

NYFAI

Interview: Joan Arbeiter interviewed by Dena Muller

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Edited for clarity by J.A.

DM: When did you first become involved with NYFAI?

JA: Shortly before NYFAI opened its doors in 1979, I spotted a brief notice about it in Ms. Magazine. It interested me so much that I can still recall exactly where I was when I saw it.

DM: What was the notice? Was it advertising for administrative help?

JA: No. It was the announcement of the Gala Opening of NYFAI at the World Trade Center. So, I went to the opening and saw Louise Nevelson make her dramatic appearance as honored guest. It was a celebration. Donna Henes wove us all together with string and symbolism. There were wonderful happenings that evening – which was my first experience with this kind of female energy.

DM: Why did you become involved?

JA: Well, I was ready to return to school after my marriage and children had reached a certain level of maturity. I was picking up the threads of my formal education, which I began as an art major in college. I was ready to get my MFA and wanted to become a college art teacher, a Professor of Art. I had recently enrolled in a patriarchal institution for my MFA, and one of the elective courses was finding yourself an Internship. I decided to use this course as an opportunity to get as much experience in as many places as I could – and one of these places was NYFAI. I became a working intern at NYFAI and other places, and in turn I received graduate credit.

DM: What did you do there?

JA: At the beginning, and this was my idea, I brought with me a new and fairly comprehensive list of New Jersey women artists, which had been compiled and published under the guidance of Lynn Miller, who was a friend of mine. I added New Jersey names to the NYFAI database so we could spread the word and enhance our chance of success.

I felt like it was a mission. Soon after that, I began to take classes at NYFAI.

DM: So you started out at NYFAI as an intern working to support the new program administratively and made sure they were notifying artists in New Jersey. You were living in New Jersey at the time?

JA: Yes, but I had lived in Brooklyn my whole life until I went to college in New Jersey. I moved from Brooklyn to New Jersey in 1962, just before my first child was born. From then on, with one brief exception, I have lived in the New Jersey suburbs.

DM: You then became a student after your internship. What kept you drawn to NYFAI?

JA: I guess I was drawn to what I needed and I felt something lacking in the graduate school courses.

DM: Did grad school have more traditional approaches to art making?

JA: I wasn't even ready to notice that as an issue, I don't think. What I'm referring to was an awakening consciousness, in general. I was still very involved in what I now call "the 50's handbook", which was a whole different thing than feminism. It didn't even overlap. Here's an example: When I began graduate school, my mother said, "Why don't you wait until the kids are in high school?" I said, "Mom! The kids are in high school!" I had waited until they were in high school just so I could be there for them when they got home from school and also be there for my husband with dinner ready when he got home from work.

I was living with what Betty Friedan called "the problem with no name". I was having that problem. I was a classic case of what the suburban housewife was going through at that time. Graduate school did not speak to that issue. I witnessed a professor reducing a young woman student to tears because he disallowed her painting of pinkish, organic, abstract forms!

DM: So you wanted to leave the handbook behind?

JA: Yes! I guess it was an instinct for survival, plus what I was picking up at NYFAI. I was

learning that art is “about” something and that I could connect being a woman with being an artist. But it didn’t happen overnight; it was a very long process. I probably still carry some of that 50’s stuff around. It just now occurred to me that I’ve been confronting this very thing in my ongoing series “Portrait of the Artist as a Young Girl, Fulfilling Society’s Limited Expectations!” So it’s still in process.

DM: Who did you meet at NYFAI and what impact did they have on you?

JA: Everything was positive. It was like all these little sparks going off. Nancy Azara had the most profound effect, then came Irene Peslikis. Also, I met Lucy Lessane, Carol Strongbilos and Miriam Schapiro – five of the original NYFAI organizers.

DM: You said Nancy had the most profound effect. Was that in her Visual Diaries class?

JA: Yes, but also in her workshops and personal critiques. She visited my MFA work-in-progress and helped me to see that what I had been doing already had a feminist perspective! And then, later on, when I interviewed her for Lives and Works ... However, my transformation took an early leap forward in her Visual Diaries class.

DM: How did this class work?

JA: To begin with, there was the image-making aspect – we talked, listened and kept drawing no matter what, and over time, when we looked back, we were surprised to discover that we were each uncovering our own kind of personal, more or less consistent, visual vocabulary which was sort of summoned up from our pre-consciousness. This discovery gave me confidence to experiment and move forward in the studio.

DM: Go on ...

