

WOMEN'S CAUCUS FOR ART

HONOR AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN THE VISUAL ARTS

HONOR AWARDS 2004

Emma Amos

Jo Baer

Michi Itami

Helen Levitt

Yvonne Rainer

2004 National Lifetime Achievement Awards

Wednesday, February 18th
The Red Lion Hotel On 5th Avenue, Seattle

Welcome and Introduction

Noreen Dean Dresser
President, Women's Caucus for Art

Introduction of Honorees

Emma Amos
Introduced by Dena Muller

Jo Baer
Introduced by Judy Stein

Michi Itami
Introduced by Nori Sato

Helen Levitt
Introduced by Vicki Harris

Yvonne Rainer
Introduced by Carrie Lambert

President's Awards

Elizabeth A. Sackler
Tara Donovan

Women's Caucus for Art

Statement of Purpose

We are committed to:

Education about the contributions of women

Opportunities for the exhibition of women's work

Publication of women's writing about art

Inclusion of women in the history of art

Professional equity for all

Respect individuals without discrimination

Support for legislation relevant to our goals

The Women's Caucus for Art, an affiliate society of the College Art Association, faces a contemporary America in which the broadest possible spectrum of professional women is involved in visual culture. We comprise art historians, museum staff, curators, cultural theorists and artists of all media. Our local chapters connect the varied regional and cultural landscapes of America. Women's professional lives are enriched by the diversity of a national network that represents their various concerns.

For over a quarter of a century, we have laid the foundational path for women achieving their visions in text, artifact, and design. Our conferences, workshops and exhibitions inform the ongoing dialogue concerning gender. The most singular expression of our efforts is the Women's Caucus for Art National Lifetime Achievement Awards.

The National Lifetime Achievement Awards are our signature in history of the value of these women and their contributions. These women lead lives that enlighten our national artistic vision and embrace life in all its complexity. Their actions in choreography, printmaking, painting, sculpture, art theory, curation and performance have inscribed in our hearts and minds important insights into our age.

Welcome to our feminist heritage.

Noreen Dean Dresser

WCA President 2002-2004

Foreword and Acknowledgements

2003 is the 26th year that the Women's Caucus for Art has honored the great achievements of women in art, art history, and our wider visual culture. Each year, the Selection Committee culls a handful of women for Award from over two hundred highly qualified nominees. While we necessarily weigh their relative artistic, curatorial, or scholarly talents, we also consider how nominees' unique accomplishments have extended creative thought beyond the often myopic aperture of the art world's power élite.

The WCA Lifetime Achievement Awards were first established in 1979 to rally social change and artistic growth with the belief that visual arts institutions—WCA itself, CAA, universities, museums, galleries, editorial boards and presses—will overcome the inertia to social change only if the individuals who run them commit to it. Collective movement and individual leadership go hand in hand. That being said, the leaders who impact organizations don't always come from within. If you wanted to acquire the personal qualities to serve as a solitary beacon for the larger group, you might muster as much perseverance and courage, as you would covet far-sightedness and creativity. This year's Honorees have those personal traits. We celebrate Emma Amos, Jo Baer, Michi Itami, Helen Levitt, and Yvonne Rainer for their altruistic spirit. We relish their gutsiness in breaking away from the status quo as much as we admire their artistic talent, intelligence, and individual accomplishments. They have been a joy to follow. Talent also attracts good company. Each of the five Honorees will be introduced by a remarkable woman in her own right — Dena Muller, Judith Stein, Norie Sato, Vicki Harris, and Carrie Lambert. Special thanks also go to Moira

Roth for her catalogue entry about Michi Itami's work. These women deserve our special appreciation for their work in support of the Catalogue and the Awards Ceremony.

In addition, we give our hearty thanks for all the behind-the-scenes work for the Awards—WCA President Noreen Dean Dresser has gone beyond the call of duty in numerous ways, Catalogue Designer and National Administrator Karin Luner has given her attention to every detail, Vice President of Development Jessica Ramsey and members of the Philadelphia Chapter have raised funds for the event, and Conference Chair Jennifer Colby and the entire WCA Pacific Region have graciously hosted the WCA National Conference in Seattle.

I also would like to acknowledge the meaningful work of the entire Selection Committee and our Past Chair Eleanor Dickinson for her valuable insight into this process. And finally but not least, I thank everyone who has financially contributed to the Ceremony and Catalogue.

Your support kindles the fire for social change.

Susan King Obarski

Chair

Lifetime Achievement Awards Committee

The Committee

Susan Obarski

Howardena Pindell

Dr. Annie Shaver-Crandell

June Wayne

Ruth Weisberg

National Women's Caucus for Art Past LTAA Honorees

New York 2003

Eleanor Dickinson, Suzi Gablik
Grace Glueck, Ronne Hartfield
Eleanor Munro, Nancy Spero

Philadelphia 2002

Camille Billops, Judith Brodsky,
Muriel Magenta, Linda Nochlin
Marilyn J. Stokstad

Chicago 2001

Joyce Aiken, Dorothy Gillespie
Marie Johnson Calloway
Thalia Gouma-Peterson
Wilhemina Holladay
Ellen Lanyon, Ruth Waddy

Los Angeles 1999

Judy Bacca, Judy Chicago
Linda Frye Burnham
Evangeline Montgomery
Arlene Raven, Barbara T. Smith

Boston 1996

Bernice Bing, Alicia Craig Faxon
Elsa Honig Fine, Howardena Pindell
Marianna Pineda, Kay WalkingStick

Philadelphia 1997

Jo Hanson, Sadie Krauss Kriebel
Jaune Quick-To-See Smith
Maira Roth, Kay Sekimachi

