

## 360 Speaker Series

### Off the Pedestal: Women Artists in Art Museums

Panelists: Lynda Benglis, Connie Butler, Elizabeth Sackler,  
Jenni Sorkin

*Presented February 11, 2017 at Nasher Sculpture Center*

**Catherine Craft:** Good morning, I'm Catherine Craft, Curator at The Nasher Sculpture Center and I'm delighted to welcome you to the 360 Speaker Series. We are especially excited about today's offering, Off The Pedestal: Women Artists in Art Museums. In 2014, the Nasher Sculpture Center received a gift from Kaleta Doolin to support the acquisition of works by female artists in the Nasher collection. Upstairs in our corner gallery you can see four recent acquisitions by the Cuban-American artist, Ana Mendieta. Today, in celebration of this initiative, we bring together four distinguished panelists to explore the extraordinary lack of representation of women artists in museum collections, especially in the field of sculpture. We are pleased to welcome our panelists. In the center, Lynda Benglis was born in Louisiana and now lives, works and travels between New York City, Santa Fe and Ahmedabad India. A pioneer of post-minimalism and process art, she arrived on the New York scene in the late 1960s gaining renown for her groundbreaking poured latex and foam sculptures. Known for her exploration of evocative and organic shapes she is also deeply concerned with the physicality of form and how it affects the viewer. Using a wide range of materials to render dynamic impressions of mass and surface, Benglis is the recipient of many awards including a Guggenheim fellowship and two National Endowment for the Arts grants. Her works are in many public collections including The Museum of Modern Art in New York, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, The National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., The Walker Art Center and many more. At the left, Chief Curator at The Hammer Museum in Los Angeles since 2013, Connie Butler has organized exhibitions including *Made in L.A.*, 2014, *Lygia Clark: The Abandonment of Art* and *Marisa Merz: The Sky is a Great Space*, which is currently on view at The Met Breuer, New York and will open at the Hammer in June. Prior to joining the Hammer, she was Chief Curator of Drawings at MoMA, where she organized major exhibitions and was also active in the cross-departmental Modern Women's Fund, which resulted in numerous acquisitions as well as the publication *Individuals: Women's Artists in the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art*. As the chief curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, she organized the internationally acclaimed 2007 exhibition, *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*. Elizabeth A. Sackler, seated next to Connie, is a public historian and activist. She is the president of the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation, President and Founder of The American Indian Ritual Object Repatriation Foundation, Trustee of the Brooklyn Museum and Founder of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum. The Sackler Center is the permanent home of *The Dinner Party* by Judy Chicago. It's Feminist Art and Herstory galleries display critically acclaimed exhibitions and its forum is a venue for lectures and a platform of advocacy for human rights and women's issues. The Sackler Center is currently celebrating its tenth anniversary with *A Year of Yes: Reimagining Feminism*. The annual Sackler Center First Awards honor women who have broken gender barriers and have made outstanding contributions in their respective fields. And, in recognition of the center's tenth anniversary, ten women will be honored on June 8th. Dr. Sackler is a frequent

lecturer and panelist and last May she was honored at The New York Women's Foundation for her lifetime of activism. Seated second from the right, Jenni Sorkin is Assistant Professor of Contemporary Art History at University of California, Santa Barbara. She holds a PhD in The History of Art from Yale University. She has written numerous essays on Feminist Art and issues of gender. Last year she co-curated with Paul Schimmel, *Revolution in The Making: Abstract Sculpture by Women*, the inaugural exhibition at Hauser, Wirth and Schimmel, Los Angeles. She recently published her first book, *Live Form: Women, Ceramics and Community* which examines gender, post-war ceramics and sculptural practices at Black Mountain College and other utopian communities. Moderating this panel, at the far right, Nasher's Assistant Curator Leigh Arnold, who received her Ph.D. last year from The University of Texas at Dallas. In addition to curating last year's *Sightings* exhibition featuring the work of Swiss artist Mai-Thu Perret, Leigh is curating an exhibition on the women artists of the Land Art movement. Please join me in welcoming our distinguished panel.

**Leigh Arnold:** Thank you Catherine and thanks to all of you for being here today. I think it's important to restate why we are here today which is to celebrate the Kaleta A. Doolin Acquisitions Fund for Women Artists. This is a type of fund that allows for institutions like the Nasher to address this problem of historical lack of representation of women artists in museum collections, especially in the field of sculpture. So just to jump right in to the discussion I wanted to throw it over to Connie and ask you if you might provide us with maybe a historical context of women art acquisition funds given your experience at MoMA with the Modern Women's Fund. How did that develop? What was the impetus? Who encouraged the development of such a fund?

**Connie Butler:** I got scared for a moment, I thought you were going to ask me the historical context of women in sculpture (laughter).

**LA:** I'm sure you could answer that as well.

**CB:** The historical context for women's... the acquisition of funds devoted to women artists is much smaller of course but thanks to people like Elizabeth Sackler and Kaleta A. Doolin and the example I could name is the Modern Women's Fund at MoMA, I think little by little, these things are changing. Museums are seeing the really sort of activist benefit of establishing a fund like this. When I went to MoMA around 2006 there was a philanthropist named Sarah Peter who is also an artist and I think that's kind of an interesting point to make who had been in conversation with MoMA about...she wanted to give money for, it was an open-ended gesture, she wanted to give money to have something to do with women. There were different ideas floated including at one point, childcare for the workers at MoMA which would have been a great thing for some of us but in the end what was decided was that she would develop or fund scholarly efforts at MoMA devoted to research on women artists and so the first initiative was actually the conference in 2008, which is the same year that *Global Feminisms* opened and the *WACK!* exhibition opened in 2007 or 08, I'm sorry I've already forgotten...and more people showed up for that panel than had shown up for any other public event at MoMA ever. So clearly there was this incredible demand. So that was one initiative, and then what we ended up focusing on primarily was a book of new scholarship around the women artists in the collection. What was interesting about that—and I think a discussion that all of these funds or initiatives