JA: But for me what made the biggest impact in that class was the weekly assignments, which resulted in forcing me to reconsider my notions, preconceptions and long-held and, frankly, half-baked, sexist ideas and theories.

DM: Nancy would pose the question the week before and ask you to return with responses?

JA: Yes. We had a week to think about it. Then we sat around and drew in our diaries while

listening to each person's answer. And we were not to interrupt, but to wait until everyone had spoken before making responsive comments.

DM: Was it the sharing that did it?

JA: That was a very important factor. We were all trying to paddle to shore in the same stormy waters but in different canoes, so to speak. But what I really remember was the challenge and stimulation of thinking through my own individual aspirations. I was initially very confused about the relative importance of everything and then came a sudden awareness ...

DM: What was that?

JA: For me the most challenging question, a very, very hard question, was "What is more important to you, your artwork or your family?"

DM: Almost impossible question, huh?

JA: The answer was, finally, my family. I came up thinking that my family is a unit that absolutely requires and deserves my personal attention and commitment. I'm responsible to them. As it turned out, my family has been inspiration for my work and my daughters are very supportive.

DM: So it didn't feel like a conflict to you at the time? It felt like a relief to understand the balance?

JA: That's it. Well of course the first couple of days, as I was chewing on it, was an enormous conflict. But by the time I made my choice it was a huge relief, because then everything fell into place, and my priorities were set straight: My artwork was right behind my family, but it wasn't any longer at the bottom of my never-ending list of responsibilities.

DM: You mentioned one class, a color class, that you remembered taking.

JA: Oh yes with Irene Peslikis. She had us do a fascinating project, which actually led to some good things for me professionally. She asked us to do a hundred of something.

That was just about the only directions she gave us. And on the way home, I was thinking, what is it that I do repetitively, in my life? And it occurred to me that it was serving meals. I had a big dining room and we used to have a lot of family and friends and guests. A lot of holidays were celebrated at my house. So twenty people were not more than I could handle. The idea of serving – that is, repeatedly picking up food from the platter or tureen and putting it on the plate ... It occurred to me after this that all along, as I was serving the food, I had been thinking in terms of decorating this plate. My husband once asked, “Why is everything always touching together? You have all this space left over.” And I didn’t know why. I would nestle the peas next to the potatoes and place the fish or the meat or whatever it was in a kind of arrangement ...

DM: You were making compositions on the plate.

JA: I was making circular compositions, and I had no idea what I was doing until I hit Irene’s class and she had us examine whatever we wanted to examine, and that is what occurred to me. So I went straight to the supermarket, and this is before I ever went home, and I bought 100 white, heavy-duty paper plates and a big serving spoon. And the next morning I was at the hardware store getting small cans of latex paint of different colors, cans that were left over or mixed and mismatched or dented, whatever they had, and I took everything out to my backyard, where I had a long bench, and I began to spoon out meals of viscous latex paint. At first I made just three abstract shapes and colors, nestled next to each other (meat, potatoes and vegetables, a typical 50’s type meal). Then I began to drizzle one shape and color into another. It was extraordinary, the fun I had, and they were my very first abstractions. After they dried I put them on trays and carried them into the house, looking for a table. I had a small round bistro table with a long white cloth and a pair of white ice cream chairs on which I stacked them. Then, around the same time, I did a project for a local arts association, and they paid for my materials, so I bought big jars of artist’s acrylic paint, and used white plastic spoons to take the paint from the jar, as if it were applesauce. I could see how beautifully the tip of the white spoon had become a lovely curved shape of color so I added these spoons to the plates, and called it “The Artist’s Palate”, a play on words.

When I was invited to display this it looked like there had been a wonderful party because all the dirty dishes and utensils were so gorgeous. Viewers were encouraged to pick up any stack of dishes to view them and then they could re-arrange them at random. This exhibit, a WCA invitational, was titled “Women’s Work”. They also asked me to show my “real” work, life size portrait figures on canvas, right alongside of my first installation piece. This was 1980 and it was shown soon after at Westbeth Gallery.

So that was one of the things that came out of the ideas that were going on at NYFAI – I mean I was really ripe for this kind of stimulation.

DM: It sounds like it was an opportunity to connect your everyday life with your life as an artist. Do you feel like that was a focus of NYFAI, making your personal experiences connected to your art practice?

JA: Absolutely! Yes and validating them. Validating what women do and the way they do it. And sure, it taught me an awful lot about myself, and about why I did what I was doing.

DM: Are there other courses ... you mentioned Visual Diaries already. Are there other courses that made an impact at that level?

