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The Women's Studio Workshop: Inside an All-Woman Art Space

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THE WOMEN’S STUDIO WORKSHOP: INSIDE AN ALL-WOMAN ART SPACE

By

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I dedicate this story of the Women’s Studio Workshop to ANN, Tana, Nita, and Babs for creating and maintaining a safe space for women to find support, inspiration, and the tools that they need and desire to be artists.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to bring to the forefront the lives and experiences of women artists within one context, the Women’s Studio Workshop. In order to ensure that women artists have equal inclusion in the canon, we must record their lives and work (Sandell & Collins, 1997; Korzenik, 1990; Nochlin, 1971). In response to the lack of opportunities, U.S. women artists have organized for more than a century (Briggs, 1932; Skiles, 1975; Sturken, 1978). An upsurge of women’s artist organizations occurred during the early 1970s feminist art movement as a part of the larger women’s liberation movement (Brodsky 1994). Driven by my curiosity about women artist organizations, I located a present day group of women artists to research. The overarching question “What is the nature of one woman centered art space?” guided my inquiry and the overarching theme of giving voice to the women artists shaped the story. The Women’s Studio Workshop is one example of a women’s artist community that provides support, education, exhibition, employment, and empowerment to women artists since the early 1970s. Fully immersed in the environment, I observed daily activities, interviewed staff and visiting artists, and participated in the community on three separate visits over the course of 18 months.

The findings are presented as a series of little narratives that thread together to tell one story of the Women’s Studio Workshop. The stories revealed a community with connection to history and its surrounding environment. The Women’s Studio Workshop is its own miniature art world that is both separate from and working within the art world at large. A grass-roots nonprofit organization, the workshop provides opportunities for women artists to create art in a room of their own. The workshop is a place where artists from several different generations can usually be found, collaborating, sharing, and growing together. Although the workshop does not hold an overtly political agenda, indeed the actions of the workshop are woman-centered, which sets the stage for political activity and dialogue. Women reportedly felt more comfortable in woman-centered environment, free to have intimate conversations and talk without censoring their words. This feminist inspired inquiry was shaped largely by my own personal perspective and feelings, which are explicitly stated throughout the findings and interpretations.

For art education this literature will be another example of a women’s artist organization that functions as a community arts program by collaborating with local schools and as an example of women artists organizing and making their way in the world as artists despite
discriminatory obstacles and as an example of careers in the arts for both the female and male art student. For the discipline of women’s studies, this paper will serve as another source of feminist praxis, illustrating where and how action reflects and supports feminist theory as well as contributing to the documentation of women’s lives and experiences.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As an undergraduate senior in art history at a small, private institution in Texas, I hardly noticed that women artists were rarely mentioned in my textbooks or classes. It was only after graduation when someone said to me “art history is a woman’s subject,” that I stopped to consider the role of women in art. Despite the number of women who study art history and who are portrayed in art, I learned of very few women artists in school. It was then that I realized I had not so much as even asked the question, “Where are all the women artists?” Some years later, I had the opportunity to take a class on women artists, which inspired my interest in women’s art, feminist theory, and joining the movement to continue the search for women artists (Chadwick, 1990; Congdon, 1991; Nochlin, 1971; Pollock, 1988).

For my master’s thesis, I investigated gender ratios in contemporary art museum collections and curatorial staff to determine if a relationship existed between the two (Hallmark, 2000). The results for seven Florida museums showed that the gender of the executive staff did not affect how the museum’s collection represented women artists. I was surprised with the outcome and began to consider how the power of dominant institutional systems can be stronger than that of individuals (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Hartmann, 1981; Humm, 1990). My inquiry into the status of women artists and why the art world has undervalued their work from museum exhibition (Chadwick, 1990; Heartney, 1987; Lippard, 1976) to art education (Collins, 1977; Congdon, 1991) is personal. Upon reflection, I wonder how my often-timid studio experience and disconnected art history learning might have been different if women artists were included in the curriculum. With this research, my goal is to contribute to the documentation of women artists’ experiences, and thereby contribute to the canon, serving as an example for students in art education. Additionally, my goal is to contribute to the praxis in women’s studies by making connections between feminist theory and action (Humm, 1990).

Research Statement

In reaction to sexist attitudes and discrimination, U.S. women throughout the twentieth century have organized to create their own communities and collaborated to provide exhibition opportunities, education, and employment for the female artist (Briggs, 1932; Guerrilla Girls,
An upsurge of groups and collectives cropped up in the late 1960s through the late 1970s (Garrard, 1994). Artists reviewed the nature of the political organization of women artists during the 1970s Women’s Liberation Movement, which resulted in a movement of their own, the Feminist Art Movement (Brodsky, 1994; Chadwick, 1990; Lippard, 1976).

Many feminist organizations were short-lived and with the change of government administration the movement started to wane in the early 1980s (Evans, 2003). I wondered what existed for women artists today, which prompted a search for spaces designed by and for women artists. I discovered an all-woman artist retreat established by four women artists that has been operating as a studio, educational forum, and an exhibition space since the early 1970s. My curiosity was peaked and I began an inquiry process to discover the nature of this woman’s space.

**Research Questions**

Qualitative research requires that the researcher maintain an open mind throughout the process of the study (Peshkin, 2001). I initiated this research with the question, “What is the nature of one woman-centered art space, the Women’s Studio Workshop?” As I entered the Women’s Studio Workshop (WSW), I recognized my perspective and how that affected my perceptions and expectations, meanwhile maintaining an open mind about what I might find there. The review of literature outlines my theoretical framework, the history of women’s oppression in art, art education, and society, the history of women’s artist’s organizations, and critical response to woman-centered spaces. This review guided my initial supporting questions, which were refined throughout the research process as other unsuspected themes emerged. The following questions were developed and refined throughout the research process:

1. Do the women artists feel that their verbal expression is different being in an all-woman space?
2. How is community defined within the context of the workshop?
3. How do the artists perceive the generational differences between them?
4. How do the artists perceive their involvement with the WSW in relation to personal empowerment and social justice?
5. Do the artists perceive this separatist, woman-only art space as a good thing for women artists?
6. What is my role as a feminist researcher and how does my perspective affect my inquiry and outcomes of the research?

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to bring to the forefront the lives and experiences of women artists within one context, the Women’s Studio Workshop (WSW). In order to ensure that women artists have equal inclusion in the canon, researchers must record their lives and work (Sandell & Collins, 1997; Korzenik, 1990; Nochlin, 1971). For the general public, the stories and the culture of the WSW may provoke thoughts about the lives and challenges that all women face. For the academic audience, I propose that this study will provide opportunities for educators in art education to have additional examples of women artists working in alternative environments. Lastly, I propose that I have contributed to women’s studies praxis by making connections between action and theory.

**Implications for Art Education**

Dewey (1926) argued that our identity is formed as we experience and interact with the world and in that context and that the development of individuality is largely the responsibility of the teacher. Martinez Alemán (2002) explained that teachers, subconsciously or consciously, have ideas about gender and knowledge that affect how students learn. Rich (1985) declared that the teacher is accountable for providing opportunities that encourage self-realization through activities that connect to a student’s interests. Therefore, it is important for art educators to present a diverse representation of artists, materials, and processes in the classroom (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Congdon, 1991; Garber, 1996; Hicks, 1992).

Until the Women’s Liberation Movement, female art students were forced to identify with male artists (Collins, 1977; Congdon, 1991; Lippard, 1976). Lippard (1976) stated that it is important to provide examples of women artists for young students, “so that they see women in museums, the history books, so that their own progress does not seem utterly impossible” (p. 143). Furthermore, art educators agreed that female students need role models in order to learn about the lives and experiences of women to develop an understanding of women’s culture in art (Congdon, 1991; Sandell, 1991, 1999). Discovering the meaning of how and why women collaborate to create art serves the art education community by providing examples for the female art student (Collins & Sandell, 1997; Condgon, 1991; Hicks, 1992).
Korzenik (1990) suggested that the field of art education reflects a male-identified curriculum and agenda. She proposed that women art educators have two choices. They can either accept the status quo or look to their own lives, experiences, and truths to make meaning for students. She further asserted that, “It seems time to hypothesize and test out what might be true and useful to women, the underrepresented majority. Women ought to be asking whether art education’s ways of researching find out enough [to] tell women’s truths” (Korzenik, 1990, p. 48).

From 1947 to 1958, female art educators outnumbered male art educators 3 to 1 in the National Art Education Association (Lovano-Kerr, Semler, & Zimmerman, 1977). However, the male art educators dominated the field until recent years in leadership roles, higher education faculty positions, and in academic publishing (Harris, 1973; Korzenik, 1990; Lovano-Kerr, 1975; Packard, 1974). Since the 1970s, women art educators questioned inequities in their own field, revealing that art education has also undervalued the role of women from professional positions to their inclusion in curriculum. Scholars set about suggesting several ways to change the status for the female art student and the female artist, from our young girls in the elementary classroom to scholars in the academy (Collins & Sandell, 1997; Hicks, 1992; Korzenik, 1990).

Saccá (1989) called for a restructuring of art education to reflect the attitudes, values, and achievements of women. She concluded, “The only way we will be able to make women visible and accomplish lasting change will be through reorganizing the field. This is a reform of art education worth pursuing” (p. 126). Pariser & Zimmerman (1990) observed that indeed scholars have considered feminist theory within art education, developed feminist art criticism, and connected the larger feminist art movement to art education. Yet, Pariser & Zimmerman noted that there is still a need for both quantitative and qualitative research in the field of art education and gender issues. Lastly, Frueh and Raven (1991) connected the importance of deconstructing the field of art education to society at large, “if art education does not change, neither will gender biases in the larger art community” (p. 7).

**Implications for Women’s Studies**

In this study, the line between art education and women’s studies is blurred. Pollock (1988) warned that merely adding women artists to the canon of art history does not change how we value art. She explicated that writing women into the history of art leaves the discipline unchanged in its current patriarchal structure of divisions, categories, and hierarchy. The role of
women’s studies is more than simply investigating the lives and experiences of women. Rather, it is to challenge the systems that have positioned men in dominance over women (Hicks, 1992; Humm, 1990). According to Pollock (1988), feminist scholars should examine the politics of knowledge within art history, including the lives and social conditions of women artists. Pollock described the disconnected nature with this type of research isolating the study within the parameters of a sociological study, without affecting the art world. Therefore, in feminist art criticism, we should not only critique the object or type of women’s art production, or merely add women artists to the canon, but we must also consider why women produce those kinds of objects and how social institutions, such as the family, education, economy, and politics affect that production (Pollock, 1988).

Feminist scholars initiated women’s studies, in part, to position women in academic study, from a social and historical perspective, in every way that men are studied (Rich, 1985). Additionally, the discipline of women’s studies serves to investigate the oppression of women within a patriarchal and capitalist society (Humm, 1990). Rich (1985) called for women’s studies as a discipline, a feminist approach to understanding the individual student and situating students within their own contextual perspective, which gives students an awareness of themselves allows them to take themselves more seriously:

Believing that there is a unique quality of validation, affirmation, challenge, support, that one woman can offer another; believing in the value and significance of women’s experience, traditions, perceptions; thinking of ourselves seriously, not as one of the boys, not as neuters, or androgynes, but as women….I would suggest that not biology, but ignorance of ourselves, has been the key to our powerlessness. (p. 24)

To live, think, create, and express like a woman in a man’s world is difficult (Irigaray, 1971; Showalter, 1998; Wolff, 1990; Zimmerman, 1981). In order to do so, a woman must be critical of language, the arts, the sciences, and all aspects of society both public and private that reveal clues and signs of oppression (Rowbotham, 1973, 1999) and spaces for freedom and creativity (Showalter, 1998). Rich (1985) claimed that through this critique, women will begin to find themselves, reveal knowledge, make connections, and discover a reality that is woman-identified. As teachers and students create this reality women can begin to change social
conditions, where categories, such as gender (de Beauvoir, 1952), do not adversely affect life opportunities.

The second-generation feminist movement encouraged women to look at their private lives as relevant in the process of understanding male and female relations (Rowbotham, 1973, 1999). Since the 1970s, feminist scholars continued to call on women to write women’s history (Congdon, 1991; Naples, 2003; Reinharz, 1992; Rowbotham, 1973). Scholars recognize that being a woman does not assume that she will take a feminist approach to research and that indeed, there are men who have proven to be feminist scholars (Rowbotham, 1973). However, feminist researchers who are also women may have the ability to reveal the private side of life previously unrecognized or undervalued to which men may not have access (Rowbotham, 1999). She claimed that women studying women allows for the possibility of getting to the private lives of women:

The women’s liberation movement has insisted that all aspects of female experience be recognized, considered, and redefined….oral history can cut right through this, especially when one woman is talking to another woman, because this could make it easier to talk about things that a man would not always notice. (Rowbotham, 1999, p. 31)

Engaging in feminist praxis in research that is working for social change is important in a progressive feminist agenda (Humm, 1990; Rowbotham, 1999). Some feminist scholars think that all types of feminist research should combine action and theory (Naples, 2003; Reinharz, 1992). I made connections between the actions of the workshop and theory in an effort to contribute to the ongoing development of feminist scholarship (McLaren, 2002). I also participated through volunteerism in an effort to contribute to the WSW (Reinharz, 1992, Naples, 2003).

Sandell (1991) explained that the two academic disciplines of art education and women’s studies are both undervalued areas of study:

….suffering the stigma that art is feminine, a frill, and unimportant in this culture, the art learner has needs similar to those of women: needs for connected teaching and learning. Art learners may face the same problem at the root of awakening women students: the
validation of their own perceptions in choosing and interpreting their education. (p. 184)

The undervaluation of art education and women’s studies are both frequently linked to the connection to female qualities. Women’s lives, experiences, and aesthetics are deemed less important in the academy and in society at large. The discipline of women’s studies and woman-centered research is indeed a natural and needed endeavor in the arts. White (1976) stated that “Women’s studies in art history will help us to become aware of past external and internal barriers, real and perceived, that made it impossible for women to be as productive or as competent in the visual arts as men” (p. 342). The Women’s Studio Workshop itself is a space where women’s studies, art, and education are interwoven components working together. This space presented itself as an ideal environment to explore the dynamics of women artists learning, creating, and collaborating on their own and where I hoped to gain insight into the fundamental ways women talk, interact, and feel about art and being artists in a woman-centered residential workshop. The process of recording the experiences of women is important for the inclusion of a female perspective in building a historical framework for the canon of art history and the curriculum of art education (Collins, 1995; Pollock, 1988).

**Research Design**

My questions are qualitative in nature in that I searched for personal and contextual meanings within one space. I conducted my study using an ethnographic design relying on a hybrid of strategies from scholars in art education, sociology, anthropology and women’s studies (T. Anderson, 2000; Eisner, 1997; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Mead 1928/2001; Naples, 2003; Reinharz, 1992). However, the essential framework for my strategy is inspired by T. Anderson’s (2000) approach of immersion and response, description, analysis, and thematic interpretation. In practical terms, I went into the field for three visits over the course of 18 months. During these visits, I underwent observation (Eisner, 1997), participation in the daily routine of the workshop and in special events (Reinharz, 1992), and engaged in formal interviews and intimate dialog (Mead, 1977; Seidman, 1998), which together shaped this story of the Women’s Studio Workshop. I also emulated the work of feminist anthropologist and writer, Margaret Mead, who studied women’s ways before they were considered worthy of scholarly research. Mead went out into the field and captured the essence of everyday life and experience for the adolescent girl in *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928, 2001). She immersed herself in the culture and learned about
such things as education, the Samoan household, girls and their friends, a girl’s role in the community and conflicts that adolescent girls encounter.

**Key Terms**

**Academy**: The institutional system of higher education.

**Aesthetics**: There are four issues that dominate feminist theory in relation to art and aesthetics: 1. the marginalization of women, 2. the female aesthetic, 3. the feminine in art, and 4. the systems that determine inclusion or exclusion from the canon, which signifies all the arenas that define a successful artist, such as inclusion in art historical materials, museum and gallery exhibition, recognition by institutions through honors and awards, and faculty art positions (Andermahr, Lovell, & Wolkowitz, 1997; Chadwick, 1990; Collins, 1977; Congdon, 1991; Garber, 1992).

**Agency**: A person’s source of power to act independently. Agency is feminism’s founding claim that originated by recognizing the social positioning of women and their lack of power to act independently, particularly related to not having the right to vote (Andermahr, Lovell, & Wolkowitz, 1997).

**Alternative Art Spaces**: A term used prominently when referring to the Alternative Space Movement of the 1970s, organized by feminist artists to promote women artists in exhibition. Alternative spaces included bars, hallways, public buildings, community centers, and other spaces that do not typically function as art galleries (Brodsky, 1994).

**Art World**: Based on Danto’s (1964) definition of the art object that situates the meaning of the object within a contextual setting, the art world refers only to a select group, culture or system that inscribes the meaning and value of art.

**Backlash**: A term coined by Susan Faludi to characterize the political shift from liberalism to staunch conservatism and the subsequent decline of the feminist movement in the 1980s and 1990s (Andermahr, Lovell, & Wolkowitz, 1997). Backlash denotes the attempt of the conservative movement to silence women, to erase gained freedoms and victories from the 1970s liberation movement (Evans, 2003).

**Canon**: Works of visual art that are heralded in the art world by inclusion in mainstream art historical material and museum exhibition and collections.

**Capitalism**: The current economic system in the United States that places the means of production in private possession. Marxist analysis of a capitalist system recognizes
exploitative conditions for the worker, but fails to identify the varied and complex role of women in the economy. However, feminist theorists acknowledge the role of capitalism as integral to patriarchy and its role in the perpetuation of oppression for women (de Beauvoir, 1952; Hartmann, 1981; Humm, 1990).

Collective: An organized group working together toward common goals. Collectives served women through the development of a feminist consciousness, inspiring much of feminist activism and theory (Evans, 2003; Humm, 1990). Collectives ranged from neighborhood child-care co-ops to radical feminist action groups on university campuses (Evans, 2003).

Communities of Women: Groups of women from the radical and lesbian feminist movements who created cites of female confinement, empowerment, and relationship. They were small-scale experiments of women-only communal living as part of the second-generation women’s liberation movement. Many of these communities were short-lived, while just a few have been sustained (Andermahr, Lovell, & Wolkowitz, 1997).

Community: Group of people unified through common experience, culture, family, friends, or physical space. Community denotes the organization of small groups that “serves less as a descriptive term than to mobilize a sense of belonging, but also by the same token, to exclude” (Andermahr, Lovell, & Wolkowitz, 1997, p. 32).

Community Study: A sociological term that references an empirical and typically ethnographic study of a community of people (Jary & Jary, 1991).

Consciousness-Raising: Within the context of the second-wave feminist movement, initially consciousness-raising referred to the process of verbal examination of women’s lives and experiences within a collective. This process led to positioning women in relationship to the dominant culture, which led to the development of feminist action and subsequent theory (Humm, 1990).

Contextualism: Within the visual arts, contextualism works largely in response to the opposing formalist tradition, which supports “art for art’s sake.” Anderson & Milbrandt (2005) stated that, “contextualists believe that the meaning and worth of art can be determined only in the context in which it is made and used” (p. 86).

Discourse analysis: Institutionalized ways of understanding relationships, activities, and meanings that emerge through language (talk, rules, thoughts, and writing) and influence what people in specific institutions assume to be true (Bodgen & Bilken, 2003).
Emancipation: Largely a first-wave feminist agenda pre-dating the 1930s, emancipation worked to gain equal access for women (Humm, 1990). Emancipation is more complex for women than for other oppressed groups who can more easily imagine a society where they have equal status, resources, and access in society (Rowbotham, 1973).

Established Artist: Defined by the Women’s Studio Workshop as a woman artist who has a level of competency with her materials and processes that are evaluated based on education, exhibition, and sale of her work. The workshop designs short and long-term residencies for established artists to fit the needs of the individual.

Feminist: Describes a person, theory, or concept that ascribes to the basic tenets of feminism, which at the least, is focused on women’s experiences and the liberation of women from a socio-historically oppressed condition. There is not one agreed upon agenda and to adopt mass media’s broad conception of feminism as “women want to be equal to men,” oversimplifies a diverse and complex issue that intersects with other social identities including race and economics (hooks, 1984). Feminism relates to the experiences of women as subjects, a perspective that has historically been ignored (Hein, 1990). Early feminist theory (de Beauvoir, 1952) was based on a socially constructed dualism of gender to deconstruct how and why there are inequities between the sexes. Contemporary theorists (Audi, 1995; Evans, 2003; Garber, 1996; Hartmann, 1981; hooks, 1984; Rowbotham, 1973) recognize that gender is deeply embedded in a multitude of social relations that constitute complex identity, such as: race, class, sexual orientation, religion, disability, geography, family, and education.

Feminist Art Movement: Referring to the unification of feminist artists as an offshoot of the 1970s second-wave feminist movement, resulting in a defined feminist aesthetic in visual art, the alternative space movement, a re-visionary process of art history, feminist art criticism, and a heightened awareness of the historical under-representation of women artists (Brodsky, 1994; Chadwick, 1990; Congdon, 1991; Nemser, 1975).

Gender: Category designation based on a socially constructed concept of what it means to be feminine or masculine (de Beauvoir, 1952).

Gynocriticism: Coined by feminist literary scholar Elaine Showalter (1998) to describe the critique of women’s writings from a point of view that situates their writings, hence their use of language, in a tradition related to their gender, much in the way academia defines
African American writings, Canadian writings, and Anglo-Indian writings. Feminists use gynocriticism to critique women’s writings to elicit female creativity, a path of individual and collective female career, and rules of a female literary tradition (Humm, 1990).

Intern Artist: (emerging artist) Defined by the Women’s Studio Workshop as a woman artist recently graduated with a BFA and under the age of 30. Intern artists are full time staff members during a six-month residency.

Liberal Feminism: A first-wave tradition established by the suffrage feminists who worked for equality between men and women without questioning the current social systems, resulting in small changes toward equality that were easily absorbed into current capitalist patriarchal systems without changing the systemic structures of oppression (Rowbotham, 1973).

Liberation: A second-wave feminist agenda that calls for relieving women from an oppressive condition by changing the systems that perpetuate patriarchal dominance over women (Humm, 1990).

Patriarchy: Male-identified social, economic, and political systems that oppress women. Whether a society is capitalist, socialist, or feudal, patriarchy works within each to achieve its agenda (Hartmann, 1981). Feminists offer varied theories of how these social systems work together, but agree that together they strengthen oppressive conditions (Daly, 1973; Humm, 1990; McLaren, 2002; Rowbotham, 1973). A patriarchal system also stratifies men based on divisions of race and class, however the overriding unification of their sex holds dominion over women (Hartmann, 1981).

Praxis: The combination of theory and practice, resulting in action toward the liberation for women, which generally occurs in small consciousness-raising groups (Rowbotham, 1973). Many contemporary feminists recognized the necessity of praxis for a progressive movement, and that theory follows practice (Humm, 1990; Schapiro, 2000).

Radical Feminism: The 1970s feminist slogan, “The personal is political” is the catch phrase for the radical feminist movement and contributed to the shift in political consciousness that included a focus on biological gender differences, especially those issues related to reproduction. Radical feminism examines the sexist nature of language and recognizes the very words that they have to choose from are male-identified, limiting women’s ability for full verbal expression to describe their own experiences (McLaren, 2002).
Radical feminism questions a woman’s destiny in the dominant culture and how social structures and relationships within those systems shape the development of a woman’s role and identity. Radical feminism aims to deconstruct and re-conceptualize institutional structures that will include women based on their individuality and experiences rather than trying to fit women equally into a male-identified structure (Humm, 1990).

Second-Wave Feminist Movement: The first-wave ended in the 1920s after the suffrage movement (Evans, 2003; Rosen, 2000). After women gained the right to vote, the feminist movement continued to exist, but dwindled, becoming latent and unrecognized by the general public (Evans, 2003). The second-wave feminist movement initiated when a group of women participating in the Civil Rights movement encountered sex discrimination within their activist groups (Rosen, 2000). Recognizing the irony of receiving unequal treatment from a group fighting for civil liberties, they left the movement to start their own activism for equality (Evans, 2003; Rosen, 2000). Weinman Lear coined the term second-wave to mark a theoretical shift in the 1970s from minimizing the differences between women and men to celebrating a woman-centered perspective (Evans, 2003; Humm, 1990; Rosen, 2000).

Sex: Assignment based on the biological categorization of an individual’s sexual reproductive organs.

Socialist Feminism: A combination of radical feminism (focus on the difference of sex) and Marxist feminism (focus on economy), addressing both the struggle against patriarchy and capitalism (Hartmann, 1981; McLaren, 2002). Socialist feminist theories aim to understand women’s oppression by considering how these systems work together equally (Hartmann, 1981). Socialist feminists view postmodernism as a threat to this agenda due to the rejection of a hegemonic power structure. They assert that we must be able to identify the normative power structures in order to emancipate the oppressed from dominant systems (McLaren, 2002).

Woman: A socially constructed identity for females (de Beauvoir, 1952). Some contemporary feminist scholars reject the term entirely as it denotes an oppositional identity to that of man, asserting that we must deny such dualities (Humm, 1990). The word, woman, is a sign, “historically variable ideological construction of meaning for a sign W*O*M*A*N, which is produced by and for another social group” (Pollock, 1992, p. 255).
Woman-centered: A view that embraces the differences of women and men, encouraging the investigation of women’s experiences as a valid topic of study. A woman-centered perspective suggests that those values be translated to the greater society (Humm, 1990).

Women’s Studies: Academic discipline that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as part of the Women’s Liberation Movement. The core principle is the examination of power and gender in every facet of public and private life, including an investigation of other academic disciplines that have historically excluded women’s history and experiences (Humm, 1990).

Summary

Faced with discrimination based on their gender, women artists struggled throughout history to participate in the Western art world (Chadwick, 1990; Collins & Sandell, 1984; Zimmerman, 1981). In response to the lack of opportunities, women artists have collaborated to create a space for art production and exhibition in the United States for more than a century (Briggs, 1932; Skiles, 1975; Sturken, 1978). The Women’s Studio Workshop is one example of a woman’s artist community that emerged in the early 1970s and continues today to provide support, education, exhibition, employment, and empowerment to women artists. This study is a qualitative examination of this woman-centered art space.

In that context, it was my pursuit in this research to contribute to the documentation of women artist’s lives and experiences. Orenstein (1975) urged feminist scholars in art “to document art history in the making through bibliographies, articles, books, new text books, videotapes, films of artists, exhibitions, panel discussions, conferences, and the creation of museums and galleries where women can exhibit their work” (p. 525). Collins (1998) recommended that scholars construct a progressive feminist theory from the ground up, resulting from observing women’s practices. In that spirit, I undertook an ethnographic investigation of the workshop to document the experiences of the women artists in an effort to contribute to the canon, to bring additional examples of potential role models to the art education classroom, and to make connections between action and theory in women’s lives and feminist theory.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review begins by outlining the theoretical framework that together with my personal perspective was the foundation that guided my understanding and perceptions throughout the research process. I reviewed literature that considers how varied systems affect the construction of gender, including economic, biological, historical, social, and racial. I further investigated the literature that delves into the nature of language acquisition and how communication is different between the sexes, classes, and races. This review led to the link between language and knowledge acquisition, which is linked directly to access to societal opportunities.

Using Danto’s (1964) theory of the art world as a point of departure, I researched the fluid meaning of art related to its socio-historical context. This leads into an overview of how and why women artists have been historically excluded from art world institutions. In response to these exclusions, feminist artists and arts educators took action in a variety of ways by establishing women’s artist advocacy groups and organizations, through educational forums and publications, and by organizing art exhibitions for women artists. The literature revealed that women artists banded together in support of each other’s work for more than one hundred years. In the late 1960s and early 1970s an increased number of women’s artist organizations emerged with the support of the Women’s Liberation Movement occurring at the same time. Women created communities that existed separately from mainstream society. These communities were both criticized and heralded by women artists and arts scholars.

Theoretical Framework

I developed the foundation for my theoretical lens first by recognizing my perspective as a woman, artist, writer, and a middle-class Caucasian with an esoteric and privileged educational background. I relied on multiple theories to formulate my foundation, including philosophical frameworks within socialist and radical feminisms, postmodernism, and poststructuralism. Varied theories that consider the conception of gender, language, and knowledge acquisition, establish the groundwork for my understanding of how and why women artists have been undervalued. From this perspective, I address the intertwining systems that perpetuate oppression
for women and the complexities of privilege and access among people, including race and economics (Evans, 2003; hooks, 1985; Rosen, 2000). I begin with a socialist feminist viewpoint.

A socialist feminist viewpoint investigates how multiple systems contribute to women’s oppression, including capitalism, patriarchy, and racism (Weedon, 1997). Biology is important within a historical and social context. Although gender is the area under primary investigation, other social conditions, such as economics and race, are embedded and integral to a fuller understanding of gender construction, knowledge acquisition, and the role of language (hooks, 1984; Rowbotham, 1973). Concerning economics, Hartmann (1981) contended that both a Marxist and a feminist analysis are necessary to fully begin to deconstruct Western patriarchal capitalist societies. She claimed that a Marxist analysis without a feminist critique generally compares women’s status within the economic system and disregards the power structures within the relationships between women and men. She employed a radical feminist standpoint that called for a complete deconstruction of social systems that dominate, exploit, and oppress women. A radical feminist agenda works from the viewpoint that the division of the sexes predates and continues to underlie the division of labor. Hartmann (1981) agreed that a capitalist system is not the cause of women’s oppression; however she recognized how it links with patriarchy to strengthen dominance and control.

The literary work of Virginia Woolf (1929) informs contemporary feminist theory in relation to a woman’s position in economics, politics, access to public spaces, creativity, and production. In *A Room of One’s Own*, Woolf referred to a place where women have the freedom and space to work, with the financial resources for the time to work creatively, fully developing their own geniuses. She recognized the importance of wealth and the lack thereof among women and their potential creativity, questioning the role of foremothers and how they may have contributed to the perpetuation of female poverty.

Social implications that accompany racial designation also inform a woman’s identity (Evans, 2003; Rosen, 2000). hooks (1984) explained that, indeed, African American women experienced and continue to experience sexism, however, their feminist agenda is their own, not a reflection or shadow of Caucasian women’s needs. hooks (1984) asked, “Do women share a common vision of what equality means?” (p. 18). A woman with economic freedom does not face the same obstacles as a woman from the working class who is struggling merely to survive.
A postmodern perspective embraces feminist goals that reject one truth, one reality, a dominant language, canonical systems, one set of principles as applicable to all persons, and grand narratives (Audi, 1995). Postmodernism is a broad term that, at the core, involves a deconstruction of social centers of power, institutional systems, and traditions in an attempt to inform present conditions (Efland, Freedman, & Stuhr, 1996). Postmodernism guides the deconstructive process suggested by many theoretical frameworks (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2004; Efland, Freedman, & Stuhr, 1996). Yet, scholars have feared that a postmodern perspective allows for too many possibilities, without a unified voice or set of beliefs and understandings (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2004; Audi, 1995; McLaren, 2002). Anderson and Milbrandt (2004) suggested that it is the grounding theories, such as feminism, Marxism, and poststructuralism, functioning within a postmodern paradigm, that provide functional philosophical systems.

A poststructuralist standpoint suggests that patriarchal relations are structural, meaning that they reside within institutions and social systems and are not related to an individual’s good or bad intentions (Weedon, 1997). Feminist scholars challenge how and why these institutions exclude women, particularly how useful knowledge is defined and how that knowledge is accessed (Weedon, 1997). Deconstruction begins with the awareness that knowledge is the source of power and control.

Derrida (2002) contended that mainstream hegemonic traditions are not inclusive of the lives and experiences of individuals outside of dominant power structures. He explained that events occur in power centers, such as the economy, sciences, technological intelligence, and public culture establish what become known as the most important events, pushing the other, quieter, private events into the shadows of silence.

In summary, my theoretical foundation is based on a postmodern perspective inclusive of socialist feminist, radical feminist, and poststructuralist theories. I acknowledge the importance of a social feminist perspective as an all-encompassing approach to deconstructing the institutional systems that oppress women (Hartmann, 1981; Humm, 1990). I also embrace a radical feminist agenda that emphasizes and celebrates women’s differences (Humm, 1990; McLaren, 2002). Lastly, I adopt a poststructuralist perspective of language that recognizes that the expression and definition of power resides within language (Derrida, 2002; Foucault, 1970).
Construction of Gender

de Beauvoir (1952) laid the groundwork for contemporary theory in understanding what it means to be a woman, from a historical, psychological, biological, and philosophical analysis, pondering myth and social construction of gendered roles. Her research began with a historical positioning of women in formative societies, revealing a long history of tense relations between the sexes. She described the central power relations in the nomadic tribes as that dealing with their roles as warriors; men observed that they had physical superiority over women, placing them in higher social positions over the women. Both nomadic men and women generally viewed childbirth and young children as a burden and hindrance to their constantly moving lifestyle. Hunters and gatherers established a division of labor by sex; men hunted (outside the home) and women gardened and took care of children (inside the home). Killing for food equated to having dominion over animals and subsequently led the tribe to perceive men to be the stronger sex; taking a life was more valued than giving life.

de Beauvoir (1952) investigated the idea of a matriarchal society, finding that researchers have not proven that female dominated societies actually ever existed. However, researchers discovered matrialineal societies, where the society passed property ownership through women but only as they were legally bound to men, through marriage, or, if not married, through their fathers, brothers, uncles, or other male relatives. She deconstructed religious systems, observing that pre-religious societies showed sexist ideals that kept women and men in their respective roles. The formal organization of religion (most significantly Christianity, Judaism, and Islam) defined gendered roles more explicitly, which lessened women’s rights further. As Christianity became dominant in Europe, laws and regulations that confined women to the home and the church became more prevalent.

de Beauvoir (1952) based her theories and themes on Hegel’s concepts, specifically those related to existentialism and the master/slave relationship (Gauthier, 1997). Gauthier (1997) examined de Beauvoir’s use of the master/slave relationship as an analogy for woman as slave or the other. Ironically, Hegelian theories that feminist scholars relied on for foundational twentieth century theory are patriarchal in nature (Gauthier, 1997). Indeed, Hegel held distinctly patriarchal views of the family and that women’s work was not suited for public arenas (Saul, 2003).
Although de Beauvoir (1952) was critical of a strictly Marxist analysis, she did acknowledge the power relations within economics throughout history. The richest man had the greatest control over woman; he owned his wife as he owned his property and had the financial means to isolate her from the public sphere. In contrast, the serf and his wife worked side-by-side in the fields and together they owned nothing. Economics was intimately tied to the oppression of women (Hartmann, 1981).

de Beauvoir (1952) talked about gendered power relations in terms of immanence and transcendence, a theory that contemporary feminist scholars continue to consider. She assigned immanence to the life and activities of women; mired with the daily chores of life, confined by their daily duties as prescribed by society, religion, and their roles as daughters, wives, and mothers. This daily life kept them too busy for things such as intellect, dreams, and philosophy, which were achieved only through transcendence. de Beauvoir assigned transcendence to the intellectual activities for men; since women take care of men’s daily needs, they have the time and opportunity to sit and ponder the meaning of life. de Beauvoir concluded that biological sex is determined at birth but indeed society defines and shapes the gendered role of woman.

Feminist scholars continue to rely on de Beauvoir’s foundation of theoretical work that identifies the role of woman as a mere reflection of society’s conception of the acceptable female. Rowbotham (1973) maintained that society is a set of hierarchical mirrors that reflects varying social positions based on gender, race, and economic class. She claimed that the socialization process is unseen and embedded in our lives to such a degree that in order for a female to recognize the development of her woman consciousness, she must delve deep into the recesses of her memories as a young girl. Rowbotham (1973) reinforced de Beauvoir’s conception of woman as the other, and contended that every time a woman expresses her experience to a man, he compares that to his own similar experience, which he views as normal and hers as other.

An important element of the social construction of gender is the rejection of the widely accepted Freudian psychoanalytic theory, particularly as it relates to sexual identity and man’s experience as normal and woman’s as other (Rowbotham, 1973). Horney (1924/1967) was the first scholar to publish an argument challenging Freud’s conception of a woman’s psychosexual development. Freud theorized that it is normal for a female to undergo penis envy and feelings of castration as she recognizes the lack of the phallus. Horney countered that Freud’s theory reflects
male narcissism and self-absorption, rather than reflecting on the character or experience of females and wondered why a female might miss something that she did not have in the first place. She offered a sociological line of reasoning for the psychosocial development of the female sexual identity as neurotic and dependent. Horney concluded that the oppressive conditions of the social world endorse gendered patterns in psychosexual development.

Miller (1976) suggested that we divide the order of socially acceptable psychological responses and developmental stages by gender; assuming that men are dominant and strong, while women are subordinate and weak. She asserted that society discourages feelings such as vulnerability, weakness, and helplessness for men, while nurturing those feelings in women even though they naturally reside within both genders. This socialized positioning enables men to easily maintain dominance over women in everyday interactions.

Daly (1973) equated the idea of a women’s position in society to that of a social and economic caste system. She proclaimed that in order for the system to continue and grow, both the oppressive and dominant groups must function accordingly. The oppressed female class supports this system due to an all-encompassing socialization process that begins at birth and is reinforced by nearly every social institution including educational, religious, and political. The socialization process is so integrated that it goes largely undetected although present and reinforced by, “parents, friends, teachers, text book authors, illustrators, advertisers, those who control mass media, toy and clothes manufacturers, and professionals such as doctors and psychologists” (Daly, 1973, p. 2).

In the opening lines of her poem, Savior, Cixous (2001) wrote about a woman’s paradoxical position of having the tools to participate fully in society while being prohibited from actually using those tools: “myopia was her fault, her lead, her imperceptible native veil. Strange: she could see that she could not see, but she could not see clearly” (p.3). Cixous used myopia metaphorically to describe the near sightedness that prevents women from seeing the big picture of society, subsequently restricting them from equal participation. Yet, she clarified that women must participate in the system that oppresses them in order for the oppression to continue. An oppressed position must exist in order to define the oppressor.

In summary, I explored feminist theories that suggest and support that gender is socially-constructed, beginning at birth, and deeply-rooted in the history of our social relations, which is
reflected in the oppressive conditions prescribed for women based on gender (Daly, 1973; De Beauvoir, 1952; Horney, 1924; Miller, 1976; Rowbotham, 1973).

**Language**

Language and the origins of knowledge are not fixed or zero sum, rather they are fluid and multiple, located in the very process of naming that distinguishes humans from other animals (Baker, 1990). As described by Wolff (1990), there are three major factors that led to a male-identified language that subordinates women: 1. institutional history, particularly the academy, 2. linguistics, how women and men communicate differently, including word selection, hand gestures, tonal qualities, and voice levels, and 3. academic methods, historically speaking how the social sciences studied men’s experiences and knowledge, making generalities about both sexes based on those findings.

Poststructuralist theorists claim that language is the central power structure (Derrida, 2002; Foucault, 1970; Weedon, 1997). Weedon (1997) explained that language, “is the place where social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested” (p. 21). At the core of poststructuralist theory is Saussure’s sign. Each sign is divided into two arbitrary parts, a signifier (either a sound or written symbol) and the signified (the meaning), which is clarified by using the word and meaning of *woman*:

If we take the example of ‘woman,’ Saussure’s theory implies that the meaning of ‘woman,’ or the qualities identified as womanly, are not fixed by a natural world and reflected in the term ‘woman,’ but socially produced within language, plural and subject to change. (Weedon, 1997, p. 23)

Foucault (1970) addressed the political nature of language, analyzing the relationship between knowledge and discourse as an ultimate reflection of power. The symbol system of language prescribed by the dominant culture defines the world within which we live. He stated, “in every culture, between the use of what one might call the ordering codes and reflections upon order itself, there is the pure experience of order and of its modes of being” (Foucault, 1970, p. 441). According to Foucault, other orders are developed and subsist within the hegemonic cultural order, which reflect other cultures, groups, and codes that are unknown to the general order. McLaren (2002) observed that Foucault’s theories mirror a radical feminist standpoint, in that they “both reject traditional liberal conceptions of power, both endorse an expanded
definition of the political, both focus on material institutions and practices, and both recognize
the power of language and representation to shape reality” (p. 8).

Language changes meaning with socio-historical context (Daly, 1973). Berger (1972) claimed that our observations and experiences define the world around us and subsequently who we are in that world, and only through language can we verify the world and ourselves, “our vision is continually active, continually moving, continually holding things in a circle around itself, constituting what is present to us as we are” (p. 9). Furthermore, Berger said that once we recognize what we are seeing, we can then know that we are seen. This unspoken reciprocal validation of existence is more profound than any verbal explanation may proffer.

Based on the empirical philosophy of John Locke, Berger (1972) asserted that language is a mere substitute for images and ideas. As language verifies existence, the meaning of objects, ideas, people, places, and things change with the simple alteration of word selection or order. He applied this concept of language to the art object, “The art of the past no longer exists as it once did. Its authority is lost. In its place there is a language of images. What matters now is who uses the language and for what purposes” (Berger, 1972, p. 33). Berger described the ways of seeing as a tool for asserting our own existence in the world. “Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak….it is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it” (p. 7). He contended that the relationship between what we know and what we see is always uncertain.

Rowbotham (1973) explicated the idea that the oppressed group is silent in the dominant language, only speaking out within the realm of its own subculture, with its own sub-language. She explained, “The underground language of people who have no power to define and determine themselves in the world develops its own density and precision” (Rowbotham, 1973, p. 32). She explained how the lines of social stratification, race, class, education, and geographic region change the power structures of language. For instance, the power of language comes into play when unions strike and the media exploits workers as uneducated, or when a middle class teacher interacts negatively with a student from a low-income family. Rowbotham conceded the power structure of language between the economic classes but contended that the boundaries of dialect present in gender are deeper and internalized, less obvious to society. Rich (1985) made this point when she described the female student struggling for self expression within the
academy, “Listen to a woman groping for language in which to express what is on her mind, sensing that the terms of academic discourse are not her language” (p. 27).

The Nushu language is an example of a language created by and for a subculture that resided in the Pumei Village in China. Prohibited from education and literacy in all forms until recent generations, the women of the Pumei Village created a secret language of writing, which they used to communicate with one another (Cody, 2004). The language was passed on from one generation of women to another for centuries, comprised of 670 to 1500 words of creative flowery elongated letters it remained an underground method of communication between the women of the Pumei Village until the twentieth century (Cody, 2004).

Based on her work in linguistics and psychoanalysis with Jacques Lacan, Irigaray (1971) deconstructed the nuances of language between men and women from a psychoanalytic perspective, asserting that men and women speak differently; therefore, they write and express themselves differently. Moreover, she explained that women must contend with a language that is male-identified, riddled with sexist overtones and terms of dominance and oppression. She recommended that women can overcome these limitations by embracing their sex and writing from the body, maintaining a female consciousness with careful word selection.

Wolff (1990) suggested that there is such a thing as a woman’s sentence. She described feminine writing or feminine art as an expression of women’s experiences directly related to being female. Women artists such as Ana Mendieta, Hannah Wilke, Cindy Sherman, Yong Soon Min, and Nancy Spero used the body and their experiences as women in their art (Frueh, 1994). Yet, Wolff cautioned against a generalized category of “women’s art,” as women are a diverse group of people and the mere designation of “woman” is not sufficient to describe who they are as people or as artists. Rather, she suggested that art or writing by women who actively engage their female consciousness into their work will have a feminine flavor to it.

Yet, women cannot create an entirely new language and continue to function within mainstream society (Rowbotham, 1973). As Saul (2003) pointed out, a new language to express women’s culture would result in the emergence of many languages to reflect the multiple lives and experiences of women. Rather, she suggested engaging a heightened consciousness and critique of the dominant language while carefully finding a way to function within it at the same time (Irigaray, 1971; Rowbotham, 1973; Saul, 2003).
In summary, the literature suggested that language reflects the dominant culture and power structure (Derrida, 2002; Foucault, 1970; Rich, 1985; Rowbotham, 1973) and is situated within a socio-historical context (Berger, 1972; Daly, 1973; Vygotsky, 1986) and how varied social structures, particularly those related to gender, are embedded in language and inform meaning (Irigaray, 1971; Rowbotham, 1973). Lastly, the literature revealed that women grapple with a male-identified language (Irigaray, 1971) to express their own experiences and creativity, resulting in a voice that is unique and individual, but distinctly woman-identified (Wolff, 1990).

**Knowledge Acquisition**

Many feminist scholars have investigated gender from an epistemological stance, addressing the implicit and explicit forms of knowledge, both consciously and unconsciously acquired (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1976). Scholars situate mainstream knowledge within the central power structures that define the dominant culture (Rosenberg, 1982; Wolff, 1990), limiting access to knowledge and participation based on gender, race, and economics (Rowbotham, 1973, Rosenberg, 1982).

The socialization process affects how we learn and develop as individuals (Clinchy, 1998; Vygotsky, 1986). Vygotsky (1986) claimed that we learn by first imitating behaviors, then by integrating the concept or practice into our knowledge structure. His theory aligns with feminist theory, which suggests a socialization process of looking, imitating, and adopting social mores and codes of conduct that tells us who we are as women (de Beauvoir, 1952).

Clinchy (1998) identified two kinds of knowledge that women acquire: connected and separate. She described connected knowledge as personal, open, and embracing a perspective that does not challenge authority, justification, or validity of the source. She defined separate knowledge as academic and critical, skeptical of every source and reasoning for new knowledge. Clinchy concluded that connected knowledge is encouraged and nurtured in women while separate knowledge has been less accessible.

Historically, public institutional systems and the process of establishing those systems including the academy, primarily excluded women’s experiences and voices (Wolff, 1990). Wolff explained that men developed the academic disciplines that reflected public areas of knowledge and training for employment in areas such as medicine, banking, education, and engineering. As new industries developed, education followed suit creating new areas of study. As these disciplines developed, a new set of vocabulary was necessary to describe original
techniques, processes, and systems, which were defined by and for men (Wolff, 1990). When the academy started to integrate disciplines that related to women’s experiences and learning, classes were limited to home economics and the domestic sciences (Rosenberg, 1982).

Valian (1999) reviewed the tested differences between girls and boys in the various academic cognitive domains including verbal ability, perceptual speed, and mathematical ability. She theorized that gender differences in various cognitive domains rely on conversational principles that we acquire through socialization. She defined those principles as rules that tell us how much or how little to say in everyday conversation and asserted that females are more sensitive to the nuances in conversation. Valian asserted that the varied approaches and abilities within our conversational abilities connect to how we process other domains, such as math, reading, and writing skills.

Valian (1999) suggested that there is no real difference in verbal cognition between the sexes. Social learning and conversational abilities account for testing differences in academics. She pointed out that although there are a few differences in mathematical achievements between males and females, they are insignificant. Also, studies across cultures and generations show that environmental factors cause differences in math-related abilities. Valian concluded that the socio-historical context has as much influence as biology in the differences of the physical characteristics of language such as voice pitch and aggressiveness.

In The Three Guineas, Woolf (1938) responded to a letter from a male friend who asked her advice about the nature of war. She pondered the influence of a woman’s opinion, considering how a woman’s perspective differs from that of a man, historically, as society has excluded women from nearly every arena in public life, from leisure to economics to politics. She considered how women and men conceive of patriotism differently. Although expressed by both sexes, men and women see the same country through different sets of eyes that are born and nurtured out of different sets of experiences.

For example, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule (1986) pointed to the alternative way that girls are conditioned to learn in private spaces, while society prepares boys for public knowledge. Girls may learn their grandmother’s secret of healing a wound from the windowsill plant, which represents a kind of knowledge that does not fit into the world of Western medicine and is devalued within the hegemonic configuration of mainstream knowledge.
Vygotsky (1986) maintained that language is an integral component to the learning process. He suggested that the acquisition of language is complex, inducing a natural and cultural history, including, “its own series of phases, its own quantitative, qualitative, and functional growth, its own dynamics and laws” (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 61). His view on the complexities of language relates to a feminist analysis that points to language development as socio-historically and contextually linked. Valian (1999) explored brain and cognition theories about women and learning in relation to how we communicate. She discovered that women are more gestural and expressive, but more passive and less likely to interrupt than men, contributing to the silencing of women’s voices. This silencing keeps women from challenging current structures of knowledge, prohibiting their voices and stories from inclusion in the traditional canons (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986).

In summary, knowledge acquisition is related to the socialization process (Clinchy, 1998; Vygotsky, 1986). The literature outlined the role of language in knowledge acquisition and that women are disadvantaged learners within the dominant language and the academy (Valian, 1999). Language reflects the dominant culture and knowledge structure, which was created largely by and for men in the public sphere. Rich (1985) made this point when she described the female student struggling for self expression within the academy, “Listen to a woman groping for language in which to express what is on her mind, sensing that the terms of academic discourse are not her language” (p. 27). In this context, I situated theories of knowledge acquisition within a context of the academy and disciplines as historically male-identified (Rosenberg, 1982).

**The Art World**

Danto (1964) described the art object as a contextual form, which changes meaning based on its socio-historical position. Danto applied this notion of contextual meaning to Andy Warhol’s *Brillo Boxes* (1964), describing how the object changed meaning from one space to the next; at the grocery store it represents a commodity; at the museum the object was elevated to the status of art. Dickie (1997) expanded on Danto’s theory and claimed that the institutional systems, such as museums, galleries, and art schools, within the art world have the power to inscribe meaning. Anderson & Milbrandt (2004) situated the art world within a contextualist perspective that says, “the meaning and worth of art can be determined only in the context in which it is made and used” (p. 86).
Berger (1972) stated that what we know affects what we see. He proffered a list of assumptions that affect how we look at art and change meaning with time and social context: beauty, truth, genius, civilization, form, status, and personal preferences. He explained that it was after the invention of the camera, when artists recognized the traditional, singular perspective that the viewer and image were situated in a specific time and place. The camera dispelled the notion that images are timeless. According to Berger, the camera decentralized the perspective from the self to a multiplicity of perspectives and interpretations, concluding that what we see depends on a contextual time and place.

A postmodern art critique allows for a pluralistic and feminist analysis of aesthetics, opposing a male-identified, hierarchical paradigm within a modernist tradition (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2004; Chadwick, 1990; Congdon, 1991; Pollock 1992). When attempting to consider a woman artist’s perspective within a modernist tradition, she may falter as the male-identified elitist art world defines the norms that categorizes her experience as the other (Pollock, 1992).

As scholars continued to attempt to answer what has become the quintessential question in feminist art history, “Why have there been no great women artists?” (Nochlin 1971, 1988), by way of searching for women artists, a re-writing of art history took hold, introducing previously overlooked women artists into classroom curricula and textbooks (Pollock, 1988). Researchers discovered that women have created art for as long as men yet men have been given the privileged position in art history (Guerrilla Girls, 2004; Nochlin, 1971). Feminist scholars challenged the very definition of the artist as male-identified, suggesting that indeed many more women who create art have not been considered artists, such as quilters and needlepoint workers (Congdon, 1991; Möhrmann, 1985). This is an ongoing process and is difficult to ascertain women’s full contribution to the history of art under the current definition of artist (Möhrmann, 1985). However, even within the modern framework there is evidence of women artists everywhere (Chadwick, 1990; Möhrmann, 1985; Nochlin, 1971).

Whereas a modern perspective limits the canon to the dominant culture of the white, male artist, a postmodern perspective opens the playing field for diverse and multiple meanings of art (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Berger, 1972; Congdon & Blandy, 1991; Danto, 1964). Congdon (1991) urged art educators to embrace a feminist postmodern approach and warned that within a modern paradigm female students are disadvantaged:
When the visible art works created by women are degraded, when they do not have language and visual symbols recognizable as their own….their ability (indeed, everyone’s ability) to freely create and expansively appreciate is greatly thwarted. (Congdon, 1991, p. 16)

In summary, I embrace a contextualist perspective of the art world (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005), originating with Danto’s (1964) conception of the art object having arbitrary meaning dependent on socio-historical context. Furthermore, I recognize Dickie’s (1997) institutional theory connecting the power in the art world to the institutional systems of that world, namely the museums, galleries, and academies. Lastly, a postmodern perspective informs my analysis of art and art production, which calls for a critique that recognizes the life and experiences of the artist as integral to the meaning of the work itself (Congdon, 1991).

**Exclusion from Art World Institutions**

Art world institutions, museums in particular, possess the power to selectively choose who shall be proclaimed an artist and which art works are worthy of exhibition, and critique (Danto, 1964; Duncan, 1989; Guerrilla Girls, 2004). R. Sullivan (1994) explicated that the museum functions as a moral educator, displaying objects that have been designated as having cultural value. In turn, society adopts these objects as the most meaningful cultural objects. Thus, culture, is in part, defined by the museum. He called on museums to recognize their position as moral educators, and to speak confidently about issues on gender and race, concluding that museums have the power to change systemic attitudes and policies about how art and the artist are defined.

Historically, the majority of museum policies and practices have oppressed women and minorities through a hierarchy of media and processes (Springer, 1996). Springer described the mission of the art museum as a patriarchal system, which created a hierarchical structure for the collection, display, and interpretation of art objects. In the modern art tradition, curators classify objects either as high or low art in terms of materials and technique (e.g., quilting as low art or craft and oil painting as high art or fine art). Springer argued that as the museum limits the voice and interpretation of objects, the museum silences the voices of diverse and marginalized groups.

The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, more than any other institution, was instrumental in the development of modernism as seen in exhibitions, acquisitions, and publications (Alloway, 1980). Duncan (1989) critiqued the MoMA and its exhibition practices as
powerful and influential on the art world. She observed that the MoMA routinely excluded women artists from exhibition, determining that the role of women was in the artwork itself as the object for the male viewer. Duncan explained that the abundance of female images, exploited as bodies without personal identification are seen through the male gaze, defining the visual experience for all museum visitors as that of the white male.

Another renowned art institution in the New York art world is the Whitney Museum of American Art. Wolff (1999) reviewed the decline in the number of women artists who exhibited at the Whitney after its original opening in 1931. Prior to the opening, women represented nearly half of artists exhibited at the museum’s predecessors; the Whitney Studio (1914-18), the Whitney Studio Club (1918-28), and the Whitney Studio Galleries (1928-30). Wolff considered the political nature of why the museum warehoused the artwork by women artists after the official museum opening. She noted that the museum also omitted artwork by male artists with a feminine style. Wolff concluded that the Whitney Museum adopted a modernist hierarchical approach to the selection and placement of art in relationship to materials, processes, and subject matter.

Women artists continued to encounter sexist practices at the Whitney Museum for decades. Even after women artists gained admittance to art schools, they still endured sex discrimination in the realm of museum exhibition. H. Anderson (1992) scrutinized the lack of art by women artists in the museum setting, reiterating that although art classrooms excluded women as students until the early twentieth century, women were making art in the margins of society. Yet, in the 1969 Whitney Museum of Art Biennial, women artists represented only 6% of the total artists exhibited (H. Anderson, 1992).

Garrard (1977) reviewed a major historical exhibition of women artists at the Los Angeles County Museum. The exhibition spanned four hundred years of women’s art, and Garrard proclaimed that this was the largest and most scholarly treatment of this theme to date. Art by women was so removed from mainstream museum exhibition that to group the work by merely based on the artist’s sex seemed natural. This is similar to the way cultural museums have categorized African art as one style or ethnic group, rather than by individual artist. Oguibe (1999) asserted that “until recently, works of classical African art were dutifully attributed to the ‘tribe,’ rather than to the individual artist, thus effectively erasing the latter from the narrative spaces of art history” (p. 21).
Although hurdles existed for women artists, one study showed that women increasingly continued to devote their lives to art. Alper, Wassal, Jeffri, Greenblatt, Butcher and Chartrand (1996) conducted a demographic study of National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) funded artists over three decades (1970 to 1990). Analysis of artist surveys and U.S. census data revealed that the percentage of women who reported working full time as artists, increased from 36.4% in 1970 to 56.46% in 1990.

The literature revealed that the museum, defined as an art world institution (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Dickie 1977) is powerful in the process of naming art and the artist (Alloway, 1980; Springer, 1996; R. Sullivan, 1994). Subsequently, museums have limited the exhibition of art by women artists, thereby silencing their voices (Springer, 1996).

Feminist Response to Sex Discrimination in Art Education

Since the 1970s Women’s Liberation Movement, art education scholars conducted research and developed theory about the relationship between feminism, feminist art criticism, feminine art, and art education. Initial research centered on recognizing the status of women within the field of art education. Sexist attitudes and glass ceilings in the universities and museums outraged women arts educators (Packard, 1974). M. Hicks (1974) observed that most of the teachers who attended the national conference for the National Art Education Association (NAEA) were women however the men dominated leadership roles. She conducted a study that revealed indeed, women art educators outnumbered the men 3 to 1 in NAEA membership from 1947 to 1958, yet, by 1977, only 3 women had been elected out of 14 total NAEA Presidential appointments (Hicks, 1974). Packard (1974) expressed frustration with unequal treatment for women in art education, “I get angry when….there is no faculty husband’s club for my spouse to join….and job interviewers repeatedly ask me about family obligations and how they will affect my job performance” (25). Additionally, Zimmerman (1981) pointed to the primarily male-identified nature of the organization when a large art print series funded by the NAEA excluded women artists completely, urging art educators to teach students diverse representation of artists.