kind of go through is, “Do you want to devote your time and money and energy towards the canonical artists who we all know, and of course, there is one of these major female figures, many of them no longer with us, or do you also want to kind of aggressively support trying to make the history but also re-invent it and revise it at the same time by introducing a lot of under-known figures of which there are many more women artists at the same time.” So what was interesting is that through that process we began something we called “The Modern Women's Fund,” which was devoted specifically to purchasing work by women artists. There were men and women on that fund and they're collectors of all kinds. In fact, I know Glen Furhman was instrumental in bringing in a work of Lynda's into the collection. So that initiative continues to support the acquisition of women artists. Sarah Peter still sits on that fund and I think it's her interest and the museum's interest to try and spread that beyond one person, and that's something you might address at some point, Elizabeth, but I think it's had a transformative effect, and MoMA... and partly there's a generation, a new generation of people there, curators men and women curators who are really interested in this who have internalized these questions, these political questions in their work for now over two decades. I'm talking about that generation. And so, I think you now see collection installations that are much more integrated and represent a much more kind of diverse history at least as far as gender goes. So I think it's had a really important effect. And there are other people since who have come forward at least at The Museum of Modern Art that support other individuals in the Drawing department and other departments who have specifically put their energies behind requiring women artists, so it's been a great thing and really amazing to be a part of it.

**LA:** So collection funds are one way. Another way is to just establish an institution that can support women artists and feminist art which, Elizabeth, you have an entire center named for you. I was wondering if you might tell us about your involvement in the development of The Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art.

**Elizabeth Sackler:** Well my involvement was basically coming up with the idea and then making it happen. And actually choosing the institution where I felt I would receive the kind of support and opportunity to really push the boundaries. Judy Chicago created *The Dinner Party* in part to counter the erasure of women artists and to go back in time. There are 1,038 women and so on and so forth, and Judy wanted very much for *The Dinner Party* to be permanently homed and housed, and that was very much her thing for a long time. At the point—it was at the end of the 90s, in 1999—that I was thinking about *The Dinner Party* and thinking about the power of *The Dinner Party*, and we know from witnesses, we know from testimonials over the years, ten years, of women who felt that seeing *The Dinner Party* had actually transformed their relationship not only to art but in terms of their own experience of life and came to understand something new. So I thought, “Well, that's one thing, but architecture—where sits this work of art? What can architecture do with art that creates an additional opportunity for people to walk into a really sacred space?” So at that point I felt really interested in seeing *The Dinner Party* within a space that would be transformational, a sacred space if you will, a beacon. But I wasn't just interested in a gallery, I was interested in creating a center. At the time, Catherine Morris had been—who is now our curator at The Sackler Center—was at White Columns and had opened a show called *Gloria*. And when I went to the opening of that show there were people of all generations, colors, you name it. And it was a small show but the energy was palpable. This was 2001, I think, that that show was opened, and I was in

conversation at that point with Arnold Lehman in Brooklyn. I had come up with a list of what museums would have to be committed to in order for me to go to that museum and say, "This is what I propose. I propose the center of The Center as *The Dinner Party*. We will have programs around it. We will have feminist art galleries around it and a 'Herstory Gallery' so that there would be another small gallery." Judy and I called it the the "girls gallery" it was also called "the jewel box gallery" it's really the Herstory Gallery. And what it would take for a museum to be my choice. It would take a commitment to women. It would take a commitment to risk. It would take a commitment to really stepping outside the canon and really making a change. And the Brooklyn Museum at that time was the only museum that was willing, that first of all check off my criteria. But Arnold was willing to take a risk. Arnold has a lot of *chutzpah* and I needed that. I needed somebody who understood what transformational power this center could have.

So I chose the Brooklyn Museum and I went to Arnold and I don't know whether or not the Brooklyn understood completely what I was envisioning because it wasn't merely having *The Dinner Party*, and it wasn't merely having exhibitions. It was opening up the entire avenue, the entire city to the conversation of women in art, women in social situations, political problems—everything having to do with women has a place at The Sackler Center, and as feminists, you know one of the questions was—when we were opening up The Sackler Center—was, "Well, do we have to use the word feminism?". Well, it had never occurred to me not to. I didn't grow up feeling I was a feminist. I grew up in a wonderful family where I was expected to do as much as my brother and so on and so forth. It wasn't until somebody mentioned to me the difference between women and feminism that I started to feel it. And I thought, "Well, wait a minute, this is political. We're talking about really taking a political stand. We are talking about humanist values but taking an aggressive, assertive stand for what that means." And it's hard to say because I'm sitting here in Dallas, but when Arnold said to me, "Couldn't we call it The Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Womens' Art?" I said—forgive me here—"That's what they would call it in Texas. (laughter) Not in Brooklyn." So I like to think that we broke barriers and that now you'll have a center for feminist art here in Texas, and I think certainly in Dallas. I have no doubt about that. But I think part of what it was really—you know it's an interesting situation—I was on the board at the Brooklyn Museum--and there's always a mote between being on the board and what your influence is within the inside of a museum, and directors and the board of trustees have to be very, very careful about that. The difference was that I was walking a line as a founder and we are actually in many ways an institution within an institution. And one of the things that I had hoped for was to have an independent institution but the Brooklyn Museum said, "No we can't have an independent institution within this institution." But I think that as a result of what it was that I knew I wanted to achieve, I knew that programming was going to be absolutely essential to the vibrancy and the power of The Sackler Center, and the museum didn't quite get that. So for the first year I spent my weekend, Saturday and Sunday, inviting people—writers, thinkers, artists, you name it—to come and speak and go into the museum, and introducing into our forum—our small forty person space. And by the end of the first year, the museum looked up and said, "Wow! We have new people coming in all the time." All ages, all backgrounds and so on and so forth. So it's a vitally important piece and it's been a great ride. We are working with Arnold and the Brooklyn Museum was really a treasure. We didn't have any bumps, we didn't have any lumps. We were all focused on what it would mean for equity and

equality and justice. So the last thing I will leave you with was that Arnold said, "Well how long in the contract do we have to keep it the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art?" Which you know the contract runs for...well, I'll be dead by the time the contract is over, but I said, "When we have equity and equality and justice for all, in the world (laughter), then you can take name."

**LA:** Okay, I must come in and defend Texas and Dallas a little bit because we have a pretty impressive history of women in the arts in Dallas. One of the first contemporary art galleries was established in 1951 by a woman. Many of our galleries today are run by women. Lynda came to Dallas in 1970 and made work for Janie C. Lee's gallery and one of those works I know ended up in the collection of The Fort Worth Modern. But Lynda, I'm curious, as an artist, what does it mean to have your work acquired by a museum? What was the first piece that you can recall was purchased by a museum?

