

Spring 2025

# Women in the Arts



NATIONAL  
MUSEUM  
OF WOMEN  
IN THE ARTS



DEAR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS,

Springtime is associated with renewal, growth, and bold adventures. Here at NMWA, join us for a season of exhibitions that represent that spirit. Art on view at the museum embodies creativity and courage, while also sharing exciting strengths of our collection.

*Uncanny* presents surreal spaces, eerie juxtapositions, and unearthly figures that explore feminist themes and provoke psychological unease in viewers. This bold exhibition—based on an unprecedented look into the museum’s holdings, alongside key loans—is enabled by the growth of NMWA’s collection over decades. The works on view illuminate the breadth of artists’ curiosity about the human psyche as well as the power of modern and contemporary art.

In April, two exhibitions will open in our new fourth-floor MaryRoss Taylor Galleries. Book arts, a longstanding focus of the museum’s collection and education programs, take the spotlight in *A Radical Alteration: Women’s Studio Workshop as a Sustainable Model for Art Making*. This exhibition delves into the inspirational fifty-year history of Women’s Studio Workshop through archival holdings as well as innovative artists’ books. *Guerrilla Girls: Making Trouble* showcases the activism of this dynamic artist collective, who declared themselves “the conscience of the art world.”

Meanwhile, visit before April 20 for your last chance to enjoy *In Focus: Artists at Work*, an immersive video gallery with short documentaries about the practices of contemporary artists in our collection.

These exhibitions—which underscore our world-class art collection and beautifully renovated galleries—demonstrate the power and impact of NMWA’s mission. Thanks to you, our members and friends, for making our work possible.

WITH GRATITUDE,

Susan Fisher Sterling  
The Alice West Director

## CHAMPION WOMEN THROUGH THE ARTS

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Friday and first Sundays,  
10 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

ADMISSION  
NMWA Members free, Adults \$16,  
D.C. residents \$13, Visitors 70 and  
older \$13, Visitors 21 and younger  
free, Visitors with disabilities plus  
one free

Free Community Days are the first  
Sundays and second Wednesdays  
of every month.

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On the cover: Gillian Wearing,  
*Sleeping Mask* (for Parkett, no. 70),  
2004; Wax reinforced with polymer  
resin, paint, 8 ¼ x 5 ½ x 3 ½ in.;  
NMWA, Gift of Heather and Tony  
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"Masks can underscore tensions between deception and revelation, or between our private and public selves."

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Works in this exhibition subvert gender stereotypes and explore feminist issues through disquieting spaces, fantastical figures, and technology that appears eerily human.

ORIN ZAHRA

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### A Radical Alteration: Women's Studio Workshop as a Sustainable Model for Art Making

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In honor of the centenary of the birth of the acclaimed abstract artist, explore her two vibrant paintings in NMWA's collection.

ELLEN G. LANDAU

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© JAMES O. JENKINS

Teresa Margolles's *Mil Veces un Instante (A Thousand Times in an Instant)* (2024) in London's Trafalgar Square

Below: Jaune Quick-to-See Smith

## About Face

In central London, a towering installation by Teresa Margolles (b. 1963) stands on Trafalgar Square's Fourth Plinth. *Mil Veces un Instante (A Thousand Times in an Instant)* (2024) features 726 plaster face masks—individually cast from trans, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming participants in Mexico and the U.K.—all facing inward.

Margolles, born in Culiacán, Sinaloa, Mexico, and based in Mexico City, dedicated the work to her friend Karla, a trans woman murdered in 2015. *Mil Veces un Instante* is arranged in the form of a *tzompantli*, a rack of the skulls of war captives or sacrificial victims created in several Mesoamerican cultures to intimidate enemies or signal power. In Margolles's work, the masks' exposed concave surfaces bear traces of the participants' faces—perhaps makeup, skin cells, or eyelashes, which will degrade over the work's two-year display—honoring the

beauty and transience of their lives.

## In Memoriam: Jaune Quick-to-See Smith

Pathbreaking artist Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, known for melding modernist art practices with Native American identity and activism, died on January 24, at age eighty-five.

Born in 1940 in St. Ignatius, Montana, and raised on the Flathead Reservation, Smith was an enrolled Salish member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Nation. She is best known for powerful, poetic, and often humorous work that combines painting and collage to record Indigenous histories and address subjects such as environmental degradation and governmental oppression. NMWA's collection includes three of her works on paper as well as a large-scale painting, *Indian, Indio, Indigenous* (1992). Smith was also an educator, curator, and organizer, and she amplified

the work of Indigenous artists throughout her practice.

Smith was the recipient of numerous awards and the subject of many solo exhibitions. Her legacy was crystallized in the 2023 retrospective *Jaune Quick-to-See Smith*:

*Memory Map* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, as well as *The Land Carries Our Ancestors: Contemporary Art by Native Americans*, which she curated the same year at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



PHOTO BY GRACE ROSELLI. PANDORA'S BOX PROJECT; COURTESY OF JAUNE QUICK-TO-SEE SMITH AND GARTH GREENAN GALLERY, NEW YORK



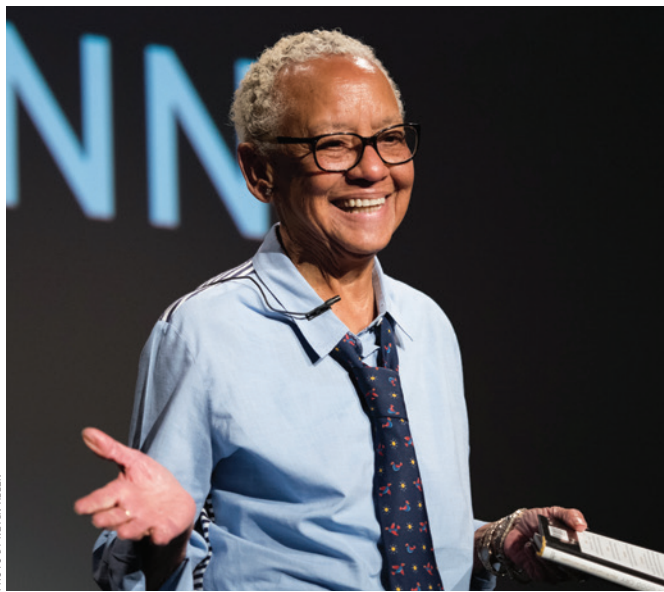


PHOTO BY KEVIN ALLEN

### In Memoriam: Nikki Giovanni

Nikki Giovanni, acclaimed poet and Black Arts Movement icon, died on December 9, at age eighty-one. Across four decades, she published more than thirty books, including poetry, essays, and children's books. Her work addresses themes of race, politics, gender, and love. Her poem "Ego Tripping" (1968) became an anthem for Black women: "I am so perfect so divine so ethereal so surreal / I cannot be comprehended / except by my permission / I mean . . . I . . . can fly." Off the page, she established herself as a public intellectual, lecturing and appearing on television. Giovanni was a powerful performer known for candor and comedy, and she featured in programs at NMWA in 2002 and 2018. She received seven NAACP awards and thirty-one honorary doctorates. Giovanni taught at Virginia Tech from 1987 to 2022 and wrote until her death. Her last volume will be published in September 2025.

Edra Soto, *Graft*, 2024; Presented by Public Art Fund at Doris C. Freedman Plaza, New York City, and on view through August 24, 2025

### Women Win Big in Art and Literature

Carrie Mae Weems (b. 1953) became the first Black female visual artist to win a National

Medal of Arts in 2024. Through a four-decade multidisciplinary practice, Weems has explored politics, feminism, and African American identity.

Writer Han Kang (b. 1970), best known for novels including *The Vegetarian* (2007), won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2024.

Photographer Candida Höfer (b. 1944), known for investigations of architecture and public space, won the 2024 Käthe Kollwitz Prize.

Video and performance artist Joan Jonas (b. 1936) won the 2024 Nam June Paik Prize. The institution will host Jonas's first solo exhibition in South Korea in November 2025.

Samantha Harvey (b. 1975) won the 2024 Booker Prize for her novel *Orbital* (2023), an immersive, awe-filled book about a day in the lives of astronauts on the International Space Station.

### Open Gates

In Central Park, New York City's Public Art Fund presents *Edra Soto: Graft*, a large-scale terrazzo-and-metal installation. Soto (b. 1971) uses *rejas*, the patterned wrought-iron gates ubiquitous in Puerto Rican architecture, to explore the relationship between private lives and public history as well as migration and the search for belonging. Through the installation's geometric patterns, traced to West African Yoruba symbols, Soto investigates how Puerto Rican cultural memory often masks the island's Black heritage. While one side of the installation is the gate, the other welcomes visitors to connect and reflect in a communal space featuring three tables. On view through August 24.



PHOTO BY NICHOLAS KNIGHT, COURTESY OF PUBLIC ART FUND, NY



# Culture Watch

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## // EXHIBITIONS

### CALIFORNIA

a set of heroes and sheroes  
Corita Art Center, Los Angeles  
Opening March 8, 2025  
<https://corita.org>

The inaugural exhibition of the new Corita Art Center in L.A.'s Arts District presents prints by Corita Kent that address social and political movements of the 1960s.

### MASSACHUSETTS

Joana Choumali:  
Languages of West  
African Marketplaces  
Harvard Art Museums,  
Cambridge **RM**  
Through May 11, 2025  
<https://harvardartmuseums.org>

Choumali photographs marketplaces in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, prints her images on fabric, and sews portraits that address the international movement of excess consumer goods.

