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## Chronology through cartography: mapping 1970s feminist art globally

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## Chronology Through Cartography: Mapping 1970s Feminist Art Globally

Marsha Meskimmon

On December 13, 1977, Suzanne Lacy and Leslie Labowitz organized the now-famous feminist activist performance *In Mourning and in Rage* on the steps of Los Angeles City Hall. The work was striking yet simple, powerful yet poignant. Ten women—nine veiled and in black mourning dress, one in scarlet—raised their voices in grief and anger at the rape and murder of ten women in the city, the sensationalist media coverage of the events, and the wider specter of violence against women internationally. These contexts were understood as intertwined at a profound level, such that the rape and murder of an individual woman could, indeed should, unite all women—in mourning and in rage.

In many ways, *In Mourning and in Rage* has come to be seen as a paradigm of 1970s feminist activist art practice.<sup>1</sup> A performance piece centered on the physical and vocal presence of women in the public sphere, it was made possible by the activities of feminist collectives and consciousness-raising groups and, significantly, sought to link a particular instance of violence against women to the inequities suffered by women globally. In their work, Lacy and Labowitz interrogated the intersection between individual women's lives and the wider social, economic, and sexual politics of the period, leaving viewers in no doubt as to the impact of the "feminist revolution" on the art of the 1970s.

Yet the problem for scholars today resides precisely in the indubitability of this impact; we know the history of 1970s feminism already, we have read and reread the texts, viewed and reviewed the works, discussed and debated these interventions before. What could we possibly achieve by rethinking this moment, a chronologically defined field of knowledge, through a spatialized frame, a global cartography?

Arguably, a great deal: the opportunity to deconstruct the so-called "alternative canon" and to interrogate the conceptual parameters of "feminist art." Those of us who write about

women's art are only too aware of the way a few well-known women and their work can come to stand in for all women and, perversely, further occlude both other women's work and any detailed critical responses to their own. In the literature on 1970s feminist art, a handful of artists, mainly from the United States but a few from Europe, have attained the status of an alternative canon; unfortunately, the double exclusion pertains—their own extraordinary interventions are generalized into insignificance while, at the same time, the work of other, less-known artists remains all but hidden from view. This has enabled an uncritical certitude concerning the intellectual and political limits of the feminist project and its impact on art to emerge. Concepts such as consciousness-raising, the personal as political, and the significance of the body to representation and sexual politics have become clichés rather than rallying cries, unchallenged norms rather than active sites of debate.

It is as a counterpoint to the dead canonical histories of 1970s feminist art that this essay proposes an exploration of chronology through cartography. In "Imagining Globalization: Power-Geometries of Time-Space,"<sup>2</sup> Doreen Massey argued that the conventional conceptions of the geographies of globalization are not in fact spatial, but temporal, and that these conventions have the effect of neutralizing difference and destroying those distinctive enunciative positions which can redress the unmarked position of "Europe" in postcolonial scholarship. As Massey argued:

Most evidently, the standard version of the story of modernity—as a narrative of progress emanating from Europe—represents a discursive victory of time over space. That is to say that differences which are truly spatial are interpreted as being differences in temporal development—differences in the stage of progress reached. Spatial differences are reconvened as temporal sequence.<sup>3</sup>

While Massey was concerned with the limits of cultural geography's ability to address globalization through the logic of "development studies," the histories of feminist art practice are

dogged by a similar, if more subtly tuned, dependency on temporal models masquerading as spatial awareness.

The chronological delimitation of 1970s feminist art implies a cartography focused upon the United States and emanating outward from it—first toward the United Kingdom, as an “Anglo-American axis,” then through Europe (white America’s cultural “home”), and, when venturing very boldly, touching upon the wider context of the Americas, Africa, and Asia. This temporal cartography elides two dubious patterns: first, a tendency for a certain kind of United States–based feminist art practice and discourse to be taken as an unmarked normative category,<sup>4</sup> thereby foreclosing differences both within and beyond the American context, and second, an implicit assumption that the “feminist revolution” will come to us all, eventually. These patterns presuppose the self-same progress narratives that demonstrated the victory of time over space, and, in exploring feminist praxis, their effect is to produce not a critical cartography, but an uncritical chronology.<sup>5</sup>