JA: Well there were workshops. I sat in Nancy’s Spirit Class. I never heard the word “chakra” before this ... and there were lots of other workshops. There was a doll-making workshop where I worked alongside of Faith Ringgold. Recently, I found this list of things you were supposed to bring to the workshop. You had to bring somebody’s hair and you had to bring pieces of fabric.

DM: You have the materials list?

JA: Yes. And I brought in a piece of my wedding gown.

DM: You cut your wedding gown?

JA: No, it was from the long gloves that came with the organdy gown. We had made a little headpiece from the fabric of one glove and the other glove I saved. So I used it in whatever this project was that we were making. I know we had to wrap up little things,

tie them to other things. So I guess the hair and the fabric were all part of that. But the thing that was really important was working with these wonderful women ... I met Alice Neel at a workshop, I met Elaine DeKooning in the workshops. In fact, Elaine looked at my slides and challenged me, "Why are you working this way?" Because it was sort of straightforward realism, so she kind of pushed me into being more expressive – one figure painter to another.

DM: Were there other programs or events that really made an impact?

JA: Oh yes. I studied with Sandra Langer. She didn't care for my work; she thought it was too didactic. But it was important to get her input. I studied with Merlin Stone. I loved her *Ancient Tales of Womanhood*, loved them because of the non-patriarchal, non-sexist tales. Also *When God Was a Woman* was the second book that we worked from. I gave "Ancient Tales" to each of my daughters. I read my favorite story to them and the three of us had tears in our eyes. We had never read or talked about these things.

DM: Are there exhibitions or events that you remember?

JA: Well sure there were plenty! My painting hung on the wall right next to an Isabel Bishop during one NYFAI exhibit. I could have bought her drawing for 100 dollars or something like that. I won a Harmony Hammond lithograph in a NYFAI fundraising raffle. I've been living with and enjoying the Harmony Hammond lithograph on a daily basis - so every time I look at it I am reminded of NYFAI. And then something else very important happened. There was a workshop with May Stevens and two others. Berenice Fisher was a student in the same workshop ... we were each given time to show or share. I didn't bring any work to show because I wanted to discuss an idea. And my idea was to mount an exhibit based on my job search credentials. I had spent two years looking for a job as a college professor and I had amassed 70 letters of rejection and all of the documents that go along with packaging yourself into an 8 1/2 x 11" envelope. Meanwhile, I had joined Ceres Gallery and when it came time ... in 1985 ... that I needed an exhibit, I asked myself, "What have I been doing this past two years? Where is my new work?" I had had six solo exhibits before that, 1975-1985, not at Ceres and after that, six more at Ceres. But at this particular time, I had not done anything because

I was busy doing the job search. So I asked May Stevens and Berenice Fisher, “Does this idea make sense to you?” You see, I needed to know whether all these rejection letters and all the time and energy I put into getting a job, were relevant to art; was it an art form, of a kind? Because it was my personal experience, I thought that I could kind of document it as a political phenomenon. In other words, it had very big political implications – why the jobs were so few and far between and with so many applicants. The College Art Association newsletter would give you the numbers of the people who would apply for each job ... so 700 people applied for a job at Hunter. And, they said applicants came “from as far away as the Orient.” This was when the art departments were shrinking the studio arts and the computer was on the upswing. They were closing down the studios and turning them into computer labs. Plus, the women faculty were not getting any kind of tenure or any kind of rank above Visiting Lecturer and stuff like that. And this was all documented in the CAA, but it wasn’t exactly publicized. It was the fine print. I think it was Berenice Fisher, particularly, but all of these gals who were at this workshop said, “Yes! Do it.” So they gave me encouragement and “permission”.

DM: All of this paper you collected seemed to be documentation of the real world situation?

JA: Yes, the installation was key. Well, it’s a long story, but I pulled it together so it was really interesting. First, I made a logo for the show which was based on the CAA logo along with a replica of a postal cancellation. I used this for all my PR. This logo and this postcard which also had a tantalizing bit of letter of rejection showing and which became my mailing announcement, wound up in a college art appreciation textbook. I had sent out a thousand postcards and I don’t know how this one got in Frederick Myers’ hands but he was writing a textbook, *The Language of Visual Art* and he requested permission to use it! So I’m on the same page with some very famous artists in that textbook. I also had posters and T-shirts with the logo for the installation and I had students wearing the T-shirts and helping me do my pushpin thing – a little like Christo’s minions.

DM: Interesting!

