

116 that the formation of the Inkhuk itself did not represent the apex of avant-garde activities but rather the final decline following a series of administrative and public relations defeats; it was the "vanguard artist's last refuge." Hubertus Gassner, "The Constructivists: Modernism on the Way to Modernization," *The Great Utopia*, 315.

60. S. Glagol, "K intsidentu v uchilishche zhivopisi vaiania i zodchestvo," *Stolichnaia molva*, 12 April 1910, 2; italics are mine (JS). Here the author attempts to distinguish the politically engaged generation who left the Imperial Academy in 1863 from the rebellion against institutional authority launched by the generation of 1910 in Moscow.

61. Valentin Songailo, author of a panegyric on the three hundredth anniversary of Romanov rule, published in the same year a blistering critique of Goncharova's work that interprets her treatment of form as insurrectionist, *O vystavke kartin Natalii Goncharovoi* (Moscow: V. M. sablin, 1913).

62. I am indebted to a number of scholars' writings as I raise this question within the Russian-Soviet context, including David Crowley's lecture at the February 1997 CAA panel, "Pozorny czy autentyczny?: Distinctions in the Production and Consumption of Culture in Stalinist Poland."

63. Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*, trans. Charles Rougle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). That Stalin finally usurps authorship of the avant-garde project seems acceptable to me, although the avant-garde's system of aesthetics was not as coherent as Groys makes it out to be. In reducing a heterogeneous pre-revolutionary avant-garde to the goals and creative visions of Malevich/Tatlin/Rodchenko, Groys misrepresents its complexity and contradictions. Stalin's sleight of hand is better understood as a function of the cultural politics of the 1920s that Groys describes rather than as a quality or program that inheres to the pre-revolutionary avant-garde itself. For another insightful study into the shift in authorship (Stalin replacing the artist) that occurs in the early 1930s see Margarita Tupitsyn, "Szenarien der Autorenschaft," in *Gustav Klucis: Retrospektive*, Hubertus Gassner and Roland Nachtigäller, eds., Exhibition Catalogue, Museum Fredericianum (Stuttgart: Gerd Hatje, 1991), 261-77.

Women at the Whitney, 1910—30: Feminism/Sociology/Aesthetics

Janet Wolff

In October 1994, I was invited by the Whitney Museum of American Art to develop a proposal for an exhibition in the Museum's series "Collection in Context." The series, which began in June, 1993, with an exhibition on *Edward Hopper in Paris*, has consisted of shows "featuring key works in the Whitney Museum's Permanent Collection," with the intention "not to isolate the works exhibited, but rather to set them in two different but related contexts: first, as products of their original time and place; second, in terms of their relevance to contemporary critics and today's audiences."² The exhibitions have been conceived and organized by outside curators, scholars, and artists; they are displayed in a single room (about 40 feet by 23 feet in size) on the first floor of the Museum, typically running for about three months each. Other themes of exhibitions in the series include *Gorky's Betrothals*, *A Year from the Collection, circa 1952*, *Joseph Cornell: Cosmic Travels*, and *Breuer's Whitney—Anniversary Exhibition*.

My invitation encouraged me to develop a proposal that would bring feminist scholarship to the project. Since my own interests are primarily in art of the early twentieth century, I decided to focus on women artists from that period whose work was prominent in the collection when the Museum opened in November, 1931. It became clear that this would involve looking at social networks and art circles connected with Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney and her assistant (and later the first Director of the Museum), Juliana Force, and particularly the Whitney Studio Club, which operated from 1918 to 1928. Eventually—this was rather an extended process, depending

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118 on visits to New York and finding time between other commitments—I submitted a proposal in January, 1996, suggesting an exhibition of the work of some of these women artists—sixteen works, by fourteen artists. After another delay (and a change of curator at the Whitney), I arranged to go to New York and look at the works themselves. (So far, I had only been able to look at reproductions at the Museum. All the work I was interested in—and this itself is part of the story—had long been in storage in the Whitney's warehouse in downtown Manhattan.) This visit to look at the paintings, which I did in the company of the Curator of the Permanent Collection, proved to be more or less decisive. In short, our joint assessment seemed to be that ~~the work simply did not merit exhibition. I postponed the decision for a few months, but more or less abandoned any idea of doing this show—at least at the Whitney Museum—by early 1997.~~

The story of the non-materialization of the exhibition is, I think, an interesting one, and one that raises many questions. The point is that in retrospect (and actually very soon after these events) I began to question this ostensibly "aesthetic" judgment. On a couple of occasions I showed slides of the work in the context of talks I gave on the subject, and each time at least some of those present expressed real interest in the images and encouraged me to pursue the idea of an exhibition. I started to ask myself what was involved in the assessment of these paintings as uninteresting or second-rate. It occurred to me, too, that the conditions under which we had viewed the works were far from ideal—having them taken from storage and propped on the floor by a couple of the warehouse employees, all the time aware that each request meant more work for them (though they were certainly willing and helpful, and I'm sure this was a normal part of their everyday job). As a novice curator (I had only organized one other exhibition), I was also aware that I was deferring to some extent to the judgment of the Whitney curator who was with me.³ Looking back on it, I realized that my disappointment in the work was—at least amongst other things—very much a product of my own aesthetic (modernist) prejudices, which coincided with, and were strongly reinforced by, those of the Whitney (here, in the person of the curator). Not long after my visit to New York to view the work, the art critic of the *New York Times* wrote a scathing and sarcastic review of the current exhibition in the "Collection in Context series," which showed the work of Raphael Montañez Ortiz, in which he dismissed the academic pretensions of its curator and responded to his description of the artist, in the accompanying brochure, as "one of the central figures in a now-forgotten international movement" with the comment "It certainly is." The last thing I wanted, of course, was a review of an exhibition of the "Whitney women" which both denigrated the work and at the same time implied that the display of such second-rate work was the consequence of misguided feminist revisionism. But the fact that I was already predicting such a review was, I now think, a measure not so much of my uncertainty in the face of art-world experts, but of my collusion in what has been, for the past half-century, the aesthetic orthodoxy in the history of art—namely, the elevation of modernist and abstract art over realism.⁴ The work that I was interested in, and which I proposed including in the small exhibition,

was realist painting, in the relatively progressive style of the Ashcan School but not at all influenced by the more avant-garde developments (cubism, fauvism, Futurism) already well established in Europe and visible in the work of other New York artists as early as 1910.⁶ It became clear that my project, which started out as the rather unexciting one of feminist retrieval (reclaiming women artists "hidden from history"), might not be about gender at all, since the post-war modernist orthodoxy marginalized realist work by men in just the same way.⁷ In this essay, I relate the progress of my research and thought as it developed, and in particular the ways in which the question of gender was superseded first by sociological questions of patronage, networks, and social influence, and then by the broader issue of the historical development of key institutions and their aesthetic ideologies. Finally, inspired by the recent work of feminist scholars of modernism and modernity, I came to see that this was, after all, very much a feminist project, though not in the way I had at first envisaged. If we can characterize feminist revisionism (rediscovering women artists and incorporating them into the canon) as 1970s feminism, then I would say (at the risk of equally broad generalization) that the Whitney project became one of 1990s feminism—the analysis of gender construction as it operates in the field of modern art and its institutions.⁸