San Antonio 1995

Irene Clark, Jacqueline Clipsham
Alessandra Comini, Jean Lacy
Amalia Mesa Bains, Celia Muñoz

New York City 1994

Mary Adams
Maria Enriquez de Allen

Beverly Pepper, Faith Ringgold
Rachel Rosenthal
Charlotte Streifer Rubenstein

Seattle 1993

Ruth Asawa, Shifra M. Goldman
Nancy Graves, Gwen Knight
Agueda Salazar Martinez
Emily Waheneka

Chicago 1992

Vera Berdich, Paula Gerard
Lucy Lewis, Louise Noun
Margaret Tafoya, Anna Tate

Washington DC 1991

Theresa Bernstein,
Mildred Constantine
Otellie Loloma, Mine Okubo
Delilah Pierce

New York City 1990

Ilse Bing, Elizabeth Layton
Helen Serger, May Stevens
Pablita Velarde

San Francisco 1989

Bernarda Bryson Shahn
Margret Craver, Clare Leighton
Samella Sanders Lewis, Betye Saar

Houston 1988

Margaret Burroughs,
Dorothy Hood, Jane Teller
Miriam Schapiro, Edith Standen

Boston 1987

Grace Hartigan, Agnes Mongan
Maud Morgan, Honore Sharrer
Elizabeth Talford Scott
Beatrice Wood

New York City 1986

Nell Blaine, Leonora Carrington

Sue Fuller, Lois Mailou Jones
Dorothy Miller

Los Angeles 1985/Toronto 1984

Minna Citron, Clyde Connell
Eleanor Raymond
Joyce Treiman, Barbara Morgan
June Wayne, Rachel Wischnitzer

Philadelphia 1983

Edna Andrade, Dorothy Dehner
Lotte Jacobi, Ellen Johnson
Stella Kramrisch
Lenore Tawney, Pecolia Warner

New York City 1982

Bernice Abbott, Elsie Driggs
Elizabeth Gilmore Holt
Katharine Kuh, Claire Zeisler
Charnion von Wiegand

San Francisco 1981

Ruth Bernhard, Adelyn Breeskin
Elizabeth Catlett, Sari Dienes
Claire Falkenstein
Helen Lundeberg

Washington DC

1980 Alternate Awards

Bella Abzug, Sonia Johnson
Sister Theresa Kane
Gloria Steinem,
Grace Paley, Rosa Parks

New Orleans 1980

Anni Albers, Louise Bourgeois
Carolyn Durieux, Ida Kohlmeyer
Lee Krasner

Washington D.C. 1979

Isabel Bishop, Selma Burke
Alice Neel, Louise Nevelson
Georgia O'Keeffe

EMMA AMOS



Photograph by © Becket Logan

We honor you, Emma Amos, activist, author, teacher and artist of multiple media.

Your career charted the transformation of self that drew new rules for empowerment. Your work filled the subtle hues of gender and politics, with insight.

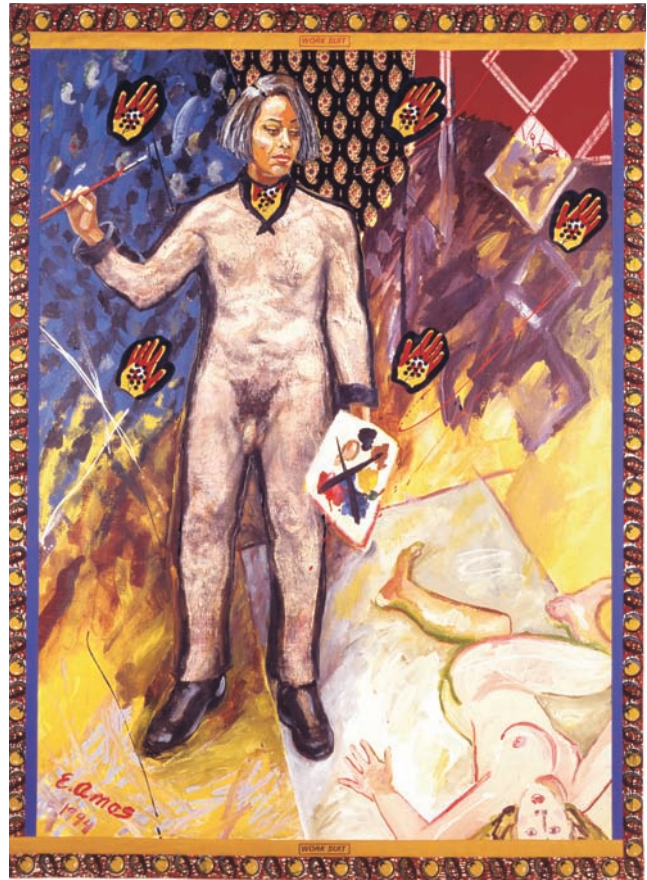
Emma Amos

by Dena Muller

The way some children think “doctor” or “firefighter”, Emma Amos was sure she wanted to be an artist. Her talent was recognized even as a child growing up in Atlanta in the 1940s and ‘50s. Between the promise of the gifted girl-child and the convictions of the accomplished black woman artist's a career that has challenged the contemporary art world and helped to change it for the better.

