# SIDE 1

# Phyllis Krim 0:02

"View of Women's Imagery: The Artist as an Individual" was coordinated by Phyllis Krim in conjunction with her solo painting exhibition at New York University, Loeb student center, May 12, 1976. Moderator: Louise Bourgeois. Panelists are: Deborah Remington, painter; Corinne Robins, critic; Bruce Barton, artist and educator; and Ernest Briggs, painter; and myself, Phyllis Krim, painter.

I am very pleased to introduce Louise Bourgeois, my good friend whom I respect and admire as a strong woman and a strong artist. She has been interested in my work from the time we met. And I have learned much from her. She has graciously accepted my invitation to be the moderator of this panel. And Louise deserves the name of activist in the women's movement because of her effort in selecting juries for CAPS in Massachusetts, and in selecting applicants for Yaddo, the artists colony, and in the last month, she has given the crits in sculpture at Yale, Pratt, the Art Students League, and the NYU Studio School. She is writing on the political position of the surrealists in the '30s and on Louise Michel, the Red Virgin of the Paris Commune. Her work is included in the *200 Years of American Sculpture* at the Whitney. She is a sculptor before anything else, as you will see in the slides she'll show and she's in the collection of major museums. She needs no further introduction: Louise Bourgeois.

Louise Bourgeois 2:05 What should we do with the slides? Should we ...should I talk at this point, or?

Phyllis Krim 2:13 Yes. You want to show your slides and talk about them?

Louise Bourgeois 2:17

...introduce the other speakers. And we come back to the slides later. This is a view – the focus isn't very good. This is a view of Aubusson on the riv – yes, that's fine. On the River Creuse, where I was born and where my parents were weavers, weavers of tapestry and were interested in the dyeing, in the stable dyeing of wool...that is to say the dyes that would not fade in the sun. So, my sister is there, and I am in a corner. [Next] On this panel in a woman's movement, and this is my mother. She was a feminist, and her ideal – idol – was Louise Michel. I am writing about Louise Michel now, and the next slide is... you see how different the two women are...my mother was rather gentle, rather finicky and very sure of herself as a woman. However, she couldn't stand up to my father in certain situations. And at that point, she would have recourse to what Louise Michel did and did not do. And Louise Michel really ruled our house. [Next]

Well, this is my work. This is my work at a certain time when [plus fort, s'il vous plait] plus fort – oh, maybe I should talk into the mic. Yes. All right. This is a completely different thing. Because before I showed the places and people and suddenly, when I came to this country, I was...I was a sculptor. And I was on my own. Of course, I missed the old country. I missed the type of house

that I'm carrying on my head, which is a type of house that has a river running down the cellars as you can see. And with - that was obviously the house in Aubusson. And apart from my past and the solidity that I had experienced with my parents, that were not perfect, but they were adequate, this is - this was the only security I had and this is why I transported my past around on my head. Later on, it changes. Yeah, it changes. This is where I live and this is a soft sculpture, which... which I do now, they are a kind of clothes that are made of very thick latex, and that are worn, they are obviously feminine forms. [The opposite.] Now this is a piece, which is at the Whitney now, which was done very early 1949. [I think we should, you should come a little forward because it's cut at the top and at the bottom.] This is a very early piece then. And it had a symbolic meaning, it was called "The Blind Leading the Blind." And it means that in time of insecurity people hold on to each other to their end. [Next] Well, this is a little bit like the soft sculpture, but this is made of hydrocal. And there are two forms that are completely empty inside and that fit on top of each other like...like a box, like the cover and the bottom of the box. [Next] ... can see this is very close in forms, to the soft sculpture and to the last female form that we saw. And this is a piece made of marble and which is at the Museum of Modern Art in Paris. The photograph shows that the piece was taken outside, as you can see the reflection of the trees in the bulges. [Next]

This is a...this is a black march, it's a reference to the events of '68 of all the peace marches. And it is made of a black stone. It is ... one, the whole thing is one piece, one stone. So that it was carved with pneumatic tools, that is to say electric tools, by me. This is a very...this is a very friendly piece, it's the way I see a woman...this is...I see a mother, really, carrying these baskets around these packages...these...she's very loaded with responsibility and difficult things and yet, and yet, she's friendly. And it is a hanging piece and the precariousness of the woman, of the woman's situation and the instability that women always feel is expressed by the fact that she's hanging by thread. The top of the piece is not seen. This is the fluidity, this is a kind of different thing. It is a woman made of very, many different facets, and the facets can revolve around an axis, as you can see, the whole thing is built around the vertical axis and each piece can be oriented like a kind of radar. And it is a flexibility that obviously women have...have to have. [When was this done?] That is early...that is the time of "The Blind Leading the Blind." But it refers to the woman image and then this is a much later piece. And it has a kind of richness of the woman on the right side, but the truncated column, as you know, as a figure, as a symbol, is a symbol of discontinuity, so that there is a kind of life and death idea there.

This is again anthropomorphic in form, it's very much a woman, but, you know, people see what they want to see in a piece, it is not up to the artist to say "I wanted to say this, I wanted to say that," because nobody cares. What counts is what people... what kind of overtone it has for the viewer. So as far as I'm concerned it is again, you see the thread, the whole thing which is made of bronze and which is quite heavy, is hanging on a thread and yet it has a certain power. It is repowered which is meaningless if the thread is cut. So it is an ambivalent thing. Well, this is a better view of "The Blind Leading the Blind." So here too, you see the precariousness is expressed by the fact that they rest on the ground and yet the piece is not a solid thing, it is a kind of wobbly, tentative associations. Well, this places the whole work in -at- a certain period since, I don't know, does anybody know this man? Well, this is an early picture, an early portrait

of Bob Rauschenberg. And he was very intent on explaining and teaching me something. And the hand is very, very expressive. [Is that the last?] This is another figure image, which is called "The Defensive Woman." And it is a bronze.

Now, let me introduce the panel. I think I can read. I can't see anything. Well, I can read in the dark, but not *that* dark. (Laughter)

Now you have the work of Phyllis all around you. Phyllis, should I introduce you first?

Phyllis Krim 11:23 Why don't you introduce the other people?

