
Elke Krasny

**Archive, Care, and Conversation:
Suzanne Lacy's
International Dinner Party
in Feminist Curatorial Thought**



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Introduction

Art is a potential link between differences. It can be constructed as a bridge between people, communities, even countries, such as my 1979 project the International Dinner Party.

— Suzanne Lacy, *The Name of the Game*, 1991

Sisterhood cannot be assumed on the basis of gender; it must be forged in concrete historical and political practice and analysis.

— Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Under Western Eyes*, 1984

This publication examines Suzanne Lacy's *International Dinner Party*. On March 14, 1979, "a simultaneous world wide dinner happened on the eve of Judy Chicago's Dinner Party exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, this global project was offered as a gift to Judy Chicago, one of Lacy's mentors."¹ While Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* has since been recognised as a widely celebrated, at times most controversially discussed, icon of feminist art, which since 2007 has been permanently installed as the central piece of the newly founded Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum in New York City, the *International Dinner Party* has remained one of Suzanne Lacy's lesser known works.

Numerous events celebrated the 1979 *Dinner Party* exhibition opening. "Poetry readings, panels, and workshops ran throughout the weekend. [...] On Saturday, an all-day conference titled 'A Celebration of Women's Heritage' took place at a nearby Holiday Inn. Art critics Lucy Lippard and Jan Butterfield, art historian Ruth Iskin, Lacy and Geldon led a panel discussion in the morning on the subject of 'women's art as a vehicle for social change.'"² *The International Dinner Party* was just one among many other events. This may have contributed to the fact that it

has taken a very long time for Suzanne Lacy's 1979 art project to become recognised as a work in its own right.

So far, no study has been devoted to the *International Dinner Party*. This book presents the first in-depth feminist cultural analysis of the *International Dinner Party*. It is structured in two parts. First, it offers first an analysis of the subjects of the *International Dinner Party*, then going on to extend some of the insights uncovered through its analysis over time.

The initial focus is on the subjects of the *International Dinner Party*: the 2,000 women who staged international dinner parties and sent telegrams to the museum where their arrival was marked by Lacy on a large black-and-white map of the world.

I argue that the *International Dinner Party* exists in the following three modes: first, as a living artwork; second, as an installation resulting from Suzanne Lacy's performance at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; third, as an archive of feminist messages from 1979. The first part of my argument explores both the living artwork and its representation as the artist's performance-installation via the documents kept by Suzanne Lacy in the *International Dinner Party* Archive. Here, historical research and a theory-based approach are brought together to analyse this example of conceptual social feminist art practice. I examine the historically gendered division of art production and art reception and introduce the concept of the "emancipated spectatress." I argue that the map is the ideological pivot through which feminism's entanglement in historical conditions and power relations becomes legible. I claim that the unresolved paradoxes of participation that can be identified in the differences between the living artwork and the artist's performance-installation play out on the map.

The second part of my argument extends the 1979 art project temporally, first toward the past and then toward the contemporary moment. I do so by placing the *International Dinner Party* within feminist curatorial thought.³ The structure of this artwork reveals a model of art-making based upon conversation with others. Such art-making differs profoundly from the concept of the artist-as-genius as the sole producer of art. *The International Dinner Party* bridges the domestic sphere and the public sphere. This inspired my search for a historical model of art as conversation bridging the domestic sphere and the public sphere. I suggest here that the historical precedent of such a model presents itself in the women-led Jewish salon culture of Berlin and Vienna around 1800. The salonière provided the space and the knowledge, the material and immaterial support necessary for conversations as artmaking with others. In today's institutional frameworks and the languages of the globalised art world, the historical subject position occupied by the *salonière* becomes legible as the curator of conversations. Yet, museum studies and writing

on the history of curating have so far never considered the inclusion of the *salonnière*. I propose here the salon model and its conversational complex. This is an intervention into the hegemonic narratives of the historiography of curating. I claim that today the *International Dinner Party*, understood as an ad-hoc and collectively produced archive, affords a search for 1979 feminism. I took this as the point of departure for the concept of my PhD exhibition. The exhibition *Suzanne Lacy's International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought* places Lacy's work in the context of four different 21st-century feminist and queer feminist artistic and curatorial collectives who engage archivism to raise consciousness and reclaim agency under the economic and political conditions of the austere and precarious contemporary moment. The four collectives are *Aktion Arkiv*, *radical practices of collective care*, *Red Min(e)d*, and *Queering Yerevan*. My PhD exhibition sought to test feminist exhibition making as a conversation-based practice that could be constructed as a bridge between past and contemporary conversations via the archive as its method of search and action. The curatorial intent differed from chronological feminist group shows or survey shows, as well as from feminist monographic exhibitions. Here, feminism is made legible as an ongoing location-specific and situation-specific project across aesthetic, social and political relations—as much a conversation with past feminism as with feminism's future.⁴

Getting to Know the International Dinner Party

While other works by Suzanne Lacy, particularly *Three Weeks in May* (1977), *In Mourning and in Rage* (1977), and *The Oakland Projects* (1991–2001), have become canonical examples in art history and art theory, more specifically the histories and theories of activist art, community art, feminist art, performance art, and socially engaged art, the same is not true for the *International Dinner Party*. This artwork has remained lesser known and has not yielded much scholarly analysis.⁵ I first read about the *International Dinner Party* in Suzanne Lacy's 2010 *Leaving Art: Writings on Performance, Politics, and Publics, 1974–2007*. In this volume of collected writings, she mentions the *International Dinner Party* once in her 1991 essay “The Name of the Game.” Here, Lacy states the following: “Art is a potential link across differences. It can be constructed as a bridge between people, communities, even countries, such as my 1979 project *The International Dinner Party*.”⁶ This sentence, which serves as the epithet to my introduction here, provoked my initial interest. I looked up the footnote that followed this sentence. It led to this information: “The International Dinner Party, with Linda Pruesse, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1979. A ‘gift’ performance to Judy Chicago on the grand opening of the Dinner Party, this installation documented the simultaneous

dinner parties of over two thousand women around the world meeting to honor women in their own communities. Described by Moira Roth in *Art in America* 68 (April 1980):⁷ I was intrigued by the impressive scale of the project, and by the international scope of feminist subjects I imagined it to entail. I followed the reference provided and looked up Moira Roth's article, from which I quote at length here:

In Ghana, West Africa, a group of women dine together and honor women of their choice. From New Zealand comes news of another such dinner at the same time. The guests of honor in Houston are Kathe Kollwitz and Artemisia Gentileschi; in Cornwall Ontario, "Mary Mack, first Cornwall women alderman," and in Ohio, Lora Sebrian, 1881–1974, quilt maker. Edinburgh feminists dedicated their dinner to women's struggles in Iran, and women sitting at an Athenian dinner table compose a cable to Suzanne Lacy, the organizer of this international dinner party: "In Greece women write their difficult story stop every day is hard work stop deepest appreciation for your movement stop."⁸

Roth's description confirmed my initial response to the piece. The project appeared to be a striking combination of conceptually focused coherence and an abundance of multiple articulations that were enabled by a convivial and self-supporting structure. Feminism of the 1970s has been thoroughly criticised for its Western-centric bias, its US hegemony, as well as its structures based on race and class. Lacy's *International Dinner Party* presents a 1970s attempt to bridge individual and location-specific feminist voices and global women's activism.

The reach of this art event encompassed the articulations of a wide range of feminist voices, and, simultaneously, the global scope of feminism. I argue here that "Suzanne Lacy's Dinner Parties," the title chosen by Moira Roth for her 1980 article, has to be addressed with respect to feminist politics and philosophical ontology: singular plural.

The International Dinner Party joined many dinner parties. A structural analysis of the work translates into a radical feminist proposition: feminism (International Dinner Party) based upon feminisms (international dinner parties) and/or feminisms (international dinner parties) based upon feminism (International Dinner Party). The singular-plural constellation resonates with Jean-Luc Nancy's 2000 essay "Being Singular Plural."⁹ Even though, one might think at first that feminist thought and feminist politics of the 1970s is firmly linked with alliance-building, consciousness-raising, and the struggles for the rights to economic, political, and sexual self-determination, I claim that it will be meaningful to turn to Jean-Luc Nancy's ontological dimension of *Being Singular Plural*. Jean-Luc Nancy asks: "How are we with one another? [...] At what point

must ontology become ... what? Become conversation? [...] The question of Being and the meaning of Being has become the question of being-with and of being together (in the sense of the world). [...] What is the being-with of Being?"¹⁰ Finding ways to go beyond the individual subject and its subjectivity in living the space between being-with and Being is a question to and in feminist thought.¹¹

I continued to follow the trail of Moira Roth's writing on the *International Dinner Party*. This led me to her 1989 essay "Autobiography, Theater, Mysticism and Politics: Women's Performance Art in Southern California." In this text, written ten years after the event,¹³ feminist art historian Roth, herself a former CalArts student of Judy Chicago, writes the following:

Cables and telegrams, often of a highly personal nature, describing dinner parties all over the world by and for women, pour into the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Suzanne Lacy planned this global dinner party as a contribution to the opening festivities for Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party*. This International Dinner Party attracted women participants outside the art realm, as Lacy's mailing list had contained a wide range of women's organizations. It was a feat of organization on a large scale which still allowed private personal experiences—not an easy combination to achieve. The International Dinner Party stands for a new genre of public and positive feminist performance art remote from the pain, anger, lamentations and private audiences of the early 1970s.¹⁴

Three aspects are of interest here: first, women from outside the art context participated in an art event; second, the large scale was based upon a private support structure which was made public in the museum installation; third, the comparison between the early 1970s and the late 1970s follows a narrative convention of feminist historiography, namely the advancement trope that pivots around the modernist old/new dichotomy. Roth's contribution to the *Performance Anthology: Source Book of California Performance Art* includes a documentary photograph showing an installation view of the *International Dinner Party* at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.¹⁵ Suzanne Lacy stands in front of a large map of the world. She puts triangles on the map. Next to the map there appears a large text panel.

Even though the photograph was taken at an oblique angle so the text is a bit distorted, I was still able to read it: "As I watched The Dinner Party grow and draw near completion, I wanted to acknowledge Judy and the people who worked on it, through a tribute to their work with my own. Thus the International Dinner Party event came into being, a performance structure for the expression of the contemporary lives and living connections of women around the world [...]"¹⁶ I discerned here a

nuanced dichotomy within the gift tribute to Lacy's teacher and mentor.¹⁷ Lacy's *International Dinner Party* was clearly focused on the present time, the living experiences and connections between all women of all cultures round the world, while Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* monument honours important historical women from Western history. I argue that the structure Suzanne Lacy built, both in material and immaterial terms, identified and navigated a number of binaries: local-global, feminism-feminisms, individual-collective, international-Western, past-present, art-activism, participation-authorship, conceptual-social. The scale and the complexities of the *International Dinner Party* therefore warrant a cultural analysis recognising this artwork as an exemplar of conceptual social feminist art practice based upon conversation.¹⁸

On Method

The chapter "Feminist Thought and Curating: On Method" lays out the conceptual framework that 'builds on and adds to conversations with others.' Feminist thought is a transformative political project. Understood as such, feminist thought can never reach its end. Feminism opens the question of feminism. Feminist thought always extends to a complex past and beyond the contemporary moment. Feminist standpoint theory's emphasis on situated knowledge is of key relevance to the critical analysis of the multi-location constellation of the *International Dinner Party*. Feminist thought has established a nuanced and elaborate critique of progress-centric and linear historiographical narratives. This extends to a thorough critique of feminism's own historiography with its progress-centric wave model premised by an old/new dichotomy. The work of Clare Hemmings provides important insights into the chronopolitics of feminist thought's historiography. I join Hemmings' analysis with the concept of critical cartography as developed by feminist art historian Marsha Meskimmon to address the politics of time and location. This is critical to illuminate the Western-centric, US-centric, and, more recently, global-centric bias of feminist art history writing. I connect the concept of critical chronopolitical cartography with Amelia Jones' work on binaries and with her concept of queer feminist durationality as a way of relating to artworks over time. I extend queer feminist durationality toward archives and conversations. Throughout, I adhere to Sarah Bracke and Maria Puig de la Bellacasa's politics of 'better with/because of' those who came before us in order to counteract hegemonic chronopolitics.

I argue here that thought, like art-making or curating, does not happen in isolation, but rather in conversation. The Latin root *conversatio* means contact, moral conduct, and way of living.¹⁹ Conversation as a way to conduct one's life is co-implicated with others; it includes the turn to others. My analysis of the *International Dinner Party* seeks to critically unfold

its subjects, then going on to extend the insights gained from this analysis to placing the *International Dinner Party* in feminist curatorial thought.

The Subjects of the International Dinner Party:

A Feminist Cultural Analysis

Part One of this book consists of two chapters and provides a feminist cultural analysis of the conceptual and social dimensions of the *International Dinner Party*. While Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* "pays homage to 39 women who have been major contributors to Western Civilization, and lists 999 others who have left their mark," the *International Dinner Party* set out "to expand the idea of honoring women from Western History to encompass living women of all cultures."²⁰ Lacy made use of community-organising strategies to engage women from around the world in the art project. The women were invited to host dinners on the evening of the *Dinner Party* opening. They were asked to honour a woman in their own region and to send messages they wanted to share from their dinners via telegram to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. In a several hours-long performance, Lacy marked their places of origin upon the arrival of the telegrams at the museum by putting a red triangle on a map of the world. Demonstrating "global women's activism"²¹ the worldwide dinner happening was meant to "create change."²² Effectively joining art-making and community activism, the artwork—at once conversation art, mail art, participatory dinner happening, performance structure, domestic art, museum art, and artist's performance-installation—centrally raises the issues of emancipated spectating and putting on the map.

The chapter "The Emancipated Spectatress Amongst Equal Listeners" introduces the subjects of the *International Dinner Party*. Subjects are understood here on the following three levels: first, the 2,000 women participants or, as I prefer to refer to them, contributors; second, the feminist subject matters raised in their messages; third, philosophical and art theoretical issues concerning the subject position. This chapter introduces the contributing women and the subject matters addressed in their telegrams, mailgrams, postcards, and letters. The situated knowledges and politics of locations specific to the contributors are shared in the messages written from the worldwide conversations on the occasion of the *International Dinner Party* event.²³ I combine here a research-based approach to the subjects of the *International Dinner Party* event with positions developed by philosophers Jacques Rancière and Jean-Luc Nancy as well as feminist art historian Amelia Jones. The *International Dinner Party* reveals a structure within which individual contributions formed a collective work. This was based upon a conceptual participatory strategy that allowed for feminist subjects to become situated at once with/in and across the aesthetic, the social, and the political. All the feminist subjects

who took part in the making of this artwork were performers and participants, spectatresses and listeners, creatresses and recipients. The piece was not created in isolation, but rather in conversation. Departing from Rancière's concept of the emancipated spectator,²⁴ I will develop here the concept of the emancipated spectatress. Participating in the *International Dinner Party*, the emancipated spectatress is attentively listening, laughing out loud, frowning sternly, nodding in agreement, having difficulty stopping herself from interrupting in disagreement, or smiling at the others round the dinner table with pleasure. She is conversing. Conversations are at once aesthetic, convivial, social, and political. Jean-Luc Nancy has drawn the attention to the fact that "co" means with, and he has pointed out words that begin with "co," such as community, communism, and collaboration or, as I want to emphasise, conversation.²⁵ This leads to the concept of a subject co-emerging and co-depending on being with others.²⁶ Amelia Jones works through the Western concept of art as "identified with the individual" and as "set apart in a binary relation to the subjects of making and viewing or judging."²⁷ The *International Dinner Party* is conversation-based and thus intervenes into the hegemonic historical construction of the reception and production of art set apart in a binary relation. Lacy's concept effectively allows for an emancipated spectatress to co-emerge in being together with others and making the artwork together with them.

The chapter "Putting on the Map: The International Dinner Parties" takes its point of departure from the aforementioned photograph that documented Lacy as she put triangles on a large map of the world to mark the arrival of telegrams from the simultaneous worldwide dinner parties.²⁸ The artist put the participants on the map. Participatory art has been most controversially discussed in the context of contemporary art-making.²⁹ I explore participation as an analytical category in order to work out what it means to be part of or to share something in conceptual, material, social, and spatial terms. I discern five levels of participation constitutive to the structure of the *International Dinner Party*. These five levels are embodied in the following five elements: the photograph (documenting the performance installation at the *San Francisco Museum of Modern Art*); the tribute (the piece was dedicated as a gift to Judy Chicago); the museum (the institutional space bound up with issues of representation, historical legacy, exclusion, and inclusion); the women and their dinner contributions (the 2,000 women who held dinners in 200 different cities round the world and sent telegram messages to the artist performing the process of mapping at the museum); the map (a black-and-white map of the world takes center stage in the installation and demonstrates the cartography of worldwide dinners). I seek to analyse how the act of taking part in as well as of sharing in navigates complex relations of production,

resources, representation, power, knowledge, and authorship. Politically and aesthetically, participation negotiates horizontality and relationality. Participation leads to co-implication, co-dependence, and co-emergence.

The International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought

The two chapters of the second part of this book place *The International Dinner Party* within feminist curatorial thought.

“The Salon Model: The Conversational Complex” places conversations within the historiography of curating. The structure of the 1979 *International Dinner Party* that bridged the domestic sphere’s private conversations and the public sphere of the museum inspired my search for a historical precedent constructing such a bridge. I propose here that the women-led Jewish salons in Berlin and Vienna around 1800 present such a historical precedent. I argue that the parallel and unconnected histories of conversations and exhibitions and their respective sites, salons and museums, have to be joined within the history and theory of curating.³⁰ This has far-reaching implications concerning the author-centric subject formation of today’s curator. Here, I suggest a conversational complex analogous to the exhibitionary complex and seek to work out the concept of the curator-as-carer in contrast to the curator-as-author. The museum has attracted much scholarly and theoretical attention as a key institution of modern culture. This has led to the emergence of a field of study, namely museum studies or museology. “Salons were among the first institutions of modern culture.”³¹ This has not led to the establishment of a field called salon studies or salonology. The writings of Jeremy Bentham are central to understanding the logics of the salon model as well as the museum model. Jeremy Bentham’s writing on the penal system of confinement has, via Michel Foucault, been key to Tony Bennett’s proposal of the exhibitionary complex, a most influential concept in museum studies.³² I demonstrate, via Leela Gandhi, that Jeremy Bentham’s writing on conversing is central to my proposal of the conversational complex.³³ While the exhibitionary complex is bound up with a vertical axis of power, the conversational complex is based upon horizontality and relationality. In my analysis of the salon model, in contrast to the museum model, I use *curare*, the etymological Latin root of the word curate, on an epistemological level. The Latin word *curare* translates into care, service, maintenance, healing, management, organisation, procurement, provision, and distribution of resources. I propose joining the curator-as-author concept with a curator-as-carer concept. Nathalie Heinrich and Michael Pollak have analysed the passage from “curator to creator” that effectively underpins the curator-as-author concept.³⁴ Via Catherine M. Soussloff’s work, I traced an analogous passage from craftsman to artist that occurred during the Early Modern Period.³⁵ The curator-as-author was modelled after

the artist-as-genius. This has far-reaching implications for the positionality of the woman artist on one hand, and for the dissociation between curating and care on the other hand due to the risk of feminisation associated with care (work). This chapter weaves together the following three interventions into the history and theory of curating: first, a parallel history of conversations and exhibitions connected to the private sphere of the salon and the public sphere of the museum which both contributed to the historical formation of the subject position we today refer to as curator; second, the etymological perspective of care in terms of its epistemological relevance; third, understanding care as productive work created in conversation with others.

The chapter “Emergent Archives: The *Suzanne Lacy’s International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought* Exhibition” deals with my PhD exhibition. Via my cultural analysis of the *International Dinner Party*, I gained the insight that the telegrams and letters constitute a collectively created ad-hoc archive of worldwide 1979 feminism. While never planned as an archive, taken together, all the messages the 2,000 women contributors sent from their dinner parties form a self-instantiated archive that captures an international moment of feminist time. This was the point of departure for developing a curatorial concept engaging with archivism and conversation.

I employ the following two methods for feminist curating: placing (Amelia Jones) and searching (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak). Placing is a feminist curatorial method owed to the work of Amelia Jones. Jones developed placing in order to critically contextualise feminist art. In 1996, she curated the *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago’s Dinner Party in Feminist Art History* exhibition at the Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center in Los Angeles.³⁶ Henry Hopkins, who had been the director of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art at the time of Judy Chicago’s first showing of the *Dinner Party*, invited Amelia Jones to act as the curator to show Chicago’s piece more than twenty years after its premiere. Jones decided to place Judy Chicago’s work in the context of art history and to work against the notion of the isolated genius making art.³⁷ Searching is a feminist method in post-colonial theory put forward by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her essay “The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives.” Spivak addresses the holes and silences in the colonial archive of imperialism. At the same time, Spivak demonstrates that one can search the archive differently to challenge and overcome its hegemonic silencing. Searching also refers to the search for a different feminism conscious of not silencing feminisms in their plural existence.

I placed the *International Dinner Party* in the context of four feminist as well as queer feminist art-based and curatorial collectives, which all engage the archive as method. By doing so, I seek to capture a global

moment of feminist and queer feminist time that is based upon archivism, a term that alludes to both the archive and activism. The four collectives are: *Queering Yerevan* (since 2007), *Red Min(e)d* (since 2012), *radical practices of collective care* (since 2012), and *Aktion Arkiv* (since 2013). They bridge feminist knowledge production, political issues, conversations, communities, and the art context. They make use of the archive as a live method based upon conversing, reporting out, and sharing with others.

With my PhD exhibition, I sought to work out new ways of feminist curating that respond critically to the fraught contemporary moment and engage with feminism's past in order to move toward feminist futures. I sought to show that there could be aesthetically relevant, politically conscious, and socially engaged feminist curating that connected the archive and conversation within the exhibition format. And I sought to show that there are ways of developing feminist curating further beyond the hegemonic formats of the large survey show or the monographic single-artist exhibition. The 21st century has witnessed a number of large-scale and high-profile feminist exhibitions. In 2004, Stella Rollig, then newly appointed director of the Lentos Museum in Linz, Austria, "emptied out the entire museum to make room for [...] an exhibition that would display only the work of female artists" from the collection.³⁸

The year 2007 was a prolific year in terms of feminist art exhibitions, including *Global Feminisms* at the Brooklyn Museum, New York, curated by Linda Nochlin and Maura Reilly. The two curators aimed for a transnational show dedicated to showing differences in order to make, in their own words, "feminism a plural noun" in defiance of the notion of "unitary feminism" and the construction of a "timeless woman". Connie Butler curated *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles. The curator describes her ambition "to make the case that feminism's impact on art of the 1970s constitutes the most influential international 'movement' of any during the postwar period." Butler invokes "bell hook's proposal to resignify the term 'feminist movement', to deliver it from its nomenclatorial fixity and reconnect it to the verb 'to move'."³⁹

While the scale of these exhibitions was definitely impressive and the books published on the occasion of the exhibitions are troughs of knowledge, there are some words of caution I would like to raise. These exhibitions very much follow a globalised pattern of trend-based, large-scale exhibition-making. Ultimately, one trend follows the other. This bears the risk of unwillingly inscribing feminism into globalised exhibition and museum logics as a trend rather than a transformative political project.

These impressively large exhibitions contribute to defining and freezing feminist art as a historical movement. This runs counter to feminism resisting definition as well as to feminism as an ongoing project. Additionally, the exhibitions bore the risk of declaring the art shown canonical to the exclusion of other kinds of art-making also considered feminist. Even though this is counter-intentional to what many of the curators may have wanted, they contributed to packaging feminism as marketable. Amelia Jones has raised these concerns: "My 'critique' was aimed less at the shows themselves than at the overall tendency of the art world (art market) to latch onto sound-byte versions of complex movements and ideas in order to market them as the next 'new' thing."⁴⁰ Most of these large-scale survey exhibitions were very much premised on competitive and masculinist categories of impact and success. While I am not at all against impact or success, I would like to see more of a feminist re/claiming and re/dressing of what impact and success can, could and should be. The exhibition *Suzanne Lacy's International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought* sought to position scale in a very different manner from the large-scale exhibitions described above. The exhibition was not large-scale in terms of the number of artists invited, square meters filled with artworks, and budgetary resources to spend, but rather large-scale in terms of issues raised, open-ended questions asked, and contributors to conversations included. The exhibition did not privilege the scopic regime. In the spatially challenging situation of the gallery at the University for the Arts Zurich, I sought to create a clear and focused structure that would give as much support as possible to concentrate on watching, listening, and reading archived conversations.⁴¹ These conversations came in different media: written, filmed, and audiotaped. And, with this setting, I hoped to inspire new conversations.

Curatorially, I employed the strategy of placing the *International Dinner Party* in the context of four feminist and queer feminist collectives that were all founded around or after the 2008 economic/financial crisis. The exhibition evidenced the importance of situated knowledge and politics of location. All the practices chosen were from a complex contemporary context that went beyond the simple equation that living and working in a European context is premised by Western-centricity. The four practices are all responsive to the concrete historic conditions of transitionality in which they have chosen to become active. *Queering Yerevan* acts with/in the connectivities of transnational Armenian diasporas as well as the post-Soviet Armenian reality of the former Eastern Bloc in the geographical Eurasian borderland, that was considered the, at times orientalist, South in the territory of the former USSR. *Red Min(e)d* acts across what they chose to call the post-Yugoslav space. The four members live and work in Belgrade, Ljubljana, Munich, and Sarajevo. This places *Red Min(e)d* both

within the EU as well as outside the EU. The space they are working in/on is marked by diaspora, migration, and politics of language and memory. The situation is characterised by the dissolution of socialism, the post-war conditions of ex-Yugoslavia, as well as the past belonging to the Non-Aligned Movement. The members of *radical practices of collective care* live and work in Austria, Spain, and the UK. Their practice is a response to the 2008 financial and economic crisis and how this crisis played out differently with regard to the concrete conditions in these different locations. The members of *Aktion Arkiv* live and work in Stockholm; two have moved to Sweden from other countries. They respond to the dissolution and transformation of the Swedish welfare state and to local situations of globalised immigration. These four feminist and queer feminist collectives have not set out to transform the art world at large. Rather they use the art context to articulate their social politics, to insert their knowledge, to share concerns, to have lively conversations, and to employ the archive as their method. The exhibition *Suzanne Lacy's International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought* intersects archive, care, and conversation.

Curating Conversations

In theory and practice, my work builds on conversations with others. I am indebted to, influenced by, and contribute to the work of activists, artists, colleagues, curators, family members, feminists, friends, philosophers, researchers, scholars, students, teachers, and many others. Throughout the process, it was my aim to discuss and share issues raised by my research as well as insights gained from it with others. Therefore, I curated three conversation-based, discursive events,⁴² presented papers and gave lectures.⁴³

Before describing the three events I curated, I would like to explain how situated knowledge and politics of location play out with regard to where I live and work. I live in Vienna, Austria, and I work there as well as in many other places. Issues that are raised by the *International Dinner Party*, such as bridging differences, global women's activism, transnational collaboration, communities, and politics of remembrance, are therefore addressed in my work from both a situated knowledge perspective of localised and globalised politics of location. I am identified as part of what in the German-speaking context of Austria is referred to as majority society. I live in a post-Nazi context⁴⁴ and a contemporary immigrant central European society. Today, 36% of Vienna's population has an immigrant background.⁴⁵ The historical legacies of the colonialism of the Habsburg Empire, Fascism and the Holocaust as well as the contested political situation with regard to histories of labour immigration since the mid-1960s, globalised immigration, refugees, and asylum seekers are part of my everyday urban experience in Vienna. Not to forget about the presence of witnessing and experiencing the ongoing processes of sexualisation, racialisation,

feminisation, and other ways of othering subjects. With regard to gendered economic inequality, Austria is penultimate, before Estonia, within the EU context. “The gender pay gap amounted to 19% for full-time earners in 2011 and to 23% for hourly wages in 2013. Gaps remained large despite a faster reduction in most of the similar countries in the 2000s. [...] According to existing evidence, and before statistically controlling for other factors, the wage gap is significantly higher for women with children than women without.”⁴⁶ Statistical and economic gender inequality, the so-called hard facts, are one thing. The everyday feelings of living in a society marked by structural patriarchy, xenophobia, sexism, and racism are another thing. It is from this specific context and through my practice, which is oriented toward international exchange and transnational collaboration, that I seek to understand what feminist thought as well as feminist curating can do today. The discursive events I curated were concerned with issues that relate to questions raised by the *International Dinner Party*. Topics included activism, archiving, feminism, socially involved and politically conscious art, education, feminist curating, international collaboration and exchange, public art, politics of remembrance, structures of support, self-organisation, and solidarity.

In winter 2012, I invited a number of activists, artists, curators, researchers, and scholars to the two-day closed meeting, *Women's Movements: Feminist Agency. Intersections of Activism, Archiving, Art History, Critical Research, Curating, Education, Feminisms and Politics of Remembrance*. This meeting was generously hosted by < rotor > association for contemporary art Graz, thanks to my curator friend Margarethe Makovec, who together with Anton Lederer is the founding director of < rotor >. For two days, November 30 and December 1, 2012, the following participants presented, discussed, debated, exchanged, ate, and laughed together: Carla Bobadilla, artist, Vienna; Angela Dimitrakaki, Lecturer in Contemporary Art, University of Edinburgh; N'Gone Fall, independent curator, Dakar and Paris; Susanna Gyulamiryan, independent art critic and curator, Yerevan; Sol Haring, freelance academic researcher, lecturer at the Universities of Graz and Klagenfurt; Elke Krasny, curator and cultural theorist; Margarethe Makovec, curator and founding director of < rotor > association for contemporary art, Graz; Karin Ondas, director of DOKU Women's Documentation, Research and Educational Centre, Graz; Lara Perry, art historian, principal lecturer, School of Humanities, University of Brighton; Dorothee Richter, art historian and curator, Director of the Postgraduate Program in Curating, Institute Cultural Studies, University of Fine Arts, Zurich; Jelena Petrović, part of the curatorial collective Red Min(e)d, Belgrade; Miriam Westen, Curator of Contemporary Art, Museum voor Moderne Kunst, Arnhem; Julia Wieger, artist, board member of the VBKÖ The Austrian Association of Women Artists, Vienna.⁴⁷



Women's Movements: Feminist Agency,
rotor association for contemporary arts Graz,
November 30 and December 1, 2012.
N'Gone Fall (speaker),
left: Dorothee Richter, Mirjam Westen,
right: Jelena Petrović, Margarethe Makovec,
Julia Wieger



Women's Movements: Feminist Agency,
rotor association for contemporary arts Graz,
November 30 and December 1, 2012.
left: Dorothee Richter, Susanna Gualmiryan,
Mirjam Westen, Jelena Petrović,
right: Eva Merian (rotor, team member),
Viola Bianchetti (rotor, team member),
Lara Perry, Carla Bobadilla, Julia Wieger



How to Identify with Difference?
Speaker: Amelia Jones; Seated: Suzana Milevska
and Mechtild Widrich,
Kunstraum Niederösterreich, Vienna,
January 30, 2013
photograph by eSel



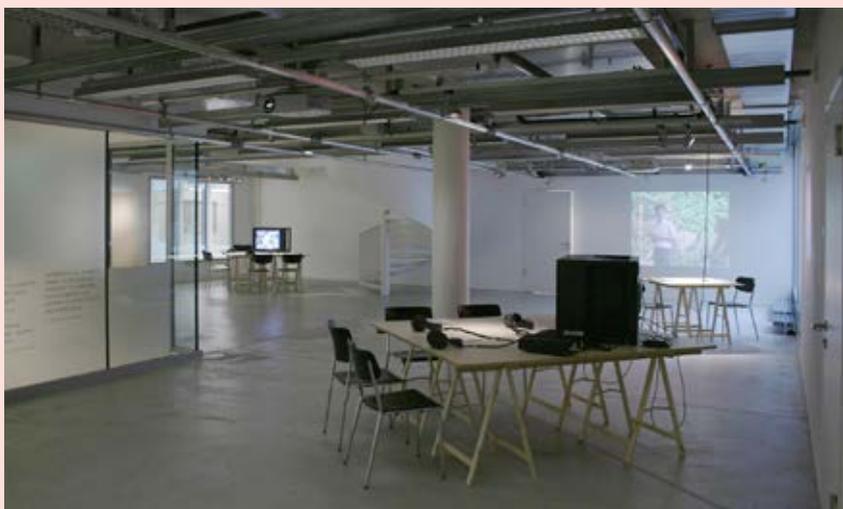
How to Identify with Difference?
Speaker: Ines Doujak,
Kunstraum Niederösterreich, Vienna,
January 30, 2013
photograph by eSel



Vulnerability and Resistance.
The Public Dis/Appearance of Bodies
 symposium: Gabi Ngcobo,
 Kunstraum Niederösterreich, Vienna,
 January 30, 2014.
 photograph by eSel



Vulnerability and Resistance.
The Public Dis/Appearance of Bodies,
 symposium: Pelin Tan, KhanAdalat,
 Marissa Lobo, and Clifford Erinwionghae,
 Kunstraum Niederösterreich, Vienna,
 January 30, 2014
 photograph by eSel



Suzanne Lacy's International Dinner Party
in feminist curatorial thought
 Gallery, Toni-Areal, ZHdK Zurich University
 of the Arts, March 20–April 13, 2015
 photograph by Alexander Schuh

On January 30, 2013, the one-day public symposium *How to Identify with Difference? Doing Art in the Public Realm* took place at Kunstraum Niederoesterreich in Vienna. The following text is from the invitation to the symposium:

In the context of globalised art production, history equally becomes a circulating resource and a challenge as how to address the specificities of local publics in the politics of remembrance. Articulations in public space, ranging from performances to monuments, are perceived as both, critical negotiators and crucial identifiers. The symposium “How to Identify with Difference” aims to foster transnational and cross-disciplinary exchange and debate about the legacy and contemporary redefinitions of feminist practices between art and activism navigating the troubled territories of identifications and the ongoing negotiation of history in the public realm.⁴⁸

Invited speakers included Ines Doujak, artist, Vienna;⁴⁹ Amelia Jones, art historian, curator, Montréal;⁵⁰ Elke Krasny, curator and cultural theorist, Vienna;⁵¹ Suzana Milevska, curator, Skopje;⁵² Maayan Sheleff, curator, Tel Aviv;⁵³ and Mechtild Widrich, art historian, Zurich.⁵⁴

The speakers addressed issues of identification, politics of location, artistic strategies of remembrance via monuments as well as performances. Amelia Jones’ focus was on feminist artistic practices of the 1970s and directly related to Suzanne Lacy’s work. I had also invited Suzanne Lacy to join the symposium, but due to conflicting schedules with her work at Tate Modern she was not able to give her lecture as originally planned.

On January 30, 2014, the symposium *Vulnerability and Resistance. The Public Dis/Appearance of Bodies*, which I curated and moderated, took place at Kunstraum Niederoesterreich, Vienna. This is a short summary of the symposium’s intent:

The struggles over what is public space, over how bodies will be supported, over what it means to have the right to have rights are fundamental ones. Contemporary politics regarding the square and the street have led to surprising alliances, ones that are self-organizing, self-instituting, feminist strategies, and critical artistic and curatorial practices. Affective and communicative labour produce new radical relationalities between self and other. At the same time, the vulnerability, fragility, and precarity of bodies and their right to support becomes apparent. The symposium *Vulnerability and Resistance. The Public Dis/Appearance of Bodies* addresses these complexly intertwined issues and aims to foster trans-local and post-disciplinary exchange and debate.⁵⁵

Speakers included Khan Adalat Refugee Activist, Refugees Protest Camp Vienna, Clifford Erinmwionghae Refugee Activist, Refugees Protest Camp; Marissa Lobo, artist and activist, Vienna⁵⁶; Anne Elizabeth Moore, artist and editor,⁵⁷ Chicago; Gabi Ngcobo, curator and artist, co-founder of the collaborative platform “Center for Historical Reenactments”, Johannesburg⁵⁸; and Pelin Tan, sociologist and curator, Mardin.⁵⁹

In Conclusion

I seek to gain new insights into feminist art-making, archivism, conversations, and curating-as-caring. Throughout, my work is based upon feminist thought and links historical research, cultural analysis, curating, and conversations with other thinkers. With this feminist cultural analysis of a lesser-known work by Suzanne Lacy that so far has not received sufficient scholarly attention, I aim to contribute to the knowledge production on conceptual social feminist art practice, in particular conversation-based art practice. With the salon model and its conversational complex, I propose an intervention into museum studies and the historiography of curating. I hope to make a contribution to the emerging feminist historiography of curating/the historiography of feminist curating.⁶⁰ With my PhD exhibition I seek to develop a model of feminist curating that counteracts hegemonic narratives of feminism as well as of feminist art and I seek to explore new ways of bridging archive, conversation, and exhibition.

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- 1 ——— Suzanne Lacy, *International Dinner Party*, accessed December 10, 2011, <http://www.suzannelacy.com/international-dinner-party/>. Since accessing this page, the artist’s website has undergone an extensive update. The version I cite here can no longer be accessed online.
 - 2 ——— Jane F. Gerhard, *The Dinner Party: Judy Chicago and the Power of Popular Feminism, 1970–2007* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2013), 164.
 - 3 ——— The feminist curatorial method of placing was put forward by Amelia Jones in her 1996 *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago’s Dinner Party in Feminist Art History* exhibition. See: Amelia Jones, ed. *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago’s Dinner Party in Feminist Art History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press at the Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center, 1996).
 - 4 ——— Throughout this introduction, I have used footnotes to provide substantial information on the research process and the practice-based components that centrally informed the theoretical analysis.
 - 5 ——— The following examples illustrate the contexts of activism, feminism, performance, and pedagogy, in which Suzanne Lacy’s works have been cited as exemplar: *Three Weeks in May* is cited as a key example in the

following essays and book chapters: Jeff Kelley, "The Body Politics of Suzanne Lacy," in Nina Felshin, *But is it Art: The Spirit of Art as Activism* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), 221–249; Charles R. Garoian, "Understanding Performance Art as Curriculum Text: The Community-based Pedagogy of Suzanne Lacy," in *Performing Pedagogy: Toward an Art of Politics* (Albany: State University of New York, 1999), 125–158; Laura Meyer, "Constructing a New Paradigm: European American Women Artists in California 1950–2000," in *Art, Women, California 1950–2000: Parallels and Intersections*, eds. Diana Burgess Fuller and Daniela Salvioni (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2002), 104; Jan Cohen-Kunz, *Local Acts: Community-Based Performance in the United States* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 31. Vivien Green Fryd, "Suzanne Lacy's Three Weeks in May: Feminist Activist Performance Art as 'Expanded Public Pedagogy,'" *NWSA Journal* 19:1 (Spring 2007): 23–38; Michelle Moravec, "Feminist Art and Activism in Public Spaces: A Case Study of Los Angeles in the 1970s," in *Art and the Artist in Society*, eds. José Jiménez-Justiniano, Elsa Luciano Feal and Jane Elizabeth Alberdeston (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 150–152; *In Mourning and in Rage* is cited as an example in Jennifer González and Adrienne Posner, "Fracture for Change: US Activist Art since 1950," in *A Companion to Contemporary Art since 1945* (Malden, MA, Oxford, UK and Carlton, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 222. *Three Weeks in May* and *In Mourning and in Rage* are both discussed and included with plates or illustrations in Peggy Phelan, ed., *Live Art in LA: Performance in Southern California 1970–1983* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012); Grant H. Kester discusses the *Oakland Project*, specifically *The Roof is on Fire* and *Code 33, Emergency, Clear the Air in Conversation Pieces: Community + Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), 4–5; 184. Only one comprehensive survey includes the *International Dinner Party* as well as *Three Weeks in May* and *In Mourning and in Rage*: Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1990), 375–376.

- 6 ——— Suzanne Lacy, "The Name of the Game," in *Leaving Art: Writings on Performance, Politics, and Publics, 1974–2007* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 163.
- 7 ——— Lacy (2010), 359. Linda Pruesse's name is variously spelt. I have come across Linda Pruesse, Linde Pruess, and Linda Preuss. I conclude this to be the correct spelling: "[...] artist and Dinner Party studio member Linda Preuss [...]" Jane F. Gerhard, *The Dinner Party: Judy Chicago and the Power of Popular Feminism 1970–2007* (Athens, GA and London: The University of Georgia Press), 163.
- 8 ——— Moira Roth, "Suzanne Lacy's Dinner Parties," *Art in America* (April 1980): 126.
- 9 ——— Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000). Here, Nancy develops a concept of subjectivity and community that is based on the ontological premise of being-with, of co-existence. Such being-with cannot be taken as a given, but it is given. Co-existence therefore is the basis for co-*existence*.
- 10 ——— *Ibid.*, 33 and 35.

- 11 ——— Dorothee Richter and Lars Gertenbach have written on the relations between the imaginary of community in relation to its complex ontological and political status. Lars Gertenbach and Dorothee Richter, “Das Imaginäre und die Gemeinschaft: Überlegungen im Anschluss an die dekonstruktivistische Herausforderung des Gemeinschaftsdenkens,” in *>Mit-Sein<*, eds. Elke Bippus, Jörg Huber, and Dorothee Richter (Zurich: Edition Voldemeeer, Vienna and New York: Springer, 2010), 119–140.
- 12 ——— Amelia Jones, “‘Presence’ in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation,” *Art Journal*, Vol. 56, No. 4, Performance Art: (Some) Theory and (Selected) Practice at the End of this Century, published by College Art Association, (1997): 11–18. In this text, Jones was asked to write about the “‘problematic of a person my age doing work on performances you have not seen [in person]’ [...] I would like to argue, however, that the problems raised by my absence (my not having been there) are largely logistical rather than ethical or hermeneutic. That is, while the experience of viewing a photograph or reading a text is clearly different from that of sitting in a small room watching an artist perform, neither has a privileged relationship to the historical ‘truth’ of the performance.” Jones (1997), 11. I was fourteen years old, when the *International Dinner Party* took place. I was not there at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. I was not there in Vienna, when the feminist artist group intAct (founded in 1977) participated and contributed to the *International Dinner Party*. This is complicated by the fact that the *International Dinner Party* is a 200-location performance. Nobody could possibly ever have been *there*. The event, the happening, the living artwork, as it is variably referred to, took place in the dinner party locations; it takes place in the telegrams and cables; it took place at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.
- 13 ——— Moira Roth, “Autobiography, Theater, Mysticism and Politics: Women’s Performance Art in Southern California,” in *Performance Anthology. Source Book of California Performance Art*, eds. Carl E. Loeffler, and Darlene Tong (San Francisco: Contemporary Arts Press and Last Gasp Press, 1989), 483.
- 14 ——— Roth (1989), 483.
- 15 ——— The chapter “Putting on the Map: International Dinner Parties” takes its point of departure from this photograph.
- 16 ——— Roth (1989), 482.
- 17 ——— Suzanne Lacy was part of Judy Chicago’s Fresno Feminist Art Program. “As a graduate student Lacy had moved outside psychology; she was studying race relations and feminism. Lacy was eager to join Chicago’s fledgling feminist group, which Chicago resisted because she felt Lacy was not going to be a professional artist. Although the political activism of Lacy and Wilding set them apart from both Chicago and other art students, Chicago admitted both of them to what became Fresno’s Feminist Art Program (FAP) after some lobbying by the two of them. Lacy incorporated her activism into art in ways that she might not have had she been an art student initially.” Sharon Irish, *Suzanne Lacy: Spaces Between* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 26.
- 18 ——— I would like to thank Susanne Clausen and Dorothee Richter who encouraged me to devote my PhD work to the *International Dinner Party*.

- 19 ——— Josef M. Stowasser, *Lateinisch-deutsches Schulwörterbuch* (Munich: Oldenbourg Schulbuch GmbH, 1994), 124. The German translations offered for conversatio are as follows: *Umgang, Verkehr, Lebenswandel, Lebensweise*. The example given is the following: *vita et conversatio, öffentliches und häusliches Leben, public and domestic life*. This is of particular importance to the chapter dealing with the salon model.
- 20 ——— An International Dinner Party to Celebrate Women's Culture, invitation letter, in Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive. In Judy Chicago's 2014 book, *The Dinner Party: Restoring Women to History*, Frances Borzello does not speak of living women of all cultures, but firmly places the emphasis on history: "To commemorate the opening, two artists, former FAP student Suzanne Lacy and Dinner Party studio team member Linda Preuss, invited women around the world to hold dinner parties in honor of local and global women's history. The events, called The International Dinner Party, involved participants in two hundred cities around the world." Frances Borzello, "An Art History Sit-In: The Dinner Party in Its Artistic Context," in Judy Chicago, *The International Dinner Party: Restoring Women to History* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2014), 262. One might want to infer from this that Suzanne Lacy's gift to Judy Chicago, while impressive and enormous in its scale, was also critical to some of the politics that shape the *Dinner Party*, in particular with regards to privileging Western civilisation and honouring important women that made Western history. This is a strong indication that the *International Dinner Party* can ultimately be understood as an artwork in its own right.
- 21 ——— Suzanne Lacy, "Interview," in *Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art*, ed. Stephanie Smith (Chicago: Smart Museum of Art and The Chicago University, 2013), 81.
- 22 ——— Suzanne Lacy, in conversation with the author, March 8, 2013, London. I had the opportunity to meet with Suzanne Lacy on the occasion of the following event: the British Library and the *Sisterhood and After: The Women's Liberation Oral History Project* event on March 8, 2013 at the British Library Staff Restaurant. (*Sisterhood and After*, accessed March 8, 2013, <http://www.bl.uk/sisterhood>). For *Silver Action*, the artist collaborated with the *Sisterhood and After: Silver Action*, which involved, like many of the other of Lacy's projects, a complex set of coproduction and collaboration: "Curated by Catherine Woods for The Tanks at Tate Modern and sponsored by the BMW Tate Live series. Vicky Carmichael, Anna Kapulika, Michele Fuirer and Capucine Perot produced the project, which was also supported by *Sisterhood and After*, a project by Dr. Margaretta Jolly, Sussex University, the Gender Studies Institute of the London School of Economics, The Southbank Centre, Forster Communications, and the staff of Tate Learning." Suzanne Lacy, "Silver Action Artist's Statement," accessed March 1, 2013, <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/blogs/suzanne-lacy-silver-action-artists-statement>.