JA: Getting back to the installation, I had slides of my own work and my students’ work in a continuous projection along with two voices on audio. I had one voice saying all the nice

things from the letters of recommendation and a harsher voice reading bits of the letters of rejection. There were two tapes, on two audio tracks, and they were timed to just overlap a little bit. You stood in the gallery and you saw one wall of all the job search materials that went out in these numerous 8 ½” x 11” envelopes; you saw another wall of letters of rejection; you saw the projected images I had reproduced of my students’ work and my own work; you could see how productive I was as an artist and how effective I was as a teacher; plus you could read from the many recommendations; and then you heard the contrasting voices.

DM: Really powerful.

JA: It turned into a sound and light installation. So if the NYFAI group hadn’t encouraged me to even consider that my experience was valid ...

DM: That it was valid and important for the public to know it.

JA: Yes, I wouldn’t have done it. This is the second installation that never would have happened. And the Dean of Columbia University came by Ceres to see the show in the adjacent gallery. He wandered into my installation. He was so impressed with the Job Search exhibit that he invited me to bring it to Columbia. So the show traveled. In addition Bernice Abbot wrote an article about it in *Frontiers* magazine which appeared along with reproductions of my “real” work and it was printed in the textbook and it traveled to Columbia. And while at Columbia, the student cable TV program “Art Beat” aired an interview with me about the job search on a local channel. So there were many unexpected and wonderful reactions.

DM: And that started at NYFAI.

JA: Yes. The courage to take a couple cardboard boxes full of paper and turn it into something ...

DM: Into this project ... would you talk a little more about Ceres and its relationship to NYFAI?

JA: The history of Ceres begins with NYFAI, and I was at Ceres from the beginning. I

wasn't a founding member of Ceres, but I was an inaugural member because I was among the first official, dues paying and exhibiting ... I have documentation from the inaugural exhibit, I was in that. Prior to that, there was a group of women who wanted to open a gallery called Kore, but their philosophy was too restrictive or not inclusive enough to prevail. By the way, I am still a dues paying member, but not as active as before. In 2006, we had a belated 21st anniversary celebration, which was held during Women's History Month and we loved that idea that we were celebrating our very own history! I was chair of the program.

DM: It takes a while to plan these things, right?

JA: Right. For Ceres I had been doing the Women's History Month programs, and this became one of the annual programs. Everybody was there, and each one spoke on tape. The tapes will be donated to the Rutgers archives, along with this history of NYFAI. The program started out with an honoring of Nancy and Darla for establishing NYFAI, and we gave them a special award and flowers.

DM: How was the founding of Ceres related to NYFAI .... Were most of the participants people who'd been students at NYFAI?

JA: I believe so. Darla will tell you that they wanted to do something with the big space on the street level. First they thought of renting it out for commercial space. And then the idea that it could be a gallery caught on. And if everybody helped to make a cooperative, paid part of the rent, it was possible.

DM: So it was a project of NYFAI originally.

JA: Yes. Darla became an inaugural member of Ceres and she was the first president. But Nancy never joined Ceres. She was showing with SOHO20 at that time. Ceres had some invitational group shows and naturally she was invited to those. NYFAI also used the gallery space for their own exhibits, and I was in those as well – so it's hard to remember which exhibits Nancy was in.

DM: Nancy became a member of A.I.R. in the early 90s, right?

JA: By 1989 she had her first exhibit at A.I.R. Before that she had been a member of SOHO

DM: So you've already talked quite a bit about the visual work that you created, did you want to talk about your writing at all? Did NYFAI have anything to do with inspiring you as a writer, or supporting your works as someone who writes about art?

JA: Well I've never considered myself a writer. But, in point of fact, I've done a number of studio critiques, artist statements and even catalogue essays. I've also helped artists to see their work more objectively and to write their own statements for their shows. I'm still doing some of that. These contacts were made through NYFAI, WCA and Ceres and more recently at the Women's Studio Center.

DM: And you published a book.