Enraged by the inequities they faced within their own field, several women art educators established the Women’s Caucus after an extended debate during an extended panel discussion at the 1974 NAEA conference. The establishment of the Women’s Caucus in the NAEA caused much discourse among art educators. While some women feared negative repercussions that a separatist group might attract, Lovano-Kerr (1975) endorsed the caucus, “I see the NAEA
confronting important issues concerning the status and role of women in art education” (p. 28). The initial goals set forth by the NAEA Women’s Caucus inspired much of the gender-based research in the field of art education that soon followed by outlining these initial goals for art education:

1. To stimulate and encourage research on the status and needs of women in our profession;
2. To educate ourselves and others about discrimination occurring now and about the contributions of women in our profession; and
3. To bring direct action to alter unfavorable situations for women art educators. (Lovano-Kerr, 1975, p. 28)

From that initial agenda, several art educators designed studies to determine the status of women and potential levels of discrimination within art education (Glenn & Sherman, 1983; Lovano-Kerr, Semler, & Zimmerman, 1977; Michael, 1977; Packard, 1977). More than thirty years later, the Women’s Caucus continues as a viable and prominent segment of the NAEA today.

Many art educators employed feminist theory in the quest for new meanings and curriculum that considered a feminist perspective (Collins, 1977; Congdon, 1991, Garber, 1992; Hicks, 1992; Sandell, 1999). Scholars first deconstructed the meaning of art and the examined historical roots of art theory and application. Collins (1977) explained that a modernist and psychoanalytic view of art that developed after the Cold War linked art and the creative process to science innovation, concluding that making art is masculine; if the creative process is deemed masculine, then the materials are hierarchical as well. In response to the general population’s perception of art as feminine, male artists dominating the art world strongly identified their own art production as masculine (Collins, 1977).

Collins (1977) referred to de Beauvoir’s (1952) theory of immanence and transcendence to understand the dualistic nature of art analysis; female art versus male art, art versus artists, and aesthetics versus art education. In Western art, transcendence is compared to the prevailing religious ideology, “a spirit neither resides in, nor comes to inhabit, his [sic] symbols or material works. The prohibition of idol worship in Western culture and the idea of god as transcendent makes this understandable” (Collins, 1977, p. 57). While immanent artists wait for something to happen to them, transcendent artists create the happening. By de Beauvoir’s definition, immanent is female, weak, bad, unoriginal, the yin; while transcendent is male, strong, good,
creative, the yang and dominant. Collins challenged the boundaries of dualism in de Beauvoir’s mid-twentieth century theory by embracing both immanent and transcendent qualities in art.

Collins (1977) recommended an art education model that is based on androgyny, which values both female and male characteristics, both immanent and transcendent qualities. The androgynous model encourages both values in all art students as they might naturally manifest themselves. Collins suggested that the complete denial of the immanent can result in a product that could be potentially hazardous to earthly matters, such as public art that may be harmful to its immediate environment. She contended that in the late 1970s, outside of the women’s studies classrooms and the rare art education classroom, art education remained focused on developing the transcendent artist.

Although Collins suggested the androgynous model as ideal, she recognized how difficult this is for the female art student. She defined a feminine quality in art as less valued and reported that it is more suitable for a woman artist to create art that is decidedly “non-gendered,” and it is important for the female to deny her sex through her work in order to succeed. Collins concluded that certain art is feminine whether defined by subject matter or materials; a label of women’s art automatically connotes negative qualities, and is not important. Conversely, if an artwork exhibits masculine attributes then it is labeled simply as art and is judged based on its artistic merits.

Collins (1978) drew a parallel between the myth of Medusa and the historical fate of women in the arts. She compared the confined position of Medusa in her cave to that of women confined to the home, limiting their creativity in and for the home. Yet, she cautioned that if women’s art does not reflect a feminine sensibility, it is criticized for exuding a deceptive or imitative quality to that of her male counterparts. On the other extreme, Collins pointed to the large body of feminist art that emerged in the 1970s, stating that just as Medusa became enraptured with her own reflection, women artists are also in danger of becoming too enthralled with the feminine and may fail to look outside of themselves.

Collins (1979) warned educators about a feminist approach to a discipline such as art education that is already marginalized in the curriculum. She explained that elevating the status of women within the art world, hence feminizing art, threatens the overall status of art within the greater society. She further suggested the irony in the notion of art as intrinsically defined as a
feminine activity yet, the art world has long been dominated by men (Chadwick, 1990; Congdon, 1991; Guerrilla Girls, 2004; Nochlin, 1971).

Sandell (1979) stressed that the first step toward feminist art education is the re-training of art educators to non-sexist views. She established a trilogy of topics relevant to feminist art education, women’s studies, the women’s art movement, and art education as intersecting disciplines. She suggested three ways to become more educated about the women’s art movement:

1. Seek membership in associations with women artists, organizations, publications, and exhibitions centered on women artists,
2. Engage in women’s studies programs, publications of and about women’s art and aesthetics and mass media coverage of feminist art events, and
3. Attend art exhibitions that confront aesthetic and political issues within art.

In the early 1990s, scholars began to take a retrospective look at how much things had changed since the 1970s feminist movement (H. Anderson, 1992; Chadwick, 1990; Hagaman, 1990). Hagaman (1990) highlighted the impact of the women’s movement on art history, art criticism, aesthetics, and art education. Initially, feminists worked to include the names of women artists in survey material, exhibitions, classrooms, and dialogue (Nochlin, 1971; Pollock, 1988). Now, feminists recognize that little has changed for women in art history due in part to unsuccessful attempts at finding a place for women in the male-centered structure of the discipline. Hagaman further asserted that continued feminist inquiry in the arts is critical to the future of equality within the arts and art education.

The art world considered feminist art to be more serious and academic than feminine art since it was largely political versus merely decorative (Sandell, 1979). Garber (1992) addressed how feminist approaches and definitions of feminine versus feminist and how these terms relate to aesthetics, and criticism developed by the early 1990s. She outlined three areas of inquiry, female sensibility and feminist aesthetics, criteria for evaluation of art, and viewer responses to art. While feminine connotes socially taught characteristics associated with being female, feminist connotes a much more complex idea about inclusion, equality, and valuation of art from a multiplicity of perspectives. Critics, educators, and historians have struggled to define what constitutes feminist aesthetics, resulting in an open interpretation that is redefined virtually any time anyone engages in feminist criticism. Viewers bring their own understanding and
experiences of gender, race, and class to the work of art, inevitably affecting how we look at art (Garber, 1992).

Garber (1996) contended that the art education classroom can be a place where feminist ideals also suit multicultural and postmodern approaches to art criticism. I synthesized her criteria as follows:

1. Studying all artworks in their social and cultural contexts,
2. Including women artists from various cultures, classes, nationalities, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and regions (including urban and rural),
3. Looking at artwork by women in relation to women’s lives and experiences,
4. Using narrative and conversation as techniques for discussion rather than lecture or debate,
5. Considering social ramifications of an artwork’s physical properties,
6. Practicing language sensitivity,
7. Allowing for personal associations,
8. Exploring a variety of possible interpretations by comparing differences,
9. Exploring how change in art and society might occur, and
10. Being open about your goals for social change.

Likewise, Congdon (1991) and Hicks (1992) proffered approaches to feminist art criticism, agreeing with Garber about the importance of considering the relationship between existing social systems and artistic production when engaging in feminist criticism. Congdon (1991) emphasized the significance of placing an art object within the context of the artist’s life and experiences in order to fully understand the work. Moreover, she claimed that the critic needs to utilize a feminist language that, “acknowledges and reflects the personal and the political. It makes connections, and it celebrates life” (Congdon, 1991, p. 21). Congdon concluded that a feminist approach to art criticism was still in the formative stages in the year 1991.

Collins (1998) challenged existing feminist theories that are merely adaptations of those theories constructed by Western men. She cautioned that these theories may not be feminist in nature. She suggested that feminist scholars, who have worked with and against previous theories designed by male scholars, may inadvertently taint new theories with a masculine bias, causing confusion and divisiveness among feminists. Rather, she recommended that scholars
construct a progressive feminist theory from the ground up, resulting from observing women’s practices.

Several art educators collaborated to produce anthologies that tell their experiences with feminist theory and art education (Collins & Sandell, 1996; Congdon & Blandy, 1991; Grauer, Irwin, & Zimmerman, 2003; La Pierre & Zimmerman, 1997; Saccá & Zimmerman, 1998). Saccá & Zimmerman (1998) presented a collection of personal narratives from art educators. They explained the book’s intent to “build a community of memory, expanding the common ground of art education to fulfill feminist ideals of an equitable world where all people can write, preserve, and create” (Saccá & Zimmerman, 1998, p. 8).

In summary, art educators have played an active role in changing the status of women artists by challenging the status quo, conducting gender-based research, developing theory for art criticism and designing practical applications for the classroom. In particular, the Women’s Caucus of the NAEA provided a space for feminist scholarship within the field of art education (M. Hicks, 1974; Lovano-Kerr, 1975). Quantitative studies revealed an under representation of women in art education (Glenn & Sherman, 1983; Lovano-Kerr, Semler, & Zimmerman, 1977; Michael, 1977; Packard, 1977). Scholars developed feminist theory and created applications for classroom instruction (Collins, 1978; Garber, 1996), including a feminist approach to art criticism that is inclusive, and contextually and socio-historically situated, informing my own approach to understanding artists and their art production (Congdon, 1991; Garber, 1996; Hicks, 1974).

**Women’s Artist Organizations**

For more than one hundred years, women artists have responded to unfavorable conditions in the art world by banding together and forming their own advocacy groups and organizations to increase their opportunities as artists. In 1932, Briggs wrote about the historical roots of the National Association of Women Painters and Sculptors, founded in 1889, due to discrimination from museums and galleries. The group hosted exhibitions, offered art instruction, and nurtured a community for women artists. Perhaps an optimist for rapid social change, Briggs heralded their work, “women no longer need to fight for a chance to show their creative efforts….only through solidarity of action that women artists could win a place for themselves in the world of art” (Briggs, 1932, p. 33).
Some women artists claimed that their organizational efforts were not politically motivated. In 1867, the Ladies Art Association in New York was a group of women artists whose mission was to promote the interests of women artists through education and employment. The association supported the development of art educators, offering women artists the opportunity to gain employment outside of the home (Graham 1980). The Philadelphia Ten was a group of women artists who met from 1917 to 1945. The collective supported the development of female artists and their public achievements. In all, thirty women were associated with this group and their work is now lumped together, as if representing a stylistic period in art. The Westmoreland Museum of Art curated a selection of 81 paintings and 9 sculptures from the group in 1998 (Westmoreland Museum of American Art, 1998). For generations, women utilized their community spaces to organize and provide services including art classes, founded by national organizations such as the American Association of University Women (Cantor, 1953).

Although some artists’ groups claim to be apolitical in nature, indeed all of the groups came together for their common experiences as artists and as women. A radical feminist agenda claims that the organization of women based on their sex is political because the very act of discerning gender for reasons of organization is personal (Dauphinais, Barkan, & Cohn; Gordon, 1978; Liss, Crawford, & Popp, 2004); meaning that all issues related to the consciousness of recognizing biological difference are personal and political (Humm, 1990).

Inspired by the Second Generation Women’s Liberation Movement, the Feminist Artist Movement emerged across the United States in the late 1960s (Brodsky, 1994; Chadwick, 1990). Women artists from the Redstockings, an early feminist activist group from the late 1960s, branched off to create the Redstockings Artists, who were the first group to initiate a feminist art journal, *Women in Art* (Garrard, 1994). Women artists responded to the call for coalition, resulting in dozens of art activist groups working for social change (Garrard, 1994).

Similar to the development of the women’s movement as an offshoot of the Civil Rights Movement (Evans, 2003), women-centered caucuses and groups developed out of larger male-dominated organizations. Women art educators initiated the Women’s Caucus of the National Art Education Association to address sex discrimination within the field (Lovano-Kerr, 1975). Women artists of the College Art Association mobilized a Women’s Caucus that also continues to function today (Harris, 1973). The caucus established their overall missions and goals to include the collection and dissemination of descriptive statistics addressing gender and race of
faculty in university art departments and museum professionals (Harris, 1973). The Women’s Artists Revolution (WAR) sprang out of the Art Worker’s Coalition, initiating during a meeting when the coalition addressed racial discrimination, but did not recognize sex discrimination as a serious issue (Nemser, 1975).

Artists Miriam Schapiro and Judy Chicago initiated the first college-level feminist art program at the California Institute of the Arts (Schapiro, 1972). Schapiro said that they started to redefine what is considered to be important art content through their collaborative project, Womanhouse (1972). She explained, “what formerly was considered trivial was heightened to the level of serious art-making: dolls, pillows, cosmetics, sanitary napkins, silk stockings, underwear, children’s toys, wash basins, toasters, frying pans, refrigerator door handles, shower caps, quilts, and satin bedspreads” (Schapiro, 1972, p. 126). Artists were broadening the scope of what was accepted as art materials and processes as fine art.

Lacking exhibition opportunities, women artists created alternative spaces and galleries, bringing attention to marginalized art, and artists. The 1970s Alternative Space Movement supported the development of several cooperatives such as the Artists in Residence (A.I.R.) and Soho 20 (Graham 1980). A.I.R. (2005) was initiated in 1972 as the first, not-for-profit, artist owned and curated gallery for women artists. The founding mission, “to advance the status of women artists by exhibiting quality work by a diverse group of women artists to provide leadership and community to women artists” (p. 1), still guides the gallery’s function and purpose. A.I.R. established the National Artists program, engaging women artists from across the United States, representing diverse regional perspectives, issues, and visions to promote an artist community beyond New York City (A.I.R., 2005).

In 1972, women artists in the Artist’s Union organized a workshop to address sex and racial discrimination in the arts (Women’s Workshop of the Artists Union, 2001). The workshop recognized that working women artists constantly struggle within a male-identified art world that excludes women as artists and is saturated with the female image as subject. The women’s workshop developed an agenda that addressed women artists gaining exhibition in galleries and museums, admittance to art schools, access to affordable studio space, and faculty positions. In the late 1970s, a coalition of women’s art organizations joined forces to develop a unified voice for women artists in conferences and lobbying in Washington for increased National Endowment for the Arts funding for women and all artists (Sturken, 1978).
Critics wondered if gender-based groups, such as the Alternative Space Movement did anything to change the status quo for women artists (Rowbotham, 1999). At the very least, this feminist inspired movement provided opportunities for many woman artists to be documented, empowered women artists to pursue careers in art and taught women to organize exhibitions from raising money to managing the press (Brodsky, 1994). Additionally, these exhibitions brought common ideas of alternative art materials and processes together to establish a body of work that defined a feminist aesthetic all its own (Chadwick, 1990; Garrard, 1994). Feminist art expressed themes centered on the body, sexuality, and domestic content that previously had precluded it from acceptance into mainstream art institutions (Brodsky, 1994; Frueh, 1994).

By the late 1970s, the women’s artist movement started to wane. Scholars wondered about the lasting effects of the movement and what the future would hold for women artists (Lippard, 1976). Lippard noted that some women artists regarded women’s liberation cautiously as they feared that varied perceptions of the movement and ideas of feminist art might illicit negative repercussions on their careers and lives, while other women artists became satisfied with finally getting a piece of the pie, however unequal it still was. However, Lippard observed that there were still many more women artists dissatisfied with the current system of the art world and felt that having a piece of that system was not sufficient for lasting change. She cautioned artists about accepting the few successes as an end to our work:

> Nevertheless, it is crucial that art by women not be sucked into the establishment and absorbed by it. If this happens, we all find ourselves back where we started with another decade, with a few more women known in the art world, with the same old system clouding the issues, and with those women not included beginning to wonder why. (Lippard, 1976, p. 141)

The 1980s brought a socially conservative shift, causing a backlash that motivated a resurgence of modernism (Evans, 2003). A new crop of nearly all-male abstract expressionist painters entered the art scene (Chadwick, 1990). Feminist activists re-examined their efforts and recognized that the attempt to fit into a male-dominated structure was a temporary and ineffective process (Brodsky, 1994; Chadwick, 1990). The impact of the backlash is evident in exhibition representation and the reduction in public funding. In 1984, nearly 40% of professional artists were women, yet women’s artwork only represented 20 to 25% of major solo
exhibitions (Collins & Sandell, 1984). Heartney (1987) reviewed gender inequality in the arts from 1982 to 1985, in museums and government agencies. She showed that while the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) increased overall funding during those years, women’s artist organizations received 35% less than in previous years.

Women’s organizations hosted independent exhibitions to increase the visibility of the female artist. In 1982, the New York City Chapter of the Women’s Caucus for Art hosted Views by Women Artists, a series of sixteen independently curated shows, displaying varied approaches to art making with a mix of traditional and nontraditional materials and processes. Moore (1982) expressed an underlying benefit of the exhibition for the participating artists, “These shows were like a promise among women to take time with each other, to be seen and heard” (Moore, 1982, p. 10). She explained that women artist contributors talked about their experience as a means of connecting with other women artists. The exhibition was displayed in galleries and alternative spaces, such as lobbies and public buildings. The artists viewed the alternative spaces as a way of showing art to an atypical audience. In addition to giving women artists exhibition opportunities, this effort contributed to reshaping the role and meaning of the art object.

Although the Women’s Liberation Movement was no longer in mainstream culture by the 1980s (Chadwick, 1990; Evans, 2003; Rosen, 2000), women artists still faced sex discrimination in the art world and continued to fight these conditions in an organized way. Some of the groups from the 1970s sustained through the backlash (Garrard, 1994), and despite the waning of the movement, new groups continued to emerge, although few in number (Lustig, 2004). The Guerrilla Girls organized in response to an impromptu demonstration at a 1984 Museum of Modern Art in New York exhibition, International Survey of Contemporary Painting and Sculpture, where women artists represented less than 10% of the show (Lustig, 2004). The Guerrilla Girls first unified action resulted in the creation of statistically driven “public-service announcements” reporting sexist discrimination in gallery and museum exhibitions, which were posted throughout Manhattan. More than twenty years later, they have evolved into an organized performance and publishing team, continuing to address sex and race discrimination in the art world (Guerrilla Girls, 2004).

In summary, women’s artist organizations have a long history of providing support, exhibition, education, and consciousness-raising efforts for the female artist (Briggs, 1932; Graham, 1980). Out of the 1970s Women’s Liberation Movement emerged politically motivated

**Woman-centered Environments**

The emergence of grass roots women’s collectives and organizations inspired the larger women’s movement itself (Evans, 2003; Rosen, 2000). In these groups, feminist action and theory developed and evolved into the very foundation that continues to set a contemporary feminist agenda (Humm, 1990). These collectives provided communities for women to share common experiences that solidified their mission and purpose (Evans, 2003). Indeed, many feminists insisted that woman-centered communities were necessary for the continued evolution of feminist theory, feminist activism toward social change, and empowerment for all women (hooks, 1995; Lippard, 1976). Frueh & Raven (1991) asserted:

> Without community…there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression. But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist…Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged. (p. 110-113)

Frueh (1991) endorsed a woman’s artist community and wondered about a woman’s ability to function within the mainstream art world, “does entering the mainstream, still white, male, and Eurocentric, lead to a cultural democracy or to the disappearance of dynamic, valuable differences?” (p. 8). Frueh claimed that a separatist environment is the only way to completely be free from patriarchal structures. Women artists unified and conducted accordingly on differing levels within the dominant culture. While some organizations aimed to empower women artists to excel within mainstream society (Harris, 1973; Sturken, 1978), others created a separate space that nurtured women’s individuality and differences (Graham, 1980; Schapiro, 1972). Some scholars merely supported the woman-centered environment as a nurturing and encouraging space where women can learn and reach their greatest potential (Harper, 1985; hooks, 1995). Others took it one step further and contended that a woman-centered environment can serve as a model for society at large (Humm, 1990; Lippard, 1976).
hooks (1995) called for a resurgence of feminist action by way of consciousness-raising
groups, gatherings, and public meetings in feminist practice. She explained that in order for
women to create, whether visual or literary art, time is needed for reverie and contemplation.
Although the woman artist is more accepted than she was several decades ago, hooks said that
society still does not accept the time and space she needs to develop creatively. She pointed out
that the Women’s Liberation Movement expanded opportunities for women artists, but remained
limited to Caucasian women with economic means. hooks concluded that women need
environments where they can work, create, and closely explore experiences in relationship to
artistic production.

Lippard (1976) outlined the programs at the Los Angeles Women’s Building in the
1970s, from various art programs to social activist groups. She described the special nature of an
all-woman space:

The difference between talking to a mixed art school class and one
made up solely of women has to be experienced to be believed, but
there sure as hell is a difference in the way women open up,
become smart and imaginative and assertive – and better artists.
Those who denounce such situations as “separatist” should just get
a glimpse of the sense of purpose and the relaxed exhilaration at
the Women’s Building. There, everything seems possible –
including a nonseparatist future. (Lippard, 1976, p. 99-100)

However, there are skeptics. The debate surrounding the purpose and result of an all-
woman environment is centered on the perceived benefits and potential detriments of a separatist
community and how this helps or hinders a woman. Adrienne Rich warned that if women
separate ourselves from “the daily lives of women and society as a whole, we deny our female
identities in our work and lose touch with our ‘real powers’” (Humm, 1990, p. 33). Daly (1973)
feared that an isolated space will only create its own dominant culture and power structure or
will exclude women who by desire or necessity function within the dominant culture.

The National Museum for Women in the Arts (NMWA) dedicates their space to the
exhibition and representation of women artists. The NMWA has undergone intense critique by
feminists in the art world, contending that the segregation of women’s art may not be a step in
the right direction (Day, 1986). Day investigated the implications of NMWA and suggested that
placement in a separate setting strengthens the idea that art made by women is not worthy of hanging next to art made by men. She stated that many critics and artists refused their support of the museum and referred to the museum as a halfway house, furthering the marginalization of women’s art. Meanwhile, many women artists have benefited from exhibition and financial support from the NMWA (Day, 1986).

Rowbotham (1973) feared that woman-centered spaces do not address the systems that perpetuate sexism and may be further marginalizing the position of women. Marsh (2001) criticized the woman-centered spaces and organizations as bringing women’s differences to the forefront, maintaining the polarity of the male/female dichotomy. She concluded that collectivism itself is a leftist political agenda as a means to, “undermine the artworld identity by dislodging the hierarchy and positioning collectivism as left praxis” (p. 101).

The all-woman class of the Feminist Art Program conducted at Cal Arts in the early 1970s was a group that embodied these debated issues of a separatist space (Broude & Garrard, 1994; Harper, 1985). Students from the Feminist Art Program (FAP), taught by artists Miriam Schapiro and Judy Chicago, offered varying responses to their experiences in this all-female art class (Harper, 1985). The students agreed that the experience fostered a psychological environment that supported their individual creativity, a strong feeling of community, and a conviction that they were making history. They also reportedly felt that they worked together best when off campus at the site of their collaborative project, Womanhouse (1972). Some of the students felt that FAP contributed to the development of their self-confidence and supported their creativity, while others expressed various disadvantages, particularly related to the separatist nature of the group. Some students felt that FAP did not prepare them for the art world and competing with men (Harper, 1985).

The women who expressed the greatest tension in their lives were those involved in heterosexual relationships, as they moved between the all-woman separatist environment and the dominant culture. Schapiro (1972) expressed her personal experience with this conflict and explained why she eventually left the group and changed her mind about the woman-centered environment:

One of the disadvantages with such a program is that you fall so in love with the community that you don’t realize that in order to survive in the real world you have to play a different kind of role
where you hop on one foot and then the other foot and that your manipulative resources have to be strengthened. (Harper, 1985, p. 127)

Unlike Schapiro, Chicago did not abandon the concept of a woman-centered art community. In an interview nearly twenty years after FAP ended, Chicago reflected on why she thought the program did not succeed:

I brought my program into a male-dominated institution, my young students were exposed to one set of values when they were working with me, but as soon as they left the room, they got a whole other set of messages. (Broude & Garrard, 1994, p. 67)

Chicago went on to create other woman-centered art communities, which took on various contexts and meanings. For example, with the Birth Project (early 1980s), Chicago organized women artists working from home across the United States. Each artist worked independently toward a common project, which became the defining characteristic of this artist community (Harper, 1985).

Schapiro (2000) explained how artists in the 1970s collaborated and began to define woman’s art, encouraging women artists to work with feminine materials (such as fabrics, sequins, and recycled household items). Today, Schapiro teaches young artists about social consciousness-raising and feminist approaches to art. She observed that the younger generation of female art students is interested and motivated to work for social change for women artists.

Issues concerning the benefits or detriments of a separatist environment are of worthy consideration. Does an all-woman separatist community marginalize women artists further (Day, 1986; Humm, 1990; Rowbotham, 1973)? Or, can an all-woman space nurture voice and creativity, support professional development, and offer community (hooks, 1995; Lippard, 1976; Harper, 1985; Frueh & Raven, 1991)?

Researchers have also considered whether a single-sex educational environment enhances the learning for students. Baker, Riordan, and Schaub (1995) discovered that indeed female students have a better chance for success in a single-sex classroom without the distraction of the male students. In a coeducational class, they linked the aggressive social interactions of the male students to the female students’ decreased opportunities for optimal learning. Singh, Vaught, and Mitchell (1998) conducted a study with inner-city fifth-grade students, which resulted in slightly
higher test scores from the single-sex classrooms opposed to the coeducational classes. However, they concluded that the results were not statistically significant and that more research is recommended in this area. Jimenez and Lockheed (1989) conducted a study on eighth-grade students in Thailand comparing math scores from single-sex and coeducational classes. Their results showed that for females a single-sex environment was more conducive to their overall success however the male students did better in a coeducational class. Warrington and Younger (2001) discovered that while a single-sex classroom is indeed better for girls it is not always the case for boys who fare better with female students in the room. Jackson (2002) researched the students’ performance and their perceptions of participating in a single-sex environment. She learned that while the single-sex class was indeed a positive and supportive environment for the female students, the male students did not fare as well. She concluded that the male students were taught the traditionally male-centered curriculum, which did nothing to discourage their feelings of superiority rather the male only classes strengthened these perceptions.

Summary

In conclusion, this literature review outlined the theoretical foundation for understanding gender construction, language and knowledge acquisition, and the historical oppression of women, which constructs the basis for feminist theory and research. This review gives a historical overview of the position of the woman artist in art world institutions and how women artists and scholars have responded to exclusions and inequities. Lastly, I reviewed the nature of various women’s artist organizations and separatist environments with response to the effectiveness of these groups. Research in the area of single-sex classes compared to coeducational classes suggests that female-centered environments are indeed good for the female student.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

My interest in women artists, art education, and feminist studies led to this ethnographic research. My desire is to contribute to the understanding of feminism, art history, and art education. I acknowledge my perspective as a Caucasian woman artist and writer with a middle-class background that has provided me with a privileged education. Throughout the research process, I reflected on how this lens may affect my perception of the findings and how I interpret them.

Research Questions

Although I had some preconceived ideas about what I would find at an all-woman’s artist retreat, I strove to maintain a wide lens (Peshkin, 2001) as I visited the women artists at the Women’s Studio Workshop (WSW). My main question “What is the nature of one woman-centered art space, the Women’s Studio Workshop?” initiated the study. Supporting questions were developed from a review of literature that set the foundation for the philosophical theories that shape my perspective, along with a review of the history of women’s oppression in art, art education, and society, and the history of women’s artist’s organizations. In this context, I developed supporting questions as patterns emerged during my research. These questions are:

1. Do the women artists feel that their verbal expression is different being in an all-woman space?
2. How is community defined within the context of the workshop?
3. How do the artists perceive the generational differences between them?
4. How do the artists perceive their involvement with the WSW in relation to personal empowerment and social justice?
5. Do the artists perceive this separatist, woman-only art space as a good thing for women artists?
6. What is my role as a feminist researcher and how does my perspective affect my inquiry and outcomes of the research?
Theoretical Framework

For this empirically-based qualitative study, I utilized ethnographic strategies to answer the preceding questions. I refer to this study as an *ethnographic experience* in the spirit of John Dewey’s (1934) conception of the continuously occurring experience between an individual and the environment. Interacting with the environment is necessary and vital to the ethnographic inquiry process. I was cognizant of my role in this process and the effects of that role on the response of others, and how this affected my perspective, and my final interpretations (Reinharz, 1992; Tedlock, 2000).

I took a phenomenological approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) in an attempt to construct a contextual meaning of one woman-centered art space; meaning that the phenomena, events, or experiences were the source of my research. Working from a symbolic interactionist standpoint (E. Brown, 1990), I maintained a constructivist agenda (Greene, 2000) that aimed to reveal and interpret “the emotional, linguistic, symbolic, interactive, political dimensions of the social world…constructed by agentic human actors…influenced by specific historical, geopolitical, and cultural practices and discourses” (Greene, 2000, p. 986). It is the point of interaction between people and between people and places that informs meaning (T. Anderson, 2000; Eisner, 1991). This study was also informed by a sociological method that is called a *community study*, which is an empirical and typically ethnographic study of a community of people (Jary & Jary, 1991). In particular, the Women’s Studio Workshop was investigated as a community of artists. Part of the community is constant, which is comprised of the founding artists and the long term staff, the other part is fluid and changes as new artists come and work for an extended period of time and as others depart at the end of their residencies.

Ethnography from a Feminist Perspective

Collins & Sandell (1997) determined that, “most feminists claim for themselves and others the right to choose from a full range of extant theories and methodologies associated with scholarly research and the opportunity to critique and modify these to accommodate feminist intentions and sensitivities” (p. 199). They encouraged art educators to embrace diverse research theories while defining their own to develop richness in findings that consider the gender, race, class, and disabilities of the research participant and the researcher (Naples, 2003; Rowbotham, 1999; Tedlock, 2000).
In 1992 Reinharz asserted that indeed woman-only research was very much needed and set these three goals for feminist ethnographers, “1. to document the lives and activities of women, 2. to understand the experiences of women from their own point of view, and 3. to conceptualize women’s behavior as an expression of social contexts” (p. 51). I strove to meet these three goals in my research.

As Collins & Sandell (1997) suggested, feminist researchers draw from varied methodologies and construct approaches that best suit the questions they are asking. Likewise, Reinharz (1992) suggested that the very act of undergoing research from a feminist perspective contributes to the development of feminist research methodologies, “feminist ethnographers typically make double contributions when they conduct their research. They contribute to our understanding of feminist ethnography as a method of social research, and they contribute to our understanding of the subject matter they chose to study” (p. 71). A substantial body of recent feminist ethnographic scholarship wherein women studied women in various facets of society, including battered women shelters (Giangrande, 2004), cancer center services for women (Kendrick, 2004), women in educational leadership roles (L. Shapiro, 2004), women in ethnic-identified feminist groups (Yamaguchi, 2004), aging waitresses (D. Sullivan, 2004), and immigrant Chinese women living in Hong Kong (Newendorp, 2004) indicates that indeed the academy supports such research.

While ethnographic research is not limited to feminist researchers and certainly women are not determined to be better ethnographers than men, women researchers undeniably add a distinctive dimension to findings and interpretation (DeVault, 1996). Women are aware of their surroundings in a different way and are typically more sensitive to the nuances of relationships and environments (Reinharz, 1992; Tedlock, 2000). Martineau (1837) described her experience as a female social scientist to be unique from that of her male colleagues. She noticed that the research subjects did not perceive the women researchers as intruders, openly revealing private aspects of their lives. Women researchers have access to woman-only spaces. The WSW granted me access to the community as an overnight guest, volunteer, and researcher, in part, because I am a woman. My stay at the women-only intern house included sharing a bathroom, kitchen space, chores, and morning coffee in bathrobes and socked feet, which nurtured intimate connections.
Women talk to other women differently than they talk to men (Reinharz, 1992; Schapiro, 2000). Yet, it is important to note that being a woman does not assume that the researcher is also a feminist or employing a feminist approach to her study (Jones, 1998; Rowbotham, 1999). Jones (1998) elucidated what it means to conduct feminist ethnography, “[it] is the practice of seeking, then writing, the experience of culture….such writing is feminist because it recognizes the multiple positions women occupy within and between cultures” (p. 422). Women who study other women encounter a myriad of social barriers, such as socioeconomics, race, geography, and religion. Therefore, it is prudent for the female researcher not to make assumptions based on gender. She must be sensitive to these factors that divide women and challenge women to reach a common goal (Reinharz, 1992; Rowbotham, 1973). Therefore, it cannot be assumed that one universalist notion defines women’s lives and experiences.

**The Self as Primary Instrument**

I utilized diverse instrumentation to assist in data collection. First and foremost, I functioned as the primary instrument, described by Eisner (1997). I immersed myself in the environment, relying on my five senses of sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste as the primary tools for investigation when engaging with the WSW and trying to make meaning of it. My skills in observation, participation, interviewing, and interpretation were critical to the final analysis and end product. I recognize that I have ultimate control and responsibility in making meaning of events, connecting themes, and in finally the words I choose to express those meanings (Eisner, 1991; Tedlock, 2000). I relied on such skills as intuition and insight to help me construct meaning (T. Anderson, 2000).

**Field Site**

The Women’s Studio Workshop is an organization established in New York State by and for women artists with a history of more than thirty years. Based on my findings in a pilot study, the workshop was a viable candidate for a main study. The workshop was accessible and offered a residential-communal structure that lent itself to an ethnographic immersion process.

**Research Design**

**Going into the Field**

I completely immersed myself into the community of the WSW by staying on-site, sharing communal household responsibilities, and volunteering in the office and studios.
Multiple visits contributed to establishing the credibility of ethnography (Creswell, 1998). I returned to the workshop for a total of three immersion encounters (T. Anderson, 2000).

**Observation**

The process of ethnography is to observe how people negotiate their daily lives (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003). Derrida (2002) talked about daily negotiations with ourselves and with others as tense, not relaxed but dynamic and shifting. I observed these negotiated interactions (Eisner, 1997) exhibited through behaviors, patterns, conversations, and daily operations at the workshop.

The process of observation is critical to building the framework for meaning (Eisner, 1991). Eisner described the concept of thick description, developed by Clifford Geertz (1973) for getting to the meanings of human behavior that lies below the surface. Description is merely the record of observations. Thick description goes a step further, involving a more detailed account of events and also an interpretive process of those behaviors. As Geertz (1973) pointed out, while the physical movement looks the same, indeed there is a difference between a blink and a wink. It is up to the researcher to discern the meaning of the physical behavior. Interpretation is built over time and through multiple interactions and observations (Eisner, 1991; Naples, 2003; Reinharz, 1992).

I observed initial impressions in the physical space using my five senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. I observed daily operations and interactions at the WSW, searching for patterns and potentially meaningful behaviors (Eisner, 1997). Conducting an ethnographic study focused on women’s lives and experiences in context is important, however Rowbotham (1999) cautioned against seeking every detail of their lives and getting mired in theoretical application and connection. Rather, she advised that it is the discernment of those details that are pertinent, related to the central theme that enriches the understanding. Some early feminist ethnographers in the 1960s and 1970s struggled with making decisions about the inclusion or exclusion of this material or that, “resulted in such long and complex accounts of the interconnecting nature of women’s oppression that it was hard to see the wood for the trees” (Rowbotham, 1973, p. 117). It is my responsibility to establish a contextual framework that is rich in description and relevant, yet thematically constructed and clear.

The process of observation overwhelms the researcher who tries to absorb every sight, smell, sound, taste, and touch within reach (Peshkin, 2001). Peshkin recommended several lenses
that assist in the observing process of empirical research. I adapted his nine lenses into objectives for my observation process:

1. Recognize patterns and routines,
2. Give attention to time: schedules within the space, history, and extended periods between visits,
3. Have respect for the subject, cause, and people who are participating,
4. Recognize bias so that your voice becomes your personal perspective,
5. Look at the situation by considering your ideological theoretical foundation,
6. Pay attention to themes. After initial observations, recognize themes that emerge and attend to in subsequent observation sessions,
7. Attend to behaviors that seem to have metaphorical meanings, follow up on those behaviors in interviews,
8. Look for the unexpected and consider how your assumptions were wrong, and
9. Listen to the silence; the unspoken words, the silence in the space, and what is implied but not said.

**Participation**

Feminist social action research is grounded in the early sociological approaches of the Chicago School and early feminist women scholars working during the late 1800s and early 1900s (Creswell, 1998; Rosenberg, 1982). Much of this early feminist research was rooted in the process of bettering the situation for women (Rosenberg, 1982). Today, much of feminist scholarship falls in line with the academic tradition of separating action from theory (Reinharz, 1992). Naples (2003) and Reinharz (1992) called for a renewed agenda for feminist research to engage both discovery and change. Feminist action research takes on a variety of frameworks. Reinharz (1992) described one framework for action research as the process of demystification, simply by documenting real life experiences. The very act of inquiry into women’s lives brings to the forefront another story that works to demystify women’s experiences.

Naples (2003) acknowledged the relationship dynamics as complex and even personal in many instances, between the researcher and subject, suggesting that feminist researchers “employ a reflexive practice to counter the reproduction of inequalities in ethnographic investigation” (p. 37). During the process of undergoing fieldwork and observing, just by the mere act of looking in, the researcher is in danger of situating the subjects as the other (Naples,
2003; Reinharz, 1992; Tedlock, 2000). Although I felt a certain acceptance into this community of women artists, as both a woman and as an artist, there were times that I felt on the outside as a Southerner. However, I perceived this position as a point of interest in relationship to the differences in accents, colloquialisms and food. The differences did not separate us, rather were topics for discussion that often led to intimate talk, which revealed deeper meanings and understanding.

Tedlock (2000) pointed out the troubled conflict within the traditional framework of the participant observer who tries to play dual roles of emotional involvement and objective detachment. Objective detachment is not my goal, as it is impossible in the study of human behavior (Eisner, 1997). Through the position of the participant observer, the line is blurred between the observer and the observed. In part, I observed myself as volunteer and community member. Tedlock (2000) suggested that participant observers shift their perspective to observing themselves, or what she called observation of participation. Here, she is recommending that researchers who also participate should look critically at themselves in the setting, recognizing how much or how little they are actually participating and how their presence affects the process, outcomes, and inevitably perspective. I was cognizant of my role as my participation changed from one visit to the next.

During each of the three visits, I participated within the WSW on various levels. At the most basic level and during each trip, I participated in light kitchen duties. During the third visit, I contributed to the preparation and hosting of the WSW Thirtieth Annual Art Auction and assisted Patty Tyrol with the Art-in-Education program with the advanced placement high school art students. These activities helped me gain a status as more than merely an outside researcher looking in; if even for a brief time, I was really a part of the community.

Interviews

The in-depth interview process provided deeper meaning to observations (Bodgan & Biklen, 2003; Eisner, 1991; Seidman, 1998). Seidman (1998) explained the purpose of the in-depth interview, as “an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p. 3), rather than testing a hypothesis or to evaluate. He asserted that, “recounting narratives of experiences has been the major way throughout recorded history that humans have made sense of their experiences” (Seidman, 1998, p. 2).
I explored the nature of each individual’s experience with the workshop based on a pre-constructed interview guide (Appendix B). The interviewing process is in part, defined by the relationship between the researcher and the participant (Naples, 2003; Tedlock, 2000). A structure of several interviews over a period of time lends itself to nurturing an open exchange. As the interviewer brings her own analysis and interpretation to the dialogue, social forces of gender, race, age and class inform both parties whether conscious or not, in the dialogue (Seidman, 1998). My relationships with Ann, Tana, Nita, and Babs were strengthened through ongoing dialog in the form of emails, postcards, letters, and phone calls between visits to the workshop, and continue today. A select few of these letters are in Appendix E. Description for feminist ethnographers comes out of what Tedlock (2000) called, “the ‘female mode,’ constructing their texts from fragments: letters from the field, diary extracts, poems, dreams, drawings, and stories” (p. 468).

Informal conversations, brief words as we go about daily interactions, and private chit chats over coffee became a source for my material that richly contributed to the structured interviews. Most of the women were more comfortable revealing their feelings in an unstructured conversation rather than with recorder present. There is benefit in the structured interview, however, the real story blossoms when everyone goes about their daily life without feeling like they are being watched or recorded. These interactions were recorded in my journal after the fact, sometimes I include quotes and sometimes I just wrote down the gist of what we were talking about. Often times these conversations led me to inquire about topics with others to give greater clarity and diverse perspective to the individual stories.

**Phases and Time Frame**

I visited the WSW three times over the course of eighteen months. Time between visits allowed for thoughts and ideas to coalesce and evolve (Rowbotham, 1999). Time also allowed for a more credible account of events as described by Peshkin (2001), “it is self-evidently reasonable to think that by following our phenomenon, problem, or issue over time, we can take account for the non-static nature of events and people” (p. 243).

The pilot study was my first visit to the WSW. Feminist researchers utilize the pilot study as an inquiry method across disciplines, in part as an informational tool that guides a more efficient and well-defined main study. In each case (Eng, 1992; Frank, 2001; Levy, 2002; Skirboll & Silverman, 1992), results from the pilot study were integral to the final reflections in
the main study. In one instance, Levy (2002) utilized the pilot study approach to construct open-ended questions that encouraged women athletes to freely express their feelings about mountain biking and their experiences with the sport. She was interested in the story behind the “sports report.” Similarly, my pilot study provided insight that shaped my questions and the construction of a practical and attainable research design. A pilot study allowed for a preliminary examination, which also secured my access to the WSW for future research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). I established relationships with the founding members of the WSW, which allowed for more indepth encounters during follow up visits (Reinharz, 1992; Seidman, 1998). Initial observations and interviews (Appendix B) informed my framework for inquiry.

During the second visit I stayed in the home of Anita Wetzel, one of the four co-founders. This allowed for the development of a personal and open dialogue between me and one of the most essential characters in the story. Her house is not at the WSW campus but is only about one mile away. The WSW was full of activity during this visit; all of the residential quarters were full of interns and artists, which prompted Ann to send me to Anita’s house. I spent long hours observing and writing field notes this visit. I conducted interviews with the four founders, visiting artists, a past intern, the studio manager, and office staff. The current artist interns were new to the program and Ann felt that they would not have in-depth perspectives to offer at that point. After my third visit, I learned that this particular group of interns turned out to be problematic for the workshop; I recalled that Ann mentioned that they do not always get a good group. However, I had the occasion to have many informal conversations with these women, which I noted in my field notes (Appendix C). Several of the interviews from this trip were digitally recorded and transcribed (Appendix B). However, I found that the unstructured conversational flow of dialogue was much more personal and sometimes more revealing than the structured formal interviews that followed a line of questioning. In the end, both types of interviews provided valuable material to build a richer narrative of the WSW.

During my third and last visit to the WSW, I observed and loosely assisted with the semiannual community-based art program, the Arts-In-Education (AIE), during which the WSW artists gave art instruction to the local high school students in the county. I participated in the preparation and hosting of the 30th Annual WSW Auction. I stayed in the artist apartment of the intern house, which gave me down time with the interns who were living there at the time.
Data Collection and Instruments

Field Notes and Photography

My field notes functioned as an important mode for data collection and analysis throughout my research process. I made jottings (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995), such as a word, phrase, or a quick scribble, to remind me of observations, which I translated into a descriptive narrative after the observation session. I was not always able to write down my descriptions during or right after an event. However while in the field, I spent hours each evening and morning writing in my journal about the previous day or expanding on any jottings.

My journal was a space for daily thoughts, private feelings, and personal insights. Tedlock (2000) supported the use of the personal journal as a research tool that may reveal something notable from the field, quite by surprise. I took photographs during each visit, which are included in my journal (Appendix C). Action photographs of the people inform how they interact with the space and each other, as well as give visual documentation to my words. Photographs of the physical space inform and remind me about the unspoken. For example, how things are organized, art and colors in the space, historical architecture, and other details that may elicit meaning, which all contribute to the richness of my findings.

A self-writing process informed my point of view throughout the experience so that I recognized my positioning in an effort to develop a deeper perspective (Foucault, 1970). Foucault described this process of “self-writing” as a means of self-recognition of one’s own desires, thoughts, and actions (McLaren, 2002). It is important to acknowledge my perceptions of the research throughout the process (Creswell, 1998; Eisner, 1991; Reinharz, 1992). Opposing a traditional scientific paradigm for the researcher as detached and objective, I acknowledged a subjective perspective, which guided my research, and which continued to evolve as I developed a personal engagement with participants necessary in order to elicit the most intimate stories and feelings (Reinharz, 1992). Naples (2003) also cautioned researchers to recognize the impact of personal relationships on perceptions and interpretation. Through the process of self-writing, my feelings and perspective about those relationships emerged to provide context for my themes, assessments, and evaluation.

Baker (1990) described human symbolic interaction as an informational tool that is the basis of language. He explicated that language is more than a transmitter. It is a coded system that shapes our reality. Humans construct truth rhetorically from social symbolic action, which
defines our realities. Baker suggested that accepting the role of rhetoric in postmodern social theory further broadens the scope of methods to include a self-reflexive writing process. He recommended that researchers undergo this process in order to persuade readers that their theories are true. Through a self-reflexive exercise, some researchers recognize their own rhetorical framework formulated for ourselves as subjects and our field as disciplinary objects (Tedlock, 2000). This approach is the antithesis of a modernist, positivist perspective that suggests an objective approach searching for one truth through scientific inquiry.

Postmodern social scientists develop their own self-reflexive writing techniques for ethnography with common threads that include self-consciousness in voice, the careful selection of words in the development of meaning, and reflection on the text we construct. Mairs (1994) explored what it means to be a woman writer and finding a voice that was there all along. The discovery of her hidden voice followed her recognition of expression within a male-identified language. She discussed the intimate process of journaling as means for self-reflection and awareness of our own position and perspective. My journals informed what Naples (2003) called an embedded perspective, which is situated within a particular locale and position within a community. It was the personal journal that revealed the troubled ethnocentric perspective of the anthropologist (Tedlock, 2000). Tedlock explained how this journal exposed a bias that was not acknowledged in the final report, which did indeed have an impact on analysis and interpretation of the findings. In the Lure of the Local, Lippard (1997) used her journal to express another voice, an intimate and personal one, sharing feelings and memories that her travels conjured, placing this text in the margins above the main text.

**Digital Recorder and Interview Questions**

Recording interviews ensures that words are not transposed, omitted, or confused during the analysis and interpretation process. I recorded interviews during the first and second visits, which were transcribed (Appendix B). While transcribing, I had the opportunity to hear my voice for the first time, how I constructed questions, my attitude and tone, and to hear the participant’s voice for the second time, paying attention to her voice intonations, inflections, and pauses (Wolff, 1990). For practical purposes, Seidman (1998) supported recording interviews for multiple listening sessions and the ability to refine follow up questions.
Data Analysis

Interpretation and analysis is an ongoing process for the ethnographer (Bogden & Bilken, 2003; Creswell, 1998; Eisner, 1997). Predetermined themes constructed from the pilot study (Reinharz, 1992; Seidman, 1998) and the literature review (Eisner, 1997) established the initial questions and foci of my study. I attended to these themes while remaining open to emergent themes throughout the research process that guided my design more accurately and closely than a pre-determined plan. Analysis of interviews and observational field notes included an open-coding process (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Open-coding entails keeping a wide frame of reference while maintaining an awareness of assumptions. In practical terms, coding included reading through my journals and interview transcripts. During the first reading, I assigned codes, in the form of a descriptive word or phrase, which revealed patterns and eventually themes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995).

Thematic Codes

The following codes represent the overarching themes that emerged and developed during my three site visits. There are several sub themes that fall within a larger theme as noted in the transcribed interviews (Appendix B) and my field notes and photographs (Appendix C). A final count of each code is presented in a table format (Appendix D), which reveals those themes that I gave the most attention and those that seemed to arise with the most frequency. As I observed various themes, such as community or as I recognized my own perspective peeking through, they became themes that I labeled and continued to give attention to throughout the process.

Personal Lens: PL: This code indicates my voice and my perspective that is shaped by my socio-economic background, education, and regional culture. I applied this code to my voice during interviews, particularly when I felt that my questions, or the dialogue, may be perceived to be directive. This code was also applied throughout my field notes, where my inner thoughts and opinions came out the strongest, from my discomfort with the cold to my feelings about the new friends that I was making.

Women’s Studio Workshop: WSW: This code signifies something that is descriptive of the physical space or the programs. My notes that refer to the studios, residential space, and programs were given this code. I also coded discussions that referred to the nature of the program, from the history to the uncertain future of the organization.
Woman Space: WS: This code denotes evidence of a woman centered space and the artists’ perceptions about being in the space. My experience in the residential space with the other women artists was frequently coded as being directly related to this code. Conversations related to girl-talk and uncensored language was coded as WS.

Artworld: AW: This code denotes evidence of the workshop as its own miniature art world and as a reflection of the art world at large. This code was applied when characteristics of how the workshop functions similar to that of a hierarchical and competitive artwork were revealed. For instance, there is an opportunistic, yet competitive climate for the artists, which was expressed by the interns as well as Tana as the Creative Director. I attended an intern slide show that felt like an undergraduate painting critique, complete with grunts, then silence, and very few props for these young artists.

Community: C: This code denotes evidence of community at the workshop as well as the role of the workshop in the community at large. The community code was given for a variety of issues due to the multi-layered nature of the sense of community at the WSW. For instance, this code was applied for the potluck, WSW events held in Rosendale, when the artists talked about the WSW as a family, and the relationship between the resident artists and the rotating intern and visiting artists.

Social Justice: SJ: This code denotes evidence of social justice working in and through the workshop. The four founding artists experienced sex discrimination on some level as women artists, which motivated their collaboration and the establishment of a space for women in an effort to balance the playing field. According to a radical feminist agenda, an act that is directly linked to a person’s biology is a political maneuver and one that is a movement toward a more balanced and socially just society. This code was applied to stories that speak of personal empowerment that was aided by the experience at the WSW, for the role of the WSW in the community as a provider of jobs and contributor to the environment, and to the broadening of opportunities for women.

Generational Connections: GC: This code denotes evidence of generational connections between women artists. This code was applied to many of the stories from and about the interns and their relationship to the established artists.

Finances: $: This code indicates discussion or activity concerning the finances linked to the operation of the workshop or to the artists perceptions of the financial opportunities for artists.
This code was applied to discussions about the uncertain financial viability of the WSW, to the fundraising events, and to the issues that are a direct result of the financial stability of the WSW.

**Coding Process**

Emergent themes were revealed and validated as I transcribed my field notes and recorded interviews while reading the journals for the second time and listening to my conversations for the first time. As I read through the transcriptions, I assigned codes from a list that I developed throughout the research process. Sub themes were revealed and elucidated next to a given code within the text (Appendix B & C). This analysis revealed the stories that supported each theme. These themes are not straightforward, they intertwine and overlap one another, so that within each section a little bit of each theme is detectable. I recognize that the themes presented here are shaped by my attention to certain areas. For example, I was enthralled with the potluck from the start and asked just about everyone who I came into contact with their feelings about it. Questions about the position and status of the ceramics studio/department is something that emerged during my research, which was not attended to in-depth but is noted as an area for future inquiry.

**Interpretations and Thematic Connections**

I made thematic connections throughout the process, which guided my ongoing process (Creswell, 1998). In the descriptive process, I recognized that meaning in social structures are not held by individuals, rather they are embedded in the transactions that occur between people and their surroundings and those between people (T. Anderson, 2000; Eisner, 1991; Lippard, 1997). T. Anderson (2000) described this process of making meaning in qualitative inquiry, “meaning is a more foundational concept in human experience than scientific truth, that truth is subsumed categorically by meaning, that it is only one of many forms of meaning” (p. 81). He suggested using tools such as insight and intuition in the process of interpretation and evaluation. At the end of the data collection process, I sorted through my entire coded translated observational and personal journal entries and transcribed interviews in an attempt to thread together all of the stories into one narrative (K. Brown, 1991; Tedlock, 2000).

**Little narratives**

Findings resulted in several stories or what Efland, Freedman, and Stuhr (1996) called, little narratives. Just as there is not one definition of *woman* to describe all females (de Beauvoir, 1952; Rowbotham, 1973), there is not one truth to any one phenomena (Eisner, 1991). Tedlock
(2000) claimed that the narratives of women’s lives are often complex, non-linear, and fragmented. I am responsible for the interpretation of the meaning of those individual stories, and connecting them into one larger context (Tedlock, 2000). Giving voice to these women artists became the overriding theme of my research. Rather than summarize or even compare what the women had to say, their individual stories give life to the WSW.

For example, E. Brown (1992) recommended that we look to the complex but unified aesthetics found within gumbo ya ya, an African American language originating in the New Orleans area. This hybrid Creole language, meaning “everyone talks at once,” resembles a chaotic chattering that is confusing to the outside listener. On the contrary, gumbo ya ya is a layering of storytelling by multiple voices that are individual yet responsive to one another. Brown explained the importance of storytelling within the context of gumbo ya ya: “They do this simultaneously, in connection, in dialogue with each other. To relate their tales separately would be to obliterate that connection” (p. 297). The connection that Brown suggested between the feminist movement and gumbo ya ya supports and nurtures individual voices that surround common themes.

Anthropologist Margaret Mead (1977) was known for writing with a feminine sensibility and for writing in a straightforward manner eliminating confusing academic jargon to reach a wider audience. Mead was criticized as well as heralded for writing culture that read like a novel. She wrote about her approach to ethnographic writing:

So the fieldworker must choose, shape, prune, discard this and collect finer detail on that, much as a novelist works who finds some minor character is threatening to swallow the major theme or that the hero is fast taking him out of his depth. But unlike the novelist...the fieldworker is wholly and helplessly dependent on what happens – on the births, deaths, marriages, quarrels, entanglements, and reconciliations, depressions, and elations of the one small community....One must be continually prepared for anything, everything – and perhaps most devastating – for nothing. (Mead, 1977, p. 181)

Personal stories revealed why one woman’s experience varies from another. Each woman offered her individual perspective that has a place within the whole of the story. I respect each
woman’s choice of words and did not attempt to assume meaning when uncertain, inserting direct quotes and anecdotal accounts from the transcripts to illustrate themes and theoretical connections. Yet, I am aware of my own voice and perceptions that is embedded in the interpretation and telling of this story. For example, in K. Brown’s ethnography *Mama Lola* (1991), she integrates four distinct voices to tell one story, that of her subject, the folk character from the stories told by the subject, her own scholarly voice, and her personal voice.

**Assumptions and Limitations in the Study**

My major assumption that resulted from the pilot study experience and the review of literature was that an all-woman environment creates a different space, dynamics, language, and protocol than that of a mixed gender group (Brodsky, 1994; Broude & Garrard, 1994; hooks, 1995; Lippard, 1976; Schapiro, 1972). Opposing more traditional, positivist approaches, feminists undergoing ethnographic research are aware of and protect the uniqueness in their findings. Consequently, results are limited to understanding the inner workings and nuances of the WSW and will not be generalizable to a larger population. However, T. Anderson (2000) pointed out that research of this nature provides, at the very least, “a written account [that] joins the literature and becomes a point of reference for further examination of similar situations. It makes meanings, possibilities, disparities and problems of a given situation manifest” (p. 86). I assume that my findings have implications for art education by providing examples of women artists and their experiences and for women’s studies by making connections between theory and practice.

A limitation to the informal interview or what became something more like a dialog was that I found myself sharing much of my own story and ideas about the topic. In retrospect, I recognized that this may be perceived as leading the interviewee to answer questions in a certain way. It is necessary to reiterate that my perspective is deeply embedded in the results of this research. For this reason, I presented these conversational interviews in transcribed form, so that the reader can discern my perspective alongside that of those artists who were interviewed.

**Credibility**

To consider validity from a positivist perspective is to posit that indeed there is one universal truth or hypothesis to prove, however a phenomenological perspective considers that there are as many truths as there are perspectives (Eisner 1991). It is up to the researcher to represent the findings that hold true for each voice and together provide a holistic view of the
phenomena (Eisner, 1991). Postmodernism rejects the modernist conception of one social truth that can either be proven through a hypothesis testing process or to be confirmed through experience in the physical environment (Baker, 1990). I propose to abandon the notion of validity and reliability altogether, as they refer to quantitative methods of research and rely on other foundational premises and strategies to establish truth worthiness and authenticity in this study.

The very nature of qualitative research insists on a separate paradigm entirely. Validity and reliability are troubled concepts within the scope of the interview and other qualitative methods. Seidman (1998) offered alternative terms for establishing trustworthiness of such research findings, such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Creswell (1998) examined how several contemporary qualitative researchers establish credibility in their work, synthesizing the various methods into the following criteria for evaluating ethnographic research:

1. Observations and quotes are set in context,
2. Themes are emergent during fieldwork,
3. Observation is conducted through immersion and multiple visits,
4. A native view is revealed through observation, interviews, and other inquiry procedures,
5. Ethnographers seek knowledge from participants in an orderly manner,
6. As themes are emergent, so too are necessary instruments, codes, schedules, questionnaires, and agenda for interviews,
7. Transcultural perspective is often implicit but not explicitly identified,
8. The ethnographer shall reveal what is implicit to participants, and
9. The ethnographer shall construct open-ended questions and not predetermine responses.

