone to be reckoned with.<sup>22</sup>

The desert, the setting for many of Dater's self-portraits, has been, as Lucy Lippard noted, "the traditional geography of revelation."<sup>23</sup>

Cynthia MacAdams's (American, b. 1939) brooding prints of naked women and children in southern desert territory were collected in her book, *Rising Goddess*.<sup>24</sup> MacAdams's women, whether adolescent, pregnant, or in mid-life, stare at the viewer, unmoving. The energy is contained, the women passive. MacAdams suggests ritual transformation in her work:

I see us heading into the Aquarian Age—a blending of right and left brain—an androgynous awakening of all human beings on the planet, a unification of energy. . . . When one is conscious of bondage, one is free to change. As an artist I am helping to mend woman and nature and to restore peace and harmony to the earth.<sup>25</sup>

Ingeborg Lüscher (Swiss, b. 1936) incorporated ritual and the nude in some of the over 150 Zauberpotos (Magic Photographs) she has created since 1976. She asked family and friends to do "magical things" for the time it took her to expose 18 black-and-white photographs of them; some of the subjects equated magic with nudity.

## WOMEN VIEW EACH OTHER

A new relationship between photographer and model



Fig. 5. Mellon, *Untitled* from Angel Peak portfolio (1981), black-and-white photograph, 9' x 11".

has also developed. Starr Ockenga (American, b. 1936), for example, created a color series of naked—not "nude" in the traditional sense—children and women, where "the fine line between blatant eroticism and straightforward present state [has] been scrupulously observed."<sup>77</sup> There is a trust here, a relaxed posing which implies a friendly relationship between photographer and subject. Since the usual erotic clues, such as ruffled bed or seductive look, are lacking, and the bodies portrayed are definitely unclothed, viewers are often confused by Ockenga's images. She explained: "Lolling about on beds or reclining in languid postures suggests too much leisure. I want a stronger and more serious, a less easy confrontation between subject and viewer."<sup>78</sup>

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, West Germans Rita Kohmann (n.d.) and Karin Szekessy (b. 1939) portrayed nude women and children in friendly, but not sexual, relationships. Kohmann's 1968 photograph of a commune in Cologne, for example, is a "slice of life"—people are gathered drinking coffee and watching the kids—the only difference is that they are without clothing.

Among the many other women photographing the female nude in nonconventional modes are Deborah Turbeville (American, b. 1937) and Sarah Moon (British, b. 1938), who, in the 1970s, created a new soft-focus aesthetic for the pages of *Vogue* magazine. Here women appear in a closed, languid world of lace and tea cups, in what is perhaps a counterreaction to the exertions of the women's movement to free females from the passive, fashion-plate image.

Other images of the nude female vacillate between extremes of tenderness and horror. Hannah Wilke (American, b. 1940), for example, created large-format color photographs of her mother undergoing several unsuccessful cancer operations. Close-ups of the mother's scarred, emaciated, stitched body are shown in heart-wrenching contrast to Wilke's young, unblemished self. Daniela Zehnder (Swiss, b. 1949) has mon-

tagged group portraits of bodies writhing and rolling across eerie, rocky landscapes suggestive of atomic devastation (1984; Fig. 4).

Female nudity is combined with physical activity in Chris Enos's (American, b. 1944) joyous portrait of a woman leaping and jumping in a garden setting. The portrait challenges the strict confines of traditional posed studio nudes, creating the kind of images not seen since Hungarian-born Martin Munkacsy's (1896–1963) athletic fashion photographs for *Town and Country* and *Harper's Bazaar* in the 1930s.

The baby as nude has become the subject of several women photographers. Part of their fascination is certainly the softness and innocence of baby skin, as in portrayals by Linda Benedict-Jones and Joanne Leonard (American, b. 1940), and part is the complicated balance of tension and tenderness in mother-child relationships. Lynn Kellner's (American, n.d.) *Lily and Her Three Girls* from her *Mothers and Daughters* Series (1980), for example, depicts a tiny, thin, nude woman with naked babies at either breast, while a third child cuddles close by. The mass of children's forms equals that of the mother and for all the warmth of the photograph, one is left wondering how this mother will survive the demands of child-rearing.