JA: No I co-authored a book. The "business" with the publisher was pre-arranged. I never had to deal with the publisher directly. What happened is this: Lynn Miller came to be on the board of NYFAI. She was a new reference librarian at Douglass College and had written a book about women in film. Meanwhile, Joan Snyder, who had graduated from Douglass undergrad a couple of years earlier in 1962, came back to the campus as a grad student and with new eyes and the new women's movement stirring in her, she looked around and said something like, "Why is it that this women's school that we're all enrolled in doesn't have any women teachers? And why is there no women's art anywhere?" She said, "We're turning out artists, women artists from a women's college, and they've never seen a work by a woman artist?" Perhaps this is a good time to point out to our younger audience that our art history textbooks didn't include *any women artists at all* and certainly at that time, there were no Women's Studies classes. Anyway, it was such a simple and powerful question. She posed it to the director of the Douglass Library, then Daisy Brightenback, who replied, "What can we do about this?" Basically that's how *the Women Artist Series* was born, back in 1971, and it's still in existence. Joan Snyder was the first curator and Lynn Miller became the first coordinator. This meant, at first, that Lynn and an assistant drove a rental van to pick up the selected artworks all by themselves and then hung them in the library.

DM: And the book ... ?

JA: The books *Lives and Works: Talks With Women Artists*, both Vol I, published in 1981, and Vol II, published in 1996, are offshoots of the Douglass *Women Artist Series* from its first ten years 1971-1981, the time of Lynn's involvement.

DM: And how did you get involved?

JA: Initially, Sally Swenson, a trained oral historian and also a very fine studio artist, asked Lynn for permission to interview the exhibiting artists. This led to Lynn transcribing and editing Sally's taped interviews which became a very successful Vol I. Later, when the Scarecrow Press Publisher asked Lynn for a second volume (Vol II), she invited me to help her out as co-author, as she herself was planning to go on to law school. Once Lynn's law schoolwork became too demanding, Beryl Smith, Zimmerli Art Librarian, took on some of the interviews and along with Sally Swenson, who had remained with the project, the three of us became co-authors of Vol II. We selected the artists from a list Lynn provided and we were each responsible for the contacts, interviews, transcriptions and editing. I'm happy to mention that Vol II was also very well received when it was finally published in 1996. It was reissued in paperback in 1999. Now, both hardcover volumes are out of print and the paperback is nearly so. So, although there was no formal link between NYFAI and the Women Artist Series, we all lived through these times and shared the same general context. Also, a number of the same women were involved in both. For example, Nancy Azara and Miriam Schapiro from NYFAI exhibited in the Douglass Series and Lynn, from Douglass, served on the NYFAI Board of Advisors. I interacted with all three women, as I interviewed Nancy and Miriam for what was originally Lynn's "Lives and Works, Vol II".

And soon after, those artists' interviews led me to two major projects. In 1997, I exhibited *Lives & Works: The Portraits*. I had gone back to all the artists in the book and asked them to pose individually for a quick portrait sketch, as none of them could spare much time. Most, graciously agreed, and as soon as I concluded each portrait in watercolor and mixed media on clayboard, I handed the panel over to them and asked them to write directly onto the panel a brief observation about life, or art and or feminism- which they each did in their own unique way. Afterwards, I added visual

images and text referencing their work to both the panel itself and to the customized framing. For example, I carved and gilded Nancy's frame and I covered Miriam's frame with a piece of fabric left over from one of her major pieces. When exhibited, each piece was accompanied by selected quotations from Vol II interviews referencing a patronizing experience or hostile challenge they encountered in their early careers – in the late 70's and early 80's. Also, when the book was published, I was able to arrange an invitation to the National Museum of Women in the Arts, at the suggestion of Charlotte Robinson, for a slide talk and book signing with reception. This was filmed and these taped selections of each artist presenting her own work were then added to my gallery installation of *Lives and Works: The Portraits*, along with a gallery copy of the book.

So, taken all together this exhibit is a unique documentation of these artists, their work and their times. It has been well received at college campuses as a very interesting and effective educational tool, especially for Women's History Month. And, this coming Spring 2008 it is to be shown in the Rutgers University Art Library along with *Portrait Of The Artist As A Young Girl Fulfilling Society's Limited Expectations*.

The second project that grew out of the book was titled "Lives and Works: The Exhibition". For this, I curated a show at Ceres in 2000 of these artists' *actual* artwork! I had been frustrated that, in the book, their work was limited to small black & white illustrations. I loved the idea of actually bringing this work to life. The artists attended the exhibit, and we especially admired the unexpected but fabulous synergy created by the collective work.

DM: And how did working on that book coincide with NYFAI ... were they simultaneous?

JA: Not exactly, but we did overlap. We didn't begin the Vol II interviews until 1988 but due to a long delay since the publisher merged, moved, then misplaced our manuscript, we were permitted to update some interviews in 1991. Meanwhile, NYFAI had closed in 1990. As a result, the book records Nancy's comments both pre and post NYFAI's existence

And, as it turned out, I had come across an amazing sculpture of Nancy's at the Women's

Artist Series at Douglass Library probably as early as 1972, but it wasn't until I began interviewing her years later that I realized that her early work was familiar to me. Somehow, that piece wasn't available to us during the NYFAI years.

