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When There Will Be Great Women Artists

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WHEN THERE WILL BE GREAT WOMEN ARTISTS

A Synthesis Project Presented

By

ANNE MARIE STANTON

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies University of Massachusetts
Boston, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

June, 1999

Critical and Creative Thinking

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Approved as to style and content by:



Delores Gallo, Associate Professor Critical and Creative Thinking

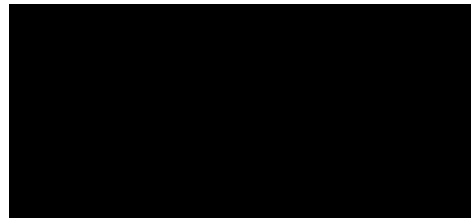
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ABSTRACT

WHEN THERE WILL BE GREAT WOMEN ARTISTS

June, 1999

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Directed by Associate Professor Delores Gallo

Linda Nochlin has posed the question why there are no great women artists? (Nochlin, 1988) While this question can be challenged as a issue of perspective, I attempt to address it as an actual phenomenon. What is it that limits the productivity of women in art?

Historically, women in the modern industrialized world have been objectified and stereotyped, and I will present a brief overview that discusses the definition of woman in this context (Bohan 1993, West and Zimmerman 1987, Hare-Mustin and Marecek 1990), and also demonstrate this view has saturated society. As a first step to change, women must recognize the impact of this historic perspective on their attitudes, thinking, and behavior.

A second step considers the research that the psychology of women differs significantly from that of men, and this can influence how relationships and priorities are developed in their lives (Gilligan, 1993, Bepko and Krestan, 1993, Miller, 1986, Belenky, et. al., 1986). These two steps attempt to define some of the internal conflicts facing

women artists.

In addition, I will also examine the material impediments women artist face. For example, Csikszentmihalyi's (1991) research highlights obstacles many women artists encounter entering a predominantly male art world. The forces that determine the commercial success or failure of an artist are generally male-controlled, and this can add to the invisibility of the woman as artist (Mavor 1996, Nemser 1975).

These influences should be recognized for the artist to make clear choices to exercise her creativity. External supports, with mentoring as an example, would provide compatible structure, both in terms of women's "ways of knowing" (Belenky, et.al., 1986), and their need for connection. Through the combined strategies of metacognition as well as external supports, women artists will have another tool to find their voice in the world of art.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	vii
Chapter	Page
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. WOMEN AND GENDER	4
3. HISTORICAL CONTEXT.....	9
Law and Custom.....	11
Women as Sexual Objects.....	13
Women as Mother.....	14
Women Enter the 20th Century.....	15
4. DIFFICULTIES FOR WOMAN AS ARTIST.....	19
Relationship.....	20
Responsibility.....	22
Risk.....	25
5. ART IN THE MARKETPLACE.....	30
The Individual.....	33
The Domain.....	34
The Field.....	35
6. THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE AND GROWTH.....	38
Woman as Discoverer of Self.....	39
Woman Asserts Herself.....	39
Woman As Discoverer of Women Artists.....	41
7. FINAL THOUGHTS.....	45
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	48

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Personal creativity is a factor of supreme importance, which we have probably barely begun to appreciate. One exciting aspect of the current ferment by women is the fact that as they struggle for authenticity, they simultaneously illuminate their personal creativity. In so doing they elucidate the creativity that struggles in a more hidden way in all people at all times." (Miller 1986, 111)

"Western civilization's culture and arts are male-dominated and male oriented. Women's highest artistic achievements are off the scene, seldom heard, or if heard, devalued, and finally viewed, but not observed. If you doubt this, there is a simple test: Name just five women artist and their contributions to history." (Snyder-Ott quoted in Apostolos-Cappadona, et. al. 1997,70)

I have found in my own life that making time to create art is directly related to the number of demands I face in my daily life. For many years, I used a pattern of thinking that is identified as common among women by psychologists Claudia Bepko and Jo-Ann Krestan in Singing At the Top of Our Lungs. In this study, the authors interviewed over three hundred women to develop their view of four "life patterns" women use to strike a balance between their relationships and their creativity. I, like some of the women interviewed, look at accomplished artists as if they have a gift I do not, and I wish I could be more like them, a pattern the authors describe as invoking the *if only*: if only I had more time, if only I had taken that painting course in college, if only I could find the right medium. The ancillary to that is: *I will get to that when*: I will get to that when I

am on vacation, when I am finished with this class, when the kids are in school, when I am not so busy, when I am finished cleaning the house, etc. The fact is, *if only* and *get to that when* are symptoms of a much deeper distress.

It is my belief this rationalization is about the way women tend to see taking time, *taking anything*, for ourselves, especially if it is seen as taking away from others. I recognize now that I had consistently prioritized other's wants and needs over my own. In taking care of what I felt I must do, I found myself with little time left over to do what I wanted to be able to express for myself. And, as Bepko and Krestan document, I am not alone in this way of denying myself, that many women everywhere repeat this cycle on a daily basis, and leave ourselves without the energy, or the time, to allow the creative process to work through us.

If this is true, how did we come to have such a mindset? I would rephrase the question posed by Linda Nochlin in her essay, When Will There Be Great Women Artists? to ask: What gets in the way, for the woman artist, of the act of creation? Is it as simple as one factor? (Nochlin 1988, 149)

In this essay, I would like to first explore the way we can define woman. From that discussion I would turn to the messages contemporary Western women have received from history, our families, our environment, and our society about the value of ourselves, and then, how many of us internalize and act out those messages. I would also like to discuss a current model of creativity to examine the barriers that exist for women artists in the art world, how many women artists must work to overcome the barriers maintained by stereotypes, and, finally, what tools we have available to us to remove

those barriers.

CHAPTER 2

Women and Gender

"Language is never innocent."
(Hare-Mustin & Marecek 1990, 26)

In beginning a discussion regarding women and art, a logical starting point is with a discussion of the meaning of the word "woman". To utilize it without understanding the power of the term would compromise the full understanding of the issues involved, and would leave the discussion incomplete. What exactly do we mean when we say "woman"?

Using the term "woman" to categorize individuals simply on the basis of possessing a certain set of biological traits is to utilize the term as a function of sex. Sociologists Candace West and Don Zimmerman describe this as "what was ascribed by biology: anatomy, hormones, and physiology" (West and Zimmerman 1987, 125). There is also the distinction of gender, which can be described as "an achieved status: that which is constructed through psychological, cultural, and social means" (West and Zimmerman 1987, 125). Psychologists Rachel T. Hare-Mustin and Jeanne Marecek, who have written extensively on the subject of gender and its implications, note: "The germinal insight of feminist thought was the discovery that *woman* is a social category." (Hare-Mustin and Marecek 1990, 29) Within the definition of "social category", there can be

further distinction between the meaning of this statement in the view of the social psychologist and the social constructionist. In her book An Introduction to Social Constructionism, Vivien Burr writes that: "Traditional psychology looks for explanations of social phenomena inside the person", while "...social constructionism ... regards as the proper focus ...the social practices engaged in by people, and their interactions with each other." (Burr 1998, 7) If the position of the social psychologist is accepted, then the characteristics of "woman" lies within the individual, and becomes a part of her make-up. It is not swayed by her daily interactions, rather it is consistent, much like being "friendly" can be considered a personality trait. (Bohan 1993, 5) On the other hand, the social constructionist would see "woman" as a result of the interaction between individuals, governed by rules implicitly agreed upon by the very fact of the interaction, and thus the category "woman" exists in this social context, not within the individual.

