



1. Joan Snyder (American, born 1940). *Sweet Cathy's Song (For Cathy Elzea)*. August–September 1978. Children's drawings, newsprint, papier-mâché, synthetic polymer paint,

oil, and pastel on canvas, 6' 6" x 12' (198.1 x 365.8 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the Louis and Bessie Adler Foundation, Inc., Seymour M. Klein, President

Let's begin with a working definition. According to Eli Zaretsky, a Marxist historian writing in the 1970s, feminism aspires to "revolutionize the deepest and most universal aspects of life—those of personal relations, love, egotism, sexuality, and our inner emotional lives."¹ I like this definition; it helps me remember that part of what I'm after, as a feminist, is the fundamental reorganization of the institutions that govern us, as well as those that we, in turn, govern. Therefore, thinking about the introduction of feminism into the museum is no small matter. It seems clear that feminist art history has made enormous gains in the academy: we have recovered scores of women artists from oblivion, populated the academy with female professors, established classes on feminist art practices, and entered numerous women artists into the canon, so that your average art history student would be hard-pressed to graduate without knowing at least a smattering of women artists and maybe even a few feminists. But American museums have been slower to encompass feminism's challenges than the academy, despite a work force largely comprising women. Art history needs its objects of study to be displayed, and thus the history of the museum can be seen in part as a struggle for how to display works of art. This essay looks to recent art-historical ideas with the aim of beginning to think through the translation of these new discursive formations into the spatial logic and requirements of the museum. In other words: I feel fairly confident that I know how to write an essay as a feminist, less sure I know how to install art as one.

The pervasive sexism in museums is evidenced by how slow museums of modern and contemporary art were to acquire feminist art of the 1970s. And when they did buy it or accept it as gifts, they were often reticent to exhibit it. Much feminist art in permanent collections, like that of The Museum of Modern Art, rarely, if ever, graces the walls. For instance, MoMA owns two terrific paintings:



2. Lee Lozano (American, 1930–1999). *Untitled*. 1963. Oil on canvas, two panels, overall 7' 10" x 8' 4" (238.8 x 254 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder

Sweet Cathy's Song (For Cathy Elzea) by Joan Snyder (1978, no. 1) and an untitled work by Lee Lozano (1963, no. 2). The Snyder work, acquired the year it was made, has been on view twice: once in an exhibition of new acquisitions in 1979 and then again in a rotation of the collection in 1987. The Lozano work was acquired in 2004 and has been shown just once, in *What Is Painting?* in 2007. I do not wish to engage in the ever-popular sport of MoMA-bashing. There are a million reasons why art objects live lives of quiet desperation in the vault. Rather than simply denounce the status quo, I'd like to ask some questions about the distinct lack of visibility of feminist art production. What are the ramifications for the reception and understanding of contemporary art given the lack of display of earlier feminist work? How do we redress the incomplete history currently on view in most museums? Given that art made by women and subsequently by feminist artists (women and feminists not being the same thing) has been so prominently absent, what forms of history can feminism offer in the space of the museum? And, more specifically, if art objects demand of their viewers various forms of competence for interpretation, what conditions of exhibition does the museum need to establish to create and satisfy those demands? For instance, if feminist works demand that viewers draw on new and different skills to interpret them, how can the museum help create and accommodate those skills?

These questions of history-making struck me very strongly in 2005, when MoMA bought and quickly exhibited *Presentation*, a mammoth painting by a young artist named Dana Schutz (2005, no. 3). Schutz had garnered an enormous amount of press: she was young, a recent graduate of the newly hot Master of Fine Arts program at Columbia University, and she made big, expressive paintings. I confess I was slow to see what was interesting about Schutz's work; I had a typically contrary reaction to a splashy article about her in the *New York Times Magazine*. I think I had difficulty seeing what was interesting about Schutz largely because she was presented as an ingénue

