

## Artistic Practices and Feminisms in the 1970s

The incorporation of women into the art scene over the course of the twentieth century had two moments of prime importance, both occurring strictly in parallel with social struggles. The first was in the 1920s and 1930s. The decades between the wars were very fertile both for art and for the implementation of social and political strategies to secure equal rights for both sexes. This wave of tolerance, social dignity, and free-thinking suffered a social corrective in the return to order of the 1940s and 1950s, after the end of World War II. In Spain, this regression was in fact brought forward by the triumph of Franco in 1939, making it more radical and traumatic than in the rest of Europe. The second moment came at the end of the 1960s, coinciding with the profound transformation in mentalities that followed the gradual incorporation of a female work force into a modernized labor market, together with the new social paradigm brought on by generalized reactions against the establishment—May 1968, the civil rights marches, the hippy movement, and the pacifist trends emerging in protest against the Vietnam War.<sup>1</sup> Although women began in the twenties and thirties to take part in the art scene with a certain degree of normality, it is not until the late sixties that we encounter the first denunciations of sexism and racism in artistic practice, together with work that we might

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1 Some of the woman artists represented in the collection of the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, like Nancy Spero and Carolee Schneemann, produced work at the turn of the decade that combined feminist stances with anti-war protest.

consider feminist or influenced by feminism. This situation occurred with the greatest clarity in the Anglo-Saxon context.<sup>2</sup> These manifestations formed part of the renegotiation of concepts and formulae under the mantle of modernism, a negotiation that was highly political and was to transform the ways of producing and consuming art proposed by the neo-avant-gardes.<sup>3</sup>

This awakening of artistic practice was joined by the development of a powerful theoretical discourse based in part on the critical study of the images projected of women, and partly too on the analysis of how official history studied the work of woman artists of the past, the conclusion being that they were not studied at all. The question asked by Linda Nochlin in 1971 in the pages of *Art News*—"Why have there been no great women artists?"—is regarded as the seminal text in a history of art constructed with a gender perspective. Nochlin concluded that the reason for the scarcity of women in history had to do with their social and educational limitations in comparison with men. She thus made it evident that the tools for selecting artists are not natural but strongly ideologized, and at the same time rejected the deeply rooted myth that artistic production is the direct expression of individual genius.<sup>4</sup>

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2 In 1969, the artists who were to form Women Artists in Resistance (WAR) decried that there were hardly any women in the annual exhibition at the Whitney Museum. In Great Britain, some artists organized themselves around the Woman's Workshop at the Artists' Union (1971). The pressure exerted by these groups had its results shortly afterwards in terms of a rise in the percentage participation of woman artists in public exhibitions and displays, leading to the museographic recovery of creators like Louise Bourgeois, Frida Kahlo, and Louise Nevelson. See Whitney Chadwick, *Woman, Art, and Society* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1989; 4th ed. 2007), pp. 345–55. In today's Spain, it is important to mention the role currently played in this respect by *Mujeres en las Artes Visuales* (MAV, Women in the Visual Arts).

3 It is not our intention here to view art of feminist affiliation as a distinct category on the margins of contemporary art, as many of its conceptual and linguistic proposals were underpinned with the general attitudes of the neo-avant-gardes.

4 Nochlin, Linda, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists," *Art News* 60, no. 9 (January 1971), pp. 22–39, 67–71.

In this respect, the prime current of feminist thought during the seventies was what is called essentialism,<sup>5</sup> based on a belief in an innate femininity opposing the concepts of nature and culture. Nevertheless, there is a dangerously reductionist tendency to pigeonhole the work produced during that period in either essentialism or poststructuralism, when their interpretive richness and diversity in fact goes far beyond such a Manichaeian reading.<sup>6</sup> One common field of struggle, for instance, was the denunciation of working conditions, public visibility, reproductive rights, family roles, and the unofficial inequality suffered by women in general at that time, an inequality that in the case of woman artists took the form of the censorship or marginalization of their creative experiences. This denunciation followed a variety of paths. On the one hand, with regard to their longing search for a language and self-representation of their own, many woman artists found that framing the female body itself as the site of the enunciation constituted a jubilant affirmation of "otherness," by contrast with the objectification to which it had been subjected in the course of the history of art. The ovoid and vulvar references in the work of Lee Bontecou, or the vaginas in that of other manifestly feminist artists like Niki de Saint Phalle, Carolee Schneemann, Hannah Wilke, Miriam Schapiro, and Judy Chicago, provide clear examples of this.

