

**DOIN'ITIN
PUBLIC**
**FEMINISM AND ART AT THE
WOMAN'S BUILDING**

**Ben Maltz Gallery
Otis College of Art and Design**

**Curators
Meg Linton and Sue Maberry**



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A PROCESS ARCHIVE: THE GRAND CIRCULARITY OF WOMAN'S BUILDING VIDEO

Alexandra Juhasz

Usually we go around the room in almost any learning situation to find out who is here: to get a sense of everyone's name. This time we are doing it with video so you get a picture of yourself back to yourself. This is how education works here. You do work to see yourself outside yourself. I'm here because I think that's a fabulous process. —Sheila Levrant de Bretteville sharing with the circle in *First Day Feminist Studio Workshop* (videotape by Nancy Angelo, 1980)¹

Video was omnipresent, preserving the voices of women who had dropped everything to be part of the Feminist Studio Workshop. Among these were lesbian students seeking role models, black women writers, and incest survivors who shared their experiences long before such speaking became acceptable. —Nancy Buchanan, "Women Video Artists and Self-Articulation"²

Doing It with Video: Now & Then

"This time we're doing it with video," proclaims Sheila Levrant de Bretteville. What did that mean in 1980, and what might it mean in 2010, while revisiting the Woman's Building's awesome archive of one medium's "omnipresence"? At the Woman's Building, video played a central role in a unique feminist art education organized around the

risks of female representation and its associated pleasures of self-realization. According to Amelia Jones, "In the early '70s it was assumed that if you put yourself out there and expressed hitherto forbidden feelings (at the time it was inadmissible to talk about things like menstruation or rape) that was itself a political act."³ At the Building this political act was *videotaped*. For example, in her article here, Vivien Fryd covers the complex ways in which video was used to initiate conversation and memory, record testimony, and in so doing create possibilities for the witnessing necessary for healing, as understood through the radical rape and incest work spearheaded at the Building. For these reasons, video was simultaneously a favored method, medium, and record:

"I'm Joy. I'm from Kansas. I came here because I heard about it, and there's nothing like it where I'm from. No feminist support community and I'm anxious for that." "I'm Lyricon Jazzwomin McCaleb. This is my 2nd year. I'm nervous. I quit smoking. I hate microphones and now I have a camera to go with it. I think I'll die. I'm a visual artist. I came here because I was a grape turning into a raisin." (*First Day Feminist Studio Workshop*)

Countless Woman's Building videos, capturing untold bits of self-expression like those from *First Day Feminist Studio Workshop*, were made and saved by innumerable (often anonymous) women, who were mutually developing and enjoying a uniquely feminist theory and practice of video fundamentally informed by a form of consciousness-raising that was itself conversant with contemporary art. Over its two hours, *First Day Feminist Studio Workshop* delivers fifty or so testimonies that share an earnest and joyous, if tough, linking of feminism, art, community, self-empowerment, and video. Using video as process and register to make public the private and female within a safe community often culminated in feminist analysis. Michelle Moravec explains: "This process represented the ideal outcome of consciousness-raising, which was meant to help individual women understand that the sexism they experienced was not individual but systematic in patriarchal society."⁴ Within feminist art education, feminist analysis could enable another outcome: a critical feminist art practice. At the building, video would initiate a process, enhance it, record it, and ultimately deliver a "picture of yourself back to yourself," which could allow for a new type of seeing of the self, and thus a feminist art intervention. This picture of a radical self was preserved for later generations: a picture of themselves put forward for ourselves. For it was the video that lasted even as—or precisely because—their processes were mostly shelved, taken up and modified by other avant-gardes, lost to the waning of community, or evaporated in the very living of them.

Throughout feminist art education at the building, process was valued and documented. All of these documents of processes were meant to be made public (often

through video), and saved for history (as video), even as they also, most critically, mark something internal and ephemeral. Thus, the archive of the omnipresent video of the Los Angeles Woman's Building performs the perplexing, inspiring, and incongruous work of holding still moving documents of and for feminist learning and transformation. Finally pinned down in the patriarchal digs of the Getty Research Institute (GRI), the Building's haphazard records of radical process and feminist change enjoy a contradictory state of preservation.

The GRI archive contains one hundred and eighty-one eclectic videos that register personal alteration, communal growth, aesthetic development, and multiple methods for and records of expanding voice and vision. In the hushed special collections reading room, contemporary feminists can appraise unruly documents that, by "doing it on video," enabled essential transformations for earlier generations of women. What might initially appear to be a cluster of random personal insights expressed on any one tape found amongst this slapdash archive in fact serves to demonstrate a consistent and self-aware project. The video archive of the Woman's Building forms a complex link between video and feminist process and preservation.

Because they manifest this uniquely feminist theory and practice of an *archive of process*, the collected tapes display what continues as a highly relevant project of women's visibility: a theory and practice for being seen and remembered. At first glance, the current catalog of Woman's Building videos is defined primarily by the heterogeneity and disorganization of its entries. Thankfully, I received invaluable assistance from Woman's Building video artist Jerri Allyn, who graciously aided me in navigating what otherwise would have been a truly opaque assortment of tapes. The collection includes, for example, sloppy recordings of art shows and poetry readings (the camera as often facing the floor as the speaker's face), unidentified footage shot for art tapes never made, hours of the now-familiar circle of women introducing themselves to each other, fully realized art videos (some well-known, most forgotten), cable access television programs made by artists at the building from 1987–89, and random tapes donated to the building by indiscriminate feminist parties from across the country. This hodgepodge also comes in a wide range of original recording formats, includes work from 1973–91, and is identified in the catalog only by the esoteric titling found on the tapes' original labels, often without dates or authors. In any case, most of the tapes are not yet transferred into a viewable format. The humble feminist researcher can only guess what hidden riches might be found in the yet-to-be-transferred *Scenes never to be seen beyond the scene (videorecording): hidden eye takes a long look at the FSW, 1975–1976 (1976)*.⁵

But I did get to see *First Day Feminist Studio Workshop*, twice, and it serves as a primer for the first of three categories of video found in the Building's unique archive of process. In our many conversations about the archive, Allyn and I have named this most common category of video *documentary footage*. In her quote above, Buchanan

describes this use of video as "preserving the voices." The many tapes of documentary footage in the archive capture, in unedited form, the activities, exercises, and methods of the unique feminist art education invented and refined at the building from 1973–1991. The archive also holds the video production that resulted from the Building's ubiquitous taking and saving of footage of the difficult private processes of building a public feminist personhood and community. Two forms of "product" (rather than process) tapes are also preserved in the collection: these forms are edited and completed videos, made as an outcome of the processes that were so central at the building: *documentary videos* and *video art*. Woman's Building documentary videos intentionally structure lived time and space with an eye towards feminist analysis and education: art videos do the same while also engaging in a feminist conversation with historical and contemporary aesthetic traditions. In all three categories, every one of the collected tapes performs and documents transformative processes, which are often focused on multiple, perhaps competing, practices—including seeing, speaking, and being seen—and the related project of making these practices public and preserving them.