Leonora Carrington:  
Dream Weaver  
Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham  
Through June 1, 2025  
<https://brandeis.edu>

Carrington's first exhibition in New England explores the Surrealist's technical versatility and offers insight into her process of conjuring fantastical worlds rich in magic and symbolism.



**MASSACHUSETTS** // Leonora Carrington, *Pastoral*, 1950; Oil on canvas, 21 x 29 1/2 in.; On view at the Rose Art Museum

### MISSOURI

Veronica Ryan:  
Unruly Objects  
Pulitzer Arts Foundation,  
St. Louis  
Through July 27, 2025  
<https://pulitzerarts.org>

The first survey of Ryan's four-decade career includes sculptures, textiles, and works on paper—many made from found objects—that speak to themes of consumption and reuse.

### OHIO

Nancy Holt:  
Power Systems  
Wexner Center for the Arts,  
Ohio State University,  
Columbus **RM**  
Through July 27, 2025  
<https://wexarts.org>

Holt's art plumbs the systems that power our world by giving them sculptural presence. Additional works in film, photography, and poetry also give form to hidden structures.

Rose B. Simpson: Strata  
Cleveland Museum of Art **RM**  
Through April 13, 2025  
<https://clevelandart.org>

In this site-specific installation, two monumental figures sculpted from clay speak to Simpson's Indigenous heritage and her ancestral

homeland of Santa Clara Pueblo, New Mexico.

### NEW YORK

Belle da Costa Greene:  
A Librarian's Legacy  
Morgan Library & Museum,  
New York City **■**  
Through May 4, 2025  
<https://themorgan.org>

The Morgan explores the fascinating life and legacy of its inaugural director through rare books, archival records, and much more, including a painting by Lavinia Fontana from NMWA's collection.

### TENNESSEE

Calida Rawles:  
Away with the Tides  
Memphis Brooks  
Museum of Art  
Through September 7, 2025  
<https://brooksmuseum.org>

In Rawles's first solo museum exhibition, her painted portraits share a vision for Black healing through images of people from Miami's historically Black Overtown neighborhood interacting with water.

**RM** North American Reciprocal Museum (NARM) or Reciprocal Organization of Associated Museums (ROAM) benefits for NMWA members at the Explorer level and above

**■** See works from NMWA's collection



**OHIO** // Nancy Holt, *Pipeline* (detail), 1986; Installation view at the Wexner Center for the Arts



## TEXAS

Tamara de Lempicka  
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston  
Through May 26, 2025  
<https://mfah.org>

The first U.S. retrospective of de Lempicka's work presents portraits, studies, drawings, and still lifes, while tracing her influences from design, Cubist aesthetics, and Renaissance art.

## UTAH

salt 16:  
Arleene Correa Valencia  
Utah Museum of Fine Arts,  
Salt Lake City **RM**  
Through June 29, 2025  
<https://umfa.utah.edu>

Correa Valencia paints and embroiders on paper that is handmade by artists in Mexico; her portraits express the complex experience of migration across the Mexico–U.S. border.



UTAH // Arleene Correa Valencia, *El Arbol / The Tree*, 2024; Textiles, acrylic, and thread on Amate paper made by Jose Daniel Santos de la Puerta, 60 x 48 in.; On view at the Utah Museum of Fine Arts



TENNESSEE // Calida Rawles, *Away with the Tides*, 2024; Acrylic on canvas, 120 x 96 in.; On view at the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art

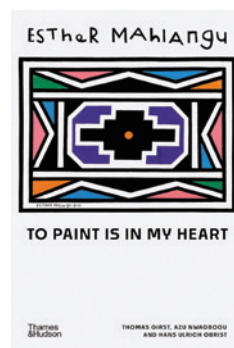
## // BOOKS



## Rachel Ruysch

In her lifetime, Dutch artist Rachel Ruysch (1664–1750) was celebrated as one of the leading floral still-life painters in Europe. But in the centuries following her death, her work was overlooked. Now, Ruysch gets her due with the major exhibition **Rachel Ruysch: Nature into Art**, organized by Alte Pinakothek, Munich; Toledo Museum of Art; and Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. An exhibition catalogue (MFA Publications, 2024), the first book on Ruysch in seventy-five years, reintroduces the artist and her seven-decade career. Ten essays explore her life, oeuvre, and legacy through the perspectives of historians of art, literature, and science as well as a biologist. Her paintings, presented in rich detail, are juxtaposed with botanical drawings and natural specimens, giving scientific context. They are also juxtaposed with impressive floral still lifes by her little-known sister Anna Ruysch. A section on poetry inspired by Ruysch spotlights her celebrity at the time—she was “Art Queen” and “the Creator of the flowers.” Her peers effusively celebrated her talent. “Oh RUISCH! Your divine artistic powers, / Rightly devoted to Immortality, / Shine eternally in the eyes of Posterity.”

// Alicia Gregory



## Esther Mahlangu

In a compact volume, **Esther Mahlangu: To Paint is in My Heart** (Thames & Hudson, 2025) captures the buoyant energy and bold aesthetic of this artist's work. Mahlangu (b. 1935), an acclaimed South African artist, learned traditional Ndebele house-painting practices from her mother and grandmother beginning at age ten. Over several decades, she has expanded on her traditions and carried her work around the world—including a 1994 mural and exhibition at NMWA. This book features poetry by Pitika Ntuli, an essay by Thebe Magugu connecting Mahlangu's art to Ndebele fashion, and an interview of the artist with curators Thomas Girst, Azu Nwagbogu, and Hans Ulrich Obrist. In that conversation, as well as quotes interspersed among imagery of her vibrant geometric painting, the artist shares insights into her practice: “In my art, the progression and evolution of shapes and colours stands out. . . . It's about moving forward and embracing a way of life that endures with us, a life that is rich with ancestral forces and abstract persuasion.” She finds deep joy in art, and says, “It's about sharing that feeling of contentment and celebration with others.”

// Elizabeth Lynch

# Education Report

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PHOTO BY JON BERG



PHOTO BY ADRIENNE L. GAYOSO, NMWA

Left: NMWA Senior Educator Adrienne L. Gayoso works with students from Brent Elementary School in exploring the properties of clay

Top: Artwork by a student from Whittier Elementary School inspired by the work of Alma Woodsey Thomas

## Inspiring Young Learners: Back to NMWA and Back to School

Since NMWA reopened last fall, the museum's educators have been rolling out our school tour program in stages as we rebuilt capacity. We kicked off 2025 by reintroducing offerings designed for some of NMWA's youngest visitors. Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten students (ages 3 to 6) get their bodies moving, minds thinking, hands making, and mouths talking about works of art. During our Art Explorations for Early Learners, students learn about NMWA, practice museum manners, and discover art through developmentally appropriate discussions, a themed story, and hands-on activities.

In addition to other student visitors in January, we welcomed 128 pre-K students from Harriet Tubman Elementary School and John Lewis Elementary School (both DCPS), over three mornings. One teacher enthused, "Engaging and fun for students; easy for adults. It was terrific!" February's tour schedule

"My students really enjoyed our trip to the museum; they were excited to take home their artwork to show their parents. Our visit served as an excellent way to tie their math learning to a real-life experience. Thank you so much for having us!"

// Lisa Brosnan, pre-K teacher from  
Harriet Tubman Elementary School  
(DCPS)

features visits by pre-K students from John Francis Elementary School (DCPS) and all John Lewis Kindergarten students, whose teachers were inspired by rave reviews from their pre-K colleagues.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and NMWA's renovation, we relished our annual partnership with Brent Elementary School (DCPS). We eagerly piloted an updated version with classroom visits in March, April, and May 2024. This school year, we are engaging with all of Brent's pre-K students during monthly visits from October 2024 through June 2025. To date, students have learned about Frida Kahlo, Maria Martinez, Yayoi Kusama, and Suchitra Mattai, whose art inspired students to create "Pet Portraits," explore the properties of natural clay, design "Self-Portrait Polka-dot Puzzles," and craft a collaborative snake sculpture, respectively. In May, we will host the students at NMWA so they can experience work by some of the featured artists in person.

## Welcoming a New Partner

We continually seek opportunities to reach new audiences by partnering with community

organizations such as An Open Book Foundation, which connects students in the Washington, D.C., metro area with authors, illustrators, and books to nurture a lifelong love of reading. We kicked off this collaboration last fall with forty second-grade students from Whittier Elementary School (DCPS). Following a visit to their school by Jeanne Walker Harvey, author of *Ablaze with Color: A Story of Painter Alma Thomas* (2022), students visited NMWA to view Thomas's work as part of a color-inspired tour.

Our work with the foundation continues in February 2025, with a visit by Native American author Carole Lindstrom and Native American illustrator Aly McKnight, who will introduce their newest book, *The Gift of the Great Buffalo* (2025), to forty-eight second-grade students from Garrison Elementary School. After the presentation, students will participate in a related tour and art project that explore the ways in which stories can be told visually.



# Dedicated Donors

## // SAN FRANCISCO ADVOCACY FOR NMWA



Members of San Francisco Advocacy for NMWA with Komal Shah at the exhibition *Making Their Mark: Works from the Shah Garg Collection* at the Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive

### "IT'S ALL ABOUT THE ART:

That's the main event," says Lorna Meyer Calas, co-founder and president of San Francisco Advocacy for NMWA. This group—part of the museum's network of national and international outreach committees—champions women artists through programs, donations, *Women to Watch* exhibitions, and much more.

