

WORK/STUDY FOR THE MASTER'S DEGREE IN WOMEN'S STUDIES AT ANTIOCH

In getting my degree plan for Masters in Women's Studies with an emphasis on Feminist Art Education, I contracted the Women's Building to do an independent Work/Study, where the Women's Building would simply funnel funds from a donor to Antioch and receive a 10% handling charge, and the benefits of my labors would be available to them/credited to them.

All the money goes to tuition (\$3300) and overhead/expenses.

HOW THE FUNDS WERE USED:

All year, I conducted and tabulated a 7 page questionnaire on which I'm basing my thesis. I read a paper on this study at the College Art Association in New Orleans, Feb., 80, and will speak on the results of this questionnaire again at the College Art Association this February, 1981, to be held in S.F. The questionnaire deals with the relationship of class background, feminism and politics in the making/success in art. I have hundreds of responses - from famous artists (Agnes Martin, Carl Andre, Philip Pearlstein, Joyce Kozloff etc.) to graduate students to street artists. (I AM ENCLOSING ONE AS AN EXAMPLE, BUT I MUST HAVE IT BACK ON THURSDAY.)

I also documented 6 collaborations with women via videotape. This will be shown at the Women's Building in Sept. at the benefit for the Women's Caucus for art.

I wrote a detailed program for a grant (to Vanguard and Zellerbach) for a program and benefit merging arts and politics at the Women's Building. Another program was designed modelled after the "eco-feminism of the 80's- Women and Life on Earth" conference I attended at Amherst in March.

Although these proposals were not sent and the programs deemed unfeasible at this time, the material is available should there be a use for them in the future.

6446½ Colby
Oakland, CA 94618
June 13, 1980

Ms. Carmen Basquiz
SF Women's Building
3543 18th Street
San Francisco, CA 94110

Dear Carmen:

It was a pleasure meeting you and I am looking forward to settling this on Wednesday at 9:30 am as I must report to Antioch at 2:00 pm that Wednesday (rather than Friday).

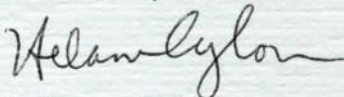
I will need a bank check made out to Antioch for \$500 and a regular or bank check from the Women's Building for \$1120 (post dated June 25). I will give the Women's Building a check for \$162.

I am including a bio so that perhaps it might suggest how I can be of further help.

My initial proposal for the Women's Building has been revised and will be done in the Los Angeles Women's Building and in an established museum. Sorry it could not work here.

Enclosed is an invitation to the performance event in my studio.

Sincerely,



Helane Aylon

HA/mk

enc.

FIFTH: The Agency will be responsible for the supervision of work performed by student participating in any project under this agreement, and will make available to the College the names and locations of Agency supervisors. The Agency will provide to the College a record of the hours worked during each payroll period by each student as certified by an authorized official of the Agency. The Agency will permit the College, from time to time at it may request, to inspect the premises in which any student is working under this Agreement and will review with the College the working conditions and job requirements of all such students.

SIXTH: Work to be performed under this agreement will not result in the displacement of employed workers or impair existing contracts for services; will be governed by such conditions including compensation, as will be appropriate and reasonable in light of such factors as the type of work performed, geographical region and proficiency of the employee, and must not involve the construction, operation or maintenance of so much of any facility used, or to be used, for sectarian instruction or as a place or religious worship. Further, no project may involve political activity or work for any political party.

SEVENTH: No student shall perform work on any project under this Agreement for more than an average of twenty-five (25) hours per week during any academic period while classes for which he/she is enrolled are in session, or for more than forty (40) hours in any other week, or as may otherwise be provided under applicable Federal Law and regulations.

EIGHTH: This Agreement shall supersede any and all prior Agreements between the College and the Agency regarding the mutual operation of a work-study program under the provisions of the College Work Study Program.

NINTH: This Agreement shall terminate _____ and may be extended by written agreement of the parties hereto for a period not to exceed one year.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have executed this Agreement as of the day and year first above written.

ANTIOCH UNIVERSITY

BY _____
Director of Financial Aid

ORGANIZATION: S.F. Women's Building

3543 18th Street,

ADDRESS S.F.

NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

ROMA P. GUY, FUND RAISING COORDINATOR

SIGNATURE OF SAME X Roma Guy

Send Roma Guy
SF Women Center
3543 18 ST
SF Ca.

6446 1/2 Colby
Oakland Ca 94618
June 21, 1980

Dear Jean,

It was a pleasure (and a relief)
meeting you.

You asked for material not in the
resumé. How's this for starters? Just
dashing it out so you get it before Thursday-
when we meet. I'm also enclosing the flyers
of the East/West forum on art I organized
where I raised \$10,000 with the help of 3rd world
students who complained that they were tired of
bongo-drum programs designed for them! ~~They~~
(they began this whole thing thru Associated Students')

Here's to using our energies to combat
the Patriarchy, and here's to the future of
the Women's Building.

Helene Aylon

SEX DISCRIMINATION, A WAY-OF-LIFE IN ART ACADEMIA

©1977

These testimonial letters below are a sampling of the types of discrimination which exist against women in college art academia. There are many more women who dare not speak out for fear of jeopardizing the un-nured, often part-time jobs which they hold. Three other women were bled to write letters for this article, but each of them has a lawsuit pending against a particular institution, and they were advised by their attorneys at their frank discussion of their circumstances in article form could well jeopardize their cases. Thus, wisely, they declined to participate.

POLITICS & FEAR OF FEMINISM

By Helene Aylon © 1977

I first came to San Francisco State University in 1973, fresh from New York, (not knowing a soul in California), as the token full-time woman in the painting area.

After my first year, there was a unanimous vote that I be rehired for the next year. I was very encouraged by this and now that I was settled, I really got into my classes. I taught a class called "Contemporary Art Issues" and coordinated a series of lectures from New York for this. I started having students come to my studio. I also worked towards two solo exhibitions in New York and one at M.L.T.

What I did not know was that a token person must behave like a token person. If a token black becomes too strong, that person will be feared as a militant. If a token woman becomes too strong, (in the words of the writer of the Hiring, Retention, and Tenure Committee Report), men might feel they are "in danger of being swallowed up." This was one of the unofficial reasons actually given to me by Wes Chamberlin, then on the HRT Committee, when I pressed for the real reason for my termination.

If only I had maintained a low profile, as I did in my first year when my energy went into getting settled... for as soon as I started to "act," things changed. In fact, the official reason for my dismissal was that I "acted unilaterally." What would be considered acting with initiative in a man is "acting unilaterally" in a woman. What is considered perseverance in a man was termed a "uhm of iron" in my case. (HRT '75). This poor mixing of metaphors is calculated sexism: "Capriciousness is always in characteristic of women, never of men;" "iron," I guess, is not a favorable adjective in reference to women. Another off-the-record remark was that I "never cut the umbilical cord from New York." When I asked Dick McLean, a friend on the faculty, to explain the faculty's feelings, he said: "Maybe you didn't like them enough; all you cared about were your students." Bob Bechtel, one of my supporters in the department had this comment: "It's irrational."

The history of the department has been a history of part-time women being let go each year. In 1975, out of seven people not being retained, six were women — ~~myself~~ and five part-time women.

When I first arrived at State University Art Department, in '73, where at least 65% of the art students are female, out of 27 full-time faculty members there were only 3 full-time women. They taught weaving, metal-jewelry, and Art for children. In 1974, one other full-time woman was hired to teach Art for children.

Visual Dialog

THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF THE VISUAL ARTS

Mar., Apr., May, 1977

In 1974 my Hiring, Retention, Tenure Committee evaluation was: "Helene Aylon energetically pursues her creative work and conveys attitudes about art which are complementary to, but distinct from those expressed by other members of the painting faculty. Her contribution is important and unique." (Jack Welpot, HRT Committee, '74)

But in 1975, the new HRT Committee thought differently: "When a new member joins the Department, it is up to that individual to realize the nature of the organization that he or she is joining. Then the individual either has to change to become part of that entity or should realize that there is no possibility of that happening and willingly leave... This may come down to a matter of style: she has one and the department another." (Wes Chamberlin, HRT, '75)

I am puzzled by this contradiction laughing and deploring the same quality. What about Professor John Ihle's style? A tenured member for many years, Ihle had a paid female model (for his life drawing class), pose nude, wearing a cowboy hat, belt and boots and straddling a motorcycle. Some of the women students were very offended, but no one on the HRT said anything about his "style."

In regard to the HRT clause, "Participation in Professional Activities," the report singled out my Feminist activities: "She has increasingly found herself involved in the feminist art movement, an attitude and movement in art that has been felt much more acutely in New York City or in Los Angeles than here in the Bay Area. Ms. Aylon has been responsible for bringing artists out from the East to speak on these concerns..." (HRT, '75)

This passage paints me as a "carrier" of some New York brand of militant Feminism. In fact, Feminism is an international phenomenon. In so far as male domination is universal, it is logical that many women everywhere are coming to consciousness.

There seems to be a whole network, beginning with the Dean, involved with the railroading out of undesteerables. After the first positive evaluation of 1974, Vice-President Garity wrote: "Obviously, we cannot be insensitive to the uniformly enthusiastic attitude of the Art Department faculty toward Ms. Aylon's performance at the University. There is in those comments a level of emotional fervor which suggests that Ms. Aylon has captivated persons with her personality as well as with her own professional proficiency as an artist... I request that we have a thorough going-over and objective evaluation by the department."

In May of 1975, after the second evaluation, which was negative, the same Vice-President wrote: "It appears that in this most recent evaluation of Ms. Aylon, her department colleagues have approached the evaluation criteria with a more objective attitude than that which had previously existed."

(Was it smart careerism for the HRT Committee to later please the deans?)

When it's time for a promotion, then it's time to let go of someone; otherwise, after

four years, there was at that time, automatic tenure. Tenure means more money. To rationalize these economies (and the sexism, conservatism and cronism that exists in varying proportions among the various members), reasons are sought and a lot of dirty work goes on. Here is how the railroad was engineered in my case.

1. Five supporters on the faculty who were on Sabbatical were not called to vote. Four of these people were available to vote. DeStabler, Henderson, and Weipolt called in their positive vote afterwards, but they were told it was too late. (The vote: 11 for a terminal year, 8 for a probationary year — 18 men, 1 woman voting.)
2. Two faculty, Munch and Nepote, who were retiring, voted although they would not be in the school any longer.
3. I was informed of the termination on the last week of classes, and the general consensus among students who heard this is that this last minute information was to prevent students from organizing a protest.
4. Equivalency (professional experience, e.g., exhibitions, reviews) is granted by SESU to faculty members in lieu of a doctorate. I was informed that this was needed for tenure. I submitted this equivalency at first and was told that it had to be revised (i.e., pasted in a straphook). I handed the "revised" material to Wes Chamberlin who then told me to "put it in Marge's box." Surprisingly, Wes Chamberlin then wrote in the HRT report: "To the best of my knowledge, it has not been revised or submitted."

Upon investigation months later, I found the Equivalency material in the office of the chairman, Seymour Locks. What surprises me is that Mr. Locks received a letter from the Vice President on May 28, 1975, with the following statement: "You will recall that there be a clear statement about her (MS, Aylon) doctoral or equivalency intentions this year as a condition for further consideration. Apparently, Ms. Aylon has chosen not to respond to that requirement either."

