President’s Award for Art and Activism

KAT GRIEFEN

By Elizabeth Driscoll Smith

As an art historian and dealer, Kat Griefen’s contributions to the visual arts intersect social activism and the New York gallery scene—a nexus that remains critical, as women are underrepresented in the majority of commercial gallery spaces. In their 2005 update of The Guerilla Girls’ “Report Card,” feminist art collective Pussy Galore detailed this systemic inequality. While advancements in equality have steadily increased, women still receive fewer opportunities to show their work—a trickle-down effect that results in less press coverage and limited market viability. Griefen has helped to challenge and reverse this unbalanced ratio over the past ten years: during her directorship at A.I.R Gallery and current role as co-owner and co-director of Accola Griefen, she has continued to advocate for women artists and art professionals.

Griefen spent five years directing A.I.R. (Artists in Residence) Gallery. Founded in 1972, it was the first of its kind: a not-for-profit, artist-run contemporary art gallery for women. One of many contributions, she produced a short documentary titled Taking Residence: A History of A.I.R. Gallery (filmed, edited, and directed by Meredith Drum) that includes interviews, photographic stills, archival footage, critical retrospections, and a sequential survey of works produced by previous and current members. A.I.R. continues to operate as both gallery and organization, addressing the changing needs of underrepresented, emerging, and established women artists.

Griefen’s dedication to documenting, preserving, and promoting the history of A.I.R. Gallery resounds in the field of art history but also stands as an extension of feminist activism—in preserving the gallery’s development and legacy, she has countered the pervasive male-centric canon. The documentary Taking Residence accompanied a historic two-part exhibition, A.I.R. Gallery: The History Show, which displayed work by A.I.R. artists dating from 1972 to the present. Co-curated with Carey Lovelace, the exhibition provided an overview of members’ artistic achievements—including early earthworks, feminist innovations, and performances—but also chronicled the gallery’s commitment to artistic diversity and critical dialogue. A concurrent exhibition, co-curated with former A.I.R. director Dena Muller, charted the organization’s historical currents through meeting notes, catalogues, correspondence, images, and administrative ephemera. Between 2006 and 2011, under Griefen’s leadership, A.I.R. presented over one hundred solo and group exhibitions, which have been reviewed by publications including The New York Times, Art in America, Sculpture Magazine, The Brooklyn Rail and ArtNews.

Griefen has also worked as an independent curator and has lectured at numerous universities and museums. Her scholarship on Ana Mendieta was published in Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory. Griefen holds an MA in Art History from Hunter College and a BA in Art History and Women’s Studies from SUNY-Purchase. She is a board member of the Feminist Art Project (TFAP).

Griefen practices activism on a daily basis. As a co-owner of the gallery Accola Griefen, she supports women artists with programming that champions feminist practices and secures a space for women in the arts.

Elizabeth Driscoll Smith is an M.A. graduate of the Hite Art Institute in Louisville, Kentucky.
WCA Lifetime Achievement Honorees

The WCA Lifetime Achievement Awards will be held at the New York Institute of Technology on Saturday February 18, 2017 in New York, NY. The event will include a reception with open wine bar and tapas from 6:00-7:30 pm (ticketed) and the ceremony, 8:00-9:30 pm (free and open to the public). Join us for the celebration and to meet the Honorees!

MARY SCHMIDT CAMPBELL

By Lisa Quinn

Mary Schmidt Campbell, Ph.D., is president of Spelman College. As president of the nation’s top ranked historically black college, she contributes to the shaping of young lives by inspiring and empowering students to become leaders committed to positive social change. Her four decades of service as an innovator in education, the arts, and the public sector models a life she encourages students to aspire to, dedicated to the betterment of individuals as well as the local, national and global communities.

Campbell credits her early education at Girls High in Philadelphia for instilling in her the sense that she could go out and rule the world. Her undergraduate experience as one of the few minorities at the elite Swarthmore College in the 1960s prompted her goal of higher education being accessible and welcoming to everyone. These ideals informed policy she enacted in her 22-year tenure at NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts where as Dean she increased the number of minority students and faculty and established a Talent Identification Process, which scouts, supports and mentors highly talented/high need students from around the country. She also initiated major renovations of Tisch’s film facilities; inaugurated new programs in Art and Public Policy, Film Preservation and Archiving, and Recorded Music; and led the School in a $75 million capital campaign. As Associate Provost for the Arts she fostered transdisciplinary collaborations among the schools at New York University.