San Francisco Advocacy for NMWA was founded in 2016 by Calas and Carol Parker, along with a group of women who were involved in the city's arts community and excited to build ties with the museum in Washington, D.C. Each committee is an independently incorporated nonprofit, and, alongside Calas and Parker, the group's initial board members were Ellen Drew, Robin Rosa Laub, Mary Mocas, and Kimberlee Swig. They organized the committee, wrote bylaws, and structured their dues and finances to enable meaningful donations to NMWA as well as significant programs in Northern California.

"San Francisco Advocacy for NMWA exemplifies the generosity, dynamism, and creativity of our museum's committees. Their activities amplify our shared mission and inspire broader enthusiasm for women in the arts."

// NMWA Director Susan Fisher Sterling

They also connected with additional longstanding NMWA supporters in the area, including Mary Lou Dauray, Susan and Tom Gage, Fred Levin and the late Nancy Livingston Levin, Tara Rudman, Amanda Spivey, Denise Littlefield Sobel, and Christine Suppes. Together, their activities amplify the profile of NMWA in San Francisco and generate enthusiasm for women artists.

The group's *Women to Watch* programming supports women artists in Northern California and builds ties to Washington, D.C. For this collaborative series, NMWA selects a unifying theme or medium, and committees work with curators in their regions to nominate artists to be featured. San Francisco Advocacy has staged in-depth local programs and exhibitions as part of their participation in *Heavy Metal: Women to Watch 2018*, *Paper Routes: Women to Watch 2020*, and *New Worlds: Women to Watch 2024*. They have collaborated with curators from several institutions as well as California College of the Arts (CCA), where committee member and

CCA Director of Exhibitions and Public Programming Jaime Austin has mounted exhibitions of art by *Women to Watch* nominees during each cycle.

With the understanding that they could best support artists through exhibitions and publications highlighting their art, the committee has helped with extra elements of each *Women to Watch* exhibition, too. They twice donated funds for NMWA to create exhibition catalogues and have supported several celebratory receptions. In addition, they have made generous art donations to NMWA focusing on *Women to Watch* artists.

The group's other projects have varied widely, from gatherings at artists' studios and exhibitions to staging virtual events and giving direct grants to artists during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A highlight of their spring season will be *Reunited*, an exhibition at CCA from April 2 to May 2, which features art by all twelve past San Francisco *Women to Watch* artist nominees, Sofía Córdova, Julia Goodman, Nicki Green, Rhonda Holberton, Cathy Lu, Adia Millett, Sandra Ono, Genevieve Quick, Davina Semo, Amy Tavern, Lava Thomas, and Katherine Vetne.

Alongside their creative and resourceful programming, San Francisco Advocacy generously supported NMWA's Space to Soar capital campaign, raising more than \$1 million for the museum's top-to-bottom renovation. When NMWA reopened, many members attended the festivities, glad to celebrate in the new gallery named for their group.

Leonora Carrington,  
*Ship of Cranes*, 2010;  
Bronze, 26 x 14 x 42 ½ in.;  
NMWA, Gift of Paul  
Weisz-Carrington, M.D.





| February 28–August 10, 2025

# Uncanny



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Orin Zahra

Unearthly, enigmatic, and psychologically tense, the works in *Uncanny* give form to women artists' powerful expressions of existential unease. Rather than comfort and soothe, these ghostly and fantastical images haunt the unconscious. Instead of picturesque works, artists offer disquieting figures and spaces that unsettle the viewer. Women's bodies, historically the subjects of male fear and desire, appear fused with inanimate objects in pointed irony. In focusing on the ambiguity between reality and fiction, artists explore increasingly blurred lines between the artificial and the eerily human.

Contemporary artists create images and figures that reveal uncharted territories of the human psyche.

Frida Orupabo, *Two Heads*, 2022; Framed collage with paper pins, 58 ¼ x 41 ½ in.; On loan from Lisa Gregory



© FRIDA ORUPABO; COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND GALERIE NORDEHNKE BERLIN/STOCKHOLM/MEXICO CITY

*Uncanny* is the first major exhibition to explore modern and contemporary women artists' use of the uncanny as a feminist strategy, as they tackle, question, and subvert patriarchal conventions in the art world.

With nearly seventy works by more than thirty artists, *Uncanny* is organized around themes of surreal imaginings, unsafe spaces, and the uncanny valley. Comprising painting, sculpture, works on paper, photography, and video, the exhibition is based on recent acquisitions and rarely seen works in NMWA's collection, complemented by key loans.

### Uncharted Territory

A concept first described by German psychiatrist Ernst Jentsch in 1906 and popularized in an essay by Sigmund Freud in 1919, the "uncanny" is the psychological experience of a phenomenon that is strangely familiar, yet alien, engendering a sense of anxiety. These eerie experiences may be provoked by artists' use of unexpected elements to induce surprise or unease in viewers. In historical representations, artists often associated women with strangeness and horror—the

"other" in contrast to a default male norm and male gaze—and conventional visual tropes positioned women as passive or uncanny objects. While artists and art historians have revisited the uncanny throughout the decades, this exhibition uncovers women's authorship of uncanny narratives, revealing how the concept is used by women artists to regain agency and probe feelings of revulsion, fear, and discomfort.

Recent scholarship by art historian Alexandra M. Kokoli, author of *The Feminist Uncanny in Theory and Art Practice* (2016), interrogates the complex relationship between Freudian psychoanalysis and feminism. Freud believed that the experience of the uncanny was triggered by a person's sudden recollection of repressed impulses or memories, leading to feelings of dread. For Kokoli, the feminist uncanny is an aggressive defamiliarization of familiar, long-held preconceptions. Through subversive representations of repressed feelings or ideas, the feminist uncanny points to the unsettling goal of resistance and liberation inherent in feminist artistic practices.



## Surreal Imaginings

The Surrealists of the early twentieth century were among the earliest to explore the concept of the uncanny expressly in their art. Drawing on Freud's writings, which asserted that the unconscious has a more powerful connection to true meaning and desire than the rational mind, Surrealists represented strange, dream-like imagery. In exploring themes of identity, metamorphosis, and transformation in an ever-changing world, Leonora Carrington (1917–2011) created playful, yet sometimes inhospitable realms. In her sculpture *Ship of Cranes* (2010), menacing birds with elongated, piercing beaks glide ominously in a bird-boat hybrid. Some scholars see Carrington's depictions of boat travel as a reflection of her interest in concepts of rebirth and the afterlife from ancient mythologies.<sup>1</sup>

Male Surrealists frequently represented the fragmentation and dissolution of female bodies; women artists reclaimed and co-opted this trope to grapple with their own frustrations and traumas. Through distortion and manipulation, works in *Uncanny* ask the viewer to navigate the body's emotional and physical relationship to the unknown. *Untitled (with foot)* (1989) by Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010), carved from pink marble, depicts a baby's foot sticking out from beneath a perfect sphere. Sculpted to allude to smooth, tender flesh under a heavy globe-like object, the work is equally alluring and alarming. Bourgeois evokes the unresolved tension of the universal trauma of birth, a recurrent theme in her art.



Fabiola Jean-Louis, *They'll Say We Enjoyed It*, from the series "Rewriting History," 2017; Archival pigment print; 33 x 26 in.; Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Myrtis

Continuing the legacies of the early Surrealists, contemporary artists create images and figures that reveal uncharted territories of the human psyche. Surreal photographic collages of Black figures by Frida Orupabo (b. 1986) employ a colonial photographic archive, while the fragmented, distorted, and multiplied bodies generate a strange, phantom-like effect. The imagery in *Two Heads* (2022) recalls pseudo-scientific photographs disseminated in colonial-era Europe that perpetuated stereotypes of African peoples. Orupabo critiques the historical racism and injustice perpetrated particularly against Black women. As the artist states,



Berlinde De Bruyckere, *019*, 2007; Wax, epoxy, metal, glass, wood, and blankets, 115½ x 203½ x 30½ in.; NMWA, Gift of Tony and Trisja Podesta Collection

Laurie Simmons, *The Music of Regret IV*, 1994; Cibachrome print, 19 ½ x 19 ½ in.; NMWA, Promised gift of Steven Scott, Baltimore, in honor of NMWA Director Susan Fisher Sterling



© 2025 LAURIE SIMMONS

“For me, to create work that looks back at the viewer is a way to refuse to be made into an object, and to say, ‘I see you.’”<sup>2</sup>

### Unsafe Spaces

The term “uncanny,” or *unheimlich* in German, translates to “unhomely.” This alludes to the feeling of being in an unfamiliar space that might contain and reveal something hidden. Women artists have long explored the domestic sphere as a point of political tension and a site to use in pushing back against established gender roles.

Some artists explore ghostly spaces that give the impression of being abandoned, neglected, and psychologically unwelcoming. Unpopulated interior spaces depicted by Julie Roberts (b. 1963) offer unsettling glimpses into human frailty. She places an isolated image—typically a medical instrument or facility—atop a thickly painted ground of saturated color. In works such as *Gynaecology Couch* (1992), Roberts examines society’s methods of exercising power, particularly on the female body, and invokes the threat of a looming, institutionalized patriarchy.

The monumental sculpture *o19* (2007) by Berlinde De Bruyckere (b. 1964) presents fragments of wax-covered wood within an antique glass vitrine. The objects appear startlingly animate, as if bodies and ethnographic specimens are hanging on display. As the artist says of her work, “I don’t want people to see the sculptures as trees, but as strange, vulnerable beings.”<sup>3</sup>

Martine Gutierrez, *Body En Thrall*, p.112, from *Indigenous Woman*, 2018; C-print mounted on Sintra, 48 x 32 in.; On loan from Nancy and Marc Duber

More than nine feet tall and fifteen feet wide, the work towers over viewers with its haunting presence.