Furthermore, Creswell proposed that the first step of establishing some credibility to the story is to recognize the researcher’s perception first and then to turn outward and through a series of social interactions, begin to build meaning. T. Anderson (2000) suggested that when establishing credibility or what he called, verity, the separate parts or little narratives, should be checked against each other, looking for gaps and inconsistencies, to see if they make sense in the construction of one narrative. Each artist or WSW staff participant received a copy of the
transcribed interviews and had the opportunity to verify their statements and clarify their meaning. I verified meaning by way of informal conversations and chit chat that was ongoing throughout my three visits; many of these conversations are noted in my field notes.

Summary

My question, “What is the nature of one woman-centered art environment drove my chosen methodologies and research design. I utilized an ethnographic approach with a feminist perspective (Naples, 2003; Reinharz, 1992) to undergo immersion, description, and interpretation (T. Anderson, 2000). I functioned as the primary research instrument (Eisner, 1991) and underwent observation through immersion (T. Anderson, 2000), conducted in-depth interviews (Seidman, 1998) and casual dialog, and participated as volunteer and community member (Naples, 2003; Reinharz, 1992). I maintained extensive fieldnotes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995) and personal journals (Tedlock, 2000) to aid my data analysis and interpretation. In the following chapters, I presented my findings in a narrative format as I thread little narratives (Efland, Freedman, & Stuhr, 1996) that tell one story of the Women’s Studio Workshop. I hope to contribute to the canon of art, which may have implications for the art education classroom by providing additional examples of women artists and their experiences. I also hope to contribute to the discipline of women’s studies by making connections between theory and practice. The following story is just one snapshot of the Women’s Studio Workshop told by a group of women who have varying levels of experience in the space, including the four women founders, intern artists, office staff, visiting artists, and myself.
CHAPTER 4
GOING INTO THE FIELD

The Pilot Study

The pilot experience at the Women’s Studio Workshop was my first time to conduct overnight immersion research. The following story reflects my impressions of this first visit, which set the stage for engaging the field site, the emergence of themes, and my perspective, which is deeply rooted in my socio-economic background, cultural and geographical regional influences, and my identity as a married heterosexual, feminist woman in her mid thirties.

It was a Friday afternoon in February and as I sat in the airport with one more flight before reaching the Stewart Airport in Newburgh, New York, my anticipation grew. As someone who goes to great lengths to plan travel well in advance, this trip felt sudden with only two weeks of preparation. Within a couple of days of finding the Women’s Studio Workshop online I was finalizing travel plans. With great admiration, I looked to Margaret Mead as a pioneering adventurer, a serious social scientist, and a feminist extraordinaire. I too felt a sense of adventure that day. Of course, Rosendale, New York was not Samoa and I was not going to be grappling with such hurdles as language, culture, and accommodations. Or was I? Yet, I was still an outsider going into a foreign space. I felt like a kid going off to camp. I recalled that the last time I experienced communal living was about fifteen years ago as an undergraduate student in a co-ed dorm. I think that the last time, and maybe the only time for that matter, I was immersed in an all female environment was at Girl Scout Camp at Camp Betty Perot in East Texas in 1981, at the tender age of eleven.

As I sat waiting for my next flight, I took inventory of my suitcase, considering the contents of my packed wardrobe and wondering about proper clothing and shoes. I sure hope that I was prepared for New York in the winter. The Weather Channel reported that temperatures would be in the high twenties during the day and in the low teens at night! This Southerner was not sure how to handle the cold weather and it became a focal point in my thought process as I prepared for this trip. Indeed, the weather was a central theme in my personal notes and how this affected my perception of being out in the field.
After landing at the Stewart Airport, I was delighted to find that the airport was even smaller and easier to navigate than I had imagined. After collecting my luggage, I walked outside into brisk air and sunshine. A woman approached me and asked if I was Kara. With a strong and warm handshake she introduced herself as Ann and loaded my suitcase into the back of her hatchback. I opened the side door as Ann swiftly cleared off papers from the passenger seat. Once inside, it was apparent that this was an artist’s car, with bags of clay, boxes of sundry materials and papers and such. The drive from Newburg to Rosendale was a brief forty minutes as conversation with Ann was comfortable and flowing. Ann Kalmbach is the Executive Director and one of four founding members of the Women’s Studio Workshop and was my main contact. I soon sensed that she was the glue that kept the place together. As we drove on a highway that cut through snow covered, wooded mountains, I took in the scenery, feeling transported from sunny Florida to this winter wonderland. It had literally been ten years since I had seen snow. Approaching Rosendale, I felt thrust back in time with historic buildings lining the narrow streets. As Ann turned down a short street, I saw a small professionally printed sign directing visitors to the Women’s Studio Workshop (WSW).

Figure 1. Sign for The Women’s Studio Workshop

Once we turned down Binnewater Lane, Ann pointed to the workshop and the intern house two doors down, where I stayed.
Ann took me to the intern house first. There were four bedrooms upstairs and one bathroom. Three of the rooms were already occupied by intern artists. The house felt ancient, really old and charming. There were wood floors throughout. Well some of the floors were merely sheets of plywood crudely painted. Other architectural details showed evidence of age, such as glass doorknobs and wide moldings. But there were no frills here. I immediately got the feeling that these women would sacrifice most anything for their art and for the cause of the WSW. Ann was embarrassed to find that the three B.F.A. graduates who were interning did not clean the house or prep my room. She rifled through a hall closet and dresser in the hallway, looking for sheets and towels. She handed me a stack of linens that were hodgepodge and old, which reminded me of camping again, or dorm life in some ways, but I recalled how my pink dorm room was decorated to the max and my grandmother really set me up complete with matching sheets, comforter, and towels. I did not go without material things although looking back there were times that I felt
like I did. However, the sheets and towels were suitable and I was pleased to have my own room at the end of the hall.

Figure 4. My Bedroom in Intern house

The old house was sparse with recycled furnishings that could have come from grandma’s attic to the local yard sale. Downstairs there was a small kitchen and cozy living area. A few movies, philosophy paperbacks, and knickknacks fill the shelves beneath a small television in the corner of this area next to an old couch and small coffee table. Flashes of dorm life and those fancy-free days of undergraduate school go off in my head like a strobe light.

Figure 5. Intern House Kitchen

Figure 6. Intern House Common Area
Once I put my suitcase and bags in my room, Ann took me over to the main workshop for a tour. She talked about the building and what renovations they had done since they purchased it in 1983. The studio spaces were housed in one large, historic building from the late 1800s. That particular weekend most everyone entered from the rear of the building because Susan, the current artist-in-residence, was occupying the front studio. As we walked through the side door, Ramona the dog barely lifted her head to great us. I gently side stepped around her so that I did not to step on her tail.

Ramona is Woody, the handyman’s dog and has a daily presence at the WSW. Ramona made instant friends with me and each time I entered the space thereafter, I was greeted with a wagging tail and a rollover, indicating a tummy rub was desired. Ramona’s comfort with the space made me feel more comfortable.

Woody is the resident handyman of the WSW. Although he was hired by other clients, he was commonly found at the WSW, especially around potluck lunch time, to which he always brought his contribution of bread and cheese. He was shocked to learn that I traveled all the way from Florida just to come to see us. Clearly he was part of the WSW and without hesitation included himself as part of this community. He told me that he has to come by each day to “check on the girls” even if he was not busy with fixing something around the place, or creating some kind of contraption that they can use in one of the studios. I noticed outback that there was a makeshift drainage system for the melting snow to flow away from the outdoor studio. As I stood there talking with Woody, I could almost see him outside carefully attaching the cut PVC pipe to the black plastic tubing to extend the drain a bit further.
He was friendly and opened up about his feelings of affection for the WSW and the women who run it. Just before he resumed work, he turned to me and said, “you know the thing about the workshop is that it’s organic. It’s a living, breathing thing that is constantly changing.”

Ann later told me that Woody first came into contact with the WSW through a jobs program with the state of New York in the mid 1970s and has been an integral part of the WSW family ever since. When the WSW moved to the current location in 1983 Woody became a regular staff member. He also worked on the Intern House, Ann and Tana’s house and Tana’s studio (the yellow barn). Ann said that Woody was a “classically trained” electrician and a jack of all trades, carpenter and problem solver. She told me that Woody’s favorite thing to do is to solve problems for artists, describing a few of the “creative” solutions he has come up with over the years.

After a brief visit with Woody, we returned back to the tour and Ann showed me where the handmade paper is constructed in the first floor back studio at the back of the building.

![Figure 8. Papermaking Studio](image)

This space was a later addition by the WSW, which expanded the studio space by approximately 1,000 square feet. Art materials and half-completed projects were taped to the wall and a wagon full of straw and grass sat off to the side.
Ann explained that she grew various wheat, oat, and barley, which are used for the handmade paper they make for the books and by some of the artists who work in printmaking. The garden was full of product to feed the artists as well as make art.

Ann led me toward a small staircase descending down to the basement. I had to duck to keep from hitting my head on exposed pipes and construction materials walking down the rickety stairs to the ceramics studio. Ann told me that they have had problems with not following American Disability Act guidelines. There have been some accidents with students and visitors coming down to the basement, one kid even broke his leg during an Art-in-Education class. Since then, she explained “we just don’t take them down there anymore.” The ceramics studio was full of chili bowls and tumblers to be sold at next weekend’s fundraiser. There were several wheels, bags of clay, green ware, glazed work, and plenty of DUST; typical studio stuff. The kilns were outside next to the papermaking studio in a makeshift room with thick, clear plastic walls that would breathe with the wind yet seemed to be keeping the moisture out.
From the back studio, down a narrow hallway there were examples of hand-made limited edition books created by various artists who have visited, taught, or who are still connected to the studio. They were elaborate and heart-felt, from basic to complex in technical proficiency and many were constructed with paper made at the studio. Several of the books were displayed in a clear box mounted to the wall, to protect them from art dust and dirt. This small space was orderly and consciously set. At the end of the hallway a wood floor demarcated the original building space met by a concrete floor in the much newer room. Just under the old staircase was a closet that served as storage for archives, photos, and articles, dating as far back as 1974. I felt like I had really stumbled onto something special there.
The hallway ends in the printmaking studio that once served as a concrete store for the town and surrounding areas in the late 1800s. The WSW is conscious of the building’s history and preserving its cultural connection to the community.

I was impressed with the history of the building and how it lived within the space alongside the artists. Off to the side of the printmaking studio was a small room that was the original Post Office. This room was full of old printing equipment. In each studio: printmaking, ceramics, silk screen, and bookmaking, there were large traditional, old pieces of equipment accompanied by some newer equipment (but not much), and handmade tools and contraptions made by Woody.

![Image](image.png)

*Figure 12. Original Rosendale Post Office*

Ann took me back down the hallway and just before stepping onto concrete floor we took a sharp left and went up the stairs. At the top of the stairs was the gallery space, which was occupied by several prints of flags adorned with personal and socio-political messages. There was a small office off to the right with two desks and a computer.

Ann and I walked into the front office and noticed that most of the staff was buttoning coats and grabbing purses as they hastily greeted me on their way out the door for the weekend. The upstairs silk-screening studio was set up for the interns to finish the chili bowl fiesta t-shirts for next weekend’s annual fundraiser. The interns looked exhausted laboring over the hot iron and sorting through finished shirts, counting sizes and adhering price tags. They barely lifted their heads to greet me, but were cheerful enough so I knew that their lack of enthusiasm was not about my arrival.
Ann explained that the WSW was quieter than usual with only one artist-in-residence and that the interns had gone to see Christo’s *The Gates* in the city. I asked her if she was referring to Manhattan when she said, “the city.” She laughed and explained that New Yorkers call Manhattan the city and the rest of the state is New York State. My Southern living status, coupled with my Texas accent had already singled me out of a crowd here, but now I was marked as a *true* outsider!

The front office upstairs had several desks and computers, bookshelves filled with past exhibition fliers, and newsletters, and an old picnic table against one wall. Off to the side was a small but fully functioning kitchen, equipped with a stovetop, antique sink, coffee maker, and fridge. There were handmade mugs, plates and bowls stacked up on a single wooden shelf the length of the kitchen.
This domestic space was warm and homey and made me think about food building community, about art, recycling, and history. She told me that she and Tana live across the street from the workshop, which made it convenient for Ann to be here most all of the time.

Mid-way through the tour, I really started to feel my stomach growl and wondered where I would get food. After walking through what appeared to be most of the space, Ann told me about our plans to go out to dinner with Susan, the artist-residence and Antonina, the web designer. About an hour later, we all piled into Ann’s hatchback and took a short drive into town. She told us that this is one of her favorite places to eat and that is has been awhile since she has been there. The Egg’s Nest is a very artsy café. Ann explained that the art on the walls, ceiling, and just about anywhere, even the tables and chairs are brightly painted and adorned with an array of embellishments, rotates throughout the year. She said that just about each time she eats
there, the art has moved around and something new has been introduced to the space. The walls are covered in murals from top to bottom with holiday lights strewn about in a warmly lit space. I felt at home here and immediately fell in love with the quaint café. It was obvious why Ann chose this place to take us. Dinner was nice and relaxed. We had good conversation and easy laughter. This was really fun and gave us a chance to feel more comfortable around each other. They all had questions about me and my research and my intentions. We chatted some about the WSW, but mostly about our personal lives and funny stories that incited uproars of laughter from our table at regular intervals.

I began to feel a connection with Antonina at dinner. We were about the same age and we began to develop a good rapport over the weekend. Ann and Susan (are about the same age, fifty something) remarked how young we were, which was funny because Antonina and I were staying in the intern house and were just remarking how old we felt when we talked to the women in their early twenties. After we finished eating, our conversation lingered. The contagious laughter that emanated from our table finally died down, looking around I noticed that much of the restaurant has cleared out. Once we stepped outside the café door, a gust of freezing air swirled around us and I noticed that everyone was wearing parka-like coats and hiking boots. I felt relieved that I kept those old Doc Martin combat boots I purchased several years ago when they were fashionable and artsy! It was a quick drive back to Ann’s house. Antonina and I walked over to the intern house together after we left Susan at the main workshop where she was staying in the artist apartment above the silk screen studio.

Back in my room, I spent time writing about the day’s events and prepared for bed. Before falling completely asleep, sirens started going off that I was unable identify. They sounded like something from an old movie, I imagined WWII sirens. Once they finally stopped, I could hear the soft jingle of wind chimes outside my second story window to which I fell into a deep sleep. The next morning, Ann drove Antonina and me into town for a few groceries at a local market, Emanuelles, then over to the local co-op, a small, specialty store that offered locally grown vegetables, homemade salves, and hemp clothing. Driving back I saw a bagel shop, Bodacious Bagels, in a converted house. Other businesses were housed in old churches along the small, curvy highway. I felt a strong sense of historical preservation. Back at the house, Antonina and I put our groceries away in the small extra refrigerator next to the stove. There was one large refrigerator and two small ones to help everyone keep their food separate.
After a brief scavenger hunt in the kitchen for a clean knife and plate, I ate my New York bagel (honestly I was not so sure what all the fuss is about and felt certain that there were bagels down South that were comparable, but by my third trip to Rosendale, Bodacious Bagels had become a regular and multiple stop for me). Antonina came in to make coffee for us only to find the coffee maker hiding in a pile of dust and began a serious distillation process. I was relieved to know that I was not the only one uncomfortable with the lack of cleanliness in the house. Previous to this trip, I had started to reduce my caffeine intake, which was now completely destroyed. I could not resist a strong cup of coffee on such a cold morning.

Kyla, the only intern who stayed home to work that weekend, kept on chatting about this and that. She was extremely open and interesting to talk to, so I asked her if I could tape record our conversation. Wide-eyed, she stopped scrubbing the pots and became a bit self conscious for about 30 seconds, then forgot about the recorder and we continued talking. Since this conversation was impromptu, I did not have a list of questions in front of me. Instead, we just conversed and every so often I led the discussion back to the specifics about her experiences at the WSW. She told me about being an intern and was grateful for the opportunity, her living accommodations were provided, she received a small stipend which she sent home every month to help cover her car insurance, and she had access to studio space in the evenings and on the weekend. She was thrilled to be there.

After an hour or so, I went over to the workshop. Ann and I sat down at the picnic table in the main office for a more formalized interview. She was soft spoken but eager to talk about the WSW. After nearly 1 hour and 45 minutes of taped interview, we took a break for lunch. Ann reminded me of my grandmother – someone who is there for everyone, overseeing the big
picture and mired in the details at the same time. She was busy, supervising the interns, assisting and supporting Tana’s art production, overseeing the chili bowl event, and hosting me all weekend on top of that.

After the interview, I sat at the table for awhile, sorting through a massive stack of archived articles and pamphlets. It was clear that there was no way that I would be able to get through all of this in one trip. Fortunately, Ann gave me extra copies of Binnewater Tides (Appendix D), a newsletter that the WSW used to write and distribute, to take home. The weekend was quiet according to Ann, but it felt like there was quite a bit of activity going on in that old house.

Later that afternoon, I returned to the Intern house for some lunch. Antonina was there. We sat, ate, and chatted for awhile. She told me about the potluck lunch that goes on during the weekdays over at the workshop and I felt sorry to miss that. Antonina revealed her impressions of the WSW as a grass roots organization that she strongly supports and wants to see survive. She first learned about the studio from an artist friend, Ayumi who lived in Rosendale and was the director of the ceramic studio and program at that time. Antonina was in and out of the workshop over the years whenever she had time between jobs. She was here this time to redesign the WSW website. She was onsite for over one month.

![Antonina, Photographer, Website Design Volunteer](image)

The website was an important source of marketing for the WSW. Many people learned about the WSW through the website or by word of mouth. Two of the interns learned about the WSW through the website and the third went to school at Alfred University ceramics program, where Ayumi was once a graduate student and teacher. I was extremely curious about how the WSW has been able to survive without much marketing or exposure to the national art market,
however there was some connection to NYC programs and artists. I remembered that when I started to search for an all woman artist organization, none of the feminist studies or art education scholars that I queried knew about the WSW. When I mentioned this to Ann, she was somewhat astounded. She went on to tell me that the WSW has an extensive history of exhibition and connections to art world institutions such as the National Museum for Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C.

After lunch, Antonina and I went for a drive around Rosendale and a short hike (as I got into the truck, I wondered how I would fair since the weather was so darn cold!). We parked on the side of the road and got out and walked through the Catskills just at the foot of one mountain. The natural environment was magnificent and I could feel how it was conducive to creating a special artist’s retreat. During our walk, I remembered seeing several pairs of ice skates at the intern house and dreaming of skating on a pond, something that I have never done (I flash back to my ice skating days as a young girl at the local rink and aspiring to be the next Dorothy Hamill).

As the sun started to set, Antonina and I were cued that it would soon be time to meet Ann and Tana for dinner. We knocked on the front screen and Ann shouted, “come on in, don’t worry about your boots!” We opened the door to delicious smells, warm air, and soft music. Ann walked up and took our coat. Susan joined us a few minutes after our arrival. She came in expressing frustration about her work and process again. Tana came out of the kitchen and gave her encouragement and guidance for a fresh start the next day. We sat and ate cheese toast
appetizers that Tana brought in from the kitchen along with a bottle of red wine. Conversation turned into reminiscing about our undergraduate days as art students and our experiences in Drawing I classes. Despite our varied backgrounds and education, our experiences were similar and without being said, bridged the gaps between us. Tana cooked dinner and was the hostess deluxe this evening. We ate fresh food from their garden and tofu. The dinner was very organic, hippie, and vegetarian. As our eating slowed down, Ann pulled out her toy collection and introduced each toy with an elaborate story about how she acquired it, which usually involved a museum exhibition and exotic travels. Meanwhile, showing us how each toy worked with a trick or some fanciful movement, we passed them around like small children with delight and amusement.

Our conversation was comfortable and intimate. Susan talked about why she comes to the WSW year after year to work with the printmaking equipment that she does not have access to in the small town in Maine where she lives. She does not have children and talked about how her husband understands her annual month-long pilgrimage to the WSW. After goodbye hugs and fastening our winter wear, we three walked back to the workshop and intern house. The lack of street lights, coupled with an unpaved and icy road was just treacherous enough to make a short jaunt three houses down seem like a dangerous passage. It was a long day. Back upstairs I fell into the lopsided squeaky bed and felt like a very spoiled brat as I dreamt of my cushy bed at home.

On the last morning, Ann met me over at the workshop. After filling our colorful, handmade mugs with hot coffee, we walked downstairs to the papermaking studio, where she dragged out a black, canvas suitcase full of artist books that were made here by visiting artists. We looked through the artwork for over an hour until it was time to leave for the airport. The drive back was swift and conversation with Ann was easy.

I developed initial impressions from this first visit to the Women’s Studio Workshop. I discovered that this was a group of women who came together for the sake of art; creating it, exhibiting it, understanding themselves through it, and building a community around it. The WSW was a community. There was the core community that formed the stable backbone of the WSW, Ann, Tana, Anita, Woody, and several office staff. Then, there was a fluid community of women artists, both emerging and established who came through, in, and around the space in varying degrees and ways. There was the community of Rosendale that embraced the WSW,
even if they do not always have accurate perceptions about what is really going on there. My initial visit left me wanting to experience and know more.

I also learned about myself as a researcher through this first visit. I stayed in the intern house for two of my visits and at Anita’s house for one. The accommodations did affect my comfort level and at times my energy depending on how I slept or if I had a diet coke that morning or not. My perspective shined through each of the following stories of the WSW, which are a result of the interweaving of several smaller narratives, including my own. Furthermore, I recognized that my attention to one theme over another was influenced by my perspective. I accepted responsibility for how the stories are framed and presented and recognized how my perception informed this process. The stories that are told here offer a glimpse of the Women’s Studio Workshop.

*Figure 20. Kara and Ann in the Upstairs Gallery at the WSW*
Four Women Artists and a Grant

The Women’s Studio Workshop was established in the early 1970s during the height of the Women’s Liberation Movement. It was a time when more women artists were organizing to create alternative spaces in which to create, work, and exhibit. Although all four of the founding artists of the WSW said that they were not active participants in the larger women’s movement, they all experienced challenges as women art students and then as women artists and educators. Their combined experiences with discrimination motivated their efforts that led to the establishment of the WSW.

The four founders, Ann Kalbach, Tana Kellner, Anita Wetzel, and Barbara Leoff Burge became friends and partners through their common bond as artists and as women. Their stories are unique but resonate with one other leading to the crossing of their paths that led to the creation of the Women’s Studio Workshop. I spoke to all four of the women on several occasions. My relationship with each one is of friendship and deep admiration.

Ann Kalmbach

I met Ann Kalmbach, the Executive Director of the WSW, when I picked up the phone and called the office as soon as I read about the organization on their website. I told her that I was looking for a woman’s artist organization, she replied, “great, you found us! When can you come up?” Her openness and warmth was immediately felt and sustained each time I visited the WSW. During my first visit, it was readily apparent that Ann was the captain of this ship. Her dedication to the WSW was boundless and her presence always felt.

Figure 21. Ann Kalmbach, Executive Director and Co-founder
Ann grew up in the state of New York in the 1950s. She felt support and encouragement from her mother to be an artist right from the start and made art as a child from the wood scraps that her father brought home from the factory where he worked. By the time she was in first grade, Ann was aware that her artistic skills exceeded those of her peers. The decision to study art in college was easy and natural. We talked about her experience as a female art student in the 1960s.

Kara: Did you experience any discrimination as a woman art student in college?
Ann: Oh, golly…well, there were only a couple of boys in the art classes….there was only one woman on the faculty. She had some problems with her health and then later they let her go. She plastered these posters all over canvas.
Kara: What were the posters about?
Ann: Oh, you know discrimination. I can’t remember exactly….She wasn’t really any harder or easier than the other teachers, but she was more like a person rather than an icon or something (referring to the male teachers). She was just a little bit more personal or something.
Kara: Do you remember learning about women artists while you were in school?
Ann: Not in school.
Kara: Anita talked about how you guys would go to the library and get books about artists and have people over to your place and learn about these artists.
Ann: Um hmm, yeah we would have to get to school early before the semester started and hide the books that we wanted in the stacks at the library so no one would check them out before we could at the beginning of each semester.
Kara: Did you have any role models?
Ann: Barbara. (Referring to Barbara Burge)
Kara: The other two said that as well (Referring to Nita and Tana).
Ann: I don’t think that there was anyone else. There weren’t that many interesting people. The painting teacher would never give an art critique. When it would get close to the end of the semester he would go off on how awful all of the work was. Meanwhile, everyone was spending days on their best work to show the teacher….The other thing about him was that he would select students to model (nude) for him.
Kara: Anita talked about that.
Ann: It was really sick.
Kara: Did you do that?
Ann: I did not, no.
Kara: Was drawing your primary medium in college?
Ann: Yes, well painting. There was a fabulous painting studio at my college that was separate from all of the other buildings. I minored in printmaking. The painting teacher was *completely* crazy!....the printmaking teacher was good and I was always interested in silk screen so I spent a lot of time there.
Kara: So many of the responses about choice of media have been related to who was teaching.
Ann: Oh sure.....maybe if you were really destined to be a painter or whatever you would stay there.

We continued to talk about how Ann and Anita ran a grass roots coffee house where students and radicals came to drink coffee and wine and discuss things like politics, philosophy, literature, and art. After graduation, Ann went on to graduate school where she met Tana. As Ann and Tana were finishing graduate school, they began to wonder what the future held for them as artists. On the occasion of our first meeting I asked Ann how the workshop originated.

Kara: I was reading the 1974 file last night. Good stuff. There was an interview with the WSW founders and it said that you guys built the workshop because you couldn’t find jobs. Is that how all of that worked?
Ann: Anita, who sits over there. (She points across the room to another desk) She was here working. And, Barbara was working here, she is, well was married. And, Tana and I just out of graduate school needed jobs and we tried and had a hard time. But, Anita wrote a grant and we got it and that’s essentially what happened.
Kara: This has really been the bulk of your career.
Ann: It’s all I’ve ever done, which is a little odd. I haven’t really been out there that much.
Kara: Kyla was talking to me about the workshop being in a different world.
Ann: It is a different world, but it’s hard to say why it’s a different world, I don’t know.

*Anita Wetzel*
I met Anita Wetzel in passing during my first visit to the WSW. On my second trip, I stayed at her house and over the course of that week we shared intimate stories about our lives and the way we each see the world. Prior to the following conversation, I asked Anita about her perception of the 1970s movement. She told me that she was aware of what was going on and even attended a few meetings but felt that they were dry and boring and that she did not really fit in. It made more sense to her to actually do something, which led to her pursuit of a grant. Anita, or Nita, as she is called by her closest comrades, is a sensitive soul and artist who had a kernel of an idea that blossomed beyond her wildest dreams.

Figure 22. Anita “Nita” Wetzel, Development Director and Co-founder

Anita grew up in the state of New York with a keen interest in drawing. As a young girl, Anita spent hours listening to radio programs while drawing as she looked through the fashion advertisements in *The New York Times*. She said that it was not the fashion that attracted her but the lines and details of the drawings. With the support of her parents, Anita enrolled as an English major in college. During an art survey course, Anita found unexpected inspiration in the studio art assignments and decided at once that she must be an art major. Despite strong protests from her parents, she pursued art as a major and acted on what she called her first obvious rebellion. Her journey through art school, alongside Ann, was not without hurdles as Ann previously eluded too. Anita tells her side of the story.

Kara: Did you experience any discrimination in art school?
Anita: Yeah, I have a lot of anger over it still. I felt like we weren’t taken seriously. It was a battle the whole time. It was mostly women. There was one teacher who wanted us
to pose nude for him because that was his project. There was a lot of pressure to do it and I didn’t want to do it….but he was actually my favorite teacher because the way he did things really resonated with me. He was hard to understand but I sort of did understand him so when he did that it really turned me off. It was more like we were in a club and having fun and listening to music, like it was a joke but I was serious….my parents came down one time when I called them and said that I was going to quit, I got really fed up.

Kara: Did something happen that made you feel that way, or was it a series of events leading up to that point?

Anita: Yeah, I don’t know I can’t remember exactly but I just didn’t think that I was going to finish that last 8 weeks. My parents came and told me that I was going to finish.

Kara: Did you have fear about what was going to come after school?

Anita: Well, there was certainly fear about that.

Kara: I know the feeling.

Anita: Even at this level?

Kara: Yes!....Do you remember learning about women artists when you were in college?

Anita: Not particularly. The artists we learned about were always men….I think that my dad gave me a book about women artists.

Kara: Wow, that’s neat.

Anita: I’m trying to remember but I think that’s right. Ann and I had this thing where we would check out all the books at the library that we liked and then take them to our house and invite our favorite art buddies over to look at them. That’s the way I remember it, she probably remembers it differently.

Kara: So you and Ann were roommates?

Anita: At a certain point, yeah. We ran this coffee shop together and we got to live alone in this house. It was quite an adventure. I lived in the dorm originally and then somehow we teamed up this idea to run the coffee house.

Kara: That’s interesting.

Anita: There is something else traumatic. Ann will remember you should ask her. There was one woman professor, she was a sculptor. Ann worked with her and she was making really beautiful sculptures and they were trying to fire her. I can remember signing papers and trying to help her not get fired. My memory is that we didn’t want to lose this one
person because of who she was, but I’m sure it was also like we don’t want to lose the only woman. The guys were well…it was bad.

Kara: Did you have any role models when you were in college?

Anita: I didn’t feel like it so that was why when I met Barbara it was so amazing.

Kara: She really filled that for you.

Anita: Yes and she wasn’t an artist in a book, she was a real life person. Her husband showed us these drawings that his wife did and they were so good, the composition and lines were so strong and clear…..and all of this art stuff for me was new because I didn’t have any art in high school and to go from English to art was pretty scary. I didn’t know that I was interested yet….I did have an amazing choral teacher who showed me an art book.

Kara: What is your favorite medium?

Anita: I prefer drawing, which is interesting because I think that drawing isn’t taken as seriously as painting. It used to be a problem, but I no longer see it as a problem. I can remember being unsure about my thesis because it was mostly drawings and I didn’t feel like it was quite good enough.

By the time I had this conversation with Anita, several people had already told me that she wrote the grant that started what has become the Women’s Studio Workshop today. Babs said, “Has Anita told you that this was her idea?” I shook my head and she continued, “No, I didn’t think so. If Anita does something great, she won’t be the one to tell you. So, I’ll tell you.” I told Anita that Babs said this and she blushed a bit as she chuckled and started to tell me about that first grant.

Anita: I was working in the library, which was actually pretty wonderful. Someone had started an interlibrary loan program and I got hired to run that….but I started to think wow, here you are and you aren’t making art. So, I somehow learned that you could write a grant. I have no idea how I learned this but once I found out that you could get some money, I started to think about what we could do. I wanted to do something for Barbara my mentor and for Ann my dear buddy…we had been drawing and making art together and going to arts activities together, so there was that kernel of a thought. I wrote the grant as if we were going to create a communal living situation, um I wish that I could think of a model to tell you but I didn’t have a model myself. I was thinking about these
communities that were self contained where stuff was made by hand with a craft quality and an aesthetic quality. This was in England and other communities sprang up around it. I wasn’t thinking about craft since we were focused on fine art, but I was thinking about a living community where we could do artistic work and discuss it and discuss ideas. So, I was all alone, Ann and Tana were away and I don’t remember if I showed it to Barbara or not, but I got it ready and sent it off on April 1 or whenever the deadline was and forgot about it…and I remember being extremely shocked that I got a phone call at the library where I was working and they said that they wanted to come up and see us. So they came up to meet us. It would never happen that way today, because we hadn’t actually done anything. Then we had the meeting and they told us that we had to come up with something that was more concrete. So after the men left, we got together and talked about what we were going to do. Fortunately, Ann and Tana were getting concrete learning in printmaking and we made a statement about how it’s difficult for women artists to find space and money to make art and they gave us the money. You’ll have to ask Ann exactly how all of this went…Nowadays I don’t know if you can ask for money unless you have been together for three years.

Kara: So, was that how your role as the grant writer came about?

Anita: Yeah, it became that. I didn’t have the technical ability in printmaking. Barbara and I taught drawing.

Kara: When did you take a hiatus from the workshop?

Anita: ‘80

Kara: When did you return?

Anita: I started coming back one day a week and writing the journal and getting more involved in little ways. When I moved back in ’95 I really didn’t know that I would be working at the workshop so I started looking for a job and they happened to need a grant writer, so here I am.

Kara: What did you do in New York while you were away from 1980 to 1995?

Anita: Well, I thought that I’d be able to work part time but that was economically impossible. We talked about this. (Referring to an earlier discussion about her time living in the city)

Kara: Yes.
Anita: Well, I was working on computers and doing ok but I didn’t feel like I really knew enough so I didn’t like that job.

Kara: Was that job tied to the art world in anyway?

Anita: No and I really should not have let that happen. But I did have a solo show that was very special and I had one group show. I did some service work for non-profits and some grant writing.

Kara: Are you comfortable with grant writing?

Anita: hmm..

Kara: Do you enjoy it?

Anita: Well, I don’t not like it….I do it because I believe in it and I wouldn’t do it for a non arts organization.

Kara: I noticed that one of your bedrooms is set up as a studio do you make art regularly?

Anita: I’m trying to.

**Tatana Kellner**

I met with Tatana, or Tana as everyone calls her, early one morning in her yellow barn studio. Officially she is the Artistic Director of the workshop and together with Ann has been an integral part of the organization from the beginning. Perhaps of more significance, Tana is a full time serious artist, evidenced by a rigorous schedule, receipt of international competitive grants,
attendance at intense artist residencies, and regular participation in exhibitions. Early that morning, I drove past Iron Mountain on the short drive from Anita’s house to the WSW campus. I parked at the main workshop and took one last swig of diet coke before gathering my materials for the interview. The sun was shining and the air was crisp and clean as I walked across the street to the yellow barn. When Tana suggested that we meet in her studio I was thrilled. I thought about how most artists only dream of such a huge and special space, truly a room of one’s own.

The space was just as I had imagined with large windows, wood floors and beams with endless space. A ping pong table was in the center of the room covered in paper and clippings of this and that. There was a computer on a desk on the other side of the room and racks of artwork lining the side wall. A cozy sitting area was set up along one wall where we sat and talked. Tana made me a cup of hot tea from an electric kettle that sat on a small table top. At the time of this conversation, Tana was on sabbatical from the workshop to complete a body of work funded by a Pollock-Krasner grant. I was impressed by the level of commitment to her work and achievements. She showed me some of her work which was politically conscious and often personally connected. Tana has led a fascinating life that was shaped by her experience as a Czechoslovakian immigrant with parents who survived the holocaust. When I asked her about the future of the WSW, she seemed ok with the notion that the WSW might die out after her and Ann are no longer running things. She recognized that the WSW was what it was because of the proximity of their home across the street and wonders who could replace that. We talked about her experience as a female art student, which to her was overshadowed, in many ways, by her immigrant status and her process of learning a new language and culture.

Kara: Did you experience sexism in your art classes in college?
Tana: Yes, and it was the worst in the painting and drawing classes.
Kara: Yes, this was also my experience.
Tana: It was more obvious with women who were like 30 who had come back to school. These women were looked down upon as merely housewives and mothers filling time. I wasn’t really conscious of it but it was there.
Kara: That’s where I encountered the most sexism in art classes too, was drawing and painting.
Tana: Painting and drawing is seen as being so macho.
Kara: Right, isn’t that funny. I can remember being so shocked the first time that I was faced with it, being a 19 year old girl and naïve about how the art world works. I had no idea about the levels of testosterone in the studio! [we both laugh]
Tana: When I was taking classes as a teenager, like 14 or 15 I would be harassed by male students, but I just ignored that. I didn’t want to play into it.
Kara: Do you remember learning about women artists when you were in school?
Tana: No, oh yeah, Mary Cassatt!
Kara: Yes, of course, Mary Cassatt. Maybe Georgia O’Keeffe?
Tana: Maybe, but probably not, she was too contemporary for my school….I did experience sexism when interviewing for a job when I was told that a man was getting the job instead of me because he had a family. I didn’t know how to respond!
Kara: Wow.
Tana: I was like, oh ok is that how it works? (Laughing about it now)
Kara: Was that about the time that you all started the workshop?
Tana: Well it was after graduate school and I had to get a job.
Kara: Tell me about how the WSW got started.
Tana: Well, Ann, Nita and I went to school together and Babs was married to one of our art teachers. He introduced us and that’s how we met Babs. Nita wrote a grant and we got it. We were all very excited and we started looking for a place that we could rent so that we could all continue working.
Kara: The development of the workshop came about so that the four of you could make art full time?
Tana: Yes. Then, we started giving art classes to the community to help support the studio and it went from there. It was really an organic process.

Barbara Leoff Burge

I met Barbara, or as everyone calls her, “Babs” for the first time during my second visit to the WSW. Ann called her and told her about me and my research and Babs made a special visit over one day to meet with me. I was sitting in the upstairs office just before the daily potluck was served, when a snappy older woman in her early seventies came over and introduced herself “I’m Babs and I’ve come to talk with you. Come sit next to me on the bench and let’s eat
lunch.” Her timing was beautiful as this was my first day to participate in the potluck and I was feeling a bit apprehensive about finding a seat on the crowded benches. She put me right at ease. After lunch we took our hot tea and coffee downstairs to the printmaking studio and sat in the deep window seat at the front of the room.

Figure 24. Barbara “Babs” Leoff Burge, Artistic Consultant and Co-founder

She showed me several of her drawings and tiles that she has been working on (I put my name on a waiting list for one of these tiles and I remembered that I saw one of these tiles in Nita’s kitchen windowsill). We flipped through some of the archival project in process and she showed me that she has created the graphics for nearly every poster, flier, or advertisement related to the WSW since the beginning. Although Babs did not have printmaking or graphic arts experience, this did not stop her from making dozens of creative posters over the years. I interviewed her for over an hour. She was a special artist and the oldest of the four. I found myself wanting to spend more time talking with her. All four of the founding members of the WSW were individual personalities who utilized their creative energy to feed the life and sustainability of the WSW for more than thirty years. Yet, there was something special about Babs. Indeed, she was the role model and mentor for the other three artists and she grew up in a different era, which shaped her view of the world. I told her that I was interested in learning about how the WSW originated and without further prompting she began to tell her story.

Babs: What led me to the workshop is that I was an angry pissed off woman because of stuff that happened to me and I know that it had an affect….like the thing about high
school was that the teachers really didn’t pay that much attention to the girls. They didn’t really call the girls artists and if you didn’t have the attention of the teacher then you really didn’t get anywhere. They pushed their favorites. I always wanted to teach. I had this huge carton of applications. But I couldn’t get hired. They would say it’s because I didn’t have a master’s degree. But, then they would hire some guy who didn’t have as much education as some women have, including me. What capped it all off was when I got a job at a community college and they told me that they really wanted a man and that when a man came along that I was going to lose my job.

Kara: Wow (incredulously)!
Babs: They told me that.
Kara: What year was that?
Babs: I think that maybe 1965 or something like that. I tried so hard… I did a lot of work. They even told me that I did really well. But, when they found a man they did fire me. After that I had a nervous breakdown. It wasn’t just that, it was a combination of things. You just accepted that as the norm, you thought that there was nothing that you could do about it. There were a lot of things like that happened that you just couldn’t do anything about it. Even to this day, I can’t break into the art world. There are some types of media that aren’t accepted. There is some part of me that just can’t do it anymore. I’m still an artist and I still make art. I wish that I could do some active resistance against it, on purpose, you are not rejecting me, I’m rejecting you. I’m not making slides. Because I never could. I just don’t work that way. I don’t criticize this, but people who make slides make a body of work and make slides and then try to get it shown and then move on to the next body of work. You can work in many different ways.

Kara: Right.
Babs: Tana and Ann came from a different place. I’m a different generation.
Kara: What year were you born?
Babs: ‘33
Kara: Did you grow up around here?
Babs: No, my parents were Russian immigrants. I came from a mill town in Massachusetts, very bigoted and small minded. However, I think that I learned some good stuff from my surroundings. Part of it was toughening up and wanting to be
rebellious. I think that it’s important for an artist to want to be different. I think that it’s important for everyone to feel that.

Kara: When was the first time that you had a consciousness about being a girl?

Babs: It’s a funny story. There was this obnoxious little boy who I used to be in his company because my mother and his mother were distantly related, wanted to pull down his pants and look at him. And, I said well, who cares and I looked at it and I said that is so ugly! He threw mud all over my bed or something. I thought I sure am glad that I don’t have one of those, but I didn’t think that he had one because he was a boy. I just thought that some people had that kind and some people had the other kind….like random assignment. He was really upset with me because he thought that I would be really impressed.

We are laughing hysterically at this point as she continues.

Babs: I think that I always knew that I was a girl. I think that my mother was my role model. My brother and my father…something about their world and their life was something that I didn’t want. I loved clothes…and SHOES! Is there a woman alive who doesn’t love new shoes?

Kara: Did you make art as a child?

Babs: As a child, I was more interested in doing dress up. It was the heartbreak of my childhood that my mother wore orthopedic shoes and all the other girls had mothers with pretty shoes. I thought that all I wanted to do was grow up and have perfume with a squeeze thing on the end that you pump all around you and a dressing table with a skirt and a lot of cosmetics. I wore high heels briefly. But, it’s hard when you are an artist.

Kara: I can’t wear them either.

Babs: It has a lot to do with being feminine.

Kara: Yes, absolutely. What was your first experience with formal art education?

Babs: Well, this is a funny thing. I had actually never done an original painting in my entire childhood. I guess maybe it’s not that strange in a small town. But the art teacher would come in for an hour and everyone had to do exactly what she did on the board and I didn’t do particularly well. My formal art education didn’t really come until my first year in Chicago. My very first year was in a commercial art school. I didn’t really know that you could be a fine artist. It was horrible. You had to go into advertising, so I didn’t
do it…I graduated high school in 1951. I went to art school in Boston for a year, like in 1952 and then I took a life drawing class in Chicago when I was visiting my grandmother and then I went to the Art Institute of Chicago when I was about 20 years old. So, it was really then that I had my first formal art education.

Kara: You mentioned that in high school the teachers gave more attention to the male students. Did you experience that in the college art classes?

Babs: It was a given. It was such a male world then. You didn’t even question it. My first thought was that I should be a nurse. But, my parents said that I didn’t want to do that….but, it was such a given you didn’t even think about it. I was more conscious that the other students seemed more sophisticated than me because they came from the city and had that background in art as children and that kind of thing.

Kara: That is interesting. Did you learn about any women artists while you were in college?

Babs: Basically no. In all the arts, music, literature, even cooking, the examples were men. There were busts of Beethoven and Shakespeare, even god is a man! (laughing) but we’ve changed our minds since then, right?

Kara: Did you have a role model who you could look to as a young artist?

Babs: I probably would never have used those words role model, because that is a term of modern times. (after several seconds of thought) I don’t think that I did. I didn’t have a role model.

Kara: Do you self identify as a feminist?

Babs: (laughing) Does a bear shit in the woods? Yeah, there have been people who have yelled at me for it and gotten on my case for it, but yeah.
Both the artists-in-residence and some of the interns talked about how the WSW gave them access to materials, space, and opportunities to learn that they may not have elsewhere. More importantly, they talked about how the artist-in-residence program gave them the opportunity to have a room of their own, even if just for awhile. At the beginning of my doctoral studies, I was given the recommendation to read Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*. In response to women’s financial hurdles to afford the space and to her domestic duties that hinder her ability to have time to create, Woolf suggested a “room of one’s own.” Here, women had the finances, time and space to create. What I found to be special about this woman-centered space was that it felt free of so many gendered expectations associated with a co-ed environment. Many of the women reported that they did not wear make-up here but do in other settings and that they felt like they do not have to censor their language, including what they say and how they say it.

During my first visit, my focus was centered on how an all-woman artist space might be different, maybe even better, than a co-ed one. I discovered that the WSW is pro-woman, not anti-man, although male artists have participated in the past Ann said that this was problematic, especially concerning the living quarters for the interns and artists. She stressed how important it was for the women feel comfortable. After a short pause Ann said, “After all the male artists have plenty of places to work.” I continued to ask her about what makes an all woman space different.

Kara: Is there something unique about the energy that it’s all women?
Ann: I don’t know.
Kara: Is that because it’s all you know?
Ann: Yeah. Sometimes I go out in the world and it’s like only the men talk and they aren’t saying an interesting thing.
Kara: Or sometimes a woman will talk, and she is interrupted and then she won’t interrupt back. That happens in seminar classes with women and men students. I have been reading about language between men and women and not only the way we express ourselves, but how it changes from a woman only group, to a mixed group.
Ann: I think that is really interesting and I think that no matter what happens, that isn’t going to change. That is real survival stuff.
Kara: I even find myself wanting to assert my voice in those mixed groups in a different way, although I often approach this cautiously and carefully. I have begun to recognize my own passiveness. I do find it interesting to be in a woman centered space and like we were talking about last night, to be in a nurturing space. Although I know you said that you stay away from that characterization.

Ann: It’s a hard one…It isn’t valued.

Kara: Certainly not in public spaces. It doesn’t fit into a hierarchical structure.

On a return trip to the WSW, I revisited the issue with Ann. I was interested to learn that she had pondered the topic over the past several months since our last conversation.

Kara: Last time I was here you and I talked a lot about the workshop being a separatist community and whether or not that is good.

Ann: I think about this a lot now.

Kara: Do you?

Ann: Yes, because I think, well first of all, I just went through this long process with the Board about our mission that says “all people” and how do you say that when the title is the Women’s Studio Workshop? And, now I’m like, it’s pretty old fashioned and what does it mean in contemporary terms?

When I talked to Tana about male artists participating in the Summer Arts Institute, she had some insight related to one incident in particular.

Kara: I read that in the summer program male artists are invited to take classes at the workshop. Is that the only scenario where men are involved?

Tana: Well, yeah. It’s really because of the housing situation. It would be too expensive to accommodate male artists and really even if we did open it up to men, how many would apply? I think male artists do change the dynamics of the space. We had this gay male artist who used to come and take courses in the summer and he was so disruptive to the class because he demanded the teacher’s attention the entire time. We found out from the other students’ evaluation of the class. The teacher was just going to let him keep on doing it.

Kara: In my women’s studies classes when all of the students are women, the discussions are generally feel balanced and each person is given time to speak and their opinion is valued enough to be heard at least. As soon men are in the class, the dynamics shift
dramatically. Sometimes when just a few men are in the class, it can still work equitably when the male students are respectful…and when the women give them respect as well. However, most of the time male voices are the loudest in the class.

Tana: That’s how this guy was. He just took over the class.

When I asked Babs about male artists in the space, she declared, “well mostly I think that they make the women feel uncomfortable. After all we can empty our own trash.” Anita told me a story about a confrontation she had with a male artist who was offended that the residency did not accept male applications. She recalled being deeply disturbed by his comments and felt that she had to defend the WSW. I did not have the opportunity to observe male artists there. Woody was always a regular but a quiet presence working away in his own world. He was a part of the WSW but there to support the women artists, not to compete with them. On one such occasion I felt the distinction between male and female energy with Reggie, the male archivist who was hired with grant money to archive the WSW materials. Throughout that day Reggie was mostly quiet or interacting with Ann about how to catalog this or that. During potluck lunch I noticed that Reggie seemed to be having some difficulty with the experience. I wrote:

Reggie is joining the lunch. Having a man at lunch isn’t that unusual since Woody is usually present, but he isn’t here today. I find Reggie’s level of discomfort interesting and I watch him throughout the lunch. Of course, since I don’t know Reggie outside of this context I won’t be able to detect if his behavior is different being in an all woman space. But, it does seem that he is struggling to find his way here. He filled his plate and then sat back from the picnic table. I’m relieved actually that he didn’t try to sit next to me, eating that close to a strange man might have just sent me over the edge…well not literally, but yeah, there would definitely have been a level of discomfort there. He also appeared to be struggling with the conversation and raised his voice a time or two to get attention.

Later reading this passage, it was not entirely clear if it was Reggie who uncomfortable or it was me who felt uncomfortable with his presence.

I met Nicole briefly during on my first visit to the WSW. On my second visit, we had the opportunity to sit down for an extended conversation. Nicole was the first woman to work at the WSW who was not a visual artist and was the first regular staff member to go through pregnancy while working at the WSW. Since she was not a visual artist, I wondered how Nicole became
involved with the WSW. Her role evolved from a temporary part time position to a full time and integral person at the WSW.

Figure 25. Nicole, Office Staff Everything Person

During that interview our talk shifted from question and answer to something organic and more of a dialogue. I felt like we were two girlfriends sitting around talking about how we felt about not wearing make-up and shaving and things like that. What may or may not be considered feminine, feminist, or womanly and what the difference was.

Kara: Do you notice anything different about working in an all woman space?
Nicole: I imagine that I might dress differently and I would be more conscious of what I say. I think that I would be more cautious with my comments. I probably wouldn’t talk about my weekend or women things so much.

Kara: Anita, Ann, and someone else…talked about you and how the children have been here so much and how they really appreciate being around your babies. I have really thought a lot about how the act of allowing you to bring your children to work was a political maneuver that was unintentionally political but was.
Nicole: That’s true.

Kara: Childcare has its own category as an issue within the feminist movement and for all mothers, regardless of political alignment. It’s something that any mom who wants to work has to face. How do you continue to cope with that?
Nicole: It’s challenging as much as I work. I work 6 hours a day, 4 days per week here. Ann is really accommodating still. I mean when I told her that I was pregnant, I had only been working here like six months or something. I really didn’t know how she was going
to take it. But, she was all “yea!” and was really happy for me. Then when I got to the end of that pregnancy I wasn’t sure how I was going to work it all out and Ann said “bring the baby to work.” Sometimes she can be vague so I wasn’t sure how that would work. But, I thought that I would try it out and quickly it became a thing. Then, it wasn’t but a few months later… I became pregnant again and I thought oh my gosh how am I going to tell them? I waited a few months to tell them. I had to adjust to it myself. But, then when I told them they were so happy for me again and they said, that’s perfect, it’s perfect timing Nicole. I said, “it is?” But everyone was so great. Now that they are a little older I have stopped bringing them to work. I feel like I work too much. She asked me if I wanted to get some of my work done from home. I said, “really?” She said that as long as I’m getting my work done and what I’m doing is valuable for them, then she will work around what I need.

During the first night of my last visit I learned that Nicole reluctantly turned in her two-week resignation. She was at a crossroads and needed to pursue a position that could pay her more. A difficult decision for Nicole, this was sad news for the WSW. Although Nicole is no longer with the WSW, I did get to see and talk with her again on my last trip during the preparations and the hosting of the Thirtieth Annual WSW Auction. Our last meeting was casual and Nicole told me that she often thinks about the things that we talked about that day. She said, “I will never forget you telling me about your grandmother putting her face on before she leaves the house.” It was as if without make-up you were not wearing your face and therefore no one could see you. We talked about how we both grew up in environments that to be feminine meant that your face was painted, your clothes were carefully selected, and your purse matched your shoes.

The artists-in-residence all expressed sentiments about how comfortable and accommodating the WSW studio spaces were, especially in relation to the artist apartment on the third floor of the main building. Staying in the workshop allowed the artists to work all hours without safety concerns of traveling to and from another location. One day after lunch, I met with Karmen, a photographer who was at the WSW for a six-week residency. When we met, Karmen had already been at the WSW for several weeks. She led me through the silk screen studio and up the narrow stairs to the third floor artist apartment. The apartment was like a secret getaway with a cozy couch and a small kitchen naturally lit by skylights with a deck off of the
back. Jessica the other artist-in-residence who shared the space with her during that session came up while we were talking to have a smoke break on the deck.

![Image](image1.jpg)

*Figure 26. Karmen, Visiting Artist, Photography*

Born in Greece, Karmen was the only person who did not want to be tape recorded. She felt self-conscious about her accent, but was fine with me taking a photograph of her. Despite the obstacle of frantically writing down as much as I possibly could without the skills of shorthand, she offered many great insights from the visiting artist’s perspective. Karmen was the product of a restrictive education that placed her into an academic track to study law. After immigrating to the United States with her husband she felt the freedom to pursue an education in the arts. Although her teachers were male, she felt that they were supportive and introduced women artists in the curriculum. At the WSW she was away from her life as teacher and wife and Karmen had the time and space to create a large body of work that kept her in the darkroom for the majority of the time. She expressed feelings of isolation about this but said that the daily potluck lunch and eating dinner out helped her through this and focus on her work when she was alone in the studio.

Kara: What are your goals as an artist?
Karmen: I go from one project to the next. After this, I will go back to teaching in Buffalo. I like to try something new each time.

Kara: Do you self identify as a feminist?
Karmen: Yes.

Kara: Do you express ideas of being a woman and or feminist in your work?
Karmen: All the time. In the beginning it was more like this bold statement, but now it is not to cry out, but [the feminism is there] in other layers, it’s quieter. It’s because I was
younger and dealing with presentation of women in the media and dilemmas inside of me but now it’s not my main concern. It’s now like exploring, like psychoanalysis.

Kara: How did you learn about the workshop?
Karmen: I learned about it from my graduate program. I knew about this place but it’s my first time here.

Kara: What has your time at the workshop meant to you?
Karmen: Being in a community with artists makes me feel great about being an artist. Being around all women made it very intimate. The first week was difficult but now it’s great. I will definitely come back if they want me.

Kara: Tell me about your average day at the workshop.
Karmen: In the beginning it was difficult. Now, I come in earlier to work each day. What really brings us together is being away from the workshop. Going out to dinner really brings us together. I love the apartment, my room, the skylight.

Kara: What has it been like staying in Rosendale, New York?
Karmen: Rosendale has a community feeling. It seems like such a small place. I feel like I am going beyond, as if camping into the woods. I love the location and I love my experience here. I have such great feelings about it. The first week was the hardest.

Jessica, Karmen’s roommate, is nearly twenty years her junior. Although I observed that they interacted like old buddies and seemed comfortable moving through the artist apartment that they shared. The apartment has two small bedrooms and bath. One of the bedrooms is without a window, which was the room that was available when Karmen arrived. She told me that when
she discovered that this was to be her room she panicked and asked Jessica about switching. She said that Jessica was so sensitive and agreed without hesitation. I found myself talking with Jessica off and on throughout this trip. She was always smiling and eager to talk about just anything.

Kara: When you leave the workshop what do you want to take away from this experience and where do you go from here?
Jessica: Well, I want to produce an amazing body of work. I’ll be here for five weeks. I’m producing at least three bodies of work while I’m here which is great. It’s great being around all these women and hearing their stories and Tana is in her own little world and to hear Anita talk about grant writing and to make connections with the interns and stuff. When you are an artist you own your own business you are an entrepreneur. And, then I have another residency coming up in April. Hopefully, I’m just getting the ball rolling. I would like to be a professional artist….but I’m interested in arts administration and the organization itself.
Kara: So, when you say you want to be a professional artist, do you mean you want to be able to support yourself with your artwork?
Jessica: Yeah. It would be really nice to get that financial reward for my work.
Kara: In order to validate your work?
Jessica: Yeah.
Kara: Do you self identify as a feminist?
Jessica: See, I think that it’s different for my generation. I don’t think that it’s an issue anymore. I don’t want to make it an issue. That’s intense to call yourself a feminist, especially with the history and with what that word means to a lot of people who think that’s its negative. I don’t think that it is but there are a lot of people out there that say it is….but, yes and no I guess.
Kara: How do you feel about the potluck lunches?
Jessica: I think that it is really important to get to know everyone. There’s so much going on here that it’s good to get away from my own work and see what’s going on and share with others.
Kara: I think that the potluck really says a lot about what kind of community it is….there isn’t any warm up time, you just do it.
Jessica: On my first day, I came into the kitchen and I was like, uh…ok what do I do?
Kara: Do you notice anything different about working in an all woman space?
Jessica: Yes, I like it. There is definitely a different energy working in a space with all women then if you are in there with five other guys.
Kara: How does that affect how you work or how you are feeling?
Jessica: Well, I guess it depends on the personalities too. But, if there are guys in the room then the women act differently and it’s nice not having them and having to bring that to the table. That probably makes me sound silly.
Kara: No, are you saying that if it’s all women in the room then the experience is just about your work?
Jessica: Yeah, we aren’t distracted.
Kara: But, then again you are attracted to men not women. What if you were a lesbian?
Jessica: Well, that would be different then I might be distracted by a room full of women. That’s an interesting topic. I’m going to get to work either way.
Kara: Is your artwork tied to being female?
Jessica: Maybe….the fish started to look feminine to me…and lately I’ve been into the coy fish which are sexy and the water symbolizes woman in some ways.
Kara: If you had to describe the workshop experience to someone else who hadn’t been here?
Jessica: That’s funny because that has changed so much since I first got here. The first week I got here I really gave myself a hard time and I was like, “I’m in the sticks!” …the bus station is in the ice cream parlor and I had my new shoes on with my cell phone and I was waiting for someone to come get me I felt ridiculous. The first week I was in shock and I didn’t know anybody. I was introduced and then here’s the studio and then I was just like ok – I really struggled the first week and then Lindsey came and I got to know other people and its been a lot better….but I think that I would tell someone that it’s a great atmosphere with accepting and open people around you. I think that the people you are around are important when you get to work.
Kara: Do you feel like your creative process is being nurtured here?
Jessica: Yes, what else is there to do?
Kara: I have been in situations where the atmosphere was extremely competitive and nurturing. There must be something good going on here that the women continue to foster a positive atmosphere all these years. How is this experience empowering you as an artist?