without any history, so it is telling that what eventually turned me around were my own scattershot attempts to place her work into some kind of historical trajectory or narrative. For instance, several years after Schutz's meteoric rise to fame I became interested in Snyder's stroke paintings from the 1970s. These paintings took a modernist grid, with all of its will to silence and impartiality, and combined it with wildly expressive brushstrokes resembling those of an impassioned censor. The combination of expressionism and its disavowal seemed to me emblematic of the feminist struggle to make the personal political. My interest in Snyder was accompanied by an associative—but rather counterintuitive—chain of thoughts about the importance of Willem de Kooning for Amy Sillman (no. 4). As a feminist trained during the heady days of 1980s theory, I was under the impression that de Kooning paintings were bad—their expressivity garish, their misogyny self-evident. But it became clear to me that Sillman had picked up on the extraordinary use of pink in de Kooning's paintings, which meant that she wasn't having the same problems. Far from feeling compelled to decry de Kooning "the misogynist," Sillman, in her paintings, suggested that in de Kooning one might find a feminized practice of painting in which abstraction is ineluctably linked to the decorative in a nonpejorative way. (I'm thinking of his paintings from the 1970s, the pastoral, frothy, and almost rococo ones, with palettes of rose, cream, and silver.) When I next saw work by Schutz it was in the context of an awful exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts in London called *USA Today*, a show of recent American art drawn exclusively from Charles Saatchi's collection. Schutz's paintings did not support the exhibition's jingoistic premise (such crass nationalism during wartime was hard to swallow) but unraveled it from the inside. Her oversized, self-devouring figures, awash in a pukey palette, seemed to encapsulate perfectly the horror of America's wartime conditions, particularly the obliteration of rational speech that was a central strategy of George W. Bush's administration.



3. Dana Schutz (American, born 1976). *Presentation*. 2005. Oil on canvas, 10 x 14' (304.8 x 426.7 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Fractional and promised gift of Michael and Judy Ovitz



4. Amy Sillman (American, born 1956). *Psychology Today*. 2006. Oil on canvas, 7' 8" x 7' 1/2" (233.7 x 214.6 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Fund for the Twenty-First Century

Perhaps part of the unbridled popular affirmation for Schutz's paintings was due to their energy and vibrancy—a directness of paint on canvas and a disarmingly emotional palate. The paintings display a particularly legible kind of neurosis about power and the body, with devouring and purging mouths desperately spitting out paint—instead of food or words—in an attempt at a kind of pre- or post-linguistic form of communication. Although the body is a perennial feminist subject, Schutz, for the most part, was not discussed in terms of a tradition of feminist work; rather her newness and youth were offered as the primary filters through which to approach her paintings. Part of her meteoric rise, therefore, was tied to the way her work appeared *unconnected* to artistic precedents. This amnesia, although prevalent in the current market-driven art world in general, is largely not the case with young male artists, who are quickly legitimized into comfortably entrenched art-historical narratives, given fathers by their critics. This makes sense given that the average museum's presentation of its permanent collection is an offering of pluralist harmony (one good picture after another) intermittently punctured by Oedipally inflected narratives of influence, in which sons either make an homage to their fathers (Richard Serra to Jackson Pollock), kill their fathers (Frank Stella to Pollock), or pointedly ignore their fathers (Luc Tuymans to Pollock).

Genealogies for art made by women aren't so clear, largely because they are structured by a shadowy absence. This is why art historians and curators have so often turned to the tasks of recovery and inclusion (we can think here of the recent retrospectives of Snyder, Lozano, and Lee Bontecou, as well as *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*).² The work of recovery is important; I have done it myself and will continue to do so. But I am increasingly puzzled about how to reinsert these absences, repressions, and omissions into the narrative continuum favored by the museum. I know I don't want ghettoized galleries dedicated to art made by women or even a room of "feminist art."³ But where, for instance, after not exhibiting

Sweet Cathy's Song (For Cathy Elzea) and Lozano's *Untitled* should MoMA hang these works? Is it really as simple as reinserting them into a chronological narrative that hitherto hasn't accounted for them? Lozano near Philip Guston, Snyder near Brice Marden? The chronological purist in me loves this idea, but I fear it is the nonfeminist in me that desires such a pat formulation: a broken story repaired by insisting that these artists occupy their rightful places in the grand narrative. But is this solution feminist *enough*? Is it a revolution of the deepest order to insert women artists back into rooms that have been structured by their very absence? What would it mean to take this absence as the very historical condition under which the work of women artists is both produced and understood? Might feminism allow us to imagine different genealogies and hence different versions of how we tell the history of art made by women, as well as art made under the influence of feminism?