Other woman artists projected their work onto the ancient religious figures of the matriarchate, and particularly the archetype of the Great

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5 We shall concentrate here on Anglo-Saxon and Spanish contributions for two reasons: because of limited space, and because the works in the permanent collection of the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía that refer to feminism or its influence on the visual arts of the 1970s and early 1980s are fundamentally by American and Spanish woman artists. Where the latter are concerned, we have relied on the research and interviews we are currently conducting thanks to a grant from the Public Programs Department of the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. This work is currently in progress, so the conclusions reached here are to be understood as provisional.

6 See Peggy Phelan, "Survey," in Helena Reckitt and Peggy Phelan, *Art and Feminism* (London: Phaidon, 2001), p. 22; and Patricia Mayayo, *Historias de mujeres, historias del arte* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2003), p. 17.



Goddess. The performances in nature of the Cuban-American Ana Mendieta identified her body with the land, adding to this the recovery of traditions from the cultural origins she had lost through political exile. Since they virtually lack history, performance, video, and photography—the last two initially viewed on many occasions as documentary media—were understood as having the ability to make women’s experiences visible outside the patriarchal gaze. Perishable supports and materials also started to be used within the general trend of dematerialization in art, while at the same time there was a vindication of the cultural and creative practices traditionally assigned to women, such as textiles or ceramics, which history had classed as “handicrafts,” with the hierarchical devaluation implied by the term.

In reaction to some of these stances, feminists linked to poststructuralism and psychoanalysis started in the middle of the decade to reject an imagery they accused of naivety, arguing that it redefined femininity by paradoxically returning it to the essentialism and ahistoricism wherein it had been confined by patriarchal thought. As an alternative, they proposed a cultural interpretation of images of women, which thereby made them subject to change, and they suggested shifting the weight of history studies onto theory, a discourse that can be illustrated with the work of Mary Kelly (*Post-Partum Document*, 1973–79).<sup>7</sup> The photographs of Cindy Sherman posited femininity as masquerade in a series of self-portraits that were far from autobiographical, since they said nothing whatsoever about the artist. Martha Rosler showed in *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) how the dominant and submissive roles are to be analyzed within the linguistic and symbolic system, illustrating her thesis with the reclusion of women in spaces like the kitchen. The *alter egos* of Eleanor Antin, whether king or ballerina, not only underlined her fantasies and dreams but also explored the possibilities of gender, showing how it was not necessary to change sex to become a man.

7 Laura Mulvey proposed turning away from historical research on woman artists toward a theoretical analysis of the gaze and representation as such. Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1975), pp. 6–27.



Ana Mendieta. *Burial Pyramide*, Yagul, México, 1974

Whereas the woman artists of the seventies had their revival in the nineties in the Anglo-Saxon context, even reopening the debate on essentialism, such a scenario was not then possible in Spain. In the historiography that analyzes what occurred in the seventies and eighties, references to woman artists tend to be discreet, and allusions to feminist discourse practically nonexistent.<sup>8</sup> This oblivion is to be framed within a wider context, for, as the historians Carmen Martínez Ten and Purificación Gutiérrez López point out, the feminist movement was generally erased from Spain’s political transition.<sup>9</sup> Generation after generation, the hegemonic narrative leaves fragments of history by the wayside.<sup>10</sup> Carmen

8 For a study on the marginal and hostile image of the feminist movement projected in the Spanish press during the years of political transition, see Pilar Toboso, “Las mujeres en la transición. Una perspectiva histórica: antecedentes y retos,” in Carmen Martínez Ten, Purificación Gutiérrez López, and Pilar González Ruiz, eds., *El Movimiento Feminista en España en los años 70* (Madrid: Cátedra, UV, Instituto de la Mujer, 2009), pp. 71–98.