# Louise Bourgeois 11:25

Okay, so we have...on my right, we have Ernest Briggs, who came to New York in the fall of '53 from the West Coast—a young abstract expressionist artist. And he has lived and worked here ever since. He showed in the old Stable, and in the Museum of Modern Art in '56, in a show called "12 Americans." And later at the Howard Wise Gallery, in '61, '62, and '63. [Now that's not necessary, no] And he had a fantastic show in 1975, which is last year, at the Susan Caldwell gallery in Soho. I wish, I hope he's going to talk to us about his work. He's very reluctant to do it. So, could we have his slides?

# Ernest Briggs 12:35

Yes, could you focus that please? That's fine. These are a couple of slides from the 1974 group that was shown at Susan's last April. They're sort of silhouettes against a ground, most of them against cotton duck, plain open ground. They derive out of the long process of imagery going back maybe two or three, four, five years. And then these in particular, were sort of organized along, well formal principles relating the two frontal silhouettes to the top and bottom of the rectangle. And the drips really sort of refer to gravity and the pull of the earth and the ... sort of a male-female symbol, which is readily accessible to most viewers. [Next please] This was the final painting in that group, in which I tried to integrate color into the ground and get back into a larger kind of spectrum. And at the same time holding the two images into that ground...some of the sort of problems, really just to sort of forget about composition, and allow a kind of spontaneous, forward thrust of the image and not attempt to deal with that thrust in traditional painting terms. [Next please] This is sort of a transitional work, in which it's a smaller painting, about six feet wide, and really sort of playing around with the material and letting... just being sort of extravagant and baroque with the same image format. [Next please] This is about seven feet wide and here I attempted to get into high-keyed color and deal with the figure-ground relationships in terms of that kind of color-saturated surface. [Next please] This is...I went from the yellows into yellow blues and just allowing a whole kind of thing to happen with the color. [Next please] And then from the yellows and the blues and the oranges into the reds and deeper reds. [I think that's the last slide, next please]

These are '75, last fall really. These were shown down in Washington DC in January of the year.

# Louise Bourgeois 16:38

Now, does anybody have any question about how little Ernest said, really? [Laughter]

#### Audience member 16:48

Were you influenced by oriental graphs or audiographs...one of them seems to suggest calligraphy.

#### Ernest Briggs 16:58

Oh, yeah, sure. I've been influenced by everything, you know, that I've seen in just day-to-day experience, or in the experiencing of art, and the idea of the calligraphic gesture has always been you know, like...I grew up in the west coast, where the only good art is Oriental art, you know, in the collections available to you and as a young student.

#### Louise Bourgeois 17:27

Now, the next...next we have Deborah. Deborah Remington...Excuse me, excuse me, I was going to forget Phyllis. No, we are not going to forget her. She graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia College of Art. Then she came to New York and studied with Will Barnet at the Art Students League. She has shown at the Phoenix Art Museum, First International Motorcycle Show. We are getting closer to the subject...the Mobile Art Museum, American Motorcycle Design Show, the Antique Automobile Club of America, the Brooklyn Museum, and several New York galleries. She was in the '76 "10 Downtown" show and will be represented in a Berlin Arts Festival. Her work is in private and corporate collections. I want to say that if you own or have owned a Bugatti or a Hispano Suiza, or a fine car of the '20s and you want Phyllis to make a portrait of the car, she will gladly do so.

Phyllis Krim 18:44 I didn't tell her to say that. [Laughing]

Louise Bourgeois 18:46 Especially the Bugatti. So where are the slides?

Phyllis Krim 18:51 Oh, slides? [Tape cuts out]

...that developed from having earlier worked with engines, abstracted engines and machinery and then going into motorcycles and then into the cars. And I'm mostly interested in the design forms and using them as symbols. I'll speak later about it, about what I'm doing...and so now we'll go on to the rest of the panel.

# Louise Bourgeois 19:30

...introduce Deborah. Deborah Remington lives and works in New York City. She went to the Art Institute in San Francisco, and she showed very actively over the past 15 years. She was with Bykert before joining Pace where she works presently...where she shows presently. Her work is in numerous museum collections all over the world. Deborah, are your slides...?

# Deborah Remington 19:59

Yes, um, can we have the slides? I've done a presentation more along the lines of Louise's, in terms of the history. In other words, presenting a history—a quick history—over the past, well, 13, 14 years of the development of my work. This painting is from 1963. This really marks one of the early paintings, in terms of a breakthrough of what I was doing to establishing my imagery as it exists today. [Can we...] This is 1964. Here, I'm still using...the surface is really refined, as much as it is today, it's still...I'm still using kind of thick paint. The interest in the imagery is really a combination of organic and mechanic — how to put them together. The interest in the concept of duality, of how to put incompatible things together. [Can you go to the next one?] This is 1966, about six-by-six-foot painting. Here the surface is refined a little bit more and a little bit farther along with the progression of the imagery. Again, the concerns of all the contrary, the basis of the concept of something that's contrary — of things that don't work together. Also, the mechanic / the organic. This is 1969, or 70, ah, first painting---it's again about a six-by-six-foot painting—first painting where I began to use the oval as a central image, the imagery begins to open up in the middle, I stopped using it, really making the laying out, the format of the painting, along a vertical axis. And now the interior of the painting begins to open up in a different way. Rather than simply...it's a different kind of left and right establishment. What's on the left....In other words, if you look at something, think it's going to be a mirror image, you look back, and it's not the same thing on the other side.

This is 1972, it's about an eight-by-eight-foot painting. First painting where I was able to really use the triangle as a central image, I find that very, really very difficult to make it fit in to a rectangle and do with the space what I want to do, in order to, you know, do something interesting with it, make it work the way I really want it to. This is 1972. It's a nine-foot-tall painting [the bottom of it's cut off a little bit.] Here, again, I'm working, I mean, you can see the development of that very central image, they become, of course, different with each painting. And different I mean, the work moves and grows in an interior manner, addressing myself for a moment to this business as the artist as individual. I've simply given you... [can we go on...next.] This is 1973. Anyway, simply, I'm trying to give you, as we go over the years, a very bird's eye view or a very brief look at how my work developed simply as an individual... with not very many outside sources, especially that you could pinpoint. This is 1973, '74, that's about eight-feet-tall. I also like...obviously, I'm also interested in the concept of light, and what I can do with it in terms of how I use space. [Next] This is 1974. Again, it's about a six-by-six-foot painting.

Audience member Are these all oil paintings?

