



the women's group

early
1990s,
new
york
city

curated by
natalie rivera



networking in the early 1990s as a woman artist in nyc



Throughout the annals of Western art history women artists have been gravely underrepresented and undocumented. While there have always been women artists, their work is historically dismissed as "craft" as opposed to "fine art." Ancient cultures reference female artists, whether in the Mithila region of India or Classical Greece and Rome, but rarely by name.

In the Medieval era, names of individual women artists increasingly started to be distinguished as they often worked beside men while creating manuscript illuminations, embroideries, and carved capitals. These women often came from two literate classes—wealthy aristocrats or nuns. Aristocrats generally created embroideries and textiles while the nuns would create illuminations. Ende, Guda, Hildegard of Bingen, all educated, powerful, intellectual women, lived in a time where their contributions to art were welcomed and even encouraged. In this period, women were allowed to be part of guilds and even run their husband's businesses should they find themselves widowed. They were instrumental in creating and working in commercial workshops throughout Europe. However, when the printing age began, women artists found themselves to be excluded in the printing workshops and

their influence in the arts encountered a setback.

Fortunately, the Renaissance Period introduced a philosophy of Humanism, which sought to bring dignity and respect to all human life. This shift in society helped women artists achieve further recognition. Women were educated in the arts, including painting, with a focus on mathematics, perspective, anatomy of the body, and the study of ancient arts. But at a certain point, the academies excluded women as their ability to study the male anatomy was discouraged. This would leave the woman artist to revert to marriage instead of pursuing a career in the arts. Nuns and female offspring of painters were the select few to become artists in Southern Europe. In Northern Europe the climate was more socially liberal and women were encouraged to follow their father's profession which resulted in more women employed in the arts in this region.

During the Baroque Period, more women painters (again primarily coming from a family of painters) were finding recognition. The shift of subject matter to still lifes made it easier for woman artists to do more commissioned work and artists like Clara Peeters, Maria van Oosterwijk, and Louise Mouillon created reputations for themselves with their talents.

In the 18th century the academies reverted back to not accepting women artists, again using the excuse of male anatomy. If a woman was in an academy she was often the wife of an existing member. Women resorted to studying male nude sculptures in institutions to gain this knowledge base. Large scale historical scenes were the main commissions at that time and why so many woman artists were excluded from the work. Due to this development, women artists began concentrating on portraiture. Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun was able to enter the academy based on her portraits and was a court favorite.

Despite the fact that two women

(Angelica Kauffman and Mary Moser) were founding members of The Royal Academy of Arts in London in 1768, they too had to deal with the issue of male nudity. Besides admitting one other female artist, there were no additional full female members inducted into the Academy until Laura Knight in 1936. Only at the end of the 18th century would academies include women and let them study the male anatomy. Even then, women were only able to study men in armor or draped in sheets.

In Paris, the Salon opened up to artists not trained in academies in 1791, making it possible for women painters to exhibit and many were accepted as protégés for established painters. Artists like Mary Cassatt, Lucy Bacon, Elisabeth Jane-Gardner, and many other women working in various mediums began gaining international reputations comparable to their male contemporaries. In 1855 in the United Kingdom, The Society of Female Artists (now The Society of Women Artists) was the first organization to focus on the achievements and exhibition of women's art. In the United States the National Association of Women Artist was established in 1889 with similar goals.

Not until the 20th century did art academies in Europe and the United States finally accept woman artists with no anatomy limitations in the curriculum. Salons and galleries became more open to showing artists of both genders. More women were able to budge their way into the art history journals at this point. To name only a few Dorothea Tanning, Dorothea Lange, Louise Bourgeois, Lee Krasner, Joan Mitchell, Georgia O'Keeffe were establishing worldwide recognition. However, it was still a man's world and there was an uphill climb to achieve recognition. Female patrons of the arts such as Gertrude Stein and Peggy Guggenheim helped women artists but men still had an easier time exhibiting and networking. With the academic world starting to increase the number of female faculty, more female curators

hired at museums, and the rise in voices of female art critics and female art patrons, it became an agenda to include more women in the annals of art history.

In the late '60s, with the Vietnam war looming and the country in the middle of a social and political revolution, women artists were joining together and organizing in groups and associations to end discrimination in the art world and help facilitate their professional careers. One of these first associations was WAR (Women Artist in Revolution) established in 1969. This association came out of the AWC's (Art Worker's Coalition) unwillingness to fight hard enough for women to be included in major museum exhibitions and galleries. WAR picketed The Whitney Annual (later the Whitney Biennial) in 1969 when women comprised only 5% of the exhibition. A degree of success was realized as the next year women comprised almost 30% of the exhibition. In 1971, WAR disbanded and formed other collectives such as Ad Hoc Women's Artist Committee in 1970, WIA (Women in the Arts) in 1971, WCA (Women's Caucus for Art) in 1972, and AIR Gallery (Artist in Residence) also in 1972, to name just a few. Many members of these groups are acclaimed women contemporary artists, including Yoko Ono, Nancy Spero, Louise Bourgeois, who organized, networked, and protested against the museum institutions and male dominated commercial art galleries throughout the '70s, especially in New York City. More art collectives were to spring up in the '80s. ArtTable was established in 1980 as a women's networking group to support women leaders in the visual arts at all stages of their careers. In 1985, Guerrilla Girls was created as a response to a painting survey exhibition held at MoMA (Museum of Modern Art) where women comprised only 2% of the exhibition. They picketed the show outside the museum, and engaged in other protest actions, their identities concealed with gorilla masks. Although yielding little success with this particular exhibition, they grew to be an organization that took on racism and

sexism in art, film, and popular culture.

In the '90s more groups were established to develop better opportunities for women in the arts such as WAC (Women's Art Coalition, 1991), WMG (Woman Made Gallery, 1992) and Women Arts, 1994. There were more informal groups that evolved from these times and the focus of this section is the Women's Group as established 1991.

The Women's Group started in the summer of 1991 with artist LC Armstrong. On a mission after working in Europe, she became determined to start a group where women would help women have an open dialogue in the art world. Although she felt her stay in Europe was good for the development of her work, she saw that just as in New York the art scene could be a good ol' boys club. In her studio on North 11th Street in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, she invited a number of her contemporaries at the time and presented her works and ideas.

These artists, some of whom had been around for a while, some just out of art school, took to the idea and energy of supporting one another by getting feedback from a group united in its goals to help foster an atmosphere in the art world where, even in the early '90s, it was still considered a man's world.

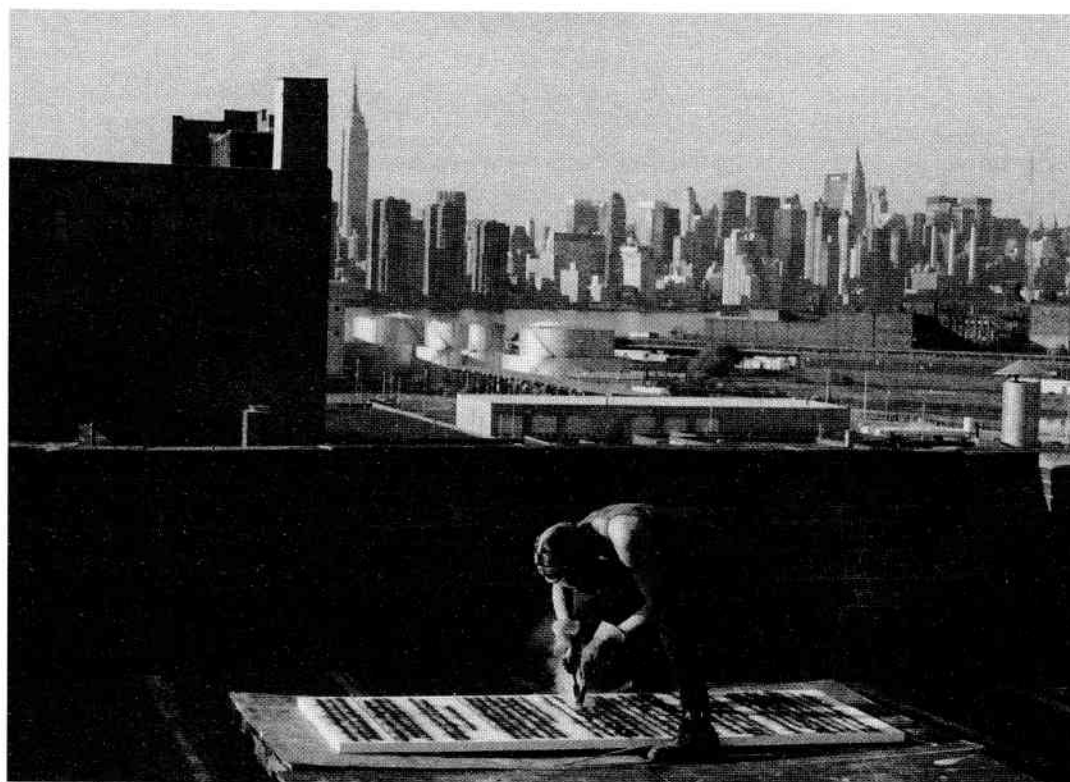
There was no real attempt to make an official organization as seen in the '70s and '80s. As the meetings continued, the groups intentions evolved without any one leader, specific meeting place, rules, or even official title. The ball was passed on from artist to artist, the camaraderie expanded and a thirst was quenched for community and sisterhood of the NYC art world of the '90s.