**Lynda Benglis:** Well, uh, well I'd just like to say something about Janie. She's gone now so I can say it and it's funny. She said, "You mean I came all the way to New York and I got myself a Louisiana artist?!" (laughter) Janie was from North Louisiana, Alexandria, and her people were into paper and she was terrific. She picked me up in a convertible, a Mercedes convertible, white, and she lived on the bayou, river bayou. That area, I don't know but it's very popular.

**Leigh Arnold:** Turtle Creek?

**LB:** Turtle Creek. (laughter) Where my hotel is, so I remember. I was going to say Turtle Creek but I thought it couldn't be the same place as where my hotel is because they are all buildings there now. So I don't recognize it. But it was a very sweet place, and she was to be betrothed to Biddle of Philadelphia, so she sent me home...or she said, "You have to go away," because...but I was going away anyway. It was kind of a personal thing, but I was having a marriage annulled since I had married because of the draft (laughs). A Scotsman. So I flew to New Orleans and then came back. But who was the actor—James Dean-ian—who was in *Rebel Without a Cause*?

**Audience:** James Dean.

**LB:** James Dean, besides James Dean...

**Audience:** Dennis Hopper.

**LB:** Dennis Hopper. Dennis Hopper was coming into town, and anyway, I really liked Janie. She was what she was and she was outspoken and she liked what she liked and you couldn't tell her otherwise. And because the marriage didn't happen, she didn't show up at the famous clothing...she was supposed to wear an outfit to get money for the museum? Or for art? Anyway, so we sat at the end of her bed watching them announce her and she was just thrilled that she wasn't there (laughs). I did some pieces for her that I didn't think were all that successful, so we floated them in the pool for her would-be marriage (laughter). And they existed later. I decided they were good but they were, like, drawings. So I did a large piece and Henry Hopkins was at the museum, at The Fort Worth Museum, and he commissioned me directly to do something. So my experience with Dallas has been terrific. But to get back to why

I'm here now and women: I think I was very lucky in that I thought of it as kind of a war, sort of all about territory. So I was invited places and I decided, "Well, now is the time of installation." And as Serra—I felt very competitive with him—and I can remember since he thought it was about territory and they—all the installation artists—thought about territory, I just happened to be one of the others. So I thought about the feminist movement and I said, "It's really a humanistic thing." And I had taken philosophy and I was very good at logic and I might have gone in that way, to academia, but it seemed I was more of a kind of priestess for the feminists because I begged the question, because it was a humanist issue for me and I liked doing that and, all things being equal, we are. But nobody is really the same and that's what I like about art, and I think we have our expressions and we should all be allowed to voice them. We are in a very crucial time now. We have big issues.

**Leigh Arnold:** We sure do (laughter)...So big that it seems kind of silly to steer this back in any direction, but...

**LB:** Well it's no longer a numbers game.

**Leigh:** No, I think what you said, "all things being equal," but in some ways there are inequalities. Just physically, women are sometimes not equal to men, and with materials like sculpture as a medium, which can be very physical and it requires sometimes strength or an ability to work with heavy machinery and equipment, and for many years these kinds of very basic realities prevented women from being involved in sculpture. And Jenni, would you mind kind of giving us a kind of historical and practical reason, beyond what I've just kind of laid out?

**Jenni Sorkin:** So in some of my research, I have found that in 1917 there was an act called the Smith-Hughes Act, which will mean something to you in a moment when I explain it. It was a way for the United States, the Federal Government, to ensure that agrarian workers picked up skills through the public education system. And there was.. It was in a high moment in Industrialization and manufacturing, and to implement this, young men in public schools were required to take shop class. So the unintended consequence of shop class was that young women had to be put in some sort of track as well, and so they ended up—you all know where this is going—home economics. And thus, the home economics movement was born for women. But this automatic separatism really stuck with and created some of these basic inequalities from the beginning of the century because women were not educated to use hammers and hang sheetrock. It was hard to learn how to use a blow torch and welding equipment and a wood shop and that kind of thing. You really have to persevere as a woman to do so, and we all know what happened in home economics. What did everyone learn?

**Audience:** Pillows.

**JS:** Sewing and cooking right? How many of you actually took home economics? That's a whole lot of people. So now we are in a moment where it has actually all come full circle and the fanciest private schools now have everybody doing everything and learning to sew—and Waldorf schools and things like that—and weave and felt. But this inequality was real, and so women came to their materials, I think, in roundabout ways. So there were work-arounds from the beginning of the

century. Somebody like Louise Nevelson did not use wood traditionally; she used scrap wood that she found and collected and lower Manhattan and put it together as sort of unified sculptures. But somebody like Lee Bontecou had to teach herself to weld, and women were frequently chased out of sculpture programs, and part of the impetus for Judy Chicago and establishing the feminist art program and in particular the famous *Womanhouse* exhibition was to teach women these kinds of hand-based skills where they were forced to use tools and learn this really difficult physicality that they had not been granted through their public education and through secondary schooling. And I think that that early on it seemed like an insurmountable task, and yet women persevered and found these other ways to work. And so one of the things I found was that because many women did not make traditional work in stone, wood, bronze, these sorts of commemorative materials, we might say—the materiality of commemoration, longevity, permanence—they would use non-traditional materials. They would take things that were more domestic: netting, pantyhose, knitting, crocheting, crocheting a lot of wire and make work that was less formal, that was less linear, that might break down and have a mortality to it, in a way, that the materials themselves might not last, might not be permanent. This trajectory also led women who were excluded from sculpture and painting departments as educators for most of the century to find other ways in which to work professionally. So an example of this is Nevelson, again, made a lot of... she did synagogue commissions all throughout New York City. Claire Falkenstein on the other coast did stained glass commissions and fountains, big public fountains for churches and banks....

**Leigh Arnold:** Nancy Grossman was an animator I think for... she made children's books, illustrated children's books in her free time while teaching herself to sew because she came from...