The Whitney Museum of American Art opened in November 1931. Its founding collection consisted of nearly 700 works of art, about 200 of them acquired since January 1930 when plans for the Museum were officially announced.⁹ All of these works had been in the collections of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, the Museum's founder, and Juliana Force, her assistant since 1907 and the Museum's first Director (1931–1948), and most had been acquired in the context of the three institutions which had preceded and resulted in the opening of the Museum in 1931—the Whitney Studio (1914–1918), the Whitney Studio Club (1918–1928), and the Whitney Studio Galleries (1928–1930). The first of these, the Whitney Studio, was founded by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (who had herself been working as a sculptor in a studio in Greenwich Village since 1907), initially as a place to organize an art exhibition for the benefit of war relief (*ROES*, 111). For the next four years, Whitney and Force organized exhibitions at the Whitney Studio, wide-ranging in their scope, but emphasizing the work of young American artists. In 1918, they found new premises (a brownstone on West Fourth Street), which they opened as the Whitney Studio Club, with Juliana Force as its director. The new Club combined exhibition space with recreational rooms and a library, and it continued an active exhibition program for the next ten years. It was disbanded in 1928, having grown too large, and was replaced by the Whitney Studio Galleries, with the narrower aim of exhibiting and selling work.¹⁰ This in turn was closed in 1930, once the decision was made to found a permanent Museum.

The catalogue of the collection, published at the Museum's opening in 1931, includes about 500 paintings (oil and watercolor), 115 pieces of sculpture, and "drawings, etchings, lithographs and works in other mediums, to the number of seven hundred," all, of course, the work of American artists.¹¹ Some of the names list-

120 ed are familiar today, including some "Ashcan" painters and other realists associated with the Art Students' League (George Bellows, William Glackens, Robert Henri, Ernest Lawson, George Luks, Reginald Marsh, Kenneth Hayes Miller, John Sloan, Arthur Davies and Maurice Prendergast) and one or two American modernists (Stuart Davis, and one work each by Marsden Hartley and Georgia O'Keeffe). There is one Edward Hopper, and a few works by Precisionist artists Charles Sheeler, Elsie Driggs, and Charles Demuth. Most striking is the fact that many of the most prominent names in the catalogue (that is, the artists with several works in the collection) are not well known—Arnold Blanch, Lucile Blanch, Ernest Fiene, Emil Ganso, Anne Goldthwaite, Leon Hartl, Joseph Pollet, Paul Rohland, Katherine Schmidt, Niles Spencer, and a few others. These are the names, though, that appear with great frequency in the records of exhibitions held at the Whitney Studio, the Whitney Studio Club and the Whitney Studio Galleries in the sixteen years leading up to the founding of the Museum.¹² In other words, they are the names of the artists supported by Whitney and Force during that period, whose work was often bought at their Whitney exhibitions, and who were, for the most part, active participants in the Club and regular members of the social networks in which Juliana Force in particular operated. They were connected with one another through their artistic training (in many cases, at the Art Students' League) and through social contact and, in some cases, marriage. (The artists Peggy Bacon and Alexander Brook were married to each other, as were Katherine Schmidt and Yasuo Kuniyoshi, all of them central players in the Whitney enterprise.) Many of them had summer homes in the art colony in Woodstock, in up-state New York, particularly in the period beginning in the early 1920s; Juliana Force herself was a frequent visitor there (*ROES*, 230).¹³ What they also had in common was a commitment to a contemporary realist aesthetic, learned in many cases from their teachers at the Art Students' League (Henri, Sloan, and Miller).¹⁴

I had begun research for this project by identifying the women artists in the Museum's collection who were active in the years leading up to the founding of the Museum in 1931. Since I was using the Museum's card index, which only includes works currently owned by the Museum, this did not give me access to those few women artists whose work has since been de-accessioned—these I discovered later, in looking at the 1931 catalogue and at other records.¹⁵ I also decided to limit my focus to works made in the period, but also *acquired* then (that is, in 1931 or soon after), since my interest was in the events and practices of the Whitney institutions at the time.¹⁶ So, for example, a work by the artist Florine Stettheimer, though painted in 1931, was not included because it was not acquired by the Museum until 1973.¹⁷ I was also well aware that Juliana Force engaged in a program of rather energetic "corrective buying" immediately before the opening of the Museum. The inclusion of one work by Georgia O'Keeffe (*Skunk Cabbage*, 1922), bought by Force in 1931 and followed by the purchase of two more O'Keeffes the next year and a fourth in 1933, has to be seen in a context in which the prospect of a permanent museum of American art, something very different from a private collection or a studio club,



▲
Figure 1: Rosella
Hartman, *Landscape*,
1930. Ink on paper.
39.69 x 50.17 cm.
Collection of Whitney
Museum of American
Art, New York.

forced the recognition of important gaps in the collection and of the necessity to do something about this (*ROES*, 303–4).¹⁸ Avis Berman, a historian of the Whitney Museum and of Juliana Force's role in its development, records the results of Force's hectic "shopping trips" over a period of a couple of years, and of her acquisitions. Particularly interesting was the accommodation reached with Alfred Stieglitz and the American modernist artists associated with his gallery—O'Keeffe, Marin, Hartley, Dove. The absence of friendly relations between Whitney and Stieglitz over the years had long been clear (Stieglitz had opened his first gallery for modern American art, The Photo-Secessionist Gallery, or 291, in 1905), as had the radically different aesthetic commitments of the two institutions and their associated artists. But in 1931 Juliana Force was making a serious attempt to rectify imbalances in the Whitney's collection, which meant the purchase of more avant-garde, European-influenced work. Nevertheless, this last-minute corrective buying, though obviously important in the formation of the Museum, should not obscure either the dominant tendency in the Whitney circle or the particular sociology of artistic production in the pre-1931 period; nor, in the end, did it make a great deal of difference to the continuing practices of the Museum, once founded.

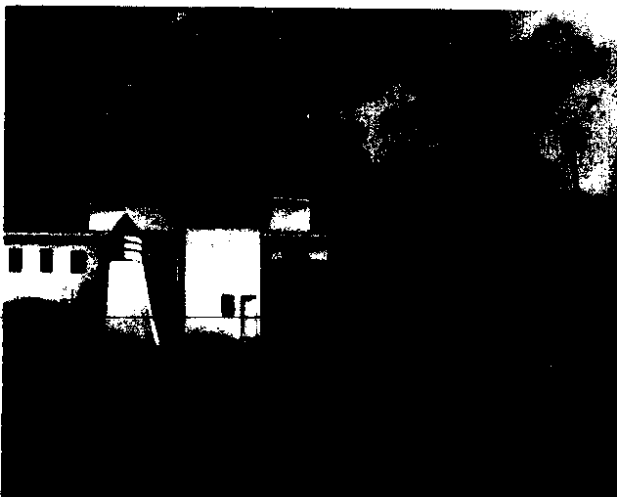


Figure 2: Katherine Schmidt, *The White Factory*, 1928. Oil on canvas, 61 x 76.2 cm. Collection of Whitney Museum of America.