9 Carmen Martínez Ten and Purificación Gutiérrez López, “Prólogo,” in *ibid.*, p. 9

10 This loss of genealogy occurred in a similar fashion in Argentina, for the feminist projects of the 1980s, such as *Mitominas*, curated by Monique Altschul, and the essays of Leonor Calvera were ignored by the historiography of the 1990s. See María Laura Rosa. “Fuera de discurso. La omisión del arte feminista en la historia del arte argentino,” *Balances, perspectivas y renovaciones disciplinares de la Historia del Arte. V Congreso Internacional de Teoría e Historia de las Artes. XIII Jornadas CAIA* (Buenos Aires: CAIA, 2009), pp. 205–16.



Navarrete has pointed out that the various pacts of the transition were not merely political but affected every order of society, including art, and she claims that historical literature deliberately ignored and continues to ignore certain artists and creative manifestations.<sup>11</sup>

Navarrete's reflections would not have been possible without the boom in gender studies in Spain during the nineties, which molded the woman historians and artists of our generation. Not only were Spanish translations made of fundamental works of Anglo-Saxon feminist historiography, such as Whitney Chadwick's *Women, Art, and Society*, and not only was an anthology of essential texts published in the catalogue of the exhibition *100%*, but we also started to produce a literature of our own, including one book that must be cited because it was so influential at the time: Estrella de Diego's *El andrógino sexuado* (The Sexed Androgyne).<sup>12</sup> This ran parallel to a change in technical register and receptive strategy in the works of artists of that generation, and a reinforcement of the presence of the woman artists of the previous decade, all of which mutated the concept of the institutional exhibitions that had regularly been held every March 8 since the advent of democracy to coincide with International (Working) Women's Day.<sup>13</sup> To counteract the inertia of the various state, regional, and

11 See. Carmen Navarrete, "Los años setenta: la transición pactada y las artistas conceptuales," in Juan Vicente Aliaga, ed., *A voz e a palabra. Coloquio sobre A batalla dos xéneros* (Santiago de Compostela: CGAC, 2008), pp. 203–10. In this regard, mention must be made of the work done by Navarrete with María Ruido and Fefa Vila (*Desacuerdos*, 2004–5). See also Juan Vicente Aliaga, "La memoria corta: arte y género," *Revista de Occidente*, no. 273 (February 2004), p. 58; and Patricia Mayayo, "¿Por qué no ha habido (grandes) artistas feministas en España? Apuntes sobre una historia en busca de autor(a)," in *Producción artística y teoría feminista del arte. Nuevos debates I* (Vitoria: Montehermoso, 2008), pp. 113–21.

12 Mar Villaespesa, ed., *100%* (Seville: Junta de Andalucía, 1993); the edition by Teresa Gómez Reus and Carmen África Vidal brought together texts by Teresa de Laurentis, Amelia Jones, and Janet Wolff, among others.

13 The Instituto de la Mujer (Institute of Woman) was founded in 1983 by Felipe González's first socialist government, and served as a model for the creation of similar departments in regional and local administrations.



Martha Rosler, *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, 1975  
 Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York (<http://www.eai.org>)

local Institutos de la Mujer, which tended to organize exhibitions whose sole nexus was the biological sex of the participants, thesis exhibitions, many of them feminist in affiliation, started to be programmed to take strategic and not wholly disinterested advantage of the March date.<sup>14</sup> However, not even this favorable opportunity helped to draw attention back to the seventies. Before the role of these woman artists can be evaluated, therefore, we still need a full account of who did what, and where and how. Only in this way can we produce a reinterpretation of history with a view to completing it. While such studies are lacking, even though some research in this direction is slowly starting to appear, it seems reasonable

14 Estrella de Diego, "Caretas," in *Territorios indefinidos. Discursos sobre la construcción de la identidad femenina*, ed. Isabel Tejada Martín (Alicante: I. Juan Gil-Albert, 1995), pp. 19–23.



to assume that there are few contributions to be regarded as part of a programmatic feminism in the Spanish art of the seventies.<sup>15</sup>

