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## Feminist Art

*art that reflects a political consciousness of what it means  
to be a woman in patriarchal culture*

Harmony Hammond

This course introduces the viewer to developments in feminist art history and art from the 70s to 2000. Materials will combine feminist theory with a close examination of works by women artists in the twentieth century. If we consider Harmony Hammond's definition of feminist art, we must evaluate the definition of art and woman. While there is no single definition for feminist art, we will look for common themes and celebrate difference, while reading two different narratives of this time period: *The Power of Feminist Art* and *Lesbian Art in America*.

Coursework will include political images that may be quite disturbing at times. The art addresses some of the wonderful and painful aspects of women's experiences. Please let me know if a particular subject is difficult for you to consider in a classroom situation.

### Course Requirements

Class Participation: 15% (Regular attendance alone is equivalent to a "C")

Midterm Exam: 20%

Book Review: 15%

Research Paper and Presentation: 30% (Proposal, Paper, and Presentation)

Final Exam: 20%

**Consider working on a collaborative art project for extra credit.** At least two people must work on a project together. Projects will be exhibited in the glass case across from the mailboxes. I am open to the possibility of the entire class working together in creating this space or a group may want to serve the broader women's community and create a banner to be used for events like Take Back the Night.

### Textbooks

H. Hammond, Lesbian Art in America, New York: Rizzoli, 2000.

N. Broude, M.D. Garrard, eds., The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s and Impact, New York: Harry Abrams, 1994.

### Book Review

Compose a critical essay that is three to four pages in length (double-spaced) that considers M. Tucker and M. Tanner, *Bad Girls*, MIT Press, 1994, Corinne Robins, "Why We Need *Bad Girls* Rather Than Good Ones!" (Reserve), and Barbara Pollack, Letter on Good Girls, Bad Girls, and Bad Boys (Reserve). Whenever you make a reference to an idea, position, or argument of an author, you must cite the source. Unless the information is common knowledge, you must indicate the source with author, title of work and page in number. Plagiarism is not acceptable and will result in a failing grade. Due April 22.

### Research Paper and Class Presentation

- A. Prepare a description of your topic and a working bibliography for Monday, April 22. Select a single work of art from the twentieth century (or twenty-first century) and place it within the context of feminist art in general. You should think about how the work reflects the interest of the artist in general and why you consider the project feminist. Perhaps the work is feminist, while the artist does not describe her or himself as feminist. It also is possible to choose a topic that allows you to work as a feminist art historian seeking to increase our knowledge about the importance of women artists. I would be happy to consider collaborative research papers, but this requires some additional negotiation with respect to requirements. In other words, the paper and presentation should be longer.
- B. The research paper should be 5-7 pages in length (double-spaced). The papers are due the day the presentations are given. Omit bibliographic information about the artist and focus on the implications of the work of art. Make sure that you have a clear thesis that you are defending. Avoid lengthy quotations from secondary sources. Previous scholarship must be consulted and credited. Follow a standard style for your notes and bibliography. Consider the MLA Handbook, Kate Turabian's A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, or the Chicago Manual of Style.

Photocopied or scanned illustrations should be attached to the back of the research paper. Number each figure consecutively and refer to the appropriate figure numbers in your text. All figures should have captions with artist, title, and date.

- C. Give a ten-minute presentation of your research to the class on April 29 or 30. The final paper should be submitted by the date of the presentation. **Provide an image of the work you will be discussing on Friday, April 26. So that I can make a slide of the image in time for your presentation.**

Syllabus  
*(Class meets at 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.)*

April 8

Introduction

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Press, 1972 (Chap. 3), 45-64.

What role does art history play in a patriarchal art world?

April 9

Art History: The Search for Female Agency

Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" (Reserve)

Power of Feminist Art, 10-20;

April 10

Reclaiming the Past and Crafty Women

Power of Feminist Art, 130-37

Suggested: Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (Reserve)

April 11

Womanhouse and Activism

Power of Feminist Art, 32-47; 48-85

Lesbian Art in America, 15-18; 40-41

Video

April 12

Recovering the Goddess

Power of Feminist Art, 174-89;

April 15

Pattern and Decoration

Power of Feminist Art, 208-225; 226-45

Lesbian Art in America, 48-49

Suggested: Monique Wittig, "The Straight Mind" (Reserve)

April 16

The Dinner Party and its Critics

April 17  
Midterm (Morning)  
Challenging the Art Establishment (Afternoon)  
Video

April 18-19  
No classes will be held on Thursday or Friday; however, you have two assignments to complete. Both are due on April 22. First write a critical essay about the exhibition catalogue entitled *Bad Girls* (M. Tucker and M. Tanner, editors, MIT Press, 1994). You must consider two other commentaries as part of your discussion:

Corinne Robins, "Why We Need *Bad Girls* Rather Than Good Ones!"  
(Reserve)

Barbara Pollack, Letter on Good Girls, Bad Girls, and Bad Boys (Reserve)

Second, determine a topic for your research paper and set up an appointment with the Humanities librarian. You should be using interlibrary loan for your assignment. Prepare a proposal of your topic and a working bibliography for Monday's Class.

April 22  
Reframing Feminism (The Challenge from the "margins")  
Power of Feminist Art, 140-173  
Lesbian Art in America, 51-57; 60-62; 70-79  
**Book Review and Paper Proposal Due**

April 23  
The Body as a Text  
Power of Feminist Art, 190-207  
Lesbian Art in America, 82-83; 86-89; 92-94

April 24  
Backlash and Appropriation of the 80s  
Power of Feminist Art, 248-75  
Lesbian Art in America, 99-103  
Hilde Heim, "The Role of Feminist Aesthetics in Feminist Theory" (Reserve)

April 25  
Feminisms in the 90s  
Power of Feminist Art, 264-287  
Amelia Jones, "*Post-Feminism* – A Remasculinization of Culture?" (Reserve)

Finding a Room of One's Own or How Successful Have Feminists Been?  
Check out the following website: <http://www.candydarling.com>. Look at  
"Familiar Men: A Book of Nudes" and "Women en Large: Images of Fat  
Nudes." Has Laurie Toby Edison successfully avoided the effects of a  
patriarchal culture or has she reinvented the same problems that we first  
considered with John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*?

April 26

Art and Activism in a Postmodern World

Lesbian Art in America, 111-12; 128-33; 141-49; 154-58

bell hooks, "Women Artists and the Creative Process" (Reserve)

April 27 (Saturday)

If interested, I will meet any students to help them finish their research at  
the University of Iowa Art library at 1:00 p.m. Students should already have  
picked out the articles that they would like to find at this library. Bring  
change/small bills for photocopying.

April 29 and 30

**Class Presentations and Research Papers are Due**

By 5:00 p.m., all students should submit their proposals for exam questions.

The exam questions will be the result of a collaborative process.

May 1

Final Exam (Cumulative)