If we were to accept that "woman" or the idea of gender, were a part of one's personality, it would be difficult to explain how this definition changes for any given culture or generation. Similarly, taking the social constructionist position, unless the environment were static, and interactions identical, how are we to have a conversation regarding women when we are unable to define the term to a common understanding?

Psychologist Carol Gilligan, psychiatrist Jean Baker Miller, and others, have written extensively on the psychological dimensions of women, and have been criticized for taking an essentialist perspective (Hare-Mustin & Marecek 1990, 23, Bohan 1993, 6). This model is defined by Bohan as one which "portray(s) gender in terms of fundamental attributes that are conceived as internal, persistent, and generally separate from the on-

going experience of interaction with the daily sociopolitical contexts of one's life" (Bohan 1993, 7). Gilligan, Miller, and others, have developed their theories on the premise that women and men have substantially different internal lives, making for different relational experiences with the world (Bohan 193, 5). But this essentialist view does not fully take into account the role the environment plays on development, both male and female, nor does it fully appreciate the context in which gendered behavior is discussed. In addition, an essentialist view portrays women as passive: "...it implies a limit on the variations and possibilities of change" (Elizabeth Grosz, quoted in Gunew 1990, 334).

If we challenge the view that all women have a basic nature that mediates their relational understanding of the world, is there anything we can say about women as a group? Hare-Mustin and Marecek challenge the traditional position of gender as a dichotomous and static trait: "...The idea of gender as opposites obscures the complexity of human action and shields both men and women from the discomfoting recognition of inequality" (Hare-Mustin & Marecek 1990, 54). They recognize the idea of gender as one that is vital to maintaining the social structure of the society, and to challenge that idea has implications for change within the society, and a reinterpretation of how we interact with one another.

West and Zimmerman, in their article Doing Gender, define "gender as an emergent feature of social situations: both as an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society" (West & Zimmerman 1987, 126). The assumption here is that gender is a created concept, one that can be reshaped by society, in contrast to the fundamental

nature of the essentialist view, and that it is used to reinforce and legitimize a social order.

West and Zimmerman continue on to say, not only is gender a socially constructed category, but that its definition is accepted implicitly and created within the context of the society by its members. We play a variety of roles within our lives, but gender is something that is defined by our active participation in certain behaviors and expectations (1987, 139). We "do" gender by behaving within a set of norms for our gender, and in turn, we are reinforced in a positive manner by others, assuming we are following the accepted protocol. We are at once acting and looking for reaction (1987, 134-135). But what are the implications of these protocols, and what relevance do they have to our discussion regarding the definition of woman?

If we look at the term woman as a function of sex, we limit our understanding to a specific set of biological definitions that have little, if nothing, to do with how an individual functions within their environment. If we look at woman as a function of gender, and we accept the definition of gender as a social construct, rather than a biological or psychological one, we must accept that the definition is subject to change by the society. We must also accept that, as we move from one society to another, from one social situation to another, the behaviors that identify and define gender may change, and may be redefined in another situation. The social constructionist approach to gender recognizes the contingency of the meaning of the terms femininity and masculinity; thus, the constructionist stance does not allow for the argument that women have a pre-ordained place they must maintain in the natural order of the world.

To discuss women from the constructionist perspective, it becomes important to consider the cultural and historic frame of reference that will be used. It also becomes obvious that any discussion of "women", or "women's shared experience" is at best an approximation of the interactions of some women within the same frame of reference. To say otherwise is to deny the rich diversity women live every day.

In the rest of the essay that follows, my use of the word "woman" and "women" is defined by the interactions, and frame of reference, shared by women of the modern, industrialized, Western world as they "do gender". It also understands that all women are not artists, nor do they wish to be, but rather, that "doing gender" in this society may reinforce behavior patterns that inhibit some women from challenging the way they "do" being an individual (West & Zimmerman 1987, 134), and this may include creating art.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Linda Nochlin holds that the vast majority of “great” artists have been men (Nochlin 1988, 149-151). Is that because men are more talented than women? Or because men have a more developed sense of what truths must be expressed? Maybe women really don’t have original ideas to express. These statements are, by any educated standards, ridiculous. Women are no more inferior to men in their ability to create than they are in any other field. So what accounts for this disparity?

The attitude maintained regarding women in the modern industrialized world is well documented throughout Western history, and can be found in numerous authors' texts that are considered foundation reading in most institutions of higher learning. While the philosophies and codes that govern our society are changing, women still serve a purpose in the power structure that wants and needs caretakers. This image has caused generations of women to grow up with very specific roles and rules to which they must conform in order to be comfortable in the world. More than comfortable; accepted. Psychiatrist Jean Baker Miller, author of Toward a New Psychology of Women writes: "For women to act and react out of their own being is to fly in the face of their appointed definition

and their prescribed way of living" (Miller 1986, 113-114). Clearly there are behaviors women have been encouraged to practice as we grow up, and it must affect the way we prioritize ourselves within our lives.

And while we might, on some level, recognize this structure is externally imposed, we will rationalize and dismiss it, saying - - believing - -that it is what we want to do, that we are making our own choices; in some cases that is true, but women have put off our own thinking, dreams, pursuits, expression, all in favor of what we have come to believe is our function (Bepko, et. al. 1993, 75). We are the caretakers, the nurturers, the workers that hold together the home and society. That is the view that has been presented to us and we have internalized it so thoroughly that we have a difficult time seeing any alternative. According to painter Susan Weil, as interviewed in Mavor: "... I found that one of the problems [to women becoming artists] was women's own attitudes. We took on some of the prejudice ourselves. We didn't have the same expectations for ourselves that men did because of how we were brought up. We regarded our role differently" (Mavor, 1996, 39).

Where did these ideas come from, that we have internalized, about how women, as a group, are to function in the world? It will become obvious, I hope, in the pages that follow that the messages women have received over the centuries have consistently delivered the themes of caretaking, reproduction, and second-class citizenship, binding women to the home, children, and husband. Many women have received the message that this is their first, best pursuit, and it is difficult to contradict years of societal reinforcement, as well as the example of the majority of women around you, in order to

create a personal path.

Law and custom

Woman, historically, "has been the...nurturer, caretaker, and helpmate" (Gilligan 1993, 17), - - whether by training, choice, or by marriage - - and that has left men free to do what they chose to do to express themselves. Women were expected to "express" themselves through children and home. Philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer expressed "...she should be either a housewife or a girl who hopes to become one; and she should be brought up, not to be arrogant, but to be thrifty and submissive" (Quoted in Agonito 1977, 202). Writing in Studies in Pessimism, Schopenhauer gives a profile of a woman's capacity, vision and role that was astonishingly prevalent:

" She may, in fact, be described as intellectually short-sighted, because, while she has an understanding of what lies quite close to her, her field of vision is narrow and does not reach to what is remote; so that things which are absent, or past, or about to come, have much less effect upon women than upon men...And since women exist in the main solely for the propagation of the species, and are not destined for anything else, they live, as a rule, more for the species than for the individual, and in their hearts take the affairs of the species more seriously than those of the individual." Schopenhauer (Quoted in Agonito 1977, 195, 198)
(Under scoring mine)

The views Schopenhauer describes were not original to the time, but can be traced back to the messages received from the ancients:

"...to signify two great duties of a virtuous woman, which are to keep at home and be silent." Plutarch (Quoted in Agonito 1977, 63)

In Western culture, women have historically not been seen as independent individuals,

but rather as part of a system with few legal rights. For women in England, it was not until 1870 "when the Married Women's Property Act allowed them to keep their own wages rather than turn them over to their husbands" (Rosenman 1995, 49). Quoted in Nicholson, historian Eleanor Flexner writes that: "Married women in particular suffered 'civil death', having no right to property and no legal entity or existence apart from their husbands....Married women could not sign contracts; they had no title to their own earnings, to property even when it was their own by inheritance or dower, or to their children in case of legal separation" (Nicholson 1986, 48).