I participated in the *Silver Action* event that was part of the Southbank Centre's Women of the World Conference on March 9, 2013. I was struck by the experience in terms of its scale and intimacy. I became part of an ad-hoc collective and found myself speaking and listening. Suzanne Lacy writes the following about the conceptual and social

intent of *Silver Action*: “How would I put this together in a participatory performance? Allowing women to explore their own experiences with each other, within the context of women’s activism and public engagement, is the most important part of the image. [...] These performances become almost ‘life-like,’ in the words of my mentor Allan Kaprow, in that real people are doing real things – they are performing themselves. Hopefully this collective of individual voices that holds up social issues for our consideration will support seeing, and listening, in new ways.” Suzanne Lacy, “Silver Action Artist’s Statement.”

- 23 ——— For a researcher and curator reading these telegram messages and letters today, the messages constitute an archive of March 14, 1979.
- 24 ——— Jacques Rancière, “The Emancipated Spectator,” *Art Forum* (March 2007): 270–281. and Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London: Verso, 2011).
- 25 ——— Dorothee Richter has pointed out to me the relevance of Jean-Luc Nancy’s work for my analysis of the *International Dinner Party*.
- 26 ——— Jean-Luc Nancy, “Mit-Sinn (Zürich, März 2010),” In *>Mit-Sein<*, 21–32, and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, ed. Peter Connor, transl. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Sawhney (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).
- 27 ——— Amelia Jones, *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 19.
- 28 ——— A version of this chapter is included in: Martino Stierli and Mechthild Widrich, eds., *Participation in Art and Architecture: Spaces of Participation and Occupation* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015).
- 29 ——— One of the culmination points in this discussion is the so-called Kester-Bishop debate, marked by the publication of the following two articles: Claire Bishop, “The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents,” *Artforum* (February 2006): 179–185 and Grant H. Kester, “Response to Claire Bishop’s ‘Another Turn,’” *Artforum* (May 2006): 22–23. A publication that has attracted much attention in this discussion is Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods with the participation of Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 1998). Amelia Jones addressed the historical omissions and obliterations with respect to feminist art practice in the lecture she gave at the symposium *How to Identify with Difference?* I curated in 2013. Helena Reckitt has analysed how Bourriaud has written feminist art practice out of the historical development of relational aesthetics while at the same time effectively depoliticising and, as I would like to add, commodifying relationality. See: Helena Reckitt, “Forgotten Relations: Feminist Artists and Relational Aesthetics,” in *Politics in a Glass Case: Feminism, Exhibition Cultures and Curatorial Transgressions*, eds. Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 131–156.

In the context of urban planning, Sherry R. Arnstein’s concept of citizen participation laid the groundwork and is still considered relevant to date: Sherry R. Arnstein, “A Ladder of Citizen Participation,” *JAIP*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (July 1969): 216–224. Critical urban scholarship, feminist geography, and critical spatial theory have produced a large body of work on participation. Yet, historical precedents are rarely analysed together with the historical participants involved at the time of the realisation of a project.

- 30 ——— A version of this chapter will be included in: *Feminist Art Histories: Renewing Radical Critiques of Theory and Practice*, eds. Victoria Horne and Lara Perry (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2016).
- 31 ——— Emily D. Bilski and Emily Braun, *Jewish Women and Their Salons: The Power of Conversation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 1.
- 32 ——— See: Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).
- 33 ——— Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006).
- 34 ——— Nathalie Heinrich and Michael Pollak, "From Museum Curator to Exhibition Auteur: Inventing a Singular Position," In *Thinking about Exhibitions*, eds. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 237–238.
- 35 ——— Catherine M. Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist. The Historiography of a Concept* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
- 36 ——— At the time, the exhibition was controversially discussed. See: Gerhard (2013), 266–271.

Interestingly enough important feminist exhibitions like this one curated by Amelia Jones or *Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of 20th Century Art in, of and from the Feminine*, curated by Catherine de Zegher, have not been made part of the argument when constructing the curator-as-author positionality at this very point in time. See: Nathalie Heinrich and Michael Pollak, "From Museum Curator to Exhibition Auteur," 237–238.

- 37 ——— See: "The 'Sexual Politics' of *The Dinner Party*: A Critical Context," in *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago's Dinner Party in Feminist Art History*, ed. Amelia Jones (Los Angeles: University of California Press at the Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center, 1996), 81–118. Amelia Jones emphasises that she set out to "curate a very intellectual, historical show." Amelia Jones and Angela Dimitrakaki, "Viable or Merely Possible? A Dialogue on Feminism's Radical Curatorial Project," in *Women's: Museum. Curatorial Politics in Feminism, Education, History, and Art*, eds. Elke Krasny and Frauenmuseum Meran (Vienna: Löcker, 2013), 75.
- 38 ——— Stella Röllig, Gundrun Ankele, VALIE EXPORT, and Petja Dimitrova, "Women's:Museum. From Collection Strategy to Social Platform, Panel 1, October 7th, 2010," in *Women's:Museum*, 50.

Paula's Home, the title of the exhibition, refers to the German painter Paula Modersohn-Becker.

The 2009 *Elles@centre pompidou* exhibition curated by Camille Morineau used the same strategy and dedicated all permanent exhibition galleries solely to female artists.

- 39 ——— Elke Krasny, Introduction to *Women's: Museum. Curatorial Politics in Feminism, Education, History, and Art*, 14.

The 2000s witnessed a number of large-scale feminist exhibitions including *Gender Battle*, curated by Juan Vicente Aliaga at the Galician Center for Contemporary Art, Santiago de Compostela, *L'Art au Féminin: approches contemporaines*, curated by Nadria Laggoune at the Musée D'Art Moderne et Contemporain d'Alger as part of Arab Cultural Capital. In 2009, *Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe*, curated by Bojana Pejić, was shown at the mumok

Museum of Modern Art Ludwig Foundation, Vienna. Also in 2009, *Rebelle: Kunst en feminisme*, curated by Mirjam Westen, was shown at the Museum voor Moderne Kunst Arnhem. For an overview see: Hilary Robinson, "Feminism Meets the Big Exhibition: Museum Survey Shows since 2005," *Anglo Saxonica* Ser. III No. 6 (2013): 128–152.

40 ——— Jones and Dimitrakaki. "Viable or Merely Possible?," 69.

41 ——— I would like to express here my deepest gratitude to Alexander Schuh who dedicated many hours of his time and much creative energy to the graphic design of the exhibition and to helping with the spatial layout of the exhibition design and its installation.

42 ——— In 2011, I received the Outstanding Artist Award for Women's Culture (Frauenkultur) by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Art and Culture (BMUKK). The award helped to raise the interest and support of funding bodies. In particular, I want to express my gratitude to Gabriele Kreidl-Kala and Katharina Blaas. I would like to thank the late Gabriele Kreidl-Kala, head of the Department for Cultural Initiatives, Ministry for Education, Art and Culture. She expressed her profound interest and gave her support to the closed workshop *Women's Movements: Feminist Agency*. Katharina Blaas, head of public art in Lower Austria encouraged and supported the following two symposia: *How to Identify with Difference? Doing Art in the Public Realm* and *Vulnerability and Resistance. The PublicDis/Appearance of Bodies*.

43 ——— Papers and lectures presented:

At the 1st International Conference "Critical Cartography of Art and Visuality in the Global Age," I presented the paper "The Feminisation of Domestic Labour and Its Critique in Feminist Art Practice." The conference took place in Barcelona on April 26–27, 2013 and was organised by the University of Barcelona Department of Art History.

The following book chapter based on this lecture was published: Elke Krasny, "The Domestic is Political: The Feminisation of Domestic Labour and Its Critique in Feminist Art Practice," in *Critical Cartography of Art and Visuality in the Global Age*, eds. Anna Maria Guasch Ferrer and Nasheli Jiménez del Val (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 161–178.

I gave the lecture "On Epistemology and Historiography. Critical Curatorial Feminist Practice" at the Post-graduate Programme in Curating at the Museum Bärengasse Zurich on March 7, 2014. As a practical follow-up to the lecture the students of the MAS in Curating staged an International Dinner Party as a tribute to their grandmothers at the Museum Bärengasse in Zurich.

The paper "Curator-as-Carer: Towards a Feminist Historiography of Curating" was presented at the conference "Writing/Curating/Making Feminist Art Histories March," which took place at the Edinburgh College of Art on March 27–28, 2014.

The lecture "Curating as Caring: Mapping Affinities, Affects, Feminist Durationality, and Solidarity" was presented at the conference "CURATING: Glittering Myth, Social Symptom, Revolutionary Force? A Conference on Curatorial Knowledge," curated by Dorothee Richter. It took place at the University of the Arts Zurich on November 15, 2014.

I held the lecture "Curating and the Politics of Care" as part of the endowed PATTERNS Lecture series. It took place at the Academy of

Fine Arts and Design of the University of Ljubljana on November 17, 2014, The paper “Host/ile/in/difference. Red Min(e)d’s Curatorial Practice,” was presented at the conference “Hostile Intelligence and the General Antagonism,” Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York City, April 9, 2015. 44 Nora Sternfeld, “Memorial Sites as Contact Zones: Cultures of Memory in a Shared/Divided Present,” accessed July 2, 2015, <http://eipcp.net/policies/sternfeld/en>.

- 45 ——— Daten und Fakten – Wiener Bevölkerung nach Migrationshintergrund, accessed August 2, 2015, <https://www.wien.gv.at/menschen/integration/grundlagen/daten.html>.
- 46 ——— OECD Economic Surveys Austria July 2015, accessed July 2015, https://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/economics/oecd-economic-surveys-austria-2015_eco_surveys-aut-2015-en#page3,73-5.
- 47 ——— This is the program the participants received:

Women’s Movements: Feminist Agency

Intersections of Activism, Archiving, Art, Art History, Critical Research, Curating, Education, Feminisms and Politics of Remembrance at < rotor > association for contemporary art Graz, Austria November 30–December 1, 2012

Introduction: Feminisms have come of age. Since the early 2000s, a renewed interest in feminisms has sparked major art exhibitions such as *Global Feminisms* at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 2007, *Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles or *Gender Check. Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe* at the mumok in Vienna. At the same time a proliferation of activist artistic, curatorial and educational practices have practiced a differentiated approach to politics of remembrance, activated queer-feminist strategies and established networks of translocal, transnational and transdisciplinary exchange on feminisms.

Today feminisms are not only challenged with the pressures of the global, but also with the challenges of developing feminist agency which is locally specific and time-specific. Feminist agency moves between practices and theories and is distinctly marked by engagement with different fields ranging from activism to curating, archiving to critical research, politics of remembrance to emancipatory models of education. Even though these fields are different, they are interconnected and can have strong effects on each other through „temporary alliances”, artist Isa Rosenberger speaks of, through changing modes of collaboration, coproductions and exchanges. The history of feminisms and feminist strategies is not only marked by discontinuities, but also by distinct geographic and regional differences in the former West, the former East, the global South or the global North. Curator Maura Reilly speaks of intersectionality, of difference, identity politics, postcolonialism and transnationalism. Involved research and activating the archive, activist curating and ethics of curating, transnational exchange and collaboration and artistic practices entering the fields of the archive, the agenda of critical research, rethinking education and

expanding the notions of curating have been on the forefront of feminist agency between practices and theories.

Given all these complex constellations, the meeting *Women's Movements: Feminist Agency* aims to nurture exchange and possible future collaborations in a trans-disciplinary and trans-national approach. The „shared time with each other“ will not be „public time“ to present to a public as an audience. We are each other's audience and will have time as a group to experience and learn about each other's work, to find out about shared interests in varying fields and differing approaches, ways of working and identifications. The getting together is thought of as a situation of exchange between all of us and our practices and interests in order to create an opportunity to think alongside and beyond with each other and to think forward in finding out about shared interests or new questions arising out of the meeting. Sharing time with each other, learning about each other's practices and thoughts might potentially lead into possible future exchanges and collaborations.

The structure of the two-day meeting *Women's Movements: Feminist Agency* will be as follows:

- _ presentations by all the participants to share their practices, their work and their current questions, grouped in three different sections.
- _ a round-up after the first day to establish together the main topics to be discussed and developed the second day
- _ time for informal exchanges, dialogues, discussions around coffees, lunches and dinners

Technical equipment provided: laptop (PC), projector, loudspeakers, internet. Please bring your data on a USB flash drive.

Thursday, November 29, 2012

20.00 Dinner at Restaurant Zur Steirerstub'n, Lendplatz 8,

8020 Graz Friday, November 30, 2012

9.00–9.30 Welcome Coffee

9.30–9.45 Welcome statement by the hosts:

Margarethe Makovec, Viola Bianchetti & Eva Meran (< rotor >)

Opening words by Elke Krasny

10.00–11.30 Section 1: Examples of agency of feminist curating, different perspectives

Mirjam Westen: Feminist futures, we need to attend the legacies of feminist pasts

Dorothee Richter: Dialogues and Debates. Rethinking feminist practices

Elke Krasny: Curatorial Constellations. Mapping the Everyday.

Neighbourhood Claims for the Future

11.45–13.15 Section 2: Interdisciplinary feminist agency / Transnational experimental curating

Angela Dimitrakaki: Feminist Politics and Geographies of Sameness: Thoughts on Transnational Curating

Lara Perry: What a feminist network can (and can't) do

Sol Haring: The Mis(sing) Representations of Women circling 50

13.15–14.45 Lunch Break / Buffet at < rotor >

14.45–16.15 Continuing Section 2: Interdisciplinary feminist agency / Transnational experimental curating Susanna Gyulamiryan: From Gender to Curatorial Troubles

Carla Bobadilla: Sketches of Migration. Postcolonial Enmeshments.

Antiracist Construction Work Margarethe Makovec: Temporary Alliances

16.30–18.00 Section 3: DIY Archives

Jelena Petrović: Bring In Take Out Living Archive (LA) - Active

Methodology of the Feminist Knowledge Production

Julia Wieger: Archives, Spaces, Histories, Futurities

Karin Ondas: Story-Telling in a feminist archive: Arranging,

De-arranging and Re-arranging of self- perception.

The case of the DOKU Graz archive.

18.15–19.00 Round-up / Collecting the themes to be discussed on Saturday

20.00 Dinner at Restaurant LAUFKE, Elisabethstraße 6, 8010 Graz Saturday, December 1, 2012

9.00–10.00 Wake up! Coffee

10.00–11.00 N'Gone Fall: Position of African women in the visual arts.

Reni Hofmüller: I enjoy sharing.

(both participants are present on Saturday only) Discussion

13.30–15.00 Lunch Break / Buffet at < rotor > Discussion

19.30 Dinner at Restaurant Taj Mahal,

Kaiser-Franz-Josef-Kai 58 8010 Graz

48 ———— Elke Krasny, How to Identify with Difference? Doing Art in the Public Realm, invitation text, Vienna 2012.

49 ———— Ines Doujak's abstract:

Title: Monuments

How can we make something speak to and for a collective?

If one thinks of monuments as being part of a country's ideological fabric that aim to fix a certain symbolic content, then in contrast to the official monumental monument the artistic anti-monumental monument has to achieve several things at once. It has to access public unconscious, needs to extend the past into the present and to protect its substance from being swallowed, to save it from becoming a past, which then seems to be healed. Artists have to create memorials that are both self-sufficient and make repressed memories visible.

They have to create a collective memory for those not considered worth being part of official history (because they are, for example, poor and female). The talk will circle around two artistic works of mine, both being monuments and both involving performance and knowing witnesses as crucial points of expression. They are a holocaust memorial commissioned by the city of Vienna for the gay/lesbian/transgender victims of National Socialism in 2010 and an installation at the Garden of Learning` Biennale in Busan, Korea 2012 dealing with the burning of (mainly) women in textile factories, a traumatic violence against the poor which comes hand in hand with the militarization of labour. Discarding the compromised strategies and forms used by those in power – the wealthy, the nazis – memorials and monuments should take on another language, they should not be

written in stone, but should develop alternative forms to those failed official displays of power. This means the artistic anti-monument not only criticizes official history but also the form in which the official history manifests itself. My works aim to create an interface where the audience might enter to complete the piece, being part of an aesthetic experience, which hopefully leads to transformation.

50 ——— Amelia Jones' abstract:

Performance and Feminist Art in the Public Realm: A Critique of "Relational Aesthetics" Performance, as a time-based medium, and feminist art, which challenges normative modes of art production, representation, and display, both beg the question of how histories of art and culture are written, how art is documented and historicized. Both the medium of live art and the politics of feminism ask the key questions: who gets included and who excluded when histories of art are written? Many claims, in fact, have been made in the past 45 years and in an accelerated fashion in the last decade for performance itself as inherently radical and resistant to commodification or conventional display and historicisation. This paper will contest these ideas, debunking the idea that any mode of expression is inherently resistant while noting the ways in which the potential for the live or performative art work to resist is contingent on its activation of a specific politics— such as that put in play by effective feminist art. I will make these points by focusing on feminist performance events and performative art works that push the limits of conventional structures of private or individual viewership.

51 ——— Elke Krasny's abstract:

Title: Making Histories Public

This lecture addresses politics of location and situated knowledges with respect to artistic and curatorial works that deal with the production of histories, the politics of recognition, forms of representation, and communication with publics. Key is the issue of how to historicise identifications and visibilities and how to demonstrate and debate these processes of historicisation in the public realm. Examples discussed include Mierle Ukeles Laederman's *Hartford Wash*, Suzanne Lacy's *International Dinner Party* and one of my own curatorial works, *Mapping the Everyday. Neighbourhood Claims for the Future* in collaboration with the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre and the Audain Gallery of the Simon Fraser University in Vancouver.

52 ——— Suzana Milevska's abstract:

Title: The Lack and its "Supplement": Gender and Agency in Public Space

I find urgent to deconstruct the socio-political and cultural structures and strategies that enable the imbalance between male and female figures in public spaces and thus construct the public space as stripped of any gender signage. Through a comparative analysis of images and events from the past and presence I will focus on unravelling of the cultural and political complexity behind the apparent absence of women figures from the recently rapid urban developments in Macedonia and other EE countries. I will offer a comparison between what is lacking (or erased, emptied out, renamed) and the eventual agency that could "supplement" the obvious strategy of leaving out the visual representations of the woman's societal role from public spaces. This

will eventually enable me to question of the notion of patriarchy as a homogenous and inevitable phenomenon. I will particularly look at the newly built monumental and public sculptures in the context of the governmental urban project “Skopje 2014” and also I will present a couple of examples of contemporary art works of women artists who dealt with gender issues in public spaces.

53 ——— Maayan Sheleff’s abstract:

A guided tour can be seen as a form of performance, in which the crowd, the viewers, are being led by a per- former- the guide, through a certain trail of historical narrative. The tour in this context is a performative memorial, a participatory bodily reconstruction of past events. The guided tour is commonly used by govern- ments and official organizations as a way to strengthen and implement the common narratives of memory and history. But it is also re-appropriated by NGO’s, activists and artists, as a tactic aimed to infiltrate and undermine these narratives and to expose memories hidden or even banned from the mainstream agenda. Through this lecture I will examine a few projects using these tactics by artists and activists from Israel, a place heavily loaded with different narratives of history, many of them traumatic. I will look at various tactics of a guided tour by “Breaking the silence” and “Zochrot” organizations, artists Yochai Avrahami with Scandar Copti, Yossi Atia, Neta Viener, Omer fast, Mushon Zer- Aviv and Laila El- Haddad, and “Public Movement” group. I will claim that by using the form of a tour the artists and activists try to undermine the perception of a national memory as a bearer of an absolute truth. They do that by bringing forth personal memories instead of national ones, encompassing multiple first hand testimonies, and inviting the audience to participate. They also play with the imagined authority of the guide and question the concept of monuments and the excepted forms of commemoration.

54 ——— Mechtild Widrich’s abstract:

Title: Delegate Architecture

How is experience formed in relation to the disparate bodies, artifacts, and discourses of performance and how (if at all) are these experiences organized and made legible as history? Focusing on the memorials and architectural projects performance artist VALIE EXPORT has undertaken in the last decades, I will reflect on issues of delegate performance as a way to answer the demand on commemorative practice that address both the private experience and communal agency. Though delegate performance is sometimes seen as an invention of relational artists and their critics, I argue that it is central to performance, and especially, performance-based architecture. This historical position will give us a new perspective on the sometimes tricky tight-rope between authority and agency in the authorial artistic process of “inviting” audiences to become active participants in the process of history making.

55 ——— This is from my preparatory email communication with the speakers whom I invited to participate in the symposium.

56 ——— Marissa Lobo presented together with Khan Adalat and Clifford Erinmwionghae. She sent a statement by the Refugees Activists: Our Movement is everything that we have. Some of the refugees have faced

deportation and others have been criminalized. The historical importance of this moment is visible in a country concretely defined by control, regulation and police.

57 ——— Anne Elizabeth Moore's abstract:

Title: Performing Two Locales at Once

This artist's talk covers three projects from my own work, in which I explore emotional and physical connections between two disparate cities, economies, and states of political engagement. The projects, *The Advantage and Disadvantage of Zine*, *Garment Work*, and *Feint*, all sit at the intersection of pedagogical exploration, body performativity, and notions of freedom. In the first, *The Advantage and Disadvantage of Zine*, I initiated an ongoing project with young people in Cambodia teaching them the tools of self-publishing I learned growing up as a punk in the US. These zines and books circulated both in self-made distribution venues in Cambodia and throughout the US. This project has since evolved to include a comics element. More intriguing, the project has now been in operation for over 6 years and includes several local, Khmer-speaking instructors; the eventual disappearance of myself from this work has always been a goal and that I am no longer necessary to ongoing comics and zine self-publishing efforts—in fact I am not even kept abreast of them—is its primary success. *Garment Work* is a project primarily about emotional connection and physical disembodiment in the global garment supply chain. It consists basically of the destruction of a pair of jeans, by hands, to its constituent threads—*zerreissung*—and has been performed twice: Once in Leipzig as a solo performance, during a residency at the *Leipziger Baumwollspinnerei*, as both a testament to the cotton manufacturing done there before the fall of the Wall, and as a participatory performance installation at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, connecting the nearby H&M to the clothes' origins in Cambodia. In addition to these two locales, it has also been installed in the Silk Museum during Tbilisi Georgia's *Artisterium*, while the nation considered entering the garment trade to boost its economy. *Feint* was a performance project conducted at the flagship H&M in Chicago to connect mass faintings of garment workers to consumers of the global supply chain they created. Although a small action, it was made distributable by a short piece on my blog, which was picked up by a group of international labor activists, who re-conducted my performance project in some 100-plus cities in Europe, to which H&M eventually responded with increased support for workers in Cambodia.

58 ——— Gabi Ngcobo's abstract:

Title: They will never kill us all

"The historical self-creation of humankind is itself a life-and-death conflict, that is, a conflict over what paths should lead to the truth of history: overcoming of capitalism and the commodity form and the contradictions associated with both." Achille Mbembe

In this paper I will discuss selected Center for Historical Reenactments (CHR) interventions of over a period of three years. I will depart from a project titled "Na Ku Randza," (2011) a project was named after a song by Gito Baloi, a musician killed in 2004 in Johannesburg, South Africa. CHR projects help to frame various states of emergencies in operation

in present day South Africa be it the vulnerability of the state over Nelson Mandela's passing, the vulnerability of the mine workers (in reference to the Marakana Massacre of 2012) queer bodies, foreigners, women, the self-proclaimed institution and the hierarchies inherent in archives and their interpretations.

59 ——— Pelin Tan's abstract:

In the last months the mayor of Nusaybin, Ayşe Gökkan went on hunger strike in the border of Nusaybin (Turkey) – Syria in order to protest the construction of border/wall in-between the Kurdish region. Along with the other protests of alliances of bodies that we witnessed last year in public space, what do the assemblies of bodies in public resistance mean and how could the institutional structure be intervened into and changed?

Besides discussing and thinking of the power of vulnerability and the in-betweenness of bare-life, how we can debate and search further autonomous transversal institutional structures that will strengthen our formats of resistances and sustain relational labor for solidarity?

I would like to discuss with a few examples that we experienced last year but also the specific case of a mobile platform called The Silent University which is initiated by artist Ahmet Öğüt. It has mainly two intertwined structures that deals firstly with the notion of subjectivity that is defined under "state of exception": refugee/asylum seekers. Secondly, it processes a new format of alternative pedagogy in which the knowledge production appears as a co-existence not only for the refugees themselves but for the public too. The whole structure as a mobile academy is a transversal machine where the "citizenship" is experienced beyond.

Furthermore, as an instituent practice, this transversal machine evolves itself within the participation of the people, audience, collaborators who are becoming part of it either temporary or for a long term.

Furthermore, in each institutional engagement, The Silent University has to negotiate and explain itself to the host institution. The unconditional hospitality appears whenever a platform (any formats as conference, meeting, research room, open course session) of The Silent University needs to be installed in a host institution. The whole negotiation process does not only question the role of The Silent University but the host institution itself in terms of guest/host relation, institutional identity, the ethics of multi-diverse audience participation, legal contracts and institutional policy. At that moment, the host institution needs to re-examine its own institutional body and has to decide whether it wants to be a part of the social "affect" as a transforming instituting practice or continue to remain as a neoliberal bureaucratic instrument of culture nowadays.

60 ——— I started to develop the concept for my PhD in December 2011. I list below publications that were of importance to the beginning of my work on my PhD. Since then, there have been more contributions to the emerging field of a feminist historiography, which are included in my thesis as well as in its bibliography.

Publications as of 2011: 2006 issue of *n.paradoxa international feminist art journal* on *Curatorial Strategies*, Katy Deepwell's "Feminist Curatorial Strategies and Practices Since the 1970s," an essay pub-

lished the same year, and the 2010 volume *Feminisms is Still Our Name: Seven Essays on Historiography and Curatorial Practices*, edited by Malin Hedlin Hayden and Jessica Sjöholm Skrubbe.

I would also like to mention here the research network *Transnational Perspectives on Women's Art, Feminism and Curating* started under the leadership of Lara Perry in 2010, as well as the symposium "Women's: Museum. From Collection Strategy to Social Platform/ Frauen: Museum. Zwischen Sammlungsstrategie und Sozialer Plattform" I curated in Vienna in 2010. This symposium was generously hosted at the Vienna City Library at City Hall/Wienbibliothek im Rathaus and served as the starting point for the book: Elke Krasny, Frauenmuseum Meran, eds., *Women's:Museum. Curatorial Politics in Feminism, Education, History, and Art/Frauen:Museum. Politiken des Kuratorischen in Feminismus, Bildung, Geschichte und Kunst* (Vienna: Löcker Verlag, 2013). This edited volume includes contributions by, among others, Angela Dimitrakaki, Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat, Amelia Jones, Suzana Milevska, Lara Perry, Dorothee Richter, and Mansoureh Shojae.

Feminist Thought and Curating: On Method

What if there is a feminist turn in curating?¹
And if so, what is it and what does it do?

Does it turn practices of curating and scholarship on the histories of curating into a feminist enterprise? Or, does it turn feminism into the subject of curatorial knowledge production? Or, does it turn to feminism in order to understand from a feminist standpoint what curating is and what it is that curating does? These questions raised here are central to my study, *The International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought*.

On Feminist Thought

This book focuses on *The International Dinner Party* within feminist curatorial thought. I turn to feminist thought in order to analyse, historicise, theorise, and practise curating. The conceptual framework, which I will lay out in this chapter, draws on feminist thought as a form of practice. Thought as practice is always situated in the concrete conditions specific to particular times and geographies. What is of interest to me throughout this thesis are the politics of feminist thought with regard to historiography, epistemology, and chronopolitics, and how the lessons gained from a critical understanding of these politics can be used to situate curating historically and theoretically.

What follows is first a conceptual framework of feminist thought. I will raise some key points here: feminist thought makes a claim to the non-monolithic; feminist thought is marked by paradox and contradiction to which it responds on a number of different theoretical, methodological, and practical levels; feminist thought expresses a pronounced resistance to be tied down by definition; feminist thought is in need of definition; feminist thought is in need of ongoing re/definition with regard to definition; feminist thought actively expresses resistance to categorisa-

tion; feminist thought is characterised by the quest for transformation and the ongoing process of further differentiation from within; feminist thought engages in a historiographical project of writing, re-writing, reflecting, and questioning the processes of knowledge-making and the resulting knowledge production.

Secondly, I will proceed with a mapping of some of feminist thought's paradigmatic historiographies. I seek to draw out how the key points raised above—ranging from the non-monolithic to ongoing processes of differentiation—are 'at work' in the already canonical or in the still emerging, yet already established histories and chronological narratives of feminist thought. What interests me are ways of relating critical insights gained from an understanding of feminist thought's historiographies to the writing of curatorial historiography. What is at stake here are the politics and power relations governing historiographic operations, and by extension the epistemological implications. I refer to Susan Archer Mann to stress the importance of such a historiographic approach. "The advantages of an historical approach are that readers can see how theories are constructed over time and how they often develop in response to concrete historical conditions as well as to other perspectives and debates they engender."² With reference to the work of Marsha Meskimmon, such an historical approach needs to be disrupted with regard to any underlying assumptions of a "progressive chronology."³ In order to specifically locate feminist thought as responses to concrete historical conditions, it is necessary to continue working "against the grain of linear narratives of progress."⁴ Meskimmon uses the work of Marxist feminist geographer Doreen Massey to reveal how "spatial differences are reconvened as temporal sequence."⁵ In order to avoid the pitfalls of "uncritical chronology," one has to turn to "critical cartography."⁶ My mapping of feminist thought's historiographies uses such a critical cartography as its method. There are important lessons to be gained from this with respect to curatorial historiography. In doing so, special attention will be paid to the chronopolitics at work within the concepts and operations used to construct such historiographies.

The Opening Question / Opening the Question (Again)

I have opened this chapter with a question. The question was: What if there is a feminist turn in curating? By starting this chapter with a question, I am actually already deeply indebted to feminist thought's methods. I make myself part of feminist thought's legacy by activating the question as method. What is feminism? This question or questions similar to this have been raised and are still being raised over and over again. I would even go so far as to say that feminism is the question.⁷ Posing the question of what feminism is, as I seek to demonstrate, leads to a strategic resistance to any merely descriptive or simply reductive definition. A feminist method, as one might argue, is the resistance to definition, the refusal to be tied down by any one monolithic and definitive definition. On the other hand, the question of what feminism is also pushes the need for ongoing processes of negotiating re-definitions and the quest for changing definitions. The question of what feminism is leads to establishing contours in order to avoid that feminism is too easily understood as some kind of indiscriminate form of attack, as a 'pick-as-you go' theory or a "particularly empty terminology, a critical stance without critique."⁸ This is one of the constitutive paradoxes, or contradictions, actively challenging feminist thought. This also offered in the past, and continues to do so, a fertile ground for a large number of different strands of feminist thought, such as liberal, Marxist, socialist, or anarchist feminism,⁹ or Christian, Islamic, Judaic, Hindu, or Buddhist feminism. Other strands of feminist thought include "psychoanalytic, care-focused, existentialist, postmodern, women of colour, global, ecofeminist,"¹⁰ poststructural, deconstructivist, intersectional, black, mestiza, postcolonial, decolonial, cross-border, transnational, indigenous, transgender, queer, or urban immigrant feminism. Considerable disputes, debates, conflicts, shared interests, and alliances within different strands of feminist thought point to another constitutive paradox.

Schools, canons, labels, or strands of feminist thought cannot be neatly separated or definitively categorized. "To be sure, this list of labels is incomplete and highly contestable."¹¹ Feminist thought therefore is also marked by a resistance to a labelling categorisation and not only by a resistance to definition, which I pointed out earlier. Even though highly contestable, such categories are nonetheless useful tools in understanding the multiplicity politics and orientations at work within feminist thought.

They also allow for an understanding of how these different strands of thought not only create productive debates and conflicts within feminism, but also sharing, crossings, and all kinds of intellectual exchange and movements that can actually lead to new associations and transgressions.

Taken together, these activities nourish the ongoing transformation of feminist thought. And, as Rosemarie Tong states: "They signal to the public that feminism is not a monolithic ideology and that all feminists do not think alike."¹²

Turning now to curating, I will follow feminist thought's method and raise the following question: What is curating? The recent proliferation of theoretical discourse on and historiographic narration of curating clearly shows that this question has been raised in a number of publications.¹³ And, having studied feminist thought, we come to see a paradox or contradiction at work. Curating chooses to resist definition. Curating seeks to change and expand how its past definitions are understood, what its current definitions are, and what its future definitions might become. Yet, in order to be seen as a specific "area of knowledge,"¹⁴ curating and curatorial thought are in need of some definition. And, I would like to add, such definitions are in fact helpful in order to make the (ongoing) transformations—which in fact often actively contest and transgress earlier models or definitions of what curating is—better understood. Therefore, the question also drives the need for specificity and for contours, as I pointed out earlier with regard to feminist thought. Again, it is a paradox that lies at the heart of curatorial thought. This paradox unfolds as follows: the desire to be understood as a specific area of knowledge and the desire to not to be tied down by restraining and narrowing definitions. This also offers fertile ground for a wide range of different approaches manifest in curating. These have not solidified into long-standing categories such as the ones I named with regard to feminist thought. Nonetheless, I will attempt to sketch out different strands that are to be discerned within contemporary curating. I will do so firstly according to perspectives taken up by curators, secondly according to historic periodisation and fields of artistic production, and thirdly according to sites where curators work. With regard to the perspectives employed, these strands are activist, critical, conceptual, discursive, educational, feminist, global, involved, postcolonial, Black America, Chicana, global, or transnational curating/curatorial thought. With regard to historic periodisation and fields of artistic production, these strands can be named as follows: modern art, contemporary art, video art, installation art, performance art, conceptual art, post-conceptual art, or digital and new media art curator. With regard to sites of work, these strands can be named as follows: museum, biennale, festival, gallery, education, public space, community-based, urban, village, or theory curator. Admittedly, such a list is unfinished and risks the danger

of oversimplification. On one hand, curating/curatorial thought is prone to introducing such self-labelling in order to work out specificities, differences, and positions. On the other hand, curating/curatorial thought is very likely to resist such labelling as restrictive and reductive. Such (albeit tentative and preliminary) labelling categorisations are seen as helpful tools to understand the different politics and orientations at work within the emerging differences of curating. They also allow opposing and conflicting perspectives to be traced, as well as the emergence of productive dialogues and intellectual transgressions. This process of differentiation into a wide number of specific strands within curating points to the emergence of a new area of knowledge pointed out earlier. This area of knowledge is marked by the differences within. I want to return now to what Rosemarie Tong stated about feminist thought and use it this recitation and change to describe curating. "They signal to the public that 'curating/curatorial thought' (my change) is not a monolithic ideology and that all 'curators' (my change) do not think alike."¹⁵

Even though definitions run the risk of reductionism and oversimplification, they are, to a certain degree, necessary to arrive at differentiation and to achieve nuanced intellectual specificity. Even though feminist thought and curating tend to resist definitions, it is of importance to not end up with, as already stated before, a "critical stance without critique."¹⁶ Even though it can be understood via feminist thought that curating cannot be described by narrowly defined schools either, naming different strands points to the complex historic and still ongoing processes of differentiation and self-transformation. In addition, such a practice of naming can also be understood as self-chosen, self-identifying, self-labelling, self-positioning, or self-organising. With regard to the methods used in this study, attention is paid to the anti-monolithic or non-monolithic. This places the focus on working out paradoxes and contradictions as well as differences and specificities. Equally, the potential for dialogues, crossings, exchanges, and movements between different times, sites, and perspectives as provided by feminist thought is central to historicising, theorising, and practicing curating. What can be learned from studying feminist thought is to turn to the question yet again. I have raised the what-is-question. Now I will proceed with the what- does-question. What does feminist thought do? What does 'doing feminist thought' imply?

What does curatorial thought do? What does 'doing curatorial thought' imply? Seen through the lens of doing, thought is a specific social practice. Susan Archer Mann emphasises "the social agency involved in theory production – how constructing theory is a social practice and a form of labor."¹⁷ She also points out that, "Feminism is not simply a body of thought: it is a politics directed toward social change."¹⁸ I follow this line of thinking, that thought is a specific social practice, and want to underline

its importance for both feminist and curatorial thought. While the political claim has been constitutive to the emergence of feminist thought, the same cannot be said about curating. While feminist thought can look back onto an historical claim of emerging out of the feminist movement(s) and being directed toward social change, the situation for the latter is quite different. Curating's beginnings did not emerge out of political movements or social movements, yet curating is part of (critically addressing) the politics of how art and culture are produced, shown, mediated, analysed, and made public. Curating cannot be understood without the concrete historical conditions of which they are a part. Therefore, I not only locate issues of politics and social change in feminist thought, but also understand curating and curatorial thought as always already profoundly entangled with political and social questions. It is specifically the feminist turn in curating that foregrounds how feminist thought needs to address the politics of curating. Feminist thought provides the methods of analysis in working out how curating is responding to specific historic conditions and how curating does or does not address the social changes wrought by feminism within these specific historic conditions. Curating as a social practice is part of the historic conditions which feminism seeks to change. As I have shown via Mann, Massey, and Meskimmon, feminist thought provides the tools to confront uncritical chronology and to activate a critical cartography.

Feminist thought relies on opening up, over again and again, both of these questions: What is feminist thought and what does feminist thought do? I will put this method to use in order to approach and question curating. The resistance to definition and to categorisation, another legacy of feminist thought, opens up the potentials for ongoing questioning, considerable conflicts, transformation, and future change. The resistance to processes of stabilizing via definition is to be discerned in feminist thought. This can be used in analysing curatorial practice to understand both such a resistance and processes of differentiation. Feminist thought has historically emerged as a politics. Curatorial practice has emerged as a distinctly cultural practice. In historical terms, it was bound up with hegemonic logics of collecting, conserving, categorising, producing, representing, and mediating art and culture. Institutions like the museum, or exhibition formats like the biennale, are powerful expressions of representative and dominant models of culture. It was via feminist critique in the 1960s and 1970s that curating was confronted with its own hegemonic and exclusionary politics. It has also been via feminist critique and feminist practice that curating has undergone considerable changes since the 1960s and 1970s. While the former is by now well understood in museum studies and curatorial historiography, the latter still warrants future research and thorough exploration. Looked at from this vantage

point of critiquing hegemonic power, feminist thought is useful for the analysis of curatorial practice as an inherently social practice with regard to its (changing) politics. And, this is my key point, feminist thought is much needed when it comes to gaining deeper insights into how curating is addressing and making public the social changes wrought by feminism, feminist thought, and feminist art.

On the Chronopolitics of Feminist Historiography

As noted, feminist thought is not monolithic, and feminist historiography seeks to mobilize strategic critical resistance against the logic of linear progress. Paradox and contradiction, as I will show in more detail later, are part of feminist thought's legacy and of its current transformations. Yet, there is a troubling tendency to be made out within the historiography of feminism as an object of study. Both a large number of feminist movements and the body of most diverse feminist thought have been written into what is now a rather canonical history hinging on chronopolitically charged terms of before versus after, pioneering versus obsolete, older versus younger. Crucial to my chronopolitical critique of feminist thought's historiography are art historian Griselda Pollock's work on paradox and Sarah Bracke's and Maria Puig de la Bellacasa's re-reading of contradiction via feminist standpoint theory.

What follows now is an outline mapping the conventional narratives of feminist thought. I will move through a number of different yet closely related narratives. As I move through these narratives, I will point out a number of chronopolitical implications and contradictions. The history of feminism has been written as a history of waves: First Wave, Second Wave, Third Wave, and, most recently, Fourth Wave. The history of feminism has also been written in terms of pre and post: prefeminist, feminist, postfeminist. Both the waves model and the pre/post model suggest a "progressive chronology."¹⁹ Susan Archer Mann points to the linearity implied in the wave model. "No doubt, many histories of U.S. feminism have employed a linear, wave approach."²⁰ Linear constructions of historical time are inherently Eurocentric. They share common legacies with modernism, modernity, progress, and universal history. Amongst many other things, feminist historiography sought to actively intervene into such concepts of historical time, to deconstruct and challenge its endur-

ing hegemonic underpinnings, and to transgress such concepts and the resulting models of constructing history via linear narrations. First-wave feminism commonly refers to movements around suffrage and to activities taking place through the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Second wave and third wave on the contrary are separated by a mere decade. “The second wave denotes the resurgence of women’s organizing in the 1960s and ends [...] with the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in 1982. The third wave refers to the resurgence of feminist activism in the 1990s, especially by younger feminists who came of age after the second wave.” The wave approach suggests a causal linearity that is very much following a chronopolitical logic owed to modernist ideas of progress. It is exactly such a progress-centric model of historiographic narration that feminist thought rejects and deconstructs. Yet, with feminism as the object of historical study, this progress-based narrative has become canonical and hegemonic. Therefore, Mann argues for a more nuanced model of feminism’s historiography. She offers a number of reasons why the waves model is problematic:

First, wave approaches too often downplay the importance of individual and small-scale collective actions as well as indirect and covert acts. Second, they ignore feminist writings and activities before and between different waves. Third, wave approaches generally draw attention to the common themes that unify each wave and focus on the largest and most hegemonic feminist organizations. Hence, they tend to obscure the diversity of competing feminisms within each wave as well as the contributions of more politically radical feminists and of women activists and theorists marginalized within each wave.²¹

I share Mann’s thoughts on such necessary problematisation. I conceive feminist thought as historically and geographically situated. Therefore, more nuanced concepts and more detailed research with regard to individual and small-scale actions, uncommon or marginal themes, and competing positions are not only welcome, but also a necessity.

This thesis is dedicated to the study of *The International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought*. Suzanne Lacy originally conceived the *International Dinner Party* project as a tribute to her mentor Judy Chicago. *The Dinner Party* by Judy Chicago opened on March 14, 1979. During the exhibition opening at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the *International Dinner Party* was performed by Lacy. *The Dinner Party* is considered a powerful and controversial icon of feminist art and by extension a symbol of second-wave feminism. The *International Dinner Party* both shares and, as I seek to show, transgresses the legacy constructed by the

historiographic operations at work in the wave model. Therefore, it is of importance to understand how the wave model operates. This offers the basis for working out how the *International Dinner Party* is conventionally situated in historical terms. The *International Dinner Party* is constituted via complex relations within a network of many different individual feminist activists and artists, but also feminist groups and organisations. Therefore, both actions representing different scales, ranging from the individual to organisations, are of interest to this study. In addition, the individuals and organisations contributing to the *International Dinner Party* are situated in regional and geographical contexts that differ widely from each other. This confirms that all the critical points raised in Susan Archer Mann's problematisation need to be taken up in research and theorisation. Yet, I want to argue that a "cultural feminist analysis"²² of the *International Dinner Party* and its situating in trans-historical feminist curatorial thought also needs to critically challenge the foundational assumptions of the waves narrative. The waves model suggests development and progress. It is this progress-centric model of historiographic narration that feminist thought sought to reject and deconstruct. Therefore, it is important to understand the waves narrative in historical terms, yet to not reproduce its chronopolitical hegemony. Prefeminist or protofeminist, feminist, and postfeminist suggest a similar progress-centric and linear conception of historic development. Feminism has come to be understood through this specific, chronopolitically charged terminology and ordering. Not only does such an ordering construct a linearity, it also suggests that one model replaces the other, or put differently, makes it obsolete. The differences between pre- and post- or between different waves are therefore not only temporal, but also ideological.

They are commonly understood as ideologically split, especially between second-wave and third-wave feminism, or feminism and postfeminism. Meskimmon's critical cartography is helpful for recognising that chronology and ideology are complexly connected with geographies and geopolitics. Such a linear ordering implies the "displacement of one set of approaches by others."²³ This means first of all that the waves model was applied outside of the U.S. context from where it originated. It means secondly that this displacement has to be critically analysed with regard to what is referred to as centres and margins. Revisiting March 14, 1979, the evening of the *International Dinner Party*, a moment in time that is commonly fully associated with second-wave feminist thinking, will necessarily entail confronting inherent hegemonic assumptions and working out nuanced differences of historical feminist thought and movement. I aim to critically address the chronopolitical implications and to actively address the paradox that feminist historiography has critically deconstructed meta-narratives, progress, and linearity, yet the historical

study of feminism has, to some degree, reproduced such concepts. I will take up Mann's points of paying attention to individual and small-scale collective actions as well as to uncommon actions in order to better understand the diversity of feminisms articulated via the messages of the *International Dinner Party*. I engage with "situated knowledges and politics of location"²⁴ throughout my analysis. Therefore, I will link the points raised by Mann with Meskimmon's concept of critical cartography in order to counteract both a progress-centric wave-based model and a centre (U.S.)-to-margin-based chronological model.

