

When I danced I leapt through the air and continued to remain up there... I felt a self-propelled air stretch. It was a way to leave this earth to think in another path, to bring coherence to reality.²

Do all my problems center around space? At one time – time was my problem. Now, space. I want to carve space. I am carving space.³

Minimalism subverted

Counternarratives of Minimal art, especially where they concerned the contribution of women, began to be proposed in the context of post-Minimal practices, while Minimalism itself has persistently been characterized as male-dominated.⁴ Moreover, Anna Chave has reflected, “where the identity of the Minimalist movement is concerned, there can be no indelible ink and no orthodoxy... for there have been all along not one but multiple Minimalisms, different discursive configurations describing differing movements.”⁵ Her view highlights the issues of plurality and diversity located within rather than subsequent to Minimalism, problematizing the singularity that the movement has been ascribed. Chave’s writing on Minimalism has constituted a rigorous, feminist dismantling of the critical orthodoxies that have been built around Minimal art, in particular their failure to account for and analyze the impact of the subjectivity of the artist on the work and thus to question Minimalism’s claims to neutrality, and to identify the limitations in the ways it maintains to have shifted the focus from the artist to the viewer as subject. The critic and curator Lucy R. Lippard had already remarked, retrospectively, “The word Minimal suggests a tabula rasa – or rather the failed attempt of a clean slate, a utopian wish of the times that never came true but was important for the goals and desires it provoked. It was and still is an idea that interests me but not for its reality quotient.”⁶ In the mid-eighties, Hal Foster had made an initial critique of Minimalism’s “analysis of perception,” which, he said, left out “the sexual-linguistic constitution of the subject” and therefore he pinpointed how “even as Minimalism turned from the objective orientation of formalism to the subjective orientation of phenomenology, it tended to position artist and viewer alike not only as historically innocent but as sexually indifferent.”⁷ It was this that Foster states received its “most productive critique” through feminism and yet, as he continues, “Minimalism did put the question of the subject into play, and in this respect feminist art began where Minimalism ends.”⁸ Foster’s framing, however, makes such feminist practice unduly dependent upon Minimalism rather than a decisive development in its own right which nevertheless constituted a counter to Minimalism. Framing feminism in this way subsumes it in the teleological formation of the canon, thus undermining Foster’s aim at revisionism and negating the breadth of feminist art as more than just a reaction to Minimalism.

Rosemarie Castoro’s work was formed in the “crux” of the concurrence of Minimalism with an empowered female identity – a circumstance shared by other female Minimalist artists and practitioners including Agnes Martin, Anne Truitt, Eva Hesse, Simone Forti, Yvonne Rainer and Lippard. Indeed, Lippard later identified Castoro as one of the women artists

1. This phrase is from one of a series of journals Castoro kept for much of her life, containing written entries and self-timed Polaroid photographs of the artist and her works. It appears in the journal dated February – December 1978, p. 37, among entries related to her works comprising groups of wooden piers.

2. Rosemarie Castoro’s journal, June 1972 – September 1973, p. 215.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 257.

4. For example, Lynn Zelevansky’s 1994 exhibition *Sense and Sensibility: Women Artists and Minimalism in the Nineties*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, which included the work of seven women artists working with the legacies of Minimal art practice. Another exhibition held in 1996 at the Rose Art Museum, *More Than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the '70s*, curated by Susan L. Stoops, examined an earlier decade.

5. Anna Chave, “Minimalism and Biography,” in *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 82, no. 1, March 2000, p. 149. Chave had previously begun this line of criticism in her “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power,” *Arts Magazine*, vol. 64, no. 5, January 1990, pp. 44–63.

6. Lucy R. Lippard, “Escape Attempts,” in *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1997, p. VIII.

7. Hal Foster, “The Crux of Minimalism,” in *The Return of the Real*. Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 1996, p. 59. This is a later revision of the eighties text.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 59 and p. 247, note 37.

9. Lucy R. Lippard, "From Eccentric to Sensuous Abstraction: An Interview with Lucy R. Lippard," in Susan L. Stoops (ed.), *More Than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the '70s*. Waltham: Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, 1996, p. 30.

10. Lynn Zelevansky, *Sense and Sensibility*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1994, p. 8.

11. Rosemarie Castoro, statement, in *Artforum*, September 1970, p. 36 and journal extract, in *Suspensions*. New York: Syracuse University Lubin House, 1973, n.p.

12. See Katy Siegel, *High Times, Hard Times: New York Painting 1967-1975*. New York: Independent Curators International and DAP/ Distributed Art Publishers, 2006.

13. Castoro is mentioned in the catalogue *More Than Minimal* but her work was not included in the exhibition.

14. Castoro's journal, August 1970 - May 1971, p. 99. She wrote a further statement on this issue in the same journal, dated March 25, 1971, p. 241, in which she says "I just refused being in a show of all women in Germany. I don't believe in segregation... it is an insult to put a person in a file category." It is not clear which group of artists Castoro is referring to; WLG might mean women's liberation group but could also refer to WAR (Women Artists in Revolution), founded in 1969, a group that Lippard had also resisted joining yet was associated with the Art Workers' Coalition in which both she and Castoro participated.

15. Chave, "Minimalism and Biography," p. 151.

16. Castoro's journal, June 1972 - September 1973, p. 233. Paul Toner (b. 1948) worked for both the Dwan Gallery and John Weber Gallery in the early seventies. Castoro showed at Dwan Gallery in group shows in 1968 and 1969, when it was directed by John Weber.

17. Within her journals Castoro frequently made a play of her gender identity and adopted androgynous forms of dress. This likely arose as a necessity for a woman at the heart of a masculine-oriented art scene, but may have run deeper, notwithstanding her relationship with Carl Andre to whom she was

who "subverted or overrode Minimalism on its own turf."⁹ Moreover, Zelevansky raises the question of the erotic in relation to Minimal and post-Minimal art, linking the works of apparently divergent artists like Robert Morris, Vito Acconci, and Eva Hesse, and equally engaging Castoro.¹⁰ Castoro's art offers the histories of Minimalism, and indeed abstraction more broadly, an exemplary alternate form and a practice that arose at the center of the scene from which Minimal art emerged, which while adopting aspects of the rational, mathematical and pared down forms of Minimalist art, rejected the depersonalization and denial of authorial subjectivity, foregrounding an investigation of abstraction in relation to the subjective and eroticized body and individual psyche rooted in her own identity. As she was to express it in 1970, "I think of myself as a container, and what I do as an eruption of what I am," and furthermore, she asserted, "paintings are the place you watch yourself. Paintings are reflections. They are the manifestations of sexuality."¹¹ Such a position is incompatible with canonical accounts of Minimalism, which accept its claims to have eschewed the personal, biographical, and sexual.

While Castoro's work was formed in relation to the milieu of Minimal and Conceptual art, her emphasis on her own subjectivity, on her roots and identity as a painter, as well as her blending of painting with other media, might place her more properly within a context that ran parallel with Minimalism, that of ongoing experimental painting, which makes the composition of the New York art scene during the late sixties and early seventies a more complex matter.¹² If Castoro's mid-sixties paintings can be thought of as Minimal, her later work belongs to those practices characterized as a challenge to Minimal art, or "more than Minimal," that testify to the limitation of the term Minimal as well as its prevailing definitions.¹³ Though this "more than" designation again raises the question of her position in relation to feminism, Castoro rejected any notion that she was a feminist artist, declining to be framed in terms of her gender even when it offered opportunities to show her work. As she wrote in a journal entry dated October 29, 1970, "Last week I was invited to the WLG of artists. I stated that I do not consider myself a woman artist. I am foremost an artist and do not want to be segregated in a quota system."¹⁴ In this she held a similar position to that of Lippard, who was to become an important supporter of Castoro's work: as Chave writes, quoting Lippard: "[to Lippard], openly assuming a female subject position seemed a bad idea because 'women were cut out of a lot of the action, and perceived as inferior. So I didn't really think I was one of *them*'."¹⁵ That Castoro shared this attitude is reinforced by an encounter she describes, which, furthermore, substantiates Lippard's statement. Castoro relates how in August 1973 she "met Paul Toner on the street... he wants to think about what to do about artists for 1973. He said they (*sic*) say, too bad I'm a woman. I think it is too bad I'm a woman too."¹⁶ Castoro frequently embraced an open, ambivalent position as far as her own gender and sexuality was concerned.¹⁷ Yet, as Lippard summarized, "Although [Castoro] declines to be politically classified as a feminist... the heightened sense of self which pervades her work can be attributed at least in part to her position as an independent and ambitious woman in the art world, long denied the degree of respect she might justifiably have expected as a serious working artist."¹⁸ It is her recourse to an embodied subjectivity, however, that marks Castoro's work out within an expanded Minimalism and reveals the contradictions in traditional accounts of the movement. Additionally, Castoro's relative invisibility even in the context of examinations of the contributions of women to Minimalism and post-Minimalism, and discussions of abstraction in the sixties and seventies, further reinforces the already acknowledged problem in the discourses around these movements. The lack of attention paid to her work and career reveals how much there is still to address in this field of study.¹⁹

married from 1963 to 1970, and their closeness even after they divorced. See Calvin Tompkins, "The Materialist: Carl Andre's Eminent Obscurity," in *The New Yorker*, December 5, 2011.