Women were considered property into the twentieth century, and in many countries, a young woman will still find her marriages arranged and her future decided by her parents, especially her father. If a woman began to fight this status, and began to assert her rights, a more subtle campaign could be invoked that relied somewhat on flattery to gain a woman's cooperation.

" Women have a strong inborn feeling for all that is beautiful, elegant, and decorated. Even in childhood they like to be dressed up, and take pleasure when they are adorned... In short, they contain the chief cause in human nature for the contrast of the beautiful qualities with the noble, and they refine even the masculine sex." (Kant 1965, 77)

A woman was expected to be a thing of beauty, and not much else mattered, as long as she could project a certain image. Mannes, quoted in Scott, states that a woman, even in the twentieth century, finds that there is difficulty being accepted as intelligent as well as beautiful. It were as if they were mutually exclusive (Scott 1971,175-177). Learning threatened attractiveness:

"Laborious learning or painful pondering, even if a woman should

greatly succeed in it, destroys the merits that are proper to her sex, and because of their rarity they can make of her an object of cold admiration; but at the same time they will weaken the charms with which she exercises her great power over the other sex."(Kant 1965, 78)

Writer Mary Wollstonecraft, quoted in Agonito, argued that to continue this attitude of keeping women at home and empty headed would lead to a weakening of society that would not serve the husbands, children or the women (Agonito 1977, 147-158).

"Women, in Mary Wollstonecraft's view, were generally trained like overgrown children, pampered and petted, and admired and guided in everything" (Smith 1970, 96).

Women as sexual objects

Men were the thinkers, as demonstrated in Darwin's assertion that "the average mental power in man must be above that of woman" (In Agonito 1977, 261). Men were also seen clearly as the sex that was more aggressive, and more dominant, demonstrated in Freud's belief that "when you say "masculine", you usually mean 'active", and when you say "feminine" you usually mean "passive" (Freud 1965, 114). This extended to sexual activity and the expectations involved for men and women.

Women were divided into two categories: wives or whores; there were very different rules that went with the different roles. In most cultures, it was accepted (at least by other men) that a man could take lovers other than his wife, as men saw it as almost necessary to do so: "...men were more highly sexed than women and thus could not be expected to observe the same moral code" (Smith 1970, 228). Author Smith quotes the figure of 20,000 prostitutes in New York City in the 1860's, and 50,000 in London, and another 30,000 in Paris (Smith 1970, 228). But for women, adultery, or even sexual liaisons,

were a risk because of the possibility of pregnancy and the subsequent dangers of childbirth (Rowbotham, 1973, 11).

A woman who exercised her sexual power outside marriage, or without the restraint of her husband, was considered a threat. She made people anxious because she was not staying within the well-defined boundaries of proper behavior (Smith 1970, 52).

" In order, therefore, to impose a due restraint on the female sex, we must attach a peculiar degree of shame to their infidelity, above what arises merely from its injustice, and must bestow proportionable praises on their chastity." (Hume 1964, 571)

This further reinforced the woman's view that she was not on equal ground with men, and in particular, was the property of her husband. She was under his control, and did what she was told. And he did what he wanted.

An example of this double standard of the "girl next door" (i.e., wife) versus the "lady of the evening" (i.e., mistress), was the "pin-up" girl of the 1940's. "The allure of the war time pin-up is in the tension between what is acceptable in the external moral code and what is unconscious and desired. (Rowbotham 1997, 264). Again, men were able to act freely, and if a woman dared object, she could be dismissed.

Women as mother

"Everything concerning woman is a puzzle, and everything concerning woman has one solution: it is named pregnancy." Nietzsche (In Agonito 1997, 268)

The role of woman as mother has been, by virtue of biology if nothing else, unwavering since the beginning of time. Although a necessity that women bear the

children, the role has been molded by societal rules to make it more a woman's duty than a biological function alone. The role of mother has always been a glorified one. The "Madonna" figure, in one form or another, is one revered in religions around the world. This is the highest achievement a woman can aspire to in her lifetime, or so the message has been given. Mothers became the best caretakers. But they were also revered and feared for this ability to reproduce; men would have limited control over the reproduction process unless they maintained some power as father and husband.

"...the husband ought to be able to superintend his wife's conduct, because it is of importance for him to be assured that the children, whom he is obliged to acknowledge and maintain, belong to no one but himself." Rousseau (In Agonito 1977, 119)

In part because of the inheritance laws, and in part because of vanity, the paternity of a child could be a large issue to a family. The easiest way to insure that a father's children were his own, was to keep their mother in a strict role that allowed no deviation. Sigmund Freud's focus on women, particularly in the role of mother, reinforced the view of woman as significant almost exclusively within the context of man.

"The difference in a mother's reaction to the birth of a son or a daughter shows that the old factor of a lack of a penis has even now not lost its strength. A mother is only brought unlimited satisfaction by her relation to a son; this is altogether the most perfect, the most free from ambivalence of all human relationships". (Freud 1965, 133)

Freud's theories came at the beginning of, and possibly set off, a backlash against the women's growing awareness of their assigned roles, and the inequalities and repression they involved.

Women enter the 20th century

Freud's theories continued the idea that a woman would only find her fulfillment

within the context of men. Their emotional difficulties, in Freud's view, were based in sexual repression, their conflicts with their mothers, and their love for their fathers.

Always the male was the preferred role, the superior of the sexes. So it is not surprising that women who began to demand equal rights, including the right to vote, were labeled almost exclusively as trouble makers at best, or lesbians, at worst. The suffrage movement was explained away, attacking women who took part in such demands (from a letter written to a local newspaper): "...unmarried and childless women must have an outlet for their free energies" (Rowbotham 1997, 13), implying that if they had husbands or children, they would not have time for such foolishness! Women were also not expected to be thinking individuals, of course, because there was no need!

There was a major shift in identity for women during World War II, when the majority of the men were overseas fighting, and women were forced to take on many of the "male" jobs in society - - becoming the breadwinners, working at manual labor jobs, running businesses, and even playing professional sports. During this time, women experienced what it was like to be a man in a man's world - - "A new confidence in themselves as workers developed among women in wartime" (Rowbotham 1977, 259), - - and I suspect they enjoyed the new freedoms they experienced. But when the war ended, and men returned home, women were praised for their efforts, but were then expected to return to their kitchens. The propaganda was at a fever-pitch. Appliance companies started marketing, before the war had even completely ended, to the newly-returned "housewife". Here were new appliances to make her time in the kitchen that much more pleasant (Roberts 1995, 29 -32).

But many women didn't want to go back, having seen what better wages and new skills brought into their lives. They "resisted going back into 'women's work' in the laundries or domestic service" (Rowbotham 1997, 268). But eventually, most were forced back, and they resumed their previous roles as wives and mothers, as evidenced by the "baby boom" of the forties and fifties, which saw over 76 million new babies in the United States alone (Johnston 1992, 281).