That material was sitting in Locks' office, and I believe he was unaware of it being there. He explained later in November: "I thought your papers had gone over to Dean McKenna. No one advised me that the material was ready to send with a covering letter. Apparently the material was simply placed upon the cabinet without instructions. By whom, I still do not know... The Department feels obligated to assist you in your efforts to obtain a new position. I personally can attest to your excellent ability to engage the students in a personal expression. Also your equivalency papers are deserving of a doctorate; this I can and would state to any prospective employer."

After I "found" the material, it was sent to the Dean where it should have been sent in the first place. I was told that it would be evaluated. I waited for three months. Finally, I got a letter saying it was "moot" to process the equivalency, as I had "accepted" a terminal year.

Some of the earliest and most militant student strikes occurred at San Francisco State in the 60's, challenging the very under-pinnings of a top-heavy, unresilient bureaucracy.

Administrative contempt for certain faculty and students can be seen in many of the Departments. The French Literature department dismissed a woman member, (author of FEMINISM AS THERAPY) who had been very active in the strikes. She sued and lost after four years, she felt caught in a legal trap, as the Deans and Judges know each other socially.

In the Philosophy Department, a lesbian feminist was let go for unclear reasons. Another lesbian feminist in the Speech Department was not rehired for puzzling reasons, but fought and won tenure. One librarian was given notice because she brought too much feminist literature into the library. She fought and won tenure. On and on...

I stayed on for my "terminal" year. The students wrote letters and signed petitions. They chiseled holes in the cement outside and stood knee-deep shouting that they were "stuck." They tied me with invisible fishing line, making a cobweb over the campus, protesting the "invisible" sexism they were caught in. They put a tombstone in front of the art building.

My students asked to see the HRT document. Somehow I was nervous about showing it. By that time, I did not want to stay on anyway. Why waste their energy? Finally, I did show it to them, and they immediately mimeographed and distributed the report with their "answers" to each clause.

Here are some excerpts from the students' letter:

CLAUSE 1: HRT REPORT, May 1975: PERSONAL COLLECTIVE RELATIONSHIP: "SHE IS UNABLE TO COMPROMISE OR WORK IN ANY SUBORDINATE OR EVEN EQUAL POSITION TO ANOTHER FACULTY MEMBER."

(Our question: In what respect was Helene to act in a subordinate fashion?)

CLAUSE 4: PROFESSIONAL GROWTH: Helene was pictured, by innuendo, as an uppity New Yorker who "WAS OFFERED SEVERAL SHOWS IN THE BAY AREA BUT DECLINED TO EXHIBIT HER WORK IN THE AREA."

(Helene has asked the HRT Committee to correct this, citing the following:)

1. Oakland Museum: "6 Painters, 6 Attitudes," July 25, 1975, Group Exhibition.
2. Grapestake Gallery, S.F., Jan. 6, 1976, Solo Exhibition.
3. Women's Center, S.F. State Univ., March 8, 1976, Group Exhibition.

(For one year, Helene Aylon requested that these false statements be corrected and the vicious innuendos deleted. She was told that "the HRT Report was unimportant, and would be seen by no one," "so she should just forget it.")

We don't think the issue is who sees the document. Even if no one ever sees it, there are lies festering in those files: the issue is truth.

It was suggested by a faculty member, that I think of my firing as a "friendly divorce" from the Department. If I was willing to behave as if my dismissal was a voluntary quit, I could be assured of the "highest recommendations." I did not carry out a long legal battle, on the questionable hope that my work will see me through financially. Many women and minorities, dependent upon teaching, do not dare consider this option. If other universities hear of any trouble, they certainly won't take a chance on a "powder keg" when there are so many grateful women who need a job. The perpetuation of this sick system depends on the excess labor pool of unemployed, struggling for token positions pitted against one another and expendable. No matter how important their contribution to the students' education, the bottom line consideration is maintaining a homogenous "club" at the Department level. The tenure procedure is the leveler that assures an unruffled status-quo.

The conservative administration is still firmly entrenched at San Francisco State. They see to it that the faculty members don't get out of hand. Sipping their coffee with cream substitute, back-slapping and smugly fulfilling the routines of academia too many go on, congratulating mediocrity, waiting for their sabbaticals, merrily releasing hundreds of BFA's and MFA's to a non-existent job market.

Helene Aylon

NOTE: All women artists who feel that they have been the victims of sex discrimination in art academia or attempts to gain gallery or museum exhibitions are invited to let us know about it as we are now starting a WEST COAST RIP-OFF FILE. We are also interested in hearing from any women who have been able to successfully prosecute their cases of sex discrimination in art academia. Please send information to Visual Dialog in care of Susan Chapin. All information will be confidential and nothing will be printed in Visual Dialog without the express consent of the writer and clearance through an attorney.

SCHEDULE TO WORK-STUDY AGREEMENT

NAME Helene Aylon DATE _____
 CENTER S.F. Women's Building

CC	SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER	ACTION CODE	ACCOUNT NUMBER
01	[REDACTED]		-
1		13-14	15-21
RATE	MAXIMUM	ACCOUNT GROSS	+ OR -
22-25	26-32	33-39	39
STUDENT NAME (LAST, FIRST, MIDDLE INITIAL)			
AYLON HELENE			
40-69			
MARITAL STATUS	NUMBER OF DEPENDENTS	RESIDENT STATE	
WIDOW		Calif.	
70	71-72	73-74	

JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE: organize Feminist Art Workshop + Collaborations re: "the LAND."
 JOB DESCRIPTION: Beginning a Feminist Art Workshop that involve collaboration among Feminist women artists, photographers, writers, actresses.
this will culminate on Feb-28, 1980 in a conference on Eco-Feminism in the 80's - held at the time of the College Art Association for maximum publicity.
the workshop will collaborate on a performance piece called "DIALOGUE WITH THE LAND."

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- organize Feminist Art Workshop:
 - a questionnaire on art education for feminists ^{to be published}
 - develop VIDEO that would elucidate type of performance/collaboration **Note: Video is scheduled in W.B. Sept.**
 - do 10 workshops, call meetings, get grants if possible
 - be responsible for publicity, invitations, press **Women's Caucus for Art**
- organize conference or event to put performance in a strong context
- Be in charge of the performance/collaboration

HOURS PER WEEK: 2.5 or MORE NUMBER OF WEEKS: 50

antioch

1025 Carleton, Berkeley, CA 94710
(415) 841-9545

463 West Street, N.Y., NY 10014
(212) 242-3687

HELANE AYLON

- SOLO EXHIBITIONS
- 1970, 72 Max Hutchinson Gallery, NYC
1975, 79 Betty Parsons Gallery, NYC
1975 Susan Caldwell Gallery, NYC
1976, 78 Grapestake Gallery, San Francisco
1976 MIT, Cambridge, MA
1979 112 Workshop (formerly 112 Greene) NYC
- GROUP EXHIBITIONS
- 1970 "Lyrical Abstraction" Aldrich Museum, CT
Phoenix Museum of Art, Phoenix, AZ
Philadelphia Civic Center, Philadelphia, PA
Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC
- 1970 "The Art Scene" Berenson Gallery, FL
- 1970 "Two Generations of Color Painting"
University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia
- 1971 The Members Gallery, Albright Knox Art
Gallery, Buffalo, NY
- 1971 "Beaux Arts 25th Anniversary Exhibition"
Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, Columbus, OH
- 1971 "4 Painters" Skidmore College,
Saratoga Springs, NY
- 1972 "Painting & Sculpture Today 1972"
Indianapolis Museum of Art, IN
- 1972 "Soho Scene" Storm King Art Center,
Mountainville, NY
- 1972 "New Instructors, New Media" Brooklyn
Museum, Brooklyn, NY
- 1975 "6 Painters, 6 Attitudes" Oakland
Museum, Oakland, CA
- 1975 "Color, Light, and Image" Women's
Interart Center, NYC
- 1976 "Abstraction in Metal, on Canvas and
Paper" Dart Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 1976 Studio School Invitational,
Fourcade Droll, NY
- 1976 "Works on Paper" Ruth S. Schaffner Gallery,
Los Angeles, CA
- 1977 WCA, Contemporary Issues: Work on Paper,
Women's Building, Los Angeles, CA
- 1977 The Artist's Book, Mandeville Art Gallery,
University of California, San Diego, CA
- 1977 WCA, Contemporary Issues: Work on Paper,
University of Houston, Houston, TX
University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT

- 1977 "Fall 1977 Contemporary Collections"
Aldrich Museum, CT
- 1978 9 Artist's Book, Dalhousie University,
Nova Scotia, Canada
University of California, Irvine, CA
Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH
University of Wisconsin, Madison, WS
- 1978 "Metamagic" California State University,
Dominguez Hills, CA
- 1978 "Sketch Books" Women Artists Archives,
Women's Interart Center, NYC
- 1979 "New York: A Selection From the Last
Ten Years" Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles

COMMISSIONS

- 1966 Chapel, John F. Kennedy Airport, Mural
for Library
- 1968 New York University Medical Center
- 1978 San Francisco Airport

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Feature Article, ART NEWS, December, 1966
(Kennedy Airport commission) Lawrence Campbell
- Feature Article, ART GALLERY MAGAZINE, January, 1968
(New York University Medical Center commission)
- ART IN AMERICA, April, 1970 (Young Lyrical Painters)
Larry Aldrich
- ARTS MAGAZINE, December 1979 (Survey of Recent
American Painting) W. Domingo
- ART INTERNATIONAL, September 1970 (New York Letter)
Carter Radcliff
- ARTS MAGAZINE, September-October, 1971 (Materiality
and Painterliness) Gregoire Muller
- ARTFORUM, March, 1973 (Women Choose Women)
April Kingsley
- SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, July 24, 1975
(Oakland Museum Exhibition) Thomas Albright
- *Feature Article, VISUAL DIALOGUE, September, 1975
(Oakland Museum Exhibition) Roberta Loach
- OAKLAND TRIBUNE, August 10, 1975 (Oakland Museum
Exhibition) Charles Shere
- *NEW YORK TIMES, December 11, 1970 Grace Glueck

- *ART NEWS, December 1970 Lawrence Campbell
- *ART INTERNATIONAL, December, 1972 Carter Ratcliff
- NEW YORK TIMES (Sunday) June 20, 1971 James Mellow
- *ART INTERNATIONAL, June 1972 Carter Ratcliff
- *ART NEWS, May, 1972 Jeanne Siegel
- *ARTS MAGAZINE, November, 1975 Allen Ellenzweig,
page 18
- *ARTS MAGAZINE, November, 1975 Noel Frackman,
page 15
- *ART IN AMERICA, November, 1975 Peter Schjeldahl
- *Essay for Catalogue, Lawrence Alloway (Betty Parsons,
Susan Caldwell Galleries) 1975
- *Essay for Catalogue, Marge Supovitz (MIT) 1976
- *SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, September 28, 1975
("New York") Alfred Frankenstein
- ARTWEEK, September 6, 1975 (Six Bay Area Artists)
R. F. Stepan
- *ART INTERNATIONAL, November 20, 1975 Carter Ratcliff
- *ARTWEEK, January 17, 1976 (Paintings in Process)
Joanne Dickson
- *SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, January 9, 1976
Alfred Frankenstein
- *CAMBRIDGE CHRONICLE, March 25, 1976 Ann Phillips
- *BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE, April 4, 1976 Robert Taylor
- WOMANART MAGAZINE, Summer 1976, "Notes in the
First Person" Lawrence Alloway
- *ARTWEEK, October 14, 1978 Mary Stofflet-Santiago
- *SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, October 14, 1978
Alfred Frankenstein
- *ART IN AMERICA, March-April, 1979 Knute Stiles
- *NEW YORK TIMES, March 16, 1979 Grace Glueck
- *VILLAGE VOICE, April, 2, 1979 April Kingsley
- *ARTS MAGAZINE, April, 1979 Barbara Cavalieri