Questions and Paradoxes

Let me now turn once more to asking a question. I have already pointed out that asking what feminism is, or what feminist art is, or what feminist thought is, can actually be considered a paradigmatic feminist method. I cannot emphasize strongly enough the importance of the question as method. First, to keep the question open as a method implies to theoretically bear the consequences that it cannot in fact be answered. Or put differently, that it is part of the question's method to resist closure and to uphold this ongoing process of producing new answers. Second, it is not only necessary to reopen the question again and again from a critical and deconstructivist theoretical perspective, as noted before, but also because of the transformations of the concrete historical conditions that need to be addressed. Looked at through the lens of the question as method, feminism is based upon this paradox of never fully answering and, at the same time, never ceasing to ask over and over again. In particular, I will now focus the histories of art histories and their pivoting on the question as method and the paradox as constitutive. In so doing, I aim to transfer insights gained from art histories' critical historiographic project to my analysis of the *International Dinner Party* with regard to curating's historiography. In her essay, "The Politics of Theory: Generations and Geographies in Feminist Theory and the Histories of Art Histories," Griselda Pollock activates the tradition of the question as feminist method:

The term 'feminist theory' has a wide currency now. But what is it? Does it mean that there is a coherent perspective on all areas unified under the rubric feminism? [...] Raising the question catapults us from the neatly ordered universe/university of intellectual knowledge with this clear disciplinary division into a field of practice.

The feminist question—the key question of feminism—brings down the loadbearing walls which compartmentalize academic knowledge to reveal the structure of sexual difference by which society and culture is riven, showing that all disciplines are impregnated with the ideological premises of a sex/gender system.²⁵

Following Pollock and many other feminist scholars and theorists, an important aim for feminist thought is therefore to transform compartmentalized intellectual knowledge production into a field of practice. Feminist knowledge practices pivot around the social and ideological implications of sexual difference. Turning knowledge production into a field of practice is important for my understanding of curating's underpinnings. A feminist turn in curating also addresses the social and ideological implications of sexual difference. For this reason, curatorial knowledge production can be understood as a practice and, as I want to suggest, curatorial knowledge production as a feminist practice. I will return to this in more detail later in this chapter. For now, I want to emphasize that, from a feminist standpoint, practising knowledge includes the activities of dis/ordering, un/learning, intervening, and moving inter/disciplinarily. This is in line with opening the question of what feminism is and what feminism does. Feminist knowledge production also needs to extend such a practice of dis/ordering and intervening into the body of knowledge produced by feminist thought. Yet, in doing so, feminist thought ought to be careful not to repeat the ideological splitting and displacing of one set of approaches by others based upon a progress-centric chronopolitical argument of before/after, obsolete/new, earlier/future-oriented. "Feminism demands that certain issues remain in view, and it functions as a resistance to any tendency to stabilize knowledge or theory around fictions of the generically human or the monolithically universal or any other androcentric, racist, sexist or ageist myth of imperial Western culture and its (often not so) radical discourses."²⁶ Such a movement of destabilizing needs to be practised not only with regard to the monolithic regimes to which Pollock critically points, but also with regard to by now hegemonic and canonical chronopolitical regimes within feminism itself.

Then, I would assert that feminism signifies a set of positions, not an essence; a critical practice not a doxa; a dynamic and self-critical response and intervention, not a platform. It is the precarious product of a paradox. Seeming to speak in the name of women, feminist analysis perpetually deconstructs the very term around which it is politically organised. [...] Yet there has been no linear progress from early thoughts to mature theories. Rather we have a synchronic configuration of debates within feminism, all of which have some-

thing valuable to contribute to the enlarging feminist enterprise. Yet they are all, none the less, caught up in the very systems of sexual difference they critique. The issue becomes one of how to make that paradox the condition of radical practice.²⁷

Both synchronic configuration and the paradox as a condition of radical practice are of methodological importance for my study of *Suzanne Lacy's International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought*. Even though I am committed, as I pointed out earlier, to critical cartography and the politics of location, I am equally interested in mobilizing synchronic configurations, both over time and in time. In bringing together cultural feminist analysis, archival studies, feminist art history, critical feminist theories, philosophy, curatorial research, and curatorial practices, I seek to counteract academic compartmentalisation in order to destabilize intellectual knowledge as field of practice. This process brings together feminist cultural analysis and curating in order to create new insights in feminist artmaking and in emerging feminist histories of curating's histories by being attentive to the *International Dinner Party's* contributors' situated knowledge and by associating affinities and links within a historiography of feminist curating.

Following Pollock, I refuse a linear succession from earlier feminist practice and theory to a mature feminist practice and theory. This follows a line of feminist thought that is aimed against monolithic and universal(ising) structures of hegemonic Western thought and culture. I join Pollock's critical analysis of the histories of art history, which offers a model for critically analysing histories of curating's history, with Sarah Bracke's and María Puig de la Bellacasa's re-working of feminist standpoint theory. In historical terms, standpoint theory came into being during the same decade the *International Dinner Party* took place. An important example for standpoint theory from this period is Dorothy E. Smith's 1974 *Women's Perspective as a Radical Critique of Sociology*. Both the feminist activist art practice of the *International Dinner Party* and standpoint theory share the active questioning of power relations and seek to take the production of knowledge into women's own hands in order to turn it into a political practice. Activist feminist art practice and feminist research practice converge in the strategy (if not the practice) of consciousness-raising to "produce oppositional and shared consciousnesses in oppressed groups—to create oppressed peoples as collective 'subjects' of research rather than only as objects of others' observation [...]."²⁸ Both the *International Dinner Party* and standpoint theory share the historical horizon of second-wave feminism. Again, it is of importance to critically point to the chronopolitical regime at work: "The main critique on standpoint we are confronted with is, roughly stated: standpoint femin-

ism is modern and essentialist and left little space to other parameters of analysis, such as 'race,' ethnicity, class, and sexuality, facilitated by post-modernisms."²⁹ For my pursuit of an anti-monolithic project within feminist thought and a politics that actively seeks to re/disorient canonical orderings of feminist thought as a passage from earlier essentialist and collectivity-oriented to anti-essentialist and individualist-based approaches, joining Pollock's arguments with Bracke's and de la Bellacasa's work is crucial. Speaking of the paradox, Pollock argues that it shaped the period of feminist thought from the late 1970s to the late 1990s:

This paradox has shaped the history of the last twenty years of feminist practice, which can perhaps be characterized by the passage from essence (a strong sense of identity of woman and the collectivity of women) to difference (a more anguished recognition not only of that which divides and undoes the collectivity of women, but also the structural condition of the term 'Woman' as an affect of psycho-symbolic systems which produce and differentiate subjectivities across the formations of class, race, and sexuality).³⁰

In my attempt to follow not only the logic, but also the history of the paradox, I reach an impasse. The paradox's history shares the chronopolitical regime of the ideological split governing the progress-centric narration of the wave model. This is marked by a constellation of earlier/later and, as described by Pollock here, by essence/difference.

Critical cartography cannot solve this problem of using the paradox as a condition for critical practice yet avoiding a linear chronology. Therefore, I turn to Sarah Bracke's and Maria Puig de la Bellacasa's "generational" discussion of standpoint theory. They express their hope that standpoint theory's "constant reformulation [...] through feminist practices of theory [...] perpetually challenges theoretical dichotomies, in particular modern/postmodern oppositions."³¹ Their work presents a possibility to proactively work with the oppositions that are inherent to the chronopolitical regimes of progress and displacement within feminist thought. "As academics we have been raised as 'modernists' because we are supposed to *show that we know better* than those who came before us. As *feminist* academics, we feel we ought to resist this modernist attitude because we are aware that we do not know 'better than' but 'better with/ because of' those who came before us."³²

With Pollock I showed that feminist thought turns intellectual knowledge production into a field of practice that allows for synchronic configurations. Following Meskimmon, I showed how critical cartography makes chronopolitical regimes of progress understood within feminist thought. Therefore, special attention [now] needs to be paid to the polit-

ics of location emphasized by Lykke. Following Bracke and Puig de la Bel-lacasa, I seek to show how orientations via dichotomies, which play out both with regard to chronopolitics and to the politics of location, can be politically addressed within a field of practice. Bracke and Puig de la Bel-lacasa introduce a line of thought that suggests “better with/because of” rather than “better than.”¹ This opens up the potential of a very different chronopolitical orientation towards the past. It does by no means obviate the need for a critical revisiting of the past nor the necessary deconstruction of monolithically universal and Western-centric historiographic knowledge production, but it avoids the ideological split of before/after or obsolete/current that functions as an impasse in much of feminist thought’s history. ‘Better with/because of’ opens up an envisioning of different cross-temporal and transgressive affinities, or to put it differently, synchronic alignments. It also creates the possibility of envisioning how opening the traditional question of what feminism is and what feminist practice does allows it to no longer be governed by the chronopolitical imperative of “better than,” but by a continuous dialogue and debate based upon “better with.”³³

Binaries / Dichotomies

I have demonstrated that feminist thought actively engages with binaries and dichotomies. These are not only part of feminist thought’s legacy but also part of ongoing debates and discussions. Binaries and dichotomies are part of the paradox that constitutes feminist thought as a form of knowledge production considered a field of practice and a field of practicing theory politically. Binaries and dichotomies are equally part of the chronopolitical ordering of feminist thought’s canonical historiography. Before/after is conventionally equated with an ideological split and a move toward progress. Before/after is constitutive for the displacement narrative. Even though the displacement narrative supposedly overcomes binary structures central to Western thought, it is, paradoxically, itself governed by yet another binary: the before/after binary. This closely resembles a progress-based model of advancement. Binaries express power relations and hierarchies:

Examples include the division of sexes into male/female or of sexualities into heterosexual/homosexual. While these categories are used to define and distinguish one from the other, they are not just different;

they are unequal; they entail hidden hierarchies where one side is privileged and the other is viewed as abject or lesser. There is also a sinister tendency to link up the lesser side of the binary with other demeaning or demonizing terms. For example, male/female is often linked to rational/irrational, culture/nature, order/chaos, and so forth.³⁴

Binaries and dichotomies are part of the politics of location. “Here,” equated with U.S. or Western feminist thought, is understood as a location of origin, a chronopolitically charged “before.” “There,” equated with non-Western feminist thought, is then equated with “after.” Here/there is equated with centre/margin or centre/periphery. Here/there has commonly been understood as unequal. Bound up with the chronopolitical regime, this here/there model has been conventionally turned into a U.S.-centric or Western-centric hegemony of feminist thought, which then spread to other parts of the world. This model can therefore be expressed in a binary that is spatially and temporally constructed as follows: here-before/there-after. This reveals that U.S. or Western feminist thought has not operated outside the hegemonic chronopolitical regimes governing modernity’s relations between Western and non-Western societies with regard to temporal value judgements such as advanced or developing.³⁵ Even though feminist thought actively challenged modernism and modernity, it is therefore paradoxically bound up with the power politics of its binary thought structure on many levels. It is not only important to challenge the binary between Western and non-Western, but equally the construction of a monolithic West and a monolithic non-West. Displacement narratives therefore not only concern the temporalities structuring feminist thought’s historiographies, but the spatialities expressed through specific locations as well. To complicate matters further, the wave model has to be joined with the before/after model in order to critically examine the chronopolitically charged hierarchical logics and power relations. At times, “before” is equated with first-wave feminism, which is rediscovered and praised for its engagement with civil and political rights. At times, “before” is equated with second-wave feminism, which is dismissed on grounds of essentialism and lack of attention paid to race-based, class-based, ethnic, religious, or immigrant diversity. At times, “before” is equated with first-wave feminism and dismissed on grounds of privileging the right to vote over economic or social rights. At times, “before” is equated with second-wave feminism and rediscovered in its dimensions of social reproduction, standpoint, and eco-feminism. Some feminists argue for a twenty-first century fourth-wave feminism.³⁶ At times, “before” is equated with third-wave feminism, which is criticised for its failure to establish a coherent feminist movement. At times, “before” is equated with third-wave feminism, which is rediscovered for its deconstruction of binaries. “The

post-structuralist generation should be given credit for loosening up the binary scheme of dialectical thought and confronting the issue of negativity and power in a more multidirectional, embodied and embedded manner.³⁷ Fourth-wave feminism is, yet again, the dis/continuation of the wave model. The previous waves are overcome, yet the waves model itself is continued. Postcolonial debate, critical positions by women of colour, feminists both living in the Global South and the Global North, transgenerism, as well as the changes wrought by social media in activism, politics, and networking, are some of the features considered central to the emergence of current fourth-wave feminism.

Paradoxically, before/after is the central binary that remains, despite feminist thought's deconstructing of and loosening up of binary thought. Amelia Jones has pointed out ways of critical engagement with the binary legacy of much of Western thought, and by extension, much of Western art.³⁸ Jones proposes a "queer feminist durationality."³⁹ She elaborates: "I suggest that feminism must take on queer theoretical insights (particularly the dissolution of binary thinking and the putting in motion of meaning) as well as the insights of Marxian, anti-racist and postcolonial theory in order to accommodate the new global world order." And, as I want to add, with regard to my study of the *International Dinner Party*, a further extension to such an approach with regard to the chronopolitical regimes revealed by Meskimmon's critical cartography beyond the historic moment of the new global world order, toward a critical engagement with both the past and the future. Far from disregarding the impact of binary thought, Jones acknowledges the reverberations of its power relations. Therefore, she proposes a (self-)critical feminist engagement that thinks "beyond or away from the binary,"⁴⁰ and she does so by opening up a question which is, as I have shown before, very much part of feminist thought's tradition:

How can we think beyond or away from the binary, or more explicitly put, how can we understand images and performances in more nuanced ways as articulating potential identificatory structures that are not simplistically binary? How can we explore these flows of interrelationality through visual practice in ways that still convey a feminist politics—an attention to inequities among subjects relating to gender broadly construed as experienced and understood through class, national, ethnic, religious, and other modes of identification?⁴¹

Amelia Jones carefully opens up possible associations and alignments between the more recent emergence of a queer feminist durationality and the longstanding tradition of feminist politics. She cautions that there is the risk of binary simplicity, and therefore emphasises the need for critical

deconstruction. Yet, she equally cautions about dismissing identification entirely, and in extension identity politics. For that reason, Jones suggests working critically with both the dangers and potentials of identificatory structures. Looked at through the lens of chronopolitical regimes, Jones carefully navigates different waves of feminist temporalities and proposes new alignments via the temporal category of durationality. She suggests ways of critical engagement activated by “away and beyond” as well as new alignments activated by “inter, trans, and between.” This is of methodological importance for my research and my cultural feminist analysis of the issues raised by the *International Dinner Party*.

The binary before/after is very much part of movements of displacement and advancement/development and their respective value judgments. Before/after governs much of feminist thought’s historiography and is actively challenged by concepts such as queer feminist durationality and better with/because of. In her book *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Thought*, Clare Hemmings offers a precise analysis of how narratives about Western feminist theory are constructed. Hemmings addresses the politics at work with regard to recurrent tropes that can be found in the historiographic narratives of academic Anglo-European feminist theory. She differentiates between three different modes of storytelling in the narratives that are to be discerned in essays published in feminist journals such as *Signs*, *Feminist Review*, and *Feminist Theory*. These three modes are progress (p. 31-58), loss (p. 59-94), and return (p. 95-130). Progress aims to leave behind essentialism. Loss laments the absence of a current feminist movement. Return suggests that, “We can combine the lessons of postmodern feminism with the materiality of embodiment and structural inequalities to move on from the current and theoretical impasse.”⁴² Taken together, progress, loss, and return offer a model for understanding how the before/after dichotomy is activated and re-negotiated. Hemmings’ analysis is of importance in working out chronopolitical pitfalls and in understanding better just how chronopolitically charged any historiography of feminist thought is. In historical terms, the *International Dinner Party* is part of the concrete conditions of the year 1979 and can thus be considered part of second-wave feminism. Such a historiographic ordering bears the danger of the project being dismissed on grounds of essentialism. (= progress) This could also lead to its romanticisation or glorification because of the project’s representation of a celebratory moment of a worldwide feminist movement. (= loss) It could also lead to using the lessons gained from the project in contemporary feminist artistic and curatorial practice. (= return). In order to counteract these chronopolitical dangers and to actively address its paradoxes, I will use a research-based approach to the contributors to the *International Dinner Party*. This approach relies, as I explained earlier, on the politics of loc-

ation and situated knowledge in order to counteract a hegemonic chrono-cartography of here-before (U.S. or Western feminism) and there-after (non-U.S. or non-Western feminism). Special attention will be paid to demonstrating how the *International Dinner Party* foregrounds concerns that resist categorisation via the wave model, and therefore allow for a more nuanced understanding of feminist thought by way of avoiding simplifying dichotomic constellations between before/after and here/there. My research-based approach toward the feminist subjects who contributed to the making of the *International Dinner Party* seeks to counteract the here-before/there-after binary. Central to my feminist cultural analysis of the issues raised by the *International Dinner Party* is a theoretical alignment between queer feminist durationality and 'better with/because of.'

Associations and Transgressions

So far, I have firmly placed my approach to method in a tradition of feminist thought and have tried to use it to approach curating in a theoretical and historical framework. Equally, I have introduced a critical perspective on feminist thought's historiographic project with regard to the chronological regime by which it is governed. I am activating the anti-monolithic intent expressed in feminist thought. Yet, I am actively counteracting the structural binary of advancement and obsolescence that is part of feminist thought's conventional historiographic narratives. Counteracting this chronological binary of advancement/obsolescence is a task to be more fully theoretically acknowledged and addressed within the feminist historiographic enterprise. I bring this counteracting to the project of curating's historiography. And I invoke again the method of the question.

Feminism is the question, I suggested. By association, I want to suggest, curating is the question. In her 2001 essay *Survey for Art and Feminism*, Peggy Phelan returns to the question of feminism within the context of a book that is curatorially organized across several generations of artists:

The troublesome question emerges: what is feminism? When faced with such an amorphous and ambivalent term, the shrewd often answer that it must be plural—not feminism but feminisms. [...] The ideological stakes in the question 'what is feminism?' have often led to increasingly sophisticated but, it must be admitted also, increasingly evasive responses. I prefer a bold, if broad definition: feminism is the conviction that gender has been, and continues to be, a funda-

mental category for the organization of culture. Moreover, the pattern of that organization usually favours men over women.⁴³

Opening the question again is not only a feminist tradition and a theoretical operation. It is equally a historiographic operation that pays close attention to the transformationality of theories and practices bound up with the concrete historic conditions of any given time in any given location. Therefore, critical cartography, situated knowledge, and politics of location are of theoretical importance to my feminist cultural analysis. Through Griselda Pollock, I introduced the paradox of being bound up with the very system of sexual difference one critiques and how to make this paradox the very condition of radical practice. I would now like to proceed by way of joining questions and paradoxes and binaries/dichotomies with associations and transgressions. In the already quoted essay, *Survey*, Peggy Phelan also writes: "Alluringly open, deceptively simple, art and feminism is a seductive subject. Among the most provocative words for critical writing, the conjunction and compels an associative logic."⁴⁴ I fully agree with the potentials of an associative logic and want to foreground that this very logic is open to questions, paradoxes, and renegotiations of binaries and dichotomies. And/and multiplies this associative logic and directs its interest to the space that is opened up by the mark of the forward slash that, theoretically speaking, can make itself part of the questions and paradoxes. Therefore, the forward slash, or whack,⁴⁵ is of methodological importance to my approach in order to understand how feminist thought works and moves. I aim to work conceptually as well as methodologically with the forward slash or whack, "/". This becomes a tool of thinking in order to activate this line, this border, or ultimately this space that both separates and connects. Taken together, the conjunction and the forward slash motivate transnational as well as transhistorical associations. Based upon association and transgression, I turn to the theoretical and practical concept of transnational feminism as developed by Chandra Talpade Mohanty. Suzanne Lacy's *International Dinner Party* project motivated the contributions of more than 2000 women organizing 200 dinners.

Taken together, the 200 different dinners can be understood as an ad-hoc community originating through the support system of the 1979 women's movements. Local women's organisations, individual artists, or feminist communities organized dinners. Therefore, the framework of transnational feminism is of importance for understanding both the possible associations between women around the globe and the complexities and contradictions with regard to the politics of location and situated knowledge as discussed earlier. Mohanty uses these terms "imagined communities" and "communities of resistance" not because they are not

“real,” but because it suggests commitment and potential alliances and collaborations across divisive boundaries.⁴⁶ Understood as such, community is not an essentializing given or a ready-made localizable entity. I associate the *International Dinner Party* with the concepts of both an imagined community and a community of resistance. In historical hindsight, this community can be joined by accessing their messages, by tracing the cultural and political legacy of change produced by this community of women, and the ad-hoc March 14, 1979 feminist archive they created. I use Mohanty’s concept of imagined communities and communities of resistance to counteract notions of essentializing women’s communities, which is very much part of how second-wave feminism has been historicized and criticized. This is conceptually part of my reading conventional feminist thought’s historiography against its grain:

The idea of imagined community is useful because it leads us away from essentialist notions of Third World feminist struggles, suggesting political rather than biological or cultural bases for alliance. It is not color or sex that constructs the ground for these struggles. Rather, it is the way we think about race, class, and gender—the political links we choose to make among and between struggles. Thus, potentially, women of all colors (including white women) can align themselves with and participate in these imagined communities. However, clearly our relations to and centrality in particular struggles depend on our different, often conflictual, locations and histories.⁴⁷

My research-based approach to a selected number of the different communities or individuals who hosted the 200 different dinners is owed to understanding their different locations and histories. Yet, I also seek to pay close attention to possible affinities based upon the politics of association. Therefore, association is understood both as a theoretical method and a political practice. The first follows Phelan’s suggestion of an associative logic creating new, unexpected, and, at times, surprising constellations (something closely resembling curatorial constellations). The second understands associations politically and follows Mohanty: “Communities of resistance like imagined communities is a political definition, not an essentialist one.”⁴⁸ Associating is thus understood as the political practice of producing and reproducing communities. “Community, then, is the product of work, of struggle.”⁴⁹

Peggy Phelan’s suggestion of an associative logic led me to place the *International Dinner Party* in feminist curatorial thought. Amelia Jones’ 1996 exhibition *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago’s Dinner Party in Feminist Art History* inspired the choice of my title *Suzanne Lacy’s International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought*. In her exhibition catalogue essay,

“Sexual Politics: Feminist Strategies, Feminist Conflicts, Feminist Histories,” Amelia Jones emphasises that she aims to “work within a historical and theoretical (rather than aesthetic or monographic) framework.”⁵⁰ Both Jones’ curatorial work and her essay writing use a historical and theoretical framework. This strongly inspired my approach toward the *International Dinner Party*. By way of using a historical and theoretical framework, I placed the *International Dinner Party* in its multi-locational historical context and in feminist curatorial thought, both historically and currently. Central to my interest are the project’s social politics, or put differently, the politics of communities of resistance or imagined communities. Equally central to my interest is the project’s complex constellation between activism, art-making, feminism, political struggles, curating, and the institution of the museum. I came to understand the different tasks performed by artist Suzanne Lacy as curatorial in nature. Lacy acted as artist, inviter, feminist community organizer, and bridge between the art world and women’s/feminist communities, between women’s and feminists’ intellectual, convivial, social, and political work and the institution of the museum. Therefore, not only the critical transgression of the waves model is of importance to my analysis, but also curatorial and theoretical transgressions of hegemonic narratives of the history of curating. This history, for the most part, has been written from the perspective of curators-as-authors. This, in fact, revives the monographic model of historical narration. Interestingly enough, the art historical convention of the monographic model very much suits the neoliberal model of star curators:

[T]he shift from the mechanically chronological display to the thematic or monographic exhibition all dramatise the role of the curator in the mediation of art. The visibility of figures like Harald Szeemann or, more recently, Hans-Ulrich Obrist and Nicolas Bourriaud as the authors of signature exhibition practices is another effect of the evolution of the neoliberal museum and its search for constant innovation and dynamism, and is a development that has produced a voluminous literature on the curator.⁵¹

Again, it is the chronopolitical regime of progress and advancement, this time in the guise of originality, innovation, dynamism, or “novelty,”⁵² that governs much of curating’s historiography. Dimitrakaki and Perry propose to “move beyond the normative distinction between a mothers’ and a daughters’ generation [...]”⁵³ Based upon this suggestion, it is my aim to make a critical contribution to counteracting the chronopolitical regime of advancement/obsolescence within feminist historiography’s waves model and the art historical monographic/neoliberal star-curator model dominating much of curating’s historiography. “There is in fact a long

and continuous history of feminist curating that has tended to be submerged by the weight of the search for novelty.”⁵⁴ I want to turn once more to Sarah Bracke’s and Maria Puig de la Bellacasa’s ‘better with/because of’ to support my resistance against novelty. Novelty also tends to obscure that we build on the work of others in order to both associate (with) and transgress (beyond). I draw on Dorothee

Richter’s critical analysis of the curator’s structural position with regard to modernism’s artistic genius and neoliberalism’s curatorial networker in order to understand curating from a feminist standpoint:

The figure of the curator (as a structural model) is in many ways a draft of a new post-Fordist accented authorship. This figure takes on in many ways, as I have expressed elsewhere, the paradigmatic attributes of the masculine myth of “artistic genius”, connects this with mobility and networking – and there you have the new role model for the Western post-industrial lifestyle.⁵⁵

The structural model is, per Richter, embedded in a historiographic construction of genealogical filiation. The neoliberal dynamism and novelty are joined with the monographic narrative model that is multiplied via a father-son genealogy. Therefore, critical feminist historiography is key in terms of counteracting the discursive power relations of such constructions.

Just think of current publications, such as Hans Ulrich Obrist’s (H.U.O.) *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Curating*. It may be symptomatic that there is only one contribution by a woman in it, with the exception of a one-page foreword by April Lamm, in which the figure of the curator is identified in the same father-son line of Harald Szeemann – Pontus Hultén – Alexander Dorner – H.U.O. [...] Not only is the absence of women symptomatic, but above all, this discourse about curatorial activity returns to the subject of the “genius curator.”⁵⁶

I draw on Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock’s *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women’s Movement 1970–1985* to understand that much of feminist art-making also led to exhibition organizing, exhibition-making, and was in fact marked by collective curatorial energy and endeavour. I draw on exemplary curatorial models such as *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago’s Dinner Party in Feminist Art History* by Amelia Jones to understand how feminist art history and theory impact curating and via curating. Another feminist way of approaching curatorial practice is offered by curator and critic Renée Baert “who thinks through curating as a dialogical practice:

exhibitions talking to other exhibitions.”⁵⁷ ‘Because of’ all of this feminist thought on which to build, I can move toward a different understanding of curating’s practice and curatorial historiography. I seek to build upon feminist associations and transgressions with regard to curatorial thought. My critical refusal of the displacement narratives and the novelty imperative leads me to using an associative logic and a transgressive feminist imagination of linking the *International Dinner Party* with a possible extension toward curating’s history, embodied in the salon model, and toward curating’s future via feminist and queer feminist living archive practices and imagined communities of resistance.

What If There Is a Feminist Turn in Curating?

In conclusion, I want to return to my opening question: What if there is a feminist turn in curating? And I want to suggest that there is, in fact, a feminist turn in curating. I understand my feminist cultural analysis of the *International Dinner Party* that pairs a research-based approach with a theory-based approach to be part of this feminist turn in curating.

Methodologically, I build on feminist thought to historicise, theorise, and practise curating. I want to emphasize that it is my aim to counteract the chronopolitics that would proclaim such a turn as novelty-centric, and therefore ultimately bound up with the advancement/obsolescence binary. On the contrary, throughout my study I follow the aforementioned feminist method of ‘better with/because of’ those who came before us.”⁵⁸ It is my firm conviction that a feminist turn in curating builds upon questions raised, answers suggested, and transgressions risked by many, many others. Because of these possible associations with the work of many others, such a feminist turn in curating will, throughout my study, be extended both toward the past and toward (possible) futures.

1 ——— A number of exhibitions, conferences, research networks, symposia, and publications do suggest that we can, in fact, speak of a feminist turn in curating. Examples include the 2006 *Curatorial Strategies* issue of *n.paradoxa: international feminist art journal*, the 2006 essay “Feminist Curatorial Strategies and Practices Since the 1970s,” 2007

exhibitions *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* and *Global Feminisms*. 2008 witnessed *La Mirada Iracunda/The Furious Gaze* and 2009 witnessed *Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe*. Publications include the 2006 essay “Issues in Feminist Curation: Strategies and Practices”, the 2010 volume of *Feminisms is Still Our Name: Seven Essays on Historiography and Curatorial Practices*, the 2013 *Politics in a Glass Case: Feminism, Exhibition Cultures and Curatorial Transgressions* and *Women’s:Museum: Curatorial Politics in Feminism, Education, History, and Art*, and *nparadoxa’s A Chronological List of International Exhibitions on Women Artists and Feminist art Practices* (<http://www.ktpress.co.uk/pdf/feministartexhibitions.pdf>, last updated October 2014). Symposia and conferences include the 1999 *Dialogues and Debates Symposium on Feminist Positions in Contemporary Visual Arts* hosted by Künstlerinnenstiftung Höge, Bremen; the 2008 *The Furious Gaze* conference at Centro Cultural Montehermoso Kulturunea; the 2010 *Frauen:Museum: Zwischen Sammlungsstrategie und Sozialer Plattform (Women’s:Museum: Between Collection Strategies and Social Platforms)* at the Vienna Library; the 2012 *Civil Partnerships? Queer and Feminist Curating* conference at Tate Modern, London; the 2012 *The First Supper Symposium* at Handverkeren Kurs- og Konferansesenter, Oslo; the 2014 *Curating Feminism Conference* hosted by Sydney College of the Arts, School of Letters, Arts and Media, and The Power Institute, University of Sydney; and the *Feminist Turn in Curating* panel at the 2015 *Curating Everything (curating as symptom)* symposium at Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst Zurich. At the Zurich symposium, Marsha Meskimmon held the lecture: *Feminism’s Curatorial Turn: What, Why and Whither?*

- 2 ——— Susan Archer Mann, Introduction to *Doing Feminist Theory: From Modernity to Postmodernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), xvii.
- 3 ——— Marsha Meskimmon, “Chronology through Cartography: Mapping 1970s Feminist Art Globally,” in *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, eds. Cornelia Butler and Lisa Gabrielle Mark (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art and Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2007), 335.
- 4 ——— Meskimmon (2007), 335.
- 5 ——— Doreen Massey, “Imagining Globalization: Power-Geometries of Time-Space,” in *Global Futures: Migration, Environment and Globalization*, eds. Avtar Brah, Mary J. Hicman, and Máirtín Mac an Ghaill (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 31. Quoted in Meskimmon (2007), 324.
- 6 ——— Meskimmon (2007), 324.
- 7 ——— To give but a very few examples: *What is Feminism?* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, 1916; *What is Socialist Feminism?* by Barbara Ehrenreich, 1976; *What is Feminism?* edited by Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley, 1986; *What is Feminist Art? Interview with Mary Kelly* by Rozsika Parker, 1977; *What is Feminist Art?* by Judy Chicago (no date); Chris Beasley, *What Is Feminism? An Introduction to Feminist Theory*, 1999; *What is Feminist in Feminist Theory?* by Cathrine Egeland, 2004; *What is Black Feminism?*, The Black International, 2014.
- 8 ——— Chris Beasley, *What Is Feminism? An Introduction to Feminist Theory* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999), 21. Quoted in Susan Archer Mann (2010), 4.

- 9 ——— See Susan Archer Mann (2010), xvi.
- 10 ——— Rosemarie Tong, "Introduction. The Diversity of Feminist Thinking," in *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2014), 1.
- 11 ——— Tong (2014), 1.
- 12 ——— Tong (2014), 1.
- 13 ——— There are a number of publications that in fact suggest a turn toward curating's history and a number of different journals establishing a discourse on curating. Examples include: Nathalie Heinrich and Michael Pollak, "From Museum Curator to Exhibition Auteur: Inventing a Singular Position," in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, ed. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 23–250; Peter White, ed., *Naming a Practice: Curatorial Strategies for the Future* (Banff: Banff Centre for the Arts, 1996); Dorothee Richter, Eva Schmidt, eds., *Curating Degree Zero: An International Curating Symposium* (Nuremberg: Verlag für Moderne Kunst, 1999); Susan Hiller and Sarah Martin, eds., *The Producers* (Newcastle upon Tyne: University of Newcastle upon Tyne, Department of Fine Art, 2000); Karsten Schubert, *The Curator's Egg: The Evolution of the Museum Concept from the French Revolution to the Present Day* (London: One Off Press, 2000); Catherine Thomas, *The Edge of Everything: Reflections on Curatorial Practice* (Banff: Banff Centre Press, 2000); Gavin Wade, ed., *Curating in the 21st Century* (Walsall: New Art Gallery Walsall; Wolverhampton: University of Wolverhampton, 2000); Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Interviews*, ed. Thomas Boutoux, vol. 1 (Milan: Charta, 2003); Christoph Tannert, Ute Tischler, and Künstlerhaus Bethanien, eds., *MIB—Men in Black: Handbook of Curatorial Practice* (Frankfurt am Main: Revolver, 2004) Hans-Joachim Müller, *Harald Szeemann: Exhibition Maker* (Munich: Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2006); Paul O'Neill, *Curating Subjects* (London: Open Editions/de Appel, 2007); Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Brief History of Curating* (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2008); Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Curating* But Were Afraid to Ask* (Berlin and New York: Sternberg Press, 2011); Dorothee Richter, "Artists and Curators as Authors, Competitors, Collaborators, or Teamworkers?" in *Cultures of the Curatorial*, eds. Beatrice von Bismarck, Jörn Schafaff, and Thomas Weski (Berlin and New York: Sternberg Press, 2012); Terry Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curating* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2012); Paul O'Neill, Paul, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Cultures*, (Cambridge, Mass and London: MIT Press, 2012); Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Ways of Curating* (London: Penuin Books, 2015) Jens Hoffman, *(Curating) From A to Z* (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2015).

Another route into writing curating's history is provided by *Afterall's* Exhibition Histories Series. "This series is the result of a research project developed by Afterall at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London, in collaboration with the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. The first publication was launched in 2010. In 2012, a new partnership was formed with the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College." (Cornelia Butler and other authors, *From Conceptualism to Feminism: Lucy Lippard's Number Shows 1969–74*, London: Afterall, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London, 2012) flyleaf.

- Journals on curating's theory and practice, on curatorial discourse, and to some extent, curating's histories include: *Curator: The Museum Journal* (this peer-reviewed academic journal was founded in 1958); *Exhibitionist* (published by the National Association for Museum Exhibition since 1981); *Manifesta Journal: Around Curatorial Practice*, <http://www.manifestajournal.org/about> (founded in 2003); *OnCurating*, <http://www.on-curating.org> (this international journal focuses on curatorial practice and theory; it was founded in 2008); *The Exhibitionist*, <http://the-exhibitionist.com> (this journal by curators and for curators was founded in 2009); *Red Hook Journal*, <http://www.bard.edu/ccs/redhook/about-the-red-hook-journal/> (the Center for Curatorial Studies Bard started this journal in 2011); *Journal of Curatorial Studies* (this peer-reviewed print journal was started in 2012); *Artist as Curator*, <http://www.theartistscurator.org> (this publication project was started in 2013).
- 14 ——— Dorothee Richter, "About On-Curating.Org," *OnCurating* 1 (2008): 1. Accessed May 24, 2015, http://www.on-curating.org/index.php/issue-1.html#.VWq_EUuWHwI.
- 15 ——— Tong (2014), 1. Recitation is owed to Clare Hemmings who introduced this method in her 2011 book *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).
- 16 ——— Beasley (1999), 21.
- 17 ——— Mann (2012), xvi.
- 18 ——— Mann (2012), xviii.
- 19 ——— Meskimmon (2007), 335.
- 20 ——— Mann (2010), xvii.
- 21 ——— Mann (2010), xvii–xviii.
- 22 ——— Griselda Pollock, "A Lonely Preface," in Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013), xxiv.
- 23 ——— Clare Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory*, 32.
- 24 ——— Nina Lykke, *Feminist Studies: A Guide to Intersectional Theory, Methodology and Writing* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), xiii.
- 25 ——— Griselda Pollock, "The Politics of Theory: Generations and Geographies in Feminist Theory and the Histories of Art Histories," in *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings*, ed. Griselda Pollock (London: Routledge, 1996), 4.
- 26 ——— Pollock (1996), 4–5.
- 27 ——— Pollock (1996), 4–5.
- 28 ——— Sandra Harding, "Introduction: Standpoint Theory as a Site of Political, Philosophical and Scientific Debate," in *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*, ed. Sandra Harding (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 3.
- 29 ——— Sarah Bracke and María Puig de la Bellacasa, "Building Standpoints," in *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*, 309.
- 30 ——— Pollock (1996), 5.
- 31 ——— Bracke and Puig de la Bellacasa (2004).
- 32 ——— Bracke and Puig de la Bellacasa (2004), 309.
- 33 ——— To provide an example here. In *Depression: A Public Feeling*, Ann Cvetkovich describes the work of artists Sheila Pepe and Allyson Mitchell

to emphasize that “their work does not celebrate the ‘third wave’ at the expense of the second wave.” (p.188) Cvetkovich states that artist Sheila “Pepe proactively names as her influences both Judy Chicago and Eva Hesse, slyly referring to them as the parents who didn’t speak to one another and expressing a conviction that work that can be simultaneously sexy and abstract.” (p. 182) see: Ann Cvetkovich, “The Utopia of Ordinary Habit: Crafting, Creativity, and Spiritual Practice,” in *Depression: A Public Feeling*, 154–202.

- 34 ——— Susan Archer Mann (2010), 216.
- 35 ——— See: Stuart Hall, “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power,” in *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, eds. Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert and Kenneth Thompson (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 185–225.
- 36 ——— Examples are: Eliasaid Munro, “Feminism: A Fourth Wave?” *Political Insight* 4:2 (2013): 22–25, or Jennifer Baumgardner, “Is there a Fourth Wave? If so, does it matter?,” In *F’EM! Goo Goo, Gaga, and Some Thoughts on Balls* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2011), 243–252.
- 37 ——— Rosi Braidotti, “Powers of Affirmation,” in *The Unexpected Guest: Art, Writing and Thinking on Hospitality*, eds. Sally Tallant and Paul Domela (London: Art Books Publishing, 2012), 281.
- 38 ——— Amelia Jones, “Art as a binary proposition; identity as a binary proposition,” in *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 17–62.
- 39 ——— Amelia Jones, “Queer Feminist Durationality: Time and Materiality as a Means of Resisting Spatial Objectification,” in *Seeing Differently A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 170–217.
- 40 ——— Amelia Jones (2012), 178.
- 41 ——— Amelia Jones (2012), 178.
- 42 ——— Hemmings (2011), 32.
- 43 ——— Peggy Phelan, “Survey,” in *Art and Feminism*, ed. Helen Reckitt (London and New York: Phaidon, 2001), 18.
- 44 ——— Phelan (2001), 16.
- 45 ——— In writing about an associative logic, I was delighted to see that the forward slash whack is homophone to “WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution”, the title of the 2007 large-scale feminist exhibition that was curated by Cornelia Butler and first shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Widely acclaimed for its scope, the show was also heatedly debated by feminist art theorists, curators, and historians with regard to the paradoxes between institutions’ desires and the willingness to put on one feminist blockbuster show and institutions’ resistance to structural, economic, political, and organisational feminist transformation.
- 46 ——— Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 47.
- 47 ——— Mohanty (2003), 46.
- 48 ——— Mohanty (2003), 47.
- 49 ——— Mohanty (2003), 104.
- 50 ——— Amelia Jones, “Sexual Politics: Feminist Strategies, Feminist Conflicts, Feminist Histories,” in *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago’s Dinner Party in Feminist Art History*, ed. Amelia Jones (UCLA at the Armand Hammer

- Museum of Art and Cultural Center in association with Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996), 24.
- 51 ——— Dimitrakaki and Perry (2012), 10–11.
- 52 ——— Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry, “How to be Seen: An Introduction to Feminist Politics, Exhibition Cultures and Curatorial Transgressions,” in *Politics in a Glass Case: Feminism, Exhibition Cultures and Curatorial Transgressions*, eds. Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 12.
- 53 ——— Dimitrakaki and Perry (2012), 5.
- 54 ——— Dimitrakaki and Perry (2012), 12.
- 55 ——— Dorothee Richter, “In Conversation with False Hearted Fanny: Feminist Demands on Curating,” in *Women’s Museum: Curatorial Politics in Feminism, Education, History, and Art*, ed. by Elke Krasny and Frauenmuseum Meran (Vienna: Löcker, 2013), 92.
- 56 ——— Richter (2013), 93.
- 57 ——— Malin Hedlin Hayden and Jessic Sjöholm Skrubbe, Preface to *Feminisms is Still Our Name: Seven Essays on Historiography and Curatorial Practices*, ed. Malin Hedlin Hayden and Jessica Sjöholm Skrubbe (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), xviii.
- 58 ——— Bracke and Puig de la Bellacasa (2004), 309.

PART 1

The Subjects of the *International Dinner Party:* A Feminist Cultural Analysis

The Emancipated Spectatress in Conversation with Equal Listeners

Hoping That Your Living Artwork Will Be A Success.

— Group of Brazilian feminists: Ajuda, Anette, Dorine, Leila, Ligia, Malu, Marhle, Marisa, and Zezé, *International Dinner Party*, 1979

Emancipation starts from the principle of equality.

— Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 2007

This chapter unpacks the *International Dinner Party* as a conversation-based living artwork, going on to discuss its central theoretical implications. These concern art-making and art-viewing with its historically gendered subject positions of artist and spectator.

Suzanne Lacy's artistic concept for the *International Dinner Party* envisioned a temporal and spatial "structure" whose sole supports were the contributions of the participants involved.¹ The structure gave rise to a living artwork based upon the everyday activity of preparing and sharing dinner. "Food united people, and since I was from a very early stage interested in cultural and social differences, meals provided a way to bring lots of people 'to the table.'"²

The *International Dinner Party* allowed for feminists to work together and to witness each other work as well as each other's work. While witnessing each other work refers here to the international dinner parties as they took place, witnessing each other's work refers to the messages and documentation sent from the dinner parties that went on to form the *International Dinner Party* installation. Preparing dinner and having conversations was declared to be an artwork. This makes the invisibilised and feminised labour of preparing dinner both art and work. This makes having conversations art and work. Therefore, the *International Dinner*

Party presents a complex intervention in the historical construction as to which activities are considered art-making and which are excluded from it. At the same time, the *International Dinner Party* is an intervention into the historically gendered division between art-making and art-viewing and the subject positions of artist and spectator.

Both dinners and conversations share a complex historical legacy within the hegemonic Western traditions of Greek philosophy, Judaism, and Christianity. We may think here of Plato's *Symposium* or *The Last Supper*. Dinners have been a constitutive part of the formation of the Western canon of texts and images. Dinners have been part of colonial history. We may think here of the North American ritual of *Thanksgiving Dinner*. Dinners have been part of politics, diplomacy, and business. We may think here of representative banquets and meetings behind closed doors. Dinners have been part of the rituals of the art world and academia. We may think here of dinners after an exhibition opening or post-conference dinners. Dinners are part of social struggles and social movements. Dinners are part of the precarious lives of the homeless and refugee populations. Dinners are part of everyday life. Dinners are at once domestic and public, commonplace and celebratory. Dinners are part of theories of social reproduction feminism and the critique of the feminisation of labour. Dinners are at once material and relational. Dinners are prepared with care.³

International Dinner Party Invitations

Suzanne Lacy's invitational strategy combined conceptual art-making and community organising. This effectively increased the scale of the event. It helped to procure more resources—specifically knowledge and labour—to be brought 'to the table' on a global scale. Networking within the feminist art movement as well as among many different women's organisations ranging from health centres to church groups resulted in an international feminist moment on March 14, 1979 with 2,000 women celebrating (with) each other.

Dinners bridge art-making, everyday practice, and political organising. Lacy describes her interest in meals as both a strategy of political organising and an aesthetic gesture as follows: "After exploring meals/eating/ foodstuffs in some of my early performances, I learned about the role of meals in organizing in 1920s labor movements: women specifically called out their organizing strategies as being what we could call today conviviality. I became interested in meals as vehicles for large-scale

An International Dinner Party to Celebrate Women's Culture

"Women have never had a Last Supper, but they have had dinner parties—lots and lots of dinner parties where they facilitated and nourished people."

—Judy Chicago

Dear Sisters,

We would like to ask you to participate with us in a worldwide celebration of ourselves! We are asking women in many countries to host dinner parties honoring women important to their own culture. These dinner parties, held simultaneously in March, 1979, will create a network of women-acknowledging-women which will extend around the world.

The occasion is the opening of "The Dinner Party" a celebration of women's history and a work of art of tremendous beauty and scope. For 4½ years artist and writer Judy Chicago, aided by over 250 artists, designers, historians and craftspeople, has been creating this work which pays homage to 39 women who have been major contributors to Western Civilization, and lists 999 others who have left their mark. The Dinner Party is a large triangular table with 39 place settings resting on a porcelain floor, which symbolically tells the story of women throughout Western History. The exhibition opens in March in San Francisco, California, and is scheduled to travel for a year to several other institutions.

Inspired by this work, several California artists want to expand the idea of honoring women from Western History to encompass **living women of all cultures**. We would like to create with you an "International Dinner Party Event," in which women from many cities and countries host **their own** dinner party, paying homage to women in **their area** who have contributed to our lives. The size, format or style of your dinner party is up to you, as well as the women you will honor and how you choose to do so. If each of our dinner parties occurs on the same evening, we will form a continuous 24 hour celebration around the world (because of the time differences).

If you would like to join us, please do the following:

1. Pass this information on to women in other cities and countries so our network can continue to expand. We particularly need to know of women in the Middle and Far East, Africa and South America.
2. Write to us, telling us who you (or your group) are, and we will send you more detailed information about the event.
3. Gather together women in your area to plan your dinner party for March.

We hope to hear from all of you.