# **Deborah Remington**

Yeah, these are all oil on canvas. I don't use a spray, this is all done by hand, brushed out by hand. And this is 1975... fairly it's really a medium sized painting. It's a four-by-five-feet kind of thing, roughly. And this is a fairly recent painting, completed late, very late, last fall almost into 1976. And it's also a medium sized painting about four-by-five-feet. And that's the end of my slides.

# Louise Bourgeois 24:47

Now I would like to introduce Bruce Barton. [Thank you] I would like to introduce Bruce Barton. There he is. Born in New York City in 1930, child of the Depression, educated in New York public school system, this is very important to him. He started drawing at Adelphi, then he went to Queens College and studied Art History. Then Brooklyn College, then Hunter College and the Hoffman School. Now he's a painter and he works as a commercial designer. And he's currently teaching art history at Visual Arts. Now, he's a wise man and a philosopher...as such, he forgot his slides. So I'm just very sorry, but we have no slides of Bruce Barton...

Audience member: Can he describe them?

Louise Bourgeois: Describe.

Phyllis Krim: Should he talk?

# Louise Bourgeois 25:53

And for the last and that is Corinne Robins. She's a critic, so please do not be light about her. Corinne Robins has written for *Arts Magazine*, *Art International*, *Arts Spectrum*, *Art Forum*, *New York Times*, *New York Times Book Review*, *Art in America*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and she lectures at Cooper Union....She was one of the organizer of "Artists Talk On Art" that is still going on and is presently, currently curating a drawing show, *Drawing Now: 10 Artists* at the Soho Visual Artists Center as a counter-exhibition to the Museum of Modern Art Show. So she is an activist. Now since she has no slides, will you talk to us?

# Corinne Robins 26:56

Well, the way I understand, we have the subject of "Women's imagery: the artist is individual." And there are two implicit subjects here. There's one the women's movement, and then there's women's imagery and art. And there tends to be a confusion between the two. The fact is, of course, that the Women's Movement has done a great deal for all women artists. And, through the 60s, women began to enter the art world in larger numbers, but it wasn't until they became very active and very activist in the early 70s, that with a half a dozen exceptions women's work was even looked at. There were certain galleries of course, where women were just not considered, there was no point in bringing their slides. That's changed a good deal and it's changed because the women have changed it. Now, on the subject of women's imagery, there are a number of schools within the women's movement itself. Miriam Shapiro and Judy Chicago have a belief that women have a patent on the cunt and cunt imagery, and that's the word they use for it. Then there is a school of women painters who are painting men, the way men used to paint women, using the nude male as a subject. Then you have various women painting and concerned with their own bodies.

I don't think that you can really say anything is women's imagery, anything is women's imagery, in the same way that anything is man's imagery. The individual artist determines what he's going to paint about. It's interesting that the subject of women's imagery has come up, because I believe it's a way of trying to deflect the strength of the women's movement and saying "women paint this way, therefore, they do not have to compete in the greater area," where they have competed, and competed very successfully. That a number of women are very, very strong drafts women, and are very good at drawing, for example, and have limited themselves to drawing does not mean that there aren't a number of women sculptors, women painters, and I don't believe you can make that kind of generalization. There are, of course, two very important women's galleries now co-ops, the AIR and the Soho 20, which are probably the best known and while each gallery has a different look, neither gallery could produce a woman's image and say this is women's imagery because the artists differ very, very radically. So that, my feeling is that, to confuse the women's movement and women's art and women's imagery is a bad mistake that people make and I would like to take questions from the floor, we'd like to discuss it, if, you know, if there are any questions about this and go on with it

#### Corrine Robins 30:20

Yeah, I think we'd like to know, you know, what you want to know and what you want to hear about, I think this would give the panel something to take off on and zero in on the subject.

#### Audience member 30:36

I'd like to...I'm sort of surprised to see men on the panel. And you know, I'd like to know how you feel that relates to the subject.

#### Louise Bourgeois 30:43

Why? Because we can be condescending and kind, also. [Laughter] I think Phyllis would like to state the premise of this evening.

#### Phyllis Krim 31:15

Well, the title, "An alternate view of women's imagery", um...the premise is that women's imagery is as varied as men's imagery, as Corinne just said, or it should be expected to be and allowed to be. And that being a woman should not preclude producing a feminine and separate type of art, and that artists—male or female—are individuals and should not be categorized by sexual grouping. Therefore, it's quite obvious why there are men on the panel. And I have a few things written that I would like to read that have bearing on this subject. Since I believe that imagery should be...that women's imagery should be varied...I'm tired of hearing that women just don't paint cars and motorcycles. So I wrote a paper called, "The motorcycle as a woman's image." I'll read a sentence or two from that:

The symbol for a woman should be one of freedom and beauty and energy and passion, similar attributes of the motorcycle, if one can appreciate beauty in a mechanized object. The motorcycle, the symbol of freedom and rebellion, is a woman's symbol—the symbol of women's breakthrough, to a unity with man, like blazing down the highway to a horizon of freedom of choice and equality. Certainly the freedom of choice to use the motorcycle or car or any

so-called male image...who decides what images are male or female? Who decides that power belongs only to men? These ideas are entrenched in childhood by parents who shape their children's behavior to what is appropriate for that sex by rewards for conformity. There is really little difference in the sexes, and what there is should be minimized. In the most recent review of the psychological research literature on sex differences, it's found that boys and girls are remarkably similar in responsiveness to visual and auditory cues, and that neither sex shows more interest in social stimuli. Thus, both sexes are much alike in the amount and kind of information that they are capable of extracting from their environment. And since both sexes are exposed to similar environments, including mechanical objects, there is no reason to continue the myths that subjects are typically male or female. Audrey Flack has said that motorcycles are not female subjects. Yet, she has painted model airplanes, and she chose to paint models because she could identify with building them as a child. Is that feminine? How can we keep drawing these lines? We only relate to our past experience and paint what interests us or what we find beautiful. Who is to tell us what that is or should be, and what we can or cannot deal with if we are women. I resent the taboos that other women put on the subject matter that I happen to love. There is no reason we should all have the same interests since we all have different backgrounds. Audrey can paint a poker game because she's familiar with it, yet not consider it male. She's a fine artist. My only contention is with this verbal limitation on what is appropriate for women, while she does what is natural for her. We should all be open to each other's interests and allow any subject matter to be handled by ...

Audience member 34:51 Can you stop reading?

Phyllis Krim 34:55 I'll be finished soon.