*indicates solo review

TEACHING/GUEST LECTURES

Brooklyn Museum, NY 1971
Hunter College, NYC 1972
San Francisco State University, CA 1973
Skidmore College, NY September 1971
MIT, Cambridge, MA March 1975
Brown University, RI March 1975
Virginia Commonwealth University,
Richmond, VA March 1975
University of California, Berkeley
May 1976
University Art Museum, University of
California, Berkeley, CA April 1976
University of California, Sacramento
September 1976
Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA
October 1977
Lone Mountain College, San Francisco
October, November 1977
Rhode Island School of Design, Providence
November 1977
Brown University, RI November 1977
California College of Arts & Crafts,
Oakland, CA Spring, Fall 1979
Columbia University, NYC October 1979
SUNY, Stonybrook, October 1979

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Who's Who in American Art, 1973, 1976, 1978
Lecture by Lawrence Alloway, Metropolitan Museum,
NYC, March 21, 1976: "Women Artists of the 70's"
Panel: College Art Association, January 25, 1978
"Contemporary Women's Art: Iconography and
Sensibility"
Panel: College Art Association, February 1, 1980
"Perspectives on Teaching"
One of 50 women artists selected to be documented
throughout their lives for the National Archives
Art Editor for Literary Magazine, "PEQUOD"
California Small Press Publication, 1975 - present
Interview: With Betty Parsons for WOMANART
MAGAZINE, Fall 1977

AWARDS

MacDowell Colony 1972
N E A 1973
N E A, Speaker's Forum 1974
New York State Council for the Arts 1979

COLLECTION OF

New York University, NYC
Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC
Westinghouse Corporation of America
Oakland Museum, CA
MIT, Cambridge, MA
Skidmore, Owens & Merrill
Harris Bank, Chicago
Flora Irving, NYC
Joyce & Max Kozloff, NYC
Svetlana Alpers, Art Historian,
Princeton, NJ
New Museum of Contemporary Art,
Haifa, Israel
Betty Parsons, NYC
Bronfman Family, NY, Montreal
Baker & Betts, Houston, TX
Mui Ho, Architect, Berkeley, CA

EDUCATION

BA Cum Laude, Brooklyn College, NY, 1960
MFA Equivalent, Art Student's League,
New York, 1961
Brooklyn Museum, NY, 1962
New School for Social Research, NY,
Art Therapy, 1963
M.A. Women's Studies, (Art Education)
Antioch College, San Francisco, 1980

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- ARTFORUM, March, 1973 (Women Choose Women)
April Kingsley
- SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, July 24, 1975
(Oakland Museum Exhibition) Thomas Albright
- *Feature Article, VISUAL DIALOGUE, September, 1975
(Oakland Museum Exhibition) Roberta Loach
- OAKLAND TRIBUNE, August 10, 1975 (Oakland Museum
Exhibition) Charles Shere
- *NEW YORK TIMES, December 11, 1970 Grace Glueck

- *ART NEWS, December 1970 Lawrence Campbell
- *ART INTERNATIONAL, December, 1972 Carter Ratcliff
NEW YORK TIMES (Sunday) June 20, 1971 James Mellow
- *ART INTERNATIONAL, June 1972 Carter Ratcliff
- *ART NEWS, May, 1972 Jeanne Siegel
- *ARTS MAGAZINE, November, 1975 Allen Ellenzweig,
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- *ARTS MAGAZINE, November, 1975 Noel Frackman,
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- *ART IN AMERICA, November, 1975 Peter Schjeldahl
- *Essay for Catalogue, Lawrence Alloway (Betty Parsons,
Susan Caldwell Galleries) 1975
- *Essay for Catalogue, Marge Supovitz (MIT) 1976
- *SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, September 28, 1975
("New York") Alfred Frankenstein
ARTWEEK, September 6, 1975 (Six Bay Area Artists)
R. F. Stepan
- *ART INTERNATIONAL, November 20, 1975 Carter Ratcliff
- *ARTWEEK, January 17, 1976 (Paintings in Process)
Joanne Dickson
- *SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, January 9, 1976
Alfred Frankenstein
- *CAMBRIDGE CHRONICLE, March 25, 1976 Ann Phillips
- *BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE, April 4, 1976 Robert Taylor
WOMANART MAGAZINE, Summer 1976, "Notes in the
First Person" Lawrence Alloway
- *ARTWEEK, October 14, 1978 Mary Stofflet-Santiago
- *SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, October 14, 1978
Alfred Frankenstein
- *ART IN AMERICA, March-April, 1979 Knute Stiles
- *NEW YORK TIMES, March 16, 1979 Grace Glueck
- *VILLAGE VOICE, April, 2, 1979 April Kingsley
- *ARTS MAGAZINE, April, 1979 Barbara Cavalieri

*indicates solo review

TEACHING/GUEST LECTURES

Brooklyn Museum, NY 1971
Hunter College, NYC 1972
San Francisco State University, CA 1973
Skidmore College, NY September 1971
MIT, Cambridge, MA March 1975
Brown University, RI March 1975
Virginia Commonwealth University,
Richmond, VA March 1975
University of California, Berkeley
May 1976
University Art Museum, University of
California, Berkeley, CA April 1976
University of California, Sacramento
September 1976
Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA
October 1977
Lone Mountain College, San Francisco
October, November 1977
Rhode Island School of Design, Providence
November 1977
Brown University, RI November 1977
California College of Arts & Crafts,
Oakland, CA Spring, Fall 1979
Columbia University, NYC October 1979
SUNY, Stonybrook, October 1979

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Who's Who in American Art, 1973, 1976, 1978
Lecture by Lawrence Alloway, Metropolitan Museum,
NYC, March 21, 1976: "Women Artists of the 70's"
Panel: College Art Association, January 25, 1978
"Contemporary Women's Art: Iconography and
Sensibility"
Panel: College Art Association, February 1, 1980
"Perspectives on Teaching"
One of 50 women artists selected to be documented
throughout their lives for the National Archives
Art Editor for Literary Magazine, "PEQUOD"
California Small Press Publication, 1975 - present
Interview: With Betty Parsons for WOMANART
MAGAZINE, Fall 1977

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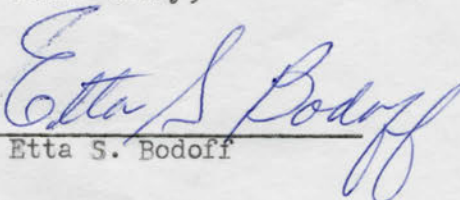
BA Cum Laude, Brooklyn College, NY, 1960
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New York, 1961
Brooklyn Museum, NY, 1962
New School for Social Research, NY,
Art Therapy, 1963
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THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, MARCH 16, 1979

By GRACE GLUECK

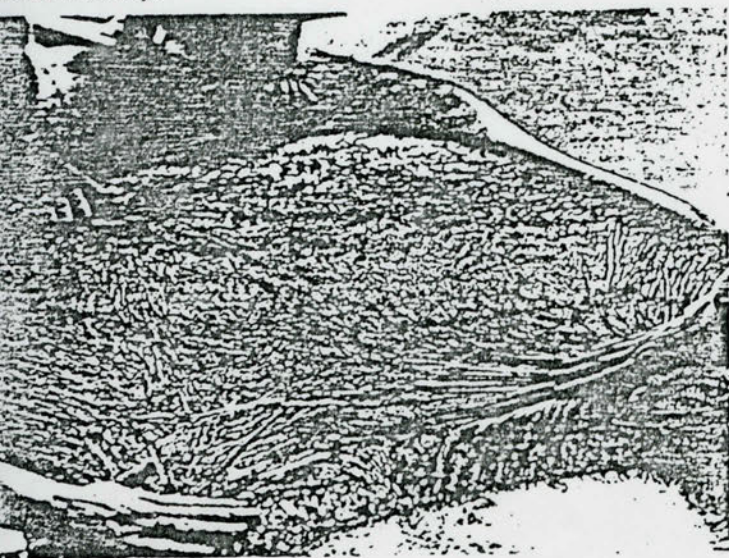
Helene Aylon (112 Workshop, 325 Spring Street; Betty Parsons, 24 West 57th Street). Remember the "accidents" of paint that the Abstract Expressionists incorporated into their canvases? Well, in Helene Aylon's work the accident is all. The artist has achieved her latest "paintings" (at the 112 Workshop) by pouring linseed oil over brown paper laid flat on a board or a sheet of Plexiglas, then letting it harden for a month into a furrowed "skin." The skin traps beneath it a puddle of oil. And when the board is raised upright, the oil collects at the bottom of the membrane, then breaks through in an urgent gush that courses down the length of the board.

The final image is an impressive recording of this act, in which the skin heals to a curvy crust from which the oil pushes out to form rich topographies of brown and golden hues. The process, an obvious metaphor for organic and psychological functions, as well as natural forces, fascinates Miss Aylon, who sees it as "primordial, about containment and release."

In her earlier work at the Betty Parsons Gallery, the artist has applied the oil to the paper — sometimes in thin layers — then laid another sheet of Plexiglas on top. The skin forms a wrinkled striated nucleus from which radiates a translucent surrounding structure that can be read in micro as cellular tissue or, in macro as a vast, mountain-dominated plane.

It is certainly not the kind of work to please a formalist, but the finished image is a strong one that, despite the wayward means of achieving it, still speaks of the artist's control.

Helene Aylon,
Performance: Touching
the Wall, 1979. Courtesy
Betty Parsons Gallery.