18. Lucy R. Lippard, "Rosemarie Castoro: Working Out," in *Artforum*, Summer 1975, p. 62, reproduced in this publication p. 55. The essay was also included in Lippard's *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art*. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co, 1976, pp. 250–56.

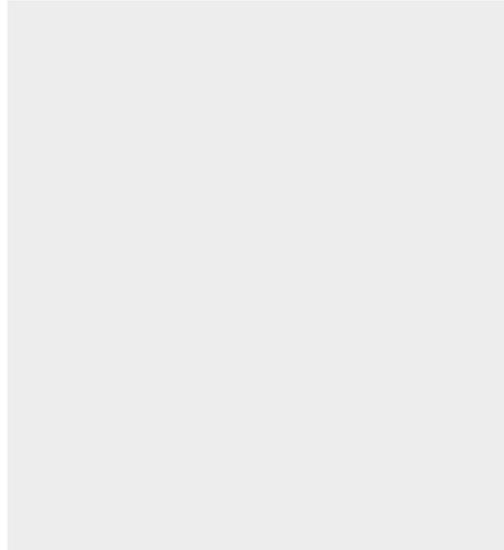
19. For instance, Stoops comments that "uncompromising individuals, Lynda Benglis, Jackie Ferrara, Nancy Graves, Mary Miss, Ree Morton, Michelle Stuart, Dorothea Rockburne, Hannah Wilke, and Jackie Winsor legitimized the role of female subjectivity in a fundamentally abstract aesthetic. Collectively they not only extended many boundaries between the traditional genres of sculpture, painting, and drawing, but also conceived an alternative to Minimalism's monolithic voice, making concrete the possibility of formally challenging yet profoundly human art." Stoops, *More Than Minimal* (1996), p. 6.

20. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh (ed.), *12 Dialogues, 1962–1963/Carl Andre, Hollis Frampton*, photographs by Hollis Frampton. Halifax and New York: NSCAD Press and NYU Press, 1980, p. 22.

21. In her journals Castoro describes herself on several occasions as once having been a Beatnik. The New Dance Group, which had been founded in the thirties to promote social change through dance, was open to all, cost little, and promoted high artistic standards across a wide array of dance styles, but was particularly involved in modern dance and new choreography.

22. The perils of being physically attractive or photogenic have dogged various woman artists, from Georgia O'Keeffe to Hannah Wilke, whereby it has impacted on their public reception – O'Keeffe following the exhibition of Alfred Stieglitz's nude photographs of her in 1921 and Wilke including criticism from feminist circles of her perceived objectifying of her own body.

23. Quoted from a conceptual poem from Castoro's series *Sharp Charges*, 1968.



Apropos of the situation of women artists at the time is a photograph of Castoro aged 20, taken by Hollis Frampton in 1959, which illustrates *12 Dialogues, 1962–1963/Carl Andre, Hollis Frampton* and is captioned "The Portrait of an Indifferently Attractive Young Lady (Rosemarie Castoro)."²⁰ While the image reveals the young Castoro, the way that it is utilized negates almost all aspects of her identity, including that of aspiring artist. Castoro had been born in Brooklyn into a blue collar Italian-American family. A self-described "Beatnik," she began studying art at Pratt Institute in 1959 and also at this time became involved with the New Dance Group.²¹ The photograph's title is drawn from a question posed by Andre to Frampton; in the exchange

they discuss the status of the photograph as art but avoid any explanation of the subject, their personal relationship to her, or the motivation for the work beyond the production of art. Here the description of Castoro could be taken for an attempt at a neutral description, in line with Minimalism's insistence on objectivity, even if it is arguably not particularly accurate, and although it could be meant ironically, its effect is misogynistic. Though the dialog in question took place the year before Andre and Castoro were married, they were living together from 1961, only divorcing as the decade closed, and though it was not published until seventeen years later the book studiously evades referencing their relationship. It also ignores the sea change that had occurred in the position of women artists from 1959 when the photograph was taken to 1980 when it was published. Nor does its framing intimate that there had been instances of proximity between Andre and Castoro's work suggesting an open exchange as peers. Instead, the young Castoro, who stares out from the photograph, is shown inactive and in the dialog she is given an equal status as photographic subject matter with a tractor, the title emphasizing her appearance and relative appeal to the men who talk about her as if she were an object. It is far removed from the photographs, discussed later, that she would take of herself during the sixties and seventies at work in her studio, or in active performative situations and poses.²²

Inspiration, method, doing, object...²³

I am a paintersculptor I used to call myself an artist. An artist is a promise of a future. You do not have to show anything for it. I say I am a ps. I have something to show for it.²⁴

On a typewritten page in the form of an undated letter to "C" from "R" pasted into one of her journals, between the entries for September 10 and 11, 1970, Castoro states, "I am a paintersculptor," which a few lines later she abbreviates to simply a "ps."²⁵ This neologism identifies the hybridity that characterizes her work, but at the same time indicates where she saw her core concerns as located, and likewise reveals an engagement with a fundamental preoccupation of new art of the sixties and seventies that questioned the boundaries between painting and sculpture. Nevertheless, on a closer examination of her life and work the impression this apparently simple formula presents becomes more complicated, the play with lan-

guage itself being an indication of a whole set of concerns in her work that this term does not encompass. Castoro was not simply a painter nor just a sculptor, perhaps a combination of the two, though much more besides. In fact, her production encompasses a wide range of fields and techniques. At Pratt Institute, initially she trained in graphic design, in order she said to pay her way, but was also involved in dance, performance and theater, choreographing and performing in her own works. Castoro never became a professional dancer, but her journals reveal how her training and involvement in dance informed her work in other media through her career.²⁶ The painting *Arm Swing Blues* (1967) shows how simple body movements, of the kind found in Minimal dance, inform or in fact come out of the act of painting in the way that Castoro said she felt dance came from her painting. Following graduation, Castoro made the definitive turn in her work, towards painting, as a way, she was to explain, to make art on a daily basis without relying on the involvement of others. After Pratt she had little opportunity to choreograph, and although she participated on one or two occasions in pieces choreographed by Yvonne Rainer, she didn't feel fulfilled merely participating in pieces devised by others. Castoro felt that she needed to make a choice between her various activities. Reflecting back in the early seventies on her decision, she said, "I was doing freelance paste-ups, going to Pratt painting, acting, and dancing. I graduated in '63, gave up acting. I kept up dancing, for six more months then made a decision. Painting or dancing. I didn't have the opportunity to choreograph outside of Pratt and I didn't want to dance in other people's works so I stopped dance and developed into a painter..."²⁷ Similarly to dance, graphic art practices underpin her work and while she developed her painting practice she also made numerous Minimal, Systems, and Conceptual drawings, as well as later instructional pieces and graphically-realized concrete poetry. Therefore, a much more complex picture emerges of an artist who was painter, sculptor, dancer, photographer, graphic designer, and poet. Despite the leaps in the form and materiality of Castoro's work, her underlying concerns are extraordinarily consistent, including the body in movement. In Castoro's work, the point is never just the media but its activation. As Lippard was to characterize it, Castoro's work is "kinesthetic."

