Melvin Paul Lader (1947-2005): CRSA member and Newsletter editor

Scott Ferris

I was informed about Mel Lader’s passing by fellow CRSA colleague Ellen Landau. To say the least, I was surprised. I remember Mel as a vibrant, friendly, helpful individual, someone who could easily have outlived me.

I do not recall now when I first met Mel. Perhaps it was at the Baltimore summer antiques show, where I was set up. Mel and his wife Roberta were avid collectors of glass, and members of the Early American Pattern Glass Society; and the historic flasks that we carry (my family’s antiques business), lured them into our booth. Or we may have met at a CRSA gathering.

When I was contemplating Nancy Mathews’s call for an editor for the Newsletter (the present day CRSA Forum) Mel had been the most recent editor so I sought his expertise on the subject. We met for lunch outside the convention center in Philadelphia, where the annual (2002, I believe) CAA conference was being held. As

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Prophet, Charlatan or Mensch?

In search of the true value of Barnett Newman’s work

David Anfam


Who was Barnett Newman?

To some, he was the prophet of a whole new mode of severe abstraction, including Minimalism and its extended family. To others, Newman represented a virtual charlatan of Abstract Expressionism who talked his way into making much from very little art. Altogether differently, he seemed to epitomize the New York Jewish intellectual: a spry figure whom one might have met on the Upper West Side, arguing his feisty anarchist politics amid Deutscherites, Stakhovanites and sundry other exotic left-wingers. The advent of Barnett

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Robert Breitmore and the Troubling of Art History

Robin Held

Performance art and its documentation trouble art history.

I am currently writing Roberta Breitmore: A Catalogue Raisonné and Interpretive Study on Lynn Hershman Leeson’s Performative Artwork, Roberta Breitmore. Below, I discuss some of the challenges that this artwork presents to art historical methodologies and foundational assumptions, regarding artworks, artist-subjects and viewers.

The Artist

The art of Lynn Hershman Leeson multiplies and refracts fictional identities to the point of exploding any stable notion of self. Her remarkable body of work, produced over more than thirty-five years, provides an artistic mirror for understanding our fragmented sense of subjectivity at the beginning of the 21st century.

The artist’s project of self-analysis and self-mythification has been expressed prolifically across mediums including drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, performance art, robotics, digital art, video, film, literature, and sculpture.

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From the President
Nancy Mowll Mathews

Farewell—and thank you to Scott!

As you know, this is Scott Ferris’s last issue of the CRSA Forum as editor. In the past four years, he has brought the journal out of hiatus and made it into a round-table for the discussion of issues of interest to catalogue raisonné scholars. The publication had been part of the CRSA since its founding in 1994 and continued until 1999 when the previous editor, the late Mel Lader, reluctantly resigned. It wasn’t until 2002 that Scott bravely volunteered to resuscitate it, taking on the thankless tasks of soliciting articles, struggling with software, and keeping on top of the ever-changing members’ list.

Throughout he has been the conscience of the organization. His insistence on addressing difficult questions such as compensation for scholarly opinions and the scholar’s relationship to the art market has helped many of us improve our working methods. In recent months, he has spearheaded the discussions about CRSA fund raising and the possibility of incorporating CRSA as a tax-exempt association. His no-holds-barred approach to whatever issue he takes on has goaded us to do more and do it better. His own willingness to put time and energy into this organization has made him a leader by example. Although Scott will no longer edit the journal, he will no doubt continue to be an active member of CRSA and have a strong voice in our future.

Let us now welcome the new editor of the CRSA Forum, Eileen Costello, who responded to Scott’s call for a replacement. Eileen’s voice and hand have already been at work in the last two journals. Eileen is finishing her Ph.D. at the University of Texas and working on the catalogues raisonné of contemporary artists Peter Cain and Brice Marden, as an independent scholar with the Matthew Marks Gallery. She will bring the perspective of someone working on recent and living artists. We will hear more from Eileen on these issues during the CRSA session (February 24 at 5:30 pm) at the annual College Art Association conference in Boston. She is speaking in the panel organized by Steven Manford titled “The Living Artist & the Catalogue Raisonné” along with independent scholar Petrus Schaessberg. For those who are planning to attend the CRSA session this year, we will follow the panel with a business meeting to discuss the pros and cons of incorporating as a tax-exempt organization. Please join us!

Prophet, Charlatan or Mensch?

Newman: A Catalogue Raisonné means that the artist’s entire oeuvre can now be weighed against such stereotypes and myths.

The book is a magisterial tome in the lineage—I should perhaps hasten to add—of my catalogue raisonné of Mark Rothko’s paintings. Its production values are arguably even finer, with heavier paper and larger type (though not images reproduced to scale). Fortunately, the three authors faced, in key respects, an arguably easier task than mine. Newman’s output was a fraction of the size of Rothko’s, his devoted widow Annalise kept an extensive archive and the artist’s Foundation has admirably chaperoned the publication’s progress. While Newman’s use of all-encompassing color and apparent simplicity defy reproduction, the present ones could not be better.

The catalogue proper, compiled by Heidi Colson-Freyberger, merits similar superlatives: its entries uphold the most impeccable scholarship. Richard Shift’s introductory essay also adds valuable research to the Newman literature. Some scholars believe such interpretive texts have no place alongside a catalogue raisonné. This notion is based upon a dubious premise that would restrict the discipline solely to putative facts.

On the contrary, the very project of determining what precisely the “facts” are is of course an interpretative endeavor (Passavant’s 1839 catalogue of Raphael set the parameters by including a critical bibliographical essay) and, in my opinion, authors have an obligation to set forth their “reasoning.” Here a concern arises insofar as Yve-Alain Bois had evidently begun the catalogue raisonné. Prof. Bois’s ongoing magnum opus on Newman should therefore ultimately supplement this publication. Secondly, Carol Manuciu-Ungaro illuminates Newman’s technical methods, despite scant mention of the delicate issues surrounding restoration of his canvases. The more monolithic the image, the more sensitive it proves to other hands—whether moved by accident or design. At least one composition, Be / f (1949), suffered irrecoverable damage during Newman’s lifetime. Likewise, Who’s Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue III (1967-68) was posthumously vandalized; its restoration prompted controversy about whether the original’s factura had somehow been lost.

Indeed, surveying this catalogue overall arouses mixed feelings of grandeur and poignancy. Newman aspired to an Old Testament tenor of sublimity. Various masterpieces throughout these pages recast for the modern world that solemn, awe-struck intensity of yore—the electrifying command that The Wild (1950), with its razor’s edge of vertical redness, exerts upon the viewer; the hypnotism of the midnight blue abyss of L’Errance (1953) (see page 22); and the breathtaking sheerness, in every sense of the word, to Voice of Fire (1967). They are latter day epics of perceptual experience and creative risk-taking. However, the great pictorial campaign at other moments feels vulnerable, dangerously close to pasteboard derring-do, as if mere paint on canvas could never support so vast an edifice of presumed meanings and emotions. Doubtless Newman, too, was mindful of the reciprocal peaks and pitfalls of his aesthetic odyssey. He had the chutzpah it demanded.

Barnett Newman: A Catalogue Raisonné fulfills its goals, and possibly more besides. Here is a corpus that has exerted a profound impact on art in the late twentieth century and beyond, Mutatis mutandis, it comprises scarcely 120 canvases, a similar number of works on paper and a handful of sculptures. For the Newman specialist there is scarcely an unfamiliar item here, nor an idea that cannot be found in, say, the Jewish Bible (with its themes of chaos, covenant and metaphysical unity—the Shema’s “the Lord is One”), American Transcendentalism (telingly, Emerson’s poem, “Uriel”, is also the title of a major Newman) or such philosophers as Kierkegaard and Heidegger (who, like Newman, rooted being in time, spirituality and primal language). Nevertheless, Newman wrung true artistic originality from the past and his example—like a declaration of independence—will continue to rivet future generations.