Suzanne Lacy
Thea Litsios
Linda Preuss

Audrey Wallace
Susan Brenner
Shannon Hogan

Adrienne Weiss
Sharon Kagan

"International Dinner Party" c/o Suzanne Lacy, 28 Avenue 27, Venice CA 90291 USA

organizing through art, and in the interaction between people as a form of aesthetic gesture.”⁴

In her archive, Suzanne Lacy has kept the invitation letters that were sent out to ask women for their participation. In one of these letters the artist writes the following:

Dear Jeb,

I'm enclosing a copy of a performance I'm working on, which has its basis in community organizing principles. [...] I'm enclosing the invitation to this event (performance) because I thought you might have contacts with women from other cultures who might want to participate in the event. If so, could you please send (rather quickly; the time for the performance is drawing near) names and addresses? Or let me know and I'll send more invitations for you to send direct. Thank you for your attention to this.

sincerely

Suzanne Lacy⁵

As the event's organiser, Lacy was invested in making it truly international. The invitational letters attest to her conscious effort to use the contacts and connections of existing groups and networks to go beyond a US-centric approach with regard to women's culture and feminism. The following examples evidence her efforts. The artist wrote to the American Friends Service Committee, Inc.:

Dear Mary,

[...] I'm enclosing a copy of an event I'm working on, and would appreciate it if you could provide me with contacts of women in other countries who might be interested in joining a worldwide network. Is it something the American Friends Service Committee might want to publish in a newsletter, use as an occasion to celebrate a particular group of women in a worldwide fashion? [...] We've gotten several responses from the US so far, but have not had time for overseas responses to get back.

Sincerely, Suzanne Lacy⁶

The artist tapped into networks of feminist activists, lesbian activists and artists, as well as women's organisations connected to church, community work, health care or academia. Here she writes to a member of the Presbyterian Church to reach out to women in Eastern countries:

Dear Mrs. Chan,

I'm enclosing an invitation to my latest art piece ... an international dinner party! I thought you might have contacts in Eastern countries through the church work of the Presbyterian Church? [...] I am interested in women from all over the world, including the US.

Sincerely, Suzanne Lacy⁷

Among the preparatory letters for the *International Dinner Party*, there is a list of women artists active in countries other than the US. All the artists on this list received personally addressed invitation letters. I will give some of these artists' names here: "Martine Aballea, France; Ida Biard, Yugoslavia; Una Maye, Belgium; Tohei Horike, Japan; Lady Brute, Vancouver; Vania Lucilla, Brazil;"⁸ Martine Aballéa is a US-born artist, who lives and works in Paris.⁹ I will also provide some of information I researched on these artists. Ida Biard is a Yugoslavia-born art historian and critic who moved to Paris, where she founded La Galerie des Locataires (Tenant's Gallery) in 1972.¹⁰ Una Maye was the name Belgium-born artist Christine Vandemoortele adopted for a short period during the 1970s.¹¹ One of Tohei Horike's art projects was called Five Years' Research Project '76-'80.¹² Lady Brute was the name Canada-born artist Kate Craig (1947-2002) chose for herself.¹³ Brazilian artist Vania Lucila participated in the 1981 São Paulo Biennial.¹⁴

The networks activated by Lacy in turn multiplied the organising efforts and distributed the information further. I would like to give the following example here. The New York Chapter of the Woman's Caucus for Art released the following newsletter on March 1, 1979:

The New York Chapter of the Women's Caucus for Art is holding a Dinner Party, at which women are to honor other women with tributes in the form of food. (...) Simultaneous dinner parties are to occur around the world, forming a 24-hour long celebration of women. The occasion is the opening of the 'Dinner Party' at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art by Judy Chicago. Inspired by this work, artists Suzanne Lacy and Linda Preuss have expanded the idea of honoring women from western history to include living women of all cultures. They envision this as a 'living work of art',

in which all who participate are to be performers. This dinner party will take place on Wednesday, March 14, 1979, beginning at 7 p.m., in Manhattan, at the loft of Naomi Teppich, 85 South Street. There is an admission charge of \$3 at the door. Men and women are welcome.¹⁵

The invitational letters attest to the fact that Suzanne Lacy bridged the following binaries: community organising/conceptual art; everyday practice/living artwork; US feminism/ transnational feminisms. The project's scope transcended by far the context of the art world. The women who participated came from a wide range of different backgrounds. Reading through all the messages and letters kept in Suzanne Lacy's *International Dinner Party* archive reveals that participants included academics, administrators, advertising copy writers, anti-racism activists, artists, cooks, educators, grandmothers, government officials, housewives, lesbian activists, mothers, peace activists, a peace corps volunteer, air pollution researchers, pro-choice activists, radical poets, seafarers, and teachers.

International Dinner Party Messages

Suzanne Lacy assigned the following task to the participants in the *International Dinner Party*. She asked them to send a collectively drafted telegram message from their dinner stating whom they honoured or celebrated. The telegram was to be sent to her at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. She eagerly and anxiously awaited the arrival of the telegram messages on the eve of the premiere of Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party*. Upon a telegram's arrival, the artist marked the location from where it was sent on a large map of the world. A documentation of this arriving-and-mapping process would have captured the temporal sequence of the international dinner parties, but no such documentation exists.

The *International Dinner Party* bridges the domestic sphere of where the dinners, the dinner conversations, and the message writing took place with the public sphere of the museum with Lacy's several hours long performance during the opening of Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* exhibition.¹⁶ The artist also asked the participants to later send letters and documentation of their dinners. All the telegrams, letters, and photographic documentation have been included in Suzanne Lacy's *International Dinner Party* archive. They also form the material basis and content of the installation piece in its current version.

MAILGRAM SERVICE CENTER
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 western union Mailgram



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01071 MGM BUFFALO NY 171 03-14 913A EST

SUZANNE LACY
INTERNATIONAL DINNER PARTY
SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF ART
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94102

FROM CAROLEE SCHNEEMANN INVITATION TO FRIENDS IN CASE NOT INVITED
TO ANOTHER DINNER PARTY EVENT.

DEDICATED TO ANNA MAE AQUASH AND LOLITA LERRUN

LYNNE TILLMAN
CARLA LISS
SUSAN HILLER
MEREDITH MONK
ALISON KNOWLES
YVONNE RAINER
SARAH CHARLESWORTH
EUNICE LIPTON
MARTHA ROTH
FELICITY SPARROW
ANNABEL NICHOLSON
MITSOU NASLEDNIKOV
LEILA KARP
BARBARA CLELAND
SHIKEKO KUBOTA
MARY LUCIER
NANA
CID COLLINS
MINI LOBELL
WANDA BERSHEN
JANE BRAKHAGE
NINA YANKOWITZ
MARINA ORBACH
SHARON AVERY-FAHLSTROM
KATHY ACKER
CONSTANCE DE JHNONG
JILL KROESEN
MARGIE KELLER
COLEEN FITZGIBBON
HELENE KAPLAN
KATY MARTIN
PENNY RIMBAUD

SIMONE FORTI
ANNE SEVERSON
KUSAMA
AGNES DENES
CHARLOTTE MOORMAN
CARRIE RICKY
MARTHA HELION
JULIA HAYWARD
TAKAKO
MARTHA WILSON
JACKIE APPLE
DOROTHEA ROCKBURNE
RUBY RICH
EDIT DE AK
BONNIE MARRANCA
SARI DIENES
ANNINA NOSET-WEBER
KIKI KOKELNTCK
YOKO ONO
CAROL BERGE
BARBARA BARACKS
MARTIE EDELWEIT
KATE MILLET
MIDGE MACKENZIE
CHIEKO SHIOMI
SALLY DIXON-BLOCK
ALINE LILLIE MAYER

TO REPLY BY MAILGRAM, SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR WESTERN UNION'S TOLL-FREE PHONE NUMBERS

Carolee Schneemann, mailgram,
Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive

PAGE 2



Mailgram



Laurie Anderson
Joan Jonas
Phoebe Neville
Marina Abramowitz
Valie Export
Sara Seagull
Rosemary Mayer
Lil Picard

10:17 EST

HGMCOMP HGM

8241 (R1/78)

TO REPLY BY MAILGRAM, SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR WESTERN UNION'S TOLL - FREE PHONE NUMBERS

Carolee Schneemann, mailgram,
Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive

Mary Beth Edelson
110 Mercer Street
New York, New York 10012
212-226-0832

PARTY TO HONOR LOUISE BOURGEOIS MARCH 14, 1979

GIVEN BY ANA MENDIETA AND MARY BETH EDELSON

The invited guests were asked--if they were in the mood--to come dressed as a famous herstorical or contemporary women artist.

1. Louise Bourgeois came as herself
2. Ana Mendieta came as Freda Kahla
3. Mary Beth Edelson came as Leonor Fini (in Leonor's ritual moon Goddess costume)
4. Michelle Stuart (along with Joyce Kozloff) came as the two Freda Kahla (from her painting of the same)
5. Hannah Wilke came as herself
6. Judy Bernstein came as herself
7. Anne Sharp came a women astronaut
8. Susan Cooper came as Louise Bourgeois' mother
9. Edit D'ak came as Amelia Earhart (NOT PICTURED)
10. Joyce Kozloff (see Michelle) came as The two Freda Kahla's
11. Barbara Moore came as herself
12. Patricia Hamilton came as Mae West
13. Phyllis Krim came as herself
14. Barbara Zucker came as herself
15. Poppy Johnson came as a woman to be named by the group
16. ~~Marisol~~
17. ~~Laure Tannon-~~
18. Marcia Resnick
19. ~~Dorothy Siberling~~
20. Gloria McDonald came as the Empress of China

(Line through name indicates that they accepted but did not arrive)

Others Invited (but they were out of town)

Lucy in California
Kate in Iran
Nancy Graves in Europe

We were each photographed individually as well as in a group

Music was supplied by the local disco station

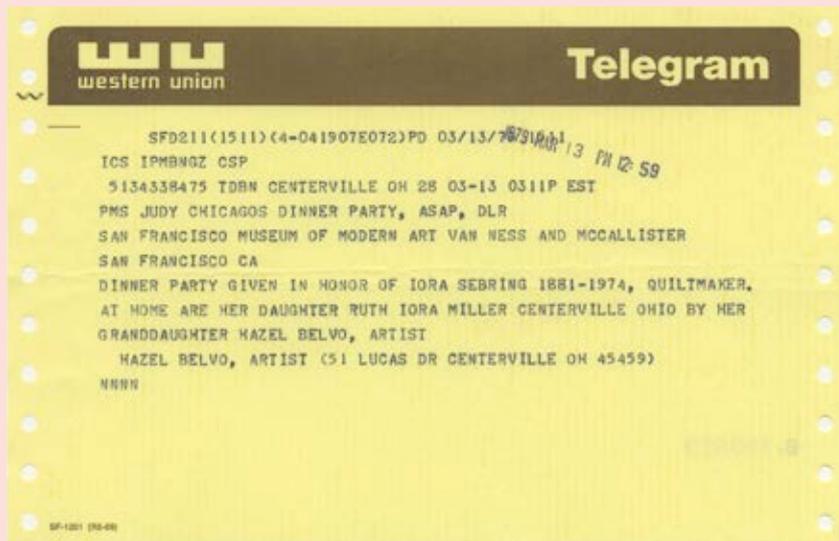
MENU

Champagne (supplied by Louise)
Red caviar and sour cream on crackers

Turkey - marinated in wine and herbs
Stuffed with sausage and walnut dressing-herbs too
Acorn squash
Cranberries
Black beans-Cuban style

Green salad-lemon-capers with sour cream and tarragon dressing

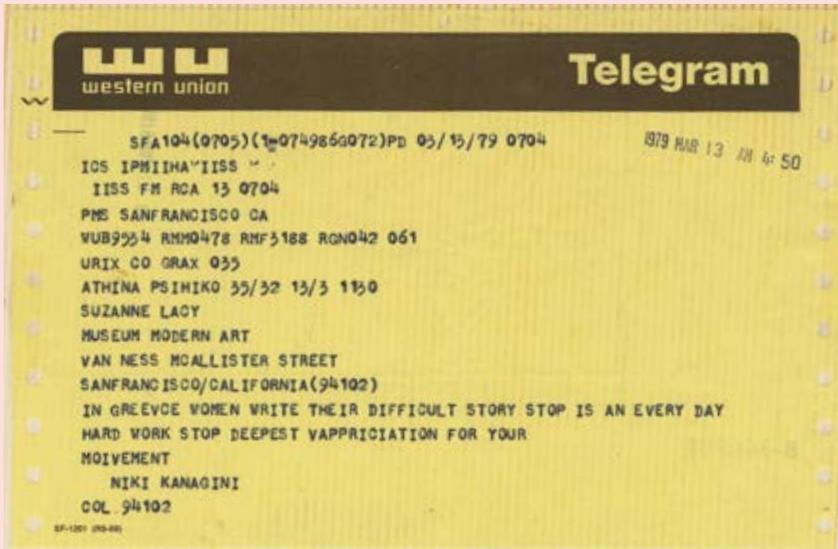
Home made flan
Coffee



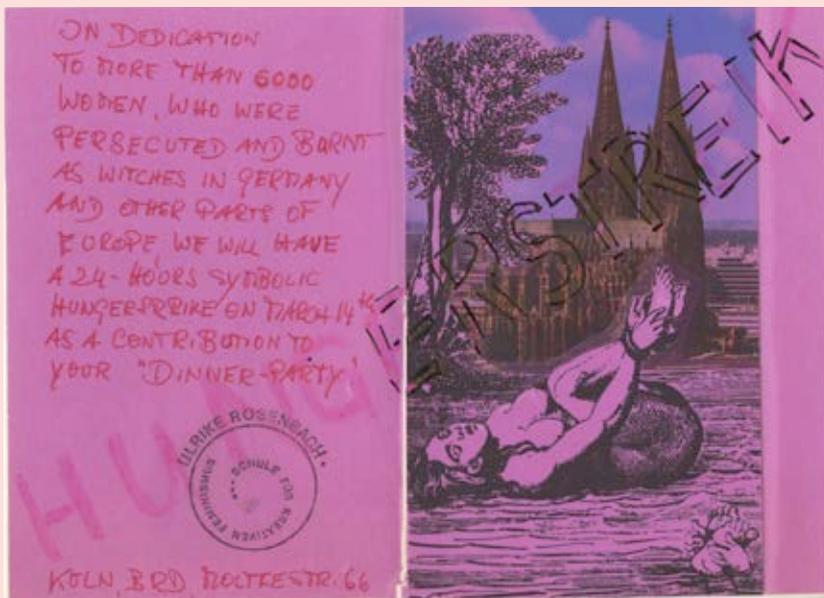
Hazel Belvo, Centerville, telegram,
 Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive



Edinburgh Feminists, telegram,
 Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive



Niki Kanagini, Athens, telegram
Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive



Ulrike Rosenbach, Cologne, postcard,
Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive

E G Y P T

JOINS IN THE INTERNATIONAL DINNER PARTY

The Womens' Health Improvement Association, Alexandria Branch, will be commemorating women who have volunteered their service in the fields of Health, Education and Welfare.

Such women would have had to have:

- 1- SERVED the Egyptian society for over 15 years
- 2- OFFERED their services free of any economic remuneration
- 3- accepted to be PARTICIPANTS in an all-host dinner as opposed to guests.

Considering this to be Children's Year, a target theme selected for the International Dinner Party in Alexandria is to begin laying the groundwork for instigating a national plan to eradicate the second most prevalent disease in Egypt ... TUBERCULOSIS ... being a disease that affects whole families and particularly children.

Our congratulations to women across the globe.

Dorreya Allouba, President
The Womens' Health Improvement Association

March 7, 1979

International Feminists
of Japan (I.F.J.)
Fujiso, 2-7-1 Haramachi
Meguro-ku, Tokyo 152, Japan

May 10, 1979

International Dinner Party
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Ms. Lacy,

At its dinner party, the International Feminists of Japan honored the spirit of cross cultural feminism. We felt that this theme was reflective of the many nationalities of women who are members of our group. We represent about 110 women from thirteen different countries, and we are learning just how world-wide feminism really is.

In order to give each woman a chance to say something about the influences on her own feminism, we asked that each woman make a short statement giving the name of a woman whom she felt had been important in shaping her feminist convictions.

The responses of the women were quite varied, with many naming literary or movement figures, and with others naming more personal acquaintances or relatives. Several women mentioned their mothers, others mentioned aunts, sisters, or friends. Among the more well-known figures cited were Kate Millett, Jane Rule, Virginia Woolf, Adrienne Rich, and Billie Jean King.

We feel that the party was a great success. We had expected only a few women to come since we had not had time to publicize the event well; but, to our surprise and delight, about forty women showed up. The dinner was a "bring-your-own," and we had plenty of good food to share, both Japanese and Western.

We are enclosing several pictures from the event, and ask that you choose the one which you feel would be best for your purposes. We are also enclosing a sheet explaining about our organization and a copy of the latest issue of our newsletter, The Feminist Forum.

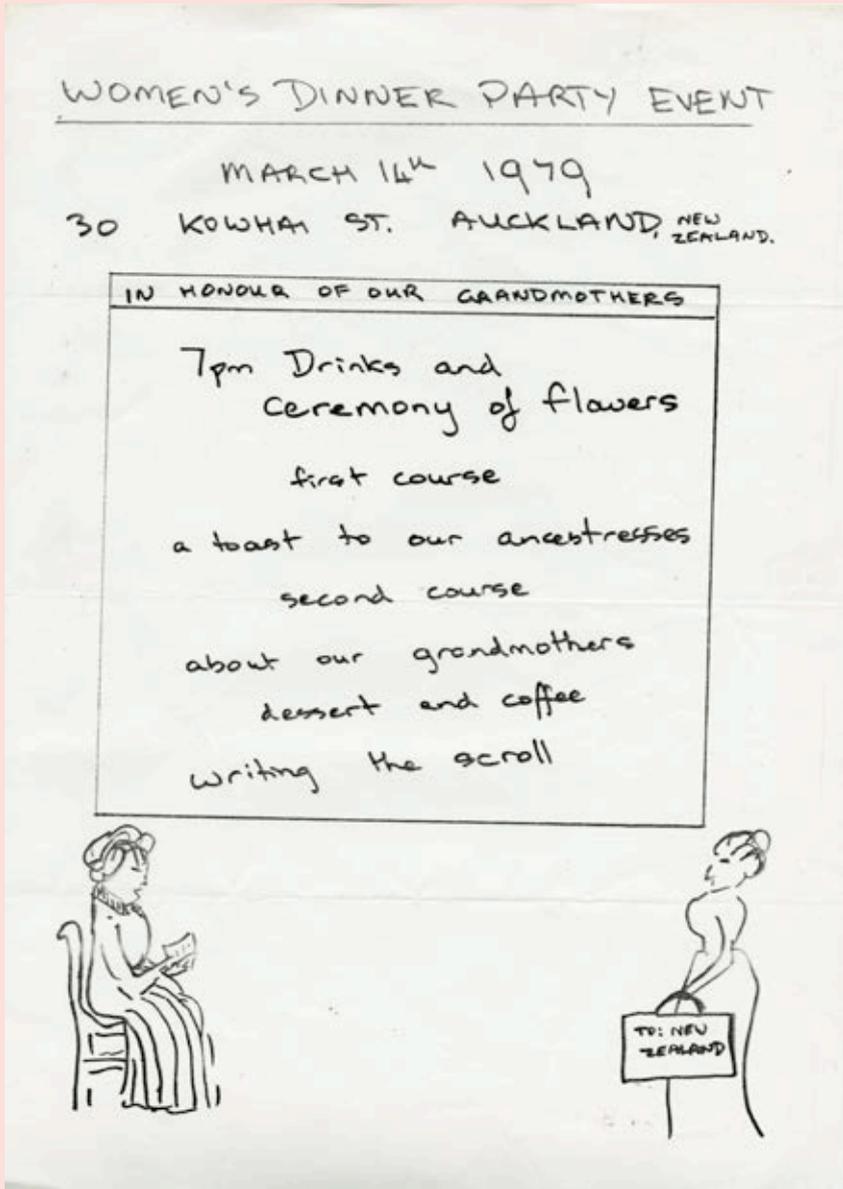
We would like to thank you for making this dinner party possible and for the beautiful idea it expressed.

Sincerely,



Anne L. Blasing, Coordinator
International Feminists of Japan

P.S. Please note that the name of our organization has been changed from the foreigners' branch of the All Japan Feminist Association to the International Feminists of Japan. The post card for the exhibit was sent to you under the old name.



Mitzi Nairn, Auckland, letter, Suzanne Lacy,
International Dinner Party Archive

I will quote here from some of the *International Dinner Party* messages and letters. This demonstrates the different subjects that were raised. “We are all Stars. Four in Paris Honour the Nameless Women,”¹⁷ reads one of the telegram messages sent from Paris. A telegram from Centerville, Ohio reads as follows: “Dinner Party Given In Honor Of Iora Sebring (1881–1974), Quiltmaker, At Home Are Her Daughter Ruth Iora Miller Centerville Ohio By Her Granddaughter Hazel Belvo, Artist.”¹⁸ A telegram from Houston, Texas reads: “A Dinner Party For Two Honoring Kathe Kollwitz and Artemisia Gentileschi. K Magnani M Pipkin.”¹⁹ Mitzi Nairn,²⁰ together with a group of women in Auckland, composed the following letter: “Women’s Dinner Party Event. In Honour Of Our Grandmothers. 7 pm Drinks and Ceremony of Flowers. first course a toast to our ancestresses. second course about our grandmothers. dessert and coffee writing the scroll.”²¹ German artist Ulrike Rosenbach and her Schule für Kreativen Feminismus (School for Creative Feminism) sent this postcard message from Cologne: “In Dedication to more than 6000 women, who were persecuted and burnt as witches in Germany and other parts of Europe, we will have a 24- hours symbolic hungerstrike on March 14th as a contribution to your ‘Dinner-Party.’”²² New-York based artists Ana Mendieta and Mary Beth Edelson gave a “Party to Honor Louise Bourgeois.” The letter in Lacy’s archive states: “The invited guests were asked—if they were in the mood—to come dressed as a famous herstorical or contemporary woman artist.” Out of the twenty women who had accepted the invitation, seventeen attended the party. “Louise Bourgeois came as herself, Ana Mendieta came as Freda Kahla (sic!), Mary Beth Edelson came as Leonor Fini (in Leonor’s ritual moon Goddess costume), [...] HannahWilke came as herself [...]”²³ They drank “Champagne, provided by Louise. [...] They listened to music “supplied by the local disco station.”²⁴ The examples chosen here evidence that many women active in the women’s movement as well as fellow artists volunteered their interest, their ideas, their time, their enthusiasm, and their energy. The structure of the *International Dinner Party* allowed for experimentation and critical engagement. Ulrike Rosenbach refused to have dinner, yet went on a hunger strike as a contribution to the *International Dinner Party*. The West Coast/East Coast art world divide did not preclude the participation of East Coast artists.²⁵ Yet, Mary Beth Edelson and Ana Mendieta specifically chose not to honour Judy Chicago, but rather Louise Bourgeois. Reading the letters and telegrams in the *International Dinner Party* archive reveals that subjects honoured included mothers and grandmothers, unknown women, Artemisia Gentileschi, Louise Bourgeois, Valeska Gert, Lucy Lippard, founders of help centres for women who had suffered a sexual assault, as well as volunteers in the fields of health, education, and welfare.²⁶

Over dinner, the women raised a wide range of different subject matters to which they refer in the telegrams and letters. They addressed international politics, women's rights, body politics, housework, artwork, friendships, and personal achievements. A feminist group in Edinburgh, UK, and a Women's Group in Christchurch, New Zealand, expressed their solidarity with women in Iran. "Edinburgh Feminists Meet to Honour Women's Struggles in Iran."²⁷ On their telegram, sent off at 9:36 am on March 14, 1979, the Christchurch Women's Group wrote the following message: "Honouring Iranian Women and other registered in sisterhood."²⁸ Only a few days before the *International Dinner Party*, Iranian women had taken to the streets of Tehran to protest against what is now known as the Iranian Revolution, or the 1979 Revolution. They sought to protect their hard-won civil and personal liberties and to protest against the newly imposed dress code. The telegram messages from Edinburgh and Auckland demonstrate the transnational expressions of solidarity. Ajuda, Anette, Dorine, Leila, Ligia, Malu, Marhel, Maris, and Zezé signed with their first names only and self-identified as "a group of Brazilian feminists living in Rio de Janeiro."²⁹ The group describes plans for a public seminar on women's reproductive rights, and on women's rights over their bodies. "On the first day will be discussed the various means of contraception, available in Brazil, and the ways they are used and abused. On the second day will be a political discussion about the family planning organisations in Brazil, both governmental and non-governmental. The third day will be dedicated to the topic of abortion, openly discussed in Brazil for the first time. Moreover this will be the first time that this whole complex of problems is discussed from a feminist point of view. It is really about time too!"³⁰ A group of women in Colombia wrote: "Judy Chicago The Dinner Party Is In Celebration Of Our Freedom From The Kitchen To Pursue Professions And Interests In The Arts, For Allowing Women To Go Beyond The Role of Cook and Dishwasher [...]"³¹ Tacoma Women sent the following mailgram: "Women of Tacoma Washington Celebrate All Living Creating Sisters Ancient and Contemporary Ritual, Collectively We Design The Way."³²

The analysis of the subjects of the *International Dinner Party* reveals that the event counteracts the here-before/there-after binary characteristic of much of feminism's historiography which I have addressed in the chapter "Feminist Thought and Curating: On Method." Situated knowledge and politics of location,³³ as well as a "critical cartography,"³⁴ are crucial to both the artistic concept and to my cultural analysis of the *International Dinner Party*. The living artwork allowed for women to raise matters of feminist concern and to celebrate feminism as both an international movement (political) and a living artwork (aesthetic). Subject matters addressed were current events, such as women's protests in Iran, repro-

ductive rights, domestic labour, knowledge on historical and contemporary women artists, historical critique, such as the burning of witches throughout Europe, and collectivity. The subjects raised demonstrate that different feminist groups were concerned with issues and memories specific to their local situation, yet aware of international relations. The *International Dinner Party* bears witness to the fact that feminist activists were connected to each other via channels of international networking, personal connections, politics of solidarity, friendship, and exchange.

A Living Feminist Artwork: Making and Viewing

Each woman did her share in the creation of this living artwork.³⁵ The roles performed by the women involved in the process of creating the *International Dinner Party* ranged from inviter to invitee, hostess to waitress, photographer to cook, guest to dishwasher, participant to performer, dinner conversationalist to listener, oral historian to message writer, producer to spectator. Letters in the *International Dinner Party* archive evidence that there was a clear understanding on the part of the participating women of what preparing dinner and having dinner meant in the context of a living feminist work of art. Dorreya Allouba, President of the Alexandria Branch of the Women's Health Improvement Association in Egypt, writes that the women at their local dinner "accepted to be PARTICIPANTS in an all-host dinner as opposed to guests."³⁶ Two women from San Diego, Micki McGee and Mary-Linn Hughes, write: "Tonight 50 women from San Diego are coming together to share their anger and their strength and to honor women who have contributed to their lives as well as to honor each other. This is a time for us to strengthen our community by sharing food and enjoying the evening [...]."³⁷

It is impossible to envision the buzz of activities of the 24-hour period of dinners, which drew their aesthetic energy and their feminist political motivation from the shared awareness of all the other worldwide dinners going on simultaneously. The sheer number of contributors and locations exceeds the capacity to picture the preparations carried out by the women following Suzanne Lacy's invitation to "stage dinners."³⁸ It is equally challenging to imagine all the different dinner party events. I imagine women having debates on how to respond to the invitation and discussing amongst themselves the particular woman to whom their dinner

would pay tribute. I imagine women discussing the choice of food and drinks, looking for the perfect recipes, inventing new dishes for the special occasion, and going to the market to find the right ingredients. I imagine women cooking together and setting the tables. I imagine some of the dining tables to be ostentatious, even glorious displays in an atmosphere of celebration, and others to be more modest, perhaps even austere in appearance. I imagine the tables being decorated according to local conventions, or as feminist interventions in local conventions. I imagine simple decorations displaying collections of plants and fruits or, somewhere else, exuberant decorations parading rich selections of colours and textiles. I imagine women sitting down at their dining tables, arranged formally for themselves by themselves, replete with name cards; and others scattered informally, with buffet-style dining, plates in their hands. I imagine them in very different private apartments or houses, porches, terraces, gardens, or artist's studios. I imagine partners or husbands who left their homes to get out of the way for the celebration of the *International Dinner Party*. I imagine partners or husbands asking if they could be included in the dinner. I imagine children running around, asking questions, and joining in the festive mood. I imagine how all these 200 different meals were relished and savoured. I imagine conversations, laughter, debate, discussions, singing, dancing, exuberance, and joy. I imagine women talking about art and politics. I imagine women having serious and meaningful conversations and light-hearted chatter. I imagine women debating and disagreeing, joking and theorising, exchanging personal stories, relating recently re-discovered women's history and envisioning a different future.

Writing about the *International Dinner Party* from the contemporary moment in the twenty-first century, I have to confront myself with the fact that the scale of this living artwork exceeds any adequate research. Yet, based on a theoretical observation by Amelia Jones, we come to understand that I would not be in any better position to do this research and cultural analysis had I actually participated in the *International Dinner Party*. Jones writes the following with respect to body art:

It is my premise here, as it has been elsewhere, that there is no possibility of an unmediated relationship to any kind of cultural product, including body art. Although I am respectful of the specificity of knowledges gained from participating in a live performance situation, I will argue here that this specificity should not be privileged over the specificity of knowledges that develop in relation to the documentary traces of such an event. [...] it is hard to identify the patterns of history while one is embedded in them. We "invent" these patterns, pulling the past together into a manageable picture, retrospectively.³⁹

Jones' theoretical insight into what a live situation means with regard to spectatorship and retrospective theorising and historicising are of particular relevance to my work on the *International Dinner Party*. I argue here that ephemeral dinners, an everyday activity, and a living artwork share the same theoretical ground. We have to be respectful and mindful of the knowledges of those who were present at a dinner or at a living artwork. But we also have to understand that that this specific knowledge should not be privileged over the knowledge gained from documentary traces of such events, be they dinners or living artworks or, as in the case of the *International Dinner Parties*, both at the same time.

The everyday knowledge gained from experiencing dinner parties evidences that the live event exceeds what can be known. There is always more than one conversation going on at the same time. No participant in any dinner party will ever arrive at a full picture of the party attended. This holds even more true for the *International Dinner Party*. No single participant could ever have attended all the 200 different dinner parties. Therefore, there is no participant or spectator position who might have gained an overview, who might have seen it all.⁴⁰ At the same time, the "manageable picture"⁴¹ Jones speaks of is not only part of any historicisation of the *International Dinner Party*, but already present in the artwork on the level of its performance-installation. The living artwork was 'pulled together into a manageable picture'⁴² by Suzanne Lacy's performance at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Upon the arrival of the telegram messages from the international dinner locations, the artist marked them on a large map of the world. The artist actively worked with the production of documentary traces at the level of performing these traces and creating a lasting installation piece. Therefore, a critical analysis of the *International Dinner Party* has to address both the living artwork that escapes the magisterial overview as well as the manageable picture that offers an overview in its installation. This chapter explores the *International Dinner Party* as a living artwork. The next chapter "Putting on the Map: The International Dinner Parties" will examine its installation via a photograph taken of Lacy's performance at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art on March 14, 1979.

The *International Dinner Party* raises the issues of art production and art viewing and their historically constructed gendered subject positions.⁴³ Therefore, it is of importance to connect art-making and art-viewing to their historical formations engendering the constructions of binary oppositions and exclusions. Since the professionalisation of art by art academies and the discipline of art history as a "discourse produced at the institutional site of the university"⁴⁴ over the course of the 19th century, conventional notions about the binary division between producers of art and viewers of art were premised by the gendered paradigms of active and

passive. The institutionalisation of these paradigms was closely linked with the politics of professional art education and art historical study. This process of professionalisation is part of the project of modernity. Its logics of binary power relations successfully excluded women from the subject position of production and denied women access to making history. Women were excluded from history painting, the highest category of art. Women painters were also actively written out of the history of art as a discourse.

Women lost the terrain of history as a subject for them to paint, and they lost the terrain of art history as subjects to be studied. The foundation of art academies is closely linked to the project of modernity. The shift from the master's workshop to professional training in newly founded art academies in the late Renaissance is part of the process of gendering art education and ultimately art production. One of the first art academies, which established the model for others to follow, was the *Accademia del Disegno* in Florence, founded in 1593. The Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna was founded in 1692, the Royal Academy of Arts in London in 1768, and the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague in 1799, to name just a few. Academies excluded women from studying art. Women were not granted access to life drawing classes. In 1971 Linda Nochlin's seminal essay "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" addresses "The Question of the Nude":

Let us first examine such a simple, but critical, issue as availability of the nude model to aspiring women artists, in the period extending from the Renaissance until near the end of the nineteenth century, a period in which careful and prolonged study of the nude model was essential to the training of every young artist, to the production of any work with pretensions to grandeur, and to the very essence of History Painting, generally accepted as the highest category of art. [...] As late as 1893, "lady" students were not admitted to life drawing at the Royal Academy in London, and even when they were, after that date, the model had to be "partially draped."⁴⁵

The discourse of art history as a political institution and an academic discipline effectively led to the silencing of women as producers of art.

What is remarkable is that it was art history, together with the art museums, that made female artistic creativity invisible, thus "amortizing" it. Artists with very high reputations in their time, such as Sofonisba Anguissola, Artemisia Gentileschi, Judith Leyster, Rosalba Carriera, and others, were simply not mentioned in art history reference books [...] It wasn't until the 1970s and 1980s that the art historians of the women's movement retrieved and reconstructed the works of female artists through laborious research [...] Is it not

bizarre that artworks from the 1920 and 1930s have to be “unearthed”, like archaeological discoveries from a bygone era?⁴⁶

In light of the historical processes of who is included and who is excluded from the artist subject position and what is considered art-making, the *International Dinner Party* presents a radical suggestion: making art while making dinner then continuing to make art while having dinner—and having conversations all the way through. Making dinner was not a subject for History Painting. This invisibilised reproductive labour is conceptually used to make feminist art involving artists and non-artists alike in the process. Having dinner was a key subject of History Painting. We may think of the Last Supper or regal banquets. History paintings evidence gendered as well as raced and classed power relations around the table.

Here, dinners as a conduit into feminist art-making have to be historicised in the context of their time in 1979. Only ten years earlier, in 1969, Sheila Tobias and Betty Friedan taught “what may have been the first women’s studies course for credit.”⁴⁷ At this time Gerda Lerner taught women’s history at Sarah Lawrence College.⁴⁸ The first women’s art class was taught by Judy Chicago at Fresno State College in 1970. Chicago writes: “When I went to Fresno to initiate the first feminist art program, I continued my research into women’s history. I was particularly interested in the history of women artists, a subject that had scarcely been studied since the late nineteenth century.”⁴⁹ Women recognised as subjects making history and women recognised as subjects making art were still a rather recent and radical development achieved through the women’s movement, through women’s liberation, and the efforts of feminist artists, educators, and scholars in academic institutions. Therefore, many women sharing the subject position of art-making was a radical proposition in 1979.

Even more so, as the central art-making activities we are concerned with here with are highly gendered everyday activities, namely preparing dinner and having dinner conversations. Even though the international dinner parties resist the magisterial overview, the sharing of the dinner activities importantly afforded women an opportunity to experience and witness each other in the making of a living artwork. This is critical given that the feminist critique of the subject position of the artist and the historical exclusion of women from this position had only just begun a decade earlier.

The Binary Division of Production and Reception

At the time of the *International Dinner Party*, the political implications of the gendered binary of the production and the reception of art had come under attack by feminist artists and activists alike. The *International Dinner Party* presents a model of involving equals in the shared production and reception. All the participants were performers. All the guests were hosts. All the listeners were speakers. The following theoretical exploration will incorporate positions put forward by Amelia Jones, Jacques Rancière, and Jean-Luc Nancy. I draw on Amelia Jones' work to introduce a critical historicisation of the logic of subjectivity based on binary oppositionality.⁵⁰ I refer to Jacques Rancière's thoughts on issues of emancipation and spectating.⁵¹ I refer to Jean-Luc Nancy's philosophical views on the sense of being-with and the attention we need to pay to words starting with *co*, *con* and *syn*, which makes us mindful of the *co* in communicating with each other.⁵² The following three sections of this chapter examine the art of producing subjects, the art of spectating subjects, and the art of conversing subjects.

The Art of Producing Subjects

First, I connect the examination of the logic of binary opposition in the historical formation of aesthetics to the *International Dinner Party*. In order to see the interventions and transformations presented by artworks such as the *International Dinner Party*, it is important to establish the philosophical, cultural and ideological premises of the historical formation of aesthetics. The historical formation of the field of aesthetics had a political impact on the construction of the position of the individual and the constitution of the androcentric Western subject position. Amelia Jones has noted that it is imperative to understand how oppositional binaries continue to challenge and creep into the process of their transgression. To develop her critique, Jones closely examines "Art as a binary proposition; identity as a binary opposition."⁵³ The historical politics of binary formations were still intact when feminist art making began to attack them in the 1970s, and they continue to be of relevance to the contemporary moment.

Amelia Jones analyses the construction of the historic binary between things called art and non-aesthetic objects. She writes:

In aesthetics, the philosophy of a special category of things called “art,” art must be divided from other kinds of objects. Art is thus a binary in the sense of being set apart from non-aesthetic objects; as an extension of this, art is set apart in a binary relation to the subjects of making and viewing or judging. Art exists as a pivot between the artist and the interpreter (each of whom, in structures of Western aesthetics, views himself as uniquely positioned to make/view the work). Again, this structure is predicated on the idea of art as expressive of a particular (special) kind of subjective meaning. Art in this sense is always “identified” with an individual.⁵⁴

The individual who produces art during the modern period is equally bound up with the Western models of domination, colonialism, capitalism, and industrialism. Jones explains:

Art historians such as Donald Preziosi, Catherine Soussloff and Grant Kester have explored the formation of the concept of the individual and of European modernity itself in relation to the visual arts. [...] Most importantly, these scholars argue that art and its related discipline of art history, the latter born of the Enlightenment and linked to the birth of the art museum in the late nineteenth century, pivot around, inform, and reinforce the ideological formation of the modern individual, in turn crucial to the rise of colonialism, capitalism and industrialism and the ideological justification of all three “Western” models of domination.⁵⁵

We can clearly see here that feminists were confronted with a set of two different yet connected problems. On one hand, women artists and feminist artists made their claim to the artist subject position and its access to the political and material conditions of art education and art production historically denied to them.⁵⁶ On the other hand, a critical feminist analysis of the artist subject position revealed it as tainted and burdened with the legacy of individual subject formation implicated in the Western models of domination. Therefore, a feminist claim to the artist position, and in extension to the Western individual subject position, was politically, socially, aesthetically, and theoretically troubling through the very exclusions and dominations such a concept of which the subject is a part.

Conceptual social feminist art practice in particular took on the latter and sought to confront and transgress the exclusions and dominations the Western subject position is historically bound up with. Such conceptual social feminist art practices counteracted the following three binaries: first, art set apart from other objects; second, the androcentric concept of the artist as genius; third, the isolated individual artist as the

sole producer of art. Such practices, including the *International Dinner Party*, were premised on collectivity and relationality.⁵⁷ To a degree, the writing of art history has contributed to the annihilation of some of the radical shifts that occurred through feminist art-making testing out models of collaboration, coproduction, and relationality. Amelia Jones points out that the identification of a single individual with the production process of art has remained the prevalent model for the writing of art critiques or art history.

This is the case even with late twentieth-century collectives, which are reduced in the logic of aesthetics to singular authorial points of expression, as is evident in curatorial and editorial projects referencing their work—thus, art historians often refer to “leaders” of groups such as Fluxus (George Macunias) or Happenings (Allan Kaprow) in writing their histories, or at the very least refer to other key artists—certainly not the legions of volunteers or casual participants.⁵⁸

This rings particularly true for the *International Dinner Party* with its 2,000 contributors. Therefore, the focus of my cultural analysis here is clearly on the participant contributors. I do so by incorporating evidence of the feminist subjects whose contributions constitute the *International Dinner Party*. Naming groups and individuals who contributed, as well as citing their messages to demonstrate how this living artwork was produced and what its results were, is part of my method in the cultural analysis put forward here. Yet, overall the position of the artist as the one who is identified with the production of the artwork remains intact. I am including my own work on the *International Dinner Party* in this critique here, even though I consciously raise awareness for the participants who made the living artwork. I find this analysis highly relevant not only to the examples cited by Amelia Jones, but also with respect to the reception of much of social conceptual feminist practice including the *International Dinner Party*. The artist position of Suzanne Lacy has been fully affirmed and asserted via exhibitionary mechanisms as well as art critical writing.

Feminist methods of initiating a process of co-producing art were aimed at unhinging the androcentric position of the individual creator, while at the same time aiming to achieve equal status with the subject position of the artist that had previously been equated with white, male and Western. In one of the messages in the *International Dinner Party* archive, artist Miriam Sharon speaks to this dilemma. What follows is from Sharon’s telegram message sent from Tel Aviv: “Until we women will not develop our own art language we shall never exist as artists independent but imitators therefore your project is a major contribution to the new feminist spirit in art.”⁵⁹

The Art of Spectating Subjects

Second, I will examine the binary logics of art reception. Jacques Rancière has pointed out that it is imperative to question conventional identifications of spectating with passivity. "Spectatorship is not the passivity that has to be turned into activity. It is our normal situation. We learn and teach, we act and know as spectators who link what they see with what they have seen and told, done and dreamt. There is no privileged medium as there is no privileged starting point."⁶⁰ Having introduced the gendered binary that was part of the historical construction of art production, I will now bring this focus on the gendered division to the logics of reception.

In his 2007 seminal essay on spectatorship, Jacques Rancière writes the following:

All these oppositions – looking/knowing, looking/acting, appearance/reality, activity/passivity – are much more than logical oppositions. They are, what I call a partition of the sensible, a distribution of places and of the capacities or incapacities attached to those placers. Put in other terms, they are allegories of inequality. This is why you can change the values given to each position without changing the meaning of the opposition themselves.⁶¹

What Rancière fails to illuminate is the historical construction of the genderedness of both spectatorship and passivity. The participants of the *International Dinner Party* asserted their right to spectatorship and at the same time they defied the dual binary of passivity. I refer here first to the historic binary opposition of male/female that was identified as active/passive and second to the binary of producer/spectator that was equally identified as active/passive.

The international dinner parties did not favour looking over knowing, looking over acting, the producer over the spectator. The conventional spatial divide with viewers assigned a space outside of the artwork was in part undermined by the *International Dinner Party*, as the dinners took place in the settings of domestic homes. The living artwork challenged the binary opposition between active producers and passive spectators.

It is worth stressing that the constellation of the *International Dinner Party* seen through Rancière's analysis of spectatorship leads me to propose here the concept of the emancipated spectatress. "Emancipation starts from the principle of equality. It begins when we dismiss the opposition between looking and acting and understand that the distribution of the visible itself is part of the configuration of domination and subjection. It starts when we realize that looking is also an action that confirms or modifies that distribution, and that 'interpreting the world' is already a means of transforming it."⁶² Rancière references Karl Marx's



The International Dinner Party, March 14 1979, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive

Thesis 11 on Feuerbach here: “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.”⁶³ Even though Rancière intervenes into Marx’s materialist critique of Feuerbach and posits that looking or interpreting are transformative activities, he does not extend his argument to address the gendered histories of looking, acting, interpreting, and consequently changing. The historically gendered opposition between looking and acting, and the therefore ultimately gendered distribution of the visible eludes him. The relations are complex. Women have been denied looking as well as spectatorship. Women have been theorised as the object of male spectatorship. Laura Mulvey has famously argued that the spectator is perennially identified with the male subject position viewing woman as the object of desire.⁶⁴ Women have been declared the ideal viewer or spectator effectively excluding them from the status of artist or author. Given the complex history of the gendered nature of spectatorship and ultimately the gendered “distribution of the visible itself,” it is of interest to take up Rancière’s proposal of “dismissing the opposition between looking and acting” to use it with respect to feminist art production and feminist art-viewing.⁶⁵

Suzanne Lacy’s conceptual structure of the *International Dinner Party* afforded the 2,000 participants the opportunity to dismiss the opposition between looking and acting as well as the division between viewing and producing. They were at once producers viewed and viewers produced. The participants made the living artwork. Following Rancière, the emancipated spectatresses “base their emancipation on the principle of equal-

ity.”⁶⁶ Yet, they go beyond and equally challenge the complexly gendered binary of looking and acting. This marks the intervention the participation-based feminist art practice of the *International Dinner Party* present. The historic continuities of the gendered distribution of the visible itself were effectively ruptured. Women saw each other as subjects acting and looking beyond the historically gendered opposition of looking and acting. Women recognised each other as emancipated spectatresses.

The Art of Conversing Subjects

Third, I examine the importance of conversation through Jean-Luc Nancy’s concept of *co* (with). Conversations bring attention to the prefix *co-* and to the auditory sense of hearing and listening. So far, I have focused on the emancipated spectatress. Now, the emphasis will shift to equal listeners. I have argued that the *International Dinner Party* exceeds the totalizing and magisterial overview. The spoken words over the dinners have long since passed. They existed only in their *listened-to-ness* when the participating women were in conversation with each other. Just as an overview, an ‘overlisten’ of the *International Dinner Party* would have been equally impossible. Yet, there are some important differences with regard to the subject position between the senses of seeing and of hearing, between the activities of spectating and listening. Language affords the concept of an overview but lacks a comparable concept of an ‘overlisten’ or ‘overhear.’⁶⁷ Hearing or listening defies perspective. It diffuses into space and thus inherently implies the potential for a different construction of the subject position than spectatorship that is predicated on perspective and overview.