Amos’ work gives voice to several essential concerns of the last fifty years: the blurring of boundaries between craft and art; the undeniable necessity for racial equity in both the art world and society at large, and the assertion of feminism. Always painting and drawing, Amos learned printmaking and weaving through her studies at Antioch College in Ohio, the Central School of Art in London, and New York University. She further developed her skills working for textile master Dorothy Liebes, and at Robert Blackburn’s Printmaking Workshop. In the late 1970s she created and

was featured in 'Show of Hands' for WGBH-TV in Boston, a program series about the intersections between craft and art. Using the program to explore the fine art applications of traditional crafts, Amos began to use these explorations in her own work. This successful mixing of seemingly disparate media produced the richness of her material process today. Works like "Tightrope" and "Work Suit", both completed in 1994, reveal a flawless inclusion of painted canvas, woven fabrics – often her own weaving or traditional African patterns – and printed elements collages into the compositions, underscoring the political and autobiographical content of each piece. After finishing Antioch and London Central and returning to Atlanta where she had her first solo at a white gallery in 1960, Amos arrived in New York City. She was ready to work as a professional artist and decided to further her graduate studies at New York University while working for Liebes. It was during this time that Amos re-encountered an influence from her Atlanta youth, professor Hale Woodruff, and was invited to join the group of black artists called Spiral. As the youngest member and the only woman in the group which included Romare Bearden, Norman Lewis, and Charles Alston, among others, Amos knew that her membership was pivotal and was ready to participate. She made it assertively clear at her first meeting that she wasn't "there to make coffee" and intended to contribute to their ongoing discussions on art and race. It was through this discourse that Amos left her schooling in Abstract Expressionism and returned to the figurative in her work. She explains "our discussions about race made me understand that, like Bearden, I couldn't address it in my work without using the body." Amos consis-



Work Suit

Acrylic on linen canvas – Amos wears photo transferred painting of artist Lucien Freud's 'skin' from his self-portrait painting in the nude with palette.

African fabric collage and borders, c.1994

74 1/2" x 54 1/2" Amos # 573

Photograph by © Becket Logan

tent political statement in Amos' work is her use of the body as a critique of white male artists' use of the dark body from before the Orientalists, to Manet, Picasso, the early German Expressionists, and on to A. R. Penck, Gilbert & George, and others. Amos' early failures in securing a teaching position in the white male-dominated art schools led her to teach, first at New York's Dalton School and then in the 70's, at the Newark School of Industrial and Fine Arts. As Amos' control of her materials and subject matter deepened, her academic position did as well. A Professor at the Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, where she has taught since 1980, Amos' feminism was shaped through her interactions with her students. She saw the disparities in the opportunities in art offered male and female graduates and saw that women artists experienced a clear disadvantage in a market-driven art world. She championed alternative art spaces, having important mid-career shows at venues like Art in General, The Studio Museum in Harlem, and Art Resources Transfer (A.R.T.) as well as showing her work in major museums.

Her simultaneous attention to the issues of race and gender became her focus in the studio and in groups like Heresies Magazine, among others. Amos' career is defined today by some clear measures of success: her art collection, looms, and studio workspace; her work as a scholar which provides her with the chance to write, curate exhibitions, and to reach young artists through her work as a Governor of the Skowhegan School in Maine; and, crucially, that her work has been widely exhibited and written about.

Amos explains, "the most important accomplishment of my career is discovering that I had a voice, and that I have had the opportunity to have people hear that voice."



Measuring Measuring

Acrylic on linen canvas, photo transfers and African strip woven borders with photography

84" h x 70" w, c. 1995 Amos # 606

Collection Birmingham Museum of Art

Photograph by © Becket Logan

Biography

Emma Amos was born in Atlanta and has lived in New York since 1960. Her work encompasses painting, printmaking, weaving, photography, writing, and teaching. She has lectured widely in the United States and abroad, is a Governor of the Skowhegan School, Maine and is a Professor II at the Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University, New Jersey. In the 1960s, Amos was the only woman and youngest member of Spiral, a group of black artists that included Romare Bearden, Norman Lewis, and Hale Woodruff.

In the 1970s, Amos commuted to Boston to co-host a television series on art and craft that she originated and wrote for WGBH TV.

In the 1980s Amos was an editor and President of Heresies, the feminist magazine. A large retrospective of her work was travelled nationally by The College of Wooster, Ohio in 1993. The exhibition included free-hanging tapestry-like paintings with fragments of Amos's weavings bordered by African fabrics, and a set of 55 watercolor portraits of her women artist friends called The Gift. The portraits were painted from sittings of Miriam Schapiro, Mae Stevens, Allison Saar, Faith Ringgold, and Camille Billops among others. Amos's innovative art explores race, politics, and gender and has been featured in numerous books, videos and journals.

Her works are in many collections including the Museum of Modern Art, the Wadsworth Athenaeum, the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Library of Congress, and the Birmingham Museum of Art. Her awards include an honorary degree from the College of Wooster, grants from the NEA and the New York Foundation for the Arts, a Rockefeller Bellagio fellowship, and the Brandywine 2002 James Van Der Zee Award for Lifetime Achievement.



Does Black Rub Off?
Oil on linen, 90" h x 56" w, 1999
Collection, the Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, GA
Photograph by © Becket Logan

JO BAER



We honor you, Jo Baer, artist and theoretician. You added to our fundamental understanding of space and the power to define painting. With a structuralist mindset, you continue to pose new potentials for meaning in myth.

“What becomes a legend most?”

