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NMWA Presents *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*
September 21-December 16, 2007

Landmark Exhibition Surveys Foundations and Legacy of Feminist Art From 1965 to 1980

Washington, D.C. – The National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA) will present the first East Coast showing of ***WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution***, a landmark survey of the remarkable body of work that emerged from the relationship between art and feminism in and around the 1970s. *WACK!* will be on view from September 21 through December 16, 2007.

Organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (LAMoCA) and curated by **Dr. Connie Butler**, *WACK!* showcases some 300 works by 118 artists, including painting, sculpture, photography, film, video, and performance art.

The late '60s through the '70s marked a period of fundamental shift in women's perceptions of their own social roles which had a profound impact on contemporary art practices. *WACK!* focuses on the intersection between art and feminism during the era and captures the idealism of the nascent feminist movement.

The exhibition's "story" begins in 1965 with important proto-feminist works by Louise Bourgeois, Yoko Ono, Yvonne Rainier, and others who influenced the feminist art of the 1970s. It continues with iconic works by feminist artists such as Chantel Ackerman, Eleanor Antin, Judith Baca, Judy Chicago, Ana Mendieta, Ulrike Ottinger, Howardena Pindell, Betye Saar, Miriam Schapiro, Nancy Spero, Katherine Sieverding, and others. The exhibition ends in 1980 with early work by artists such as Cindy Sherman and Lorraine O'Grady, whose work was influenced by the first generation of feminist artists.

While the term "feminism" can be broadly defined, Stanford scholar and *WACK!* catalogue contributor Peggy Phelan states, "Feminism is the conviction that gender has been, and continues to be, a fundamental category for the organization of culture."

Although described by many as the most important artistic *movement* since World War II, feminist art is "less a movement defined by certain artistic conventions than a philosophy of art informed by gender," says Dr. Susan Fisher Sterling, NMWA chief curator and curator for the exhibition's Washington presentation.

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Feminist art was born in '60s activism that saw the rise of the Civil Rights Movement and an anti-war movement unparalleled in American history that saw the downfall of a powerful president—Lyndon Baines Johnson—and the end of a tragic and divisive war in Vietnam. The '60s and '70s saw women seizing control of their own destinies and redefining their social roles. The feminist art that emerged from this crucible was often a strident, in-your-face manifesto that expressed women's long-held anger.

“For many of the artist in *WACK!*, feminism often co-existed with political engagement in other fronts, such as race, class, and sexual orientation, which at times superseded feminism as the dominant discourse within which they preferred to situate their work,” writes Dr. Butler.

WACK! Dismantles the often canonical picture of feminist art through the inclusion of women of other geographies, formal approaches, socio-political alliances, and critical and theoretical concerns. The globalized model adopted in *WACK!* Acknowledges that even artists working in their own communities and working in relative isolation, nevertheless came together through discourse, affinity, and relationship forming a body of work that, for want of a better term, can be called “feminist.”

Even thirty and forty years out, the art continues to have the power to shock and outrage.

Many of the artists in the exhibition set out to do just that, says Sterling. “They were throwing off many of the sanitized conceptions of women and expressing overt independence and sexuality in a way that had never been acceptable before.”

A number of the works deal with sexual themes, including heterosexual, lesbian, gay, and transgender topics, in a frank manner that some may find offensive. Warnings will be placed in certain portions of the exhibition space advising visitors of potentially disturbing subject matter.

WACK! Will be presented thematically, not chronologically. Sections include: Silence and Noise/Speaking in Public; Taped and Measured; Auto-Photo; Feminine Sensibility; Gendered Preference/Body Trauma; Gendered Space; Goddess; Body as Medium/Social Sculpture; Making Art History; Abstraction; Collective Impulse/Knowledge is Power; and Pattern Assemblage.

Also included in the exhibition package will be 23 free “Guide by Cell” exhibition tours and recorded lectures by exhibition artists that can be downloaded to cell phone or listened to via computer.

WACK! Is the largest exhibition in NMWA's twenty-year history, spreading across two full floors and over 12,000 gallery feet.

After leaving NMWA, *WACK!* Will travel to P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center in Long Island City, New York (opens February 2008) and to the Vancouver Art Gallery in British Columbia, Canada (summer 2008).

Admission to the exhibition is \$10 for adults, \$8 for students and visitors 60 and over and free for NMWA members and youth 18 and under.