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This review originally appeared in the September 2005 issue of the Art Newspaper
Mel Lader
Continued

I queried him I soon discovered that Mel didn't have much to offer on the topic, in a descriptive sort of way that is—there was no job description for the post. Moreover, what I recall from our exchange was his kindness and encouragement; that is what made me decide to give the task a shot. At his offering, I returned to him with minor questions long after that sunny, park-side chat.

Most of what I know about Mel comes from two obituaries that I found online—one from the Washington Post, another from The Citizen (an Auburn and Skaneateles, NY area newspaper, local to Mel's family). Thanks to David Anfam, who provided me with the Lader's contact information, I was able to speak with Mel's widow, Roberta Cole Lader, about the obituary, and obtain the photograph that illustrates this piece.

Mel was a native of the Finger Lakes community of Auburn, NY. He studied at the State University of New York at Albany, receiving a bachelor's in Classics in 1969 and a master's in art history (with a thesis on Arshile Gorky) in 1972. By 1981 he had earned a Ph.D. in art history—majoring in modern art with an emphasis in 20th century American painting and sculpture—from the University of Delaware. He began teaching at the University of Delaware in 1976 but moved on to George Washington University in 1978, where he was promoted to a full professorship in art history in 1989.

As we know, Mel researched and wrote extensively on Arshile Gorky (1904-1948); he was working on the CR of Gorky's drawings. One of his most recent projects was serving as curator and co-author of the exhibition and catalogue, Arshile Gorky: A Retrospective of Drawings, which was held at the Whitney Museum in 2003. He was also well known for his broad knowledge of the Abstract Expressionist artists, and more specifically, the work of Charles Seliger (1926-).

One thing in the Washington Post obituary that caught my eye was the mention of Mel's membership in the CRSA. Also mentioned was his association with the CAA, the Association of Historians of American Art and the Archives of American Art, but nothing made me feel prouder than to know what the CRSA must have meant to him (it validated my small contribution to keeping the association going).

Mel's and Roberta's enthusiasm for history—familial as well as art and social—was reflected in their willingness to share their knowledge of genealogy with the visitors to the family history center in Springfield, VA. Mel died of congestive heart failure on 16 November at his home in Fairfax County, Virginia. In addition to Roberta, Mel's survivors include their two sons—Matthew and Christopher—and his three sisters.

Memories of Mel

David Anfam

Although Washington DC is rarely renowned for its probity, Mel always distinguished himself there as both a scholar of unimpeachable integrity and as a warmly responsive human being.

Ellen Landau

I met Mel Lader in graduate school at the University of Delaware. We finished at the same time and both marched for our diplomas on the same day in June 1981. Since that time we had kept in touch as colleagues and friends. Although CAA was sometimes the only opportunity to see each other, our common interests as scholars and parents kept us close. I admired Mel's work on Peggy Guggenheim, Howard Putzel and Gorky, and we shared interviews each of us had done that would be of mutual interest to our respective topics.

In the eighties both of us were fortunate to have the support of the late Richard Martin, editor of Arts Magazine. Richard especially supported younger scholars of Abstract Expressionism: Mel and I are only two of the many authors now prominent in the field to whom Richard gave a start.

No one working on Ab Ex would be able to write on Guggenheim or Gorky without referencing Mel's meticulous research and insights. His acumen has, thankfully, been validated by his involvement in major and highly acclaimed (as well as beautiful) exhibitions at the Guggenheim and the Whitney on these two figures respectively.

I know that Mel was very pleased that, after years of hard work on Gorky's drawings, he was about to embark on a catalogue raisonné of the artist's works on paper under the auspices of the Gorky family.

Although Mel confided in me a little more than a decade ago that he had been diagnosed with congestive heart failure, he seemed to have his health problems under control and I, like everyone else, was stunned to hear he had passed away. In addition to being a heart-breaking loss for his family, the passing of Mel Lader is a loss to all of us who work in the modernist field.

Mel Lader
1947-2006
Editor’s Notes

In lieu of a traditional “Editor’s Notes” (due to the fact that I have one foot out the door on a business trip), I will cram in a few miscellaneous notes.

Following Gail Levin’s advice, I sent emails to Barbara Lynes and Roberta Tarbell for their recollections on the history of the CRSA. Since I heard nothing from either one of them with my first request I am hopeful that they will enlighten us with their recollections in upcoming issues of the “Forum.”

I am also hopeful that our new editor, Eileen Costello, will continue to print members comments and ideas on topics such as those that have been discussed in this and the Summer 2005 issue of the Forum. Many, many thanks to Eileen for providing continuity to our voice.

It was my pleasure, as well as my frustration (I’ve never hidden my thoughts for propriety sake) to serve as editor of the Forum, and to help stimulate the discussions on association structure and perpetuity.

As Mr. Murrow would say: “Good night and good luck.”

Scott R. Ferris

CRSA: Organizational Structure and Funding

During the late autumn of last year a fairly lengthy, and sometimes heated discussion occurred via emails and the CRSA listserve on the topics of organizational structure and operational funding. Below are two offerings on these topics: 1) Notes taken by Eileen Costello, and edited by participants of the 12/21/05 informal gathering (held at the Luce Foundation), on a variety of issues related to the CRSA; 2) A lawyer’s fellow member Barbara Hoffman review of our discussions, and a clarification of the more salient points that have been raised. To begin with, I offer a brief history of the CRSA to help put things in perspective.

A Brief History of the CRSA
Scott R. Ferris

The concept of the Catalogue Raisonné Scholars Association was born of an enthusiastic response to a CR session initiated and co-chaired by Gail Levin, at the 1993 CAA Annual Meeting in Seattle. According to Gail, in a recent e-mail to me: “I had the idea after I chaired a CAA panel on the CR. When I met Barbara Lynes at Beinecke Library at Yale, I had a fellowship to work on Hartley and she was working on O’Keeffe, I proposed the idea to her and she joined me. The conversations took place in the lounge there. I knew and recruited Roberta [Tarbell] to join us; she became the treasurer.” The associations inaugural session “The Catalogue Raisonné: Authenticity and Legal Issues” was held at the 1994 annual CAA meeting.

Regarding the initial structure and goals of the CRSA Gail added: “There were no by-laws that I can recall, other than those imposed by the CAA since we wanted to be an affiliated group. But there were goals, which were in the first issue of the newsletter. A big one was to raise awareness and gain more respect for our kind of endeavor, which was nearly non-existent with the domination of critical theory. There were no facts and no objects and we scholars of CR’s were considered by some to be commercial pawns.”

In a brief note entitled “CRSA: An Affiliated Society” (Newsletter. June 1994, p. 3), it states that Gail served as president, Barbara as vice-president, and Roberta as treasurer. A following statement, entitled “Statement of Purpose,” further clarifies the structure and goals of the CRSA. “The CRSA has been formed as a communication network that will provide information and advice to scholars engaged in compiling a catalogue raisonné or seeking to begin one. A newsletter will be circulated twice yearly. Sessions on issues pertaining to catalogue raisonné projects will take place during the annual meeting of the CAA.” The statement goes on to read, “Among the goals of the CRSA are the following: to raise the level of awareness among art historians and museum professionals of the value of the catalogue raisonné; legitimacy of the museum practice of charging permission fees for reproducing works of art in these reference studies; to encourage cooperation between catalogue raisonné scholars and museum, dealers, estates of artists and other scholars.” And it concludes with a note about the leadership required for this start up association. “Its officers include a President, Vice-President, and Treasurer, who will be elected for three-year terms by the membership.”