by Judith Stein

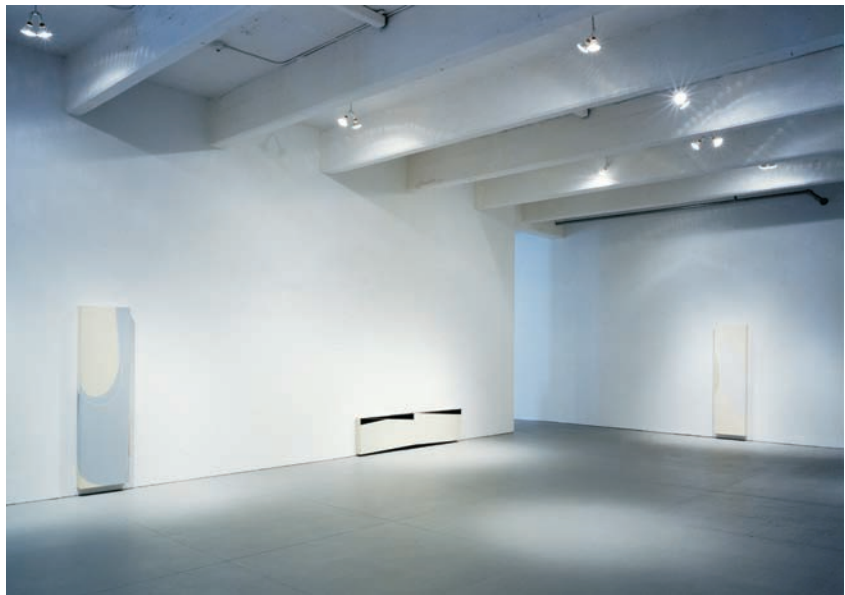
This caption accompanied a highly successful ad campaign in the sixties, in which glamour-pusses such as Lauren Bacall and Marlene Dietrich preened for the camera wearing Blackgama mink coats. But if the executives handling that account had really been on the ball, they would have pictured the painter Jo Baer as well. Her absence from that ad series notwithstanding, Jo Baer is a legendary figure: what other woman had her work acquired by MoMA and the Guggenheim Museum within six years of moving to New York and within eight years of starting to paint; had dared to go mano-a-mano, intellectually speaking, with the irascible Donald Judd, and been shunned by him and his influential friends for her efforts.

Art critic Peter Schjeldahl has written of the sixties, which he termed the “decade of wonder”, that “artists of the

time can be divided into those who made definitions, those who undermined definitions, and those who found seams of individual expression in the shifting, grinding fault zone between". He placed the brilliant maverick Jo Baer in this third category along with painters Brice Marden, Robert Mangold and Robert Ryman. Committed to an abstract language of form in the sixties and early seventies, Jo Baer challenged herself to find new ways to explore the subtleties of perception in sequential series of symmetrical paintings with dark bands framing light centers and compositions of sensual, colored shapes that wrapped around the sides of her canvases. Working reductively to create masterful, transcendent paintings in the style that Thomas McEvilley has termed "the metaphysical monochrome", Baer was arguably the most acclaimed woman artist of her generation. Several months after the Whitney Museum organized a retrospective of her paintings in 1975, she moved to Europe, relinquishing abstraction to work with images in a style she had begun in New York. An intrepid explorer of ideas and aesthetic possibilities, Baer left the US at the height of her career, for which the New York art world never quite forgave her.

Writing about the "rare pleasure" of seeing her early work at the Dia Art Foundation's retrospective of 2002, reviewer Jim Long noted that "Baer discovered unique territory, made it hers, inhabited it for a time, and moved on". Since moving

abroad, she has been mining recognizable images as the raw material for her painting. You may already know this about Jo Baer's career. But there are aspects of her pioneering practice that you likely don't know, namely her status as a performance artist a vast le lettre. Picture Jo Baer in Los Angeles in the late fifties – she's one cool chick dashing about on her Harley 650cc, sometimes garbed in pearls, jeans and a leather jacket. Keenly aware of the manly



*Installation view from the exhibition "The Minimalist Years, 1960-1975"
Dia Center for the Arts, NYC 9/12/02 - 6/15/03
Photo: Bill Jacobson. Courtesy Dia Art Foundation*

stud culture, ruling the LA art world in 1959, she chose to protest it in a way that presages Judy Chicago and the feminist performance art of the seventies. She once attended an opening of an all-male art exhibition wearing a men's undershirt, a pair of blue satin boxer's trunks, and high, lace-up shoes. Protruding from the crotch of her shorts were two red satin balls she had fashioned for herself. After sashaying in through the gallery door, she boldly announced, "Okay guys, do I have enough balls to be in a show here?"

Although the immediate answer was no, she wasn't inclined to take that for an answer for long. Within a few years Baer had penetrated the men's club environment of the art world, her fresh new art garnering respect and attention. What becomes a legend most? This award from the Women's Caucus for Art is a most fitting and becoming tribute to one of the great American painters of our age.



*Testament of the Powers That Be (Where Trees Turn to Sand,
Residual Colours Stain the Lands)*
83cm x 153cm, 2001

Biography

In 1929, Jo Baer was born in Seattle, the site of this year's WCA honor awards. After completing graduate work in psychology at the New School for Social Research in New York, she began her career as an artist in Los Angeles in 1953. Seven years later, she returned to New York where she became a key participant in the Minimalist art movement.

Her paintings were included with works by Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, Robert Morris, and Sol LeWitt in many of the first Minimalist art exhibitions in New York in the early 1960s.

Her unwavering commitment to painting as a radical art form brought her a one-person exhibition as early as 1966 at the Fischbach Gallery in New York.

In 1975, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York held a mid-career retrospective of her work. In 1999, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam held a large retrospective of her work. Recently the Dia Center for the Arts in New York also held a major exhibition of over 25 minimalist paintings and prints that she completed from 1960 to 1975.

In search of more substantive art, Baer exiled herself from the New York art world with a move to Ireland in 1975. By 1983, she took a stance against abstract art as an a vast-garde form with a polemical article in *Art in America*.

Since 1984, she has lived and worked in Amsterdam. Baer continues to develop the formal content of her paintings in a quasi-figurative manner that she considers radical figuration – without pre-eminence of image or space.



Installation views, Stedelijk Museum 1999

*left: Stacked Horizontal, Dyptich-Aluminum, 1966-74
152,4 x 213,3cm (2x) Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery*

right: The Old Lie, 1997-98

*Dyptich, left: 208 x 148cm, right: 180 x 316cm
Courtesy Paul Andriess Amsterdam*

MICHI ITAMI



We honor you, Michi Itami, director, ceramicist, printmaker, and professor.
You have directed our attention to the subtle distinctions of being and belonging.

