

Countering memory loss through misrepresentation: what does she think feminist art history is?

Review of:

Julie M. Johnson, *The Memory Factory: The Forgotten Women Artists of Vienna 1900*, West Lafayette, IN.: Purdue University Press, 2012, 438 pp., 136 b. & w. illus. £27.00 pbk, ISBN978-1-55753-613-3.

In December, 1999, I was in Vienna on a fellowship at a research institute to present a series of lectures on my latest concept in feminist interventions in art's histories, *Differencing the Canon*. My lectures went badly. The younger scholars at the Institute found little to interest them in feminist studies. The general view even amongst the young women was that there really was no need now for feminism, which they considered in very limited terms of social attitudes towards women rather than as a serious theoretical project tackling a range of major cultural issues. They told me that they had everything they wanted and saw no obstacles ahead. Disregarding the struggles that had been necessary for these confident young Europeans to feel so positive about their open futures, the young scholars felt no anxiety about possible obstructions such as glass ceilings or other hidden prejudices abundantly documented by real research and which filled me with anxiety on their behalf.

What I was there to present was not a campaign for job equality and consumer egalitarianism but a reminder that there is still work to be done to secure inclusiveness in our cultural histories now and to ensure that what women do now automatically becomes part of cultural memory for the future: to ensure the redundancy of corrective recovery by integrating feminist thought so fully that we actually make the playing field definitively plural. To 'difference the canon' is not create special categories that segregate women from men, but to formulate ways to write inclusive histories of art that at the same time acknowledge differences that function as signs of the creative plurality of the human condition, as Hannah Arendt has taught us to think post 1945.

There was in Vienna at that time an exhibition of special interest to me and relevant to this review. Part of the imminent millennial celebrations, the exhibition was curated at the Vienna KunstForum by Ingrid Brugger and titled *Jahrhundert der Frauen: Von Impressionismus zur Gegenwart: Österreich 1870-bis heute* [The Century of Women: From Impressionism to the Present: Austria 1870 to today]. It was thus a show about women artists from or working in Austria specifically during the modern period, the period when French modern art set several new agendas between 1870-1930 while Vienna and other Central European centres, Frankfurt, Berlin, Dresden, Amsterdam, Prague, Lodź, and Munich, both noted what was happening in Paris and created their own singular modernist cultures in the other modernizing capitals, such as Vienna at the heart of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (until 1918). *The Century of Women* was an exhibition showing works by many of the artists featured and analysed in Julie Johnson's substantial book reviewed here and was indeed part of the memory work of recovery of 'forgotten women artists' that

forms its major research question. *The Memory Factory* is the latest, and perhaps in English, the most substantial study to date of the three generations of women modernists centred in Imperial and then post-Hapsburg Vienna, the home to its own efflorescence of modernist consciousness in art, architecture and the decorative arts. The bibliography shows that the work of initially restoring the *Künstlerinnen*, artists who are women, began after around 1970 and produced major research texts during the 1990s, notably by Sabine Plakholm Forsthuber.¹

I visited the *Jahrhundert der Frauen* show in the context of ever wanting to know ever more about any artists who are women, and to know more about art in Vienna, but also to understand why this kind of basic recovery exhibition of 'women artists' was still happening almost a quarter of a century after Linda Nochlin and Ann Sutherland Harris had created in 1977 a major survey *Women Artists 1550-1950* which they hoped would be the last of its kind to be necessary, so powerful would the single gesture of restoration of knowledge of the women artists of the western tradition since the sixteenth century. Such exhibitions assembling women into a gendered category in which they rarely exhibited during their own careers, offer the viewer, whatever the problems curatorially and theoretically of the women-only show, the real pleasure of seeing actual paintings by artist-names already known through feminist publications and older dictionaries, as well as the not-yet-known. They enable encounters with artworks that undeniably need to come out of basements and private archives and become once again part of the everyday knowledge of the history of art. These encounters always shock me: why did I not know of these extraordinary artists and their works?

Julie Johnson's book traverses this much studied terrain of Vienna and its modernisms opening up a vista obliquely referenced if at all by the dominant figures in cultural analysis of this era and in the art history focussing on Vienna at the turn of the twentieth century: namely the history of women, who as a category cross the borderlines between the Non-Jewish and Jewish worlds that have been the focus of much cultural study of Vienna ca. 1900. Johnson's book brings into view the lives, practices and careers in the lively art worlds of Vienna of both significant individual women artists and the many women artists involved in the rich cultural life and multiplying coteries, exhibition groupings and artists' associations as well as social circles, intellectual salons, and 'public' cultural life.