The natural evolution of our leadership began in 1997 and became fully realized by 1998 when Gail, Barbara and Roberta had completed their tenures. Nancy Mathews, who became treasurer in 1997, moved up to the office of president in 1998. By the October 1998 issue of the Newsletter, only Nancy, as president, Mel Lader, as editor, and Heidi Hornick, as listserv proctor, are mentioned as “officers.” Mel apparently served as editor for two issues 10/98 and Spring 1999. At that time it appears that Nancy became our one column of stability. She served as president as well as editor of the Newsletter (which was primarily a notice regarding our annual meeting and a membership list) until I came on board as editor with the Summer issue of the now CRSA Forum. There is no mention of any new “officers” until the Winter 2004 issue of the “Forum” when Steven Manford is mentioned as Program Director (though it is apparent that he had assumed this role by the Spring 2003 issue of the Forum), and then in the Autumn 2004 issue when Tina Dickey is mentioned as Webmaster. Nancy made a very public “Call for Nominations” in the Spring 2003 issue of the “Forum.” In Nancy’s initial announcement as president (see “A Note from the President,” October...
CRSA Structure & Funding  
Continued

1998 issue, front page) she outlined her perception of goals for the CRSA. She states that membership “dues” will be used to pay off our deficit and to publish our semi-annual newsletters. She goes on to say that “now that we have the beginnings of a membership base, we will be able to provide more help to scholars and others seeking information about current catalogue raisonné projects.” In her following paragraph she states: “this organization will serve its members seeking both peer and expert advice through the newsletter, the annual meetings and sessions at the CAA, and now through the CRSA list serv. We would also like to organize public panels or debates to reach a wider audience.” To this date, no one has heeded her call for nominations of president (indeed, a whole roster of officers).

The only other public reference to a broader form of governance for the CRSA comes in the August 1997 Newsletter, in a notice entitled “CRSA Changes and Development”: this notice reads: “in the last year, CRSA has formed a Steering Committee that will function to plan future activities of the organization. Those on the committee include the officers of CRSA (Gail Levin, President, Barbara Bulher Lynes, Vice-President, Nancy Mathews, Treasurer), Jerry Carr, Peter Hassrick, Heidi Hornick, Sona Johnston, Mel Lader, Aimée Price, Donna Stein, Roberta K. Tarbell, and Barbara Wolanin.” Many of these members are no longer with us and therefore it is safe to assume that we have no standing steering committee, or lead officers vice-president, treasurer.

It is evident that we need to reorganize. In Barbara Hoffman’s letter below she provides evidence that we should be considering the adoption of a board. It is also clear that we need to recruit, recruit, nominate, a broad array of officers in addition to the posts that currently exist.

initially conceived, was “intended to provide information about topics that interest its membership.” The manner in which its authors sought this material “please let us know your concerns” was a virtual call for papers. Suggested topics included notices about recently published CRs; questions pertaining to current research problems; and “recommendations about database programs that have been proven to be particularly effective for catalogue raisonné projects.” And the method of funding the Newsletter has become a casual request for support: “contributions from members are welcome.” The inaugural Newsletter consisted of seven black and white pages, with three of them devoted to the membership list. Today the CRSA Forum is illustrated (just recently in color) and consistently has 20-28 pages with approximately six of them devoted to the membership list.

In Gail Levin’s (above mentioned) email to me she noted that she and Barbara did most of the editing and writing of the Newsletter, with Roberta pitching in. She went on to say that they “had very little help from others in the beginning”; unfortunately this situation has been consistent throughout the history of our publication. There were 39 members of the CRSA in June 1994. Of those 39, 14 are still members and one, Mel Lader, recently passed away. Today we have approximately 175 members, and we continue to grow. It is imperative that our members become active in the association.

Minutes From Informal Gathering

Notes from 12/21/05 CRSA inform-gathering at the Luce Foundation, New York: Thanks to Ellen Holtzman and the Luce Foundation for providing us with a room in which to meet and for their generous hospitality during our stay. Thanks to Eileen Costello for taking the notes, long hand.

For those of you who do not use online services, a bit about the 12/21 gathering. I was going to be in New York City for leisure/purposes imbuing in the city’s cultural amenities and made an open offer to and all CRSA members to get together to discuss the state of the association as well as the concerns of individual members. A small handful of people initially signed on: the city’s then public transportation strike, in addition to holiday and other commitments, dwindled down the number of participants to the four listed below. As the discussion was always intended to be open, what we had to say is for the ears of all members.

Keep in mind that none of the participants were or are learned in the art of short hand so some of what you will read is recalled from personal memories and not always verbatim, despite Eileen’s Herculean efforts to record everything. I strongly recommend that all members avail themselves of the opportunity to “call” informal gatherings. Call the gatherings grass roots or town hall meetings if you wish, the purpose is to keep the CRSA alive with thoughtful ideas and caring and committed individual members; an association is not governed by lemmings (despite the obvious attempt at this type of governing by the current US government).

In attendance:
Scott Ferris
Phyllis Braff
Ellen Russotto
Eileen Costello

Scott opens by saying that he wants to discuss specific issues, including whether or not the CRSA should be 501(c)3. He feels that the organization needs structure in order to be effective. He intends to submit an article in the next issue of the Forum that will focus on our origins and initial goals, as an association, where we are now, and where we could be headed.

Phyllis: gaining structure is part of the growth of the organization. She feels that we should “codify rather than critique” the CRSA.

Ellen: Asks where the CRSA is going. What do people foresee? What’s its purpose?

Phyllis: The CRSA list-serve serves as a great forum for discussion.

Scott: What do we need to go forward? We need more than a president, webmaster, program director, list-serve proctor, Forum editor, etc.

He read from an article to him from Gail Levin:

“Roberta wasn’t in on the founding [of the CRSA]. I had the idea after I chaired a CAA panel on the CR. When I met Barbara Lynes at

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Roberta Breitmore
Continued

interactive multimedia installations, and artificial intelligence. Rich and consistent themes have been developed and sustained in this journey such as the construction of self in relation to vision, the relationship between bodies and technology, and shifting ideas of the real and the virtual. Each of these themes emerged in one of Hershman Leeson's earliest and most ambitious artworks, entitled Roberta Breitmore (1974-78).

The Artwork

Roberta Breitmore is a performance, photo and video work exploring individual identity as it is constructed by spectacle, surveillance, and spectatorship. In the early years of this performance Hershman Leeson constructed "Roberta" by donning a costume, blonde wig and makeup. "Roberta's" existence was made "real" by an apartment lease, an employment contract, a driver's license, checking account, credit cards, and dental records.

The Roberta Breitmore project invited "real-world" participation in September 1975 with the placement of an advertisement in the San Francisco Progress. The form of the ad was ambiguous: it could have been construed as a listing for a roommate or a personal ad. When "Roberta" agreed to meet someone, he (mostly men responded), the respondent, was unwittingly caught up in the artist's performance. "Roberta" met with each respondent about three times, and varying photographers recorded each session. A tape recorder in "Roberta's" pocket produced an audiotape chronicle.

Many of these photographic documents remained in their "original" form as evidence of "Roberta's" existence. Hershman Leeson produced documents, made into collages, of various meetings, or dates, even after the body-in-performance "Roberta" ceased to exist. In 1975, by which time "Roberta" had had dates in Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco, Hershman Leeson commissioned artist Spain Rodriguez to create an eight-page comic strip of "Roberta's" adventure made from "Roberta's" photographic documents and collages.

Three years into the Roberta Breitmore performance, Hershman Leeson expanded its exploration by hiring three additional women to perform as "Roberta": Kristine Stiles, Michelle Larsen, and Helen Dannenberg. All three performers dressed identically to Hershman Lee-son's "Roberta". Each had two home addresses and two jobs, corresponded with respondents and went on dates (recorded in photographs and audiotapes). These photographs were made into collages and then annotated.

In 1978 the project was further expanded as part of an exhibition of Roberta artifacts entitled "Lynn Hershman Is Not Roberta Breitmore/Roberta Breitmore Is Not Lynn Hershman," presented at the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco. A "Roberta" look-alike contest held at the museum attracted drag queens, women, young girls, and even a set of elderly female twins. As the contestants vied to win, "Roberta" was fractured and dispersed across their bodies. Photographs of contestants then entered the same process of re-photographing and being made into collages.