**JS:** And she was a David Smith student at Bennington. And I think that what this ultimately leads to for me, and I think, historically, if we want to make a larger link, is that women paved the path toward non-traditional sculpture and broadening the field in really interesting and provocative ways through a materiality of abstraction and also through these work-arounds: working in public, working with communities, working in churches and so that kind of site-specific installation work leads from a single, pedestal-based object out into this broader realm of what we now call sculptural installation or just plain installation art. And then, I think even further, it pushed us into this contemporary realm of social practice that's been spearheaded by women who just leave objects behind entirely now and make events and performances and experiences. I really do feel that it's rooted in a kind of alternative sculptural history.

**LA:** Also, the fact that sculpture takes up space. You need space to make sculpture unless you're making something very small. And Connie, one of the great things about *WACK!*, one of the many fantastic things that *WACK!* did, is it really exposed the alternate spaces that women were relegated to in order to make their work—for example, making work in their kitchen, or their basement—and I'm wondering if you might talk about how, when women wanted to make work, they made it happen. But what effect did that have on the sculpture that you were seeing coming out of that period of time?

**CB:** Well I might start by addressing a slightly different question, but it's related, which is, "What happens to that work, or what happened to that work when it comes

out of those spaces?" I mean I think it's for sure: making work in a more domestic space, or a cramped apartment, or a laundry room of your loft, or whatever, had a certain effect. But I remember when the *WACK!* show opened, or when I was installing it actually, and the works were beginning to arrive in the space and, actually, it was a moment with your work, Lynda, in particular—and I'm not saying this just because we are here, but I do remember this very clearly—the work started to go into the space and I think it was one of these big sort of molten dark pours that's maybe even owned by the Dallas Museum [of Art], and I know they were lenders to the show. But anyway, the work came in and we'd made a kind of conventional corner gallery for it. We tried for a very open installation plan—and I don't know if you remember this, Jenni—but anyway we had made kind of a corner for it, a partial gallery and it came in and it plopped in there and it got situated and it looked gorgeous, I mean it just looked gorgeous! I mean it anchored the space and there it was, and it looked big and beautiful, but I had a moment when I thought, "What are we doing to this work?" We are taking work, and this is more general, but taking this work that was made under such—often—duress or political circumstances, or a work of protest, but work that was often very scrappy and materially ephemeral and all that, and kind of cleaning it up and historicizing it and making it museum-ready, which is what we do. But in that cleaning up, were we in some ways... were we losing, not in terms of only where it was made, but the history of circulation of it and reception and the intense sort of resistance and politics that was underlying it by kind of cleaning it up. And of course, you know, some work could hold up to it and looked great and was ready for its moment and others, you know, didn't because it was made under the circumstances you are describing.

**LB:** But this whole thing of context and teaching, I've been teaching almost 50 years and women do differently. They make and feel differently and I encourage that, and whatever it is, whatever the size, whatever they bring to it is continuous and it's very similar. They are people that do knitting things, I encourage that because it is there. It's out there and there's no reason not to give it a context, and context in different circumstances change. But nothing's changed really. The context changes.

**JS:** But don't you think it's taken a long time to take away the hierarchy of materials?

**ES:** Well one of the things I...

**LB:** I'm always...

**JS:** Well you used everything, but you're a pioneer.

**LB:** Well, I'm a teacher! I'm not a pioneer.

**JS:** You are a pioneer. (laughter)

**LB:** Well let me bring something up. I know pioneers and they are dead now (laughter). You know, I'm just still existing, but where are the Elizabeth Murrays in the museum? Where are the Jennifer Bartletts? Where are they? They are not there. There's a great show that Pace did on the Lower East Side in a little gallery off the Bowery, you know? It was fantastic! But you know, where...what's happening? I mean

everything should be voiced and seen and perhaps there's just a lot more out there at one time. But maybe it's more established or more categorized now?

**ES:** One of the things that Judy had always been very vocal about was, of course, that the textiles and all of the components of her sculpture *The Dinner Party* had been relegated to craft. And part of what the whole discussion became was how do you delineate? How do you say, "this is art and this is craft?" And that seemed to be along gender lines. And I think that that is part of the fluidity that we are seeing that was completely broken down in the 70s and the 80s.

**LB:** As it should be.

**ES:** Glass is still craft.

**JS:** Also let's not forget that people get way more excited about boys who sew than girls who sew. It's true. And that hasn't gone away yet. I think that we are still in a space that when men create craft practices, Jim Hodges for instance, they get these big monographic shows much quicker than textile-based women. It's this weird fact. And then when women appropriate traditional means of sculpture, like Elizabeth Catlett making bronze and wood mothers and child, they don't make it into the collection.

**LA:** It's true, and ceramics also.

**ES:** Well Leigh, I don't see it as a weird fact, actually, Jenni, because we live in a patriarchy. We live in a patriarchal culture. We see everything through a patriarchal lens both in this country and worldwide. So as long as that is the case, that becomes the default. So it really shouldn't be all that surprising that that's the case. The question becomes, how does that change? Where is the revolution? And so I don't think it's all that surprising.

**LA:** And I'm wondering where does it change? It changes by buying more work from women, showing more work by women. One of the perennial questions of a curator is, "What do you do with women artists? Do you do group shows that kind of pull out these unknown, underrepresented women artists who've been working alongside their male peers doing just as great work but never really getting the recognition? Do you focus more on solo shows of these women and pulling them up? Do you think that exhibitions that are strict along gender lines are ghettoizing?" I deal with this question constantly but I'm curious: for Connie or Jenni who have organized gender specific exhibitions, do you think they are relevant? Do they retain their relevancy? Do we need to continue doing that?

**CB:** I'm so tired of this question. (laughter) No but it has to be asked. And I think as long as we have to ask the question, it means we need them. I mean, who cares?! I feel like...that's not true, I feel like where there is historical importance of bringing a certain history forward, as you're doing with your earth art exhibition, say, or as we did with *WACK!* then—and actually now we are organizing now at The Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, The Getty is focusing in the Fall on Latin America and so our contribution to that is an exhibition called *Radical Women: Latin American Artists, 1960-1980*. And what's interesting to me as a subtext is that it's like a second *WACK!*

in a way, with this sort of historical lag that happens in Latin American because of dictatorship and so on. But that show is about a hundred women artists and there absolutely is a need. I mean, in Latin America nobody until very recently even spoke about gender, and certainly not about feminism, except in Mexico. And so, I think absolutely that's necessary, and I think where there is a historical imperative, yes, why not? You know? And of course we don't have to say again, and again, and again, but I was just looking at, I don't know, *ArtForum* or something, at somebody's roster that I won't even name, a major gallerist who is a woman who we already know and, like, literally there are like three women in a roster of like forty artists. Like, Ugh...you know? If that can happen then we still have to ask the question I think.