There are five main chapters or case-studies in the first part of the book each studying a specific artist from a specific angle dealing with inscribing memory and its vagaries: 'Writing, Erasing. Silencing: Tina Blau and the (Woman) Artist's Biography', Elena Luksch-Makowsky and the New Spatial Aesthetic of the Vienna Secession', 'Broncia Koller and Interiority in Public Art Exhibitions', 'Rediscovering Helene Funcke: The Invisible Foremother', 'Teresa Ries in the Memory Factory'. Johnson, however, sets herself a difficult task of seeking to combine presenting works by the artists and featuring in each chapter aspects of the process of entering memory through self-inscription, the role of biographical documentation and the profile of the artist in discourse, through being visible in the records of an exhibiting

¹ Sabine Plakholm Forsthuber, *Künstlerinnen in Österreich 1897-1938: Malerei, Plastik, Architektur* (Vienna: Picus, 1994); *Moderne Raumkunst: Wiener Ausstellungenbauten von 1898 bis 1914* (Vienna: Picus, 1991).

institution of which as a woman the artist could not be a member but in which was selected to appear in prominent ways, through participating in a key thematic of several artistic modernist groups around Klimt and Schiele, through playing an influential role in disseminating Fauvist painting and making oneself visible through retrospectives, and through making major monumental symbolist sculpture. The challenge is to hold together in one written format the mass of information about critical writing on the artists, career planning and outcomes, analysis of complex artworks and the aftermath of being erased and being rediscovered. Her ambition makes for a dense book, rich in many ways but torn between institutional and critical histories of art, and formal art historical study of working artists over time. All this is peppered with slight contextualizations drawn often anachronistically from a very superficial reading of feminist art histories of other times and other artists.

As the title suggests, this book is about the construction of memory and the parallel production of its failure, or the consignment to oblivion. The author sets out her methodology for the documentation of the many artists who were women participating in the radical artistic culture of Vienna ca. 1900 as ‘memory studies’. At the same time, it is her intention to critique certain trends in feminist art histories that are, however, presented in a somewhat distorting caricature. Johnson tells us: ‘The title also refers to my method which depends more on work done in memory studies and *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* than on approaches that feminists have used in questioning the canon to find alternative aesthetic values.’ (4)

The purpose of the book it would seem, therefore, is to refute certain ‘feminist’ ideas whose purchase on the issue of women and art worlds is deemed by Johnson to be inappropriate to the Vienna case, or plainly wrong in the light of this massive evidence she is producing that women artists participated in the main modernist formations and organizations, and that they were publicly acknowledged to be there and to be part of Vienna’s art worlds. This central proposition skews the book in odd ways. Arguing against what she represents, rather inaccurately, as feminist modes—of which more shortly—Johnson argues that because in their own moment these Austrian women artists were noted and visible, the work post-1970 by feminists seeking to retrieve women artists them from an evident oblivion into which so many had fallen by 1970 is misguided.

Yet the book is about the historical events of Vienna 1870-1938, about that period’s own memory holes, and specifically about the later vacuum into which many formerly well-known artists fell—as women and especially those in double jeopardy as Jewish women—from which a ‘recovery’ mode has now rescued them. What does not seem to occur to this author that this is precisely this problem: the documented evidence of visibility of women in art in the early modernist era, and their invisibility in subsequent modernist *art history* which then necessitated the need for feminist-inflected recovery and, at the same time, feminist investigation into the discursive and ideological conditions that could lead to such extraordinary *modernist* ‘writing out’ of modernist artists on the grounds of gender.

Johnson’s book offers substantial chapters on five outstanding artists, the Impressionist Tina Blau (1845-1916), the Russian émigré Elena Luksch-Makowsky (1878-1965) who participated in the Secessionist exploration of spatial aesthetic, *Raumkunst*, an interpreter of French modernism Bronica Koller-Pinell (1863-1934),

Helene Funcke (1869-1957) an Expressionist and Fauvist painter born in Germany who exhibited alongside Matisse in Paris, and finally the one sculptor, the Russian-born Teresa Feodorovna Ries (1874-1950). Other key artists are discussed in the more synthetic, themed chapters such as Ilse Twardoswki-Conrat (1880-1942) and Friedl Dicker-Brandeis (1898-1944). The cover image, *The Travellers* (1940) is a painting by the youngest of the artists discussed, Marie-Louise von Motesiczky (1906-1996) who fled Austria in 1938 and found refuge in London while also living later in Amsterdam. Marie-Louise von Motesiczky had left school at the age of thirteen and studied art in Vienna, the Hague, Frankfurt and Berlin. In 1926 she went to Paris where she again met Max Beckman with whom she later was invited to work at the Städelschule in Frankfurt. She exhibited with the Hagenbund in Vienna and knew Kokoschka well.

Painted in London or Amsterdam, *The Travellers* shows an open boat seemingly rudderless and oarless on stormy seas. The boat is occupied by four people. An elderly woman seen in profile sits in the prow, a young man drapes his feet over the gunnel into the choppy sea, a young woman gazes at herself reflected back to the viewer in a large gold framed and encrusted mirror and in the centre sits an anxious and nude woman clutching an outsized sausage. Critics have been tempted to interpret the painting biographically by identifying the people on the boat as family members and associates. Johnson does so as well. Yet the painting makes clear its allegorical function by combining nudes and the 'dressing room' scene with the close-up view of the boat and its expressive faces. Not quite a ship of fools, it allegorizes rather than illustrates the artist's recent experience of forced migration created the sense of being tossed on the stormy seas of a real Channel crossing in order to make a painting about a condition not an event. Escape, displacement, memory all co-exist in this distillation through its own confident handling of paint and creation of an expressive yet enigmatic scene untypical of an artist who shared with Beckman an intense attention to persons, things, and places known to her that held the possibility of layers of meaning. Despite placing this work on its cover, the book does not provide detailed readings of these complex paintings as ways in which the artists drawing on their wealth of modernist resources negotiated their complex positions in the changing historical climate of early twentieth century Europe and Vienna in particularity.