Michi Itami

by Moira Roth

Michi Itami, born in California in 1938, is a most distinguished and original artist with a very active national and international showing record. Equally she has been a most generous and engaged member of many art communities and organizations, and has had a long career as a deeply committed and inspiring teacher. For some twelve years, she taught at the San Francisco Art Institute, and then in 1988 began to teach at The City College of New York, CUNY, where she is now a full professor and Director of the M.F.A. Program.

She has shown her work in many group exhibitions and recently has had solo exhibitions in Seoul, Korea (1992), New Delhi, India (1999), and New York (2003), at A.I.R. Gallery.

For years, she was on the steering committee of Godzilla, that admirably feisty Asian-American art network in New

York City. She is an energetic member of the A.I.R. women artists' cooperative, and of the International Board of Directors of Art in General. Of great significance has been Itami's sustained work with the College Art Association. She served on its Board of Directors (1994-1999), was the head of the Board's Cultural Diversity Committee, and finally was elected the Vice President of CAA (1998-1999).

Itami learned printmaking from Misch Kohn, who was her colleague at Hayward State. Her academic training was first in literature (B.A., UCLA, 1959, and Columbia University, NYC – graduate work) and later in ceramics/design (M.A, UC, Berkeley, 1971). Her early prints, beginning around 1972-1974, are astonishingly subtle and marvelously elusive as they hover between abstraction and veiled allusions to a natural world. Just as she had fallen in love immediately with the print medium when she first came across it in the early 1970s, she was to fall in love around 1990 with the myriad possibilities inherent in computer-generated prints.

Since then, Itami's work with the computer has allowed her to plunge directly into imagery. Earlier on, she had already drawn from material on her father (he had a huge collection of photographs of himself and his world) in a series of photo etchings, but this new medium of digital printmaking through offset-lithography and Iris prints offered Itami many more possibilities in the way of literally layering the images, and interspersing this rich history more fully. Born here, her father was educated in Japan, and then returned to America where he and his family were interned (Manzanar); he volunteered for the US Army, was



Shizukasa, 1976
Sugar-lift etching with relief roll, 22" x 30"
Collection Brooklyn Museum

awarded the Legion of Merit, and ended up as the head interpreter of the Tokyo War Crimes Trial. His history, portrayed by his daughter, does indeed painfully illustrate "The Irony of Being American," the title of Itami's superb duotone lithograph, digital photo print and 1999 CD-ROM, a poignant and elegant narrative with sparse language and a dense unfolding of images, about a hundred in all. Over the years Itami has woven more strains of her family narrative together, including that of her mother, her daughters, and herself. The result is a fascinating and intricate autobiographical investigation that relies on Itami's brilliant grasp of computer skills, a fastidious design sense, and her passion for the visual re-telling of history.



Kimi, Past and Present
computer generated lithograph printed digitally
Paper size: 22" x 26", 2003

Biography

Michi Itami did graduate work in Japanese language and literature and English literature at Columbia University. She became totally involved in ceramics and in 1971, after spending a year in Japan with ceramist, Kimpei Nakamura, she received a Master's degree from the College of Environmental Design at UC Berkeley.

In the intervening years, her artistic focus shifted to two-dimensional works including painting and all aspects of print-making including digitally originated images.

A retrospective of Itami's print works was held in 2003 at the A.I.R. Gallery in New York. Many of her works are exclusively abstract, focusing on the movement of a brush or squeegee, while others are highly narrative and incorporate layers of archival family photographs to evoke issues of citizenship and belonging. She has had solo exhibitions of her work at Atelier 2221 in New Delhi, India, Shinsegae Gallery in Seoul, Korea, Beni Gallery in Kyoto, Japan, A.I.R. Gallery, and 55 Mercer Gallery in New York.

Since 1991, Itami has been a professor at The City College of New York, CUNY and currently serves as the Director of the MFA program there.

From 1994 to 1998, she served on the CAA Board of Directors and was Vice President of CAA from 1998-1999. Her work is represented in museum collections throughout the United States including the Brooklyn Museum, Cincinnati Art Museum, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. She has received numerous awards including a NEA Grant in Printmaking, a New York Foundation for the Arts Grant, and a Printmaking Fellowship in Asilah, Morocco.

She also has two grown daughters, Naomi, who is an opera singer and mother, and Sarah, who is a public relations writer in New York.



Mujo
Deeply etched etching with relief roll
22" x 30", 1974

HELEN LEVITT



We honor you, Helen Levitt, documentary photographer. You have never let poverty, pestilence or urban decay limit or disrupt the humanity of your lens. Your life work revealed that clarity and whimsy burn through images as they reveal their truth.

*On Location, 1963 © Helen Levitt
Courtesy Laurence Miller Gallery, New York*

Helen Levitt

By Susan Obarski

As Maria Morris Hambourg so aptly said about Helen Levitt in 1991—

“For her art does not grow in public, nor is it produced primarily for the public, but out of private need.”

Given Helen Levitt’s uncanny ability to capture movement in photographs and her interest in children fast at play, it fits that her earliest vivid memories from her childhood in Brooklyn involve strenuous activity – horseback riding, swimming, roller-skating and bicycling. Her photographs are momentary narratives, with psychic energy holding as much presence as physical action, so it’s also no surprise that she’s always been an avid reader, one who responds to a good story more than to formal style. Yet school held little interest for her, and she dropped out one month before her high school graduation in 1930.

Leaving institutions behind over 70 years ago, she has relied instead on her intuitive acumen to fuel one of the most long-standing and remarkable photographic careers of the 20th century.