In her series “Rewriting History” (2017), Fabiola Jean-Louis (b. 1978) uses the *unheimlich* to explore issues of racial trauma. She carefully stages studio portraits of subjects wearing fashionable ballgowns and period costumes typical of upper-class European women. Seemingly innocuous at first glance, like familiar historical paintings of nobility, Jean-Louis’s portraits reveal images of racial and sexual violence on closer inspection—in a composition’s background or a dress’s intricate details. Through this disquieting imagery, the artist addresses generational trauma faced by Black women across history.

### Uncanny Valley

Japanese roboticist Masahiro Mori coined the phrase “uncanny valley” in 1970, describing the strange and apprehensive sensation evoked by objects that very closely—but not completely—resemble people and places. Within the exhibition, several works exploit this tension; they typically contain small but significant peculiar elements that signal to the viewer that what is being depicted is not quite naturalistic.



© MARTINE GUTIERREZ; COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND RYAN LEE GALLERY, NEW YORK



A master of the uncanny, Gillian Wearing (b. 1963) dons silicone prosthetic masks, wigs, and costumes, adding elaborate lighting and backdrops to stage eerie images of herself as other people. Her photographs transform the artist into versions of her younger self, her biological relatives, and figures from art history whom she considers her spiritual family, such as Albrecht Dürer, Meret Oppenheim, and the Mona Lisa. The images provide just-sufficient clues to indicate that the faces are unnatural, as she reveals her own eyes peering out at viewers from behind the masks. For Wearing, masks can underscore tensions between deception and revelation, or our private and public selves. She uses them to explore how people form identities within familial, social, and historical contexts.

Laurie Simmons (b. 1949) famously uses dolls, ventriloquist dummies, and miniature objects to stage scenes that question the stereotypically gendered roles of men and women in postwar suburban America. Anthropomorphized doll legs—attached to pastries, stacks of money, perfume bottles, and other household objects—palpably express the way that consumer fetishism has been tailored to a female identity.

Like Simmons, Martine Gutierrez (b. 1989) employs satire and humor to reveal the uncanny, using the medium of photography to upend traditional ideals of femininity and beauty. Gutierrez's *Body En Thrall* (2018) looks like a center-fold image, with the artist posed in front of a backdrop of blooming flowers, wearing a white bathing suit that reveals her cleavage. The viewer soon realizes that Gutierrez has actually tucked melon halves into her bikini top to appear as her breasts. Foregrounding her Mayan heritage as well as her transgender identity, Gutierrez creates photographs that disassemble limiting, unfeasible conceptions of womanhood.

In recent years, the emergence of artificial intelligence has led many artists to question the meaning of being human. The series "Conversations with Bina48" (2014–ongoing) by Stephanie Dinkins (b. 1964) visualizes the intersections of artificial intelligence, art, and human nature. The artist documents her interactions with an android modeled on the looks and memories of Bina Aspen Rothblatt, a Black woman and the wife of the co-founder of Terasem Movement, a foundation promoting the maximum extension of human life. While Bina48 exists as a bust-like head mounted on a frame, and thus is clearly not human, her conversational speech is eerily advanced. Programmed primarily by white men from Hanson Robotics, the android responds to a series of questions on race and gender from Dinkins. Bina48's answers highlight the human biases and social inequities perpetuated by people encoding technologically advanced systems.

Stephanie Dinkins, *Conversations with Bina48: Fragments 7, 6, 5, 2*, 2018; Video and audio, 4 min.; Courtesy of the artist



### Uncanny Insights

Kokoli describes the feminist uncanny as a "force of perpetual unrest," using grotesqueness or monstrosity to explore the effects of repression.<sup>4</sup> Artists in this exhibition boldly repurpose established approaches to the uncanny, transforming them into myriad forms of feminist critique. The featured works destabilize gendered and societal preconceptions. They enable critical insights into how we may bear witness to women's complex experiences and worldviews. Although beautiful or reassuring imagery has a place in enriching the human psyche, *Uncanny* demonstrates the potency of the unexpected.

// Orin Zahra is associate curator at the National Museum of Women in the Arts.

*Uncanny* is organized by the National Museum of Women in the Arts. The exhibition is made possible by Share Fund and the Estate of Lisa Claudy Fleischman, with additional funding provided by the members of NMWA.

### Notes

1. Claire LeSar, "Representing Motherhood and Aging in Leonora Carrington's Bird Iconography," (master's thesis, University of Alabama at Birmingham, 2022), 50–51.
2. Fi Churchman, "Frida Orupabo Reconfigures Black Female Sexuality" in *ArtReview* (May 2023), <https://artreview.com/frida-orupabo-reconfigures-black-female-sexuality>.
3. De Bruyckere, quoted in *Berlinde De Bruyckere: We Are All Flesh*, ACCA Education, produced for *Berlinde De Bruyckere: We Are All Flesh*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Arts, Melbourne (2012), <https://content.acca.melbourne/uploads/2016/11/BerlindeDeBruyckereEducationkit.pdf>.
4. Alexandra Kokoli, *The Feminist Uncanny in Theory and Art Practice* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 2016, 39–40.

# Calendar

## // EXHIBITIONS

**Samantha Box: Confluences**  
Through March 23, 2025

**In Focus: Artists at Work**  
Through April 20, 2025

**Uncanny**  
Through August 10, 2025

**Guerrilla Girls:  
Making Trouble**  
April 12–September 28, 2025

**A Radical Alteration:  
Women's Studio Workshop  
as a Sustainable Model  
for Art Making**  
April 25–September 28, 2025

**Niki de Saint Phalle In Print**  
May 9–November 30, 2025

**Online exhibitions:**  
Revisit favorite NMWA  
exhibitions and more at  
[https://nmwa.org/whats-on/  
exhibitions/online](https://nmwa.org/whats-on/exhibitions/online).

## // KEY

- F** Free
- M** Free for members
- +** Free for members and one guest
- A** Free with admission
- R** Reservations required  
at <https://nmwa.org>
- O** No reservations required
- E** Exhibition-related program
- V** Virtual/online program  
(Please note that the time  
zone for all online programs is  
Eastern Time)

Automated speech-to-text transcription is enabled during most virtual programs. To request additional access services, please check the online calendar for contact information or email [accessibility@nmwa.org](mailto:accessibility@nmwa.org). Two weeks' notice is appreciated but not required.

## Daily / Weekly / Monthly

For museum admission, advance online reservations are suggested.

### Free Community Day

FIRST SUNDAYS & SECOND WEDNESDAYS 10 A.M.–5 P.M. // **FMR**

The first Sunday and second Wednesday of each month, NMWA offers free admission to the public. Enjoy current exhibitions and the collection galleries. Advance registration is required, with limited walk-up availability.

### Open Studio

FIRST SUNDAYS & SECOND WEDNESDAYS 10 A.M.–4 P.M. // **FMO**

During Free Community Days, visit the museum's new studio for drop-in art-making activities. All ages welcome; children twelve and younger require adult supervision.

### Collection Highlights Tour

DAILY 2–2:45 P.M. & FIRST SUNDAYS 11–11:45 A.M. // **MAO**

During these interactive, docent- or staff-led talks, look closely and discuss artworks from NMWA's collection. Join as often as you like—content varies.

### Gallery Talk

MOST WEDNESDAYS 12–12:30 P.M. // **FMOE**

Conversational, thematic staff-led talks highlight several works on view. Join as often as you like—content varies.

### NMWA Nights

SELECT WEDNESDAYS 5:30–8 P.M. // **R**

On the third Wednesday of most months, join a creative and engaging after-hours experience! Peruse the galleries, grab a cocktail, make art, and enjoy a performance or talk.

### Art Chat

SELECT FRIDAYS 5–5:45 P.M. // **FMREV**

On select Fridays, jump-start your weekend with art! Join NMWA educators online for informal 45-minute chats about selected works from NMWA's collection and exhibitions.

## March

### 3/16 Creative's Keynote: Sandra Jackson-Dumont

SUN 6–8 P.M. // **R**

Sandra Jackson-Dumont, director and CEO of the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, shares her vision for promoting diversity and inclusion in the arts through storytelling. Followed by a salon-style cocktail hour. \$25 general/\$22 students, seniors, D.C. residents/\$20 members.

### 3/19 Gallery Talk: Collection Sampler

WED 12–12:30 P.M. // **FMO**



Last chance! See *In Focus: Artists at Work*, the museum's immersive short film series, before it closes on April 20





Explore the museum after hours during NMWA Nights on March 19, April 16, and May 21

### 3/19 NMWA Nights

WED 5:30–8 P.M. // **R**

Enjoy NMWA's late-hours series with cocktails, art-making, and more. \$25 general/\$22 students, seniors, D.C. residents/\$20 members. Free for members at the Explorer level and above. All members can purchase tickets if the event is sold out.

### 3/24 Fresh Talk: Defining Success

MON 6–8 P.M. // **R**

Join us for a conversation exploring the many definitions of success with entrepreneurs from the food industry Jill Nguyễn, founder of the D.C.-based micro-bakery and cake workshop Capitol Jill Baking, and Bricia Lopez, co-owner of Guelaguetza, a Oaxacan restaurant and market in Los Angeles. Followed by a salon-style cocktail hour. \$25 general/\$22 students, seniors, D.C. residents/\$20 members.

