

now we see two forces such that each makes the other impossible. Duality, a frequent theme in her work, is expressed here as an internal splitting, as a conflict of opposites: the tension of her hands expressing anguish in contrast to relaxation and hope. In the work of Ketty La Rocca, the masculine hand ended up dominating the situation and hiding the interpellation of the woman. This same duality between what we see and what we cannot see had already appeared in earlier works by Àngels Ribé, in which the journey, the process or the perspective allowed us to perceive that which had not initially been shown. Once again, duality appeared in geometrical works in which symmetry acts as the physical and conceptual axis (*Invisible Geometry 3*, 1973). Duality can be understood physically: as empty and filled space, or as light or as open air contrasted with corresponding artificial phenomena. But duality can also be psychological, as can be seen in these works, which confront dream and memory.

It is interesting to observe how the more introspective works, which indicate the devalued position of women, are perhaps those that best exemplify the social and political situation of our country throughout those years. It is true that the social construction of concepts such as 'gender' is a product of ideology, of fundamental ideas that are the backbone of a person's or a collective's thinking, but also of their day-to-day practice. To this extent, the political is not only that which concerns government, but is rather that which controls our behaviour in a collective context. The dual reality that has been pinpointed clearly by Àngels Ribé in these installations from 1977 is revealing not only of a fragmented and stigmatised feminine imaginary but also of a process of state building that, in fragile fashion, was trying to mediate between the burden of recent history and a different political imaginary. Social and cultural change should be made not only within the orbit of the individual, but that of the collective. In this sense, even though these works require the spectator to adopt a contemplative attitude – that of seeing and listening – they are also an invitation to action: even though it is not immediate, it is certainly crucial. They act on the emotions as powerful narratives, inseparable from a rational process. They act on a personal level and at the same time in a public space. They do not allow us to be passive, but rather force us to position ourselves before a given situation. In this sense, they are highly engaged political works, not only because they reveal, but also because they denounce unbearable situations. It is precisely this manifestation of a rupture in the social construction of women and of the individual that makes the need for the spectator to act – we are clearly called upon to do so – absolutely unequivocal.

Incongruent Conceptualism: Placing Àngels Ribé in a Gendered Frame

Abigail Solomon-Godeau

In 1972–73, in Barcelona, Àngels Ribé produced a series of black and white photographs featuring variations on the triangle orchestrated in real space and then photographed. In certain of these, the triangle, made of string, joins interior walls; in others, such as *3 punts 2*, Ribé herself forms the perpendicular side of a right-angled triangle, her shadow forming the triangle's base. In *3 punts 3*, from a series of five prints, Ribé again deploys her body against a blank wall as the vertical element with which to represent isosceles, scalene, and acute triangles. The works exist in the form of photographs, but it does not seem appropriate to describe them as such. It is not, after all, the photographic as a particular medium in visual art that accounts for them, nor does Ribé's actual presence in certain of them make it seem any more appropriate to call them documentations of a performance. In fact, even in those of Ribé's other works where she herself is represented, the effect is not that of a performance, even allowing that the art of performance does not necessarily require an audience. What can be said is that Ribé has set something up – a relationship, a demonstration – in real time and space – by marking it with actual or virtual lines. And it is that elusive "something" that both encompasses and reflects upon the relations of the corporeal, the spatial, and the geometric that characterizes the nature of the work.¹ In the same years, in Vienna, Valie Export, also produced a photographic series, one of which, *Körperkonfigurationen* (Body Configurations, 1982) depicts Export variously positioned – supine or upright – in contiguity with architectural spaces and structures, counterpointing the monumental geometry of the built environment with the adaptability and physicality of the body. In her description of the project, Export defined her conflation of the corporeal with the social in its broadest sense: "As plastic poses, as living pictures and sculptures, my photographic body configurations signify not only the double images of the (geometric and human) figures, but also of sociology and cultural history. [...] The arrangements of body position are expression of inner conditions."² Here too, we can consider this practice as intra-medial, insofar as the counterpointing of body and architecture was physically enacted, then photographed, but as with Ribé's series, not in a manner in which the work itself can be justly described as "photographic" and thus primarily engaged with the aesthetic possibilities of the medium.³

1. The marking of space with string is most often associated with the art of Fred Sandbak, but as an artistic device or procedure it figures in the work of very different artists, such as Cecilia Vicuña.