The early paintings and *distillation*

In 1964–65 Castoro was making all-over abstractions of gestural but tightly packed tile-like shapes which evolved into a basic "Y" unit, and then into beams of light intersecting and weaving in space.²⁸

In her mid-twenties, Castoro embarked on a series of abstract paintings that followed as their organizing principle an all-over patterning effect, at first gestural but swiftly moving to a more hard-edged, Minimal design of tessellating "Y" shapes and then to these shapes being detached and isolated within a color field. The "Y" shapes themselves then became fragmented, developed into bars, again suspended within a monochrome field, and began to interrupt one another. Nonetheless, they often exposed the means of their construction, as though showing how they had been "drafted," through visible pencil lines that were incorporated as part of the composition, perhaps showing the influence of Agnes Martin in this respect as well as Castoro's training in design. These works investigating "literal" Minimal color through simple and direct compositions of bold, flat, shapes isolated on an unmodulated ground have a lot in common with the kind of painting selected for the exhibition *8 Young Artists* by the curator and teacher E. C. Goossen in 1964. They also seemingly bear a relation to the "X" form that dominates Carl Andre's sculpture *Cedar Piece* (1959), which he remade for the 1964 show. As co-curator Martin Ries's informal photographs reveal, Castoro accompanied Andre for the installation of the exhibition.

24. Castoro's journal, August 1970 – May 1971, p. 24.

25. The initials suggest this is a letter to Carl Andre from Castoro, but there is no indication if it was indeed sent as such.

26. Castoro refers to having been a member of the New Dance Group in the early sixties. Castoro's journal, September 1975 – January 1976, p. 105.

27. Castoro's journal, May 1971 – June 1972, entry dated June 15, 1972, p. 298.

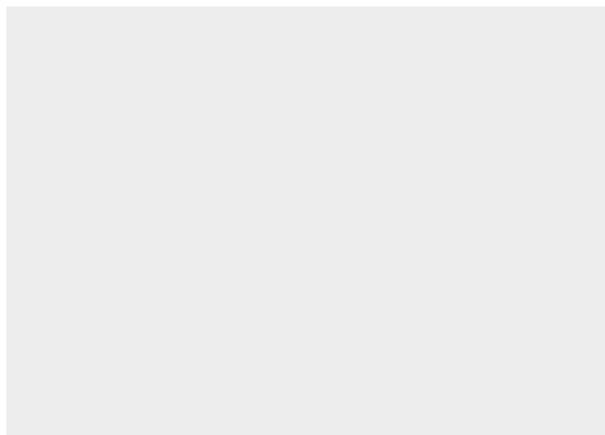
28. Lippard, "Rosemarie Castoro: Working Out" (1975), reproduced in this publication, p. 53.

Despite the proximity of her early work to the concerns of her peers, Castoro thought of the shapes in her paintings in a more particular way, as either figures or feet, as revealed in the titling of the small painting *Gray Purple Feet* (1965) [see p. 68]. Thus the shapes can be seen to parallel dancers and their steps, and the choreographic underpinnings of the paintings become apparent – they are abstractions composed through a dancer’s mind.²⁹ Castoro was dealing with space and structure in these Minimalist paintings through a dancer’s understanding of them and their graphic translation into forms of Minimal dance notation. The horizontal plane of the stage is turned to become vertical and the bodies or steps on that stage become abstract forms or signs: “Y”s or bars. Castoro’s fields of “Y”s that stand in for bodies present a multiplicity of direction that comes from a potentially infinitely repeated pattern – an expansion out beyond the limits of the painted canvas. This is the first articulation of the thematic of infinite structures which appears in Castoro’s work.

While not included in *8 Young Artists*, one of Castoro’s first exhibitions was the group show *Distillation*, once again organized by Goossen, following in the wake of the earlier show, and held jointly at the Stable and Tibor de Nagy galleries in New York in 1966.³⁰ Goossen played an early role in defining the key characteristics of the work of the new generation of artists who were to become known as “Minimalist,” particularly with these two early shows and their accompanying texts. James Meyer has commented however that “for Goossen, the goal of the arts was the teleological revelation of the medium’s ‘essence.’ ... [which] reflected the modernist theory of Greenberg... Yet Goossen’s version of modernism differed from Greenberg’s in an important respect: he was not a partisan of ‘optical.’”³¹ The article by Goossen that accompanied *Distillation* was reprinted in the November 1966 issue of *Artforum* where it was illustrated with one of Castoro’s somewhat optical “interference” paintings, *Brown Ochre* (1966).³² Highlighting the relation between color and structure in Castoro’s work, and characterizing it in terms of a play between rationality and sensuality, rather than in terms of opticality, Goossen wrote:

Rosemarie Castoro’s paintings, which at first seem to be color fields broken by odd random shapes of another color, gradually reveal the source of their cohesion in an underlying structure. It is from within this structure, rational and plotted, that an immense variety of related shapes have been retrieved, and it is the rationality of these shapes which leaves her free to explore the sensuous possibilities of color.³³

Goossen’s support for Castoro’s work was thus dependent on reading it as literalist, and her color as material, rather than as optical. Chave critiques how Goossen, in the *Distillation*



Rosemarie Castoro and Carl Andre at the exhibition *8 Young Artists*, Hudson River Museum, New York, 1964.

29. See Melissa Feldman in this publication pp. 36–43.

30. *8 Young Artists* was held at the Hudson River Museum in Yonkers, New York, in October 1964. It included work by Carl Andre, Darby Bannard, Robert Barry, Robert Huot, Patricia Johanson, Antoni Milkowski, Douglas Ohlson, and Terrence Syverson and is recognized as perhaps the first Minimal art exhibition. Two years later, *Distillation* included the work of Castoro alongside four other artists, Robert Barry, Patricia Johanson, Antoni Milkowski, and Terrence Syverson, all whom, unlike Castoro, had been in the previous exhibition.

31. James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001, p. 111.

32. E. C. Goossen, “Distillation: a joint showing,” in *Artforum*, November 1966, p. 31. The text was reproduced in 1968 in Gregory Battcock’s *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1995, pp. 165–74.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

article, exemplifies the “rhetoric of purity” built around Minimalism and his framing of the movement in terms of a demand for an “honest, direct, unadulterated experience of art... minus symbolism, minus messages, minus personal exhibitionism” and which therefore claimed to eschew politics.³⁴ In the rejection of personal exhibitionism or psychology Goossen adhered to Greenberg, and yet it is on this point that Castoro’s work begins to contravene and subvert the language of Minimalism in the way that Lippard identifies. When it came to Goossen organizing, two years after *Distillation*, the major exhibition *The Art of the Real* at the Museum of Modern Art, a show that Meyer explains “canonized the Minimal movement,” he omitted Castoro’s work from the thirty-three artists shown.³⁵ This was despite the fact that in this exhibition Goossen brought together artists working between 1948 and 1968 to construct a genealogy of a specifically American tradition of abstraction, in the way he had outlined in the article on *Distillation*, and which in the press release he described as exploring “a significant identifiable change: the development in abstract art that is maximal in color and minimal in form and an unprecedented interaction between painting and sculpture.” There are some obvious reasons for Castoro’s omission, including attitudes towards women artists at this moment, as well as the “opticality” of her work, but it may also have owed something to the fact that Castoro increasingly departed from the rigorous neutrality of position that Goossen advanced as a basic requirement of Minimal aesthetics. Regardless, this omission begins a pattern for Castoro of comparative visibility in commercial galleries and art journals and invisibility in institutions and scholarship.³⁶

Castoro’s paintings of the later sixties reflect successive shifts away from the Minimal towards painting that has Optical, Systems art or Conceptual underpinning. The clearest reflection of this was Castoro’s series of *Inventory* paintings. These relate to a number of drawings in which space, distance, the environment, and relationships therein are apparently mapped out through measurements but are nevertheless injected with a surreal humor, exposed in their titles, which undermines their supposed systematization and rationality; for example *Controlled Arbitrary Statements* (1968) [see p. 90], *No Connection whatsoever* (1968), or *Any Distance Away from Anywhere* (1969).³⁷ In some cases, Castoro employed these line drawings as a form of Conceptual portraiture, as in *Portrait of Sol LeWitt with Donor and Friends – Oct 3. 1968* (1968) [see p. 90]. In her painted canvases Castoro turned these line drawings into abstractions suggesting a potential for infinite expansion. The drawings *Entasis* (1968), titled after the technique used to correct optical distortions within classical Greek architecture, and *No Connection whatsoever* become the basis for a painting titled *Inventory Series White and Brown* (1968) [see pp. 86–87]. Logic and irrationality, the distance between perceived and actual reality, as well as a formal opticality are explored through these works.