### 3/26 Gallery Talk: Collection Sampler

WED 12–12:30 P.M. // **F M O**

### 3/26 Environmental Film Festival: *Holding Back the Tide*

WED 6–7:30 P.M. // **F M R**

Experimental documentary *Holding Back the Tide* (2023) explores the life cycle of oysters through queer characters and ancient myth. Screening followed by a discussion with the film's director, Emily Packer. Presented in partnership with the Environmental Film Festival in the Nation's Capital.

### 3/27 Wikipedia Edit-a-thon: Intersectional Environmentalism

THU 1–3:30 P.M. // **R V**

Join NMWA and partner Wikimedia DC for a virtual Wikipedia Edit-a-thon to help close information gaps related to gender, feminism, and the arts. This event focuses on environmental justice and sustainability in the arts.

### 3/28 Art Chat

FRI 5–5:45 P.M. // **F M R V**

## April

### 4/2 Gallery Talk: *Uncanny*

WED 12–12:30 P.M. // **F M O E**

### 4/5 Slow Art Day

SAT 1–2:30 P.M. // **A M + R**

Slow Art Day is an international event encouraging people to visit art spaces and look at art slowly. Register in advance, look at selected artworks, and discuss the experience with a museum educator.

### 4/6 Free Community Day

SUN 10 A.M.–5 P.M. // **F M R**

### 4/6 Open Studio

SUN 10 A.M.–4 P.M. // **F M O**

### 4/6 Collection Highlights Tour

SUN 11–11:45 A.M. // **F M O**

### 4/6 Collection Highlights Tour

SUN 2–2:45 P.M. // **F M O**

### 4/9 Free Community Day

WED 10 A.M.–5 P.M. // **F M R**

### 4/9 Open Studio

WED 10 A.M.–4 P.M. // **F M O**

### 4/9 Gallery Talk: *Uncanny*

WED 12–12:30 P.M. // **F M O E**

Magdalena Abakanowicz's *4 Seated Figures* (2002) is on view in *Uncanny* through August 10



PHOTO BY EMILY HAIGHT, NMWA



PHOTO BY JULIE COLE

Left: Shop handmade goods from local vendors at a Makers' Market during Free Community Day on May 4

// KEY

<b>F</b> Free	<b>O</b> No reservations required
<b>M</b> Free for members	<b>E</b> Exhibition-related program
<b>+</b> Free for members and one guest	<b>V</b> Virtual/online program (Please note that the time zone for all online programs is Eastern Time)
<b>A</b> Free with admission	
<b>R</b> Reservations required at <a href="https://nmwa.org">https://nmwa.org</a>	

**4/11 Spring Gala**

FRI 6:30–10 P.M. // **R**

Join us for a memorable and celebratory evening at the museum's largest annual fundraising event. Contact [gala@nmwa.org](mailto:gala@nmwa.org) for tickets and sponsorship.

**4/16 Gallery Talk: Collection Sampler**

WED 12–12:30 P.M. // **F M O**

**4/16 NMWA Nights**

WED 5:30–8 P.M. // **R**

Enjoy NMWA's late-hours series with cocktails, art-making, and more. \$25 general/\$22 students, seniors, D.C. residents/\$20 members. Free for members at the Explorer level and above. All members can purchase tickets if the event is sold out.

**4/16 Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) Look Club**

WED 3–4 P.M. // **R V**

Join NMWA educators for their residency with VTS Look Club Online. Using the VTS method of thoughtful, open-ended questions, educators will facilitate discussions based on images from NMWA's collection. Pay what you can.

**4/19 Tour: Earth Day**

SAT 12–1 P.M. // **A M R**

Celebrate Earth Day on this engaging, interactive tour. Explore how NMWA collection artists draw inspiration from the natural world, from subject matter to materials.

**4/23 Gallery Talk: *Uncanny***

WED 12–12:30 P.M. // **F M O E**

**4/25 Art Chat**

FRI 5–5:45 P.M. // **F M R V**

**4/30 Gallery Talk: *Uncanny***

WED 12–12:30 P.M. // **F M O E**

**4/30 Curator's Perspective: *Remix***

WED 6–7 P.M. // **M R V**

In this members-only virtual presentation, NMWA curators share behind-the-scenes insights into the museum's collection installation, *Remix*.

**May**

**5/4 Free Community Day**

SUN 10 A.M.–5 P.M. // **F M R**

**5/4 Makers' Market**

SUN 10 A.M.–4 P.M. // **F M R**

Shop handcrafted art and merchandise made by local women artists and designers. Included in Community Day admission.

**5/4 Open Studio**

SUN 10 A.M.–4 P.M. // **F M O**

**5/4 Collection Highlights Tour**

SUN 11–11:45 A.M. // **F M O**

**5/4 Collection Highlights Tour**

SUN 2–2:45 P.M. // **F M O**

**5/7 Gallery Talk: *Uncanny***

WED 12–12:30 P.M. // **F M O E**

**5/10 Firsthand Experience: *Hula Hoop***

SAT 11 A.M.–3 P.M. // **R**

Inspired by artworks in the exhibition *Uncanny*, Erin Jeannier, a variety circus performer specializing in hula hoop artistry, will teach participants various spins and movements with a hula hoop. \$25 general/\$22 students, seniors, D.C. residents/\$20 members.

**5/14 Free Community Day**

WED 10 A.M.–5 P.M. // **F M R**

**5/14 Open Studio**

WED 10 A.M.–4 P.M. // **F M O**

**5/14 Gallery Talk: *A Radical Alteration***

WED 12–12:30 P.M. // **F M O E**



**5/21 Gallery Talk: Collection Sampler**WED 12–12:30 P.M. // **F M O****5/21 NMWA Nights**WED 5:30–8 P.M. // **R**

Enjoy NMWA's late-hours series with cocktails, art-making, and more. \$25 general/\$22 students, seniors, D.C. residents/\$20 members. Free for members at the Explorer level and above. All members can purchase tickets if the event is sold out.

**5/23 Art Chat**FRI 5–5:45 P.M. // **F M R V****5/28 Gallery Talk: *Guerrilla Girls***WED 12–12:30 P.M. // **F M O E**


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## June

**6/1 Free Community Day**SUN 10 A.M.–5 P.M. // **F M R****6/1 Open Studio**SUN 10 A.M.–4 P.M. // **F M O****6/1 Collection Highlights Tour**SUN 11–11:45 A.M. // **F M O****6/1 Collection Highlights Tour**SUN 2–2:45 P.M. // **F M O****6/4 Gallery Talk: *Guerrilla Girls***WED 12–12:30 P.M. // **F M O E****6/11 Free Community Day**WED 10 A.M.–5 P.M. // **F M R****6/11 Open Studio**WED 10 A.M.–4 P.M. // **F M O****6/11 Gallery Talk: Collection Sampler—LGBTQIA+ Artists**WED 12–12:30 P.M. // **F M O****6/11 Fresh Talk: Gender & Performance**WED 6–8:30 P.M. // **R**

Step into the bold and creative world of drag, where artistry and activism collide. This program spotlights four drag performers—Evry Pleasure, Sweet Pickles, King Molasses, and Citrine the Queen—who use their craft to challenge societal norms, foster inclusive communities, and redefine artistic expression. Followed by a salon-style cocktail hour. \$25 general/\$22 students, seniors, D.C. residents/\$20 members.

**6/18 Gallery Talk: Collection Sampler**WED 12–12:30 P.M. // **F M O****6/21 Tour: Celebrating Pride**SAT 12–1 P.M. // **A M R**

Explore the creative contributions of LGBTQIA+ artists in NMWA's collection. On this engaging, interactive tour, you will look closely and consider identity and community in several works of art, spanning time and space.

**6/25 Gallery Talk: *Niki de Saint Phalle***WED 12–12:30 P.M. // **F M O E****6/27 Art Chat**FRI 5–5:45 P.M. // **F M R V**

PHOTO COURTESY OF EVRY PLEASURE

Evry Pleasure appears in a Fresh Talk about gender and performance on June 11

// Education programming is made possible by the A. James & Alice B. Clark Foundation, with further support provided by Sarah Kennedy, the Leo Rosner Foundation, the Hayes Foundation, the William Randolph Hearst Foundation, and Elinor Coleman and David Sparkman. Additional funding is provided by the Harriet E. McNamee Youth Education Fund and William and Christine Leahy.

The Women, Arts, and Social Change public programs initiative is made possible through leadership gifts from Denise Littlefield Sobel and the Davis/Dauray Family Fund, with additional support provided by Anne N. Edwards, the Revada Foundation of the Logan Family, and the Susan and Jim Swartz Public Programs Fund.



© WOMEN'S STUDIO WORKSHOP

# A Radical Alteration

Women's Studio Workshop as a Sustainable Model for Art Making

April 25–September 28, 2025

Elizabeth Ajunwa

Women's Studio Workshop (WSW) is one of few remaining arts organizations that originated at the height of second-wave feminism, the era that sparked Linda Nochlin's groundbreaking essay "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" (1971). *A Radical Alteration* examines WSW's history as a proponent of book arts for marginalized communities in the U.S. Through artists' books, zines, printed materials, ephemera, and archival materials, the exhibition shares the work of WSW as a model for radical change.

Elizabeth Ajunwa, director of NMWA's Betty Boyd Dettre Library and Research Center, spoke with exhibition curator Maymanah Farhat about her work and WSW's inspirational fifty-year history.

**Elizabeth Ajunwa: I'm looking forward to talking about *A Radical Alteration*. Can you introduce yourself?**

**Maymanah Farhat:** I am a California-based art historian, curator, and educator. I focus on underrepresented artists and forgotten art scenes, because I'm interested in how art history has not just overlooked, but also erased, particular communities, artists, and artworks.