**LB:** I have to say, I have a gallery that at least half are women.

**CB:** Yep. Absolutely you do.

**LB:** It's unusual. It's one of the few.

**ES:** Well, I'd like to take us back also to the larger political moment that we are in and think, well maybe the art world is going to be swept along with a certain tide that is happening. Uhm, when the Women's March happened in Washington, I tweeted the next day, "Suddenly the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art sounded very old fashioned." That we should call it, "The Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Pussy Power." (laughter) And I read today that there are sixteen thousand—and they are young from my point of view—they are younger women who are going to be running for office. So if all of this continues in some way and we are coming into some kind of new moment. How are the museums going to respond to this? And how will it begin to change? How will the women who are collectors, women who are of means, who support museums, what will they do? The same way that women during the feminist revolution became feminist artists, that was their contribution if you will. So it's going to be an interesting moment that we have a huge opportunity, I think, to really grab onto.

**LB:** What's interesting now is, too, a lot of these marches are mostly women right now. I saw it in New York. That's what's happening. And they're joined by men but for the large part if you count it...

**JS:** I would also say that we are in a very gender fluid moment. We are in a space where there is a lot of visibility for the first time ever of the open acceptance of transgendered people you know M-to-F, F-to-M and everything in between, people who don't identify as one gender or another, and this moment allows for a different level of acceptance than just segregating everything into all men and all women, that we are actually in a moment of a third space, if you will, and that that accounts also for a completely different generational shift and way of thinking which actually goes back to some of the earliest radical feminist texts that were ever written. Somebody like Shulamith Firestone was trying to think outside of biology, and if we make a larger connection, she goes forward to the cyborg that Donna Haraway writes about, which is a kind of alien or non-human biology, and then we can take it all the way back to Mary Shelley where Frankenstein is birthed in a sense by a man, and that there's these larger histories of thinking through gender and thinking out of the binary of male-female, which is sometimes very easy to get caught up in.

**LA:** I think one of the aims of feminism and the revolution was to re-write the canon. Because as long as we are trying to put women back into an existing canon the patriarchy continues. What needs to happen is the canon needs to be re-written or done away with completely. And I think, as Jenni is saying, there is this third space that is being created where there is all of this fluidity between genders. Maybe this is further a way to re-think the entire canon: genderless canon, historical canon.

**LB:** Well it's still happening organically. I think about most of my young friends that look like women are kind of out there and doing everything and it's just there.

**ES:** I think it also expands to the dimension of people of color. I mean we are now faced directly with Black Lives Matter, with the Muslim bans, and I think it's a moment when that area... where it behooves us to focus and embrace what is taking place for those people with the pipeline, and so on and so forth, and the historic genocide of our first peoples. So we are at a quite an intersection of time for everyone.

**CB:** You're right, Lynda, the marches were so female, but I was also struck and so happy about how diverse they were, at least in Los Angeles. I mean because I thought as I got on the subway, you know, when it was all middle aged white women, I thought, "Oh my God, is this going to happen again?" But no, it's actually just where the train was coming from (laughter). And in fact, it was incredibly diverse and I think that this idea, which I was explaining to my young sons on the day of the march, you know, "the future is female," which is a slogan that I'm not sure actually what the origin is—I think it originated in Los Angeles with an artist named Steiner and her partner—but I don't mean actually that the future is only women, I mean how boring is that? No. That, actually, a female future is one that has all these allegiances that you're talking about, and that's the way forward. It's not about a kind of 70s middle class white feminism anymore at all. I mean certainly that's not what...

**ES:** It's an inclusivity.

**CB:** It absolutely has to be.

**LB:** Well it's a terrific energy that's building and I'm excited about it.

**LA:** Jenni?

**JS:** I wanted to throw out... actually, that Connie can field this. Initially—to go back to your idea about all-women exhibitions—that, early on, there was this constant struggle and question that Connie would get asked constantly: "Are you going to include men?" It was a question that, I think, every artist we saw together asked you. And there was this idea that there should be a kind of natural inclusion, that some men were feminists, that some men belonged in *WACK!* and that there was an uncomfortableness on the part of a lot of women to be included in all-women exhibitions and these kinds of segregated shows, at large, cause a lot of consternation. You know, we are still asking this question. I don't think it's any different when you do a show of Asian-American artists or African-American artists in that it still circles around identity politics, and I think the one thing we can do is banish the terminology "those people" from our vocabulary because it's all of us. It's "we the

people," it's not "those people." So it's an important sort of distinction to make, that you don't separate yourself from these groups and create divisiveness even in our everyday language.

**LA:** Right on.

**ES:** I agree with you, it's not ghettoization. We are looking at a beacon. And we are looking at focusing a spotlight where it perhaps isn't but that doesn't preclude a "other."

**LA:** I can't believe it, but we've already been chatting for 45 minutes and I think we may need to either wrap it up or take some questions, but we barely scratched the surface. I think I had prepared so many questions and so many thoughts for this panel. And we've not really gotten to much of any of it, but I still feel like we've tackled and at least posed a few questions that can't be answered in 45 minutes.

**Audience:** But can we go on just a little while longer?

**LA:** Let's take a show of hands. How many would like to continue just a little while longer? Okay, let's keep going. I mean, Lynda, I'm curious, from your perspective do you... how do you feel about all-women exhibitions? Are you happy to be included? Would you rather just be...

**LB:** I'd like to make it more complicated, because I go to India and the women are very strong there. They have always been respected. And there's a lot of strong women artists there. And it's interesting, when I was first getting my work out I was invited to Australia and sometimes Lucy Lippard and I would follow each other in a way. Lucy, the historian, would usually come before me and then I would be there and they said, "Oh we had Lucy here," and so forth. But I think that this movement is also racial. And I just think that's also equally important and because I'm from the South, and also because I see it that some of us, that some of the women have the racial issues as well, and... but they somehow appear. Still, all this is coming out again. I think we're more sensitive now to not only the woman issue but we are more sensitive to the racial issue. It comes together. And finally, it's a humanist issue. So we're all exploding now but also we are pulling back and we are trying to understand it. And it's complicated.