Jessica: Yes, to have the time to work without having to wait tables or some other kind of part time job is really great.

Kara: How has this experience changed you?

Jessica: Every opportunity I give myself I try to change a little bit. I don’t know what that will be just yet, but I need to reflect on that.

Kara: Sometimes the realization comes later when another experience or event will trigger a memory from this one.

Jessica: I was just talking to Lindsey about how many people I’ve met and how much inspiration and motivation I have gotten from being around them.

Kara: Let’s talk about Rosendale. To me the little town contributes to the atmosphere of the workshop….although if you have food you really don’t have to leave campus. I think that the closeness of the buildings so that you can walk back and forth is convenient and makes it feel like you are at camp.

Jessica: That’s what I told my friends ok I’m going to art camp! I don’t leave the studio much, but the small village community helps.

Kara: Since you went to school in the South, do you think that a place could work in the South?

Jessica: Yeah, why not? I think that there are other organizations like this. But, like what you said earlier I think that this place works because of the people, Ann, Anita, and Tana. It could work, but could it work as well I don’t know?

Kara: Do you think that you would come back?

Jessica: Maybe, yeah.

Kara: What do you think about the woman only space?

Jessica: Well, I was always close with my mom so I wasn’t that worried about it being strange…when I first looked at the workshop online I thought – oooh how lucky and I was excited that there was something just for us (women). My guy friends were like, what we can’t come? Oh, we want to come! I feel very lucky that this is an opportunity.
You Can Always Count on the Daily Potluck

I became fascinated with the weekday potluck right away. In one of our first conversations about the WSW, Ann told me about the potluck ritual. She said that food and community are important and explained how that plays an important role in the WSW. It was something that everyone talked to me about on that first trip, which I was unable to experience since my stay was during the weekend. My attention remained centered on the potluck as a community builder within the WSW. I was equally fascinated with the picnic table where the lunches have been served for more than thirty years. To me, this simple wooden construction symbolized the longevity and history of the workshop, which was probably recycled from another time and place; it is an object that represents a psycho-social space, a point of communal gathering for sustenance and connection. Layers and layers of color have started to chip and peel, to reveal years of painting. I imagined Ann or Tana painting that table over and over until one day they just stopped now the peeling represents years of untold stories.

![Figure 28. Close-up: Picnic Table in Office](image)

On subsequent visits to the WSW, I participated in the potluck. I opted out of cooking to save time and instead brought a store bought pastry from the local grocery, Emanuelles each day. I brought my contribution in the morning, which was often eaten early as it perfectly complimented the strong coffee that most everyone drank throughout the morning. I talked to people about the potluck during all three of my visits and was relieved to learn that I was not the only one who felt a level of discomfort and uncertainty about the lunches. Yet, I also learned that everyone, even very shy artists expressed that they looked forward to the potluck. It was a time to take a break, eat, and share ideas with each other through which they began to build relationships with one another.
It was my conversation with Chris that put me at ease when I discovered that I was not the only one who at first felt ill at ease with the potluck.

Kara: Let’s talk about the potluck lunches. That is something that really struck me as a community builder. Yesterday when I came in for my first potluck, I was a little nervous because I thought that I was going to be the new girl. Then, when I saw several people introducing themselves to each other, I realized that there were lots of new people. But we all sat down on the benches close to each other and started to eat – there’s no warm up time.

Chris: It freaked me out at first.

Kara: It freaked me out too!

Chris: It took me some time to get used to it and to get used to eating so much right at 12:30!

Kara: Do you feel that these lunches are important?

Chris: Yes, I think that they are really important. It took me awhile to realize but it’s a good thing in your day and when you are in the studio all morning, or the dark room like Karmen, it’s a good thing to come out and eat. You really need it. It’s different.

Kara: Yes, I think that for me sitting so close to strangers was different. My family is warm and I wouldn’t stay standoffish, but I just didn’t grow up doing things like this.

Chris: Right, me either. That kind of situation really made me anxious. I thought, I have to sit with 10 people while I eat? The first year as an intern and then the second year with Americorps, I had issues with the potluck. But, now I am more comfortable and see how it’s helpful.

Although I only participated in a handful of potluck lunches, I too became more comfortable with the closeness that sitting on benches creates and the process of gathering to eat. On one occasion, the picnic table was unavailable to use, which caused us to find an alternate space to eat and really created a different atmosphere. I wrote about it in my journal later that day:

The picnic table was covered with auction materials so we found a space in the silk screen studio to eat…We had a good conversation but it really was a different sort of experience eating at this huge table with vast amounts of space between us, sitting in chairs
without touching, we were very separate and I felt far from everyone.

Ann told me how she, Tana, and Anita lived in the workshop in the beginning, which naturally led to them eating lunch together each day. She said that the lunches really help gel the community each time new artists come in from the outside. Although, she said that at times it can be tedious and that some people are self conscious about cooking something everyday. Anita explained that even though sometimes the interns whined about their cooking duties, in the end, everyone appreciated the potluck lunches. I asked Anita how the potluck got started.

Kara: When did you start the potluck?
Anita: I think right from the beginning…I think that this is the same picnic table too, because the three of us were living together and we had the staff during the day it just sort of happened. I don’t know, it’s been a tradition for so long.
Kara: It seems to be an important thing for everyone.
Anita: Well, yeah we don’t require anyone to attend but usually they do and then when they leave they always say, love the potluck!…it helps too because we are out in the middle of nowhere…I love good food and I think that one of the most important things that you can give someone is good food. We actually have had intern groups who ask, do we have to keep doing this and the answer is always yes, because it’s a good thing and it is.

Everyone agrees that the potluck is a time that you can count on to break away from your day and be fed. Beyond that, the activity contributes to the building of a new community each time people come in and out of the workshop. Ellen talked about her feelings about the potluck and the space that it created, which allowed for an interchange between people and between artists.

Ellen: My dad was talking to me about that (the potluck) and was so surprised to know that they have been doing this for more than thirty years. The potluck is really important to what’s going on here. It’s really a community, it’s like a family. Its home in some way…people can get comfortable here right away we are all staying here and having lunch together. People are really open, well and sometimes they’re not, which is ok. Because people are here to do serious work and there is that level of intensity….but I remember one year when I had Thanksgiving at Ann and Tana’s and that was really
nice…or there would be times that artists would be here and we would have a barbeque and you know things like that, that are very supportive and they are always there to lean on….and to see how the artists are preparing for exhibitions you can see how you can really be an artist. It can be hard.

Figure 29. Chris, Jessica, CJ, Ann, and Staff at the Daily Potluck

Quiet Feminism

The feminist label was difficult for some of the women to embrace at the WSW. A few of the artists expressed that the term was too divisive and implied a feeling of anti-man. However, everyone I talked to, even those adverse to the term strongly agreed that they endorse feminist ideals, defined as supporting women’s equality in economic, political, and in every other way that men experience society. Although the women were not overtly proclaiming a feminist agenda or participating in public political activity, the WSW was founded on giving opportunities to women, which permeates everything that they do.

Ann said that she cannot help but take the role of social worker and recognized that people probably perceive her to be a feminist, although she does not call herself that. Tana and Anita both felt that the term suggests an association with the political consciousness-raising groups of the 1970s, which they did not participate in. However, they all agreed that indeed the WSW is an agent for social change and that in contemporary terms they are feminists. Of the four founders, Babs was the only one who boldly proclaimed to be a feminist. She maintained strong feelings about the role of the WSW in the lives of women artists.

Babs: When we started we had problems with the name, lots of people said, “don’t you know that calling yourself the women’s studio workshop is making it more divisive?” I would just say “back off…we are just trying to even the score” I mean people would
come up to us and say things. It was just awful. I think that if nothing else - well once in-
awhile we have troubles. People would say that women don’t need to be a separate group. 
But we do need it. I can see how things are better and different than they used to be but 
it’s not all better. It isn’t.

Ellen is a past intern who never really left the WSW. After her six-month internship, she 
continued working until returning to graduate school. Today, Ellen is married and has recently 
completed her M.F.A. and she was regularly seen volunteering at WSW events. Late one 
afternoon, Ann told me about Ellen and that she was on her way over to meet with me for an 
impromptu interview. I waited for her in the main office while Chris, Anita, and Sandra, the 
administrative intern, finished up the day’s work. When Ellen walked through the side office 
door, everyone was thrilled to see her and jumped up to greet her with hugs.

She confidently introduced herself and we walked back into the silk screen studio to talk. She 
told me right away that she loves the workshop and when she heard about my project that she 
just had to drive over and talk to me. Ellen was born in 1975 in Iowa and grew up in a home 
environment that taught her to voice her opinions and that women should have equal 
opportunities in life and society.

Kara: Was being female a hurdle in the college art classes?
Ellen: Well, no. All the teachers were male, in the art department. There was one female 
adjunct teacher that taught a class in the summer. So, that was an issue and I was feeling 
all feminism about it and I was unsure about the woman-ness in my work and I just 
wasn’t sure how to approach that. I think that they did the best that they could and one
time they had this women’s studies professor come give a critique and that was ok….but it was very obvious to me that I had no female instructors.

Kara: Did you have role models?

Ellen: Well, the male teachers that I had for printmaking and sculpture were very nurturing and supportive and they were my artistic role models. My mother is spectacular. She taught me to have a consciousness about being a woman and she is definitely a feminist. I grew up with like *Ms. Magazine* in the house. My dad cooked dinner and things like that. She was a professor…I did this project for a women’s studies class where we counted the faculty at the school and discovered something like 95 male full professors and 5 female, which of course made me very angry. But, it also made me very proud that my mother was one of those 5.

Kara: Wow. Do you self identify as a feminist?

Ellen: Yes, I do!

Kara: Did you learn about women artists in your undergraduate program?

Ellen: Well, yes it was definitely touched upon in our art history classes. I was definitely vocal about not having female teachers and others were too, the head of the sculpture department was conscious of that and I think that he made sure that we saw women artists or at least brought up names of women who we could research.

Kara: You talked about expressing ideas of being a woman in your artwork as a younger student, do you still do that?

Ellen: Oh, well this is a really interesting story. I came here about six months after graduating. I came here January 31, 2000. My work really changed. And, I had to think about how I was in an all female environment and then I realized that it wasn’t an issue for me anymore. It was just something that I didn’t have that feeling anymore, I wasn’t having that struggle. It was a level of comfort….I could just focus on what I wanted and it started to become and still is very much so to this day about the environment and natural surroundings. And you can also understand why that started happening while I was at the workshop. My praise for the workshop is that it is feminism at its best. It’s not hitting you over the head with it we’re not running around with picket signs and t-shirts or anything like that. It’s just an organization full of women doing something. Doing
what they want to be doing and doing it quietly, well I don’t know if that’s the word but
doing it without shouting, I am woman.
Kara: I am woman, hear me roar?
Ellen: Yeah, yeah. It’s felt like it’s always really been that way. Um, which I think is
really nice. It allows people like me to feel really comfortable in what I’m doing. And,
knowing that this place is here and is still here I feel like it carries on through life.
Kara: So, I think that what I hear you saying is that your intern experience was really
pivotal for you.
Ellen: I think so, well…
Kara: You said that this was the first time that you could let go of inhibitions and make
art.
Ellen: Yes, and this was my first non-academic experience with art.
Kara: Which in and of itself is going to be influential.
Ellen: Yes it was a huge, huge experience. It honestly changed our lives.
Nicole and I had already talked about how the WSW is indeed a catalyst for social
change. Yet, I wanted to know specifically how she thought this worked since her initial interest
in the organization was sparked by her perception of the WSW.
Kara: How do you feel that the workshop fits in with social change?
Nicole: From my perspective, not being a founder, I think that the content of the books is
powerful. I mean that I think that its cool that artists can come here and do work that isn’t
censored. There has been gender switching stuff. It’s pretty powerful. There is some
discussion around here about changing our name because we are afraid that people will
think that we are too radical or that there isn’t a need anymore. And, I think that just by
holding the name the Women’s Studio Workshop that we are holding a statement that we
are giving women opportunities here. I think it is a powerful choice, but inevitably social
change whether it’s quantifiable or not. We don’t lobby, it’s not direct.
Kara: Ellen said that the workshop is a quiet feminism.
Nicole: Yeah, that’s a good way of saying it.
Kara: I think that anytime you do something that is based on your gender, in and of itself
is political. We are providing something to help balance the opportunity for women. It is
what it is, even if you don’t picket or lobby.
Nicole: I don’t know if you got to see the old blinds [statistics about women in society and art]… Those were powerful. They need to be redone. I wonder how they have changed, some may have gotten worse, and some may have gotten better.

Figure 31. Women’s Studio Workshop Window Shades

I observed that feminist space, however quiet, was having a strong impact on many women, who became empowered to be stronger artists and people. Chris’ story is one of evolution. She came to the WSW as a young and timid intern and over time and through her experiences there, she has blossomed into a vital artist and educator. I knew that Chris started as an intern and was recently named the first official Studio Manager of the WSW. As we got settled in one of the small rooms downstairs, Chris started telling me about Patty, an artist who has taught art at the WSW for more than twenty-five years.

Figure 32. Chris, Studio Manager and AIE Educator, Previous Intern Artist, Office Staff

Chris: You know Patty is involved in the Art-in-Ed program
Kara: Yeah, are you going to be involved with Art-in-Ed?
Chris: Um, yeah, I teach papermaking. When I first got here I would help out with the papermaking and last spring I started teaching it as well. I really like working with the kids and sticking their hands in the vat. The kids get really into it.
Kara: Fifth grade is a good age to work with too I bet.
Chris: Yes, perfect. They are not at that stage yet where things aren’t cool. And, the boys will still listen to you and help with clean up. [we laugh]
Kara: My stepsons were really cool at that age too. The first questions that I have for you are about you and then about the workshop. When and where were you born?
Chris: I was born March 26, 1980 in Long Island.
Kara: When do you remember having awareness that you were a girl?
Chris: I had Barbie hair and I would dress up a lot. So, I guess that I felt like a girl pretty early on.
Kara: I did that stuff too, the towel on the head to make it look like this really long hair.
Chris: Yes, I had this cousin too who was really girlie and we were very close when we were little. She was a lot more girlie than me, but we did a lot together.
Kara: What was your earliest experience with art?
Chris: I can remember finger painting in nursery school. I always liked art class in school. That was my favorite. I was in Catholic School from kindergarten to eighth grade. Art was just about the only thing that I did like.
Kara: That’s good that you had art classes that you liked.
Chris: Well, one of the teachers was this weird guy but the woman teacher was cool.
Kara: How did your family feel about it when you decided to study art in college?
Chris: They were supportive as much as they could be. My father was a musician who dropped out of college. He lives in the garment district now.
Kara: So, you think that he had some level of understanding about being an artist.
Chris: Yes, if I had to pick anyone who completely understood is my dad. I think that my mom is also supportive.
Kara: What does your mom do?
Chris: She’s from Queens and she’s a teacher, very academic. I don’t think that was what she hoped for or planned for me, but she’s supportive.
Kara: In college art classes, did you feel that you experienced sex discrimination?

Chris: Well, yeah I had some really sexist and misogynist professors, who would just give you these looks. Between students? Sometimes, but mostly from my childhood. In college, everyone was pretty laid back for the most part. If I was in the X lab or working with the welders in the sculpture department, I felt intimidated. But, when I was in my studios, painting and printmaking I was intimidated by the master printmaker…but nothing too bad.

Kara: But, nothing that made you want to leave.

Chris: No, if anything it made me want to stick around more. In community college I was pretty oblivious about everything there.

Kara: Did you learn about women artists when you were in school?

Chris: Oh yeah. I met so many feminists, artists, and musicians. I learned a lot about women artists in feminist art classes and sometimes in art history. I never felt like it was an overwhelmingly disproportionate amount of male artists that were being brought to my attention.

Kara: Really? You are fortunate.

Chris: Really?

Kara: Yes.

Chris: ….we had a lot of male professors, but they would bring in female adjunct and it would be good.

Kara: Did you have role models in art school?

Chris: I love Dada and the fact that it isn’t misogynist. Hannah Hoch was my favorite artist and Eva Hesse. I always had those books with me. If I didn’t have a role model in real life, I looked around and found one. I guess that would be really sad for someone not to know about women artists.

Kara: Some of it’s generational as you could probably guess. For instance, Babs didn’t learn about women artists in college in the 1950s and Tana only remembers learning about Mary Cassatt.

Chris: If I could do it over again, I would take some of those art history classes again.
Kara: What are your goals as an artist? (Chris pauses with a puzzled look, so I continue) I see you filling an administrative role but I also see you spending a lot of time in the studio.

Chris: Oh, administrative - it scares me, but I have been in the office a lot. Yes, I want to be in the studio. What my favorite part of the job is the studio maintenance and learning about the presses and becoming more familiar with things, and working with the residents and their process is ok and everything.

Kara: And you are going to be teaching this summer?

Chris: (With eyebrows raised and higher tone voice), yeah.

Kara: Is that going to be new for you?

Chris: (another hesitant sounding) yeah. I don’t like parts of it, the administrative and telling people what to do, like public speaking.

Kara: Really? (I’m surprised to hear this because I find Chris to be so personable).

Chris: Well, I like teaching one on one. I get very nervous about public speaking….It’s a huge challenge.

Kara: The co-teaching thing might help you out with that.

Chris: Yeah, I think that co-teaching sounds safer, doesn’t sound as scary.

Kara: The classes are small.

Chris: It’s a challenge for me. But, I am getting pretty good at it now so I don’t get as anxious about it anymore. You know.

Kara: You are in your comfort zone in the studio. (She nods her head yes) Do you self identify as a feminist?

Chris: Yeah, I think so. I think that I’ve always seen myself agreeing with my feminist friends even though I’m not as active as they are. But, in my heart, yeah I think so.

Kara: ok, good. (I say this without thinking and later realize that I’m concerned that the younger women identify as feminists, assuming that this perspective will empower them and give them a consciousness about themselves – to look out for themselves and other women). Do you make art that expresses feminist ideals or about being a woman?

Chris: Definitely about being a woman and yeah feminist too. I don’t really think about that because that’s not where I’m at but I’m sure it’s there.

Kara: Would you say that the workshop has empowered you, as a woman, as an artist?
Chris: Yeah. I feel that personally, yeah. Um, definitely it has given me confidence. The challenges and things that I never would have done….Looking back I don’t think that I would have thought that I would have been able to handle the job.

During my last visit to the WSW, I observed one day of the Art-in-Education program. This bi-annual program brings local elementary and high school students to the workshop for a series of art lessons that coordinates with their curriculum. I remembered that Chris expressed feeling some apprehension about teaching several months prior when we talked about her role at the WSW. I quietly entered the studio so I would not disturb the class. However, once I entered, I saw that not only did Chris seem comfortable but she appeared to be a natural! Dressed in proper gear for the wet mess of the papermaking studio, Chris was mid-demonstration as I came in.

She had an easy way of explaining the process. The kids were really responsive to Chris and seemed to enjoy the wet and very messy process. After class, I asked her about this experience and she said it was great! She said that she really loved it. I reflected back on some of the things that Chris shared with me about her feelings of insecurity as an artist and teacher and how her experience at the WSW changed all of that for her.

**Working the Auction**

During my third and final visit I volunteered during the preparation and hosting of the Women’s Studio Workshop Thirtieth Annual Auction and Party. Fundraising is a big source of income for the WSW with the auction bringing in around $25,000 each year. All of the auction
items are donated. There were paintings, drawings, tiles, ceramics, art books, and sundry items that were contributed by local businesses such as free chiropractic visits, an electric toothbrush from the dentist, and a catered dinner party by a local vegan chef.

I was thrilled to be participating in such an important event for the WSW. Although I peripherally participated in other ways during each of my visits by cleaning dishes, taking out the trash, or writing a support letter for a grant application, this experience was something a bit different. I became a part of the system for a short while. The days leading up to the auction were hectic. I assisted Anita and Sandra with administrative preparations, from constructing displays to tagging books and entering the item descriptions into the computer database.

Figure 34. Sandra, Administrative Intern with Anita in the background

Figure 35. Women’s Studio Workshop Thirtieth Annual Auction Invitation
The auction occurred on the last day of my visit. That morning I woke early and felt achy all over from a busy week. After a quick shower, a diet coke, and a cold chocolate pop tart, I went over to the workshop where I found Anita frantically gathering materials and trying to prepare the name tags for board members and the workshop staff. She told me that I’d be working in the kitchen during the auction instead of up front and that the wine display that I worked on for her didn’t look right so she was sorry that I wasted my time. I tried not to show my frustration with this. Oh well. We drove over to Woodstock, which was about a thirty minute drive. We had an easy conversation and she told me that she is a nervous wreck and had been meditating all morning about how things will go at the auction. Her stress level observably continued to rise until after the auction was complete and we packed up to go home.

About mid-morning, we were the first to arrive at the small theater music venue in Woodstock. The front door was open for us so we unloaded a few things from her car. She wanted to start moving things around but there didn’t seem to be much of a plan for the layout design or how things were going to proceed. I felt relief when Ann got there and displayed a calmer head and the ability to direct and make decisions. Around 1:00 P.M. we took a break for lunch and I asked Anita how she was doing to which she replied “not good but therapy will help.” We all started to talk about the noticeable absence of the interns. Pamela, a board member was there helping and Nicole arrived just around lunch time (this was her last big workshop...
event before starting her new job). Ann, Anita, Lisa, the theater manager and I moved furniture around the room until Ann was satisfied.

The day was long and several people had different ideas about what to do. I kept my cool and tried not to interrupt anything (fighting against my instincts to take the lead).

![Figure 36. Anita and Amada Prepping for the Auction](image1)

![Figure 37. Amanda T., Anita, Chris, and Lisa Prepping for the Auction](image2)

The interns finally showed up and we got down to the last minute details of the auction. The band showed up for sound check and some rehearsing around 4:00 P.M. The music permeated the theater and elevated our moods as the excitement started to build. Once all of the items were set up for the silent auction and accounted for in the auditorium for the live auction, everyone changed into their hostess clothes. This was the first time that I saw some of the artists wearing fashionable clothing, jewelry and even a little make-up. Nicole and I talked about how “pretty” everyone looked.

The bartender showed up and opened the full bar for the silent auction portion of the evening. Laura, the high school art teacher from the previous day’s Art-in-Education program arrived and asked about the display before going into the auditorium to look. Anita told her to go
ahead and change it if she thought that it needed to be different but they worked on it for two hours the night before. I felt the tension in her tone. Tana arrived just around 5:00 P.M. She is carrying trays of prepared food, which made me hungry since lunch was a few carrot sticks and half of a vegan sandwich. Chris was in the kitchen warming and preparing the food and did a good job at orchestrating the process and keeping the kitchen volunteers and servers in line. I flashed back to my café days and actually found enjoyment in the evening kitchen duties rather than feeling like melting down.

People began to arrive and placed bids on the silent auction items. A few people asked me about the process. I chuckled to myself as I know the answers and Anita had said that volunteers (including me) would not wear nametags so that people wouldn’t ask questions that they wouldn’t have answers to. I bid on some things myself. I wandered in and out of the kitchen until the food service is done to help Chris, although she insisted that she had everything under control. I still wanted to help her out. She was only scheduled to run the kitchen for an hour, but stayed in there the entire time. She said that she felt more comfortable hidden away from the crowd. Her mother and soon to be stepfather came to the auction and went back to the kitchen to see Chris and wish her luck. Her mom was very supportive.

Soon the silent auction room was filled with people to the point that it was impossible to navigate the room without bumping bodies, purses, and hats along the way. I wound up losing the bid on a couple of items, because I could not reach the bidder sheet to raise my bid before the auction closed. At 7:45 P.M. the last silent bid closed and I was crushed to have lost the bid on Bab’s tile that I had my eye on all night. I am drawn to the whimsical women that she draws and paints. During my visits, Babs was such a vital spirit that floated in and out of the workshop. She showed up to the auction that night dressed to the nines in all black with a short skirt and tall boots complete with a sassy bob haircut and stunning make-up. She said that I looked like a real Texas cowgirl and cute in my denim, boots, and rhinestones – HA! This made me smile.

The live auction began and the bidding was slow but warmed up as the evening went along. I stood along the wall taking pictures with the WSW camera that Chris gave me to get “as much as I could.” I had the opportunity to see Ellen, although we really did not have a chance to talk. She was there with her new husband. I talked extensively with Chris and Nicole about stuff we had talked about previously and what’s happening now.
The auction closed and then it was another hour or so to check people out and to clean up. I was not sure what time it was when we loaded up the cars and all drove back to Rosendale. The air was cold and several of the artists were excited that it might snow soon. Oh no! That is all I could think, just one more night to get me home. I drove home with Anita and she had finally started to relax and told me about a nature hike she had planned with some friends for the following morning. I am surprised when I got back to my room the clock read midnight! Wow, a fourteen hour day. The interns and Anita were gracious about my help. I passed out shortly after my head hit the pillow.

The next morning I woke early and was unable to go back to sleep. I showered, packed, and attended to writing my field notes and impressions from the night before. I took a few more pictures of the intern house and drove into town for a diet coke, since I ran out the day before. After writing for several hours, one of the interns knocked on my door to tell me that Ann and Tana wanted to take us all out for breakfast. We loaded up in two cars and drove over to the Hillside Café, which was a new place for me. The breakfast was great and a nice treat for us from Ann and Tana to say thank you for the work that we did the day before. They told us that the auction made $24,000 for the workshop, which was about what they make each year. Tana was disappointed that they didn’t reach $30,000. After a short drive back to the intern house, I said my goodbyes and loaded up the car for the airport. My head was spinning as I realized that this was my last visit for this research. During my travel home, I began to sort through and thread together the little narratives that I had gathered along the way to tell one story of the Women’s Studio Workshop and I asked myself, “What does it all mean?”
CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATIONS AND SUMMARY

The overarching question for the study was “what is the nature of one woman-centered art space, the Women’s Studio Workshop?” and the overarching theme of giving voice to the women artists shaped the story. Working within a poststructuralist framework that suggests language is the expression and definition of power (Derrida, 2002; Foucault, 1970), I strove to give each woman an opportunity to have a voice that was uniquely her own without misrepresentation. In an attempt to maintain a true voice for each woman, I often included quotations directly from the transcribed interviews. When I was confused or uncertain of the meaning, I inquired further rather than leaving room for misinterpretation and recognized that language and the origins of knowledge are fluid in meaning (Baker, 1990). Giving voice to each woman created a deeper understanding of how women grapple with a male-identified language and transform it to make it their own (Wolff, 1990). In many ways, the overall goal of this paper, to bring to the forefront the lives and voices of these women artists aligns with that of the First Generation Women’s Movement that strove to gain the vote for women (Evans, 2003).

During my inquiry, themes emerged that guided my journey of discovery. The emergent themes are centered on how the community is defined, the relationship between the artists of varying generations and experiences, the role of social justice at the workshop, and how the women interact with each other in a single-sex environment. Based on these emergent themes, I developed six supporting questions that are addressed below. Together they contribute to answering the main question.

1. Do the women artists feel that their verbal expression is different being in an all-woman space?

Conversation felt uninhibited and at the WSW. The shiest of women had a voice in this space, free from perceived judgment. Although some of the intern artists said they felt comfortable with male artists, most of them agreed that a primarily female presence gave them freedom to have intimate conversations. Nicole said that she would censor what she talked about and how she said it if men were present. She said that although there is not a lot of “tampon talk” at the workshop, indeed woman topics and private talk occurs throughout the day. Visiting artist,
Jessica elaborated that the presence of men would have been a sexual distraction for her and surely would have changed the way she conversed with the other artists in the room.

Ann said that she was unsure of the differences because being in an all woman space was all that she knew. Upon reflection, she recalled board meetings with the New York Consortium of Artists and that the male voices often dominated. Rich (1985) made this point when she described the female student struggling for self expression within the academy, “Listen to a woman groping for language in which to express what is on her mind, sensing that the terms of academic discourse are not her language” (p. 27). Rowbotham (1973) explicated the idea that the oppressed group is silent in the dominant language, only speaking out within the realm of its own subculture, with its own sub-language. She explained, “The underground language of people who have no power to define and determine themselves in the world develops its own density and precision” (Rowbotham, 1973, p. 32). She explained how the lines of social stratification, race, class, education, and geographic region change the power structures of language.

There were noticeable differences in our language at the WSW evidenced by generational gaps and regional differences more than economic influences. However, these differences did not divide us but became points of interest and often led to personal discussions. For instance, when the high school art teacher was at the WSW with her students for the day, she recognized my accent and inquired about my travel and research interests.

2. How is community defined within the context of the workshop?

The four co-founders were friends before they were partners in the WSW. Their relationship to one another and their desire to build an art community where they could live and work was the motivation behind the establishment of the organization. In many ways, their friendships and relationships between them are still at the core of the WSW. Stall and Stoecker (1998) observed that the woman-centered community model is built upon personal relationships within the community and the empowerment of the individual through those connections.

Each of the four co-founders experienced sex discrimination during their pursuit to be artists, most directly related to employment opportunities. Initially, they were motivated by their personal desires to work as artists, which evolved into an organization that is a viable opportunity for women artists to work, learn, and grow creatively. Although their explicit motivation was not politically-centered, the WSW has become an organization working for the equality of women, which in and of itself is a political movement (McLaren 2002).
The present day community of the workshop has many layers. There are full time office staff and studio artists who comprise the stable community, which changes as new positions are created or as staffing needs adjust or decrease with funding and on occasion as artists choose to leave the studio for other opportunities. This community has periods of months and even years without changing. In addition to the stability of the co-founders and the full time staff artists, there is also a fluid community, changing as new artists enter the space and others leave. This community changes every few weeks. The interns are on campus for six months to a year, which gives a perception of stability to the visiting artists who may only be at the WSW for a few weeks.

There are many different factors that define this community. The community is a group of women who come to the WSW for the sake of making their art. This all-woman artist space is an open door for women to be considered for inclusion. Although this environment has many elements that give a feeling of support and nurture, this space is competitive. The artists are carefully selected to be a member of this community, which is based on their level of artistic production and commitment to their work. However, while in the space, it does not feel as though they are directly competitive with each other. Rather they are challenging themselves to do more, reach higher as they prepare to re-enter the art world at large.

Although this community is comprised only of artists who are women, there is a constant male presence at the WSW. Woody has been an integral member of the community for many years. Woody is supportive of the community and contributes with his skills as a carpenter and has built relationships with many of the women artists at the WSW. I asked the artists about his presence. They all responded that Woody was well-loved and that his role was his own as the fix-it person and since he was not an artist he was not a direct threat or competition for them.

Financial concerns and issues are an integral part of the community. The community was initially established based on the grant money that they were awarded. Since then, the perpetual quest for funding in many ways shapes this community. Anita spends much of her time researching and writing grants. Two of the largest annual events, which have become regular social events in the Rosendale community, are fund raisers, the chili bowl fundraiser and the art auction. These events are primarily motivated by the need for additional funding, but they have become important activities that have bridged the community of the WSW with the greater community of Rosendale. Many of the intern and visiting artists mentioned that the time and
support of the WSW allowed them to delay seeking other employment, which was at times potentially unrelated to the arts. At times the notion of the lack of funding further defined the community. For instance, the inability to convert the space to meet the requirements set forth by the American Disability Act could impede the inclusion of some artists. Although future plans have been developed for expansion, the lack of funds has prohibited the building of new studios, which limits the WSW from increasing the available media and resources.

The artists’ perceptions of the community and their feelings of inclusion in the community were often centered on participation in group meals. Ann was cognizant of working to build a new community each time the members change. She said that food was a natural gathering point and it was used regularly as a community builder. Indeed, food seemed to be the common denominator for solidifying the new community each time the members changed. The first evening of each of my visits, Ann took me to the Egg’s Nest for dinner; sometimes there were a few others to join us and one time it was just the two of us. Visiting artists expressed feelings of initial discomfort until several members of the group went out to dinner together. Karmen said that once she shared a few meals with the other artists she really started to feel more comfortable and at ease in the studios and artist apartment. Tana and Ann frequently host dinner parties at their house across the street from the main studio. These gatherings also ease the transition for many of the artists, giving them an opportunity to get to know two of the co-founders on a more intimate basis. Aside from the impromptu dinners, the daily potluck lunch was a central activity and community builder within the WSW. The daily potluck is a constant, which created a structure in the day and a system in which new artists could participate in right away. The potluck evolved from the four co-founders making lunch together and sitting down at the picnic table. The lunches continued as more artists became involved with the WSW and for more than thirty years the daily potluck lunch has been an integral part of the WSW.

3. How do the artists perceive the generational differences between them?

When I asked the co-founders if they had any role models, Babs said no and the other three said that it was Babs. Anita said that Babs was the first woman artist who she could look to as an example. The mentor relationship between Babs and the other three artists, Ann, Tana, and Anita was a strong bond between them and an integral part of the foundation for the WSW. The established and older artists spoke as frequently about the positive benefits of being exposed to the younger artists. Babs said that she thinks that she learns as much from the younger artists as
they do from her. Every time a new group of intern artists arrive, Babs invites them to her house for an evening. She said that she is amazed at the strength and empowerment of young women today. I found myself drawn to Babs and her wisdom that she gleans from years of experience as an artist and as a woman striving to be an artist.

Today, most of the artists and staff agree that the artist intern program is the most beneficial program because the young artists are exposed to established artists and have the opportunity to see what it feels like to work full time in an art space and to make art outside of an academic environment for the first time. When I spoke with Kyla, an artist intern, about being at the WSW, she told me about seeing an old photograph of the four co-founders from the early 1970s. She said that the picture inspired her to do something creative with her life as an artist.

Schapiro (2000) explained how artists in the 1970s collaborated and began to define woman’s art, encouraging women artists to work with feminine materials (such as fabrics, sequins, and recycled household items). Today, Schapiro teaches young artists about social consciousness-raising and feminist approaches to art. She observed that the younger generation of female art students is interested and motivated to work for social change for women artists. I found this to be the case the WSW as well. Many of the younger artists, such as Jessica, felt somewhat removed from the Women’s Movement or from feminism until they got to the WSW. Although Jessica did not feel that she had experienced sex discrimination as an art student, she was astonished to learn about others’ experiences and enlightened to learn about other women artists and what they have overcome.

4. How do the artists perceive their involvement with the WSW in relation to personal empowerment and social justice?

The women artists who initiated the WSW all underwent some form of direct discrimination based on their gender. Anita and Babs expressed anger and even deep disappointment in the lack of opportunities that they faced as young women artists. Anita reached a level frustration that nearly caused her to leave art school and Babs was told that she would lose her community college position when a man of equal qualifications came along. Their reaction to this discrimination led to the establishment of the WSW and creating opportunities for themselves and for other women artists. Although they do not proclaim a feminist agenda, the WSW is woman centered which in and of itself is a political maneuver. As such, the WSW exudes a quiet
feminism that empowers women and creates space for their needs and desires. The WSW is actively working to help bring equality to women artists, which is an act of social justice.

A radical feminist agenda claims that the organization of women based on their sex is political because the very act of discerning gender for reasons of organization is personal (Dauphinais, Barkan, & Cohn; Gordon, 1978; Liss, Crawford, & Popp, 2004), meaning, all issues related to the consciousness of recognizing biological difference are personal and political (Humm, 1990). Other actions by the WSW indicate that indeed a climate of social justice is present at the WSW. For instance, when Nicole became pregnant with her first child she was uncertain about how the women at the WSW would react. Although none of the four co-founding women artists have had children, they were delighted and immediately set about accommodating her needs. After the baby was born, Nicole brought the baby to work and they all became part time mommies for six months. It was something that they had never done before, yet without hesitation recognized her position and the dilemma of the working mother and helped her through it.

The WSW has empowered many of the artists, both established and interns. Chris was a shining example. Initially, she came to the WSW as an intern artist was later hired through a jobs program and now is a full time staff member as the Studio Manager and Art Teacher. Chris said that she could never have imagined that she could actually live her life as an artist before she came to the WSW. During my second visit to the WSW, Chris was already functioning as the Studio Manager but had not yet taught a class on her own. When I returned several months later, I had the opportunity to observe Chris teaching a room full of advanced placement high school students how to make handmade paper. They were completely engaged and Chris was inspiring as a teacher. Now that she has been with the WSW for several years, she has witnessed dozens of interns come through the studios and said that nearly all of them expressed how the experience empowered them as artists and strong women.

Nicole’s story speaks to the socially-conscious role that the WSW takes. Although the women of the WSW were not mothers themselves, when a member of their community discovered that she was pregnant they rallied around her. The issue of childcare and work is a central theme in the women’s political movement. Without hesitation, the WSW made accommodations for Nicole and the needs of her children. The community was flexible and worked around the children for months as she brought them to work. By giving Nicole the ability
to continue to work and ensure that her children were safe and contributing the space, time, and help the WSW eased the financial burden of childcare. All of these actions are socially-conscious and contribute to a feeling of social justice working at the WSW.

Many of the artists come to the WSW with feminist ideals and have been making art about being a woman for years, such as Karmen and Jessica. As well, Tana, the Creative Director, has a strong voice that often speaks to the injustices of humanity in her work. Tana is a strong role model for the other artists. Other artists, such as Ellen said that although she felt confident about her gender, she was not aware of her insecurities about the subject matter in her art until she came to the WSW. Ellen said that only after she came to the workshop did she begin to realize that something had been holding her back and it was being in this space that allowed her to feel empowered to explore woman-centered themes in her artwork.

5. Do the artists perceive this separatist, woman-only art space as a good thing for women artists?

During our first meeting, Ann told me that the WSW is pro-woman and not anti-man. At one time the WSW tried to integrate male artists, in an attempt not to be exclusive. However, with little residential space this caused problems for the women artists and there was even an incident where a male artist was disruptive in the studio. Overall, when I asked the co-founders about having male artists they said that it was a problem logistically and that men had plenty of opportunities elsewhere. This space was separatist in the sense that it is a small residential retreat in a country setting that allows the artists to close off from the rest of the world to work in solitude if they wish. I found this woman-only art space to be a place where serious creative work and concentrated production took place with a casual and comfortable, almost homey at times, social atmosphere. Schaff (1985) talked about two kinds of societal systems that we function in as women. The white male system that is outwardly aggressive with each member of the system in a constant struggle to elevate himself on the hierarchical ladder that only allows each person to hold one position so that no two people are equal. Or, the female system, which Schaff described as a more neutral playing field for individuals to see others as peers rather than only as competitors. She wrote:

In the Female System, relationships are philosophically conceived of as peer until proven otherwise….In other words, each new encounter holds the promise of equality. One does not have to be
one-up or one-down, superior or inferior; one can be peer. (Schaff, 1985, p. 105).

However, the WSW is a space that is indeed competitive. Artists are expected to have a certain level of dedication to their work. As such, these artists were socialized in a male dominated art world and have learned to function with some degree of success before they come to the WSW, by participation in art world activities such as art school, exhibition, teaching, or art sales. Yet, the WSW is a woman’s world. The women are serious and ambitious artists but their success is not dependent on another’s failure. As a woman-centered space, the WSW fosters connection between women and the opportunity for intimate conversation and relationship building. Although close relationships are not always formed, the WSW provided a space that is safe with time and access to materials and space for women to create art. Tannen (1990) pointed out that women are competitive too and that the difference between men and women here, is that women are not focused on status and success exclusively, whereas, she said men are. She said, “Women are also concerned with achieving status and avoiding failure, but these are not the goals they are focused on all the time, and they tend to pursue them in the guise of connection” (Tannen, 1990, p. 25).

Many of the artists said that having a space all their own to work for a period of time with great intensity was the best thing about being at the WSW. Jessica said that she was relieved when she got the grant to come to the WSW, rather than waiting tables. Several of the intern artists casually mentioned that they too wondered about what odd jobs they might have to do if they were not on staff at the WSW. In A Room of One’s Own, Woolf (1929) referred to a place where women have the freedom and space to work, with the financial resources for the time to work creatively, fully developing their own geniuses. She recognized the importance of wealth and the lack thereof among women and their potential creativity, questioning the role of foremothers and how they may have contributed to the perpetuation of female poverty.

Karmen was happy to take a break from the chores of her daily life as a teacher and wife. She cautioned me against misinterpreting that she was unhappy with her life, but said that she found it difficult to complete a large body of work at one time with the demands of daily life. de Beauvoir (1952) assigned immanence to the life and activities of women; mired with the daily chores of life, confined by their daily duties as prescribed by society, religion, and their roles as daughters, wives, and mothers. This daily life kept them too busy for things such as intellect,
dreams, and philosophy, which were achieved only through transcendence. de Beauvoir assigned transcendence to the intellectual activities for men; since women take care of men’s daily needs, they have the time and opportunity to sit and ponder the meaning of life.

Frueh (1991) endorsed a woman’s artist community and wondered about a woman’s ability to function within the mainstream art world, “does entering the mainstream, still white, male, and Eurocentric, lead to a cultural democracy or to the disappearance of dynamic, valuable differences?” (p. 8). Frueh claimed that a separatist environment is the only way to completely be free from patriarchal structures. Women artists unified and conducted accordingly on differing levels within the dominant culture. While some organizations aimed to empower women artists to excel within mainstream society (Harris, 1973; Sturken, 1978), others created a separate space that nurtured women’s individuality and differences (Graham, 1980; Schapiro, 1972).

hooks (1995) called for a resurgence of feminist action by way of consciousness-raising groups, gatherings, and public meetings in feminist practice. She explained that in order for women to create, whether visual or literary art, time is needed for reverie and contemplation. Although the woman artist is more accepted than she was several decades ago, hooks said that society still does not accept the time and space she needs to develop creatively. She pointed out that the Women’s Liberation Movement expanded opportunities for women artists, but remained limited to Caucasian women with economic means. hooks concluded that women need environments where they can work, create, and closely explore experiences and relationship to artistic production. Researchers (Baker, Riordan, & Schaub, 1995; Jackson, 2002; Jimenez & Lockheed, 1989; Singh, Vaught, & Mitchell, 1998; Warrington & Younger, 2001) determined that indeed single-sex educational classrooms produce a more supportive environment for the female student.

The WSW offers women artists a room of their own free from the restrictions and codes of living and interacting in a co-ed art world. All of the co-founders and the permanent staff at the WSW talked about the conflict with the name and limiting the space to women only. Many of them faced direct scrutiny and criticism from the local and art world community. Yet, they all go back to the fact that women still need space to create.

6. What is my role as a feminist researcher and how does my perspective affect my inquiry and outcomes of the research?
My position as a woman researcher allowed for residential immersion. A male researcher may not have gained the same level of access. As a feminist researcher, I strove to follow the straightforward guidelines set forth by Reinharz (1992) “1. to document the lives and activities of women, 2. to understand the experiences of women from their own point of view, and 3. to conceptualize women’s behavior as an expression of social contexts” (p. 51).

As a feminist researcher, I participated in the community during each of my trips. During my last trip, I volunteered my efforts toward preparation and execution of the annual auction. Naples (2003) and Reinharz (1992) called for a renewed agenda for feminist research to engage both discovery and change. Feminist action research takes on a variety of frameworks.

Women who study other women encounter a myriad of social barriers, such as socioeconomics, race, geography, and religion. Therefore, it is prudent for the female researcher not to make assumptions based on gender. She must be sensitive to these factors that divide women and challenge women to reach a common goal (Reinharz, 1992; Rowbotham, 1973). Therefore, it cannot be assumed that one universalist notion defines women’s lives and experiences.

From my perspective as a Southerner, who is a homebody, these trips were not always easy for me. Each trip I left with excitement and felt great anticipation during much of my trip, but by the time it came to an end I was always happy to come home. My field notes revealed more complaining than I would like to admit. At times it does seem that the weather, access to diet coke, food, hot showers, and comfortable bedding were a distraction for me. Yet, each time I was back over at the studio in the midst of everything with a hot mug of tea in my hands, all was right with the world.

**Summary**

The main question, “What is the nature of one woman-centered art space, the Women’s Studio Workshop?” inspired my initial inquiry and kept me on track anytime I seemed to lose focus. Five of the supporting questions answer this overarching question. The findings are presented in the form of little narratives, which give voice and authority to the women artists. It is their perceptions of the WSW that are presented and from which the themes emerged.

The Women’s Studio Workshop is a community. A community that was formed based on friendship, mutual respect, and common goals as artists. The community has a solid core consisting of the four co-founders, a few staff artists, Woody the handyman, and regular visitors.
and volunteers from Rosendale, NY. The community is also comprised of the artists who may be in residency for a couple of weeks to the interns who are there for six months to one year. Each time the community members change, food is used to facilitate the boundaries of the new group.

Over the years the WSW evolved from the four co-founders creating a space where they could make art, to a retreat for women artists from all over the world, an educational space that is linked to the community at large and to the public school system, an internship program for emerging artists to work as artists for the first time outside of the art classroom, and a woman-centered organization that provides a unique environment for women artists to be in a non-gendered art studio. All of the artists felt more comfortable and safe in a woman-centered environment. Some of the women artists felt that it fostered the development of intimate talk and building close friendships. Even for those women who did not feel that sex discrimination was something that they had even encountered or had to be concerned with, felt that being in an all woman art space was special. The WSW is a competitive art space, not unlike the larger art world, yet the women artists who are serious and successful find that a woman-centered space gave them freedom to create without male critique or interference. Although not all of the women artists who come to the workshop make lifelong friends, the artists I spoke with felt that their perspectives and sometimes even their art making had changed since their experiences at the WSW. Overall, the women artists felt that this woman-only art space was a good thing.

**Implications for Art Education**

For art education, this literature will be another example of women artists who organized and made their way in the world as artists despite obstacles. This research revealed the inside of one woman centered art space that has evolved since the 1970s from a small studio for four women artists into a special retreat for all kinds of women artists. When students can see themselves in the face of those they look up to, then they can begin to imagine a different life for themselves. Frueh and Raven (1991) connected the importance of deconstructing the field of art education to society at large, “if art education does not change, neither will gender biases in the larger art community” (p. 7).

The account will provide varying types of employment examples for women artists. Chris for example, is a young woman artist who came to the WSW as an intern without vision of her life as an artist. After her internship and exposure to the lives of established women artists, Chris began to see a life for herself in the arts. Today, she is the studio manager and teacher in the Art-
in-Education program at the WSW. Other examples include women in arts administrative positions, from general office work to grant writing to community art event organizing, teaching art in alternative settings, and short-term residential opportunities for artists.

This research may be used in the art education setting as an example of the reported discrimination that women artists encountered in the art world and society at large. Class discussions may be centered on a historical perspective and how the status for women in the art world has changed and how it has not. The individual stories of the women could be used as case studies to illustrate alternative choices made by women artists so that they could work and live as artists.

This research demonstrates that women perceive a single-sex environment to be positive and supportive, which contributes to the canon of single-sex learning spaces. As a result, art educators may consider providing single-sex classes for their students. As well, future research may be conducted in this area to determine the success rate of undergraduate female art students compared to those females who have exclusively coeducational classes.

Implications for Women’s Studies

By recording the lives and experiences of women artists, I aimed to contribute to the understanding of women’s lives and feelings about being artists. Additionally, I wanted to document how they felt about being artists and their experiences at the Women’s Studio Workshop. Reinharz (1992) described one framework for action research as the process of demystification, simply by documenting real life experiences. The very act of inquiry into women’s lives brings to the forefront another story that works to demystify women’s experiences. Additionally for the discipline of women’s studies, this paper will serve as another source and example of feminist praxis, where scholars align action and theory as illustrated in the preceding section.

Future Research

My research at the Women’s Studio Workshop revealed that there is much to talk about and much more to experience there. There were many other areas and potential themes that emerged but I chose to direct my attention to the themes presented in this document. Additional research at the WSW may include an in-depth look at the experience of the intern artists. What may be most revealing and richly interesting is the perspective of one intern over the course of six months through journal writing, photography, and art production. Other areas of interest
include a close look at art production, the inner workings of the Art Farm, the Annual Chili Bowl Fiesta, the Art-in-Education program, the Summer Arts Institute at the workshop and in Italy, and a closer look at how one nonprofit arts organization procures funding and continues to survive in a capitalist society. Although I touched on the subject of the generational connections made between the artists, this topic could be explored much deeper.

Generally speaking, future research may entail ethnography in community arts programs, women’s artist groups, and alternative art spaces. As stories accumulate, researchers can start to make connections between action and theory, hence enriching our understanding of how people make their way in the world. In addition to continued ethnographic research in varied art communities, the review of literature reveals that there are significant gaps in recent quantitative research after the height of the 1970s feminist movement and the scholarly writings to follow. The literature dramatically decreased in the 1980s and by the 1990s was a subject of marginal interest.
APPENDIX A

IRB Letters

Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2763
(850) 644-8673 - FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 3/2/2005

To:
Kara Kelley Hallmark
689 Millwood Drive
Havana, FL 32333

Dept.: ART EDUCATION

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
Women Artists' Organizations in the United States

The forms that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Exempt per 45 CFR § 46.101(b) 2 and has been approved by an accelerated review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If the project has not been completed by 2/28/2006 you must request renewed approval for continuation of the project.

You are advised that any change in protocol in this project must be approved by resubmission of the project to the Committee for approval. Also, the principal investigator must promptly report, in writing, any unexpected problems causing risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols of such investigations as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Protection from Research Risks. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: Tom Anderson
HSC No. 2005.095
Informed Consent/Copyright Release

I freely and voluntarily and without element of force or coercion, consent to be interviewed for this research entitled, "Women Artists' Organizations in the United States." This research is being conducted by Kara Kelley Hallmark, a doctoral student at Florida State University. I understand that the purpose of this research is aimed at revealing the nature of the women artist organization. The total time commitment will vary based on my position and my availability for multiple interviews. Total time will range from 30 minutes to 2 hours, or longer at the interviewee's discretion.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from this research at any time. I understand that this consent may be withdrawn at any time without prejudice or penalty. I have been given the right to ask and have answered any inquiry concerning this study.

I understand that I will be audio taped. The tapes will be stored at my residence, 689 Millwood Drive, Havana, FL 32333, up to five years and then destroyed on May 31, 2010. I can opt out of being taped altogether but still participate in the interview process by stating so in the section below. I understand all of my responses will remain confidential to the extent allowed by law.

I understand that findings from this research may be published by an outside entity other than Florida State University.

I understand that I may contact Kara Kelley Hallmark, Florida State University at 850-539-5848 or kkhallmark@aol.com. Dr. Tom Anderson, Faculty Advisor, Florida State University at 850-644-2331 and the Office of Human Subjects, Florida State University.
University at 850-644-8673 for answers to questions about this research or my rights. I can request a copy of the report prior to publication by stating so below.


Subject............................................................................................................................................ Date

Please write below any special considerations that must be met in order for you to consent to participating:


I, Kara Kelley Hallmark, the researcher of this project, understand the special requirements of this participant and will abide by all requests.


Kara Kelley Hallmark.......................................................... Date
Office of the Vice President For Research  
Human Subjects Committee  
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742  
(904) 644-6633  FAX (904) 644-4392

REAPPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 2/23/2006  

To:  
Kara Kelley Hallmark  
689 Millwood Drive  
Havana, FL 32333

Dept:  ART EDUCATION

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Reapproval of Use of Human subjects in Research:  
Women Artists' Organizations in the United States

Your request to continue the research project listed above involving human subjects has been approved  
by the Human Subjects Committee. If your project has not been completed by 2/22/2007 please  
request renewed approval.

You are reminded that a change in protocol in this project must be approved by resubmission of the  
project to the Committee for approval. Also, the principal investigator must report to the Chair promptly,  
and in writing, any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chairman of your department and/or your major professor are  
reminded of their responsibility for being informed concerning research projects involving human  
subjects in their department. They are advised to review the protocols of such investigations as often  
as necessary to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with  
DHHS regulations.

Cc: Tom Anderson  
HSC No. 2006.0152-R
APPENDIX B

Interview Transcripts

Interviewee: Ann Kalmbach/Administrative Director WSW
Place: Kitchen in WSW Studio House, sitting at picnic table in front upstairs office where daily potluck lunches are held
Date of Interview: Saturday afternoon, February 19, 2005

KH: How do you select the interns?  Pause…do you look at their work?

AK: Yeah, we do.  They are all art students….Once and while we get applicants who come from schools that aren’t really art schools with a different background.  But, mostly the work is pretty solid.  Here’s an example, she came in yesterday to interview, she’s pretty serious.  O.K (she pulls out a resume that was recently sent in for the internship and as she scans), the exhibitions are always student based.  You look for work experience, preferably for a waitress.  I mean we want a person who knows that just walking through the studio is goopy work and being a waitress is good training.  And, we rely a lot on their references and then, the ones that we are most interested in, we talk with them on the phone…this is actually the second or third intern who has come by recently and that’s a lot.

KH: I was wondering about how many applicants do you get each year?

AK: About 25 or so.  We don’t want anyone over 30, which means that we tried that.

KH: Was that because she was established?

AK: Well, the reality is that a resident artist has been as young as 27 and that sets up an odd relationship.  Anyway, at some point in your life you shouldn’t be interning, but doing something more professional.  We depend a lot on references.  And, sometimes, believe it or not the art school professor references are lame.

[AW: expectations of progression as artist]

KH: How are the artists-in-residence selected?

AK: There is a jury.  Always outside.  Um, always diverse.  Always, two or three. Some of the grants we try to do blind, so there is no one who knows whose stuff it is.  It’s hard on some of the work that is signed, but on slides we can black out the names….Once and awhile we use our Board, it’s Tana’s department.  She sort of oversees that.

[AW: process of selection subjective]

KH: I was reading the 1974 file last night.  Good stuff.  There was an interview with the WSW founders and it said that you guys built the workshop because you couldn’t find jobs.  Is that how all of that worked?
AK: Anita, who sits over there. She was here working. And, Barbara was working here, she is, well was married. And, Tana and I just out of graduate school needed jobs and we tried and had a hard time. But, Anita wrote a grant and we got it and that’s essentially what happened. [WSW]

KH: This has really been the bulk of your career.

AK: It’s all I’ve ever done, which is a little odd. I haven’t really been out there that much.

KH: Kyla was talking to me about the workshop being in a different world.

AK: It is a different world, but it’s hard to say why it’s a different world, I don’t know.

KH: It’s pretty comfortable and unpretentious.

AK: Yes, it’s pretty cozy. I’m not quite sure why it’s a little different. I think that we have fun. Even though it’s busy, we usually have fun.

KH: Everybody’s here because they want to be doing what they want to do.

AK: I think that’s kind of important.

KH: Woody said that he feels the WSW is organic to him.
[WSW: Organic/changing]

AK: That’s probably true. He is outdoors a lot. He has been with us for awhile, since 1979 or around there.

KH: Something is keeping him here.

AK: He really, really likes making stuff for artists. Like figuring out how to make pots fly through the air, the mechanics of it. Or, sometimes for book projects, he needs to fashion a gig or something. And, there is always stuff to fix here. He has two trucks and he keeps one here with all the supplies and comes by to pick up some materials for another job, then he’s back again.

KH: And, he can bring Ramona.

AK: And, he can bring Ramona.

KH: It seems like although there is a fluidity of artists coming through the space, interns and residences, etc., there is a core group that is integral to the essence of this place, you and Tana, Anita…

AK: Well, it has been a little bit of an issue for long term stuff, but I think that Nicole will be here for awhile. I’m not sure how long Joanna will be here, but I think that she’ll be here for awhile. I’m not sure how another person in that position (administrative) would do.
KH: Personalities can affect the energy flow for sure.

AK: Yeah, I don’t think that an ultra management type would work out here for long. Joanna wants to keep things organized. Although she has relaxed some since she’s been here…I think that it is really hard to start from concept, it doesn’t work when you come from the outside in. It happens in organizations a lot when they have certain amount of money, so they set the project up based on that. But, if it doesn’t happen sort of organically it won’t survive. A lot of places (not for profits) are disappearing. And, that may become more dramatic over the next few years because money is so horrible.

[S: future of WSW]

KH: You get funding from fundraising, sale of art work, community art classes, and state and federal grants?

AK: state mostly…tuition is almost one third, mostly the clay classes, about $75,000 in summer classes, but the expense is high. We don’t have enough space for big enough classes. You saw in the plans (AK had showed me blueprints for expanded facilities) and then we could have more classes and lower overall cost per student. I’m a little worried about the dollar issue. We raised the price some, but it might really be a disaster for us.

KH: Meaning that the people who enroll won’t be able to afford it?