This insight presages the most significant shift enabled by moving from temporal to spatial explorations of 1970s feminist art and politics in a global frame. In a temporal mode, international connections are “mapped” through a linear sequence of origin, influence, and development. This timeline inevitably justifies mainstream interpretations of feminist art by reading differences *in terms of* progress narratives. Where works differ significantly from the norm, they do not call the definitions of the center into question, but instead are cast as less advanced and “derivative” or marginalized into invisibility as inexplicable unrelated phenomena—perhaps just not “feminist” or not “art.” Thinking spatially, however, we can admit the coexistence in time of locationally distinct narratives and connect disjointed temporalities, thus asking vital questions concerning networks of relation, processes of exchange, and affinities of meaning.

It is here that we find an important political corollary to these seemingly esoteric arguments about the relative merits of spatial and temporal explorations of 1970s feminist art.

Demonstrating the relevance of “feminist art, 1965–1980” to a contemporary audience entails not a temporal shift of focus, but a spatial realignment of our intellectual frames of reference. Casting spatial disjunctions of meaning in terms of temporal “development” is a major obstacle to genuine cross-cultural dialogue in a globalized world. Post 9/11, it will not suffice to take as read the dominance of American (or Western, Eurocentric) political or cultural narratives as if the rest of the world has simply not caught up, but inevitably will. Rather, it is vital in the current situation to remap our engagement with/in the world, as situated participants in dialogues with difference, capable of reevaluating our historical connections, renegotiating our contemporary roles, and inventing our futures in new terms. For this reason, the questions asked by feminists around the world during the 1970s are not irrelevant to us now, especially where they help us get a purchase on such crucial issues as the international and cross-cultural definitions of “feminism,” “politics,” and “art”; the materialization of sexed subjectivity; and the intimate relationship between the individual and the collective.

In the next sections of this essay, two intertwined cartographies are charted: a geopolitical network of power and affinity and a conceptual map of meaning and articulation. The point of this double mapping is to enable a spatialized interrogation of 1970s feminist art to emerge such that locationally distinct interventions are not simply added to the chronological progress narrative as a kind of derivative legacy designed to demonstrate the center’s impact.<sup>6</sup> Instead, reevaluating the impact of the “feminist revolution” on art in the wider global context implies the development of a critical cartography that links geopolitical networks of exchange with the movement of concepts, ideas, and aesthetic agency in, of, and through<sup>7</sup> time and space. These critical cartographies begin a process of conceptual decolonization; exploring affinities between diverse geographical positions is a strategy that makes it possible both to expand our knowledge of the global parameters of “feminist art” and interrogate the concepts by which we define its limits.<sup>8</sup>

## Geopolitical Cartographies: Feminist Affinities

The dominance of Anglo-American perspectives in the literature on feminist art and theory has already been the subject of much critical attention, and these debates need not be rehearsed here.<sup>9</sup> The effect of these perspectives has been to produce an unmarked normative mainstream,<sup>10</sup> obscuring internal diversity while mapping the rest of the world in terms of its own definitions of progress. Suffice it to say that the privilege of the Anglo-American perspective in the field is itself an effect of the power of the “special relationship” between the United States and the United Kingdom, rather than a “natural” preeminence or “true” account of the activities of feminist artists internationally. Critical accounts of the Anglo-American axis in feminist art/theory consistently end in deadlock precisely because they do not go far enough in their attempts to locate its authority as an effect of intellectual and geopolitical domination. Remaining within a chronological narrative of feminisms and art, such criticism fails to explore the global reach of *Anglophone* power and influence. Rehearsing the internal struggles of the Anglo-American connection obscures its deep embeddedness within international networks of political and economic power while reinforcing its centrality.

Therefore, the ramifications of producing a critical global cartography of 1970s feminist art are profound. Such an approach ceases to read diverse work *in terms of* the American or Anglo-American contexts and begins to acknowledge both greater degrees and kinds of difference, even autonomy, in alternative articulations of female subjectivity, feminist politics, and art.