Advertising today still shows women as primary caretaker/parent, and magazines routinely target mothers with recipes for 'quick meals to please your hungry crowd!' (Oakley 1974, 114). "Barbie" was the role-model ideal for girls for years, and has only recently begun to reflect a more normal body type than the fantasy she had previously projected. There are very few women who are not brought up with the image of the white dress and veil; a perfect wedding as the start of a perfect life about to begin - - this being the highlight of her life! It is an image that runs very deep within the female psyche, and it is an image of caretaker, wife, of "smiling woman".

Today, women have control over their reproductive rights, own property, hold political office, run successful businesses. But rape is still a common crime of violence, sexual harassment is prominent in the headlines, and women earn a lower wage, on average, than men. Women as a group are expected to maintain the socially approved status quo, or face the consequences of this rebellion. Historian Shelia Rowbotham holds Hillary Clinton up as an example of the woman who tries to break through the stereotype, and is castigated. "Accused of being a feminist frump in glasses, she became a power-dresser and was immediately declared too bossy... And through it all she remained

suspect as intelligent" (Rowbotham 1997, 563). There seems to be no way to express ourselves outside our prescribed roles without criticism from some camp or another. It is no wonder women still truly believe that they are best-suited for child-rearing, caring for the home, nurturing, and providing emotional support to all who ask for it!

There are many obstacles women face as they attempt to create art in the world of today, and I maintain these obstacles are both internal and external. As this brief history highlights, by far the most challenging obstacle is for women to see themselves outside the historically supported role of *mother*, or *wife*, or *caretaker*, and recognize in themselves an alternative. The messages we receive are so prevalent, yet sometimes so subtle, it can be exhausting sorting out what we have been told from what it is we want. In the next section, I would like to outline the major areas I see as obstacles for women in our pursuit of creativity in our daily lives. These obstacles may have their roots in history, but we continue to feel the impact on our daily lives. Years of expectations will not be changed simply by identifying these ideas, but should, I expect, encourage the process of challenging the system toward a new understanding of how women can live in the world.

CHAPTER 4

DIFFICULTIES FOR WOMAN AS ARTIST

"Personal Creativity: Especially important is the right to participate in creating one's own personhood, as opposed to accepting the form and content prescribed for you by the dominant group." (Miller 1986, 25)

"The puzzle of how power relates to love in a woman's experience is central to the dilemma of the woman as artist...The woman as artist may help to illuminate woman as woman." Patricia Meyer Spacks (In Apostolos-Cappadona 1997, 95)

"It is a man's part to be absolute, to act absolutely, to give expression to the absolute; woman has her being in relationships." (Kierkegaard in Agonito 1977, 175)

We have seen in the brief historical account that earlier women did not significantly dictate their own lives in the society, and in many ways, still have not advanced significantly from the repression that characterized the Victorian era.. Even with the right to vote, to control our reproductive rights, to hold property, to sign contracts, to function autonomously in the world, most women still take the husband's name when we marry, earn significantly less than men in the workplace, and are expected to care for domestic issues even if employed outside the home. We also seem to carry more of the emotional responsibility within our relationships, and are the partner to be at greatest risk

if there is physical violence in the home.

I believe the reasons women might have difficulty creating "a room of their own" (Woolf 1989, 4) can be broken down into three broad categories: relationships, responsibilities, and risks. Within these categories, obstacles to creativity and art might be named so as to limit their power and help contemporary American women begin the changes necessary if we want to improve our current state of activity.

Relationship

It will become clear there are a number of internal, emotional components that keep women in this position of wanting to create, yet being unable. It must be considered that control in a woman's emotional life may be key in her choice-making. Psychologist Carol Gilligan, in her groundbreaking work, In A Different Voice, discusses psychological theory and women's development. She writes that: "Intimacy goes along with identity, as the female comes to know herself as she is known, through her relationship with others" (Gilligan 1993, 12).

Women, as a group, are used to "judging themselves in terms of their ability to care" (Gilligan 1993, 17), and the idea of pursuing "selfish" goals, which might limit their availability to others, may not be acceptable. Women make choices on a daily basis based on their view of the power balance within their relationships. In Women's Lives, psychologists Sue Llewelyn and Kate Osborne note: "...Women are far more likely than men to take responsibility for interpersonal and social relationships, and to respond to the needs of others by providing nurturance and care" (Llewelyn, et. al. 1990, 106-107). What would claiming power do to that balance in the relationship, and how would it

affect their emotional lives? Author Kate O'Neill quotes painter Miriam Schapiro on this matter: "A woman can make the choice to be an artist and decide to go all the way, but there is tremendous guilt. You feel as if you're stealing power" (O'Neill 1997, 56). This is no small consideration for creatures who value connection.

In her book, In a Different Voice, psychologist Carol Gilligan discusses how men and women see the world. Simplified, men see the world in terms of activity and achievement, and women see it in terms of relationships and caring. The connection that governs women's lives is "defined in a context of relationship and judged by a standard of responsibility and care" (Gilligan 1993, 160). This view makes it distressing for a woman to be in conflict over meeting her own needs versus those of her family, especially if she perceives it as doing harm in some way to them. Since "virtue for women lies in self-sacrifice" (Gilligan 1993, 132), it must be further complicated with overtones of selfishness, which Gilligan calls "the cardinal sin in the ladder of feminine virtue" (Gilligan 1993, 129).

If women value the ideal of care for others, but consider care of self as selfish, it is not surprising that we rarely choose to put ourselves first. It is also not surprising that we find it difficult to challenge the hierarchy within our relationships, for, if a woman perceives she might lose in this struggle, it is a much safer stance to fall back on the idea that caring for others is a higher ideal than taking care of her own needs. Thus, continuing the relationship becomes the priority over self.

In 1986, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule published Women's Ways of Knowing, in which they, like Gilligan, interviewed a number (135) of women to gain

insight into women's ways of looking at the world, and expressing themselves. Their theory outlined five "voices", or positions, of "knowing" for women, ranging from the position of *silence*, in which the woman considers all knowledge as coming from the external world, and has no voice of her own, to the position of *constructed knowing*. In this position, the woman combines her personal knowledge of the world with external knowledge so she can construct her own reality. This is the voice with the most power and authority; it is a voice of a confident woman. Advances through the various voices come from a combination of being open to outside thoughts and new experiences, being willing to indulge in metacognition, and integrating this knowledge for your own purposes (Belenky, et. al. 1986, 15). But to have voice is not to act in isolation: "...speaking depends on listening and being heard; it is an intensely relational act" (Gilligan 1991, xvi). If women need to be connected and to care, then selflessness is an avenue toward that end. This need to care, combined with a hesitance to challenge, is a continued theme in the division of responsibility in a woman's life.