Thus in its totality the collection reveals a distinctive, highly relevant, and uniquely feminist archival project that is primarily devoted to the *now* of video-aided process—of seeing "yourself outside yourself"—while also being committed to the potentially incompatible goal of entering history through an anticipated (but perhaps under-thought) dialogue with feminists of the future. These are both systems for feminist history built on the circle—of a narcissism where the artist looks at her self across generations and back again, which is an idea explored by Michelle Moravec in this volume. In her essay, Moravec uses as an example Susan King's "conundrum": "how to tell two stories simultaneously" of the Woman's Building's past and present. Video proved an excellent medium with which to work through this challenge of how to express a shared, complex, and sometimes contradictory theory of a mutual and multiple space, time, and self. Doing it with video, women at the building engaged in collective, circular practices developed to acknowledge simultaneous points of view. Today, their videos create a different simultaneity: representing the building, its women, and their loss(es), as well as the multiple and conflicting views of the feminists of the seventies and their progeny. From today's vantage of yesterday's videos, not only are the women of the seventies lost to history (once they were young, now they are not, as will be the case for us as well), but also many of their values and practices no longer seem relevant (lost perhaps to post-identity politics and post-structuralism).

In her essay in this volume, Jennie Klein identifies these "certain qualities—reciprocity, mutuality, equality" as "lesbian." With this I agree, and I note as well that while some of these qualities seem lost, others have been revisited or reinterpreted. Similarly, in their critical contributions to feminist art/archival studies, Ann Cvetkovich and Diana Taylor observe related contradictions that arise from studying archives of ephemera. Cvetkovich explores affect and trauma; Taylor investigates the

repertoire of performance.⁶ I contribute to this branch of feminist archival/art studies by “doing it with video,” just as my forebears did so conscientiously before me. While Cvetkovich and Taylor also rely on video for traces of what would have otherwise been lost to history, I study the Woman’s Building’s self-conscious move to video, in the face of loss, as my central concern. In his introduction to the photo exhibition *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*, Okwui Enwezor remarks, “The camera is literally an archiving machine, every photograph, every film is *a priori* an archival object.”⁷ Acknowledging video’s unique relation to archives, my claim will be that the Woman’s Building engaged this *a priori* power in a uniquely feminist fashion.

The (Waning) Power of Process (Across Space and Time)

The contradictions of documenting process on video via feminist art education expands the reach of video, the archive, and process. I return to *First Day Feminist Studio Workshop* because, as does every tape in the collection, it exhibits the incongruous pulls experienced, documented, and preserved in an archive of process. The tape captures two workshop exercises experienced and relayed over two unedited hours (save for a rough, in-camera edit between exercises and during which it seems the group watched yet another videotape). The processes of videotaping and being videotaped are explicit; answers are performed for the camera and the room, the public and the personal, the future and the now. The first exercise is the one described by de Bretteville above—a building requisite—the personal introduction, around the circle, of all participants and teachers, to the group and the camera:

“I’m Terry Wolverton. I’m here because I want to be a better writer and I want to work with women in an artist’s community.” “I’m Cheri Gaulke, core faculty in the workshop. I came five years ago. The reasons I came then are the reasons I’m here now. I want to do my work in a community and get feedback and have my work grow from the experiences of feedback from other women.” “This is so nerve wracking. My name is Diana. I don’t know why I am here. This is my second year. I never cried so much as last year. I don’t know why I am here. I’ve asked myself a million times, why am I coming back? Because I want more. I want more from myself and I want more for other women.” “I’m Deirdre Beckett. I’m here to do this sort of thing we’re doing right now. I find it very difficult. I find it very difficult talking in a group. But I came here after going to art school. I got confused about whether I was being produced by the institution or I was the producer. The question of my being a person or not was unclear to me.”



Annette Hunt documenting with video on the first work day of the Feminist Studio Workshop, October 22, 1975. Woman's Building Image Archive, Otis College of Art and Design.

The tension, fear, and excitement in the room are palpable in the women's comments, faces, and gestures. It's also greatly exacerbated by the camera. The subjects are saying out loud things they've never said before (as a personal and political act), taping it for their own later view (to see themselves outside themselves), and also for posterity (to see themselves by ourselves). They tell us how hard it is to speak to each other, to the camera, and to us.

As a feminist professor and artist myself, I've been in many such rooms, enjoying our matrilineal inheritance of videotaping exercises around a circle. I know the power of this process. However, I must attest that it came as somewhat of a surprise to find that *watching* such a process at the Getty, rather than engaging in it myself in my own room with my students, proved to be another matter entirely. I'll be frank. *First Day Feminist Studio Workshop* is basically unremarkable, tedious, and somewhat impenetrable when watched thirty years later in the hushed special collections reading room of the GRI. While its reel-to-reel, black-and-white, seventies feel, as well as the haircuts, are initially entertaining, watching hours of other women's unprocessed process is, well, boring. However, when I watch the tapes with Jerri Allyn, that's a different matter altogether. Allyn recognizes everyone, and narrates aloud many levels of information that would be utterly inscrutable without her: who the mostly unnamed women are, who is probably behind the camera, what's become of them all, and what was *really* going on in the room at the time—all the exciting, unspoken drama and tension. It's delightful to engage with the tapes through her animated nostalgia; it's like watching home movies. (Home movies are also prime examples of the category documentary footage, although home videos are not made with a view towards a larger, theorized process that will involve their later use by researchers.)

In *First Day Feminist Studio Workshop*, de Bretteville eloquently addresses this gap between the seen and felt (or lived) aspects of process, between its now and its later, its public and private, its participant-users and its projected-but-ill-defined-future-audience. She identifies a well-known trouble with realist documentary footage (one often satisfied by making fiction or art video): it only records the surfaces or facts of things. For this essay, I will focus on this particular problem and how the Woman's Building developed unique theories and practices that used video as both record and resource for the now, while also committing it towards a somewhat less coherent project of the future. For this reason, the video footage and video documentary output found in the collection—not the video art—will take up my primary consideration. Furthermore, while the feminist video art of the Woman's Building has already received some critical and curatorial attention, the work that comprises the majority of the archive has not.³ Thus, video's documentary, rather than aesthetic, problems and potential will be of greatest concern to me. (It was thus for women at the Building who, as Jenni Sorokin establishes in this volume, were not primarily committed to the making of great—or sometimes any—works of art.)