Hence we have here the recollections of some of the Women's Group participants—nineteen women answer our questions on why they joined, what it did for their work, how it affected their lives, what it means to be a woman artist,

and how best to support and encourage one another.

So today we make an effort to remember, honor, and recollect the Women's Group as it brought forth many influential women artists of the contemporary art world of the '90s, helped many artists find their voices, and gave them the confidence they sought after. For those now and in the future who look back at this time and see its record and history, the Women's Group most certainly deserves to be evoked, and not just as a minor footnote in art history. And after being stagnant for a few years, the group lives on.

—Natalie Rivera



lc armstrong

The first Women's Group meeting was done at my loft at 99 N 11th Street, Williamsburg, Brooklyn, NY in June 1991. I ended up attending the Women's Group for around two years. I presented at my loft at the first meeting and then again at Janine Antoni's brother's (Brian Antoni) loft on Broome Street in Soho.

I remember attending the presentations of Janine Antoni, Beth Haggart, Jessica Stockholder, Devon Dikeou, Amy Sillman, Lisa Hoke, Holly Miller, Drew Shiflett, Nicola Tyson, Suzanne McClelland, Lisa Hein, Elana Herzog, Joan Jonas, Robin Kahn, Andrea Zittel, and many others.

I wanted to be a part of the Women's Group because I felt that women didn't have the invisible networking structure that men had. Most men met weekly or bi-weekly, often nightly, in bars. They often hung out in each other's studios. The women I knew were more isolated.

When I asked my male artist friends if they would like to start a group back then, they all laughed at the idea, as they didn't feel the need. I was married at the time and didn't feel free to hang out in bars with mostly male artists. Once the

group started, some male artists (Simon Ungers specifically) were outright angered by the fact that there was a group exclusively for women artists.

When I was in Germany in the early '90s I felt being a female artist was a hindrance to my ability to network in the art world. After my opening at Gallerie Sophia Ungers in Cologne in 1991 I asked, "Where are all the women artists?" I thought that I'd meet Rosemarie Trockel or Katharina Fritsch. Claus Cartensen replied to me, "They are at home knitting." Big laughs...

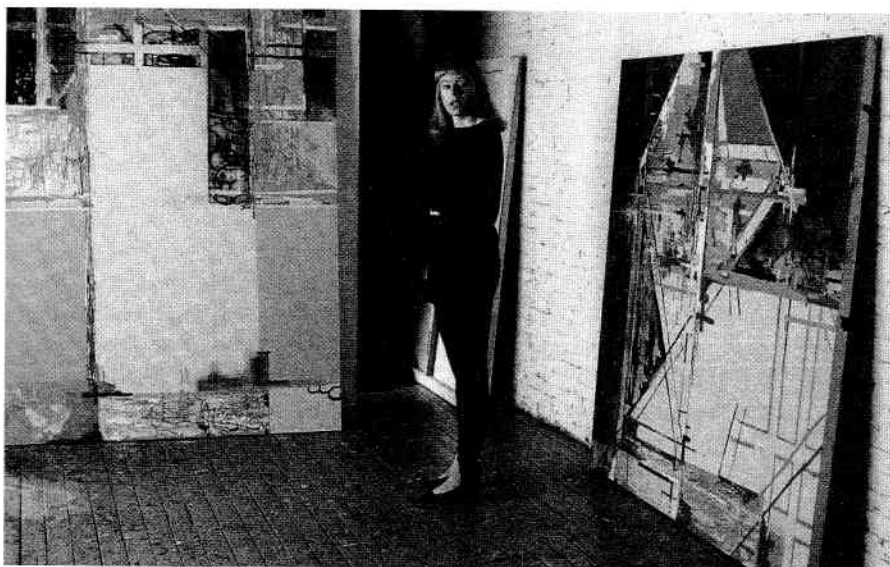
I wanted to have a small group of peers who would share their work and ideas. It turned out there was a huge need and the group grew out of my original idea, which was a smaller group that could delve ever more deeply into concepts. It became more of a support group. I'm very proud to have started something that provided so much support to so many women artists.

The feedback from the Women's Group did influence my work. Amy Sillman was painting monochromes, as was I, and she admitted that she often started figuratively then covered it up. I was doing the same thing. I told her that I wanted to see what was underneath.

I realized that I needed to do the same, and slowly my work moved from abstract to figurative.

Back in the early '90s my methods of networking in the art world were mainly the telephone, the women's group, and openings. Today I go to gallery openings, use Facebook, social media, and a revived Women's Group (restarted in 2015). I still am friends with quite a few of the original group. It was definitely a positive experience for me.

In my career, I had a few strong female mentors in the art world. They were Barbara Rodgers, the head of painting at San Francisco Art Institute, Terrie Sultan, Luanne McKinnon, and Pat Hearn. I myself mentor female artists, especially my assistants. They have gone on to graduate schools and careers in the arts. I write letters of recommendation for them and help in any way possible. Several have told me that working for a woman artist and seeing how an artist runs a studio was very important for their development. I feel younger female artists of today still face the same issues when starting out in the art world. I would tell them we must support other artists, especially women, in any way possible.



lydia dona

I remember first attending the Women's Group in the early '90s circa 1991. It was in somebody's loft in Soho. There were quite a lot of women artists; Moira Sheen, Aura Rosenberg, LC Armstrong, Jeanne Silverthorne. That's more or less what I recall. I dropped in and out of meetings that year and I never presented at any of the Women's Group meetings.

The space of the early '90s was extremely interesting for the dialogue with women artists. It was a struggling space within the market where women were not having a position commercially in an easy way. The linguistic space of post feminism was active and very interesting work was being made. It was interesting as a lot of these women were not painters, for me to dialogue with them and expand the conversation. My expectations from going to the meetings were to be more connected, involved and even helped by and in the dialogue with other women artists. The few times I attended it was interesting, sometimes boring, and sometimes energizing.

The reality of my career currently and in the past is that I was and am always more supported by my male colleagues. In the past there were very few women, so it was understandable. In the present, it's a puzzle. However, the women artists during the '90s that had more interdisciplinary awareness exhibited more helpful gestures and availability.

If I felt being a female artist was a hinderance to my career it was in Europe. In Europe back then it was unconscious and unspoken in that generation and still is. There are for sure men that have been in this country, unfriendly and unsupportive as well. Being a strong woman is a problem, always was, but this does not mean you have to hide.

In the early '90s we went to a lot of openings in Soho for networking. It was crowded, smaller, more intimate and quite hysterical. We sat at Manhattan Bistro, on Spring Street and talked. We visited each others' studios, we talked one to one about work and people did recommend each other for shows. There was a very interdisciplinary dialogue and less focus on market and the art dealers were more interesting as people. The art dealers were personable and the spaces were more welcoming, it had to do with the geography of Soho. The scene was smaller and more self contained. A conceptual artist, a painter, a photographer, a performance artist were all squeezed up together in the streets. There was less isolation.

Today I hate going to openings as they require major displacement, multi-displacements of geographies, and less possibility of any type of dialogue. Social media is a different way to get information and without it it is impossible to know what is going on, as half of the announcements don't even arrive anymore. There is however a huge discrepancy when you do finally go to see the shows, which look very thin most of the time in real life and

look good on Facebook or Instagram. So for networking today for me, it's always on a one to one basis. Sadly the art world has become so large that everyone got scattered, however it is nice to run into people and say hello to them and catch up.

As far as strong female mentors go for me, I respect Pat Steir. She was never directly a mentor but early on in my career she encouraged me to work and show in galleries in Europe, even if the relationships were difficult as a woman artist because there were not many opportunities, especially for women painters. She told me, a woman has to hang in, it takes a long time! Yes it does!

I mentor younger artists now. Luckily I had the joy of teaching and having wonderful students, but more so, I had and have some fantastic young female assistants. These ladies are precious to me, I always want to give them all I know, as I know what it takes. And that is important because there are so many stones on the path.

I think that there are lots of women artists today, therefore it's more conventional. It's also so politically correct to collect women painters and for curators to be aware of these issues. There are lots of galleries in which the young dealers don't have a problem with this issue, so it really is very easy. However there is one thing that I would tell young women artists: you still have to fight for your longevity, it's a long journey and you need to be extremely strong in it.

Overall, there are lots of pressures today and the climate is very different. It is a huge art world with a lot of agendas, "women don't necessarily help other women," is a myth, in the same way certain other myths have been broken. There are also different issues that need to be addressed in the group. The issues are different than they were in the '90s.

The art world is so huge today and full of so many people that want to be artists or dealers or collectors that it is incomprehensible, what is the fascination? The problems have really changed and things are really complicated. If a group is formed, other spaces need to be addressed.

elana herzog

I first attended a Women's Group meeting in the summer or fall of 1991, but I don't remember who was presenting at that first meeting. Lisa Hein was the person who first invited me to participate. I ended up attending the meetings until at least 1996.