Nancy writes: “Communication is not transmission, but a sharing that becomes subject: sharing as subject of all “subjects”. [...] Sound in general is first of all communication in this sense.”⁶⁸ We cannot even begin to imagine the sound of the *International Dinner Party*. It is the sound of women worldwide engaging in conversation. It is the sound of the collective. The sounds they produced and listened to may have been happy, joyful, celebratory, soft, half-shouted, excited, anxious, nervous, angry, loud, boisterous, rowdy, or quiet. A number of different sounds may have been heard around one dinner table at any given time. Some of the sounds may never have been heard. They may have been lost in conversation. Some of the sounds may have been listened to by many others. In conversation, sharing becomes subject. In conversation, subjects constitute each other via their shared subjects. Suzanne Lacy emphasises her “desire for communication across difference.”⁶⁹ In this sense, sharing becomes subject across difference. Lacy writes: “Concerned with communication above all else, feminist art cannot rest on prior assumptions or conventions about the nature of art. Its shape will be as radical as its contents.”⁷⁰ Its shape cannot

only be seen, it can be heard, it can be listened to. Its shape can take on the form of a conversation. A conversation can lead to radical subjects. A conversation depends on subjects. The conversation emerges with its subjects. Without subjects, the conversation comes to an end. Without conversation, subjects cannot engage with other subjects. Without conversation, subjects remain in isolation. Therefore, subjects constitute themselves and each other through conversation. Listening to each other, the subjects make themselves understood. In conversation, subjects are with each other. They communicate.

Following Jean-Luc Nancy, my focus is now on the prefix *co-* in conversation and communication. Nancy speaks of community (*Gemeinschaft*; *communauté*), communism (*Kommunismus*; *communisme*), compassion (*Mitgefühl*; *compassion*) and commemoration (*Kommemoration*; *commemoration*) to turn the attention to the prefix *co-*, which runs like a thread through these heavily charged terms, as he describes them.⁷¹ Nancy stresses that the category derived from the prefix *co-* or *con-*, in Latin, or *syn-*, in Greek, is an under-theorised category in the history of philosophy. With respect to art, and in particular conceptual social feminist art-making, I would like to add that the prefix *co-* is a most useful, yet largely under-theorised analytical category. *Co-* is a prefix. It cannot stand on its own. It needs to be connected with a base to form a word. Together with different bases *co-* takes on many meanings. The prefix *co-* adds the meaning of with or together to its base. *Co-* needs to share a base to make sense. Nancy thinks about “making sense.”⁷² He argues that information does not make sense per se, but only makes sense through being shared with others. Only then does it become true communication. Lacy’s *International Dinner Party* at once depends on and affords ‘co-’ on many levels. Just as *co-* cannot stand alone, the *International Dinner Party* is predicated on not standing alone. The enabling conceptual structure depended upon participants. Their contributions made the living artwork come alive. They engaged with each other in the practice of *co-*: coproduction, collaboration, communication, and conversation.

In Conclusion

My analysis in this chapter shows that the *International Dinner Party* does not merely inverse the relations between the production and the reception of art, but complexly folds them together in the position of female subjects who made the living artwork/who made the living art work/who made the living work of art. Other readings of the social and activ-

ist engagement afforded by Lacy's practice have prioritised the shift from reception to production as a shift from passive to active.⁷³ I argue that the shift goes beyond that, as I have demonstrated that the conceptual structure of the *International Dinner Party* afforded the participants the opportunity to move beyond the opposition between looking and acting and, equally important, they went beyond this opposition together with each other. Following Rancière's notion that emancipation starts with the principle of equality and Nancy's notion that we make sense only through the operation of 'co-', we come to understand that the *International Dinner Party* is made up of conversations between emancipated spectatrices and equal listeners.

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- 1 ——— Suzanne Lacy, "Interview," in *Feast. Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art*, ed. Stephanie Smith (Chicago: Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, 2013), 82.
 - 2 ——— Suzanne Lacy, "Interview," in Smith (2013), 78.
 - 3 ——— The chapter "The Salon Model: The Conversational Complex" makes epistemological use of the etymological dimension of *curare* (care), the Latin root of the words curator and curating.
 - 4 ——— Suzanne Lacy, "Interview," in Smith (2013), 78.
 - 5 ——— Orgadata, in Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive.
 - 6 ——— Ibid.
 - 7 ——— Ibid.
 - 8 ——— Ibid.
 - 9 ——— Martine Aballea, accessed August 14, 2014, <https://www.centrepompidou.fr/cpv/resource/cGE7R7/rxkEkp>.
 - 10 ——— Ivana Bago, "'Strike' by La Galerie des Locataires," accessed August 10, 2014, <http://tranzit.org/exhibitionarchive/tag/ida-biard/>.
 - 11 ——— Christine Vandemoortele, accessed September 9, 2014, <http://www.christinevandemoortele.com/biography>.
 - 12 ——— A poster of Tohei Horike's project can be traced to the ATCA, Alternative Traditions in the Contemporary Arts, Artists Works' and Correspondence Collection (Msc 764) at the University of Iowa's Libraries Special Collections & University Archives. Horike, Tohei (Japan). Poster for "Five Years' Research Project '76-'80," accessed August 15, 2014, http://www.lib.uiowa.edu/scua/msc/tomsc800/msc764/crane_friedman.htm.
 - 13 ——— The Kate Craig Online Archive, accessed January 15, 2015, <http://front.bc.ca/wwwf-collection/the-kate-craig-online-archive/>.
 - 14 ——— Arte Postal. XVI Bienal de São Paulo Outubro Dezembro 1981, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://lomholtmailartarchive.dk/networkers/fbsp/1981-12-00-fbsp>.
 - 15 ——— Woman's Caucus for Art. New York Chapter, newsletter, March 1, 1979, in Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive.
 - 16 ——— The chapter "The Salon Model: The Conversational Complex" provides an examination of the domestic sphere/public sphere dichotomy as

- well as an analysis of how this dichotomy impacted the conventional historiography of curating.
- 17 ——— Four in Paris, telegram, March 14, 1979, in Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive.
- 18 ——— Hazel Belvo Artist (51 Lucas Dr Centerville OH 45459), telegram March 13, 1979, in Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive.
- 19 ——— K. Magnani and M. Pipkin, telegram message, March 14, 1979, in Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive.
- 20 ——— Mitzi Nairn, born in 1942, figures prominently in Christine Berry's study of *The New Zealand Student Christian Movement, 1896-1996. A Centennial History*. Mitzi Nairn's appearance in the *International Dinner Party* archive evidences that the network of women to whom word of the International Dinner Party had spread was far-reaching and included many different positions within feminism. Nairn worked on a number of political issues ranging from apartheid to the conflict in South Korea. One of the groups she was active in was "dedicated to the study of Christian feminism." (Berry 1998: 10) For many years, Mitzi Nairn was the Director of the Combined Churches of Aotearoa New Zealand's Programme on Racism. She has been actively involved in anti-racism initiatives since the 1960s including the Auckland Committee on Racism and Discrimination.
- She self-identified as a Pakeha woman and argues that the population of European descent in New Zealand has to turn around the "ignorance of Maori values (tikanga), both traditional both traditional ones and modern expressions which come as a response to current changes and developments; and we need to repair our ignorance of colonial history." Mitzi Nairn, "Reflections on the state of the Pakeha nation," accessed January 3, 2015, http://news.tangatawhenua.com/2011/02/reflections-on-the-state-of-the-pakeha-nation-mitzi-nairn/?doing_wp_cron=1420392691.9871909618377685546875.
- 21 ——— Mitzi Nairn and a group of Auckland women, letter and scroll, March 14, 1979, in Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive.
- 22 ——— Ulrike Rosenbach, Cologne, Germany, postcard, March 14, 1979, in Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive.
- 23 ——— Mary Beth Edelson, New York, New York, letter, March 14, 1979, in: Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive.
- 24 ——— Ibid.
- 25 ——— "Chicago claims that feminist art could only get off the ground institutionally on the West Coast. Speaking to [Lynn] Hershman Leeson in 2005, she comments on the traditional antagonism between the two coasts." Peggy Phelan, ed., *Live Art in LA: Performance in Southern California, 1970-1983* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2012), 5. Phelan goes on to quote Judy Chicago: "The west coast/east coast thing had nothing to do with women or feminism. It had to do with the west coast/east coast art world struggle: that is that the east coast did not take the west coast seriously. At the same time, there is no way the feminist art movement could have started on the east coast. It could only have started on the west coast, because there was a tradition on the west coast of inventing yourself, and one could only do that outside the shadow of the European art tradition." Phelan (2012), 5.
- 26 ——— The information on women honoured in the *International Dinner Party* was gathered from the telegrams and letters in Suzanne Lacy's Archive.

- 27 ——— Edinburgh Feminists, telegram, March 14th, 1979, in Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive.
- 28 ——— Christchurch Women's Group, telegram, March 14, 1979, in Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive.
- 29 ——— Group of Brazilian feminists, letter, March 14, 1979, in Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive. Even though my search based upon the first names was not entirely conclusive, many of the traces I was able to follow online point to the fact that the group of women who together signed the letter were the Coletivo de Mulheres de Rio de Janeiro.
- 30 ——— Ibid.
- 31 ——— Sarah Edwards, Nancy Albertson, Victoria Cesino et al, mailgram, March 14, 1979, in Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive.
- 32 ——— Tacoma Women, mailgram, March 14, 1979, in Suzanne Lacy, The International Dinner Party Archive.
- 33 ——— Lykke (2010), xiii.
- 34 ——— Meskimmon (2007), 335.
- 35 ——— Amelia Jones has pointed out the historiographical omission of connecting 1990s relationality to their historical precedents in performative and feminist practices of the 1960s and 1970s. "While many critics, from Nicolas Bourriaud to Jan Verwoert and Simon O'Sullivan, have noted the rise of this interest in activating the relationality involved in processes of making and viewing art, few have connected relationality either to these historical precedents (viz., the works of media performative artists such as Allan Kaprow, Carolee Schneemann, Bruce Naumann, Suzanne Lacy, Helio Oiticica, VALIE EXPORT, and many, many others since the 1960s) or to the absolutely essential context of the end of the European political colonization of the so-called third world, the rise of the rights movements, and the impact of identity politics on Euro-American art discourse and practice since 1960. It is not an accident that so many artists activating a relational approach since that time were invested in the rights movements. Not surprisingly, this tendency to ignore these precedents has led to the formation of new micro-canons that, once again, leave out the work that is the most threatening, messy, and uncontainable according to these new models of what curator Nicolas Bourriaud termed "relational aesthetics" in an influential exhibition and book by this title in the late 1990s." Jones (2012): 235-236.
- 36 ——— Dorreay Allouba, President, The Women's Health Improvement Association, letter, in Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive.
- 37 ——— Micki McGee and Mary-Linn Hughes (San Diego), mailgram, March 14, 1979, in Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive.
- 38 ——— Smith (2011), 69.
- 39 ——— Jones (1997), 12.
- 40 ——— I will turn to the gendered implications of overview in more detail in this chapter's section "The Art of Spectating Subjects."
- 41 ——— Jones (1997), 12.
- 42 ——— Ibid.
- 43 ——— Even though there was a resistance to the power relations that come with the magisterial overview during the dinner parties, this resistance did not carry over into the museum installation of the *International Dinner Party*. Its visual representation and documentation via a map

of the world onto which Lacy mapped the locations of the dinners according to the arrival time of the telegram messages again adheres to the logic of the overview. I will address this in more detail in the following chapter.

- 44 ——— Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 27.
- 45 ——— Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" (1971) in Linda Nochlin, *Women, Art, And Power and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988), 158-159.
- 46 ——— Hammer-Tugendhat (2013): 61.
- 47 ——— Sara M. Evans, *Tidal Wave: How Women Changed America at Century's End* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 94.
- 48 ——— Evans (2003), 94.
- 49 ——— See: Judy Chicago, *Institutional Time: A Critique of Studio Art Education* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2014).
- 50 ——— Even though the framework of intersectionality based on gender, race, and class (and, I would like to add, age, health, and mobility) and the differentiated positions of queer theory have profoundly attacked and seemingly overcome the older model of binary oppositions, it is nonetheless of importance to reconsider and re-reflect on binaries in their construction, "As for better or worse the binary model of self/other central to the European structure of subjectivity for obvious reasons came to dominate either explicitly or implicitly a certain identity politics motivated discourse in the Euro-American art world (particularly in the US) with the rise to prominence of the feminist art movement around 1970 and other identity-based models for making, exhibiting, and writing about visual arts such as 'multiculturalism' in the following decades." (Jones (2012): 47). Even though binaries have been under attack and seemingly deconstructed through critical theory and critical art making, it is important to note that on the level of *realpolitik*, especially after 9/11 and currently with the rise of ISIS, Russian Cold War politics in Crimea and Russia's Anti-Gay Law, new binary oppositions are under construction on a globalised level of reverting to alliances of good and bad and of drawing new borders of discrimination and domination.
- 51 ——— Jacques Rancière, "The Emancipated Spectator," *Art Forum*, March (2007): 270–281. and Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London: Verso, 2011).
- 52 ——— Jean-Luc Nancy, "Mit-Sinn (Zürich, März 2010)," In *>Mit-Sein<*, eds. Elke Bippus, Jörg Huber and Dorothee Richter (Zurich: Edition Vol-demeer, Vienna and New York: Springer, 2010), 21–32; as well as Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, ed. Peter Connor, transl. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Sawhney (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).
- 53 ——— Jones (2012), 17.
- 54 ——— Jones (2012), 19.
- 55 ——— Jones (2012), 20.
- 56 ——— Equality in the recognition and representation of art made by female artists was, of course, the political aim behind attacking the gender imbalance and injustice imposed on women artists by the art system at large. See, for example, Women's Ad Hoc Committee/Women Artists in Revolution/WASABAL, "To the Viewing Public for the 1970 Whitney Annual Exhibition" (1970). Self-published handout distrib-

uted at demonstrations against gender imbalance in the 1970 annual exhibition at the Whitney Museum, New York. "WE'RE NOT SATISFIED! WE WANT MORE! WE HAVE BEEN DEMANDING FIFTY PERCENT, AND WE'RE GOING TO KEEP RIGHT ON UNTIL WE GET IT." (Reprinted in Hilary Robinson, ed., *Feminism—Art—Theory: An Anthology 1968–2000* (Malden/Oxford/Carlton: Blackwell Publishing 2001), 56–57.

- 57 ——— Extensive theoretical positioning and writing has been part of the feminist art movement, and if one will, of its parallel feminist art history movement, from the very onset on in the 1960s and 1970s. Linda Nochlin's essay "Why Have There Been No Great Woman Artists?" (*ARTnews* (January 1971): 22–39) marked a turning point in the critique of the writing of art history. The coalescing of art, activism, and politics was mirrored by a similar movement in art history writing. For examples of this feminist art history movement relevant to the development in the Anglophone context, see: Lucy R. Lippard, *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art* (New York: Dutton, 1976); Lucy R. Lippard, "More Alternate Spaces: The LA Woman's Building," *Art in America* (May/June 1974): 85–85; Lucy R. Lippard, *The Pink Glass Swan: Selected Essays on Feminist Art* (New York: New Press, 1995); Lucy R. Lippard, "Projecting a Feminist Criticism," *Art Journal* Vol. 35, No. 4 (Summer, 1976): 337–339; Lucy R. Lippard, "Sexual Politics, Art Style," *Art in America* (Sept.–Oct., 1971); and Nancy Marmer, "Womanspace: A Creative Battle for Equality in the Art World," *Art News* Vol. 72 (Summer 1973): 38–39; Griselda Pollock with Rozsika Parker, *Framing Feminism: Art & the Women's Movement 1970–85*, 1987.
- 58 ——— Jones (2012): 51.
- 59 ——— Miriam Sharon, telegram, dated March 5, 1979, in: Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive. 60 Rancière, quoted in Claire Bishop, ed., *Participation: Whitechapel Documents of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006): 16.
- 61 ——— Rancière, (2007), 277.
- 62 ——— Ibid.
- 63 ——— Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach* [first published by Marx in the Spring of 1845], accessed August 15, 2015, Marx/Engels Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm>.
- 64 ——— See: Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16 (3) (1975): 6–18.
- 65 ——— Rancière (2007), 277.
- 66 ——— Ibid.
- 67 ——— Overhearing means to hear someone speak, to listen in on someone who is not at all aware that she or he is being heard.
- 68 ——— Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press, 2007), 41.
- 69 ——— Roth, in: Lacy (2010), xxvi.
- 70 ——— Suzanne Lacy with Leslie Labowitz, "Feminist Artists: Developing a Media Strategy for the Movement (1981)," in Suzanne Lacy, *Leaving Art: Writings on Performance, Politics, and Publics 1974–2007* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 83.
- 71 ——— Nancy (2010), 21.
- 72 ——— Nancy (2010), 23.
- 73 ——— Roth, in Lacy (2010), xxvi.

Putting on the Map: International Dinner Parties

If each of our dinner parties occurs on the same evening,
we will form a continuous 24-hour celebration around the world
because of the time differences.

— Suzanne Lacy, *An International Dinner Party
to Celebrate Women's Culture*, letter of invitation, 1979

My point of departure is a photograph that was taken at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art on March 14, 1979. Today, this photograph can be seen on the website of artist Suzanne Lacy, bearing witness to a performance she staged over 35 years ago. On the eve of the much-awaited opening of Judy Chicago's large-scale sculpture, *The Dinner Party*, Lacy dedicated the *International Dinner Party* performance to her teacher and mentor, presenting a global and participatory event celebrating women's community.¹ The photograph shows a large map of the world in black and white with little red triangles forming a new layer—a new map, superimposed on the old. Suzanne Lacy put the triangles on the map to mark the places of origin of the telegram messages sent from the worldwide dinner parties.

All these triangles were connected one-by-one, forming a strange, ephemeral territory on the map's surface for 24 hours, a network of newly established relations between different women's groups and feminist activists around the globe who had agreed to become participants, collaborators, and contributors to Lacy's performance: the women's groups staged individual dinners in various locations around the world.

On Participation

The short description already indicates how complicated notions of ‘participation’ can be. Between artist, exhibition opening, map, museum venue, performance, participants, photograph, theorist, and viewer, one sees a multitude of relations participating with each other. Even if I were to only address the most obvious layers of ‘participation,’ it quickly becomes a complexly layered and interconnected set of inter-temporalities, inter-spatialities and inter-mediations. Working my way backward from the present, I want to first introduce my own participation as a curator and cultural theorist, occupying the territory between history and theory. Lacy’s photographic documentation of this one moment has come to stand in for the entirety of her 24-hour performance, a moment now globally accessible at the artist’s website, www.suzannelacy.com. Thus, a single photograph creates a possible connection to a present-day global audience, which can witness this document produced in the course of that evening in March 1979. A second layer of participation is Lacy’s engagement with the opening of the Judy Chicago exhibition. The process of offering a dedication to another artist involves both affective labour and symbolic capital. A third level of participation is that of artists and their art works in the making and shaping of the institution of the museum. At the time of its opening in 1935, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art was the first museum on the West Coast of the United States devoted exclusively to twentieth-century art. Defining ‘contemporary art’ at any given time is part of the museum’s power to select artistic production, thus producing a public meaning and interpretation. In 1979, SFMOMA participated in making feminist art public by showing not only Judy Chicago’s *Dinner Party* installation, but also hosting Suzanne Lacy’s *International Dinner Party*. Neither Chicago’s installation nor Lacy’s work were to become part of the museum’s permanent collection. A fourth layer of participation is the one most conventionally referred to as ‘participatory’ or ‘collaborative’ art. This, in very general terms, describes art-making as a way of offering opportunities for the audience’s activation, or for public involvement or community engagement.² The fifth layer of participation I want to discuss is the participation of the map in the performance and the participation in the map by the artist. Maps are representations of spatial relations; they are the physical documentation of both the production of knowledge and the relations of power.

Looking at these five distinct layers of participation, they are all marked by an intricate entanglement of shared territories. Taking my cues from the traditional definition of participation—to actively take part

in something or to share in something—I would like to suggest a territory shared in a complex way between these different actors, institutions, places, and times. I would like to complicate this notion further by introducing the intricate dialectics at work in these processes of sharing in a territory. That is, taking part in these shared territories is profoundly transformational and, at times, transgressive. Locating these processes within the very state of being of and in a shared territoriality makes participation not a matter of volition or choice, but a stipulated (pre-)condition that is constantly re-negotiated. This process, in turn, becomes the very process of participation itself.

In examining the five layers of participation more closely, the complex shared territories that are an inherent condition of participation come to the fore. As a theorist, I actively participate by examining the photograph of the *International Dinner Party*. At the same time, the photograph participates in my evolving analysis—it challenges and hinders interpretation by its references to both presence and absence. This photograph has extended its reach over time and forms the shared territory between the large-scale performance of the *International Dinner Party* in March 1979 and my contemporary reading of it. As an artist and organiser, Suzanne Lacy dedicated her *International Dinner Party* to the opening of Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* exhibition. Dedication is a very particular form of taking part in someone else's production or achievement—it is a shared, inter-subjective territory of participation. This complexity follows from its double meaning; dedication means both the act of dedicating as well as the state of being dedicated.³

Material and immaterial labour, the production and exchange of symbolic capital, and a complexly balanced and negotiated gift economy figure prominently in many acts and states of dedication. Neither dedicator nor dedicatee exclusively performs the role of producer or recipient. Both positions are implicated in the reciprocating exchange of producing and receiving achievement, affiliation, genealogy, and recognition.⁴ As artists, both Suzanne Lacy and Judy Chicago participated in the institutional rituals and rules that distinguish an art museum. When SFMOMA chose to exhibit Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party*, the institution of the museum—if not SFMOMA in particular—had come under severe attack for its exclusivity and its prevalent androcentric bias, with most permanent collections, but also temporary exhibitions, dominated by male artists. The institution of the museum, as a shared public territory, went on to reproduce over and over again a divide between a 'loud' majority—white male artists—and a silenced minority made up of non-male, non-white, non-European or non-North-American artists.⁵ This history also involves the implicit role that museums and galleries play in constructing contemporary art—a curator's invitation to actively take part in the insti-

tution of the museum by showing one's artwork there is part of the creation of a contemporary historiography of art, a decision which also has a profound impact on the capitalist art market and interests of private collectors. Non-participation, or exclusion, is thus a form of discrimination in both cultural and economic terms. 'The right to have the right' to participate therefore becomes an issue of politics. Hannah Arendt has written extensively on this problem of the right to have rights. "We became aware of the existence of a right to have rights [...] and a right to belong to some kind of organised community, only when millions of people emerged who had lost and could not regain these rights."⁶

Artistic processes like the *International Dinner Party*, based on the active involvement of many contributors, have been described alternatively as participatory, collaborative, collective, or relational. Participatory art, in this narrower sense, is understood as a conceptual approach to art-making, an approach that attacks the clearly defined divide between producers of art on one side and recipients of art on the other. Furthermore, participatory art, in its radical politics, posits the potentials of co-authorship and co-production.⁷ Participation in art occurs when the artwork begins to transgress into life, and, equally importantly, migrate back into the artwork. Participatory art, that is, wants to effect change both in life and in the art world. The 1970s witnessed transgressive art practices in which the aesthetics and politics of art decisively left the narrow confines of the art world behind and migrated into the public realm. Many artists decided to participate in the public sphere and in the public's issues, debates, and spaces.

In her text, *Tracing Allan Kaprow*, Suzanne Lacy revisits the decade of the 1970s in Los Angeles and elucidates the period's shifts towards "life-like art" and "performance-based public art practice."⁸ Lacy emphasizes Kaprow's influence on feminist art practitioners.

That's how it was in 1970s Los Angeles, among performance artists, conceptualists, feminists, Marxists, and artists of color [...] Allan's articulation of a vision where the boundaries of art and life were blurred offered a significant aesthetic 'way out' of an increasing dilemma for feminist artists whose identity politics and critical stance vis-à-vis culture and its production demanded the production of an activist avant-garde—art that went beyond simple protest politics and engaged the public sphere in multiple and open-ended ways. His well-thought-out boundary blurring gave us permission for framing life—domestic life, political life, relational life, and public life—as art.⁹

While these artistic practices were grounded in a politics of emancipation, aesthetic and spatial justice, and, at times, redistribution, they still strove

to remain included in the art world they aimed to critically, and above all transformationally, expand. Again, the movement is not one-way. It is not simply about a public, or members of a public, actively participating in the production and reception of artistic processes, but, more radically, the participation of art in all dimensions and aspects of life. The participation of art in life aims at changing and transforming both art and life.

Having opened up entry points into the complex shared territories that indicate participation, it is clear that participation is not a neatly structured and ordered process.¹⁰ Instead, I understand participation as a condition of shared territories that result in an ongoing transformationality. Looking at these intricately intertwined processes from this vantage point, participation—actively taking part in—becomes filled with contradictions.

Live-Mapping

I will now turn to a cultural analysis of the world map that was the centrepiece of the *International Dinner Party* performance and, later, a temporary wall installation at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. What is of interest to me here is how the map participates in the feminist geographies opened up through the *International Dinner Party* and how the artist participates, willingly or unwillingly, in the map's powerful representational logics. Tracing the photograph of Suzanne Lacy at work with the black- and-white map of the world, involves, among other things, visiting of the artist's website, which offers a concise description of the *International Dinner Party*.

Suzanne Lacy and Linda Preuss (San Francisco, 1979) A simultaneous world wide dinner happening on the eve of Judy Chicago's Dinner Party exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, this global project was offered as a gift to Judy Chicago, one of Lacy's mentors. Gathering mailing lists from the rapidly growing networks of feminist and development organizations, in this era before the internet, Lacy and Preuss mailed thousands of postcards inviting women from around the world to participate in the art project. Over 2000 women responded, in groups as small as two and as large as fifty. They were invited to host dinners on the same evening that would honor a woman in their own region. Given the time difference, the events would form a twenty-four hour simultaneous celebration. At

each dinner, women collectively drafted a statement and sent it via telegram to the SF MOMA, where their dinner was marked by Lacy with a red inverted triangle on a twenty-foot black and white map of the world. Their telegrams were displayed in albums next to the map.¹¹

The photograph showing the map of the world and the artist at work adding little red triangles to this map is one of the few existing visual documents of the performance by Lacy. The photograph needs to be placed within its historical context, most immediately Lacy's response to *The Dinner Party* by Judy Chicago.

From 1974 to 1979, Judy Chicago, together with a large number of contributing and supporting women who were part of her creative and administrative team, realised *The Dinner Party*, a piece which sparked both enthusiastic acclaim and heated controversy. The monumental piece is now considered an icon of 1970s feminist art. The large-scale sculpture is conceived as a triangular table staging a commemorative banquet honouring thirty-nine women who have individually crafted place settings. On the tile floor below the table are the names of an additional 999 women. The sculpture is, centrally, a mapping or charting of the then uncharted territory of women's history, and it is here that the deep conceptual connection to Suzanne Lacy's *International Dinner Party* as a contemporary and participatory mapping becomes obvious. "*The Dinner Party* sought to write forgotten women back into history. Its principle aim was to reclaim women from history—or *his-* story, as it was often referred to in the 1970s—a narrative that for millennia had excluded and even at times removed women as historical subjects."¹²

Five thousand visitors came the opening of *The Dinner Party* at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art on March 14, 1979, and it is estimated that 100,000 people saw the sculpture during its three months at the museum.¹³ Visitors to the exhibition entered the space designated to Judy Chicago's ceremonial banquet of *The Dinner Party* by way of the museum's foyer, which is where they would have seen Suzanne Lacy's map installed, as well as the artist, herself, at work during the opening.¹⁴ Lacy attached inverted red triangles onto the twenty-foot black-and-white map to mark the arrival of the telegram messages from their places of origin around the world. This mapping process went on for several hours.

The International Dinner Party was a performance art work that was part of a series of explorations I was doing at the time having to do with what a women's community was. It was also a gift, a tribute, a performance for Judy Chicago on the opening of the Dinner Party project. So I invited women from all over the world to have dinner the same evening and what that would make would be a 24-hour

simultaneous celebration. So even the very notion of celebrating women's culture was something that feminists had been exploring throughout the 70s, part of reclaiming, heritage and contemporary contributions to society... Each triangle represents a dinner. My task assigned to these groups was to have a dinner on March 14 and celebrate a woman who has made a contribution in your own home or your own community [...].¹⁵

Lacy's performance at the museum was a live-mapping of the spatiotemporal dimensions and the multi-local simultaneity of the *International Dinner Party* in process. "As the telegrams came in, I put a mark on the map and put the telegram in here. It was like a performance. It went on for several hours."¹⁶ The mapping became the performance, and the performance resulted in the mapping. The mapping did not stop in the foyer of the museum. It extended far beyond and reaches into the preparatory stages of this art project.

Prior to the event at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the process of determining the invitational strategies for the *International Dinner Party* led to an extensive research process that resulted in a map of the then-current territory of feminism. Feminism at the time, to continue with the use of a spatial metaphor, covered a lot of ground. Feminism not only changed the art world, it dealt with numerous issues of justice, education, equality, human rights, ecology, development, decolonisation, issues of domestic labour, sexual politics, and history. All these different issues entered the *International Dinner Party*, since the invitational strategies reached out to different groups of women active in the women's movement. Suzanne Lacy's worldwide mapping of women's groups relied heavily on community organising strategies and used the activist gamut of personal contacts, mailing lists, and calling on networks to mobilise their networks. Women's groups and feminist activist organizations were located by means of elaborate and effective grassroots communication. Lacy explains that the preparations involved a "mass mailing" and "follow-up phone calls."¹⁷ In order to join forces with women's groups around the globe, Lacy and Pruess had to "organize by phone," which was still very costly at the time, by letter, and even by telegraph.¹⁸ Gathering information, doing research, and establishing new relationships between different forms of information is a method constitutive of mapping. This is what happened in the course of the preparations leading up to the *International Dinner Party*. Regionally diverse women's groups, whose activist causes were all joined and related to each other through feminism, even though their struggles and background stories were profoundly different. At the time, Suzanne Lacy was interested in exploring "what a women's community was."¹⁹ Lacy points to the fact that the 2,000 women

who staged the 200 dinners actually “participated for all kinds of different reasons.”²⁰ It gave them the opportunity to organise a feminist event, to create an artistic performance in its own right, to celebrate women in their immediate family, to reach out to other local women’s groups or to express the celebratory mood on completion of Judy Chicago’s *Dinner Party*, which had similarly relied upon a large number of women volunteers.²¹ All this is a clear indication that the *International Dinner Party* allowed for the expression of difference and the celebration of regional diversity. At the same time, the participants created amongst themselves a sense of simultaneous global connectivity—an international con-temporality producing con-currency within the feminist movement. Even though the places where these women’s groups were active were very different from each other, historically, politically, economically, and culturally, and despite the fact that they decided to partake in the project for a number of reasons, they all came to be represented on the map in the very same way. Thus, Lacy’s choice of representation on the map created a layer of unification. The simultaneous celebration put feminism on the map. It was a potent mix of solidarity and shared time and space. A red triangle marks both the location and the existence of a women’s group. All the triangles read together constitute the striking image of a worldwide feminist movement creating a new territory of feminism. And yet, the relations between sameness and difference in the logics of representation point to inherent ambivalence in both the theory and practice of the *International Dinner Party*. On one hand, the unifying strategy of representation through red triangles annihilated the very difference that Lacy spoke of. Not only were the regional women’s groups different from each other in their specific struggles and claims, but they also participated in the event for very different reasons. On the other hand, the unifying strategy of representation was a way of overcoming the stigma of being marked as ‘different’ and having to express and identify with one’s difference. The actual lived experience of the performance included a genuine difference within the many participating dinners, but Lacy did not perform this difference on the level of visual representation when she put the 200 geographic locations of the simultaneous dinners on the map.²²

The Power of Mapping

Let us now take a closer look at a photograph of Lacy's performance and a recent explanation she gave of her installation in a video on YouTube. This video was made on the occasion of the re-installation of the *International Dinner Party* for the 2012 exhibition *Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art*, curated by Stephanie Smith at the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago. Lacy's position in front of the map evokes many associations—to the position and gestures of a presenter standing in a televised media newsroom, to a detective standing in front of a crime scene map tacked onto the wall of a police station, or even to a history or geography teacher in a classroom, engaged in explaining one of world history's many war zones. Each of these associations points at the different areas of influence associated with the map—the newsroom, the police station, or the battlefield. All these spaces are deeply embedded in the conventional perception of a map, spaces that evoke a less obvious, but equally present implication of the map and its participation in imperialism and colonialism.

Suzanne Lacy did not draw or design a new map of the world, but rather relied on a political map that anyone could purchase. She then went on to inscribe the feminist world onto the existing map of the world. She recalls that she “found something and changed it around, scale wise and color wise, etc.”²³ Then, she had the map produced according to the spatial needs of the installation at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Such standardised maps are strongly associated with state power and invoke Foucauldian notions of power, knowledge, discipline, and control. Historically, map-making has not only been a part of the territorial imperatives of the state, but it has also been implicated in the state-led project of colonialism. In 1979, the map of the world was changing rapidly, with lines representing national boundaries being constantly redrawn. After World War II, the system of European colonialism came up against resistance. A number of previously colonised countries in Asia and Africa gained independence peacefully, while many others underwent struggles, unrest, and long wars of independence. To name just a few—Indonesia declared independence in 1945, India gained independence in 1947, Nigeria became independent in 1960, Algeria gained independence in 1962, and Mozambique became independent in 1975. A map in 1979 was consequently a map that had become used to registering change. Though the map itself remained, in many ways, an active part of the politics of the colonial project, the new borders and the new names had turned it into a representation of liberation struggles and newly declared independence. This points

to the fact that a map is anything but static, but rather a dynamic tool: a map can register change. While maps were employed as a tool of colonialism, they also came to be representations of post-colonial change and were used as part of strategies of empowerment. That which is put on the map can register with the public, and a map that fails to register change fails its purpose. It becomes outdated. With regard to the artistic and activist mapping of the *International Dinner Party*, one might argue that the map of the world was in fact in urgent need of an update in order to show how the contemporary world had changed through feminist activism. Seen from this particular vantage point, Suzanne Lacy assisted the existing map of the 'world-as-is' in overcoming its own outdatedness. The map was helped by Lacy to arrive at being a representation of a changing and changed world, with its growing network of women's groups and feminist initiatives. "In case after case, however, we have remarked on the apparent power of maps to transform as well as merely to summarize the facts that they portray. This transformative power resides not in the map, of course, but rather in the power possessed by those who deploy the perspective of that particular map."²⁴

Maps are as selective in their representation. Herein lies their power. Maps work as representational tools by selection, which appears to be complete and exhaustive, at least for a given point in time. Taking on an existing map is therefore both an opportunity and a risk. The opportunity speaks to the potential of the map to represent political change and to chart transformations. As I suggested with regard to the processes of decolonisation after World War II, a map of the world in the year 1979 was one that had become used to absorbing and representing transformation following struggles for independence. In a similar vein, the changes wrought by feminism were ready to be put on the map. Originally a tool of imperial power, the map was used to represent a changing world in which women's groups and feminist activists were fighting to end oppression and to change a patriarchal system. By using a standard political map, Lacy's performance transformed the very symbol of the system she was putting into question.

The emancipatory and critical power of mapping²⁵ has to be understood with the context of the map's historic legacy. From a point of view that considers artefacts as imbued with historical processes and everyday politics, maps stand out for not only representing, but in fact producing and changing power relations. The lines correspond to material and historical conditions. The imperial survey, for example, imposed a rectilinear grid, a grid that followed a logic of an evolving capitalism, with its quest for legibility, accountability, and taxation.²⁶ In this context, drawing a line on the map is a fight to inscribe a new line onto the world. When looking at the map of the world used by Lacy, we see this grid as part of the map's background—it travels as part of the map's legacy. Mapping, or map-

making, comes with a long history of wars, territorial claims, land ownership, tax administration, resource extraction, and colonialism. Maps were tools in these processes—they were legible to outsiders, replacing the physically strenuous tour of inspection. Whether taxpayers or colonial subjects, the map is designed to render them legible, and thus controllable.

As early as 1607, an English surveyor, John Norden, sold his services to the aristocracy on the premise that the map was a substitute for the tour of inspection: “A plot rightly drawne by true information, discribeth so the lively image of a manor, and every branch and member of the same, as the lord sitting in his chayre, may see what he hath, and where and how he lyeth, and in whole use and occupation of every particular is upon suddaine view.”²⁷

The uniformity of the lines of the map allows for a synoptic overview. Too much difference within a map and too many nuances within the graphic representations will destroy its legibility and therefore its purpose. A map is, therefore, by definition, a simplification rendering the world legible for a specific purpose. The theoretical problem posed by this politics of representation is that, through everyday use, the role of the map in the histories of power and control becomes obscured:

This device by which the world could be schematically represented was extremely useful to Europeans who needed to develop a visual language of property or territory in order to inventory their ‘discoveries’ both actual and potential. This representational system was understood as the paradigm of divine order, as a device for the conquest in the physical world and as a practical tool for an imperialist venture.²⁸

The Artist as Feminist Cartographer

The network of the *International Dinner Party* participants constituted a feminist map, or rather a map of the emergence of feminism. Lacy put this network on the map. This turns Lacy into *the artist as cartographer*.²⁹ More specifically, this turns Lacy into *the feminist artist as critical cartographer*.³⁰ Using a map means participating in its accrued practical and symbolic meanings. The map of the world Lacy used was a Mercator projection and can therefore be described as a ‘man-made map.’³¹ A feminist

artist uses this map to establish a new map of women's groups on it. This was an emancipatory mapping of the radical claim for change. The feminist cartography put on the map by the artist as cartographer lays claim to criticising and transforming the existing world. This ad-hoc cartography of feminists worldwide that were put on the map by Lacy shows that as feminists they all participated in the concrete conditions specific to the different situations and locations round the world.

Therefore, participating in the map expresses the claim to the right to participate in the world represented by this map, revealing feminism as an international movement. Yet, participating in the map is also an expression of having to deal with the conditions as found and to have to find agency with/within/against/beyond them. Second-wave feminism has been criticised for its US-centric and Western bias and its ethnocentrism. Yet, feminism in the 1960s and 1970s not only coincides with the Civil Rights movement in the United States and the beginning of a critical history of fascism in Germany, but also to the aforementioned processes of decolonisation in Africa, the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, and South America. All these international processes are part of feminism as a diverse international movement with its local specifics. The mapping allows for an understanding of an historic constellation of feminist alignments and relationships, while subtly pointing to a necessary cartography of differences within the feminist movement.

In Conclusion

Finally, in spite of my ambiguity when looking at the problems associated with the map of the world in the photograph, I allow myself to arrive at seeing Lacy's act of re-appropriation as a kind of utopian 'opening up', a utopian proposition of an international feminism mapped onto the world to be recognised and shared in the futures to come. Still, the questions of participation as a manifestation of power relations and the problem of the means and media of representation remain. The producers of the *International Dinner Party* were genuine participants insofar as they created and decided their specific dinners, as well as who they wanted to honour with their dinner party.³² They did not know, however, that they would be represented with a triangle on the artist's map. The women decided to participate, but they did not decide how their participation would be turned into representation. This question of an artist who decrees what other people's participation becomes by way of representation remains unresolved on the level of the politics of representation. Lacy's repres-

entational form was not offered up for active participation. The women's telegrams expressed that they staged their dinner parties and honoured women of their choice. These telegrams are the lasting documents that bear witness to the women's creation. The triangles on the map, on the other hand, testified to the artist's act of representation, documenting her artistic strategy of inviting participation on the level of the dinner performance, yet not on the level of the performance on the map.

1 ——— “Artist Judy Chicago (born Judith Cohen in 1939) came to Fresno from Los Angeles to teach in 1970, after Lacy's first year there. In fall 1971, the Feminist Art Program moved from Fresno to the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in Valencia (just north of Los Angeles). [...] Lacy also transferred to CalArts as a graduate student, finding the social design program there compatible with her political interests.” Even though Lacy was not a participant in Womanhouse, she continued to associate with FAP women. Sharon Irish, *Suzanne Lacy: Spaces Between* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 25 and 33.

Judy Chicago in conversation with Suzanne Lacy: “On March 5, 2007, approximately 350 attendees joined Otis College of Art and Design and the Skirball Cultural Center for a conversation between critically acclaimed artist, author, creator of The Dinner Party, and a founder of the Los Angeles Woman's Building; and performance artist and author Suzanne Lacy, chair of Otis College of Art and Design's graduate program in Public Practices.” In this conversation, Lacy emphasises the importance of acknowledging an opportunity to acknowledge my teacher and my mentor. Lacy continues to argue that the art world is fixated on the ‘new’. Her public conversation counteracts this deliberate cutting oneself off from one's past in order to celebrate artistic identity. Lacy establishes a lineage through acknowledgment.

Judy Chicago in conversation with Suzanne Lacy, accessed August 12, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=stVbdXdDSIE>.

2 ——— Suzanne Lacy has emphasised the importance of the *International Dinner Party* “as an early social practice.” (Suzanne Lacy, “Interview,” in: *Feast. Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art*, ed. Stephanie Smith (Chicago: Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago: 2013), 81).

Generating heated debates on the social and aesthetic politics involved and, at times, even confrontational opposition, recent publications attest to the ongoing controversies in the shared territory of participation. These publications include Grant H. Kester's 2011 *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* and Claire Bishop's 2012 *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. Nato Thompson's 2012 *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991 to 2011* grew out of an exhibition at Creative Time in New York. Anna Dezeuze's 2012 *The Do-it-Yourself Artwork: Participation from Fluxus to New Media* focuses on the activation of the art-viewer.

- 3 ——— In an interview, Suzanne Lacy states the following about this tribute to Judy Chicago: “The performance was a gift to her accomplishments with that piece.” Suzanne Lacy, “Interview.”
- 4 ——— In a 1973 conversation between critic Lucy Lippard and artist Judy Chicago, which appeared in *Artforum* 13/1 (September 1974), Chicago emphasises the importance of building historic continuity and referencing between women artists. “I started to build on other women’s work [...] I wanted my work to be seen in relation to other women’s work, historically, as men’s work is seen.” Lucy Lippard, “Judy Chicago, Talking to Lucy R. Lippard,” in *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women’s Art* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1976), 215.
- This approach resonates with the ‘better with/because of those who came before us’ approach, which I emphasised via Sarah Bracke and Maria Puig de la Bellacasa in the chapter “Feminist Thought and Curating: On Method.”
- 5 ——— The incipient feminist art movement on the West Coast of the US began to openly criticise and polemicise against the exclusion of women from the institution of the museum. Women active in the feminist movement and the feminist art movement made the institution of the museum and its invitational politics a site of activist feminist struggle and public debate. They demonstrated a very different aspect of participation, namely activist and un-invited participation. To cite just one of the many feminist claims to the institution of the museum challenging its injustice and inequality in its public representation-ality: “In the spring of 1971 the Los Angeles Council of Women Artists launched a massive complaint against the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, whose ‘Art and Technology’ exhibition catalogue had just come out ‘with fifty men’s faces on the cover’ (no women’s). Supported by activist women filmmakers, the Council published a list of proposals for the museum to increase hiring of women (from guards to trustees) and to exhibit women’s art; it made the front page of the *Los Angeles Times* because the statistics were so damaging (over a ten year period one one-artist show out of fifty-three was devoted to a woman; less than one percent of all work on display at the museum at that moment was by women; only twenty-nine of seven hundred and thirteen artists in group shows had been women). The museum’s statement in defense was to the effect that women were no good, so they didn’t have to deal with them.” Lucy Lippard, “The L.A. Woman’s Building,” in *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women’s Art*, 98.
- 6 ——— Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1986), 277.
- 7 ——— I discussed this in the previous chapter, “The Emancipated Spectatress in Conversation with Equal Listeners.”
- 8 ——— Suzanne Lacy, “Tracing Allan Kaprow,” in *Leaving Art: Writings on Performance, Politics, and Publics, 1974–2007* (Durham and London: Duke University Press: 2010), 319.
- 9 ——— Suzanne Lacy, “Tracing Allan Kaprow” (2010), 320-1.
- 10 ——— Much of contemporary participation in urban planning processes has been turned into mechanisms of public pacification using participation as a tool of soft governance.
- 11 ——— http://www.suzannelacy.com/1980sdinner_international.htm, accessed August 30, 2013.

- 12 ——— https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/dinner_party/index.php, accessed August 13, 2013.
- 13 ——— Maura Reilly, *Tour and Home. Brooklyn Museum. Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art: The Dinner Party*, http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/dinner_party/tour_and_home.php, accessed August 12, 2013. Today, Judy Chicago's Dinner Party is presented as the permanently installed central piece around which the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum is organised.
- 14 ——— I am indebted to Suzanne Lacy, who generously shared information on the installation of the *International Dinner Party* at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.
- 15 ——— <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZGu8k1OlfU>, published on March 28, 2012, accessed August 2, 2013.
- 16 ——— Ibid.
- 17 ——— Ibid.
- 18 ——— Ibid.
- 19 ——— Ibid.
- 20 ——— Ibid.
- 21 ——— After the end of the Judy Chicago *Dinner Party* exhibition at SFMOMA, the map was taken down and became part of Suzanne Lacy's archive. The map was shown at the *International Dinner Party* installation at the occasion of the exhibition *Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art*, curated by Stephanie Smith and shown at the Chicago Smart Museum of Art in 2012. Then, the map was shown at my PhD exhibition: *Suzanne Lacy's International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought* at the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) in 2015.
- 22 ——— Trinh T. Minh-Ha writes on the complexities of postcoloniality and feminism: "The understanding of difference is a shared responsibility, which requires a minimum of willingness to reach out to the unknown." Trinh Minh-Ha, "Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism," in *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*, in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 246.
- 23 ——— Suzanne Lacy, e-mail message to the author, August 11, 2013.
- 24 ——— James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 87.
- 25 ——— Over 400 people contributed to the completion of the *Dinner Party*. About 125 were called "members of the project," and a small group worked on it for the final three years, including ceramicists, needleworkers, and researchers. See Lucy Lippard, "Judy Chicago's Dinner Party," *Art in America* 68 (April 1980): 114-126.
- 26 ——— See James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*.
- 27 ——— Scott (1998), 45.
- 28 ——— Jo Anna Isaak, "Mapping the Imaginary," in *The Event Horizon: Essays on Hope, Sexuality, Social Space and Media(tion)*, ed. Lorne Falk (Toronto: The Coach House Press and Walter Phillips, 1987), 138-57 quoted from *Feminism Art Theory: An Anthology 1968-2000*, ed. Hilary Robinson, (Malden, Oxford and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 482.
- 29 ——— Long before Hal Foster published his text, *The Artist as Ethnographer*, I came to understand Suzanne Lacy's performance and mapping as

revealing the position of *The Artist as Cartographer*. Hal Foster chose his title as an echo of Walter Benjamin's *The Author as Producer*. Thinking of Marsha Meskimmon's work on "Chronology through Cartography," which I introduced in the chapter "Feminist Thought and Curating: On Method," we might come to consider *The Artist as Critical Cartographer*.