The documentary concerns related to preserving feminist process with video were central to women at the building, which is eloquently elaborated by de Bretteville during the second recorded exercise of *First Day Feminist Studio Workshop*. In this case, women were asked to explain the metaphorical and/or physical importance of the Woman's Building. De Bretteville remarks:

This place embodies our energy. If I measure it under feminist energy, there's a strange gap between reality and what we made happen. In rational, logical, linear thinking it stands as proof for that which is not measurable, that which is based on our wanting it, our needing it. We are vulnerable to a kind of naïveté. We've accomplished a lot, and we can accomplish more, as long as there are enough of us. I am scared that there won't be enough women to carry us into the future. If there aren't women, there won't be a building.

De Bretteville expresses that the Woman's Building is nothing more than their own irrational, illogical (and undocumentable) wants, needs, and energies—the lived process of those who are there, now, creating (and documenting) it. Note, as ever, the power of the now, and its tug against an implicit theory of future (as well as the condemnation of the linear). De Bretteville remarks that this place will stop being the Woman's Building when women stop doing and wanting in the way that they are. They did stop, and the building is no longer, just as she anticipated. All that is left is its collection of videos.

Documentary videos can only capture the visible and audible aspects of that feminist energy, not the unquantifiable, interpersonal, and private stuff: the feeling, wanting, and needing. (Again, that is the project of video art.) Alone with the videos these many years later, I find that even when the women speaking are as eloquent as de Bretteville (and most are not, I must admit), I am *not* riveted by their process. I can see and hear them attesting to their wanting and needing, but I can't *feel* it. My mind wanders, I start scanning the tapes at 4X speed, hoping not to miss a crucial moment amidst the mundane revelations, hoping the other researchers (careful, attentive art historians) don't catch my sloppy methods. I realize: Wow, come to think of it, this video actually isn't for me, the feminist future, even as it could have been preserved for no one else but me. It clearly worked as part of *their* process, in its time, in its now. It even seems to continue to work today for the women like Allyn who made it; it retains value in their ongoing feminist process. But what is the meaning and purpose of process video for others once it is archived?

It seems that the contradictions inherent in gathering and saving evidence of *feminist process*—something that is most critical in the doing and living of it, in its present, and within its community—are paled by those raised by the ensuing process of

sitting in a subdued research room, years later, watching long, eclectic, often unauthored and untitled bits of evidence of someone else's daring development. Saving process is weird enough, but watching someone else's saved process feels downright crazy. While I may be revealing myself as a bitchy archivist (daughter), or I might be hinting that this is an unpleasant (mother's) archive, it is the complex meanings raised by this collection's many paradoxes that I will attempt to illuminate for the rest of this essay. Centrally, I am interested in the powerful and productive ambivalence that the archive produces in relation to its own feminist theories of time, place, self, community, generation, and consequence. I intend to highlight, upfront, the many irreconcilable theories and practices at the heart of these feminist videos and their preservation between past, present, and future; archiver and archivist; mother and daughter; public and private; and importance (or quality) and insignificance.

A/No Document for the Daughters of Posterity

Across this essay, I engage in a curious mapping of the contradictions found in a *process archive*, using the videos found therein to help answer what might be, in more familiar archival settings, some relatively straightforward questions: Why were these tapes made and for whom? Why and how were they archived? What does the archive, and the fact of its archiving, tell us about video and feminist art education at the Woman's Building? Some of what is learned is to be expected. For instance, it is now accepted wisdom that feminists in the seventies, like others breaking past the confines of high Modernism, used this new technology against art objects and in celebration of the quotidian. "Woman's art and video were largely responsible for transforming the predominantly male monoliths of minimalism into the cluttered, chatty, often messy objects of post-minimalism and post-modernism," explains Ann-Sargent Wooster in her introduction to *The First Generation: Women and Video, 1970-75*.⁹ Chris Hill builds on this history in *Video Art and Alternative Media in the United States 1969-1980*. "The valorization of 'process' and 'an almost religious return to experience' was shared by both political and cultural radicals of the late '60s, even though their agendas and strategies varied considerably."¹⁰

While notable for their eclecticism of purpose, style, and method, the fifty or so tapes from the Woman's Building archive currently available deliver what any student of video would expect from work of the seventies (and eighties): a host of predictably low production values used to record the social and cultural world of a community of diverse female artists, where a distinct value is placed on process over product. "Low production values characterized the emergent feminist video art of this era," explains Christine Tamblyn, who then enumerates "long, unedited takes, minimal camera angles or movement, and a reliance on synch sound."¹¹ The work in the collection establishes how the act of shooting, and thereby owning and preserving women's voices, bodies, and experiences, proved as paramount for these feminist artists as

it did for others inventing the field in the seventies. Deidre Boyle elaborates in *Illuminating Video*:

Video's unique ability to capitalize on the moment with instant play-back and real time monitoring of events also suited the era's emphasis on 'process, not product.' Process art, earth art, conceptual art, and performance all shared a de-emphasis on the final work and an emphasis on how it came to be. The absence of electronic editing equipment—which discourages shaping a tape into a finished "product"—further encouraged the development of a 'process' video aesthetic.¹²

Across the decades, the focus of early feminist video stays consistently on women's voices, bodies, and daily experiences; self-growth, healing, and self-definition; and advancing feminist community and art. "Without the burdens of tradition linked with other media, women video artists were freer to concentrate on process, often using video to explore the body and the self," writes JoAnn Hanley in her introduction to *The First Generation: Women and Video, 1970–75*.¹³ The significance of self-expression to seventies feminism is everywhere evident: most videos focus upon women talking about themselves, their experiences, and the power of feminist representation. Predictably, a feminist methodology including reflexivity and collaboration, an action orientation and activist stance, and an affective focus on the everyday is demonstrated across the work.¹⁴ These shared forms, contents, and methods arise from and often refer to the central place of consciousness-raising and collectivism within the building and the feminist art education developed there. "Feminist art forms stressed performance and group reception and foregrounded the values of collaboration, participation, empowerment, consciousness-raising, and the belief in art's ability to create change," write Mary Jo Agerstoun and Elissa Auther in "Considering Feminist Activist Art."¹⁵

In regard to both form and content, the videos appear exactly as we might expect, and precisely as they've been described by previous feminist scholarship. Take, for example, the tape *la la la workshop* (1976)¹⁶ listed thus in the Getty's catalog: "[produced by?] the Woman's Building, 1976. Video documentation of the second day of the la la la workshop held at the Woman's Building, June 5-6, 1976, 10 mins." The video opens and closes to black and is without identifying titles of any sort. The first image is a close-up of a woman who begins to tell a joke "about a wide-mouthed frog" that "you need to both see and hear to really enjoy." But "you" don't get the punch line because an in-camera edit cuts to the body of the tape, which is comprised of two real-time, brief segments. In each, a different group of three women sit in a semi-circle on plastic chairs facing the camera and a camerawoman with whom they are openly interacting. They pass a microphone between them and answer interview questions posed by one



Video workshop with Jerri Allyn, 1979. Woman's Building Image Archive, Otis College of Art and Design.

member of the visible group. The first begins, "This is Sheila Ruth at la la la speaking with Linda and Marilou. I'd like to ask you two lesbians several questions." The questions relate to how they told their mom, dad, best friend, and boyfriend that they were lesbians. They are about to tape lesbians saying out loud what's rarely been made public before. It's no small thing, as Buchanan describes above. They are sharing "their experiences long before such speaking became acceptable."