**LA:** It is.

**CB:** But also to acknowledge of course that we are not all the same. You know, I think it's a moment to really respect, obviously, difference and provide a context for that too. We had an artist, Simone Lee, who's an African-American, Brooklyn-based artist who did a project in L. A.—and she's also done it in New York—but where part of her... she had a small exhibition of her sculpture, but she also did a project that was a kind of closed-door meeting of four African American women in Los Angeles who are artists but also curators and cultural workers in the city, and the specific proposal was that they want to have a closed-door meeting and we were not invited until afterwards, and then there was a discussion but I mean it's so important to also provide space where one has the ability to offer something. You know, a space for that. And I think those kinds of discussions are also really important as much as the

coming together. I'm curious, Jenni, if you—in the *Revolution in the Making* exhibition at Hauser, Wirth and Schimmel—if you face that question now? Ten years later?

**JS:** Yes.

**CB:** From the artists not wanting to be in an all-women group show? Yes, there was one artist who declined to be in the show because she had felt that she had worked too hard to get to where she was to “go back to” being in an all-women exhibition of sculpture.

**CB:** Which is exactly what we heard with *WACK!*.

**JS:** Ten years earlier...

**CB:** ...this kind of idea of sliding back somehow.

**ES:** At the same time, everybody is doing percentages. No, if you do the percentages and... the two don't...

**LB:** I thought that was over.

**JS:** But even if we look... If we're going to do percentages, I think we actually have to look at museums themselves and the sort of... there are so many women who work as cultural workers, who work in the not-for-profit realm, and it is largely staffs of all women—not all women, but many, many women—who make up museum staff and educational staff, and women gravitate for not-for-profits and educational initiatives. And yet still there's a kind of... it's largely male directors and largely—not everywhere—male senior curators. There's still a ceiling at the top that makes it very hard for women to cross that threshold.

**LA:** I'm just curious at MoCA when you did *WACK!* or even at Hauser, Wirth and Schimmel, were you challenged at all: “Why are you doing this show?.” You know, “We don't need a feminist show, can't you do something else? Can't you do a Richard Serra show?” (laughter)

**CB:** No one has ever asked me that (laughter). But I was actually thinking that Jeremy Strick, who's here somewhere, who is, of course, the Director of the Nasher, was the steward of MoCA when we were organizing *WACK!*, and I don't actually think I've ever asked him about, you know, what was he thinking? (laughter) You know, 'cause from my perspective, what was extraordinary is that there was only institutional support from the top to every area in the museum, and I do remember people on the outside saying to me things like, “Why would you want to do that? It'll be like a career sinker.” Like, that's it, you know, “What are you even thinking?” And I just couldn't imagine that was true. I mean, I have some thoughts about that now, but there was no objection. We—everybody at MoCA—framed it, wanted to frame it as a blockbuster, like, “This is going to be big and noisy and we are going to put full institutional support behind it.”

**JS:** But that's not true because it was an underfunded show.

**CB:** That's a different question.

**JS:** I was a part-time employee on that show. I was a part-time research assistant and you helped me find enough, another part-time job at The Getty so that I could work on *WACK!*, and it was only at the end that there was full-time research support, and that wasn't true of many of MoCA's other shows.

**ES:** But you also contextualized it within the Women's Revolution. It wasn't separated out. You contextualized it within a movement.

**CB:** Yeah, but I think...

**ES:** I mean that might have been a marketing thing, but that's worked.

**CB:** I mean, it was partly a marketing thing. I think at the time, too, it was... I mean, you're right, but at the time no one wanted.. I mean, there hadn't been on that scale a show or anything calling it a feminist art movement. I mean, there had been other smaller shows, historically, but even to do that, to make it... I mean, it's true. It wasn't a show, it was a feminist art movement.

**ES:** It was a feminist movement.

**CB:** Yeah, I always thought that was important.

**ES:** Very. Because the women who were producing the art who then became, or not, feminist artists, or mothers of feminist artists during that movement, that period of time.

**CB:** Uh-huh.

**ES:** Art and the feminist revolution.

**LA:** So, ten years later with the show Hauser, Wirth and Schimmel, whose idea was it? Hauser, Wirth and Schimmel is opening this beautiful new gallery space and they choose to do this exhibition, which I think is fantastic, but...

**LB:** Well it was a surprise, I think, for everyone.

**LA:** Right. Jenny?

**JS:** Well I think sculpture anchors a space that's that large and I think that smaller works would have gotten swallowed up. And to, maybe, make a splash, you need really big work in a big space. But I also think that there's.... We are in a moment of commercial ventures that are able and willing to put forward an agenda when many museums are stymied financially, and I don't think that I, you know, personally, I wouldn't have had the patience to wait ten years to fundraise for a show like that in the museum world, which is what that would have taken. It would have taken a ten-year commitment over a long period of time to raise that kind of capital to do a show on that scale. And you know, commercial galleries have a different budget, and they work differently, and I think that's very threatening to museums and it's scary in a

sense. So I think that's a bigger issue that's different than this panel, perhaps, but I would say that it was an opportunity that I took because it was also something that could come to fruition much quicker.

**ES:** I think it was really great because Hauser Wirth in Europe right now has a show—most of their shows only have twenty-five percent women in all of their shows—

**JS:** Their stable is half though.

**ES:** So, yeah but the shows themselves. So, uhm, insofar as galleries influence the art market and the purchase of art and the value of an artist in the art market, there's also that connection, and until all of those hems, all those seams are completely torn apart, then maybe we will have an opportunity for real fluidity and work of both men, women, transgender, whatever it is, people of color that will flow, and it will have to do with the art, not necessarily with the “other.”

**LB:** Well that is what was so wonderful when we did have situations in the situational art, and it was about the art and it was about feeling that there was a response that wasn't commercial. And the museums did cooperate, and galleries did cooperate. It was a great feeling.