**EA: What led you to curate this exhibition?**

**MF:** In 2019, I was encouraged to submit an exhibition proposal to the Center for Book Arts. At the time, I was reading books by Audre Lorde and Gloria Anzaldúa, poetry by June Jordan, and essays by Adrienne Rich. I find that period of feminist thinkers in this country so interesting—their experiences and writings explore many issues that I relate to myself.

That exhibition was titled *Poetry is Not a Luxury* after Audre Lorde's 1985 essay ("For women, then, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence."). It looked at artists' books as an especially exciting genre for women-identifying artists. I was interested not only in rethinking the book as an art object, but also in considering the intimacy of an artist's book. The fact that the viewing experience really becomes an encounter.

After that, I was chatting with a friend, artist Dahlia Elsayed, who was on the board of WSW, about the organization's upcoming fiftieth anniversary. The idea for this



exhibition took shape as I started looking into their history. WSW grew out of the early stage of feminist art—it is one of about four feminist arts organizations from that period still operating. That is really significant to me. How were they able to navigate the ups and downs of the American art world, the political climate, and the women's movement?

The intent of this exhibition is to dive into the history of WSW and help viewers gain an understanding that this type of work can be done sustainably. There are so many pressures on nonprofit arts organizations—funding, donors, grant applications, and many other challenges. Not only did WSW survive, they thrived. They kept expanding and adding to their programming. I want the exhibition to articulate that it can be done. Not without a lot of sacrifice, of course—the four cofounders of WSW put all of their energy and time into it.

When artists are accepted to the Artist's Book Residency program, WSW gives extensive monetary, production, and studio support. The campus has studios for photography, papermaking, and much more, and staff who have those technical skills can facilitate new work.

**“In order to correct our history . . . you not only have to intervene within the canon, but you also have to create new opportunities and art spaces.”**

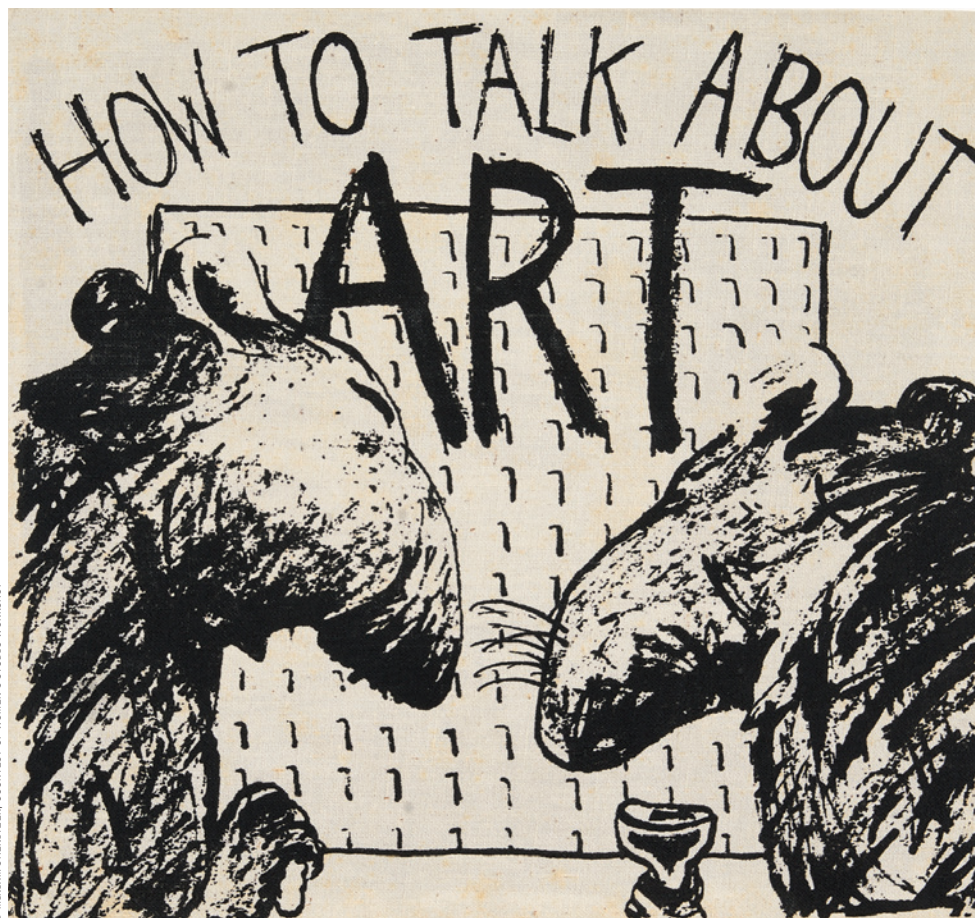
// MAYMANAH FARHAT

Opposite: Women's Studio Workshop, *Sisterhood* posters, 1976; Silkscreen, each 24 ½ x 15 ⅞ in.; Courtesy of Women's Studio Workshop

Below: Women's Studio Collective promotional card, 1975; Silkscreen, 6 ½ x 9 ¼ in.; Courtesy of Women's Studio Workshop







**“I want people to see how much amazing work can come out of a program that is rooted in support, encouragement, and love.”**

// MAYMANAH FARHAT

Miriam Shenitzer,  
*How to talk about art*, 1994; Artist's book, offset printing, 8 ¼ x 8 ½ in.; NMWA, Betty Boyd Dettre Library and Research Center

**EA:** It's fascinating to hear you talk about not just the artists' books, but the whole ecosystem of WSW. Can you touch on how that relates to the exhibition title?

**MF:** “A radical alteration” comes from Linda Nochlin's groundbreaking 1971 essay on women artists and why they haven't been included in institutions. She argued that it was not necessarily a matter of women artists not having training or talent, but instead about structure and opportunity. In order to correct that history—that lack of inclusion within the Western canon—you need to have “a radical alteration.” You not only have to intervene within the canon, but you also have to create new opportunities and art spaces that are what you want them to be.

There was so much happening around the country at that time. I teach at Fresno State, where Judy Chicago launched her feminist art program in 1970, and it was the first in the country.

It made me think about other movements happening around the same time, which all flowed from the civil rights movement. Here in California's Central Valley, we had the emergence of the Chicano art movement alongside the strikes of the United Farm Workers. A lot of related movements

were growing, including the Black Arts movement. Jaune Quick-to-See Smith was organizing shows near that time; Faith Ringgold was working in book arts as well.

I was interested in how Nochlin's essay could inform this exhibition, because I wanted to contextualize WSW within that larger cultural movement.

**EA:** It's interesting to think about the context of the feminist art movement. Where do artists' books fit into that space?

**MF:** In the U.S., artists' books really come into the fold of contemporary art in the sixties and seventies. From the beginning in this country, there were so many women artists experimenting with the medium.

You can do so much with artists' book forms. They were part of an alternative scene of exchange, and a nonprofit arts organization could be established by a group of artists who had like-minded interests. A number of the WSW founders were printmakers, so artists' books were a logical next step.



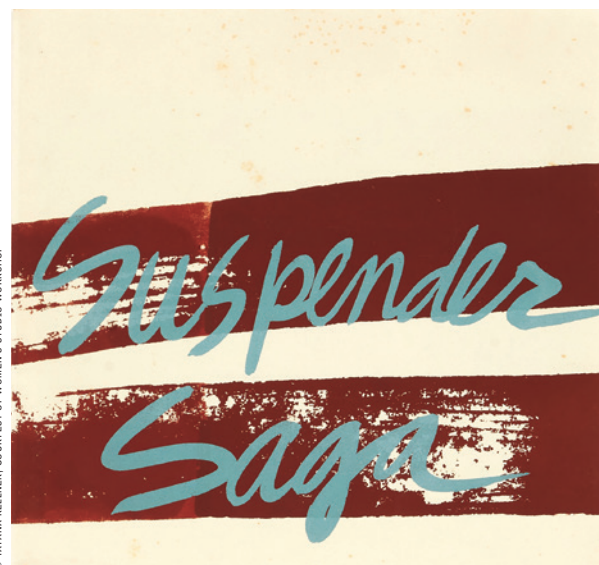
**EA: What do you hope people take away from this exhibition when they see it?**

**MF:** I want people to see how much amazing work can come out of a program that is rooted in support, encouragement, and love. Every time I've talked about this show and this organization, I've had women artists come up to me and say, "WSW was transformative in my artistic practice."

Then you will see the work. It's my subjective view of WSW's history. Anyone could look at WSW's archive and find works they are drawn to that reflect an astounding level of artistry and vision. In terms of the content, there's such a range. It is really a history—in the form of artist books—of this country and the issues that women artists have faced.

When the exhibition was on view in San Francisco, someone said to me, "A lot of the books are about incarcerated people and incarcerated communities—was that a personal choice?" I said, "I didn't do that, that's American history." Those books about the prison system were created over several decades, which means we've had this issue in this country over several decades. Artists are political beings and critical thinkers, so their ideas are reflected in their art.