Castoro’s conceptualism

I sometimes watch myself in time by recording my activities with a stop watch.³⁸

At the end of the sixties, Castoro turned away from painting. Her work adopted a more clearly Conceptual character, for the first time directly involved performance, and also took her work out of the studio and into the street. She made a number of instructional pieces using a stopwatch to record the durations of actions that developed from her diaristic tendency and a concern with time, as well as concrete-conceptual poetry and performative works that similarly engaged with time. Lippard described Castoro’s instructional and diaristic pieces as “the best ‘fiction’ I have read about the life of an artist.”³⁹

34. Anna Chave, “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power,” in Francis Francina and Jonathan Harris (eds), *Art in Modern Culture: An Anthology of Critical Texts*. New York: Icon Editions/Harper Collins, 1992, p. 266.

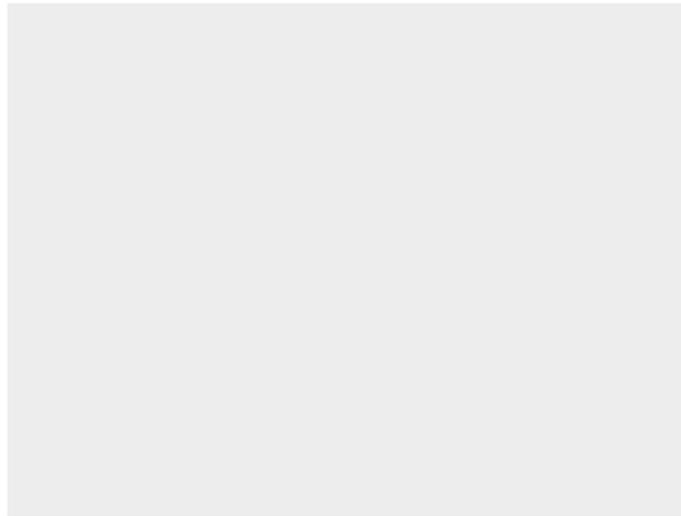
35. *Art of the Real: USA 1948–1968* was at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, July 3 – September 8, 1968. It then toured to the Grand Palais in Paris and the Tate Gallery in London. The exhibition in 1966 included two women, Castoro and Patricia Johanson; the 1968 exhibition, while beginning its argument with O’Keeffe, included, along with her work, that of Johanson, and Agnes Martin. Johanson, Goossen’s student and later his wife, was the only woman artist in all three of the early Minimal exhibitions he curated.

36. That is, save for as Andre’s former partner. Andre had been given his first solo exhibition at Tibor de Nagy in 1965 and it was only in 1971, after the pair’s marriage broke up, that the gallery gave Castoro her first solo show, though it would be the first of a number. Castoro’s relationship with Tibor de Nagy was not easy and she often felt Tibor did not support her sufficiently.

37. These drawings predate the use of linear vectors by Lucinda Childs in her drawings, though the palimpsest quality of those in which line drawing covers handwritten text is mirrored in pages of Castoro’s journals where she obliterates areas of text. Castoro’s journals themselves parallel other artists’ recourse to journals at this time, in particular Lee Lozano and Eva Hesse with whom she was friends.

38. Castoro quoted by Lippard (1975), reproduced in this publication, p. 53.

39. Lippard (1975), reproduced in this publication, p. 53. These stopwatch works are investigated in detail by Anna Lovatt in her essay in this publication, pp. 44–51.



A photograph of Castoro's studio taken in 1969 reveals the group of artists with whom she and Andre circulated at the time, including Lawrence Weiner, Richard Long, Sol LeWitt, Robert Smithson and Jan Dibbets.⁴⁰ It was from this artist community that the core of the Art Workers' Coalition was drawn, a grouping formed to protest at discrimination within the art world and its institutions. Castoro's involvement began after the meetings, often held in her studio, were opened up and her political engagement also led her to respond to a call from *Artforum* for commentary on the position of artists – one of only two women, with Jo Baer, who did so. Castoro's remarks are mostly pragmatic and economic. Her political concerns were also expressed in one key work that addressed the war in Vietnam: *A Day in the Life of a Conscientious Objector* (1969) [see p. 92], which was shown in the exhibition *Language III* at Dwan Gallery (May 24 – June 18, 1969). In 1968 Castoro had begun to write poetry prolifically, turning these works into visually rendered concrete poems executed in Prismacolor marker on squared paper. She conceived several multi-poem works, as both portfolios of poems and installations, composed by photographing the handwritten sheets and showing them as a slide projection with a recording of Castoro reading the poems.⁴¹ Castoro had composed a poem for one hour a day on successive hours for twenty-four days. As James Meyer has described "Castoro's daily practice during those three and a half weeks" is conflated "into a single day in the life of an imagined young man of draft age. His identity is not as transparent as the poem's title suggests. Castoro's protagonist is not a certified conscientious objector. The authorities have denied him that status. He is on the run, a draft dodger. He is also, and equally, an enlisted soldier on active duty in Vietnam. Both men – the war resister and the GI – are victims and perpetrators of violence. Castoro's poem flickers back and forth between these scenarios, identities, and geographies... Castoro's fugitive is no pacifist. He is a radical militant... Castoro was compelled to make this work during a particularly violent interlude of the war. There is a tacitly feminist aspect to the project: crossing the lives of a left-wing fugitive and a GI, she speaks from the subject position of one who could never be drafted nor resist the draft but who is a mere bystander to these events – a witness to history – because she is a woman."⁴²

40. The photograph was taken by Castoro, who can be seen using a shutter release cable, crouching in the left foreground of the composition.

41. Castoro's activism continued and later she became a cofounder of the HIV Arts Network (HAN).

42. James Meyer, *Los Angeles to New York: Dawn Gallery 1959–1971*. Washington and Chicago: National Gallery of Art, and University of Chicago Press, 2016, pp. 80–81.

One of her first actions, *Running (Polaroid Self Timing)* (1968–70) [see pp. 94–97], combined photography and poetic instructions written, like her concrete poetry, in Prismacolor markers, and took her work out into the street. Castoro set her Polaroid camera up in both street and studio and set the timer. The instructions she had written commanded she was to "focus at infinity." She then attempted to run away from the camera with the task of turning

at the moment that the camera took the photograph, the later typed text records the number of paces and other activities. Her varying success in guessing the moment reveals her in different stages of motion away from or towards the camera in a field that recedes into the distance. It is of course literally impossible to “focus at infinity” and with this short phrase we can see how Castoro adopted but also plays with the rationalism and investigation of perception underpinning Minimal and Conceptual practice.