HELENE AYLON

Helene Aylon's formations are records of their own process, a slow, patient process metaphorically alluding to the shifts in Nature which encompass long geological ages. Linseed oil is poured on a brown-papered side of plexiglass sheeting. The work is lifted to an upright position by the artist with her assistant when it has formed a dried skin and the linseed oil has been sufficiently absorbed into the paper. There is a ritualistic quality to the process, a quiet patience involved in the time taken for the pieces to form themselves, first on the floor maybe for up to three months and then on the wall, even to the time of their exhibition and beyond. A number of the works are dominated by wrinkled oval forms which move, radiate, disperse across the surfaces which resemble aerial views of a shifting plain or desert. The atavistic feeling is enhanced by the earth tonality of the surface-in-perpetual transformation. Aylon also performed the act of pouring and the lifting/breaking, emphasizing her involvement with a metaphysical process. (Betty Parsons, March 6-24; 112 Workshop, March 10-April 10)

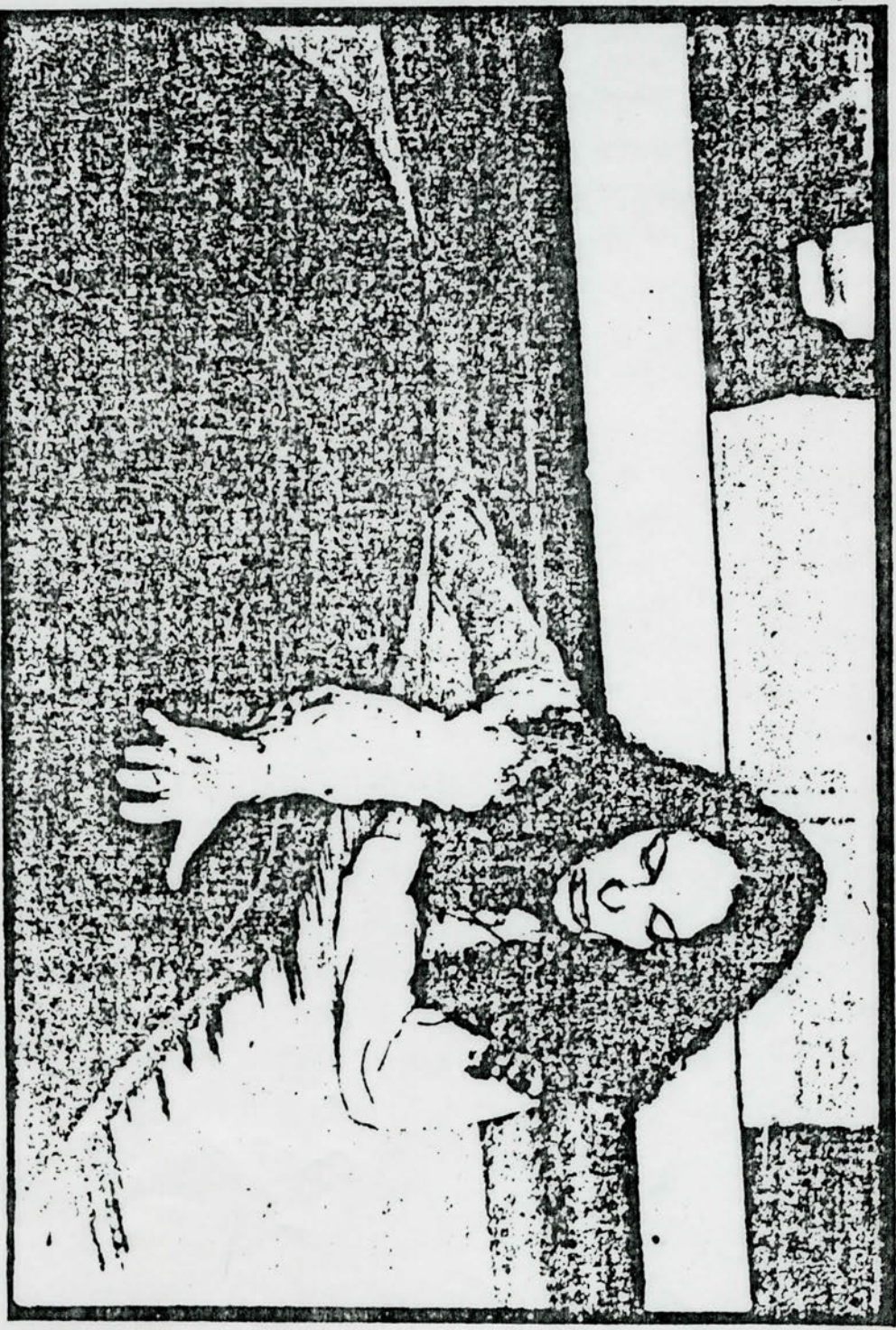
ART

By April Kingsley

To rely on chance, letting process determine product, is one of the least sturdy but most fruitful branches on the tree of modern art. When Pollock swung out on it, he retained a good deal of control, but that's not the way it has to be according to many "accident-prone" youngsters today.

HELANE AYLON, for instance, pours oil onto paper-backed Plexiglas and lets the imagery form itself and change in time. She deliberately removes herself from the work to prove that "there is something there, by itself, of itself." The artist is a catalyst; the materials react according to their own laws, with strange, sometimes mystifying results which she and her audience step back to observe.

Aylon's *Formations* of 1977-'78 (recently at Betty Parsons) are abstract equivalents of the flow of matter in nature. The brown oil soaked into brown paper backed by natural Masonite is all undulate earth—porous, layered, riddled with faults and pockets, with streams and passageways filled with oozing substances or crystalline excrescences. Her 1978 *Formations: Breaking* (at 112 Workshop, 325 Spring Street, to April 10) are vertical, instead of landscape-horizontal like the earlier pieces, and look like gargantuan torsos of Mother Earth. The oil having spilled out of a kind of centralized entrapment, leaving latered remnants of skin in its downward path, these paintings are metaphors for birth. Completed pieces on the wall ring others in progress lying on the floor. The oil she poured onto these on March 10 is drying, forming a skin over itself, and will gush out of the fragile sacs that are momentarily formed when the panels are lifted on April 7, 8, 9, and 10. As artist and audience watch, performers will "midwife" the birth of these new images which will be determined by various natural factors, but which will bear familiar resemblance to their siblings.



Helane Aylon tests a *Formation's* skin; it will break open next month when the painting is lifted.

Nature Takes Its Course

re:ilrens 1979
NY shows

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

HELÉNE AYLON

CALL FOR REVIEWS 75
76

Reviewed by Roberta Loach



HELÉNE AYLON

Standing next to her own works in the Oakland Museum, Helène Aylon remarked that she felt like a bystander . . . an observer, watching her works grow and take on a life of their own. It's a common feeling in the art world that works of meaning and significance do have a life of their own; one which transcends their creator, and sometimes becomes stronger as time passes. Such is the circumstance with Aylon's most recent body of works. The "life" and changes in her works are a physical, visual reality due to the manner in which she chooses to work. Through the processes that she uses, it is her intention that her works change and undergo metamorphoses again and again from the moment they leave her hands. Her stains on paper behind plexiglass are achieved through oil paints, oils of different viscosities, furniture stains, fabric dyes, and a wide variety of other materials applied to the backside of deep tan paper which is usually adhered tightly to the plexiglass. Her palette is limited to the earth tones of siennas, umbers and ochres. For added color intrigue she will sometimes include copper dust, gold leaf powder, or bleach if the absence of color is wanted. Aylon plans her work to some extent, guiding it initially then letting it go. She prefers Oakland Curator George Neuber's assessment of her approach when he calls it "process and control." Both activities are present, but possibly the most important element of her work is the "letting go" i.e. the allowing of a work "to be" on its own terms.

Aylon's work is not really painting . . . It goes beyond painting and, as she puts it, has to do with how much she can (or cannot) control her life. Working within the traditional square or rectangular shapes is Aylon's last homage to formalistic principles of art. She admits abandonment of such principles as they don't pertain in what it is that she is after. She interferes in her work only to the extent that she tries to predict certain outcomes. And to this end, she photographs and records periodic changes in her works. Her feeling is that her works compose themselves; she wants the viewers to participate in and complete the various stages of their development.

A strong part of Aylon's quiet moving surfaces is cracks and lines which punctuate her dark, dense surfaces and intrude on the emptiness of her paper. These networks of cracks and lines are formed by air pockets between the paper and the plexiglass, often helped along by her application of hot water. Aylon feels the strong influence of nature in her work. She likens the networks of lines to cracks and fissures in the earth and to the wrinkles of the aging process in man. The lines and cracks also remind her of the veiny network of our own blood vessels and lungs . . . the veins in leaves . . . the scales of fish. These are all inescapable images of the ongoing process of life.

(OVER)

Though her basically drab earth tones limit the actual color of her works, different color "feelings" happen. Sometimes subtle greens and blues come and go out of her dense, transparent tones. Her copper dust works to create the glow of soft oranges; her gold leaf crystallizes into a shiny textured golden ochre. This latter textural effect is especially evident in her work "Gilded expanse," where beads of gold leaf and copper dust have crystallized to give the work a glittering jewel-like quality. The talcum powder mixes with oils and stains in "Shadows" producing crystals that give the work the heavily textured appearance of slices of rock and earth. The big cracks in "Drifting Boundaries" look like the careful tunneling of earth worms or erosion of the earth's surface. Aylon comments of this particular work that it has been "galloping along at record speed." She predicts that the deep siennas in the right bottom will swallow up the remaining white before the exhibition is over.

Aylon's work is consistent with her total development as an artist and as a person. Her roots go back to working with Ad Reinhardt with whom she gained an appreciation and sensitivity for subtle, at times hidden tones and depths in color, rather than overpowering color experiences for the sake of color alone. Her tendency to let works develop is strongly felt in her efforts on metal which developed and changed in accordance with the processes and materials she used, but significantly different from her current works, she completed her metal paintings and deliberately halted their growth. Her new works on paper seem a logical, albeit risky outgrowth of this previous development. The uncertainty and insecurity of letting works go and grow of their own accord is a big breakthrough, fully inherent only in non-objective works. Part of this same kind of feeling is her strong respect for space which for the most part is a powerful aesthetic element fully understood and used with rare exception only in the Ancient Orient. This aspect in her works may well have been influenced by living in California, the home of many Eastern thoughts and cults. Her earth tones and again her sense of space may also have been influenced by her experience of crossing California's deserts en route from New York. She recalls that the sight of these endless earth vistas had a great impact on her. Whatever the antecedents it is to Aylon's credit that she had the sensitivity to embrace and grow with her new found environment.

A criticism that I raised of her work was the danger of lack of permanence in her failure to properly size and treat her paper. She replied that she knows this is dangerous but that any treatment of the paper would hinder the growth and development of her work, its most dominant aspect. The very nature of her work demands this sort of vulnerability. Aylon's work is cosmic in an all consuming sense, and mystical in its unpredictable change . . . a change that never quits, so unmistakably parallel to the ongoing process of life.

Concurrent with the Oakland Museum Exhibition of Helène Aylon's work through September 28 will be exhibits of her work at the Betty Parsons Gallery in New York through September 27 and at the Susan Caldwell Gallery in New York through October 1. ■



"Shadow" by Helène Aylon, oil stain under plexiglass



"Drifting Boundaries" by Helène Aylon, oil stain under plexiglass

January 17, 1976

PAINTINGS IN PROCESS

San Francisco

Joanne Dickson

Helene Aylon integrates many levels of philosophical and perceptual thinking into a singular modality. Her *Paintings that Change in Time* have the fluidity of a Frankenthaler, the serenity of an Oriental landscape. Conceptual art, process art, kinetics, expressionism are implied in Aylon's work. Visual immediacy and metaphysical complexity permeate her enigmatic organic imagery.