In 1978, in a performance in Lucretia Borgia's tomb in Genoa, Italy, the body-in-performance "Roberta" was laid to rest ("exorcised" in Hershman's term) by setting fire to her photographic image. Two "Robertas" participated in the event: Hershman Leeson ("Lynn-Roberta") and Kristine Stiles ("Kristine-Roberta"). This event was of course obsessively photographed and re-photographed; the photographs, which were elaborated upon, were then made into collages. Although the exorcism was performed in September, "Roberta" took a few months to "die." By December 1978, the body-in-performance "Roberta" was retired.

The Roberta Breitmore project is most often understood to be the performance of the persona, "Roberta," by the artist Lynn Hershman Leeson. This focus on the performance of "Lynn-Roberta" recognizes only the first and least complex phase of the project. My study will include first time interviews with the three "Roberta multiples" Larsen, Dannenberg and Stiles who performed as "Roberta" in 1977-78. (Larsen and Dannenberg are actors; Stiles, then an artist, went on to become an influential performance artist historian.) Their perspectives will enhance our understanding of this ambitious performance, photography and video project.

Performance, Documentation and the Troubling of Art History

For art historians the 'Roberta' performance is best known for its constructed, embellished photographs, such as Roberta's Construction Chart #2 (1975) (see page 22), a photographic portrait that charts the cosmic transformation of Lynn into "Lynn-Roberta."

This kind of time-based production, and its related artifacts and documentation, has often troubled art historians and eluded art history. These troubles range from issues of ontology and genealogy to assessments of the value of performance work, as well as issues of its hybridity its development in relation to other disciplines. (The performance work of artists such as Allan Kaprow, Carolee Schneemann and Vito Acconci, for example, draw from several artistic genealogies.) This hybridity continues to undercut the search for and classification of the most relevant perspective of these artists' works. How does one talk or write about this hybridity? Which discourses are relevant to this material? Which are the keys to its value? What are some of the other challenges performance art presents? What are the most relevant tools we, as art historians, can employ to process the proliferation of documentation that performance art creates? Do the photographs of "Lynn-Roberta" have a different ontological status than the photographs of the other "Robertas" because they engage the body of the artist? How are the relationships between signifiers and signified sorted out here? Do the "original," unaltered surveillance photos, have a different status than those made into collages, painted, and elaborated on by the artist? How does one talk about the dynamic "self-portraits" of "Roberta" as they are disseminated across the bodies of various subjects women of various ages, men in "Roberta-drag," and twins?

Recent feminist scholarship has increased our understanding of feminist performance art, but frustratingly continues to mine a limited range of artists and artworks. According to scholars such as Amelia Jones, Kristine Stiles and Peggy Phelan, the inclusion of Roberta Breitmore in this discourse complicates recent interpretations of the female body in performance.

The "Roberta multiples" and the circulation of the performance-as-documentation "Roberta" (long after retirement of the body-in-performance "Roberta") has blurred the line between live art and its documentation. Scholars like Rosalene Goldberg and Peggy Phelan[1], for example, insist that the artist/audience encounter should be live (the "now") and its documentation (the "after now"). For Goldberg, especially: to
read the visual and textual documentation of performance (its artifacts, verbal, inter-textual and photographic documentation) is to "resuscitate" that unique experience in the "now": to recall the sweat and feel the heat of the artist's body. This characterization implies the performance is dying or dead before being reborn, somehow, in the text. The question is: what sort of unmediated experience does Goldberg think is being resuscitated and just how is this performed by a spectator-historian like herself? Goldberg does not address this issue.

Performance historian Kristine Stiles rarely deals with the status of performance arts visual and textual documents of performance with any specificity: even an event/document as important to her theorization of Fluxus performance as George Brecht's Exit [ii]. This neglect of performance-as-document in her work surprises me given Stiles' role as a "Roberta multiple," whereby "Kristine-Roberta," like the other "Robertas," was constructed over time entirely by photographs, audiotapes and other documentation. Stiles, like Goldberg and Phelan, privileges live performance over its documentation.[iii] For her the live event means the physical presence of the artist and the immediate live response of the audience, an encounter that is for her inherently redemptive. The work of feminist art historian Amelia Jones is especially useful for my analysis. In contrast to Goldberg, Phelan and Stiles, Jones refutes to privilege live performance over its documentation. Instead, performance is an act of reiteration, which has for her the theoretical possibilities for a new production of (postmodern) subjectivity. Jones sees in performance a postmodern critique of modernist critical authority, because it posits both an artist and a spectatorspectatorial exchange, which demands acknowledgment of desire and specificity of subjectivity.

More unusual, Jones is interested in body art that might or might not have occurred before a live audience, and attentive to body art as it is understood from an historical distance, by spectators who experience that art only through its photographic, textual, oral, video or filmic documentation (performance-as-documentation). Her views on this problematic are most fully outlined in her essay "Presence" in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation," where she argues that neither the live encounter between artist and audience nor its experience through documentation (what Jones calls a "documentary exchange") can claim a privileged relationship to historical "truth." Jones also offers the insight that body art is dependent on documentation to attain symbolic status in culture, and vice versa: "The body art needs the photograph to confirm its having happened; the photograph needs the body art event as an ontological 'anchor' of its indexicality."[v]

How might the multiplication of "Robertas" be conceptualized? In what ways, for example, do the "Roberta multiples" complicate notions of authorship? How did notions of authorship shift for Hershman Leeson as she expanded the project to include "Roberta multiples"? In what way do the multiples envision themselves as authors and of what material might they be considered authors? Are the "multiples" only authorized by Hershman Leeson? What historical comparisons are relevant? In my study I attempt to expand this feminist inquiry and demonstrate how and why Roberta Breretmore offers the discipline an especially challenging artistic venue for exploring fragmented human subjectivity at the beginning of the 21st century.

Robin Held is Chief Curator and Director of Exhibitions and Collections at the Frye Art Museum. She is curator of Hershmanlandia: the Art and Films of Lynn Hershman Leeson, organized by The Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington. This exhibition is the first major U.S. survey of this American artist's visual art and film. Following its premiere at the Henry (November 5, 2005-January 29, 2006), Hershmanlandia tours internationally. Published in conjunction with the exhibition is the first critical monograph on the artist, The Art and Films of Lynn Hershman Leeson: Secret Agents, Private 1 (co-published by the Henry Art Gallery and the University of California Press).


CRSA Structure & Funding
Continued

Beinecke Library at Yale, where I had a fellowship to work on Hartley and she was working on O’Keeffe. I proposed the idea to her and she joined me. The conversations took place in the lounge there. I knew and recruited Roberta to join us: she became the treasurer. There was no fourth person. There were no bi-laws that I can recall, other than those imposed by the CAA since we wanted to be an affiliated group. But there were goals, which were in the first issue of the newsletter. A big one was to raise awareness and gain more respect for our kind of endeavor, which was nearly non-existent with the domination of critical theory. There were no facts and no objects and we scholars of CR’s were considered by some to be commercial pawns. Barbara and I did most of the editing and writing of the newsletters by ourselves: Roberta pitched in too. We had very little help from others in the beginning. I am very pleased that the organization has really taken off. Your efforts have been much needed. Also the fundraising efforts of Nancy have made a huge difference in our profile. You should ask Barbara and Roberta what they remember and look at the first newsletters. Can I please see what you come up with. You may, of course, use the above.”

He says that he wants to know that the CRSA will be there, as a support-ive, umbrella organization: that if “he” is, members are having difficulty with obtaining photography or information on specific works for his/her CR from commercial entities or private collectors, or applying for grants for CR work (for example), that the CRSA would verify his/her credentials and work. He believes that CRSA members should have the prestige of the association behind them.

He suggested that we need more “officers” vice-president, treasurer, membership and development directors, etc. to help with the tasks that we already have at hand; and that we should come up with job descriptions for these and our current posts so that potential candidates are aware of what needs to be done. The Forum and the list-serve are our avenues to talk about these things. How can we get other people to become active?