A spatialized strategy also moves beyond simple accession to, or rejection of, the normative center; we need neither reiterate the alternative canon nor, to take the seemingly more radical approach, reject “mainstream” American feminist art outright as neo-liberal, neo-colonial, and/or untheorized and essentialist. A spatialized engagement with inter- and transnational feminist practices recasts the center in the full weight of its embeddedness within

the world. As a single component within a vital international network, “canonical” transatlantic feminist work demonstrates one particular enunciative position amongst many that can enter into new and productive dialogues with strategies from diverse geo-political contexts.

Moving beyond chronologies masquerading as cartographies and tendencies to map ideas from a central origin point toward a sphere of influence/legacy enables alternative histories of the impact of feminism on art to emerge. Previously occluded affinities appear. For example, Assia Djébar’s 1977 film *La Noubia des femmes du Mont-Chenoua* can be engaged productively in conjunction with Annette Messager’s *Les tortures volontaires* (1972) as a Francophone exploration of the interface between gender and genre, informed by subtle plays of language, voice, and visual image. Yet developing that locational affinity in no way undermines the equally compelling relationship between Djébar’s tale of the Algerian war in the stories and songs of women and the work of other North African feminist filmmakers such as Moufida Tlatli, who also explored the politics of decolonization through women’s experiences. Similarly, connecting Messager with Djébar does not preclude looking at Messager’s work in terms of its vital relationships with other continental European feminist practices from the 1970s, such as the performance-based work of Gina Pane or Helena Almeida. Where the model of feminist impact is evaluated through origin and influence, a singular progress narrative is implied with a linear strand of in- and exclusions; spatializing these histories, by contrast, enables us to see, simultaneously, the multiple cartographies that have given shape to a complex global feminist project and a fascinating network of art practices and ideas.

Charting multiple cartographies should not be confused with ahistorical or essentialist strategies—*many* maps do not simply equate with *any* maps. The geographies being explored by this spatialized approach are not random; indeed, they are rigorous explorations of the interstices between socio-political, cultural, and linguistic histories and contemporary economic and geopolitical alliances. Interrogating feminist art globally acknowledges differences between practices and their conceptual territory rather than assuming a generalized (feminine/feminist)

worldwide unity of meaning that merely reaches different “stages of development” at any given time. This is an important distinction since it yields the possibility to redefine “feminisms” and “art” in their complexity and historical specificity continually rather than to predetermine the limits of the category and apply it as a norm to diverse work.

It is obviously impossible in this brief text to explore all of the cartographies suggested by such a spatializing approach. However, I would like to examine further the global reach of an Anglophone feminist art praxis and then, in the final section of this essay, turn to some alternative constellations of work from the period that suggest compelling renegotiations of the conceptual parameters of 1970s feminist art.

My decision to explore an Anglophone cartography might seem to substitute one power for another, and provide an equally centrist model. In fact, I am exploring this further for two very different reasons. First, the wider Anglophone context does not simply displace the Anglo-American paradigm, it deconstructs it, repositioning the unmarked normative center and opening up a set of multilayered spatial connections. The center/periphery logic underpinning the former way of thinking becomes untenable. Secondly, for me, this map links the question of research with that of embodied agency and situated knowledge. I was born and raised in the United States, but came to the United Kingdom as an undergraduate student and have pursued my academic career here; transatlantic feminisms are my own context. Moving beyond that paradigm is as much a personal imperative as a political and intellectual necessity. The questions that are consistently raised in my own work concerning a viable and truly global approach to feminist aesthetics, ethics, and theory are commonly ones of method, of finding ways to speak against the grain. This essay participates in that wider project, and testing these questions tests the limits of my own understanding—and I readily admit that I can ask far more than I can answer.

It could be argued that the two most insidious inventions of the Anglo-American axis are the key to its power—imperialism and isolation. These are all but unable to be deconstructed

without interrogating the global reach of Anglophone power politics. In many ways, these politics were the target of Martha Rosler's photomontage series *Bringing the War Home* (1967–72), in which she launched a stinging critique of the willful ignorance underpinning prosperous American domesticity and its brutal effects internationally. In her montages, the “police action” in Vietnam forcibly bridged the ideological gulf of isolationism and entered the middle-class American home.