I remember presenting at least twice—once in my studio, and once at my show at Black and Herron Gallery in Soho in 1995. I remember attending the presentations of the following artists: Nicola Tyson, Devon Dikeou, Lisa Hein, Lisa Hoke, LC Armstrong, Janet Biggs, Kathleen Gilrain, Jessica Stockholder, Janine Antoni, Beth Haggart, Wendy Klemperer, Shelly Marlow, Deborah Edmeades, Teri Hackett, Elizabeth Berdann, and Cathy Quinlan.

I attended the Women's Group as it was my introduction to a community of women artists and that was incredibly important to me. It continues to be the foundation underlying many of the relationships I've developed since. It gave me feedback, peer support, advice, affirmation, and friendship. My experiences were very positive. I had lacked confidence—which could be because I wasn't taught to present myself. This could be gender related, but not unique to women. When the group got very large it became more impersonal. I am still currently in contact with the attendees.

In the '90s I would network by going to openings, studio visits, the mail, telephone, etc. Now I not only still go to gallery openings, but also use social media, etc.



I'm not sure how the Women's Group influenced my work or if younger female artists are faced with the same issues I encountered when I started out in the art world. However, I had strong female mentors in the art world and I mentor younger female artists myself.

I think the Women's Group came from a positive impulse—to encourage and empower, to join forces. I'm not sure how much can be accomplished pragmatically through that format, but I think community is tremendously important for morale.

I remember attending the Women's Group in the mid '90s, maybe? Elena Herzog was presenting at the time. I only attended a few of them. I think I joined late and then eventually it dissolved. I remember attending the presentations of Drew Shiflett, Theresa Hackett and possibly Jessica Stockholder, Katherine Bowling, and Jacqueline Gourevitch.

I did a presentation of my work in my studio which was in Chinatown back then, probably around the year 1995. I participated because I thought it would be interesting to have a group discussion with other women artists. My expectations were to have interesting conversations, feedback, criticism, and informative dialogue. My experience in the Women's Group was mostly positive. I found meeting with a group of female artists always enriching and there was a sensibility in all the criticism. It could be tough and informative but never mean or patronizing. We were definitely supportive of each other.

I feel the Women's Group influenced my art by making me feel like I am not alone out there because the art world can be really tough and trying to get your work shown can be very discouraging. So the Women's Group is helpful in making one feel part of a network that is not threatening. There is a strong feeling of solidarity and support in this predicament and the feedback is always important and helpful. It's always good to hear other artists' points of view on your work but because art is so subjective it is interesting to have group conversations and then filter and digest the input. The fact that these exchanges happen only between women just makes it more intimate and to a certain degree safer and more open. There's one less power struggle to deal with.

I can't say that I felt excluded by male artists nor that I have ever felt overly discriminated as a female artist but I do sense a stronger competitiveness from male artists versus female artists. I feel that some male artists try to keep me at arm's length, never quite allowing

me to be part of their group. Possibly it's that my work threatens them or just doesn't interest them. Maybe because I challenge the "masculine" in my paintings. I do feel dismissed by male artists more than female artists.

Back then in the early '90s my methods of networking in the art world would be to attend tons of openings, send out slides, meet other artists, and invite people to my studio. Today I still go to tons of openings but only to artists and gallerists I know (which are a lot!). I have a website that I update regularly. Once in a while I will post to Facebook or Instagram either a new painting or an announcement for a show. I will try to create a relationship with dealers of galleries I am interested in and cultivate that relationship by going to see the shows on a regular basis and trying to go to their openings. Basically I stay in touch with my friends who are artists. I am still in touch with many artists from the Women's Group.

As for strong female mentors in my career, I have several very close friends that I share art world experiences with and exchange studio visits fairly regularly. We often go see shows together to continue our dialogue on art but in general I feel part of a strong, inspiring, and supportive group of women artists in

New York and that we are all on the same level. We respect and follow each other's development as artists. I don't mentor younger female artists however I know several and we exchange dialogues about our own work and art in general.

Today I think that there's a more open approach to showing women artists than there used to be. We are finally getting to the point where there are group shows of just women artists but that's not the show's title. It doesn't need to be mentioned as much anymore.

I also get a sense that very young female artists who are straight out of graduate art schools and much more elderly women artists (80 or older) seem to be commanding more interest in the art world than mid-career female artists. My advice to younger female artists would be to keep working, develop your artistic voice but also be part of the art world. Go to openings, follow the galleries that have a program that you are interested in or you relate to, and keep meeting other artists.

Overall I love interacting with women. I feel that the Women's Group was and still is an intellectual exchange of ideas in art while being supportive, encouraging and enriching both emotionally and intellectually.



Holly Miller, in her studio on Grand Street, Chinatown, circa early '90s.



karen shaw

Besides the Women's Group, I belonged to a conscience raising group in about 1970 or 1971. While this was not a group of artists, it was an early feminist group that gave me the confidence to strike out in my art work. I was then a young mother living in the suburbs and the feminist movement just arrived there. The first women's art group was in the late '80s and we met at a friend's loft on the Bowery. I remember most of the names of most of the women. We talked about the art world at that time and passed on information and spoke of personal problems. Several years later in the '90s I was invited to a group of younger artists at their studios, this was the Women's Group. We met about once a month for a few years in the first group

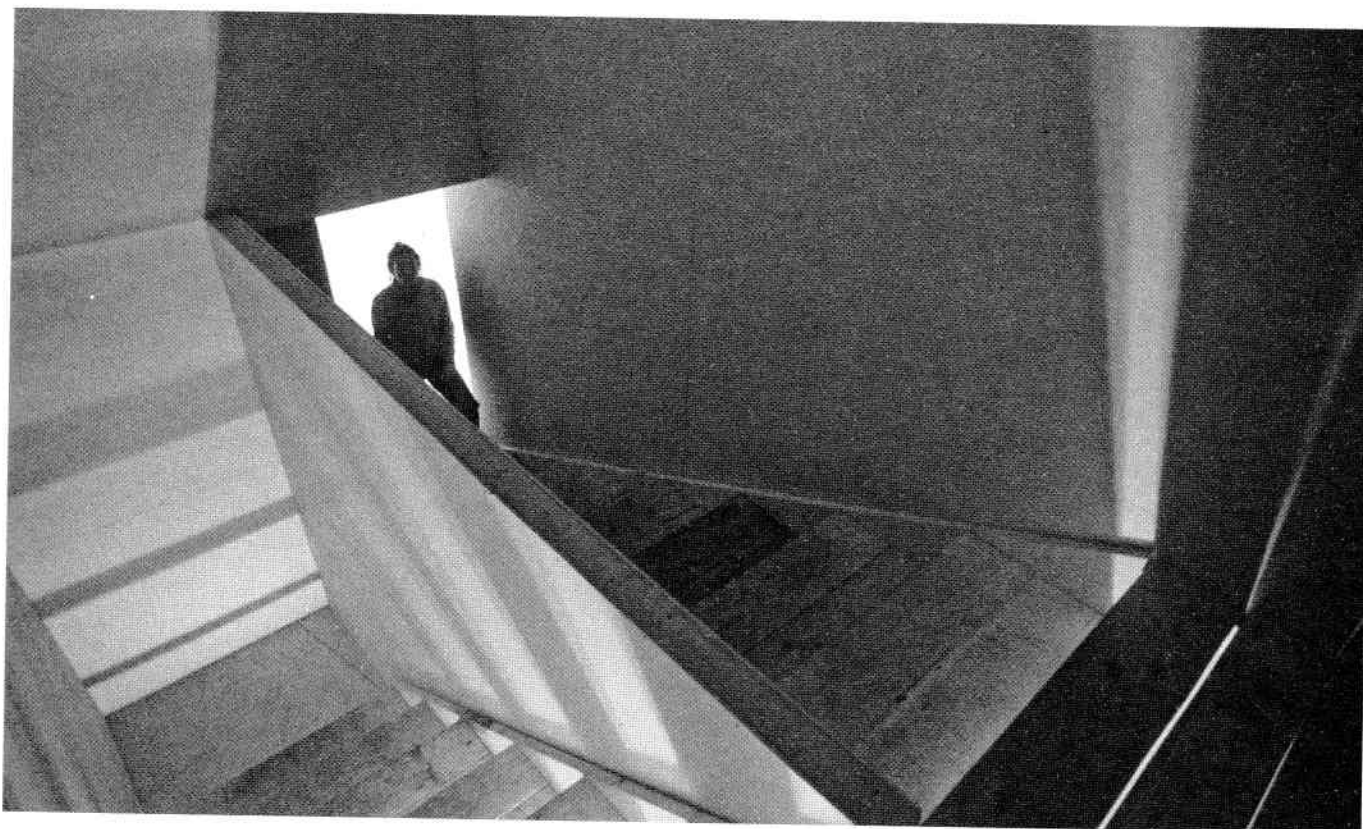
on the Bowery, the later group was every once in a while. I did not present at the Women's Group as I preferred to have one on one visits to my studio or gallery if I was having a show rather than the whole group at once.

I attended the Women's Group meetings because I liked the support and liked seeing what everyone was doing. I also worked as a curator for many, many years so it was helpful to my job too. I like sharing information and seeing how other women work and present their work. It was a positive experience and I still am in contact with some of the attendees from the Women's Group. Overall I found it did not influence my work.