- 30 ——— I have, via Marsha Meskimmon, introduced the concept of critical cartography. Through the international dinner parties, Suzanne Lacy and the 2,000 women contributors sought to intervene in prevailing hegemonomies of chronology that pivoted around the well-established chronological axis of hegemonic feminist narrative: here/before (read US, Western feminism) and there/after (read feminism in other, marginalised or peripheralised parts of the world) In an interview I conducted with Suzanne Lacy in Bologna in June 2015, she confirmed that her intent was to work against the Western-centric bias of feminism.
- 31 ——— The map of the world uses the traditional Mercator projection, developed by the Flemish geographer and cartographer Gerardus Mercator in 1569. This cylindrical projection distorts areas further from the equator, rendering Africa and Central America disproportionately small while rendering Europa and North America and Northern Asia disproportionately large. This map, and its ongoing use, can be understood as result of "epistemic violence." Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives," *History and Theory* 24, no. 3 (October 1985): 250.
- 32 ——— The letter that Lacy und Preuss sent out to invite and motivate women to participate in the artwork phrased this as follows: "The size, format or style of your dinner Party is up to you, as well as the women you will honor and how you choose to do so." Suzanne Lacy, Linda Preuss, and others: Letter of Invitation to participate in the International Dinner Party, no date, in Suzanne Lacy, International Dinner Party Archive.

PART 2

The International Dinner Party
in Feminist Curatorial Thought

The Salon Model: The Conversational Complex

Salons are ephemeral creatures. Conversations and laughter, hushed and booming voices begin to fade the moment they emerge.

— Barbara Hahn, “The Myth of the Salon,” 2005

The *International Dinner Party* inspired my search for a historical precedent of conversation-based art bridging the domestic sphere and the public sphere. I suggest here that an example of such a model can be found in the women-led Jewish salon culture of Berlin and Vienna around 1800. The *salonnière* provided the space and the knowledge to support making “conversation as an artwork” together with others.¹ Looked at from today’s perspective, the *salonnière* acted as a curator. The salon model I propose here challenges notions of the conventional historiography of curating.

The second half of the 1990s witnessed a conversational turn in curating. Ranging from small discussion circles to blockbuster-like marathons, conversations abounded in museums, art galleries, and exhibitions. The very same period witnessed an increasing number of publications dedicated to museum studies, including the history and theory of curating.

Whereas the questions raised by museum scholarship were very much concerned with exhibitions, the same cannot be said about conversations. Yet, conversations have been equally important to the formation of modern culture as museum exhibitions. And the salon was the domestic space where these “private conversations that changed public life” took place.²

The Exhibitionary Complex and the Conversational Complex

Here I propose that this contemporary conversational turn in curating *could* have motivated a historiographical search for an earlier curatorial model based upon conversations – but, so far, such a search has not happened. The importance of exhibitions has been firmly connected to the logic of the museum by museum studies.³ Yet, museum studies and accounts of the historiography of curating did not develop an equal interest in the history and theory of conversation. There are no salon studies. There is no salonology. Nevertheless, the salon is widely studied, in particular by historians with a focus on Jewish history, women’s history, gender studies, diaspora studies, and the history of thought, but also philosophers and German philologists have turned to Berlin and Vienna salon culture and the importance of Jewesses for metropolitan cultural life, feminism, and philanthropy during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁴

In his influential study *The Birth of the Museum*, Tony Bennett introduces the exhibitionary complex, a concept central to museology and critical museum studies.⁵ I would like to suggest that there was in fact a historical conversational complex analogous to the exhibitionary complex. While the latter was produced in the museum, the conversational complex was produced in the salon, particularly in Berlin and Vienna salon culture around 1800. Like the museum, “Salons were among the first institutions of modern culture.”⁶ Both spaces assume an important historical position in the production of modernity, modern culture, and modern subjects. In what follows, I seek to work out the implication of the salon model and its conversational complex with respect to political thought, curating, and art-making. I am particularly interested in understanding the implications of the salon model and its conversational complex with respect to introducing a different historiography of curating.

Governing and Conversing

Let me now turn to the writings of the British philosopher and social reformer Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), whose description of the penal system of confinement has been central to Bennett’s proposal of the exhib-

itionary complex. I will show that Bentham's political thought on conversing is equally important to introducing the concept of the conversational complex. Via Leela Gandhi's work, I will highlight how Bentham joins the prepolitical with conversing and, based upon this, I develop further the concept of a conversational complex connected to the salon model.

Michel Foucault drew upon Bentham's two-volume treatise on the *panopticon*, when writing an analysis of "power/knowledge relations during the formation of the modern period," published as *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* in 1975.⁷ Bennett's study, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (1995) echoes Foucault's title, and it is via the philosopher's work on "institutions of confinement" that Bennett develops his analysis of institutions of "exhibition."⁸ "Bentham had envisaged, by making the penitentiaries open to public inspection—that children, and their parents, were invited to attend their lessons in civics."⁹ Rather, as Bennett argues, such lessons were organised through the exhibitionary complex, which involved "the transfer of objects and bodies from the enclosed and private domains in which they had previously been displayed (but to a restricted public) into progressively more open and public arenas where, through the representation to which they were subjected, they formed vehicles for inscribing and broadcasting messages of power (but of a different type) throughout society."¹⁰ Not only did the visitors to the museum see, and inspect, the objects representing histories of the past and the present, they also saw, and inspected, each other. "It was in thus democratizing the eye of power that the expositions realized Bentham's aspirations for a system of looks within which the central position would be available to the public at all times, a model lesson in civics in which a society regulated itself through self-observation."¹¹ The exhibitionary complex turned the museum model into a model of governing. The visitors to the museum came to represent the logics of a regulated, governed, and obedient public.

I will now turn to *A Fragment on Government*, the first book by Jeremy Bentham, to work out the underpinnings for the conversational complex and tease out its key differences from the exhibitionary complex. It is the year 1776, when this book was published:

When a number of persons (whom we may style *subjects*) are supposed to be in the habit of paying obedience to a person, or an assemblage of persons [...] (whom we may call governor or governors) such persons altogether (subjects and governors) are said to be in a state of *political society* [...] When a number of persons are supposed to be in the habit of *conversing* with each other, at the same time that

they are not in any such habit as mentioned above, they are said to be in a state of *natural society*.¹²

What provokes my interest here is the dichotomy between *governing* and *conversing*. In the context of political thought, governing and conversing represent two different states of society. Following Bentham, they stand for political versus natural, respectively. Gandhi writes:

The work of the early Bentham, especially, conveys the clear sense that unmediated relationality, the horizontal arrangement of the “face-to-face” relation, or what he calls “conversation”, is constitutively antithetical to the vertical axis of power along which are arranged the motions of obedience, the disciplinary rotations of governmentality. [...] That is to say, the condition of horizontal, direct, or immediate relationality – relationality sans obedience – equals a state of prepolitical, nongovernmental, and anarchic sociality. Governmentality becomes shorthand for the improved culture of mediated relationality.¹³

Via Gandhi’s description of governance and conversation, we come to see that there is an analogous dichotomy between the museum and the salon. While the exhibitionary complex relies on a vertical axis of power, the conversational complex is based upon horizontality and relationality. I am specifically referring here to salon culture in its Berlin and Vienna versions around 1800. In the salon, subjects do not transform into a regulated, governed, and obedient public; rather, they converse in prepolitical sociality. The Jewish women who hosted salons, to which they themselves referred as circles or societies, used the economic and spatial resources of their bourgeois homes to offer the supporting infrastructures for conversing subjects. It is of importance to situate the Berlin and Vienna Jewesses and their practice of aesthetic, social, and intellectual conviviality in the specific political and economic context of the time.¹⁴ “In the early nineteenth century Jews could not live in Vienna unless they purchased the right of toleration for a very large sum of money. In 1829 there were 135 ‘tolerated Jews in Vienna, mostly wealthy bankers and merchants, along with their families, employees, servants and assorted hangers-on.’¹⁵ Marsha L. Rozenblit writes the following with regard to the specific situation of Jewish women in the Habsburg Empire:

They certainly shared legal status with all Jews: suffering traditional anti-Jewish economic and residential restrictions until Joseph II lifted some of them in his famous Edict of Toleration in 1781 and enjoying civil, legal and political equality after the Austrian and

Hungarian governments extended full emancipation in 1867. Yet as women they did not have access to higher education until the turn of the century, nor did they have the right to vote and participate in the political process until after World War I. They could not even join political organizations until 1908.¹⁶

Conversation as an Artwork

The domestic sphere became central to female subjects since the public sphere precluded their full political participation.¹⁷ Historical female subjects cared for and provided the support necessary for conversation as an artwork, which was produced in the domestic sphere of the private home. Not only did the *salonières* open their private homes as the spatial infrastructures supporting the salon culture, they also actively participated in the ephemeral artworks the salon produced, namely conversation. At once hostess and conversationalist amongst other conversationalists, the *salonière* performs a dual role. This is crucial to the excavation of a different historiography of curating. The *salonière* is at once providing the material and immaterial resources and conversing with others. Here is a position that we might identify in hindsight as a curator. She curates conversations and ephemeral artworks that take place in the domestic realm.

“The fine arts are a public, professional activity, the results of this activity became part of the epistemic power of the exhibitionary complex. What women make, which is usually defined as ‘craft’, could in fact be defined as ‘domestic art’.”¹⁸ A Western ideology of separate, *gendered* spheres effectively produced the dichotomy public/domestic art, or, in other words, fine art/craft.¹⁹ Both women and men were involved in this domestic art of the “conversation as an artwork.”²⁰ The *salonière* is at once behind and with/in the making of the artwork of conversation. The spatial preposition “behind” places emphasis on the fact that the *salonière* acts as hostess providing the material and immaterial support structures and resources, the space of the private home, the food, and the skills to make this known as “salons or at-homes on a jour fixe” so local and international visitors could plan their participation.²¹ As hostess, the *salonière* developed the knowledge of how to create “a specific social constellation.”²² I activate the figurative meaning of being behind someone, of fully supporting someone.

The salonière provided other women with intellectual sustenance and access, even as men outranked them as guests in number and renown. [...] The company of professionals, moreover, afforded female writers, critics, musicians, and artists a platform for their own creativity and subject matter for their work. [...] Composers and artists, men and women, had a place to perform and exhibit when suitable public venues were non-existent or inaccessible.²³

The spatial prepositions “with” or “within” point out that the *salonière* was actively involved in making “conversation as an artwork.”²⁴ What we see here are not subjects in isolation, but subjects in conversation.

Society without Hierarchy

Barbara Hahn emphasises that Rahel Levin Varnhagen and other Jewish *salonières* in Berlin around 1800 never referred to the gatherings they hosted as salons. “Rahel Levin, for instance, called the gatherings staged by the high aristocracy ‘salons’—for her a distant and inaccessible world. To speak of ‘salons’ inevitably implies a prior history, in particular in the salon culture of the French aristocracy. Rahel Levin speaks of her ‘society’.”²⁵ Hanna Lotte Lund equally stresses that the position of Berlin Jewesses, as subjects without rights, was very different from positions held by French aristocratic gentlewomen and their salons or the Blue Stockings Society in England led by aristocratic, wealthy, and upper-middle-class women.²⁶ “Rahel Levin, for instance, called the gatherings staged by the high aristocracy ‘salons’—for her a distant and inaccessible world. [...] Rahel Levin speaks of her ‘society’.”²⁷ There is a metonymical operation to be analysed here: society can be understood as society at large as well as a social gathering in the domestic space. The metonymical operation relating the salon or conversation-based gathering to society at large is called *pars pro toto*. The part can stand in for the whole, the social gathering for society at large. In 1799, Rahel Varnhagen wrote: “There need be no hierarchy in society. [...] The elementary relation within the word society [*Gesellschaft*] ought to alert us already to this: it is an associate-ness [*Gesellschaft*] for joy or the like. There is no master among it, but entirely equal associates [*Gesellen*]; and it is not appropriate there for anyone to be master.”²⁸ The art of conversation embodies a politics (or utopia) of horizontality and a non-hierarchical society. In the small gatherings, no one is a master. There is no hierarchy.

Etymology is of importance here. Being without master is etymologically derived from the word *Gesell/en/schaft*: associate-ness. Anybody can become an associate. Anybody can be associated with anybody else. This horizontality and relationality are practised in the domestic sphere, from where it could impact society at large. This passage from society practised in the domestic sphere to society at large was politically radical. It would have led to a society without hierarchy and without masters. Such a society was put into practice in conversation. Here, the separate spheres model takes on a very different concept of horizontal power in its social potentiality. We will see how this potentiality was carefully silenced and negated.

The Domestic Sphere and the Public Sphere

Jürgen Habermas' 1962 treatise, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, has informed the majority of political and social history on the social spheres model. What is of interest here, is that Habermas uses the salon as his model to introduce Kant's concept of "knowledge of the world (*Weltkenntnis*)" and the "man of the world (*Mann von Welt*)."²⁹ Following Kant, Habermas draws a line from the public sphere via the knowledge of the world and the man of the world to the salon conversations. The genderedness and the racialisation of this line is evident. The Jewish women, who initiated and supported salon culture, as well as Jewish men, were effectively excluded from full participation in the public sphere. A critical analysis of this constellation shows that there is no reciprocal line to be drawn from the salon conversations to the public sphere. This was a broken line, interrupted by those who were excluded from it. Habermas uses the following quotation from Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) to underline the significance of salon conversations: "If we attend to the course of conversation in mixed companies consisting not merely of scholars and subtle reasoners but also of business people or women, we notice that besides storytelling and jesting they have another entertainment, namely arguing."³⁰ The women-led salon model was written into a public sphere history governed by men of the world—at the expense of the women who supported and organised salon culture. Let me turn to the German original in order to draw out the specific gendered operations at work in Immanuel Kant's choice of words and language. The quote from Kant's *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* reads as follows in German:

“Wenn man auf den Gang der Gespräche in gemischten Gesellschaften, die nicht bloß aus Gelehrten und Vernünftlern, sondern auch aus Leuten von Geschäften oder Frauenzimmern bestehen, acht hat, so bemerkt man, daß außer dem Erzählen und Scherzen noch eine Unterhaltung, nämlich das Räsionieren darin Platz findet.”³¹ I want to draw the attention to the difference we can discern between the term “women” and the term “*Frauenzimmer*”. Even though one can translate *Frauenzimmer* into women, much of the nuance that the term *Frauenzimmer* registers is definitely lost. The word conventionally used for women is *Frauen*, the word used to refer to female members of the aristocracy or the upper-class bourgeoisie is *Dame*. The word *Frauenzimmer* is curiously ambiguous and complex in and of itself: *Frauen* means women and *Zimmer* means rooms. Therefore, the literal translation of *Frauenzimmer* is women’s rooms. Following Duden’s *Etymological Dictionary of the German Language*, the word *Frauenzimmer* developed as follows: The word originated as a spatial term. It first described the rooms designated to be used by the lady or mistress of the house, and it later described all the rooms used by all the female servants of the court and even later all the bowers in a castle; eventually the term came to collectively describe all the women who actually lived in these rooms; at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the term came to be used for an individual woman as well and was particularly used to describe women of noble descent or ladies; then a devaluation process began, and since the nineteenth century the word has been used to speak of frivolous women and can also be understood to refer to prostitutes.³² The decline of the word *Frauenzimmer* was already well underway by the time Kant used it in 1788. Therefore, his use of the word is at best ambiguous.

Habermas states that, “It was the world of the men of letters but also that of the Salon, in which ‘mixed companies’ engaged in critical discussions; here in the bourgeois salon, the public sphere was established.”³³ Following Kant and Habermas here, the man of the world and the public sphere emerge from the salon and its conversations. Yet, the salon as a woman-led space and its complex culture of conversation that effectively bridges the domestic sphere and the public sphere is not taken into account. On one hand, we witness the process of salon culture’s devaluation and feminisation. On the other hand, we witness the process of the making of the man of the world and his public sphere via salon culture without acknowledging the specific significance of the “mixed companies” that produced the domestic art of conversation and the salon as a domestic space work. Taken together, these two lines of thought support each other to arrive at the public sphere without equal involvement or participation of women or Jews. The salon is a *Frauenzimmer*, and I deliberately misread the term now and place my emphasis on *Zimmer*, room. The salon now literally becomes a *Frauenzimmer*, a room opened

up and created by women as a support structure for the art of conversation. Whilst the salon is acknowledged in its importance within the discourse of the public sphere, it is precisely via this discourse that the salon is rendered a space supporting the masculinist subject formation, resulting in a man of the world.

While men of the world, artists, thinkers, and writers of the Romantic period enjoyed the fertile and inspiring ground of salon conversations that fuelled their aesthetic and intellectual energy, the very same men put forward a discursive formation that effectively devaluated and feminised salon culture. This feminisation had at once political and aesthetic reasons.

The practice of a society beyond hierarchy, beyond strict social role models for men and women, as well as for Jews and Jewesses, would be too dangerous were it to become a political reality and not merely domestic art taking place in the privacy of homes. The practice of conversation as an artwork,³⁴ at once co-emergent with and co-dependent upon others, vehemently questions the artist-as-genius position distinguished by making art conceived of in isolation and based upon the subject model of the independent individual.³⁵ Therefore, it proved to be necessary to devalue and feminise the subject formation produced in the art of conversation. “The most vehement and influential attack on the art of conversation as shallow, vain and deceptive came from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who also denounced the excessive power of the ‘gentle sex’ in the salons, where the ‘natural’ inferiority of woman to man was subverted and men were feminized.”³⁶ And this is entirely in line with Kant’s use of the term *Frauenzimmer* I discussed before. Ultimately, this salon culture has to be understood as a threat to modernity’s project of the individual, independent, masculinist subject formation. The aesthetic and political stakes were high: a different society and a different kind of art-making appeared possible.

Curator-as-Carer versus Curator-as-Author

Let me now continue to find the man of the world in the museum: “[T]he displacement, in the art gallery, of the king by the citizen as the archactor and metanarrator of a self-referring narrative formed part of a new and broader narrative, one with a wider epistemic reach in which it is ‘Man’ who functions as the archactor and metanarrator of the story of his (for

it was a *gendered narrative*) own development.”³⁷ This story produced gendered, classed, and racialised exclusions in order to constitute what was considered historically relevant. The curators who provided the material basis, the objects with which to structure these narratives, did not appear to communicate with the public. Rather, the museum accordingly introduced a division of labour. Bennett emphasises the “hidden spaces of the museum where knowledge was produced and organized in camera [...]”³⁸ From this follows a binary between production and reception with a hidden curator as public knowledge producer and a public museum audience that consisted of both women and men. Paul O’Neill describes the historical role of the museum curator as “curator-as-carer working with collections out of sight of the public.”³⁹ This curator-as-carer did not provide much in terms of a historical subject formation that was a precedent for the curator-as-author introduced in the second half of the twentieth century. However, the *salonnière* might have offered a historical subject formation of interest to the positionality of the contemporary curator. The *salonnière*’s work was at once curatorial practice and art practice and might therefore have been well suited to be understood as the subject formation after which contemporary curatorship was modelled. Yet, the domestic sphere, the feminisation, and the genderedness of her positionality precluded that. Therefore, ultimately the masculinist artist-as-genius concept was activated for the curator-as-author concept.

I would now like to look more closely at the mid-1990s, as this period witnessed the passage from museum curator to curator-as-author, and the arrival of the conversational turn in curating. In their 1996 essay, “From Museum Curator to Exhibition Auteur: Inventing a Singular Position,” Nathalie Heinrich and Michael Pollak analyse the passage from “curator to creator,” which they link to the individualist, masculinist subject position of the “the auteur.”⁴⁰ They state:

Therefore, it is in the name of the privilege accorded invention and creation—of the singularity of the individual creator of an artwork and his or her capacity for innovation when faced with the solidified traditions in the institutions—that the original work, the combination of works and documents, which constitutes an exhibition, can be judged. In other words, in extremis, it is as auteur that an exhibition curator will eventually be regarded. This is certainly an extreme position, but it is the passage to this extreme, which is of interest to us here.⁴¹

We have seen that the curator-as-carer was hidden in camera and did not give much support in terms of allowing for a curator-as-author. The *salonnière* who conversed with other subjects in the process of making art

as conversation might have offered a complicated and interesting subject position combining the curator-as-carer with the curator-as-author, but she had never been considered a curator in the first place. The literal meanings of the Latin root of the words to curate and curator did not lend themselves to the construction of the curator-as-author at all. The meanings found in translation have to do with care, service, maintenance, management, healing, and the provision and distribution of resources. The Austrian school Latin school dictionary Stowasser offers the following meanings, which I translate into English here:

care

I. look after, to take care of something or to take an interest in something, to take something to heart or to worry, to provide or to manage, to affect

II. to take care of; 2. to service or to maintain, to foster or to care for somebody; 3. a (sacrifice) to provide; b. to manage, to command; c. (sick people) to treat, to cure; d. (money) to provide, to obtain or to get, to pay.⁴²

The historical role model for the curator-as-author was found in an earlier model of a fully male-identified subject position: the artist-as-genius. Catherine M. Soussloff dates the formation of the artist-as-genius to the Early Modern Period. "The situation of the artist whose origins can be identified as textual and located specifically in the early biographies of artists but whose genius is universal is one that we have come to accept as the norm in our culture."⁴³ According to Soussloff, the passage in art history was that from craftsman to artist. We see here that the passage from curator-as-carer to curator-as-author echoes this much earlier passage. The masculinist concept of the artist became consolidated over the centuries, while at the same time the concept of the woman artist came to designate a separate sphere of art-making, one clearly distinguished and set apart from the isolated genius. This closely resembles the bourgeois separate sphere concept of men's public sphere and women's domestic sphere.⁴⁴ In the artist/woman artist binary, the latter designates the subordinate part. In spatial terms, this is expressed in the separate sphere concept of a public sphere, largely reserved for men, and a domestic (or private) sphere, largely reserved for women.

Paradoxically, the artist-as-genius, who acts in isolation, is very much part of the public sphere. The artist-as-genius performs a public sphere function. The woman artist does not perform the same public sphere function. Seen from the perspective of the woman artist, this

spatial separation equals domestic art versus fine art, read private art versus public art. In light of this, the woman artist's subject formation, her life, and her artwork become the site of struggle where the binary of artist/woman artist plays out. The artist-as-genius was the woman artist's problem.⁴⁵ This struggle was part of the politics of recognition with regard to art produced by women artists and largely informed the material and economic conditions of women artists. The history of art as a discipline contributed to this problem. The artist-as-genius also presents itself as the *salonnière's* problem. To a large extent, the emerging history of the writing on curating follows the curator-as-author who is modelled after the artist-as-genius.

Curating Conversations

As much as exhibitions, conversations have been central to curating since the mid-1990s. In 1995, Hans Ulrich Obrist curated *Mind Revolution*, which he described as "Curating (Non)-Conferences."⁴⁶ The event used "Ernst Pöppel's research centre near Cologne in Jülich, where there were hundreds of scientists and laboratories. [...] And so the 'conference' we organized at the research centre, 'Art and Brain', had all the constituents of a colloquium except the colloquium. There were coffee breaks, a bus trip, meals, tours of the facilities, but no colloquium."⁴⁷ What we see here is the production of conditions enabling relationality, horizontality, and the avoidance of a vertical axis of power. We also see that the existing infrastructure, in this case a research centre, was used as a support structure for 'private conversations' between artists and scientists. Again, such private conversations have the potential to impact art, science, society, economy, politics, etc. In short, such conversations have an impact on public life. As Obrist elaborates: "In my practice, the curator has to bridge gaps and build bridges between artists, the public, institutions and other types of communities. The crux of this work is to build temporary communities, by connecting different people and practices, and creating the conditions for triggering sparks between them."⁴⁸ We see here that contemporary curating does in fact encompass curating-as-caring as I have analysed it via the salon model. Such curating provides the support necessary for having conversations. It bridges private and public, conversing and governing, art and science. It creates new constellations for conversations, of which the curator becomes a part.

In 1997, *documenta X* also witnessed a turn to conversation. The curator, Catherine David, had “already extended the spatiotemporal nature of the exhibition format” by inviting and participating with 100 guests over 100 days.⁴⁹ The series of discussions, debates, and events featured speakers including Ackbar Abbas, Giorgio Agamben, Edward Said, Etienne Balibar, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Geeta Kapu. Issues of state and nation prevailed, and the positions invited clearly emphasize the postcolonial perspective of the programming and the outreach beyond Western, European-centric thought. The title of the programme, ‘100 Days – 100 Guests’, refers to hospitality. However, the guest is an ambivalent figure. The Latin root of the word ‘guest’ bears witness to that: *hostis* means at once guest and enemy. In a globalised world with ever increasing borders, not everyone is a welcome guest. Many critical debates followed the public lectures and discussions. These exchanges were a catalyst for the founding of the international antiracist network *No Person Is Illegal at documenta X*. This network assists immigrants regardless of their immigration status. The salon acted as a bridge between the domestic and the public. *Documenta X* bridged the art world context and the larger context of globalisation, society, politics, and migration regimes. Therefore, conversations can, in fact, connect exhibitions “like biennials ‘now understood as vehicles for the production of knowledge and intellectual debate’⁵⁰ with public life.⁵¹ Five years later, in conjunction with *documenta11*, we again see a strong emphasis on curating conversations of a global dimension. *Documenta11* curator Okwui Enwezor conceived of five different platforms. They took place in Vienna, New Delhi, Berlin, St. Lucia, Lagos, and Kassel.

Enwezor describes the term ‘Platform’ as ‘an open encyclopedia for the analysis of late modernity; a network of relationships; in an open form for organizing knowledge; a nonhierarchical model of representation; a compendium of voices, cultural, artistic, and knowledge circuits. [...] On [...] a final level, perhaps the legacy of Enwezor’s contribution was the *consciousness-raising* (emphasis added) move that momentarily shifted the emphasis away from the exhibition, both symbolically and in actuality, by extending the parameters beyond its exhibition framework.⁵²

Again, we see the rejection of a vertical axis of power, and the desire for horizontal exchange and knowledge production as well as its nonhierarchical representation. “One of the Documenta curators under Enwezor, Ute Meta Bauer, called this a temporarily ‘adopted country’ for intellectual diasporas from diverse origins and disciplines where art functioned as ‘a space of refuge – an in-between space of transition and of diasporic

passage.”⁵³ This resonates strongly with the spaces created by Jewish women and their salons.

For a biblical nation ‘wandering in exile’ and deemed ‘rootless’ by host countries, the salon granted a secure domicile and a sense of belonging – a home of one’s own. Yet it was simultaneously a worldly place – a center for cosmopolitans, who, like the hostess, came from other lands and identified with the international compartment of *le monde*.⁵⁴

In Conclusion

Hidden in plain sight in curating’s contemporary turn to conversation is the historical subject of the *salonnière*. “Overall, the eighteenth-century *salonnière* emerges as muse and patron, and only secondarily as *femme savante* or *femme auteur*.”⁵⁵ The *salonnière* merges the conflict of providing care and support, muse and patron, with intellectual and artistic achievement, *femme savante* or *femme auteur*. The *salonnière*’s subject formation united what modern ideology constructed as mutually exclusive. The *salonnière* appears at once as carer and as author. She brings together these functions as a woman. The *salonnière* never occupied the genius-as-artist position. The subject formation we can discern here is based upon conversing with others. The woman-led salons and their conversational complex clearly demonstrate that modernity could have taken a very different turn with regard to the politics of subject formation, society, politics, and art-making. The *salonnière*’s authorship or subject position is marked by work considered reproductive work (care), domestic art (taking place in her private home), and ephemeral art (conversation). In today’s institutional frameworks and languages of the art market under capitalist globalisation, the historical subject position occupied by the *salonnière* becomes legible as the curator of conversations. Yet, so far, she has not been included in the historiography of curating. This may have to do with the fact the domestic art of conversations curated by a hostess bore both too much risk of feminisation and the legacy of the salon as a classed space.⁵⁶ More radical lessons to be gained from the exclusion of the *salonnière* from the historiography of curating might be the following: first, the woman-led culture of the salon embodied art-making with others based upon conversations as opposed to the artist-as-genius in isolation; second, the politics practised in the salon was a society with no masters and no hierarchy; the domestic

art of conversation was based upon care as co-emergence, co-dependence, and co-authorship.

Therefore, the risk of feminisation as the reason why the *salonière* has not been taken into account as a role model for the curator successfully masks the much larger threats posed by the society practised in the salon. Modernity, modern culture, and modern subjects might well have taken a different turn: the *salonière* proves that horizontality and relationality in making art and making politics are possible.

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- 1 ——— Lucia Re, "The Salon and Literary Modernism: Proust, Wilde, Stein," in *Jewish Women and Their Salons: The Power of Conversation* (2005), 171.
 - 2 ——— Emily D. Bilski and Emily Braun, *Jewish Women and Their Salons: The Power of Conversation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 1.
 - 3 ——— Key museum studies and museology publications include: Peter Vergo, ed., *New Museology* (London: Reaktion Books, 1989); Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, eds., *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press in association with the American Association of Museums, 1991); Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); Krzysztof Pomian, *Der Ursprung des Museums: Vom Sammeln* (Berlin: Verlag Klaus Wagenbach, 1993); Ivan Karp, Christine Mullen Kreamer, and Steven D. Lavine, eds., *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992); Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 1995); Gerlinde Hauer, Roswitha Muttenthaler, Anna Schober, und Regina Wonisch, *Das inszenierte Geschlecht: Feministische Strategien im Museum* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1997); Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000); Gottfried Korff, *Museumsdinge: deponieren-exponieren*, eds. Martina Eberspächer, Gudrun M. König and Bernard Tschöfen (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2002); Ivan Karp, Corinne A. Kratz, Lynne Szewaja, and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, eds., *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006); Janet Marstine, ed. *New Museum Theory and Practice: An Introduction* (Malden, MA, Oxford, UK and Carlton, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2006); Belinda Kazeem and Charlotte Manz-Turek, *Das Unbehagen im Museum: Postkoloniale Museologien* (Vienna: Turia + Kant Verlag, 2009); Sharon Macdonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); Joachim Baur, *Museumsanalyse: Methoden und Konturen eines neuen Forschungsfeldes* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2013); Bettina Messias Carbonell, ed., *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); Andrew Dewdney, David Dibosa and Victoria Walsh, eds., *Post-Critical*

Museology: Theory and Practice in the Art Museum (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2013); Kirsten F. Latham and John E. Simmons, eds., *Foundations of Museum Studies: Evolving Systems of Knowledge* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2014).

- 4 ——— Examples include: Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980); Marsha Rozenbit, *The Jews of Vienna, 1867-1914: Assimilation and Identity*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1984); Deborah Hertz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988); Deborah Hertz, "Emancipation through Inter-marriage? Wealthy Jewish Salon Women in Old Berlin," in Judith Reesa Baskin, ed., *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988); Marsha Rozenblit, "For Fatherland and Jewish People: Jewish Women in Austria during World War I," in *Authority, Identity and the Social History of the Great War*, eds. Frans Coetzee and Marilyn Shevin-Coetzee (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 1995), 199-220; Helga Embacher, "Aussenseiterinnen: bürgerlich, jüdisch, intellektuell—links," *L'homme: Zeitschrift für feministische Geschichtswissenschaft* 2 (1991): 64-65; Ulrike Weckel, "A Lost Paradise of a Female Culture? Some Critical Questions Regarding the Scholarship on Late Eighteenth- and early Nineteenth-Century German Salons," *German History* Vol. 18, No. 3 (2000): 310-336; Petra Wilhelmy-Dollinger, *Die Berliner Salons. Mit historisch-literarischen Spaziergängen* (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2000); Alison Rose, *Jewish Women in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008); Hannah Lotte Lund, "'Ich kann nicht glücklich sein ohne eine geistreiche Freundin.' Gustav von Brinkmann in Berlin und Paris—eine 'Salon' Biographie," in Anne Baillet, *Netzwerke des Wissens: Das intellektuelle Berlin um 1800* (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschaftsverlag, 2011), 213-244. Hannah Lotte Lund, *Der Berliner >Jüdische Salon< um 1800: Emanzipation in der Debatte* (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2012); Barbara Hahn, *Die Jüdin Pallas Athene: Auch eine Theorie der Moderne* (Berlin: Berlin Verlag, 2002), the English translation was published as: Barbara Hahn, *The Jewess Pallas Athena: This Too a Theory of Modernity* (Princeton and Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press, 2005); Emily D. Bilski and Emily Braun, *Jewish Women and Their Salons: The Power of Conversation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005); Natalie Naimark-Goldberg, *Jewish Women in Enlightenment Berlin* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2013); Julia Kristeva, *Hannah Arendt: Life is a Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), in particular "The Meaning of an Example: Rahel Varnhagen," 48-68.
- 5 ——— Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).
- 6 ——— Bilski and Braun, *Jewish Women and Their Salons: The Power of Conversation* (2005), 1.
- 7 ——— Bennett (1995), 61.
- 8 ——— Ibid., 59.
- 9 ——— Ibid., 67.
- 10 ——— Ibid., 60-1.
- 11 ——— Ibid., 69.

12 ——— Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 98.

13 ——— Ibid., 98-9.

14 ——— In 1781, Christian Wilhelm von Dohm published two volumes of *Concerning the Amelioration of the Civil Status of the Jews* that were of importance to the process of Jewish emancipation in Germany. Marsha L. Rozenblit, “Habsburg Monarchy: Nineteenth to Twentieth Centuries,” in *Jewish Women’s Archive*, accessed July 30, 2015, <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/habsburg-monarchy-nineteenth-to-twentieth-centuries>.

In 1812, Frederick William III, King of Prussia passed the *Edict Concerning the Civil Status of the Jews in the Prussian State*: “Almost 70,000 Jews in Prussia became residents of the state.” Yet, Deborah Sadie Hertz emphasises that, “The ethos of the 1812 edict was a partial and conditional emancipation.” Deborah Sadie Hertz, *How Jews Became Germans: The History of Conversion and Assimilation in Berlin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 108.

15 ——— Rozenblit, Ibid.

16 ——— Rozenblit, Ibid.

17 ——— The history of labour as well as the histories of demonstrations evidence the presence of women.

18 ——— Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 70.

19 ——— Ibid. The distinction made here is between fine art and craft. Yet, I want to deliberately use the term domestic art in a wider sense than suggested here. I propose understanding the art of conversation as a specific domestic art.

Specific types of art and craft production, such as sketching, stitching, embroidery, or pottery were devalued and feminised. See for example: Hadumod Bußman and Renate Hof, eds. *Genus: Zur Geschlechterdifferenz in den Kulturwissenschaften* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 1995); Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Rozsika Parker, *Subversive Stitch* (London: The Women’s Press, 1984). Reviving crafts that had been devalued and feminised and restoring these crafts as art are key motivations in Judy Chicago’s *Dinner Party*. “China-painting,” “research on embroidery and needlework,” and “ecclesial embroidery” were central to Judy Chicago’s *Dinner Party*. (Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party: A Symbol of Our Heritage* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books Edition, 1979), 9 and 14.

20 ——— Re (2005), 171.

21 ——— Bilski and Braun (2005), 2.

22 ——— Ibid., 147.

23 ——— Ibid., 14–15.

24 ——— Re (2005), 171.

25 ——— Hahn (2005), 42.

26 ——— Hanna Lotte Lund, *Der Berliner jüdische Salon um 1800: Emanzipation in der Debatte* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2011), 3.

27 ——— Hahn (2005), 42.

- 28 ——— Barbara Hahn, "A Dream of Living Together: Jewish Women in Berlin around 1800," in eds. E. D. Bilski and E. Braun, *Jewish Women and Their Salons: The Power of Conversation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 156.
- 29 ——— Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 106.
- 30 ——— Ibid.
- 31 ——— Ibid., 183.
- 32 ——— Duden, *Etymologie: Herkunftswörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache* (Mannheim, Vienna, Zurich: Dudenverlag 1989), 203.
- 33 ——— Habermas (1990), 183.
- 34 ——— I refer here to the conversation culture of Jewish salons in Vienna and Berlin and not to the aristocratic conventions and etiquettes of French salon culture, which we might infer to call the fine art of conversation. Jewish salon culture was victim to politicisation and anti-Semitism. Hannah Arendt writes: "The salon which had brought together people of all classes, in which a person could participate without having any social status at all, which had offered a haven for those who fitted in nowhere socially, had fallen victim to the disaster of 1806." Arendt (1974), 121. From 1809 onwards, a "younger generation of Romantics [...] determined the intellectual tone of Berlin society. [...] These groups bore all the earmarks of patriotic secret societies." Arendt (1974), 123. The open-mindedness of the Jewish salon posed a political threat. The indiscriminateness, relationality, and horizontality of the salon was rendered precarious. The new societies, called "*Liedertafel*" or "*Christlich-Deutsche Tischgesellschaft*" were no longer led by Jewish women, but by nobles and Romantics. And, they were decisively nationalistic: "The bylaws banned admittance of women, Frenchmen, philistines, and Jews. [...] The nobles had been the first to admit the Jews to a degree of social equality, and it was among the nobles that systematic anti-Semitism first broke out." Arendt (1974), 123.
- 35 ——— Catherine Soussloff has developed a historical analysis of the subject position of the artist since the Early Modern Age. See: Catherine M. Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist: The Historiography of a Concept* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
- 36 ——— Re (2005), 173.
- 37 ——— Bennett, Ibid., 38.
- 38 ——— Bennett (1995), 89.
- 39 ——— O'Neill (2012), 9.
- 40 ——— Nathalie Heinrich and Michael Pollak, "From Museum Curator to Exhibition Auteur. Inventing a singular position," In *Thinking about Exhibitions*, ed. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 237–238.
- 41 ——— Ibid.
- 42 ——— Josef M. Stowasser, *Lateinisch-deutsches Schulwörterbuch* (München: Oldenbourg Schulbuch GmbH, 1994), 135.
- sorgen
I. sich kümmern, sich angelegen sein lassen, sich zu Herzen nehmen, besorgen, bevorzugen II. besorgen;

2. warten, pflegen;
 3. a (Opfer u. dgl.) besorgen; b. verwalten, befehligen; c. (Kranke) behandeln, kurieren; d (Geld) besorgen, herbeischaffen, auszahlen.
- 43 ——— Soussloff (1997), 74.
- 44 ——— The work of Jürgen Habermas, in particular his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, has been of importance with regard to a discussion of the separate sphere model.
- 45 ——— Specific types of art and craft production, such as sketching, stitching, embroidery, or pottery were devalued and feminised. See for example: Hadumod Bußman and Renate Hof, eds. *Genus: Zur Geschlechterdifferenz in den Kulturwissenschaften* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 1995); Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Roszika Parker, *Subversive Stitch* (London: The Women's Press, 1984). Reviving crafts that had been devalued and feminised and restoring these crafts as art are key motivations in Judy Chicago's Dinner Party. "China-painting", "research on embroidery and needlework" and "ecclestial embroidery" were central to Judy Chicago's Dinner Party. (Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party: A Symbol of Our Heritage* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books Edition, 1979), 9 and 14.
- 46 ——— Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Curating (Non)-Conferences," in *Ways of Curating* (London: Penguin Random House, 2015), 152–156.
- 47 ——— *Ibid.*, 153–154.
- 48 ——— *Ibid.*, 154.
- 49 ——— Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2012), 81.
- 50 ——— *Ibid.*
- 51 ——— By no means do I want to downplay the risk of capture, commodification, and pacification of conversation as an art world format. Yet, I do strongly believe that conversations can practise a politics of horizontality and relationality and are crucial to sociability.
- 52 ——— O'Neill, *Ibid.*, 154 and 83.
- 53 ——— *Ibid.*, 83.
- 54 ——— Bilski and Braun (2005), 4–5.
- 55 ——— *Ibid.*, 10.
- 56 ——— Lara Perry's *History's Beauties: Women and the National Portrait Gallery, 1856–1900* points to the fact that classed dichotomies based upon the bourgeoisie (moral) and aristocracy (immoral) binary fall short of historical realities. This is of interest in terms of understanding the dynamics when historical subject role models are activated. There are not only gender biases to be taken into account but also other intersectional biases. The artist-as-genius model was based upon the passage from craftsman to artist and evidences upward social mobility as well as the ideal of the independent creator as *homo economicus*. Catherine M. Soussloff has worked out this passage from craftsman to artist in *The Absolute Artist: The Historiography of a Concept*. The salon is tainted with its aristocratic past. In addition, the Jewish *salonières* remained tainted as outsiders on the inside. Hannah Arendt states: "Rahel had remained a Jew and a pariah." Arendt (1974), 203.

Emergent Archives of Conversations: Feminist and Queer Feminist Practices

This chapter presents my PhD exhibition *Suzanne Lacy's International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought*. The exhibition was shown at the Gallery of the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) at Toni-Areal from March 21 through April 14, 2015.¹ The opening took place on March 20, 2015.

Curating as Placing: A Feminist Method

The title of the exhibition, *Suzanne Lacy's International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought*, references the 1996 exhibition *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago's Dinner Party in Feminist Art History* curated by Amelia Jones. Jones established “placing” as a method of feminist curating, with the exhibition “assuming the structure of a critical essay.”² I place my exhibition in the history of feminist exhibitions. The choice of title renders this legible. This is based upon the “‘better with/because of’ those who came before us”³ approach which it aims to demonstrate. The title of my exhibition contains five levels of different, yet connected references: First, the title acknowledges the relation between Judy Chicago’s *Dinner Party* and Suzanne Lacy’s *International Dinner Party*. Lacy originally created the simultaneous worldwide international dinner parties as a gift and tribute to Chicago, her teacher and mentor. The chosen title alludes to this connection, albeit obliquely. Second, the title of the exhibition is built around the title of an artwork to which it draws attention. While *The Dinner Party* is an icon of feminist art, the *International Dinner Party* is an example of conceptual social feminist art practice that has remained a lesser known artwork. I argue that both the *International Dinner Party* and conceptual social feminist art practice warrant further critical exploration and exhib-

ition focus. The title therefore establishes a connection between *The Dinner Party* and the *International Dinner Party* and seeks to draw attention to the difference between the two artworks and the two ways of artmaking they represent. Third, Amelia Jones developed “placing” as a method of feminist curating.⁴ Jones “placed” *The Dinner Party* in “historical and theoretical” context.⁵ Hinging the title of her exhibition on one widely known feminist artwork, Jones alludes both to the hegemonic model of the “aesthetic and monographic” and to the curatorial intervention she proposes against this model: *The Dinner Party* appears in/through/via the framework of feminist art history.⁶ I follow this model, yet my framework of reference is a different one. The *International Dinner Party* appears in/through/via the framework of feminist curatorial thought. Fourth, Amelia Jones created a contextualisation for *The Dinner Party* that showed that notions of core imagery were developed with and through the specific context of the work of many different feminist artists. I seek to create a context through which conceptual social feminist practice can appear as a distinct category that evolves and transforms over time. I join both artistic and curatorial positions with this category of conceptual social feminist practice. The *International Dinner Party* is placed in the context of four 21st century feminist and queer feminist artistic and curatorial groups or collectives. Fifth, I reference the strategy of referencing that Amelia Jones used for her exhibition title. “The first part of the title of this exhibition, *Sexual Politics*, alludes to Kate Millet’s best-selling book of 1970 [...]”⁷

I wrote to Amelia Jones to let her know about the title I planned to give to my exhibition. I quote here from the e-mail exchange:

Dear Amelia,
[...]

I am writing to you today because I want to ask you the following question. [...]

I want to show Suzanne Lacy’s International Dinner Party alongside with a number of feminist curatorial/artistic collectives active today, Red Min(e)d, Queering Yerevan, Aktion Arkiv and radical practices of collective care.

I want to use the following title for the exhibition:

Suzanne Lacy’s International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought

This is of course indebted to and inspired by your exhibition and book on Judy Chicago's Dinner Party.

Therefore I want to ask you if you would be fine with me using the title I am thinking of. Of course, I would credit and mention your exhibition as a source of inspiration.

[...]

Elke,

Of course you can use that title—it's an honor for me.
Thank you.

[...]