The following year, Castoro contributed works to three of the *Street Works* projects organized by curator and critic John Perreault and artist Marjorie Strider. A series of five events, staged from March to December, the *Street Works* encapsulated the prevailing anti-institutionality by bypassing more formal venues and long duration shows – all but *Street Works IV* lasting just one day – and aimed at connecting with a wider yet chance audience. The work Castoro realized for the first *Street Works* on March 15 was titled *Ariadne’s Trail* [see pp. 104–05] and involved the artist attaching a can of white enamel paint to the back of her bicycle, making a hole in it, and cycling at midnight, as she says, “up the down streets and down the up streets” through Manhattan. The title referenced Greek myth but also a term used in logic given to resolving a problem with multiple possible routes to a solution through the application of rational thinking to these routes and by tracing the steps, often using a physical marking. It captures Castoro’s liking for word play and for adopting and subverting rational strategies in her work. Castoro’s action for the second *Street Works* on April 18 was the first of the type of work she called a “cracking,” though it was not given that title. For it she fixed tape to the sidewalks encircling a city block to “cut” a hole out of the island of Manhattan, thus transforming it conceptually into an *Atoll*, as the title of the work announced [see pp. 106–09]. Like *Running (Polaroid Self Timing)*, the photographic images produced for this piece constitute a revision of the concept of infinity in Castoro’s work as it would play out in many of the subsequent “gallery crackings,” in that the tape is frequently shown disappearing into the distance where its end cannot be determined. The last of Castoro’s three projects was realized for *Street Works V* on December 21 and titled *Gates of Troy*, again from Greek myth [see pp. 110–11]. Castoro’s work this time employed a roll of thin aluminum sheeting, which she unraveled in the street, making the most of its undulating forms recorded, as in each of the *Street Works* pieces, through photography. Castoro herself also made a number of photographic images of the aluminum roll in her studio, showing her interacting with it in an animated way, or else depicting it in various states of unraveling as a sculptural object.⁴³

Coinciding with the *Street Works*, Castoro’s work was first included by Lippard in a group exhibition titled *Number 7* at the Paula Cooper Gallery (May 18 – June 15, 1969). Castoro made the first work that can properly be called a “gallery cracking” for this show, although she titled it *Cracking #7*, apparently after the show’s title [see p. 100]. When it came to publishing her book *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* in 1973, Lippard included photographs of Andre’s and Castoro’s works for the show side-by-side which, as Chave has pointed out, suggests a close relation between the two artists’ works: “Castoro (a former wife of Andre’s) is among those many women whose careers have remained under a kind of historical erasure, but that her work was once in a reciprocal relation with Andre’s is suggested by the photograph of a project from 1969 by each artist published side-by-side in Lippard [*Six Years...*].”⁴⁴ While Andre showed a sculpture made from cables spread in a wavering line on the gallery floor, Castoro made her cracking piece with silver tape extending in a meandering line through the gallery, across the floor and walls, and into the gallery office where, above the window, a set of wheels were installed to constitute one of Castoro’s *Ceiling Movements*, another series of architectural interventions, involving the surreal suggestion of being able to shift a part of a building by adding wheels to it.⁴⁵ Castoro’s and

43. Andre appears to have been using thin aluminum as a sculptural material at this time although his works are always more controlled and insistently static in their presentation.

44. Anna Chave (2000), p. 163, note 80.

45. See Lippard, *Six Years* (1997), p. 100. As well as referencing this show, Lippard also included an extract from Castoro’s stopwatch work *Love’s Time* (1970) in *Six Years*, p. 152. See the discussion of this piece by Anna Lovatt in this publication, pp. 49–50. *Six Years* also includes Perreault and Strider’s *Street Works* (see pp. 90–91, 94–95, 102, and 117) but it does not include any of Castoro’s *Street Works* projects.

Andre's works even crossed each other on the floor at one point. Though Castoro and Andre were to separate as a married couple in 1969, their work exhibits similarities prompting the question of who was influencing whom? Likewise, a relation between their works with thin aluminum rolls could also be proposed, as with their recourse to language and poetry.⁴⁶ Later, in 1971, they exhibited together in a show staged at the artist-run space 112 Greene Street, though by this time Castoro's work was returning to experiments with gestural painting and drawing.

Lippard also included Castoro's works in her Minimal and Conceptual oriented "number's exhibitions." Towards the end of 1969, Castoro participated in the first "numbers" show, *557,087* (September 5 – October 5) at Seattle Art Museum (housed at the 1962 World's Fair Pavilion). She was one of a few artists to make new work especially for the site. Castoro made a gallery cracking, titled *Seattle Cracking*: this time it began at the fountain outside the venue, extended across the windows of the entrance, through the foyer and into the exhibition space itself [see p. 101]. Castoro explained that she thought of this work as akin to taking a bite out of a building. As a form of institutional critique, however, it suggests the breaking of the authoritative edifice of the institutional setting.⁴⁷ In 1970, the second "numbers" show, *955,000*, staged at Vancouver Art Gallery (January 13 – February 8) again included a new work that Castoro devised specially for the exhibition. The architectural installation *Room Revelation* consisted of a 15 x 15 foot (4.6 x 4.6 meter) square room constructed within the gallery space [see p. 103]. Inside Castoro placed a "rheostated" (variable) light bulb, initially planned for the ceiling but in the end installed at the center of the floor, which lit up in response to the presence of viewers, and grew in intensity over a three and a half-minute period. The light would be extinguished however, and the process began again if anyone entered the room. In some of the preparatory drawings a "cracking" was also included within the room, but in the end this idea was discarded in favor of incorporating a *Ceiling Movement*. *Seattle Cracking* and *Room Revelation* were to remain Castoro's most ambitious contributions to Conceptual installation.⁴⁸

46. As Castoro mentioned in her journals, she also "assisted" Andre at times with his textual and graphic work.

47. As such Castoro perhaps rightly felt that it pre-empted any such gesture by the Colombian artist Doris Salcedo at Tate Modern in 2007. Likewise, with these "cracking" works she had also pre-empted Matta Clark's *Splitting* (1974) and other building interventions.

48. Despite the fact that the final *Numbers* exhibition was comprised only of women artists, Castoro's work was not included. Lippard has explained that she decided only to include work by artists she had not shown before, so this ruled Castoro out.

49. Yvonne Rainer, *Feelings are Facts*. Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2006, p. 274.

50. Anna Chave, "Striking Poses: The Absurdist Theatrics of Eva Hesse," in Geraldine A. Johnson (ed.), *Sculpture and Photography: Envisioning the Third Dimension*. Cambridge, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 168. This passage highlights personal relations but also falls into some of the traps that Chave would later expose in her essay *Minimalism and Biography* in that women appear to be defined by their male partners. Yet Chave builds an argument along these lines that accounts for the downplaying of the importance of the role of dance, and the contribution of its largely female practitioners, within the development of Minimalism.

51. The photograph is by Frank Calderoni of dance choreography and performance by Rosemarie Castoro, as performed on February 11–18, 1963 at Pratt Institute.

Minimalism and dance

The important relationship between Minimalism and dance has by now become more widely acknowledged, revealing a lineage extending through Merce Cunningham and Anna Halprin to Simone Forti, Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, Lucinda Childs, and Twyla Tharp, and involving the close relationship between key Minimalist artists and dancers, both professionally and personally. Rainer, in her book *Feelings are Facts*, speaks of the scene around the New York diner Max's Kansas City: "It became the favorite watering hole of all the latest bicoastal art world luminaries. Bob Morris and I hung out there at least once a week. The people we saw the most were Don and Julie Judd, Robert Smithson and Nancy Holt, and Carl Andre and Rosemary (*sic*) Castoro. Max's was the main point of convergence."⁴⁹ Chave has emphasized the role of gender when it came to the part dance played within Minimalism, commenting that "for female practitioners, new subject positions and greater freedoms often beckoned from the more female-identified field of modern dance and choreography, where Yvonne Rainer, a figure admired by Hesse and others, emerged as a leading light during the sixties. (Rauschenberg and Morris danced with Rainer, as did Morris's former wife Simone Forti, Carl Andre's then lover, the sculptor Rosemarie Castoro, and Julie Judd, wife of Donald.)"⁵⁰ In particular, it was the development of simplified Minimal object-forms and their use within dance performances, and the implications of the body's relation to them, which impacted on Minimalism and the reconsideration of the art object towards a perceiving body. In a grainy photograph from 1963 of a dance piece choreographed and performed by Castoro while still a student at Pratt Institute, the artist is shown to the right of the image, poised, stretching a piece of fabric the length

of her body.⁵¹ It suggests that Castoro was in step with the use of props in experimental dance, as had been established in the preceding years by Cunningham, Halprin, and Forti, and which would be continued by Rainer. In Castoro's piece, however, in contrast to some of the proto-Minimalist sculptural objects employed particularly by Forti and Rainer, it is a pliable fabric that is used suggesting the supporting canvas of a painting rather than the weightiness and rigidity of sculpture and stressing the relationship between painting and dance.