In the 1930s and 40s, she prowled the movie houses, concert halls, museums and galleries of New York. Levitt studied modern dance with Charles Weidman and watched in awe as her fellow student José Limón danced. From the “What’s On” column in *The Daily Worker* and other papers, she found free Shakespearean plays and free chamber music concerts to attend, hot acts to watch at the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem, and events in the local dance halls. For three years she honed her photography and darkroom skills as an apprentice to J. Florian Mitchell, a portrait photographer in the Bronx and the son of one of her mother’s friends.

Her first camera was a used Voigtländer. By 1935, she hung out with the young, socially conscious photographers and filmmakers of the Film and Photo League in New York. Rather than joining the League, she attended their screenings of Russian and French films at the New School for Social Research. In 1935 she got a first hand lesson in surrealist aesthetics from Cartier-Bresson as she worked by his side on the Brooklyn waterfront. The following year she bought another used camera – a hand-held Leica – to make what are now legendary photographs.

After seeing Walker Evan’s work from Havana in the book ‘*The Crime of Cuba*’, she looked him up to show him her photographs. James Agee happened to drop in on that first visit, and they all remained fast friends and collaborators. She and Evans sought their own ways to become less intrusive as they photographed on the streets. Soon he also introduced her to Janice Loeb, a painter and art historian at the Museum of Modern Art, who would in turn introduce her to the worlds of film editing and classical ballet.



Untitled New York, c. 1942

© Helen Levitt

Courtesy Laurence Miller Gallery, New York

Helen Levitt is remarkable for her playfulness, her lack of pretense, her deep respect for chance, and her shy yet gracious spirit – all qualities that critics have also used to describe her photographic works. Her attention never seems focused on her self; rather she is wholly rapt by the moments she photographs. Sentimentality and romanticism have no place in her photographs of New York, or in most of the ones she took in the streets dispossessed from Mexico City's rapid modernization in 1941.

After returning from Mexico, she worked as film editor and by 1952, she, Loeb, and Agee released their East Harlem film 'In the Street.'

Often the children and adults of her photographs are so full of themselves that they remain oblivious, or at least indifferent, to Levitt's presence. Yet in some shots, an individual looks penetratingly back to her, perhaps in defiance, or simply with curiosity. Whether they return her gaze or remain isolated from it, her subjects' self-possession, not hers, rules the scene. We usually think of psychic energy as elusive, yet so many of her compositions seem to depend on it. They thrive under its power – it becomes a directional force linking people to each other, and sometimes to her too through the person aware that she has just witnessed the scene.



Untitled New York, c. 1972

© Helen Levitt

Courtesy Laurence Miller Gallery, New York

Biography

Throughout her long career as a documentary photographer, Helen Levitt's photographs have consistently reflected her poetic vision, humor, and inventiveness as much as they have honestly portrayed her subjects—men, women, and children living it out on the streets and among the tenements of New York. Born in Brooklyn, her career took off during the depression with friendships and advice from Cartier Bresson and Walker Evans.

In 1936, she bought a 35mm Leica camera like the one used by Cartier Bresson, and with an angled viewfinder, she was able to discreetly photograph her fellow New Yorkers. In 1952 she shot and edited the film 'In the Street' with prose poet James Agee and her friend Janice Loeb, providing a moving portrait of her still photography.

For 60 years she has maintained that her images must speak for themselves. Levitt's first major museum exhibition was at the Museum of Modern Art in 1943. A second solo show, this time only of color work, was held there in 1974. Major retrospectives of her work have been held at several museums – first in 1991, jointly at the San Francisco Museum of Modern and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; in 1997 at the International Center for Photography in New York; and in 2001 at the Centre National de la Photographie in Paris.

The seminal book of her photographs, 'In the Street', was published in 1962 and has been re-issued twice. A large book of her works, 'Crosstown', was published in 2001, and a new book of her work, 'Here and There', will be released in February 2004. Now 90 years old, Levitt is working on a book of her color work, due out in 2005. She lives in New York City.



Untitled (boys playing around a fire hydrant)

New York, c. 1972

© Helen Levitt

Courtesy Laurence Miller Gallery, New York

YVONNE RAINER



We honor you, Yvonne Rainer, dancer, choreographer, founder, filmmaker, and author. You articulated movement, co-founded the Judson Dance Theater and gave us the seminal line of dance for a generation.

Yvonne Rainer

by Carrie Lambert

The life and art of Yvonne Rainer as self-help manual, or, Chicken Soup for the a vast-Garde Soul.

1. How to make your own opportunities. Feeling overwhelmed, drop out of college after a week at Berkeley; then use the time to haunt the San Francisco bookstores and galleries where the beats are birthing the counterculture (be sure to be there for Allan Ginsberg's first reading of "Howl" in 1955; you can ponder that unfinished degree someday when you're teaching at Harvard or NYU). When you move to New York in the mid-50s, study dance with Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham. When your teachers tell you you're too athletic, remember to make a dance at some point that consists of nothing but jogging. When you realize you'll never look right doing

Cunningham, do, as critic Jill Johnson put it in 1962, “movement nobody ever saw before.” When the official Young Choreographers concerts won’t have you, ask a minister at Judson Memorial Church if you and your friends can perform there. Make the church the setting for an aesthetic revolution, equal parts Cagean composition, ordinary movement, cooperative governance, and the question “why not?” When in your thirties you feel illness and years stiffening your dancer’s body, make films. (Then, when you’re a 64-year-old cancer survivor, start dancing again.)