For instance, I have a fantasy room in which hang works by Snyder, Cindy Sherman (no. 5), Sillman, Wangechi Mutu (no. 6), and Schutz. I have an intuition that these works might, as curators say, "talk to each other." My first response to this fantasy is to be made nervous by its ahistorical or potentially essentializing nature, but despite my anxieties, such a room would be true to the kind of associative chain I described earlier, when I moved from Schutz to Snyder to Sillman to de Kooning and back again. Might such a room, organized by the very process of coming to terms with new work, offer a way out of the current impasse created by the opposition of chronological installation (such as that favored by MoMA) versus thematic (favored by Tate Modern, in London)? Instead of coming to terms with Schutz, Snyder, and de Kooning and then putting them back where they "belong," should the museum experiment with other models of history-making?

Two art historians, Lisa Tickner and Mignon Nixon, have recently argued, tentatively but with promise, for historical models of influence, production, narration, and interpretation that eschew the two most powerful and

5. Cindy Sherman (American, born 1954). *Untitled #92*. 1981. Chromogenic color print, 24 x 47 ¹⁵/₁₆" (61 x 121.9 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The Fellows of Photography Fund



familiar in art history: the Oedipal narrative of the son who murders his father (the trumping of one style by another) and the mother-daughter model of the daughter learning through the transmission of oral history (women painters who worked in their fathers' studios; the history of the decorative arts; even some of the mythology surrounding Womanhouse).⁴ Tickner and Nixon look to another version of family life for models of production and reception, specifically to the relationships of siblings and cousins.

Tickner argues that historically women artists have sought attachment rather than separation, meaning that one of the effects of operating within a genealogy marked by absences and omissions is that you try to seek out your predecessors rather than refute them. She writes that

although women may experience "the anxiety of finding oneself a motherless daughter seeking attachment," the discovery of "(real and elective) artist-mothers releases women to deal with their fathers and encounter their siblings on equal terms. Feminism fought for our right to publicly acknowledge cultural expression; it also insists on our place in the patrimony, as equal heirs with our brothers and cousins."⁵ This is an interesting idea for two reasons. On the one hand it moves quickly from a familial narrative to a social one—from a putatively private arrangement to an explicitly public one—in a hallmark of feminist critique: the making public and legible of inequities deemed private. On the other hand it subverts the potentially pathological nature of familial narratives by insisting on the category of "elective mother." Queer



6. Wangechi Mutu (Kenyan, born 1972). *Yo Mama*. 2003. Ink, mica flakes, pressure-sensitive synthetic polymer sheeting, cut-and-pasted printed paper, painted paper, and synthetic polymer paint on paper, overall 59 1/8" x 7' 1" (150.2 x 215.9 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The Judith Rothschild Foundation Contemporary Drawings Collection Gift

life and theory have offered us increasingly expansive models of the family, and Tickner's argument reaps the benefit of a model developed by those for whom family is established through choice as well as through chance.⁶

To amplify the logic of her argument, Tickner turns to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's powerful idea of the rhizome as a metaphor for organizing history and knowledge. Unlike the image of the tree—vertical, hierarchical, and evolutionary—the rhizome offers a horizontal, non-linear structure in which all ideas have the possibility of connecting to all other ideas. Building on this open model of family, she quotes Deleuze and Guattari: "The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance."⁷ If we think according to the logic of the rhizome, we can see that history is filled with gaps and fissures *and* moments of connection and synchronicity, and that while there is loss and neglect (as there is regarding the history of art made by women), there are also alliances formed despite geographical distance and temporal incommensurability. Thus an artist seeking an elective mother might not place her in a hierarchical relationship but might instead construct a situation of relative degrees of parity—which might cause those elective mothers a degree of consternation, especially those from the generations of women who fought for the rights we currently take for granted; to them such a synchronic version of history might appear unfair. But a model of history structured by alliance allows us to think about lines of influence and conditions of production that are organized horizontally, by necessarily competing ideas of identification, attachment, sameness, and difference, as opposed to our all too familiar (vertical) narratives of exclusion, rejection, and triumph. Such a modification in our thinking might, in turn, help us reorganize our institutional dynamics of power.