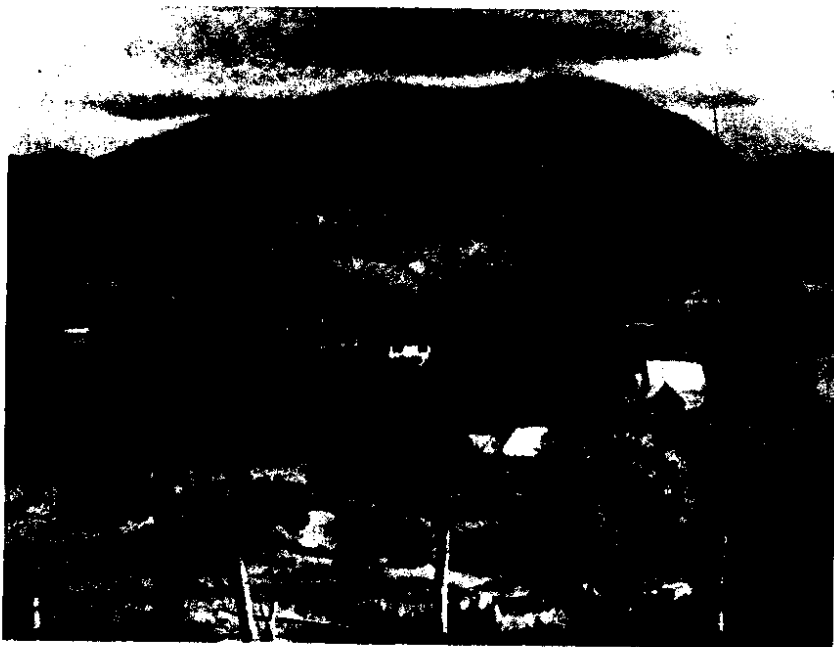


Figure 3: Lucile Blanch, *August Landscape*, 1932. Oil on canvas, 55.9 x 71.1 cm. Collection of Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

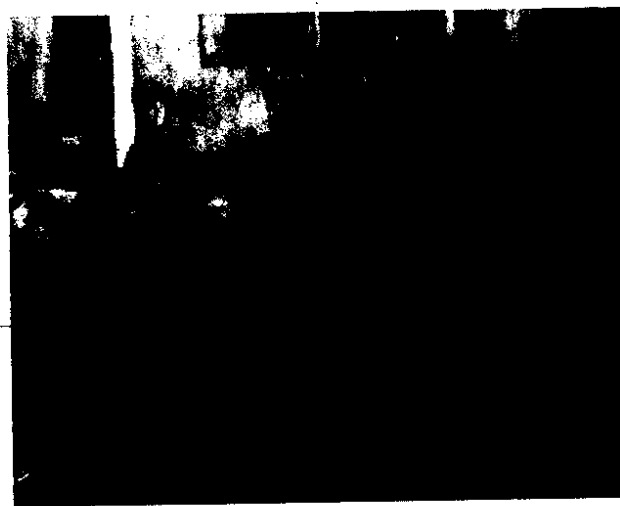
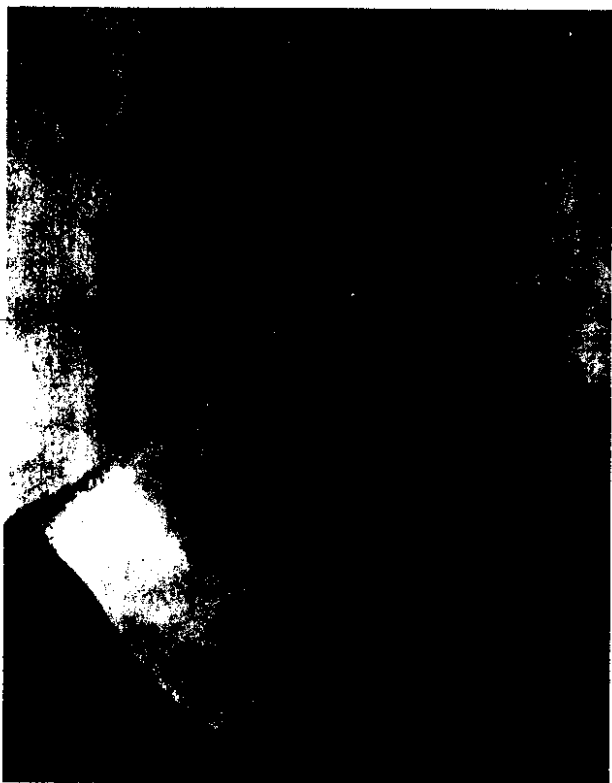


Figure 4: Dorothy Varian, *Fruit*, 1930. Oil, 66 x 81.3 cm. Collection of Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

I compiled a list of twenty-four women artists, active in the Whitney circle in the period before the opening of the Museum. Seventeen of these women had work included in the catalogue at the opening of the Museum in 1931. Interestingly, too, eleven of the twenty-five were also included in the 1949 Whitney exhibition which served as a memorial to Juliana Force (who had died the previous year) and which still manifested a predominantly realist aesthetic.²⁰ (See Appendix.) Most of these artists had an active exhibition record with the various incarnations of the Whitney Studio. They were represented regularly in group shows, and several of them had one-person shows—in some cases, more than once. Molly Luce, Dorothea Schwarcz, Rosella Hartman (fig. 1), and Georgina Klitgaard each had exhibitions of their work. Katherine Schmidt (fig. 2), Lucile Blanch (fig. 3), Caroline Rohland, and Dorothy Varian (fig. 4) had two one-person shows; and Nan Watson (fig. 5) had four one-person shows. Peggy Bacon, who exhibited her prints and drawings regularly at other New York galleries in the 1920s and 1930s, was included frequently in the Whitney Studio Club exhibitions (fig. 6).²¹ It is clear that women artists were able to thrive in the context of the Whitney Studio Club. According to Berman, women accounted for between 30 and 35 percent of works exhibited in the Whitney exhibitions and the Whitney and Force collections. She quotes Juliana Force's nephew, who stresses his aunt's firm belief in the equality of women: "She believed in applying the same standards to men and women alike. She would never use the once-familiar 'aviatrix' any more than she would say 'painteress.' Years later, as a museum director, she refused to hold special exhibits for women artists on the grounds that this was condescending to women" (*ROES*, 134). (This is not to say, however, that the usual processes of gender selectivity were not in play at the time, including in the critical response to the Whitney's activities. The art critic, Henry McBride, reviewing the opening exhibition of the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1931, does



◀ Figure 5: Nan Watson, *Portrait*, no date, acq. 1931. Oil, 45.7 x 35.6 cm. Collection of Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

not mention a single woman artist by name, but makes a point of listing twelve male artists who are, for him, the stars of the show.)²¹

If the relative success of women artists in the Whitney circle is apparent, then so is the (relatively) gender-neutral decline of their reputations in later years. Soon after the 1949 Memorial Exhibition at the Whitney, in which several of them were still exhibiting work, the museum became far more receptive to European-influenced modern art, including abstraction. The international success of Abstract Expressionism in the 1950s rendered it imperative that *the* Museum of American Art play an active part in exhibiting and acquiring the work. Under the next two Directors after Force's death in 1948—Herman More (1948–1958) and Lloyd Goodrich (1958–1968)—the Whitney Museum's aesthetic was radically transformed. More wrote, in the foreword of the 1950 Annual Exhibition catalogue: "If modern art in its many forms, such as expressionism, abstraction, and surrealism, predominates in the show, it is because it is the leading movement in art today, and has influenced the greatest number of younger artists."²² In 1954, the Museum moved from its original location in adjacent townhouses in Greenwich Village to a building on West 54th Street, near the Museum of Modern Art (and in fact owned by the