The political situation of Spain, with the persistence of a dictatorship, is not easily comparable with that of other countries, and the same can be said of the analysis of its artistic practices. As Griselda Pollock has pointed out, it is necessary to take the different geographies of feminism into account.<sup>16</sup> We emerged from a political system that had crushed any attempt at renewing the status quo for nearly forty years, so condemning us to cultural, social, and economic isolation. In this context, both the left-wing parties and part of the so-called dual militancy (feminists and democrats) decided that the problem of women could be left until a more propitious moment in the face of the pressing need to re-establish a democratic system of liberties.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, very few of the woman artists active in the seventies whose work has been studied, and who now declare themselves to be feminists, belonged to or had contacts with a feminist movement that was not only a minority in Spain but also, it must be said, was fragmentary in its articulation and maintained “very lax and informal structures.”<sup>18</sup> Their reasons for not doing so may have had to do with lack of interest, with caution lest the label of “feminists” should lead them to be doubly excluded from the artistic scene, or with the development of mimetic strategies, assuming the role expected of them in order to facilitate

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15 I am grateful to Eva Lootz, Marisa González, Paz Muro, Isabel Quintanilla, Isabel Oliver, Angela García Codoñer, Paloma Navares, Esther Ferrer, and Concha Jerez for their contributions.

16 Griselda Pollock, *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

17 The men on the left did not align themselves with the vindications or foundations of feminism: “Who wants to have the class struggle in their own home?” See Mónica Threlfall, “El papel transformador del movimiento de mujeres en la transición política española,” in *El Movimiento Feminista en España*, p. 39.

18 Martínez Ten and Gutiérrez López, “Prólogo,” p. 10. With regard to the scant militancy of woman artists in the feminist movement of those years, there is coincidence between the research conducted by Assumpta Bassas, carried out in *Desacuerdos*, and my own, although the case of Isabel Oliver in Valencia may be cited as an exception.

their acceptance by the system. The gender conscience of Spanish women came in general from their personal experience, not from the influence of a theoretical corpus. It was, one might say, an organic and unconnected brand of feminism. It is not that these artists were impermeable to outside influences, but that they suffered an overwhelming isolation that only the ones lucky enough to travel were able to avoid. This isolation even affected woman artists living in the same city.

In the seventies, new representations of women in which the site of enunciation was emphasized also started to be produced in Spain, although to a lesser extent than in the Anglo-Saxon, European, or Latin American contexts. While it is perhaps startling that these artists, as we have said, were unstructured, it is our opinion that in the circumstances of Spain at that time, a move to occupy the public territory of art has to be regarded as a political act in itself, an initial formula for self-awareness. In Spain, the system marked sexual difference, segregating and excluding women almost systematically. From the family environment, education, and withheld resources, to the difficulty of accessing distribution networks or exhibition spaces, everything militated against women, forming a filter that grew tighter and tighter as they tried to pass through the professional world. This is something on which all the woman artists we have consulted agree, whether feminists or not: it was normal to minimize the talent of women by using the adjective *femenino*, so removing them from contingency in order to link any production by a woman’s hands to unchangeable essences. The woman artists who operated on the Spanish art scene were viewed, in a tradition going back a very long way, as rare exceptions.

The politicization of artistic discourses was common currency in late-Francoist Spain, and while male artists touched on the themes of repression, censorship, and the lack of liberties, these discourses were enlarged in the hands of some of their female contemporaries to include the fact of their having to confront their experience with the social structures constraining them as women. Nevertheless, in many cases, such as that of Concha Jerez, the feminine question was veiled within a broader political discourse:

Yes, in my work on censorship there were references to all personal experiences. I did my first installation on the theme of self-censorship in the year 1976 because I suddenly realized that besides the prime form of self-censorship, the political variety, there were heaps of other self-censorships, starting with your partner ... and a thousand other things ... Any attitude we adopted was centered on total vindication, in which the feminist phenomenon was included, though when it appeared, at least in my case, it was usually hidden and accessible only to profoundly discerning viewers.<sup>19</sup>

As we have indicated, one of the causes of such lack of definition was the general perception of a need to establish priorities. Esther Ferrer remembers it thus:

I'm a feminist, and I've done all those things inside feminism, but when there's a situation of urgency—and during Franco's dictatorship there was—there's plenty of action but not much reflection on contents, because the need to get things done is so pressing.<sup>20</sup>

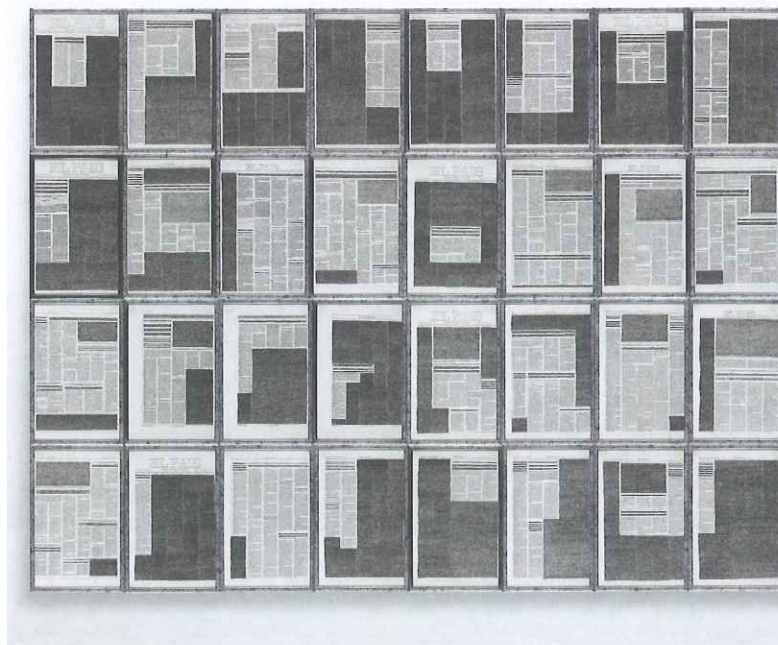
For other woman artists who began their careers in the late sixties, self-awareness came later, and with it the feminist themes of their work. The artist Soledad Sevilla recalls that:

When I couldn't even exhibit, back in the sixties, my friends—all the ones who had started with me—were already well-known, at least in the circles we then moved in. Galleries left you to one side, and there was rejection and mistrust. And our own mentality had an influence on it too. By dint of sheer repression, I'd come to accept it as logical that they should turn me down, but not men. It seemed normal to me to be second-class because I was a woman. The atmosphere we lived in was so chauvinistic that it wouldn't even let us realize it.<sup>21</sup>

19 Concha Jerez, interviewed by the author, Madrid, April 20, 2011.

20 Esther Ferrer, interviewed by Fefa Vila, May 2004, in *Desacuerdos. Sobre arte, políticas y esfera pública en el Estado español*, vol. 1. (Barcelona: Arteleku/UNIA/MACBA, 2004), p. 130.

21 Enriqueta Antolín, "Qué pintan las mujeres," *El País* (Madrid), December 6, 1998.



Concha Jerez. *Seguimiento de una noticia*, 1977

In such a position, specific group vindications, and particularly that of being artists as well as women, were relegated to the background behind the political strategies and priorities they ran parallel to.

If traditional artistic languages and their aesthetic and moral values were contaminated by the exclusive practices of the patriarchy, their systematic rejection led to a role in the articulation of new formulae for making and consuming art by the Spanish neo-avant-garde, to which some of these woman artists belonged. Many of them embraced conceptual practices, sometimes with pop influences, to make use of disciplines and media like photography, performance, installation, film, or video to denounce the social segregation suffered by women. They were thus attuned to the processes of dematerialization, processuality, and rejection of the self-referentiality of the





Eulàlia Grau. *Discriminació de la dona* (detail), 1977

artwork that we have analyzed above in the Anglo-Saxon context. Today, it is not so easy to separate one strand from another. Eva Lootz has said that the influences on her work in those years cannot now be disentangled:

Everything was mixed up, from feminist readings to the search for new discourses that would liberate art from the conservative straitjacket of modernism; the seams were bursting on all sides.<sup>22</sup>

This led Eva Lootz, Concha Jerez, and various others to approach women's issues while immersed in other political and linguistic discourses.