Within the United States, the conflict in Vietnam was a catalyst for bitter civil disputes concerning racism, sexism, and political corruption. Globally, however, American involvement in Southeast Asia was but one minor moment in a much longer struggle for decolonization in the region, one in which the United States was a relative newcomer. At the international level, the period following the Second World War witnessed the dismantling of long-held Western European imperial power on a massive and unprecedented scale. In light of this, it is interesting to place Rosler's series with Rita Donagh's work from the same period, rather than to explore its relationship with other antiwar work from within the United States. I would argue that Donagh's work, seen with Rosler's, provides precisely the kind of counterpoint needed to begin a spatial reconception of transatlantic feminisms as embedded within a much wider international frame, one critically underscored by the politics of decolonization.

In *Evening Papers Ulster 1972–74* (1973–74), Donagh addresses “the troubles,” the violent political impasse that still plagues Northern Ireland. Like Rosler, Donagh drew on documentary images from the press, reconfiguring these through collage into evocative, semi-abstract political landscapes, a painterly form of cartography that mapped Britain's nearly untenable postcolonial position in the world. The connection between Rosler and Donagh does not suggest a relationship of origin or influence, but of confluence within a wider political geography. Taken together, their works do more than critique the internal politics of the United States and the United Kingdom; feminist artists who engaged the realm of global politics from the position of the Anglo-American axis by necessity touched upon the legacies of imperialism

and isolationism as forces sustaining the myth of the unmarked center—they were implicated by the Anglophone frame.

And this unmarked center was frequently hostile to those “others” who dared to transgress its borders and voice their difference—such as Yoko Ono.<sup>11</sup> Ono’s early experiments with musicians and visual artists associated with Japanese Conceptualism and her strong links with European Fluxus lent to her work both an exoticism and an impenetrability when it was first seen in New York and London. With works such as *Cut Piece* (first performed in Japan in 1964) and *Rape* (1969), Ono implicated her audience in voyeuristic, potentially violent encounters with women, thus staging a critically calculated exploration of sexism, objectification, and the parameters of masculine power. Significantly, in *Cut Piece*, the “object” was Ono herself—a Japanese woman artist. Performed in Europe and the United States, Ono’s body acted both as the docile body of the “Oriental woman” and as a troubling reminder of the endurance of the Japanese after Hiroshima. The fact that Ono came to the United States as a student and forged her subsequent career mainly between New York and London is not simply coincidental; her locus at the heart of the Anglo-American art world is a function of the postwar orientation of Japanese industrial and economic restructuring. Ono’s very presence deconstructed the imperialism and isolationism of transatlantic power to reveal its deep-seated international interests, and her practice foregrounded the complexities of articulating female subjectivity as a process of cross-cultural dialogue.

Exploring the international networks of Anglophone feminisms and their impact on art in the period deconstructs the normative Anglo-American center and begins to reveal its internal hostility to its own and others whose presence implicated it in global power politics. In addition, extending our geographical remit to include Anglophone nations throughout the world raises questions concerning the limits of what we might understand as feminist art practice. It is clear that vast geographical regions have simply been ignored in mainstream critical work on 1970s feminist art, despite their historical and cultural connections with the transatlantic center. For

example, the work of artists from the Indian sub-continent, such as Nasreen Mohamedi and Nalini Malani, has still not received comprehensive critical coverage, and work on Anglophone women artists from the Caribbean, Africa, and the Middle East is woefully inadequate.<sup>12</sup>

So-called “white settler” nations have not, for the most part, fared much better in relation to the transatlantic power-base of the United States–United Kingdom. Rather than be ignored, the specificity of the work of, for example, Canadian feminist artists such as Colette Whiten, with its variant take on collaboration and collectivity, has been subsumed into mainstream United States–based histories. South-African feminist art practices have suffered from the language of “development studies” so commonly applied to Africa by Eurocentric scholars and have been cast as late arrivals from the 1980s, ignoring the significance of gender-specific political activism throughout the 1960s and 70s to the dismantling of apartheid.