Related to the theme of this painting, there was, however, a terrible pathos in 1999 for me when visiting the Vienna exhibition of art running across two world wars and of course registering not only the end of Empire and Annexation to the Nazi-dominated Reich but also the resulting catastrophe of Aryanization of the art world and cultural memory and the enactment of racialized genocide that literally destroyed many artists or their works. As I scanned artists' dates on the captions I could not fail to notice how many of their lives were abruptly shortened, ending prematurely between 1940-45 by deportation and mass murder like Dicker-Brandeis or, in the case of Ilse Conrat in 1942, by suicide to avoid deportation. Some of this dark and painful history forms the concluding chapter on 'Erasure' in *The Memory Factory: The Forgotten Women Artists of Vienna 1900*.

'Vienna 1900' performed its own singular *fin de siècle* aesthetics across literature, architecture, design and the fine arts. It was, of course, as famously, also the home of psychoanalysis the influential if contested study of 'interiority' as

subjectivity and sexuality as fantasy. Across all of its vibrant modernisms lay the persistent shadow of anti-Semitism, afflicting Vienna's many Jewish intellectuals and artists who were kept marginal to its mainstream institutions while being, at the margins, often the agents of modernization. One might also say anti-Semitism also blighted the anti-Semites with distorted visions of their Jewish co-citizens. Vienna's margins and its varied centres offered a range of possibilities for artists who were both men and women, both Jewish and non-Jewish, both home-born and immigrant/émigré, even if social, ethnic and gendered outsiders to a Catholic androcentric core were still curtailed by institutional and social or even personal prejudice. Johnson writes however, in her final chapter: 'Despite a lively subculture of misogyny, the discursive culture of fin-de-siècle Vienna alone does not explain why famous women artists were forgotten. The difference between 1910 and 1977, the two dates of the retrospective exhibitions of women artists in Vienna and the US, is a better place to start' (337). She is referencing here the theme of the penultimate chapter, which is a major retrospective historical exhibition of 300 works of art by women, *The Art of Women* [Der Kunst der Frauen] staged in 1910 covering art from the Renaissance to Impressionism at the Secession by Ilse Conrat (1880-1942) and Olga Brand-Krieghammer (1871-?). This exhibition is historiographically interesting as an event 1910, indicating a need to make an argument about women as artists in that context, or to install the pre-history of the women of that moment. Johnson focusses on this major show of what she freely names 'Old Mistresses', a term used by Johnson with neither acknowledgement of Broun and Gabhart who coined it in 1972 nor of Parker and Pollock who, with acknowledgement, used it as the title for their major study of the androcentric 'political unconscious' of the discipline of Art History in 1981. In 1977, Nochlin and Sutherland Harris did not use the term, but staged an extraordinarily similar show of *Women Artists 1550-1950*, already mentioned. Clearly there is an important art historiographical issue in thinking about the two moments of 1910 and 1977 in relation to Johnson's argument that feminist discourses about recovery are faulty.

Johnson wants to use the 1910 show to argue that women were not forgotten in 1910 but were forgotten by 1970 and thus the 1970+ work of recovery is faulted for a recovery mode that is 'feminist' when in 1910 neither recovery nor feminism was needed. Proper, or perhaps we might have to call it feminist, research into the pattern and dating of publication and knowledge about women artists would reveal that writing about women as artists and women in art was part of later nineteenth century culture, marked, however, by very different politics. There were the feminists seeking to show that women deserved emancipation because they had participated so fully in history and culture. There were ideologues who believed that women were part of art, but only as a breed apart, demonstrating their quintessential femininity in preferring colour over line, family topics over history, etc.. Parker and Pollock's *boo Old Mistresses* (1981, relaunched 2013) tracked the long history of this literature on women, art and artists to the beginnings of twentieth century when, in the moment of modernist writing of art history, they noted a new trend in which women were simply absented. They emphasized that it was *only in the twentieth century* that women as artists were absolutely written out of the newly hegemonic forms of academic and museal art history. This obliteration produced the paradox of Broun and Gabhart and then Nochlin and Sutherland Harris having

to unearth the only recently erased rather than long-forgotten women artists. They could do this because they merely needed to go back 70 years to find the many anthologies, the extensive dictionaries and earlier archive documents naming women and documenting their careers, and indeed the art works themselves.