2. Chrissie Iles, Kristine Stiles, Gary Indiana, and Robert Fleck, *Valie Export: Ob/De+Con(Struction)*. Philadelphia: Goldey Paley Gallery (Moore international discovery series), 2004.

3. Dick Higgins defined the intermedial art in these terms: "In Inter-media, the different media are conceptually fused, you cannot distinguish them. With multimedia or mixed media they are easily distinguished, although they are happening simultaneously." Cited in Roswitha Müller, *Valie Export: Fragments of the Imagination*. Bloomington: Indiana Press, 1994, p. 207.

In 1976, the Portuguese artist Helena Almeida produced her photographic series in which the body of the artist also features. These she has collectively entitled *Pintura habitada*, and they stage what might be called “situations” of spatial inhabitation, where the opacity of the blue paint in some of them annuls the transparency (or the illusionistic depth) of the photograph. In certain of these works, it is the geometric form of a stretcher – the support of a canvas – that “frames” the artist, who both appears within, and subsequently absents herself from its containing geometry. Indeed, there is a sense of implied narrative in which Almeida “leaves” the framing terms of the stretcher. Insofar as the stretcher is the support of the canvas, the work both affirms and rejects “support” of the canvas, synecdoche of painting, the sign of which is indicated by Almeida’s use of opaque blue or black paint on the surface of the image. While the inhabiting of space by the body is a given, the inhabiting of painting proposes another kind of relationship, the artist “in” the work, but equally, the work inhabiting the artist.

Here then, are three artists working contemporaneously, in Barcelona, Vienna, and Lisbon, most likely without knowledge of each other, but who at a certain historical moment chose to work in the medium of photography, to use themselves rather than a model within these works, and, *grosso modo*, to explore in their art, among other issues (and within the given terms of their medium), the relations between the corporeal and the immaterial, phenomenological space and representational space. In the case of Ribé, the artistic context from which she emerged was that of Catalan Conceptualism; in Export’s, the point of departure was Viennese Actionism, and for Almeida, her original medium was painting during her formation at the Escola Superior de Belas-Artes in Lisbon, although by the early seventies, she had decisively reoriented her work to the intermedial.

I do not invoke these three artists for the purposes of comparison. They are linked here by chronology, by roughly contemporaneous birth date, by their shared adoption of the various possibilities of intermedial production, and by certain related preoccupations and thematics. Art historically speaking, it might seem more appropriate to link these artists with others of their contemporaries and the specific artistic milieus with which they were identified.⁴ Certain of Ribé’s works from the seventies are close to those of Francesc Torres, with whom she was exhibited during her time in Chicago, and later, in New York. But in the context of this essay, what should also be acknowledged (as part of a somewhat different historical reflection) is their identity as women artists.

It goes without saying that any invocation of the category “woman artist” in art criticism immediately raises questions about how and why this category figures

4. See for example the following: Stephen Snoddy, *Ideas & Attitudes: Catalan Conceptual Art 1969–1981*. Manchester: John Hansard Gallery and Cornerhouse Press, 1994; Pilar Parcerisas, *Conceptualismo(S) poéticos, políticos y periféricos: en torno al arte conceptual en España, 1964-1980*. Madrid: Akal, 2007; Rosa Queralt, *El arte sucede: origen de las prácticas conceptuales en España, 1965-1980*. Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2005; Lluís Utrilla, *Cròniques de l’era conceptual*. Madrid: Edicions Robrenyo, 1980; Antoni Mercader, Pilar Parcerisas, Valentín Roma (eds.), *El Grup de Treball*. Barcelona: Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 1999; *Idees i actituds: entorn de l’art conceptual a Catalunya, 1964-1980*. Barcelona: Centre d’Art Santa Mònica, 1992; Abel Figueres, “Catalan Conceptual Art, the Conceptual Art of the South”, *Catalònia*, no. 28, 1992.

within the larger subject at hand – here, the work of Àngels Ribé in the years from 1969 to 1984. It is not a more or less self-explanatory designation such as “feminist artist,” a term denoting a politics that is variously declared in the work and espoused by the artist, but rather, a description. Or rather, both a condition and a liability, whether acknowledged by the artist or not.⁵ But any consideration of the work of women artists active from the end of the sixties must immediately confront a number of very large historical, political, economic, and cultural factors, among which the relative exclusion or marginalization of women artists is but one (well documented) factor.