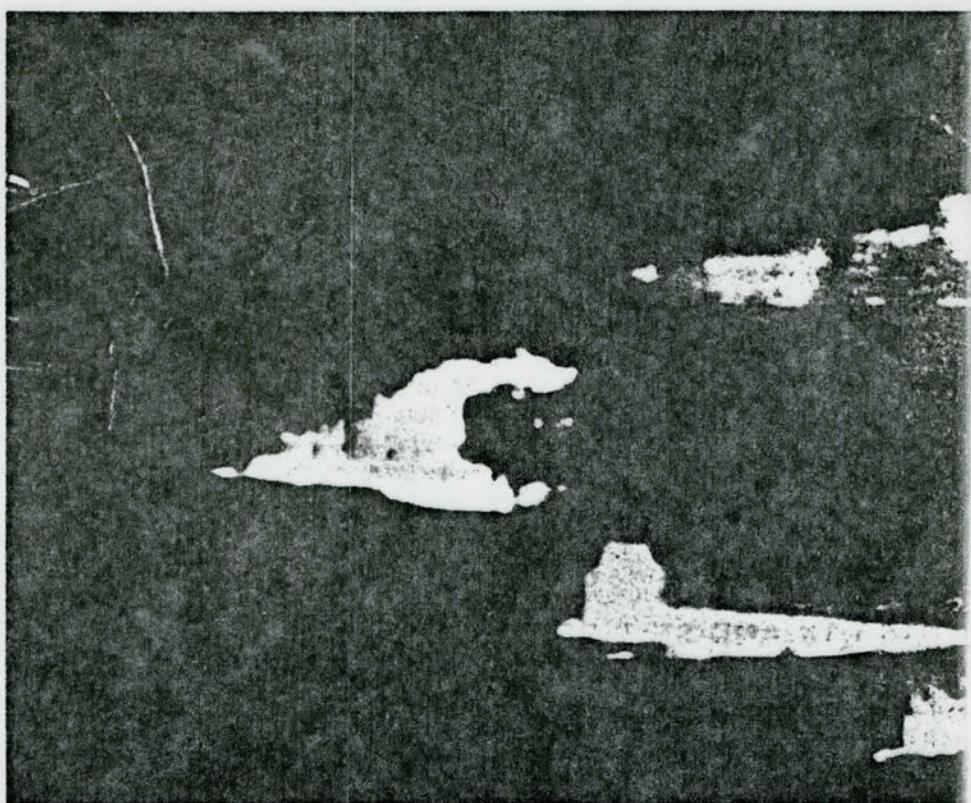
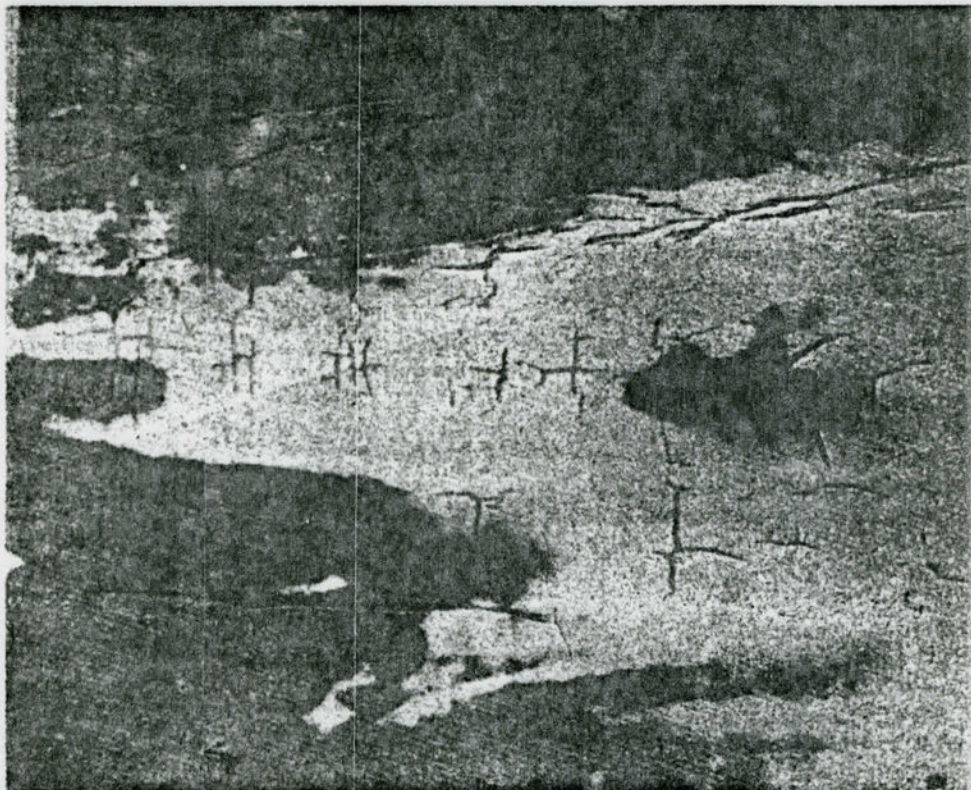
This is Aylon's first solo show on the west coast. In these intriguing process pieces she applies oils of varying viscosity, dyes, stains, lacum, epoxy, bleach and even tea leaves to kraft paper which is then sealed within plexiglass sheets. The paper is worked — scrubbed, marked and scored — until it yields, allowing the media to penetrate the surface, creating rich, organic images. Cracks, pockets and rivulets are formed by the gradual saturation, causing the materials to congeal, crystallize, drift or darken. The process continues indefinitely. Everything that happens is part of the piece. Aylon initiates the process. The work then assumes a life of its own — subject to its own laws — a starting point for a voyage of the imagination.

Some critics speak of the artist "relinquishing control over her work." They speak of the work's inevitable deterioration. Their words are as self-referent as a Rorschach reading. Aylon, herself, sets up the conditions of transience. She is responsible for every part of the process. Conception, growth, regeneration — to my mind these words are more descriptive of what is occurring.

En route to California from New York, Aylon spent time in the desert. This experience profoundly affected her work. The desert is full of subtle variations, ambiguities, mirage and slow, shifting change. This evolution echoes the Life Cycle and is subject to its diversity and complexity.

Nature is measured by growth and change; Aylon's paintings are a lyrical metaphor for nature. The works are elusive and evocative. Wind, rain, geological upheaval, germinating seeds — all are suggested. Kinesthetic energy choreographs the paintings; lines and creases give a heightened sense of life's energy.

Each state may be viewed and appraised independently, as movement is imperceptible. Latent images emerge over the course of several months. □



HELENE AYLON: DRIFTING BOUNDARIES, January, 1974, oil stain through paper under plexiglass, 75 $\frac{3}{4}$ "x 95", seen in earlier (top) and later stages.

Paintings With No Dominant 'School'

By Thomas Albright

"If any one conclusion may be drawn at the mid-point of the decade, it is that no one attitude or style has dominated the medium of painting in the 1970s," curator George Neubert writes in the catalog to "Six Painters/Six Attitudes" at the Oakland Museum.

That statement could as well have been made about painting during most of the past 15 years, except that, until recently, certain styles or schools have managed to be somewhat more successful in cadging exhibitions and publicity. The fact that three of these six painters — Barbara Rogers, Leo Valledor and Corban LePell — are displaying works that are virtually identical to what they have been exhibiting for the past two or three years could also be interpreted to mean that, at the mid-point of the decade, not much of anything new is going on.

Perhaps the major change over the past five years has been not so much esthetic as curatorial — with no clear-cut "avant-garde" on the horizon, or dominant "schools," it has become harder than ever to find a common denominator on which to hang a group show. At any rate, the six painters in Oakland form an interesting cross-section of recent trends, if scarcely new ones.

→ The most interesting of them, to my taste, is Helene Aylon, who, like many current artists, is Into Process, but without abandoning the traditional art "object." Aylon makes big objects of paper under plexiglass; behind the paper are globules and rivulets of oil which stain and bleed through it so that the forms it creates undergo a slow, but continual, change.

These are by no means entirely accidental works — each develops from a spare formal structure — a line, a shaggy spot in one of the corners — which sometimes recalls the airy calligraphy of Motherwell, sometimes the raw, organic grandeur of Clyfford Still. As the forms expand, grow and metamorphosize in response to the grain of the paper, to air bubbles and other physical forces, they crackle, form rivulets, pockets and other shapes that suggest the face of the earth as it is altered by geological activity. The entire performance beautifully combines strength with subtlety.

By Alfred Frankenstein

San Francisco Chronicle 41

Fri., Jan. 9, 1976

Helene Aylon is showing her "paintings that change with time" at the Grapestake Gallery, 2876 California Street. Her methods as everyone in the art community must know by now, involves impregnating specially prepared paper with oils which spread very

slowly, under a protecting shield of Plexiglas. Now and then air pockets develop between the paper and the glass, and these enter into the composition. Miss Aylon

complicates things further with such devices as metallic reflecting sheets under the paper and pigment brushed over it.

Many of the paintings in the

show are accompanied by photographs of themselves as they were some time ago, thereby demonstrating the fact of their growth. What is more important to the viewer is the idea of their growing rather than the fact that they may look different one day from the way they looked before. But what is most important is the way they look now.

They remind one of the beauty of brown Japanese glazes; of the richness, complexity, and luster of Persian textiles; of aerial views of deserts; of Leonardo's famous description of the fantastic landscapes that may be seen in the cracks and growths on old walls. All this by way of metaphor rather than description.

Six Artists Playing Games With Eyes and Mind

By CHARLES SHERE
Tribune Art Critic

The big show documenting Christo's expensive orange curtain across Rifle Gap will probably be drawing fair crowds to the Oakland Museum, particularly in view of the controversy concerning the Bulgarian-born artist's plan to drape a nylon "Running Fence" across Marin County this fall.

But musings on Christo will have to wait until later; in the meantime, an exhibition of paintings by six local artists is more than enough food for thought—and will very likely have something to say about Rifle Gap and Running Fence, too.

The six painters at first seem to have little in common. In fact the exhibit is called "Six Painters: Six Attitudes," as if to acknowledge a group show with little focus. (Too bad every show has to have a name: it must exhaust curators.)

In fact, the six painters all share at least one attitude, and that an important one, not always struck by contemporary painters. They have all committed themselves to paint visions which are curiously and perversely denied by the means they use.

(If a Dutch master comes to mind while looking at Helene Aylon's work it is not Vermeer but his opposite, Rembrandt. Her painting, taken visually at least, is about rich tonalities. Deep golds, reds, burgundies are stained into the grounds. "High Light," one of the most dramatic paintings ever hung in this museum, is as sumptuous as Rembrandt's celebrated golden helmet.

Yet, like the other painters gathered here, the medium conflicts with the visual effect. Aylon works in industrial oils—lubricants, not pigments—and paper behind plexiglas. The oil stains move constantly though slowly in and across the paper; a part of the fascination of her work is the changing appearance it develops over the months.

But conceptual and up-to-the-minute as this approach would seem to be, the result is old-fashioned tonalism. Many of her works recall that grand old predecessor of abstract painting, Thomas Ryder. There is a Kline-like strength, too, combined with a lyrical delicacy—look at "Two Delineated Areas," for example, with its small hummocky areas isolated on the left edge of an otherwise blank field, and compare it with Arthur Okamura's "Rock Garden" in the Oakland Museum's permanent collection a few galleries away.)

So there it is: Op, hard-edge, color-field, photorealism, concept- or process-art—six painters with one or two overridingly agreeing attitudes: toward control and care with respect to their craft, and toward a balance of depiction and suggestion in their vision.

Almost every work here makes you wonder what the devil's going on—and then makes you keep looking until you begin to see why you don't see. It's an enormously provocative show—and it balances the Christo nicely.

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Richard Poussette-Dart (cited by John Gordon in "Richard Poussette-Dart," New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1963, p. 16.)

The high premium placed on process in art-making in the past decade has drawn a significant segment of aesthetic inquiry away from considerations of art-as-durable-object to what has been referred to as its progressive "dematerialization." In the wake of Abstract Expressionism and subsequent stain painting innovations, the picture plane has come to be viewed as the least likely area for engineering more radical investigations of process. Instead, the vocabulary of newer modes includes unusual materials, unorthodox sites and documentary devices that have resulted in the extension of what is normally classified as sculpture to encompass Earth- and Body-works, and in the two-dimensional sphere of legitimizing documents as the tangible record of Conceptual art's form and content.