As for my male colleagues helping me network or feeling excluded in the art

world from the males, I would say yes and no. However I would say being a female was not an hinderance in my ability to network in the art world back then. Back then studio visits were my main method of networking, now besides studio visits I go to gallery openings and do email. I don't do social media.

I had strong female mentors back then and as a curator for thirty five years I mentor and show many young female artists. I think for young female artists today it is similar to back then but when I was starting out, being a mother was a serious detriment whereas now many young artists proudly bring their babies with them. I think a supportive group can always be important as we work alone for the most part in isolation and need to share ideas and information.



Lisa Hein at her exhibition, "Arch" at Pat Heern Gallery in 1993, Soho.

lisa hein

My first Women's Group meeting might have been LC Armstrong, date unknown. There was a printed list of addresses and phone numbers which circulated from host to host which disappeared in the mid '90s. The group got too big, someone bogarted the list and it fizzled out. I believe it recently revived, although with fewer members.

I presented around 1994 at my studio at 37 Lispenard Street. I kept journal entries of my presentation but have no pictures of the meetings. I remember going to see the presentations of Janet Biggs, Wendy Klemperer, LC Armstrong, Elana Herzog, Ann Hamilton, Lisa Hoke, Devon Dikeou...

I had moved to NYC from California in 1991 really hoping for serious shop talk. Here was the opportunity! I didn't expect anything, but had my consciousness raised. Not only did I not know how to talk about my own work, the vocabulary hardly existed to talk about any woman artist. Flipside¹ was discovering how much misogyny had been built into my

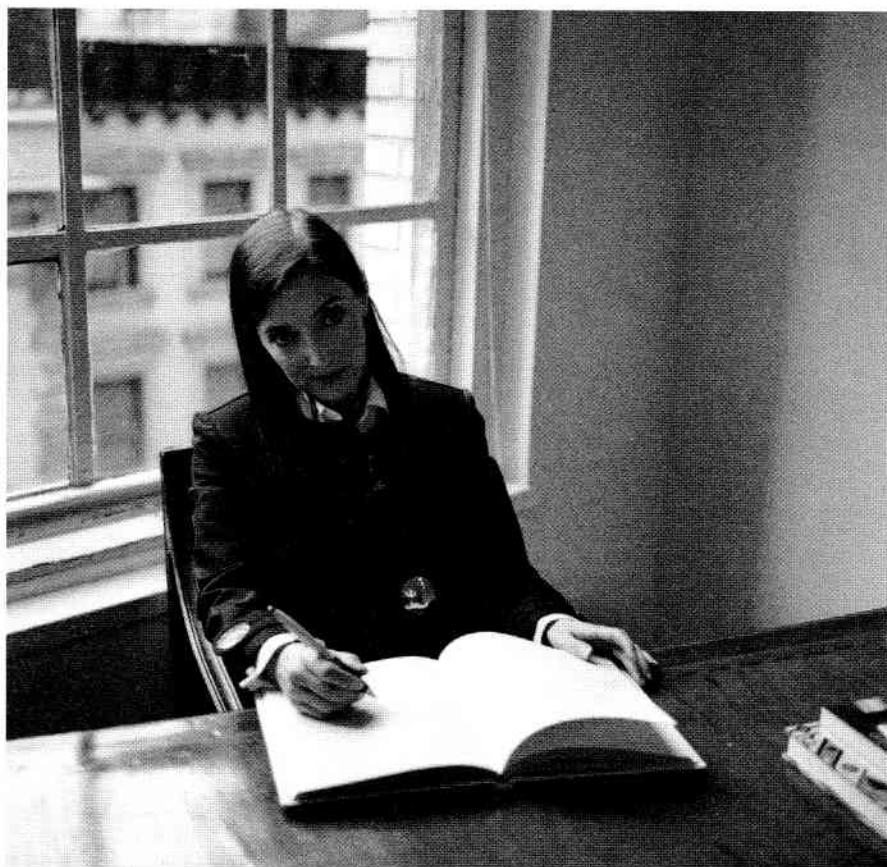
own value set. Before women's group, I only had the language to discuss men's work. The group helped build a whole new value system which, along with many others' efforts, has since come to prevail. The Women's Group was both a positive and negative experience for me. I currently do still keep in contact with attendees.

In my career, when it came to male colleagues versus female colleagues helping me in my networking pursuits, wish it weren't so, but men have been more helpful than women. However I found being a female a hinderance in my ability to network in the art world in two ways: one in the sense of shame and diffidence we developed from mid-century critical values. And two in how few favors we could do anyone.

Networking back then in the '90s, the art world was geographically compact then. Go to Soho galleries any Saturday, and you'd see people face to face. Networking now; I go to gallery openings, use social media, go to performances and discussions at places like Centotto and Studio 10. When it comes to female mentors in the

art world for me, I have to say, "I wish!" This is the biggest flaw in my formation. I never went to grad school, and was surrounded by men in undergrad. Thanks to the Women's Group I have peers, but still lack for mentors. I do not mentor younger female artists as I feel they learn by my example of what NOT to do. A majority of today's gallerists, curators and professors are probably women. The resulting achievements of younger women is very encouraging.





devon dikeou

I attended the very first Women's Group that LC Armstrong organized at her Williamsburg loft/rooftop. It was a balmy summer day I believe, early '90s. There was a handful of ladies there—I recall Kirsten Moser, Lisa Hein, Beth Haggart, Janine Antoni, Natalie, and LC at that initial meeting. No presentations. Natalie and LC organized the whole thing and the premise was initially that we as women should support each other as a group in each other's practices. As I recall, at the first meeting two books were assigned to the group to read: *Writing a Woman's World* by Carolyn Heilbrun and Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*.

I attended for two years . . . the group seemed to transform, which it should have, and went more from conceptual/installation artists to painters, so my interest at that time waned. (Although thinking back on it, they were/are excellent painters and it would have behooved me to stick around. Perhaps

my *zingmagazine* editorial/publishing practice could have benefitted. Same goes for my practice as curator for the Dikeou Collection).

All participants had a chance to present. The one I remember presenting is a tour of Soho, which happened to be at night. Leading the group, I stopped at different locations on the streets of Soho and read excerpts from works of literature while also talking about the neighborhood architecture. The idea was to engage the history of the place where we were all creating art. During the tour, for example, on Broadway where the very first telephone line was installed, I paused the group. Nearby was a now defunct payphone. We had met at Janine's loft before the tour and I had written down the names of attendees . . . I had slipped the list of names and public phone number to Brian, Janine's brother (and the group's only honorary male member) with a time he should call the booth. During the tour explanation of the telephone site, the actual public telephone kept ringing in

a purposefully annoying way. I asked LC to answer, who was in turn asked by my co-conspirator for another attendee. And then it was a game of telephone as each lady was passed along, and all the while I delivered the story of the first telephone connection. Funnily enough, I created a piece for a show curated by Kenny Schachter at Flamingo East called "Call Me" in which I wrote my phone number on the inside of Flamingo East matchbooks with the phrase "Call Me." These matchbooks were then distributed by the club. It's an ongoing piece that continues to record the response of those who wish to call. I like to think it was my endeavor to create an art tour, in itself an art piece, that also eventually inspired another piece.

I attended many Women's Group meetings, however, Nicola Tyson's was very memorable. She had just started Trial BALLOON on Broadway, an artist space which I learned about when she dropped by Collins & Milazzo's neighboring temporary art space also on Broadway. I was sitting the desk for the curatorial team, both of whom I worked for and who were my mentors. Oddly, at the C&M space there was no phone, so as a desk sitter you're a captive audience. Nicola approached and spoke about her project and left an actual balloon that was printed with the Trial BALLOON 411. While there she explained her mission to show emerging female artists' work. It was lovely. As was her presentation of her work at Trial BALLOON, the space she created, which was just as lovely.

The Women's Group developed as I recall to create a "fraternity" of ladies in the art world. At first I was a bit reluctant and resistant to the idea but went nonetheless. Wish I had that fraternity now, but at least I have the memory and knowledge shared from that time. My expectation of the group was really just of friendship and hopefully some insightful critique. It far exceeded that in retrospect.



Left to right: Lisa Yuskavage, Emily Chang, Lawrie Stone, Nicola Tyson, Marilla Palmer, KK Kozik, Ellen Salpeter at Four Walls panel discussion circa early '90s.

marilla palmer

I did attend the Women's Group in the early '90s. I don't remember when I stopped going but I remember I went to many Women's Group meetings, however I never presented my work. I attended the Women's Group because the art world seemed like such a closed system at the time, and coming out of a macho phase. It was exciting to be included. Also my work was overtly feminine and feminist at the time so it was great to hear women present their work and to be part of the dialog. I really liked it and was excited to have been

asked to participate. I think it indirectly confirmed my use of feminine/feminist subject matter. I am still in contact with many from the original group.

I must admit for networking pursuits, my most important recommendations came from male colleagues. But they were in a better position to help me. Male colleagues never made me feel excluded from the networking in the art world. Back then I usually networked by hanging out with artists, going to openings, having studio visits. Currently, I don't have as many studio visits but I post on Facebook and Instagram and go to my friend's openings.

I didn't feel being a female was a hinderance in the art world but I felt there were definitely way fewer opportunities for women. I never experienced any strong female mentors in the art world however I have mentored a young Korean artist but she had to return to Korea for an arranged marriage.