Responsibility

Marriage is seen as a basis for stability for society, as well as for the family. And with marriage, there is generally the assumption children will follow. In our society today, most men (and women) accept that either the woman will be staying home with the children and caring for the home. This is what feminist writer Betty Friedan calls "the problem that has no name" (Friedan 1963, 15). In the even more taxing role, Mom will carry primary responsibility for the children, and the home, while working outside the home as well. It is no surprise that this is a draining schedule and it is further

complicated by the fact that, particularly in regards to work outside the home, women remain of the opinion that their work is less important than their husband's, and this is reinforced by the culture as well:

" But even more pervasive than discrimination from employers is the perception by the woman herself that her career does not matter as much as her husband's, or that doing what she wants for herself must come second to what is needed by her family." (Llewelyn, et. al. 1990, 105)

In Sexual Power, author Carolyn Johnston cites the statistic that 80% of the work done in the home is performed by women, and that "the most helpful husbands logged just under eleven hours a week of housework" (Johnston 1992, 285). And author Barbara J. Harris discusses some of the issues she sees as central to women's liberation from their current role in the society. She says: "Although men often treat it as a trivial subject, few questions are more crucial to the future of women than what Pat Minardi, quoted in Harris, calls 'the politics of housework'" (Harris 1978, 178). Who does what in the house can be a source of great conflict if the people involved are stuck in stereotypic ways of thinking about the division of household labor. Writer and musician Naomi Shihab Nye, interviewed by Anne Mavor, considers what it is like for those women who have partners who do not recognize their need for a creative life: "That would be really horrible. I can't imagine what it would be like to live in a house with someone who didn't regard what I was doing with utter respect" (Mavor 1996, 87). This respect is what will allow for the stereotypes to be broken and for the burden of work to find equal levels.

The expectation that women would care for the children, and the home, has not diminished despite the changing economic climate that sees the majority of women

working outside the home as well as within it. Job responsibilities at work are frequently compromised because the realities of child care intrude on the work schedule, and "it is an extremely rare women who does not have to modify or even radically alter her plans in response to overt or covert pressures from family or employers" (Llewelyn, et. al. 1990, 105). If a woman has demands on her time for the majority of her day, when will she have the space to think quietly, never mind consider her emotions in an artistic mode for expression? Marya Mannes sums it up very nicely in Scott: "For one thing, she has no wife, as he had, to protect her from intrusion, to maintain the machinery of living, to care for the children, to answer the doorbell. For another, no one believes her time to be sacred" (Scott 1971, 176). Even if those around her do believe her time is sacred, it is the woman who may not be able to indulge this idea, in part because she has not been rewarded in the past for that type of behavior.

In Singing at the Top of our Lungs, Bepko and Krestan talk about the "Smiling Woman", who is the good girl, the one who does what is expected of her and never complains about her situation. She takes care of others, never concerns herself with her own needs, and will sacrifice herself for love. There are "smiling women" all around us, and I doubt if we, or they, are aware of it, they have played the role so long.

Not enough time, too tired, no room to work , too many other commitments - - Even when a woman can come to terms with this split in what she has been taught and what she wants, there is still the reality of everyday life, and the reality of how caretaking, and also child-rearing, happens. Sculptor Bella Feldman talks about what she tries to explain to her students about the nature of having children and being an artist: "...it's very hard

for a woman to be an artist and have children.....Even when you have assistance, the sheer number of details you have to keep in mind interferes with the wholehearted concentration you need to be able to go through the long haul and develop a personal body of work" (Mavor 1996, 17).

Virginia Woolf maintained that "a woman must have money and a room of her own" (Woolf 1989, 4) in order to do creative work. Money for financial freedom, so she would not be beholden to any one to support her, and a room of her own to insure she would be able to concentrate on herself, without the demands of the world pressing in upon her, and drawing her away from her art. Woolf recognized this pull to responsibility as a very real barrier to women doing significant work. As did Mannes, again quoted in Scott, when she said: "A man at his desk in a room is a man at work. A woman at a desk in any room is a woman available" (Scott 1971, 176). But for many women, asserting this need to create can be full of risk, both emotionally and physically.

Risk

"...women must conceive of themselves as potentially, if not actually, equal subjects, and must be willing to look the facts of their situation full in the face, without self pity, or cop-outs; at the same time they must view their situation with that high degree of emotional and intellectual commitment necessary to create a world in which equal achievement will be not only made possible but actively encouraged by social institutions." (Nochlin 1988, 151)

Women can be their own greatest obstacle in terms of taking on the roles that are given to them, and not questioning if there is more, if there is something else that they might want from their life. This may be because women know there is risk in breaking the rules, and "if she wanted to live on in peace, she had to decide: either she accepted

the constrictions made by others, or she would consciously play a role, acknowledging the relativity of reality or the fictional character of her reality" (Artist Iris Brunsch quoted in Apostolos-Cappadona, et. al 1997, 19).

But there are also external components, not any less important. One such factor relates to control especially of the physical environment; this impacts greatly on whether an artist will be able to create.

In her book, Toward A New Psychology Of Women, psychologist Jean Baker Miller discusses that women's position in the dominant culture (that is, the male culture) may actually give women an advantage in the realm of creativity, because they are: " ... the people struggling to create for themselves a new concept of personhood; they are attempting to restructure the central tenets of their lives" (Miller 1986, 44). But even while doing this "restructuring", sculptor Bella Feldman says that women will tend to do "tiny work...because they don't think they deserve much space" (Mavor 1996, 19).

Many women artists who have been partners with successful male artists have not demanded that their art be celebrated on a par with their male counterparts. In the 1940's, painter Lee Krasner, who was painter Jackson "Pollack's wife who also paints", found her work taking a backseat to her famous husband's (Munro 1982, 49). According to artist Grace Hartigan, "I thought of them equally as artists, but she was working against a barrier of ego. It took her a long time before Jackson would *let* (my emphasis) her move, really move, as an artist. She deliberately submerged her personality to his genius" (Nemser 1975, 151). I think that the idea that women can be artists, that we deserve the time to concentrate intensely and exclusively on our own interests, is an

enticing one but that it also makes us think, 'it's a nice idea, but I don't think I could ever be an artist! Who would want to look at my work?' And so they will create reasons for why they could not be artists: No talent, the kids don't leave me any time, I have to work, my husband doesn't approve and thinks this is a waste of time, how would I support myself and my family?, and the list goes on. But I believe each reason has a similar root - fear. "If being an artist seems too good to be true to you, you will devise a price tag for it that strikes you as unpayable" (Cameron 1992, 33).

There are unlimited reasons, excuses, for not taking the risk to do your art. And it is a risk. You risk your self-esteem (people may not like what you create, you may find out you can't do what you want with your art), your relationships (your family may resent that you are taking this time for yourself and think the work foolish), your income (what if you quit your job to pursue this art full time - and fail? What if you are the sole support of your family?) ; these are no small considerations in anyone's life, especially for single women, and for those women whose choice-making ability is limited by circumstance and/or economics. This is not to say there are not risks inherent in creating art, or becoming an artist, that would also apply to men; my point here is that women have fewer social supports that would allow them to manage this endeavor as an acceptable risk. There is also the added dimension of fiscal reality. In 1985, "women artists earn(ed) only one-third of what men artists (did)" (Guerrilla Girls 1995, 39).

Writer Denise Shekerjian interviewed forty winners of the MacArthur Foundation Fellowship. These are individuals the Foundation members consider to be creative innovators, people who, with the help of the prize award, will be able to take time from

their usual schedules and lives to continue to pursue their creative process at their own pace. Shekerjian observes it is "an unfortunate aspect of creative work that it requires an element of risk-taking....Of having to part paths with friends and mentors. Of suffering unintended consequences" (Shekerjian 1990, 16). And if you do not have a support system in place that honors your pursuit of those risks, the outcome of that personal expression, then you even more unlikely to succeed in your task.