#### Audience member 34:56

I think that...um...it's very difficult to see you as an artist when you're reading from a paper and you can't speak with any feeling, or any connection with art.

Phyllis Krim 35:08 I'll speak about the art later. I wanted to make a statement about the subject of the panel.

Audience member 35:14 You're reading. You're not making a statement.

#### Phyllis Krim 35:15

Well, this is the way I'm presenting it. Why put limits on a newfound freedom? Linda Nochlin agrees that we shouldn't have to deal with masculine-feminine labels. For me cars and engines are natural because they were part of my childhood. Nochlin also believes that rebellion is necessary in the art world, that submissive attitudes won't get one very far. And that an artist is a woman has no bearing on her choice of style or subject. It is only an element, like her training, temperament, responses, and priorities of self-identification. Sense of self as a woman may or

may not play much of a role in formulating imagery. My sense of self as a woman is involved with strength and energy-attributes that I don't believe are strictly male. Therefore, I don't understand the controversy. Why would women not want to deal with strength? Or if they don't, why would they object to others doing so, or negate their trip? Is choice of a realist motif for women floors, skies, jars, flowers or children, rather than cars, because of the entrenched ideas of appropriateness, or just that the material is in their immediate environment? I respond to the stimuli in my environment and there seems to be a lot of beautiful cars around. I was interested in them from an early age. The choice, perhaps unconscious, of motif can be a symbol of an attitude or idea—as my concept of the car and cycle are symbols of strength. On the similarity between structure of objects and organs, there is some relationship of engines and human achievement; therefore the mechanical components may take on some organic aspects, especially when abstracted. This interests me from the standpoint of the inherent energy in these functioning, well-integrated machines. Women use flowers as symbols of other organic structures, why not machines? I am mainly involved in the shapes as formal design elements and in portraying energy and strength-positive attributes for both men and women. Alright, that's the statement. I'll speak about the art later.

Louise Bourgeois 37:37 Oui, can you tell us what...what you meant?

Audience member 37:39

I think that in these four presentations of women as artists, I think that all four of you have avoided being emotional by revealing yourselves, you know what...it's all...what is it? Is it just a waste of time, are we just giving a documentary on this fame that you've acquired?

Louise Bourgeois 38:01 Are you saying that we express no emotion? I am, I am very sorry, but I always feel that I express much too much emotion!

audience member 38:11 The woman that asked the question about why are men on the panel, it was valid, because...

Louise Bourgeois 38:18 But I took it very seriously!

Audience member 38:19 Because you are...you are ignoring them....

Louise Bourgeois 38:23 What do you mean, I am ignoring them? But they are my friends....

Audience member 38:27 You are not dealing with them....

Louise Bourgeois 38:31 But just a minute. Phyllis insists on making her statement ... she has a right to make her statement.

Audience member 38:37 Each woman had a time to speak. And nobody said anything, anything new, nobody brought "new," nobody opened the minds of the people. Nobody inspired thought.

Audience member Can you? Can you. Let's hear you...

Louise Bourgeois 38:52

Now, just a minute now. You are defending the men. All right! I...I am very much in their favor.

Audience member 38:59

I think there is some confusion about what the panel is about.

#### Ernest Briggs 39:02

Well, they go back to what Corinne said, and what Phyllis has said, I think that what becomes clear is that there's a kind of political, tactical...feeling of a political tactical error on the part of the women artists who are searching for a strictly feminine sensibility in terms of plastic art. My feeling, personally, is that...I, as I look at women's art, and as has been noted, there's increasing open freedom and opportunity to see and experience that...that, on the one hand, the plastic expression is somehow genderless. When I think of a Dufy, or when I think of a Joan Thorne, the names being gendered, automatically, unmistakably, I will think of this artist as a woman and this artist as a male. But, plastically, on the one hand, the Dufy, which was ripped off by perfume ads in the early 30s and associated with feminine qualities, presents that kind of an image association. The problem with the plastic arts in this relation is that they do escape automatically, intrinsically. Writing language, I feel poetry, etc. is probably much more specific and identifiable. And in my experience, reading women poetry, novels, and Doris Lessing, etc. I can automatically sense that something's coming at me that, which is specifically from a feminine consciousness, and that a man couldn't have written it in guite that way. I've read novels, I read a novel recently by a male telling the tale of a woman, and it really didn't work. There is a constant kind of trouble in that kind of presentation. It wasn't a terribly good novel, maybe that was it.

But, I really feel that if one experiences plastic work and is not aware of the name of the artists, it would be practically impossible to identify, specific, this thing, this feminine sensibility or this male sensibility at this stage in our development. And it's proven in the past, I mean, there's tons of historical examples where women's art has been buried and misattributed and etc. So that we have evidence from the past and evidence in the present that this is really a strategic error. The fact that any art and any individual, I mean, after all, we're into and have been for a long time, the aesthetics of the self, that in itself is a liberating situation. And, you know, is there a Jewish art? Is there a West Coast art? Is there a New York School, etc., etc.. All of these are

sort of academic types of questions, not eliminating the possibility that a specific individual can and might achieve, you know, that kind of an image or structure or presentation or form, which is readily read and readily experienced as a kind of specifically feminine or specifically male image, structure, art form, what have you. I mean, I think that my feeling is that it's just a wrong note, a kind of cyclical thing to come back to...it me reminds me of the kind of chauvinism of the '50s, in which the males were constantly saying, "Oh, well, women should paint women type paintings, you know, they should paint flower paintings or something." And to hear feminists, at this point, saying essentially the same thing I think, is a tactical error. And that's really about all I have to say about it.

Louise Bourgeois 44:55

Any question? Now shall we ask Bruce? Bruce Barton what he thinks about women art?

#### Bruce Barton 45:05

I think to answer this young lady over here, the reason that Ernie and I are on the panel is...to answer the young lady, who raised the question of why Ernie and I are on the panel, I think Phyllis wanted different points of view. And not to make this the usual, all-feminist panel. There have been so many feminist panels in the past two or three years. [My question?] Yes, I'm referring to your question. No, you raised the question of why we are on....

Audience member: No, I didn't. She did.

#### Bruce Barton 45:05

Oh, I'm sorry, I forgot. [Not hostilely, I was just...] Um, I'm going to, I suppose, be the devil's advocate on this panel. To a certain extent, I agree with Corrine, in that I don't think there is any such thing, or at least I've never been able to distinguish any such thing that I could pin down as feminist imagery or feminist subject matter. I'm always amazed that student exhibitions in particular—where walking in and not knowing any of the names, who has done what—I'm never able to decide whether a work has been done by a male or a female. I think there are larger formal borrowings and, at any given moment, there are certain themes and certain subjects that just are used by both indiscriminately...