Johnson's book ends with the real political destruction of lives, as well as of studios, archives, memory traces of those artists who were Jewish or whose removal from Vienna left their studios vulnerable, which is a suitable conclusion to a book which declares its topic to be the issue of loss of cultural memory, hence silencing, forgetting, and the need for recovering. This chapter makes clear that some forms of destruction of memory are political, documented and hence we know why they occurred. But beyond the erasure of the names, archives, even creations of artists who were Jewish under Nazism and its collaborators, Johnson struggles with a more evasive force erasing memory: the politics of gender, rank misogyny and the coincident birth in the modern period of new possibilities for women in largish numbers to train, show and be written about as artists with the creation of a very powerful mythology, mentioned by Johnson, of an Oedipal model of artistic succession, the symbolic father and the killing son. Mothers, she rightly argues, play no role in such mythicisation of art for either men or women.

While it is clear that her book reveals some amazing, artistically innovative, professionally active and recognized members of the Viennese avant-garde communities who have been forgotten and are now in need of being remembered for their visible and acknowledged presence during their active years, Johnson repeatedly positions her project in opposition to feminist work on reclaiming women for the histories of art, and to feminist work on attempting to theorize and analyse the socio-historical and ideological conditions of both their practice and their fragility: present, active, acknowledged in their own moment often for quite contrary and often treacherous reasons, and obliterated from the later institutionalized art histories of modern art. Why Johnson has felt it necessary to set up as her straw women the 'feminists', myself included I cannot grasp. But I can state unequivocally, that whatever these straw feminists are, their ideas and propositions are at best poorly understood and at worst completely misrepresented in her book, mostly for the sake of using these misrepresentations to make her often confusing arguments. There are many pathways into discussion of Johnson's substantially researched and important book. Since I am referenced in the book and identified with the method that she forswears as feminist: 'questioning the canon to find alternative aesthetic values' I wish to focus on the debate her book sets in motion.

Johnson sets up her own work on recovered memory against a feminist discourse of recovery of forgotten artists. Feminism is also only allowed to this attribution of 'alternative aesthetic values', confusing certain culturalist approaches valorizing a women's culture with a strong tendency continental theoretical feminism to study sexual difference. As the title suggests, the very artists whose one-time visibility and public involvement and acceptance forms the substance of the books' documented case-studies, have been forgotten. Thus Johnson has to explain the gap between their contemporary repute and later historical oblivion, while at the same time holding up post-1970s feminist art history as having failed to recognize the former, and having written as if women artists were only ever

missing, or absent because they were discriminated against, or to be 'rediscovered'. How can she arrive at such a mistaken view of what feminist art histories have argued?

Feminists, it is claimed, look for 'reasons why women were excluded from the canon for their aesthetic differences'; this strategy, were it to exist, is palpably irrelevant in her field of study, claims the author, because the artists she is documenting were 'leading practitioners of the dominant strategies of modernism and the Viennese interest in interiority'. (8) The author states that the feminist project seeks to create a separate sphere for women artists. It has to be refuted because the women artists she documents in Vienna were in the public sphere. Thus we read:

The separate spheres model is predicated on a power structure in which bourgeois women are relegated to the home and the public sphere is the realm of men or fallen women. This model applied by Griselda Pollock and Linda Nochlin to the French art of the nineteenth century to explain the aesthetics of Impressionists Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot (neither of whom painted nudes, for example), does not apply in the Central European context, in which a more class-diverse pool of women became artists (9).

Public and private is not a 'model applied' to French art. It represents a nineteenth century ideology whose often wishful simplicity historians and sociologists have discerned across many cultural articulations in texts and images in the nineteenth century. Modernist studies in the visual arts have to deal, however, with a central paradox, one that has becoming increasingly clear as a paradox only as a result of initial research in the crude 'recovery of lost women artists' mode. One singular, and some might argue determining, feature of *modernist* culture, often challenging the dominant bourgeois ideology of an absolute and natural difference between men and women who hence belong in distinct spheres, was modernist culture's radicalization of gender and sexuality in ways which, from the beginning, involved women alongside men in every one of its major aesthetic and organizational initiatives.

It is crucial to grasp the significant fact that the so-called Impressionist group form the first egalitarian movement in art, and in modernism particularly, with men and women founding, organizing, exhibiting, and understanding themselves participating equally in a shared project of artistic and cultural independence between 1874 and 1886. The subject or shall we say the sites and spaces of the practices of these modernist artists included the everyday as opposed to the mythical, religious or historical topics of the still vibrant academic tradition based around the study of anatomy and the nude. That everyday included domestic spaces, the spaces of leisure as well those of commercial sexuality, wherein the prostitute functioned also as a figure of a certain understanding of the modern condition under emerging capitalism. In later twentieth century feminist studies of the Impressionist group and notably its women members, there have been two elements. The first is to reinstall the many women Impressionists in their historical place, John Rewald, the dominant figure in the documentary study of Impressionism in the 1950s-70s having consigned the women to footnotes and side

lined them as mere followers of the masters of the movement, Manet and Degas. Once having made the initial 'recovery' by overthrowing Rewald's disinformation by means of research into the contemporary documents of the later nineteenth century, a second project arose: to what extent were the shared *topoi* of the movement's art works inflected with differentially lived experience? What are the social and the psychological implications of a highly gendered society and were they in any way inscribed into the shared terrain of the modern and the everyday by the painters living lives shaped by gender and class? The modernism of the Impressionist group is declared in their radically gender-inclusive gesture in a bourgeois society that, at the same time, promoted through imaginative constructions and actual social regulations a highly gender-differentiated world. Thus the conditions that made it possible for both women and men to paint and exhibit—gestures of organizational and aesthetic radicalism—did not yet match the social and sexual spaces psychologically inhabited by men and women in turn further inflected by regimens of class.