The sociological and critical readings proposed by art coincided with the demand for political change and the construction of a new society. If we

<sup>22</sup> Eva Lootz, interviewed by the author, Madrid, April 10, 2011.

Spaniards, men and women alike, went from being victims or voyeurs of our history to playing an active part in it, the new artistic behaviors proposed experience and participation over contemplation. And on many occasions, such a proposal arose organically. The media and popular culture were caustically analyzed as instruments that propagated and fortified the archetypes of social, cultural, and sexual behavior. It was common to appropriate their imagery as a formula for showing how the roles they implemented, from the family environment to the rest of the social structures assumed as normal and projected as such by the consumer society, were indeed no more than assumptions.

In Catalonia, Eulàlia Grau examined men's and women's roles in her *Etnografía* (Ethnography) photomontages of 1974 on the basis of mass-media imagery. Her counterpositions made it clear that apart from the archetypes restrictive of both sexes, those bodies modeled on the basis of strict canons were being presented for the purpose of consumption.<sup>23</sup> This work found a parallel in Super-8 format, with the ironic use of mass-media images of men and women in *Boy Meets Girl* (1978) by Eugènia Balcells. The choice of working in reproducible media like serigraphy and video, lighter and less durable than traditional ones, occasionally meant that the work was presented outside artistic circles. Eulàlia Grau made *Discriminació de la Dona* (Discrimination of Woman, 1977) in the form of a book—let us recall the importance of the printed medium as a political channel for social influence in the work of artists like Rodchenko and Heartfield—although she sometimes exhibited on panels.<sup>24</sup> Performance, which could take place anywhere, similarly revealed itself as an ideal medium. In *Standard* (1976),

<sup>23</sup> In Catalonia, thanks to the research of Assumpta Bassas, we can cite the cases of Mari Chordà, Fina Miralles, Àngels Ribé, Eugènia Balcells, Olga Pijoan, and Eulàlia Grau. Assumpta Bassas Vila, "El impacto del feminismo en las prácticas artísticas de la década de los setenta en Cataluña. Algunas reflexiones a raíz de mi investigación sobre las trayectorias de varias artistas de las llamadas *prácticas artísticas del Concepto en Cataluña*: Eugènia Balcells, Fina Miralles, Àngels Ribé y Eulàlia," in Aliaga, *A voz e a palavra*, p. 223.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

Fina Miralles made strategic use of the resource of the appropriation of her own body, appearing gagged and bound to a wheelchair in front of a television and a slideshow mixing photographs of her personal life, pictures of a woman dressing a little girl, and female archetypes taken from advertisements.