END OF SIDE 1

# SIDE 2

Bruce Barton 0:01

...women's discrimination because there were so many women that I saw...whose work I saw. Perhaps some of those people have been forgotten today. Like, I remember Perle Fine was an important name in those days. And I was influenced by her work. I would go to the old Whitney Museum shows down here on 8th Street, and I would see Irene Rice Pereira. I would see, you know, Isabel Bishop, etc. And it never occurred to me that they were being discriminated against. There were other names that I can't remember now. But I never had the feeling that there was any kind of uh...Yes.

Corinne Robins: Well there was.

#### Bruce Barton

Well, you say, there was, but I don't know, I'm not so sure.

# Corinne Robins 0:52

Well, I'll document it a little bit because in the '60s, one of the first things, the first books I had to review was a book called The Vanguard Artists Questionnaire. Somebody did, I think, three or four hundred artists in the New York art world. And they came out....and there was a little section on women-male artists' attitude toward women-and it came out that "they should really leave it to us," was the upshot of it. The upshot in the '50s, was that the woman who was a good artist was the exception. As a rule, a woman painter was not in the same class-there was a great deal of discrimination, there was discriminate...It was the kind of thing that in the '60s, I remember going to a show at Cordier-Ekstrom, similar situation, and all of a sudden, there were a lot of Black people there. It was Romare Bearden's show and it was the first time I realized that you didn't see a lot of Black people at a show in the art world-you just didn't see it, up until the mid '60s. And there was guite a bit of discrimination against women artists. There was always the token one or the token two, or three. And partly, I think this was the result of the fact that women were encouraged to be art teachers. They were not encouraged to be artists. And there was a whole other attitude. And I would like to say that there's a connection, not stylistically, but in who gets, who becomes an artist depends a lot on the feeling of power. The fact that a lot of women are now becoming artists, a lot of women have become very aggressive about their work, and are feeling a sense of power. So that great numbers of women have entered the art world, on a different level, has a great deal to do with the movement, in the same way that American art was very important and very powerful because America felt like the number-one country and we were ... artists reflect what's around them and we were reflecting the sense of power that we had. I have, I don't know if it's fact, but I have a feeling that one of the reasons why you find so many strong women artists and correspondingly weaker number of men artists—not as many men artists are emerging—is because Americans in general, do not feel that kind of power. We lost a war, we may not have thought it was a right war, but we had never lost a war before and the sense of power has gone out of the art world and art has become very inward-looking today. It's a completely different kind of thing that the younger artists are doing. And so what I'm not arguing at all for women's imagery. I am arguing that you had Louise Bourgeois, you had Deborah Remington, you had the exceptional woman artists emerging, who became like the token, who was certainly better than most of the men around, but you didn't have a number of women artists and Deborah would be the one woman artist in the show, over and over. It was partly because she was quality-probably better than most of the men-and partly because women were not, at that point, competing. Women didn't feel they had a chance. The sense of power that the Women's Movement has done a lot for women

artists who have become better as a result. And, as an example of that, I would go back to a show of 1973 called "Women Choose Women," which was a very weak show. A lot of those women hadn't...their work had literally been in the closet too long. And it was very tentative work and they were just pleased that they were doing anything, where, a year or two years later, the same women began to dare more and began to be much more in touch with themselves...Not doing a women's imagery, but began to take chances and risks, and do what only maybe one out of 10,000 women, whereas one out of 1,000 men would do—that kind of statistic. And therefore, I'm saying that the composition of the art world has changed and the strength of the art world has changed a great deal. But the imagery is something else and that was the distinction I was trying to make before.

# Bruce Barton 5:42

I challenge that—I think there's been a misreading of the, of the whole fifties, uh...I was on the scene when the Clark Galleries were being formed and my memory of those galleries is that nearly every one of them had a great many women in them, either forming them or as part of the gallery. The product I think it would be very...The Tanager Gallery was founded by two women, as a matter of fact, by Sally Hazelet and by Lois Dodd. I think somebody should go over the old art magazines and just start checking out the number of shows that women have. An awful lot of those women have disappeared, I grant you, some of them have gone off into teaching, others I don't know what happened to, but my memory is of a great many more women on the scene in those days than the mythology of the '70s and late '60s wants to admit. Also, the schools...when I went to school, the schools were loaded with women. There were usually more women in the classes that I were in, I've kept in touch with and they're still painting. And...

Audience member 6:56 And the teachers were very quick to say, Oh, why don't you just have babies instead?

# Bruce Barton 7:00

No, no, not at all. Not the teachers I had. Perhaps I missed those teachers because the ones I had encouraged them.

Audience member 7:17 They started co-ops because they really couldn't get in.

# Bruce Barton

Well, everybody was in the same boat in those - everybody was in the same boat in the co-ops. I mean, this was before anybody made it, male or female.

Audience member 7:27 There were no other galleries when I was first coming to New York.

Bruce Barton 7:28

I mean, it was before anybody – before abstract expressionism made it. And everybody was in the same boat at that time.

Male audience member 7:36

I think adult artists have been painting under water, while adult art teachers have been brain damaging children who might have blossomed into...to have given us the world...

Ernest Briggs 7:43

But I think it does circulate around that idea that Corinne brought up of power. [Pardon?] It does circulate around the idea that Corrine brought up of power in the ultimate art world. A lot of the women of the '50s faded, because they did have babies and the opportunities simply weren't there to reach, you know, that ultimate authority and function. Now, like a lot of men failed too, right? Because they had to support babies or something else.

Audience member 8:30 Babies are the enemies of art?

# Ernest Briggs

But that's just that's just par for the course. But there is that idea of entrance, you know, doors opening. And that's what's been accomplished in the last five or six years. Is that whole aura of a kind of unspoken or if spoken kind of...well, folk history, or folklore kind of thing, not ever having been dealt with in any serious terms. And that is past now....I feel, certainly.

# Male audience member 9:06

I stopped painting in '65 because I felt the art world had a gun in my head for 55 years. And I said fuck you.

Ernest Briggs 9:20 Well, you change the art world and when you change the economy, the art world fluctuates with the stock market.