Arguably, the most significant body of Anglophone feminist theory to emerge during the latter part of the 1980s and early 90s was the distinctive work of Australian feminist philosophers.<sup>13</sup> Yet, 1970s feminist art and politics from Australia and New Zealand have long been marginalized as “derivative,” as simply borrowing Anglo-American ideas and following in their wake. Interpretations of this work as derivative are temporal, rather than spatial, and rely on simplistic assertions of influence rather than careful analyses of affinity. Their effect is to map geographical diversity without signifying difference in any meaningful way.

I would argue otherwise; 1970s feminist art, political agency, and theory in Australia and New Zealand provide a crucial insight into the development of the unique perspectives that characterize the later, and internationally better-known theoretical work. Australia’s simultaneous distance and proximity (in geographic, cultural, and intellectual terms) from the United States and Europe, combined with its specific history of settler and indigenous relationships and an Asian-Pacific orientation, gave its feminist work a particular slant, especially in terms of concepts of space/place, embodiment, and subjectivity. These ideas were embedded in the practices of women artists and feminist activists throughout the 1970s.

In the work of Joan Brassil, the negotiation between embodied subjectivity and location was played out as a dynamic exchange between the cosmos and the everyday, an exchange made more vital by her acknowledgment of the significance of indigenous practices to contemporary art. In an early piece, *Can It Be That the Everlasting Is Everchanging* (1978), Brassil overlaid two temporal maps: ochred saplings, configured to correspond with an Aboriginal Dreamtime constellation, were placed in conjunction with Geiger tubes that were connected to a series of light-emitting diodes operated by circuits responding to meteor showers in space. These coincidental maps linked the heavens with the earth and charted competing narratives of space and time in a colonized land. The subject is here conceived through location and connection: as absolutely specific, yet interpellated through embodied intersubjective exchange.

These alternative cartographies of the Anglophone context both add to our knowledge of the period and begin to reshape its primary assumptions. They are maps of affinity rather than influence, and they recognize the possibility of multiple networks of relations between “feminisms,” art, and ideas across a global geopolitical sphere.

### Conceptual Cartographies: Feminist Articulations

If spatializing our explorations of art and the “feminist revolution” challenges the certitude of progress narratives and singular sequences of origin, influence, and legacy, it also provides the basis for a conceptual decolonization, for questioning the assumed categories and tropes which have come to define 1970s feminist art. While there are many ways to interrogate these categories, for the sake of brevity and clarity here, just two key themes are taken up below—the articulation of an embodied female sexuality and an enworlded sexed subjectivity. These themes are intertwined inasmuch as they engage relationships between bodies, subjects, and power at the nexus of gender and sexual politics, and they are resonant with, but not identical to, more readily recognizable tropes of mainstream 1970s feminisms, such as the “personal is

political” or the debates concerning the representation of the body and the significance of women’s collectives. This resonant non-identity is strategic; their resonances provide a crucial insight into the way assumed paradigms of feminist praxis might be engaged productively, not simply replaced, through alternative cartographies of the period and these, in turn, suggest compelling new formations of the histories of feminist art of vital significance to developing contemporary feminist praxis under the conditions of globalization.

Articulating female sexuality and desire beyond the objectification of “woman” raises important questions concerning the relationship between subjectivity, bodies, and the body politic. In 1979, Croatian artist Sanja Iveković performed the work *Triangle*, simulating masturbation on the balcony of her Yugoslavian home as Marshal Tito’s motorcade passed by, knowing she was under police surveillance. The action was seen as a direct confrontation with the power of the state, and Iveković was stopped and forced to go back inside her apartment by the secret service. In this action, female sexuality became a means of political critique simply by moving from the domestic interior to the balcony, signifying a transgression of the border between safely contained (unseen, unspoken) female desire and its dangerous counterpart, visible female sexual agency.