**JS:** I would say also, though, that one of the primary differences between something like that and like what I did is that *Revolution in the Making* as a commercial... as a big show in a gallery, there wasn't the same need to be as responsible to include everyone. There was never going to be an ability to do this large-scale historical show in such a way that everyone felt included, and I think *WACK!* really strived to include and be inclusive, and we visited so many more artists than could have been in the show, and it was agonizing to cut people out and figure out how to cull the list, because you can't include everyone and yet you know that's what a catalog is for, in order to have back matter that includes many more names that the show can be, which is the same thing that Judy Chicago did in her *Dinner Party* piece: many more names than plates. It's this endless idea of revisionism and inclusion and trying to press for recognition in some way.

**LB:** But, you know, I've been teaching for a long time and the art really hasn't changed that much. There are people still contextually doing things that don't last and are lightweight... ideas that are in-and-of-themselves unique to them in the context. Things haven't changed since the 70s really.

**LA:** (laughs)

**LB:** It's true. I mean, you know you have a different surface, you part your hair differently or a different color here and there...things really haven't changed.

**CB:** Well and I think getting back to something you said about painters—you know, Elizabeth Murray—I mean, I was thinking that one of the questions that is probably not something we can get into here but it's definitely true that a certain level of the market—and I think it may be in the realm of painting, mostly, where this is very much in high relief and really visible—is the shocking discrepancy of difference in value.

**LB:** She's a drawer. You look at her drawings and she's a drawer.

**CB:** Absolutely. But at that certain level, again, of the market, the painters who actually break through—there are so few women at that level—and maybe only one or two or three lose value through their paintings.

**LB:** If they die they are in bad luck then, right?

**ES:** One of the things that has changed, Lynda, is that in the 80s art became commodity, and that is a big shift. We now have the power of the art market, and by the way, I should say that we bring up Hauser Wirth because you are with Hauser Wirth, but I know... I mean, you did that show, but I mean, I know Eiwyn very well and he's a good friend and so I don't, you know, want to, you know, say that... I think it's true as we are looking at the way the system is built, and that really started in the 80s. And I think I'm not sure how that gets cracked at this point. And what role the museums can play in this, because part of it is—Jenny, you were saying it has to do with money, what it would take to put a show together, etc....

**LB:** I think these are big questions.

**JS:** I think the lineage, creating these lineages, you know, why not install Judy Pfaff and Sarah Sze in adjacent galleries? You know, Judy Pfaff is a precursor to what Sarah Sze does. Sarah Sze has a bigger market presence, but you know there's certainly an homage that you can pay to that earlier work and generation, and I think that's what we don't see because that work is not in permanent collections. Sarah Sze might be now but Judy Pfaff is not. And so there's a whole generation... I remember very early on as an art student hearing Carolee Schneemann speak, and I was shocked and... It solidified in my mind the state [of things], that the first time that her work was collected by a museum was in 1995 and it was SFMoMA. It took that long to get a Carolee Schneemann work into a permanent collection somewhere. And you know, that's just astounding. She was brought in by the School of the Art Institute of Chicago not by the Art Institute of Chicago, so women have historically made the rounds in art schools. Again, in the educational realm, that's a different level of influence than coming to an institutional space.

**LA:** How much of when you organize a show, a historical show, how much of the work is coming from the artist or how much of the work had already been acquired by museums? And I'm speaking about women especially because a show like *WACK!*, a show like the Hauser, Wirth and Schimmel show, you know you rely upon galleries maybe, when it comes to organizing historical shows to find the work, or in permanent collections. So where is the work coming from when you are organizing these historical exhibitions?

**CB:** I think it's really different now. I mean, the good news is, ten years later, it's actually different. I mean, I would imagine that all of the women in the Hauser and Wirth show, those works did come from collections and galleries. When we were organizing *WACK!* almost... I mean, many, many things, the majority of the things came from the artist, and we are seeing the same thing, of course, in this *Radical Women* exhibition in South America. There are artists from every South American

country and, with very few exceptions, the work is all coming from the artists. And many of the same things, you know, women who can't necessarily afford to even make exhibition prints to send us, you know, to those who can't afford to come to the opening. I mean it's incredible. The history is exactly now sort of rolling out in the same way. But I do think the market has, you know, there has become this really solid re-entry middle ground for women of a certain generation, you know, the *WACK!* generation, re-entering the market. And those prices, I mean, I know what they are going to be every single time. Those are not going up that much, as much as they should actually. There's this 150- to 200-thousand level for, like, major masterpieces from the 70s, and that's the level at which those women re-enter for historically significant works that should be in museums. And it's changing a little bit and certainly there are Eve Hesse outlier kind of examples but, uhm, yeah that's...

**JS:** So it's supremely undervalued work.

**CB:** Yeah, still.

**JS:** And it's extremely cheap to buy.

**ES:** Either that or the other is extremely overvalued. (laughter)

**LA:** I think that the scary thing, too, is that when work doesn't enter a permanent collection, it has to go somewhere, and a lot of these artists might just throw it away, do away with it. So are we losing an entire history of work because they don't have anywhere to put it? Keep it? I've talked with several artists who have thrown work away because they were moving studios and didn't have a place to store it. So, yeah, I hope things change and I hope we can continue to acquire by women and get their work out there and get it shown.

Should we open it up for questions? Okay, there are two microphones available. One on either end so let's take this one right here.

**Audience Question:** Hi, my name is Ivana Ferrero. I'm an artist and I'm 50 years old. So, I think that you guys have talked a lot about race issues, gender issues, but we didn't talk about age issues. And just picking back up with what you were saying about, as an artist, you know, as a woman, 50 year old woman, it's very difficult for me to go a gallery and then for them to get my work because they don't want a 50 year old woman's art in their gallery, you know. How do I come from making the art in my kitchen and in my studio at home, and I can market it as much as I can but it's very difficult. There's no way to get into these places, these venues that you guys are talking about, so I wanted to see if you could touch base a little bit on the age issue and how an artist that is working from home can get into the venues that you guys are talking about.