What would happen if we thought about the museum in this way? After all, it presents its objects simultaneously and equally, while at the same time arranging them chronologically and with an implied tale of progress. Is it possible to privilege the horizontal or rhizomatic aspect

over that more powerful vertical spatialization of chronology or those hierarchical family dramas? Better yet, might we be able to highlight or foreground the idea that the model of interconnectedness and the older chronological Oedipal model are already simultaneous with each other? Might we be able to give credence to the deferred and delayed temporality of the recognition of feminist art, to pay better attention to which artists become available and/or important to us, and at what point? Can we allow this double sense of time and space to have more traction in our ideas about how to present art to contemporary viewers? If we did this, we could better understand the young woman who comes of age as an artist in the halls of MoMA but doesn't see her first Snyder painting until it suddenly emerges at the (corrective) retrospective at The Jewish Museum. Does this young artist, when she encounters an artist heretofore left out of the grand narrative, need the diachronic narrative of mother-daughter or father-son influence in order to incorporate and make sense of the lessons of her discovery? Or does Tickner's model of affiliation and alliance offer other possibilities?

And what new forms of competence would the objects in my fantasy installation, placed in such a configuration with one another, demand of the viewer? In the back and forth between the forces of abstraction and representation, between expressionism and its restraint, in the highly affective use of color, might we see a common exploration of nonlinguistic communication? Establishing Snyder as an elective mother allows us to see her expressive strokes of enthusiastically colored paint as a rejoinder to the properness of a tastefully muted Minimalist palette, as both a refusal and an embrace of modernism's love of the monochromatic grid. My hope is to suggest that abstraction, expressionism, and beauty or bad taste (depending on your predilection for Snyder's dime-store palette) are not only formal attributes but also constitutive elements in the highly contested field of nonlinguistic expression, a form of expression that might have been particularly problematic for artists negotiating the terms of patriarchy

(that is, the rules surrounding who gets to speak when about what). Seen in this framework, the tension between Snyder's censorious strokes and demonstrative use of color coheres into a kind of unsolvable contradiction.

Establishing Snyder as an elective mother lets us tease out elements of struggle between silence and expression in all of the works: in Schutz's proliferation of mute figures facing a gaping void; in Sherman's macabre mimicry of Hollywood and fairy-tale narratives, her characters forever silent (despite the prominence she gives to images of mouths); in Mutu's laying bare, with her unwavering cut-and-paste, of women's bodies, particularly her exposure of the colonialist fantasy that is the resplendent, silent, and perpetually available body of color, poised for pleasure and destruction; and in Sillman's neurotic cartoonish figures, delicately sitting on top of powerfully explosive fields of color, begging for captions that never appear. What I see in this installation is an alliance among works formed by a shared disavowal of speech and language and a common ambivalence toward claims of self-expression and toward the privilege afforded such claims by bourgeois capitalism and patriarchy. The internal dynamics of each image show a pictorial struggle to occupy a place in a world structured by language—be it the language of painting, abstraction, color, Hollywood, glossy women's magazines, racism, gender, or family. The combined effect suggests that the artists have entered into these preexisting languages with ambivalence and a degree of difficulty. The works also suggest a perennial feminist dilemma: the simultaneous occupying and denying of these positions (or of our place in these languages). They want expressive power as much as they are critical of it. My hope is that this fantasy room of artworks would make an issue out of the psychic and social conditions of patriarchy, suggesting that not all art by women is the same (the problem created by thematic installation), or that art by women gets progressively better over time and therefore can now be exhibited (the weakness of the chronological installation); it would suggest that these conditions have consistently presented women

artists with certain challenges, ranging from the neglect of historical figures to the hierarchy of gender, from the assignation of very strongly defined societal roles to the exclusion of women from the history of painting, and that in this room those challenges and struggles are made visible and become part of the competency required for engaging with art made and installed under the rubric of feminism. The elective mother allows us to see that the silences and absences are indeed part of the history of feminist thought and art-making. By installing a 1970s stroke painting by Snyder in a room with more contemporary works I hope to articulate the temporality of certain art becoming necessary for artists and art historians at certain times. This act is something more than merely rescuing Snyder from the vault. The painting should certainly be shown: it's a great painting (made by a woman), and it's a great feminist painting. By installing it in this way I hope to intimate that "to articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was,'" but might mean instead to present it as crucial for recalibrating the effects of the new.⁸