AK: I don’t think we quite access that population (the one that can afford art classes) yet. One thing that Joanna helped us with was our organization, although we are all artists and sometimes we just don’t have time for things in the office to be perfectly clean and organized. We have hired various people through programs like AmeriCorps. We have been working on our website, which helps get the word out about the workshop. (Pause)…We started to have trouble. Well we’ve had a lot of trouble. He was kinda dreamy, and we found out that he was on drugs. We had spent $25,000 and couldn’t get it finished. Then we went with another guy that came highly recommended. But, this guy has another job so we can’t even contact him directly. My whole scheme about the website was to get the books on the webpage. We are on year three to get it done. So, most of the text on the website I wrote three years ago. We need to rewrite it and rethink it. I think that it is pretty tight….the text is a little clunky, navigating is not as simple…you have to really focus…I think that most websites are not very thorough. We have a lot and we want to add more. We have marketed through the mail. But, we don’t even do mass mailing anymore. We do web based marketing and I think that it’s clearly the wave of the future. We just need to make it a very functional thing. I’m less concerned with it being snappy. I think that functional describes us anyway.

[S: WSW plans for expansion and future of WSW]

KH: Yes.

AK: Do you know what I mean?

KH: Yes.
AK: We don’t really need to be flashy. But we need to be clear with lots and lots of information.

KH: There was a statement on the website about what you do here, but it wasn’t clearly defined as your “mission statement.” Do you have a separate mission statement for the Workshop?

AK: Yes. (She pulls a copy of one of many that is taped on computers throughout the office and gives it to me to keep)...In terms of establishing, um...this also may be about three years now: professionalizing the board, rewrote the bylaws (I get a copy of these), defining the mission statement...used to be a lot more regional and we are trying to nationalize these.

KH: You were saying that you feel like the current website doesn’t really reflect what’s going on here.

AK: I think that’s its just not easy enough to navigate. And, there are just things we can’t do until we get the website up and running. Now, we ask people to write a statement. Previously, we got pages and pages of stuff. There is a lot of stuff that we want to add to the website, trying to add a layer of professionalism to the website. Mostly, because organizationally, we do a lot of stuff. Most of our peer organizations do just one thing. Like the papermill place, just does paper. Mostly, I think that we need to do a little less of this and more of that. But, it’s hard to give up stuff you have been doing.

KH: I can see that. This place feels like an extension of your house.

AK: We lived at the workshop originally. So, we were in the house and then when we moved across the street we were afraid that things would change. But, I think that the potluck lunch helps. [C: live on campus and potluck]

KH: You can just walk to work.

AK: yea, that’s nice. And, there is so much odd space over there. The upstairs in the barn is Tana’s studio, but the downstairs has some big equipment that we can’t fit over here...we are out of space.

KH: Would you ever accept a painter?

AK: We just don’t have the space...one of the biggest issues is what are we going to do with this space after we build the new studios, since it won’t be contiguous. We have considered painters, but I don’t think that we have a clear enough vision about that yet. She shows me elaborate blue prints of the expansion, beautiful studio spaces...they have paid thousands of dollars to architects for these blue prints – planning on serious fundraising for the expansion in 2 years, Ann will need this time for finalizing physical and programmatic plans (Some discussion about the plans on tape 1. A. Ann in the middle of the tape) [S: WSW future]
KH: I’m already feeling like I need more time here to really soak in the place and everything that’s going on.

AK: Yea, it’s hard. We have just extended the minimum time for the artist-in-residency program from 2 weeks to at least 3 weeks.

KH: are there other artists who come back year after year like Susan?

AK: She is the only one, although we do make her apply. There is another artist who is coming back on a grant. She teaches, in New Jersey somewhere. She comes back year after year to do a project, because it is pretty cheap. $200 a week for the artist fellowship program. I think that there are some students who take classes every year. There are others who come periodically.

KH: What do you think it is about Susan that makes her come back every year?

AK: She is serious about her work and she doesn’t have the studio access in her town….I think that we would be completely packed with a little marketing. [C: artists who return to WSW]

KH: I do too.

AK: It’s odd this year, usually we have more artists. This is the worst financial year yet…we’ve had to cut back on our staff, which has made things a little bit busier. We have been over staffed in the past. Most organizations this size do not have 7 staff working for them. We don’t make very much money…we are contracting out the fundraising this year…it is time consuming.

KH: Is the chili bowl fundraising a big fundraiser for you?

AK: Awww….pretty big. We made about $15,000 last year. And, it doesn’t actually engage the whole staff. We also do an auction, which engages the entire staff.

KH: Who came up with the chili bowl idea?

AK: Danielle, she was an intern…she is really charismatic and good at getting people going….originally, the idea was that the community would spend time in the studio and by the second year it was so crowded that Danielle couldn’t really deal with that, so she pulled back and one kid broke his leg and we got sued.

KH: yikes.

AK: in clay. They weren’t supposed to be down there anyway, but Danielle had a hard time saying no. [S: fundraising efforts and facility standards]

KH: Last night at the restaurant I heard the teacher you were talking to mention that some of her students will volunteer for the fiesta.
AK: Her daughter used to do it. She teaches elementary school...I guess that 5th graders could help out. [C: Rosendale involved with WSW event]

*She shows me a photo of the children of local woman who comes and hangs out at the workshop because she is “socially conscious”*

KH: Are these the workshop kids?

AK: (she laughs and says) yeah, in thirty years we never had kids. [SJ: support of mothers]

KH: Is the mother an artist?

AK: her degree is in communications.

KH: she is interested in art?

AK: She’s interested in social change…which I think is very interesting about this current generation…I think that it really went away for awhile. [C: volunteer]

KH: it’s coming back though.

AK: I do think that…it’s a good sign…

KH: A third wave of feminism…which is different than the movement in the 1970s. Mostly because it isn’t unified in the same way, or have the appearance of being unified.

AK: I think that generally people aren’t as clubby as they used to be. In the early 20th century, probably post Victorian, there was so much social club, the youth services organizations went bankrupt. And, the YWCA….that was shocking. That really means that ALL that level of service to ALL the underclass is gone. I really don’t know what we are going to do. They can’t even find an organization to take over the Americorps contracts. It’s shocking. It means that those organizations are really going to go away. It’s a shame.

KH: Is that where Joanna came from?

AK: No, she is a graduate student in Arts Administration…part of not being able to pay her a lot of money is o.k. because she is getting credit for school.

KH: It was funny when Antonina and I came in with our groceries. We weren’t quite sure where to put them or how to maneuver through the kitchen without intruding. About that same time, Kyla came down and it was like all of a sudden she became hyper conscious that they hadn’t cleaned and she made herself busy cleaning, and putting things away…inviting us to eat this, but not that and where we could put our food so that it wouldn’t be touched. She then tells us that she is not much of dishwasher and that the other 2 interns are probably starting to get mad at her, which was part of the reason she stayed at the workshop this weekend to get some stuff done. (Ann and I get a chuckle out of this)
AK: Yeah, I think that three interns usually works well. Sometimes not, you have to be a real self starter and there has been some confusion about who was giving them direction and whose they should follow. There’s this whole thing about how to get the task to the interns and then for it to be done right. We are working on it. I think that it’s better. It’s certainly better. Chris has done well with the artists because she is quiet and let’s them do their thing and Tana is pretty aggressive, like with her own work…she wants things done now. She is focused. So, getting the sequence of that stuff worked out. We have a staff meeting every week, which helps keep everyone know what we are all doing. As soon as you stop communicating, tensions develop and people wonder what this means or that. It can create an odd vibe. [AW: personality driven, and self motivated individuals flourish]

KH: Is there something unique about the energy that it’s all women?

AK: I don’t know.

KH: Is that because it’s all you know?

AK: Sometimes I go out in the world and its like only the men talk and they aren’t saying an interesting thing.

KH: Or sometimes a woman will talk, and then she is interrupted and then she won’t interrupt back. That happens in seminar classes with women and men students. I have been reading so much about language between men and women and not only the way we express ourselves, but how it changes from a woman only group, to a mixed group.

AK: I think that is really interesting and I think that no matter what happens, that isn’t going to change. That is real survival stuff.

KH: I even find myself wanting to assert my voice in those mixed groups in a different way, although I often approach this cautiously and carefully. I have begun to recognize my own passiveness. I do find it interesting to be in a woman centered space and like what we were talking about last night, to be in a nurturing space. Although I know you have said that you stay away from that characterization.

AK: It’s a hard one…It isn’t valued.

KH: Certainly not in public spaces. It doesn’t fit into a hierarchical structure. [WS: communication and nurturing issue]

AK: I think that one of things that is really hard for us…like with the previous Board, is to see beyond the local impact to the national/global impact, which is far more significant than the local. So, that’s a really hard thing for us to figure out. How do we stay connected to the local community, while our program is really geared for beyond. How do we articulate the need or do we think that people will only support us if they think that they are getting something out of it. So, the previous Board has really pushed local stuff. It’s really a challenge. There’s no local foundations, there’s no local business. There’s really no local cash, so we always have to look
beyond. We will need someone to help us with the buildings. We need to find some local donors to sniff out. Or, some donors, not locally, who are able to recognize the benefit of what we are doing and to be o.k. that they are not personally benefiting or their communities aren’t directly benefiting. [$: fundraising, local money versus national money]

KH: Do you receive funding from the NEA?

AK: Not anymore.

KH: Does that have anything to do with the Bush Administration?

AK: Well, they are putting all their money into teaching. They have a Shakespeare program traveling the countryside, they have put a lot of money into art and the military. It will be a few years before we will see if organizations like us will be able to survive.

KH: I know that depending on corporate sponsorship is awkward, but it almost seems like that could be a viable source for the Workshop.

AK: We have received some corporate support…one time this woman came to visit one day and it was a weekend and there was a lot going on and she says, ‘you need some chairs and desks.’ She leaves, then calls and send over a huge donation of chairs and desks. It was really cute.

KH: What other fundraisers do you do?

AK: We do the auction.

KH: Of the work made by the Workshop artists.

AK: No, Joanna wanted to do that…I think that we may be able to sell the work on the website. The problem is that we have never been able to sell the art for what its worth. We sold some really quality work at the auction for nothing. We sold a David Salle for $200, excuse me! So, we have sold painted furniture…last year we sold a painted chair for $700…actually Woody has made a lot of nice things. We do a lot of outdoor gardening stuff, its kind of a little flat.

KH: But, you are trying to appeal to buyers who may not be willing to pay for art.

AK: Yeah, but we need some fresh ideas…..We just put a woman on the Board who had a beautiful printshop here in town for many years and I think that she’ll have some time and I think that she knows a lot of people and she could guide us…she could hook us up with Hilary Clinton….I think that we should honor a woman artist and Hilary Clinton could present the award and we could charge $50 for that. [$: Fundraising]

KH: You could charge more.

AK: Yeah, probably. We don’t necessarily want to honor an extremely well known artist. We are not really in the big name artist business, so it’s a little tricky.
KH: Do you feel that this goes against your mission?

AK: Yeah. But, it might make sense for us. We have also added a woman to the Board who works at SUNY. She is an extremely well known writer about public art…..She was thinking that we should do the thing with the famous artist and then we could print and sell a book, purely for fundraising purposes…..We should have done it last fall…She’s with the College Art Association…There are a lot of ideas, its just a matter of how to guide the Board to help us.

KH: How do you select the Board? Pause…I would think availability would factor in as well as that person having a sense about what you do and what direction you are going in.

AK: What are the skills we need? It’s hard to think about this. It used to be walking up to someone and saying, “hey do you want to be on our Board?” So, we are trying to move away from that era…the new era we are actually looking at what do we need to get done and who do we need to help us do it? This is actually kind of complicated, but there is this organization called New York Art Consortium where we are getting some money. (she brings me the brochure about this program)…we have been meeting with a consultant out of Minneapolis about how to professionalize us, yada yada…oh yeah, I remember why I was telling you about the Consortium. (confused, but some discussion here about adding minorities, nationalizing the Board, and having full time working artists on the Board) [$: on a wing…]

AK: Some good Board members bring other members….When we do an article with a national magazine we get more response locally then we do with local press.

KH: wow, really?

AK: Yeah, it’s validating…in some sense, what we are doing locally is the chili bowl, and art classes. People don’t even really know what we are doing here.

KH: What’s going on with the garden?

AK: The art farm?...one of the projects we did with the art farm was with one of the residents, she was a paper maker. We did a one week program with community. Three people did a body of work and we organized an exhibition. Someone came up to me and said, “you girls throw such good parties.” And, I thought oh no, this is the problem. [WS: feminist consciousness, girls, parties]

How will anyone locally take us serious support locally if they think that all we throw is parties. There are people here with lots of money, so hello….so chili bowl and blah blah in the press is not enough…..I think that our connection with the Consortium will help with this. One of things we did was make a presentation at Ford and some other corporate sponsors….as a group, now 10 of us, can leverage that kind of activity. We started as 5, now we are 10. So, we will start doing that stuff.

New York Consortium discussion….tape 1.B midway….We are trying to differentiate ourselves from a retreat and a place where you become part of a working community, where there is a lot of equipment and technical expertise. We are trying to make a difference with that and a case for
itself….we are really trying to lay the groundwork for accessibility for broader funding. Sometimes we get nothing decided in these meetings. But, it can be extremely helpful just to hear about the others’ problems…the thing which is very very interesting about it, we are mostly women, although there are a couple of men, after five groups have been meeting 5 years and the additional 5 groups for 1 year….we say stuff, “I don’t know how I’m going to pay my staff next week,”…can be helpful to know others are going through what you are…you get little hints and solutions…it’s really very useful….people just don’t want to stop meeting….and, when this book came out, the 5 new groups had just been added….In 1999, 20 people got $1,000 from the WSW as an outright award, it was our 25th anniversary and the turn of the twentieth century Binnewater Tides was a crucial time, we used to do more outside exhibits, a film and video series, and a woman writer series, until federal programs started cutting back. [S: funding for ongoing activities – association with other organizations for help]

KH: I want to believe that we will get through this.

AK: I think we will. There will be a swing in the economy as well. I think that there is a connection between liberal thinking and flush money.

KH: I do too.

Interviewee: Ayumi Horei, Ceramics Director/ WSW
Place: Her home in Rosendale, NY
Date of Interview: Saturday, February 19, 2005

Upon arrival, we meet and talk about my research a little as we stand in her kitchen. Ayumi makes hot tea for everyone, which is welcomed after a brisk walk down the rail with Antonina. I notice a hutch off to the side full of handmade mugs, tumblers, plates, and bowls virtually every color and of varied design.

KH: Is this most of your work?

AH: No, nearly all of it was made by friends.

KH: Very interesting work. I was just at an artists’ village in the keys last week and noticed that while some of the work was innovative and creative, much of it seemed to be produced for the express purpose of sale, for the buyer looking to enhance the décor in their house or what naught.

AH: It’s hard to find a balance. It’s hard to make art with integrity that doesn’t always sell.

KH: Have you been making art lately.

AH: Yes, but it’s been hard. I feel kind of scattered, especially with the house. Like right now I have 4 jobs. It is really physical work and hard on my body. I’m thirty-five now, and my body is already starting to hurt.

KH: How long have you been a potter?
AH: For a while now. In college, I studied printmaking and after I freelanced as a photographer. Then, I really got into ceramics. I made sculpture in graduate school. But, it’s a good thing when you can focus on one thing and really develop in that area.

KH: I can see that. As an undergrad art history major, I took studio courses all over the place and have since wished that I stayed in one area to really develop some skills.

AH: Yeah, it has been good to focus on ceramics. I really do love production, but I also need that down time. But, then before long, I start to feel an itch.

KH: Have you been making lots of chili bowls? [we both laugh knowingly that this is the big event coming up]

AH: Yes, but not as many as I wanted to. The house has kept me busier than usual. I have more help this year with the chili bowls than before. Having Kyla there has been great.

KH: How long have you been with the Workshop?

AH: Almost 2 years....I have an incredibly flexible schedule; I sorta keep track of my own hours, but I often wind up over there late in the evenings or on the weekends, which sometimes blurs the boundaries. But, I have a lot of flexibility and I really appreciate that. I have been in artist residencies that were as long as 2 years. Sometimes, I think that it is difficult to really get attached and develop as an artist when they are here for only a few weeks or months. Ann and Tana have a lot of responsibility to make that happen and I can understand how exhausting that can be. When I first came here, my partner and I (she also worked at WSW and we have since broken up), used to have artists over for dinner all the time, then we got selective, then we just got tired and in a place where we wanted to be able to leave work behind at the end of the day. It was really great while it lasted, but at some point my home became more of a public space.

KH: Ann talked about extending the residencies from 2 to 3 weeks, or from 6 to 9 weeks; but even with the extension it really isn’t the time intensive experience of one year or longer.

AH: Yeah, well the population that the Workshop is engaging isn’t available for longer residencies. Philosophically, they are just really interested in the younger, developing artist. And, many of those younger artists can’t imagine a few weeks in one place, let alone 2 years. The dynamics of each group that comes through the workshop is different; sometimes they really click and sometimes not. It can be personality dependent. [GC: focus on mentoring interns]

KH: The interns seem to get along as much as they need to…but, it does seem like there is a bit of tension between the three.

AH: It is a really intense experience for the interns. They work full time and then they make their own art at night after the artists are finished working in the studios. They are really looking for learning experiences and to produce art that shows the fruits of their labor.
KH: They are just out of college, I would imagine that many of them have not worked too many 40 hour weeks before.

Phone rings....Ayumi takes call

We move into the studio that has been added onto the back of the house, just behind the kitchen. The space is amazingly well organized and clean for a ceramics studio. Much order here compared to the workspace at WSW. She prepares to work on tumblers that have already been thrown and sitting on shelves along one wall.

KH: Are you preparing for an exhibition?

AH: Yes, I’m actually getting ready for a couple of things. There is a traveling exhibition where this guy has renovated an old Airstream. He just fills it up and travels around. So, I’m trying to get some stuff done before he comes out. [AW: working as artist out in art world, example to younger artists]

KH: Do you miss the West coast?
(AH lived in Seattle and Montana for sometime and has mentioned that she loved living in MT)

AH: Uhh, no. I’m really an East coast gal. New York is such a different thing though. I have been meaning to get published more, it takes time. I’m not really good at the marketing stuff. I have seen the benefits of my website.

KH: I found out that you have a Japanese parent I was excited to meet with you, particularly in relation to another project that I am working on.

AH: Yea, I think that in terms of identity and being biracial informs my art, more than lesbian or woman.

KH: have you spent time in Japan?

AH: a little bit.

KH: you were born in the states?

AH: I was born in the states. I was there for about a year when I was a baby. My parents decided to raise me here; they didn’t like the educational system. I have been there about 5 or 6 times as an adult. I haven’t taken a trip very recently, I would like to go back. Right now I’m working 10 and 12 hour days right now, everyday. Plus I’m in a new relationship.

KH: that takes an enormous amount of energy as well.
(we both laugh)

AH: Yeah…

KH: even when it’s really great.
AH: Yeah, for sure. And, the house (remodel) takes so much creative energy and is challenging my aesthetic, since I have to make a decision about every little detail throughout the process. It’s really challenging because when I think about things sculpturally and try to translate that to a doorknob or a shingle…it can be interesting. And, then you have to try to salvage stuff, or find it for sale…

KH: and have the budget

AH: yes, and make compromises when you don’t find exactly what you are looking for. I wish that I could design some of the stuff and have people make it. That would be ideal.

KH: We looked at the expansion plans of the WSW today and I was wondering who will carry on after Ann and Tana?

AH: Yeah, they are trying to change and become more professional. They just revamped their board, which has been great.

KH: Ann talked about that, and it seemed like the old board was stuck in local politics too much without a broad vision of the WSW….We started talking about marketing some and Ann asked me about how I found out about them. When she learned that I had found them on the internet, she told me that 2 of the 3 interns had also first learned about the workshop on the Internet. [WSW: organizational future]

AH: did you have a chance to talk with Joanna? She’s a good administrator. She thinks a lot about stuff like that. (discussion about the web)

Antonina: 10 minute notice, just to let you know we will have to go.

AH: What? You guys have to go?

KH: Yeah, we’re having dinner at Ann and Tana’s house tonight
(Poncho the small pug dog is present in and out, sleeping next to the fire and follows Ayumi throughout the house)

KH: You said that Kyla was really the first intern you worked closely with in clay.

AH: As a 6 month intern, this is the third group; Mary Beth is a 2 month chili bowl intern

KH: Do you feel that the intern program, the mentoring relationship between artists and students is at the heart of the Workshop?

AH: I feel like it is a strong program, but the facility is poor, which makes it difficult. My job is to mentor. Part of it is that bringing in the emerging artist, they don’t have high expectations about the space; but will really have everything that you need to work. You really don’t need fancy equipment, it’s nice to have, but you don’t really need it. You can develop a good work
ethic. You can really see what it’s like to make pots day in and day out. It’s really different from when they were in school. And, the chili bowl fiesta gives them a real world deadline, and we are really under the gun. It also gives them the chance to make stuff with their signature stamp on it…because it allows to us to try all kinds of techniques and styles that we wouldn’t normally try in our own work. It’s fun to let go and take a lot of risks. I think that it helps them that way to develop as artists. It’s nice for me too. I can get a lot of good ideas. [S: studio space for ceramics not good; AW: interns learn how to make art outside of school]

KH: I was wondering about your relationship to the interns as artists and how that affects your own work.

AH: It’s good. I learn a lot from them. In terms of power, I’m still the boss and I’m still the one making decisions, it feels mutually beneficial. They have a lot of freedom to be creative. I think that the word is starting to get out there that it’s a good internship program. And, that feels nice. The applicants have increased. This is the only program that has community classes, which allows for more down time. If there is a ceramics artist in residence then I’m the liaison. The community connection is there and strong, but not always in connection with what is really going on. [GC: Constructivist approach to teaching]

KH: Ann talked about the relationship with the community and how their perceptions about what is going on at the WSW is not always accurate.

AH: It can be a tricky thing, because you want them to know what’s going on and to be interested and supportive, but you also need your privacy to work; if they are coming in through the front door…it can be disturbing [C: Rosendale community’s perception of the WSW]

Interviewee: Kyla/ Intern-in-Residence
Place: Kitchen in WSW Intern House, Rosendale, NY
Date of Interview: Saturday morning, February 19, 2005

KH: You are willing to sacrifice for your art.

Kyla: Antonina was just asking us questions for the website and I think that not very many people know about this place.

KH: I don’t think so either.

KY: I’m fortunately getting paid to do what I do and to live here in this house, is a pretty sweet deal. I think that is huge and takes a lot of pressure off from getting a real job. I really don’t mind not having much money…I’m gonna be poor…we get a stipend, which I mail to my parents to pay my car insurance…also, I work with Ayumi a lot and other odds and ends that gives me extra money…It’s a good place to be. [S: Starving artist perspective]

KH: The other two interns told me that they learned about the workshop on the Internet, is that how you learned about it also?
KY: I learned about it from school. Ayumi went to Alfred, which is where I went. They need to figure out a way to get the word out there. I can’t imagine that there are many people who are not in the East know about the Workshop. Like, I bet nobody knows about the workshop on the west coast…It is really different in that it is so rooted here, Anita and Tana and Ann (and Babs is always around)…it gives it a really different feel that they are the same place. [WSW: history]

KH: there is real history here.

KY: Yeah, you know that picture of the four of them in bathroom from the 1970s, it took us forever to figure out who each of them is…Anita and Ann don’t look the same….it is so great and nice to see that, just a little older than we are…and to see how much this has grown and gives us a little bit of hope for those of us who want to do something like this…all my friends that are here, we are all potters…it’s a dorky situation, but we would love to start a studio, but we are all poor and out of school. [WSW: history, C, GC]

KH: how old are you?

KY: 22 I went straight through…I wish I would have stayed longer. Because Alfred is Alfred, it’s the place for ceramics. I partied too much.

KH: Is the other place you are considering an internship for next year co-ed?

KY: Yeah, I don’t know of any other place where it isn’t co-ed…but at the same time, it feels…well so many people have this feeling that it’s just about women, and (long sigh), it’s not. One night I was helping Ayumi with a class and my favorite student down there is a guy and he is really great. There is a real imbalance about that. I love the guys that can look past that and come anyway. I wish that there was more of that. [WS: guys in classes]

KH: So, I hear you are going to teach some of those community classes?

KY: I’m going to teach the advanced class…to give everybody a break. Ayumi is letting me do stuff that interns don’t usually get to do since there isn’t always a clay intern…it’s good for me. (Antonina walks in and tells us that Woody is still over at the workshop doing odds and ends)

KY: He is so dedicated. He is so great. Ramona is so dedicated to Woody and she is really nice to be around…he comes through the studio everyday…he parks his truck, and then goes to work other places, but keeps his tools in the van…he just always has his eye on the place. He has been with those ladies for a long time now. [C: Woody’s dedication to space]

KH: Has he done most of the construction on all the buildings?

KY: It seems so, he knows everything about the buildings….whenever he comes to the potluck, he brings bread and cheese, every time, bread and cheese [Woody and potluck]

KH: That’s a great mug, did you make that?
KY: I did make this one (she looks at it closely before washing it as she is washing all of dirty dishes left behind)...I like patterns

KH: I saw all of the chili bowls today down in the ceramic studio, they are really nice.

KY: It is so overwhelming. It has been nice to watch the stack growing. It’s really fun. I’m excited for Wednesday. We will take it all out, price it, and prepare for the weekend...there made a lot of money last year. They sold 600 bowls last year. For this small community, that’s a lot of people and it gives you a little bit of hope for your art. [C: Chili Bowl; also $]

KH: Is this the 8th year?

KY: Yeah, it’s the 8th annual...I don’t know how exactly how it started, but I know of a lot of other fundraising efforts where they sell food in handmade bowls. But, this is the biggest one I know of.

KH: I have never heard of one connected to supporting the arts.

KY: If you sell the bowl with food, then people will get the idea that art can be used. [AW: craft as art; art as function]
Antonina wonders why she isn’t using the dishwasher….Kyla explains that it leaks and makes a bigger mess than just washing your dishes by hand. [$: facility problems]

KH: Do you have the opportunity to produce your own art here?

KY: Yeah, and before I was traveling to China, working at a summer camp teaching art, or in school, producing art for classes and assignments. Now that I’m out of school, I knew that if I went and got a job I wouldn’t have time to make my own art, unless I went to live with my parents. So, I went home and this helped me make work, but I knew that wouldn’t last because my parents drive me crazy and that I would be pushed to find something like this to do. Now, I’m making work on a pretty regular schedule. I need to get my work into some shows and galleries and at school, where I can sell my work as well. There are some other shows that I’m looking at...just whatever gets done. This job is really much more intense than I thought that it would be. I think that once chili bowl is over with my days will go back to 9 to 5. During chili bowl it’s like 9 to...well, pretty much just all day. Until you just can’t do it anymore. I’ll have to find a place to live after this...well, I’m going to camp after this to teach, then a place to live, I don’t know what I’m going to do.

KH: Is that the camp that you worked at last summer?

KY: Yea, it’s fun. I really like being in the studio and teaching...and I can make my own work. It’s a really intensive studio experience for the campers. When they get into it and they come back to me with their own interpretations about stuff is really fun. I’m a people person. I’m really excited about teaching for Ayumi. It will be nice to work with different age groups.
KH: Do you think that you would ever go back to school for your MFA and then teach in a traditional setting?

KY: Yes, but not for a few years. I’m really sick of school right now.

The following transcribed interviews occurred during my second visit to the workshop. These interviews were guided by the following set of questions:

Questions related to Identity and Background:
1. When and where were you born?
2. When do you remember first understanding gender and having a consciousness about being your own gender?
3. What was your earliest experience with art?
4. What was your first experience with formal art education (classes of some kind)?
5. What was your family’s response to your decision to be an artist?
6. Did you receive support from them during your education? Financial and/or emotional?
7. What was your experience in art during your K-12 years?
8. What was your experience in college art classes? Graduate school?
9. How did being a woman affect your perspective and experiences in college art programs?
10. Do you remember learning about women artists in school?
11. Who were your role models?
12. What is your preferred media?
13. What are your goals as an artist? In your work and professionally.
14. Do you self identify as a feminist?
15. Do you express ideas of being a woman and or feminist in your work?

Questions related to the workshop:
1. How long have you been active with the workshop?
2. What inspired your involvement with the workshop?
3. How do you feel about your involvement with the workshop?
4. More specifically, has your involvement changed your overall perception of yourself as an artist?
5. How has the workshop contributed to your development as an artist?
6. Is there a specific experience that particularly characterizes your work with the workshop?
7. Tell me about your average day at the workshop.
8. What does being in a woman-centered space feel like to you?
9. How do you think/feel that being in an all-woman space is different from working with both women and men?
10. How does working with other women artists affect your perception of yourself as an artist? As a woman?
11. How would you describe the workshop community?
12. How do you feel about the daily potluck lunches?
13. How has the workshop empowered you?

Founding Member Additional Questions:
1. What was your vision of the workshop agenda when you first established the workshop?
2. Now, more than thirty years later, what is your vision for the future?
3. What has it been like to work in an all woman-organization?
4. In your opinion, how has an all-woman organization affected the inner workings of the workshop?
5. When you initiated the workshop in 1973, were you aware of the burgeoning Alternative Space Movement?
6. How does the workshop work for social justice?
Questions specifically for the visiting artists:
1. What have you learned about yourself as an artist and or person while at the the workshop?
2. What has it been like staying at the workshop?
3. What has it been like staying in Rosendale, New York?
4. Where will you go from here?
5. What lessons will you take with you?
6. Will you come back to the workshop at any point in time?
7. Would you recommend this experience to other women artists?

Interview with Karmen, Artist-in-residence, photography
Conducted in the 3rd Floor Artist apartment of the workshop
This was the only formal interview that I conducted using handwritten notes rather than a recording at the request of the artist.

KH: When and where were you born?


KH: When do you remember first understanding gender and having a consciousness about being female?

K: Right from the beginning of my memory.

KH: What was your earliest experience with art?

K: Playing in the sand. I spent my first seven years in a small seaside town. My favorite was in the summer and I would use sticks to draw in the sand. The sand was so unspoiled it was great to be able to make marks in it. I play in the sand even now when I return.

KH: What was your first experience with formal art education (classes of some kind)?

K: When I came to the U.S. in my early 20s I had a law degree, which I hated. I came to the U.S. with my husband and I knew this was my opportunity to take art and I loved it right away. Education in Greece was free but when you get into a department, like Law, you cannot change. I didn’t have a choice; it’s very difficult. Its great for those who know what they want to do when they are 18 years old.

KH: What was your family’s response to your decision to be an artist?
K: They thought that it was something for fun, but not serious in the beginning. It was easier since they were in Greece, it gave me some separation. My husband is Greek and we came here for graduate school. He has always been very supportive. Now, they now that art is who I am. They don’t say but I think that they think that I’m wasting my time. I don’t have a strong contact with them.

KH: What was your experience in college art classes? Graduate school?

K: I went to Notre Dame as a graduate student in sociology then to St. Mary’s, an all girl’s school, to study art.

KH: How did being a woman affect your perspective and experiences in college art programs?

K: I didn’t feel different based on gender. My male teachers were great – absolutely great, especially one who really encouraged me to pursue graduate studies. He made sure we were aware of ourselves as female artists and studied the work of other female artists. He was a big influence on my work.

KH: Who were your role models?

K: Role models. Well, female artists that I learned about such as Lorna Simpson, Annette Messenger, Kiki Smith were role models for me. The only man who influenced my work is...hmm, I cannot remember his name, but he works with small narratives with his photography.

KH: What are your goals as an artist? In your work and professionally.

K: I go from one project to the next. After this, I will go back to teaching in Buffalo. I like to try something new each time.

KH: Do you self identify as a feminist?

K: yes

KH: Do you express ideas of being a woman and or feminist in your work?

K: All the time. In the beginning it was more like this bold statement, but now it is not to cry out, but [the feminism is there] in other layers, it’s quieter. It’s because I was younger and dealing with presentation of women in the media and dilemmas inside of me but now its not my main concern. Its now like exploring, like psychoanalysis. [WS: woman themes in work]

KH: How did you learn about the workshop?

K: I learned about it from my graduate program. I knew about this place but it’s my first time here.

KH: What has your time at the workshop meant to you?
K: Being in a community with artists makes me feel great about being an artist. Being around all women made it very intimate. The first week was difficult but now its great. I will definitely come back if they want me. [WS: intimate]

KH: Tell me about your average day at the workshop.

K: In the beginning it was difficult. Now, I come in earlier to work each day. What really brings us together is being away from the workshop. Going out to dinner really brings us together. I love the apartment, my room, the skylight. [C: struggled to fit into the small community at first]

KH: What has it been like staying in Rosendale, New York?

K: Rosendale has a community feeling. It seems like such a small place. I feel like I am going beyond, as if camping into the woods. I love the location and I love my experience here. I have such great feelings about it. The first week was the hardest. [C: Rosendale]

Tana Kellner, Creative Director
Interview conducted in her art studio in yellow barn across the street from the workshop

KH: When and where were you born?

T: Prague 1950

KH: How old were you when you recognized that you were female and different from being male?

T: Always, I had an older brother.

KH: What was your first experience with art?

T: When I was about 9 or 10 I wanted oils, but I had watercolors. I remember going to the art store and dreaming of art and how I always wanted to make art. I applied to an art program in Czechoslovakia as a young girl but I was rejected….that was my tough luck and I had to deal with it. My family wanted me to have practical skills first anyway. I studied economics.

KH: Did you have an early role model?

T: It was a guy who was a friend of the family and he was cool.

KH: When did you have your first formal art lesson?

T: I was taking private classes when I was a teenager. They were old fashioned artists and taught me the basic stuff. Then when we came here and I went to the university on scholarship. And, my parents came to the United States with me. They made a great personal sacrifice to come
here….my mom went along with being an artist, but my father wanted me to be a pharmacist. [we chuckle together]

KH: We do love our dads though, don’t we? I sense that my dad is still uncertain about art, women’s studies and what kind of future I’ll have.

T: After about 15 years into the workshop when my parents were here for a visit, my dad asked me about what I was going to do? [we both really get a good laugh at that] He wanted me to teach.

….sidebar discussion between us about art and teaching and the restrictions of academia

KH: You met Ann in graduate school, is that right?

T: Yeah.

KH: I want to ask you some questions about your experience as an art student. My experience in studio courses was not always positive and there was definitely a sense that the male art students were taken more seriously. [AW: art classes]

T: Didn’t you have classes that were mostly female?

KH: No

T: Where did you go?

KH: In Texas, University of North Texas and Southern Methodist University in Dallas. The painting and drawing classes were dominated by men, which sent me packing to art history where I felt comfortable at the time. What was your experience as a young female artist?

T: When I first came to the country I was quiet because I was adjusting to the new culture and learning the language. So, I was really focused on that. At first I was in the painting department and they had a really hands-off approach to teaching and just told us to go with whatever. I wanted to actually learn something because I didn’t have the training yet. The teacher said that people are born painters. That was all I got from her all semester….Then, in graduate school the painting guy didn’t like me. I was really shy so I just avoided him. I think that the woman thing wasn’t conscious, but it was there. So, I switched to printmaking. [AW: art class]

KH: Looking back now you see?

T: Yes, and it was the worst in the painting and drawing classes. [AW: media hierarchy]

KH: Yes, this was also my experience. [maybe because they are considered two of the most traditional and hierarchically superior media]
T: It was more obvious with women who were like 30 who had come back to school. These women were looked down upon as merely housewives and mothers filling time. I wasn’t really conscious of it but it was there.

KH: That’s where I encountered the most sexism in art classes too, was drawing and painting.

T: Painting and drawing is seen as being so macho.

KH: Right, isn’t that funny. I can remember being so shocked the first time that I was faced with it, being a 19 year old girl and naïve about how the art world works. I had no idea about the levels of testosterone in the studio! [we both laugh]

T: When I was taking classes as a teenager, like 14 or 15 I would be harassed by male students, but I just ignored that. I didn’t want to play into it.

KH: Do you remember learning about women artists when you were in school?

T: No, oh yea, Mary Cassatt!

KH: Yes, of course, Mary Cassatt. Maybe Georgia O’Keeffe?

T: Maybe, but probably not, she was too contemporary for my school. [AW: women artists missing from the canon]

KH: As a young woman artist, were there other women artists who you could look to as a role model?

T: Well, Kathe Kollwitz definitely and there were others. Really they weren’t role models because a role model is someone who you want to emulate and I could never imaging myself as an artist so I couldn’t imagine emulating the lives of any of those successful artists.

…more tea? Tana heats up water for some more herbal tea 😊

I think that Barbara was a role model for me. She was a practicing artist when we met her and she was married. So, I think that she was supported which allowed her to be an artist.

KH: Do you self identify as a feminist?

T: No, I do not.

KH: You don’t? Why not?

T: I think because when we first started the workshop, uh…I think that feminism is a political activity and that back when it was going on in the 1970s, there was any space for you as an artist. I think that is true for any political movement, artists might be used for the agenda of the
movement but that’s it. I just felt like I didn’t fit in feminism. We weren’t the main part of the movement.

KH: That is very interesting to me. Because from the outside looking in, even though the workshop isn’t functioning in a directly political way, it does feel very much like it’s a space for women to be independent and to be creative, which to me is in part a feminist action. I wonder about this from a generational perspective, because my mother has had some hesitation calling herself a feminist, but I call her one, because her actions fall in line with a feminist agenda.

T: In our time, to be a feminist you had to be actually involved with the movement. I think that makes the difference. Anytime you put a label on something there are problems. [SJ: Feminism and fear of labels]

KH: But you call yourself an artist.

T: Yes.

KH: But that’s a much broader category.

T: Yes, I think that the problem is that when you label it then people have misperceptions about what that means and make judgments based on that. I guess thirty years ago, I would say that I am not a feminist, but I probably am because I had interest in the movement but wasn’t directly involved….Even someone like Ann who is much more woman-identified might say that she is feminist, but again she might not.

KH: I’ll ask her.

T: What did Nita say?

KH: You are the first one that I’ve asked [of the four co-founders].

T: It will be interesting to find out what everyone says about this. I think that Babs will say that she is a feminist because she is older and when we met she had feminist ideals. She was a woman in the fifties. I did experience sexism when interviewing for a job when I was told that a man was getting the job instead of me because he had a family. I didn’t know how to respond!

KH: Wow.

T: I was like, oh ok is that how it works? Laughing about it now….

KH: Was that about the time that you all started the workshop?

T: Well it was after graduate school and I had to get a job.

KH: wow, what a story. I know that this still happens today, but not so overtly.
T: Yes, of course that still happens, they just don’t tell you to your face.

KH: Your artwork is very personal. Is your work informed by being a woman?

T: Not consciously.

KH: How did the four of you come together to create the workshop?

T: Well, Ann, Nita and I went to school together and Babs was married to one of our art teachers. He introduced us and that’s how we met Babs. Nita wrote a grant and we got it. We were all very excited and we started looking for a place that we could rent so that we could all continue working.

KH: The development of the workshop came about so that the four of you could make art full time?

T: Yes. Then, we started giving art classes to the community to help support the studio and it went from there. It was really an organic process. [WSW: history]

KH: Right now you are on sabbatical, what is your role as the Creative Director?

T: Well, pause…I sort of decide who will intern, teach and go through portfolios. I work with the visiting artists. Now Chris works with them on a daily basis and I can come in and work with them on their concepts. I help with the marketing of the artists; just whatever needs to be done, because there is always something going on. [AW: Role of Creative Director]

KH: Would you say that the bookmaking is the heart of the workshop?

T: No, but we it is an important part. We have been making books for so long. When an artist comes to make a book they need a lot of support. The other artists come and do their work independently and then its over when their residency is over, they go home and take their work with them. When a book artist comes, they leave and the book is still connected to the workshop – how we market it, maintain it, exhibit it. Its affect is a major thing….Really, the artists that get the most out of the program are the interns because they are here for the longest. [GC: Interns]

KH: Oh, yes the interns. You feel that the workshop is servicing the interns the best?

T: I think so yes.

KH: They are here for so long, I’m sure that plays a role.

T: Yes, they are here for so long and for most of them its there first experience outside of school. It’s a pivotal time for them in their development as artists.

KH: How do the interns apply? Do they have to submit slides?
T: Yes, slides, resume, recommendations, and a statement about why they want to come to the workshop. We give them a telephone interview and we talk about who we think will fit here. If they are too old and experienced then they won’t benefit as much as someone coming right out of school. We read between the lines in the recommendation letters. We consider all factors. We just had an intern who came here for one day. There were so many glowing recommendations. She is a dual major, art history and writing. She came here with the attitude that she was above the job and told us that she decided to spend her time writing instead of the internship. She packed up and left.

KH: Do you think that she thought the work was too much?

T: Yes, she acted like a queen.

KH: Ah, yes you have to pay your dues.

T: So, I think that it is really important to carefully select the interns. They can’t be lazy.

KH: I read that in the summer program you invite male artists are invited to take classes at the workshop. Is that the only scenario where men are involved?

T: Well, yeah. It’s really because of the housing situation. It would be too expensive to accommodate male artists and really even if we did open it up to men, how many would apply? I think male artists do change the dynamics of the space. We had this gay male artist who used to come and take courses in the summer and he was so disruptive to the class because he demanded the teacher’s attention the entire time. We found out from the other students’ evaluation of the class. The teacher was just going to let him keep on doing it.

KH: For me, in my women’s studies classes when all of the students are women, the discussions are generally balanced and each person is given time to speak and their opinion is valued enough to be heard at least. As soon men are in the class, the dynamics shift dramatically. Sometimes when just a few men are in the class, it can still work equitably when the male students are respectful and take the outsider position. Then, the women give them respect as well. However, most of the time male voices are the loudest in the class.

T: That’s how this guy was. He just took over the class. [WS: Language]

…personal discussion here about women’s studies classes and involvement of men, evolution of women’s studies into gender studies

KH: I know that you said that you all [co-founders] did not have a political agenda when you started the workshop, but I do get the sense that women who come here for a period of time take away something special, an empowerment as an artist and maybe as a woman artist. Even though that’s not directly political, it does feel like the workshop facilitates a kind of social justice.
T: Yes. I think that even though we didn’t start out as political, there are political overtones in the workshop. We are outside of the mainstream. I think that the perception of the workshop with the word woman in the title was either that we were housewives or lesbians.

KH: This label or that.

T: Yes, it kept us outside of the mainstream, even now. We have done some political work, but we can’t lobby or anything like that. We are careful not to be strongly political and support one thing over another….sometimes we are doing political art or involved, but most of the time we are so involved in the day to day running of the workshop that we don’t have for anything except keeping the doors open and figuring out how we will keep things going another year. [SJ: Political agenda of WSW]

KH: The workshop has its own exhibition gallery for the visiting artists. Do you host exhibitions for outside artists and formal shows?

T: No. It’s is really just for the visiting artists so that we can all see what they are working on. This has changed. We used to try and have formal exhibitions there, but we just don’t have the staff to run it and then having people walking through the workshop while the artists are working is always a problem. It is too much traffic.

KH: It sounds like a conflict.

T: Yes, it is.

KH: You would almost need a separate space for that.

T: Yes, to do it right….It is a lot of work….I have organized exhibitions with outside galleries and museums and there is always so much to deal with, everyone has their own agenda and what artists they want to show….It is just not a priority. [AW]

KH: You have a lot going on here.

T: I have my own work too and trying to get my own work in exhibitions. [AW: Creative Dir. Functioning in art world at large]

KH: What is your vision of the workshop once you and Ann are “done with it” so to speak.

T: I don’t know if it will go on because the kind of person we need to hire will cost more than what we can pay; unless we can get the money. [$: future of WSW]

KH: You and Ann are the heartbeat of the workshop, it seems like it would be really hard to find the right person or people to take over here.

T: We are all artists so I’m not sure if we could find a person who is an artist and understands artists and who also understands business and how to run a place like this. I hope that it will
survive but if it doesn’t, it doesn’t. It’s the cycle of life. This is really a socialist community, not a dictatorship. I’m not sure how a CEO could ever fit into the system that we have here. You can’t make something work if it isn’t going to….we don’t know how to raise 6million dollars. I’ve seen the people who came through the workshop who are middle class and upper middle class America and they don’t understand what our needs are here. We had this one artist who was a billion dollar photography dilettante. She wanted us to help her with her exposure and career and we just kept thinking, “we are the ones who need help here!” [S: fundraising, future of the WSW uncertain]

We wrap up the session with Tana showing me around the studio and going through some of her photography work.

Chris Petrone, Studio Manager
Interview in WSW, downstairs side room/office

…talking casually about stuff as we get set up for the interview.

C: You know Patty is involved in the Art-in-Ed program

KH: Yea, are you going to be involved with Art-in-Ed?

C: Um, yeah, I teach papermaking. When I first got here I would help out with the papermaking and last spring I started teaching it as well. I really like working with the kids and sticking their hands in the vat. The kids get really into it.

KH: Fifth grade is a good age to work with too I bet.

C: Yes, perfect. They are not at that stage yet where things aren’t cool. And, the boys will still listen to you and help with clean up. [we laugh]

KH: My step sons were really cool at that age too. The first questions that I have for you are about you and then about the workshop. When and where were you born?

C: I was born March 26, 1980 in Long Island.

KH: When do you remember having awareness that you were a girl?

C: I had Barbie hair and I would dress up a lot. So, I guess that I felt like a girl pretty early on.

KH: I did that stuff too, the towel on the head to make it look like this really long hair.

C: Yes, I had this cousin too who was really girlie and we were very close when we were little. She was a lot more girlie than me, but we did a lot together.

KH: What was your earliest experience with art?
C: I can remember finger painting in nursery school. I always liked art class in school. That was my favorite. I was in Catholic School from kindergarten to eighth grade. Art was just about the only thing that I did like.

KH: That’s good that you had art classes that you liked.

C: Well, one of the teachers was this weird guy but the woman teacher was cool.

KH: How did your family feel about it when you decided to study art in college?

C: They were supportive as much as they could be. My father was a musician who dropped out of college. He lives in the garment district now.

KH: So, you think that he had some level of understanding about being an artist.

C: Yes, if I had to pick anyone who completely understood is my dad. I think that my mom is also supportive.

KH: What does your mom do?

C: She’s from Queens and she’s a teacher, very academic. I don’t think that was what she hoped for or planned for me, but she’s supportive.

KH: Did you get financial support from your family for your education?

C: My dad paid for most of it, it’s a legal thing. I found out recently that my dad and my stepmom paid for most of my college. I owe a lot to her and my dad paid for my books and stuff like that.

KH: In college art classes, did you feel that you experienced sex discrimination?

C: Well, yeah I had some really sexist and misogynist professors, who would just give you these looks. Between students? Sometimes, but mostly from my childhood. In college, everyone was pretty laid back for the most part. If I was in the X lab or working with the welders in the sculpture department, I felt intimidated. But, when I was in my studios, painting and printmaking I was intimidated by the master printmaker…but nothing too bad. [AW: Art School – expecting that some sexism will be present]

KH: But, nothing that made you want to leave.

C: No, if anything it made me want to stick around more. In community college I was pretty oblivious about everything there.

KH: Did you learn about women artists when you were in school?
C: Oh yeah. I met so many feminists, artists, and musicians. I learned a lot about women artists in feminist art classes and sometimes in art history. I never felt like it was an overwhelmingly disproportionate amount of male artists were being brought to my attention.

KH: Really, you are fortunate.

C: Really?

KH: Yes.

C: ….we had a lot of male professors, but they would bring in female adjunct and it would be good.

KH: Did you have role models in art school?

C: I love Dada and the fact that it isn’t misogynist. Hannah Hoch was my favorite artist and Eva Hesse. I always had those books with me. If I didn’t have a role model in real life, I looked around and found one. I guess that would be really sad for someone not to know about women artists.

KH: Some of its generational as you could probably guess. For instance, Babs didn’t learn about women artists in college in the 1950s and Tana only remembers learning about Mary Cassatt.

C: If I could do it over again, I would take some of those art history classes again.

KH: What are your goals as an artist?

C: Hmmm

KH: I see you filling an administrative role but I also see you spending a lot of time in the studio.

C: Oh, administrative it scares me, but I have been in the office a lot. Yes, I want to be in the studio. What my favorite part of the job is the studio maintenance and learning about the presses and becoming more familiar with things, and working with the residents and their process is ok and everything.

KH: And you are going to be teaching this summer?

C: (With eyebrows raised and higher tone voice), yea.

KH: Is that going to be new for you?

C: (another hesitant sounding) yea. I don’t like the parts of it, the administrative and telling people what to do, like public speaking.

KH: Really? (I’m surprised to hear this because I find Chris to be so personable).
C: Well, I like teaching one on one. I get very nervous about public speaking….It’s a huge challenge.

KH: The co-teaching thing might help you out with that.

C: Yea, I think that co-teaching sounds safer, doesn’t sound as scary.

KH: The classes are small.

C: It’s a challenge for me. But, I am getting pretty good at it now so I don’t get as anxious about it anymore. You know.

KH: You are in your comfort zone in the studio. Do you self identify as a feminist?

C: Yeah, I think so. I think that I’ve always seen myself agreeing with my feminist friends even though I’m not as active as they are. But, in my heart, yeah I think so.

KH: ok, good. (I say this without thinking and later realize that I’m concerned that the younger women identify as feminists, assuming that this perspective will empower them and give them a consciousness about themselves – to look out for themselves and other women). Do you make art that expresses feminist ideals or about being a woman?

C: Definitely about being a woman and yea feminist too. I don’t really think about that because that’s not where I’m at but I’m sure it’s there. [SJ: empowerment to be an artist, teacher, arts manager through experience at WSW]

KH: Cool. Let’s talk about your role at the workshop. You started as an artist intern, how was that for you?

C: It was great! I had finished school and I was really missing that and my friends. I was working 2 part time jobs, 40 hours per week in New Paltz. I applied and got it and I remember that when I got the internship I cried I was so happy that I didn’t have to work those jobs anymore.

[we laugh and recall odd jobs that we had as college students and recent grads]

C: It was a great experience for me. I was living alone and then I was living with 2 other interns. It was hard, a lot of work. I’m glad that I did it.

KH: What was it like moving into an all woman environment? Did you feel like it affected your creativity?

C: It felt completely supportive. Actually, I was intimidated because I was used to work with all men. I was scared about being in a new group of women. I had a lot of… I was just scared and I had known the guys from the record store where I worked for three years. But, it was just the extreme opposite of what I thought would happen. They were so supportive and nurturing and at
the same time I felt so completely overwhelmed. I was very shy. [WS: intimidating but supportive eventually]

KH: I think that it’s healthy to be scared as long as you continue to move forward in that fear.

C: Yes, definitely.

KH: How did you change as an artist when you were an intern?

C: I had so much access to new materials and media. I hadn’t been active in printmaking for awhile. I was into book arts and mixed media. Actually, I didn’t work with it that much as an intern, but having the space during my own time at night and on the weekends was great. [WSW: access for artists]

KH: Do you feel that being in an all woman space changed the way you worked?

C: Yes, I felt intimidated to come in. It’s a challenge for me to work around other people anyway. I was looking at what other people were doing around me and that was intimidating. But, I almost felt overwhelmed when it came to what I wanted to do. I worked a lot at home and I needed that. But, yes we have time where we share what we are all doing and that’s good….So, I think that it was.

KH: Did that experience change the way you saw yourself as an artist or as a woman?

C: Yes, I grew a lot from that. I look back and contemplate this when I look back and I think about something that interfered with my work. Realizing now, I have so much more clarity now looking back. If I didn’t have that experience I would have definitely if anything then go back from college but I wouldn’t have learned what I learned here.

KH: What is that?

C: Well, being in a community and working with other artists. How good it is to be around women and not always working and locked away in the studio. To have other people to stimulate you and realizing that you need equilibrium, you can’t just do one or the other.

KH: Ah, you used that word community. That was the first thing that I felt when I was here. Although it was different than my previous notion of community, which would be the same group of people over and over, but it’s not here.

C: That’s another thing that is that there are always new people coming through. Six months passes another group comes in, another six months passes and we get another new group and here I am not going anywhere. It’s good but it’s a challenge too. You know that movie *Ground Hog Day*?

KH: Yeah!
C: The same thing happening over and over but not quite.

KH: That is really interesting. Let’s talk about the potluck lunches. That is something that really struck me as a community builder. Yesterday when I came in for my first potluck, I was a little nervous because I thought that I was going to be the new girl. Then, when I saw several people introducing themselves to each other, I realized that there were lots of new people. But we all sat down on the benches close to each other and started to eat – there’s no warm up time.

C: It freaked me out at first.

KH: It freaked me out too!

C: It took me sometime to get used to it and to get used to eating so much right at 12:30!

KH: Do you feel that these lunches are important?

C: Yes, I think that they are really important. It took me awhile to realize but it’s a good thing in your day and when you are in the studio all morning, or the dark room like Karmen, it’s a good thing to come out and eat. You really need it. It’s different.

KH: Yes, I think that for me sitting so close to strangers was different. My family is warm and I wouldn’t stay standoffish, but I just didn’t grow up doing things like this.

C: Right, me either. That kind of situation really made me anxious. I thought, I have to sit with 10 people while I eat? The first year as an intern and then the second year with Americorps, I had issues with the potluck. But, now I am more comfortable and see how it’s helpful. [C: artists coming through, fluid and stable community, potluck lunches]

KH: After your internship you were with Americorps? How long were you with that program?

C: It was supposed to be a year. But, because of budget cuts – well I was about 4 or 5 months in. I didn’t get terminated until May and then another agency paid me through the summer. I was really lucky.

KH: What was your function at the workshop during that time?

C: I worked in the studios and helped with the classes and teaching the high school kids.

KH: Oh, ok. There’s some teaching.

C: Yeah, and if anything, I am most comfortable with papermaking.

KH: What is your role with the art farm?
C: Well, I do a lot of planting, harvesting and maintaining. When ___ was here, she was with Americorps, she built the gates and we worked with the composte. There’s a lot to do. It’s a lot of work.

KH: Yeah.

C: I love farming. I love being out there for sure. But, I’m not sure how good I am of it. I’m good at planting and harvesting. I guess that’s farming, huh?

KH: So, this winter…

C: The fibers are broken down so that we can make paper….I just kind of follow people around.

KH: What month is it going?

C: In the fall the last thing is harvested. This year it was snowing. I think that it will probably start mid spring. Well, rye will go in early early spring. The planting for most everything will start in May. This summer was rough. It’s very rocky soil because of the cement factory.

KH: do you have to put in soil?

C: Yes. We have the interns do that.

KH: Oh.

C: (laughing)…we had the interns last year shoveling dirt. We were like, welcome! Get to work. [we laugh together]

KH: Would you say that the workshop has empowered you, as a woman, as an artist?

C: Yea. I feel that personally, yea. Um, definitely it has given me confidence. The challenges and things that I never would have done….Looking back I don’t think that I would have thought that I would have been able to handle the job. [SJ: Empowerment as artist through experience at WSW]

KH: Right.

C: And, having just having access to all the studios and the people that you meet.

KH: So after your time with Americorps, the workshop hired you?

C: Yes, I helped with the intern applications, the studios, and when the interns would start. There isn’t a lot of structure, it can be chaotic. It’s different all the time. I’m learning a lot about non-profits.

KH: Ann says that this place is organic.
C: Yea, for sure.

KH: She told me that during my first visit and that stuck with me as I continue to learn more about the workshop. It’s definitely the feeling that I get, especially now that the archives are all spread out and listening to the founders as they look through saying stuff about how much they have changed since they started the workshop.

C: It’s amazing how things change around here. I mean when I started at the workshop there is no way that I would have thought that I’d be teaching one day. I would have thought that was crazy. Now, I’m like ok let’s do it, bring it on. [WSW: organic]

KH: Let’s talk about Rosendale. For me, growing up in Dallas, everything is new. This community just looks like old and has so much history. Just looking at the houses and the way the streets are designed around the houses. Up here, there seems to be a feeling for preservation. Since the workshop is in this old building and now they are painting it to original colors of the 1880s. Do you feel that the history of the town and the role of the workshop in preserving the history of the architecture that the space is housed in plays an important part in what the workshop is all about?

C: Yes, I think so. I didn’t know a lot about the history….like there is a group of local people who fight for local preservation and other community issues. I see them at the workshop and out and about around town. I can tell that they have been fighting for this stuff for a really long time. Also, have an eye to protect the town, not in that weird creepy way. They are just very aware of what’s going on. The elections are big and people seem to be very active in all of that. It’s starting to be important to the younger community too, like the co-op and the green grocery. [C: Rosendale]

KH: Right. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about the workshop?

C: I think that I talked a whole lot. (laughing)

KH: Yes, you did. Thank you.

Nicole, Full time WSW Administrative Staff
In small computer room just off to the side at the top of the stairs by the hallway gallery

KH: Are you an artist?

N: I am not a visual artist. When I was hired here, Ann said that everyone was pretty much a visual artist. I was hired part time and really on a temporary basis. Really I’m more of a literary artist.