Each woman answers in her own way—charming, funny, but also fast because the off-screen voice keeps reminding them that they only have two and a half minutes. Ruth does not even get to finish her answer, as the tape is abruptly cut (at the ominous time limit, we assume) by another rough, in-camera edit. A new group of women pops into place, beginning their segment with the statement, "Our group is so creative." They have decided that for their part of what now seems an exercise, they will answer the question "What is la la la?" The answers are multiple, uncertain, and passionate, including "Being with a lot of women. It's all a celebration," and "Lesbians Are Living and Loving Amazons." Then we begin to hear what was so powerful about la la la, which seems to have included lectures and workshops. One woman explains: "I would love access to Ruth Iskin's slide show. I wish that had been videotaped. I'd like to see a book of the photo exhibition to be available for future reference, for future study. My interest has been sparked in things I will continue on my own. My fantasy is that this sort of thing is happening for a lot of women. What is happening at the Woman's Building is almost synonymous with what's happening this weekend..." But we've run out of time to finish her thoughts. From off-screen: "We're winding up. Good-bye."

I describe the tape in detail so that you might begin to understand the complicated process of viewing and making sense of this and most of the other works in the collection. Toward what goal, and for whom was this tape made? Why was it archived? Why do I watch it today? Whatever would they like me to make of it, here and now? At first, answers seem hard to come by (in that unappreciative daughter sort of way). This is no document for the daughters of posterity. The direct-to-camera address seems to be an acknowledgement of the videographer in the room rather than an outside, or even future viewer, who would certainly need more context, background, and a more coherent structure to be able to engage meaningfully with these vaguely structured fragments of video. *la la la workshop* is not the coherent chronicle of two days of events that would be of any real use to the future (like the video the woman in the tape said she wanted "for future reference"). Apparently, the video is instead one component of one exercise from one workshop from la la la, where six women were asked to use video to interview each other about the event, quickly. The video is not future-oriented, but rather process-oriented. It is for and of the now. While Jennie Klein (in this anthology) writes about la la la as one of several gestures produced by the Woman's Building towards an imagined lesbian future—"THE FUTURE IS FEMALE" she quotes Raven as writing in 1979—the primary value of the tape of this utopian action is in the act of its

taping: it gave these lesbians coming into art and voice a structured activity around public speaking and its record. "The Woman's Building in L.A. taught liberation as a broad-based action imbedded in real time, not as an abstraction," explains Marlena Doktorczyk-Donohue in her essay about one of the building's performance collectives, The Waitresses.¹⁷ Videotaping served to formalize and give shape, as well as make public and permanent, this small and private action experienced within one sparsely attended workshop, which was itself part of a larger set of events and activities that we will never see again because they were not adequately recorded with video.

And yet, there is more. There is *abstraction* and a future, too! Yes, this video, like all the others in the archive, was originally for process. But it was also carefully saved, meaning that someone (or many) deemed it of value for an intangible future. Moreover, it is highly self-reflexive and self-aware (and therefore abstract). Discussions about its own making, structure, and the value of video run consistently across what initially appears as ten haphazard minutes of videotaping an exercise. There's more to this video than its one-time use value. For *la la la workshop* is a video documentary, structured in three (albeit weird) acts, each consistently relaying several linked and coherent themes and practices. At once entirely about and for its own moment and community, feminist method and theory are at play in the consideration and construction of the multiplicity of time, space, and self that extends this one tape beyond video's cherished function as a playback machine that easily records and represents process. The woman quoted above ends the tape by imagining herself, or a feminist like her, wanting to re-visit and re-use all the ephemera produced at the Woman's Building, particularly the stuff experienced during *la la la* (slide shows, art exhibits, workshops). She expresses a radical, lesbian, future-oriented video fancy: that others in her present, as well as the future, will be as lucky as is she—recorded on tape, and accessible again and again, "for future reference, for future study."

She and this exercise *were* videotaped, archived, and made available for future reference by me, a feminist media scholar who is the middle-aged daughter of a seventies feminist, Suzanne Juhasz, who was a first-generation women's studies professor, and one-time visitor to the Woman's Building for a program on feminist poetry about which she was an early expert.¹⁸ And for you, curious reader, diligent student of feminist art history, video, or documentary studies. We are that woman of the future, referencing and studying, and yet sadly, problematically, so little like *her*, what with her ungainly seventies fashion and heart-wrenching enthusiasm for the endless exercises and events of *la la la*. At the same time, I prove not to be the woman she imagined me to be, longing for access to the minutiae of her generation's self-education. I gain little from watching the tape, because—let's face it—that was her process, not mine. So, in the face of my coldhearted disinterest and unforgivable lack of gratitude, and in the name of their narcissistic projection of a future populated not by *all* women (as Klein suggests was their stated utopian desire) but only by more of themselves, I'd like to

attest that what remains compelling is the fact of the feminist video archive itself. This seriously messy collection, housed for years in dusty boxes on the shelves of the venerable Long Beach Museum of Art's Video Annex, goes truly public, and ends up accomplishing the impossibly stimulating work of unsettling the staid structures between contemporary feminist scholars and (the histories of) their activist artist foremothers.

Feminist Archives Are(n't) Made for their Archivists

la la la workshop is only the first example of the heartbreaking failures and unimaginable successes of this archive of feminist process. So rightfully caught up in the moment were they that they somehow didn't realize that the feminist process that they created and documented would itself create new feminist processes, and that feminism would change, not simply carry on in their likeness. So moved were they by their own present that they planned for a future littered with the documents that they needed *then*. Women at the building diligently shot and preserved the archive that *they* wished to study, as if they would give birth to another generation that would study the tapes just as their foremothers had already studied themselves. But some archives aren't made for their archivists. For an article about the Woman's Building published for the Getty's exhibition *California Video*, which included several tapes from the Woman's Building collection, Meg Cranston worked closely with Allyn. Cranston writes that she asked Allyn: "What constitutes the Woman's Building video collection?"