Neither Linda Nochlin nor I invented the model of the separate spheres. It was one of the dominant *ideologies* of the nineteenth century bourgeoisie, a novel idea created by its most earnest Christian ideologues and promoted through poetry and public discourse, that was then written onto the redesign of cities as well as the architecture of the homes built out in the residential suburbs. As an ideology, it was not a fact, but a contested and contradictory aspiration often undone by economic forces and by the pressures of class. Thus working women worked and bourgeois women shopped, strolled, and consumed in the urban spaces of the metropoloi. In doing so, however, their presence caused anxiety that produced ideologically charged visions of corrupted women and fears for compromised respectability. The artistic representations of the spaces of modernity were, therefore, marked by various contradictions that art historians have sought to examine, through drawing on the sociological studies of the nature of these new urban experiences so brilliantly analysed from Georg Simmel to Richard Sennett, themselves relating to Simmel's student, Walter Benjamin's study of Baudelairean poetry and critical writing of mid-century Paris.

For my own part, the conclusion that I drew from plotting out the 'ideal' or fantasmatic evocation of urban space that we can trace in Baudelaire's poetry and writing that mapped an imaginary journey around Paris and then setting that virtual city against the representations of urban spaces by artists in the Impressionist group was precisely that *the public/private separation did not hold*. I argued the opposite of what Johnson attributes to me. The feminist argument is that the public/private divide is a fiction that was being contested. The line of demarcation was not the ideological imaginary of two exclusive gendered spheres, public and private. If we read the spaces of modernity that appear in the paintings of men and women in the Impressionist exhibiting community, we see that it was in fact the cross-class sexual use of working women by bourgeois men—the prostitutional—that created a tenuous boundary between the spheres of operation and representation of the masculine bourgeois artists and the artists who were bourgeois women. Cassatt and Morisot, Braquemond and Gonzalès painted women in public space as well as in intimate and domestic space, just as their masculine peers too painted interior, familial and social scenes. Women did not,

however, visit or represent the interiors of brothels or focus on public zones such as the café concert (even if sometimes attending performances) and its specifically masculine exchanges where men were seeking to purchase sex. Feminism does not impose a model of the separate spheres; it interrogates the ideological trope against lived social experience and against the critical, modernist refraction of both through self-conscious aesthetic innovation.

Over and over again, Johnson invokes as feminist the trope of the private /public to dismiss the feminist argument as relevant to what she discovers in her close study of Vienna circa 1900 where women participated in socially sanctioned public spaces such as café culture, exhibitions and salons. She misses the point that this is the sign of modernization. Furthermore she makes no allowance for the historical gap between feminist studies undertaken of Britain in the 1850s and Paris in the 1870s and the Vienna of 1900 up to 1940, when modernizing and the force of women's emancipatory movements had really begun to shift cultural mores. The conditions of social exchange and cultural practice were changing rapidly in this period and by the early 1900s in Paris we find considerable social and sexual experimentation in shared living by men and women and an expansion of women professionals living without family frameworks in Paris and other cities. Modernization had a progressively profound impact on the social conventions governing personal, sexual and gendered experience. Thus it is anachronistic to identify and fix as 'feminist' an initial reading of an initiating moment of modernist culture in one city during certain decades making it an absolute standard against which to set behaviours and practices several decades later and elsewhere already inheriting the radicalizations aesthetically and sociologically that enabled increasing participation by women in the avant-garde art communities of Europe and The United States in the early twentieth century.

What has become a major and as yet unexplained problem for all art history, but notably feminist studies, is how it could be that the institutionalized history of modern art in the twentieth century, that inherited modernizing gender radicalization, and indeed witnessed its real effects in mixed artistic practice, managed to betray its own modernism so profoundly as to fail to include any women virtually at all, and furthermore to make the idea of woman as artist entirely unthinkable as part of modernism's modernity. When I began to study art history in 1970 a cultural feminicide had been effected so completely that even while many women modernists were still alive, I was being taught a history of modern art entirely without mention of any of them, and with the concurrent denigration of all women if any woman artist's name slipped in. Woman was referenced, if at all, only to serve as the negative signifier of the not-artist. The full paradox of the visible presence, the documented activities, the material aesthetic traces of a modernist culture whose modernism was defined by a new inclusiveness and gendered extension to women of so many nations and cultures meeting a wilful and institutionalized erasure has never been adequately grasped or understood. But we have been seriously struggling with its analysis in ways that seem to have bypassed Julie Johnson.