Rendering female sexual agency visible treads a dangerous path between an empowering investigation of desiring subjectivity and the objectification of “woman” as no more than a sexual body. In light of this, it is instructive to examine *Triangle* in conjunction with two films from the period: Carolee Schneemann’s *Fuses* (1964–66) and Chantal Akerman’s *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975). Like *Triangle*, *Fuses* took the risk of sexualizing the body of the woman artist—it is an explicit film of Schneemann and her male partner’s lovemaking—and, like *Triangle*, the performance of the artist’s sexual pleasure was met with censorship and harsh critique by the establishment. Indeed, Schneemann’s work attracted negative criticism not only from expected conservative quarters, but from many left-wing male artists and feminists alike.<sup>14</sup> Where Iveković’s simulated masturbatory action

foregrounded explicit female sexuality, its public and political venue located its critique at the level of the social. By contrast, Schneemann's explicit, performing female body threatened to overwhelm the agency of the transgressive woman artist by rendering her the titillating object, the *artiste*.<sup>15</sup>

Akerman's exploration of female sexuality in the film *Jeanne Dielman* located the most intimate of pleasures within the realm of socio-economic control. The film's pivotal sequence of female orgasm is rendered as an inescapable insight into the interface between the body and the state; only when the central character experiences desire beyond the socially imposed limits of banal housewifery and sanitized prostitution can she act against these constraints. *Triangle*, *Fuses*, and *Jeanne Dielman* position sexual desire and pleasure as positive forces in the production of female subjectivity and political agency, yet they all walk a fine line between articulating sexed subjectivity and displaying female sexuality as an object.

Charting this particular cartography suggests a complicated pattern of locational affinities and differences in feminist explorations of female sexuality and embodiment, a pattern that cannot easily be reduced to a clichéd "development" from early liberal essentialist (read "American") feminisms and their later, Marxist poststructuralist (read "European") counterparts. Certainly *Jeanne Dielman*'s politically charged formal disruptions of voyeuristic pleasure through extended duration and banal violence bore the traces of poststructuralist avant-garde cinema and socialist critiques of alienated labor, and *Triangle* was linked to the radical Body art that emerged in the wake of the polarized geographies of the Cold War. But these contexts in themselves do not make the pieces the more sophisticated "followers" of works such as *Fuses*; Schneemann's pleasure-seeking, genre-crossing female body was also an affront to normative definitions of sexuality and a powerful transgression of class boundaries. Rather than assert a lineage or debate the "feminist" content of these works, acknowledging their locational specificity opens up degrees of difference between their tactics. This in turn allows us to explore

the multiple interfaces between sexual desire and female agency as constitutive of what might be understood as the impact of feminisms on sexual politics and art in the period.

It further opens the relationship between art centered on the body and the articulation of embodied subjectivity and sensual intersubjectivity. Between 1968 and 1973, Rebecca Horn produced a number of body-extension pieces and, with these, executed a range of live artworks and short films such as *Pencil Mask* (1973). The prosthetics themselves are extraordinary corporeal instruments which, when worn, position the body of the adorned at the nexus between subject and object; the filmed actions provoke in their viewers a sensitive and sensory embeddedness within the world. Two short films using feather objects epitomize this kinaesthetic pleasure and its articulation of embodied subjectivity: *Feather Fingers* (1972) and *Cockfeather Mask* (1973) (both featured in *Performances II*, 1973). In *Feather Fingers*, the artist, wearing feathered finger extensions, slowly caresses every contour of her own arm from wrist to shoulder. In *Cockfeather Mask*, Horn gently but purposefully strokes the face of a man with a fan-like feathered mask worn over her own face. The attenuated pleasures of both of these body actions are palpable; they are erotic without sexual objectification, and they connect the agency of corporeal exchange with the articulation of sexed subjectivity.

Horn's body extensions can be mapped alongside Iveković's body art and Schneemann's explorations of sexual pleasure as another facet of feminism's exploration of bodies and sexual politics in the period, but they may equally be located within a slightly variant constellation of affinities, focused more on the interface between embodiment, sensory knowledge, and intersubjective sociality. In this sense, it is fascinating to place Horn's body extensions in relation to Senga Nengudi's corporeal sculptural abstracts, such as *R.S.V.P. VI* (1976), and the participative objects of Lygia Clark.