Younger artists of today I feel are not faced with the same issues I encountered back then. I don't think they have any idea how hard it was. And it has been much easier for me than my mother who was an artist. It was nearly impossible in her time to get anywhere.



janine antoni

I first attended the Women's Group meeting in the early '90s, I think it was started by Devon? Kerri Scharlin? LC Armstrong? I didn't attend too long as it got too big too fast and it became unwieldy! I don't think I presented. I am still in contact with many attendees.

I attended the Women's Group meetings because we felt that women need to be talking to each other about their work especially if the work pertains to women's issues. My expectations from attending were better work, mutual support rather than competitiveness. The Women's Group made me feel like I was part of a community and less

alone, it was important for me to have dialogue with other women as my work is about woman's issues. My experience was positive at first and then it got too crowded and made it hard to have a real dialogue.

Regarding male colleagues helping network versus female colleagues, some male friends were very helpful, and some where not, which is the same as I would say of women most of the time. I felt excluded because I wasn't willing to do some of the things that I saw my male contemporaries do, in that way I excluded myself. Back then in the '90s I networked in the art world by going to openings. I worked for artists. I helped my friends make their art and install their shows. We went to as many shows and lectures as possible and

discussed them with my fellow artists. We recommended each other for studio visits, jobs, and shows. I also worked at the Drawing Center. Currently I do not have much time to network. I try to see my friends' shows. I try to support the people and institutions that have supported me. I try to make the best work I can.

My experience with female mentors is positive, I have many and I continued to experience it. I myself mentor many younger female artists and my advice for them would be that women need to help each other, both in making the work, and in showing the work. The most important thing is not to isolate oneself, but to be in dialogue, find some people to talk too that will tell you the truth.



Carter Hodkins as US artist for Khoj International Workshop in 1993. Carter Hodkins making palm leaf books by collaging images from self help books (*Men Are From Mars, Women From Venus*), the *Kama Sutra*, and the *Starr Report* (Clinton & Monica L).

carter hodgkins

I don't remember my first Women's Group or how long I attended nor who was attending. I attended the meetings because of blatant prejudices in the art world and my expectations from the group were to have awareness and solidarity from women artists. Attending the Women's Group did not have any influence on my work.

I hardly ever felt that my male colleagues helped in networking which made me feel excluded in the art world. My methods back then for networking were openings and having studio visits. Today it's still openings, studio visits, social media and belonging to a "gal group" of women artists.

I do feel being a female was a hinderance in my ability to network in the art world however my experience with the Women's Group was positive. Currently I am not in contact with any of the attendees from the Women's Group.

I myself did not experience any strong female mentors in the art world and I currently do not mentor any young

female artists. If you ask me younger artists are still faced with the same issues that I encountered when I first started out in the art world. However, I would say it is not as bad as the '90s. I think they're more savvy so I am reluctant to give advice. Also being a young artist is a plus more than it was in the '90s.





judith fleishman

Ahhh—ready, set, go—time to go traveling through the dimming dim mists of time . . . Okay, Mr. Peabody let's get into the way-back machine & do a lil' recollection . . . Sometime—yes, eons ago, yes—it was in the last century—was it 1991 . . . ? Was it earlier . . . ? It was—as I now recollect—my unbeknownst then—but I see it now—my own private heyday—the zenith of my not so private illusions & delusions about art & not art, its double—but the infinite possibility of art to transcend—to transform—to be magic, to be experiential—experimental—to enter the eternal—albeit through a back door—still to actively participate in a dialogue of ideas—to enter “herstory”—to hijack art history & to extoll—purify—sanctify—herald—glorify—in whispers—in solitude & shared—the inherent beauty of every irrational gesture—to be a part of an active activating community

of women—sisters—creative sisters/beautiful women—still with the fresh kiss of youth—damp & so green—the dewy kiss of youth upon our still smooth foreheads & moistly parted lips.

I recall the presentations of Drew Shiflett, Lisa Hein, Nicola Tyson, LC Armstorng, Elana Herzog, Lisa Hoke, Janine Antoni, Amy Sillman, Beth Haggart, Jessica Diamond & others whose names elude me. I attended not faithfully—who could ever be faithful anyways—but I attended much as I could given my own agoraphobia—feelings of insecurity—of color bias—each attendance lunging over private fears/feeling I was too old—too fat—not educated—a autodidact to be sure . . . still I attended a number of meetings—in lofts in Soho—in NYC—in Brooklyn (?) Is that true??? Thou time has misted my memory banks & inserted holes into my wholly holy swiss cheese brain-insane in the membrane I was & remain . . . I attended & gathered what courage & sustenance till I could present my own . . . work . . . in slide form . . . remember slides . . . LOL OMG . . . how droll . . .

Why did I attend the Women's Group? Why does the sun rise . . . to find footing—to hear women speak about their ideas—to see their work—to understand better—deeper, fuller what was going on—to be a part of . . . to find myself in community—to feel actual in the morass that is . . . life. I had no expectations other than I knew it would be exciting . . .

I also knew that upon returning home there would be words with my then husband—a player in his own mind—an anarchist with a reputation to protect—he would who would pooh pooh each meeting . . . Again I say LOL yet my experiences were positive and it influenced my work, it gave me permission to have faith in art—art making—to expose, uncover, investigate emotional issues in art—

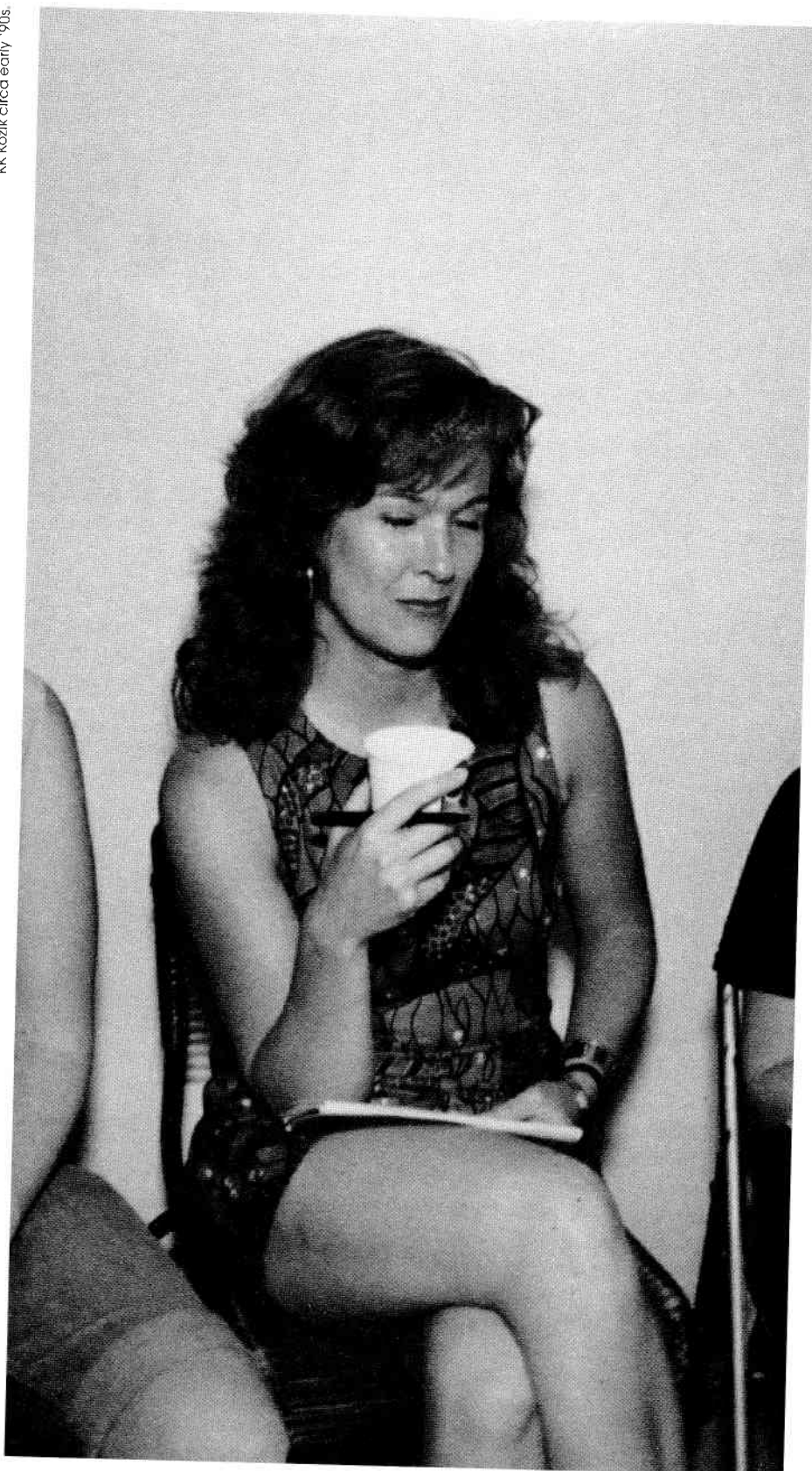
the psychosexual importance of object making—the residue of poetry, the importance of . . . faith.