Corinne Robins: Does anyone have any other questions?

Louise Bourgeois 9:29

Yes, I would like to propose this explanation for part, only part of the years...is that a lot of galleries were, and still are, directed by women. Let us take the example of the Diwan Gallery, but to name only one, but I counted about 20. The galleries were directed by women and they had an eye for the young men...and this is why the women didn't get into the galleries. [Laughter] And it is still true.

Ernest Briggs 10:06 All right, Louise, you have that.

Audience member It didn't work for me...unfortunately....

Ernest Briggs

Like, as a young... as a young man coming to New York and I mean, there was a serious question in my mind about the homosexual establishment...

Louise Bourgeois Oh no, that has nothing to do with anything.

Ernest Briggs They control the modern museum for like 20 years.

Louise Bourgeois 10:31 Well, I can tell you that the women who directed the artists were not not homosexual. Now, who has another explanation? Deborah?

Deborah Remington No.

Corinne Robins Somebody had their hands up...

Audience member 10:49 I don't think there was any stigma in the '50s, any, there wasn't.

Louise Bourgeois 10:55 Against women?

Audience member 10:56 Not so much, no. There's many more women, many more women working. But I don't think that if you were a good painter, I mean, you made your way. I don't think they're...

Louise Bourgeois 11:08 No, the fact that the women had to, to get together and create cooperatives proves the fact that they had strength and they had something to say, but they had no gallery so they had to get together and open their own...but a cooperative is not a commercial venture. It is not a real gallery.

Audience member 11:42 Now, there are female co-ops but in those days, the coop galleries were not just that...name one in the 50s...

Audience member:

No! There wasn't women forming co-ops just for women because in those days, women were terribly afraid of being classed as a woman artist.

Audience member 12:02 Because as a woman, or as you were classed as a woman, you were finished.

Louise Bourgeois 12:02 Of course, That's right...you were finished.

Audience member

And it was a thing to be ashamed of in those days. You were hoping to be taken for one of the boys. That was your only way to make it in the art world.

Male audience member 12:14

This woman next to me is the only union bricklayer in the country that is not allowed to lay one goddamn brick in this country. And you're talkin' about, you know, prejudice towards women in the arts....they can't build a house.

Audience member 12:29 That's what we're saying....

Louise Bourgeois 12:31 Well, that has to do with the unions. It doesn't have to do with...

Male audience member 12:35

It has to do with architects, it has to do with artists, that are silent. That are waiting for checks every week. That are bought out and sold out. It has to do with intellectuals.

Louise Bourgeois 12:47 Yes, but in the art world, we are not concerned with unions. It's a matter of prestige.

Male audience member 12:53 Because the unions can do what they want because the artists are afraid, because the unions are the guns that they're afraid of.

Louise Bourgeois 13:03 What do you mean by that?

Male audience member 13:03

Well, there are two governments in America. Like the iceberg. The big gun is this real government on top of that birthday party, birthday cake, which makes you sick after one slice. The art world has closed its eyes, the same way that I can't relate to anything I saw here to my 60 years of nightmare.

Louise Bourgeois 13:29 Excuse me, what is your name?

Male audience member 13:31 Does it matter?

Louise Bourgeois 13:32 It matters very much because we all have a name in the art world.

Male audience member 13:37 I'm not in an art world.

Louise Bourgeois 13:38 Oh, you're not an artist, I see. I thought you were an artist.

Male audience member 13:42 I'm in a nightmare.

Louise Bourgeois 13:46 Well, the fact that you didn't relate to the slides is nothing against the sides.

Audience member 13:53 He didn't say he was not an artist, he said he was not in the art world.

Louise Bourgeois 13:58 No, no, but I'm referring to the remark that he said I cannot relate to any of the slides that were shown earlier. I see.

Male audience member 14:05 Oh I heard you. I cannot take this here to the world, the construction world that I'm in.

Louise Bourgeois 14:12 ...the construction world, I see.

Male audience member 14:17 And say to this world, you know, like, what I've seen, give them some kind of report, except to slit my wrists and go there and cry. Maybe they might understand [unintelligible].

Audience member 14:29 I have another question. I want to get back to the subject with the feminine imagery... [unintelligible]...That's construction. It's a dead issue.

Audience member 14:46

I want to talk about with the feminist imagery when the Women's Interart show was here in the spring, I think, in viewing most of the slides that um, they did have a feminine aspect. I equate that with...the imagery was delicate, and the colors were very bright, I would say. And some of them were extremely organic, feminine flowers [unintelligible] I think three quarters of the slides, I would have said that this was very...Some of them were extremely strong and very masculine looking. Now, for example, Ms. Krim's cars will go take the mechanical object, which is representative of strength and power and generally when I view them head on, there's a threatening aspect of those eyes that glare at you, and she's made them very....the line is light and delicate, the color is beautiful and sensuous. Actually, they're almost like a plaything. You know, they're not macho, certainly no man's painting in this way.

Louise Bourgeois 16:03 Do you agree, Phyllis? Do you agree?

#### Phyllis Krim 16:03

Well, I've been told that my work is not cold and detached. A lot of people who paint cars do it in a very detached, cool manner and they kind of, as far as I'm concerned, take the energy out of them. I'm interested in the emotion and the energy that I find in these machines. And, and I try to – try to portray that, you know, with the brightness, and I think that that's the difference between the way a lot of the men are painting the cars. What I was speaking about – reading about – was that I just want it to be said that women should be able to paint any subject matter, that this is not just a male subject matter. And I'm not denying that many women, you know, paint flowers, or you know, whatever. I'm just saying that it should be open. That's all.

Audience member I agree with you.

# Phyllis Krim

And I, yeah, it is open, but I think that a lot of women just get...they feel that there's some limitation. In the Soho Weekly News a couple of weeks ago it said, "well women just don't paint cars and motorcycles." I keep hearing this, you know, and I mean, the thing is, why put a limitation, you know, like I mean not that it would stop me, you know, or not that it would stop anyone, you know, from painting what they're interested in, but but I don't think that other women, you know, should should make any kind of limitation I think that the subject matter will open up even more and I think that the light delicate colors that you're talking about, you know, again are something that that maybe a lot of women were brought up to think are the right colors. I know from my own experience, you know, my own family always tried to stop me from wearing bright colors, you know. It's just, you know, there's this pastel thing, you know, like that that we have to get beyond.