Women appear constrained by the "dominant society" (Miller 1986), a constraint in which we seem to be active participants. But there are some who desire to break from this pre-ordained mold, and become expressive artists in the world. Even for those who get beyond the initial barriers, there still remain the questions of how to continue to fight the personal, as well as external, prejudices, how to make the time and space available to create, and especially difficult, how to adjust the other relationships in their lives, so as to not compromise the creativity. In order to adjust successfully, they must be able to live with the outcome; if those relationships are not able to adjust, then the woman must be able to face the possibility of walking away, and forsaking that part of herself in order to find another. This may be a risk the woman is not willing to make.

But what if she is willing, and she faces her own fears and makes time for her art? This is not the end of the obstacles in her path. She still must contend with the external world, and the challenge brought about by the dominant society.

The Guerrilla Girls are a group of women and men who have a rather broad social agenda, including highlighting the absence of women in the commercial art world. They facilitate their activism by remaining anonymous, only appearing in public dressed in

gorilla masks, and taking on the names of deceased artists to identify themselves. They understand the element of risk in challenging the "dominant society", and so this anonymity is also a way of protecting themselves as artists. They recognize the ambivalence women feel in taking the spotlight and putting themselves first: "For women, trained from birth to develop social and public personae based on appearances, torn between wanting to be seen and not wanting to appear too visible, secrecy and disguise have often proved enormously empowering" (Guerrilla Girls 1995, 9). The disguise is a way to become someone else. It is ironic to me that this, assuming a disguise, is a way in which women can successfully express ourselves. But it is not surprising, and it may be the best way, for the present, to compete with a male-dominated field.

CHAPTER 5

ART IN THE MARKETPLACE

Control over the physical environment is exercised in many different ways, but in art, men have traditionally been the patrons of great artists, and men have controlled reputation and success of those young artists (Munro 1982, 39). In Creativity, noted creativity psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi explores the question of what creativity is and how it functions in our lives. Through interviews with ninety-one noted individuals, he constructs a triangular model that he means to describe the process of creativity. It is this system that outlines how the creative process works with the "individual" (the artist), the "domain" (the actual discipline of art the individual works within), and the "field" (the group of experts, or "gatekeepers"), acting with a synergy that can not be separated (Csikszentmihalyi 1996, 262).

For purposes of this discussion, I will accept the definition of "creativity" proposed by Csikszentmihalyi, as a "process by which a symbolic domain in the culture is changed" (Csikszentmihalyi 1991, 8). Although there are numerous other definitions within the field today, (Amabile, Gruber, Gardner), I want focus to be kept on the issues of women, their creative lives, and how these relate to the external world, without

becoming mired in a different debate.

Women, despite their creative production, have not been recognized within the art domains to the same extent as have men. Csikszentmihalyi proposes that the field has much to do with the success of an artist within a given domain, and that the field also controls changes and shifts of vision within that domain. The component of the field is one women must learn to understand and manipulate to their own ends if we are to use it to influence our future in the arts. So how do we begin to change this world view?

Women have always created beautiful and functional art, some of which has been called domestic art, and have had a number of other creative outlets, not the least of which involves children. That said, I would like to limit my meaning of "art" here to include the more traditional, male-oriented fields. This would include arts such as painting, sculpture, music, writing, photography and dance. The so-called "feminine" arts (i.e., quilting, needlework, sewing) have not received the recognition of the so-called "male" arts, and therefore are not well represented in the world of commercial art. I will focus on the theory of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi that will, in part, discuss how the commercial aspects of the arts interacts and defines the artist. There are many different theories of the way creativity functions and I would like to highlight, for discussion, one "system" that is currently under discussion in the academic world. It is my hope that this theory will prove to be an example of one of the external obstacles a woman faces as she struggles to create art.

Csikszentmihalyi puts forth a theory that inter-relates three distinct pieces to a whole in the creative process. It is his opinion that one piece does not, and can not, function

without the others if we are truly gauging what is creative. In his book, Creativity, his conclusion is that "...creativity can be observed only in the interrelations of a system made up of three main parts" (Csikszentmihalyi 1996, 39) Those three parts are the individual, the domain, and the field; they are fairly straight-forward concepts taken individually, but it is their combination which produces the theory Csikszentmihalyi says can define for us what is "creative".

In contrast to Csikszentmihalyi's view of a system, Howard Gruber sees creativity in terms of the individual, "that each person is a complex, organized system and must be understood in her or his uniqueness" (Wallace, et.al. 1989, 3-4). Gruber also sees an inter-relation of three pieces, but in his view, the three aspects relate more intimately to the individual: organizations of knowledge, purpose and affect. And while these are all inter-related, there exists in Gruber's model the possibility that one might exist without influencing the others, in marked contrast to Csikszentmihalyi, who lays out the hurdles an artist must jump in order to be successful and achieve status, indeed, to be considered creative.

As I have mentioned earlier, there are three components to this theory of creativity: the individual, the domain, and the field. A woman's interaction with each component piece will be a very different experience than that of her male counterpart, and may offer insight to the theory itself.

Why might this model be useful for women? Each component has its own distinct advantages and obstacles for the individual artist, and in examining them, I want to propose where they could be a useful model in changing the way women assert their

creativity in every day life. If a woman understands the forces that influence the structure of her creative world, however limited her resources may be, then perhaps she will be better able to grasp her own place in that structure, and go about the task of remodeling to meet her own design.

The Individual

The *individual* is an obvious starting point - - the person who will bring to bear their experience, perspective, emotion and skill on a creative effort. It is the individual who expresses what they have learned, experienced, felt in their life to express their vision. They are inspired, and sometimes compelled, to find new ways of seeing the world, and to enable others to take part in that vision. But they also can find satisfaction in simply creating; in establishing this link to their inner psyche, it is like they have completed a circuit. This drive has been well-described as intrinsic motivation, by Teresa Amabile in The Social Psychology of Creativity (1983). But in Csikszentmihalyi's view, being driven, wanting to be creative, to be an artist is not enough. You must be ready to accept that simply "creating" something is not creating art. You must be willing to expose yourself to other artists, be fully part of your culture, and to strive to understand the current state of your society as well as your art. Artists bring a different type of energy to the projects they pursue- -they are more connected on an emotional level with the world around them. They need to remove themselves from rational thinking skills. To fully explore what it is one thinks, and to be able to interpret for the world one's thoughts, the artist must have time to lose the details of the day and concentrate on a single focus. They must be fully engaged with their subject. Csikszentmihalyi calls "flow" that feeling

of being totally absorbed in a thought or an action, so much so that the rest of our consciousness seems to not attend to the world around us. Along with individuality and emotion, the individual must also have acquired considerable knowledge of their chosen domain, the second component of the system.

The Domain

The *domain* is that set of concepts the individual is working within to produce a desired effect. Music, philosophy, and metal-working are all examples of a domain. Each has specific rules that govern their implementation, and, unless the artist follows those rules, by definition, she can not be considered to be working within that domain. He is blunt about the fact that he is not addressing some domains that are arguably creative, (and arguably traditionally female) such as nurturance and wisdom, because they are "loosely organized domains with few generally accepted rules and priorities, and they lack a field of experts who can determine legitimacy of claims" (Csikszentmihalyi 1991, 29).