Phyllis recalls how she was the first paying member of the CRSA. “For most of us we thought there were so many issues that we come up with on a day-to-day basis and we thought it could be beneficial in terms of scholarship to form a CRSA. Tina’s comments [in the e-mail] about voting was right on target. All the comments about whether or not to become a 501(c)3 are right on target.” She notes that she was instrumental in working out a 501(c)3 for another organization. At present, they’re testing it for fundraising. And the only way that busy scholars can manage is to hire part-time administrators. The CRSA is probably in a position to fundraise more easily because of the galleries and dealers who are interested in the products of our scholarship. There’s credibility in all that we do. She notes that 501(c)3 has merit, particularly because it could be a conduit for others to fund their catalogue raisonné projects.

Ellen asks what type of structure the Art Dealers Association of America is based on and whether not the CRSA could emulate what they do.

Phyllis suggests the International Association of Art Critics, of which she is a member.

Ellen: Brings up Nancy’s suggestion that anyone can become a member of the CRSA, however, only those who pay the $20 donation can receive the Forum. She also asks what the CRSA needs funding for other than the Forum, the website, the list-serve (does that cost money?). Is it worth the time, trouble and expense to become 501(c)3 when all we’re hoping to do is produce a quarterly newsletter? It shouldn’t be that expensive to publish. Can we cut down on costs and pay for our own design? Should we explore external funding from foundations? Sharon Flescher received $100,000 from the Luce Foundation (this is published on their website as well as in the IFAR Journal) for her catalogue raisonné of catalogues raisonné project (on which I worked one summer).

Scott suggests that we speak with Ellen Holtzman about this, to see if a request for funding (for the CRSA) from the Luce Foundation would fit their parameters for giving.

Ellen asks what kind of funding the CRSA is now receiving from the Dedalus Foundation and the Hofmann Foundation. Scott replies that to his recollection we received $4000 from Dedalus for the Forum, programming and our website; and that the Hofmann Foundation underwrote the website for the time being.

Scott notes that Eileen can produce the Forum any way that she wants to. There’s no limit. Without CRSA structure there is no one that she is answerable to. Someone else piped in that the editor would be answerable to a board (which Scott mentioned, we also don’t have).

He also said that most of us could think of someone who would give $1000 and that would help pay our expenses.

What’s the situation with NYU and their symposiums, someone asked? Why don’t we (CRSA) organize them ourselves? Scott said that he believed Lisa Koenigsberg organized the CR sessions with Nancy’s assistance. Someone else suggested that Lisa is using us [CRSA]. Scott suggested that we could organize our own CR seminar, since we have a program director, but that it would require funding.

On to the scholars and compensation issue, which also brought up the question about who makes up our membership and what kind of information we should be discussing among the various members, etc.

Phyllis: Keep in mind for the Forum that as the CRSA is evolving, it becomes a record of what you’re giving to a potential donor.

Scott: Who is a member? A diverse body of people. There are some things I’d rather not put in the Forum [what scholars should charge commercial entities, when there are individuals representing commercial entities in our membership. It’s a fine line what to print and what not to.

Phyllis: If we had a lawyer with by-laws set up, we’d have to address those things as well as qualifications. Who can be a member and who can’t be.

Scott: Peter Stern, Ron Spencer and Barbara Hoffman have been helpful with providing “legal issues” for the

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Forum and answering legal questions.
I've asked Barbara for information on whether or not the CRSA could provide a potential donor with a tax write-off; we later discussed how we could become a 501(c)3 charitable organization. I asked her for her response at her earliest convenience. I think we can continue to rely on these three people, as well as new member, Robert Warshaw, for legal advice.

Phyllis: The issue of 501(c)3 could be addressed to an accounting firm.

Ellen: We could get a pro-bono lawyer.

How the Forum Looks:

Phyllis: Color accuracy is sometimes a concern. Re: Money and conflict of interest one could have a subscription by donation (you don't even have to be a member); donation of a sum, say $50-$500-$1000, etc. Also, allow for a modest stipend for the editor.

Ellen: How much does it cost to mail the Forum?

Scott: For domestic and international—primarily Europe mailing, the costs are approximately $150-$170. I suggested that I had not looked into bulk mailing. Someone else suggested that for bulk mailing one needs 501(c)3 status. (I also chimed in that I had not looked into getting the Forum copyright registered.)

A Future Forum Topic: The importance of personal insurance and incorporating oneself as protection against getting sued for defamation of character.

Scott: Returned to the concern that perhaps there are certain things that we should not include in the Forum. (We talk about how we go about working on our CRs and get away from being a newsletter.) Should we restrict certain topics to the list-serve, and have that available to certain types of members? Is the Forum, our list-serve and website the method by which we discuss and make association decisions?

What are our CRSA objectives and goals? I'm still not seeing a response on the list-serve from others regarding these and other questions. Who are we?

Phyllis: We need to reach out and organize. Everyone's busy. All the ideas are good. It takes leadership to move to a platform to vote on. We should hold more informal discussions with notes. Set up a committee and filter down to a secure website where people can vote.

Scott: We need to hammer out basic organizational ideas.

END OF THE "MINUTES" OF THE 12/21/05 INFORMAL GATHERING.

Policy Update
Barbara Hoffman

Dear All,

First, happy new year to all of you. I have been following the discussion and noticed that there has been significant confusion in the dialogue. In forming an organization and a corporate structure, the first step is to incorporate under state law. In this connection, there are several different types of not-for-profit organizations. Organizations may be membership or non-membership. In a membership organization, the members elect the Board of Directors. In a non-membership organization, the directors elect the directors. I would assume that this is a membership organization thus, an initial Board of Directors is selected and you must determine the procedures and criteria for membership.

Articles of Incorporation are filed with the Secretary of State. For this, a discussion prior to filing of the purposes of the organization is required. The corporation must then adopt by-laws which are the way it will operate.

There are several models depending on the functions you wish the organization to play. A discussion of criteria for membership and the purposes of the organization are key.

The Art Dealers Association of America is a non-profit 501(c)(6) membership organization. Its website states:

Organizational Structure and Membership
Within a few months of its inauguration, the Art Dealers Association of America had formalized its corporate and organizational structure. Ralph Colm would, for the remainder of his life, serve as Administrative Vice President and Counsel, providing both legal advice and administrative continuity. Colm's law partner, Gilbert S. Edelson, took over that function following Colm's death in 1985. The Association is governed by a rotating Board of Directors elected from the membership. Officers are also elected and serve for three-year terms. Special dealer committees handle such ongoing activities as Membership.

Public Relations and The Art Show
Some 20 well-established dealers attended the ADAA's initial meetings in 1962, but the number of members quickly doubled as the organization's merits were recognized. While all the original members were based in New York City, others from across the country were soon invited to join. At the time of the Association's tenth anniversary, in 1972, the membership had risen to 84, including galleries in Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Dallas, Detroit, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, and Philadelphia. Today there are over 160 members. Although this growth reflects the steady expansion of the art market as a whole, the ADAA remains highly selective in its process for welcoming new members.

To qualify for admission to the ADAA, a gallery must not only have a reputation for honesty, but must demonstrate its professionalism and standing among colleagues and those in the academic and museum worlds. Also required is that the dealer make a "substantial contribution to the cultural life of the community by the nature of the works offered for sale, worth-while exhibitions, and informative catalogues or other publications." Additionally, the gallery must have been in business for at least five years. To further ensure the integrity of the organization, the ADAA accepts no applications for membership; instead, galleries are invited to join by the Association's Board of Directors after intensive screening by the Membership Committee. Before a prospective member receives final approval, the gallery's
Policy Update
Continued

name is circulated for comment to the entire membership. Given that many of the ADAA’s founders were in business since the early 1900s, it can be said that the Association’s membership has included most of the leading American art dealers of the past century.

Another model may be the Art Critics Association which is a 501 (c)(3).

The next step is to apply for your tax exempt status, preferably as a 501(c)(3). A 501(c)(3) enables a donor to deduct his or her contribution to the organization as a charitable contribution. The organization also will not pay taxes on the gift. Trade associations while tax exempt are governed by different regulations. For example, the difference between ADAA and AICA.

The average cost for maintaining a not-for-profit is probably $1,000 per year. The filing fees to incorporate as a not-for-profit in New York probably run around $300-$400.