Both aesthetically and intellectually, Helène Aylon's recent work discloses sensitive and original perceptions about the phenomenon of process as it relates to the medium of painting today.

Using brushes and often her bare hands, Aylon introduces oils, dyes, paint, bleach, stains and a variety of other substances to the back of initially impermeable kraft paper until the materials begin to bleed through to the front. Emerging forms constitute the incipient imagery of the work, which is often powdered or dusted with crystals, sometimes moistened, then sealed in plexiglas and mounted on masonite. Creases, folds, air pockets and moisture beads become integral to the emanation, and a process of continual transformation occurs, recorded at intervals by photographs that are documents of the work at any given point in time. The rate of change, dependent on materials and atmospheric conditions, can be dramatic — perceptible in a matter of weeks — or gradual over a period of several months. Aylon's use of plexiglas is also important to her concept of change, heightening the reflectivity and elusiveness of light.

The paintings secrete earth tones through the tan paper and take on a topographical and paleontological aura. Diaphanous veils of transparent wash, lustrous oil streaks, dark pools of opaque color with occasional glints of copper dust or gold leaf and streaks of moisture, imply poetic metaphors for organic evolution and primal essences. Aylon's initial contact with the paper from behind adds persuasion to the inference of origins and advancement, and she often makes geological and biological allusions when describing her work: "The other day when brown spots began to appear, emerging here and there, I thought of pieces of earth gathering to cover... it was like the earth covering something... advancing... I'm pretty sure there are secrets to find out. About cracking and aging, about living and dying. I'll be receptive to new formations."⁴

The group of works in the exhibition, Aylon's production since 1973, represents a fresh attempt to assert the viability of painting as a medium capable of reflecting the vanguard spirit. She writes: "We already know enough about how one color/texture/shape looks when it is placed next to another. Doing it a little differently no longer seems to matter. The new questions are not about what goes where on the canvas but about the very process of painting/art itself."⁵

Rather than addressing herself to a formal compositional syntax, Aylon values colorlessness, formlessness, transiency and flux. The temporary and elusive nature of her imagery celebrates the energy attribute that has replaced the object in Process art. In fact, there is a potential denial of the concrete objectness of her paintings, inherent not only in the fluctuating visual configurations but in the risk of ultimate deterioration that her pieces face; the combinations of substances that make up her palette offer no assurance of conservation. Prospective collectors may or may not ultimately be left with a series of photo documents recording the life of the work. In keeping with Process philosophy, Aylon sees this aspect of her work as a political statement denying the preciousness of the art object and related to the protest of art as commodity raised in Process and Conceptual dogma.

As much as to impermanence, however, Aylon affirms a commitment to control, and her work becomes a dialogue between the two polarities. Whereas certain process-oriented artists like Walter de Maria, Hans Haacke and Robert Smithson, for example, accept nature's indeterminate field, and others like Robert Morris, Keith Sonnier and Richard Serra often use materials that negate formal boundaries (thread, splashes of molten lead, felt, etc.), Aylon contains the forces and energies to which she subjects her surfaces within the limits of the work's framing edge. Before she submits to the materials, Aylon also makes deliberate choices and alterations based on her experience with the media that are intended to predict the overall tenor of each work and to ensure artistic intent.

(over)

OTHER REVIEWS
M.I.T. exhibition

from the catalogue
(of the exhibition at M.I.T.)

Aylon paintings at MIT pictures that change in time

ROBERT TAYLOR

Time changes every picture. The process may be physical: the Mona Lisa is a spectral wrath of itself; or the process may simply involve our perceptions — it is impossible to view a Luca Signorelli or a Sebastiano del Piombo exactly as a 16th Century Italian did, for we see them with 20th Century eyes.

This is quite a different sort of time from the conscious and conglutated substance of Helene Aylon's "Paintings That Change in Time" at MIT's Hayden Gallery. When time becomes a formal principle in

an art that essentially deals with space, it becomes a different thing from the time outside the picture-frame. "Real" time and "art" time are not the same. Aylon's paintings, however, in their desire to blend these two kinds of time, constitute a peculiarly contemporary experience. Her technical approach reminds

one of the hybridization of art in all areas: the musician who seats the chords of an orchestra after the manner of the Berlioz Requiem, so that one might have a different experience of musical space; the dancer whose art is both narrative and visual. "The new questions," says Aylon, "are not about what goes where on the canvas, but about the process of painting itself."

Beside each of the paintings is photographic documentation and the artist's commentary on the development of her image. She seems to view process as having an extra, virtually magical value; and so she is not too far away from the premises of the surrealists, like Arp and Ernst, who were interested in the incorporation of magic into reality.

As pictures, then, Aylon's seem less significant for their process or their practical purposes, they don't change while you're in the gallery. One tends to perceive them like other paintings, and though they invent themselves, as it were, the elusiveness of a human being behind them seems to reinforce the artist's intervention that brought them into being.

Aylon Paintings at MIT

Continued from Page B2
the desire to negate color, shape and light as absolutes brings back color shape and light.
Aylon's surfaces seem Oriental in their screen-like decor, and her sense of space is expansive and exuberant. Her bronze configurations, beiges, ochres, smouldering dramas of dark and light, indicate a ruling intelligence — the artist as something more than a passive catalyst, an artist in spite of herself.

HELENE AYLON, painting, Hayden Gallery, MIT through April 10.

measurable kraft paper. The dyes bleed through the paper to what is intended as the front, where they are powdered with crystals of moistened, then mounted on Masonite and sealed in

plexiglas. As time goes by, the creases, folds and beads of moisture resulting from this treatment, change identity and presumably meaning. The image creates earth tones from the stains, and the artist evokes implications of geology and biology and paleolithic art. In fact, what happens to the spectator is that one responds to the pictures in traditional ways: "what goes where on the canvas" (or paper) is exceedingly important although Aylon's is not an act of painting. Fundamentally, she would disavow the presence of the artist as the maker of the piece, and the materiality of a physical object (it is not so much a solid fact if it is a surface is constantly altering). The artist, therefore, is merely the applicator of dyes, stains, oils and other means to impermeable kraft paper. The and; the distinction between the reality of the materials and the conceptual reality of the picture's meaning disappears.

One piece even makes use of the "happy accident" for which most artists are famous: a narrow horizontal strip of kraft paper. To most artists, though, the happy accident leads to a desired end, Picasso's bicycle handlebars metamorphosing into the horn of a bull. To Aylon it is an end in itself, and this accounts for some

of the remoteness we feel in her paintings: A depersonalized art provokes depersonalized responses. There are countless artworks in nature which we admire in themselves, rain-bow puddles, sunsets, blossoms, but they don't mean much unless they communicate something.

Continued on Page B7

Aylon's paintings flow before your very eyes

By Ann Phillips

Helene Aylon's "Paintings That Change in Time" at MIT's Hayden Gallery aren't objects that transpose before your eyes as might be expected. They change at an unobservable pace, measurable in months and years rather than in minutes.

When this show opened last week, Aylon's paintings seemed richly colored and lyrical - amorphous shapes, dark brown, black and russet tones in fields of tan or surrounding patches of rough edged cream colors. They are almost the same today.

Some of Aylon's paintings suggest landscapes, but most are vague; multiple layers of color receding and (quite literally) advancing across the paper surface. What they will look like next year is a matter of conjecture, even for Aylon. As she explains it, her rule is merely to start a process of change.

It is a change that completely alters her pictures. In the course of time, shapes move and turn, lines grow and fracture, colors change, and the surfaces generally become darker. Some become almost totally dark with lost images - like the death ending a life process. One couldn't guess this life process from a visit to the exhibition were it not for photographic documentation of the changes time has wrought in Aylon's Paintings.

Photographs taken in 1974 and 1975 show that one of the most poetic landscapes - "Suspension" - has changed dramatically. The darks are moving downward and covering little darts of light that once might have suggested a snow scape. The downward motion is not gravitational pull. It is ab-

sorption, chemical change and interaction. Color follows or avoids crinkles and folds, tones form in puddles and air pockets according to the thickness of applications. The change is largely an uncontrolled happening.

Aylon's method is to paint on huge sheets of coated paper, thick and (like butcher's paper) impervious to oil. She paints the back with the picture appearing on the front as she selectively breaks down the oil-impervious surface with applications of dye, oil, charcoal, cement, paint; everything and anything.

Past experience tells her what some materials do. She knows that cement slows the absorption of color, dyes change hue as they seep through - that sometimes a brilliant cobalt blue on the back will become (months later) an umber on the front.

Some of her paints are born almost empty, with a minimum of tone on an edge. The wall-sized piece "Four Times" hasn't reached its peak of interest yet for this viewer but it is becoming more complicated (as the photographs taken in 1974 and 1975 show), developing some clouds as the ground darkens, creases sprouting and moving upward in crystalline-like shapes.

"Rich Brown", on the other hand, is a painting already mature. One wishes its motion to be suspended now. This, however, would be antithetical to Aylon's purpose.

She intends to have her art grow like a life process, and like life where it will go she isn't certain.

The exhibit is open through Apr. 10, daily except Sundays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Enclosed:

1) Politics and Fear of Feminism

This is now the Bible for new women art faculty; they know who the good guys and the bad guys are from the start!

By the way, the editors deleted a lot; e.g., the editors refused to name Sally Gerhardt from "Word is Out"- and the other avowed lesbians, who felt fine about being defined as lesbian, for the article.

2) Interview with Betty Parsons

This was meant for the Heresies lesbian issue, but since Betty said, "the truth is too sacred to tell," I gave the article to Woman art. The piece explores the connection of Betty's right wing politics with her attraction to the cowboy persona- so much a quality in her male artists.

The strong woman of that time often loved individual women, but were not women identified.

3) Committee on Racism in the Arts

I worked closely with Howardina Pindell (see Ms. May, '80, p.66), a black feminist artist. I helped draft the protest, and when the deplorable "nigger Drawing" exhibition got a good review, I wrote to the editor of Art in America, etc. Many "liberal" artists thought I over-reacted and should not censor art, but of course my paranoia was well grounded as you can see there's some new "darky chic."

4) East/West art forum I raised \$10,000 to get the N.Y. art World out of N.Y. (elitism) and into the world.

I think all the above topics should be explored: 1) a rip-off file where women tell all - jobs, academia, etc. so that their oppression is on record;

2) More interviews with older strong women to see where they were coming from and how far we can take it from there; 3) an in depth exhibition on racism with all the artifacts/antiques etc. that portray the Mammy, the lazy clown etc.

I know someone like Camille Billips, a black artist in N.Y.C., has an enormous collection and file she might lend out, or guest curate.

4) As the contemporary museum has replaced the church, we should challenge the patriarchal, elitist "culture" that comes out of these institutions.

Hayden

1025 Carleton St.
Berkeley, CA. 94710

July 25, 1979

Letter to the Editor:

In her review of charcoal drawings titled "Nigger Drawings," Roberta Smith complains: "It's not pleasant to find yourself on a first name basis with someone who titles his art with a word most people find unspeakable." Well, at least it is pleasant for Donald; look how he's admired by this critic: "It's not every 23 year old artist who managed to polarize a large segment of the art world first time out." Now Roberta Smith, is he so precocious? Do you want to bet a 22½ year old could top him with (blue and white) "Kike Drawings?"