**LA:** Does anyone want to take that on?

**JS:** The historical answer, the true answer, is it's really difficult and I don't have a practical answer, but the historical answer is that there are so many women who waited such a long time for recognition. Somebody like Nevelson didn't show until she was 60 and then she showed among a peer group at MoMA of like Frank Stella, who

was 22, in a big group show. Or, uh, somebody like Beatrice Wood, the potter, who basically had to outlive her whole peer group in order to tell her own history; live 'til 105. Carmen Herrera, who just had her first significant retrospective at the age of 101 at the Whitney. You know, Louise Bourgeois, you know, whose career didn't take off in some ways until she was in her 70s, potentially, and this idea of longevity and perseverance is so attached to the female psyche in a way—that “women endure.” I think this is a larger... I think it's something we accept culturally that we have to really undo: that women don't have to endure and wait and wait it out. That women can show now and early, and it's something archaic left in our culture.

**LA:** Question in the very back?

**AQ:** Hi, uhm, so piggy-backing on that last question, I was hoping someone would mention childbirth or child bearing and having children. And I think that a lot of this delay for women has to do with all those years. I mean, I'm currently an artist and I have all these small children and the career gets put off for a lot of years, so I was curious if anyone would speak to...

**ES:** Well, I'll channel Gloria Steinem and say that mrrn have to take on 50 percent of the child rearing and house work in order for women to have 50 percent of their time to their work. That was Gloria, not me. (laughter and clapping) No, but I think there's a relevance to what you're saying. I mean, historically, you know, that is the case of course, that women do, and until that percentage shifts, I don't know.

**LB:** But to address the issue in a different way, if you know yourself and within your friends, if you could get together and all of you don't necessarily have an outlet, but would like one why not rent a space? This happened in the 70s in SoHo. There were galleries, pop up galleries in that way, and there's always that. Everywhere in LA it happened, in New York. It could happen here. And I think if you feel that you're being judged, you know, number one that's not a good feeling so do something about it. Really get out there, get with it, you know, get support and show your work.

**CB:** I think it's a great suggestion. I mean, I think we were talking about Elizabeth Murray yesterday, who in my life, or in my career—I met her early on—and one of the things she said to me in the early 1990s—and this is before I was doing this work and, you know, thinking about these politics very much—and she talked about having kids and how hard it was and having to hide them when studio visits came, and... (laughter) You know, people came to visit her studio and I think that you really can't underestimate the bias that there is, even as, like, cool and hip as it is to drag your kids around in the art world or Hollywood or whatever, and it sort of seems like there's more visibility. I absolutely think that it's a problem. I think, as a woman artist, you have to be very conscious of it, or as a curator. And, I mean, the way that I've always dealt with it is—and I've never said this really out loud too much—is just to be really like: they're just part of what you do, they are part of your labor and you have to make them visible. And trustees don't want to see it; they don't want to see the kids. They want to know a little bit but they don't want to know a lot, you know. You have to negotiate that all the time and I think my strategy, and I'm sure it's hurt me, is to just... and they're just... and I don't mean, like, literally, they are visible all the time, but that is part of your labor and it's part of your identity, and you cannot hide it, especially until there's 50 percent labor going on in the home. I mean, it's just... it's very hard,

and I know a lot of women artists my age and generation who talked about having kids and made the decision not to because of privileging their work, and made that... it was a conscious choice and anyway, just to say it's extremely hard.

**LA:** Right here.

**AQ:** I would like to know your thoughts and opinions on the powerfulness or lack of powerfulness in writing about work. So my question is, how effective is writing about a person's exhibition and anything that is related to that?

**CB:** I'll say a couple things. I think it's really, hugely important. I mean, I think that one of the things that I learned in researching the *WACK!* show, and I've thought about a lot, is that the ways in which women's work—it's true today but differently, but certainly historically—the ways in which work by women artists circulated affected... the reception that they got or didn't get affected how, affected the production of the work in the end. I mean. you know. getting it out of the studio, having someone see it, having someone write about it or not for certain bodies of work. or whatever, effects the shape of the career and the production. and I think that choosing who writes about it, if you can, having control over that, having it be serious. getting something published as a thing—a book a pamphlet or whatever—I think is really... I think there's tremendous value in it.

**ES:** Well, there's so many different levels because you are talking about catalogs, reviews. You're talking about monographs. You're talking about having a catalogue raisonné. There are all of those different levels.

**LA:** But I think Jenni was talking about—was it a master's thesis? Or... What was your...

**JS:** I just published a book on ceramic artists.

**LA:** Yes, I know. But we were having a conversation last night where Jenni was describing this publication that was the only publication, the first publication... *High Performance Magazine*, thank you, was the first publication devoted to performance art.

**JS:** In the United States, yes. It was founded by a woman. It was established in Los Angeles. It was the first place where artists were asked to contribute and write about their own practice not mediated through a critic. So you submit the documentation of your performance and then you wrote a synopsis or something that went with it. If you didn't write something up, you weren't published. And so it forced artists to write, in a sense. I think also there's historical value in the trickle-down effect. History is slow. Art history is a conservative discipline. I think it's really boring to write another dissertation on Bruce Nauman (laughter). We don't need one. You know there's a replication or a cycle of replication where, if you work on a certain artist or kind of artist, you can get a different level of recognition than artists who do not have that kind of commercial value. It's different to write a book on Guston than it is to write on women at Black Mountain College in the 50s, and I think that's a distinction that happens in terms of the way scholarship is valued or undervalued. And our commercial museum world moves very, very quickly, and from my perspective,

essays aren't long enough. They're written on the fly. Sometimes curators don't have enough time to do the kind of heavy lifting research that art history or art historians are able to do because it's a different job description. But I think that there's just not... there's not enough writing.

**LA:** Here?

**AQ:** I just want to applaud all of the women up there and all of the wonderful things you've done. And you keep mentioning Elizabeth Murray, and we keep talking about Dallas and the history of great women and the things that have happened here. Elizabeth Murray's first museum show was at The Dallas Museum of Art in 1987, and curated by Sue Gray. And I think what is so important is that we not only talk about history but we talk about the future. And we talk about shining a light on the inequalities in the art world among men and women, whether it's art dealers collecting or artists, and for everyone to do what they can as far as whether it's showing art or collecting art. But to do our little bits to get to that place of equality. But I just wanted to say, I think we've got a good Elizabeth Murray moment going on here and wanted to say she has a great history in Dallas, and thank you all for coming.

**LA:** I don't think I can end it any better way. Thank you Talley. Thank you so much everyone for joining us.