As an alternative to obtaining your own tax exempt status, you may apply for grants once you are a not-for-profit by using a tax exempt umbrella organization like the New York Foundation for the Arts. For organizations that will probably not raise more than $10,000 a year, it may make sense to use the umbrella organization. Their fee is usually 5% - 6% of the amount collected but includes all the services required to monitor the grant and to carry out the necessary filings. The organization has a separate account with the umbrella organization.

You do not need an accountant to do 501(c)(3) applications. You can download the papers from the IRS website. Fill in what you can. You need an operating budget for two years for which an accountant would be helpful. This is to identify the sources of your income etc and to determine your public charity status. I can help you in dealing with the IRS and completion of the application if necessary. The time to obtain exempt status is now running six months. You will need the accountant to do your year end filings for both the state and federal government.

I hope this helps to clarify some of the discussion. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Time for obtaining tax exempt status should you decide to go that route is now running about six months. State not-for-profit incorporation if it does not have to pass through the Department of Education, can be obtained in less than a week through the use of an attorney service.

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Membership List

Members please check your personal data and make sure all information is correct. Please let the editor, as well as Nancy Mathews, know if changes need to be made! Thank you for your assistance with this matter. As usual there are a number of additions and updates in this list.

Artists and CRSA related services included in this list.

Artists:

ALEXANDER ARCHIPENKO
(See Alexandra Keiser)
BACHIACCA
(See Robert G. LaFrance)
JOHN BALDESSARI
(See Sharon Coplan Hurowitz)
WILLIAM BAZIOTES
(See Michael Preble)
THOMAS HART BENTON
(See Henry Adams)
HARRY BERTOIA
(See Mary Thorp)
NORMAN BLUMH
(See John Yau)
PAUL BRIL
(See Louis Wood Ruby)
JAMES BROOKS
(See Meg J. Perelman)
CONSTANTINO BRUMIDI
(See Barbara A. Wolanin)
THEODORE EARL BUTLER
(See Patrick Bertrand)
PETER CAINE
(See Eileen Costello)
ALEXANDER CALDER
(See Alexander S. C. Rower)
ARTHUR B. CARLES
(See Barbara A. Wolanin)
JOHN CARROLL
(See Touran K. Latham)
MARY CASSATT
(See Nancy Mowll Mathews)
SAINT CLAIR CEMIN
(See Joy L. Glass)
PAUL CEZANNE
(See Jayne Warman)
FREDERIC EDWIN CHURCH
(See Gerald L. Carr)
CHARLES CARYL COLEMAN
(See Adrienne Baxter Bell)
GUSTAVE COURBET
(See Sarah Faunce)
JASPER F. CROPSEY
(See Kenneth W. Maddox)
FRANCIS CUNNINGHAM
(See Valerie Mendelson Moylan)
LEONARDO DA VINCI
(See Patricia Truty-Cooihill)
PIERRE PUVIS DE CHAVANNES
(See Aimee Brown Price)
DOROTHY DEHNER
(See Joan M. Marter)
TAMARA DE LEMPICKA
(See Alain Blondel)
MARIA OAKEY DEWING
(See Susan A. Hobbs)
THOMAS W. DEWING
(See Susan A. Hobbs)
EDWIN DICKINSON
(See Helen Dickinson Baldwin)
RICHARD DIBENKORN
(See Richard Grant)
ARTHUR WESLEY DOW
(See Nancy Green)
MABEL DWIGHT
(See Susan Barnes Robinson)
KERR EBY
(See Margaret D. Hausberg)
SALLY JAMES FARNHAM
(See Michael P. Reed)
LYONEL FEININGER
(See Achim Moeller)
SAM FEINSTEIN
(See Patricia Stark Feinstein)
ERNST FIENE
(See Jeffrey A. Coven)
JOHN FULTON FOLINSBEE
(See Peter B. Cook, Joan W. Hooker, Kirsten M. Jensen)
MARY FOOTE
(See E. Adina Gordon)
SAMUEL L. FRANCIS
(See Debra Burchett-Lere)
EMIL GANSO
(See Donald E. Smith)
GUNTHER GERZSO
(See John Michael Gerzso)
SAM GLANKOFF
(See Wendy Snyder)
GLICENSTEIN
(See Charlotte Sholod)
ROBERT GOODNOUGH
(See Ellen J. Epstein)
J. J. GRANDVILLE
(See Clive F. Getty)
CHAIM GROSS
(See April Paul)
NORMA BAOSETT HALL
(See Joby Patterson)
DAVID HARE
(See Ellen Raszotto)
KEITH HARING
(See Julia Gruen)
MARSDEN HARTLEY
(See Gail Levin)
MARTIN JOHNSON HEADE
(See Theodore E. Stubbins, Jr.)
ARTHUR WM. HEINTZELMAN
(See Donald E. Smith)
ROBERT HENRI
Valerie Ann Lees
HANS HOFMANN
(See Tina Dickey, Dawn Rogala)
KATSUSHIKA HOKUSAI
(See Roger Keyes)
WINSLOW HOMER
(See Abigail Booth Gerdis)
EDWARD HOPPER
(See Gail Levin)
HENRI GABRIEL IBELS
(See Magda Le Donne)
ROBERT INDIANA
(See Elizabeth A. Barry)
GEORGE INNESS
(See Michael Quick)
EASTMAN JOHNSON
(See Patricia Hills)
JASPER JOHNS
(See Robert Bernstein, Heidi Colsman-Freyberger)
VASYL KYDINSKY
(See Vivian Endicott Barnett)
ROCKWELL KENT
(See Scott R. Ferris)
PAUL KLEE
(See Josef Helfenstein)
LEE Krasner
(See Ellen G. Landau)
JOHN LEWIS KimmEL
(See Milo M. Naivee)
GASTON LACHAISE
(See Virginia Budy)
JACOB LAWRENCE
(See Michelle DuBois, Peter T. Nesbitt)
ERNST LAWSON
(See Valerie A. Leeds)
LYNN HERSHMAN LEESON
(See Robin Held)
WM. ROBINSON LEIGH
(See Deborah A. White)
ROY LICHTENSTEIN
(See Jack Cowart, Justine Price, Yolande Trincere)
JACQUES LIPCHITZ
(See Kosme de Baranano)
FREDERICK WM. MACMONNIES
(See E. Adina Gordon)
MARY FAIRCHILD
MACMONNIES
(See E. Adina Gordon)
UGO MALVANO
(See Anna Malvano)
MARCELLO
(See Caterina Y. Pierre)
BRICE MARDEN
(See Eileen Costello)
ALFRED JACOB MILLER
(See Deborah A. White)
DAVID B. MILNE
(See David P. Silcox)
GILBERT MUNGER
(See Michael Schroeder)
EDWARD MORAN
(See Joseph Carlton)
THOMAS MORAN

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(See Phyllis Braff, Melissa Webster Speidel)

ROBERT MOTHERWELL
(See Allison Harding, Joachim Pissarro, Katy Rogers)
EDWARD MUNCH
(See Gerd Wolfl)

GILBERT MUNGER
(See Michael Schroeder)

SIR ALFRED MUNNINGS
(See Lorain Peralta-Ramos)
BARNETT NEWMAN
(See Heidi Colsman-Freyberger)

ISAMU NOGUCHI
(See Neil Printz, Bonnie Rychlak)

GEORGIA O’KEEFFE
(See Doris Bry, Barbara Buhler Lynes)

STEPHEN PARRISH
(See Rona Schneider)

LILLA CABOT PERRY
(See Pamela Moffat)

FRANCIS PICAIBA
(See Maria Luisa Borras, Roger Buono, Pierre Calé, William Camfield)

PABLO PICASSO
(See Diana Widmaier Picasso)

CAMILLE PISSARRO
(See Joachim Pissarro)
FAIRFIELD PORTER
(See Joan Ludman)

CHARLES A. PLATT
(See James B. Atkinson)

JACKSON POLLOCK
(See Francis V. O’Connor)

EDWARD POTTHAST
(See Mary Ran)