# Audience member 18:22

Maybe you're in the wrong field. Maybe you should go into interior decorating. I think you seem to be saying that artists can paint whatever they want. I think that art has a conscience and that each painting has to justify itself.

Audience member Are you an artist?

Audience member That question is irrevelant [sic].

Audience member Irrelevant. [Laughter]

Audience member

[unintelligible] I kind of ran from the other place. I didn't even look for petunias. You see when you're a city-bred [unintelligible] all you see is stone walls, if you ever see a flower you're lucky...your upbringing, cars, constant traveling. [unintelligible]

# Phyllis Krim 20:00

Yeah, I think that it's true that not not all women have the opportunity, you know, to spend a lot of time in garages, and so forth like that, that I have. But if they want to they can, you know, if they're interested in it.

audience member 20:19 What about the reality of the car in that it's choking us out in the street, and it's what has destroyed the country and run us all over?

Male audience member And put women and children in the cemetery.

Phyllis Krim 20:29

Well, there are plenty of people who don't like cars. And there are certainly a lot of things wrong with machines. But I'm approaching them as art objects. I'm approaching using classics...

Male audience member 20:46 Archaeologist [unintelligible]

# Audience member 20:51

Can I say one thing...in the '50s I was attending Pratt Institute, it was a very long drawn-out affair. I'd been going for 13 years before I got my degree because I had to take off and you know, you have to go at night. And I had one particular teacher who shall be nameless, who said "art is dead". He was teaching an "Aesthetics of art" class. Art is dead, semantics is the true reality. And I just took off for Mexico and...uh, well, first I stopped painting for a while then I took off for Mexico, but then I stopped painting altogether. When I came back to Pratt, I found another girl had been discouraged similarly by the very same teacher and had to stop painting for a number of, well, at least a year anyway, practically for the very same reasons. And I think,

as far as feminism is concerned she was a lesbian, which has really nothing to do with it, there are different types of experience....

# Phyllis Krim 21:45

Well, I don't know if you saw the tape, but I mentioned on the videotape that a similar thing happened to me when I was painting machinery, when I first decided to become a painter, I was told that that was craziness and that I would flunk out from graduate school, and I quit painting for several years also, and then picked up where I had left off. But I think it is, I think it's dreadful for people to be discouraged in whatever they're trying to do, by teachers. And I, you know, what can...hopefully that's not too prevalent.

# Audience member 22:28

Well he had had a nervous breakdown. I don't know if he was projecting that...

# Audience member 22:35

Like in my case, I was like in a graduate program at Columbia, Robert Motherwell was one of the teachers among others, and about half men and half women, and the teachers would spend all the time rapping with the men. I mean, the women were just ignored...no matter what the level of their work was, they were just considered not worth talking to. So there was this automatic feeling that the men were the up-and-coming, the people that were worth the teachers bothering to waste their precious intellect on, and the women were just passed through the course with the least amount of ado possible.

# Male audience member 23:16

I have a question. I'd like to ask the panel generally. [Speak louder so we can hear you] I have a question I'd like to ask the panel, generally and perhaps first from Corinne Robins. Concerning the women who insist that there is a specifically feminine imagery, what do you suppose is the reason if it is harmful to the women's movement generally that these women would have such a conviction...?

# Corinne Robins 23:48

Well first of all, I didn't say it was harmful to the women's movement, I said there was a confusion and I was making a distinction. I think that these women are painting what they feel, and some of them are painting it very, with a great deal of strength, and some of it's very good. I think one tends to identify, and would like to enlarge what you're doing and saying this is stands for everybody, this is a symbol of a lot of things. So therefore, if you give it a political underwriting as well, that's reinforcing your image for yourself and for other people. And I think it's a perfectly valid thing to do. I'm just saying it's one individual's approach, and one individual's —or a handful of individuals'—way of getting their work known and considered in both a political as well as an aesthetic standpoint. I'm not judging the work. I'm just saying this group exists, some of whom are very good artists, some of whom are lousy.

# Audience member 24:51

Some really believe in it. Oh, yes. Like there are people that...

# Corinne Robins 24:54

They believe they believe in their own imagery, of course.

#### Audience member 24:58

People...are human beings.. sex is for propagation, it really has nothing to do with art. It has to do with reproduction, strictly. But there are people that think it does have to do with art. On both sides...

#### Audience member 25:14

Who you are, is going to condition what you do whether you're tall or short. Male or female...

#### Audience member 25:25

Exactly. I think, has more influence, more on one's art more than their sex, I think you can tell the difference between European artists, and American artists...

#### Audience member 25:39

If no one has a name on a picture or a sculpture, how can you tell? On the whole, I think it's very difficult unless there are...

#### Audience member 25:45

But these differences aren't important, they're just not important when it comes to real, real honest art, they really have no importance at all. They have importance for theses and studies of different sorts and minute comparisons.

#### Larry Warshaw 26:16

I'm just running a little thought, on the fact that some of these women galleries, galleries that are strictly for women, in a way are really ghettoizing women's art. In a certain sense are taking them out of a competitive, individualistic approach. And when you're involved in, let's say, Women's Interart movement, and you're willing to just pick names out of a hat for a show... rather than just...

#### Louise Bourgeois 26:45

This is not the professional art world, this is the fringe of the art world.

#### Larry Warshaw 26:50

I don't know, it's questionable. In Chicago, you have galleries devoted strictly to women and other movements growing up, which I wonder, are they becoming centers for mediocrity?

# Louise Bourgeois 27:08

Why shouldn't they be centers for mediocrity? There is room for everybody. That is not what Corinne was talking about. She was talking about the professional...and the way you enter the large gallery, the international scene. And it is not it is not the same art word. There has always been hobby groups and why shouldn't there be?

Larry Warshaw 27:40 Well, if you feel...if what you're saying Louise, is that AIR and S20 are basically hobby groups...

Corrine Robins Oh, no, these are very, very professional galleries

Louise Bourgeois No, this is not ... this is now what I'm... but ...

Male audience member On one hand, you say that. On the other hand, you say hobby groups, that sometimes mixes up the definition.

Corinne Robins 27:57 No, no, no, this is...Louise and I feel very distinctly that AIR is very...one of the best of the professional groups, period.