▲ Figure 6: Peggy Bacon, *The Whitney Studio Club, 1925*. Drypoint, 22.9 x 27.9 cm. Collection of Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Museum of Modern Art).²³ The display of works in the context of a more "modern" building coincided with the move towards a conception of "modern art" which was defined by the Museum of Modern Art (and originally by its first Director, Alfred Barr) and already more or less established as the art-historical orthodoxy in America and Western Europe. The narrative of this story, elaborated in Barr's famous diagram in the 1936 Museum of Modern Art Catalogue, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, and developed by his successors (critics and curators in New York), traces a line of development from Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, to Cubism, Surrealism and, eventually, Abstract Expressionism (and, thus, from Paris to New York).²⁴ Among the obvious consequences of the acceptance of this narrative is the marginalization of realism in the twentieth century. After the second World War, the Museum of Modern Art story was not only the dominant one; it was, at least in educated circles in the art world, the only story. The Whitney's belated subscription to this version of the canon, and to the aesthetic which upheld it, had the practical corollary of consigning a good deal of the work of the Whitney Studio Club members to storage. This reassessment affected the work of men as well as women artists. Paintings by Whitney Studio Club artists Alexander Brook, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, and Guy Pène du Bois (fig.7) suffered the same



◀
 Figure 7: Guy Pène du Bois, *Opera Box*, 1926. Oil on canvas, 144.75 x 115 cm. Collection of Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

fate, with the ascendancy of modernism over realism in the post-war Whitney Museum.²⁵

During the two decades before the founding of the Whitney Museum, it was still possible to pursue and promote an aesthetic other than the Euro-modernist version. Certainly modernism was already much in evidence in New York during the years of the Whitney Studio and the Whitney Studio Club. Stieglitz's gallery, after all had been founded in 1905, and remained an important exhibition space for modernist painting and photography. The 1913 Armory Show had introduced European avant-garde movements—notably cubism and fauvism—to American audiences, and had also included work by American modernists (Marin, Hartley, Morgan Russell, Davis, and others). In 1920, Katharine Dreier and Marcel Duchamp had founded the Société Anonyme, "America's first museum of modern art," which showed European and American modernist art.²⁶ In 1927, A. E. Gallatin's Gallery of Living Art opened at New York University, showing Gallatin's own collection of modern art.²⁷ And the Museum of Modern Art was itself founded in 1929, based on the private collections of European modern art of Lillie Bliss and Mary Sullivan, and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller's collection of American folk and modern art.²⁸ Several galleries and

dealers in New York exhibited modernist art (the Daniel Gallery, the Montross Gallery, the Modern Gallery, Kraushaar's and Wildenstein's among others).²⁹ Collectors like John Quinn and Duncan Phillips were buying European and American modernist works in the first decades of the century. At the same time, it was entirely possible in this period for a non-modernist aesthetic to flourish alongside these developments. Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney's taste was for early twentieth-century American realism, of a type that was in fact considered progressive in its time. She bought four of the seven paintings sold at the ground-breaking 1908 Macbeth Gallery exhibition of *The Eight*—the so-called "Ashcan" painters of realist urban scenes (Henri, Luks, Sloan and others) who were showing work very different from, and opposed to, the prevailing academic traditions. At the Whitney Studio and the Studio Club, she and Juliana Force continued to exhibit the work of such artists, as well as the younger artists who had studied with them. Their taste, then, though not avant-garde, was forward-looking in terms of then current established aesthetic conventions. Their hostility to modernism, too, should not be exaggerated. (Berman suggests that the Whitney Studio Club is better seen as anti-Stieglitz, rather than anti-modern, *ROES*, 223). Whitney herself was involved in planning for the radical 1913 Armory Show. She supported the photographer Edward Steichen in the rather peculiar court case in 1926–27, in which he attempted to convince the U.S. Customs that Brancusi's ultra-modernist sculpture, *Bird in Space*, was in fact art, and therefore exempt from import duty; Whitney took over the appeal and met all Steichen's costs.³⁰ The Whitney Studio Club also exhibited and supported some modernist artists, including Stuart Davis and Oscar Bluemner, and sponsored individual modernist shows (for example, Mario de Zayas's important Picasso exhibition at the Whitney Studio Club in 1923). But the overall tendency is clear, and all the more so in the light of those concurrent developments in the New York art world. As Adam Weinberg says, "In a cursory examination of the Whitney's exhibition program, publications, and acquisitions from the founding of the Whitney Studio Club in 1918 until Juliana Force's death in 1948, the record does substantiate an overwhelming emphasis on realist artists."³¹

At the Whitney Studio Club, the high visibility of women artists, and their success in terms of exhibition and sales, has to be seen as the product of a complex social network of friendships, patronage, and personal relationships.³² Both the access to Force and Whitney (and thus to exhibition and sales) and the shared aesthetic were related aspects of these close interactions. Several of the artists were founder members of the Whitney Studio Club (Schmidt, Varian, Watson, Bacon, Dwight; Isabel Bishop joined in 1920). The Woodstock connection, already referred to, was an important structural feature in the interplay of social and professional relations, as was the shared history of training at the Art Students' League (where Schmidt, Bacon, Varian, Luce and Bishop had studied, as well as Yasuo Kuniyoshi and Alexander Brook).³³ Mabel Dwight worked as secretary-receptionist for Force at the Whitney Studio Club in its early days; Katherine Schmidt ran the Club's evening sketch class for two years; and Alexander Brook (the husband of Peggy Bacon) acted as Force's

128 assistant from 1923 until 1927 (*ROES*, 157, 195–96, 239). The artist Nan Watson (who had four one-person shows, and who had the fourth largest number of works in the collection when the Museum opened in 1931—a total of eight) was the wife of the critic, Forbes Watson, who not only maintained close connections with the Whitney circle but was also Juliana Force's lover for twelve years, from 1919.³⁴ A sociology of cultural production and reception in the Whitney circle would certainly focus on the patterns of influence and decision which emerged from these and other connections, as well as on the particular relations between the Whitney artists and the many other New York art institutions (galleries, critics, schools) against which they were defined. It is likely, though, that what now seems the rather unprofessional (though perhaps not so unusual) set of art-world relations in which the Whitney artists operated provided the very conditions in which women could succeed on the same terms as men.

The ascendancy and post-war consolidation of the "Museum of Modern Art narrative" had the effect of producing an impressive collective amnesia in American visual culture. The history of early American art has been, for the past fifty years, the story of the emergence and eventual success of the American avant-garde. The more comprehensive surveys of American art do include discussion of American Impressionism and the "Ashcan" painters, though artists in the Whitney circle are rarely considered.³⁵ Even in these accounts, though, the realist painters of the "Ashcan" group are often treated as a necessary, but quickly surpassed, stage on the way to modernism. This statement, from a catalogue introduction to a 1997 exhibition of the work of *The Eight* (the exhibitors in the 1908 exhibition) is a typical account of this relationship:

By breaking away from and rebelling against the narrow confines of traditional art typically displayed at the National Academy of Design, Henri and his seven colleagues effectively opened the door for more innovation in painting in the United States. By exhibiting more experimental, progressive work to a wide public audience, *The Eight* helped create an environment more willing and able to accept the shocking trends which would affront the American art community at the Armory Show in 1913. *The Eight's* exhibition helped build an effective bridge between the art of the nineteenth century and the Modernism of the twentieth.³⁶