MAURICE PRENDERGAST
(See Nancy Mowll Mathews)
LUIS QUINTANILLA
(See Jeffrey A. Coven)

WILLIAM RANNEY
(See Sarah Boehme, Julie Coleman)

MAN RAY
(See Steven Manford)

HANS REICHEL
(See Deborah Browning Schimek)

FREDERIC REMINGTON
(See Sarah Boehme, Julie Coleman, Laura A. Foster, Emily Ballesta)

WILLIAM RIMMER
(See Jeffrey Weidman)

THEODORE ROBINSON
(See Sonja K. Johnston)

MARK ROTHKO
(See David Anfam, Ruth Fine)

THEODORE ROUSSEL
(See Margaret D. Hausberg)

MARK ROTHKO
(See Ruth Fine, Renee Maurer, Laili Nasr)

PETER PAUL RUBENS
(See Anne-Marie Logan)

EDWARD RUSCHA

(See Rainer Crone, Robert Dean, Petrus Schaesberg, Eric Wright)

CHARLES M. RUSSELL
(See Elizabeth A. Dean)

ROBERT RYMAN
(See Amy Baker Sandback)

KAY SAGE
(See Stephen Robeson Miller)

JOHN SINGER SARGENT
(See Elizabeth Oustonoff)

FREDERICK FERDINAND SCHAER
(See Jerome H. Saltzer)

CORNELIUS SCHUT
(See Gertrude Wilmers)

FRANK E. SCHOONOVER
(See John R. Schoonover)

JOHN SLOAN
(See Joyce K. Schiller)

JUNIUS R. SLOAN
(See Richard H. W. Brauer)

LEON SPIELAERT
(See Anne Adriaens-Pannier)

ALFRED STEIGLITZ
(See Doris Bry)

YVES TANGUY
(See Alessandra Carnielle, Stephen Robeson Miller)

TAO SOCIETY OF ARTISTS
(See Ashley Waechter)

MARK TOBY
(See Achim Moeller)

JOAQUIN TORRES-GARCIA
(See Cecilia de Torres)

MICHELE TOSINI
(See Heidi J. Hornik)

ELIHU VEDDER
(See Regina Soria)

FRANCESCO D’UBERTINO VERDI
(See Robert G. LaFrance)

ESTEBAN VICENTE
(See Ellen Russototo)

HUBERT VON HERKOMER
(See Lee M. Edwar)

FRANKLIN T. WOOD
(See Kenneth A. Pollack)

ALEXANDER HEWIG WYANT
(See Anthony E. Battelle)

ANDREW, J.B. and/or N.C.

WYETH
(See Christine B. Podmaniczky, Joyce Hill Stoner)

W.M. & MARGARET ZORACH
(See Roberta K. Tarbell)
Brookline, MA 02446
aebattelle@aol.com
Alexander Helwig Wyant, N.A.

Adrienne Baxter Bell
594 Highland Avenue
Upper Montclair, NJ 07043
BaxterBell@verizon.net
Charles Caryl Coleman

Robert Bernstein
Prof. Art History
University at Albany
225 Novak Road
Valatie, New York 12184
rmbernstein555@aol.com
Jasper Johns

Patrick Bertrand
P.O. Box 10993
Oakland, CA 94610
giverny@usa.net
Theodore Earl Butler

Alain Blondel
50, rue du Temple
75004 Paris, France
info@encyclopedia.com
Tamara de Lempicka

Sarah Boehme
The John S. Bugas Curator of
Western Art
Buffalo Bill Historical Center
720 Sheridan Avenue
Cody, Wyoming 82414
Sarahb@bbhc.org
Frederic Remington; William Ranney

Maria Luisa Borras
Art Historian
Comite Picabia
Conseil des Cent 369
28009 Barcelona, Spain
Borras@mente.net
Francis Picabia

Phyllis Braff
333 East 55th Street
New York, NY 10022
pbraff@rcn.com
Thomas Moran

Richard H. W. Brauer
Brauer Museum of Art
Valparaiso University Center for the Arts
Valparaiso, IN 46383
Richard.Brauer@Valpo.edu
Junius R. Sloan

Mark L. Brock
174 Sunset Road
Carlisle, MA 01741
mark@brockandco.com

Doris Bry
11 East 73rd Street
New York, NY 10021
dbry@earthlink.net
Stieglitz/Keefe

Virginia Budny
324 East 81st Street, 6R
New York, NY 10028
virginiabudny@yahoo.com
Gaston Lachaise

Roger Buono
Comite Picabia
213 Rue de la Convention
75015 Paris, France
r.buono@free.fr
Francis Picabia

Debra Burchett-Lere, Dir.
Samuel L. Francis Art Museum
1146 North Central Ave., #523
Glendale, CA 91202
samfrancisfoundation@earthlink.net

Samuel L. Francis, canvas & works
on paper

Pierre Calte, Pres.
Comite Picabia
26, Rue Danielle Casanova
75002 Paris, France
archives@comite-picabia.com
Francis Picabia

William A. Camfield
Prof. Emeritus
Dept. of Art & Art History
Rice University
1117 Milford
Houston, TX 77006
billec@rice.edu
Francis Picabia

Dr. Joseph Carlton
Two Sutton Place South
New York, NY 10022
jycrit@aol.com
Edward Moran

Alexandra Carnielli, Dir.
Pierre & Maria Gaetana Matisse
Foundation
1 East 53 Street, 4th floor
New York, NY 10022
acarnielli@pmntfn.org

Yves Tanguy, pls. & works on paper
in color

Gerald L. Carr
608 Apple Road
Newark, DE 19711
gcarr@dpnet.net
Frederic Edwin Church

Claudia Carson
29 Park Hill Avenue
Norwalk, CT 06851
cloeja@yahoo.com
Computer data bases

Heidi Colsman-Freyberger
715 North Broadway
Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706
hcfc@barnettnewman.org
Barnett Newman; Jasper Johns

Peter B. Cook
4 Humboldt Street
Cambridge, MA 02140
petercook@comcast.net
John Folarsbee, N.A. (1892-1972)

Eileen Costello
Matthew Marks Gallery
235 Mulberry Street, #4
New York, NY 10012
eecostello@hotmail.com
Peter Cain; Brice Marden

Jeffrey A. Coven
7 Village Way
Smithtown, NY 11787
catsra@yahoo.com
Ernest Fiene, prints; Luis Quintanilla, prints

Jack Cowart, Exec. Dir.
Roy Lichtenstein Foundation
745 Washington Street
New York, NY 10014
Roy Lichtenstein

Dr. Rainer Crone, Prof.
Ludwig Maximilian Universitat
(Munchen, Germany)
452 Riverside Drive, #85
New York, NY 10027
rainer@edruscha.org

Edward Ruscha, works on Paper

Kosme de Baranano, Prof.
Universidad Miguel Hernandez
Apartado 1037
La Xara., 03709 Alicante, Spain
kdbior@terra.es
Jacques Lipchitz

Cecilia de Torres
140 Greene Street
New York, NY 10012
mail@ceciatdetores.com

Joaquín Torres-Garcia

Robert Dean
3581 Ocean View Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90066
robert@edruscha.org
Edward Ruscha, paintings