# Larry Warshaw 28:08

In my view, a sexist group, but it actually goes to the point. I can understand this political implications being terribly necessary in a time when feminism is trying to struggle and identify itself and I can see it maybe go on for another two years. But finally, when the political movement has made its statement, and it's not necessary anymore to continue with dead issues, the continuation then goes into another level...[unintelligible] sexism.

Audience member: Well, it's still necessary.

Corinne Robins 28:35

First of all, it doesn't seem to be very soon that it's going to be a dead issue. I don't think anybody has to worry about that being a dead issue.

Male audience member 28:41 I'm talking about political feminism.

Corinne Robins 28:43 I'm talking about political feminism. Second of all...

Louise Bourgeois 28:48 Who said that it was a dead issue?

Larry Warshaw 28:50

I say that once women establish themselves as persons [audible groan from audience] as people, as individuals, then you do not have to say, "First, I'm a woman"...

#### Louise Bourgeois 28:58

Well, they have not reached that point yet, so we don't have to worry about...

#### Corinne Robins 29:02

The second thing is that AIR, aside from being a woman's gallery, has a distinct aesthetic approach. Aside from any political thing, there's a certain kind of work, it's like most good galleries reflect a certain kind of approach, a certain...either by the owner or, if it's a co-op then by the members, there's usually a kind of aesthetic unity and AIR has a definite aesthetic unity.

#### Larry Warshaw 29:28

But is that aesthetic unity based on the sense of the sexual implication...

Audience member 29:32 No!

#### Larry Warshaw 29:34

That these are only women, and if you did have a few men in AIR, which did carry along the imagery, the philosophical imagery of whoever chooses...

#### Corinne Robins 29:45

At the moment, they have quite a few people to consider first, since the millennium hasn't come yet and women are not just considered persons, I don't think AIR has to shut up shop for a long time.

#### Larry Warshaw 29:59

Well, I don't know where women are not considered persons, in the fields I've been involved in, whether it's academia, which I've been involved in for a while, whether it's the women's art movement, which I see very strongly as persons. I mean, I find this is an old statement about women and carrying babies and all of this, is in the '50s the '40s and '30s, but today these are dead shibboleths, you know and to carry them on as sort of placards in order to force one's way indoors, is unnecessary. Let the quality...

# Male audience member

Why not carry it a step further and say maybe women should get out of the American art world and maybe establish something you know another place you can get out of together like women's like

Larry Warshaw Like Women's Land, like Disneyland Well I don't believe in that.

#### Male audience member

I was hoping for a new world, because the art world is stymying, it's stultifying, it's sick.

Larry Warshaw 30:58 Well, I don't know what you're talking about.

Male audience member 31:00 What I'm talking about is art galleries, they stink. Museums stink.

Audience member 31:08 It is really commercialism...

Louise Bourgeois 31:12

I know I think what you say is very interesting. It's very difficult for me to perceive what you mean, because it is so...it is so inaccurate.

Larry Warshaw 31:34 This may sound stupid, but I don't know what you mean when you say that.

Louise Bourgeois 31:28

But still... [Laughter] Like when you say that there is no discrimination against women in the art world, I mean, it is really weird to hear such a thing...

Larry Warshaw 31:37

I did not say that, but I said - because you just told me you know 20 galleries that are run by women. And when I go into galleries today, I see as many women showing...

Louise Bourgeois 31:46

Yes, but not of the same quality of galleries. Yes, I will make a list: Susan Coldwell, Diwan, I mean, Mary Harriman in the old days and, and you know, then you look at this stable...

Larry Warshaw 32:02

The women have time to devote to painting. Thank goodness for birth control.

#### Male audience member 32:09

This is a sexist...I think that all the discussion here, and I'm sorry to interrupt, is a sexist remark, because it's the majority of the finer galleries in this city and in the United States and in the world are owned and controlled by men and that women, who are painters, who have to bring their work to a gallery and stand below this "master race" that says "I decide what is good. I decide what is art," makes a woman a second class citizen and a woman who's a painter should not have to deal in those terms. And I think the reasoning behind opening up a woman's gallery is a very important step in the 20th century. And while the minority of men stand up and speak about women's rights should remember the old adage about people speaking about understanding the Black experience when you're not Black, and understanding the Jewish experience when you're not Jewish. I think the topic tonight is women's imagery and their fight to get their work seen. And I think that's what this discussion should do.

Louise Bourgeois 33:18 No, I agree with him. He just understands the subject.

Audience member 33:26 It's not women's imagery, the topic...

# Audience member 33:28

Well, you know, I was just, Ms. Krim... [unintelligible]. Well, the anti-car idea, you do mostly paint the old cars, which are no longer threatening and they're museum pieces. And, you know, general...trying to do political art, anti-pollution, very rarely works, unfortunately, protest art generally doesn't...maybe in Russia, I don't know. No? [I'm not...] But I agree. Like, you want things to change. I mean, cars are a very deadly...as a matter of fact, it so happened I was struck by one about three weeks ago. So I should be minding the cars as much as anybody, and the pollution bothers me excessively. And perhaps, maybe we should be more involved in, this rather than retreat into the past or abstract ourselves from what's happening today...and three quarters of the shows that you ever see in Soho or anywhere else, really don't.

#### Audience member

That's your abstract, ideas or what you've seen at galleries is not necessarily what's being done...there's a lot of work which isn't shown.

Audience member 35:00 Let's get into...

# Audience member 35:02

And that's quite different from the work which is shown. People make the mistake of feeling that the only thing that exists is what's in the galleries. That is not true at all. In fact there's more that's not shown than there is, shown.

#### Audience member

I know there was an article in the Times about how artists get into galleries...[unintelligible]

# Phyllis Krim 35:52

What did you say is rough on the women? [The other women...] Oh, yeah, sure. Yeah. Well, I think a lot of the limitations are put on women by other women. That's true. I've not found really, that, you know, except verbally, you know, people say what are you doing that for? Or, you know, both men and women question, you know, why I choose this particular subject. But I really haven't been stopped in any way except for my early experience, when it was from...when a teacher just wanted me to work in the way that he wanted everybody to work. But, other than that, no one's really held me down as a woman. I'm not complaining that much for myself.

#### Male audience member 37:05

The art director's son of Esquire jumped off the George Washington Bridge ...19-years old.

Audience member 37:22 Nice flashback.

Audience member 37:23 [Laughter] On that note, let's go home.

Louise Bourgeois 37:26 Thank you very much.

Phyllis Krim 37:29 Thank you, Louise. Thank you, everybody.