My earlier quandary—how we might create feminist genealogies in the museum—remains. I have declined a ghettoized room of feminist art and refused the simple insertion of women back into canons predicated upon their exclusion. My fantasy room suggests that I am also not interested in rooms where who made the work and under what conditions doesn't matter; it's important to me that these artists are women (important even in the midst of wanting it to not be important: feminism's double bind, its inescapable contradiction). Assembling works of art synchronically through alliance permits them to "talk to each other" about what does matter in our struggle for cultural expression: that women artists, although they might find themselves on what appears to be equal footing with their brothers, still labor under conditions that are demonstrably shaped by patriarchy, and that those conditions and the work they produce can and should be discussed rather than ignored. But lest the

model of alliance seem too sunny—everything and everyone happily ensconced in their equality in the benign space of the museum—I want to attend to some of the psychic ramifications of such a model.

Nixon has also been thinking about shifting our interpretation away from the vertical, with a feminist analysis that redirects the hierarchical and vertical family drama of psychoanalysis ("mommy, daddy, and me") toward the horizontal logic of siblings.⁹ For Nixon, however, this would not be primarily a model or metaphor for alliance or equality; rather it constitutes a recognition as traumatic as that of sexuality itself, that siblings and cousins are the undeniable proof that one is serial, that one exists in a continuous chain of sameness and difference, of repetition and death. Nixon comes to her argument through *Siblings: Sex and Violence*, a book by the feminist psychoanalytic theorist Juliet Mitchell.¹⁰ Why, Mitchell wonders, do we organize our most powerful narratives of personal identity around our parents rather than our siblings? After all, we know our siblings for our entire lives, and they us. She notes that in Western cultures we talk of liberty, equality, and *fraternity*, and feminists, in upending the gendered logic of democracy, once talked of *sisterhood*. Mitchell contends that while we foreground and even fetishize the hierarchical nature of society, the primary structure of our social organization is lateral, and sibling-based social formations (such as peers, friends, and colleagues) are based on alliances and as a result operate differently from those based on vertical structures (such as parent and child, employer and employee, king and subject). Why, then, do our accounts of selfhood privilege the vertical model to the exclusion of the lateral? Might it be that museums celebrate uniqueness (the genius, the masterpiece) as a way of denying or avoiding the psychological tension produced by the equally strong counternarrative of sameness? (Let's face it, a lot of those Renaissance altarpieces look alike, as do formal portraits, still lifes, even abstract paintings.) Mitchell proposes that the recognition of sameness—the seriality and repetition implied and instantiated by

our siblings and cousins—generates in us a terrifying fantasy of annihilation and of our expendability. Siblings are the traumatic recognition of our mortality. Nixon takes Mitchell's emphasis on repetition in sibling relations and makes an analogy with the serial as a mode of artistic production (from Minimalism and photography to the artist producing her works in editions or series) and suggests that in the hands of someone like Eva Hesse, an artist highly attuned to the activities of her artistic peers, lateral thinking and feeling, rather than Oedipal rivalry, was the very engine for her quirky, medium-extending, bodily engaged, psychically affective work.¹¹

I return to my question: is there a way to install works of art so that the artist and the art historian do not experience the space of the museum as the site of one triumph over another? What of the artist who experiences a sisterhood of artists, in which sameness and difference are attributes in constant (pleasurable?) friction with one another? Mitchell, sensing the possibilities her argument has for artists, discusses how artists experience their predecessors "though long dead and buried . . . as the same age as the subject. In other words, these artistic ancestors are 'lateralized.'"¹² Thus it's possible that artists already see the museum as lateralized in that they imagine themselves in a kind of temporal continuity with either Hesse or Albrecht Dürer. Can we permit the fantasy of contemporaneity and the trauma of sameness and its attendant fear of mortality to permeate our museums in a recognizable way? Can we install works of art in ways that permit us this complicated realm of feelings and associations rather than in ways designed to hold such anxieties at bay? Could we reengage with the language of sisterhood, not as a discourse of essentializing sameness but as a complicated narrative of horizontal or lateral thinking?