You must be able to master the rules or standards of your domain in order to be judged to be creative. Csikszentmihalyi considers that if you have not mastered the fundamentals, say, of painting, then you will never be considered an artist in the domain of painting. But, as Linda Nochlin asks in her essay *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?*: "What if Picasso had been born a girl?" (Apostolos-Cappadona, et. al. 1997, 51). Her point being that, as a girl, Picasso might not have gotten the attention for his skills, the reinforcement from society, nor the access to the training that went along with the privilege of being male. Then, would his genius have been discovered? Or

might it have been channeled into making a home, or raising children? It is hard to imagine, given the life he played out, but it could have been.

If women are not allowed access to the various domains, and, even more important, are not allowed the same encouragement as their male counterparts, then how are they ever to be expected to evolve and compete with the standards of the domain? That is not to say that the standards that define a domain do not evolve over time, but the standards that determine the evolution of the domain are frequently decided by the third component of the system, the field. This final component is the third piece of the structure for women to change if they truly want to expand their creativity within society.

The Field

The *field*, in my opinion, is an opaque way of saying the powerbrokers, the current accepted “experts” in a domain; they represent the prevailing thought in the society, as well as the power in control of the domain at the time. Csikszentmihalyi calls them “gatekeepers”. The field is in control of the definition of the domain, and it is very difficult to affect change, for an artist, without the implicit cooperation of the field (Csikszentmihalyi 1991). There have been examples of changes taking place in a domain where the field has taken a generation to acknowledge it as such. In the 1800's the Impressionists were initially shunned, and were finally recognized only because the younger generation of art curators hung their work so they could be seen by the Paris elite. Even with this exposure, it took many years for this change in the domain to be fully incorporated.

But without the field, Csikszentmihalyi says that there would be no standard of

creativity, no way for the rest of society to judge what is good or bad in a domain. The field is in an almost absolute position of control and power in this theory of the creative process.

If your work in a particular domain did not meet the standards of “beauty” of the day, or was outside the current political thinking, or was not respectful enough of the dogma of the domain, (and not respectful enough of the field) then your work would be passed over as inadequate, or worse, as bad art. Your career would be non-existent. Your work would remain invisible, or worse: "...it recognizes the fact that jealous and antagonistic critics have ways to silence the artist's voice..." (Csikszentmihalyi 1996, 246). There are numerous examples of artist who were not appreciated in their time, indeed artists who were persecuted, but whose view of the world was ultimately vindicated by the change of generation in the field. Galileo, van Gogh, and others were not recognized in their time, yet their thinking went outside the current boundaries of the field. It is almost a contradiction to think that an artist must be noticed by the field before they could be considered an “artist”. But the above examples have shown that the field is not the only mediating force, nor is it stagnant; it can adjust to external opinions, as well as to demand for change from the society.

Clearly, from the earlier descriptions of women's place in society and the expectations placed on their function, it would not be a simple matter of a single, personal decision to revise the current system of male dominance in the field. The Guerrilla Girls reported a survey of art schools in the late 80's that cited the majority of art students were female, for fifteen years running, while the full-time faculty at these schools has remained

"overwhelmingly male" (Guerrilla Girls 1995, 86). There is a very real barrier to success in the art world.

It will not be an easy task to re-cast the roles women play in everyday life, to have them learn to "do gender" differently, and to allow them more free time to create. But to recognize there is real set of obstacles, not just internal roadblocks, is important to effect change.

CHAPTER 6

THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE AND GROWTH

Women are very creative in their everyday lives; we must be if we are to successfully juggle schedules, take care of our homes, our children, our relationships, and have anything left over for ourselves. I have titled this essay “When There Will Be Great Women Artists” because I am hopeful the time is coming when women will learn that it is not on our shoulders alone to be the parents, the wives, the caretakers . Although there is grace and value in being connected in relationship, integrity does not have to be sacrificed in order that we can get what we want from life. Women have made great strides in the past few decades, but there is a great deal of work that needs to be done in order to insure woman continue to grow to be the people we want to be.

In discussing Csikszentmihalyi’s model, it becomes apparent that there is work to be done, both by the individual woman, and by women as a group, if we want the standards to change in our lives. We will need to be brutally honest with ourselves, take risks, (which for some women may be beyond their means and abilities) and we must be prepared to challenge the beliefs that restrict us in our search for wholeness. Society has a stake in maintaining women in the gender roles they currently occupy (Bohan 1993, 9),

but that is not to say this will not change with redefinition of gender roles and tenacity.

Woman as Discoverer of Self

First, women must recognize ourselves for who we are in our world. We must be able to acknowledge who set the rules we live by, and recognize if we are comfortable with those rules. Chances are, we will see that the beliefs we take for granted were actually accepted without any thought or input of our own; we must take responsibility for the beliefs we hold and the roles we play. We must evaluate our "voice"; are we in a position of silence? Do we accept the authority of others, from a position of received knowing? Or are we fully aware, more integrated knowers who evaluate for ourselves the messages we hear in a position of constructed knowing? (Belenky, et. al. 1986) Many women will find that they are more comfortable with the ways things are with than the anticipation of changes. But metacognition is the first step a woman must take if she is going to grow. Even if we makes no conscious changes in our lives, the act of evaluation itself, like seeing an optical illusion's deception, will forever alter the perception we carry of our world .

Woman Asserts Herself

After evaluating her beliefs, a woman must look at the relationships in her life, and how they are working for her or against her. (Although I am, at times, using the example of the male-female relationship in my discussion, any relationship that finds one person in a diminished position of power would qualify.) I say this, not because I think difficult relationships should automatically be discarded but, because recognition is key to

deciding what you need to do for yourself in order to get where you want to be in your life. Challenge the rules within the relationship, and see the dynamics change. It is not something that will change overnight, but something must be demanded if anything is going to move forward. I do not think that, to become more assertive, women have to give up those qualities that are positive in our personalities. Denying individual identity, especially when it is healthy and positive, an essential aspect of who we are as women, would be abandoning ourselves. Psychologist Rollo May speaks of it also in terms of the greater responsibility to society:

"But if you do not express your own original ideas, if you do not listen to your own being, you will have betrayed yourself. Also, you will have betrayed our community in failing to make your contribution to the whole." (May 1975, 12-13)

We should not be afraid to say no to the expectations of others if those are not our expectations. The research conducted by Barron and Harrington, cited by Vera John-Steiner in her article *Creative Lives, Creative Tensions*, found that the creative personality was "... shown to be active, curious, cynical, imaginative, resourceful, unconventional, and clear thinkers" (John-Steiner 1992, 99). These qualities would be invaluable to an artist when she needs to continue working when others may not agree with her choices. Especially for women, who are concerned with connection, a sense of identity is essential to believing we are on the right path for ourselves. But we must be able to create our own identity, not just assume the one created in our societal interaction.

In hand with being able to say no, we should also be able to say yes to experiences and opportunities we might otherwise miss. A new class, some time off with friends, a

vacation alone, may be just what is needed to realize a part of our lives that has been closed off for years.

Asking for what we need should not inspire guilt nor that sense of selfishness women are so accustomed to feeling. It is not selfish to want some time alone, to ask your partner to take an equal share of the work load, to follow your desire to express your vision of the world you see everyday. But in my experience, most women will not do this. Mary Weil is right: in many ways, we are our own most effective enemies. But awareness, and will, can change the way we think. The internal, as well as external, obstacles to our creativity will perhaps be battled for years, but awareness is a powerful beginning to the end.

Woman as Discoverer of Women Artists

It is essential that we utilize our belief in connection to bolster one another's understanding, creativity, and caretaking. More experienced women must speak up in order to give younger women a direction to follow, and so they also experience a sense of community. It is essential that we observe our behavior in relation to others to see the patterns that emerge even without out conscious input.