2. How to be a body. Start by doing away with everything cherished in ballet and modern dance: elegant carriage, heightened emotion, virtuoso technique. Instead, have your dancers walk and run, make goofy faces, wiggle and point. Break a rule so basic no one even noticed it by making noise as you dance—give filmmaker Hollis Frampton an aesthetic doubletake when you, in your decorous black leotard, start emitting squeaks and bleats (“Is she going crazy?” he’ll remember thinking. “Is this the moment? Are we witnessing it? Are we going crazy?”) Voice a generation’s aesthetic of negation by rejecting all the options available for performance circa 1965: “NO to spectacle no to virtuosity no to transformations and magic and make-believe...no to trash imagery no to involvement of the performer or spectator no to style no to camp...no to moving or being moved.” Meet your own challenge by making a dance in which you move at a determined pace and never allow the level of your visible expenditure of energy to fluctuate—not even when you jump, not even when you drop to the ground. During this unbroken continuum of quirky but fluid movement, never let the performer make eye contact with the audience. Call it Trio A. This is the one that, in twenty years or so, a PBS documentary will call the “mini-masterpiece” of postmodern dance; the one Sally Banes will write into dance history as having finally, in setting forth for itself “the earthly, intelligent body,” overcome the timeworn debate between technique and expression. While recalling dance to its quintessential physicality, refuse to cleave the corporeal from the linguistic. Play a taped reading of an eighteenth-century diary during one of your dances; recite your past addresses while you perform another. Sum it up in the typically brilliant title of a 1966 work: *The Mind is a Muscle*.
3. How to sever authorship and authority (and still have a voice). Have the participants in the Judson Dance Theater take turns presenting work, taking tickets, and hanging lights. Try to suppress your own electric stage presence. Have a costume that differentiates one dancer from a group—then give everyone a chance to wear it. Make a work in which the dancers determine the order of movement phrases and activities. Let the performers start to add their own bits, and finally give up artistic ownership altogether. Make venues stop advertising your show as “Yvonne Rainer and Company,” and let it morph into the improvisation collaborative, Grand Union. Meanwhile, in your films, replace auteur’s vision with the collision of speech, image, inter-titles, and voiceovers. Become a col-

lector of quotations. Dispense them liberally (interweave the writings of Russian revolutionaries and your own teenage diary; write a seduction scene entirely in language appropriated from feminist theorist Meaghan Morris and Michel Foucault).

4. How to refuse formulas (but use clichés). Just when your work is getting known as the epitome of Minimalism in performance, start slipping in character, emotion, and narrative. In your first film, rupture all possible conventions of Hollywood cinema— de-synching sound and image, letting actors directly address the camera – but subtitle the film “A Melodrama”, make it the story of a backstage love triangle, and let us feel for the lives of performers you’ve barely sketched out. Launch your investigation of gender, power, and cinema concurrently with the rise of feminist film theory, but maintain a critical dialogue with the species you fondly dub “de Lauraedipus Mulvey.” Make films in which the female protagonist is not seen, but heard – a voiceover being who eludes the male (and female) gaze. Then, make your “feminist films” address the displacement of Manhattan’s poor by the real estate boom



Dialogues 1964

left to right: Deborah Hay, Yvonne Rainer, Alex Hay, Judith Dunn

Photo by Peter Moore

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(and artists’ part in the process), the line between political action and terrorism, or the links between cancer and chemical waste. Use every avantgarde strategy at your disposal, while refusing the cherished equation of formal means and political ends that you crib as “disjunction equals alert viewer equals critique of patriarchy.” Make the most tender, hopeful love scene on film – with a shot of two middle-aged women, eating soup.

5. How to teach intellectual appetite, generosity of spirit, and the power of serious humor. By example. Of course.

Biography

Yvonne Rainer was born in San Francisco in 1934. She trained as a modern dancer in New York from 1957 and began to choreograph her own work in 1960. She was one of the founders of the Judson Dance Theater in 1962, the genesis of a movement that proved to be a vital force in modern dance in the following decades. Some of her better known dances and theater pieces are *Terrain* (1963), *The Mind is a Muscle* (1968), *Continuous Project-Altered Daily* (1969-70), *This is the story of a woman who...* (1973), and *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* that was commissioned by the Baryshnikov Dance Foundation in 2000. Since 1972 Rainer has completed seven feature-length films, beginning with *Lives of Performers* and later in 1990 *Privilege* (winner of the Filmmakers' Trophy at the 1991 Sundance Film Festival and the Geyer Werke Prize at the 1991 International Documentary Film Festival in Munich). Her 1996 film, *MURDER and murder*, won the Teddy Award at the 1997 Berlin Film Festival and received a Special Jury Award at the 1999 Miami Lesbian and Gay Film Festival. Rainer's films are noteworthy for a wry humor and emotional candor about the everyday intersections of private and public life. Her films deal with a number of aesthetic and social issues, such as melodrama, menopause, racism, political violence, sexual identity, and notions of disease. Her most recent book – *A Woman Who...: Essays, Interviews, Scripts* – was published by Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

In 2002, the Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery in Philadelphia mounted a Rainer exhibition of video installations, film screenings, dance photos, and memorabilia. Rainer is the recipient of a number of prestigious awards.



'Trio A' from the Mind is a Muscle Part 1
Judson Memorial Church, 1966, NYC
Front to back: Yvonne Rainer, David Gordon, Steve Paxton
Photo by Peter Moore
© Estate of Peter Moore / VAGA, NYC

The President's Awards

The WCA, as an affiliate society of the College Art Association, was founded to change the access to and opportunities for women in the visual arts in colleges, universities, galleries and museums. To a great extent, we have achieved these goals. The CAA has been enriched by the contributions of women and has become more pluralistic in its representation. One of our National Lifetime Achievement Award honorees, Michi Itami, having served on the Board of Directors of CAA, exemplifies the progress we have made toward fulfilling our original goals for the College Art Association.