"Nigger" is blandly and easily defined by this critic as "...this racial epithet considered - particularly by white liberals - a taboo." Particularly by white liberals???? How about black people, who have been oppressed by this term? Guess they don't mind much.

The reviewer further distances a social reality by explaining the word, nigger, as "exotic, potent, ugly." "Exotic" - as in National Geographic? "Potent???" Haven't these stereotypes been used in conjunction with black people long enough? I doubt if any black person would define this belittling, dehumanizing slur as exotic and potent. Maybe ugly. Sure, some black people do use this word jovially and affectionately amongst themselves and those they trust. Only in this connotation is it funny and fun. It is theirs. They paid their dues, and they own that word. But the reviewer thinks "It's peculiar to declare a word off-limits, and even more peculiar to declare it off-limits to some people and some work and not others." The black people at the teach-in (whose ancestors have been lynched with this word) did not find it peculiar to declare the word off-limits to a white exploitive kid, who tried some "racist chic" at the expense of a whole group. Oh, but we shouldn't censor little Donald. I wonder if Ms. Smith objects to libel laws and defamation of character suits. They censor. Artists Space censors all the time simply by not showing certain work. What is peculiar is that Nigger Drawings was chosen and the title was accepted and a political situation was callously allowed to be exploited.

The aesthetics are explained: "...the work's title and the work do form an entity....They intersect but refuse to dovetail; painful discrepancies remain." E.g. "mechanical/handmade, legible/vague." Now, this art expert has seen tons of art with these very "discrepancies" she calls "painful." The painful discrepancy here is giving the word "nigger" equal consideration as though it was no different than the other "discrepancies" in this "entity."

Now, the relation of the title to the work is explained: "You're forced to consider one in terms of the other, in terms of your feelings, knowledge and associations.... the images are mysterious and raw." (Is that what a black person is, too?) "...they allude to night skies, infinite darkness....the drawings are clearly about different kinds of blackness - visual, material, and metaphorical." Metaphorical? Would Reinhardt's "Black Paintings" force one to think of black people? Would Ryman's white paintings force one to think of white people? I don't get the metaphor: These charcoal drawings obviously have to do with value - shade and light - what freshman art courses deal with. The "nigger" title, randomly attached, refers to people who have brown complexions. The reviewer feels no compunction in projecting the imagery from her cultural heritage onto that of another group.

Roberta Smith's grand summation of Donald: "intelligent, audacious, chillingly astute." I'd punctuate it this way: intelligently astute (about media hype), and chillingly audacious, (in the fact that he would stop at nothing and still get away with a review like this.)

It's sad that this critic had an opportunity to rise above this chilling audacity, but because of her disinterest in deeper issues, only was able to perpetuate it by rationalizing an apolitical and amoral stance.

Sincerely,

Helane Aylon

Helane Aylon

Berkeley, Ca. and New York City

ACTION AGAINST RACISM IN THE ARTS

“Almost at once, the stench of southern jails, cocked guns, dog bites, and the ever present red-screaming cries of “nigger” were around me. The time was not 1962, however, as a child caught between the desegregation of Columbus, Ohio schools; it wasn’t my life’s experience in Georgia, the Carolinas, Mississippi, or Alabama, but it was New York City, 1979, challenging the very existence of myself and other Blacks: challenging my very existence as a human being.”

The Event: a white male artist exhibits a series of charcoal drawings. The work is abstract, consistent with work shown in established, prestigious galleries. The artist calls his work, “The Nigger Drawings”. The gallery sponsoring him is Artists Space, an “alternative” space designed for young artists who do not have galleries. Artists Space receives the majority of its funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

This exhibition was unique only in its open expression of racism. Racial discrimination pervades the whole of the art world, including publicly funded “alternative” spaces. Even those spaces created especially for minority artists are discriminated against by being drastically underfunded. The exhibition “The Nigger Drawings” points up this discrimination: while this artist gets support for his show the art world fails to provide minority artists the opportunity to express and define themselves.

It should not be surprising that a prestigious art institution sponsors an overt racist gesture at this time. The efforts initiated in the 1960’s to draw Blacks and other minority groups into the “mainstream”—the programs for better education, housing, health services and job training—are now judged inessential. When the economy is slow and jobs are scarce, Black health and well-being become dispensable. This trend has been accompanied by a resurgence of both covert and explicit racism. “The Nigger Drawings” introduces to the art world a new form of racism: brutality chic.

In brutality chic, social pathologies masquerade as new-found virtues. Racism, sexism, poverty, social violence and repression emerge in glamorized form. Brutality chic is the cultural front of today’s backlash. “The Nigger Drawings” not only reflects that backlash but also strengthens it.

As individuals in the arts, it is our responsibility to oppose racism as it confronts and divides us.

The Villag

Serving Greenwich Village, Soho, Tribeca
and Lower Manhattan

People thought we were paranoid - until World War II. We showed up one year later.



ART BEAT

The Politics of Culture

By Richard Goldstein

Before an abstract work called *The Nigger Drawings* was shown at Artist's Space last spring, Donald Neuman was just another green-haired vixen in the back room of Puffy's saloon. But after the furor created by black artists who were appalled that a publicly funded gallery would countenance such gratuitous use of a racial slur, a collector bought the drawings—Neuman's first professional sale. This May, he'll be honored with a show at a commercial gallery.

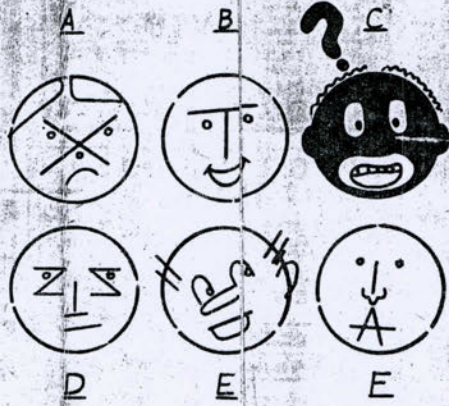
Hot shit for an artist who has used other people's rage to compress the painful process of developing an aesthetic. But that is precisely the ambition of punk: to cheapen success, even as it comments on the cheapening. The avant-garde may be dead on West Broadway, but it is thriving in those ur-regions to the south and east where young artists perpetuate the myth of personal hostility honed by abstract expressionists who made decorum part of the process creating art. *The Nigger Drawings* are on a line that runs from Pollock through Warhol—a line that replaces subject matter with a thematic concern for displacing social and aesthetic orthodoxy. As long as that orthodoxy was conservative, this dialectic looked progressive—even Warhol's soup cans could be regarded as the revenge of mass culture on the aristocracy. But now that liberalism is an established perspective, the iconography of art is changing to express the dialectic in reverse. Instead of Marilyn Monroe, we get Aunt Jemima; instead of electric chairs, we get darkies running wild.

Think of visual punk as the revenge of the aristocracy on mass culture and the true nature of its fascination with the vulgar becomes clear. It is well to consider in black (or Latino) art, there is no equivalent of punk—this is a totem's game. The cultural elite have much to gain by shrouding their contempt in ironic appreciation, and there is no better mask for their antagonism than its expression in pop iconography. What patronage commands, aesthetics soon justifies. *The Nigger Drawings* were a premonition of the day when it will be permissible to display images of degraded blacks. This work may be hung in any dining room, and the title which provoked such anger among black artists may be uttered in innocence, since it now refers only to a piece of art. Neuman's passive aggression makes it possible for his collector to say "nigger" with a happy conscience.

But there is a more specific reason why some white artists feel drawn to both language and imagery that degrades blacks. What affirmative action means for a publicly funded gallery like Artist's Space is that its directors will have to become familiar with the formal and thematic concerns of black artists, and make room for those concerns in an exhibition space that was formerly reserved for whites. The New York State Council on the Arts now requires the organizations it funds to give evidence of affirmative action on their application grants. If the sense of this statute is observed, and funding hinges on the participation of blacks, nothing less than American aesthetics is up for grabs.

"This is a white neighborhood," I remember one artist shrieking during last spring's demonstration at Artist's Space. I suspect that she was referring not just to the physical gallery, but to the entire domain of imagery—which has indeed been a white neighborhood for as long as it has been a neighborhood at all. One way to stake a continuing claim on that turf is to declare that language which is profoundly offensive to blacks may be freely used in art, and then to deny that its employment has anything to do with a

WHICH PERSON CAN'T READ



A drawing from "Real Life" magazine

'Darky' Chic

to put this drawing on the cover of *Real Life*, but the artist insisted that it run inside the magazine. I will not name the artist, because to do so might aid and abet a career strategy he claims to reject. "I've only sold my straight work," he insists, by which he means drawings that depict people and animals in a cartoon setting that comments on their image as cliché. Lawson speaks of "entrapment within cliché" as a theme of this artist's work, and indeed, the drawings are whimsically executed, in a context that reconciles Lichtenstein with Brainard through the eyes of Johnny Rotten; interesting stuff.

But can an artist be exempt from the culture in which he works? By placing ethnic imagery in a cartoon context (penguins with bones through their beaks are called "The Africans"), this artist gives his viewers permission to experience stereotypes in a setting so benign that malice may be denied. Much as white folks at the turn of the century looking at a postcard of "darkies" eating watermelon found those images edifying, a spokesman for the Droll-Kolbert gallery on Fifth Avenue, which showed this artist's work last year, was baffled by any suggestion that racism was involved. "It has more to do with itself than with any issue," he said, and a spokeswoman for the Houston Contemporary Arts Museum, which showed the work last January, said it had been "extremely well received."

There is something bizarre about white people getting together to agree that a work depicting racial stereotypes is neutral or benign, as if intention is something that can be universally perceived. Most white people I showed this drawing to saw it as an ironic attempt to counter racism-by-cliché. I was told by more than one white critic that to call this work racist was to miss its obvious point. But most black people who saw the work had a more troubled response; they assumed the artist a racist member of a racist communi-

dramatically different responses, I decided to ask the artist about his intentions. "I don't know how deeply one thinks about something while they do it," he told me over the phone, and then launched into what sounded like dutiful orthodoxy: "It has nothing to do with hatred. I guess it starts with laughing at oneself, and then it goes on to laughing at others." We agreed that we would meet later in the week, so I could see more than a single example of his work.

When I arrived at his studio, the artist was more forthcoming. He was no admirer of Donald Neuman, but he thought "a bunch of blacks tried to take advantage of a situation, so they could start showing at Artist's Space. I don't think people won't show blacks because they're black," he said, "but because they don't do interesting work. It has nothing to do with color. It's like women. Women happen to be inferior artists to men, and it's the same with blacks. They happen to be better at peddling dope. Maybe that's their talent. I mean, why should blacks be good at art?"

The artist began to do ethnic caricature about two years ago, not long after he says he was beaten and mugged by a black man with a gun. "I didn't go out the next day and try to shoot a black person," he explains. "This is my way. If I wake up in the morning and I hate blacks, I'm gonna do a picture about it. I consider myself a racist only in that I try to be frank about the people I deal with. I mean, Jews are a pain in the ass, but blacks are a real pain in the ass."

This was not the extent of our communication. The artist phoned the next day to ask that his remarks be stricken from my piece. Stick to the first version, he demanded. "I think art is about engaging people," he had told me then. "I think that's the only subject matter left." I told him that, as in a piece of conceptual art, all his words were part of the performance. At any rate, I was reasonably certain that most white people would conclude from his remarks—as they did from his work—that the artist was being ironic. To acknowledge that white racism is a mode in contemporary culture requires us to deal with art that is morally reprehensible. That possibility is something people in this culture confront only when they are excluded from the majority.