In my observation, too many of my friends will not discuss dreams and aspirations because they are afraid to be outside the norm, a "bad mother", or a "bad wife". Women can learn to talk with one another, and begin to guide creative energy so that it can function in every woman's life to whatever extent possible for her. Women need to recognize that our creative energy feeds off other energy, and often the only way to have that energy available to us is to seek it out. There can be different settings in which this

takes place, and a variety of situations can nurture it. But I believe another person is the best energy an artist can experience. In Kate O'Neill's study of an artistic friendship between two women painters, *A Relationship Runs Through It*, Ms. O'Neill finds a phrase (she calls it a *koan*) that clarifies for her the nature of the relationship the two painters have had over the years: " We don't need each other - but we need to be together" (O'Neill 1997, 39). Even though they see the other fulfilling different needs, they have no doubts that the other is an important, though not essential, aspect to the other's development as an artist. O'Neill's study is valuable because, as she says the "...painting partnership...defies every notion of separation versus connection, creativity versus relationship, and linear versus mutual influence between painters" (O'Neill 1997, 3). She continues that Glenn Zorpette, in *Art News* (1994), quotes a number of male artists as listing qualities such as competition and tension as essential to creativity (O'Neill 1997, 6). Women do not have to follow the male guidelines for how to achieve creativity; we are free to fashion our own out of our experience, both by ourselves and with others. We need to learn from, not in spite of, each other.

Men have had a system of mentoring in place for thousands of years. The word itself, "Mentor", is after the teacher of Telemachus in The Odessey. The apprentice model has its roots in the trades, and is still a viable way for a young man or woman to learn a skill at the side of a master craftsman. This learning by watching another is not only a way to acquire a specific skill, as in painting, or photography or dance, but also a way to develop an attitude about one's ability and philosophy of doing the work. And this attitude can be the anchor that holds the place when an artist is uncertain regarding

their ability or commitment. Women can ask for the help they need to maintain their energy; no one is capable of perpetual care-taking, and a mentor is a good source of nourishment. As artist Louise Nevelson sees it, quoted by Cindy Nemser, "...a gift is not enough, a gift has to be supported" (Nemser 1975, 61).

Bepko and Krestan discuss the things woman do for themselves in order to continue the flow of creativity in their lives. One of the things they cite is mentors.

"Often the kind of personal contact and modeling a mentor can provide is critical to our internalizing a sense of the importance and value of our work. A mentor can point us toward the limitless horizon, even while we are deluged by doubt. It is the mentor who says, 'Sure you can'." (Bepko, et. al. 1993, 116)

A mentor is not only a role model, a teacher, a spiritual guide, and a cheerleader; they can also serve as a practical way for women to gain an edge into Csikszentmihalyi's "field". A function of the mentor has also been to introduce protégé into the world they are being trained for, whether that be, for example, business or art. Women should not be afraid to utilize this avenue if it is available to them, because, part of what Virginia Woolf said women needed was money to pay for that room of their own. And to be financially successful as a woman artist may take some assistance in opening doors. The Guerrilla Girls has "produced a collective identity that draws attention to the ways in which those who wield power do so by excluding and withholding as well as conferring recognition, and with it, success" (Guerrilla Girls 1995, 9). Known artists need to take an active interest in younger students, seeking them out, and letting them know help is there if they want to learn. Women who have reached the level of "constructed knowledge" must be able to understand the other women around them and speak to them,

encourage them, and guide them. They need to provide inspiration, and be role models, to women who might not have had enough experience to see the vision for themselves. I would like to emphasize here the important piece of mentoring is to provide support and encouragement; this does not preclude men from fulfilling that role. Indeed, given there exist individual personalities, a man may be more predisposed to offer insight and training than a woman in the same field.

The external obstacles to creative work can be overcome with a combination of insight and teamwork, but not without a fair amount of risk. But the assumption of risk may also allow the experience of growth, and that is the goal to becoming a more complete person, even if we are not successful as artists.

CHAPTER 7

FINAL THOUGHTS

"Learn to say no and ask for help when you need it. And believe in yourself. If you don't believe in yourself, no one else will. It's such a waste of time to be negative about your own work...If you really believe the Great Spirit gave you this gift, you'll find a way."

Writer Marion Winik, (Mavor 1996, 238)

Art is about changing what is there, creating a new way of looking at the world, and imagining what other possibilities exist. It is "the process of bringing something new into being" (May 1975, 39). What better exercise for a woman than to practice these skills in the pursuit of her own discovery?

As we have seen in the earlier discussion on gender, women, and men, are labeled from birth with a certain set of expectations and rules that will govern us throughout our lives, provide us with a path to follow, and a place to "fit" within society. If we allow it these roles will make choices for us, and allow us to live our entire lives without having to truly think about who we are or what we want out of life. The society we live in is different from the hundreds of other societies on our planet, but the lives of women across cultures have similar, traditional expectations as mothers and caretakers. There are expanded roles for some, but for others, these are all they will ever know. But these roles can only be played out by a willing actor.

The opportunity exists for women to reconsider who it was that assigned the parts in this play we all live out. The roles are in some sense, practical (men can not bear children), and in other senses, arbitrary (men can wash dishes and run the kid's carpool). But, whether arbitrary or practical, they are roles that can be changed; they must be changed if women are to gain equal standing with men, and if we are to develop our full potential as human beings.

Art is one way that a woman can be expressive. But it can also be a vehicle of self-discovery, a platform for self esteem, and an income. Male artists have, for centuries, made a career out of their expression, and in doing so, have impacted how we now see the world. They have done this while indulging themselves in beauty and creativity, and have not expressed guilt, I would imagine, about leaving dishes in the sink, or not spending enough time at home with their partner. Traditionally, they have been allowed different priorities that have allowed them to do the work. Virginia Woolf understood this when she made her declaration regarding "a room of her own", as have other women who have not chosen to live "by the rules", and have instead lived, and created, from their hearts.

It may be that women will reshape the stereotype of "artist" in the coming decades. I believe there is a way to create, within your own space, and still be connected to others. But I also believe that women must learn to be more assertive in taking time for ourselves. We must be persistent in saying 'no' to activities that do not interest us, to people who try to fit us into molds, to relationships that do not nurture our spirit and our energy. We must learn that, while we know how to take care of others, that is not our

entire value in the world. There is more, if we will acknowledge it.

To be successful in this, women must recognize the positive relationships in our lives, and also seek out new ones that will challenge the choices we have made in our lives, and help us to discover hidden parts of ourselves. We should not hesitate to ask for help, and to seek advice from other women, in particular, who have taken the road less traveled, for they will be valuable guides to a world not yet discovered.

Women do not have to become men in order to compete in the world, but we do need to understand what the current rules are so we can decide which ones need to be broken. We must recognize that when we are "doing" gender, and following the predetermined, accepted path of relations within our society, we contribute to and reinforce those existing rules. To expedite change, women will have to recognize our own potential, then decide if it is worth the consequences for us to use it. We will need to utilize our personal power and insight to become fully actualized individuals who are willing to begin to redefine gendered roles. This will involve not only challenging our ideas of who we are, but also challenging the social systems around us to accept the decisions we make about how we choose to live. When will there be great women artists? When each woman is ready to challenge the social systems in her life, claim her personal and creative power, and use both to nourish herself.

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