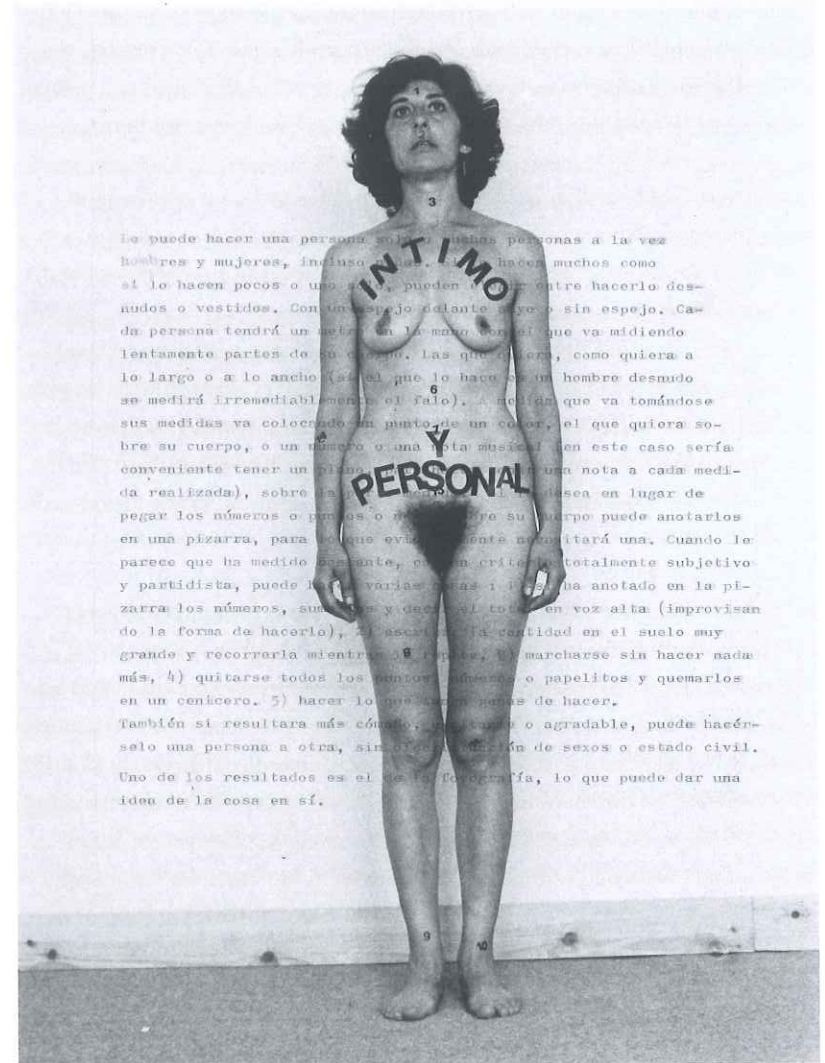
Born in San Sebastián, Esther Ferrer also worked with performance both inside and outside Zaj, though always eschewing both illusion and fiction. Her feminist pieces like *Íntimo y personal* (Intimate and Personal, 1977) underscored the site of enunciation:

As regards the purely feminist struggle, I think that the fact I did certain things with Zaj in Spain, and in a male chauvinist medium, was already an act of feminist struggle, bearing in mind that they called me a whore in the newspapers.<sup>25</sup>

Although centered on actionism, she also fashioned a series of objects, *Juguetes educativos* (Educational Toys, 1970), by means of which she introduced the issue of rape as a weapon of war. Between Chicago and Washington, Bilbao-born Marisa González meanwhile denounced the terror inflicted specifically on women in the dictatorships of Chile and Argentina and during the death rattles of Francoism (*Violencia mujer*, 1975–78; *La descarga/Thermofax*, 1975–77) by means of photography and electrography. In a more poetic and metaphorical approach making use of a cross between performance and contemporary dance, Paloma Navares, born in Burgos, hung in 1982 a tree with ballerinas emerging slowly from their cocoons as a metaphor for the awakening of women to the public sphere “outside” (*Canto a un árbol caído* [Song for a Fallen Tree]), or illustrated the battle of the sexes through a confrontation between male and female dancers (*Seraván*).

In Madrid, Paz Muro, an outsider who has received little scholarly attention, anticipated the carefree attitudes that became common after

25 Esther Ferrer, interviewed by Fefa Vila, p. 130.



Esther Ferrer. *Íntimo y personal* (detail), 1977



the arrival of democracy. Though influenced by conceptual art, her work is difficult to classify. On the one hand it rejects the artist/gallery structure, while despite its link to social and political discourses, it makes constant references to a popular culture it applauds. Muro works on issues related to women, but without openly subscribing to feminist theses. She turns the system upside down, making use of a liberty she never demands, since she regards it as already grasped, and challenging the existence of univocal identities (one example being her transvestite intervention of William Shakespeare in the magazine *Nueva Lente*), questioning censorship (*Libro Blanco de la Paz* [White Book of Peace], 1974), or acting irreverently when invited to take part in 1975 in what was to be the first exhibition of woman artists held on an 8 March (*Influencia cultural y nada más que cultural de la mujer en las artes arquitectónicas, visuales y otras* [Cultural and No More than Cultural Influence of Woman on the Architectural, Visual, and Other Arts]).