After receiving a Master’s degree in Art History and a Doctorate in Humanities from Syracuse University, Campbell spent ten years developing a museum dedicated to Black culture in the heart of the African-American residential, cultural and business center. The Studio Museum of Harlem is now internationally known for its support of emerging artists of African descent through their exhibitions and artist-in-residencies programs that also provide arts education opportunities for a diverse public. As Executive Director, Campbell guided the transition of the Studio Museum from a rented loft space to a permanent location housing a collection of over two thousand works of art and accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM).

A constant advocate for the arts and proponent of the value of arts education in public schools, Dr. Campbell served as chairwoman of the New York State Council on the Arts, commissioner of New York City’s Cultural Affairs Department under two mayors, and in 2009, was appointed the vice chair of the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities by President Barack Obama. She co-edited Artistic Citizenship: A Public Voice for the Arts in addition to writing scholarly publications including Harlem Renaissance: Art of Black America and Memory and Metaphor: The Art of Romare Bearden, 1940–1987, co-authored with Sharon Patton.

The recipient of numerous honors, including a Candace Award from the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Campbell holds honorary degrees from The College of New Rochelle, Colgate University, City University of New York, Pace University, Maryland Institute College of Art and Swarthmore College. She is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and has sat on the boards of the American Academy in Rome, the New York Shakespeare Festival, the United Nations International School, the Public Theater, and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

Campbell’s passion and brilliance has been evident throughout her distinguished career. She continues to inspire and transform through her leadership as exemplified by her presidential address to the women of Spelman College on Nov. 9, 2016 in which she encouraged them “to continue to make choices that empower and allow us to make positive changes in the world.”

Lisa Quinn is the Educational Programs Coordinator at Kennedy Museum of Art in Athens, OH, and an MA candidate in Art History at Ohio University.
AUDREY FLACK

By Cynda Benson

Since the heyday of Abstract Expressionism, Audrey Flack has been at the forefront of stylistic change in the art world, but has always striven, regardless of varying manner and medium, to capture the effect of high drama, of the heroic sublime. In her renowned Photorealist still life paintings of the 1970s, seemingly intimate subjects took on a monumental scale and revealed an element of tragedy under the surface. The Vanitas series portrayed the fleeting nature of life using iconic images of beautiful women like Marilyn Monroe. She steadfastly, even aggressively, commented on women’s experience by using the subjects of their lives, in spite of criticism. Flack shunned the cool, detached attitude of Pop and Photorealism, and instead favored symbolic themes of layered meaning. Her paintings of the early 1980s, such as *Hannah: Who She Is*, transition from still life to figurative subjects with spiritual or mythological overtones. Flack’s more recent work, no longer airbrushed compositions depicting the everyday objects of a woman’s life in heroic scale, now comprises gilded and bejewelled angels, heroines and goddesses up to thirty-five feet tall. Flack’s later sculpture reflects and codifies her concern for the universal archetype, for transcendence, for works of art which defy modernist traditions and speak directly to the spirit.

Flack began to work in three dimensions to find a more concrete medium to express herself and to reach a larger audience to heal the spiritual infirmity of the modern soul. She intends her sculptures to speak to people and restore them to health. Public sculpture, such as her 1990-91 *Civitas*, has the power to communicate her message directly to the specific intended constituency. Flack incorporates ideas from the people, their background, and their aspirations, regardless of art world notions of style and taste, and the resulting allegory embodies community ideals. From Queen Catherine to Wonder Woman, Flack produces archetypal images which create role models to inspire our daughters to find their own heroism.

To create new allegories for a new age, Flack both revives themes from classical mythology and invents new heroines with contemporary attributes. Her sculptural renditions vary from standard interpretations both stylistically and iconographically. The body type Flack chose for Diana, lean and powerful, constitutes the principal difference between this modern goddess and her predecessors. From the late classical Greek period through the nineteenth century, artists have most often portrayed the female nude as a voluptuous, sensual being. Flack rejects the softly modeled academic nudes in favor of muscular bodies with anatomical definition and strength. Flack’s Diana provides a role model for contemporary women; strong in both body and spirit, she exemplifies the self-sufficient, independent woman.