Nengudi's work drew together the high language of abstraction, African influences on modernism, and the everyday materials of contemporary women's experiences; her sensuous geometrical objects were made from nylon stockings that were stretched, twisted, knotted, and

filled with sand. Actively seeking to explore the cross-cultural formations of African-American female subjectivity, the works connected materials and making as intercorporeal, rather than disembodied, processes. Clark's *Collective Head* (1975) demonstrated yet another locational variation on the interconnectedness of the individual and the social, materialized in corporeal practices. Returning to Brazil after five years of politically determined exile in Paris, Clark produced works that were premised upon collective bodily participation. Her objects were not an end in themselves, but a compelling way to bring the most intimate corporeal experience into direct and immediate contact with other subjects and objects in the world.

Located with Nengudi and Clark, Horn's work begins to chart another territory constitutive of feminist praxis not easily engaged through the chronological logic of origin and influence: the relationship between individuality and collectivity. Feminisms have sometimes struggled with the seeming opposition between local specificity and notions of shared female experience, wondering how to acknowledge difference and yet move toward collective analysis and agency. Key to this process, and its global ramifications, is how to articulate the specificity of female subjectivity so to engage the wider socio-political field in the full force of difference.

Feminist reconceptions of the subject as embodied, situated, and constituted in and through exchanges with other subjects and objects in the world recast the seeming opposition between individual and collective as the dynamic force of intersubjectivity, or, as Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd put it, "transindividuality":

What we know, imagine and believe is constitutive of our identities and these identities are processual, rather than fixed, because they are formed and re-formed through our participation in larger transindividual wholes.<sup>16</sup>

In a strange way, critical accounts of feminist collectives and collaborative art practices have often served to exacerbate the ostensible opposition between individuality and sociality. In light of this, it is useful make an obvious point: for many feminist artists, collaborative working

methods begun in the 1960s and 70s set the tone for continued successful collaborations later. For example, Kirsten Dufour's activist practice is one that still operates through a variety of different collective partnerships that configure temporarily around particular interventions and then dissolve to allow new collaborations to begin. And this pattern is not unique to Dufour; artists such as the late Jo Spence, Rosy Martin, and Marina Abramović as well as the members of the Berwick Street Film Collective, Lesbian Art Project, and Las Mujeres Muralistas are cases in point. Importantly, these apparently obvious examples of collaborative practice help to make a more subtle point; their detractors commonly assert the dissolution of feminist collectives as a mark of their "failure." But, obviously, this is an interpretation at odds with the strategic political value of collaboration and, I would argue, one premised upon a notion of the primary opposition between the individual and forms of collective sociality, interpreted through progressive chronology.

Rather than explore collectives as isolated phenomena and record their longevity as the mark of their significance, it is perhaps more telling to see them as part of a continuum of explorations of sexed subjectivity and social exchange. In this way, compelling connections between the intersubjective dynamics of the works of Horn, Nengudi, and Clark extend to interrogate the limits of our understanding of the multiple formations of collectivity in the period and the constitutive role such formations play in rethinking the limits of feminist art and politics. The corporeal engagement between subjects in the work of Horn and Nengudi and the bodily participation that produces the art of Clark are no less profound statements of subjectivity formed through collectivity than collaborative creative ventures, regardless of their life-span.

The dual cartographies traced by this brief essay begin to rework the histories of 1970s feminist art beyond those territories now so well-charted as to have become invisible and ineffective. Transitory cartography as a concept and a practice both ends this text and yet refuses to end the work still to be done on mapping 1970s feminist art globally. Cecilia Vicuña's practice in the period centered upon her *Precarios*, ephemeral site-specific material

performances, first produced in Santiago de Chile in the mid-1960s and later continued in London, Bogotá, and New York during her exile from Chile after General Pinochet's brutal 1973 coup. These precarious prayers drew upon indigenous Andean women's traditions of weaving and storytelling to render fleeting evocations of the everyday. In resisting a regime determined to identify, fix, and destroy its opposition, mobilizing dissent *in absentia* made the Precarios a powerful testament to voice in their ephemeral poetry and a corporeal reminder of multiple connections with others throughout the world. For us now, looking back on the global dynamics of 1970s feminist art, reading locational affinities and articulations against the grain of linear narratives of progress means producing a cartography able to explore difference and the nuances of the "feminist revolution" without subsuming them into the story already written. It is a welcome and long-overdue task.