Amelia⁸

Jones used placing to act on two fronts in her 1996 exhibition: first, she worked against the prevailing bias that saw 1970s sexual politics in feminist art through a lens of reductive essentialism; and second, she pushed against the widely held concept of the isolated artist genius. Her exhibition argued the latter by demonstrating that themes central to artistic production are specifically owed to contexts, movements, struggles, and politics. Jones writes:

The project begins from the assumption that, like any other cultural product, *The Dinner Party* did not spring spontaneously from the mind of one isolated 'genius'. The piece itself and its cultural effects are a product of years of theorizing, art making, writing, and exhibiting on the part of feminists and other artists, writers, and curators from the 1960s onward. [...] I am motivated here [...] by my specifically poststructuralist suspicion of interpretations that pose as 'objective' and of the exclusions put into play by the formation of restrictive historical narratives.⁹

I fully share the notion that artistic and curatorial work emerges from a specific geopolitical, historical, material, social, and aesthetic context. Artistic and curatorial work also have to be analysed in the contexts described above. I claim that making art is part of a conversation with others and that exhibitions have yet to fully explore the extent of the con-

versations behind/with/around artworks. Even though I build on Amelia Jones' method "to work within a historical and theoretical (rather than aesthetic or monographic) framework," I also significantly differ from her approach.¹⁰ My aim was not the "re-evaluation"¹¹ of the *International Diner Party* in the art historical context of the late 1970s.¹² My political and theoretical motivations were to *place* Suzanne Lacy's *International Diner Party* in the context of conceptual social feminist and queer feminist art practices of the 21st century. The contemporary groups and collectives included in the exhibition are: *Queering Yerevan*, active since 2007, *Red Min(e)d*, active since 2012, *radical practices of collective care*, active since 2012, and *Aktion Arkiv*, active since 2013. The context was chosen for the following reasons: first, to demonstrate how bridging art, activism, and the politics of consciousness-raising connect conceptual social art practice from the late 1970s with today's; second, to work against the grain of restrictive historical narratives and its chronopolitical ordering of feminism and feminist art into here-before/there-after; third, to critically address politics of location, in particular the historical gravitation around an Anglo-centric axis and the contemporary gravitation around a globalism-centric axis; fourth, to establish connections between practices that establish temporal communities and networks between people involved in the art context and people from other social contexts; fifth, to connect conversations and archives.

Matters of Scale

The late 2000s witnessed the acceleration of crises with the collapse of Lehman Brothers and the subsequent scaling up of uneven growth, precarisation, and austerity. The late 2000s saw the emergence of new feminist and queer feminist artists' and curators' collectives. In addition, the late 2000s gave rise to a number of large-scale exhibitions on feminism at major art institutions. Examples include *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, curated by Connie Butler and shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles in 2007 as well as at PS1 Contemporary Art Center in New York in 2008; *Global Feminisms*, curated by Maura Reilly and Linda Nochlin for the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, Brooklyn Museum New York in 2007; *elles@centrepompidou*, curated by Camille Morineau for the Centre Pompidou Paris in 2009; and *Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe* at MUMOK Vienna in 2009-2010 and Zachęta, Warsaw in 2010.

This tidal wave of feminist blockbuster exhibitions that assumed the structure of survey shows provoked critique. I quote here from a 2013 e-mail dialogue between Angela Dimitrakaki and Amelia Jones:

ANGELA DIMITRAKAKI – It is now 2012, five years after the noted wave of “feminist” shows in the U.S. and elsewhere – a wave criticised, not least by you, both for historicising feminism and for facilitating the literal “sale” of historic feminist art.¹³ Would you stand by this view today or do you feel inclined to review your position?

AMELIA JONES – My “critique” was aimed less at the shows themselves than at the overall tendency of the art world (art market) to latch onto sound-byte versions of complex movements and ideas in order to market them as the next “new” thing. What worried me then, and this worry has been borne out completely, is that feminism, here in the sense of feminist art and its histories, was turned into a superficial idea by the institutions and the media (the curators were, of course, often attempting to present more complex arguments), burned through, and then dropped it.¹⁴

Large-scale survey exhibitions educate the public and give accessibility to knowledge and understanding otherwise not available. Equally, these exhibitions impact the history/histories of art, not to mention the art market. They counteract established canonical narratives and open up new avenues of thought. However, they also run the risk of becoming blockbusters akin to branding strategies that celebrate novelty. With the exhibition *Suzanne Lacy's International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought*, I sought to intervene into restrictive notions of what a large-scale exhibition has to be—and can be. Given that the *International Dinner Party* was a precedent of a self-organised and collectively produced global-scale feminist endeavour, I had to take issues of scale into account. Suzanne Lacy links scale to the political experiences of her generation. “Protests were important in general for my generation, starting with the Civil Rights, through Vietnam, farm workers organising, feminist protests like Take Back the Night marches. What they evidenced was a culture where we felt our voice would make a difference. Scale is an important lesson from that era too, that numbers of bodies make a difference.”¹⁵ I argue that feminist curating can work with scale conceptually. Then, scale is not identified with large budgets to spend, huge marketing efforts, large numbers of artworks on loan from prestigious institutions, or visitors waiting in line to see an exhibition at their allocated time slot. Going beyond these restrictive and commodified notions of scale under the conditions of the globalised art world in accelerated capitalism opens up scale as a method of feminist politics. I argue that the exhibition *Suzanne Lacy's*

International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought was large-scale in terms of questions raised, problems addressed, knowledge made available, and conversations made present. Politics of scale matters for all the feminist and queer feminist practices included in the Zurich exhibition. Scale is understood here in aesthetic, social, and political terms regarding the ratio between the size of something and its representation. The scale of a problem addressed or an issue tackled can be huge. Yet, the scale of its chosen aesthetic representation can be deliberately modest. The scale of a problem can be huge, yet the political response to it can be minimal. The scale of a problem can be considered small by some, yet huge by others. Scaling up, increasing proportionally, and scaling down, reducing proportionally, are therefore central with respect to aesthetics, politics, and feminism. “Scale,” as Suzanne Lacy argues is indeed “an important lesson.”¹⁶

Politics of Location

Queering Yerevan, *Red Min(e)d*, *radical practices of collective care*, and *Aktion Arkiv* are all responsive to the scale of global capitalist and neoliberal transformation and how this plays out differently with regard to their respective local contexts. They are all entangled in and complexly relating to politics of location. They act and counteract under concrete material conditions—be it the post-Yugoslav space (*Red Min(e)d*), the Armenian reality marked by post-Soviet transitionality and diasporic experience (*Queering Yerevan*), immigrant society in a crumbling Swedish welfare state (*Aktion Arkiv*), or the crisis-driven European austerity measures (*radical practices of collective care*). The practices I chose for the exhibition are conversation-based and involve much social interaction, sometimes with a large number of people, sometimes with a group of friends and collaborators over an extended time period, sometimes with a group of people in a short period of time. They engage both the long-term and the ephemeral. They produce specific temporal and spatial situations through which they continuously test, question, and transform their own feminist and queer feminist politics. They rely on conversations. Via situated conversations, they produce documents and evidence, using different materialities ranging from text-based to image-based. Therefore, these practices are conversational and “archivistic”¹⁷ rather than exhibitionistic. In their work, activist and aesthetic strategies, political and formal decisions, social and art encounters are not considered mutually exclusive, but rather co-dependent and co-emergent.

Beyond the Exhibitionary Imperative

The work produced by *Aktion Arkiv*, *radical practices of collective care*, *Red Min(e)d*, and *Queering Yerevan*, as well as the *International Dinner Party* by Suzanne Lacy, only partially complies with the exhibitionary format. Conversation-based, ephemeral, performative, interdisciplinary in nature, and research-based, these feminist and queer feminist practices act as much outside the art context as inside it. They put the exhibition format to the test. At the same time they are challenged to respond to the contemporary art context and its exhibitionary imperative.¹⁸ Even though these practices operate outside of restrictive exhibitionary conventions, they have sought out the contemporary art context to communicate—i.e. show—their work.¹⁹ Dimitrakaki and Jones discuss the implications of this exhibitionary imperative and its hegemonic format of the “show”:

ANGELA DIMITRAKAKI – [...] The ‘show’, the exhibition, has been a historical format suited to a particular kind of art – an art that was to be seen (on walls, pedestals, or in glass cases), an art committed to the visual and invested in representation (even in terms of its politicisation). We have, however, ways of making art that do not subscribe to these principles of visibility – for example within the feminist practices of the 1970s and increasingly so today with the rise of a biopolitical paradigm, where the artistic ‘act’ unfolds within the social life (*bios*, in Greek) proper. [...]

AMELIA JONES – Angela, I couldn’t agree with you more. Interesting that feminist activist projects from the 1970s, for example, don’t make it fully into these ‘shows’ of feminist art. [...] To some degree this is inevitable, since activist work largely intended to work against the marketplace [...] or [...] to convey political ideas (not to make ‘artwork’ amenable to the white cube.²⁰

Going beyond or against the exhibitionary imperative has consequences for curating and exhibition-making. Many of the materials present in the *Suzanne Lacy’s Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought* exhibition are visually and materially precarious and even fragile in nature: telegrams, transcripts of debates, e-mail interviews, video documentation of interviews and debates, documentary footage of ephemeral events, or questionnaires. Yet, the amount of telegram messages, letters and other documents to read, and hours of conversation to listen to and to watch is large-scale and robust. This resists commodification or fast consumption and

considerably increases the time and dedication needed on the part of the visitors.

The materials in the exhibition did not just require viewing, but also listening. In order to gain inspiration, hope, and knowledge from past feminist and queer feminist conversations, one needs to listen to them.

Curating as Searching: A Feminist Method

I introduce the *search* as a feminist curatorial method here. Searching was as important as placing for the curatorial process of *Suzanne Lacy's International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought*. I argue that in the contemporary moment the “search” for alignments across historical and current feminist and queer feminist art and curatorial practices dedicated to conceptually motivated, politically conscious, and socially involved art working is much needed in feminist exhibition-making.²¹

“Search” as a feminist curatorial method follows Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s *The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives*. Spivak suggests here “a ‘reading’ of a handful of archival material.”²² She tells her readers that she intended “to look a little further, of course. As the archivist assured me with archivistic glee: it *will* be a search.”²³ Feminist curating supports that there *is* a search, that there *will* be a search, and that there *can* be a search. Archives are needed for the search to happen. Archives enable the search. Archives are the subject of and subject to the feminist and queer feminist search. Spivak searches for, as Judith Halberstam emphasises, a different kind of feminism. “In her Derridean deconstructivist mode, Spivak is calling for a feminism that can claim not to speak for the subaltern or to demand that the subaltern speak in the active voice of Western feminism; [...] Spivak’s call for a ‘female intellectual’ who does not disown another version of womanhood, femininity, and feminism [...]”²⁴ I suggest that feminist curating can still take this *search* for a different kind of feminism called for by Spivak much further.

The *International Dinner Party* resulted in an unplanned, ad-hoc archive that captures a feminist moment of time in the year of 1979. *Aktion Arkiv*, *Queering Yerevan*, *radical practices of collective care*, and *Red Min(e)d* produce emergent and urgent feminist and queer feminist archives based upon conversations. The work of these four collectives is evidence of the search for new feminist and queer feminist practices in the fraught contem-

porary moment of accelerated globalised transformation and economic and political turmoil. The exhibition format, as I want to argue, can in fact construct a bridge between feminist and queer feminist practices and a visiting public. The Zurich exhibition space supported listening to, reading through, and other modes of engaging with the conversation-based archives presented. While not giving in to the exhibitionary imperative, the feminist curatorial methods of *placing* and *searching* make use of the exhibition space for conversations, archives, and consciousness-raising.

Archive-as-Subject

Archivism not only engages with “a new history,”²⁵ but with a different future as well. The archival turn, very much connected to Jacques Derrida’s 1995 *Archive Fever*, was influential to historical scholarship as well as artistic and curatorial work.²⁶ From the mid-1990s onwards, artistic and curatorial practices have explored the archive as a site, a method, a source, and a subject.²⁷ Feminist, queer feminist, post-colonial, and critical race scholarship has produced new insights via the archive. Therefore, *searching* as a feminist method of curating can build on these areas of knowledge and take them further following Spivak’s call for a different feminism.

In her 2002 *Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance* paper, Stoler argues that, “Scholars need to move from archive-as-source to archive-as-subject.”²⁸ It is via the archive that historical subjects are produced. It is via the archive that women subjects are produced. It is via the archive that feminist and queer feminist subjects are produced. It is via the archive that classed, racialised, and sexualised subjects are produced. The paradox of the archive is that it constitutes and produces subjects, i.e. historical subjects, and subjects, i.e. historical subject matter. The archive-as-source was commonly understood to be merely an “inert depository.”²⁹ Yet, far from being inert depositories, archives produce “an epistemological master pattern”³⁰ and are strong “agents of fact production.”³¹ Therefore, Stoler “argues that scholars should view archives not as sites of knowledge retrieval, but of knowledge production.”³² This is exactly what *Aktion Arkiv*, *radical practices of collective care*, *Red Min(e)d*, and *Queering Yerevan* do. They view—and actively use—archives as sites of new knowledge production. The archive presents a paradox: the archive remains the site of hegemonic power and its ordering moves of governance and the archive appears as the method through which feminist and queer feminist knowledge production emerges.

Placing and *searching* open up archives and conversations to queer feminist durationality. What Jones calls the art situation is the space (gap) between art and spectator/spectatress. I propose that the “interrelational moment of interpretation”³³ can in fact become a very long moment. It can stay with spectators/spectatresses over time. This moment is where archivism and queer feminist durationality intersect. The archive can thus be conceived of as an archive situation that allows for the interrelational moment of interpretation. The exhibition, as a space and as a format, can bring the archive situation and the art situation together to support these interrelational moments of interpretation.

All the practices shown in *Suzanne Lacy’s International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought* foreground living archives. I argue here that searching the archives becomes producing. They make use of the archive for “feminist futures”³⁴ and the potentials of “queer feminist durationality” which Amelia Jones describes as “the introduction of the beat of desire, of time and its embodied relations, into the art situation and particularly into the interrelational moment of interpretation.”³⁵

Suzanne Lacy’s *International Dinner Party* in Feminist Curatorial Thought: A Curator’s Talk

In what follows I make use of the format of the curator’s talk. I try to use this format for a written text that speaks in/to/with/about the exhibition.³⁶ In this curator’s talk, I seek to share the exhibition with readers who (mostly) will not have been present at the exhibition’s opening and will not have had the chance to see the exhibition during its three-week duration between March 21 and April 13, 2015.

I will first describe and analyse the urban and spatial context of the gallery where the exhibition took place. Then I will proceed with the feminist and queer feminist practices that were shown. Much of what will be said results from knowledge gained through conversations with the artists, architects, curators, educators, researchers, theorists, and writers whose work was included in the exhibition: the Los Angeles-based artist Suzanne Lacy, the Stockholm-based group *Aktion Arkiv*, the post-Yugoslav group *Red Min(e)d* based in Belgrade, Ljubljana, Munich and Sarajevo, the Yerevan-based collective *Queering Yerevan*, and the *radical practices of col-*

lective care group whose members live and work in Austria, Spain, and the UK. Throughout, I will quote from publications, books, films, exhibition catalogues, websites, and other documents that were all present in the exhibition.

In the Gallery

Let me first introduce you to the gallery and its location. The gallery space is part of the Zurich University of the Arts (Zürcher Hochschule der Künste), commonly referred to as ZHdK. In September 2014, the university's move to its new location, the Toni Areal, was complete. The university building is a reuse of a former dairy factory. Both the university's choice of location and the repurposing of an existing industrial building reflect a larger trend in contemporary urbanisation, namely for the tertiary education sector to perform robust, and at times large-scale, urban transformations, or rather, urban updates. Single university buildings as well as university campuses are key to processes that have been described as "gentrification, or studentification."³⁷ Comparable to art institutions, universities demonstrate the move from industrial to post-industrial. Architects EM2N, Matthias Müller, and Daniel Niggli transformed the existing large-scale 1970s building. Its architecture speaks the exacting, yet modest language of contemporaneity. The building actively resists signature contemporary architecture's formal and technical exuberance of the architecturally afforded experience economy as described by Hal Foster.³⁸ The spaces for movement and circulation such as the lobby and the corridors are very generous in dimension. The spaces for teaching and learning, on the contrary, are more compact. The exacting choice of materials corresponds with their meticulous use. Precisely, these perfect and generous spaces that exude the architectural expression of globalised standards of competitive academic excellence, the "educational market",³⁹ and "the subjectivity (...) of the consuming student"⁴⁰ allow for an exhibition space that can be used for the critical artistic and intellectual work of collective feminist and queer feminist practice. Such a space, quite paradoxically, at once supports and resists, shelters and ignores critical feminist and queer feminist practice.

Surrounded by wide corridors opening up to classrooms and offices, the gallery is part of the building's inner urbanism, oriented to the student population, but not so much to the public at large. The gallery is located on the fourth and fifth levels of the building with a white spiral staircase connecting its two levels. A second staircase leads down to the student kitchen. With six doors leading in and out of the gallery space and a number of floor-to-ceiling glass windows, the space offers both surprising vistas and reflections visible from quite a distance in the corridors. Given the

great number of different features—the dominant staircase, the rectangular void surrounding the staircase on the upper level, the many different doors leading in and out of corridors but also opening onto study spaces and classrooms, and the transparent walls—the gallery does not offer a profound understanding of the needs and requirements of exhibiting contemporary art on the part of the architects. For a curator, the space therefore offers a challenging spatial situation to work with. I invested two days in measuring and testing the site. I paid very close attention to its many varying elements, with regard to the light situation, including an interior courtyard that effectively acts as a lightwell and provides natural daylight.

I incorporated the two levels of the gallery into the curatorial concept: the collectives that formed in the 21st century, *Aktion Arkiv*, *Queering Yerevan*, *radical practices of collective care*, and *Red Min(e)d*, were presented on the fourth floor, which is where the official entrance to the gallery is located. Then, ascending the white staircase, the visitors were led to *The International Dinner Party* installation. This reversal in chronology was deliberate. I sought to avoid the linear historical or art historical chronology of before/after. The spiral staircase supported the conceptual argument spatially. By going up, the visitors saw the 1979 piece. I used a number of display elements that connected the two levels. The introductory curatorial exhibition text was printed on wall high cardboard panels in the dimensions of two meters in height and 80 centimetres in width. Such a panel describing all the positions exhibited was leaning to the wall on both of the gallery's levels. I had different size trestle tables made out of beechwood. Alluding to the atmosphere of a studio or a research archive, these tables were used to place monitors and books. With a number of chairs around them, they invited the visitors to sit down, to read, to watch, and to listen. The tables gave structure to the whole space. They created focused islands, but also visual and spatial coherence and continuity.

Imagine that I am standing in front of the table where the monitors for *Red Min(e)d's Living Archive* is installed, not too far from the black-on-red poster printout by *radical practices of collective care*, facing both the table holding *Aktion Arkiv's* monitor as well as *Queering Yerevan's* film that was projected onto the wall. This is from where I spoke about the four different feminist and queer feminist practices that were shown on the gallery's lower level.

Queering Yerevan

we've managed to raise consciousness, OUR consciousness, here on the list, but what have we managed to queer in yerevan?

— Queered: What's To Be Done With XCentric Art, 2011

Queering Yerevan's contribution to the exhibition consists of a book and a film. The book rests on a small table and is opened up. The film is looped and projected onto the wall. There are two chairs placed at the table, so people can sit down to study the book and watch the film.

Queering Yerevan is self-described as “a collaborative project of queer and straight artists, writers, cultural critics, and activists to be realized within the framework of the QY collective. It takes as its point of departure concrete mnemonic experiences of concrete queer artists in a specific time and space: Yerevan, 2000s.”⁴¹ *Queering Yerevan*, originally active under the name WOW, Women Oriented Women, was formed in 2007. The members started from shared experiences of transitionality from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, USSR, to the Republic of Armenia and its post-Soviet globalisation, the haunting memory of the Armenian genocide, the Armenian diaspora, the conditions of prevailing homophobia, xenophobia, and patriarchy, the dire economic conditions, and the powerful influence of the Armenian Orthodox church. The three core members are Lusine Talalyan, Arpi Adamyan, and Shushan Avagyan. Around them, there is a larger group both of queer and straight artists, writers, intellectuals from both the Armenian diaspora and the local Yerevan scene. “For me, it seemed like the purpose was to try to get the community involved in whatever capacity we could. Just to be dealing with some topics that, maybe, have not been explored so much in Armenia and to give a voice to queer and women's issues and create a space and a dialogue for artists and writers to bridge a dialogue with the audience and people who are attending, with the work that they were making about those issues.”⁴² The conversations nurtured by the group formed around *Queering Yerevan* are concerned with art and life, art and activism, and the im/possibilities of becoming and sustaining a collective and raising consciousness, artistically as well as politically. As of January 2009, they had published and disseminated the following *Open Letter Against Intolerance* on their blog spot:

After the government in Armenia signed the UN declaration against discrimination based on sexual orientation in December 2008, we have witnessed a resurgence of hostile rhetoric against homosexuals both in official and oppositional media. [...] Thus, several civil society groups and individuals, concerned with these developments,

strongly condemn the statements, which disseminate hatred and intolerance. Before inflicting potentially violent rhetoric, such public figures should realize that they have a responsibility towards larger society and towards its sexual minorities as well, including their safety and well being.⁴³

In the absence of much infrastructure readily available for the production, distribution, and reception of feminist and queer feminist contemporary art in Yerevan, Arpi Adamyán, Shushan Avagyan, and Lusine Talalyán self-organise the means and spaces for artistic co-production, experimentation, seminars, and conversations. They put together events, exhibitions, happenings, film screenings, and workshops. They run a blog and publish books. They apply for funding, find private supporters, or crowd-source funding. They curate.

Coming To You To Not Be With You was *Queering Yerevan's* first exhibition. In 2008, the group opened the garden of Zarbuyán 34 in Yerevan as a safe space for their exhibitions and performances. The garden served as a site for gatherings and nurtured conversations: "One of the main objectives of the group is to be affected by each other's issues and be influenced by each other's aesthetics and methods, ideas and practices: to see how our work can change in the process."⁴⁴

In their 2011 book, *Queered: What's To Be Done With Xcentric Art*, they include documents from the first exhibition opening in the garden of Zarbuyán 34 and from many of the following exhibition experiments, time-based events, discussions, and performances.

These documents express the collective artistic, curatorial and social search for contemporary feminist and queer feminist articulations responding to the specific context of Yerevan and the Armenian diaspora. For three consecutive years, 2008 through 2010, the summer months turned the garden of Zarbuyán 34 into *Queering Yerevan's* space of exhibition-making, experimenting with art, life, collectivity, and the public. Angela Harutyunyan, art historian and curator, who is part of the Armenian diaspora, theorises her memories of QY's first exhibition: "What I had in mind was to recuperate this collective experience of labour, precisely the experience of producing art as a laborious collective process, which resulted in an intersubjective exchange between the participants in terms of constructing relationships, strengthening and rearticulating friendships."⁴⁵ She emphasizes having experienced "dissensus" rather than "consensus" and describes the exhibition as "attempts of subjectivisation and its very failure."⁴⁶ The book mixes and combines experimental, poetic, and theoretical writing with the conversations via Listserv e-mail that instituted the formation of the loose local and diasporic network of feminist and queer feminist Armenian artists and intellectual producers active around the

QY collective. The book demonstrates the potentialities, conflicts, desires, and emotions of becoming a collective. The book also makes public the almost always invisibilised self-organised curatorial labour of fundraising, as it includes applications for funding. Timothy D. Straight, Norwegian Honorary Consul in Armenia, responded to one of *Queering Yerevan's* funding requests as follows: "While the issue of sexual minorities is an important one for Armenia, there were so many applications on so many pressing issues that all of the projects could not be chosen, unfortunately."⁴⁷ In the end, the book was self-funded via the "generous support" of "individuals."⁴⁸

Queered: What's To Be Done With XCentric Art associates and transgresses different formats of writing and mixes and combines three different languages and alphabets: Armenian, English, and Russian. The book manages to retain a strong sense of being an archive opened up rather than a finished book that closes a chapter of collective becoming/becoming collective. *Queered: What's To Be Done With XCentric Art* joins the private and the public, the here and now, the there and then, Yerevan and the Armenian diaspora. The book's archivism becomes most obvious via the inclusion of "a two-year conversation"⁴⁹ that took place on a Listserv via e-mails.

[T]he goal is to archive a two-year conversation that has been most productive to us, in various ways - if not collectively, then alternatively, individually and otherwise. This 'unspace' has been the most real space and it's created possibilities. we need a record of that, not in the form of a pdf, or a blog, not in the form of censored and cut up pieces, but boldly, in boldface, on paper, thick and heavy, as our conversations have been.⁵⁰

The metaphor of thick and heavy conversations, though fleeting and ephemeral in nature, serves as an argument towards materialising the archive of a two-year conversation in book form. The book gives access to the conversations on the Listserv. This includes discussions on the politics of making public the private conversations of a collective: "That is I don't want anything I wrote to the listserv to be published. [...] decisions should be made collectively and the needs and concerns of all should be taken into account."⁵¹ *Queered: What's To Be Done With XCentric Art* appears to remain open-ended. One of the participants in the Listserv writes: "I agree, the book is open-ended, like you said, at least for me it is."⁵²

It is from one of the last e-mails in the book that inspired me to propose to *Queering Yerevan* to make a film on the Zarubyan garden for the Zurich exhibition. This is from the e-mail:

It has been raining a lot in the past couple days. the snails have crawled out of their hiding places and gathered around the rotting table in the zarubyan garden. arpi said, careful, don't step on them, but it was too late – someone had already been there before us and among the red mulberries smashed on the ground i saw a few broken shells and slime. the table needs to be repaired – it needs a new top and sturdy legs. the paint has chipped away.⁵³

This strong poetic image of a derelict and abandoned garden filled with past memories and melancholia lent itself to envisioning a film of the ephemeral events and the collective spirit the garden had witnessed over the period of three summers. The garden, both a safe space and an experimental space had witnessed feminist and queer feminist aesthetic practice in its experimental and im/possible collective politics. Via e-mail and Skype, Shushan Avagyan and I discussed the possibility of a 30- to 40-minute-long film revisiting the experimental exhibitions, conversations, and convivial gatherings at the garden of Zarbuyan 34 from 2008 to 2010. Following my curatorial suggestion, *Queering Yerevan* contributed a new film based on video footage shot in the garden. Different languages—Armenian, French, English—mix and combine. In the exhibition, the opened-up book rests on the small table. One can sit down and, while watching the film, turn the book's pages. One can start to work out the connections. The captured conversations are an expression of feminist and queer feminist feelings,⁵⁴ desires, hopes, contradictions, disappointments, doubts, failures, struggles, conflicts, and potential. *Queering Yerevan's* book and film are archivistic and express a search for queer feminist practice seeking to raise consciousness under the homophobic and precarious conditions in Yerevan in the late 2000s.

radical practices of collective care

We're interested in practices that could offer us cues for alternative ways of organizing care and social reproduction; alternative structures to those (anyways) crumbling social institutions of the state; structures that would step out of capitalist logics of exploitation and competition and rather build upon forms of collectivity and solidarity – that could take the forms of mutual aid, sustained self-organization, or institutions of the commons.

— radical practices of collective care, 2014

The contribution of *radical practices of collective care* to the exhibition is text-based. Two posters, each 50 centimetres by 70 centimetres in size, are mounted on the wall. The text is printed in narrow columns. It is structured by the following questions: What were the reasons to start rad-col-care? What do you mean by collective care? What are your most important theoretical references? There are detailed answers to all the questions.⁵⁵

Radical practices of collective care is self-described as a “collective research process investigating collective practices of care, reproduction and mutual aid as related to social movements.”⁵⁶ The group has identified the social care crisis as one of the most pressing and urgent problems of 21st century capitalism. Together with others, they search for everyday practices that test and sustain radical collective care practices. The three group members drive the ongoing process of research for “structures that would step out of capitalist logics of exploitation and competition and rather build upon forms of collectivity and solidarity – that could take the forms of mutual aid, sustained self-organization, or institutions of the commons.”⁵⁷ The project was initiated by Manuela Zechner, Julia Wieger, and Bue Rübner Hansen in 2012. Against the backdrop of the social care crisis and the prevailing “state of insecurity,”⁵⁸ *radical practices of collective care* began to work together. They describe the reasons behind their search for radical practices of collective care as follows:

The idea to start the project came up in 2012 against the background of a social crisis convulsing Europe – at a time when the impact of the 2008 financial crisis could be felt strongly especially in Spain, Greece, Portugal; and when austerity politics started to take effect, further dismantling the social institutions once provided by the (welfare)state throughout Europe. What was new – at least in Europe – was that this situation posed autonomous self-reproduction as a necessity for many people (...).⁵⁹

At the beginning, forming a stable group was central to the project’s intent. They sought to create a group-based research platform focusing on the issues surrounding reproductive labour in regard to food production and housing.

Our first few meetings at VBKÖ were attempts at establishing a stable group of contributors, which failed somewhat; we thus assumed that the three of us drive the process and also began to accept to take the project to other places. So far most presentations happened in cultural spaces and attracted a mix of activists, academics and cultural workers, and people working across those. But we also work in activist and academic spaces and see the project as open to travelling, given certain basic material, ethical and political conditions.⁶⁰

They decided to initiate an open-ended research process that bridges historic precedents of collective care practices with new and emerging forms of self-organisation that respond to the prevailing conditions of governmental precarisation and increasing austerity. Debates surrounding the commons and feminist positions on reproductive labour offer orientations for their research process.

For us the writings of feminist authors such as Silvia Federici and Mariarosa dalla Costa are important sources of inspiration, as well as writings on commons by people such as the Midnight notes collective, George Caffentzis or Massimo de Angelis (check out the gendered divisions of subjects!), but also texts about the crisis from various collectives and individuals. The feminist authors we appreciate start from the gendered nature of reproductive work while historicizing, rather than essentialising it as female.⁶¹

Both in theory and in practice their aim is to take up positions that “disarticulate familiar binaries such as autonomy and heteronomy, production and reproduction, creative and care, desire and need, avoiding the subtle violence of invisibility and domestication that comes with choosing one side over the other.”⁶² Raising consciousness for the tremendous impact of the social care crisis and the need for new forms of agency and collective forms of action are very much part of the project’s aim. Their work is driven by research rather than political organising. Their work focuses on small-scale “case study meetings”⁶³ in which they form ad-hoc communities with others with whom they work together for a certain amount of time on issues specific to certain groups and locations. The resulting knowledge is subsequently disseminated via their website. The open-ended search focuses on the material and economic conditions rapidly and profoundly transforming the everyday, as well as on the lived and practised knowledge that emerges out of these transformations. Articulating and sharing this emerging knowledge becomes a way of sustaining such practices. Case study meetings are a form of mutual support and a political action aimed at raising consciousness. *Radical practices of collective care* use the admittedly limited resources of the art context and the infrastructures available in art spaces, cultural venues, or academia to host workshops. They seek to create different situations within the current conditions by using the available resources to enable encounters that would not be possible otherwise. The encounters they organise are live tests of solidarity-focussed knowledge production. In 2014, for example, they were invited by curator Katharina Morawek and co-curator Manuela Zechner to contribute to the exhibition *How We Want to Live*.⁶⁴ Part of their contribution to the exhibition was a workshop with *Territorio*

Doméstico at the Shedhalle Zurich where the exhibition took place: “Madrid-based domestic worker’s group Territorio Doméstico is a collective of mostly migrant women working in private homes. Territorio Doméstico has been a powerful voice in defending the rights of domestic workers and a key reference for creative and community-based methodologies of organising.”⁶⁵

Since *radical practices of collective care*’s work does not much conform to exhibitionary conventions, I pondered how to find a way of presenting their existing work in the exhibition and to allow for the creation of a new piece based on previous work. In the course of my curatorial research, I suggested a conversation or an interview to the group. They chose to do an e-interview.

Out of the answers to my questions resulted a text they wrote in August and September 2014 and then decided to edit and publish as interview-text on their blog. We then agreed to use this interview-text as their contribution to the exhibition. The text was transformed into a poster for the exhibition. It was printed black on red. The red colour chosen is a reference to the group’s website.

In the interview-text, *radical practices of collective care* describe their own practice in terms of the archive.

M co-curated an exhibition on radical care in Zürich and brought us in with a series of events and a wall space, which gave us the occasion to edit and assemble our materials in more solid ways. There we created a space for reading and listening to case studies in the Shedhalle library (with audio stations and take-away booklets), and used the same space for presentations of the domestic worker’s collectives Territorio Doméstico, Keine Hausarbeiterin ist Illegal and Respekt@Vpod. This space functioned as a kind of lively and convivial archive.⁶⁶

The seminars are lively and convivial archives. In archival terms, they produce sources. The group runs their blog as an opened-up archive distributing and disseminating the knowledge they produce via the seminars. They “consider conversations (in discourse and practice) between activism, knowledge production, radical pedagogy and cultural production to be very important.”⁶⁷ The conversational and the archival are co-constitutive. The conversations, just as much as their archive, raise consciousness for the politics of care work and address the crisis of the contemporary moment.

Red Min(e)d

In the beginning of the Living Archive [...] we agreed that whatever happens we will focus on LOVE, on the politics of love. Putting FRIENDSHIP and LOVE first and before all misunderstandings, disagreements and problems was the best thing we could do for us, for the Living Archive and for all the people involved in the process.

— Red Min(e)d, 2014

Red Min(e)d's contribution to the exhibition consists of a wallpaper including quotes from their questionnaire, a film, a book, and a collection of conversations documented on video. The wallpaper almost fully covers the glass wall that visually connects to the student kitchen one floor below the gallery. The film is looped and projected onto the back wall of the gallery. On a table, there are two large monitors to each of which two sets of headphones connect. Two books are placed in front of the monitors. Visitors can choose to sit down in front of the monitors to listen to the interviews while reading the books.

Red Min(e)d is self-identified as a “feminist curatorial group” active in the post-Yugoslav space. Dugandžić Živanović, Katja Kobolt, Dunja Kukovec, and Jelena Petrović started *Red Min(e)d* in 2011. The four are united by shared experiences of the transition from the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia to post-socialist globalisation and the precarious and underpaid conditions for intellectual and cultural labour. Grounded in shared interests in curating feminist knowledge, friendship, and solidarity, the four of them decided to combine their different backgrounds and to share their knowledge in feminist theory, contemporary art, cultural production, and activism. Based in Ljubljana, Belgrade, Munich, and Sarajevo, “They live and work moving from one place to another, on the crossroad of common understanding and methods of researching, (re)presenting, curating and mediating contemporary art.”⁶⁸ In a Skype conversation with Jelena Petrović in September 2014, and in a conversation with Dunja Kukovec that took place when she came to pick me up in her car at Ljubljana airport in November 2014, these two members of *Red Min(e)d* shared with me some of the concepts they consider central to their practice: affect, apocalypse, archive, capitalism, collectivity, feminism, friendship, knowledge, love, magic, posthumanism, post-socialism, precarity, solidarity, and trust.

Shortly after starting *Red Min(e)d* in 2011, the group developed their curatorial method, *The Living Archive*. The first edition of *The Bring In Take Out – Living Archive (LA)* took place in Zagreb from October 13 through October 16, 2011.⁶⁹ Other editions in Ljubljana, Sarajevo, Vienna, and Stockholm were soon to follow. *The Living Archive* is based upon conversations

in search of the history of feminism and feminist art in the post-Yugoslav space. Equally, *Red Min(e)d* is interested in exploring feminist practices in the contemporary moment. They address the politics of location in the post-Yugoslav space and the material and economic conditions of “precarity” and “flexible, underpaid jobs”⁷⁰ characteristic of much artistic and curatorial labour.

It was also the beginning of an idea about a Living Archive, in which you could bring in and take out whatever speaks to you. Collecting what is given to us and sharing it with others in different spaces and cities meant not only collecting artworks and their documentation as well as stories of artists/scholars/activists, but also understanding the position of each person we met and understanding how s/he works, produces and lives and the challenges s/he meets. This empty space between artist and curator and their expected roles in this system needed to be changed.⁷¹

The Living Archive includes the *Feminism and Art Questionnaire* that asks the following questions:

What is feminism for you? How do you think feminism is manifested in art production, theory and curating nowadays? Which artists and/or artworks would you include into feminist archive in/from the post Yugoslav space? What do you think would be important for the creation of feminist art archive (ways, methods, criteria, materials, etc.)? Do you see distinction between feminist and gender-related art practices? How do you see your practice in the context of these questions?⁷²

It is of particular interest that *Red Min(e)d* has singled out the empty space between curators and artists as a space for critical feminist practice. They argue that this empty space is in fact a full space, occupied with negotiations regarding material conditions of artistic and curatorial labour and production as well as with intellectual movements, encounters, feelings, and friendships. *Red Min(e)d* write:

What we have known since the first edition of the Living Archive is that most artists, curators, and authors, just like each one of us, have no salaries, no health insurance, have no savings, have no studios, no security and no plans for future. They produce hungry, tired, love sick, home sick, lonely, with friends, using the equipment and skills of their friends and giving their lives, time and energy to produce art knowing that most of the people around them believe that art is just a commodity.⁷³

In 2013, *Red Min(ed)* were nominated as curators of the October Salon. Initiated in 1960 by the City of Belgrade, the Salon is the oldest and most prestigious institution of contemporary visual art in Belgrade. Yet, the Salon's legacy is not matched by an adequate cultural infrastructure in contemporary Belgrade. The conditions of art-making, curating, and cultural production are precarious with many of the public museums closed and very little funding available. *Red Min(ed)* describes the situation as follows: "In June 2013, when we got appointed as the curators of the 54th October Salon [...] we searched for a public museum or a gallery in Belgrade that would be big enough to host over 40 artistic positions, have at its disposal an operating license to be able to welcome the public, be open and available in autumn and have heating and electricity in the whole building."⁷⁴ They found none.

They decided that the 54th October Salon would take place in a historical Belgrade landmark building, the former KLUZ department store and factory, currently owned by Zepter.⁷⁵ The exhibition *No One Belongs Here More Than You* made use of the precarious space of a private-public partnership afforded within the conditions of "neoliberal predatory capitalism and aggressive Orthodox Christianity."⁷⁶ The feminist collective took the risk of being accused of co-optation or capture. They decided to make public in the exhibition the conditions under which the 54th October Salon operated including the labour of art and curating. The group states: "The 54th October Salon showed the labour, the work behind each artwork, the tears, the feminist agendas, the sociality, and the affect as well as the living in the Living Archive."⁷⁷

Since *Red Min(ed)*'s emphasis is on the living in *The Living Archive*, it was of importance to retain this in the Zurich exhibition. Jelena Petrović and I discussed their contribution over a meeting in the gallery space in Zurich. Together, we decided on a small retrospective of previous editions of *The Living Archive*. The floor-to-ceiling transparent glass wall opening on to the student kitchen was covered with a wallpaper showing the key visual they had used for their edition of the October Salon. Into the palm tree image Sasa Kerkos incorporated quotes by Marina Gržinić (Ljubljana/Vienna), Nada Kachakova (Skopje), and Biljana Kašić (Zadar/Zagreb) from the *Feminism and Art Questionnaire*. Stockholm-based artist Elin Magnusson agreed to the screening of her film *Act of Instinct*. This film had been part of the "turbulent edition of the Living Archive in Stockholm (DaDa Polis, November, 2014)."⁷⁸

Two tables hold copies of *Red Min(ed)*'s book *No One Belongs Here More Than You*. Two monitors screen conversations. One monitor shows *The Living Archive Forum: Creating the Feminist Archive Means Facing the Real to the Most Extent* which took place at *The Living Archive* in Ljubljana on March 9, 2012. The second monitor screens *The Living Archive Forum:*

No One Belongs Here More Than You which took place at the October Salon on October 13, 2013. The forum discussed “the role that feminism(s) has in working together in the field of contemporary art through/within social movements and politically engaged practices.”⁷⁹

The conversational and the archival constitute *The Living Archive*. *Red Min(e)d* employs conversations to raise consciousness with regard to the precarious working conditions in art-making and curating. The curatorial group engages archivism with respect to the history of feminism and feminist art practice in the post-Yugoslav space.

Aktion Arkiv

Unlike traditional archives, the association's archive acts on site.

— Aktion Arkiv, 2014

Aktion Arkiv's contribution to the exhibition consists of a few historical photographs that are presented as a looped slide show on a monitor. An audio drama is based on the transcript of a witness seminar dedicated to a 1989 conference.

Helena Mattsson, Meike Schalk, and Sara Brolund de Carvalho initiated *Aktion Arkiv*, a not-for-profit association, in 2013. The three founding members are connected via Stockholm's KTH Royal Institute of Technology. Mattsson and Schalk also share a studio with other practitioners active at the intersection of architecture and feminism. *Aktion Arkiv* is based on their friendship and their expressed interest in working together collectively as much as it is driven by their shared interests in architecture, critical spatial practices, conceptual art practice, feminism, urban studies and participation. They insert their work into the contemporary art context. Starting from shared experiences of the far-reaching restructuring of the Swedish model of the welfare state, the implementation of austerity measures, the loss of social security, and the divides running through the contemporary immigrant Swedish society, they saw the need for a mobile archive. Affordable housing, communal relations under the prevailing conditions of everyday precarity,⁸⁰ the politics of collective action and civic participation in a contemporary immigrant Northern European urban context are at the core of *Aktion Arkiv's* practice. The name chosen for their association, *Aktion Arkiv*, is at once concept and method. Their actions include ad-hoc communities, everyday hospitality, and political alignments. They create specific situations for these actions to take place. The mobile archive—a vehicle on wheels, at once sturdy and flexible, heavy enough to stand on its own, yet light enough to go on the metro with

them—becomes the physical support structure for many of their actions. In addition, it houses the research results collected thus far. *Aktion Arkiv* searches in existing archives, questions absences and silences and produces new archival materials and sources.

What follows describes the contribution *Aktion Arkiv* realised for the exhibition *Tensta Museum: Reports from New Sweden* that ran at Tensta konsthall from October 2013 through May 2014. Tensta konsthall is located in a suburb of Stockholm that was built with the Swedish Million Program, an ambitious social housing program between 1965 and 1974. In 1967, the first generation of inhabitants moved to the new suburb of Tensta. Today, many of the suburbs are identified negatively with the large late-modernist housing ensembles and their mostly immigrant populations. In 2013, more than 90% of the 19,000 residents of Tensta have immigrant background. In light of these urban transformation processes, *Aktion Arkiv* felt the need to critically investigate how raising historical consciousness for past participatory involvement in the making of housing and civic spaces could lead to new orientations. They describe *Aktion Arkiv* as follows:

Aktion Arkiv [...] furthers participatory history writing. For the exhibition *Tensta Museum*, it used an ambulant archive vehicle for taking off to Tensta. During the exhibition, the vehicle served for the exchange of information, it contained a library with books photos, films, maps, a time line, a guest book, and archival material. It also housed a foldable table and seats, and functioned as a generator for discussion, like a round table, which contributed to the collection and documentation of narratives and documents, and other new material.⁸¹

Aktion Arkiv aims to uncover lost and forgotten histories of the complex transnational and translocal communities of Tensta to redefine together with others today's civic spaces and the politics of participation in contemporary urban conditions. *Aktion Arkiv* sets out to search and "collect disappeared material and undocumented knowledge."⁸² Schalk, Mattsson and Brolund de Carvalho identified the year of 1989 as the turning point, both globally and locally in Tensta. 1989 was the year the Cold War ended and the process of neoliberalisation in Sweden began. 1989 was the year that labour migration shifted to a global refugee migration in Tensta. And, 1989 was the year in which an almost entirely forgotten international housing renewal conference took place in Tensta. The focus of this conference was on participation:

In 1989, Stockholm's Real Estate Committee organized a large international housing conference in Tensta, which gathered together experts from important renewal projects in, e.g. France, Turkey, England and the US. The conference became the starting point for a new era of citizen participation and several housing renewal projects, carried out together with the residents, were initiated in Tensta. Most of the material from the conference has been lost, possibly because of reorganization within the local authority, possibly because of lack of interest. However, Action Archive contend that both the conference and the subsequent renewal projects are central to Swedish history and important bits of the picture in order to understand both the development of architecture and the urban history of Tensta.⁸³

In 2014, *Aktion Arkiv* invited protagonists of the 1989 international housing renewal conference to a witness seminar at Tensta konsthall. Invitees included: Monica Andersson, who was a city official in charge of real estate development; Anna Hesser, the project leader for the conference; UK community architect Rod Hackney; and Turkish planner Erol Sayin.⁸⁴ In 1989, "The conference became the starting point for a new but short era of citizen participation and several housing renewal projects were carried out together with residents, in Stockholm, before the program was suddenly stopped after only a few years, when the local government shifted."⁸⁵ The goal of the 2014 witness seminar was to understand what had made residents' participation possible and why it was stopped only a few years after its introduction. The witness seminar gave rise to intense dialogue and heated debates between the foreign guests and the public. The Swedish administration was heavily criticized for its rigid systems-based approach and its inability to handle the public on the level of the individual. *Aktion Arkiv's* practice presents a rare example of contemporary art practice and urban research that seeks to engage with historical processes of participation in conversation and to learn lessons from such participatory urban history production with regard to the fraught contemporary moment.

Aktion Arkiv sought to understand the larger societal and political shifts that resulted in stopping the participation program just a few years after its introduction. The group states: "In the 1980s and 1990s many Swedish institutional structures were dismantled. This also happened in relation to local politics and planning. This shift can be related to international trends, a turn from welfare state politics and left wing ideologies starting already in the late 1960's to 'Third Way Politics' or a neo-liberal turn in the 80's."⁸⁶

In 2014, I went to see the Tensta konsthall exhibition where *Aktion Arkiv's* work was shown. During my Stockholm visit, I met the three *Aktion*

Arkiv members. In subsequent conversations with Meike Schalk in Stockholm and in Berlin, I came to understand that the 2014 witness seminar had provoked such controversy that no agreement on the transcript could be reached even though this is central to the method of the witness seminar. “Witness seminars are conducted and recorded in front of an audience of expert academics and other interested individuals, from which an agreed transcript is published for the use of scholars and practitioners.”⁸⁷

Meike Schalk and I discussed that the existing, yet not agreed upon transcript would make a very good starting point for the contribution of *Aktion Arkiv* to the Zurich exhibition. The transcript became the basis for an audio drama. Controversy, heated debate, and conflicts have neither been silenced nor erased. At the Zurich exhibition, they can be listened to. The entire transcript is read by one person. There is also a printed-out copy of the audio drama’s text available. On the monitor, you see a series of images from the 1989 international housing renewal conference. The images are presented in a loop. There are no captions—the reason for this being that despite much searching not all the people and events in the photographic source material could be identified.