Flack reinvents traditional subjects from mythology, such as the Gorgon Medusa, through a revisionist reading of the classical texts. Flack’s early Head of Medusa, screaming, dynamic, snakes writhing in her hair, resembles the traditionally depicted appearance of Medusa. In her second version of Medusa Flack recreates the innocent young woman as a metaphor for the rape of the earth. Flack combines her positive revision of Medusa’s image with new symbols, like coral and shells, which double as reminders of her true story and metaphors for the earth. The deer skull with antlers, as an image of death, recalls both Medusa’s severed head and the potential devastation of the earth if people do not responsibly intervene before the disinterest in ecology allows its ruin. A bullet placed in her hair suggests the violence which victimized Medusa, as well as our pervasive cultural violence. The sculpture rehabilitates Medusa’s reputation and provides a healing image for ourselves and the earth. Flack’s historical and contemporary subjects create role models to inspire our daughters to find their own heroism.

Cynda Benson, Ph.D. is a professor of art history at the Savannah College of Art and Design with a specialty in American women of the 19th-20th centuries.

MARTHA ROSLER

By Shannon M. Lieberman

Martha Rosler has been making sharply intelligent, politically engaged, caustically witty art for over four decades. Initially trained as a painter, she has worked in a wide range of media including film, installation, performance, photography, and video, and she has addressed a variety of themes, ideas, and social issues. While her specific focus shifts from one work to the next, Rosler’s art has consistently interrogated systems of power, exposed the rupture between ideals and reality, and broken down artificial boundaries to encourage viewers to see new connections between ideas and events, and between themselves and others.

A Brooklyn native, Rosler moved to California in the late 1960s, where she completed graduate studies and began producing some of her most well-known photomontages. Her photomontage series *House Beautiful: Bringing the War...*
Home (1967-1972) combined images of the atrocities of the Vietnam War with the advertisements and spotless interiors featured in House Beautiful magazine. In response to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, Rosler returned to this format and created a related series, House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home, New Series (2004-2008). In one work from this series, Saddam’s Palace (2004), soldiers walk through the debris inside Hussein’s bombed out Baghdad palace while a woman in the foreground smiles as she sprays armchairs with the fabric deodorizer Febreze. Rosler’s work startles viewers, as images that are typically separated now appear in the same frame and require us to think about and connect them differently. Her work also critiques the media, suggesting the ways in which coverage of war is packaged—either made into a spectacle akin to a form of entertainment or polished in order to be passively consumed.

As testament to Rosler’s ability to create surprising, conversation-starting work, her photomontage Body Beautiful, or Beauty Knows No Pain: Hot House, or Harem (1966-1972) caused controversy in 2007 when it appeared on the catalog cover for LA MOCA’s traveling exhibition WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution. Comprising nude women Rosler cut from discarded issues of Playboy, the work prompted feminists of multiple generations to revisit fundamental questions about the kind of commentary that is possible through using sexualized images of women. Here, too, Rosler’s removal of the divisions between women seemed to create a new way of reading the pin-ups. Writing in Artforum in defense of Rosler’s work on the cover of the WACK! catalog, art historian Richard Meyer observes that, with Rosler’s reframing, the nudes “overproduce female submission to the point where it becomes something like its opposite—a wave of naked defiance.”

Rosler’s work has long blurred any division between art and activism, and one area in which this is most evident is her commitment to working against homelessness and hunger. Her project If You Lived Here… (1989) included three exhibitions and multiple public forums on housing and homelessness. Seeking to fully engage the community, Rosler not only collaborated with other artists, but also with homeless people, school children, elected officials, and local activists. In 2009, Rosler organized If You Lived Here Still…, an extension of the original project. Rosler felt a renewed sense of urgency as the number of homeless and hungry in the U.S. increased since 1989. In 2016, Rosler was the inaugural winner of The 100K Prize from The New Foundation Seattle and used the funds to create the year-long project Housing is a Human Right, a project rooted in the earlier If You Lived Here… works. Throughout the year, Rosler partnered with a variety of organizations to explore the complex relationships between business, education opportunities, local history, trauma and addiction, and homelessness as they shape Seattle’s current housing crisis.

Rosler’s multi-valent works ask viewers to think critically not only about what they see, but about what often remains hidden, suppressed, or censored. Rosler’s artwork as well as her tenacity, her unwavering commitment to art as a social practice, and the strength of her voice and vision has—and continues to—guide and inspire so many others.

Shannon M. Lieberman is a doctoral candidate in the History of Art and Architecture at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where she is completing her dissertation, “Alongside, Outside, Within, Against: Feminist Art and the American Museum, 1965-2007.”