Other woman artists maintained their link to traditional languages through painting. Nevertheless, they revised the medium either iconographically or by a rejection of its purity. Since the sixties, Isabel Villar had been painting ahistorical representations of women located in a paradise bereft of male figures, linking maternity and fertility with the figure of Mother Earth. In the meantime, Ana Peters in Valencia was using a pop-influenced language for the series *Imágenes de la mujer en la sociedad de consumo* (Images of Woman in the Consumer Society, 1966). The influence of Equipo Crónica on Valencia was to prove fundamental, although the region's feminist artists used the resources of pop as a mordant way of taking the female imagery projected by Anglo-Saxon Pop Art and popular culture and inverting it from within. Isabel Oliver used the strategy of appropriation from the history of art to denounce gender roles in the series *La mujer* (Woman, 1971). García Codoñer reacted to the falsehood of such images by renouncing the stereotypes of women as beautiful, submissive, weightless, or inferior beings and rejecting the fantasies projected by the patriarchy. She did so by cutting out pictures of beauty queens, or drawings from the children's comic *Azucena*, and

pasting them onto the canvas in non-linear strips. As she has said herself, the process of cutting and displacing the figures was marked by rage, trauma, and an attitude of self-defense, not only toward the professional artistic sphere in which she was trying to survive, but also toward her closest family. It was also in Valencia, around the end of the decade, that the revaluation began of those artistic techniques traditionally identified with women, and which had previously formed an important part of their childhood education, such as embroidery and sewing, which were incorporated into painting in an attempt to present them symbolically as equivalent to the fine arts. In addition to García and Oliver, it is also necessary in this respect to mention Carmen Calvo. Her early and nowadays little-known feminist work, whose crude aesthetic recalls the painting of fairground stalls, evolved in the seventies toward a fusion with pottery or lines of oil strokes resembling backstitching, thus relinquishing painting in its purity.

The eighties not only brought a "return" of painting but also another return to order, always liable to lead to another step backwards for the presence of women in artistic structures. In the middle of the decade, this turn of events generated the appearance of new groups in the United States, such as the Guerrilla Girls. At the same time, amidst the intensity of the construction of woman as subject, there were insistent calls for a critical review of both representation and the feminist movement itself. By the mid eighties, some female thinkers, critics, and artists were demanding a non-exclusive feminism that would not give rise to a new orthodoxy, in this case that of the white, middle-class, heterosexual Western woman, which had been strengthened in different ways by both the feminism of "equality" and that of "difference." This new look at the concept of alterity made it clear that the structure of dominance/submission continued to underlie it if the parameter of "gender" alone was adopted as a differential axis. If it was granted that women had always been a constant "other," those who failed to adjust to the canon because they belonged to a specific cultural context or a particular race, or because of their sexual choice, were doubly "other." This is what Deborah King called "multiple

jeopardy.” The notion of feminism was thus amplified into a formula capable of decomposing gender differences understood as the sociocultural construction of biological sex, thus creating links with queer theory. As cultural constructs, the masculine and the feminine were offered in indefinite and unstable readings.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993).

## Allegorical Technologies: The Art of Interpolation

In a well-known episode, Kazimir Malevich drew up designs for his own exequies on the basis of a number of his works, including the famous *Black Square on a White Ground*, which was painted in about 1913 and reused for “funerary” purposes in 1935. Nevertheless, this displacement of the terms of a work intended as an extreme synthesis of the formal concepts of painting, and which appeared in transfigured form as an element of ritual, remains radiantly senseless for the history of art. Its echo resounds almost stridently through any full understanding of all that had happened before then. The conversion into an emblem of death itself of what came to signify the categorial closure of pictorial forms, and of the whole grammar of a tradition turned inside out by the avant-garde, affected some vital organ of modern art. That fade to black, in a way so cinematic, marked off the threshold of a certain history of art, leaving behind the empire of pure forms, and strode into the realm of an allegory superimposed on the symbolic remains of works whose meaning, no matter how complete and finished they were in themselves, changed in accordance with a context in the throes of transformation. Paradoxically, the *Black Square on a White Ground* was thus allegorized when it became the symbol of the funeral the artist had prepared for himself. In the chapel of rest, the lifeless body of Kazimir Malevich shared the space with the artworks hung there in the manner of a small retrospective. Just as the artistic form becomes a symbol in relation to the presence-absence of the artist as corpse, the event and its documentary traces become an allegory for history. In a process inscribed