Besides Castoro's early dance practice at Pratt and through the New Dance Group, she was involved as a performer in two of Rainer's works including *Carriage Discreteness*, performed as part of *9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering* in 1966 with Minimal props designed by Carl Andre. Likewise, she participated in artistic circles that included, in addition to Rainer, figures such as Tharp, Childs and Joan Jonas, and she took informal lessons from the dancer and choreographer Judy Padow.⁵² However, it is the photographic record included within Castoro's journals and her accompanying comments that provide the most compelling evidence of the importance of dance to her work. Castoro employed a self-timing Polaroid camera to record her movements in the studio, more often than not picturing herself with her work in process, and pasted the images into her journals. Frequently she is seen adopting balletic or acrobatic poses – making clear the extent of her formal training as a dancer – while suspended on ropes from her studio ceiling. The activity and use of rope recalls Forti's early *Dance Constructions, Hangers* (1961) and *Accompaniment for La Monte's "2 Sounds" and La Monte's "2 Sounds"* (1961). Castoro's actions in the studio were not so clearly structured as these pieces however and involved only herself and her work, without an audience. In one sequence of six photographs for example, Castoro is seen suspended and apparently moving vigorously in front of her work, to the extent that three of the photographs show her figure blurred in movement, while the following trio of images reveal that in this series she is nude. As Lippard has commented, Castoro's subjects are "her own activities – paramount among them the motions of her own limber and athletic body."⁵³ The images reveal something visceral about the relation of the body to her work and they reinforce Castoro's commentary about the association between her work and sexuality.

Embodied painting: Free standing walls and brushstrokes

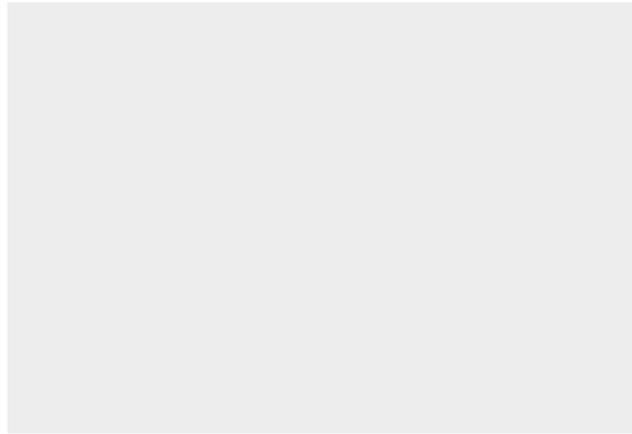
I became hostile. It kept me working. I finally isolated myself, climbing the walls in my studio, snarling at whoever crossed my path. I moved ceilings, cracked rooms, dumped paint in the streets, I went to Vancouver to build a 15-foot-square room lit with one 4-minute rheostated light bulb. Upon returning to my studio, I moved into the middle of the room, gave up the straight-edge, and released my energies onto hard surfaces which are growing into curved, freestanding, portable walls.⁵⁴

In 1970, following *557,087* and *955,000* and in part as a result of the architectural engagement of her works for those exhibitions, Castoro returned to painting but in a newly spatialized form. If in her stopwatch works, as well as *Running (Polaroid Self Timing)* and *Room Revelation*, time had been the issue, her concern had now become, as she said, that of "carving space." She began work on a series of freestanding "paintings" made from multiple panels, shown in her first solo exhibition at Tibor de Nagy Gallery in 1971. From her journals it is clear that these freestanding walls, whilst about painting, also took on that medium's relation to sculpture and architecture as had been at issue through Minimalism. These works embraced space but also addressed the question of the paintings' surface and the gesture of the brushstroke itself. Thus they are a reply to Minimalism but also to the Greenbergian New York School that had preceded it, and particularly Greenberg's demand for medium purity and his emphasis on flatness as unique to painting. In addition, Castoro

52. Padow was a Judson Dance Theater dancer and choreographer, from 1973 she was a regular member of Lucinda Childs' dances and later formed her own company. Castoro's journal, June 24, 1970, p. 97.

53. Lippard (1975), reproduced in this publication, p. 55.

54. Rosemarie Castoro, "Artists Transgress All Boundaries," published as one of eight replies to Linda Nochlin's essay "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" in *ARTnews*, January 1971, and republished in June 2015. <https://artnews.com/2015/06/02/eight-artists-reply-why-have-there-been-no-great-women-artists/#castoro>.



added another element to these works: her use of graphite and cross-hatching on their surfaces concern drawing. Aiming to explain this complex media hybridity, one critic in *Artforum* wrote:

[Castoro] reduces marking on the surface to the most sculptural element in painting or drawing, namely modeling, but a kind of magnified allover treatment which is more understood than seen as modeling... the differentiation of these pieces as sculpture depends upon the differentiation of their surfaces... the differentiation among surfaces by modeling confirms the demand that the pieces need to be walked around, that their geometry does not grant a token access to them, the way shape did in some Minimal work. But the distinction among faces is essentially pictorial, depending upon the convention of modeling.⁵⁵

Thus an important aspect of these works, and an indication of the manner in which they enter the debates around Minimalism, is the way that they address the human figure. While Harold Rosenberg had sought to discredit Minimalism's negotiation of the object for its dependence on theatricality, he also identified something important for Minimalism. As we have seen, Minimalism had roots in contemporary dance. Castoro, with her dance training and athletic body, clearly related her works to performance. In her journal Polaroids, the freestanding walls and related works figure prominently in dialog with her body. In one image, she adopts the pose approximating second position in ballet, her spine held straight, with her legs shoulder-width apart and her arms extended at breast height, curved yet open. The wall piece curves around her body. She appears to embody her own phrases "The artist is a container," "the studio is in the mind when the container is in the world," or "I think of myself as a container" and "my works are my containers."⁵⁶ Castoro's freestanding walls engaged with a new kind of sculptural practice initiated by Robert Morris's early works *Box for Standing* (1961) and *Untitled (Passageway)* (1961). A more precisely contemporary influence could also have come from Bruce Nauman who in 1969–71 had also begun to make works that employed architectural panels to address the body and create unsettling physical and psychological situations, such as *Performance Corridor* (1969). Yet Castoro's freestanding walls lack the physical aggression of Morris's and Nauman's works, and instead return to issues of painting. This interest in painting and Castoro's background in dance led her in a different direction, without the exertion of power dynamics that was so much a part of the Minimal aesthetic.

Castoro began another series that developed directly from the panel works. As she herself described it, "the panels of graphite drawings grew, stood by themselves, and became room spaces... The corners turned and brushstrokes snapped away and landed smack on the existing brick walls of my studio."⁵⁷ The critic Barbara Rose saw the works exactly as a response to

55. Kenneth Baker, *Artforum*, May 1972, p. 85.

56. The couplet "The studio is in the mind/the artist is a container" appears repeatedly in Castoro's papers, for example in the September 1969 – August 1970 journal, pp. 3, 5, and again on p. 11 alongside an image of 557,087.

57. Castoro quoted in *Vogue*, August 1, 1972.

developments in painting, remarking “Castoro’s wall-sized brushstrokes, ironically dripping with pseudo impasto, and freestanding paintings executed with a broom instead of a brush... are both a witty reaction to stained color painting as well as quite substantial statements in themselves.”⁵⁸ While the freestanding walls were containers or settings for the body, the relation between body and architecture returns in a different way within the brushstrokes, which evoke bodily fragmentation in relation to architectural scale. The titles of the works stress this play, referring to hair, body parts, or to bodily postures. One critic in *Arts Magazine* explained them however as self-reflexive statements purely about painting: “[Castoro’s] wall pieces are real representations of an abstraction which relates solely to the activity of painting. It is Castoro’s strategy to isolate one element – the most essential, in this case to the act of painting – and return it as an image of itself. Castoro emphasizes the materiality, as opposed to the potential force as expressed by Franz Kline, inherent in isolated, non-referential brushstrokes.”⁵⁹ Others read them as manifestations of expanded drawing. The large multi-part work *Side by Side* (1972) [see p. 127], one of Castoro’s more unruly brushstroke works, was shown in a display of contemporary works from the MoMA collection in 1985 alongside a three-part drawing by Dorothea Rockburne, *A, C And D From Group/And* (1970), as well as works by Robert Mangold, Agnes Martin, and Robert Ryman. As Castoro’s brushstroke works developed, they took on a relation to both abstract signs as language, through the use of Pitman shorthand, and world play, becoming Conceptual portraits, for example *Guinness Martin* (1972) [see pp. 122–23], referring in a coded way to Agnes Martin, and *Curl And* (1972) to Carl Andre.