This modernist effacement is in direct contrast to what was happening in the mid- to later nineteenth century. We can show that when Art History, as a discipline, first formulates its surveys, textbooks, museums and dictionaries, women

as artists are recorded and women as artists are a topic. The recording means that names of thousands can be found in dictionaries such as Thieme-Becker and Bénézit: the sources for our post-1970 recovery. As I have mentioned the topic of women and art was subject to various politics. Thus there were survey histories of women in art compiled by women scholars, as part of the emancipation campaigns using these histories to support the claims for the vote by showing what women had created in the past. At the same time, a parallel literature equally focussed on the specificity of women but in a manner closer to the dominant ideology of highly differentiated gender stereotypes. Thus women were acclaimed as artists by men or denigrated for values or characteristics attributed to their art as symptoms of assumed natural and homogenizing feminine difference. All of these discursive forces are at play and each text in which 'women artists' or an artist who is a woman is discussed must be carefully analysed for both its ideological disposition and for the contradictions at play is simultaneously welcoming women and narrowly categorizing them as 'other' even within modernist criticism. Johnson uses her fascinating compilations of contemporary critical writing about women in the modernist Viennese art worlds to refute the value of what she homogenizes as feminist positions rather than teasing out the weaving of these contradictory positive and negative elements in the texts that might in themselves begin to account for the later conditions under which only the negative were consolidated and the positive were brushed aside into discursive oblivion.

One line of feminist argument has been that the mid 19th century and conservative terms that gave value to women as adding something specific as women to culture, became in modernism's gender-neutralizing rejection of its Victorian past a complete repression of gender as a factor with anything but negative meaning. Linda Nochlin's argument, first made in 1971, as the opening polemic for a feminist art historical intervention had to confront what was by that date a naturalized assumption: there were no women artists, or none of any quality, because women *naturally* lacked the spark of genius. To counter this post-1945 *art historical* ideology of natural lack (as opposed to 19th century cultural ideology of different qualities), Nochlin argued that social and institutional factors, not biology shaped access of not only women, but classed, ethnicized and geopolitically located 'others' to the formal education and public acknowledgements that enabled participation in an artistic practice. She too has since revised her thinking as the forty years of a brilliant career as an art historian have unfolded. The point is that because recovery of lost names coupled with the deconstruction of the ideologies that had naturalized the absence of women from art history was necessary, the full implications of the erasure of women from art history by the twentieth century's art historians were not immediately apparent. It is now much clearer that the problem is not that there were no women because of institutional discrimination. There have always been women artists, each epoch shaping the forms of their practice in relation to the organization of art making and the dominant concepts of gender and of art. Deeper cultural mythologies have turned modern art history totally androcentric in the face of all evidence to the contrary. Despite everything at different times (sometimes exclusion from academies to later notions of bourgeois respectability) thrown against women's participation, there have always been women making art, and I argue, as much *because of* as *despite* their differential situations. Thus

differentiated readings of women's art are not intended to put them in a separate sphere or to attribute different aesthetic values to their work but to learn from each artistic inscription that which each singular artist might wish to introduce into culture from their specific position in which both current aesthetic debates and priorities work with more structural issues around the formations of gendered and classed subjectivities.

The period covered in this book certainly addresses the modern. Johnson works, however, with a peculiarly impoverished notion of Modernism, which, with its capitalization, is identified as a 'doctrine articulated best by Clement Greenberg' (11). Greenbergian modernism is reduced to the precedence of medium over subject, a view of progression and autonomy 'freedom from social contexts and politics'. Modernism 'removes [artworlds] into an aesthetic vacuum, where works relate to each other in a historical progression. This is what Modernism is in a nutshell'. (11) Thus Johnson confuses Modernism (the art) with modernist writing about and modernist theory of art, and with modernist art history, distinct again. Her representation of the critique of Greenberg is frankly silly, reduced to those who pointed out that Abstract Expressionism was not really autonomous but was used by the CIA to promote the American idea of freedom during the Cold War.' (11). This is not for what Krauss critiqued Greenberg: it was his suppression of certain tendencies in the histories of modern art itself. I am making a meal of these phrasings because they represent what I imagine is being taught or is being digested by students of Art History on American campuses. I share with T J Clark the despair at the thoughtless caricature of one of the great writers and serious thinkers about how we might understand modern painting, Clement Greenberg, even while we can note equally the shifting grounds of his Trotskyist analysis in the 1930s of modernist art's necessary distance from ideology in order better to perform its aesthetic contribution to revolution towards more limiting Kantian assertions by the mid-1950s of a 'categorical imperative' for art to move towards working through the effects of its own singular medium. Greenberg's critical reading of modernist painting, not a doctrine but a reading, did acquire a certain hegemony, but it was internally challenged by his contemporaries like Harold Rosenberg's Marxist analysis of modernism and by some of his brilliant students.