I have been thinking about relatively new models of thinking (Deleuze and Guattari's horizontal rhizome and Mitchell's lateralization of siblings) and how these are being used by feminist art historians (Tickner and Nixon respectively) to rethink the kinds of stories art history

tells us, particularly the stories it tells us about art made by women—stories of exceptionalism or uniqueness, or stories of strays and misfits who simply cannot find their proper place in the gallery. I have been groping around for ways to ways to imagine the fullness of these feminist critiques in the space of the museum, using the installation of the permanent collection as a kind of limit case. Before I close I want to register a few other instances of lateral thinking, as a way to suggest that the influence of feminist thinking might not always be labeled as such, but we might find it flowing through our discipline nonetheless.

For example, the art historians George Baker and Miwon Kwon have taken up the problem of the postmedium condition. Examining the works of Anthony McCall and Jessica Stockholder, respectively, they have each tried to articulate what is at stake for contemporary artists as they extend and explore the boundaries between and among traditional mediums such as painting, sculpture, and film. Far from celebrating the proliferation of the new post-medium condition for its own expansive sake, they have attempted to make sense of why and how discussions of medium have either fallen into disrepair or become so contentious as to be rendered useless. I have been paying close attention to their language, sifting through the layers of nuance and possibility in the words they chose to describe their objects of study. I listen as Kwon confronts the “tendency toward spatialization in postwar art” and discusses how “three notions of space seem to come together and coexist in her [Stockholder’s] installations,” meaning that “Stockholder’s work asserts (sometimes voraciously) a both/and attitude rather than one of either/or.”¹³ Consider this alongside Baker’s account of the status of medium specificity in McCall’s works; he does not insist that they are sculpture, nor that they are film. Baker instead lands upon the seemingly simple word “touch,” as in, “A transgressive model of medium-belonging that sought to take mediums to the limits where they began to touch and shape other forms, but only by ‘othering’ themselves in the process.”¹⁴

In both of these instances, and notable also in the writing of Briony Fer, a new language has crept into the discourse of art history: an understated but decided move away from dialectical thinking, a tacit refusal to structure arguments in terms of opposition.¹⁵ This art-historical generational shift is being mediated neither through “a line of unbroken maternal production” nor “through murderous rivalry either.”¹⁶ We are witnessing the replacement of the either/or logic of the dialectic with the conjunction “and.” So, too, the go-to structuring word “tension,” used to discuss an artwork, has given way to “touch.” To my ear such shifts, however delicately deployed, rhyme with the drift away from vertical or hierarchical thinking toward the more lateral and connective rhetorical tissue offered by Tickner and Nixon. “And” and “touch” imply proximity; they are not the language of the inevitable but the contingent, wobbling our routine spatiotemporal conventions, shying away from the hard-and-fast language of causality. They are words that when used in a museum context might offer an opening that would allow us to learn from artists seeking elective mothers in the mode of alliance (as Tickner would have it) or to experience the museum as a site of temporal immediateness (as Mitchell suggests) or to negotiate the psychic ramifications of sameness and difference as they are played out in a field marked by parity (as Nixon proposes). What if we let artworks touch each other in the museum? What if, instead of making demarcations between mediums and artists, we let their mutual otherness act as a kind of contagion? What if, in the next room, around the corner from the Sillman we placed a de Kooning, and maybe next to it a Hesse? (It’s worth noting that Hesse was obsessed with de Kooning.) I’d like to install an early Hesse (1960, no. 7), one of those not thought to be fully mature, the paintings in which she worked through the logic of one, two, and three. Or, abandoning the language of math, the ones in which she negotiated aloneness, the couple, and the group. What if we made a gallery of paintings by the feminists who were touched by de Kooning, artists for whom there



7. Eva Hesse (American, born Germany. 1936–1970). *Untitled*. 1960. Oil on canvas, 18 x 15" (45.7 x 38.1 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Murray Charash

is no either/or between de Kooning and feminism? Could we recover what they found in his work that perhaps now we can no longer see or feel; can we register the artists' sense of alliance; can we enable museum viewers to see their sisterhood?