KH: ok
N: I work on writing novels. I was writing a lot. I write short stories for magazines. That’s where I was at. But, I don’t really do that anymore so I don’t think that I can claim to be a literary artist anymore.

KH: Why is that? Is it related to not having enough time?

N: Well, yeah it’s kind of life style. When I have spare time away from the workshop I feel that I need to clean and this and that. It’s never time to just lay around, especially with the kids. I can get some time when they are sleeping. That’s where I’m at right now. Who knows how things will evolve, I don’t even really read right now. I’m so tired at night I just want to pop in video. I did start reading again recently and maybe that will be a step toward writing again. I’m trying to find myself again in my life. I want to start writing again, not to worry about what it will be or anything like that.

KH: Do you journal?

N: Not a regular basis. If we go on vacation, family trips or traveling – like an adventurous trip, then I keep a journal about the people that we met and where we go and what we encounter. Then with the kids, I write every couple of months or whenever I remember that it’s been awhile since I’ve written about what they are doing and what’s going on with them.

KH: It must take a tremendous about of energy to take care of two small children and work.

N: Yea, it has gotten easier since Cora is older. When she was an infant and couldn’t even sit up it was incredibly difficult. I couldn’t imagine how so many other mothers have done with this with even more children! (we laugh in agreement)...now, they can play together and I can actually do something else at the same time. But, I often feel like my life is chaotic and my house is mess and I feel like, I just can’t be here. My friend comes over and she winds up helping me clean up and then I notice the dishes in the sink and I feel horrible. But, now things are better. Like, my sister-in-law is a cleaning fanatic and she came and cleaned my house cleaner than I would have ever gotten it even if I had all the time....But, I was really happy because recently she came up and she remarked how clean my house was. I learned from her and got tips from her.

KH: Anita, Ann, and someone else...talked about you and how the children have been here so much and how they really appreciate being around your babies. I have really thought a lot about how the act of allowing you to bring your children to work was a political maneuver that was unintentionally political but was

N: That’s true.

KH: Childcare has its own category as an issue within the feminist movement and for all mothers, regardless of political alignment. It’s something that any mom who wants to work has to face. How do you continue to cope with that?
N: It’s challenging as much as I work. I work 6 hours a day, 4 days per week here. Ann is really accommodating still. I mean when I told her that I was pregnant, I had only been working here like six months or something. I really didn’t know how she was going to take it. But, she was all “yea!” and was really happy for me. Then when I got to the end of that pregnancy I wasn’t sure how I was going to work it all out and Ann said “bring the baby to work.” Sometimes she can be vague so I wasn’t sure how that would work. But, I thought that I would try it out and quickly it became a thing. Then, it wasn’t but a few months later that I became pregnant again and I thought oh my gosh, how am I going to tell them? I waited a few months to tell them. I had to adjust to it myself. But, then when I told them they were so happy for me again and they said, that’s perfect, it’s perfect timing Nicole. I said, “it is?” But everyone was so great. Now that they are a little older I have stopped bringing them to work. I feel like I work too much. She asked me if I wanted to get some of my work done from home. I said, “really?” She said that as long as I’m getting my work done and what I’m doing is valuable for them, then she will work around what I need. [SJ: Childcare needs and WSW accommodates]

KH: Wow that is great. What is your main function here?

N: Well, I would be interested to know what other people think that is…because I do so many things here. My real title that was given to me by Ann is Development Associative. I work with the fundraising events and I do membership, so the title kind of makes sense. That was in the beginning, now that I do more than that, I’m known in house as the Communications Coordinator. I don’t have that title on my business card or anything but I kind of feel like I’m the person who communicates to the public on behalf of the Women’s Studio Workshop. Not so much in the lecturing sense, Ann and Tana handle that. But, I do the website, the newsletter….

KH: The PR stuff

N: Yeah, all the PR stuff. Writing letters, pretty much if you see something in your mailbox from WSW, I worked on it. That’s kind of the quick short version of it. I still work on the database and that kind of stuff.

KH: OK.

N: I try to train the interns very quickly, so that I can get to other work and just oversee it. I am working toward reducing what I spend 100% of my time down to 25 to 30% of my time. I’m having a hard time seeing how that it going to happen. I can then spend my time researching large donors for the board and creating materials for the board to use. Going back to the Development title…that’s where I’m headed. [WSW: Organizational structure]

KH: How did you learn about the workshop?

N: Well, when I first moved to the area in Stoneridge and then I learned about the Chili Bowl. We crashed with my brother who lived in the area and he let us stay there for a long time. I saw the WSW sign down the road and I have a lot of friends who are artists, so I wondered I about that place and I’m not sure if I mentioned it or if he (brother) mentioned and then he said oh, you got to go the chili bowl event. I didn’t wind up going then, but it was the first time I remember
learning about the workshop. And, then later I learned from someone in town that the workshop was looking for someone to work part time to help with the auction event. My friend called me up and I was writing full time. I had money saved up and Chris was working. I was not looking for a job, I was just going to take a year to focus and write and try to make that take off and see if that could become my job. She said, it’s only about 2 hours a couple of days a week and if you want it you pretty much have the job because I told them all about you.

KH: Wow.

N: Yeah, I thought well maybe. That was the next time that I heard about the workshop….Then, I just walked into the office and they shook my hand and that was it. I was like, wow that was really weird. I wasn’t looking for a job. After the project was over that I was hired to help with, Ann said there’s more work if you want a job and I said, you know I think that I do and I really enjoy being at the workshop so it just kind of evolved from there.

KH: Where were you born?

N: In Middletown, which isn’t too far from here; I grew up in a small town.

KH: What year were you born?

N: 1975

KH: Do you consider yourself to be a feminist?

N: (laughing nervously)…well, that’s an interesting question. I guess I do, but I didn’t grow up in the era of the feminist movement.

KH: Right.

N: Um, I don’t think that I have any friends who are my age who would consider themselves feminist because those issues are mostly resolved now…I even have one friend who insists that she wishes that the feminist movement didn’t even happen and that life was better before the movement because families could live on one income. It really is difficult to be a mom, not only financially but I think that there it is implied that if you are a stay-at-home mom, then you just don’t have that much going for you.

KH: Which is wrong.

N: It’s totally wrong, I mean when I come here it’s like a break. I mean being at home is so much harder than being at work. I guess I don’t call myself a feminist because I am removed from the movement, but as far as thinking about the inequalities that still exist between the genders, then yea I think that there still are. Sometimes I think that my husband is more of a feminist than I am.

KH: Really?
N: Yeah, it's funny, it seems like he is constantly pointing out how men put women down and it just went by me without even noticing it. He gets really pissed off. Like one time we had this discussion about shaving. He asked me why do you shave? Why haven't you ever questioned that behavior? I said, “It’s part of my culture.” He argued that men want women to look like little girls and I started to analyze what he was saying. So, I tried not shaving and I just wasn’t comfortable with that. I recognize where it comes from, but I still wanted to do it and fit into society and not be someone who was radical.

KH: Right. (not as in right or wrong, but “I hear you.”) So do you shave now?

N: Yeah I do. I don’t in the winter because he doesn’t care, but when it gets warmer and I wear shorts or a bathing suit and I do. I tried not shaving and I’m just not comfortable. I know it's wrapped up in all these issues.

KH: I had a neighbor when I lived in Orlando who was from New York and had never lived in the South before and she had never shaved before. We had a couple of conversations about shaving and make up.

N: She was au naturale.

KH: Yes, and she was really struggling with it in the South because all the women are so made up. In my family for instance, if you don’t have your make-up on, you don’t have your face on.

N: (laughing) Right, right.

KH: My grandmother would say, ya know it’s just too exhausting to put my whole face on but I have to put my lips on (Nicole knows that I’m referring to lipstick here). It’s like without your make-up you aren’t really yourself or that no one can see you.

N: That’s interesting.

KH: I was just talking to my Dad and he asked, “is it hippie or what?” (Nicole laughs at this), I replied, “well Daddy yes, you may think so.” He continues to inquire, “well, since its all women, do you dress up for each other, I mean do you wear make up and all that?” (we are both laughing hard at this point) I tell him that no one really wears make-up and that clothing is more about function and protection from the weather, casual because making art is messy. He asks, “do you wear make-up when you are up there?” [PL]

N: He probably is thinking, “Please tell me you do.”

KH: I said, no, not really and I said that since I’ve moved away from Texas I’m more comfortable not wearing make-up. Even though I’m still in the South, I’m somehow more comfortable not having someone from my family or childhood looking at me, asking what is wrong with you? Are you sick today? He was receptive to what I was saying, but it does seem to be still apart of so many people’s consciousness. Are you feminine? If you don’t wear make-up are you gay or you don’t care? [PL]
N: It’s really interesting. This little part of New York here in Ulster County is unique.

KH: Like a little hippie community.

N: It is. If you go to Middletown where I grew up, it’s not like this. People are not mostly liberal. So, you can’t really say this region is one way or another. But, there are nooks and crannies of liberal areas, like if you go up to Woodstock then its liberal. It’s like a blast from the 60s.

KH: I should do that sometime.

N: Yes, you should it’s not far from here. Did you meet Joanna last time you were here?

KH: Very briefly.

N: When Joanna started working here, I would be wearing jeans and she’d come in with long skirts and outfits and she was about if you want to be professional then you should look more professional. She never said that to any of us, but it was implied by her presence. So, I started dressing nicer at work. I started wearing skirts and slacks instead of jeans. But, after she left I wondered if I should start wearing jeans again and I knew that no one at the workshop was going to care. But, it was kind of back and forth like that for me. But, the make-up thing I personally came to the point where I want to have more make-up because I like dressing up and going out. I want to look fancy and nice and extra special pretty. I don’t really have make-up anymore. When I was in high school, I wore make-up all the time but I was getting ready to go out the other night and realized that I didn’t have any make-up. It was really weird. And like my sister-in-law gave several family members this lipstick last year for Christmas, but I didn’t get any and I thought that maybe since I never wear make-up she thought that I wouldn’t want it. [WS: C: how one person influences the group]

KH: ….What is your feeling about the potluck lunches everyday?

N: I like it. Sometimes I feel guilty that I don’t spend a lot of time making my potluck meal. I’ll bring something for 2 days and then the other 2 I’ll be out the door and I’ll think, oh man! I forgot potluck! (laughing) ….in general I think that it’s really awesome that we all sit together to eat. I wish that the table were bigger to hold everybody. It’s a good time for everyone to share what’s going on and I think that it’s a good experience for visitors to experience that.

KH: It is. (referring to my own experience with potluck)

N: It’s interesting how it varies, depending on the interns, what their cooking background and what kind of food they eat. Some interns would take your crappy potluck contribution and turn it into this beautiful heavenly dish and others just put out your crappy potluck dish because they don’t know what to do.

KH: That’s interesting. How does it feel being in an all woman space? Even though there is Woody and occasionally other men who come through the workshop.
N: ……this is really only my second full time committed job that I have had since college. Really, it is so much like my first job at another non-profit, it wasn’t an arts organization but it dealt with human rights things, it was in a really old building with the bathroom cluttered with pinups (of local events), it was really similar. It happened to be all women, they would have hired men, and it’s just the way that it worked out.

K: Wow, so these two experiences were so much alike you really don’t have a way to compare (all women vs. all men)

N: Yeah, well you know in both situations there was the regular stuff. I can’t really imagine working with a man in an office, I never really have. I did this publication with my husband, but that was different because he is my husband. I guess it just feels natural and comfortable to work with women…..

KH: Ann said that too….

N: I imagine that I might dress differently and I would be more conscious of what I say. I think that I would be more cautious with my comments. I probably wouldn’t talk about my weekend or women things so much.

[WS: Language]

KH: Like, I just started my period (we both howl at this)

N: Although, there really isn’t tampon talk here.

KH: Really?

N: Yeah. I don’t know if some of the women are older and they have entered menopause. I don’t know how old they are. For me, I was pregnant for so long. I talked a lot about that. But, it’s really interesting how this is an all woman organization how none of the women have babies and in fact I was going to be having the first baby at the WSW in thirty years. None of the workers, either they don’t have partners or their lesbian. They were all so happy. It was the greatest gift. They all really went above and beyond to help. Ann was incredible…Elias would be fussy and not wanting to sit in my lap anymore. She would just pick him up and walk around with him and talk to him about workshop problems.

KH: Even Barbara who was married for awhile chose not to have children. I think that this is interesting.

N: Like the last group of interns, like one of them was like I will never be a mother ever. I tried not to take it personally.

KH: No, it is not against you.
N: Sometimes I just wanted to cry out and say “there’s nothing wrong with being a mother!” But, honestly, I had so many of these same questions before I became a mother.

KH: You said yourself how difficult it is.

N: I totally respect when a woman says, it’s just not for me.

KH: I wish more women would say that. I’m 35 with 2 stepsons and I’m perfectly wonderfully happy with my dogs, but I still get questions from people about it and they say, “oh you’ll change your mind or are you sure?”

N: I don’t know if I would have chosen to be a mother. I had a weird set of circumstances where I thought that I couldn’t get pregnant. I thought that I was sterile…..it was not an issue for me. I was ok with it. It really didn’t bring up, “oh my god I’ll never have children issues.” But, I’m really happy now and glad that I have them……

(personal discussion about friends and babies…..)

KH: How do you feel that the workshop fits in with social change?

N: From my perspective, not being a founder, I think that the content of the books is powerful. I mean that I think that its cool that artists can come here and do work that isn’t censored. There has been gender switching stuff. It’s pretty powerful. There is some discussion around here about changing our name because we are afraid that we people will think that we are too radical or that there isn’t a need anymore. And, I think that just by holding the name the WSW that we are holding a statement that we are giving women opportunities here. I think is a powerful choice, but inevitably social change whether it’s quantifiable or not. We don’t lobby, it’s not direct. [SJ]

KH: Ellen said that the workshop is a quiet feminism.

N: Yeah, that’s a good way of saying it.

KH: I think that anytime you do something that is based on your gender, in and of itself is political. We are providing something to help balance the opportunity for women. It is what it is, even if you don’t picket or lobby.

N: I don’t know if you got to see the old blinds (statistics about women in society and art)

KH: Yes, I did get pictures of them.

N: Those were powerful. They need to be redone. I wonder how they have changed, some may have gotten worse, and some may have gotten better. [SJ: WSW role in social justice/ blinds in front of building with stats]

KH: Yeah, that would be interesting. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about the workshop?
N: I love the program for the interns.

KH: Ann says that she thinks it’s the most important program. Would you say that?

N: I’m very out of the loop when it comes to the residency. I don’t work with them. I don’t think that I’d feel at liberty to say that it’s the most important. But, I think it is incredible. The exit evaluations of the group that just left were interesting. A huge component of their experience is how they fit in socially. The internship can depend on if the group gets along or not. If they fun or if they don’t really want to hang out. The last group didn’t hang out but they worked together. One of them really wanted that and was sad that it didn’t work out like that. But, all three of them said that despite that it was a life changing experience. They all came with expectations that were filled and beyond that a whole new world was opened up to them…..they all left feeling like really proud of meeting the challenge and they learned a lot. I don’t think that they could do much that is more challenging, from working with new programs in the office, working with visiting artists, mopping, cooking, and things that they may not be comfortable doing….Also, another thing that I could say is that, from my perspective, we have a really large network of support. This is actually something that we have never talked about…. I feel like we have gotten a lot of response from letters that have been mailed out, a lot of money on our events, membership, and people are just generally supportive. I think that’s different from a lot of nonprofits. We can mail out letters to 800 people and get $10,000. I’m blown away by it pretty much. I don’t have a huge amount of experience. But from my position where we are a small organization that is in a small niche population and an organization that doesn’t do the social change thing directly, like pulling people up from their boot straps and feeding people. I think art is an abstract thing for some people to understand that we need funding…..it is really exciting how many donors we have. I think that it is important to find large donors. I hope that a year from now we are a world beyond from where we are now, with a large base of donors that give more than $1,000 and it will get bigger and bigger.

[WS: women feel comfortable if they fit in socially; WSW: intern program; GC: Interns learn from older artists; $: WSW future fundraising efforts]

(we continue to talk personal stuff for awhile…)
Barbara “Babs” Leoff Burge, Co-founder, Artist, Mentor, Creative Consultant, Volunteer
In the window seat downstairs in the front printmaking studio

KH: I’m really interested in finding out how everyone came to the workshop.

B: ok (cheerfully)

(we stop and talk to Julie about her work as she is leaving for the café to get internet connection to access her animation files)

B: What led me to the workshop is that I was an angry pissed off woman because of stuff that happened to me and I know that it had an affect….like the thing about high school was that the teachers really didn’t pay that much attention to the girls. They didn’t really call the girls artists and if you didn’t have the attention of the teacher then you really didn’t get anywhere.

KH: That’s right.

B: They pushed their favorites. I always wanted to teach. I had this huge carton of applications. But I couldn’t get hired. They would say it’s because I didn’t have a masters degree. But, then they would hire some guy who didn’t have as much education as some women have, including me. What capped it all off was when I got a job at a community college and they told me that they really wanted a man and that when a man came along that I was going to lose my job.

KH: Wow (incredulously)

B: They told me that.

KH: What year was that?

B: I think that maybe 1965 or something like that. I tried so hard…I did a lot of work. They even told me that I did really well. But, when they found a man they did fire me. After that I had a nervous breakdown. It wasn’t just that, it was a combination of things. You just accepted that as the norm, you thought that there was nothing that you could do about it. There were a lot of things like that happened that you just couldn’t do anything about it. Even to this day, I can’t break into the art world. There are some types of media that aren’t accepted. There is some part of me that just can’t do it anymore. I’m still an artist and I still make art. I wish that I could do some active resistance against it, on purpose, you are not rejecting me, I’m rejecting you. I’m not making slides. Because I never could. I just don’t work that way. I don’t criticize this, but people who make slides make a body of work and make slides and then try to get it shown and then move on to the next body of work. You can work in many different ways.[AW: background for Babs, job market as woman and life as woman artist]

KH: Right.

B: Tana and Ann came from a different place. I’m a different generation.
KH: What year were you born?
B: ’33

KH: Did you grow up around here?

B: No, my parents were Russian immigrants. I came from a mill town in Massachusetts, very bigoted and small minded. However, I think that I learned some good stuff from my surroundings. Part of it was toughening up and wanting to be rebellious. I think that it’s important for an artist to want to be different. I think that it’s important for everyone to feel that.

KH: When was the first time that you had a consciousness about being a girl?

B: It’s a funny story. There was this obnoxious little boy who I used to be in his company because my mother and his mother were distantly related, wanted to pull down his pants and look at him. And, I said well, who cares and I looked at it and I said that is so ugly! He threw mud all over my bed or something. I thought I sure am glad that I don’t have one of those, but I didn’t think that he had one because he was a boy. I just thought that some people had that kind and some people had the other kind….like random assignment. He was really upset with me because he thought that I would be really impressed.

(we are laughing hysterically at this point)……

B: I think that I always knew that I was a girl. I think that my mother was my role model. My brother and my father was something about their world and their life was something that I didn’t want. I loved clothes…and SHOES! Is there a woman alive who doesn’t love new shoes?…..

KH: Did you make art as a child?

B: As a child, I was more interested in doing dress up. It was the heartbreak of my childhood that my mother wore orthopedic shoes and all the other girls had mothers with pretty shoes. I thought that all I wanted to do was grow up and have perfume with a squeeze thing on the end that you pump all around you and a dressing table with a skirt and a lot of cosmetics. I wore high heels briefly. But, it’s hard when you are an artist.

KH: I can’t wear them either.

B: It has a lot to do with being feminine.

KH: Yes, absolutely. What was your first experience with formal art education?

B: Well, this is a funny thing. I had actually done an original painting in my entire childhood. I guess maybe it’s not that strange in a small town. But the art teacher would come in for an hour and everyone had to do exactly what she did on the board and I didn’t do particularly well. My formal art education didn’t really come until my first year in Chicago. My very first year was in a commercial art school. I didn’t really know that you could be a fine artist. It was horrible. You had to go into advertising, so I didn’t do it…I graduate high school in 1951. I went to art school
in Boston for a year, like in 1952 and then I took a life drawing class in Chicago when I was visiting my grandmother and then I went to the Art Institute of Chicago when I was about 20 years old. So, it was really then that I had my first formal art education. [AW: education, experience in art education]

KH: You mentioned that in high school the teachers gave more attention to the male students. Did you experience that in the college art classes?

B: It was a given. It was such a male world then. You didn’t even question it. My first thought was that I should be a nurse. But, my parents said that I didn’t want to do that….but, it was such a given you didn’t even think about it. I was more conscious that the other students seemed more sophisticated than me because they came from the city and had that background in art as children and that kind of thing.
[AW: sexism is expected in class]

KH: That is interesting. Did you learn about any women artists while you were in college?

B: Basically no. In all the arts, music, literature, even cooking, the examples were men. There were busts of Beethoven and Shakespeare, even god is a man! (laughing) but we’ve changed our minds since then, right? [AW: women missing from canon]

KH: Did you have a role model who you could look to as a young artist?

B: I probably would never have used those words role model, because that is a term of modern times. (after several seconds of thought) I don’t think that I did. I didn’t have a role model.

KH: Do you self identify as a feminist?

B: (laughing) Does a bear shit in the woods? Yeah, there have been people who have yelled at me for it and gotten on my case for it, but yeah.

KH: Do you express your womaness or sexuality in your artwork? Consciously I mean.

B: No, I mean my work is personal and about my life but….

KH: Being a woman is just part of the mix?

B: Yes….It’s floating around in there. But there is this thing that I do. When I draw a figure of a woman I give her an attitude. I accept myself as I am and I think that I look great and if you don’t think so then you’re wrong…(laughing) [SJ: WS: feminist art presenting strong female image]

KH: I love that.

B: All my women have titles, stuff like they will be lying back and the title will be “enjoying reclining” “languishing in her own desire” (she makes photo copies of these titles for me).
KH: How did you get there? I mean, women look to the outside so much to give them their identities, what they should look like and how they should act.

B: Yes, they do.

KH: So, how did you arrive at this self awareness?

B: Through a lot of pain. I am no longer interested in sex anymore, which is part of my age and where I am in my life. So, that gives me a longer perspective. I can look back and see when I looked to men for validation but I don’t need that anymore. Every once and awhile, I’ll get those feelings back and then I say to myself, no no I’m not having any part of that. It may have something to do with hormonal changes and realizing that just isn’t part of your life. [GC: Woman’s perspective]

KH: Do you have children?

B: No, do you?

KH: No.

B: Babies are nice they are so innocent and pure. But children are so irritating, toddlers….I know that kind of makes me unpopular that I don’t like children (laughing) Maybe you don’t want to hear that!

KH: No, I think that we need to hear that more. I think that women need to hear that because I think that more women are feeling that than are willing to admit. [SJ: Alternate vision of life as woman without children]

B: Well, I don’t have children and there are plenty of people that do that. I don’t need to do that.

KH: That’s how I feel. There are all kinds of kids in my life, stepsons, nieces and nephews and my friends kids.

B: Yeah. To me a child is someone like Jessica’s age (she looks over to the early twenty something visiting artist working in the printmaking studio, Jessica hears and smiles) and Babs says to her, “right baby?” (we all laugh and love that Babs feels maternal toward the younger women artists at the studio). I’m old enough to be your grandmother. (Jessica nods yes). Yea, I am. Oh, I really love being around the younger artists. They give me so many good ideas and they are the ones that tell me what’s really going on in the world. [GC: learning from each other]

KH: Sure. That was one thing that I really noticed about being at the workshop during my first visit when I stayed in the intern house was the varied generational perspectives going on here. The interns were just so energized about being out of art school and eager about doing new things and go, go, go!
B: Aren’t they though? There is such interesting stuff.

KH: I think there is so much for them to learn here. I think there is something special for the established artists as well, but it seems like the intern program is the real gem here.

B: There are a lot funny things that have happened here. I have a friend who is twelve years older than I am and she has a friend who is in her early twenties. It’s a very interesting thing.

KH: The workshop itself started when Anita got a grant and then you guys….

B: It was her idea!

KH: OK

B: Well, she was the one who voiced it. Maybe we all had the idea, well, I didn’t have the idea, I’m sure I didn’t.

(Tana comes in and we make plans for dinner later in the week. We all talk about the showing of *Pride and Prejudice* at the town library)

B: We were just all hanging out in the studio and Nita came in and was like maybe I could get us a grant…and the next thing you know, there it is and we got started. Hasn’t she told you this story?

KH: I have gotten bits and pieces of this story from several people but not directly from her yet. I’m going to ask her.

B: If Nita does something good, she won’t tell you about it.

KH: I’ve noticed that about her.

B: She won’t tell you, but I’ll tell you.

(we talk about Nita and her humbleness….)

KH: From my perspective, there seems to be an empowering experience for many of the women artists who come here. In my mind, that is a form of social justice even if its not directly intentional or underlying.

B: When we started we had problems with the name, lots of people said, “don’t you know that calling yourself the women’s studio workshop is making it more divisive?” I would just say “back off….we are just trying to even the score” I mean people would come up to us and say things. It was just awful. I think that if nothing else - well once and while we have troubles now. People would say that women don’t need to be a separate group. But we do need it. I can see how things are better and different than they used to be but it’s not all better. It isn’t. [WS: what does it mean to be a woman space? SJ: leveling the playing field for women; WSW: history]
KH: That’s right.

B: I don’t know about writing, but for actors you can’t get any good parts especially after you reach a certain age…I don’t know it seems like a lot of women aren’t aware of it. But, the artists here mostly are. In an article that Ellen did, you’ll talk to Ellen later.

KH: Yes.

B: I told Ellen that if it were up to me we would still be in that little house with the studio in the basement and teaching classes. I’m not a material person I’m kind of a dreamer. The administrative stuff, organizing the classes, getting money all of that isn’t my thing. Sometimes I felt that I wasn’t needed. I guess my part has always been the poetic part. I told Ellen all of this and she said oh, that’s not true and I don’t know. It’s like my art work, I’m just not conscious of it, I just follow my heart, you know?
[S: on a wing and shoe string – just figuring things out as you went along]

KH: Yes. What was your role when the workshop first started?

B: I’d do anything. OK I don’t know anything about this media but I’ll figure it out and teach it. I did all of the posters and fliers. I didn’t know anything about graphic arts and I didn’t know anything about silkscreen. So, I never knew if anything I did was ever going to turn out ok. I mean I do have a solid background in design because the school that I went to was a really strong design school.

KH: You just figured things out as you went along.

B: Yes, and I loved teaching. I just couldn’t wait to teach.

KH: You mentioned before that you had a passion for teaching.

B: All of my life.

KH: Do you do any teaching now?

B: Not in the same way. I talk to the artists who might need a little suggestion or encouragement. They are pretty solid in their own work. Like a consulting thing, I don’t charge anybody. I get as much out of it as they do.

KH: That’s great. (sirens start in the background, just the sirens I heard in my previous trip – no one seems alarmed and Babs is mid thought, so we continue on and I hope that I remember to ask someone about these) [PL]

B: I spent the entire day with an artist friend recently and helped her with her process and it was great. I get a lot out of it.
KH: What is your role with the workshop today?

B: I’m going to start crying. (laughing)

KH: Oh no.

B: Well, let’s see. I’m not a paid staff member. My skills don’t really fit in with what they need. I’m not good with computers. I’m not an arts administrator. Every time I try to teach I put a class together and no one takes it. Well, I had my old students and I work with them some, but they want to take classes that I’m not teaching. I used to teach those classes, like etching. But, there are many more people around here with current knowledge.....I do make stuff for the workshop. That’s pretty much all I do. Like if we are having chili bowl, I’ll make a lot of stuff. Or, if we are having a holiday sale, I make a lot of stuff, posters too. I actually prefer to make art for a purpose rather than to satisfy my own creativity. I do that and um, I have a lot of connections with the interns. I usually have them come to my house and we have a lot of food and drinks. (Jessica pipes up, “I haven’t gotten to do that yet”)

[GC: Interns]

KH: That sounds great!

B: And, they tell me all the stuff about their lives and I’m usually in on their love lives. Oh yeah....I don’t really have an official function at the workshop, it’s kind of fringy.

KH: But, still a definite connection.

B: Oh, yeah.

KH: That’s wonderful. So, what do you think the future holds for the workshop after you and Ann and Tana and Nita are no longer working here?

(Babs quickly looks around and sees an intern and says, “Lindsey will come back one day and run it, won’t you?” Lindsey says “what?” Babs says “When Ann and Tana and Nita and I are gone, you’ll come back and run the workshop in 10 years or so, won’t you?” Lindsey grins and agrees.)

We talk to Jessica and Lindsey for awhile….and then Babs starts to tell them about how the workshop started.[GC: talk with interns]

B: We always say that we started in 1974 but really it was before then. Nita and I taught classes together at this experimental school. I say we started in 1971 – yea, we were together and doing things together and thinking about how we could do things. [WSW: history]

KH: Were you aware of the alternative space movement of the 1970s?

B: No not really. There was a woman’s art group in New York on the west side in a really horrible neighborhood, but they didn’t last long.

KH: A lot of those groups didn’t.
B: No they didn’t. I’m not sure why we made it.

KH: Do you think that it had something to do with geography? You all live around here, and want to live here.

B: Yes, and we are all very dedicated to our work. Not in a selfish way. We wanted to share ourselves with others.

(Jessica and Lindsey join in the conversation and talk about how they work and the friends that they have met in art school and how artists are passionate and can find themselves working longer hours because they are driven)

[GC: Intern talk]

KH: I think that if you make art, or write, you work differently. If you get into that groove then you know that you need to go with it. If you find yourself with a partner or being around people who don’t get that or who can’t support that you work like that then there’s a rub.

B: It can be very damaging. We were just talking about that the other night at dinner….sometimes you feel invalidated if you aren’t a doctor or a lawyer or something.

(conversation here with Lindsey and Jessica about their families’ lack of acceptance of their choice to become artists) [$: how do artists survive without much money?]

B: Then, you find out that everyone else’s family is like that too.

KH: That’s right; we all go through that on some level. After ten years of college I think that only my sister could tell you my major and my minor and my dissertation topic. Half of my family probably thinks that I’m in Manhattan right now. (they all get a kick out of this). The underlying question is “how much money are you going to make?” It’s always an issue in this capitalist society. I’m not knocking making money it is just interesting how some people measure everything by dollars.

KH: What are your feelings about having male artists in the space?

B: Well, mostly I think that they make the women feel uncomfortable. Afterall we can empty our own trash
(we are both laughing and at that end the formal interview)

[WS: Men as students]
Jessica, Artist-in-residence, printmaker
Downstairs in the printmaking studio

KH: When and where were you born?

J: I was born in 1982 in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

KH: When was the first time you were aware of being a girl?

J: Well I had two brothers, so I was always aware that I was different. But, I always wanted to be a boy. I was very much a tomboy. I wanted to hang out with my brothers and do the boy thing.

KH: What was your earliest experience with art?

J: I got to take art classes at our local art center and my mom would draw all of the time. I came from a very artistic family. I was like 8 or 9.

KH: That is young. (to be in classes)

J: I used to just draw all everything in front of me. I think that when I was in the second grade my teacher submitted my work in a local contest or something. I got some kind of recognition for that as a young kid. It was such a positive atmosphere.

KH: Was your family financially supportive through your education?

J: They helped me find the loans that I needed.

KH: That’s supportive.

J: Yes, they are very supportive, emotionally, spiritually, and a little bit financially; but essentially I’m kind of on my own in that area.

KH: Right. What about your experience as a woman in art classes, high school – college? Or was it something that even crossed your mind?

J: Well, not so much in the studio classes, but once I started taking classes about the history of art it was disturbing. I noticed that there were all of these male artists receiving notoriety and women artists weren’t. But, uh I think that my generation is completely different than say… [AW: Women artists missing from the canon]

KH: Even mine.

J: Yes, probably.

KH: I had such a terrible experience in the painting studio, it was so macho that I switched to art history, where I felt much more comfortable.
J: Wow, yeah I didn’t really encounter that….

KH: So, for you it was more about recognizing that women were missing from the canon. Did you learn about any women artists in college?

J: Yeah, there was this one teacher who taught this class about women artists from 1945 to now. She taught us about the Guerrilla Girls….and about many of the women who were behind the successful male artists they were really the backbone of the art world. (laughing)

KH: Interesting. Did you have any role models in school?

J: Yes, not in regular school but I always looked up to the young artists who were teaching the art classes. Well and in the art world, there are artists. Is that what you mean?

KH: Whatever that means to you.

J: My mom….and my dad, both of my parents really.

KH: That’s great. Were the artist teachers that you had at the community school men or women?

J: They were male artists.

KH: You are a painter and printmaker. When you leave the workshop what do you want to take away from this experience and where do you go from here?

J: Well, I want to produce an amazing body of work. I’ll be here for 5 weeks. I’m producing at least three bodies of work while I’m here which is great. It’s great being around all these women and hearing their stories and Tana is in her own little world and to hear Anita talk about grant writing and to make connections with the interns and stuff. When you are an artist you own your own business you are an entrepreneur. And, then I have another residency coming up in April. Hopefully, I’m just getting the ball rolling. I would like to be a professional artist….but I’m interested in arts administration and the organization itself. [WSW: Time and space to create – a room of one’s own]

KH:….so, when you say you want to be a professional artist, do you mean you want to be able to support yourself with your artwork?

J: Yeah. It would be really nice to get that financial reward for my work. [$: concerns about making money as an artist]

KH: in order to validate your work?

J: Yea.

KH: Do you self identify as a feminist?
J: See, I think that it’s different for my generation. I don’t think that it’s an issue anymore. I don’t want to make it an issue. That’s intense to call yourself a feminist, especially with the history and with what that word means to a lot of people who think that it’s its negative. I don’t think that it is but there are a lot of people out there that say it is….but, yes and no I guess. [SJ: unsure about term feminist]

KH: I would say that you probably really are, but you feel that the label is too loaded. Not that I know you that well, but I get that feeling from the things that you said. It has only been in the last say, 5 years or so that I’ve been able to say ok yes I am a feminist. Also, to feel confident and if someone thinks that it is bad or negative but I just think to myself then, they don’t know what the word means and they are wrong. (we both laugh at this). But, I know exactly what you mean….How do you feel about the potluck lunches?

J: I think that it is really important to get to know everyone. There’s so much going on here that it’s good to get away from my own work and see what’s going on and share with others.

KH: I think that the potluck really says a lot about what kind of community it is….there isn’t any warm up time, you just do it.

J: On my first day, I came into the kitchen and I was like, uh…ok what do I do? [C: potluck]

KH:….Do you notice anything different about working in an all woman space?

J: Yes, I like it. There is definitely a different energy working in a space with all women then if you are in there with 5 other guys.

KH: How does that affect how you work or how you are feeling?

J: Well, I guess it depends on the personalities too. But, if there are guys in the room then the women act differently and it’s nice not having them and having to bring that to the table. That probably makes me sound silly.

KH: No, are you saying that if it’s all women in the room then the experience is just about your work?

J: Yeah, we aren’t distracted.

KH: But, then again you are attracted to men not women. What if you were a lesbian?

J: Well, that would be different then I might be distracted by a room full of women. That’s an interesting topic. I’m going to get to work either way….[WS: different energy level, for her sexual energy removed]

KH: Is your artwork tied to being female?
J: Maybe….the fish started to look feminine to me…and lately I’ve been into the coy fish which are sexy and the water symbolizes woman in some ways.

KH: If you had to describe the workshop experience to someone else who hadn’t been here?

J: That’s funny because that has changed so much since I first got here. The first week I got here I really gave myself a hard time and I was like, “I’m in the sticks!” ….the bus station is in the ice cream parlor and I had my new shoes on with my cell phone and I was waiting for someone to come get me I felt ridiculous. The first week I was in shock and I didn’t know anybody. I was introduced and then here’s the studio and then I was just like ok – I really struggled the first week and then Lindsey came and I got to know other people and its been a lot better….but I think that I would tell someone that it’s a great atmosphere with accepting and open people around you. I think that the people you are around is important when you get to work. [C: Rosendale, isolation and time warming up to the community]

KH: Do you feel like your creative process is being nurtured here?

J: Yes, what else is there to do?

KH: I have been in situations where the atmosphere was extremely competitive and nurturing. There must be something good going on here that the women continue to foster a positive atmosphere all these years. How is this experience empowering you as an artist?

J: Yes, to have the time to work without having to wait tables or some other kind of part time job is really great. [WSW: a room of one’s own]

KH: How has this experience changed you?

J: Every opportunity I give myself I try to change a little bit. I don’t know what that will be just yet, but I need to reflect on that.

KH: Sometimes the realization comes later when another experience or event will trigger a memory from this one.

J: I was just talking to Lindsey about how many people I’ve met and how much inspiration and motivation I have gotten from being around them.

KH: Let’s talk about Rosendale. To me the little town contributes to the atmosphere of the workshop….although if you have food you really don’t have to leave campus. I think that the buildings being close together so that you can walk back and forth is so convenient and makes it feel like you are at camp.

J: That’s what I told my friends ok I’m going to art camp! I don’t leave the studio much, but the small village community helps. [C: Rosendale in the woods]

KH: Since you went to school in the South, do you think that a place could work in the south?
J: Yeah, why not? I think that there are other organizations like this. But, like what you said earlier I think that this place works because of the people, Ann, Anita, and Tana. It could work, but could it work as well I don’t know?

KH: Do you think that you would come back?

J: Maybe, yeah.

KH: What do you think about the woman only space?

J: Well, I was always close with my mom so I wasn’t that worried about it being strange…when I first looked at the workshop online I thought – oooh how lucky and I was excited that there was something just for us (women). My guy friends were like, what we can’t come? Oh, we want to come! I feel very lucky that this is an opportunity.

KH: Is the next residency co-ed?

J: Yes in Vermont for three weeks in April.

Ann, Executive Director
In her office in the workshop

KH: What year and where were you born?


KH: OK. When was the first time you remember having a consciousness about being female?

A: Oh god, I have no idea. I think that there was a time when I was pretty little Mom told me that I couldn’t play without wearing a short. I don’t know how old I was. I was already walking and running, I might have been 5ish or so. I was really pissed off.

KH: My sister had this thing when she was about that old and younger where she didn’t wear her shirt and would follow my dad behind the lawn mower….just too funny because Lea just couldn’t be more girlie girl. What is your earliest memory making art?

A: One thing that I remember a lot is that we had a fireplace at home and my dad used to get wood from the factory where he worked. They built crates and stuff. I used to make huge piles and stacks with them all over the living room.

KH: Interesting, was this like elementary?

A: Oh yeah, and I was totally aware, well I was a little egotistic but I was aware by the time I was in first grade for sure that my drawings were much more advanced than the other kids, most of them were still making stick figures.
KH: What was your first experience with formal art education?

A: High school.

KH: So, you didn’t have an art teacher in elementary?

A: No, there were some teachers who were more gifted. We had art, but it was a classroom teacher.

KH: What was your family’s response to your decision to become an artist?

A: Mom really encouraged me.

KH: She did? That is fabulous. Did you experience any discrimination as a woman art student in college?

A: Oh, golly…well, there were only a couple of boys in the art classes….there was only one woman on the faculty. She had some problems with her health and then later they let her go. She plastered these posters all over canvas. [AW: male faculty]

KH: What were the posters about?

A: Oh, you know, discrimination – I can’t remember exactly….She wasn’t really any harder or easier than the other teachers, but she was more like a person rather than an icon or something (referring to the male teachers). She was just a little bit more personal or something.

[KH: discrimination for female faculty]

KH: Do you remember learning about women artists while you were in school?

A: Not in school.

[AW: women missing from the canon]

KH: Anita talked about how you guys would go to the library and get books about artists and have people over to your place and learn about these artists.

A: Um-hmm, yea we would have to get to school early before the semester started hide the books that we wanted in the stacks at the library so no one would check them out before we could at the beginning of each semester.

KH: Anita told me about the coffee house that you guys ran together in college. What was that like?

A: Well at first it was really great, it was just Ann and Anita and there was another person who didn’t show up a lot…It was pretty interesting. The church managed the coffee house but there was no reverend involved the first year and the people were pretty radical. This was during war
time. Everything was pretty cheap too and there were women in town who would always bring treats for the Saturday night thing. So, you knew it was fun. It was a coffee house and people would come and sing and sometimes large groups of people would come through….looking back it didn’t actually function as a place to hang out. The second year I had to be interviewed to keep the job…..the churches in town became concerned, and probably rightfully, about the management and what was going on at the coffeehouse and everything changed. The minister and his wife and family were more involved, he was pretty nice and genuinely interested in helping out. Mrs. minister thought that women went to college to get married.

KH: The M.R.S. degree.

A: Yeah, even if I thought that I certainly wouldn’t say it and I certainly wouldn’t say that in front of my husband the minister! (we are both laughing).

KH: Did you have any role models?

A: Barbara.

KH: The other two said that as well actually (referring to Nita and Tana).

A: I don’t think that there was anyone else. There weren’t that many interesting people. The painting teacher would never give an art critique. When it would close to the end of the semester he would go off on how awful all of the work was. Meanwhile, everyone was spending days on their best work to show the teacher….The other thing about him was that he would select students to model for him.

[AW: male faculty having female students pose for him]

KH: Anita talked about that.

A: It was really sick.

KH: Did you do that?

A: I did not, no.

KH: Was drawing your primary medium in college?

A: Yes, well painting there was a fabulous painting studio at my college that was separate from all of the other buildings. I minored in printmaking. The painting teacher was completely crazy!....the printmaking teacher was good and I was always interested in silk screen so I spent a lot of time there.

KH: So many of the responses about choice of media has been related to who was teaching.

A: Oh sure….maybe if you were really destined to be a painter or whatever you would stay there.
KH: …and work through whatever was going on. Do you self identify as a feminist?

A: I don’t really think about things like that. But, I think that I would be foolish to think that the world perceives me as anything else. I don’t think of myself as a feminist although I know that I have an obligation in my role here. I don’t know. There’s complication in it. It just isn’t that simple. What did Anta say? [SJ: feminism]

KH: Well, we looked it up in the dictionary yesterday. It has really been interesting how everyone has responded to this question….but I think that basically most everyone here is at the most basic level.

A: Well, yeah.

KH: Everyone here agrees that women should have equal opportunity as men in economic, social and in every way, which is essentially a feminist agenda. I think that is complicated by many different factors.

A: It’s so complicated. I think that people are fearful of saying they are feminist because they aren’t sure about the responsibility of the term, what is the big picture here?

KH: I know that you used to work. When did that shift for you?

A: I think that I probably am more of a social worker at heart or for whatever reason I can’t not be one. There’s a time to be an effective artist and an effective administrator. [SJ: perception of self as social worker]

You could maybe make a pot now and then, but you can’t make artwork. It’s too hard. We’ve talked about this a lot. I don’t think that you can be a mom and an artist at the same time. I think that you could be a crappy mom and good artist or just an average artist and not really making big changes. There just isn’t time…..If they don’t get to work until they are 40 how is their perception different? It seems like most contemporary artists who are under the age of 25 are making art related to sex. Well, you are out there more than I am, do you think that a lot of the art is still about sex? [AW: perception of expectations to be considered an artist; AW: ceramics as lower medium]

KH: Yes, you still see that. Male artists in particular still project their vision of female sexuality and objectifying her as an object. I just did this research about an artist, Masami Teraoka who paints Caucasian women scantily dressed with Asian men looking at them. His work is aesthetically great, but kind of creepy.

A: Yes, there has always been this thing with Western men looking at non-Western women.

KH: That’s right.

(Ann is trying to adjust her chair)
A: I need Woody to come fix my chair. [$: broken chair]
KH: I have been asking everyone about their feelings about the potluck. It really seems like it’s the glue in everyone’s day.

A: It serves a lot of functions. I mean obviously this isn’t a traditional residency where we do dinner. So, we have the lunch. We don’t want to interfere with anyone’s day or process. Like Karmen for example, we aren’t going to disturb her in the darkroom.

KH: You have always done the potluck?

A: Yes, partly because we lived in the main workshop when we first bought the building. It wasn’t intentional.

KH: It just kind of happened?

A: Yes, we just started making lunch together in that tiny kitchen and sitting together.

KH: Do you think that has anything to do with being women?

A: Well, sure it does.

KH: I think that I have gotten interesting responses from everyone about how they feel about the potluck.

A: Sometimes it’s tedious.

KH: But, it seems to be a really important element to the workshop….

A: Some people have been self conscious about cooking each day.

KH: I think too that some people have been nervous about sitting so close to someone they just met and then eating. It’s so close and intimate.

A: It’s good when we can sit out on the back patio in the summer. It is sort of interesting that when we sit outside there is a group who sit together on a table in the corner. It can be easier to sit outside of the group.

KH: I think that for some it may feel uncomfortable in the beginning, but has become something that they look forward to.

A: I think that some people didn’t grow up around that….[C: potluck]

KH: That is exactly where I was going with this, for me – during the second half of my childhood, we never ate together as a family, you came in and fed yourself and then you went about whatever it is that you were going to do that evening. [PL]
A: Food was about fuel.

KH: Yes. That’s exactly what it was. We ate together during Thanksgiving or Christmas. The first day I ate at the potluck I thought wow, this feels like Thanksgiving with a table full of food and people kind of crawling over each other to get to everything.

A: I think that unfettered, it’s the natural thing to do.

KH: I do too. I think that it really helps to gel the community here.

A: I think that for people who come from the outside, we don’t really host them, we just have our lunch together. Then, after a few days they may take them to dinner. One thing that we have talked about with the staff is that we will all go out to dinner with them and at least one staff member.

KH: To help break the ice.

A: Yes, so that there is someone on the staff that they can go to right away, especially since there is an ongoing community.

KH: On my first day of this trip, I thought that I was going to be the only new girl, and then I realized that there were lots of new girls that day.

A: It can be really intimidating to come in here. We need to figure out ways to make that better.

KH: The potluck is a really good way.

A: Yes, but I think that you don’t know that until you come. [C: food to gel community when new member enters from outside]

KH: Last time I was here you and I talked a lot about the workshop being a separatist community and whether or not that’s good. Tana and I talked about male artists who have come through here who have both worked out and been problematic.

A: I think about this a lot now.

KH: Do you?

A: Yes, because I think, well first of all, I just went through this long process with the Board about our mission that says “all people” and how do you say that when the title is the Women’s Studio Workshop? And, now I’m like, it’s pretty old fashioned and what does it mean in contemporary terms? [WS: questions about what this means and if it is still needed in 2006?]

KH: What is the future of the workshop?
A: We aren’t going to make it, unless we can find someone to capitalize on what we have here and find women who are interested in running things.

KH: Last time I was here you showed me drawings of future plans for buildings.

A: We aren’t going to do that.

KH: It would be a massive undertaking.

A: We would have to raise too much money. [$: future WSW expansion on hold due to no $]

KH: When you were looking at the expansion were you considering adding men to the residency?

A: No, we don’t want to make any changes, but what we need is to know how to talk about this. What does it mean to be a feminist at the Women’s Studio Workshop? What I think is interesting is that the young boys aren’t going to college anymore I mean that the numbers are way down.

KH: So…

A: We need to figure out how to articulate these issues at the workshop.

(Nicole comes in with questions….)

A: I just hate all of these computer wires and things….

KH: I think that we talked about this last time. But, when you started the workshop did you have a consciousness about the Alternative Space Movement going on within the Feminist Movement – since that is exactly what you were doing, creating an alternate space for yourselves to work.

A: I did know about it, but it wasn’t something that I was thinking about. I think that it was the way of thinking for baby boomers during that time, it was a different time in America.

KH: What was about that time that gave you an agency, which made you feel like you could go out and create…

A: I think it was growing up in the 50’s. Even though the ’50s are portrayed as….well, it was different for adults in the ’50s than it was for kids in the ’50s. I don’t know maybe it was just me.

KH: The beatnik movement and….

A: It was by far the majority of people, it seemed, were trying new things….I think that now it’s much harder to go out on your own. Now it seems like the kids use tattoos and putting holes in their bodies to be individuals.

KH: Yes, there is a big group of 18-25 years olds in my family and that’s what they do.
A: Oh, yea?

KH: Yea, tattoos, piercings...

A: I think that the ’50s, just post WWII – everyone lost a lot and then the ’50s were a grateful time and we all felt like we could make a lot of progress. I just don’t think that’s the case now.

KH: I think you’re right.

A: You can’t go out and get a job and expect to have that job for life and that you can expect to buy a house and a car. You just can’t expect that anymore, it’s just not possible. I mean I didn’t grow up rich or anything or go to private schools. But people who go to private schools have a different kind of permission. They have permission to, oh I don’t know I guess that I can’t speak to that. But, I think that you know what I mean.

KH: My grandmother told me that one in four households was affected by WWII and that the entire country participated in rationing and cared about the war effort.

A: There was a national concern that we don’t have anymore.

KH: John went into the Navy right after Vietnam and he told me that he joined the Navy because he was a poor kid.

A: I was just thinking about that this morning, you don’t join the military because you want to learn how to kill people. You join the military because you don’t know what to do, you need a job, you need an education and it’s the only way to get it.

KH: That’s right, whereas during WWII, everyone was interested in helping the effort and poor or not, men were enlisting to protect the country….I have been talking to everyone about their feelings about the workshop having a political agenda. Some people don’t think that’s what is going on. But, I think that there is something political happening.

A: I have always felt that the workshop’s responsibility was to represent the unspoken political perspective in a conversation. That hasn’t really happened in a long time. The fact that there has been so little political discussion in the art world lately has been a little startling…. [SJ: WSW’s role in social justice dialogue]

KH: I think that even just the act of accepting Nicole’s children at the workshop is in and of itself is political.

A: People thought that we were out of our minds.

KH: But, you like her and she worked well…

A: I couldn’t have done my work without Nicole. So, I can remember carrying the babies around for hours when they were a little fussy (laughing), but it worked…and she appreciated that and
recognized when it was time for the kids to be at home when they started to get older. I mean the babies spend most of their waking hours sitting on someone’s lap. I mean what a treat! What a treat for me. What a treat for Anita and ultimately, what a treat for these interns.

KH: Really, too, what a treat for those children.

A: We helped shape who they are.

KH: They are amazingly well socialized.

A: They are probably more comfortable with adults than other children.

KH: Do you feel that the interns get the most from the program here because of the length of their residency?

A: Oh, yeah I think that we make the most impact on the interns because as an alternative to school. Well, letting them come from school, which is highly structured and then coming here to letting them figure out who they are. I don’t think there’s anything better that we could do.

KH: Chris and Ellen both said that if they hadn’t done the intern they wouldn’t be doing what they are doing today.

A: Ellen is a pretty strong personality she probably knew she wanted to be in an all woman space before she came here. AJ is a lesbian and probably sought us out for that, but not very many of the interns who come here are lesbians or necessarily looking for an all woman art space.

…..we continue having a discussion about the differences between the 1970s feminist movement and contemporary feminism

Anita Wetzel, Grant Writer, Artist
Front office

KH: When and where you were born?

A: OK, 1949 in Utica – right in the middle of New York State.

KH: When was the first time you had a consciousness about being female?

A: Tana told me that you were going to ask me that. (laughing) but I told her, don’t tell me anything else. Oh, I need to think for a minute because I was a tomboy. I was a serious tomboy. Clearly?

KH: Well, when you first started to recognize a difference between the sexes and maybe when you started to recognize that there was a different code. If you are a boy you act like this and if you are a girl you act like that.
A: My brother and I were close and I knew that he was different, so I guess you could say that subconsciously it was something that I always knew. My parents worked really hard to keep everything equal between us and not to show any favoritism. I know this because of one time I asked, why doesn’t Gary have to do such and such and the way that I was answered so harshly made it clear that they were trying hard to keep things equal between us. I thought that was something that they did really well….but since I was tomboyish we were always outside camping and doing sports and things. When I was a young teenager my brother and my dad started going on canoe trips alone or with another man and his son. I can remember feeling a split personality about these trips, because I can remember wanting to be a part of the adventure – it was way beyond camping, they were way out in the woods and part of me said, girls don’t do that and you aren’t going to be invited and you are scared anyway. I wanted to be with mom, although we were starting to get rocky….I think that I understood that they were doing bonding between them and I think that I thought that was important, but I really wanted to go and if I had asserted myself maybe I could have gone.

KH: But, you never went on any of those trips?

A: No.

KH: When they were gone on those trips and you were home with your mother did you do anything with your mom?

A: Well, we were at home so we did the shopping for the week and stuff like that, but nothing special or of equal caliber. I think that I was jealous, but it wasn’t really jealous of him, but that I really would have liked to go on those trips. Even now when I travel I don’t want the entire trip booked. I like not knowing what I am going to encounter. Kind of like you coming here, you just have to trust that life supports life and to somewhere that is foreign to you. There is an element of danger in that too and maybe something really amazing will happen. One thing that me and my mom did together…well, she didn’t drive until she was over 40 and that was a really big deal.

KH: Sure.

A: At that point, we actually got a second, so we had 2 old cars….it was a pretty big deal because we lived 8 miles from the city and there was a bus that we could pick up and take us to the city. And, she and I would always take the bus and do all the shopping. I don’t know how we got everything back home. But, anyway when we got the car we could just go anywhere and we were in this great big car.

KH: What is your earliest memory of making art?

A: Well, I’m not sure if this is the earliest, but we had a radio and we would listen to shows and at some point my parents got The New York Times and I noticed the drawings in there. They were fashion drawings but for me it didn’t have to do anything with fashion it was the lines and shapes. I was about 7 I think and I started making drawings and I would use those newspaper
clippings of those drawings in collages. It isn’t completely clear, but I know that those drawings affected my desire to make art.

KH: When was the first time you had formal art education?

A: In the third grade. We had a good art teacher, but she was the kind that gave rules and I took it very seriously. I don’t know if they were good drawings or not, but I do remember drawing.

KH: When you told your parents that you wanted to major in art in college what was their response?

A: Not good. (laughing) The first year that I was in school I studied English, which of course was a perfectly acceptable major. Then, I had this amazing experience in an art survey course that taught art history very well. I don’t know how often this happens, but it had a studio component too. I had no idea when I signed up but I had drawing, painting, and printmaking and that was what really happened. So, then I transferred down to the art school, but they didn’t want me to do fine arts and said that I had to do education or something so that I would be able to get a job. But, I did fine arts anyway and I didn’t tell them. I mean, I was a really good kid and that was my first rebellious act that was obvious. I think that they just thought that I was out on my own. My parents thought that artists were foreign, well not my dad so much. But, my mother thought that artists did weird things. She told me stories about kids that she grew up with who became artists but she didn’t get that there were different kinds of artists, great artists, bohemian artists, crazy artists…it never did seem like she accepted it.

KH: Did she accept it later? After you were at the workshop?

A: No, I don’t think so. There was one particular episode, when she came to visit me we were already in this building. I walked her through the studios and she looked at a lot of different kinds of artwork. Afterward, she said that there was one artwork in particular that offended her and I thought to myself, wow, she doesn’t really think that what we are doing here is good. [SJ: no censorship at the WSW]

KH: Did your parents help you financially through school?

A: I was very lucky my dad made it his plan to help me get through undergraduate school. He didn’t want me to work, because he had to work through college. He did that for both me and my brother. The bad part was that I didn’t feel like I could choose a private school. They never said that to me. See, my school was trying to encourage me to apply to Vassar but I didn’t feel like I could. The foolish thing is that I could have had scholarship help. I don’t remember hearing the word scholarship or anything about it, so I told the guidance counselor oh no I can’t go there.

KH: Did you experience any discrimination in art school?

A: Yeah, I have a lot of anger over it still. I felt like we weren’t taken seriously. It was a battle the whole time. It was mostly women. There was one teacher who wanted us to pose nude for him because that was his project. There was a lot of pressure to do it and I didn’t want to do
it….but he was actually my favorite teacher because the way he did things really resonated with me. He was hard to understand but I sort of did understand him so when he did that it really turned me off. It was more like we were in a club and having fun and listening to music, like it was a joke but I was serious….my parents came down one time when I called them and said that I was going to quit, I got really fed up. [AW: discrimination in art school]

KH: Did something happen that made you feel that way, or was it a series of events leading up to that point?

A: Yeah, I don’t know I can’t remember exactly but I just didn’t think that I was going to finish that last 8 weeks. My parents came and told me that I was going to finish.

KH: Did you have fear about what was going to come after school?

A: Well, there was certainly fear about that.

KH: I know the feeling.

A: Even at this level?

KH: Yes!….Do you remember learning about women artists when you were in college?

A: Not particularly. The artists we learned about were always men….I think that my dad gave me a book about women artists. [AW: women artists missing from canon]

KH: Wow, that’s neat.

A: I’m trying to remember but I think that’s right. Ann and I had this thing where we would check out all the books at the library that we liked and then take them to our house and invite our favorite art buddies over to look at them. That’s the way I remember it, she probably remembers it differently.

KH: So you and Ann were roommates?

A: At a certain point, yea. We ran this coffee shop together and we got to live alone in this house. It was quite an adventure. I lived in the dorm originally and then somehow we teamed up this idea to run the coffee house.

KH: That’s interesting.