Continued on page 14
r-fine@nga.gov
Mark Rothko: The Works on Paper
Jack Flam, Prof. Art History
City University of New York
35 West 81st St., Apt. 11D
New York, New York 10024
JackFlam@aol.com
Recent American art
Sharon Flescher, Exec. Dir.
International Foundation for Art Research
500 Fifth Avenue, Suite 935
New York, NY 10110
Authentication issues
Laura A. Foster, Cur.
Frederic Remington Art Museum
303 Washington Street
Ogdensburg, NY 13669
laf@fredericremington.org
Frederic Remington
Jonathan Franklin,
Head of Collections &
Database Management
National Gallery of Canada Library
380 Sussex Dr., P.O. Box 427,
Station A
Ottawa, Ontario Canada
jfranklin@gallery.ca
Abigail Booth Gerds
Ph.D. Prog. in Art History
CUNY Graduate Center
365 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10016
Winslow Homer
John Michael Gerzso
1630-A 30th Street, #232
Boulder, CO 80301
mike.gerzso@earthlink.net
Gunther Gerzso
Clive F. Getty
Miami University
Department of Art
Oxford, Ohio 45056
gettyc@muohio.edu
J.J. Grandville
Joy L. Glass
24 Fifth Avenue, No. 224
New York, NY 10011
jglass@mindspring.com
Steve R. Golan
359 Warren Avenue
Cincinnati, OH 45220
golan4@hotmail.com
Charles B. Goldstein
8 Hardwicke Place
Rockville, MD 20850
charles@forensiccartappraiser.com
E. Adina Gordon, Ph.D
155 Elm Road
Englewood, NJ 07631
Yadina@earthlink.net
Frederick Wm. MacMonnies, sculpt.
& pgs.; Mary Foote, pgs.; Mary
Fairchild MacMonnies, pgs.
Richard Grant, Project Mgr.
Richard Diebenkorn Catalogue
Raisonnée
3200 College Avenue, #2
Berkeley, CA 94705
dick@diebenkorn.org
Richard Diebenkorn
Nancy Green, Chief Cur.
Johnson Museum
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853
neg4@cornell.edu
Arthur Wesley Dow
Julia Gruen, Exec. Dir.
Keith Haring Foundation
676 Broadway, 5th floor
New York, NY 10012
jgruen@haring.com
Keith Haring
Allison Harding, Project Mgr.
The Dedalus Foundation, Inc.
555 West 57th Street, Suite 1222
New York, NY 10019
aharding@dedalusfoundation.org
Robert Motherwell
Margaret D. Hausberg
P.O. Box 744
Lake Forest, IL 60045
mhausberg@aol.com
Theodore Roussel; Kerr Eby, prints
Robin Held, Chief Cur./Dir.
Exhibits & Collections
Frye Art Museum
704 Terry Ave.
Seattle, WA 98104
robinheld@fryemuseum.org
Lynn Herschman Leeson
Josef Helfenstein, Dir.
Kranert Art Museum
500 Peabody Drive
Champaign, IL 61820
helfenstein@uiuc.edu
Paul Klee
Patricia Hills, Prof. Art History
Boston University
238 Putnam Avenue
Continued on page 15
r-maurer@nga.gov
Mark Rothko

Doug Milford
A.R.T. Systems
11 West 25th Street, 5th floor
New York, NY 10010
dml@artsystems.com
Make Catalogue Raisonné Systems

Stephen Robeson Miller
Research Consultant
Yves Tanguy Catalogue Raisonné
367 Cambridge Street
Cambridge, MA 02141
ferrars@bu.edu
Yves Tanguy; Kay Sage

Achim Moeller
167 East 73rd Street
New York, NY 10021
achim@moellerart.com
Lyonel Feininger, Mark Tobey archive

Pamela Moffat
2022 Columbia Rd., NW, #414
Washington, DC 20009
JmMofat@aol.com
Lilla Cabot Perry

Dr. Hatula Moholy-Nagy
The Moholy-Nagy Foundation
1204 Gardner Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
hatula@sprynet.com
Laszlo Moholy-Nagy

Valerie Mendelson Moylan
39-73 48 Street
Long Island City, NY 11104
cmoylan@sprynet.com
Francis Cunningham

Jane Myers, Chief Cur.
Amon Carter Museum
3501 Camp Bowie Boulevard
Fort Worth, Texas 76107
janem.myers@cartermuseum.org

Milo M. Naevé
Field-McCormick Cur. Emeritus of American Arts
The Art Institute of Chicago
24 Ingleton Circle
Kennett Square, PA 19348
John Lewis Krimmel

Laili Nasr
8303 Rising Ridge Way
Bethesda, MD 20817
l-nasr@nga.gov
Mark Rothko

Emily Ballew Neff,
Cur., Amer. Ptg's & Sculpt.
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
P.O. Box 6826
Houston, TX 77265
eneff@mfa.org
Frederic Remington

Peter T. Nesbitt, Exec. Dir.
The Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence Foundation
P.O. Box 5533
New York, NY 10027
jicrp@aol.com
Jacob Lawrence

Washburn Oberwager
100 Chetwynd Drive
Bryn Mawr, PA 19010
woberwager@mail.com

Dr. Francis V. O'Connor
250 E. 73rd Street, Apt. 11C
New York, NY 10021
fvoc@aol.com
Jackson Pollock

Elizabeth Ostynoff, Dir.
Adelson Galleries
The Mark Hotel, 25 E. 77th St.
New York, NY 10021
eo@adelsongalleries.com
John Singer Sargent

Joby Patterson
Adj. Asst. Prof., Art History
University of Oregon
2346 Charnelton Street
Eugene, OR 97405
joby@uoregon.edu
Norma Bassett Hall

April Paul, Dir.
The Chaim Gross Studio Museum
680 Ft. Washington Ave.
Apt. 2H
New York, NY 10040
grossmuseum@earthlink.net
Chaim Gross

Lorian Peralta-Ramos
454 Carter Street
New Canaan, CT 06840
ajm-lpr@att.net
Sir Alfred Munnings

Meg J. Perlman
490 West End Avenue, Apt. 5E
New York, NY 10024
MegerP@aol.com
James Brooks

Diana Widmaier Picasso
Art Historian
DWP Editions
23 Place Vendome

75001 Paris, France
info@dwpicasso.com
Sculptures of Pablo Picasso

Caterina Y. Pierre
73 Jackson Street
Brooklyn, NY 11211
caterinapierre@yahoo.com
Marcello

Joachim Pissarro
The Dedalus Foundation, Inc.
151 East 80 Street, Apt. 10B
New York, NY 10021
joachim.pissarro@nyc.rr.com
Robert Motherwell; Camille Pissarro

Christine B. Podmaniczky
Assoc. Cur.
Brandywine River Museum
P.O. Box 141
Chadds Ford, PA 19317
cppodmaniczky@brandywine.org
Newell Convers Wyeth

Anne Poling
Skinner, Inc.
357 Main Street
Bolton, MA 01740
paintings@skinnerinc.com

Kenneth A. Pollack
2124 Stuart Street
Brooklyn, NY 11229
bookken@aol.com
Franklin T. Wood, prints

Michael Preble, Program Dir.
Peninsula Fine Arts Center
101 Museum Drive
Newport News, VA 23606
mpreble@pfas-va.org;
baziotes@verizon.net
William Baziotes

Justine Price
1136 Garden Street
Hoboken, NJ 07030
justinedprice@mail.utexas.edu
Roy Lichtenstein

Aimee Brown Price
203 West 86th Street, Apt. 1010
New York, NY 10024
abpr@juno.com
Pierre Puvis de Chavannes

Neil Printz
Andy Warhol Foundation
525 W. 20th St., 7th fl.
New York, NY 10011
nprintz@warholfoundation.org
Andy Warhol

Michael Quick, Dir.

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Index of the CRSA Newsletter & Forum (1994-2005)

In 2005 fellow member, index, and programmer of CR systems, Peter Rooney, presented Nancy Mathews and I with an index he produced of the CRSA Forum (formerly the Newsletter). After some convincing Peter agreed to publish his "Index" within the "Forum." Since our initial reading of the "Index" he has refined and updated it; the below is the result. I believe you will find the "Index" easy to use and quite thorough. Peter already has ideas on how to expand it and is open for suggestions as to what else should be included. Any comments regarding his work can be made to him directly at: Magnetic Reports, 332 Bleecker Street, #X6, New York, NY 10014.

Ed.

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© Peter Rooney
L’Errance, 1953
Oil on canvas
88 x 77 1/2"  
223.4 x 196.9 cm
The Barnett Newman Foundation, New York
Photo by Bruce White

Robertson Construction Chart #2, 1975
Chromogenic print
Courtesy of the artist

Rekordlust 2001
Feature film 35 mm
Courtesy of the artist