With the exception of general survey books on American art, until recently most publications dealing with the early twentieth century have focused on American modernism—the Armory Show and its consequences, the Stieglitz artists, and the varieties of American modernism in the 1910s and 1920s.³⁷ (The 1930s return to realism, for example in work associated with the Works Projects Administration—an agency of the U. S. government created in 1935 to provide jobs, especially in public works—and with regionalism, is another matter. But even this work, impossible to ignore or write out of American art history, is invariably treated as a sub plot—perhaps even an embarrassing one—to the main story).³⁸ Internationally, non-modernist American

art barely registers in the art-historical community (with one or two exceptions, like Edward Hopper), and the same is true within the US among those whose areas of interest are not specifically the history of American art.³⁹

The Whitney Museum itself was so radically transformed in the years after Juliana Force's death that in 1960 a group of realist artists wrote to the Director (then Lloyd Goodrich) about the lack of representational art in the Museum's recent annual exhibition, pointing out that of the 145 paintings included "102 were non-objective, 17 abstract and 17 semi-abstract, leaving only 9 paintings in which the image had not receded or disappeared, whereas in former exhibitions the Whitney Museum showed a much larger cross section of style and method in work in progress."⁴⁰ As Adam Weinberg reports, Goodrich's reply admitted that "the abstract trend is dominant, particularly among the younger generation."⁴¹ Although Weinberg is concerned to stress the Whitney's long-standing openness to both realist and modernist (including abstract) art, the context of his essay is evidence of the Museum's postwar collusion in the privileging of modernism. It appears in a catalogue for a 1997 exhibition at the Whitney, the third in a series called *Views from Abroad*, in which museum directors from other countries have been invited to curate work from the Whitney's Permanent Collection. This particular show was organized by Nicholas Serota and Sandy Nairne of the Tate Gallery in London and, as the *New Yorker* put it at the time, "This is American art viewed through eyes used to looking at Francis Bacon and Lucien Freud."⁴² The curators entitled the exhibition "American Realities," and a major part of its project was to restore the figurative tradition to visibility. Reflecting on the fact that the Tate had earlier displayed an exhibition of the work of American artists which had been organized by the Museum of Modern Art, Serota explains his interest in its omissions:

The exhibition played a small but influential part in transforming the European assessment of American art from provincial and peripheral to revolutionary, highly influential, and central to developments worldwide. But this perception clearly obscured the existence of an earlier, prewar cosmopolitanism, which manifested different forms of radical modern figuration . . . This led us on a track of the "real" for "Views from Abroad." Admittedly using the term in an elastic way, we have explored the idea of bringing particular, sometimes neglected, works to critical attention and reviving a broader view of modernism which does not regard an interest in the figure as being, by definition, anti-modern.⁴³

Included in the exhibition, therefore, was work by du Bois, Sloan, Soyer, Bishop, Luks, Marsh, and Driggs, alongside the more usual selection of works by early modernists Dove, Hartley, O'Keeffe, and Avery, and postwar modernists Pollock, Rothko, Kline, and Diebenkorn.⁴⁴ The exhibition was itself, I believe, an indication of an interesting development in museum practice and associated art-critical discourses (and, not incidentally, art market sales) in the past couple of years, namely the beginning of a reevaluation of the realist and figurative tradition.⁴⁵ Despite the signs of this very recent intervention, however, the dominant aesthetic, at the Whitney as else-

130 where in the art world, has remained one founded in the story of modernism and its postwar successors. There is some evidence of a certain nervousness about the revival of the realist tradition, as two minor anecdotes about my own Whitney proposal demonstrate. The first was the suggestion made to me by the Whitney's curator that, although an exhibition of the work of these women artists might not work for the museum, I might propose it to the curator of a museum outside Manhattan.⁴⁸ And the second was the rather surprising discovery that a year after my fateful (fatal) visit to New York to view the paintings, the Whitney did in fact mount a version of the show I was proposing, with the two differences that this was an exhibition only of works on paper by those women artists, and that it took place at the Whitney's branch in Champion, Connecticut.⁴⁹ It seemed that the work was good enough for the provinces, but it could not (yet) be risked in New York City.

My inquiries into the invisibility of the "Whitney women" had quickly made clear to me that this was not, after all, the feminist project of rediscovering women artists who had been marginalized either in relation to the conditions of cultural production or by the normal practices of art-historical discourse—the project of the recovery of a "hidden heritage."⁵⁰ These artists worked on equal terms with men, and apparently with more or less equivalent success and visibility at the time. Their disappearance, both from the Whitney's own display and from official histories of American art in general, was not a matter of gender prejudice either, but rather a consequence of the resolution of competing aesthetic narratives, a resolution which sidelined the work of male realist artists in (almost) the same measure as that of women. In the end, the exhibition I proposed to the Whitney was not a specifically feminist project, but one whose conceptual underpinning had much more to do with foregrounding a sociology of cultural production—the relevance and centrality of social relations and networks in the production and reception of art. As I have said, the decision not to take this further was an aesthetic one, based on an assessment of whether the paintings were worth exhibiting. At the time, I tried to think about this assessment in the light of what we have learned from feminist criticism over the past couple of decades, in an attempt to identify any deeper prejudices which might be gender-related. Feminist art historians have demonstrated the ways in which aesthetic hierarchies are clearly gender-based, with work associated with women (still life and flower painting, for example) invariably being considered "decorative" or "lesser arts."⁵¹ Critical work in feminist aesthetics has alerted us to certain androcentric tendencies in Western philosophy of art (for example, the gendering of the opposition of the beautiful and the sublime, and the inseparability of the practical and the personal—including gender identity—from the aesthetic for the spectator of a work of art).⁵² But there was no obvious difference in content or style between the work of the Whitney women and the paintings of Alexander Brook and Yasuo Kuniyoshi, nor did there seem to be any reason to suppose that questions of gender came into the appreciation or judgment of the works. The belated recognition that this was, after all, a feminist project followed instead from my subsequent doubts (and self-doubt) about the privileging of modernism over realism. The point is that the discourse of

131 modernism is itself a masculinist discourse. This means that the marginalization of realism, though ostensibly an aesthetic move, is at the same time fundamentally gendered. In this perspective, it does not matter that some of the work thus denigrated happened to be made by men; it is still gendered "feminine" by a discourse which produces modernism as masculine. In the rest of this essay, I shall consider this question of "the gender of modernism" as a way of returning to the Whitney women and the problem of assessing their work.

The recognition that modernism in the visual arts has always had strong masculinist (and often misogynistic) tendencies is by now well established. In an article first published in 1973, Carol Duncan identified a preoccupation with virility in avant-garde painting in the early twentieth century, an obsession which she relates to the contemporary anxieties about the emancipation of women and their increased participation in the public world of work and politics.⁵³ And much of Griselda Pollock's work has been concerned with addressing the question of "why the territory of modernism so often is a way of dealing with masculine sexuality and its sign, the bodies of women—why the nude, the brothel, the bar?"⁵⁴ In another context, Andreas Huyssen has explored the nineteenth-century discourses which produced modernism as male, in this case in opposition to a mass culture which was gendered female.⁵⁵ These gendered discourses of early modernism were then definitively reinforced by the post-war narrative of twentieth-century art history, seen from the vantage-point of the international success and prominence of the New York School. As Ann Gibson has recently shown, the invisibility of women and minority artists among the Abstract Expressionists (and there were plenty of these who were active in the late 1940s and early 1950s) is the necessary by-product of the universalizing ideology of this movement and its associated critics.