"It's everything!" Jerri Allyn said, and then her hubris made her laugh. She explained. "It sounds strange now, but then...everything was important. That was part of the feminist ethos. Everything was political and everything was important. So that's what got put into the collection—everything."¹⁹

Yep...everything. As Ilya Kabakov ponders in "The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away." "But if you don't do these sortings, these purges, and you allow the flow of paper to engulf you, considering it impossible to separate the important from the unimportant—wouldn't that be insanity?"²⁰ I will attest to how exhausting and confusing the post-facto sorting of an undifferentiated archive can be. I see that the women at the building had an articulated, feminist rationale behind their incessant archiving. Something critical and revolutionary defined their archival impulse: they believed in their archive's consequence, as well as the worth of every woman who made video there, and the value of every tape she ever made. But to whom was it important, and how?

In relation to the toxic misogyny of the period (and henceforth), the radical feminist art education at the building taught its students several related, political ideals, including that their work and their voices were important in their own right, and to history. In this volume, Moravec quotes Ruth Iskin: "There was a sense of the

importance of history, that what we were doing was something that was history." You and I are now that history, sorting the meaning of their significance. Cranston continues:

In the halls and archives of the Woman's Building, women—as artists and subjects, as students and instructors, as employees and volunteers—are taking action in the belief that all work is important, and that creative construction can produce social change. This conviction is the basis of the feminism that constructed the Woman's Building and the video collection is a testament to that view.²¹

Women at the building knew that if their important work was going to enter and stay in history, then they would need to "get shown and be known" (one course offered through the Woman's Building Continuing Education Program was called *Getting Shown, Being Known*), by and for themselves, because no one would do it for them. Well, that is, no one except for me (and you), here. For there's the rub in all this: the taping and the saving of the tapes actually *worked*. The seventies feminist theories and politics of voice and preservation were right on. The women at the building understood that video would enable them to enter the archive, thus insuring their own power; they did, and it *was*. Writes Jacques Derrida: "There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation."²² They made the work and it has been archived, and not simply because the women from the building saw value in it, and in themselves (the ultimate feminist act) but also because the Getty did as well (the ultimate patriarchal fact). The unique feminist art education at the building—which produced these tapes, as well as some other objects archived elsewhere, and a slew of ephemera only available to memory—played a part in real cultural shifts that ultimately allowed for feminist art, method, and education to move into dominant institutions like the Getty and other major museums, universities, and libraries. Of course, feminist work is sometimes still considered marginal, but mostly it's not. Major shows of feminist art have been recently staged across the country, and the Woman's Building Video Archive and other feminist archives have been readily accepted by some of our foremost cultural institutions.

This raises a related question as to the associated matter of (my) tone. Given their preeminently housed archive, and its related visibility and power, why do the women from the building, and feminists from the seventies more generally, continue to feel unseen and undervalued? Are they in or out of history? And who is the best judge? While conducting research for this article, I made use of a significant and consistent body of scholarship that clearly defines the form and content of seventies feminist video and art education, as well as the role that the Woman's Building played

in its history and development. Now, there may not be as much written on this topic as, say, the work of Pablo Picasso or John Baldessari, but that is definitive of feminist production and scholarship and comes as no surprise. Thus, in the end, what seems more noteworthy are the interrelations between the previous generation's insatiable anxieties about invisibility in the face of their own consistent visibility project (via video) and my own, somewhat contradictorily resistant response as I make this and other small gestures towards ensuring their ongoing visibility. Hal Foster explains: "Perhaps the paranoid dimension of archival art is the other side of its utopian ambition—its desire to turn belatedness into becomingness, to recoup failed visions of art, literature, philosophy and everyday life into possible scenarios of alternative kinds of social relations, to transform the no-place of the archive into the no-place of utopia."²³

But whose paranoia is this: the archiver's or the archivist's? Gayatri Spivak uses the terminology of "transference" to describe the complex relations between these subjects of past and present, "in the modified psychoanalytic sense of a repetition-displacement of the past into the present as it necessarily beats on the future."²⁴ For, given that these participants in the Woman's Building are very much alive and playing central roles in the reevaluation of this archive, the repetitive relations between generations of feminists displacing past into present, as modified and supported by this archive, seems impossible to avoid. Michel Foucault writes, "The analysis of the archive, then, involves a privileged region: at once close to us, and different from our present existence, it is the border of time that surrounds our presence, which overhangs it, and which indicates its otherness: it is that which, outside ourselves, delimits us."²⁵ And yet, nothing is so simple between generations of women. While the feminist mother is not outside ourselves as simply as the forefather is to his son, the point of the video process was to see "ourselves outside ourselves," remember? Jennie Klein sheds some light on my complicated amalgam of transference, resistance, and receptivity in the face of this work. She writes that it is the "aura of distance that is misleading" when confronting these tapes.²⁶ When I do research in this archive, do I see my mother (and her sisters) or myself (and my sisters), and to whom am I obligated? Is it me seeing them seeing themselves? Is it their process or mine? Their archive or ours? Whose importance does it signify? These tensions between author and archivist, feminist past and feminist future, are duly noted, but I will leave them unresolved to haunt their archive and my writing about it. As a media studies scholar, I find it easier to note and then run away from the intransigent psychodrama at the heart of the feminist archive. Turning from feminist discourse and relations, I will conclude, instead, by engaging with a less loaded but equally important battle for provenance. For the remainder of this piece, I will demonstrate how the archive of Woman's Building video forces us to re-think the accepted wisdom about histories of documentary and video.

Accepted narratives of various art histories all move past seventies feminist art to end with a celebration of movements and ideas that are considered to have been

built from and improved upon it—critical theory, deconstructive form, and postmodern method. However, as I believe I've shown, the feminist practice at the Woman's Building was thoroughly theorized and politicized. Art histories need to be reevaluated in light of what this archive demonstrates.

I will attempt to conclude my thoughts on the contradictions of the process archive by explaining how the diverse but coherent body of video work from the Woman's Building demands a rethinking of the tautological hierarchies developed by art and feminist history, as well as those of documentary studies. Video at the Woman's Building might be contradictory, but it is neither preliminary, nor "pre" anything else that might be dismissively called upon to compare this collection to the better, brighter videos of today.

Multiple Views: Things Are(n't) This or That

I have forcefully objected to oppositional labels like "first wave" and "second wave," for these only rehearse male-conceived dualistic Cartesian symbolic systems wherein things are with "this" or "that." This type of fractured/territorialist thinking runs counter to what was and is a holistic feminist social program. —Marlene Doktorczyk-Donohue²⁷

So far we have regarded all films made from natural material as coming within this category [documentary]....They all represent different qualities of observation, different intentions in observation, and, of course, very different powers and ambitions at the stage of organizing material. I propose, therefore, after a brief word on the lower categories, to use the documentary description exclusively of the higher. —John Grierson²⁸

John Grierson, considered the father of documentary film, looked scornfully on the "lower categories" of the form as being so base that they did not even deserve the name. In so doing, he programmatically rehearsed a type of the "male-conceived dualistic Cartesian symbolic systems" to which Doktorczyk-Donohue objects. The kinds of films Grierson disdains include those videos most commonly found in the Woman's Building archive: "different qualities of observation" of events, activities, and the processes of women's lives and feminist education. Take, for example, the first three videos listed in the archive's alphabetically organized holdings: *1893 Historical Handicrafts exhibition, 1976: Adrienne Rich and Mary Daly, 1979—readings*; and *Alcoholism Center for Women (Summary: Videos probably contain documentation of an event organized by the Alcoholism Center for Women)*.²⁹ Grierson calls such records "snip-snaps of some

utterly unimportant ceremony."³⁰ Note the importance of the word *importance* again, and, as ever, my question: Important to whom? This aside, what Grierson is attempting to define in the 1940s, as he invents our contemporary documentary form as well as its academic studies, is how using the camera to record "natural material," the stuff of daily life, does not become a *documentary* until it is edited and organized into an argument, and made into art.