WSW never shied away from those topics, no matter how controversial or uncomfortable. Their stance was always: "We are practicing artists. We established this organization

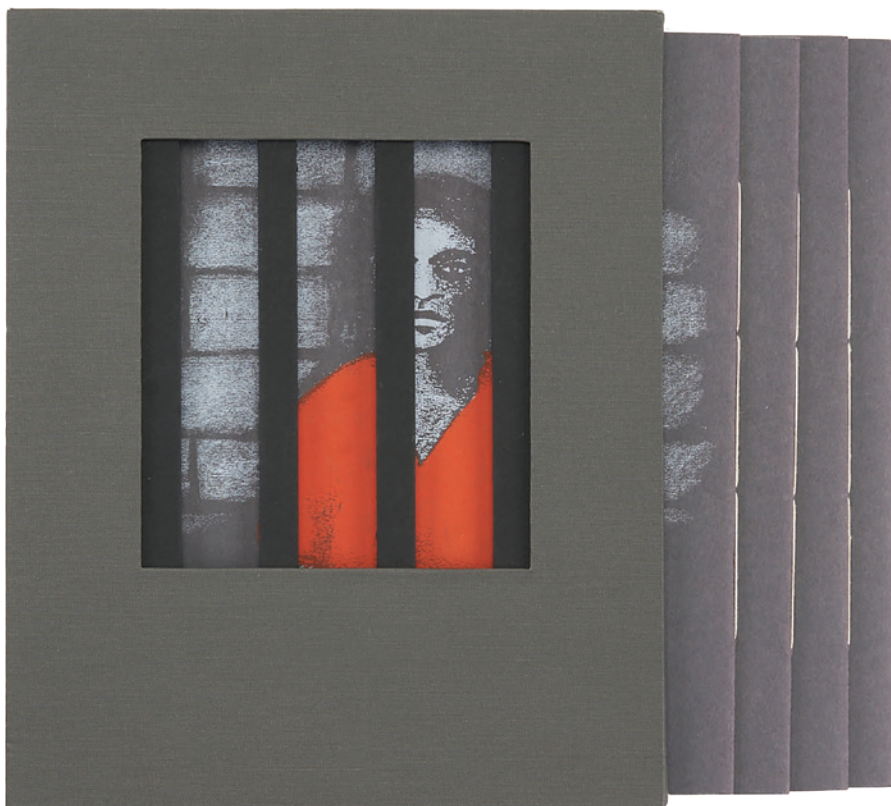


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to teach other artists, specifically women artists, skills in a variety of media. And we want to support you as best as we can." That, to me, really comes through in the art.

// Elizabeth Ajunwa is director of NMWA's Betty Boyd Dettre Library and Research Center.

*A Radical Alteration: Women's Studio Workshop as a Sustainable Model for Art Making* is organized by Women's Studio Workshop. Presentation of the exhibition at NMWA is made possible by a generous bequest from Marjorie B. Rachlin.



© TONA WILSON; COURTESY OF WOMEN'S STUDIO WORKSHOP

Above: Tatana Kellner, *Suspender Saga*, 1979; Artist's book, silkscreen, 9 ½ x 78 ¾ in. (folded to 9 ½ x 9 ¾ in.); Courtesy of Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College

Left: Tona Wilson, *Stories behind bars*, 2010; Artist's book, silkscreen, 10 ¼ x 8 ¼ x 1 in.; Courtesy of Women's Studio Workshop





Joan Mitchell, *Sale Neige*, 1980;  
Oil on canvas, 86 ¼ x 70 ⅞ in.;  
NMWA, Gift of Wallace and  
Wilhelmina Holladay

# “Remembered Landscapes”

Marking Joan Mitchell's Centenary

Ellen G. Landau

While Joan Mitchell (1925–1992) garnered considerable fame as a prominent member of the “second generation” of New York School painters, this designation (which she disdained) leads audiences to overlook the fact that the artist spent the majority of her career in France, at first Paris, and later in Vétheuil, a village near Monet’s house and studio in Giverny. Bilingual after decades abroad, Mitchell elected to anoint herself with an offbeat French idiom, “*mauvaise herbe*”—signifying a weed—although,



in her usage, she reversed its negative meaning, emphasizing a weed's beauty and ability to flourish in unlikely circumstances. Her purposeful misinterpretation of this phrase neatly conveys Mitchell's unruly personality and the continual "out of place" feeling she could never overcome.

## "People always look for the horizon. I want to hold a surface in space."

// JOAN MITCHELL

These presentiments trace back to Mitchell's wealthy Chicago childhood. She was the second daughter of Marion Strobel, a poet whose promising career was stymied by her authoritarian and patriarchal husband, who expressed keen disappointment that Joan was not a son. Her resultant dis-ease continued into adulthood, leading her to live and work in Europe and, after 1959, to limit her extended forays back to New York and its misogynistic art world milieu. Her transatlantic artistic identity did turn fraught—for France, Mitchell wryly explained, her art was too American (i.e., violent) and, for Americans, too French, her paintings downgraded as decorative. This conundrum complicated Mitchell's increasingly competitive, almost twenty-five-year professional and personal relationship with prominent Canadian expatriate "art star" Jean Paul Riopelle. The more finished European *tachiste* style he exemplified—incorporating blots, staining, linear calligraphy, and patches of hue—contrasted with the bolder improvisational effects of American "action" painting.

Mitchell's fierce sensuality and predilection for risk became subsumed into intensely passionate compositions beginning in Paris, followed by the exquisitely poetic, oversized canvases she produced after moving into a more peaceful life in Normandy. In Vétheuil, Monet, Cézanne, Van Gogh, and Matisse seemed like "colleagues" to her, and Mitchell developed a deeply considered visual dialogue with their unmistakably French approaches to space and color. The mutual artistic influence that she and Riopelle cultivated likewise helped underwrite a greater embrace of lyricism, leaving American roughness and toughness mostly behind.

The National Museum of Women in the Arts is fortunate to own two exemplary oil paintings demonstrating a transition toward the renewal of Mitchell's later work. *Sale Neige* (1980) and *Orange* (1981) were both gifted by museum founders Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay. *Sale Neige*, whose title seems to—but doesn't really—refer to dirty snow, exemplifies the strikingly atmospheric landscape-based abstractions, evocative of nature's ever-changing temperaments, that Mitchell developed by the eighties. In the prominent upper area of this edge-to-edge, hardly "dirty" composition, downward strokes of white, tinted with pinks, lavenders, and lighter blue, partially reveal a scaffolding of black lying underneath. Below, more thickly applied, colorfully accentuated horizontal and vertical scrawls are punctuated by gravitational drips, suggesting a receding natural topography through complementary touches of lilac, cobalt blue, and dazzling yellow.

In conceptualizing *Sale Neige*, Mitchell recalled the silent and colorless winters of her Lake Michigan childhood: the white is "in me," she always maintained. *Orange* exemplifies the artist in a different frame of mind.<sup>1</sup> Painting with a bolder brush, here her manipulation of vigorous strokes into a grid-like over-covering replaces, more brashly, land and sky references traditional in landscape painting. "People always look for the horizon. I want to hold a surface in space," Mitchell explained of her nature-based abstractions.<sup>2</sup> This superimposition appears heavier, denser, and more textured at the top, a reverse compositional ploy Mitchell developed to represent emotional intensity in a structural way. Pentimenti below in glowing pastel hues, especially



Jean Paul Riopelle, *Antibes*, 1966; Oil on canvas, 47 x 36 in.; The Levett Collection, CL 198

© ESTATE OF JEAN PAUL RIOPELLE/ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY, NEW YORK/CARCC, OTTAWA; IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LEVETT COLLECTION; PHOTO BY JÉRÔME KÉLAGOPHAN



Joan Mitchell, *Orange*, 1981; Oil on canvas, 63 ¼ x 51 in.; NMWA, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Conservation funds generously provided in honor of Ed Williams by his family

the pale greens and lavender of her Vétheuil garden, subtly hint at deeper space.

White pigment patches scattered throughout *Orange* interject air, acting as rest stops for the viewer's eye. These sections serve to modify the overwhelming edge-to-edge markings in dissonant orange, a hue that Mitchell used frequently, its emotive permanence in her consciousness traceable back to childhood. The artist—the centenary of whose birth is being celebrated in 2025—insisted, “I paint from remembered landscapes that I carry with me and remembered feelings of them which of course become transformed.” Further differentiating herself from the New York School, she chose to modify improvisation with clarity. “I want to know what my brush is doing,” she said. Her work also served a deeper purpose: “Painting” she confirmed, “is what allows me to survive.”<sup>3</sup>

// Ellen G. Landau, an independent art historian in California, is Andrew W. Mellon Professor Emerita in the Humanities, Case Western Reserve University.

#### Notes:

1. “White in me”: Eleanor Munro, *Originals: American Women Artists* (Simon & Schuster, 1979), 233.
2. Yves Michaud, “Entretiens,” *Joan Mitchell* (Réunion des musées nationaux, 1994): 29–31. Aspects of *Orange* presage Mitchell's 1983 majestic twenty-one painting suite, *La Grande Vallée*, whose title references a state of feeling induced by memory and loss, not a location.
3. “I paint”: Judith Bernstock, *Joan Mitchell* (Hudson Hills Press, 1988), 31. “My brush”: Irving Sandler, “Joan Mitchell paints a picture,” *Artnews* 56 (October 1957), 69. “Survive”: Marcia Tucker, *Joan Mitchell* (Whitney Museum of American Art, 1974), 7.



# Suzanne Valadon

// Elizabeth Lynch

Adventurous and unconventional French artist Suzanne Valadon (1865–1938) is the subject of an exhibition in Paris at the Musée National d'Art Moderne at the Centre Pompidou, which features two paintings on loan from NMWA's collection, *Nude Arranging Her Hair* (*Nu se coiffant*, ca. 1916) and *The Abandoned Doll* (*La poupée délaissée*, 1921). Famously a model for artists including Auguste Renoir and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec before establishing her own artistic career, Valadon developed a distinctive style—bold, expressive, and endlessly interested in the human body.