DM: What was it?

JA: I recall being both totally puzzled and blown away because it was sculpture – but it didn't have any of the qualities I had associated with sculpture. It was a good size, over life-size, and it took up a lot of floor space, but it wasn't one solid, tall, monolithic anything. It was lots of little pieces, different colors, pegged together with wooden pins. She later told me it was a self-portrait and a metaphor for the female condition, struggling to get up off the floor, struggling to put things together to make a bigger thing. In 1972, I hadn't yet read the new feminist handbook to know that it was okay to do that, and I couldn't articulate this at that time. However, I could see and feel that it worked.

DM: You felt the strength of the piece?

JA: Right, but also the precariousness.

DM: You mentioned the Feminist Art Project. Do you feel that it is a continuation of the energy, the spirit that was NYFAI?

JA: Absolutely! Today, in 2007, it provides a badly needed infusion of that energy. You know, NYFAI closed its doors in 1991, so we were treading water for a long time. And, it didn't seem that our gains had been secured. So when the FAP came along and unequivocally declared that the Feminist Art Movement invented Post-Modernism, and, let's celebrate our 35 years of successes and further, that we're looking forward to more gains in the future, then that created a big leap forward! And then they backed all this up with a national database and exhibits from coast to coast of established and emerging American and multicultural women artists was which has received some very important critical attention from the mainstream press.

What seems to be at the very center of this incredible energy is the establishment of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, the only such entity in the entire world! It

is a permanent installation of Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party*. Along with an auxiliary gallery space for rotating historical exhibitions of artifacts and other relevant materials designed to deepen and extend our knowledge and understanding of the legacy left by Judy's one thousand thirty eight women throughout history, many of whom, as you know, she virtually rescued from obscurity. All this is a colossal success, as far as I'm concerned. Then too, there is a gallery designed for contemporary feminist art exhibits. Another important component, and Elizabeth Sackler made a point of this - she envisioned the Center and adjacent lecture/ discussion area as a forum for the exchange of ideas and opinions.

So, the dialogue continues with forward-looking programs. We need to make all of these accessible to the next generations and then come to understand how we can help them to go forward *on their own terms*. It's not only about our past history. We also need to be about the future history of feminism as well.

DM: And, in conclusion, as to your other professional contexts and your life in general, is there still a connection to whatever was energizing about NYFAI?

JA: Well, once you have shed your cocoon, so to speak, you cannot fit back into it. After the initial breakthrough, I had to adjust, absorb and modify until the metamorphosis was complete. And, you know, I am still evolving.

It seems we have all learned to open up our minds to possibilities we didn't know existed before.

Today you and I question everything. We know that history and even most current information is biased, as it was written from a patriarchal perspective. So we have learned to evaluate and ask, "Well, who is it that is speaking and what is his agenda?"

As I said, I am still developing. My interests have expanded to women in other disciplines, women in other cultures and the role of the younger generations who have awakened to and are redefining feminism.

This expanded interest, by the way, also includes men of all ages. When I see men listening to the WCA/CAA panels and discussions, and I ask them if they are feminists, they seem confused – as if they really don't know. After all, by now most have been exposed to, and responded to the training and practice of feminist art, and its history and critical theory. But, it seems, they have somehow not received permission or incentives to admit it, or, better yet, to embrace and champion it. My growing feeling is, we need to target them or devise what amounts to a marketing strategy – maybe something like what the guerilla girls were known for. My own latest artwork is a small landscape drawing with a provocative title: *Why Have There Been No Great Male Feminists?*

In light of recent alarming domestic and global developments, I now truly believe that Feminism, with its various manifestations and benevolent social, political and ethical imperatives, could actually save the world! However, we would need to expand our base of support – as the bad guys are always ready to push the door closed again.

Now, to get off the soapbox and bring this back to a personal level, I have learned a lot from you, Dena. You are an important role model for young moms and young feminists of all stripes. I believe you've had as much input into the FAP as any of the highly credentialed senior women who are its principle organizers. And, we realize how absolutely necessary it is to document NYFAI, which seems, in retrospect, along with the precedent-setting California Feminist Art Movement, to have been the breeding ground for the feminists of my generation. So we are truly grateful for your perspective, your work and your energy.

DM: Thank you, Joan. And we appreciate your contributions, as well.

END