It not only matters that the artist is a woman (usually white), but it also matters whether she occupies a putative art center or a putative periphery. Until quite recently art world centers were limited to a few cities internationally, with New York City as the unrivaled depot of legitimation, acme of visibility. Processes of artistic legitimation necessarily involve many different kinds of overlapping institutions and discourses.⁶ These include museums, galleries and other exhibition venues, auction houses, magazine and art book publishing, art critics, academic programs, and hardly least, existing markets. New York City’s rise to prominence as the world art center, producing artists, movements, and criticism is historically rooted in the US’s post-World War Two emergence as the imperial world power, its art world fertilized by the aggregate influence of European artists who immigrated to the States in wartime. If these geopolitical circumstances put artists from other countries at a signal disadvantage in terms of international recognition, it goes without saying that the consequences of cultural hegemony were generally fatal to the careers (in the sense of international visibility) of women artists. Thinking here of artists such as the Viennese Maria Lassnig (1919), Meret Oppenheim (1913), Carol Rama (1918), and Lygia Clark (1920) – Austrian, Swiss, Italian, Brazilian – it is interesting to speculate on what their critical fortunes would have been had they lived in New York City. Although, it should be noted, Louise Bourgeois, living in New York City for decades, did not become recognized as a “major” figure until she was well into her seventies.

This is not to deny that the vicissitudes of artistic production are shaped by local circumstances and conditions, just as they are shaped by the immediate artistic contexts within which the artist is situated. Ribé’s work in the first half of the seventies belongs squarely within the purchase of Conceptualism, but working within a given artistic formation does not by that token neutralize the mark of gender and the material consequences of being a woman artist. Be that as it may, as the larger tidal flows of that entity called “the” art world makes newly visible the work of hitherto unrecognized women artists, there is reason to wonder how many others await discovery.

5. See in this respect, the important study by Anne Middleton Wagner, *Three Artists (Three Women). Modernism, and the Art of Hesse, Krasner and O’Keeffe*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996.

6. In addition to the classic sociological analysis by Howard Becker (*Art Worlds*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), see the more recent discussion by Sarah Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2008.

To a considerable extent then, the rediscovery of women artists is itself a consequence of the globalization of the art world and its markets. There are now many recently established art centers situated throughout the world, most, if not all of them possessing the requisite apparatuses and institutions, albeit on vastly differing scales. (Reykjavik's thriving art world cannot be compared in scale or capital with Beijing's). Moreover, the globalization of art worlds and the new technologies that have accompanied this expansion, the growth of contemporary art institutions, and the increasing number of large contemporary exhibitions, biennials, triennials, commercial art fairs, etc., have now made it less a liability to be an artist from Spain, Turkey or Finland than was previously the case. Like the rising tide that raises all ships, the vast expansion of art centers and art markets has served to make women artists – living and dead – more visible.

But a far more significant factor fostering the belated acknowledgment of so many women artists has been the impetus of feminist art history and criticism that, in turn, has recently borne fruit in the form of substantial exhibitions devoted to women artists (such as the present one), many of whom were unknown outside their own countries and cultures. Recent large-scale group exhibitions such as *Inside the Visible* and *WACK* in the US, *Elles* in Paris, *Donna: Avanguardia femminista negli'70* in Rome and *Female Trouble* in Munich have thus been important markers in the Long March of women artists, and doubtless others will follow.

It is within this changing context that an American art historian such as myself comes to encounter the work of artists who rarely, if ever, were shown in New York, who were not featured in prestigious international venues like documenta, and who were not the subject of Anglophone criticism.⁷ These belated encounters with their work are not without a sense of personal embarrassment, paralleling the general rule that while many European artists knew what was going on in the US, few American artists or critics could claim the reverse. And, needless to say, while a Catalan artist likely speaks three or four languages, Anglophone writers are far less linguistically cosmopolitan. This has many consequences, among them the primacy of American artists in the Anglophone chronicles of the art of the 1960s. Àngels Ribé thus takes her place as another example of a women artist belonging to this ever-growing panoply of recently acknowledged figures, whose art provokes new questions about the configuration, the mapping, of post-1960s art, once we begin to consider it in an international frame.⁸

7. Ribé did in fact spend time in the US, in New York City and Chicago, and even earlier had worked in Paris. Moreover, she appeared in a number of exhibitions in both cities. But she resettled in Barcelona in 1980, and did not return afterwards.