Castoro’s later seventies: “Paintingsculpture” and “sculptural drawing”

“Paintingsculpture” returns in Castoro’s work of the mid-seventies. This time it is with *informel*, painterly works made from epoxy in muted colors that are the post-Minimal legacy of “eccentric abstraction”: comparisons with Hesse (an artist who had been within Castoro’s artistic milieu prior to her death) abound in the various articles written about Castoro’s work at the time.⁶⁰ More than ever, however, these works are about the body, as the artist was to explain of the various tunnel works, the earliest of which were suspended: “It is a tunnel made of arches. You can see the inside from the outside. It is ragged and suspended in mid-air. I use (*sic*) to tumble around on ropes and suspend myself in midair. My work is adapting itself to all those things I am.”⁶¹ Similarly, she was to say her tunnels were made “as if to hold an imaginary body.”⁶² Subsequent works, such as *Two Play Tunnel* (1974) [see p. 52], were

58. Barbara Rose in *New York Magazine*, February 28, 1972, p. 69.

59. Denise Wolmer, *Arts Magazine*, April 1972, p. 67.

60. Castoro’s journals include an entry on the day of Hesse’s death that reads, “Dear Emily Dickinson/ Is your humanity showing/Do you become upset when a friend dies?” The following day’s entry records Castoro attending Hesse’s funeral. Castoro’s journal, September 1969 – August 1970, pp. 61 and 63.

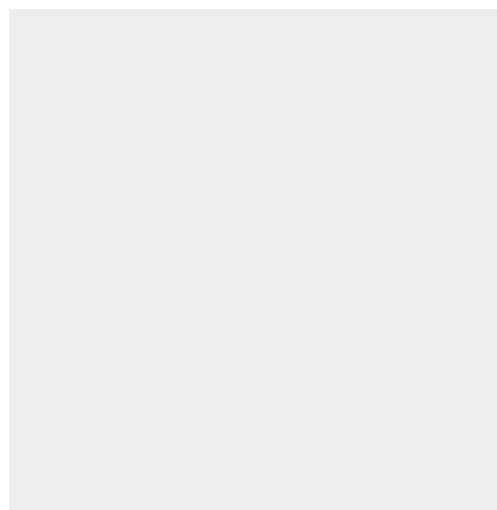
61. Castoro’s journal, September 1973 – February 1974, p. 17.

62. Castoro’s journal, June 1972 – September 1973, p. 299.

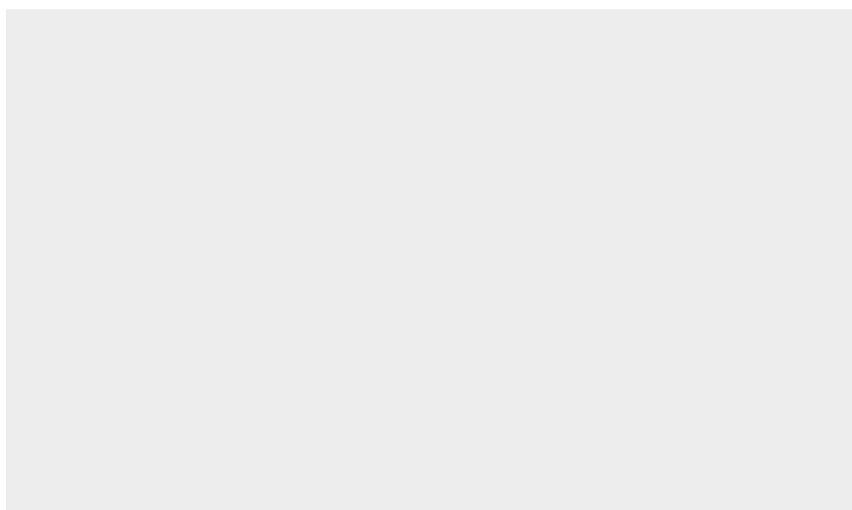
63. Francis Naumann, *Artforum*, February 1974, p. 77.

64. Castoro’s journal, February – August 1974, p. 113.

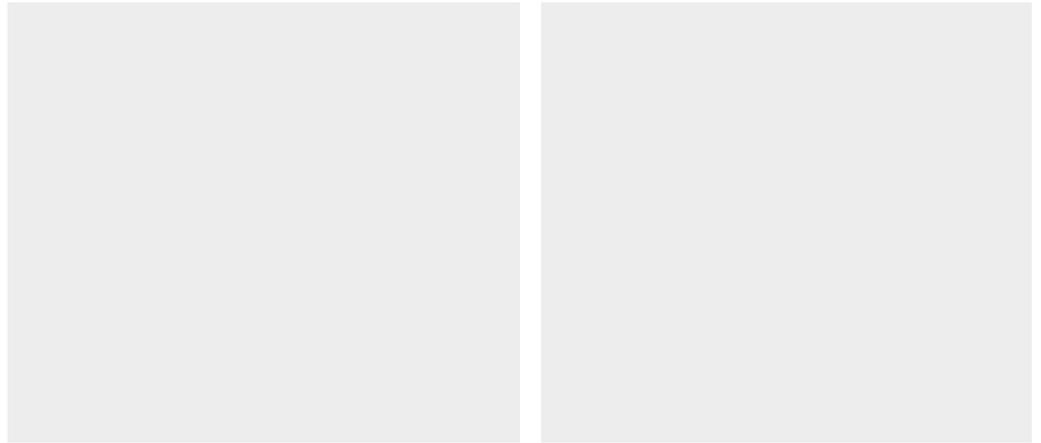
65. *Ibid.*, p. 123.



Robert Morris, *Untitled (Passageway)*, 1961.



Harmony Hammond, *Hunkertime*, 1979–80.



placed on the gallery floor and the Polaroids in Castoro's journal for these years show her lying inside them as if they were a sort of giant cocoon. A later video, *Many Flavors*, made by Castoro in 1998, shows her mounting this tunnel on the roof of her studio and then climbing inside. Her works had become quite literally containers for the body. The bodily in the works was not lost on the critics either, and their evident foregrounding of matter and process was also emphasized. Writing in *Artforum*, Francis Naumann commented "references to human genitalia are certainly apparent in the forms themselves, but perhaps in order to deal with her work we must realize that primarily it is *about* art, and the processes involved in its making... what is really on exhibition is the product of her bending, pushing, breaking, plastering, varnishing, and other process-oriented manipulation of materials. Her current sculpture visually derives from the serial forms of Eva Hesse and certain anthropological investigations of Nancy Graves."⁶³ The epoxy works, as well as the wooden pieces she was to make simultaneously and after, also returned to the theme of infinity through the sculptural rendition of a heightened perspective.

Castoro's epoxy works, and her use of the ladder motif, can be related to the work of other artists working at the time. Harmony Hammond's *Hunkertime* (1979–80) is particularly close to Castoro's *Land of Lads* (1975) [see p. 131]. In *Hunkertime*, Hammond employed painted fabric strips composed of old rags in which the wooden armature was bound, similar to Castoro's process for the earlier tunnels, while Castoro's sculptural-painterly ladders are built up around a metal armature from layers of epoxy and paint. In both works, deformed or informel ladders are grouped, yet while Castoro's work was suspended from the ceiling by nylon threads, Hammond's is propped against the wall. Castoro's work further explores the ideas of perspective and recession, playing with space and the choreographing of sculptural elements within it. Differences also exist in the relation of Castoro's work to the drawn line, an effect heightened by Castoro painting her studio floor white as a setting for the work, that contrasts with Hammond's wrapped ladders. Nevertheless, the use of muted color on the surface of a group of ladder structures is remarkably similar.