My methods for networking back then were to see exhibitions on the regular, go to openings, read the trade journals (Artforum, Flash Art, Art in America—& other rags I cannot recall) read criticism in the New York Times, NY Observer—wherever, go to museums, visit my colleagues studios when invited and collaborations. Today (LOL), I now fully & deeply understand how Arthur Rimbaud opted out of Paris & the Parisian (f)art world to become a slave trader/gun runner . . . Opting for the reality of being a real criminal (an OG) versus that fatuous posturing of being a cultural criminal.

The art world is a separate entity form art & art making. Being female being a woman—being the source of shakti is different from being in the art world . . . the art world is laughable—no longer a concern of mine—relegated it along with my Barbies & later dreams of social revolution to a waste basket marked “The Ridiculous Follies of Youth.” I would tell young artists today to make art—don't give a fuck about the (f)art world . . . bypass the gallery system . . . intervene . . . wherever possible . . . in life—in the larger arena—of life—death . . . kisses.



Judith Fleishman at art dinner circa early '90s

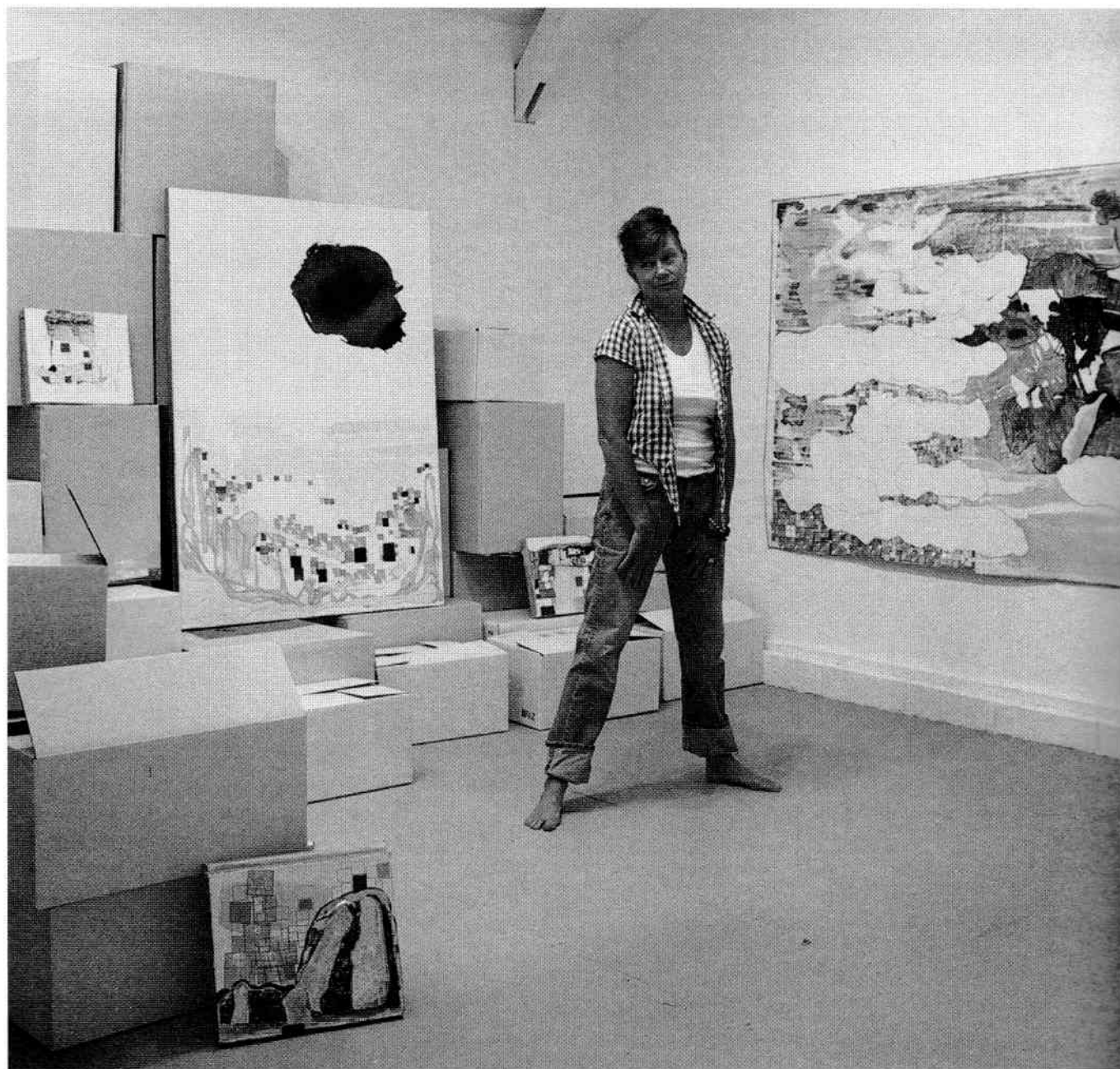


kk kozik

I attended the Women's Group and I remember four in particular: LC Armstrong's, Lisa Hoke's at Threadwaxing space, Janine Antoni at her brother's fabulous place on Broome, and Nicola's at Trial BALLOON. I attended for perhaps two years? This must have been about 1993-1994. I think I presented at Trial BALLOON myself.

I found myself at the Women's Group because I enjoyed the camaraderie and the mental stimulation. I learned a lot and met a lot of women who would go on in their careers to do great things. I think attending the Women's Group helped my work with critical thinking and understanding of women's issues and how they play out in work. It was a positive experience for me and I am still in contact with some members, Marilla Palmer and Nicola Tyson in particular.

When it came to male colleagues helping me in networking pursuits I felt a bit like a token. Enjoyed and included to some extent but never really given a leg up. Being a female in the art world was a bit of a hinderance. My networking back then was: studio visits, curating—White Columns, ES vandal, New Observations, Women's Group, writing on art for 10+ publications. Now I go to openings, use social media, and do studio visits.



theresa hackett

I was a member of the Women's Group and attended several times, it was maybe 1994 and at Carol's (don't remember her last name), Broome Street loft. I attended the meetings until the original group disbanded. I actually still attend a newer version of the group.

I presented at the Women's Group in my studio in DUMBO, 247 Water Street in 1994. I also remember attending Janet Biggs's and Elizabeth Berdann's at Kustera Gallery and so many more.

At the time my friend Maureen McQuillan told me about the Women's Group. I needed to talk about art and be in a community, it was maybe 1993. My expectations were to just have a dialogue and to meet new friends which I did to this day. It affected my work by making me push harder. I made some of my best friends from that time and it was a positive experience for me. I mentor younger female artists whenever I can.

I don't feel excluded in networking from male artists. I just don't really see that many opportunities for mid career

older artists that are female sometimes. Back then I networked by phone, mail and word of mouth. Today I do everything from open studios to aggressive social media.

Regarding younger female artists today, what I would tell them is that other artists can give you more than anyone else in the art world; support and criticism which makes you stronger. I restarted the group last year and Elizabeth Berdann does the emailing so we just had the last one at my studio. We have had about five or six meetings. We are still happening.



nicola tyson

I attended quite a few of the Women's Group meetings. I don't remember my first one—it might have been LC Armstrong, KK Kozik, or Amy Sillman and was probably sometime in the Fall of 1992.

I don't remember clearly how many meetings I attended, partly because I was running a project space from my loft in Soho at the time called Trial BALLOON, with my partner Angela Lyras (not an artist, and didn't attend any of the meetings). We were showcasing women artists only, with a particular emphasis on the emerging lesbian subculture at that time—artists like Nicole Eisenman (current McArthur Genius Award winner), Daphne Fitzpatrick, Sarah Rapson and GB Jones.

I also exhibited the work of other Brits who had recently arrived in NYC like me, such as Siobahn Liddell and Josephine Pryde. I went to art school (Central St Martins School of Art) with Josephine—she was shortlisted for the Turner Prize in the UK recently. Neither of these artists presented to the Women's Group, as far as I can remember, but like I say it blurs a bit because it was a very politically active time and there was always a lot going on. I showed the work of KK Kozik and Marilla Palmer and Amanda Trager (now a filmmaker but then a painter)—

all of whom I think presented their work independently to the group at some point though. Additionally some artists from Europe such as Kirisi Mikkola, a Fin living in Berlin. She subsequently moved to NYC and we became fast friends. She may have presented her work—she has been living in Germany again for the last decade.

I presented my work in 1993 during a show of my own new paintings at Trial BALLOON. I remember the artist Jutta Koether was there, though I don't remember if she ever presented to the group. Sadly I did not document my presentation. I remember KK Kozik, LC Armstrong, possibly Pamela Arm, Amy Sillman, possibly photographers Tanya Marcuse and Ann Daly, attended who I also showed at Trial BALLOON.

The reason I attended the Women's Group was because I had moved to NYC, on graduating in 1989 to be with my partner Angela, who I had met on a visit in 1988. Additionally, I was drawn to the art scene in NYC—it was so politically active and sophisticated, especially regarding feminist issues, which I had studied a great deal at art school, in a self-educated way. The London art scene was very small and a bit off the map until the YBAs (Damien Hirst & Co) reinvented and expanded exponentially it in the early '90s. Although I had studied painting, I had been fascinated by the work of Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger, and Jenny Holzer—to name just three groundbreaking women artists of the '80s—and wanted to be where that work was being made. It also felt like there would be more opportunities for me as an artist—to make work and be taken seriously.