8. Such a reinscription of non-American, and especially, women artists, would have to begin with group exhibitions outside the US. Whereas influential group shows such as Kynaston McShine's exhibition *Information* at MoMA in 1968 did include artists from Latin America, Scandinavia, Italy, Germany, and Great Britain. Of the 91 artists represented, three were women. But a recent exhibition in New York that sought an even more international representation was *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin 1950–1980s* with an exhibition catalogue by Luis Camnitzer (Queens Museum of Art, New York, 1999).

But if, in regard to gender, one was to sketch out a kind of international time line of women artists active in the period of, say 1968 to 1980 – a kind of artistic “snapshot” – what would it look like? How might such a mapping change the “official” narratives of the art of this period? By which I refer to those art critical, historical, and museological accounts describing the predominant forms of art making succeeding Pop art, that is, Minimalism and Conceptualism. And if such a viewpoint focused especially on those practices identified with women artists working in media other than the traditional forms of easel painting and sculpture, what would this retrospective line-up look like? Might it produce a different narrative of (relatively) recent art?⁹ Is there, however, any heuristic justification in focusing on individual women artists outside their specific artistic milieu? Asking such questions does not assume there is any one answer, or indeed any answer at all, but the questions have the merit of making visible the classificatory, discursive, and economic determinations that shape (art) historical narratives.

Certainly, such an optic would offer few examples of the art production loosely categorized under the rubric of Minimalism, and a modest number of women artists working within Conceptualism internationally. Within official Anglophone accounts of Minimalism and Conceptualism, there are a few prominent exceptions, such as Agnes Martin and Hanne Darboven who have become as well known as their male peers. But overall, women artists have not been especially visible in this company, although this too is perhaps a consequence of the dominance of US art as the representative production.¹⁰ Anecdotally, it seems that where women artists have had a marginally greater presence has been within those artistic formations such as Fluxus, that overarched national boundaries, were programmatically international, polyvalent, intra-medial, and explicitly critical of the commodity status of the art object. However, while certain of the Fluxus-associated artists (i.e., Yoko Ono, Carolee Schneemann, Shigeko Kubota, Allison Knowles) would fit into my notional timeline of women artists, the emergence of women artists in this period, and the ways their practices were informed by the global reemergence of feminism(s), is not necessarily linked to Fluxus, nor to any other existing artistic formation. Rather, the reemergence of feminism and the formation of the women's movement as what Rita Felski calls a “feminist public sphere,” or a “feminist counter-public sphere,” inevitably altered

9. A timeline of art made for the 1960s and after in Michael Archer's *Art Since 1960* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997), lists remarkably few women artists, or for that matter, relatively few formations or artists outside the US. This is equally the case with other surveys of Conceptualism. It is, therefore, outside the realm of “official” accounts, such as Catherine de Zegher's exhibition catalogue *Inside the Visible: an Elliptical Traverse of the Twentieth Century Art in, of and from the Feminine* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995) or Lea Vergine's *L'Autre moitié de l'avant-garde: 1910–1940: femmes peintres et femmes sculpteurs dans les mouvements d'avant-garde historiques* (Paris: Les Femmes, 1982) that one gleans hints of how this map might be altered.

10. In his general survey book *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon, 1999), Tony Godfrey remarks on the absence of women artists, and thus, under the chapter “Where Were They? The Curious Case of Women Conceptual Artists” he groups together the work of Susan Hiller, Ana Mendieta, Annette Messager, Adrienne Piper, Martha Rosler, and Hannah Wilke. Which neither answers the question nor accurately characterizes their work. In the excellent catalogues *A Minimal Future? Art as Object 1958–1968*, out of forty artists, only seven are women, and *In Reconsidering the Object of Art: 1965–1975* (Los Angeles: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 2004) of 55 artists, there are again only seven.

the terms and circumstances of various art worlds and the nature and terms of art making: “Unlike the bourgeois public sphere, then, the feminist public sphere does not claim a representative universality but rather offers a critique of cultural values from the standpoint of women as a marginalized group within society. In this sense it constitutes a partial or counter-public sphere... Yet insofar as it is a public sphere, its arguments are also directed outward, toward a dissemination of feminist ideas and values throughout society as a whole.”¹¹ Does that mean that we are justified in assuming a pre- and post-women’s movement division of art made by women? And do the artistic trajectories of artists like Ribé support the notion of what Gabriele Schor has described as a “feminist avant-garde,” to be considered separately from the work of male contemporaries?¹²

Putting aside for the moment the concept of a feminist avant-garde, as soon as one constructs a discursive entity designated “art by women,” as has been variously proposed since the eighteenth century, the normative language of art history and criticism is destabilized, if for no other reason than through revelation of its exclusions. Or not. For, as convincingly demonstrated by Tamar Garb, the category of *art féminin* of nineteenth century France was neither oppositional nor transgressive, although it allowed for professional activity as well as the occasional success of individual women.¹³ Similarly, the much more recently conceived notion of *écriture féminine* in literature (associated with theorists and philosophers such as Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, or Monique Wittig) has been criticized for its apparent disconnection from social movements where femininity is not necessarily the discursive or political stake.