An early instance of Castoro's use of wood as a material is *Georgia Branch Dance* (1974), made while Castoro was a visiting teacher at Berry College in Georgia, on the invitation of mail artist and teacher Tommy Mew. Castoro instructed students to collect branches and place them in a row, then a corner, then a circle.⁶⁴ Characteristically blurring the boundaries between media, Castoro describes the work as a "sculptural drawing."⁶⁵ Its structure – a ring of anthropomorphic forms – and title however allude to dance, a reference perhaps to Anna Halprin's 1957 work *Branch Dance*. As an ephemeral work, *Georgia Branch Dance* could only be pre-

Rosemarie Castoro and a group of students making *Georgia Branch Dance* while the artist was a visiting teacher at Berry College in Georgia, 1974, as photographed by Tommy Mew.

served through photography, and Castoro took care to record it early one morning. On seeing the photographs, she said “*GBD* looks so delicate in the photos. In reality its delicacy is more curious and stronger. It still is a delicate sculpture drawing.”⁶⁶ She would later reprise this way of working on ephemeral interventions within the landscape with a work titled *Atlanta Sapling*. She describes how it came about following a call from an acquaintance in Atlanta: “I told him I would build a tunnel of arched saplings in perspective... I also said I would photograph it... I said a new continuity has started and I want to see it through. *Georgia Branch Dance* in Mount Berry, *Atlanta Sapling*.”⁶⁷

“Sculptural drawing” employing heightened perspective recurs in *Beaver’s Trap* (1977–78) [see pp. 132–33], which Castoro began while on an extended residency at the University of Colorado in Boulder, and completed in New York. Her wooden sculptures and installations often utilize delicate wooden branches, which retain the organicism of their natural form, but are stripped of bark and smoothed. In *Beaver’s Trap*, the wooden elements are sharpened to a point, like stakes, and arranged, diminishing in height, into a geometric trapezoid that contrasts with the organic variation of the forms. The title, while implying a trap set to capture an animal, contains within it layers of meaning in a characteristic word play. It is first and foremost a pun on the artist’s name: Castoro means beaver in Italian, and yet is also evidently a bodily, sexual allusion. Castoro describes how “*Beaver’s Trap* began as a way of self-protection. The stakes were carved with sharp tops to impale the intruder... The trap always entices its victim.”⁶⁸ Later, making clear the work’s erotic connotations, she said “*Beaver’s Trap* is sexy” and that it was “relating to making a bed for the capture of a mate.”⁶⁹ Still later she says “*Beaver’s Trap* was built to stake out a territory in a new environment.”⁷⁰ Thus the work contains a threat of a violent encounter and becomes a manifestation of a *vagina dentata* reclaimed as an image of female empowerment.

Beaver’s Trap, though indicative of the earlier formally delicate wooden sculptures, also relates to a body of work that Castoro produced in the late seventies. In 1978, Castoro realized one of her most ambitious public projects, titled *Trap a Zoid*, for Creative Time’s *Art on the Beach* on Manhattan’s lower east side. Castoro chose to work with cylindrical logs to create a field in the form of an asymmetrical geometric shape. A drawing in the collection of Yale University Art Gallery reveals the grid structure that underlay this work. A series of journal photographs from 1978 show Castoro working through the use of such arrangements of wooden elements in related works titled *Pier Group* and *Tank Trap*. In a telling inscription alongside these images is the phrase “an obstacle course for a dancer,” revealing the continued referencing of the dancer’s body in movement. Always aware of the implications of her materials and their bodily allusions, in one photograph Castoro poses with a log suggestively held at her waist so that it takes on phallic connotations in a manner not dissimilar to Lynda Benglis’s 1974 photographic intervention in the pages of *Artforum*, revealing that Castoro was aware of such feminist gestures employing gender fluidity. The photograph also recalls the works of Hannah Wilke. Like Wilke, Castoro poses

seductively, confident of her looks and asserting her independent spirit. Chave has explored such posing with works by Hesse, though in this case and those of Benglis and Wilke it was not the artist who was taking the photographs.⁷¹ Castoro's self-authored Polaroids share something of the self-presentation, through revelation and concealment, of Francesca Woodman. This affinity is clear in one photograph in particular: taken in the studio it shows Castoro lifting her clothes to expose her lower torso, and the erotic play of nudity and exposure is heightened by the briefs suspended about her thighs.⁷² Her figure however is juxtaposed with the materials of her work, the workbench on which rests the phallic cut timber logs, reminding us of Castoro's awareness of the gender and sexual symbolism of her materials. This photograph might also be compared to Man Ray's *Veiled Erotic* (1933) in which gender boundaries are similarly contravened, but Castoro's is a self-authored, and thus empowered, feminist revision of the theme.⁷³ Castoro's photography also suggests a subtext in the relation of the mathematically determined Minimal field *Trap a Zoid*, composed of similarly rough logs, to the work of Castoro's male peers, not least Andre. It was this line that Castoro chose to walk, neither wholly Minimalist nor feminist but bearing a relation to both.

In the late seventies, Castoro began a new series of works that would occupy her attention on and off for several decades. The works are abstract totemic forms that are nevertheless hollow and incomplete columns, forming a crescent footprint. They were initially suggested to Castoro by crumpling banknotes into crescents and standing then on the narrow end. Ranging from cardboard and gesso maquettes to large-scale concrete permanent outdoor commissions, Castoro's preferred material however was thin steel with a matte black acrylic surface. She collectively titled them *Flashers*, indicating her interest in manifesting different aspects of sexuality and, like flashers themselves, evoking simultaneously the threatening, the comic, and the pathetic.

Castoro's career exists in a lacuna at the very heart of canonized contemporary art history, within the New York art scene of the sixties and seventies. She was a key participant, and while scholarship and institutional recognition has been severely lacking, at the time there were curators who paid attention and included her work in important art exhibitions and events, and her regular gallery shows garnered frequent reviews in art journals and press. The context of institutional inattention provides the impetus for this exhibition, which concentrates on the fifteen years between 1964 and 1979 when Castoro was especially active.⁷⁴

In October 1980, Castoro appeared as part of a group of leading women artists on the cover of *ARTnews*. The issue returned to the subject of the position and careers of women a decade after having given it prominence in the January 1971 issue, which had included Linda Nochlin's provocative essay "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" as well as Castoro's reply "Artists Transgress All Boundaries." The 1980 cover pictures twenty artists including Louise Bourgeois, Miriam Schapiro, Faith Ringgold, Nancy Graves, Elaine de Kooning, Nancy Holt, and Laurie Anderson. Rather strikingly, there are a number missing, including Lynda Benglis, Mary Beth Edelson, Mary Kelly, and Ana Mendieta. The photograph used was one reportedly taken at the very end of the shoot, in an unstaged moment, and Castoro is shown exchanging a caress with Hannah Wilke. The cover suggests a reversal has occurred through the headline "Where Are The Great Men Artists?," and yet many of the artists pictured were not to find a lasting wider recognition in keeping with that accorded to their male colleagues often, if at all, until much later. Castoro's lack of recognition is not unusual then, other than for its degree. A proper acknowledgment of the contribution that she made to developments in art from Minimalism and Conceptualism to post-Minimal, process, performance and Land art is long overdue.

66. *Ibid.* p. 129.

67. Castoro's journal, August 1974 – January 1975, p. 161.

68. Castoro's journal, July 1977 – February 1978, p. 134.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 147

70. Castoro's journal, February–December 1978, p. 6.

71. Chave (1998), pp. 166–80.

72. The image is accompanied in Castoro's journal by a comment reflecting on women's bodies, "Icons to women's thighs. Aspects of a ladies thigh." Journal, February–December 1978, p. 53.

73. There is much more to say about the similarities and differences between these images and their engagement with themes of gender, sexuality and Surrealist concepts such as the uncanny, as well as the relation of Castoro's work to Surrealism more broadly. However, I do not have space to develop this line of enquiry here.

74. Nevertheless, some select examples of later work are included.