A: There is something else traumatic. Ann will remember you should ask her. There was one woman professor, she was a sculptor. Ann worked with her and she was making really beautiful sculptures and they were trying to fire her. I can remember signing papers and trying to help her not get fired. My memory is that we didn’t want to lose this one person because of who she was, but I’m sure it was also like we don’t want to lose the only woman. The guys were well, it was bad….[AW: only woman faculty fired from her university]
KH: Did you have any role models when you were in college?

A: I didn’t feel like it so that was why when I met Barbara it was so amazing.

KH: She really filled that for you.

A: Yes and she wasn’t an artist in a book, she was a real life person. Her husband showed us these drawings that his wife did and they were so good, the composition and lines were so strong and clear…..and all of this art stuff for me was new because I didn’t have any art in high school and to go from English to art was pretty scary. I didn’t know that I was interested yet….I did have an amazing choral teacher who showed me an art book.

KH: What is your favorite medium?

A: I prefer drawing, which is interesting because I think that drawing isn’t taken as seriously as painting. It used to be a problem, but I no longer see it as a problem. I can remember being unsure about my thesis because it was mostly drawings and I didn’t feel like it wasn’t quite good enough. [AW: hierarchy of materials]

KH: Do you self identify as a feminist?

A: You mean now?

KH: Yes.

A: I think that I’m starting too (laughing). I don’t think that I did. What are the feminist values?

KH: Inclusiveness….

A: Are these published values?

KH: Not really and I think that part of the confusion is the uncertainty of the meaning of feminism.

A: It’s in the dictionary right?

KH: Yea, you know what? Let’s look it up.

A: I have a dictionary right here. (she reaches around her for the office dictionary). I remember looking this up before when someone who was really strong was challenging me, it was a male artist. Then I told someone else about the conversation and she said, you don’t need to defend what you are doing!...he was offended that the WSW didn’t take men. Here it is, feminism not feminist, is the theory of the political, economical, and social equality of women to men. [SJ: WS: feminist agenda]
KH: There it is at the core of it.

A: Well, I believe in those three things, political, economical, and social equality – I guess it’s weird when you say that you are something.

KH: That’s a label.

A: Yeah, and maybe if you say that you are one thing then you are saying that you aren’t something else.

KH: Right.

A: Like, if you say, are you a humanist? Yes, or are you a….

KH: Although some argue that a humanist perspective is hierarchical and places humans’ importance above that of animals and the earth. I have shied away from that term.

A: That’s interesting…..

Spiritual and metaphysical discussion here in relationship to humanism – we look this up as well and discover that the definition is ambiguous but does focus on human concern over earthly or spiritual concerns - this makes Anita reconsider her previous statement

KH: Do you express ideas about being a woman in your work?

A: My work is purely abstract, so other people won’t necessarily be able to tell. But, yes very much so I like to use my body in the making of it. I have a very strong reaction with the materials. There is a sexual energy involved and then there’s a spiritual energy involved and a human energy and then when I got involved with clay there is such an amazing interaction with clay….for myself I think that my femaleness is a huge part of how and why the art is coming out.

KH: When I talked to Barbara she said that you probably wouldn’t tell me about this so she would tell me. She told me that you wrote the grant and had the idea about the workshop right from the beginning.

A: Well, Ann and Tana were in graduate school and I was in my first real job.

KH: Which was what?

A: I was working in the library, which was actually pretty wonderful. Someone had started an interlibrary loan program and I got hired to run that….but I started to think wow, here you are and you aren’t making art. So, I somehow learned that you could write a grant. I have no idea how I learned this but once I found out that you could get some money, I started to think about what we could do. I wanted to do something for Barbara my mentor and for Ann my dear buddy…we had been drawing and making art together and going to arts activities together, so there was that kernel of a thought. I wrote the grant as if we were going to create a communal
living situation, um I wish that I could think of a model to tell you but I didn’t have a model myself. I was thinking about these communities that were self contained where stuff was made by hand with a craft quality and an aesthetic quality. This was in England and other communities sprang up around it. I wasn’t thinking about craft since we were focused on fine art, but I was thinking about a living community where we could do artistic work and discuss it and discuss ideas. So, I was all alone, Ann and Tana were away and I don’t remember if I showed it to Barbara or not, but I got it ready and sent it off on April 1st or whenever the deadline was and forgot about it…and I remember being extremely shocked that I got a phone call at the library where I was working and they said that they wanted to come up and see us. [WSW: history]

KH: Wow.

A: So they came up to meet us. It would never happen that way today, because we hadn’t actually done anything. Then we had the meeting and they told us that we had to come up with something that was more concrete. So after the men left, we got together and talked about what we were going to do. Fortunately, Ann and Tana were getting concrete learning in printmaking and we made a statement about how it’s difficult for women artists to find space and money to make art and they gave us the money. You’ll have to ask Ann exactly how all of this went…Nowadays I don’t know if you can ask for money unless you have been together for three years.

KH: So, was that how your role as the grant writer came about?

A: Yea, it became that. I didn’t have the technical ability in printmaking. Barbara and I taught drawing.

KH: When did you take a hiatus from the workshop?

A: ’80

KH: When did you return?

A: I started coming back one day a week and writing the journal and getting more involved in little ways. When I moved back in ’95 I really didn’t know that I would be working at the workshop so I started looking for a job and they happened to need a grant writer, so here I am.

KH: What did you do in New York while you were away from 1980 to 1995?

A: Well, I thought that I’d be able to work part time but that was economically impossible. We talked about this.

KH: Yes.

A: Well, I was working on computers and doing ok but I didn’t feel like I really knew enough so I didn’t like that job.
KH: Was that job tied to the art world in anyway?

A: No and I really should not have let that happen. But I did have a solo show that was very special and I had one group show. I did some service work for non-profits and some grant writing.

KH: Are you comfortable with grant writing?

A: hmm..

KH: Do you enjoy it?

A: Well, I don’t not like it….I do it because I believe in it and I wouldn’t do it for a non arts organization.

KH: I noticed that one of your bedrooms is set up as a studio do you make art regularly?

A: I’m trying to.

KH: Was there a time when you made art in this space?

A: Yes.

KH: Was that different from making art at home?

A: Surely. It was always a challenge for me to make art while other people were walking through the space. It was difficult but good….One day it occurred to me that drawing is technical but I never think of it that way since that’s what I do. I still think that I can’t do the technical stuff but I have, I have silk screened and I have made prints so I’m not sure. But, it does make me feel sad that there is all this stuff here and I still feel like I can’t do it and maybe part of it is because I’m a girl and Ann and Tana can do it because they are just naturals….it seems so natural to them. I think that some people come here and feel the way that I do and then they learn and they make prints….also, prints sell better than drawings, not that I want to make money from my art, but the older I get and the less that I am making art I am thinking about it more. And, maybe I still will since its all here and in a comfortable environment. Would I go somewhere else to learn it, yea I might. Sometimes its good to get out of your element….[WS: making art in community rather than in solitary]

KH: I have asked Ann about this, since Ann and Tana have basically been only with the workshop for the past thirty plus years they aren’t able to really compare an all woman space to a co-ed space. I know that there are men who come through here but not many.

A: Yes, the women are dominant and the men have to fit themselves in here.

KH: How would you compare being in an all woman space vs. your other experiences during the 15 year period that you were away?
A: I think that there is a comfort level and a sense of family….but I have been really lucky that in the other situations my male bosses were really good. But, I observed other stuff going on, like there was this woman who was the secretary to the head guy and she always looked so put together and really nice. Then, one day I had this conversation with her in the bathroom and she told me that was what he wanted and she wouldn’t necessarily dress like that. It really told me a lot about who she was….she was doing it because she needed a job, she was a single mom and was getting by….here it can be a struggle to have structure without hierarchy and to not have people feel competitive or threatened and just be together and figure out how to do their work.

KH: Yet someone has to make the decisions.

A: Yes, someone has to make the decisions and then everyone needs to accept those decisions or create a dialog about that and we can hash it out and then eventually there has to be a decision, so much of the time no one wants to make the decision.

KH: How do you define the community at the workshop?

Anita: Well, that’s hard for me to answer but I love the community and its very important to me. In the beginning I can remember thinking intellectually that we needed more people around here to give us input….we got about 10 staff people and we had never had any management, I mean training and it was crazy. I don’t know how we got through it all, but we got some good stuff out of it. So, that was like whew….the community was maybe like my family….my sense is that it presents challenges and incredible inspiration. I had already left before the outside thing had really been formulated. I was thinking that the community has to have people from the outside, literally from anywhere in the world. I was also thinking that we could do an exchange, meaning that someone from California could come here and someone from here could go there, or from South Africa, or from Ireland…if the money situation was better maybe we could make that happen…. [C: changed over the years and can still change]

KH: When did you start the potluck?

A: I think right from the beginning…I think that this is the same picnic table too, because the three of us were living together and we had the staff during the day it just sort of happened. I don’t know, it’s been a tradition for so long.

KH: It seems to be an important thing for everyone.

A: Well, yea we don’t require anyone to attend but usually they do and then when they leave they always say, love the potluck!...it helps too because we are out in the middle of nowhere...I love good food and I think that one of the most important things that you can give someone is good food. We actually have had intern groups who ask, do we have to keep doing this and the answer is always yes, because it’s a good thing and it is. [C: potluck]

KH: Do you feel that this experience with Ann, Tana, and Barbara, building the workshop and working with it throughout the years has empowered you as an artist?
A: Yeah, probably. I still have a lot of stuff that I’m working on, but yeah especially those early years before I left and we made so much art and had exhibits….I cannot even imagine that anyone would have put my art up. I probably would have been making it, but. And, we worked together on a lot of projects which relieved the pressure of you being the artist instead it was we are doing this, we are the artists, we are the voices. Those experiences were probably more profound than I even know. Through that I was able to say ok maybe I really am an artist. I question it even now and I’ll say something to a friend and they will say well you are an artist. So, I wonder if that person thinks that I am how come I don’t think that I am? [AW: insecurities about being an artist]

KH: When you started the workshop the Alternative Space Movement was going on in NYC, were you aware of that at the time?

A: I think that we used that language but I don’t think that we really explored what was going on. We would go see a show in an alternative space. We weren’t really looking to other groups as model, we were just…

KH: Making your own.

A: Yeah. I don’t really remember having a conscious about it at the time, but quite a bit later I remember looking around and thinking wow, look at all of these groups who started right around the time we did….I went to California and the studied with CalArts but not with the Woman’s Building.

KH: Did you know Miriam Schapiro or Judy Chicago?

A: They were there and I knew of them. This was before we started the workshop, I’m not sure what year.

KH: Womanhouse was ’72.

A: Yeah, it was around there…

KH: Why did you leave?

A: I think that I left the workshop because I was burned out. I needed to get away. I think that I needed to experience the world away from here.

KH: Was your intention to be out in the art world so to speak?

A: Yes, the big wide world for experience and then I thought that I would have time to do artwork…but I didn’t have time, but I did make that one big effort to do that in nonprofit space.

KH: What do you think will happen to the WSW after all of you retire?
A: What do I wish would happen?

KH: Yes

A: Sometimes I think that some of the younger artists will pick it up but then I think that maybe one day the doors will close and that will be it….I kind of feel like if someone else came in they would change everything the way art is today…I like how we are keeping the traditional, get your hands dirty and making the traditional object instead of an installation or something else….so my hope is that some part of the workshop will go on but I don’t know if anyone is interested. [WSW: future of space]

KH: Are you guys actively looking?

A: No, not that I know of….we have had interns who have expressed genuine interest and a couple who have said that they would live here and run the place, but we haven’t done anything about it yet…do you think that a place like this could go forward?

KH: I think it could. I think that it would have to change, especially if someone was going to come in and replace Ann and Tana. In regards to the fact that they live across the street, I can see how someone would want that space to make it work the same way. I don’t know how they feel about that, but it would be different. I mean, the fact that they are so close is something that helps to make this place special. I think it could if you find someone with the same level of commitment or things would have to be more standardized in some way so that you can have a variety of people running things according to a system.

A: We had plans to expand….but, if money was no object. Each studio would need a manager. That would be a way to bring in people who were already knowledgeable and some would be trained….all of the administration has always been artists. Like the director, is there another artist who can take that role?

KH: I think that would be hard.

A: Yes, it is hard. We had made a conscious decision to do that, but it doesn’t always work. But, we could have a director and an artistic director that wasn’t like Tana but was more like Ann….since we are all 3 the same age it could be something interesting.

KH: Since you all might retire at the same time?

A: Yes.

KH: Do you think that language is the same or different in an all woman space?

A: We try to create a safe environment and to be supportive through language and encouraging, nurturing but it’s not in a motherly way, in fact it’s actually in a challenging way. [WS: language]
Ellen, Ex-Intern, WSW Volunteer, Artist
Upstairs in the silk screen studio

KH: When and where were you born?

E: Des Moines, Iowa in 1975

KH: Do you remember the first time you had a consciousness about being a girl?

E: Not really, but I can remember instances like one time we moved when I was like 4 or 5 and I had short hair and someone said that I was a boy and I said, no I’m a girl. I like being a girl.

KH: What was your earliest experience making art?

E: I feel like I have always been making art. My mom was always painting, she was a hobbyist so she was always doing that and I was encouraged to do things.

KH: So your parents supported you as an artist?

E: Yes, my mother does painting and my father does woodwork.

KH: So, when you went to college you didn’t have to try and justify why you wanted to be an art major.

E: I was very lucky. I was actually undecided for awhile and then an English major for awhile….but yes, they were very supportive of me getting my BFA in sculpture.

KH: Wonderful, yea you are lucky. Were your parents financially supportive as well?

E: Yea, my mom was a professor so I didn’t have to pay tuition.

KH: Oh! You are so lucky. What was your art experience like in the k-12 system?

E: In the second grade I went to this arts magnet program in the summer that was at our neighborhood school. There was a lot of art there and my brother was older and he learned how to play steel drums and there’s a lot of stuff going on and then it changed between second and third grade. It became a traditional school with new rules; like we used to wear shorts to school and stuff like that. But there was a lot of support to do art projects and I did a lot. I started taking ceramics at the Des Moines Art Center in the third grade. The experiences that I remember more were those outside of school or like summer programs. A lot of the art I did at school was through the gifted and talented program. Then in high school I had a couple of classes but when I changed to the academic track, those professors weren’t as supportive shall we say.

KH: Was being female a hurdle in the college art classes?
E: Well, no. All the teachers were male, in the art department. There was one female adjunct teacher that taught a class in the summer. So, that was an issue and I was feeling all feministy about it and I was unsure about the woman-ness in my work and I just wasn’t sure how to approach that. I think that they did the best that they could and one time they had this women’s studies professor come give a critique and that was ok….but it was very obvious to me that I had no female instructors. [AW: no female art teachers]

KH: Did you have role models?

E: Well, the male teachers that I had for printmaking and sculpture were very nurturing and supportive and they were my artistic role models. My mother is spectacular. She taught me to have a consciousness about being a woman and she is definitely a feminist. I grew up with like Ms. Magazine in the house. My dad cooked dinner and things like that. She was a professor…I did this project for a women’s studies class where we counted the faculty at the school and discovered something like 95 male full professors and 5 female, which of course made me very angry. But, it also made me very proud that my mother was one of those 5. [SJ: feminist household]

KH: Wow. Do you self identify as a feminist?

E: Yes, I do!

KH: You are a three dimensional artist, right?

E: Yes, I work with a lot of different stuff, but yes three dimensional.

KH: Did you learn about women artists in your undergraduate program?

E: Well, yes it was definitely touched upon in our art history classes. I was definitely vocal about not having female teachers and others were too, the head of the sculpture department was conscious of that and I think that he made sure that we saw women artists or at least brought up names of women who we could research. [AW: no female teachers, male teachers helped students learn about women artists not in mainstream canon]

KH: That has been one of the interesting responses depending on the generation that someone when to school. Babs for instance can’t remember learning about women artists in school.

E: Right, well it can still get better.

KH: Oh definitely! You talked about expressing ideas of being a woman in your artwork as a younger student, do you still do that?

E: Oh, well this is a really interesting story. I came here about 6 months after graduating. I came here January 31, 2000. My work really changed. And, I had to think about how I was in an all female environment and then I realized that it wasn’t an issue for me anymore. It was just something that I didn’t have that feeling anymore, I wasn’t having that struggle. It was a level of
comfort….I could just focus on what I wanted and it started to become and still is very much so to this day about the environment and natural surroundings. And you can also understand why that started happening while I was at the workshop. My praise for the workshop is that it is at feminism at its best. It’s not hitting you over the head with it we’re not running around with picket signs and t-shirts or anything like that. It’s just an organization full of women doing something. Doing what they want to be doing and doing it quietly, well I don’t know if that’s the word but doing it without shouting, I am woman. [SJ: experience as an intern empowering]

KH: I am woman, hear me roar?

E: Yeah, yeah. It’s felt like it’s always really been that way. Um, which I think is really nice. It allows people like me to feel really comfortable in what I’m doing. And, knowing that this place is here and is still here I feel like it carries on through life.

KH: So, I think that what I hear you saying is that your intern experience was really pivotal for you.

E: I think so, well…

KH: You said that this was the first time that you could let go of inhibitions and make art.

E: Yes, and this was my first non-academic experience with art.

KH: Which in and of itself is going to be influential.

E: Yes it was a huge, huge experience. It honestly changed our lives.

KH: What was it like for you in the intern house?

E: Well, we weren’t in this house. I was here when the intern house was being rebuilt so they rented a house on Williams Lake for us. It was like a mansion, it was just this enormous house. There were four of us, three interns and the Americorps volunteer. We each had our own bedrooms we each had our own bathrooms. The two girls who got here first had these enormous bedrooms. I have lived in apartments smaller than that. We just had tons and tons of room, which I think made a huge difference. We were able to go to work and then come home and do what we needed to do. Stuff like there was a T.V. upstairs and there was a T.V. downstairs….it was nice to have a break from each other and be able to watch separate shows. So, we all had a really good experience. I had actually found out about the workshop from a friend of mine from California….she became the Americorps volunteer and we were here at the same time, so we knew each other and we were more serious about making art than the other two who were more interested in being social and going down to the café and having a drink. But, we did stuff together as well and the three of us interns really did do a lot of stuff together. I haven’t really seen that in other intern groups. I think that a lot of it has to do with the house and the fact that we really could separate regularly.
KH: I stayed in the intern house last visit over the weekend so half the house was gone, but I could imagine what it would feel like full….a very college feel to it.

E: Most of the interns are right out of college so it’s not too much of a stretch for them.

KH: Yes, I can see that and they each have their own rooms, I shared a room in the dorm.

E: I couldn’t stay there now….after an experience in a small trailer for a residency in Minnesota I was very grateful for what I had here.

KH: What was your next role after with the workshop after your internship?

E: After I was an intern, I ran the clay program and I was in charge of the Art in Ed. Program and I was in charge of the interns.

KH: Wow, that’s a lot.

E: Yes, very much….not all of that at the same time, but I did that kind of work and some PR throughout the four years that I was there.

KH: Did you observe other interns growing in this experience the way that you did?

E: Yes, of course everyone has their own experience…but I think that definitely people evolve and change. I see some girls coming here and feeling lost and not knowing what they are doing and that’s what I came here feeling. Yes, I have a BFA but really that’s just a piece of paper. So many of us want to know how do we keep making art outside of the academic environment?…that is something that really helped me being at the workshop….being around other artists who are constantly making work and how they go about it and seeing the opportunities….and also developing relationships with people from the workshop and keeping up with them later and what’s going on….I see other artists juggling family, work, home, and they show me how it can work….I do see the experience as pivotal for a lot of young artists. [SJ: interns growing as artists]

KH: Obviously there must be something special because you keep coming back.

E: (laughing) Many of us do! I always say that I came to New York for 6 months and I stayed for five years and then I left…but I’m always coming back here. Now, they make me feel like a rock star when I come back, ya know?

KH: Isn’t that nice?

E: This summer I’m going to teach a class.

KH: Great, what are you teaching?
E: Chris and I are teaching together, like armatures for sculpture or something like that. I’ll focus on the sculpture and she will focus on the papermaking….other people keep coming back to take a class or for chili bowl, because you know its fun.

KH: It feels like a community here, even though a huge part of it is transient.

E: Yeah.

KH: I was surprised today at the potluck how many new people there were and relieved to know that I wasn’t the only new girl. Boy, there is really no warm up time at the potluck you just dive in and get to know everyone.

E: Yeah, my dad was talking to me about that and was so surprised to know that they have been doing this for more than thirty years. The potluck is really important to what’s going on here. It’s really a community, it’s like a family. It’s home in some way…people can get comfortable here right away, we are all staying here and having lunch together. People are really open, well and sometimes their not, which is ok. Because people are here to do serious work and there is that level of intensity….but I remember one year when I had Thanksgiving at Ann and Tana’s and that was really nice…or there would be times that artists would be here and we would have a barbeque and you know things like that, that are very supportive and they are always there to lean on….and to see how the artists are preparing for exhibitions you can see how you can really be an artist. It can be hard. [C: potluck, family, dinner together]

KH: It is hard to be an artist.

E: It is very hard to be an artist.

KH: You are a really good talker. You’ve answered so many of my questions without being asked.
APPENDIX C

Field Notes

First Visit: February 18-20, 2005
Women’s Studio Workshop, Rosendale, New York

Friday, 1:15p.m. I’m in the Detroit airport…one more flight to go before reaching Newburgh/Stewart, NY for the weekend. I got an email yesterday from Ann, the WSW Director saying that either she or one of the three interns would be there to pick me up and then we would go by the grocery. My anticipation is growing and I’m genuinely excited about this weekend. I feel like a kid going off to camp. I think the last time I really did something like this – a communal living kind of thing – was the summer of 1984. I was 14 years old and off to my first co-ed camp experience (and my last as well). I’m not really the rugged, camping type. Well, actually I’m not at all. Some would say that I’m high maintenance even. I’ll be staying in a house with 3 interns and the “web woman” Antonina, who is there to finish the WSW website. Ann, the Executive Director seems very “New York” and brief in her interactions but also seems excited about my visit and has been extremely accommodating. I am going out into the field – hahaha – really laughing at myself. But, definitely feeling like I’m branching out a bit – because of this Northern weather if nothing else. The highs are in the 20s! and the lows in the teens, yikes. This Texan gone Florida is not sure how to do this cold weather stuff. It has been a focal point of my preparation and thought process. [This is just the first of many regional differences that I discover during this first trip] [PL]

6:10p.m. Ann picked me up from the Stewart/Newburgh airport. If anyone is interested in coming to see the studio, you can arrange for someone at the WSW to transport you to and from the airport (40 miles to Rosendale). There is snow and ice on the ground (which I haven’t seen in nearly 10 years. [PL]

Once inside Ann’s car, it is obvious that I’ve entered an artist’s space full of materials and remnants of materials – she has to clear off the front seat so that I can sit down. She says it has been since last spring since she drove into Stewart Airport area, but she routinely drives into NYC for art stuff (materials, shows, meetings).

We talk about my studies and art making for awhile and how most women’s artist organizations do not exist like they did in the 1970s and early 1980s. Most have died out and how women’s studies programs really aren’t what they used to be either. Ann thinks that this is tied to the political climate in the country, as do I. She is conscious of current positioning of the female artist and politics. Ann says that the women artists who have become more marketable are so because they are making art for the market and that most women don’t have the sensibilities for that stuff. Rather, she says that most women artists work with alternative media and processes that are not generally accepted as mainstream.

On the ride over, Ann tells me that she is in fact one of the four original founders from 1974 – and that 3 of the 4 are still involved in the daily operations of the workshop. They are all four women artists. I think about the number of women artists organizations like the WSW that sprang up during the 1970s feminist art movement and how most have disbanded many years ago. There is real longevity and commitment here. [WSW: history]
The WSW is chock-full of art, materials, and women – although Ann tells me that usually there are many more women artists around and indeed this is off-season. I am bunking (laughing at the use of that word, reminds me of camp or my dad talking about boot camp in the Navy) – but I’m yes, literally bunking at the Intern house. Ann shows me the intern house: 4 bedrooms upstairs and 1 bath. Three rooms are already occupied by the interns. The house is ancient…really old and charming. There are wood floors throughout well some of the floors are merely sheets of plywood crudely painted. Other architectural details are evidence of the age, glass doorknobs and wide moldings. But there are no frills here…I immediately get the feeling that these women will sacrifice most anything for their art and for the cause of the WSW. Ann is embarrassed to find that the 3 BFA grads who are interning are not clean and have not prepped my room. She rifles through a hall closet and dresser drawer in the hallway, looking for sheets and towels. They are hodgepodge and old, makes me think about camping again. I would say dorm life and in some ways yes, but my dorm room was decorated to the max and my grandmother had really set me up with new sheets, comforter, and towels. I did not go without material things even though there seemed to be many times that I felt that I did. Even though, the sheets and towels were suitable and I’m pleased to have my own room at the end of the hall.

The studio spaces are housed in one large, historic building from the late 1800s. It was a concrete store and the local post office functioned out of the side of the front room. The WSW originally started in a rented house in town and by 1983/4 they bought the old store and since have purchased the intern house and the land behind it with future designs for expansion. The space where the papermaking studio is in the back was added on, approximately 1,000 square feet of space. The kilns are off to the side of this room. Art materials and half-completed projects are taped to the wall. A wagon full of straw and grass sits off to the side. Ann explained that she grows various wheat, oat, and barley. They are used for the handmade paper they make for the books and by some of the artists who work in printmaking. The garden is full of product to make art and to feed the artists as well. [SJ: Art farm]

She brings up the importance of the potluck lunch each day. [C: potluck]

This space is the add-on where I find Woody and Ramona the dog on and off throughout the weekend….adjusting shelves and checking on stuff to make sure everything is running right in this 20° weather (teens at night). I have to duck my head so that I don’t hit my head on exposed pipes and construction materials as I go down the rickety stairs to the basement where the ceramics studio functions. Ann tells me that they have had problems with not being ADA prepared. There have been some accidents with students and visitors coming down to the basement, one kid even broke his leg during Art-in-Education program. Since then, they don’t teach the younger children down there anymore. I thought about my clumsy self and how I nearly fell walking back to the intern house last night (dark, slippery, patio). The ceramics studio is full of chili bowl and tumblers to be sold at next weekend’s fundraiser. [S: facility problems, fundraiser/ PL: not used to cold weather!]

There are several wheels and lots of materials and DUST, typical studio stuff. The kilns are upstairs next to the papermaking studio. They are in a room with makeshift walls from thick, clear plastic that breathes with the wind, but seems to be keeping the moisture out. [S: facility problems]

The workshop is conscious of the building’s history and preserving its cultural connection to the community. [C: history, preservation]
From the back studio, down a narrow hallway there are examples of edition books made by various artists who have visited, taught, or who are still connected to the studio. They are elaborate, heart-felt, from basic to complex in technical proficiency many are constructed with paper made at the studio. Each book is displayed in a clear box that is mounted to the wall, to protect it from art dust and dirt. This small space is orderly and consciously set. [WSW: space, program]

At the start of the hallway there are wood floors where the old store was and then it changes to a concrete floor in the added space. There is a closet (just under the stairs) that is full of archives, photos, and articles from as far back as 1974. [WSW: history]
The hallway ends in the front room that serves as the printmaking studio that once served as a concrete store for the town and surrounding areas in the late 1800s. [WSW: C: connection to history and community]

I am impressed with the history of the building and how it lives within the space alongside the women artists. Off to the side of the printmaking studio is a small room that was the original Post Office. This room is full of old printing equipment (I mean ancient). [C: preservation]

I see that Susan is working in the printmaking studio. She seems to be taking a break, so I approach her about an interview. She is hesitant and explains that she is having some production problems. I sense that she may not feel comfortable working. While I’m in there, Tana comes down and looks at Susan’s work. She is unbelievably harsh without offering positive direction. I have flashbacks to my undergraduate days in the studio with the relentless criticism and scrutiny from my art professors, who were mostly male. I sense that Tana understands how to function successfully in the art world and is not here to nurture or coddle the artists rather to give them the cold reality of the art world. I notice that Susan seems a bit beaten down by the criticism and Antonina and I are suddenly in an awkward position as the unsuspecting classmates sitting by quietly while she gets her lashing. [AW: competitive, critical, being all woman does not dictate nurture]

We left Susan to continue her work and went back down the hallway. Just before you step onto concrete, turn left and up the stairs and at the top is the gallery space, which is occupied by several politically motivated prints, flags adorned with personal and socio-political messages. [SJ: no censorship and politically motivated work]

There is a small office off to the right with two desks and a computer. This is where Antonina is doing most of her work.

Ramona the dog barely lifts her head to great me as we walk through the kiln area. I gently side step around her so that I don’t step on her tail.

Ramona is Woody’ dog and has a daily presence at the workshop. Ramona makes instant friends with me and each time I enter the space thereafter, I was greeted with a wagging tail and a rollover, indicating a tummy rub was desired. Ramona’s comfort with the space really told me a lot about the workshop. [PL: my love for dogs warms me to this space faster]

Woody is the resident handyman of the workshop – although he does outside projects, he is commonly found at the workshop, especially around lunch time – to which he always brings his contribution. He tells me that he has to come by each day to “check on the girls” even if he isn’t busy with fixing something around the place, or creating some kind of contraption that they can use in one of the studios. I noticed outback that there was a makeshift drainage system for the melting snow to flow away from the outdoor studio. I could almost see Woody out there carefully attaching the cut PVC pipe to the black plastic tubing to extend the drain a bit further. Wood is downstairs building some contraption for the ceramic studio. Woody has been with the
workshop since the mid 1970s when he started a project through a jobs program through the state of New York. Since the WSW moved to the current location in 1983, Woody has become a regular staff member, even after his grant program ended – the workshop kept him on. He also works at the Intern House, Ann and Tana’s house and Tana’s studio (the yellow barn). He is what he calls a “classically trained” electrician and a jack of all trades, carpenter and problem solver. Just as he turned back to resume his work, he said, “you know the thing about the workshop is that its organic. It’s a living, breathing thing that is constantly changing.” Ann and Tana tell me that Woody’s favorite thing to do is to solve problems for artists. They begin to tell me about all of the “creative” solutions he has come up with over the years. In each studio, printmaking, ceramics, silk screen, and bookmaking they have large traditional, old equipment accompanied by some newer equipment (but not much), and handmade tools and contraptions made by Woody. Construction is going on a bit in nearly every space, including the intern house and Ann and Tana’s house and studio as well. Woody is warm and friendly and welcomes me. He is shocked to learn that I traveled all the way from Florida just to come to see us. Clearly he is part of the WSW and without hesitation includes himself as part of this community. He works small contracts around Rosendale. He tells me that he has 2 trucks; a van, full of hardware and odds & ends that he always keeps at the workshop and another that he drives to off-site jobs. Ann tells me that he is “on staff,” he gets a regular stipend and health insurance for him and his girlfriend who works part time at the local library. Ann tells me that they hired her to some office work a few years ago but turned out to be a total disaster so they “phased” her out, but they still offer her that financial support – mainly I think as part of Woody’s salary.

I find out that the house and barn across the street belong to Ann and Tana, two of the co-founders who are also life partners. This is something that I discover rather than being told directly. I sense that this was because she consciously hesitated until she knew how I would react to that. I sense a fear in being labeled lesbian/feminist/separatist and then being adversely judged for this] [WSW: C: Ann and Tana, sense of family]

I get the feeling that they are constantly working with a low budget at the workshop, yet there does seem to be plenty of art materials and women are there making art despite these hurdles (I notice that many seem to be recycled or home grown materials).

The front office upstairs has several desks and computers, bookshelf with past exhibition fliers, and newsletters off to the side, and an old picnic table against one wall. The picnic table where the daily potluck lunches have been served for more than 30 years symbolizes the longevity and history of the workshop – which was probably recycled from another time and place; it is an object that represents a psycho-social space, a point of communal gathering for sustenance and connection. Layers and layers of paint that have started to chip and peel, literally show the years and I can imagine Ann or Tana painting that table over and over until they just stopped and then the peeling revealing their years of stories. Ann mentions this later and points out the necessity of food and community and how that plays an important role in the workshop. [C: Potluck and the picnic table]

Off to the side is a small but fully functioning kitchen, equipped with a stovetop, antique sink, coffee maker, and fridge. There are handmade mugs, plates and bowls stacked up on a single wooden shelf the length of the kitchen.

This domestic space is warm, homey and makes me think about food bringing the community together, about art, recycling, and history. [WS]
WSW is pro-woman, not anti-man, although male artists have participated in the past – Ann says that this was problematic, especially concerning the living quarters for the interns and artists. She stresses how important it is that the women feel comfortable – after all the male artists have plenty of places to work. [SJ: expanding the opportunities for women to work]

I am going out to dinner tonight with Ann, Susan, the artist-residence, and Antonina, the web designer. Tomorrow will be spent observing, interviewing Ann and going through archival material. Actually, Ann got some of the archival stuff out for me tonight so that I can start going through this. Not sure what the plan is for food just yet. [PL: food is often on the brain]

We ate at the Egg’s Nest, a very artsy place. Ann explained that the art on the walls, ceiling, and just about anywhere there wasn’t a table or chair – actually the tables and chairs are art themselves, brightly and wildly painted and adorned with sundry materials, rotates – that just about each time she eats there, the art has moved around and something new has been introduced to the space. The walls are covered in murals from top to bottom with holiday lights strewn about in a warmly lit space. I’m immediately taken with this place. Its obvious why Ann chose this place to take us. Dinner was nice and relaxed. We have good conversation and easy laughter. We each have a beer and start to get a little giggly. This is really fun and is giving us a chance to feel more comfortable around each other. It also gives me an opportunity to talk more about my research and my intentions with my visit. We chat some about the workshop, but mostly about our personal lives and funny stories that brings uproars of laughter from our table at regular intervals. I begin to feel a connection with Antonina at dinner. We are about the same age and have a good rapport. Ann and Susan (are about the same age, 50 something) remark how young we are – which is funny because Antonina and I are staying in the intern house and were just remarking how old we feel when we talk to the women in the early 20s.

[C: Egg’s Nest in Rosendale; GC: conversation about age gaps and experiences related to that]

After we leave the restaurant, it’s freezing! Everyone has a parka-like coat and hiking boots. I’m grateful for the Doc Martins I purchased several years ago when they were fashionable and artsy. Now they are really functional! [PL: weather]

Antonina and I walk back to the intern house together after we drop-off Susan at the main workshop where she is staying in the artist apartment above the silk screen studio. Antonina and I are the seniors in the intern house since we are in our 30s and the interns are all about 22 years old. Later that night: Sirens are going off that I cannot identify, it feels like something from a movie – WWII sirens – strange, ok now it has stopped and I can hear the soft jingle of wind chimes outside my second story window. The intern house is furnished with odds and ends seemingly from just about anywhere, my grandmother’s barn to the local yard sale down the street. [PL]

Saturday, 9:00a.m. Ann picks me and Antonina up to go grocery shopping. She takes us to a small market, but sufficient for what we need. Then, off to a smaller store, a local co-op filled with locally grown vegetables, hemp products, tofu, granola, and all hippie stuff – TINY store. When I go to purchase my hemp lip balm, the clerk asks me for my membership card. The front entry way is littered with colorful (both printed and handwritten) fliers and notices about events, stuff for sale or rent, jobs, and the like. This was just the kind of space I would have imagined existed in this small New York, artsy community. Ann forgot her list, curses herself and then goes about her shopping remembering that she needed only 7 items. [PL: food; C: stores in town]

I get the feeling that I’ve been dropped into another time and space here in Rosendale, an upstate, hippie town where most of the churches have been bought and transformed into personal
residences, shops, and offices and the main grocery is a small mart that is complimented by a tiny local co-op grocery. [C: Rosendale stores]

Back to the intern house, Antonina and I carry our bags into the kitchen and Kyla one of the interns comes down the stairs. We are uncertain about where to put our food and what the protocol is about cooking. Kyla seems to be self conscious in that very moment as she begins to hastily move food around and clean off shelves. [WS]

She then begins an extended explanation about her lack of involvement keeping the kitchen clean and how the other 2 interns are probably starting to get upset with her. She has been skipping out on cooking for the daily potluck and admitted that she avoids cleaning dishes at all costs. She started gathering up dirty dishes around the kitchen, then leaves briefly, returning with an armful of dishes from her bedroom to wash. I can only imagine what the rest of her room must be like. The other 2 interns have gone to New York (they all say New York when referring to NYC or just “the city”) to Christo’s The Gates. I’m frustrated that I didn’t organize my time better to see this for myself. I sit in a wooden chair (3 of the 4 match) at the wobbly, wooden kitchen table, just big enough for 4. [C: Interns working together or not]

After a brief scavenger hunt in the kitchen for a clean knife and plate, I eat my New York bagel (honestly I’m not so sure what all the fuss is about and feel certain that there are bagels down South that are comparable! ☺). Antonina comes in and makes coffee for us only to find the dustiest coffee maker ever and goes through a serious distillation process. I’m relieved to know that I’m not the only one uncomfortable with the lack of cleanliness in the house. Previous to this trip, I had started to reduce my caffeine intake, which is now completely destroyed. I cannot resist a strong cup of coffee on such a cold morning. [PL: food, weather, cleanliness]

Kyla keeps on chatting about this and that….she is extremely open and interesting to talk to – so I ask her if I can tape record our conversation. She gets wide-eyed, stops scrubbing the pots and becomes a bit self conscious for about 30 seconds, then forgets and we continue talking. I don’t have a list of questions – we just converse – every so often I guide the discussion back to the specifics about her experiences at the workshop. She sits down with me at the table and tells me about her plans. I’m grateful to have the time with her since the other 2 are of for the weekend and I won’t see them again until just before I leave, only to say goodbye. After an hour or so, I head over to the workshop.

Later that day, Kyla, is sitting at a desk in the office working on last minute stuff for the Chili Bowl cook-off. [$: fundraising]

The workshop is preparing for the 8th Annual Chili Bowl Fiesta, a fundraising event for the WSW that includes local restaurant and school involvement. The bowls and tumblers are made in the Ceramics studio in the basement by the ceramics director, ceramics intern and then many volunteers (current and previous students). They fill the bowls with chili made by the local cafes and fill the tumblers with lemonade. The school children are involved in the event by helping with sales and passing out drinks and food. A local band plays for the event every year, which has contributed to the festival atmosphere that the community looks forward to each year. [C: Rosendale community involved in chili bowl; $: chili bowl as fundraiser]

I remember that our waitress at the Egg’s Nest asked Ann about her role in the fiesta this year and another woman who teaches 5th grade stopped by our table as well to ask about final details. [C: involvement with chili bowl]

Tana, Ann’s partner is one of four co-founders and is the Creative Director for the workshop. The yellow barn across the road is her personal studio. She spends concentrated time on her art
work, which is exhibited throughout the workshop studios and throughout her and Ann’s house (next door to the barn). [AW: Creative Dir. Works in art world as a full time artist]

There are 12 Board members, 11 are women and one man. Ann explained that there have been other male board members in the past. The current male member is Kenny Burge (the ex partner of Babs Burge, who is one of the four original founding members). Ann and I talk about their resistance to bringing in big name artists, which we both agree would boost opportunities for funding and strengthen the mentoring program for the interns. [AW: resistant to art world ways]

In 1979, the Artist-in-Residence program started. I’m sitting here in the office at the picnic table and I can smell coffee brewing which is great because I’m so dang cold in here! Ann whistles throughout the space, which is really nice. My grandmother (and her father) is a grand whistler, which puts me at ease. [PL]

Tana is in the silk-screen studio furiously working and obviously frustrated with her process, trashing much of her work along the way, insisting upon perfection. She is from Czechoslovakia and is very talkative but her accent is so thick that I missing every other word – so much that I don’t dare to ask her to repeat everything. Our conversation is an effort in decoding on my part (maybe hers too!?). The studio is her focus and I feel obliged that she has allowed my presence. She is the creative director but doesn’t really seem to be directing any of the interns, visiting artists or even the chili bowl/tumbler production for the upcoming fundraising event. Her energy is fast, strong, and intense. [AW: Serious artist must have time and assistance]

Tana is the artist, yet she doesn’t seem to be involved with anything/anyone at work but her own vision. I was surprised to see her working at the WSW when she has such a great big barn space to work out of. She assured me that she only comes over on weekends when things are quieter and she can work with the equipment that she doesn’t have in her studio. [AW: concerns of full time artist]

Her energy is fast, strong and intense. She graciously allows me to photograph her at work and components of the silkscreen project that she is working on. The image of two women strangling one another is filled with text referring to political positioning related to the war, economics, and immigration. The work is for an upcoming show about Domestic policy and collaboration. [SJ: artwork that reflects socio-political theme made by WSW artist]

Tana’s art is personal. She tells me about her experience as an immigrant and her concerns about the unnecessary detainments and abusive conditions for many immigrants today. [SJ: Social consciousness]

Ann comes into the studio to assist. She holds screens, washes them clean, brings them back over to Tana to work with again. They go through this process many times over before she is then satisfied with her product. Ann shows me their logo “A Piece of Kake” Ka stands for Kalmbach (Ann) and Ke for Kellner (Tana). It is at this point that I know for sure that they are more than business partners. I sense Ann tentatively revealing her lesbian identity, feeling the waters for judgment from me the outsider/other/hetero woman from the South. After this moment, I can feel her relax more around me. [PL]

I follow Ann through the workshop as she busily tends to Antoninna (the web designer), the interns (prepping for the fundraiser), and Susan (the only artist-in-residence at this time). Ann is anxious about Tana’s artmaking and conscious of being available to lend a hand as we move throughout the space (listening for Tana’s voice to call her back into the upstairs silk screen studio). Ann and I sit down at the picnic table in the main office for a more formalized interview. She is forthcoming and sometimes soft spoken but extremely informational. After nearly 1 hour and 45 minutes of taped interview, we break for lunch. Ann reminds me of my grandmother –
someone who is there for everyone, overseeing the big picture and mired in the details at the same time. She is supervising the interns, assisting and supporting Tana’s art production, entertaining me both evenings, overseeing the chili bowl event, and hosting me all weekend on top of that. [$: on a wing – Ann is the wing!]

I sit at the table for awhile and sort through a massive stack of archived articles and pamphlets. It’s clear that there is no way that I’ll be able to go through all of this in one trip. Fortunately, Ann has given me extra copies to take with me. Binnewater Tides is a newsletter that the workshop used to write and distribute – it looks interesting and Ann gives me several issues to take with me. The weekend is quiet according to Ann, but it feels like there is quite a bit of activity going on in this old house. Ann and I talk about the public’s perception of art – particularly contemporary art, which leads to discussion about The Gates in Central Park. She says that she is more impressed with the open and fun reactions to the installation rather than the usual “what is it and how can it be art?” questions. [AW: awareness of events and happenings in art world]

After some time, Tana comes up front beckoning Ann’s assistance with the silk screening process. She seems very self-involved with this project. I wonder if this is work-specific behavior or is this routine. I know that I find myself in the same focused work mode with my creative projects…sometimes I think that kind of work requires that kind of drive and focus.

3:00p.m. or so: Back over to the Intern house for some lunch. Antonina is there (Kyla is still working on the chili bowls and tumblers in the ceramics studio). We sit, eat, and chat. She tells me about the potluck lunch that goes on everyday (M-F) at the workshop and I’m sorry to miss that. Antonina starts to reveal her impressions of the workshop. [C: potluck]

She had first learned about the studio from an artist friend who now lives in Rosendale and runs the ceramic studio (Ayumi) for the past two years. Antonina has been in and out of the workshop over the years and now that she is in between jobs, she has donated her time to redesigning the WSW website. She will be onsite for one month. [SJ: volunteer for social change cause to help WSW]

This is somewhat critical since many people have only learned about the workshop through the website or through word of mouth, unless they are regionally located and may have learned about it through community activity or news. Two of the interns learned about the WSW through the web site and the third went to school at Alfred University ceramics program, where Ayumi was once a graduate student and teacher. I am extremely curious about how they have been able to survive without much marketing or exposure to the national art market, although they are connected to NYC programs and artists, which is probably enough. When I started to search for an all woman artist organization, none of the scholars that I queried knew about the WSW (I mean that I asked big time feminist studies/art education people). This is somewhat astounding to Ann and the WSW group, especially with their history of exhibition, connections to the National Museum for Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. Nearly all of the interns and artists-in-residence are either local or regional (NE) or connected to someone who already knew about the workshop. [AW: presence in the art world]

Antonina and I decide to go for a drive around Rosendale and maybe take a short hike (although I’m wondering how I’ll fair since the weather is so darn cold!). We park on the side of the road and get out and walk through the catskills just at the foot of one mountain – I get a real feel for the natural environment that is here and how it is conducive to an artist’s retreat. I remember seeing several pairs of ice skates at the intern house and dreaming of skating on a pond,
something that I have never done (I flash back to ice skating at the local rink when I was a kid dreaming of Dorothy Hamill). Antonina talks about what it is like in the summer.

I recall Ann telling me about the lake nearby the workshop and how the artists and interns routinely swim and hang out around the lake. They all really seem to be enchanted with the landscape and the untouched natural elements in which this tiny, historic town (almost feels like a village) sits. After about an hour hike, its gorgeous but indeed freezing – even the brisk hike really doesn’t warm me up, just sets in the freeze in my fingers and nose. We drive toward Ayumi’s house. She is the Ceramics Director at the workshop. She also teaches at SUNY Newpaltz and makes her own art full time. She lives in Rosendale in an old church that she has bought and is in the process of renovating. The front chapel area is all original and is currently being used as a storage space. The original stained glass windows, stretching 3 x 8 feet, line the front and side chapel walls. The original bell tower is off to the left, and Ayumi tells me that she enjoys ringing it. She pulls the rope which gives us a loud, deep, ding dong that is surely reverberating through her tiny neighborhood. The back of the house is where she lives and has been remodeled mostly. Poncho, the small dog, guards the palace. A Franklin stove in the corner keeps the living space and kitchen very toasty warm. [C: Space: Rosendale and Ulster County landscape]

Ayumi is appreciative of her position with the workshop and the freedom she has to pursue other teaching opportunities and allows her some studio time. I talk to her about Kyla, the ceramic intern who recently graduated from Alfred College (which is the #1 program in ceramics as I was told by Ann and Kyla on 2 separate occasions). Kyla worked with Ayumi at Alfred, while Ayumi was there teaching as a graduate student. This is how Kyla learned about the workshop and the internship opportunity. [GC]

Ayumi’s kitchen is great. I really feel at home in this space, not particularly by her but by the surroundings. It’s warm, well-organized, and inviting. She has made us a cup of hot tea (which helps to quickly defrost my hands). Antonina and Ayumi were friends first in NYC. Ayumi introduced the workshop to Antonina as well. We are so cold from the short hike that hot tea is just what I need. We drink from hand thrown and creatively glazed mugs. As I warm up I take in the details of the space. A large, wooden hutch anchors the far wall that is full of colorful art that serves as her dishes, plates, bowls, mugs, tumblers – Ayumi explained that nearly all were made by friends and colleagues and given to her as gifts. Antonina agrees to take photos Ayumi in her studio while we talk. I am amazed that I have just met Antonina and she is offering so much of her time and help this weekend.

Just off the back is a studio where she has been working all day and explains that we can talk while she continues to finish her work for the day.

She sits down at her table with several pots that have already been thrown. She begins to fashion handles for each one – maybe they will be mugs. I sense that she is at first hesitant about who I am and what my project is. She starts telling me stuff about the workshop and then stops and asks me who will hear what she has to say. I assure her that I will only print what she wants me to and she says that she wants to approve the transcript.

Overall, her main concern is that the workshop is personality driven. I consider this statement and recall Ann saying something similar – Woody too, about the space being organic and changing as the people come in and out. I think that although this can be problematic for an organization, its unavoidable with the current structure of the workshop. Also, I consider how the nature of the space may not be a good fit for everyone, when it does fit, it really fits. [WSW: personality driven, organic]
She is engaged as an art educator and takes a constructivist approach to her teaching, feeling that
she has as much to gain from her students as they do from her. [GC: constructivist approach to
teaching]
She is concerned with art that can function as something that we need. She is sensitive to her bi-
nationality (Japan and U.S.) as she is to her status as woman or even as her status as lesbian.
I consider how Ann, Tana, and Ayumi are lesbians and how they are all sensitive to being
labeled feminist. The label feminist is often misunderstood as being synonymous with lesbian –
they are concerned that this separates them even further from society. [SJ: concerns about labels
and separatism]
6:45p.m. Antonina and I head back over to Ann and Tana’s house for dinner. Susan joins us after
a few minutes. She expresses frustration about her work and process again and Tana talks to her
about this some. We all start reminiscing about our Drawing I classes. We sat around and drank
wine and really had a good time. Dinner was organic, hippie, veggie, very upstate New York to
me. I did my best to wash it down with a little too much wine. Ann starts to pull out her toy
collection as we finish dinner. She introduces each toy with a story of where they got it – usually
a museum store that involved an exhibition and travels. She shows us how each one works. Most
all of them engage you with a trick or movement. We pass these around like small children,
delighted and amused. The house is 1800s and a bit rickety, but really cozy, full of Tana’s art. I
am unable to find any of Ann’s work. I ask her about this and she shrugs it off and says, “oh I
don’t make much work anymore” (even though much of the work by Tana is also more than
twenty years old). [C: Dinner at Ann and Tana’s house, family]
Tana cooked dinner and is the main hostess here – she is a gracious host and we all enjoy
ourselves an hour longer than planned. I make plans to meet with Ann at 9:00am the next
morning for one last visit before heading out to the airport. After goodbye hugs and fastening our
winter wear, we head back to the workshop and intern house. The lack of street lights, coupled
with an unpaved and icy road was just treacherous enough to make a short jaunt three houses
down seem like a dangerous passage. It was a long day. I’m really tired and it will be a longer
day tomorrow traveling home. Back upstairs in the lopsided squeaker of a bed and feeling like a
very spoiled middle class brat. [PL]
Sunday, 8:00a.m. I pull a diet coke out of the mini fridge in the kitchen just as Antonina comes
in and starts to make us coffee. While that’s brewing, I go outdoors with my camera for last
minute pictures. The sun is so shiny with blinding reflection coming off of the snow. The
landscape is breathtaking. [C: landscape]
Back in the intern house, Antonina and I talk privately about the workshop as we drink coffee.
Interesting that we both seem to have similar ideas about the workshop and what could really
make this place take off the way Ann sees it. Antonina asks me to write my impressions about
the workshop for her research for designing their new website. We talk through marketing ideas
but mostly that the workshop is personality driven, that there needs to be another creative
director more involved with the day to day operations and willing to bring in big name artists and
how Ann is the glue that keeps the workshop running. [AW: changes to WSW]
9:00a.m. I go over to the workshop where I find Ann wheeling in two large, black suitcases.
They are full of artist books that she wants to show me. She gives me a couple of brochures that
have many of these books featured. Many of the books have been exhibited and sold at the
National Museum for Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. She pulls out book after book,
each one unique and in contrast to the one before in materials, design, and content. Many are
really stunning. All of the books seem to have some personal connection with an underlying
political comment. We go through these books for about an hour and half, yet this isn’t even enough time. I could have been left there all day to look through the books. I knew some of book arts before this trip, but had not seen so many in one sitting before. [AW: Connection to AW institutions; SJ: political art for social change]

I have made a short list of last minute things for Ann. I pull it out and we start going through the list: informed consent – Ann says no problem, she is completely open and available to me. She seems to have a sense that maybe my writing about the workshop will bring some new attention to her project. I hope that this will be the case, but it is uncertain that I will find myself writing about the stuff that will bring that kind of attention. I know that I need to be sensitive to personality conflicts, yet I fear that this will indeed be the heart of the story. This will be a challenge. I get a t-shirt from Ann and buy two pieces for the chili bowl fiesta the following weekend. They just happen to be two works made by Ayumi. Ann tells me that she only wants to charge me $50 for the transport and the room! I write her a check for $100 and she is happy – still very inexpensive! She is too generous. [$: WSW is $ supportive of my research as a student and offers me practically free housing]

Susan comes in just before we leave for the airport and takes our picture in the upstairs gallery hallway.

Our ride to the airport is quick and without problems. It’s supposed to be nice weather. Ann and I talk some about the town and religion. It definitely seems more of a liberal population and man of the fundamental churches have been transformed into other entities (which makes me think about Ayumi’s house and how that may not be that unusual as I first thought). [C: Rosendale]

Second Visit: January 23-27, 2006
Women’s Studio Workshop, Rosendale, NY

Monday, 3:00p.m. I arrive at the workshop after renting a car and driving in from Albany this time. It is an easier airport for me to find flights and good to have my own set of wheels. When I walk into the workshop Chris and Nita (Anita) welcome me warmly with hugs and hot soup. [PL; C: Family, food]

I hang out at the picnic table for a few minutes and then go walking around in search of Ann. I find her and she greets me with a warm hug. It feels good to be back. She tells me about the interns who just started a few weeks ago are going to be giving us a slide show of their work tonight and then we are all going out to eat at the Egg’s Nest. I’m thrilled to return to that artsy café where I had such a good time nearly one year before. [C: Egg’s Nest]

6:00p.m. Surprise, surprise, but the weather is freezing! I told myself that I wasn’t going to come back here in the winter and here I am! I’m staying at Nita’s house this trip instead of the intern house. It’s cleaner but sparse and I think that she put me in her bedroom, which makes me feel a bit strange. I settle in, get some rest on the futon, which reminds me of the futon that I slept on for most of my college years and for a few after. [PL]

7:00p.m. I head back over to the workshop. Everyone is setting up chairs in the silk screen studio. The slide projector and screen are old and the interns seem to be struggling just a bit to get it working. I’m guessing that these young women don’t have much experience with such equipment that isn’t connected to their laptops. There is an intern slide show each six months when a new group arrives. [$: interns aren’t sure how to work with old equipment]

The show gets underway and the interns talk about their work as they flip through a few slides of their work, some old from high school or college and other more recent work. There is CJ who is a poet with studies in English and Women’s Studies. At 27, she is a bit older than the average 22 year old intern and is conscious of it. Then there is Lindsey who does work in photography and
Maureen is the chili bowl intern and works primarily in ceramics. They are all three noticeably nervous but survive. I wonder about this, since they all had to submit portfolios for acceptance into the program. Yet, I notice that the room is full of harsh critics with direct questions and without superfluous praise. In fact, no one really seems to be making comments about their work. They all three make work that is personal and connected their identity as women and to intimate relationships they have had. [AW: art critique, WS: art connected to being female]

After the show we left for the Egg’s Nest in several cars, there are 10 of us for dinner. We get there and sit down at a grouping of a few tables of varying sizes and heights pushed together, which contributes to the breakdown in communication as a group. Multiple conversations are going on at once and those of us on the edge of these micro groups may be a part of two conversations at any one time (thinking about gumbo yaya). Being the “new” woman to the group among those visiting, I notice that many look up when I am asked questions about my research. I sit next to Ann and Tana and had a good time reconnecting with them. They are the heartbeat of the workshop and a cool couple to be around. Carmen sits on my left. She is from Greece, but is now living with her husband in Buffalo. She teaches photography and is here as an artist-in-residence for 3 ½ weeks. [WS: gumbo yaya conversation; C: food gelling community]

Julie is another artist-in-residence and has just arrived the day before me from Vermont by bus(!). She teaches animation and printmaking at Rutgers University. She is interested in my Southern drawl and I think that she keeps asking me questions about my work just because she wants to listen to me talk. (HA! I find this amusing). However, she isn’t the first person to talk about this. I am quickly labeled as the Texan from Florida, but this trip I’m sure to let everyone know that I’m moving home soon! Many ask me questions about how warm it is in Florida. [PL: region, language, weather]

After dinner we bundle up and I drive back with Nita to her house, which is only about 1 mile from the workshop so I will have easy access back and forth to the workshop. I am however; a bit worried about the icy roads and the most windy, narrow, steep hill you can imagine that leads the way to Nita’s house. We make it up the drive and she makes us both a cup of tea. Hot tea might just be a theme of its own. We sit at the quaint kitchen table and chat about our personal lives for quite awhile and then retire around 11:00pm or so. I asked her about the sleeping arrangements and she tells me that she has set up a sleeping bag in her studio. Ugh, I feel awful that I have displaced her like this, but she insists that she does this all the time for her guests. Ann told me that to stay at Nita’s is $40 per night, so I feel a little better knowing that I’ll be paying her anyway. [PL: comfort level with staying in personal space of woman that I hardly know]

Tuesday, 9:00a.m. I parked over at the workshop and then walked over to meet Tana in her yellow barn studio, which I am very anxious to see. I think most artists only dream of such a huge and special space. [WSW: space, a room of one’s own]

The space is just as I had imagined with large windows, wood floors and beams and space forever. A ping pong table is in the center of the room. There is a computer on a desk on the other side of the room. There are racks of artwork lining the side wall and comfortable sitting area off to the side where we set up to talk. She makes me a cup of hot tea from a kettle that she has plugged in and sits on a small table tops. She is currently on sabbatical from the workshop to complete a body of work funded by a Jackson-Pollock grant. I am impressed with her level of commitment to her work and her achievements. She shows me some of her work which is politically conscious and often personally connected. We talk for about 90 minutes which winds
up being the longest interview of the day and I could have talked to her longer. She has led a fascinating life as an immigrant with parents who survived the holocaust. She seems ok with the notion that the workshop could die out after her and Ann are no longer running things. She recognizes that the workshop is what it is because of the proximity of their home across the street and wonders who could replace that. [AW: Tana functions in AW on big grants, exhibitions, etc.; WSW: future; C: hot tea as community builder]

I notice that Ayumi, the ceramics director from my first visit, is no longer working with the workshop. She had expressed feelings of unhappiness with the workshop, so it was not exactly a surprise that she was no longer there. [C: sometimes difficult to fit in]

Joanna no longer works there either (she worked in the office, I remember how Ann mentioned that she was too focused on cleaning and organizing – but she had some good ideas). Ann said that they just couldn’t pay Joanna anymore and money is an ongoing struggle.