Ironically, the destabilization of epistemological categories (of classification, of style, of chronology, of artistic formation) is the reason why “woman artists” as a category, or “art made by women” as another category, are a priori excluded from the unmarked universal terms, “artist,” and “art.”¹⁴ Analogous to women’s historical exclusion from the universal category of citizen, so too does the woman artist reveal her non-universality as soon as she receives the particularized denomination, the marked term.¹⁵ All of which is to say that historical designations such as *l’art féminin*, if not *écriture féminine*, have more frequently served as structures of containment than as breaches in the symbolic order.

11. Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 167.

12. See, for example, her essay “The Feminist Avant-Garde: A Radical Transformation,” in *Donna: Avantguardia femminista negli anni '70*, Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Moderna, Roma, 2010 [exh. cat.].

13. Tamar Garb, *Sisters of the Brush: Women’s Artistic Culture in the Nineteenth Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994.

14. Similarly, the honorific “Old Masters” takes on a very different meaning when feminized, as signalled in the title of: Griselda Pollock and Rozika Parker, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*. New York: Pantheon, 1979.

15. See in this regard: Anne Wagner, *Three Artists (Three Women). Modernism, and the Art of Hesse, Krasner and O’Keeffe*, op. cit.

For this reason, (and others), any consideration of the work of women artists in the wake of 1968–69 (itself an international political landmark) must begin with feminism, even before consideration of the specific characteristics of any given art world. The identification with feminism by individual artists, or the various attempts to invent “feminist art” are less important in this context than the profound effects of the women’s movement itself, which among other things provided new *topoi*, new themes, new perceptions for which women artists invented new artistic languages. As Valie Export wrote in her 1972 “Women’s Art: A Manifesto”: “[...] the transference of the specific situation of women to the artistic context sets up signs and signals which provide new artistic expressions and messages on one hand, and change retrospectively the situation of women on the other.”¹⁶ But this “transference” of women’s estate into the artistic domain is not necessarily to do with a particular content, and, despite the dominant presence of women artists in particular genres (e.g., performance) is not linked to any particular form.

One of the photographic sequences within Fina Miralles’ photographic *Relacions* (1975) is a four image vertical panel entitled «Relacions del cos amb elements naturals: el cos cobert de palla» depicting her transformation into a tree-woman. This was included in her exhibition at the Sala Tres (in Sabadell) of the same year. In her catalogue essay on Miralles, Pilar Parcerisas discusses a number of themes that are relevant to the work including references to Joan Amades’s *Costumari català*, Catalan popular culture, the artistic politics of Sabadell and those of the Grup de Treball, and many other factors that shaped or influenced Miralles’s work.¹⁷ Birgit Jürgenssen’s untitled color photograph of 1979 is strikingly similar in terms of what it represents – woman as tree – and needless to say, it is Jürgenssen, the artist who is also tree-woman. While these former works are singular works in the artists’ oeuvre, Mendieta’s variations of herself as merged, submerged, imprinted or inscribed, in natural settings – ocean, earth, trees, flowers, mud, etc. – are elements in an extensive series. But where Jürgenssen’s allusions are specific to Northern European folklore and legend, and to a feminist critique of woman-as-nature, Mendieta’s stagings of her self in these series, while also feminist, are based on a complex interweaving of mythico-religious ritual, including pre-Colombian and Latino-Hispanic cultures.

It was the art historian Erwin Panofsky who coined the term “pseudomorphism” to describe the pitfall in assuming that different artworks that might visually resemble one another have necessarily any substantial relation. But when one observes that at a certain historical juncture (that is, my initial periodization from the end of the sixties and the following decade), women artists on both sides of the Atlantic, generally unaware of each others’s production, appear to have

16. Valie Export, “Women’s Art: A Manifesto,” in Helena Reckett and Peggy Phelan (eds.), *Art and Feminism*. London: Phaidon, 2001, p. 206.