My expectations from the meetings were to have moral support and to get to know other artists with similar interests and ambitions. I had left my peer group behind in London so I was eager to develop/find a community of artists. The experience was positive and supportive and helpfully critical where necessary.

I networked back then by going to openings, parties, events and running the project space Trial BALLOON. We were one of a number of artist-run project spaces that sprang up in the early

'90s to better reflect what was happening in the artistic community, and to give work a chance of exposure that the commercial scene wouldn't touch. We were the only "women-only" space and we took this stance with a kind of attitude and humor—rather than in a the politically separatist manner of the feminist movement twenty years prior. We did a readings series too so we hooked up with the downtown writing scene and many creative alliances were formed during those years. Kirsi Mikkola—an artist who I showed at Trial BALLOON, was a invaluable studio buddy and critic back then. Nicole Eisenman was an inspiration.

I did feel excluded by males back then for all the usual reasons. Women being viewed as having less credibility—creative authority and value—than male artists. Ironically, in addition to regular sexism, there was a very tight and supportive male gay network—supportive of women too, but naturally more so of other gay men—and that was one of the motivating factors for Trial BALLOON emphasizing support for the developing lesbian subculture at that time.

Now I network by going to openings occasionally and other events. I have lived upstate in the mid Hudson Valley in New Paltz for 15 years so it's difficult to be part of a scene that requires any spontaneity. Social media has been an immense plus in the ability to be part of a community whilst not actually being there in person. I still keep up with some members of the group not closely, but we meet up occasionally and follow each others progress.

I mentor other female artists only through them encountering my work, either in 'real life' or on social media but not in person. I don't teach but I do have a few artist friends who are in their 30s.

For female artists today it's not anywhere nearly as bad as 30 years ago, but the sexism still lurks there, though less openly. Women artists don't get paid as much as an equivalent male artist or get the museum shows, publications, etc. My advice would just be keep pushing, don't settle for second best. Shout louder, demand more—all easier said than done!



drew shiflett

I went to my first Women's Group meeting in the early '90s—1993? I'm not sure what year it was. I went for as long as it lasted, sometime in the 90's. I attended for networking purposes as I had no base of friends in NYC, so the Women's Group was helpful to be a little more connected

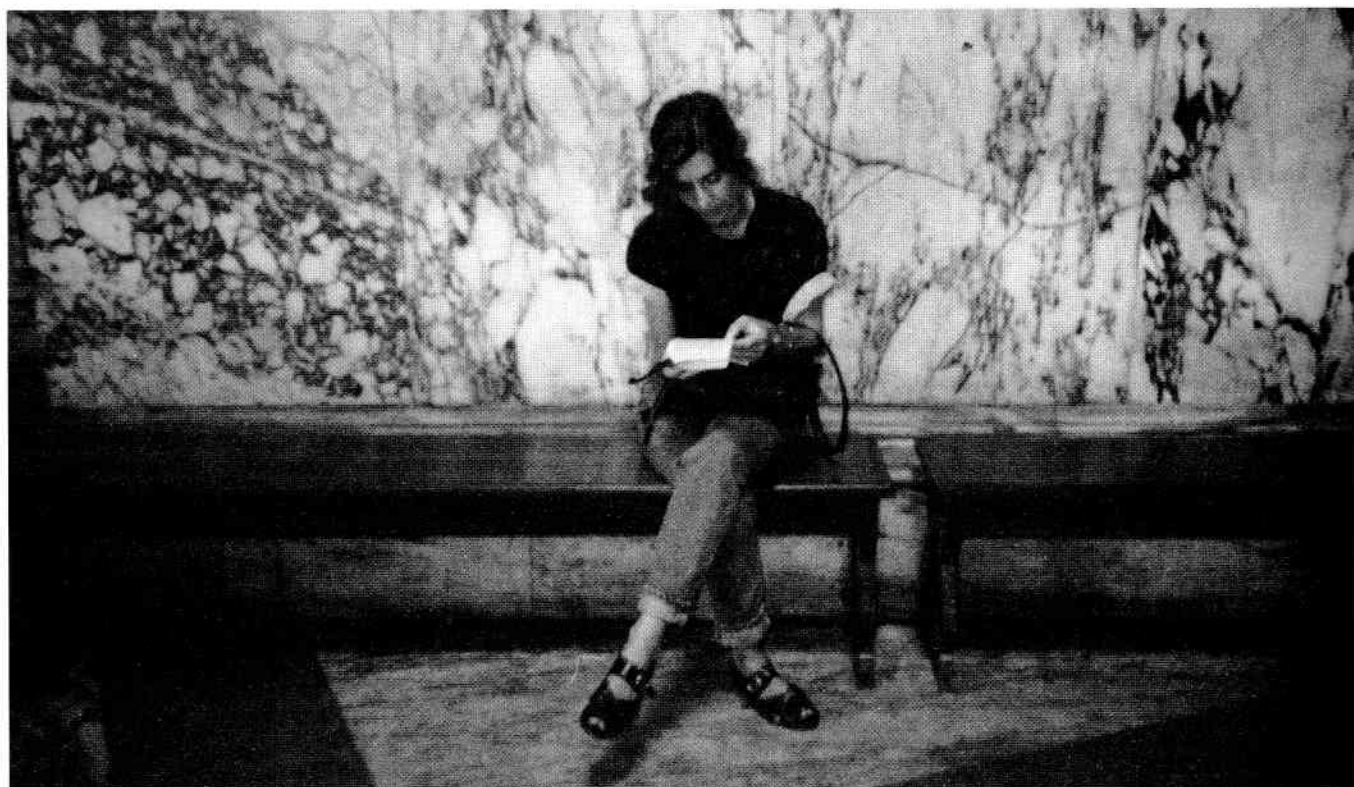
to the art world. I was also curious to see other artists' work. At the time my networking consisted mainly of going to openings, mailings, and studio visits. Sometime male artists helped me. I didn't particularly feel excluded from male artists. They just seemed to be in another world—not quite as easy to communicate with. I didn't feel being a female was a hinderance in the art world, the only hinderance was myself. Today I network by gallery openings, social media, email, Facebook, shows, occasional socializing outside of openings, occasional studio visits.

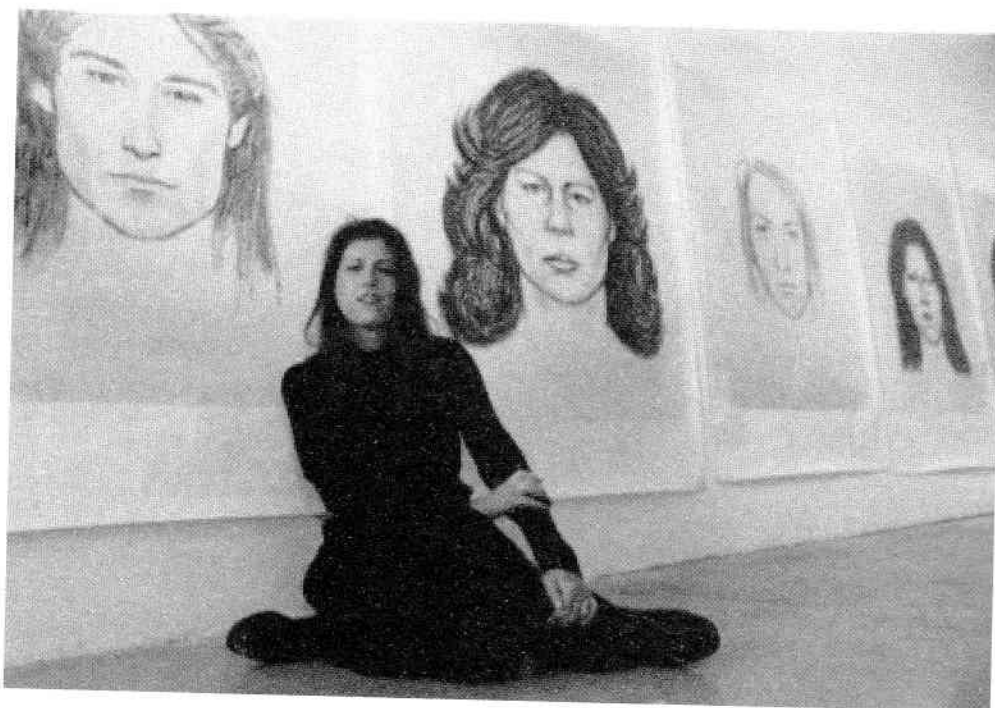
I did a presentation of my work at my studio which was 4-6 White St. NYC at the time. I remember attending the presentations of Janine Antoni, Lisa Hein, Janet Biggs and many other artists. I remember seeing Jessica Stockholder, Elana Herzog, Lisa Hoke, Katherine Bowling, Devon Dikeou, Janet Goleas, Emily Feinstein, Anne Chu, Holly Miller and many other artists at these meetings. My experiences were positive in that it was very helpful to have a base of artist friends. It was much easier to meet other artists after I was involved in the woman's group. There

were also some negative aspects to the group, but in the long run, the negative aspects were insignificant. I would say the Women's Group had no influence on my work, however I am still in contact today with many the attendees.