Furthermore, the critical revisionism that named his work as 'modernist criticism' as distinct from Modernism—the artistic practices of which modernist criticism sought to make sense—have tried to produce more complex analyses of the many threads of the modernist formations without a purely American and abstract destination. These have enabled us to grant that formalist thinking was a dominant and enabling trend amongst artists and critics alike, but it was not the only one in the later nineteenth century, while partially shaping artists' self-understanding, but not following on the designated path towards abstraction favoured by Barr and Greenberg. Surely the thinking of scholars from Mignon Nixon to T J Clark, from Charles Harrison to Anne Wagner has left some impact thicker and more interesting than the banal notion of what Greenberg wrote and why it has been deposed presented hereby Johnson. Much of the work done to thicken the etiolated understandings of modernisms, across Europe and much more broadly international and in staggered time, have ensured that we can hold in mind both the formal preoccupations that dynamized modernist art's energetic movement and

variety and the complex social and historical conditions with which such practices directly, obliquely or symptomatically intersected. This book's approach to the institutional study of the Viennese modernist art worlds is itself evidence not that Greenberg was wrong about modernism entirely, but that our picture of the many threads of the modernist canvas can be enriched by real research into its multi-centred and not uniform formation. If we are, in the name of documented historical evidence of the presence and participation of women, to challenge modernist art history, itself distinct from modernist criticism and also not identical with Modernism as it was made historically, and to challenge it for its selective and exclusionist version of a much more diverse and pluralized histories of modern art, we should not begin to do so with so slight and already rejected caricature that confuses critical writing, art historical thinking and the art movements themselves into one strange entity Modernism. Art history has to learn that what it says happened is not necessarily coincident with what we can document to have happened. This is precisely the challenge of seeing the gender diversity of Modernist practices that were so misrepresented by a blindly androcentric and sexist modernist art history.

Speculating about the reasons that this important artist was written out of Austrian art history, Broncia Koller (1863-1934), Johnson states 'Traditional feminist methods of enquiry have only reinforced her separation from the men artists and the groups to which she belonged.' Indeed this is the paradox facing feminist studies. Since women artists have wholesale been set outside the history of art by modernist art history, there is indeed a primary necessity to relink the terms woman and artist to counter their apparently complete severance. Thus many of the early feminist interventions in the 1970s were compilations of women artists, but each book was distinct. Each author took a different approach to their subject, and many exemplified very expanded approaches including social, historical, cultural and material factors shaping each practice which was also allowed women artists to be singular (not homogenizing all women as artists of one ilk) and connected to their contemporaries and current artistic culture. Thus the studies of artists who were women were often more progressive or critical in their methodologies than the art histories that excluded women completely and used exclusive, often purely formal criteria for the appraisal of the narrowed field of selective art by selected men did.

Johnson further seems unable to make sense of the other strategy practised in the re-integration of women artists namely the monographic study. The monograph necessarily focuses on a single artist rather than groups or movements. But that does not constitute a setting apart. I have yet to discover a feminist project in art history that actually seeks to separate women from mixed culture, or that posits isolating them from their cultural terrain as 'women' as their purpose. The opposite is the actually the case except where the historical evidence presents us with women's organizations or practices which themselves created all-women or even feminist spaces, either defensively or as part of their embrace of gender-divided ideologies to which women can be susceptible. For the most part the evidence of the later nineteenth century and early twentieth century is that all-women projects are either actively feminist in orientation or strategic, providing training for women excluded from access to professional training or exhibition. The

many studios catering to women art students springing up in Paris were major sites of artistic enablement not social ghettos.

In the case of Broncia Koller-Pinell, Johnson argues that her focus on 'interiority' is not a sign a specific feminine proclivity aligned with the ideology of separate spheres that place women in the private zone. Rather it aligns her precisely with trends in Viennese avant-gardes notably in the circle around Klimt. If only Johnson had read the sociological studies about the virtual and sometimes actual divisions of the spheres of social worlds in the nineteenth century, such as Simmel or Sennett, she would have understood that the ideological public/private division co-opts masculinity and femininity differentially. Thus the home or interior becomes a site of retreat for the masculine subject from the rigorous demands of his persona in public life. The man traverses work and home, playing different forms of masculinity in both. Certain trends, the symbolist notably, of the fin-de-siècle culture notably in Vienna as well as Northern Europe involved masculine withdrawal from the materiality and noise of the economic public sphere, a retreat that could be geographical to the provinces or backwoods, or tropic, to 'nature' and spiritual interiority, or created spaces of specially designed domestic/creative work architecture in the form of artistic houses. The valency of such a retreat by men-artists as an active rejection of materialism in favour of personal cultivation of a lifestyle would be different for a man, able to make such a choice and be respected for such sacrifice for the sake of art or whatever, than for a woman, for whom identification in ideology with the home as a proper sphere made such a gesture impossible. She may well have wanted to make space in the public sphere, while also valuing her own worlds associated with sociality, intimacy and generations.