This universalism was delivered by men who aspired to be artistic heroes. This claim, to which sympathetic contemporary viewers readily responded and which subsequent historians have made specific, was not seen as the movement's implicit story about itself, that is, as literary, but simply as wondrous fact. . . . This notion established grounds for the distinction that, in segregated America, only white heterosexual males could attain: generating a universal product that could speak for everyone. Women, African Americans, and avowed homosexuals could not do that because their audiences would not accept their work as universal.⁵⁶

Michael Leja explains the androcentric nature of Abstract Expressionism in terms of the type of subjectivity produced by its discourses, one founded on a new image of "self" (the Modern Man subject, as he calls it) which deployed notions of the "primitive" and the unconscious and which was "profoundly gendered."⁵⁷ The point then, as he explains, is

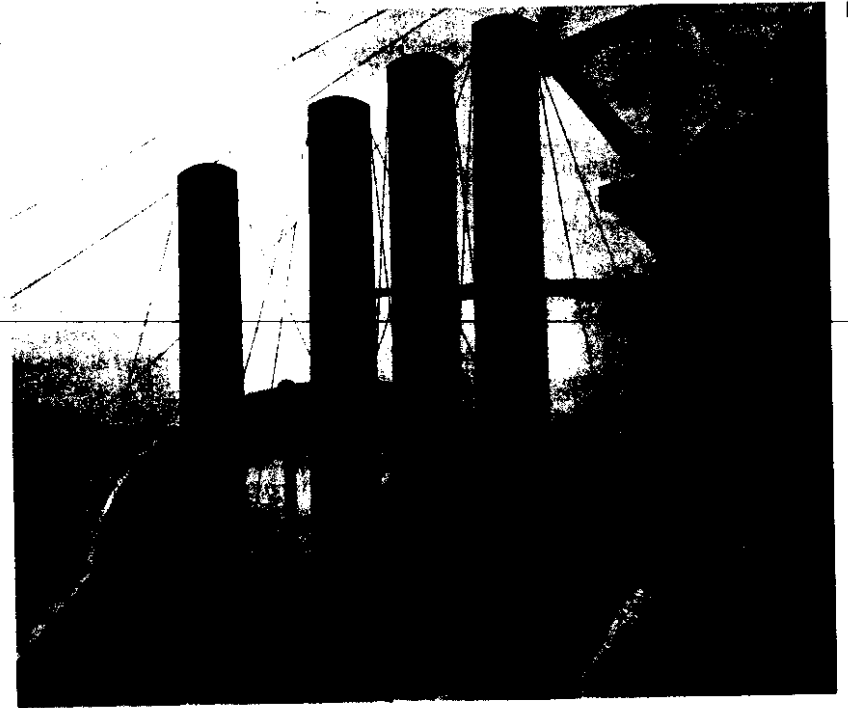
not to document the exclusion of women from Abstract Expressionism, but rather to examine the processes and mechanisms by which that exclusion was effected then and now. What made Abstract Expressionism so inhospitable to artists who were

132 women. . . ? The answer centers, I believe, on the subjectivity inscribed in Abstract Expressionist art.⁵⁶

The exclusion of women, then is a structural and discursive operation, integral to the production and maintenance of a particular conception of subject and artist.

The re-writing of early twentieth-century American art from the point of view of the 1950s—the project that I have suggested was involved in the transformation of the Whitney's history—can now be seen as more than a matter of aesthetic revision. The privileging of modernism in the earlier period, in the production of a specific lineage for the New York School, was also an exercise in engendering visual culture. In other words, the marginalization of certain kinds of realist and figurative painting is the marginalization of the "feminine," a process which does not necessarily have much to do with the question of whether the work involved is by women or by men. This retroactive strategy has been able to take up and restate those gender discourses around early modernism, with their own tendency to equate the modern with the masculine. Although, as Rita Felski has argued, the gender of modernity and of modernism was relatively open-ended in the early twentieth century, so that the androcentric discourses could still be contested and countered, and a feminine/feminist "modernism" proposed, there is plenty of evidence of what was to become the dominant narrative, in which the realist/feminine was denigrated in relation to the modernist/masculine. This is clear in the case of the contemporaneous establishment of the Whitney Museum and the Museum of Modern Art. In an important and highly original study of the contrasting display strategies of the two museums and their precursors in the period 1913 to 1939, Evelyn Hankins has demonstrated the ascendancy of the "modern" approach (the museum as white cube) in relation to the "decorative" (*moderne*), the latter, characteristic of the Whitney's displays, associated in contemporary criticism and discourse with the feminine. In particular, the exhibition of works in the "domestic" setting of the brownstones of the Whitney Studio Club and the Museum itself in its early years, and the employment of *Beaux-Arts* architects and designers to renovate the buildings, was in stark contrast to the Museum of Modern Art, and it enabled a reading of the Whitney as a feminine space.⁵⁷

The invisibility of the Whitney artists in most histories of twentieth-century American art is after all a feminist issue, inasmuch as the denigration of realism has depended on a fundamentally gendered discursive strategy. I want to conclude by considering the implications of this for the current revival of interest in realist art, which I referred to earlier. The critical challenge to "the Museum of Modern Art story," for example in the 1997 "American Realities" exhibition at the Whitney which reintegrated figurative art into the history of American art, is necessarily also a process of deconstructing the dominant gender hierarchies of modernism and realism. And yet it is striking that there were no women artists from the Whitney Studio Club included among the realists in that show, with the exception of Isabel Bishop and Elsie Driggs (fig. 8), neither of whom was quite typical of the Whitney artists and their work.⁵⁸ (The same is true of the blockbuster Whitney exhibition, *The American*



▲
Figure 8: Elsie Driggs,
Pittsburgh, 1927. Oil on
canvas, 87 x 101.6 cm.
Collection of Whitney
Museum of American
Art, New York.

Century, which opened as I was completing work on this essay).⁵⁹ It could be that this brings us back to the vexed question of "quality" (and hence full circle to my dilemma when confronted with the paintings).⁶⁰ But at the very least it suggests that we look carefully at both the aesthetic and the gender implications of the revival of realism in the late twentieth century, a revival which may, after all, still turn out to be on modernism's terms.

134 Appendix

Women artists active in the Whitney Studio Club and/or exhibiting regularly at the Whitney Studio, Whitney Studio Club and Whitney Studio Gallery

* Included in the collection, 1931

+ Included in the exhibition, 1949

Peggy Bacon *+	Mabel Dwight *	Jane Peterson
Virginia Beresford	Anne Goldthwaite *	Caroline S. Rohland *+
Pamela Bianco *	Rosella Hartman *+	Katherine Schmidt *+
Isabel Bishop +	Isabella Howland *	Dorothea Schwarcz *
Lucile Blanch *+	Georgina Klitgaard *+	Madeline Shiff
Rose Clark *	Molly Luce *+	Dorothy Varian *+
Lucille Corcos	Harriette G. Miller	Nan Watson *+
Elsie Driggs *	Maud Morgan	Marguerite Zorach *+

Thanks to Howard Singerman, Martin Berger, and Evelyn Hankins for very helpful discussions of this project; to Anita Duquette at the Whitney Museum for invaluable advice and assistance; and to Charles Wright for research assistance. I'd also like to thank those who attended and responded to various talks I gave on the topic, at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; City University of New York Graduate Center; McGill University; and the Susan B. Anthony Institute for Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Rochester.