#### WOMEN PHOTOGRAPH MALE NUDES

When Imogen Cunningham's nude portraits of her husband were published in Seattle in 1915, they created a scandal. The image of the nude male has never been as prevalent as that of the female, and women who adopt it still risk opprobrium. Indeed, censorship laws in some countries prohibit publication of images of male genitalia and pubic hair; female breasts and buttocks are almost always acceptable.<sup>79</sup> The book *Women Photograph Men*, published in 1977,<sup>80</sup> while it included male nudes, discreetly excluded penises.

One of the earliest exhibitions to deal specifically with photographs of the male nude by both men and women was organized in 1978 at the Marcuse Pfeiffer Gallery, New York.<sup>81</sup> In *The Male Nude in Photography*, a book published a year after the exhibition, Pfeiffer wrote:

Almost without exception the critics were negative about the subject matter and almost without exception the critics were male . . . I do not think that the critics would have been as bothered if the medium were not photography. In painting and sculpture this controversy has long since been put to rest. Photography is more highly charged with reality, or a facsimile thereof, than any other medium, and therefore has more power to evoke response.<sup>82</sup>

Ben Lifson, *The Village Voice* critic, wrote that "a man's body doesn't lend itself to abstraction like a woman's," while John Ashbery, then at *New York* magazine, commented: "Nude women seem to be in their natural state; men, for some reason, merely look unnatural."<sup>83</sup>

Women photographers of nude men have been criticized for turning men into "sex objects," for doing to men what they resent having been done to them, especially if the pose echoes academic nude paintings of women or the *Playboy* or *Penthouse* variety. In a

spoof on this photographic foible, Annette Leyener (West German, b. 1958) created *Sex Quartett* (1981): she posed four men in exactly the same way as were four women on a set of "nude" playing cards. The ridiculousness of the male images makes it apparent that Leyener is not interested in merely exchanging traditional sex roles.

Dianora Niccolini (American, b. 1936), in her *Nude Male Series* (1976), created a group of photographs of active, unclothed men who are neither overtly sexual nor threatening. One views *Men Fighting*, for example, with the same pleasure one gets from witnessing males' sinuous bodies at play. Niccolini writes:

Photography of the male nude was relegated to the realm of pornography, while photography of the female nude was elevated to the realm and status of art. Therein lay an incredible and outrageous double standard that compelled me to create my male nude series in which I purposefully confronted the viewer with the male nude in all of his unabashed glory and nude splendor in a very non-sexual way.<sup>84</sup>

Some of Niccolini's work is included in Arno Minkkinen's *New American Nudes*,<sup>85</sup> as are the works of several other talented women. Minette Lehmann (American, b. 1928) shows men (and women) with moles, distended bellies, and slumped posture, yet these images from the 1970s are gentle and compassionate. Tamarra Kaida's (American, b. 1946) *Fathers and Sons Series* (1980) is filled with quiet insight. One photograph shows a lanky son similar to his father in mood and body build, while subtle differences enhance both their connection and their separateness. Barbara DeGenevieve's (American, n.d.) *Four Graces* (1979), a spoof on art history's ubiquitous *Three Graces*, Paris's choice among three female beauties, seems to emphasize the subjectivity of any choice made in the name of "ideal beauty." Rosalind Kimball Moulton's (American, b. 1941) low-angled, untitled piece of 1980 is filled with tension and suggests that danger lurks amid the seeming innocence of a man and child sunbathing. What would otherwise be a plausible family scene is transformed by the haunched presence of a wolf-like dog on the horizon line.