17. Pilar Parcerisas, “De la naturalesa a la naturalesa,” in Fina Miralles: *De les idees a la vida*, Museu d’Art de Sabadell, 2001 [exh. cat.].

seized on certain tropes and *topoi*, certain symbolizations of the body, certain deployments of the artist as subject, certain investigations of the woman's body as sign, are these to be considered merely adventitious? Or do these synchronic *topoi* frequently appearing in the art of women support the intuition that the "official" accounts of this period tracing the art of Minimalism (with its almost all-male cast of producers) through to Conceptualism and after, are at once partial and inadequate? Is it possible that the formal distinctions made between media, such that performance practice is bracketed off from both "isms," function to both simplify and unify the artistic field? Is it possible that the "disciplining," the "art historicizing" or the institutionalization of the art of this period, requires the repression of the more heterodox, polyvocal, and indeed, experimental work of women artists, even within the acknowledged avant-gardes (or neo-avant-gardes), a repression that might then be considered as a structuring absence?¹⁸ These are questions worth considering, if for no other reason than their ability to undercut the assumption that the relative fame (or obscurity) of artists within particular artistic formations reflect an unproblematic and self-evident meritocracy, or worse, indicate that women artist are inevitably less likely to achieve "major" status.

In a text published originally in 1976, Anne-Marie Sauzeau Boetti observed that the woman artist, implicitly or explicitly a feminist subject, occupies a position she characterized as "incongruent": "[The woman artist's] relationship with the technique and artistic field she deals with, her very language, changes when she reaches the point of exercising her ability to symbolize areas of life which have been historically unexpressed (and sheltered) for so long. In this case she enters the double space of *incongruence*, by which I mean that she can still be read and appreciated through the cultural criteria of the avant-garde, formal quality and so on, *but* also through an other criterion, as a landmark of an *alien* culture, with reference to other values and mind schemes... it is also true that her redeemed creativity cannot exist in a pure state, outside history, all shadow-cultures or exiled cultures being related to the revolution which prepares their way home."¹⁹ Boetti's text resonates in suggestive ways with certain writing by Lucy Lippard, especially in the seventies when Lippard, already a committed feminist, considered the work of women artists who were exhibited in the cadre of Conceptualism. In her essay for the exhibition *Style and Process* of 1976, curated by Marina Urbach and featuring an unusually large number of women (ten out of thirteen) including Ribé, Lippard speculated on the relation of gender to the nominally ungendered language of Conceptualism. Referring to Urbach's characterizations of the group as manifesting such qualities as "stylelessness," "intentional inconsistency," and a "tangential vision," Lippard linked these features to the rise of feminism: "One of the things these artists seem to have in common

18. See for example, the manner in which the two-volume *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* by Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, and Benjamin H. D. Buchloh (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004) produces its linear narrative of the seventies, within which women artists rarely figure.

19. Anne-Marie Sauzeau Boetti, "Negative Capability as Practice in Women's Art," in *Studio International*, no. 191, January–February 1976, pp. 24–26. Reprinted in Helena Reckett and Peggy Phelan (eds.), *Art and Feminism*, op. cit., pp. 213–14.

is a curious kind of fragmentation or disjunction that I noticed first and still see most frequently in work by women. I use the term fragmentation not in a negative sense but as a way of signaling the existence of a network, a web of barely visible connections and meanings and associations – both visual and verbal."²⁰

Boetti's notion of "incongruence" and Lippard's "disjunction" are intuitions of a difference lodged within the larger framework of Conceptualist production itself. As both writers imply, the existence of such a difference inserts the question of difference into a form of art production whose very assumptions and procedures would appear resistant to gender distinctions. Moreover, the frequency with which women artists utilized fragmentation in the body's representation (often working with hands or face alone) support Lippard's observations, which seem extremely relevant to so much of Ribé's work in the 1970s and after.

In fact, even those works of Ribé that might appear to be fully in keeping with the contemporary work of male Conceptualists, there are facets of it that seem to invite a feminist reading. In Ribé's photographic series *Vilanova de la Roca* (1972), for example, which depicts her standing, back to camera, in featureless walled enclosures, even flattened against the wall, there is the implication of invisible constraint, in which, as in Export's *Body Configurations*, the body can be perceived as both occupying a space and being subjected to it. Implicit in all the variations in which Ribé's body is positioned within the built environment, is the acknowledgment that women's relation to architectural and social space is itself overdetermined, inevitably traversed by the fact of sexual difference. In this respect, it seems significant that Ribé's work in "natural" space (e.g., sea-side, countryside) rarely features the artist within the frame.