CHARLENE TETERS

By Guarina Lopez-Davis

Born and raised in Spokane, Washington near the Spokane Indian Reservation, Charlene Teters was one of three Native American artists chosen to pursue a Master of Fine Arts at the University of Illinois in 1988. An alumna of the Institute of American Indian Arts and a graduate of the College of Santa Fe, Teters spent her life to that point living in Native communities and being educated alongside other Native students. She was raised in her culture, practicing her ceremonies and wearing traditional regalia. She was teaching the traditions of the Spokane Indians to her two children. In what she considered a rare opportunity to further her education, she accepted the offer at the University of Illinois, having never set foot on the campus or in the state. Teters was one of three Native students to enroll that year at a school with a student body of 36,000.

Teters was the subject of the 1997 documentary In Whose Honor where she described the perspective that defines her as a Native American leader:

I never looked to anything other than being a good mother...in terms of being a leader of a movement...To keep what little we have left, the fact that we even have anything today speaks to the strength of our ancestors and that is what I am protecting.

While an MFA student, Teters and her two children attended a University of Illinois basketball game. Without warning, the school mascot, Chief Illini, whose name and imagery she had seen on the campus, came bounding out at halftime. Surprised, ashamed and angered by the characterization of a “Native chief” acting out a ceremonial dance in traditional regalia for the benefit of entertaining a crowd, Teters began protesting. Sacrificing her student...
status she stood alone on campus, wearing a sign that read, “Indians are human beings not mascots.”

This singular experience of witnessing an entire culture reduced to a stereotype and dehumanized as a mascot was simply too much for her to bear. Since this pivotal incident, Teters has spent her life on the frontline of American Indian activism. Teters has pursued a career in the arts, activism, and academia, always using her voice and work to fuel a national conversation about the negative effects of racist imagery in popular culture. As an artist, Teters works in multi-media, using painting, sculpture and installations to create an atmosphere intended to provoke conversation, debate and a realization that Native Americans today are survivors of the largest genocide in American history. It is this understanding that lies at the root of much of Teters’ work and that which compels her to forge on in her fight against blatant racist caricatures.

Teters’ activism led her to found the Racial Justice Office at the National Congress of American Indians in Washington, D.C. in 1991. She has also spent much of her life working in academia at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, N.M. where she has held positions as a faculty member teaching art and Director of Alumni Relations and Student Retention. She is currently the Dean of the College of Arts and Cultural Studies at IAIA.

Teters said that activism came to her, but a life dedicated to social justice and equal rights was already imbedded in her very core. She was raised in a powerful and proud culture and she may never have intended to bring to light the genocide that befell Native people, but she turned the rage and anger at not being able to shield her children from a culturally denigrating experience into conviction, passion and a determination to rewrite American history as it had been understood. Teters has done the unimaginable and she is the embodiment of what survivors strive to be. She is a protector, a defender of cultural heritage, an educator, and a reminder to all people that ignorance only begets ignorance. Most importantly, as a Native woman she has shown that to restore one’s integrity is to restore the integrity of an entire people for generations to come.

Guarina Lopez-Davis is a fine-art photographer, archivist and historian from San Francisco, CA based in Washington, D.C. She currently works in higher education at American University.

The WCA LTA Awards were first presented in 1979 in President Jimmy Carter’s Oval Office to Isabel Bishop, Selma Burke, Alice Neel, Louise Nevelson, and Georgia O’Keeffe. The Awards were the first awards recognizing the contribution of women to the visual arts and their profound effect on society. Today, the LTA Awards continue to honor the work, vision, and commitment of women in the visual arts. Recent honorees—from Tina Dunkley to Judy Chicago, Carolee Schneemann, and Phyllis Bramson—have represented a wide range of distinguished achievement in visual arts professions. This year’s awardees are no exception. In addition to the Lifetime Achievement Awards, the annual President’s Award for Art & Activism is presented to an emerging or mid-career woman whose life and work exemplifies WCA’s mission to create community through art, education, and social activism. The award anticipates a lifetime of achievement for its recipient.

WAGE ON! Women, Art, and Money

WAGE ON! Women, Art, and Money is the national exhibition of the 2017 WCA national conference hosted at Ceres Gallery in New York City. It offers a timely opportunity to address the impact of a changing political and economic landscape through the multi-generational lens of the twenty artists in the exhibition. As juror Helga Christoffersen of the New Museum remarked:

I looked to works that took on issues of woman’s work, rights, and identity today, in ways that speak to fundamental underlying issues in our society that affect us all. . . . This exhibition is an important initiative and an example of a way to bring together a broad range of voices, opinions, and practices under a united and urgent cause.