Notes

1. John G. Hanhardt (Curator of Film and Video, Whitney Museum of American Art), Letter to author, 7 October 1994. The Whitney Museum of American Art is hereafter abbreviated as WMAA.
2. Adam D. Weinberg (Curator, Permanent Collection, WMMA), *Hopper in Paris*. Exhibition brochure (New York: WMMA, 1993).
3. *Pictured Women*. Memorial Art Gallery, Rochester, 1995.
4. Michael Kimmelman, "The Return of the Well-trampled Clavier," *New York Times*, 3 January, 1997, A 22.
5. Andrew Hemingway has recently demonstrated how this ideology has rendered all but invisible most American art before 1945 in: "How the Tale of Taste Wags the Dog of History: American Art Pre-1945 and the Problem of Art History's Object" (paper presented at College Art Association meetings, Los Angeles, February 1999).
6. Susan Noyes Platt describes the Ashcan work as "mildly modern" in *Modernism in the 1920s: Interpretations of Modern Art in New York from Expressionism to Constructivism* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1985, 1981), 17.
7. Sheila Rowbotham's phrase in *Hidden from History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It* (London: Pluto Press, 1973).
8. As Jackie Stacey has insisted, however, such periodization is often quite unfair to early feminist theory, as well as blind to the important continuities in feminist work over the past twenty-five

years. See "Feminist Theory: Capital F, Capital T." in Victoria Robinson and Diane Richardson, eds., *Introducing Women's Studies: Feminist Theory and Practice*, 2d ed. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 54-76.

9. Avis Berman, *Rebels on Eighth Street: Juliana Force and the Whitney Museum of American Art* (New York: Atheneum, 1990), 311, 277; hereafter abbreviated in the text as ROES.

10. By then, it had more than 400 members, and a long waiting list (ROES, 253).

11. Hermon More, Curator, "Introduction" to the Catalogue of the Collection (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1931), 11.

12. See *Juliana Force and American Art: A Memorial Exhibition*, September 24—October 30, 1949, Whitney Museum of American Art, Exhibitions 1914-1949 (64-66); and *The Annual and Biennial Exhibition Record of the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1918-1989* (Madison: Sound View Press, 1991).

13. Other "Whitney artists" who had homes in Woodstock, or who spent time there on a regular basis, included Alexander Brook, Peggy Bacon, Dorothy Varian, Rosella Hartman, Arnold and Lucile Blanch, and Eugene Speicher. See Alexander Brook, "The Woodstock whirl," *The Arts* 3 & 4 (June 1923): 415-20; and Karal Ann Marling, "Introduction," *Woodstock: An American Art Colony 1902-1977* (New York: Vassar College Art Gallery, 1977)

14. Schmidt, Bacon, Varian, Luce, Kuniyoshi and Brook were among those who had studied at the Art Students' League.

15. Among those women artists included in the Whitney museum's collection on opening, but since de-accessioned, were Rose Clark, Dorothea Schwarcz, and Molly Luce.

16. In the Whitney's records, works acquired by Whitney and Force before the museum's founding still bear an acquisition date of 1931.

17. The painting is Stettheimer's *Sun*, of 1931.

18. *Skunk Cabbage* was later exchanged for another work by O'Keeffe. It is now in the Montclair Art Museum (*New York Times*, 24 December 1998). Thanks to Nancy Mowll Mathews, Eugénie Prendergast Curator at the Williams College Museum of Art, for clarifying this for me. Another O'Keeffe *Skunk Cabbage*, which Avis Berman identifies as the Whitney version, is in the collection of the Williams College Museum of Art.

19. *Juliana Force and American Art: A Memorial Exhibition*

20. See *Peggy Bacon: Personalities and Places* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1975), Exhibitions (65-71).

21. "Among these who already better their reputations by this event are Edward Hopper, Niles Spencer, Stuart Davis, Louis Eilshemius, Joseph Pollet, Henry McFee, Reginald Marsh, Charles Rosen, Vincent Canadé, Bernard Karfiol, Gaston Lachaise and Cecil Howard." Henry McBride, "Opening of the Whitney Museum." *New York Sun*, 21 November, 1931; reprinted in *The Flow of Art: Essays and Criticisms* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1975/1997), 281.

22. Quoted in *The Annual & Biennial Exhibition Record of the Whitney Museum of American Art*, 28.

23. *Op. cit.*, 27.

24. See Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (London & New York: Routledge, 1988), 50-90; the diagram is reproduced on 51. Also Carol Duncan, "The Modern Art Museum: It's a Man's World," in *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London & New York: Routledge, 1995), 102-32; Serge Guilbaut; *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Alan Wallach, "The Museum of Modern Art: the Past's Future," in his *Exhibiting Contradiction: Essays on the Art Museum in the United States* (Amherst MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 73-87.

25. This is not entirely true. Though these artists are certainly not as well known as, say, Arthur Dove or Marsden Hartley, their modernist contemporaries, who have remained in favor throughout the century, it is more likely that their work will be on display in exhibitions of American art than that of their female counterparts. And, with regard to the WMAA's adoption of the Museum of

- 136 Modern Art aesthetic, Bruce Lineker stresses the continuing attachment to its earlier realist tendencies: "For six decades of American art, the surveys documented the Whitney Museum's consistent support of the Realist tradition. One can also trace in the exhibition program the emergence of abstraction in the 1930s and 1940s, it's [sic] extraordinary success in Abstract Expressionism of the 1950s, and abstraction's subsequent induction into the mainstream vocabulary of American art. However, even when critical attention overwhelmingly shifted toward abstraction, the program retained its original dedication to realism" (*The Annual & Biennial Exhibition Record of the Whitney Museum of American Art*, 11–12).
26. Abraham A. Davidson: *Early American Modernist Painting 1910–1935* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1994/1981), 89. The collection is now at Yale University.
27. Gail Stavitsky, "A. E. Gallatin's Gallery and Museum of Living Art (1927–1943)," *American Art* 7. 2, (Spring 1983). The collection was transferred in 1943 to the Philadelphia Museum of Art.
28. Susan Noyes Platt, *Modernism in the 1920s: Interpretations of Modern Art in New York from Expressionism to Constructivism* (Ann Arbor MI: UMI Research Press, 1985, 1981), 137.
29. Platt, 19–33.
30. Customs officials had listed it under "kitchen utensils and hospital supplies" and charged Steichen \$240 duty when he brought the work back from France (ROES, 243).
31. Adam Weinberg, "The Real Whitney: the Tradition of Diversity," in Nicholas Serota, Sandy Nairne, Adam Weinberg, eds. *Views from Abroad: European Perspectives on American Art 3—American Realities*, exhibition catalogue (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1995), 25.
32. This approach is well established among sociologists of culture, who have long insisted on the importance of understanding artistic success and canon-formation in terms of social relations of cultural production and institutions—patrons, dealers, critics, museums, art schools, art-critical discourses, and so on, which facilitate and enable (and, of course, sometimes obstruct) such success. With regard to gender, feminists have also answered Linda Nochlin's question, "Why have there been no great women artists?" by focusing on the social relations and institutions which exclude, or permit, women's participation in the making of art. Nochlin's 1971 essay of this title is reprinted in Thomas B. Hess and Elizabeth C. Baker, eds. *Art and Sexual Politics* (New York: Collier Books, 1973), 1–39. For an interesting example of a study of social networks and patronage in cultural production in a different context, see David Morgan: "Cultural Work and Friendship Work: the Case of 'Bloomsbury,'" *Media, Culture and Society* 4 (1982): 19–32.
33. Berman suggests that the consequent "top-heaviness of Woodstock on the Whitney exhibition roster and in the permanent collection" was rather unfortunate, and too uncritical on Force's part, ROES, 231.
34. Of her eight paintings, four were de-accessioned after Force's death in 1948 (ROES, 166).
35. For example, Matthew Baigell, *A Concise History of American Painting and Sculpture* (New York: Harper Collins, 1984); Joshua C. Taylor, *The Fine Arts in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).
36. Brian Paul Clamp, "The Eight: Bridging the Art of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *The Eight* (New York: Owen Gallery, 1997), no pagination. Clamp rightly points out that the group of eight artists does not exactly coincide with the group collectively known as the "Ashcan School."
37. For example, Milton W. Brown, *American Painting: From the Armory Show to the Depression* (Princeton N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1955); *Avant-Garde Painting and Sculpture in America 1910–25* (Wilmington: Delaware Art Museum, 1975); Abraham A. Davidson, *Early American Modernist Painting 1910–1935* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1994).
38. Brown, for example, puts it like this: "After the [first world] war, realism continued, with many changes in character, but as a minor and neglected phase of American art." Unusually, Brook Kunitzoshi and Pène du Bois do appear in his book, though none of the Whitney women do, 167.
39. The issue of the invisibility of much American art within the discipline of art history was addressed by Hemingway, *How the Tale of Art Wags the Dog of History*. A marvellous example of this appears in a recent publisher's catalogue, advertising a recent edition of the reprinted essays of the art critic Henry McBride—one of the most important critics in New York between about 1913