I went to Emanuelle’s grocery, the very small local grocery that Ann had taken me to on the first trip. I bought some pastry which I put on the table as does everyone else with their homemade dishes. Wow, I’m impressed that everyone cooks in this group. [C: local stores and food, food, food!]

Babs is here to meet with me and comes over boldly to introduce herself. She invites me to squeeze onto the bench and sit next to her at the picnic table. She puts me at instant ease. Reggie, the archivist that the WSW has hired is joining the lunch. This isn’t that unusual since Woody is usually present, but he isn’t here today. I find Reggie’s level of discomfort interesting and I watch him throughout the lunch. Of course, since I don’t know Reggie outside of this context I won’t be able to detect if his behavior is different being in an all woman space. But, it does seem that he is struggling to find his way here, physically as he gets food and then decides to sit back from the picnic table (I’m relieved actually that he didn’t try to sit next to me, eating that close to a strange man might have just sent me over the edge...well not literally, but yeah, there would definitely have been a level of discomfort there) and also he struggled with the conversation.

Eating potluck was great. Sitting close on the bench at the picnic table forced you to engage with those around you – the adjustment time usually involved in getting to know a person was reduced to almost no time. Although everyone was so friendly and seemed so comfortable with each other, I notice right away that several people introduce themselves to each other (many people who were not at the dinner the night before) and realize that I’m not the only new girl! 😊 There is so much food and closeness, physically and emotionally in a thirty minute time frame and then, bam – everyone is done and up, cleaning up and getting back to work.

Babs and I go downstairs where we can talk for a bit. We sit in the wide wooden window sill of the front, printmaking studio. This picture of Babs doesn’t feel like the Babs that I met with that day, she was bubbly and eager to tell me whatever I wanted to know. She was great. She showed me several of her drawings and tiles that she has been working on (I put my name on a waiting list for one of these tiles – I also remember that I’ve seen one of these tiles in Nita’s kitchen windowsill). She shows me that she has created the graphics for nearly every poster, flier, or advertisement related to the workshop since the beginning – they are fascinating and tell another tale of the workshop. I interview her for over an hour. She is a special artist and the oldest of the four. I find myself wanting to spend more time talking with her. [GC: between me and Babs]
After we talk, I walk around and assess the goings on in the workshop. Woody is still here with his dog Ramona (always a good sign when a dog is around). Nicole is upstairs in the office showing CJ how to work on files in the office. She is mentoring the interns and a couple of visiting artists.

About 2:00p.m. I wander back down to the printmaking studio where Jessica, another visiting artist, is busy with her printmaking project of coy fish in water. She talks about how the imagery represents female sensuality. She is open and willing to talk to me about her experience and feeling about the workshop and her art.

She is a young artist-in-residence. Actually she is only 23 about the same age as the interns. She is very energetic and committed to her work and has another residency lined up after this one is over. She is staying in the artist apartment on the third floor of the workshop with Carmen.

The archivist (an older guy who joined us at the potluck and who seemed very conscious of his sex) is downstairs sorting through box after box of old articles and materials from the past thirty years. This may not be a good trip to go through that stuff, maybe next trip. I am busy enough actually and feeling good about the response that I’m getting from the artists.

Anita is working hard at her desk writing grants and she is taking extra care with me and helping me organize my time with interviews and meals. I’m very comfortable with her and her hospitality is tremendous, but I feel awful that I’m sleeping in her bed. [WSW: daily activities]

3:30p.m. There is a staff meeting and more hot tea in handmade mugs. In the kitchen I look closely at the art that they use as plates and bowls. [WSW: C: hot tea and space]

The kitchen reminds me of my great grandmother’s with the old sink sans disposal and dishwasher – everything is vintage and fragile. The plumbing is sensitive and works depending on who else is using it at the same time elsewhere in the house. Woody and Ramona are still onsite fixing this and that. She follows him from room to room. [$: Facility]

Just as we are sitting down at the picnic table for the meeting, Chris flies in with a big bag of M&Ms in hand smelling of the cigarette that she finished on her walk back from the market.

Ann, Nita, Chris, Nicole and I sit at the table and munch on the candy while the discussion gets underway. They cover topics such as the chili bowl, the artist-in-residency program and who is coming next, and the details related to the Summer Arts Institute program SAI, including the printing of the brochure and the website postings. [WSW: staff meeting; $; C: Food]

CJ sits at one of the desks in the office revising a mailing list, while Lindsey is working at the computer in the office updating the website. While we are sitting around after the meeting, in walks Ellen. She has come to meet with me. Everyone is thrilled to see her and greet her with hugs.

We go into the silk screen studio and sit down for an interview. She tells me right away that she loves the workshop and when she heard about my project, she said that she had to drive over and talk to me.

Wednesday, 6:30a.m. I wake with an aching hip. Its cold outside which doesn’t help. I’m too young for this?! The shower is hot at first then the plumbing shifts and I hurry through the shampoo part. Again, I am reminded how comfortable and even luxurious my life really is. Nita has coffee and toast for me. I pass on coffee and drink a diet coke instead. I review my prospectus and pictures from the day before. I do some yoga stretches, but still feel stiff and cold.

Morning coffee with Nita…this morning I accept her offer and save the diet coke for later in the day. We talk some about the women’s movement. She says that she attended some of the consciousness-raising group meetings in the 1970s but felt that she didn’t “fit” in and they were dry and boring, just sitting around talking about it. It made more sense to her to actually do
something, which led to her pursuit of a grant. Actually Babs told me about Nita being the one who went out and got a grant that was the seed money for the workshop. Babs said that Nita probably wouldn’t tell me about it since she is so modest, but she wanted to be sure that I knew that. Nita said that she does not identify herself as a feminist because she thinks that there is too much complications associated with the label. When I talked about feminist ideology, she agreed with that and admitted that she was probably a feminist but was scared of the term.

[SJ: issues with feminism; WSW: history]

9:30a.m. I’m over at the workshop. Chris is working at her desk and Anita is working on a grant who is coming in later that day. CJ is a printmaker and poet from Minneapolis. She gives me a basic silk screening lesson as I watch her pressure wash a screen that didn’t come out correct the first time. She tells me about the equipment at the Art Center of Minneapolis and how high tech everything was there and how everything here is makeshift. But, she likes that and says it gives her ideas about how to be creative with the equipment and materials available and how she will be able to set up her studio on a small budget. She is very cheerful about her duties and just happy to be around artists. [$: AW: Intern sees the WSW as an example of how to make it in the art world on a low budget]

Patty comes in a few minutes later. She has been with the workshop since the beginning off and on. She teaches art in the AIE program bi-annually with the local 5th graders and high school classes. She says that is has been 5 ½ years (since her son was “in her belly”) since she has worked on her own art and is actually going back to some drawings and prints that she started from back then, and is finally going to finish them. She laughs as she sees a book on the table that is exactly like the one she brought in herself on Eastern birds (another artist had also used this as a reference). Nature is a recurring theme in many of the artists’ work. She tells me that she is 47 and has shrunk an inch and is having difficulty using the largest screen, which she prefers. She talks about her desire to be an art teacher. She has a BFA but is having some difficulty finding a program where she can obtain the education to proceed as she wants a master’s degree not another bachelor’s degree. She also talks about the challenge she’ll face doing this and juggling her role with the boys.

[SJ: Patty’s Story, involvement with the WSW, eventually returned to school to become art teacher]

10:00a.m. Ann has me copying the archives in the silk screen studio. I did this for about 45 minutes before being pulled away. I will continue with this if I have time after my interview with Nita this afternoon. I still need to schedule an interview with Ann. She is the main character in the play here. I am having dinner at her house Thursday night. I’m really enjoying getting to meet everyone at the workshop. [PL: participation]

Ann enters the office and hands a stack of mail to Nita and says “fan mail!” We all get a laugh out of this and the interns from the kitchen asked, “do we actually get fan mail?” Ann proudly proclaimed, “yes we do!” The interns are prepping another day’s potluck and it is really starting to smell good in here...smells of fresh vegetables and garlic sizzling on the stovetop float through the office and the upstairs studio. There is much laughter and commotion coming from the kitchen as the interns finish preparing lunch for all of us. The potluck is good again today. Everyone has noticed that I brought sweets two days in a row and they are happy about it. No one else does this and I’m wondering why? Most of the food is healthy, organic, and vegetarian. I’ll go by Emanuelles again tomorrow and get some fresh treats. I’ll take something over to Ann and Tana’s house. [C: potluck]
After lunch I met with Nita in the front office. Anita “Nita” is one of the four co-founders. She works four days per week as the grant writer and primary Administrative person.

We had a good conversation, one of the longer interviews – in someways it was more of a dialogue than structured interview. [Methods]

After our meeting, I met Jenny, a volunteer who has come in to help with grant researching. She is a strong presence in the front office and seems to be very happy there helping out. [SJ: Volunteer]

Ann spent most of her day tied up with Reggie, the archivist there on contract. Nicole showed up to get some emails done as her computer at home isn’t working right. She brought her children, Cora and Elias (ages 1 ½ and 2 ½ years). Both of these children spent the first 6 months of their lives in the workshop so Nicole didn’t have to get traditional childcare and/or quit her job. Anita talked about this fondly and what a special gift it was to be around those children even though the office had to make adjustments, they wanted to make that happen for her. [SJ: Nicole’s Story with Elias and Cora]

Babs is here again working in the silk screening studio upstairs. I feel like I really love her already. She is the senior of the four founders at age 73. She shared many personal stories with me about her personal relationships and why she doesn’t have children. We talked about this choice and how the majority of people today still don’t understand that decision. She shared her artistic process with me and photocopied a couple of pages out of her sketch book that had titles, phrases and interesting words about women focusing on themselves instead of on others. I remarked how open and wonderful she has been and she said its because of me and my openness that she is able to be that way. I smiled and had a good feeling in my gut. Anita too has thanked me for coming to the workshop and having interest in telling the story. [GC: me and Babs]

Nicole’s children are extremely bright and sociable. I guess that this partly due to the fact that they grew up at the workshop and Nicole says that they had 7 mothers for the first year of their lives. Although none of the 4 founders have children they have a strong respect and awareness of the importance of mothering and childcare. [SJ: WS: Nicole’s story]

CJ comes in to play with the children. Lindsey continues to work on the website and said that she was at the office until 8:00p.m. last night. MaryBeth, the ceramics supervisor came in. I’ll try to talk to her later. Maureen is downstairs with her making tumblers and chili bowls for the upcoming fundraiser. [$: fundraiser]

The weather is cold. There is snow on the ground but not much wind or precipitation. I’m crossing my fingers that it will stay that way 48 more hours so that I can leave town safely and timely this time (remembering last trip when I was stuck in a blizzard that got me home 30 hours late). I’m trying not to miss the comforts of my own home and family. Feeling happy to be conducting my research but not entirely certain I am cut out for this kind of fieldwork – maybe if I could schedule to come here exclusively in the summer months. I am wondering how I will proceed next time around. [PL: weather, travel]

Downstairs Jessica is print making and I watch as we talk about our childhoods and stories about our grandmothers. She is a happy spirit and willing, maybe even eager to share with me. Her work is joyful with bright blues with red and orange fish.
9:30 p.m. I am back from eating dinner at Ann and Tana’s house. We had crepes with spinach and beef and then crepes with applesauce and yogurt for dessert – very yummy and as usual red wine to wash it down. We have good conversation about our family, religion and the research that I’ve done so far. They are extremely interested in what everyone has to say about the workshop and some of my questions about being female and understanding feminism and who self-identifies as feminist. Also, they are very interested in my work and particularly what I want to do after school. [C: food, GC: sharing personal stories]

Thursday morning: I woke up tired. I was restless and hot all night. I pull myself out of bed and into the kitchen where Nita is making coffee and toast. It doesn’t take me long to become accustomed to her morning routine and look forward to it. We have a good morning conversation. I struggle through another luke warm shower and tell myself that its only one more night and one more shower and I’ll be back to my home base.

This morning when I arrive at the workshop, Ann is in the silk screening studio giving instructions to an artist who is just here for the day (her young daughter is here as well). Reggie is downstairs archiving, although he seems a bit lost in this woman-centered space. He was awkward at the potluck yesterday. He was unsure of himself in conversation (I think about my dad and how comfortable he always seems around me and my sisters and mother, and now stepmother) – he asked me questions about ethnography and my methods. He was curious about the final report and what would become of it. He was shocked (as are many of the artists) that I’ve come so far to conduct my research and then even more shocked to learn that this is a unique space. Carmen walks through the office. She has been working in the darkroom for nearly three weeks now. We make an appointment to talk just after lunch. Sitting here at the picnic table and thinking about how Nita said that they have had this table from the very beginning. Nicole is sitting with CJ at the computer training her on the mailing list and how to proceed for donations. Ann takes a call from a California-based artist, Ricki who is setting up the first prison exhibition of work by women who are mothers and who are incarcerated. She called to ask Ann about insurance concerns for such an event. Ann hangs up and starts to research the issue for her. [WSW: support for women artists]

Maureen comes in and starts to make the potluck. I move over to Nita’s desk – today is her day off. Tonight we are going to the Ulster County high school art opening at 6:30 p.m. I’m going with Nita and Patty (AIE artist/educator for the workshop). Maybe we will go out to eat afterward. Nita said something about walking to the local café – but its so cold outside (am I whining again??). I can hardly bare to walk when the sun is shining let alone in the dark, after the temperature has dropped even more. [C: local kids’ exhibition]

There are yummy smells wafting in from the kitchen. I brought sweet pastry again this morning, which was gone well before the potluck. [C: food, potluck; PL: food ☺]

Susan Amos is the artist who was here last year when I was here. I see her name on the big schedule board in the off notice. She comes every year for one month. She is another married woman who has no children. I ponder this and remember reading how only 8% of child bearing women voluntarily decide not to have children. Wow, are they all here? Well, I do know a handful of women but I mean just a handful. [WS: but most everyone has no children or is planning on having them]

I met with Ann this morning in the front office and taped her interview.
I was struck when she said that she does not think that a woman can be a really great and dedicated artist and be a mother. This is making me think about so many woman artists who I

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have learned about who speak about the challenges that they are faced with juggling motherhood and making art. [AW: expectations to be an artist]

I can hear laughter rolling from the kitchen and the interns seem to be happy about their work and being together. I notice that there is another woman in the front office who I have not met yet. She looks like she just rolled out of bed with hair mussed and sweatshirt on. I was very conscious of the frills attire of most of the women and the freedom not to feel good with no make-up. I have gotten better about this as I’ve gotten older, but I grew up hearing my grandmother say that putting make-up on was “putting her face on the morning…and if I just had time to put my lips on, then I’d put my eyes on later.” Make-up was and is definitely integral to a Texan woman’s beauty regime. However, once here I quickly fall in line and let it all go. Most everyone dresses for functional and not fashion. There is one intern this session who comes into the workshop each day in full make-up, styled hair, and carefully selected clothing. She tells me that she has been so bored (she is single and 22) and is going into the city this weekend for some social activity. She is feeling isolated at the workshop and in Rosendale. [WS: no make-up with functional clothing]

The artists are starting to file in for lunch and talking about their work. Julie went to town to use her computer online, which she needs to complete her animation work. She is having some difficulty accessing her online files. There is a café in town that has wireless connection and good coffee. She tells us that she will be missing the potluck today. [WSW: C: Rosendale remote location]

The picnic bench is full so I sit at the desks with Ann I’m realizing that I don’t really making jottings as suggested by some researchers. Maybe this is because I practice journaling on a regular basis and have a comfort level with the process. I am spending some time after conversations and/or events writing about them. I am also spending time each evening and early morning to recap previous events. [Methods]

Well, it happened. I slipped and fell on the ice! I knew this was going to happen and it did. I do think that this will be my last trip to the workshop in the winter. It’s a bit much for me and I keep thinking that if I were warmer that I wouldn’t be so focused on this weather! I don’t have the right wardrobe for sure. I do admit that that winter white outside is really beautiful and stark. I went outside this morning to take a few outside pictures and the sun’s reflection off of the snow was blinding. Everyone here (just like my last trip) is from the Northeast or Midwest and are acclimated to this weather – they all say that today is nice. They all have proper boots, coats and such. [PL: you guessed it, the weather!]

12:30p.m. Potluck lunch is served. The group is lively today even though Nita and Julie are absent.

There is much discussion and Reggie is really trying to contribute today. He raises his voice over the others to be heard and I find that this offends my sensibility about the space but quickly notice that no one else seems to be really listening to him. I don’t think that this is because he is a man – because they all love Woody and I have seen other men peripherally attached to the workshop who seem to feel comfortable here and with the women here. I think its just a personality thing. He may think that it’s a man/woman thing though. WS: Language with Reggie

Directly after lunch, I go upstairs to the artist’s apartment in the workshop on the third floor to meet with Karmen. She is the only person who does not want to be tape recorded. She says that she feels self-conscious about her accent. But, she is fine with me taking a photograph of her. She offers many great insights from the visiting artist’s perspective. The upstairs apartment is really quite awesome with skylights, a small kitchen and a deck off of the back. Jessica is sharing
the space with her. She comes up while we are talking to have a smoke on the deck. I am having some difficulty with the easy flow of conversation with this interview since I am having to write down all of her answers and maintaining eye contact is not possible. [Methods]
After this interview I go meet Nicole in the front office. She is still working with CJ on the database. We go into the small computer room off the exhibition area. I soon realize that she is not a visual artist. Other than the general questions, this interview turns into something different, more organic and dialogic…more like two girlfriends sitting around talking about how we feel about not wearing make-up and shaving and things like that…and what may or may not be considered feminine, feminist, or womanly and what the difference is.[Methods: interview process] We had a very interesting conversation. She tells me about the exit interviews that she conducts with the interns and she thinks that they gain tremendous experience at the workshop and life altering perspectives through their tenure at the workshop. I ask her about looking at the interviews and she says that they aren’t formal or really even available for reading through, that they are just notes jotted down. I shy away from pushing her on this, since she is clearly overloaded with her work. They are down one staff member due to budget cuts and down one intern who changed her mind after one day. [$: short staffed]
I meet with Chris who is the studio manager. She is a shy, but warm and generous spirit. We go into a side office for some privacy. Chris Petrone, Studio Manager and AIE Educator, Previous Intern Artist, Office Staff: WSW, SJ]
The last evening of my visit we go to the Ulster County High School art exhibition, Ann and Tana went to this also. It was quite the community event held in the community college art gallery. The workshop women recognized many of the students and even recognized their work just by the style of it from when they were at the workshop during one of the Art-in-Education (AIE) sessions. I’m impressed that they came out to this to support the students. The students seem pleased to have them there as well. We mingle for awhile and then go to the Rosendale Café in town. The small café is decorated with art by local artists that they all recognize. The food was good with service slow as molasses, but the conversation was really good. We talked about Patty’s boys and her new Quaker church, very interesting. [C: Ulster County high school art exhibition at the community college and dinner at local arts café afterward]

Third Visit: November 1-5, 2006
Women’s Studio Workshop, Rosendale, NY

Wednesday, 11:18a.m. I am on a plane in Cleveland, Ohio taking off for Albany, New York. I arrive Albany around 12:30p.m. It is beautiful out, very sunny with cool and clean air; a nice fall day. I am so happy to be here before winter has set in. The drive is easy breezy and I go right into Stone Ridge where I stop at the grocery, Emanuelles. I feel like its old hat by now. I like that so much time has gone between each of my visit. I have really been able to see what changes and what stays the same. I arrive at the workshop around 3:00p.m. I walk up the narrow stairs on the side of the building to the front office on the second floor. When I open the door, I am greeted by one of the new interns. Chris sees me from across the room and runs over with open arms. She introduces me to the new interns and artists milling about. I see Nicole at the computer in Ann’s office. We hug hello as well and she tells me how the kids are doing and their recent experience with Halloween. I walk through the space confidently and find Ann downstairs framing prints for the upcoming auction on Saturday. We hug hello and as before, it is so good to see her. I notice a new man on campus right away. [PL: third visit much more relaxed right from the start, C: I feel like I’ve become a transient member of the WSW]
Jeff was hired to help Woody out and he is downstairs painting in the bookmaking studio. The workshop is looking really good. Since my first visit, the exterior has been painted with original 1880s colors and style. They hired a main painter to complete the project and the rest of the labor was volunteers, interns, artists, community volunteers. [SJ: C: History, preservation, volunteers giving time to assist nonprofit org]

Ann tells me that Jeff and Woody have a different work ethic and approach to projects, so they really work on separate projects. She leads me upstairs to the back porch where we find Zoe, the new black Labrador puppy. She is Ann and Tana’s new baby. She is so very sweet and full of energy. Ann tells me that Tana has been away for one month for an artist residency. Everytime I come, Tana is busy with her own work. She is really a strong example of what it looks like to be a full time artist and the level of commitment that it requires. Ann says that it is good for Tana to be out there in the art world to see what is going on. [AW: Tana in the art world doing the artist thing]

This trip, I’m staying in the artist’s apartment on the first floor of the intern house. I’m so pleased because this room has its very own bathroom! 😊 : PL

My comfort level has just reached a new level this trip, coupled with awesome weather – very nice. I am also very relieved to be on the first floor, dragging my suitcase up the old, narrow stairs is always a challenge for me. This room is really big with a front space carved out as an office with a large desk – it is really comfortable in here. [PL]

After I get settled in, Ann and I walk Zoe around the lake we make plans to eat at the Egg’s Nest in town. I’m thrilled to return to that artsy café. I treat since Ann and Tana always have me over for dinner each time I’m in town. I’m disappointed that Tana is not here to join us, but she will be back tomorrow. Ann and I eat burgers and drink coronas at the café and talk about our lives and the workshop. [C: Egg’s Nest, FOOD!]

She tells me that Nicole has put in her two week notice and has only one week left. Ann and the others are upset but they are unable to match the money of Nicole’s new job. Ann thinks that she is making a mistake since it’s a long commute. I mentioned how the workshop was so great with Nicole’s kids and Ann said, “yes!” They were willing to make that sacrifice to help her and to keep Nicole on staff at that time. She mentioned that they probably saved her a lot of money in childcare and traveling to pick them up, etc. [$: Nicole leaving for a higher paying job]

I asked her about the interns that I met the last time I was in town, CJ and Lindsey. They turned out to be not so great according to Ann. CJ was a “know it all” and Lindsey was lazy. I recall what Ann told me in one of the first conversations that we had about the workshop – that they don’t hire interns that are older than thirty because of the type of work the interns are asked to do. I remembered that CJ was in her late twenties and had some very specific ideas about how things should go but not old enough to have humility yet. I can see how this wasn’t a great fit. Also, I remember how Lindsey was much more concerned with her social life than making art in her off time. Previous interns were more dedicated to spending their off time to art making and or visiting art museums and other art events in the community. Ann tells me that the new group of interns is good; Amanda K., Amanda T., and Sandra. They have been here since July and will stay here until December 20. Sandra is the first administrative intern and will be at the workshop until the following June. [WSW; C: Interns who didn’t fit in with WSW]

Ann talks about how she is still considering how to go about finding someone to replace her. She has started to experience burn out. She has been running the workshop for more than thirty years and is ready to do something different. She is unsure about what she wants to do exactly, but is
interested in lecturing, which she already does when she can. She is feeling like she just needs to get out into the world more. [WSW: future; Ann experiencing burnout]

We have lengthy discussions about our pets, her 90 year old mother, and the longevity of people in my family. We drive back after a leisurely dinner.[WS: easy and intimate conversation – language]

7:30p.m. I head back over the intern house where I find all three of the interns hanging out in the living area and eating. Exhausted from the travel and the first day back, I head into bed and read some brain candy before drifting off to sleep. [WS]

Thursday, 6:30a.m. I doze for another 30 minutes or so before waking, showering and heading over to Bodacious Bagles (another place that I go to every trip, not sure if I’ve mentioned this yummy place…ok so I now I’m getting the NY bagel thing and there is ALWAYS fresh smoked salmon and cream cheese). After my bagel stop, I go over to Emanuelles for toilet paper.

I had just about torn the house apart the day before looking for some. When I get back to the house Amanda T. is awake and eating breakfast at the dining table. We talk some about the workshop and how she learned about the workshop online when searching for a residency after graduation. I asked her what she is taking away from this experience. She replied, “the relationships and friendships with the other interns.” They all seem to get along really well and I recall that this is not always the case. Amanda goes on talking about the workshop and her life as an intern, which she says is mostly janitorial but she has learned letter press and may seek out this media once she is finished here and moves to Detroit. She is a sculptor and works mainly with fabrics. Her boyfriend is also an artist based in Detroit. She says that some of the visiting artists have been role models for her regarding their dedication to their work and how they use their time effectively and focused. She is disappointed about the lack of time and energy that she feels for making her own art. Just then, I heard the heat come on again. It is loud in these old houses, it was so loud last night I thought that a small animal was stuck in the pipes or something! [GC: life as intern, role models at WSW]

9:00a.m. I walk over to the workshop and find Anita. She is thrilled that I’m available to help with the setup for the big 30year anniversary auction that is going on Saturday night. She gives me the task of coming up with a way to present 2 lots of wine bottles (6 bottles each). We walk through the studio in search of materials for the job. Finding decent scissors was a challenge as most were dull or missing. She gives me recycled boxes, paper and tape to decorate the boxes. I work downstairs while Amada K. works with Ann on framing artwork for the auction. Woody enters and remembers me. Anita comes running down stairs to tell us that a silent bid came in for the print that was donated by a New York artist who is relatively well-known. The bid is for $2,500 and Ann is ecstatic! She says that this is the highest bid ever. I finally finish decorating the boxes and take them to Anita. [PL: Participate in Auction setup; $: fundraising]

She gives me another task of organizing the art books that have been donated for the auction. I write all of the titles and come up with some estimated retail value for each batch of books. I label each book, tie up the batches with string, and box up to be taken over to the theater for the auction.

12:30p.m. Upstairs it is time for lunch and the interns have prepared the potluck. As before, I brought pastry from Emanuelles and has been eaten by everyone before lunch. The interns have prepared a medley of vegetarian dishes, some are ok but most really strange and foreign to me or just really bland. I recall Ann telling me how the quality of the potluck changes every six months depending on the culinary skill level of the interns. Anyway, I’m fed and can’t complain. The
conversation is slow and intermittent with lapses of awkward quiet pauses. This is dramatically different from the past group! I notice that Anita is the only one of the four founders that is present today and she is the quietest of the group for sure. [C: Potluck]

After lunch, Sandra walks back down to the printmaking studio with me and we get set up for the book lots. I go up to the office later and type the information into the database for her. Then, I quickly look at my own emails which total 79! Yikes, it is hard not having easy access to the internet while I’m here. I am trying not to worry about stuff that is going on at home and other work that waits for me. [PL: travel]

Also, I am focusing on not being homesick, which I guess I am pretty much if I’m away from home. While I’m in the office, a woman walks in to buy two tickets for the auction.

The focus for this trip is participation through volunteering. My interviews this trip will be informal and dialogic rather than sitting down in a formalized way with questions in hand and tape recorder on. I have found that I have learned the most from the organic dialogue that flows between women easily from food to lovers to art to whatever and then back again. Most of the interviews that I conducted in this structured format evolved into something organic with a life of its own. [Methods – interviews]

Tomorrow is the first day of the high school Art-in-Education program from 8:30a.m. to 1p.m. which I will be observing and assisting with as needed. Patty Tyril (I met her last visit) will be directing the program. I can’t get cell phone reception out here which is really making me feel isolated and did I mention that television is practically non-existent. One time I got a glimpse of the evening news when I was at Ann and Tana’s house. However, the trip goes by so fast there really isn’t time for any of that anyway. The next few days are packed full of activity and today went by really quickly. Saturday will be an extra long day. We are meeting that morning around 9a.m. and then going over to the location of the auction and will set up, then run the show, clean up and then head home…probably around 10p.m. I’m guessing and hoping that it won’t be later. It is being held in a new venue this year in Woodstock. I’m wondering how far that is from here. [WSW: AIE; C: AIE; PL: participate through volunteerism]

Babs comes in and recognizes me but isn’t quite sure so I remind her and she greets me warmly. I have to admit that she is my favorite person at the workshop. I’m not sure I can put my finger on it exactly. I just feel a certain kinship with her. She is a free-spirited 74 year old woman with contemporary sensibilities. [GC: Role model]

The weather continues to be manageable. A little brisk and wet this morning but sunny and warmer this afternoon and the leaves are falling off the trees, which always makes me feel good like sloughing off that dead layer of skin or something. Then, I think about my grandmother who says it always makes her think of dying and that it makes her feel depressed.

After getting some more office work done, I head over to the intern house where I practically fall asleep immediately for about 1 ½ hours. I wake up hungry about 5p.m. and write in my journal for sometime before reading some brain candy and falling back asleep. I cherish this quiet night. [PL]

Friday morning 6:30a.m. I wake and prepare for my day with Patty and the high school students participating in the AIE program. I go over to the workshop (its so great to just walk between the house and the workshop). The artists-in-residence, Angela and Emily are here as collaborators on a book project and will be teaching silk screen to the students today. Chris, the studio manager and Amanda T. will teach paper making and Patty and Amanda K. will teach printmaking in the front studio. Patty arrives hastily with a stack of books overflowing from her arms. [C; WSW: AIE]
She is happy to see me and I remind her of when I was there last and a look of deeper recognition crossed her face. She tells me that she has started working toward her M.A. in art education at New Paltz and is excited about teaching AIE at the workshop, which she has done for the past 25 years. She has been organizing the AIE for about two years and admits that she is more nervous about teaching today and I’m surprised and wondering. She says that in previous years she just jumped into the program with kids. Now, she says that she has a different consciousness about curriculum and lesson planning. She asked me to critique her performance afterward. The kids arrive around 8:30a.m. by bus with an assistant art teacher. The art teacher shows up in her personal car a bit later. Patty has all of the students in the printmaking studio as she gives them the theme of their project for the day before they split up into the various studios. She shows them examples of self-portrait from art books which is a bit awkward and difficult to see but the students all respond to the idea of self-portrait. These kids are mostly advanced placement art students and have experimented with self-portrait many times. As soon as the students split off into their respective groups and start working on their projects, they start to come alive talking with one another and with the teachers some. By this time they have all put on their aprons and name tags (including teachers and me), which helps make it more personal between when we can all call each other by our names.

SJ: Patty now in Graduate school working on M.A. – the WSW provided a space for her to be a teacher for 25 years before deciding to become a traditional k-12 art teacher; C/WSW: AIE

Chris has her group going in the papermaking studio. She is giving them a detailed demonstration. She is really a good teacher. [SJ: Chris has become empowered as an artist and educator through her experience at the WSW]

Chris in black apron with green straps, teaching high school students during AIE: C, GC, WSW

I like the way she talks. She seems very much at ease with her students and comfortable in the class. She is so shy by nature and when I was here last time she mentioned how she was so nervous about teaching a summer course. I asked her about this experience and she said it was great! She said that she really loved it; watching her today it is evident that she is at home in the studio and has a natural ability to guide students in the process. I think about some of the things that Chris shared with me about her feelings of insecurity as an artist and teacher and how her experience at the workshop changed all of that for her. The kids are really responsive to Chris. They seem to be enjoying the wet and very messy process. The art teacher is busying herself with papermaking as well.

Angela and Emily also seem to have a good handle on the classroom. They forgot to get the kids to put on name tags but all seems ok in here. Everyone is hard at work using photographs that they brought from home as a point of departure in their self-portraits. The assistant art teacher is also working in here. She is less friendly and unsure of who I am even though I introduced myself to everyone. I visit papermaking and silk screening intermittently throughout the session whenever Patty doesn’t need me, which is most of the time. Other than observing, I spend most of my time walking around and talking with the students about their work. They are open and fun to be around. I enjoy engaging with them. The students are serious and thoughtful about their work. I notice one girl has scars on her arm from cutting, which I recognize because my younger cousin is a cutter. This breaks my heart and I want to reach out but I know that this is inappropriate and talk to her teacher about it instead.

Nicole, Anita, and Sandra are in the upstairs office making last minute preparations for the auction on Saturday. They look tired and ready for it to be over with. They leave later in the day.
for Woodstock where the even will be held. I’m looking forward to seeing the little town, even though I won’t really have a chance to experience it. [§: Auction]

Laura, the high school art teacher asks me about my research and where I’m from. She laughs when I say Texas and replies, “Are there any cool people in Texas? You must be from Austin!” I laugh with her and ask, “how did you know?” She tells me that she is from Kansas and how much she hates the conservative climate there. She is intrigued with my research and that this is my third trip up there. [PL: region, research]

I notice that everyone is dressed sensibly for the studio, no make-up for sure, most of the adult women have short hair, but those of us with long hair have just thrown it up and out of the way. Most of us look like we’ve just rolled out of bed and into the studio, though the energy level is awake and vibrant. It feels non-competitive in the beauty way and I like that. However, the female high school students are fully fashionable and their faces painted for the high school prom. [WS: no make-up, functional clothes]

Upstairs there is an older gray bearded man walking into the office and kitchen. I introduce myself and he tells me that his name is Jerry and he is a local photographer who rents the darkroom on occasion. He tells me that he moved here a few years back and moved into a smaller house that didn’t have room for a darkroom. When he started looking around for a darkroom to rent he was referred to the workshop. He says that he was hesitant at first since he is not a woman, but they told him that they’ll take your money whether you’re a woman or a man. He has been coming here for about 3 years. He puts a Tupperware with cold noodles in the fridge, which is his contribution to the potluck lunch. He tells me that his wife prepared this and that it’s meant to be eaten cold. [C: WS: Man on campus; potluck]

I’m back down in the printmaking studio and Patty is finding the time slipping away from her and decides to stick to dry point since the students seem to be fully engaged and working hard. She is afraid that there may not be enough time for an art critique with the students.

The kids break for lunch and Patty and Amanda and I start to clean the long glass table where the kids have been spreading the oil based ink on their printing boards. We talk about our lives and Patty is shocked to learn about the conservatism alive and well in the South; indeed sexism and racism are prevalent. She cannot believe that the KKK still exists and that people actually fly the confederate flag with pride. She tells me that she has never lived outside of New York state before. She attended an arts magnet high school in Manhattan. She tells me again how she has been with the workshop for 25 years. I say “you’re practically an original member!” She says, “oh yea, I am” and she starts to tell me about working in the studios at the first location where the workshop started. The bookmaking was in a damp basement with a tiny window for natural light and the papermaking in an attic with a slanted ceiling that kept the artists from standing up straight. She laughs and says “it worked!” The kids file back in and quickly get back to their work. Before we know it, the school has called and the bus is on its way. We get everyone to clean up hurriedly. Patty is a bit distressed since we haven’t had a formal critique. Three of the students volunteer to pin up their work and we casually talk about their work. Generally, the kids have produced some nice work. I’m impressed with their stuff. Papermaking is not as easy to see their final outcome and they will need another session to complete their work. The silk screen students have produced some nice work and have worked in a formal critique that led to some emotional discussions about identity and their personal lives and experiences reflected in their self-portraits. [SJ: talk at WSW about race, discrimination and other social concerns]

1:30p.m. The school bus pulls up and the students quickly file into line and out the door. Patty, Amanda K. and I sit around the printmaking studio after a final cleanup talking about the session
and the kids that were there that day. We talk about the Hispanic boy who used Spanish text in his print and how he masked his eyes. He says that Mexican and Hispanic artists make themselves have these huge eyes and he wanted to do the opposite. I later learn from the art teacher, Laura Goradano that he is an illegal from Mexico and lives in constant fear that he will be deported without notice. We talk about the girl who is cutting herself and debate the nature/nurture issue and the fate of children. We go upstairs where the interns are making our lunch. Most everyone is gone to Woodstock in preparation for the auction on Saturday.

[SJ: conversation is socially conscious]

The picnic table is covered with auction materials so we find a space in the silk screening studio to eat. Jerry wanders out of the darkroom to join us. He is a benign presence but a male one nonetheless. We have good conversation but it really is a different sort of experience eating at this huge table with vast amounts of space between us, sitting in chairs without touching, we are very separate and feeling far away from everyone. They inquire about my work some and Patty is so supportive about my writing and direction in art education. The interns tell me about their school and experiences as art students and abroad in Europe. They are definitely ambitious young women and a diverse group which is interesting. They have a lot to offer the workshop.

Ann has already told that they are the best intern group. Later Amanda K. tells me that they have tried to get them to stay for another session and even raised their stipends but it still isn’t enough and both of the Amandas will be leaving, although Sandra will stay for a full year. [C: Potluck]

After lunch Patty and I offer to do the dishes and the interns are overjoyed. Patty and I both have a consciousness that the workshop is kind of grungy and gritty – a real artist’s space for sure! We start to do a deep clean on the oven and stovetop while we talk. We know that they don’t have time for this kind of work and we are glad to do it as we get to know each other better. She tells me about the Quaker group that she joined and how they are excessive about following the health codes in the kitchen there. We laugh about it. We talk about NAEA coming up in March and agree to meet there. I’m happy to have a new friend and cohort in ARE from New York. It will be great to see her in another setting. [WS: Intimate talk with Patty]

After we finish up and we say goodbye, I wander back over to the intern house where I lay down and quickly fall asleep without much effort at all. I wake up about an hour later, now it’s about 5:30p.m. Both of the Amandas are in the living room heating a frozen pizza. They invite me to watch a DVD of old episodes of Friends. I make myself a salad from a packet and sit and watch one episode. This reminds me that we have no television reception here, rarely internet, and no cell…and for these young women, no boys! So, what is there to do? MAKE ART!! ☺

[WSW: isolation in Rosendale]

While we are watching the DVD, Ann calls and invites me over to eat with her and Tana. Glad that I only ate a salad, I grab my coat and walk over to their house. As soon as Tana came home from her retreat, she started cooking right away. Their puppy dog, Zoe greets me at the door. She is super sweet and loves my rubbing her head. We sit in the tiny eat-in kitchen, so quaint and cute. They are in the middle of a huge remodel on this old house, very nice. The small table is pushed up against the wall with 3 chairs just right for us. Tana cooks while Ann busies herself about the house. It’s clear that Ann is exhausted from the month’s preparation for the auction. Tana is also tired but cheerful and talkative about her residency. [C: food, dinner at Ann and Tana’s, relaxed evening with good food, rich conversation, and good connections]

She was at Blue Mountain in the Adirondacks. The retreat is funded by a man who was born into tons of money but chose his own path as a writer rather than his expected place of succession in the family business. He is the founder of the political magazine, Mother Jones. He is located in
California and is really hands off with the retreat. Tana says that she is impressed with how warmly everyone is greeted and says that she wishes she was more that way with the workshop interns and visiting artists. She says that getting away is hard because she is away from home and sharing a bath is awkward and a studio is distracting (she has a huge dream studio in the old yellow barn next door). I am thinking about myself while she is talking. In many ways, Tana and I are so much alike. She talks about the writers-in-residence who were at Blue Mountain with her. Tana was impressed with one gentleman in particular, an 80-something African American man who wrote a book about his experience in World War II and how the African American military were mistreated even though they were fighting alongside the other soldiers. She said that there were music composers as well as visual and literary artists. The on-site manager ate dinner with the residents every night and cooks were there to make elaborate breakfasts each morning. The conversation turns to me and what I’ve been doing since the big move to Austin.

Tana asks me, “don’t you want children?” Immediately, I wonder why a woman who has chosen not to raise children would ask me that question. I reply with a question, “Why don’t you have children?” Ann laughs, “that’s good, turn it around on her!” Tana tells me that she is selfish about her work and time. I tell her that is primarily my reason for not having them either. She seems surprised to hear this and I wonder if this is linked to my married, heterosexual status, and age (still child bearing age). [PL: the kid question again, keeps coming up again and again]

Tana serves our plates with chicken, wild rice, and stir fry veggies. For dessert we have a ginger apple tart and ice cream, yum! I am thinking that I have been writing a lot about food during my visits. I’m impressed again with Tana’s ease in the kitchen and her culinary expertise after a long drive home from being away for one month. Ann starts talking about how she is burned out and doesn’t feel qualified to the Executive Director any longer. Tana says that her time away is critical to her ability to focus on her own work. She says that the house, Zoe, and the workshop are too distracting. Each time I have been at the workshop Tana is involved in off-campus activity and has not been involved with the workshop even though she is the Creative Director. I’m not sure what the title means as is. I think that this is a cursory title. Maybe she was more involved in the beginning. It is reasonable that both Ann and Tana would be burned out after thirty years of living and breathing the workshop. They always host me in their home, so how many others have been hosted there? [AW: Tana out in the art world, but not available to the WSW?]

8:30p.m. I get sleepy and find myself yawning after Tana, which signals the end of the evening. I get up and walk back over to the intern house, which is short but it has gotten really cold and its super dark, must be a new moon. As I walk past the workshop, I see that the lights are on and guess that Angela and Emily are up working on their project late. Then I pass the house between the workshop and the intern house and hear a strange noise in the bushes and pick up the pace a bit. I see lights on at the intern house and breathe a sigh of relief. I open the door to find a warm room with Amanda K. watching a DVD, surfing the internet (what? We do have it here???? Ok just in the kitchen, but this is good to know), and burning CDs. She is worried about Sandra, who hasn’t made it back yet from Woodstock. She is sensitive to her friend’s long hours and has made her oatmeal chocolate chip cookies. She offers me some and I take one with me. Yummy, hmmm food again ☺ [WSW: space; C: food and intimate connections]

I’m relieved that there is a large fan in my room, which provides my beloved white noise and drowns out the activity in the next room. I always retire the earliest and I am the first to rise each morning as well. I think about what a night owl and late sleeper I used to be. The interns made space for me in the fridge where I keep a supply of diet cokes and apples and chocolate pop tarts.
After finishing my novel I read some historical slave narratives that I found in the intern house bookshelves before drifting off to sleep with a dose of Tylenol PM. The dry heat is a killer and keeps me restless – I open a window, which helps but keeps the temperature unbalanced. Am I whining again? [PL: in the field]

Saturday, 8:00a.m. I wake slowly and feel achy all over. I head over to the workshop and find Anita frantically gathering materials and trying to prepare the name tags for board members and the workshop staff. She tells me that I’ll be working in the kitchen during the auction instead of up front and that the wine display that I worked on for her didn’t look right so she was sorry that I wasted my time. I try not to show my frustration with this – as I was following her instructions. Oh well. We drive over to Woodstock, which is about a 30 minute drive and talk about her dad and my grandmother and their similar circumstances and how they have been able to/or sometimes not, adapt to being single and alone as their physical capabilities are changing. She also tells me that she is a nervous wreck and has been meditating all morning about how things will go at the auction. Her stress level observably continues to rise until after the auction is complete and we have packed up to go home. [PL: Participate as volunteer in auction]

We are the first to arrive at the small theater music venue in Woodstock and unload the few things from her car. She wants to start moving things around but there doesn’t seem to be much of a plan for the design/layout or how things will proceed. I’m relieved when Ann gets there and has a calmer head and the ability to direct and make decisions. Anita can’t seem to do much of that at all. We sit down and eat around 1p.m. and I ask Anita how she’s doing and she said not good but therapy will help. We are all getting a bit frustrated that the interns have not yet arrived – they were supposed to be there several hours earlier. Pamela, a board member is there helping and Nicole arrives (this will be her last big workshop event before starting her new job). Ann, Anita, Lisa, bar manager and I move furniture around the room. Lisa is a UT graduate and from Dallas (she graduated from my high school’s rival one year ahead of me) we are thrilled and talk about this off and on throughout the night. [WSW: organizational chaos prior to Ann’s arrival]

The day is long and several people have different ideas about what to do. I keep my cool and try not to lead anything (which totally goes against my instincts). I just do as I’m told.

The band shows up for sound check and some rehearsing. The interns finally show up and we get down to the last minute details of the auction. Everyone changes into nicer/hostess clothes. This is the first time that I see some of them wearing fashionable clothing, jewelry and even a little make-up. [WS: change in make-up and dress for off-campus event]

Nicole and I talk about how “pretty” everyone looks. She tells me that she has often thought about what I told her about my grandmother saying that you don’t have your face “on” if you aren’t wearing your make-up.

The bartender shows up and opens the full bar for the silent auction portion of the evening. The live auction room is set up from the day before. Laura, the high school art teacher is here and asks about the display before going into the auditorium to look. Anita tells her to go ahead and change it if she thinks that it needs to be different but they worked on it for two hours the night before. I can feel the tension in her tone. I’m feeling relieved that I’m not staying in her house this trip. She has too much to deal with to be bumped from her bed this go around.

Last minute details are attended to. Tana arrives just around 5:00p.m. with the food which is plentiful. Chris is in the kitchen warming and preparing the food. She is doing a good job at orchestrating the process and keeping the kitchen help and servers in line. I have flashes back to my café and actually enjoy the evening rather than melting down. Sue (Woody’s girlfriend) is in the kitchen. I had heard about her but had not met her yet. She is very friendly. She is also
brushing her hair which makes me cringe and think about health codes. [SJ: Chris showing leadership]

People begin to arrive and place bids on the silent auction items. A few people ask me about the process. I chuckle to myself as I know the answers and Anita had said that volunteers (including me) wouldn’t have nametags so that people wouldn’t ask them questions that they won’t have answers to. I bid on some things myself. I wander in and out of the kitchen until the food service is done to help Chris, although she insisted that she had everything under control. I still wanted to help her out. She was only scheduled to run the kitchen for an hour, but stayed in there the entire time. She said that she felt more comfortable hidden away from the crowd. Her mother and soon to be step father came to the auction and come back to the kitchen to see Chris and wish her luck. Her mom is very supportive. Chris is precious. She is one of the sweetest people I have ever met. She is always so tired looking and reeking of cigarette smoke and cupping a Styrofoam of hot coffee with a handmade scarf wrapped around her neck.

Soon the silent auction room is filled with people to the point that it was impossible to navigate the room without touching many strangers along the way. I wind up losing the bid on a couple of items, because I cannot reach the bidder sheet to rebid before the auction closes.

7:45p.m. The last silent bid closes and I’m crushed to have lost the bid on Bab’s tile that I had my eye on all night. Undoubtedly, Babs is my favorite artist at the workshop. She is such a vital spirit that floats in and out of the workshop. She shows up tonight in all black, top, skirt, tights, and boots with a sassy bob haircut and stunning make-up. She says that I look like a real Texas cow girl tonight and cute in my denim, boots, and rhinestones – HA! This makes me smile. We share a martini later in the evening and I admit to her that I want to be like her when I grow up. I ask her to make me a tile and she says yes! I hope that happens. Her life and work inspires my soul. [GC: Babs and me]

I won some hand dyed placemats and an art book on Matta and Matta-Clark. The live auction begins and the bidding is slow but warms up as they go along. I stand along the wall and Chris comes up and asks me to take pictures as I can. Jeff the workshop painter comes over and talks to me while we stand. He is intrigued with my story and my time in Florida. He lived in Florida for many years before coming home to take care of his mother. He says that Ann has promised him two years of work at the workshop, intern house, her house, and the barn studio. He is overwhelmed by the number of people who filter through the workshop and said that he met an artist from Australia. Ann said that a Japanese Canadian artist just left a few days prior to my visit. [PL: Regional discussion with Jeff about Florida and the South]

I have the opportunity to see Ellen, although we really didn’t have a chance to talk. She was there with her new husband. I talked extensively with Chris and Nicole about stuff we had talked about previously and what’s happening now. I met Woody’s girlfriend and talked with her about her art making and her involvement with the workshop. She had some concerns that Woody had not yet married her and that she wouldn’t have any financial support if something happened to him. [WS: intimate talk]

The auction closes and then it’s another hour or so to check people out and then to clean up. We load up the cars and all head home. The air is cold and many of the group are excited that it might snow soon…oh no, is all I can think, just one more night to get me home. I drive home with Anita and she has finally started to relax. She tells me about the ceramics program after I inquire. She says that it is sporadically active and I mentioned my discussion with Ayumi who was the ceramics director during my first visit. Anita says that she doesn’t know why Ayumi didn’t get along with Ann and Tana – but Anita thinks that the workshop in general doesn’t
respect ceramics the same as photography and printmaking. I mention that Mary Beth, who is the current ceramics director, has not had a chance to meet with me – she never seems to be around. Anita says that ceramics is the stepchild of the workshop. I definitely get the impression that Ann and Tana are critical of much of the work that comes through there and seem to be the toughest critics of the workshop. [AW: Ceramics the step child of the workshop]

My impressions this trip about being an all woman space have changes some. It is definitely convenient for all of the interns and artists to be all women relating to the living quarters and even bonding with each other (or sometimes not) but related to being an artist – I don’t think that being an all woman space in this instance affects whether the environment is more or less nurturing to a woman’s creativity. [WS: conflicts and not always nurturing]

When I get back to my room the clock says its midnight! Wow, a 14 hour day. The interns and Anita are gracious about my help. I pass out shortly after my head hits the pillow.

Sunday, 8:00a.m. I wake and cannot go back to sleep. I shower, pack, and attend to writing my field notes and impressions from the night before. I take a few more pictures of the intern house and head into town for a diet coke, since I ran out the day before. After writing for sometime, Amanda T. knocks on my door to tell me that Ann and Tana want to take us all out for breakfast. We load up in two cars and head over to the Hillside Café, this is a new place for me. The breakfast was great and a nice treat for us from Ann and Tana to say thank you for the work we did the day before. [C: food]

They tell us that the auction made $24,000 for the workshop, which is about what they make each year. Tana is disappointed that they didn’t reach $30,000. [$: Auction results]

As we sit and are eating has slowed down some, Sandra tells me that she is interested in the Library Science/Special Collections program at UT. I invite her to stay with me if she comes down to check it out. [GC: me and Sandra]

She tells me that her parents miss her and that they have been displaced from their rental home of 12 years and are trying to rent a place with 3 bedrooms so she would have to share with her sister for the first time. The Amandas also seem to be from lower income households as well. Maybe this allows them to be comfortable with the sparse conditions of the intern house and studios. We all talk about our impressions of the auction. Generally everyone has good feelings with some constructive criticism. I had a great time after the work was done and enjoyed meeting so many people – it was a full house for sure! The artists-in-residence seem somewhat disconnected from the other workshop staff this session.

They don’t make it to the auction because their car broke down and some other convoluted reason – but it seems that they are not interested in participation.

Back at the workshop after breakfast, Patty is preparing the AIE student’s portfolio pages. Its good to see her smiling face and we recap the previous evening’s events. Patty and I talk about high school reunions, dyeing hair, and her experience in an art magnet high school in NYC. [WS: intimate talk]

She tells me that Laura, the art teacher isn’t happy with the work that the students did in the silk screening studio last Friday with Angela and Emily. Apparently, they didn’t cover the techniques as they should have. I’m curious about this since the assistant art teacher was in there, but she was really quiet and maybe wasn’t familiar enough with silk screen to step in. Patty is anxious about talking to Angela and Emily about this but knows that she needs to. Just about then, Angela comes down from the artist’s 3rd floor apartment and I exit so that they can talk privately. Later, Patty and I make plans to meet at NAFA. I pack up the car and head for Albany feeling good. [GC: Patty mentoring artists]
Travel home was timely and smooth. Flying home I am feeling good about my research and the emergent themes and how those were validated through my visits. Although I also feel like more time could be spent and I find myself wanting to know more! I recognize that this research is just scratching the surface. [Methods: Limitations]

Since my last visit, I have had several phone conversations with Babs about stuff like her crazy male artist friend who lives in Houston and who doesn’t validate her work. We talked about the weather, what we are each working on and what we each want to do next. We talked about an exhibition that she is in, along with Tana and several other artists. She is frustrated that she did not assert herself the way that Tana did regarding the art submission for the group show. Instead, she feels manipulated and forced to make what they want her too. [AW]

Follow emails from Ann telling me about how the WSW is adjusting without Nicole; they have hired 2 staff people to fill her shoes. She also reported her mother turned 90 years old and told me about Woody and Jeff being absent from the WSW due to serious health issues. Babs told me that Ellen graduated with her MFA. Sandra has taken a full time admin job with the WSW, which will start after her internship ends June 2007.
APPENDIX D

THEMATIC CODE CHART

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APPENDIX E

WOMEN'S STUDIO WORKSHOP: Select Publications and Brochures
The Binnewater Tides
Volume 8 No. 3 of 1991
Artists’ Book Catalog Edition

IN THIS ISSUE

WSW
Women’s Studio Workshop was founded in 1974 by a group of artists looking for an alternative to the art world as they knew it. What they created was an alternative for themselves, for other artists and for the community at large. Today, Women’s Studio Workshop is an artist-run open community arts center for women and girls with programs open to everyone. Located in Rosendale, New York, it is a unique blend of art and education that encourages learning in a nurturing environment. The Workshop has fully equipped studios in printmaking, silkscreen, photography, and papermaking.

The WSW provides a place for women to come together to learn and work. We think that something special happens when a space is run by women. (As you may know, men are welcome, but our primary goal is to serve the community of women artists.) The Women’s Studio Workshop has offered a number of workshops, seminars, and programs for women artists, including a limited edition printmaking workshop, a limited edition silkscreen workshop, and a limited edition photography workshop.

INTERVIEW
Linda Montano/Karen Finley

ARTISTS’ BOOKS
1991 Catalog

BORDER BOOK
Tale of the Tail Tools
Nancy Chaker/Tanya Noguchi

ORDERING INFORMATION—ARTISTS BOOK CATALOG
Our minimum order is $15. We package each order with personal care, and our minimum shipping and handling charge is $5. Shipping and handling for orders under $50 and $100 to 99% of $100 and over is $5. On orders under $50 and $100 to 99% of $100 and over is $5. All orders must be prepaid. UPS cannot deliver to post office boxes. All orders are shipped via UPS unless otherwise noted.

Signature

TIDES SUBSCRIPTION

Women’s Studio Workshop is funded by the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, the State of New York, and memberships.
The Binnewater Tides

Volume 8 No. 2  Spring 1991

IN THIS ISSUE

PUBLIC DISCOURSE:
WARES, NEWs and GULFs
CONNECTIONs
Beth Haber

INTERVIEWS
Andrea Freule Loevenstein
Sarah Schulman
Linda Montano
Mary Beth Edelson

WRITERS' RITES
Thulani Davis
Jean Larkin
Carol Maro

[Image of a figure with stripes and a helmet, and a quote from Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter: "SOME ARE NOW WORTHY"]
A HISTORY OF BINNEWATER IN THE CEMENT MINING TIMES

by Frances Marion Platt

Published by Women's Studio Workshop
Women's Studio Workshop

Spring Exhibitions 2005

Dahlia Elsayed
January 14 - March 6

Maureen Cummins
February 11 - March 6

Heidi Neilson
March 11 - April 3

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REFERENCES


Hallmark, K. (2000). Where are all the women in museums?: A comparative look at the representation of women in museums 20th century collections and higher administration. In T. M. Brewer (Ed.), Forum III (Florida Art Education Association), 3(1), 24-35.


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kara Kelley Hallmark earned a B.F.A. in Art History from Southern Methodist University, and a M.A. in Art Education and a Graduate Certificate in Gender Studies from the University of Central Florida prior to her doctoral studies at Florida State University in the Art Education Department. Ms. Hallmark also completed the requirements for a minor in Women’s Studies at Florida State University. Ms. Hallmark co-wrote with Dr. Kristin G. Congdon several artist reference books for Greenwood Press, including *Artists from Latin American Cultures* (2002), *Twentieth Century U.S. Photographers: An Educational Resource* (at press, est. December 2007), and *Twentieth Century U.S. Folk Artists: A Two Volume Resource* (under contract). Ms. Hallmark’s first solo effort for Greenwood Press, *Encyclopedia of Asian American Artists*, was released in April 2007. Other publications include papers published by the Florida State University Hardee Center for Leadership and Ethics in Education Department and in the Florida Art Education Association’s *Forum*. As a master’s student Ms. Hallmark was the managing editor for a desktop publication written by art history students in conjunction with the House of Blues, which was later sold to the Florida Folklife Association for statewide distribution. Additionally, Ms. Hallmark has presented scholarly research at both state and national conferences on several occasions. Today, Ms. Hallmark lives in Austin and is an art teacher at Union Hill Elementary in Round Rock, Texas.