The President's Awards of the Women's Caucus for Art this year recognize two women who represent, each in her own and quite different way, the fruition of the promises that were present in WCA's founding. They also represent the directions this presidency has chosen to emphasize. Dr. Elizabeth A. Sackler and Tara Donovan are visionary agents, changing how we engage society in our perceptions for the world. Today, reflecting our early ambitions, women are fully represented in undergraduate and graduate programs. Qualified women are ensured a knowledgeable beginning. A larger and even more significant promise of feminism was that women's visions would matter, and that we would participate in the world as full and influential partners in leadership, development, policy formation, and social responsibility.

Our task now is to support and recognize the women whose transformational visions are willing to shape our societal institutions – our educational institutions at all levels, our museums, galleries, private collections, and publishers. Our task also is to acknowledge and reward women artists whose vision offers the promise that could be afforded us in our material existence. The President's Awards afford me the opportunity to identify and to celebrate two women whom I feel illustrate our value to the nation. I am most fortunate to know such achievement; these are women to look to and who are shaping our future culture.

Noreen Dean Dresser

President of the National Board 2002-2004

DR. ELIZABETH A. SACKLER



The President's Award is presented to you, Dr. Elizabeth Sackler, known for your scholarship, leadership and innovation. We acknowledge you for securing the feminist historical perspective by the collection of women artists for the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum. We acknowledge you for the courage and foresight shown in founding the American Indian Ritual Object Repatriation Foundation.

You have been a helmswomen setting an ethical course through the troubled, indecisive waters of a post-colonial era. You have wrought the power to define ourselves within our experience by ensuring our cultural institutional grasp. While many of our American generation have sought and consolidated wealth, you have, through your brilliant insight and tireless generosity, produced and distributed manifold cultural riches.

Your vision keeps our promise as feminists, to influence civilization so that our human endeavors sustain and empower circles of community.

Biography

Elizabeth A. Sackler received her Ph.D. from the Union Institute in Public History in 1997 and was the recipient of the Institute's Sussman Award for Academic Excellence in 1998. Dr. Sackler is president of the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation, The Elizabeth A. Sackler Foundation and founder and president of the American Indian Ritual Object Repatriation Foundation.

She is an active member of the National Advisory Board of the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C. and on the Collections Committee, Executive Committee and Board of Directors of the Brooklyn Museum of Art.

Dr. Sackler was the founding president of the Friends of the Freer and Sackler Galleries, Smithsonian Institution and also a founding member of the Institute of American Indian Arts Museum in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Over the last decade, Dr. Sackler has published numerous papers and articles in scholarly journals and national magazines calling for a code of ethics in the Indian Art market. As an Indian advocate, she made a particularly crucial impact as a member of the editorial committee of the 1996 *Mending the Circle*:

A Native American Repatriation Guide, assisting museums and Native American Nations implementing federal laws and repatriation policies.

Recently, Dr. Sackler edited *Judy Chicago* (Watson-Guption Publishers, 2002) published in conjunction with the 2002 survey of the artist's work at the National Museum of Women in the Arts. Dr. Sackler, a former instructor at The New School and a panelist and lecturer at conferences nationally, is a regular guest lecturer at the Gallatin School of Individualized Study, New York University and at Baruch College, CUNY.

Dr. Sackler was honored by the Yurok Tribal Council in 1999, received the Brooklyn Museum of Art Community Committee "Women in the Arts Award" in 2002, and was one of Women's eNews "21 Leaders of the 21st Century" in 2003.

As president of The Elizabeth A. Sackler Foundation, Dr. Sackler is responsible for the 2002 gift of Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* to the Brooklyn Museum of Art where it will be permanently installed in the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art scheduled to open in 2006.

TARA DONOVAN



*Foam Cup Installation, ACE Gallery, NYC
Photograph by Raymond Meier, The New York Times Magazine, 11/30/2003*

The President's Award is presented to you, Tara Donovan, for the clarity you offer into the rubric of postmodern civilization. We acknowledge you for breaking down the digits of systems into their parts and then transforming their existence by re-presenting their complexity in the duplicity of vast numbers. Your ostensibly simple equation has presented evidence of the complicated world that abstract ideas manufacture. Your investigation brings the light of inquiry to common objects and raises questions regarding our fundamental material existence.

You visually deconstruct the simple and re-order the complex.

Your steps mirror our feminist insight into the spirituality present in physicality, the ability to appreciate the sublime in what could be considered common of the world.

Tara Donovan

Artist Statement

In creating sculptural installations, I develop systems based on the physical properties and structural capabilities of a singular, accumulated material. These homogenous systems often mimic those that govern the growth of the biological, architectural and technological structures to which my work makes frequent aesthetic allusions.

I choose materials already identified with a basic functional purpose. Beginning with an open experimental approach, I calculate the physical properties of the material such as texture, density, mass, and size that will eventually give rise to a structure or unit when accumulated.

Once established, this unit is then reproduced according to given spatial conditions and collected in various ways to discover how it behaves visually in a population. I give particular attention to patterning, configuration, and light absorption/reflection in deciding how to then unit y that population, but the final form evolves organically from the material itself via its innate properties and structure. Installed specifically for each exhibition space, these forms function as fields of visual activity that reveal distinctive characteristics with each shifting viewpoint.

Upcoming Shows

2004 Akira Ikeda Gallery, Berlin, Germany
UCLA Arm and Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA
The Augustus Saint-Gaudens Memorial, Cornish, NH
Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, La Jolla, CA

Recent One Person Exhibitions

2003 Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland, OH
Rice University Art Gallery, Houston, TX
IBM Building, NYC
ACE Gallery, NYC

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We would like to thank our sponsors and our members for their generous contributions toward the vision and work of the WCA and toward this catalogue honoring women's outstanding accomplishments and leadership in the visual arts.