The exhibition runs from January 31 to February 25, 2017 and continues themes set by the Minnesota WCA chapter in their expansive 2016 “The Women and Money Project.” A full-color catalog will extend the historical and geographical reach of the exhibition and be available in February 2017.

Thursday, February 16 – First Day of Conference

9:00 am-6:00 pm–WCA Book Table at CAA
Hilton Hotel, 1335 Ave of the Americas, NY, NY 10018

7:30-9:00 am–WCA CONFERENCE REGISTRATION
Marriott Courtyard / Central Park

8:00-9:00 am–WCA Welcome Conversation with President
Susan King
Marriott Courtyard, Room TBA

9:00-11:45 am–WCA Chapters Council Session
Marriott Courtyard, Room TBA

12:00-2:30 pm–WCA Caucus Meetings
JWAN, Eco-Art, International and Young WCA
Marriott Courtyard, Room TBA

3:30-5:00 pm–WCA Special Conference Event: Presentation by Shervone Neckles of the Joan Mitchell Foundation programs
Location TBA

5:30-6:00 pm–WCA Private Reception for WAGE On!
Exhibition
Ceres Gallery in Chelsea, 547 27tth, Suite 201, New York, NY 10001

6:00-8:00 pm–WAGE ON! Women, Art & Money Public Reception
Ceres Gallery

8:00-10:00 pm–Dine Around Town with WCA Friends

Friday, February 17 – Second Day of Conference

9:00-6:00 pm–WCA Book Table at CAA
Hilton Hotel, CAA Book Expo

8:30-10 am–WCA Workshop on Community Art Projects
Nonprofit arts consultant and artist Cheryl Bookout will give tips and explore funding challenges and rewards from goals to grants plus working with fiscal receiverships and sponsors.
Hilton Hotel, East Ballroom Foyer, 3rd floor

10:30-12 pm–WCA Affiliate Panel on Maternal Art Activism
Hilton Hotel, Rendezvous Trianon, 3rd floor
Requires CAA badge or single ticket.

12:00-1:30 pm–WCA Roundtable on Art & Activism
Hilton Hotel, Rendezvous Trianon, 3rd floor

1:30-3:00 pm–TFAP Affiliate Panel on Matriarchal Action & Art

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Hilton Hotel, Rendezvous Trianon, 3rd floor
Requires CAA badge or single ticket

3:15-5:00 pm–WCA Art Tour of United Nations Building
— Limited Spots! Travel by subway or taxi in small groups. Plan to arrive at least 60 minutes in advance of tour.
UN General Assembly Building. Entrance is at 46th & 1st Avenue. Must bring valid photo ID & confirm attendance in advance.

5:00-9:00 pm–WCA Art Crawl — Met, Met Breuer, Whitney, MOMA. Museums are open late - check their websites for details.
Upper East Side and other locations. Explore at your pace with WCA friends

5:30-7:30 pm–ARTexchange with Cash Bar
Hilton Hotel, Murray Hill Suite, 2nd Floor

7:00-10:00 pm–TFAP “From the Belly of the Beast” Performances
Grace Exhibition Space, 840 Broadway, 2nd Fl., Brooklyn 11206

Saturday, February 18 – Last Day of Conference

9:00-2:00pm–WCA Book Table at CAA
Hilton Hotel, CAA Book Expo

10:15-6:00 pm–The Feminist Art Project (TFAP) Day of Panels
Museum of Arts & Design, 2 Columbus Circle, NYC 10019

6:00-7:30 pm–WCA LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS VIP RECEPTION
Tickets are included in conference package.
New York Institute or Technology 1871 Broadway @ 61st St, NYC 10023

8:00-9:30pm–WCA LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS CEREMONY. Free to the public.
New York Institute or Technology 1871 Broadway @ 61st St, NYC 10023

Sunday, February 19 – National WCA Board Meeting

10:00-2:00pm–WCA National Board Meeting at the
Marriott Courtyard / Central Park Hotel
Celebrating women’s achievements in the visual arts since 1979.

WCA Annual Lifetime Achievement Awards
Saturday, February 18, 2017
For tickets and info, go to: www.nationalwca.org