Male half-nudes and studio studies by Americans Lynn Davis (n.d.) and Marsha Burns (b. 1945) and West German Ulrike Wenzel (b. 1959) are concerned with traditional aesthetics. Their assumption that females enjoy viewing attractive male nudes is beginning to gain acceptance. However, outside of homosexual circles, there still remains strong bias against exhibition and reproduction of photographs of the full male nude body. As the New York photographer Mellon (n.d.) noted when she tried to get her fantasy series Angel Peak (1981) into print: "There simply exists a prejudice by men against showing the penis in art, especially [if it is] erect."<sup>86</sup> The series reveals a man's dream as he falls asleep while reading a book, on the cover of which are images of two naked women. The women come to life and begin gallivanting about his body, stimulating him to erection (1981; Fig. 5). Advertisements for the nine black-and-white montages were refused by *Playboy*, *Camera Arts*, *Artforum*, *Art in America*, and *ARTnews*. An earlier series (1978) "with photos of a nude woman nibbling from a bowl

of strawberries, bananas, and little nude men" who clamber over her and fondle her breast was well-received. "But that was different, wasn't it?," she said. "There the woman's body was big, not the man's."<sup>87</sup>

#### MEN PHOTOGRAPH NUDES

As a result of the women's movement many male photographers have changed the way they view women, and themselves. To compare the work of Edward Weston, whose nudes of the 1920s and 1930s have become classics in photography, to work being done by men in this genre today is to see the great changes that have occurred in the last 50 years. In looking at Weston's *Torso of Neil* (1925), for example, writes critic Janet Malcolm, "one feels something of the emotions one feels in looking at a Greek statue."<sup>88</sup> This interest in "perfect" form, whether in humans or vegetables, no longer seems relevant. Instead, photographers are searching for variety in form and an expression of the uniqueness of each individual or thing.

Malcolm has also described Weston's female nudes as "strikingly sexless and impersonal. . . [and] evocative of death and sleep rather than of lovemaking."<sup>89</sup> What contemporary photographers seek, rather, is direct contact with both the personality and sexuality of the model. Arno Minkkinen's (American, b. 1945) *For Sandy, kultaseni*,<sup>90</sup> for example, is a tender nude portrait of the artist hugging his wife, both his arms encased in the satin panties she is wearing. Robert Mapplethorpe's (American, b. 1947) nude portrait of singer Patti Smith (1976) reveals neither breasts nor pubic area. Instead, the emphasis is on her shoulders and the ribs of her back. What is transmitted is a tender, tired, vulnerable, sexual, though not defenseless, woman. Mapplethorpe, however, is more famous for his portraits of black males with huge, erect penises. The men are classically and formally posed; only the subject matter is shocking. But by distancing himself and the viewer from the subject, Mapplethorpe has been able to show this work in "high art" settings.



Fig. 6. Joe Gantz, *Women Influencing Behavior* (1984), color photograph, 11' x 14".

Peter Hujar's (American, b. 1934) work is more personal than that of Mapplethorpe. A half-nude portrait of Laurent Di Lorenzo (1980) shows the subject lying dreamily on a bed holding a daintily-decorated fan. The contrast between Di Lorenzo's hirsute, muscular body and the traditional feminine accessory is poignant and suggests his vulnerability.

Duane Michaels (American, b. 1932) has dealt sensitively with sexual topics for the past two decades. His *The Fallen Angel* (1968), for example, depicts a rape through which a bewinged being loses his immortality and becomes an ordinary man. A recent pair of photographs, *Violent Men and Violent Women* (1983), depicts attacks by nude women and men on their same sex, as if Michaels were trying to decode contemporary behavior. This decoding effort has also been taken up by the young American artist, Joe Gantz (b. 1954), who transfers highly theatrical scenarios into large-format color prints. With titles such as *Women Influencing Behavior* (1984; Fig. 6) and *Women as Men* collected in his book, *Inching Towards a Leap of Faith* (1984),<sup>4</sup> Gantz questions both male and female responses to culturally sanctioned patterns of behavior. The artist himself appears in some of his prints. In *Women Influencing Behavior* he is being hounded by a group of nude harpies as he is forced to choose among them. In the foreground are three more women: one is dressed as a cheerleader, one as a bride, and one lies nude with legs agape.