Exhibition curators Chiara Parisi, Nathalie Ernault, and Xavier Rey discussed the significance of this presentation, on view through May 26, 2025.

## What will visitors learn about Valadon from this exhibition?

While Suzanne Valadon's work was recognized early on by critics, institutions, and artists, today's French public often knows her only through the prism of the Montmartre "Trio of Cursed Painters" she formed with her son Maurice Utrillo and her companion André Utter. Her unique trajectory, from model to artist, as well as her independence from the avant-garde, has sometimes led to her being relegated to the background in art history.

It seemed essential to organize a retrospective of her work to look back on the vital role she played in the development of modern art in France. We began at the Centre Pompidou-Metz with the exhibition *Suzanne Valadon: Un monde à soi* (2023), which

provided fertile ground for our investigations and served as the basis for this new exhibition at the Centre Pompidou, in which almost 200 works—paintings, drawings, and prints—provide a comprehensive portrait of the breadth of her art.

## Is this presentation organized around particular themes in her work?

The exhibition is organized around five thematic sections: "Learning through observation," "Family portraits," "I paint people to get to know them," "True theory is imposed by nature," and "The nude: a feminine view." It also shares a selection of works by her female contemporaries with pictorial preoccupations close to her own, such as Juliette Roche, Georgette Agutte, Jacqueline Marval, Émilie Charmy, and Hélène Delasalle.

## Works such as *Nude Arranging Her Hair* (ca. 1916) show female nudes that are not idealized. How does this painting exemplify Valadon's art?

Since the start of her career in 1884, Valadon devoted herself to female nudes, breaking with the male gaze and replacing it with a vision of women's bodies unfocused by male desire. Far from being idealized, nude women are painted for themselves, without the slightest aesthetic pretext, and not for a voyeuristic viewer. Freed from social and artistic shackles, Valadon entered the realm of sexuality in painting, long confined to the "male artist/nude woman model" antagonism.

This painting illustrates her sculptural treatment of the female body. The expressive use of cross-hatching shapes



PHOTO BY LEE STALS WORTH

"This exhibition reconsiders Valadon's work in its entire artistic, social, and political ecosystem from a feminist perspective."

// Chiara Parisi, Nathalie Ernault, and Xavier Rey, curators of *Suzanne Valadon* at the Centre Pompidou

the volumes, while Valadon emphasizes the contours of the body with a strong outline. The perspective, obstructed by the superimposition of planes, forms large flat areas of color behind the model. All these elements highlight her touch and her great mastery of painting.

// Elizabeth Lynch is director of publications at the National Museum of Women in the Arts.

Suzanne Valadon, *Nude Arranging Her Hair*, ca. 1916; Oil on canvasboard, 41¼ x 29 ¾ in.; NMWA, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay

# Committee News

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## Comings and Goings

NMWA Deputy Director of National and International Outreach Ilene Gutman, who worked for the museum for twenty-seven years, recently retired—or “re-wired”—from her position leading the museum’s national and international outreach committees as well as the NMWA Advisory Board. NMWA leadership as well as committee leaders from around the world extended thanks and good wishes on her departure.

Picking up the baton is NMWA Senior Development Officer for National and International Outreach Jill Stern, whose experience includes positions as leadership gift officer at the Williston Northampton School and director of the Mount Holyoke Fund and advancement communications at Mount Holyoke College. Welcome!

## From the Committees

A recent roundup of committee events and programs includes talks, gatherings, and more—all in support of women in the arts across the U.S. and in other countries.

- The **Arkansas Committee** celebrated its thirty-fifth anniversary and culminated a series of state-wide events in Little Rock with a luncheon at the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts that featured a keynote presentation by NMWA Director Susan Fisher Sterling.
- The **Massachusetts Committee** hosted the NMWA Advisory Board in Boston. One highlight of the visit was a talk with Susan Fisher Sterling, former ICA Boston Director Jill Medvedow, and *The Culture Show* host Jared Bowen, organized through



PHOTO BY DAVID LEWIS



PHOTO BY GRACE DEWITT, NMWA

NMWA's national and international outreach committees champion women artists far beyond the museum's walls.

the collaborative efforts of NMWA and committee members.

- The **Mississippi Committee** recognized Alexis McGrigg, who represented the state in *New Worlds: Women to Watch 2024*, and H. C. Porter at their annual Honored Artist Luncheon.
  - The **Oregon Alliance** launched the Cultural Corridor: Portland's Art Map, highlighting area art spaces and collections. A printable copy is available online at [www.nmwaoregon.org](http://www.nmwaoregon.org).
  - The **Greater Kansas City Area Committee** held a
- new member welcome event featuring remarks from NMWA National and International Outreach Associate Grace DeWitt.
  - The **Japan Committee** celebrated sponsors for *New Worlds*, showcased a video interview with their representing artist from the exhibition, and launched new programming at their reception in Tokyo.
  - The **Georgia Committee** organized a friend-raising artist luncheon featuring a gender equity report by NMWA Senior Development Officer Jill Stern.



# Museum Events

## Fresh Talk: Suchitra Mattai and Aruna D'Souza

**1.** Suchitra Mattai and art writer Aruna D'Souza in conversation during the exhibition *Suchitra Mattai: Myth from Matter*

**2.** After the Fresh Talk, Mattai chats with attendees during cocktail hour



## Fresh Talk: Photography and Advocacy

**3–4.** Photographer Samantha Box, filmmaker Kristen Lovell, and moderator Farrah Skeiky during a special in-gallery conversation during *Samantha Box: Confluences*



## Highlights from NMWA Nights

**5.** NMWA Associate Curator Orin Zahra and Samantha Box; November's event marked the opening of Box's exhibition

**6–7.** Attendees in November enjoyed refreshments and entertainment featuring DJ Xsa

**8.** January's program featured a partnership with I Support the Girls, collecting more than 2,500 period products and nearly 250 bras for people in need through the collaboration

**9.** Attendees enjoyed the new photo booth in NMWA's Museum Shop



PHOTOS 1–2 BY DEREK BAKER

PHOTOS 3–4 BY DEREK BAKER

PHOTOS 5–7 BY FARAH SKEIKY; PHOTOS 8–9 BY LAURA HOFFMAN

# Supporting Roles

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*We thank supporters of the Space to Soar capital campaign, whose generosity enabled the museum's major building renovation. Although we can only list donations of \$20,000 and above due to space limitations, we extend sincere gratitude to all donors.*

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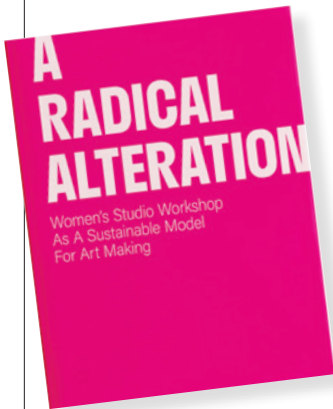
\* Deceased



# Museum Shop

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## **A Radical Alteration Exhibition Catalogue**

The catalogue shares Women's Studio Workshop's rich history through archival materials and more than forty-five artists' books. Featuring an essay by curator Maymanah Farhat. Softcover, 96 pages. \$24/Member \$21.60



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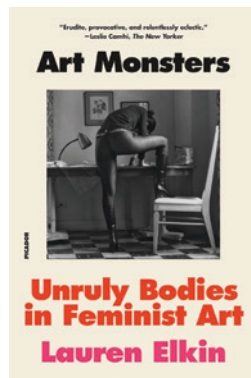
## **Toilet Paper Magazine**

The April 2024 issue features photography by Alex Prager, known for her uncanny images and films that blur the line between artifice and reality. Softcover, 40 pages. \$23/Member \$20.70



## **National Museum of Women in the Arts: Collection Highlights**

The museum's new collection highlights catalogue explores the breadth of NMWA's holdings, drawing connections among more than 180 works and sharing new essays by nearly fifty artists and scholars. Hardcover, 264 pages. \$60/Member \$54



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## **Art Monsters: Unruly Bodies in Feminist Art**

In this exploration of women's stories, bodies, and art, writer Lauren Elkin examines how feminist artists challenge the patriarchy and redefine their aesthetic goals. Softcover, 368 pages. \$21/Member \$18.90



## **Guerrilla Girls Zip Pocket Bags**

This set of three bags features iconic works from the feminist art collective. Made of 100% recycled taffeta. 5 x 9 in., 8 x 11 in., and 10 x 13 in. \$20/Member \$18

// COMING SOON

# Guerrilla Girls

## Making Trouble

April 12–September 28, 2025

The dynamic artist collective known as the Guerrilla Girls (est. 1985), who declared themselves “the conscience of the art world,” mark their fortieth anniversary in 2025. The anonymous feminist-activist

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Guerrilla Girls,  
*You're Seeing Less  
than Half the Picture*,  
from the series  
“Guerrilla Girls  
Talk Back:  
The First Five Years,  
1985–1990,” 1989;  
Photolithograph  
on paper, 17 x 22 in.;  
NMWA, Gift of  
Steven Scott,  
Baltimore, in honor  
of Wilhelmina Cole  
Holladay

artists are known for their provocative street campaigns and the advertising-style graphics that they use to broadcast their messages. Combining eye-catching aesthetics with stark statistics, the group brings

widespread attention to issues of inequality and inequity.

Drawn from NMWA's extensive holdings of work by the Guerrilla Girls, this exhibition presents a riveting visual timeline of the group's progress and

ever-expanding subject matter, including gender disparity in the arts as well as politics, the environment, and pop culture.