The 1977 installation *Can't Go Home* is exceptional among Ribé's works in a number of ways, not least for its ostensibly "personal" if not confessional aspects. Employing projected slides, an audio component, and written texts, *Can't Go Home* was in fact produced before Ribé's return to Barcelona. Although autobiographical or emphatically subjective approaches were by the seventies a staple of feminist art production, Ribé's own working procedures, shaped by Conceptualism, were more typically coolly objective, and programmatically impersonal, such that her represented person is rarely a persona. *Can't Go Home*, however, consists of staged images of infantile regression (e.g., Ribé nursing at the breast, having her hair braided, sucking her thumb, kneeling, and apparently importuning a business-suited man – all stagings of dependency and subordination). It is important, however, to consider how feminism recasts confessional or autobiographical modes so as to link them to larger sociopolitical realities that overarch the individual subject. In this regard, Rita Felski has observed that

20. Lucy Lippard, "The Magnetism of Fragmentation," *Style and Process*, Fine Arts Building, New York, 1976, p. 10.

“Feminist confession... is less concerned with unique individuality or notions of essential humanity than with delineating the specific problems and experiences which bind women together.”²¹ Furthermore, she remarks, “through its discussion of, and distillation of individual experience in relation to a general problematic of sexual politics, feminist confession thus appropriates some of the functions of political discourse.”²² Although Felski is here discussing literary forms rather than those in the visual arts, her comments seem equally relevant to ostensibly personal works such as *Can't Go Home* and remind us that articulations of the personal as such are entirely capable of expressing larger, social meanings and need not be linked to artistic autobiography.

Returning to the rhetorical questions posed here in relation to the mapping of art by women, there are many reasons to question how recent art, from the sixties on, becomes “art history.” As feminists have long insisted, the “problem” of the woman artist’s exclusion or marginalization is not to be rectified by adding more and more artists as we rediscover or resurrect them. Rather, the problem is fundamentally rooted in the problem of gender politics, of the unequal ordering of sexual difference and their material consequences that are played out in all the institutions and arrangements of political, social, economic, and cultural life. Without endorsing any essentialist notions of women’s art or female subjectivity, it seems that reading across the map of cultural production makes us aware that all artistic “isms” (whether claimed by artists or imposed by institutions) are provisional and contingent. Casting a more expansive and inclusive gaze across the cartography of cultural creation by women permits us to perceive networks, circuits, lines of influence, unacknowledged connections across various boundaries that collectively recast not only the history of art, but the terms by which it is institutionally constructed.

21. Felski, op. cit., p. 94.

22. Ibid., p. 95.

A Moment within Eternity

Antoni Llena

By way of introduction, I can think of nothing better than Wallace Stevens’s poem ‘The Glass of Water’,¹ which in my view informs Àngels Ribé’s entire poetics:

That the glass would melt in heat,
That the water would freeze in cold,
Shows that this object is merely a state,
One of many, between two poles. So,
In the metaphysical, there are these poles.

Here in the centre stands the glass. Light
Is the lion that comes down to drink. There.
And in that state, the glass is a pool.
Ruddy are his eyes and ruddy are his claws
When light comes down to wet his frothy jaws

And in the water winding weeds move round.
And there and in another state – the refractions,
The *metaphysica*, the plastic parts of poems
Crash in the mind – But, fat Jocundus, worrying
About what stands here in the centre, not the glass.

But in the centre of our lives, this time, this day,
It is a state, this spring among the politicians
Playing cards. In a village of the indigenes,
One would have still to discover. Among the dogs and dung,
One would continue to contend with one’s ideas.

Micro-stories

As I look at Àngels Ribé’s work, I cannot help but feel a sense of familiarity that draws me close to it. It is not only a question of generations, though I am from 1942 and she from ’43. Nor would it be right to attribute it to cultural reasons, regardless of the fact that we were neighbours and our middleclass families were largely uninterested in instilling in us an interest in art. Rather, it is because

1. Wallace Stevens, *De la simple existencia*. Bilingual text (English/Spanish) in Andrés Sánchez Robayna (ed.). Barcelona: Debolsillo, 2005.