To close a provisional note: Might there be a way of rethinking the notion of sisterhood—a word so out-of-date it almost sounds cool again? What if sisterhood were not based on essentialist claims of gender? What if it were not dependent on behaving as our mothers or fathers would like us to (or rebelling against them as they expect us to)? What if sisterhood offered a model for forming alliances structured by a loving but skeptical engagement with the new, one that saw the new as part of a larger pattern of seriality and repetition, sameness and difference, annihilation and birth, that defied the logic of chronological or teleological history? Such a model of interpretation, sisterhood, or genealogy would demonstrate that the new does not cancel out the old; it would show us that the new is not a form of triumph but a recalibration of alliances. (Think of the moment a new baby comes home, an arrival that simultaneously produces a mother, a sister, an aunt,

and a grandmother: everyone's identity shifts.) In such a model, narratives of influence would be open to a Rashomon-like chorus of voices of nieces, nephews, cousins, sisters, and brothers, opening up single objects to multiple points of alliance, much the way an individual can simultaneously be an aunt, sister, mother, and grandmother. In such a model the seemingly ahistorical installation of Snyder in a room with Schutz, Sillman, and Mutu would allow us to register the affiliations among the artists, to see them as engaged in a common pursuit striated with differences. It might be the beginning of a way of telling history that incorporates the challenges of feminism beyond enumerating which women worked when. So, too, it might be a way of acknowledging the long gaps and absences, the blind spots produced by the vertical narratives of patriarchy, stories so familiar that we often forget that they serve certain interests and not others. Such a room might instead suggest something about how women artists have often forged connections over disjointed periods of space and time, about moving laterally in order to revolutionize the deepest aspects of our lives.

1. Eli Zaretsky, *Capitalism, the Family, and Personal Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), p. 1.
2. Each of these exhibitions was accompanied by important catalogues: Hayden Herrera, *Joan Snyder* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2005); Adam Szymczyk, *Lee Lozano: Win First Dont Last Win Last Dont Care* (Basel: Schwabe AG, 2006); Elizabeth A. T. Smith, *Lee Bontecou: A Retrospective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); and Cornelia Butler and Lisa Gabrielle Mark, eds., *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007).
3. I place "feminist art" in quotes because I don't believe in it as a designation of style. I prefer "art made by feminists" or "art made under the influence of feminism"—both are awkward formulations but nonetheless speak to the inherent limita-

4. It bears noting that despite the powerfully gendered quality of these narratives of influence, they are structural, available to either sex; some male painters have been taught via oral tradition, and some female artists have staged Oedipal rebellions. See Lisa Tickner's "Mediating Generation: The Mother-Daughter Plot," in Carol Armstrong and Catherine de Zegher, eds., *Women Artists at the Millennium* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006), pp.85–120. Tickner suggests that it is better to think of "the question of attachment or rupture not as a *gendered* distinction, but in terms of a *historical* contrast in modes of production." *Ibid.*, p. 89.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
6. "Family—a code word referring to gays or the gay community, as in, 'Ellen DeGeneres is Family.'" Rebecca Scott, "A Brief

- Dictionary of Queer Slang and Culture," www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/Stonewall/4219.
7. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Atholone Press, 1988), p. 25; quoted in Tickner, "Mediating Generation," pp. 91–92.
8. Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 1950, in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 255.
9. Mignon Nixon, "O + X," *October* 119 (Winter 2007): 6–20.
10. Juliet Mitchell, *Siblings: Sex and Violence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003).
11. Nixon, "Child Drawing," in de Zegher, ed., *Eva Hesse Drawing* (New York: The Drawing Center; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 27–56.
12. Mitchell, *Siblings*, pp. 16–17.
13. Miwon Kwon, "Promiscuity of Space: Some Thoughts

- on Jessica Stockholder's Scenographic Compositions," *Grey Room* 18 (Winter 2004): 52–63. The quotes appear on pages 54, 58, and 59.
14. George Baker, "Film Beyond Its Limits," *Grey Room* 25 (Fall 2006): 92–125.
15. See in particular Briony Fer's chapter on Eva Hesse, "Studio," in *An Infinite Line: Remaking Art after Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 116–43.
16. Tickner, "Mediating Generation," p. 94.