RSVP

If there's one group that stands to benefit even more than illegal aliens from an accurate census count, it's those legal aliens—artists. Statistics on the demographics of creative types come exclusively from the IRS, which means that only those who earn taxable income from their art are counted. Imagine how these statistics might change if the indigent were counted as well. A whole new population might emerge to inspire significant shifts in state and federal funding, as well as making it harder for NYSCA and the NEA to justify their neglect.

Even post-modernists are advised to answer the forms that will arrive in the mail beginning this Friday. One out of six households will receive a more detailed questionnaire, and because artists may have difficulty describing their work within the confines of the form, the census bureau is providing three assistance centers for their use—at the Leslie-Lohman gallery, 485 Broome Street; the District Census Office, 299 Broadway (corner Duane Street); and the McBurney Y, 215 West 23rd Street. The centers will be open beginning March 28, and tonight (Wednesday) at 7:30, the Foundation for the Community of Artists and the Crosby Street Association will hold a forum on the census at the Judson Community Church, 55 Washington Square South.

Secrecy is assured, and remember—the grant you save may be your own.

JANINE BAER
1413 Murray Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90026



pl.



TO: HELANE AYLON
c/o 6446 1/2 COLBY STREET
OAKLAND, CA 94618

IS IT TIME TO CHANGE ART EDUCATION?

November, 1979

The College Art Association meets every year but rarely asks this question.

I intend to ask this question on February 1 when I will be a member of the panel, PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHING, at the CAA convention being held in New Orleans this year.

The question, "Is it time to change art education?" can't be answered without hearing from you. Enclosed is a questionnaire to find out what you as students/artists want(ed) out of art education, what you need(ed) from your teachers and how you see yourselves in the context of the art establishment. I want to know how your art education affected (or didn't affect) your position in the art world today.

Your responses will be part of a national survey that will be published at a later date. If the responses reach me in time, I will tabulate and read the findings at the College Art Association convention.

Where will it be published?

Please answer thoughtfully (use additional pages if necessary). I'll need you to mail it back by December 31 in time to review it for the CAA. If you cannot do it by then, just send it later.

Thank you,

HELANE AYLON, artist and visiting faculty at these (and other institutions)

- California College of Arts and Crafts
- San Francisco State University
- MIT, Massachusetts
- Brown University, R.I.
- Rhode Island School of Design, P.I.
- Skidmore College, New York
- Brooklyn Museum, New York
- Hunter College, New York
- Columbia University, New York

just finished M.A. art history

1. Graduate Student 2. Undergraduate student _____ 3. Dropout _____

4. Working artist _____ 5. a) Female b) Male _____

6. Name JANINE BAER 7. Address 1413 MURRAY DRIVE
(optional) (optional)

8. a) AGE GROUP: a) under 25 _____ b) 25-35 c) LOS ANGELES, CA
c) over 35 _____ d) over 50 _____ 90026

9. INCOME: a) under \$5,000 _____ b) \$5,000-10,000 c) \$10,000-15,000 _____
d) \$15,000-20,000 _____ e) over \$20,000 _____

10. a) Married _____ b) Single c) Number of children _____

11. PARENT'S CLASS BACKGROUND: a) working class b) middle class ?
like my grandparents' class? c) upper class _____ d) other _____
they were working class -- one became bourgeois by starting a business. grandparents were Eastern European immigrants.

12. PERSONAL LIFE: a) heterosexual orientation _____ b) bisexual orientation _____
c) homosexual orientation d) undefined _____

13. If you are living with others, ^{no} do they support your involvement in art?
a) financially ___ yes ___ no b) emotionally ___ yes ___ no

14. Do you consider yourself politically
a) conservative ___ b) liberal ___ c) radical d) apolitical ___

15. Ethnic Background Jewish

16. Where did you receive your art education?

Place HAMILTON HIGH SCHOOL Dates 1965-68 Major ART

Place U.C. BERKELEY Dates 68-73 Major ART-studio

Place ^{at USC} CSU Los Angeles Dates 76-79 Major ART-art history

17. IN WHAT WAYS WAS THIS EDUCATION BENEFICIAL TO YOUR DEVELOPMENT AS AN ARTIST?

In High School & even junior high school i got a lot of encouragement from (female) art teachers, and from my parents (father), who bought me oils & canvas boards at the age of 12. The encouragement was beneficial. ^{time to do art & financial backing from father certainly helped.}

At Berkeley, ~~I~~ I learned some more techniques & design principles. BUT I found there was no discussion of content, no encouragement of me ~~or~~ or my career (possible future career) as an artist, no coherence to the program, just classes that taught about form. (this relates to your next question).

I did learn to make & stretch canvases at Berkeley.

At Cal State Los Angeles, I was mostly studying art history, to which i brought the feminist perspective which I had developed ~~starting~~ in my last year at Berkeley. A class in mural painting ^(Cal State L.A.) gave me the mural technique, and the radical teacher of that class, which was not in the art department, affirmed my sense of the need for a connection ^{on art & literature" as a reading.}

18. IN WHAT WAYS WAS THIS EDUCATION DETRIMENTAL TO YOUR DEVELOPMENT AS AN ARTIST?

(see my comments in the last question)

My experience at Berkeley was detrimental to my development as an artist. I was interested in content, in exploring issues & feelings to try to say something important in my art. But the art instructors were into formalism, minimalism, &/or non-objective painting styles, & i couldn't connect my perspective with theirs. also, the instructors were all men, & i strongly suspect that they treated women students less seriously. the fact that they were all men & the artists we studied in art history were all (or quite nearly all) men was a definite message to women students in the fine arts. i dropped out, then dropped back in & tried to change my major to social welfare, but failed one course in it so returned to art to get my degree,

19. WHY DO YOU WANT TO MAKE ART? being rather apathetic towards art by then.

↓ (1980)
at this point in my life, i am re-integrating art

back into my life as a "hobby" rather than a profession, which it never had become. creating art is an enjoyable activity, which should be open to everyone. if my new "hobby" (stained glass) were to progress & persist, i would ultimately find its most meaningful use in political themes. i hadn't thought about this, since i've just recently gotten back into art, in the form ^(medium) of stained glass (i'm turned off to painting, probably because of my school experience), theoretically, stained glass political images sounds like a good goal.

i tend to lack motivation in carrying through my good ideas sometimes. being graded in art classes at Berkeley, & having a strict structure (time limits, # of paintings to do) felt the discipline must

They didn't teach it that way at Cal State...

20. HAS FEMINISM AFFECTED YOUR THINKING ON ART?

(all these questions & my answers are overlapping, i see!)

yes yes yes. a class in Berkeley on the psychology of women (1973) pointed out the inequalities on all levels. In 1974 i got involved with the radical lesbian-feminist community in Palo Alto and life hasn't been the same since. at that point, i began teaching myself about women's art history & finding myself in los angeles (another story), pursued women's art history in the M.A. program at Cal State (A., recently completing a thesis on the topic of feminist cartoons. From 1977 to 1979 I taught a class on women's art history (orange coast college, in southern california) that being the first time i made money in an art-related job.

21. IF YOU ARE NOT SUPPORTING YOURSELF ON YOUR ART, DO YOU THINK YOU WILL BE ABLE TO DO SO IN 10 YEARS? IF NOT, HOW DOES THIS AFFECT YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS YOUR (PREVIOUS) ART EDUCATION AND YOUR ART IN GENERAL?

I am not supporting myself on my art; i'm not making much art, and i don't intend to support myself on art in 10 years, or ever. i feel ripped off having studied something which is not likely to lead to being self-supporting, and nearing age 30, feel i still don't have a career. at this time, i am looking into going back to school in a more practical program in a totally different field, if i am qualified, given my art background. i think art departments should let students know that they may be in a very impractical field, & suggest alternatives, OR/AND take students more seriously as individuals & help the students based on their own goals, perhaps by referring them to professionals in the community who can help the student. women students should know about woman artists, past & present; blacks should have the same opportunity, etc.

Answers to E 23

artists & support groups

22. CAN YOU DESCRIBE ONE PROFOUND EXPERIENCE IN YOUR SCHOOLING THAT HAS LEFT ITS MARK?

I can think of several negative ones.

at U.C. Berkeley circa 1972, i asked an art instructor (male) what he thought about the moral responsibility of art, or something to that effect, & he said that art and morality have nothing to do with each other; that he personally left morality when he left his religion back home somewhere. (today i would ~~not~~ add "politics" to that question)

similarly, another UCB professor said that "art is not therapy" -- a while i had always found art to be "therapeutic" for the process to have a healing effect. the same professor (perhaps this is the most "profound") refused to discuss the content of a painting in which i had invested a lot of time & energy, saying, "this quarter were studying materials; next quarter we study content." I didnt go back to school the next quarter, & felt very discouraged.

23. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE CHANGED IN THE TEACHING OF ART?

(this answer #24 also) (see my answer to question 21, the last part.)

besides that, it would be nice to live in a society based on cooperation rather than competition, so art students (among others) wouldn't feel the desperate need to competitively succeed monetarily in the "art world," which is corrupted and controlled by capitalism & business interests. maybe art should have the position it does in China, in which ~~some~~ workers also do art, but (i dont know what happens in China exactly) dont work at art full time.

the book My Name Is Asher Lev gave a good model for art education -- an apprentice/teacher relationship between an older and younger person from the same (in this case ethnic) community

24. CAN YOU DESCRIBE AN UTOPIAN ART EDUCATION (WHETHER IT IS FEASIBLE OR NOT).

i seem to keep anticipating the next question & answering from in the previous space.

FIRST there should be no grades, unless perhaps a criticism/self-criticism process would be incorporated in a grade.

THEN, in a field as personal & subjective as art, there should be a lot of caring, sensitive interpersonal interaction (if & when a student wanted it).

IT MIGHT BE PRACTICAL TO
COMPLETE A LIST OF ARTISTS IN
THE COMMUNITY WHO ARE WILLING
TO ACT AS "MENTOR" TO A
COMPATIBLE YOUNGER ARTIST, TO
ACTUALLY IMPLEMENT THIS PROGRAM
± ENVISION IT AS EXTRA-FINANCIAL,
DONE SIMPLY FOR THE ENJOYMENT
OF IT. NO MONEY, NO CREDITS,
NO GRADES.

SERIOUSLY, i like the idea i mentioned elsewhere of
apprentice/teacher situations, one-to-one
relationships of a compatible paired artist
from the community with a student-artist.
in My Name Is Asher Lev by Chaim Potok, it was a
Jewish man and a Jewish boy. i can
envision women in this role, lesbians teaching
lesbians, for example. in addition to this one-to-one
situation, there can be larger classes or
critique groups which meet on a regular basis.

PERSONALLY i have always hated working in class, the
uptight school environment, and prefer working
at home. a weekly or bi-weekly critique/support
group would help. they can share information of
all kinds, there could be no "grading" in this group,
or it wouldn't work.

Thanks for getting me to think about this topic, which has been so
crucial in my life. I just found a copy (this form) at the Wideman's
Building in Los Angeles. (If you have the time, I'd be interested in
hearing about the results & what was presented to CAA.) I appreciate
this effort