However, for the women of the building, this record keeping—these documents of daily practice, this process—*was* their art. "Video moves well beyond the function of the artistic," explains Deidre Boyle, "to encompass every discursive function of documentary media: recording, preserving, persuading, and analyzing events—public and private, local and global."³¹ As I've been establishing throughout, this archive is quite special in that it holds evidence of a complex and unique feminist practice where "art" and the "discursive functions of documentary media" are produced *in tandem*, or even perhaps as the very same thing, as one messy but still coherent project, where neither tautology nor priority is given to the "this" or the "that," the "lower" or "higher." All the work is the work; all the process is the process; and thus, everything is in the archive. For the women at the building, documentary footage and art video were two equivalent and supporting parts of their multifaceted video archive process. "At the Feminist Art Program artists would create performances out of psychodynamic situations (ones drawn from consciousness-raising sessions) which would finally find their way into the visual imagery," explains Amelia Jones in an interview about women's art in California. "I also have a problem with the dichotomy made between conceptual work and feminist work whereby the former is thought of as obviously theorized and the latter as intuitive, naïve, and overly sincere."³²

As a renowned scholar of early cinema, Tom Gunning repudiates yet another accepted academic hierarchy. Gunning nuances the dichotomy between the preliminary forms, which Grierson names "actualities," and the ones that come later, which Grierson more righteously called "documentaries." "Confronting a gaping abyss that separates the earlier and later modes of nonfiction filmmaking," Gunning notes that the actualities of documentary's "prehistory" have gone under-studied because they are understood to be merely "descriptive," "uninterpreted," "too raw, too close to reality, and bereft of artistic or conceptual shaping."³³ They are characterized by single shots, as editing was yet to be matured, and little attention was given to narrative clarity and logic. As you've probably noticed, I've been discussing just this sort of work, found in the Woman's Building archive seventy years later.

In his work on early documentary, Gunning makes an unexpected and helpful move that provides media scholars of other periods a critical vocabulary for understanding "primitive" work. Rather than discarding the earliest forms, as most are wont to do for their embarrassing lacks and "snip-snaps," Gunning chooses to carefully enumerate their distinct stylistic subtleties. "This *Urform* of early nonfiction film I

propose to call the 'view,'" he writes. "I mean to highlight the way early actuality films were structured around presenting something visually, capturing and preserving a look or vantage point."³⁴ He then delineates the two common forms of the "view:" the tour that presents space, and "films dedicated to activities and processes" that are more temporal in nature.³⁵ While Gunning's description eerily foretells the video practices found in the archive under consideration, the feminist underpinnings of Woman's Building video profoundly distinguish, and complicate, the form and function of their videos' "actualities."

For the remainder of the paper, I will continue to demonstrate how video in the Woman's Building, whether "high" or "low," "actuality" or "documentary," differentiates itself from other process work—and documentary—in that the varied but related productions all embody a consistent theory built from the coherent, self-aware project of feminist art education developed at the Building. Facing the camera, eyes obscured by purple glasses, Judy Chicago proclaims in *Judy Chicago in 1976* (Sheila Ruth, 1980): "Feminism is a new world view, a whole philosophical system that challenges the value system of Western civilization."³⁶

I am particularly interested in how feminist challenges to theories of time and space, expressed through their practices of mutuality and circularity, are illuminated in every video in this collection. Masterfully manifested in the archive as a totality, they defy commonsense understandings of the ordering of artistic development already being questioned by feminist scholars. The contradictions of a process archive create a coherent artistic theory and practice, "a new value system," structured by feminist multiplicity and collectivity. In this part of the essay, I will look closely at several videos to demonstrate how the collective, the circle, and the archive form a distinct and lucid feminist practice rooted in process, voice, and memory. *From Reverence to Rape to Respect. Leslie Labowitz and Suzanne Lacy* (Leslie Labowitz and Suzanne Lacy, 1978)³⁷ documents one hour of group process towards a public artwork that will be staged later by a diverse group of feminist activists who have been cobbled together by Lacy and Labowitz in Las Vegas. The visitors from the building are keen on educating this group about the unique role of collective criticism in feminist art education: "We need criticism to move from isolation to support community. Criticism is a central aspect of support. Does that make sense to you?" A woman in the circle responds: "I disagree. I'm beginning to believe criticism is not a factor of the social function." Lacy reacts, "We're not talking about art critics, we're talking about how criticism works within a group. Can we think of a framework for the group, when we criticize or give feedback without splitting up? So we can talk to each other and communicate? . . . Raven says it's an essential part of any feminist community. But you need trust, and willingness to be open and vulnerable and to be able to learn." The women sit in the predictable circle of consciousness-raising. What is more, the entire tape is not only shot in black-and-white long-takes, but the circle sits within what is called an iris-shot—an early

cinematographic technique that takes the form of a circle: part of the screen is blacked so that only a round portion of the image can be seen by the viewer. It's an idiosyncratic view to be sure: based on the circle, which represents the collective, which produces a new kind of knowledge based in trust and criticism. This feminist epistemology underpins the work in the building's video archive, and is manifested, again and again, in the content and form of its eclectic holdings.