The case of Tina Blau, with whom Johnson opens her book is especially relevant. She was reticent, disliking the hustle of the public sphere of the art world, and made anxious within it by a hearing impairment. She clearly paid a price for her reserve and her retreat to a beautiful studio in the grounds of the Prater, Vienna's leisure grounds. Woman is required to be social not solitary, to be facilitating not introspective. On the other hand, Broncia Koller-Pinell belonged to a class and condition in which the house is not a retreat but a major social space of elite exchanges, including both a town house and a country house to which guests are invited to form select social coteries of intellectuals and art lovers, artists and patrons. For the fact that her access to a stimulating social and cultural world came through being able to entertain in her own well-appointed town or country houses, Broncia Koller has been dismissed by women art historians as a dilettante or housewife. Gender-class can be a double bind.

Johnson seeks to and does indeed make us think about art as an effect of an art world. Her arguments, substantiated by considerable research and documentation, produce a picture of the mechanics of training, making, exhibition, reviewing, exchanging in Vienna in its overlapping official and avant-garde circles. Small and embattled as avant-gardes often are, the social networks were limited and the exhibitors, organizers, reviewers, and patrons formed tight communities of shared aesthetic convictions and mutual support opening onto a semi-public space of journalism and other sites of inscription. But she does not incorporate into this kind of social history of art and its institutional sites of production and exchange the factors inflecting differences within them. Thus Broncia Koller-Pinell later finds

herself dismissed as a 'a painting housewife' (111) while the snidely oblique anti-Semitism of her being described as from a 'wealthy' background does not merit sufficiently nuanced analysis, even while the nature of her social position is, to my mind, very interesting to interrogate as whether it facilitated or distracted from her own cultures' ability to ensure her writing into its own memory.

It is clear that all of the remarkable artists whose careers and works Johnson evaluates thought of themselves as professional artists and also understood themselves as professional artists in ways altered by the new conflicts between official art worlds and the emergent, self-organized avant-garde institutions, such as the Secession. They had trained in art academies, served apprenticeships and had, through travel to Munich or Paris, come to know intimately the newest of artistic movements and possibilities. Indeed Tina Blau was one of the first Viennese artists to bring and further explore the *plein-air* painting project to Vienna. Broncia Koller-Pinell grasped and explored the implications of Cézannian still life and space as well as fauvist palettes while Helene Funcke (1869-1957) exhibited with Matisse and the Fauves in 1907 – 1908, seeing the Cézanne retrospective of 1907 before coming to Vienna in 1911.

Johnson's case-studies introduce us to major players in the international field of modernist art. They were the transmitters and further elaborators through their own deep study and practice. Our stories of the emergence, dissemination and transformation of the modernist interventions would be deeply enriched by integrating them, and many others because they are part of that story. The selective now canonical story wants only to tell of the few innovators. Thus there is a tendency in art historical narratives to move on before we use the widening circle of dissemination, 'translation' and differencing by individual, culture, city and moment to allow us to think through what these modernist interventions meant as prisms for seeing the varied fields of the modern world. Johnson in many cases rightly wishes to point out that not only were some of these women the ones who introduced formal innovation and forced the pace of change imported from the hot house of Paris, they were recognized by their peers for their radicalism in subject, composition, colour, brushwork, surfaces and the deeper meanings these were effecting. But her work is impoverished by her adherence to an art historical value system that only appreciates the innovator and not the artist through whose prolonged meditation painting by painting on the changing modes of art making might bring us to deeper understandings of what those modes meant for artists and their cultural moment.

In conclusion, I think this book will make a contribution to the appreciation and study of both the artists she discusses and the art worlds and art strategies each represented. Yet I have to oppose the misrepresentations of what constitutes the many-sided arguments of genuine and evolving feminist analysis of both modernist art and the discourses of Art History that are so distorted and distorting that the value of the memory work performed by this book is undermined. Johnson does not need straw women to knock down. She just needed to have read feminist art histories much more carefully and thoughtfully instead of trusting to banal caricatures of forty years of scholarly argument and visual analysis. The picture she presents of women in lively participation, making Viennese modernist cultures is a wonderful corrective. But Johnson underplays the implicit androcentrism which,

coupled with both anti-Semitism and what would later be the embrace of radically anti-feminist fascism, would bring to an end one chapter of modernization with its experiment in greater gender equality. A terrible history and its destructive wake carved into the twentieth century something other than a passive forgetting. To restructure art history without gender bias needs alliances between all who would argue that art historians have to respect history, not comply with myths of only masculine genius.

Griselda Pollock is Professor of Social and Critical Histories of Art and Director of the Centre for Cultural Analysis, Theory and History at the University of Leeds. Forthcoming books include *After-affects I After-Images: Trauma and Aesthetic Transformation* (Manchester University Press, 2013); *Concentrationary Memories*, edited Griselda Pollock and Max Silverman (I B Tauris, 2013); *Visual Politics and Psychoanalysis: Art & the Image in Post-Traumatic Cultures* (I. B Tauris, 2013).

G.F.S.Pollock@leeds.ac.uk