Exhibition Catalogue

WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue. Each artist in the exhibition is represented by a short biographical text and a selected bibliography. The catalogue presents new scholarship on individual artists and subjects related to feminism in art. Contributors include Connie Butler, Judith Russi Kirshner, Catherine Lord, Marsha Meskimmon, Richard Meyer, Helen Molesworth, Peggy Phelan, Nelly Richard, Valerie Smith, Jenni Sorkin, and Abigail Solomon Godeau. The catalogue is available from the NMWA Museum Shop for \$59.95 (member price: \$53.96) or on-line at <http://www.nmwa.org/museumShop>.

Exhibition Support

WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution is made possible by the Annenberg Foundation.

Additional generous support is provided by Geraldine and Harold Alden; The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; the National Endowment for the Arts; The Peter Norton Family Foundation; Audrey M. Irmas; The Jamie and Steve Tisch Foundation; The MOCA Contemporaries; Wells Fargo Foundation; The Broad Art Foundation; Vivian and Hans Buehler; the Barbara Lee Family Foundation Donor Advised Fund at the Boston Foundation; Étant donnés: The French-American Fund for Contemporary Art; the Robert Lehman Foundation; Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e. V., Stuttgart; the Pasadena Art Alliance; Frances Dittmer Family Foundation; the Hugh M. Hefner Foundation; Peg Yorkin; Merrill Lynch; the Fifth Floor Foundation; The Cowles Charitable Trust; Rosette V. Delug; The Herrerger Family Foundation; and the Polish Cultural Institute.

Major support is also provided by Susan Bay Nimoy and Leonard Nimoy with the members of the WACK! Women's Consortium.



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Public Programs

NMWA will host a variety of related programs in conjunction with the exhibition. Unless otherwise noted, reservations are required for all programs. Email reservations@nmwa.org or call 202-783-7370. Visit www.nmwa.org for complete schedule information.

Select programs on the following page.

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Tea with the Guerrilla Girls – October 28, 2007

Join the Guerilla Girls—the self-proclaimed “Conscience of the Art World”—for one of their signature presentations filled with “facts, humor, and fake fur.” Living proof that feminists do have a sense of humor, the Guerilla Girls use wit to address sexism and racism in the culture at large, especially the art world. The program concludes with a question-and-answer session and a reception. Presented in conjunction with *WACK!* General \$25.

NMWA's 20th Anniversary Festival of Women's Film and Media Arts – September 25-30, 2007

In commemoration of our history and to highlight exceptional and exciting new film and media works by women, NMWA is thrilled to launch its first women's film festival. Over the course of five days, NMWA's 20th Anniversary Festival of Women's Film and Media Arts will highlight the talents of outstanding contemporary filmmakers who are creating works that are both artistically innovative and socially relevant. The programs will focus on new works by prominent, established filmmakers, as well as cutting-edge works by unknown, emerging filmmakers and media artists who are exploiting the medium in provocative ways.

Lecture: An evening for Isabel Allende – November 14, 2007

Chilean journalist and novelist Isabel Allende, one of Latin America's foremost writers and part of the Latin American feminist literary awakening, speaks on her work, her life, and her inspirations. Among her best selling novels are *The House of Spirits*, *Eva Luna*, and *Daughter of Fortune*. Visit www.nmwa.org for ticket information.

NMWA at 20

The National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA), founded in 1981 and opened in April 1987, is the only museum dedicated solely to celebrating the achievements of women in the visual, performing, and literary arts. The museum contains works by more than 900 artists in its permanent collection, maintains a Library and Research Center, and conducts multidisciplinary programs for diverse audiences. In the past 20 years since its' opening the museum has presented more than 200 exhibitions, expanded its permanent collection to include over 3,600 pieces, and has a membership ranking it in the top ten museums nationally with more than 30,000 members. In celebration of the museum's 20th anniversary three ground-breaking exhibits will be presented: *The Book as Art: Twenty Years of Artists' Books from the National Museum of Women in the Arts*, *Italian Women Artists from Renaissance to Baroque*, and *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution, 1965-1980*. The museum will also inaugurate *CLARA: Database of Women Artists*TM, a Web-accessible, authoritative resource for students, scholars, and the general public. NMWA is located at 1250 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C., in a landmark building near the White House. It is open Monday–Saturday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. and Sunday, noon–5 p.m. For information, call 202-783-5000 or visit the museum's Web site at www.nmwa.org.

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