One of the categories of documentary film that Gunning discusses is the *tour* film. He describes it thus: "The view of the tourist is recorded here, placing natural or cultural sites on display, but also miming the act of visual appropriation, the natural and cultural consumed *sights*."³⁸ Interestingly, the women at the building shot a large number of such tours: several of the building itself, and many more of the shows they put on there. However, if we think of *all* the video from the Woman's Building as tours (putting cultural sites on display) of "everything important," what is striking about the collection is that the "view" in these tours differs from more traditional forms in that it is circular, mutual, collective, and interactive. In *Arlene Raven* (Kate Horsfield/Lyn Blumenthal, 1979), one of the Building's founders explains how Sapphic education "takes into account mutuality."³⁹ I am suggesting that this video might be understood as a guided tour not of a place but of Raven's *analysis*. The video is shot in their signature style, including black-and-white long-takes and often extreme close-ups. Similarly, in the "tour" *Adrienne Rich, 1976* (1976), the celebrated poet remarks upon the new and "intense reciprocity between individuals" that distinguishes her experience at the Woman's Building.⁴⁰ These careful articulations of theories of collectivism fill the archive, and color our understanding of it. Writes Moravec, "The Woman's Building explored the multiplicative aspect of collaboration. What Cheri Gaulke once described as 'one plus one equals three.'"⁴¹

This mutual view is also enacted in what was perhaps the most bizarre video that I viewed from the collection, *1893 Historical Handicrafts Exhibition* (The Woman's Building, 1976), which documents an exhibition of historical objects related to the original, 1893 Woman's Building at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition. This literal tour of the exhibition follows the curators—de Bretteville and Ruth Iskin—for thirty or so minutes as they move clockwise around the room. Sharing the microphone, de Bretteville and Iskin stop before each panel and discuss minute historical details and background, as well as their exacting curatorial thinking, about everything, yes everything, in the exhibition. They know a lot about this history and they address all of the many works on the wall. Says Iskin: "We're going to go through each board and go through the different aspects of the exhibition." Why I call this bizarre is that the viewer cannot see what is on the wall, given that the entire video is shot in real time in a medium long shot. The *women* are our focus, and in particular their shared words and analysis. This tour is actually a staid, if circular and shared, lecture. It is also, somewhat eerily, the imagined video that the woman from *la la la workshop* tried to conjure: "I

would love access to Ruth Iskin's slide show. I wish that had been videotaped.... To be available for future reference, for future study."

However, this video is unlike a more traditional tour film or the document of the slide show that we might really have wanted to watch (where we could see the slides). It is also distinct from much of the process work, with its emphasis on the now of the making and using of the tape, that I have discussed so far. *1893 Historical Handicrafts Exhibition* displays a much more complicated relation to time as well as to place than what one might initially expect. The video records two women in the present "touring" illegible pictures from an art show about the past, while standing in the Woman's Building of the present, and lecturing in direct-address to putative students in the future. Chicago gives words to this feminist theory of time in her discussion of *The Dinner Party* (1974–79) in *Judy Chicago in 1976*: "We create a wedge in the culture. If we can bring in women's history, we can bring in women's future." Hence, the mutuality enacted in Woman's Building tour videos is across multiple registers: in terms of point of view of the "tourist" or guide, and also in relation to temporality—all at once the past, present, and future of Woman's Buildings. Here we find evidence of what Moravec, in this anthology, understands as the building's "circular conception of history, not one that rested on linear progress, but one that spiraled or curved at times, and bent concepts of time and space...particularly apparent in the extensive uses of the 1893 Woman's Building."

This is evidenced with more success by *Constructive Feminism: Reconstruction of the Woman's Building 1975* (Directed by Sheila Ruth; Produced by Sheila Ruth, Diana Johnson and Annette Hunt, 1976),⁴² which also makes explicit a complex register of spatiality. One woman guides this tour, which begins outside the building. Speaking to the camera with a microphone in hand, she takes up the familiar stance of a live TV correspondent. "The Woman's Building is a public center for women's culture," she begins. Here, the video cuts to a close-up of the front of the building, tour guide missing. (Why didn't they do this in the previous tour?!) She continues in voiceover:

When we speak of the Woman's Building we are not just talking about the physical building. But the physical space has been part of our process: taking responsibility for the creation of the kind of environment we need to produce our work and the space we need to make our work public. We have created not only a room, but a building of our own. Please join me inside.

And so, the mutual and multiple spatiality, temporality, and visuality of the tour begin: seeing oneself outside oneself, seeing themselves by ourselves. Later in the tape, in one of many interviews with her, de Bretteville explains this theory of collective vision:

The experience that you always have at the Woman's Building is that while you are seeing one thing, you can, out of the periphery of your vision, see something else going on and in that way it never feels like one thing is happening at a time. There are many points of view existing concurrently.

Just so. While we see a video image of the entry desk, we hear the voice of de Bretteville describing the decisions made, practical and philosophical, about the function and meaning of the Building's face to the public. "I am now speaking with Sheila de Bretteville," explains our tour guide after the fact. We cut to a two-shot, and hear the cut (some period-specific formal snafu that occurs in most seventies videos). Our guide then diligently escorts us to each room and area of the building, from bottom to top. At each stop we meet a different woman who narrates the work done on that space, as well as the feminist principles embodied in the design choices. Says one:

A part of feminist education is not only to create one's art but also the wall in which the piece will hang. This is about ownership. Owning the space: the gallery and classroom. They own that space and it belongs to them. The other reason for physical work [is] to halt the separation, people's problem of separating out different kinds of work. We want to work and play. It gives us another way of being together, building our community and working together.

We cut to images, from some earlier time, of women collectively painting a ceiling and singing together.

The video juggles, with little temporal logic or coherence, photographs and moving documents of past processes of construction, the present of the interview, and the anticipated future of its viewing. A fully realized "video documentary," this tape, more than most that we've seen (but also like the previous tour) is clearly for viewers (of the future) outside the often closed world of the building. The same can be said for *FSW Videoletter* (Susan Mogul, 1975), which is similarly structured but much funnier, in Mogul's signature style.⁴³ This video tour was made to be sent to women's groups in Chicago, New York, and Washington. Two guides, Pam McDonald and Mogul, go from room to room, interviewing teachers, visitors, students, and yet again circling the walls and halls of the building. With their loving, laughing testaments to the architectural and metaphorical space and time of feminist art education, all of these many tour tapes preserve and educate with a complexity of vision unimagined in the early (preliminary, actuality) film tours that they might at first seem to resemble.

The Grand Circularity of an Archive of Process

Woman's Building video begs us to reconsider the possibilities of archiving process. Gunning describes the second, more temporal form of early documentary as "a view of a process." He explains that these are records of "the production of a consumer good through a complex industrial process, the creation of an object through traditional craft, or the detailing of a local custom or festival...the most fully developed narrative pattern is the transformation of raw materials into consumable goods."⁴⁴ Again, while the archive under consideration is rife with such videos, it is their specifically feminist analysis of process that serves to truly differentiate feminist video from the predictable plots (and products) of their patriarchal predecessors. Here I will focus again on the prevalence of the circle in consciousness-raising and the videos it inspired as a direct contest to the linearity of industrial production celebrated in the early films of modernity (and elsewhere across patriarchal production).