#### Notes

1. I am indebted to Mary Jo Agerstoun for the clarity of her thinking and the extent of her research into the question of what might constitute feminist "activist" art. For those who wish to explore this topic further, she and Elissa Auther are editing a special issue of the *National Women's Studies Association Journal* on the theme. It will appear as volume 19, number 1, 2006.
2. Doreen Massey, "Imagining Globalization: Power-Geometries of Time-Space," in Avtar Brah, Mary J. Hickman, and Máirtín Mac an Ghaill, eds., *Global Futures: Migration, Environment and Globalization* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 27–43.
3. Ibid., 31.
4. What I am calling "normative" or "mainstream" are sometimes termed "Western" or "white Western" or "first-world" feminisms—there is now a huge literature on the subject of these feminisms and their politically dubious exclusions, e.g., Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Watertown,

Massachusetts: Persephone Press, 1981); Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, eds., *All the Women Are White, And All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies* (Old Westbury, New York: The Feminist Press, 1982); bell hooks, *Reel to Real: Race, Sex and Class at the Movies* (New York: Routledge, 1996); E. Ann Kaplan, *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film, and the Imperial Gaze* (London: Routledge, 1997); and Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Cinema Interval* (London: Routledge, 1999).

5. An important work that mapped alternative cartographies of feminist art was M. Catherine de Zegher, ed., *Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of Twentieth Century Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996).

6. I want to thank Whitney Chadwick, who read an earlier version of this essay, for her astute comments on the problems of writing about transnational art beyond the center.

7. This provocative formulation of prepositions is borrowed from *Inside the Visible*, and the resonance is intended.

8. I would like to thank Charlotte Klonk, who read the first draft of this text, for her excellent insights on the difficulties of feminist methodology and the term “conceptual decolonization,” which perfectly encapsulated the idea I was inferring without such eloquence.

9. On the Anglo-American “divide,” see Amelia Jones, ed., *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago's Dinner Party in Feminist Art History* (Los Angeles: UCLA at the Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center; and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); and my essay “Feminisms and Art Theory,” in *A Companion to Art Theory*, eds. Paul Smith and Carolyn Wilde (Oxford, England: Blackwell, 2002), 380–97.

10. Hilary Robinson commented on the problem of American publishing dominance manifesting itself as an unmarked norm in her very astute introduction to the edited collection *Feminism-Art-Theory: An Anthology 1968–2000* (Oxford, England: Blackwell, 2001), 1–8.

11. Yoko Ono's work, indeed her very presence in the New York and London art scenes, conjured up the most remarkable sexism and racism amongst her critics, not least when she

became involved with John Lennon. And Ono was not alone in this; artists such as Ana Mendieta and Yayoi Kusama were similarly treated.

12. This exclusion is particularly problematic given that, for example, the field of “English” literature, in response to postcolonial critiques, now commonly includes Anglophone literatures from around the world.

13. For an excellent introduction to Australian feminist philosophy, see the special edition of *Hypatia*, Christine Battersby, Catherine Constable, Rachel Jones, and Judy Purdom, eds., “Going Australian: Reconfiguring Feminism and Philosophy,” *Hypatia* 15, no. 2 (spring 2000).

14. Carolee Schneemann was not the only woman artist to be criticized for using her body in active displays of female heterosexual desire; similar critiques dogged the work of Hannah Wilke and Joan Semmel, among others.

15. I want to thank my doctoral student Jacki Willson for these insights into the genre and class boundaries of Schneemann’s work, an important part of her thesis on transgressive feminist performance art.

16. Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present* (London: Routledge, 1999), 127.