All the works discussed here have been "affected by female reassessments."<sup>5</sup> Although the female nude still dominates the genre, she is no longer portrayed only as a passive receptacle for man's desire. Photographs being created today reveal a wide spectrum of possibilities for the nude, a greater tolerance of corporeal imperfection, and less adherence to a strict canon of sexual behavior. All of these innovations are welcome challenges to a genre previously dominated by the cinematographic and pornographic industries. ●

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1. This essay is an expanded version of Claire Bonney, "'Yang' mit einem Quentchen 'Yin': Weibliche Sehweisen in der Aktfotografie," in Michael Köhler and Gisela Barche, eds., *Das Aktfoto* (Munich: Bucher Verlag, 1985), 157-62.
2. See June Singer, *Androgyny: Towards a New Theory of Sexuality* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977) for commentary on sexuality in the 1980s.
3. Anne Tucker, ed., *The Woman's Eye* (New York: Knopf, 1975).
4. "Women of Photography: An Historical Survey" (San Francisco Museum of Fine Arts, April 18-June 15, 1975). Foreword by Margery Mann.

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6. Joyce Tenneson Cohen, *In/Sights: Self-portraits by Women* (Boston: Godine, 1978).
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8. Anne Tüne, ed., *Körper, Liebe, Sprache: Ueber weibliche Kunst, Erotik darzustellen* (Berlin: Elefant Press, 1982).
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10. *Photo* (French edition) (September 1981).
11. Jack Wellpotts and Judy Dater, *Women and Other Visions* (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Morgan and Morgan, 1975). Introduction by Henry Holmes Smith.
12. Annette Messager, *La Femme et . . .* (Geneva: Ateliers d'Ecart, 1975).
13. Letter to author, February 18, 1984.
14. Friedl Kubelka-Bondy, *Friedl Kubelka-Bondy* (Linz: Edition neue texte, 1984).
15. William Messer, letter to author, September 1984.
16. Susan Butler, "New Perspectives on the Nude" (Cardiff foto Gallery, September 16-October 22, 1983).
17. Manon, *Identität, Selbstdarstellung, Image* (Bern: Benteli, 1981).
18. Manon, in Henning, "Typisch Mann?," n.p.
19. See "Cindy Sherman" (Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, December 1982).
20. Cibachrome is a process of obtaining color photographs whereby the colors are already contained in the photographic paper and are bleached out with the silver halide during development. The colors yielded are less sensitive to light than those obtained by the usual dye-transfer process and thus fade less quickly.
21. Joan Halifax, *Shamanic Voices: The Shaman as Seer, Poet and Healer* (London: Penguin, 1979), 23-25.
22. Letter to author, February 20, 1984.
23. Letter to author, March 22, 1984.
24. Lucy Lippard, *Overlay* (New York: Pantheon, 1983), 106.
25. Cynthia MacAdams, *Rising Goddess* (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Morgan and Morgan, 1983).
26. Letter to author, February 23, 1984.
27. Estelle Jussim, "Starr Ockenga's Nudes: Some Notes on the Genre," *The Massachusetts Review* (Spring 1983), 96-106.
28. *Ibid.*, 99.
29. Monica Picnic, picture editor of *Popular Photography* magazine, letter to author, April 16, 1984.
30. Danielle B. Hays, ed., *Women Photograph Men* (New York: William Morrow, 1977).
31. "The Male Nude: A Survey in Photography" (Marcuse Pfeifer Gallery, New York, June 13-July 28, 1978).
32. Lawrence Burns, ed., *The Male Nude in Photography* (Waitsfield, Vt.: Crossroads Press, 1980), 5.
33. *Ibid.*
34. Letter to author, January 4, 1984.
35. Arno R. Minkkinen, *New American Nudes: Recent Trends and Attitudes* (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Morgan and Morgan, 1981).
36. Howard Smith and Lin Harris, "Mellon's Dilemma," *The Village Voice*, New York, January 20-26, 1980, 12.
37. *Ibid.*
38. Janet Malcolm, *Diana & Nikon: Essays on the Aesthetics of Photography* (Boston: Godine, 1980), 12.
39. *Ibid.*, 23-24.
40. Arno R. Minkkinen, *Frostbite* (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Morgan and Morgan, 1978), Plate 2.
41. Joe Gantz, *Inching Towards a Leap of Faith* (San Francisco: View Press, 1984).
42. William Messer, letter to author, March 8, 1984.