and 1950. The advert gives prominent place is given to a line from a review of the book by the art historian, Svetlana Alpers, who says: "Until I read this book I had never heard of [McBride], but his collected reviews make for good reading." It says something, of course, about the fate of early twentieth-century art and art criticism that such a sentence stands as a compliment. See "The Henry McBride Series in Modernism and Modernity from Yale University," publisher's catalogue (New Haven: Yale University Press, n. d. [but 1999]), 3.

40. Quoted by Adam D. Weinberg: "The Real Whitney: the Tradition of Diversity," *Views from Abroad: European Perspectives on American Art 3: American Realities* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1997), 28.

41. *Loc. cit.*

42. *New Yorker*, listings, 15 September 1997.

43. Nicholas Serota, Introduction, *Views from Abroad*, 10.

44. Bishop and Driggs are the only women realists here, and, of the group of twenty-four artists I have been considering, they are the only women whose work has continued to be shown, perhaps with the exception of Marguerite Zorach.

45. Other examples of this new attempt to reinstate realism as serious art include the Whitney's 1995 Florine Stettheimer retrospective and 1998 Edward Hopper retrospective; a major exhibition at the National Museum of American Art in Washington D. C. in 1995, *Metropolitan Lives: The Ashcan Artists and Their New York*; an exhibition of the work of Peggy Bacon at the Kraushaar Galleries, New York, from December 1995; an exhibition of the work of Lucille Corcos at the Susan Teller Gallery, New York, in Fall 1997. And—no doubt a more trivial example—the selection of American realist art to hang on the walls of the home of an extremely rich young couple (played by Mel Gibson and Rene Russo) in the movie *Ransom*; see Avis Berman, "In the Script, the Art Says 'They're Rich,'" *New York Times*, 3 November 1996, 43–44.

46. In fact, the Montclair Art Museum, with whose curator I did subsequently exchange letters.

47. *Between the Wars: Women Artists of the Whitney Studio Club and Museum* (New York: Whitney Museum of Modern Art, 1997).

48. The title of one of several volumes published in the 1970s which undertook this task. See Eleanor Tufts, *Our Hidden Heritage: Five Centuries of Women Artists* (New York: Paddington Press, 1974).

49. Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (London & New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), ch. 2, "Crafty Women and the Hierarchy of the Arts," 50–81.

50. Paul Mattick Jr, "Beautiful and Sublime: 'Gender Totemism' in the Constitution of Art," and editors' "Introduction," in Peggy Zeglin Brand and Carolyn Korsmeyer, eds., *Feminism and Tradition in Aesthetics* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 27–48.

51. Carol Duncan, "Virility and Domination in Early Twentieth-Century Vanguard Painting," *Artforum* (December 1973); reprinted in Duncan, *The Aesthetics of Power: Essays in Critical Art History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 81–108.

52. Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in her *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (London & New York: Routledge, 1988), 54.

53. Andreas Huyssen, "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other," in *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture and Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986). On the related topic of the gender of modernity, see Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), and Barbara L. Marshall, *Engendering Modernity: Feminism, Social Theory and Social Change* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1994), both of which identify the recuperative possibilities for women and for feminism within a "masculinized" but complex modernity.

54. Ann Eden Gibson, *Abstract Expressionism: Other Politics* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1997), xxvi.

55. Michael Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1993), 258.

- 138 56. Leja, 257.
57. Evelyn C. Hankins, "Homes for the Modern: En/Gendering Modernist Display in New York City, 1913-39" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1999).
58. Bishop has always maintained a certain status in histories of American art, largely because of her importance as a member of the Fourteenth Street School of urban realist painters. Driggs' 1927 painting, *Pittsburgh*, which has remained on view in the WMAA's permanent exhibition, is unlike the work of her Whitney Studio Club contemporaries in its more modernist, Precisionist, style.
59. *The American Century: Art and Culture 1900-1950*, Whitney Museum of American Art, April-August 1999.
60. A disconcerting little aside in a recent article about the Whitney Museum of Modern Art in the late 1990s refers to the uncritical buying policies of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, "who, lore has it, would sometimes purchase a second-rate picture in an artist's show, knowing that the best work would find another buyer" (Arthur Lubow, "The Curse of the Whitney," *New York Times Magazine*, 11 April 1999, 58). See also note 33, above.

Review Essay

Radway's "Feelings" and the Reflexive Sociology of American Literature

By James F. English, University of Pennsylvania

***A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-Class Desire.* Janice A. Radway. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997. Pp. xiii. + 424. \$29.95 (cloth); \$16.95 (paper).**

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Virtually alone among American English professors, Janice Radway has been performing ethnographic research into contemporary American literary taste and reading practice for twenty years. This is not to say that her work lacks points of contact with broad movements or trends within the discipline. Between the publication of her *Reading the Romance* (1984) and her new study *A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-Class Desire* (1997), there has been a reflexive sociological turn within English departments, resulting in studies about canon formation, literary value, and the relation of English to other disciplines, to the broader cultural field, and to the field of power itself.¹ Much of this work has been marked at least glancingly by the influence of Pierre Bourdieu, the controversial French sociologist whose *Distinction* (1984), *Homo Academicus* (1988), *The Logic of Practice* (1990), *Photography: A Middlebrow Art* (1990), *The Rules of Art* (1996), and eight other books all appeared in English during this time, and whose core theoretical concepts (field, habitus, and capital) have been widely circulated and heatedly debated by sociologists of culture.² Although, as John Guillory and others have observed, Bourdieu's reception among American literature professors has for the most part been a hostile one, with neither his postpositivist scientism nor his seemingly economic terminology and schema finding much support in that quarter, there has been a significant convergence of concerns.³ As English professors have begun more rigorously to scrutinize their