As has become quite clear, passing the camera around a circle is a recurring format and trope in the Woman's Building archive. "Feminists often employed egalitarian structures. At the most basic level, this effort translated into the venerable feminist institution of the circle, around which each woman speaks in turn, having equal opportunity to voice her views," explains Moravec.⁴⁵ *Feminist Studio Workshop—student self-portraits* (FSW Students, 1979) has a similar structure, although it is more figurative.⁴⁶ All twenty-four participants introduce themselves, then produce a short, rudimentary, autobiographical video with the help of their classmates. "Julie James. I am seed. I am heart. I am healing. I am power. I am smooth. I am alive. I am dark red. I am pulsing. I am magic. I am clearing. I am self." "Laurine DeRocco. I was five years old, heard my baby brother's cry and knew there was no more time for me." And so on. The video ends with the group joining together in a moving class portrait culminating with a chant, "Feminist Studio Workshop, 1979–80," and a loud "YEAH!" A quick fade to black bumps us against an unanticipated snippet of yet another circle. We suddenly see the last five minutes of a consciousness-raising meeting of a group of deaf women. (Perhaps the other tape was taped over this one.) The women speak together about the role of affection in their lives (we hear through an interpreter while they sign), and end their meeting (and the tape) with a group (circle) hug. This process leads to no product (other than its video documentation), but rather to affection, collectivity, and self-expression. But I'm starting to bore myself. That's their theory, and it is represented in everything they made.

Finally, the kind of process Gunning finds in early documentary is perhaps most closely modeled in *Kate Millet 1977* (Claudia Queen and Cyd Slayton, 1977), where the documentarians show the production (from inception to installation) of a set of naked "fat lady" sculptures that Millet made as a commission while she was an artist in residence at the building.⁴⁷ While the video imagery is primarily of Millet and a team of unnamed assistants, who produce the sculptures from wire mesh and papier-mâché.

and of the exhibition opening, the views of the process are multiple. In her voiceover Millet discusses how these powerful figures came to be made. She explains, "What was really great was working with other people." The unidentified voices of her assistants from the building say in chorus: "I learned a lot of skills, and took chances and took responsibility. I gained my voice." "I learned a lot from Kate. We didn't work for her. We worked with her. We didn't do it for nothing. We did it because we wanted to, and getting to know Kate Millett." Where patriarchy, and its documentary, see linear, singular, goal-oriented processes resulting in commodifiable products, Woman's Building video produces and preserves a multiple, messy vision of the development of collective experience and growth en route. As de Bretteville says in *Constructive Feminism: Reconstruction of the Woman's Building 1975*. "There are many points of view existing concurrently."

By "doing it with video" in their time and in their building, de Bretteville and many others augmented their feminist epistemology to allow for a permanent record of their theory of process. This process turns out to be a transformative practice of feminist history-making: a varied, collective point of view that reverberates across the present and into the future. By doing it with video today as I watch their compelling archive of process, I am humbled by the complexity and originality of their vision even as I realize that it takes the hard work of their daughters' voices and (re)visions—which are rife with ambivalence, judgment, admiration, boredom, and anger—to produce coherence out of contradiction. This, of course, is the work of any archivist—making stuff into stories. In *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*, Carolyn Steedman writes in familiar terms about how the archival work of history is less about the objects we find than the *process* of making use of them:

We have to be less concerned with History as *Stuff* (we must put to one side the content of any particular piece of historical writing, and the historical information it imparts) than as *process*, as ideation, imagining and remembering.... It is indexed, and catalogued, and some of it is not indexed and catalogued, and some of it is lost. But as stuff, it just sits there until it is read, and used, and narrativized.⁴⁸

By visiting her theory of dust—the ephemeral traces that remain in the archive, easily lost but ever calling us to reach, touch, breath, intake, and inhabit the things made and saved for us—I can best make my feminist conclusion. The archive has taught me to name for myself the empowering legacy of a feminist epistemology and preservation of process that describes and is described by the circle. Moravec discusses in this volume how women at the building used history: "At least for a moment, the members of the Woman's Buildings past and present existed in one seamless timeline." Their video archive multiplies this impulse and weaves women of the present into their process. In

her study's conclusion, Steedman writes, "Dust—the Philosophy of Dust—speaks of the opposite of waste and dispersal; of a grand circularity, of nothing ever, ever going away."⁴⁹ This grand circularity, evidenced in the Woman's Building's feminist video archive, is what I salute in all I have said and seen.

Notes

1. Long Beach Museum of Art Video Archive, Getty Research Institute. Transferred by the Long Beach Museum of Art Foundation and the City of Long Beach, 2005.
2. Nancy Buchanan, "What Do We Want? The Subject Behind the Camera: Women Video Artists and Self Articulation," in *Art/Women/California 1950-2000: Parallels and Intersections*, Diana Fuller and Daniela Salvioni, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 324.
3. Amelia Jones interviewed by Fuller and Salvioni, "Burning Down the House: Feminist Art in California (an interview with Amelia Jones)," in *Art/Women/California*, 167.
4. Michelle Moravec, "In the Name of Love: Feminist Art, the Women's Movement and History," in *The Waitresses Unpeeled: Performance Art and Life*, Jerri Allyn and Anne Gaudin, eds. (Los Angeles: Spectrum Digital, 2008), 67.
5. Long Beach Museum of Art Video Archive, Getty Research Institute.
6. Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); and Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).
7. Okwui Enwezor, *Archive Fever—Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art* (New York: ICP, 2008), 12.
8. The works of feminist art, cinema history, and theory that comprise these footnotes are ample testament to the substantial and rigorous body of writing dedicated to both early feminist video and its place at the Woman's Building.
9. Ann-Sargent Wooster and JoAnn Hanley, *The First Generation: Women and Video, 1970-75* (New York: Independent Curators, Inc., 1993): 21-22.
10. Chris Hill, *Video Art and Alternative Media in the United States 1969-1980* (Chicago: Video Data Bank, SAIC, 1996), 2.
11. Christine Tamblyn, "Significant Others: Social Documentary as Personal Portraiture in Women's Video of the 1980s," in *Illuminating Video*, Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer, eds. (New York: Aperture, 1991): 406.

12. Deirdre Boyle, "A Brief History of American Documentary Video," *Illuminating Video*, 52.
13. JoAnne Hanley, *The First Generation: Women and Video, 1970-75* (New York: Independent Curators, 1993), 10.
14. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber, Christina K. Gilmartin, and Robin Lydenberg, eds., *Feminist Approaches to Theory and Methodology* (New York: Oxford, 1999).
15. Mary Jo Aagerstoun and Elissa Auther, "Considering Feminist Activist Art," *NWSA Journal* 19.1 (2007): viii.
16. Long Beach Museum of Art Video Archive, Getty Research Institute.
17. Marlena Doktorczyk-Donohue, "The Waitresses in Context," *The Waitresses Unpeeled*, 13.
18. Suzanne Juhasz, *Naked and Fiery Forms* (New York: Octagon Books, 1977).
19. Meg Cranston, "Everything's Important: A Consideration of Feminist Video in the Woman's Building Collection," *California Video: Artists and Histories*, Glenn Phillips, ed. (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2008), 269.
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