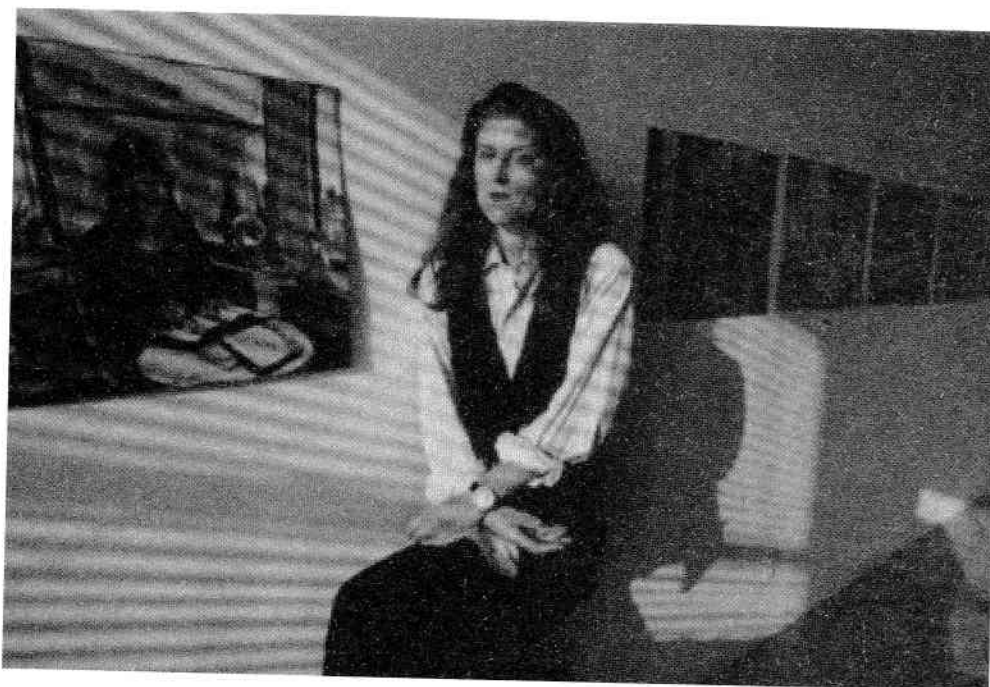
I wouldn't say I have had strong women mentors in the art world but the women have been helpful. As for me, I try to be helpful, but again, I wouldn't use the word "mentor," except I was officially a "mentor" for one female artist who was involved in NYFA (nothing to do with the Women's Group).

For women artists today I would tell them that I think it's probably different now, because it's so difficult for younger artists (men and women) to live in NYC or Brooklyn. My advice would be to hang in there for the long term, no matter what is happening in their career. Each artist's career is different, so it's not always helpful to compare yourself to your peers. That is, if the young artists love making art, are obsessed with their work and can't imagine doing anything else, they should think of art as a life-long commitment. If not, it might be best to try another field.





Kerri Scharlin at her art exhibition, "Wanted" 1993 at Postmasters Gallery, Soho, NYC.



Kerri Scharlin in her studio in the early '90s.

kerri scharlin

The first Women's Group meeting I remember going to was probably at Janine Antoni's studio. I think Janine was presenting, it was probably around 1992 or 93. I attended for two years maybe. I remember attending the presentations Elana Herzog, Lisa Hein,

KK Kozik, Nicola Tyson, and Jessica Stockholder. In addition I remember seeing LC Armstrong, Natalie Rivera, and Devon Dikeou at these meetings.

I decided to attend the Women's Group out of curiosity and the desire to connect, I had no expectations of the group. It was a positive experience and although it did not influence my art in the '90s I feel like

it informs my current project.

Back then for networking in the art world I used to go to openings, dinners, and bars with colleagues (now it's mainly openings). I must admit when it came to networking I had more issues with feeling competitive with other women, less so with men. Today I don't have much contact with the attendees.



katherine bowling

I did attend at least 10 meetings, maybe more. The first one was with LC Armstrong, the first time I ever met her. Lisa Hoke had invited me. Lisa is an old friend from art school at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, VA. The date was 1990 or '91? Over the course of the next year or two I attended the meetings. Can't remember how often we met but probably once a month. I did present my work once. It was the first time I had publicly talked about my work before a group in any place other than school.

At the Women's Group I remembering seeing Lisa Hoke, Janine Antoni, Jessica Stockholder, LC Armstrong, Amy Sillman, Brenda Zlamany, Drew Shiflett, maybe . . . Janet Biggs, Elana Herzog, Elena Sisto, Sharon Lawless? I attended

the meetings as it was a supportive peer group to talk about our individual experience in the art world and our work. No one was really showing much at the time. I also expected to learn about other's work and make some friends.

In the early '90s networking for me consisted of going to friend's studios, going to openings, going to an occasional lucky artist residency or through social occasions. Now I do pretty much the same as I did then. Networking is not a strong attribute of mine as I am a loner. I observed that my male friends were just as helpful or not as my female friends when it came to networking. Being a woman in the art world you just had to carry more baggage and heavier loads to get your art out.

My experiences in the Women's Group were really positive! It gave one confidence in a safe and supportive environment for talking about one's work.

I am still in contact with almost all of the people as they are either close friends or friendly peers. Many of the group have gone on to become quite well known, so I don't see them as often. It influenced my work as the Women's Group gave me confidence and helped me to express my self clearly.

I did not have one particular female mentor but rather just the support of my friends. We all pulled each other up with our own rises and commitment to our practices. As for me being a mentor to younger women artists, I would say no to any particular individual but again just as a group.

There are certainly more opportunities for females in the art world but although things might have been less open in the early '90s one just had to work harder and be more focused in their work. I never felt that I couldn't do anything because of my gender. I just had to work harder, fair or not, that was the way it was.

shelley marlow

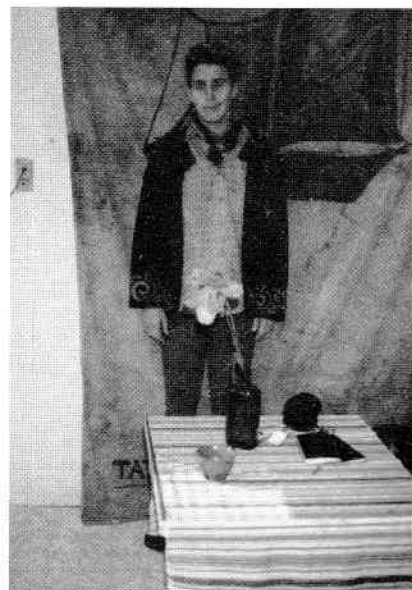
I attended the Women's Group many times. Janine Antoni presented her work at the first Women's Group meeting that I attended. I presented when I had a show at Trial BALLOON in October 1992.

I attended the Women's Group for great socializing and the networking that went on. I also went for the interesting conversation. It was a mostly positive experience and the dialogues were often inspiring. In the early '90s I networked by attending openings with friends. I often made new

friends at openings and after parties. Now I network by social media, attending friends openings and showing work occasionally in between my literary career.

Being a woman in the art world back then, some gallerists were less interested. My male colleagues helped my networking but I did also feel excluded from males. I am still in contact with most of the attendees of the Women's Group.

If I had to give advice to the younger female artists of today I would tell them to persevere and support each other rather than compete.



Shelley Marlow in her studio, circa early 90's.



Shelley Marlow at an artist residency in the early '90s.



natalie rivera

I remember attending the first Women's Group Meeting in either 1991 or '92. It was LC Armstrong at her studio on North 11th St. in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. I attended the meetings for around two to four years. Although I am not an artist, I presented at a meeting more for reviewing feminist art theory which was still a new subject for me back then and I felt I needed to learn more from the women artists around me than the books I read.

At these meetings I remember seeing the presentations of LC Armstrong, Devon Dikeou, Judith Fleishman, Janine Antoni, Holly Miller, Andrea Zittel, Beth Haggart, Lisa Hein, Elana Herzog, and Nicola Tyson. I particularly remember Devon Dikeou taking us through the streets of Soho and still

remembering to this day about the first working Otis elevator in New York City, I remember Nicola Tyson and Trial BALLOON, Judith Fleishman and her brutal honesty about her childhood and how it influenced her work.

I attended the Women's Group to network and learn more about the subject matter of the attendees. I was a freelance curator and the Women's Group was ideal for getting ideas for exhibitions and finding new artists to do studio visits with and eventually exhibit. It was a positive experience and I developed lifelong friendships from those meetings. At the time for networking in the early '90s I went to gallery openings, museum openings, studio visits, art dinners and all around socializing at bars. Now its mainly gallery openings, social media, internet, etc. The men were inclusive in networking with me to a point. I had to

go to quite a few bars and strip joints back in the day.

Since I was more in the gallery scene I had some strong female mentors but not artists, more gallerists and art academics such as Linda Stux, Barbara Rose, and Sandra Gering.

For the young women artists of today I think they still have some of the same issues however it's a more open world and equality is expected, even demanded. I feel the internet and social media make it easier for them. My advice would be to go to galleries and art venues that you respect, try to socialize with their artists and staff and see if you can finagle yourself in that way. I would also remind them to document their journey and their art community as you will come to eventually realize that you are making and living in history.