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## portraits

# Cecilia and María Sobrino: Spain's Golden-Age Painter-Nuns

MINDY N. TAGGARD

During the Middle Ages Europe's convents functioned as centers of learning, and for educated women they often provided an environment more stimulating than that available on the outside. Within the cloister, for example, talented females could receive training in art, which, in the secular world, along with the materials and support necessary to production, usually was available only to wives or daughters of male artists. Numerous richly illuminated manuscripts by medieval painter-nuns, including the 12th-century *Augustini Sermones* (Grand Ducal Library, Wolfenbüttel) by the Saxon Ermengarde and the 13th-century *Codex Gisele* (Cathedral Library, Osnabrück) by the Westphalian Gisele von Kerksenbroek, document the artistic activity of these cloisters. Indeed, the Spanish woman artist Ende, credited with the illustrations for the 10th-century Gerona *Beatus Apocalypse*, considered "of a quality unsurpassed by any other in that century,"<sup>1</sup> must also have been trained in such a center.

With the rise in the 13th century of professional secular scriptoria, the convent began to relinquish its bookmaking functions. And when in the mid-15th century the printing press was introduced, bookmaking was revolutionized, with both manuscript production and the illuminator becoming almost obsolete.

Despite these developments, however, within those cloisters that weathered the Reformation, artistic activity did not cease. Instead, one kind of painting simply gave way to another: organized and often anonymous manuscript illumination was superseded by larger-scale painting by individual members. For example, one early 16th-century Dominican nun, Plautilla Nelli, daughter of the Italian painter Luca Nelli, frescoed a *Last Supper* at Santa Maria Novella, Florence, after a design by the Florentine artist Bronzino, while other Italian nuns working in the same century, including the Alberti sisters, Clara and Elisabetta, and the Ferraran Ippolita Tassoni, completed devotional panel paintings.

In Catholic Spain, where convents multiplied in number during the Counter-Reformation, one might expect to see a similar pattern develop—from workshop illuminator to larger-scale painter. Indeed, biographer José Parada y Santin catalogued several Golden-Age painter-nuns, including Ana de la Madre de Dios, a discolored Carmelite from Zaragoza (d. 1638)

and María de San Ignacio (d. 1660), a Recollet Augustinian and mystic author said to have signed her compositions in blood.<sup>2</sup>

Parada y Santin's entries, however, appear to be no more than convent myth—to date no works by these or any other of the Spanish painter-nuns he discussed have surfaced. Of exceptional historical value, therefore, are the five paintings attributed by convent tradition to the discolored Carmelite Cecilia Sobrino (1570-1646),<sup>3</sup> who at age 19, along with her sister María, professed in Valladolid's La Concepción (located in central Spain). The group includes three half-length paintings of *Ecce Homo* (Figs. 1-3), one *Salvator Mundi* (Fig. 4), and a *Christ as the Man of Sorrows* surrounded by seven rounds of the Circumcision and Passion (Fig. 5).

Because none of the five has ever left La Concepción—the order still maintains the original building occupied by the founder in 1569—and because Sobrino is documented by her contemporary Sister Petronilla de San Joseph as having painted within that house,<sup>4</sup> the attribution seems secure. In composition and theme, moreover, the works agree with a later 16th- or early 17th-century date. The *Christ as the Man of Sorrows* (Fig. 5), for example, is apparently based on a mid-16th-century single-leaf woodcut by the Netherlandish artist Nicklas Stoer,<sup>5</sup> while one *Ecce Homo* (Fig. 3)—one of Golden-Age Spain's most popular pictorial and sculptural themes—appears to have been modeled after an early 16th-century painting by Antonio Vázquez, of Valladolid, now in that city's Cathedral Museum.

A stylistic analysis, however, unquestionably shows that one artist alone could not have produced all five images. While the central Christ figures in four of the compositions (Figs. 1, 3, 4, and 5) are conceived volumetrically by a painter who understood chiaroscuro and the fundamentals of the human figure, that of one *Ecce Homo* (Fig. 2), a canvas calligraphically decorated with scriptural quotations (John 1:29 and Isaiah 53:7), is not. In fact, though the head of this Saviour and his soulful expression are sensitively rendered, from the neck down the figure is summarily treated, the torso progressively flattening, the folds in the cloak which drapes it expressed as no more than decorative wedges of black paint.

To solve this dilemma a reasonable solution can be