Collected material is being saved in archives, held by the state, by municipalities, and by organizations, or others, and it is this material that constitutes the fundament for the dominant historiography. But what kind of material is collected in those archives? What histories and whose histories are considered as the historical facts building up our history and our identities? The material that has not been archived and is not searchable in the records is outside the established history, in a silent room where the stories have faded out. In this silent space we found the stories around the renewal projects here in Tensta in the late 1980’s and early in the 1990’s.⁸⁸

Aktion Arkiv critically addresses the absences and silences of past participation in official archives. Therefore, their practice can be considered corrective, complementary, or a counter-discourse. They appropriate the witness seminar as their method. Originally, it was rather elitist in nature — “‘for elite oral historians’ [...] the witness seminar programme established that policymakers, both politicians and civil servants, could and should talk to academics on the record and in public.”⁸⁹ *Aktion Arkiv* practices participatory oral history that goes on record in their action archive. The group’s archivism is aimed against a monolithic or unilinear historical narrative and uses the archive as method to nourish public debate and to create a space for collective consciousness-raising. Their goal is to develop a critical understanding, and possible counteracting, of neoliberal urban politics. The *Aktion Arkiv* searches for neglected histories of participation in the

immigrant neighbourhood of Tensta, where communication is complex insofar as the inhabitants speak a range of languages, such that a multi-directional translational archive is needed. *Aktion Arkiv* embraces feminist social-justice urbanism and is oriented toward possible participatory urban futures emerging out of the knowledge recovered from the lost archive of past participatory urbanism.

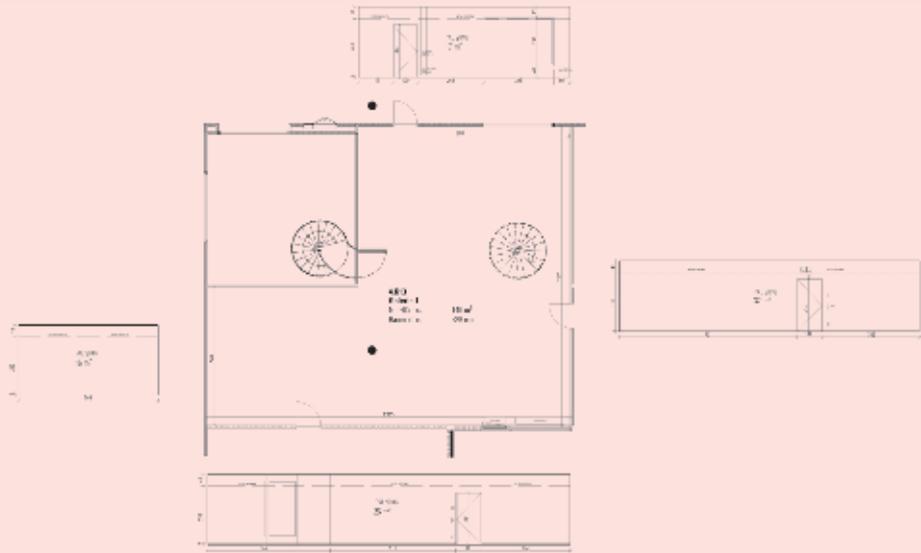
The *International Dinner Party*

Ascending the central white spiral staircase, one sees the *International Dinner Party*. I quote the following text from the booklet prepared for the Zurich exhibition:

On March 14, 1979, “a simultaneous world wide dinner happened on the eve of Judy Chicago’s Dinner Party exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Suzanne Lacy, together with Linda Preuss, mailed thousands of postcards inviting women from around the world to participate in the art project. Over 2000 women responded. They were invited to host simultaneous dinners on a single evening, honouring a woman in their own region [...] Because of time differences, the work constituted a 24-hour performance. At each dinner, women collectively drafted a statement and sent it via telegram to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, where the location of their dinner was marked by Lacy with a red inverted triangle on a twenty-foot wide black and white map of the world. The telegrams were displayed next to it. The project, with its over 2000 participants from all parts of the world, demonstrated the extent of feminist organizing in a pre-Internet era.”⁹⁰

The installation consists of a wall-high map of the world. Underneath the map are two tables holding five red telegram binders.

The telegrams are ordered according to location in these binders: Asia, Central and South America, Europe and Africa, North America. “This way the audience can go through the telegrams and immediately look to their location on the map above.”⁹¹ There are two more tables with plexiglass vitrine cases holding additional archival materials as well as a looped video interview with Suzanne Lacy in which the artist explains the concept behind the *International Dinner Party*.

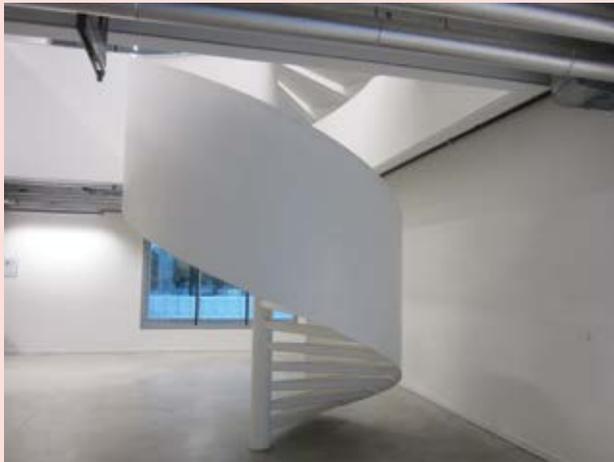
**Z**

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 Zentrum für Kunst und
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 ETH Zürich
 EM_AKT3_Galerie 1

SÄMTLICHE MASSSE SIND AN RAUJ ZU ÜBERNEHMEN!

Maßstab 1:50
 Projekt 2015
 Datum 02/2015
 Seite 11

Gallery Toni Areal, Floor plan of the gallery's lower level,
 ZHdK, Zurich University of the Arts, 2015



Toni Areal, Gallery, ZHdK University of the Arts Zurich, White spiral staircase,
 photograph by Elke Krasny, 2015



Suzanne Lacy's International Dinner Party in feminist curatorial thought, 2015
installation view: Suzanne Lacy, *International Dinner Party*
photograph by Alexander Schuh, 2015



Suzanne Lacy's International Dinner Party in feminist curatorial thought, 2015
installation view: Red Min(e)d: The Living Archive; Elin Magnusson's Art of Instinct,
Sasa Kerkos' wallpaper installation and, in the foreground, the monitors screening
Living Archive conversations, photograph by Alexander Schuh, 2015



Suzanne Lacy's International Dinner Party in feminist curatorial thought, 2015
installation view: Aktion Arkiv, 2015, photograph by Alexander Schuh, 2015

Transcript

Witness seminar

March 5, 2014 18:30-21:00
at Tensta konsthall
(Tensta Art Hall)

Concerning the event of the
international housing renewal
conference in Tensta 1989

by Action Archive

Suzanne Lacy's International Dinner Party in feminist curatorial thought, 2015
Aktion Arkiv, Transcript of the Witness Seminar, 2015

Placed in the context of the four contemporary feminist and queer feminist practices shown in the exhibition, we can find alignments with Lacy's work, but also differences. While the four contemporary practices consciously use or reflect the archive as method, the *International Dinner Party* never set out to become an archive. "Taken together, the telegram messages constitute a world-wide feminist archive of March 1979. The statements drafted by the women are an expression of international feminism. Their telegrams and letters reflect both specific local struggles and international networks of collaboration and exchange."⁹²

When I began my research on the *International Dinner Party* messages, I originally envisioned developing a method for participatory art history writing that would provide the basis for a curatorial research-based project. I set out to contact the women who had participated in the *International Dinner Party*. I intended to send their original 1979 telegram message to them, to discuss their current perspectives on their participation in Lacy's living artwork and their views on feminism in 1979. Equally, it was part of my research plan to engage them in a conversation on feminism and the women's community today. These efforts of mine did not prove successful. Many women had only signed with their first names. Many searches did not yield any e-mail addresses or phone numbers. The women whose e-mails I did find never responded to my requests. I understood that I had to develop a different method. This led to a feminist cultural analysis of the subjects of the *International Dinner Party*. Then I used *placing* and *searching* as feminist curatorial methods to engage with the subjects raised by the *International Dinner Party* across time and locations. All the practices shown in the *Suzanne Lacy's International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought* exhibition "leave art"⁹³—in order to do art. They work in social, activist, urban, and political contexts. Yet, they very intentionally connect their practices to the contemporary art context and its institutions. They show their work. All the feminist and queer feminist positions shown are conversational and archivistic rather than adhering to the exhibitionary imperative. Even so, the exhibition format continues to remain useful. I argue that the exhibition, both the format and the space, have great potential to be further explored from a feminist and queer feminist perspective. The Zurich exhibition supported that a visiting public can witness past conversations bridging the aesthetic and the political and engage in new conversations. The exhibition then becomes the test site for the space of appearance—presencing past conversations and enabling new ones.

Testing the Space of Appearance

Let me explain the space of appearance. In her 1958 book, *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt introduces this concept. She bases her argument on the Western political imaginary of the Greek *polis*. The space of appearance is “where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things, but [...] make their appearance explicitly.”⁹⁴ The space of appearance is not given, it has to be made, i.e. worked toward.

[U]nlike the spaces which are the work of our hands, it does not survive the actuality of the movement which brought it into being, but disappears not only with the dispersal of men—as in the case of great catastrophes when the body politic of a people is destroyed—but with the disappearance or arrest of the activities themselves. Wherever people gather together, it is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever.⁹⁵

In conversation, people gather together. Conversations are ephemeral. Of course, not all conversations can be related to the space of appearance. Leela Gandhi has explained via Jeremy Bentham that conversation is “horizontal, direct, or immediate relationality,” which equals a “state of prepolitical [...] sociality.”⁹⁶ Conversation has the potential, as I have demonstrated via the historical model of the Jewish salon culture in Berlin and Vienna around 1800, to “change public life.”⁹⁷ I argue here that conversations can therefore be understood as test spaces of appearance. The exhibition then becomes an interesting space and format. First, the exhibition can be used as a space to stage public conversations. The conversational turn in curating since the mid-1990s bears witness to this. Second, the exhibition can be used as a format that evidences past conversations via the archivism of artistic and curatorial practice. The exhibition becomes a test space of appearance in which what Arendt has described as that which “does not survive the actuality of the movement which brought it into being” can be accessed, searched, and witnessed by a visiting public via the exhibitionary format of conversation-based archives. The exhibition, historically bound up with a vertical axis of power and today fully incorporated into the logics of globalised capitalism, massification, and touristification, then becomes the site where horizontality and relationality can be witnessed. The active and lively archives of Suzanne Lacy’s *International Dinner Party*, *Aktion Arkiv*, *radical practices of collective care*, *Red Min(e)d* and *Queering Yerevan* bear witness to conversations that were test spaces of appearance. Placed together, these opened-up

archives enable the search for past moments that practised the politics of relationality and horizontality. These archives bridge past feminist conversations with possible future feminist and queer feminist spaces of appearance.

1 ——— The originally planned opening date was March 14, 2015. It must be said that this would have coincided with the date when the *International Dinner Party* premiered 36 years ago during the opening of Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* on March 14, 1979. The exhibition opening in Zurich was part of the *Curating Everything (Curating as Symptom)* conference. Dorothee Richter, the curator of the conference, had generously invited me to collaborate with her on a panel dedicated to the *Feminist Turn in Curating* and to schedule the exhibition opening to happen during the conference. It was a beautiful and quite touching moment when people left the Migros Museum, the conference venue, and travelled together by tram to Toni-Areal to attend the opening. There, a larger audience joined the conference group. I will include photographs taken during the opening in this chapter.

The next day, many of the same people attended the lectures and the panel discussion of the *Feminist Turn in Curating* panel. Marsha Meskimmon spoke on *Feminism's Curatorial Turn: What, Why and Whither?* Fred-erike Hansen was invited to speak about *The Drive to Remember: Kuratorisk Aktion's Curatorial Engagement with Invisibilised Coloniality and Indigeneity in the Nordic Region and beyond*. (Due to the fact that one of her collaborators went into premature labour and could not work at their *Ghetto: Art as Exit Strategy* workshop which they conducted together with André Eugène and five members of the Haitian artist collective Ti Moun Rezistans (Youth Resistance) from the Grand Rue slum in Port-au-Prince at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Frederike Hansen had to stay in Copenhagen and could not join the Zurich conference. <https://www.facebook.com/events/1439573039667970/>). Fatima Hellberg spoke about *Transformations – or how to deal with affect and method*. See: <http://www.curating.org/index.php/news/conf-curating-everything-curating-as-symptom>.

2 ——— Angela Dimitrakaki, "The Lessons of Sexual Politics: From the 1970s to Empire. An Interview with Amelia Jones," in *Politics in a Glass Case: Feminism, Exhibition Cultures and Curatorial Transgressions*, eds. Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 93. The innovations and legacies of feminist exhibition-making have not yet been fully explored, and they have not been fully historiographically acknowledged in the writing of the history of curating. Amelia Jones' curatorial method developed for *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago's Dinner Party in Feminist Art History* still awaits further in-depth analysis.

3 ——— Bracke and Puig de la Bellacasa (2004), 309.

4 ——— See: Amelia Jones, "Sexual Politics: Feminist Strategies, Feminist Conflicts, Feminist Histories," in *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago's Dinner*

Party in Feminist Art History, ed. Amelia Jones (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 22.

5 ——— Ibid., 23.

6 ——— Ibid., 24.

7 ——— Ibid., 22.

8 ——— Amelia Jones and Elke Krasny, e-mail messages, January 18 and January 19, 2015.

9 ——— Jones (1996), 24.

10 ——— Ibid., 23.

11 ——— Ibid., 37.

12 ——— This could have made for, and still would make for, an extremely relevant project. Back in 2013 when I first started to think about the curatorial work for my thesis exhibition, I was actually leaning more toward such a historical re-evaluation project, since I found it particularly troubling that the paradigm of relational aesthetics as proposed by Nicolas Bourriaud in 1998 completely obliterated, and even actively dismissed, the historical legacy of feminist and politically engaged art practice. The *International Dinner Party* amongst many, many, many other 1970s projects would definitely form the core of such a re-evaluation exhibition. I would consider such a project a curatorial intervention into both the processes of art institutional commodification and art historical/curatorial narrative formation. Especially given that Bourriaud based his book *Relational Aesthetics* on prior curatorial work such as “his contribution to the Aperto section of the 1993 Venice Biennale, and including such group exhibitions as Commerce at Espace St. Nicolas in Paris, 1994, and Traffic at CAPC Musée d’art contemporain de Bordeaux, 1996.” Helena Reckitt, “Forgotten Relations: Feminist Artists and Relational Aesthetics,” in Dimitrakaki and Perry (2013), 135.

In a 2013 essay Amelia Jones addresses this problem. More than merely forgetting, Nicolas Bourriaud “explicitly rejects politically motivated theories of visual arts practice. [...] For Bourriaud, relational aesthetics functions at the expense of the very vicissitudes of identification and embodiment that feminism, and other rights movements, and theories and practices of performance—all *fundamental tendencies in the establishment of relational strategies*—have insistently foregrounded.” Amelia Jones, “Unpredictable Temporalities: The Body and Performance in (Art) History,” in *Performing Archives, Archives of Performance*, ed. Rune Gade and Gunhild Borggreen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2013), 64.

In her 2013 essay, Helena Reckitt criticises what she refers to as Nicolas Bourriaud’s “memory lapse”: “Yet while Bourriaud championed key contemporary artists, he disregarded practitioners and movements from former eras. [...] Relational Aesthetics presents the artist as a universal figure, unmarked by sex, race or class. In his book, Bourriaud dismisses ‘feminism, anti-racism and environmentalism’ as ‘the most die-hard forms of conservatism’ [...]” Speaking about artist Janine Antoni and her 1993 *Loving Care* performance, Helena Reckitt sees a different model of engaging with the past. She states that Antoni “looked back in order to move forward.” Reckitt (2013), 138.

These two essays mattered to my curatorial work of placing the

International Dinner Party in the context of 21st-century feminist and queer feminist practice. Political motivation, looking back in order to move forward, and art-making/curatorial work as a collaborative/collective practice as opposed to the artist as universal figure were all central theoretical considerations for my curatorial conceptualisation. I did not look for forgotten relations, but instead set out to look for new relations/relations to be found.

- 13 ——— See Amelia Jones, “1970/2007: The Return of Feminist Art,” in: *X-Tra: contemporary art quarterly online* (Summer 2008, v. 10, no. 4), http://www.xtraonline.org/past_articles.php?articleID=184.
- 14 ——— Amelia Jones and Angela Dimitrakaki, “Viable or Merely Possible? A Dialogue on Feminism’s Radical Curatorial Project,” in *Women’s Museum: Curatorial Politics in Feminism, Education, History, and Art*, eds. Elke Krasny and Frauenmuseum Meran (Vienna: Löcker, 2013), 69.
- 15 ——— Catherine Wood, “Art as Life, Art as Politics, Art as Political Action. An Interview with Suzanne Lacy,” in Dimitrakaki and Perry (2013), 122.
- 16 ——— Wood (2013): 122.
- 17 ——— Michel de Certeau, “The Historiographical Operation,” in *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 75.
- 18 ——— Catherine Wood raises this question in her interview with Suzanne Lacy: “Given that your work has often taken the form of ephemeral events, have you encountered problems to do with value and visibility in the art world?” Lacy answers, “It became more of a dilemma in the late 1980s and 1990s.” Wood (2013), 129.
- 19 ——— In the already quoted 2009 interview, Suzanne Lacy states the following: “In a sense I left art – the idea of leaving the art world in order to make art and then referring back to the art world to frame what I’d done was always part of my practice.” Wood (2013), 129. In the e-letter that *radical practices of collective care* wrote in response to my questions they state the following: There is an interest from the side of the arts – institutions, people, discussions – to connect to broader political questions and that therefore support projects like the *rad-col-care-project* in terms of funding as well as in terms of spaces provided for meetings. In terms of content and discourse: These corners of the art and culture context offer spaces for discussions that are neither strictly academic and neither purely driven by, let’s say, an activist objective or demand. This might be less productive in terms of concrete results, but on the other hand, these spaces can offer the possibility of open-ended discussion as well as a wider public that might otherwise not feel addressed. In times where the educational complex is increasingly neoliberal, these spaces offer an important haven for projects like the *rad-col-care-project* that try to bridge a conversation between activism, research pedagogy and/or cultural production. Bue Rübner Hansen, Julia Wieger, and Manuela Zechner, questions by Elke Krasny, “About the Radical Care Practices Project – an interview text,” accessed May 15, 2015, <http://radicalcollectivecare.blogspot.co.at/2015/03/about-radical-collective-care-practices.html#more>.
- 20 ——— Jones and Dimitrakaki, in *Women’s Museum* (2013), 70–71.
- 21 ——— Spivak (1985): 270.
- 22 ——— Spivak (1985): 248.

- 23 ——— Spivak (1985), 270.
- 24 ——— Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 128.
- 25 ——— De Certeau (1988), 75. The sentence from which I quote reads: “The transformation of ‘archivistic’ activity is the point of departure and the condition for a new history.”
- 26 ——— Jacques Derrida, “Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression,” *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (Summer 1995). In her paper, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance,” Ann Laura Stoler points out that the archival turn had already been well under way before Jacques Derrida’s seminal publication. “But Natalie Zemon Davis’ Fiction in the Archives, Roberto Ecchevaria’s Myth and Archive, Thomas Richards’ Imperial Archive, and Sonia Coombe’s Archives Interditas, to name but a few, suggest that Derrida’s splash came only after the archival turn had already been made.” Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance,” *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 87.
- 27 ——— Curatorial projects and exhibitions made rich contributions to the archival turn. Many of these were several year-long projects. Some of these did in fact institute archives that have then become part of permanent collections. I name here but a few examples of the archival turn in curating:

In 1996, Hans Ulrich Obrist first began to publish his interviews in *Artforum*. *The Interview Project* is based upon hours and hours of conversation with artists and results in an ongoing and open-ended archive that is continuously published in book form.

In 1997-1998, the exhibition *Deep Storage: Arsenale der Erinnerung* took place at the Munich Haus der Kunst. From 1997-2002, the exhibition project *Interarchive: Archival Practices and Sites in the Contemporary Art Field*, curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist, took place at the Universität Lüneburg Kunstraum. It resulted in the 2002 publication by the same name, edited by Beatrice von Bismarck, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Ulf Wuggenig, and Diethelm Stoller.

From 2003 to 2009, Dorothee Richter together with Barnaby Drabble curated the *Curating Degree Zero Archive*. After years of extensive travel that showed the growing archive at a large number of different art institutions, the archive has now found a permanent home as a special collection at the Zurich University of the Arts’ Library. “Curating Degree Zero was launched to research, present and discuss changes in the practice of freelance curators, artist-curators, new-media curators and curatorial collaborations. Beginning in 1998 with a three-day symposium and an ensuing publication, the project went on to build an expanding archive about these practices. Between 2003 and 2008 the archive toured to 17 venues, where it was displayed, used and accompanied by a programme of live events and discussions. [...] The fundamental idea behind the archive is to enlighten: to bring together information that is difficult to find and then make it accessible. The website serves as a navigational structure available to the users of the archive as a basis for scholarly and practical research both for the participating curators and for other members of the “operating system” of the art world. The archive is not intended to establish a self-contained narrative but rather to present a range of divergent positions in order

to provide a framework for, and shed light on the contexts of the work of individual curators who wish to be critical and political. With that in mind, the contradictions that become evident in an overview of divergent practices seem fruitful to us. We want to allow these contradictions, fissures, and rifts to stand, and to use the questions that arise from them as an opportunity to gain knowledge.” Accessed July 2, 2015, <http://www.curatingdegrezero.org>.

Together with Elisabeth Madlener, I co-curated the 1998 exhibition *Archiv X. Ermittlungen der Gegenwartskunst* which was shown on the occasion of the reopening of the OK Kunsthaus Linz after renovation.

In the late 2000s, Studio Miessen began to explore The Archive as Productive Space of Conflict. Studio Miessen researched “questions of archives, libraries, and cultural centres, and – more specifically – how to make archives productive [...] This was explored through a series of test-cases, called ‘hubs’ (such as the Performa Hub NY, 2009, Manifesta Hub, 2010, and Archive Kabinett, 2010), and was being developed for the Hans Ulrich Obrist archive and cultural centre, which was devised by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Markus Miessen in 2008.” Accessed July 2, 2015, <http://www.studiomiessen.com/huo-archive/>.

From 2008–2009, *re.act.feminism - performancekunst der 1960er und 70er jahre heute Ausstellung, Videoarchiv, Live-Performances und Tagung*, curated by Bettina Knap and Beatrice E. Stammer, took place at the Academy of Fine Arts Berlin, during the International Festival of Contemporary Arts, City of Women Ljubljana, and at Kunsthaus Erfurt. Between 2011 and 2014, the *re.act.feminism #2 - a performing archive Archive / Exhibitions / Workshops / Performances / Talks / Research* project took place: “re.act.feminism #2 - a performing archive was a continually expanding, temporary and living performance archive travelling through six European countries from 2011 to 2013. The core of the project was a mobile archive and workstation with a growing collection of videos, photographs and other documents of feminist, gendercritical and queer performance art. This transnational and crossgenerational project featured works by over 180 artists and artist collectives from the 1960s to the beginning of the 1980s, as well as contemporary positions. The research focus was on Eastern and Western Europe, the Mediterranean and Middle East, the US and Latin America. On its journey through Europe—starting in Spain and continuing through Poland, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia and ending in Germany—this temporary archive continued to expand through local research and cooperation with art institutions, academies and universities. It was also ‘activated’ through exhibitions, screenings, performances and discussions along the way.” Accessed July 2, 2015, <http://www.reactfeminism.org>.

28 ——— Stoler (2002), 93.

29 ——— Pollock (2007), 12.

30 ——— Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London: Verso 1993), 11. quoted in Stoler (2002), 97.

31 ——— Stoler (2002), 87.

32 ——— Stoler (2002), 87.

33 ——— Jones (2012), 173.

34 ——— Feminist futures is owed to FATALE’s eponymous series of courses,

classes, workshops, lectures, and salons. FATALE is a group of architects, based at the School of Architecture, KTH, pursuing research and education within, and through, feminist architecture theory and practice. FATALE started their work in 2007. Founding members were Katarina Bonnevier, Brady Burroughs, Katja Grillner, Meike Schalk, and the late Lena Villner. As of 2015, FATALE is working on a Feminist Futures book scheduled for publication in 2016.

- 35 ——— Jones (2012), 173. Amelia Jones responds with her development of queer feminist durationality to an “insight proposed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who in 2003 wrote: ‘it’s far easier to deprecate the confounding, tendentious effects of binary modes of thinking—and so to expose their often stultifying preservation—than it is to articulate or model other structures of thought.’” This connects to what I introduced in my chapter “Feminist Thought and Curating: On Method” on two levels. Jones activates a better with/because of model of a feminist line of thought. She responds to Sedgwick in order to think further with Sedgwick. Via Sedgwick, the impasse of critical binary analysis is made evident. Even though binaries and their powerful and far-reaching constructions and politics should not be analysed any longer, it is equally important to test out different models or structures of thought. This is not an “either/or” proposition, but really rather an “and/and” as well as an “and/or” proposition. And one that can be put to work productively and inspiringly with connectedness and social relationality. The Sedgwick quote can be found at: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 2.
- 36 ——— When I write down “in/about/to/with”, I think of Jane Rendell’s propositional writing regarding the use one can make of prepositions. There is a genealogical line in critical feminist thought that has worked with/on/around prepositions. It is in this line of thought that I am placing my curatorial work and the way I speak in/to/with/about the resulting exhibition. “As stressed by cultural critic Irit Rogoff, artist and film-maker Trinh T. Minh-ha has drawn attention to the significance assigned to the shift in use of prepositions, particularly from speaking ‘about’ to speaking ‘to’. [...] Adopting the preposition ‘with’ rather than ‘to’, Rogoff discusses how the practice of ‘writing with’ is a ‘dehierarchization’ of the social relations governing the making of meaning in visual culture. [...] I have also explored the use of prepositions, especially ‘to’, in order to investigate how position informs relation [...]” Jane Rendell, “Site-Writing”, accessed July 4, 2015, <http://www.janerendell.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Rendell-Site-Writing-PDF.pdf>. Jane Rendell draws on the theoretical work of Trin T. Minh-ha via Irit Rogoff and on the philosophical work of Luce Irigaray to act with prepositions differently. The spatial dimension of relating to subjects, objects, and spaces is expressed via prepositions. This is relevant for critical feminist thought regarding the spatial dimension curatorial work and theoretical analysis.
- 37 ——— The Edu-factory Collective, “Introduction: All Power to Self-Education,” in *Toward a Global Autonomous University: Cognitive Labor, The Production of Knowledge, and Exodus from the Education Factory*, ed. The Edu-factory Collective (New York: Autonomedia, 2009), 8.

- 38 ——— Hal Foster, *Art-Architecture Complex* (London and New York: Verso, 2011).
- 39 ——— The Edu-factory Collective (2009), 13.
- 40 ——— Universidad Experimental, “Conflicts in the Production of Knowledge,” in *Toward a Global Autonomous University* (2009), 162.
- 41 ——— Queering Yerevan, accessed January 1, 2013, <http://queeringyerevan.blogspot.co.at>.
- 42 ——— Nelli Sargsyan-Pitman, “Interviews with four artists from the ‘Queering Translation’ Art Intervention,” in *Queered: What’s To Be Done With XCentric Art*, eds. Lusine Talalyan, Arpi Adamyan, and Shushan Avagyan (Yerevan: QY Collective, 2011), 14.
- 43 ——— “Open Letter Against Intolerance,” in Talalyan, Adamyan, and Avagyan (2011), 180–181.
- 44 ——— Queering Yerevan (2011): 12.
- 45 ——— Angela Harutyunyan, “Live from Angela: Apart We Are Together,” in Talalyan, Adamyan, and Avagyan (2011), 200.
- 46 ——— Harutyunyan (2001): 201.
- 47 ——— “E-Mails 2007- 2011”, in Talalyan, Adamyan, and Avagyan (2011), 14.
- 48 ——— Talalyan, Adamyan, and Avagyan (2011), 334.
- 49 ——— *Ibid.*, 319.
- 50 ——— *Ibid.*, 318.
- 51 ——— *Ibid.*
- 52 ——— *Ibid.*, 321.
- 53 ——— *Ibid.*, 325.
- 54 ——— Ann Cvetkovich, *The Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Publics* (London and New York: Duke University Press, 2003). Even though Cvetkovich’s work focuses on trauma, activism, and sexuality, I want to invoke the archive of feelings she coined as a powerful trope with respect to peripheralisation and marginalisation of feminist and queer feminist feelings in the post-Soviet Armenian context, the condition of the Armenian genocide, and the complexities of the Armenian diaspora.
- 55 ——— Bue Rübner Hansen, Julia Wieger and Manuela Zechner, questions by Elke Krasny, “About the Radical Practices of Collective Care Project – an interview-text,” accessed March 28, 2015, <http://radicalcollective-care.blogspot.co.at>.
- 56 ——— *Ibid.*
- 57 ——— *Ibid.*
- 58 ——— Isabell Lorey, *State of Insecurity. Government of the Precarious* (London and New York: Verso, 2015).
- 59 ——— Hansen, Wieger, and Zechner (2015).
- 60 ——— *Ibid.*
- 61 ——— *Ibid.*
- 62 ——— *Ibid.*
- 63 ——— *Ibid.*
- 64 ——— The workshop with Territorio Doméstico took place in the framework of the exhibition *How We Want to Live* curated by Katharina Morawek together with co-curator Manuela Zechner. It was shown at Shedhalle Zurich from April 11, 2014 to September 7, 2014.
- 65 ——— Accessed December 22, 2014. <http://www.shedhalle.ch/2013/en/330/>.
- 66 ——— Hansen, Wieger, and Zechner (2015): <http://radicalcollectivecare.blogspot.co.at>.

- 67 ——— Ibid.
- 68 ——— “About Red Min(e)d,” accessed June 15, 2015, <https://bringintakeout.wordpress.com/about-red-mined/>.
- 69 ——— LA Editions, Accessed June 15, 2015. <https://bringintakeout.wordpress.com/la-editions/zagreb/>.
- 70 ——— Red Min(e)d, “Production in Times of Trouble,” in *No One Belongs Here More Than You*. (2014): 203. *Red Min(e)d*’s use of the term precarity refers to Marxist feminist thinker and activist Silvia Federici and in particular they refer to the following text: Silvia Federici, “Precarious Labor: A Feminist Viewpoint,” accessed June 16, 2015, <https://inthemiddleofthewhirlwind.wordpress.com/precarius-labor-a-feminist-viewpoint/>.
- 71 ——— Red Min(e)d (2014), 203.
- 72 ——— Questionnaire, accessed June 15, 2015, <https://bringintakeout.wordpress.com/questionnaire/>.
- 73 ——— Red Min(e)d (2014), 204.
- 74 ——— Red Min(e)d (2014), 28.
- 75 ——— According to Wikipedia, Philip Zepter is an entrepreneur of Serbian origin with an estimated net worth of \$5 billion. “In 2004 Zepter sued the International Crisis Group a think tank cofounded by financier George Soros, media mogul Rupert Murdoch, lawyer David Boies, money manager Paul Tudor Jones, former Chase Manhattan Bank chief executive David Rockefeller, Goldman Sachs, and J.P. Morgan Chase, for defamation following a 2003 report which described him as ‘an arms dealer, money launderer and crony of brutal Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic.’” Philip Zepter, accessed September 2, 2015, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_Zepter#cite_note-4.
- 76 ——— Zoran (2009), 10. I presented *Red Min(e)d*’s curatorial method and the contradictions and conflicts they are part of in the paper “Hostile Indifference: Feminist Curatorial Practice” at Pratt Institute’s 2015 Spring Conference, *Hostile Intelligences and The General Antagonism*, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://alexismgarner.wix.com/hostileintelligences#!schedule/c1i1h>.
- 77 ——— Red Min(e)d (2014), 205.
- 78 ——— Red Min(e)d, “Exhibition Text,” in *Suzanne Lacy’s International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought*, curated by Elke Krasny (Zurich: Toni Areal Gallery ZHdK, 2015).
- 79 ——— Red Min(e)d, “Exhibition Text,” 2015.
- 80 ——— A large number of critical analysis and theoretical thought is devoted to understanding processes of precarisation, conditions of precarity, and crisis politics. Central to my understanding of precarity are Isabell Lorey, *State of Insecurity* (London and New York: Verso, 2015); Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2011); Athena Athanasiou, “Becoming precarious through regimes of gender, capital, and nation,” *Fieldsights - Hot Spots, Cultural Anthropology Online* (October 28, 2011), accessed July 4, 2014, <http://www.culanth.org/fieldsights/250-becoming-precarious-through-regimes-of-gender-capital-and-nation>; Precarias a la Deriva, > *Was ist Dein Streik<: Militante Streifzüge durch die Kreisläufe der Prekarität*, trans. Birgit Mennel and Stefan Nowotny (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2011); Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The*

Performative and the Political (Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 2013).

- 81 ——— Meike Schalk, e-mail message to the author, October 9, 2014.
- 82 ——— Ibid.
- 83 ——— Helena Mattsson, Meike Schalk and Sara Brolund de Carvalho, “Action Archive” (2014), accessed June 14, 2015, <http://architectureandtheory.com/projects/action-archive>.
- 84 ——— In the 1989 conference: “Eight international participants worked with the theme for a week here in Tensta. The participants who had all worked with similar renewal projects before, were: the British architect Rod Hackney, the French sociologist Pierre Soller, the French social worker Susanne Ostier, the Danish engineer Jørgen Andersen, the Turkish planner Erol Sayin, the American activist Berta Gilkey, the political scientist Eisse Kalk from the Netherlands and the Finnish architect Lena Kaukatso.”
- Action Archive. Transcript. Witness seminar concerning the event of the international housing renewal conference in Tensta 1989 at Tensta konsthall, March 5, 2014, 18:30–21.00.
- 85 ——— Meike Schalk, e-mail message to the author, October 9, 2014.
- 86 ——— Ibid.
- 87 ——— Ibid.
- 88 ——— Action Archive. Transcript. Witness seminar concerning the event of the international housing renewal conference in Tensta 1989 at Tensta konsthall, March 5, 2014, 18:30–21.00.
- 89 ——— Michael Kandiah and Virginia Preston, “Centre for Contemporary British History,” accessed June 11, 2015, <http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/resources/articles/ccbh.html>.
- 90 ——— Elke Krasny, “International Dinner Party, 1979, Suzanne Lacy and Linda Preuss,” in Exhibition Booklet, put together on the occasion of the *Suzanne Lacy’s International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought* exhibition, Toni-Areal Gallery, Zurich University of the Arts, March 21–April 13, 2015, 10.
- 91 ——— Megan Steinman, e-mail message to the author, March 3, 2015. Megan Steinman, Suzanne Lacy’s assistant, sent these instructions as to how to install the *International Dinner Party* so that the audience could best interact with the telegrams.
- 92 ——— Krasny (2015), 10.
- 93 ——— This is a reference to the title of Lacy’s book: *Suzanne Lacy: Leaving Art. Writings on Performance, Politics, and Publics 1974–2007* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010).
- 94 ——— Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 198–9.
- 95 ——— Ibid., 199.
- 96 ——— Gandhi (2006), 99.
- 97 ——— Bilski and Brown (2005), 1.

Conclusion

The substance is the conversation [...].

— Suzanne Lacy, *Leaving Art: After 2000*, 2010

Our relationality with others is [...] regarded as fundamental.

— Isabell Lorey, *State of Insecurity: The Government of the Precarious*, 2015

“May your dinner party be well attended in many places, for many years, right on sisters.”¹ This telegram message, written by Norma Papish, Caroline Dubois, Sue Martin, Phyllis Diness, Faith Gabelnick, Barbara Robb, and Jessie Bernard over dinner on March 14, 1979, was sent to Suzanne Lacy for her performance and installation of the *International Dinner Party* at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. In the 1970s, feminist art practice transformed and transgressed historically constructed Western concepts of the artist-genius that, via Catherine M. Soussloff’s work, can be traced back to the Early Modern Age.² Conceptual social feminist art practice counteracted the following historical hegemonic binaries: first, art set apart from other objects and everyday life; second, the androcentric concept of the artist-as-genius; third, the isolated individual artist as the sole producer of art. Suzanne Lacy’s *International Dinner Party* provides an outstanding example of counteracting these binaries: she made conceptual use of dinner parties, an everyday life practice; she was actively involved in the contexts of activism and feminist networks; she involved 2,000 women contributors and participants worldwide in the process of art-making. The *International Dinner Party* therefore presents an exemplar of conceptual social feminist art practice. This book offers the first in-depth feminist cultural analysis of this artwork.

Much of early conceptual social feminist art practice has not been fully historicised and theorised. This points to the lack of adequate frameworks and methods of participatory art history and theory writing. So far, art history, including feminist art history and cultural analysis, has failed to put forward novel and innovative methods of participatory analysis and writing. Feminist art practice, feminist art history, and feminist art criticism emerged in tandem from the late 1960s onwards. Yet, art history and theory have failed to respond to conceptual social art practice by developing adequate models of participatory history and theory writing. There is, of course, a vast and growing body of theoretical debate and scholarly

work on participatory art and relational aesthetics. Central critical positions on the aesthetics, ethics, and politics of participation include Claire Bishop, Nicolas Bourriaud, Markus Miessen, Chantal Mouffe, Paul O'Neill, Irit Rogoff, and Gregory Sholette.

Yet, there is little evidence that there is much historical research and critical theoretical analysis with the subjects of participation on the subjects of their participation, on their contributions to art-making. This invisibilises and silences the subjects who make art participatory. I claim that the same holds true about curatorial practice. Participants in participatory art are absent from the curatorial process as well as from exhibitions. Amelia Jones has pointed out that art history writing is premised on the concept of the artist-as-genius and the model of the artist as sole producer. This effectively erases the appearance of participants or volunteers in art-making processes from art history.³

I have established here for the *International Dinner Party* a method for a feminist cultural analysis that focuses on its subjects: the women who contributed to the making of this artwork and the subject matters they raised in their messages and letters. My original research plan was to search for them and to engage the historical participants in my process of analysis. It was my aim to activate their participation on the level of art historical research and cultural theoretical analysis. Yet, I was confronted with the fact that this approach was not successful. It did not yield the results I had planned and, of course, hoped for. The historical participants were either not to be found or did not respond to my requests. This shows the challenges and limitations when trying to include participants who contributed to art projects in the late 1970s, in today's research process and critical analysis.

Therefore, I turned to concepts developed by critical feminist thought in order to use them in the analysis of the subjects who participated in the *International Dinner Party* as well as in the analysis of the subjects raised by the artwork. Feminist thought is characterised by opening the question of feminism. What is feminism? What is feminist art-making? What is feminist curating? I have retained this notion of keeping open these questions in dealing with the historical subjects of the *International Dinner Party*. The cultural analysis of an artwork from a period conventionally referred to as second-wave feminism has to confront the chronopolitics of feminist historiography. Via Clare Hemmings' work, I demonstrated that much of the historiography of feminist thought is governed by a progress-centric orientation and its before/after binary. In order to go beyond these limitations, I built new alignments over time and over space. In doing so, I joined the chronopolitical awareness raised by Hemmings with Marsha Meskimmon's concept of critical cartography in art history to work out the here-before/there-after opposition premised by a hege-

monic Western-centric, US-centric, and more recently global-centric axis. I turned to Amelia Jones' work to maintain critical awareness as to how binary oppositions, be they temporal, spatial, social, or political in nature, are still active within much of Western and globalised theory, including feminist thought.⁴ Amelia Jones' concept of queer feminist durationality was most helpful to relate to artworks, in particular to conceive of this relating as a way to include historical participants and their contributions to art-making. Bringing together chronopolitical awareness, critical cartography, and queer feminist durationality, I have adhered throughout to the following guiding principle: 'better with/because of' those who came before us."⁵ This not only counteracts the legacies of progress-centric modernity, but also inspires new alignments over time and over space.

My analysis of the *International Dinner Party* has demonstrated that this artwork has assumed three different modes of existence: first, living artwork; second, artist performance- installation; third, lasting, albeit unplanned, archive. I argue that the telegram messages, mailgrams, letters, postcards, and photographic documentation produced by the collective effort of 2,000 contributors resulted in an ad-hoc archive of a moment of feminist time in 1979. I first developed my analysis of the living artwork, then continued with the artist performance and museum installation through the materials in the *International Dinner Party* archive, kept safe by Suzanne Lacy since 1979. "The Emancipated Spectatress among Equal Listeners" analyses the living artwork. This chapter unpacks the historically constructed and complexly gendered binary division of the production and reception of art and connects this analysis to the subject position of the contributors to the *International Dinner Party*. I combined here historical research on some of the 2,000 women contributors, quotes from their messages and positions on spectatorship and listening developed by the philosophers Jacques Rancière and Jean-Luc Nancy, respectively. This analysis significantly reveals a subject that is formed in co-emergence and co-dependence with others.⁶ The participatory structure envisioned by Suzanne Lacy's concept defies a totalising magisterial overview, which is very much bound up with the history of perspective and the colonial domination of space. At the same time, making dinner and sharing conversations over dinner, afforded the participating women an opportunity to witness each other as producers and recipients of their living artwork. I argue that there is much to be gained from this analysis of the *International Dinner Party* for developing future feminist methods of curating, in particular with respect to further work on conceptual social feminist art practice.

The chapter "Putting on the Map: International Dinner Parties" examined Suzanne Lacy's performance that resulted in the installation of the *International Dinner Party* at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1979. The main source, which is the focus of my analysis, is a documentary

photograph showing the artist as she puts red triangles on a large black-and-white map of the world. This image has become the key visual representation of the *International Dinner Party*. Here, I examined the logics of participation as the act of sharing through the following five elements constitutive to the artwork: the photograph, the map, the dedication to Lacy's teacher Judy Chicago, the institution of the museum, and the women who participated. Using an existing map of the world, Lacy shows that feminism participates in the concrete, lived, political, and material conditions. It also shows that feminism is entangled with existing power relations, conflicts, and contradictions very much evidenced by the map, a symbol of cartographic power, coloniality, domination, and magisterial overview.⁷ While the living artwork escaped a totalising overview, the artist's performance put the 200 different dinners on the map, thus pulling them into a "manageable picture."⁸

The feminist cultural analysis of the *International Dinner Party* revealed that its structure connected the domestic sphere of the dinner parties and their conversations with the public sphere of the museum. I suggest here that the in-depth analysis of an artwork, the constellational thinking owed to curatorial practice, and the feminist approach of building new alignments that extend over time and space can lead to new insights and novel forms of knowledge production. This method will prove useful for future theoretical and curatorial work. Here, it inspired my search for an earlier conversation-based model of bridging the domestic sphere and the public sphere. The chapter "The Salon Model: The Conversational Complex" proposed that the women-led Jewish salon culture of Berlin and Vienna around 1800 is such a historical precedent. In today's institutional frameworks and the languages of the globalised art context, the historical subject position occupied by the *salonnière* has to be understood as the curator of conversations. I linked "the exhibitionary complex," a key concept in museum studies developed by Tony Bennett, with the introduction of the conversational complex. I argue that conversations just as much as exhibitions have to be taken into account within the writing on the history of curating. While exhibitions adhere to a vertical axis of power, conversations are based upon relationality and horizontality. The salon model and the conversational complex are a significant intervention into restrictive narratives established by museum studies and the historiography of curating. Horizontality and relationality will continue to challenge feminist exhibition-making in order to develop new models that do not adhere to the vertical axis of power. My analysis suggests possible future alignments between exhibitions and conversations that might lead to new feminist curatorial practices of *co-hibiting*.

My PhD exhibition, *Suzanne Lacy's International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought*, explored the following two methods: *placing* and

searching. I claim that more knowledge on the historical legacy of feminist exhibition-making and transferring critical methods from feminist theory, post-colonial theory, or queer theory into exhibition-making will broaden critical curatorial practice. I turned to the curatorial method of *placing* that was developed by Amelia Jones in her 1996 exhibition, *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago's Dinner Party in Feminist Art History*. I made use of *searching* as proposed by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak with regard to the archive, but also the *search* for a different kind of feminism that does not disown other versions of womanhood, femininity, and feminism.⁹ I placed the *International Dinner Party* in the context of four feminist and queer feminist art and curatorial collectives: *Aktion Arkiv*, *radical practices of collective care*, *Red Min(e)d*, and *Queering Yerevan*. The chapter "Emergent Archives of Conversations: Feminist and Queer Feminist Practices" described and analysed how politically conscious, socially involved, and conceptual contemporary practices use the archive as method. The exhibition then becomes an enabler for an audience to search through opened-up archives. *Suzanne Lacy's International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought* sought to bring together the exhibition, the archive, and conversation. I argue that conversations can potentially be test spaces of appearance in the Arendtian sense. Exhibitions then provide the space to witness such past test spaces of appearance. I sought to transgress the exhibitionary imperative. I did so by opening up the exhibition as a support structure for witnessing feminist and queer feminist conversations as well as practices of relationality and horizontality—hopefully counteracting the precarity of the contemporary moment and supporting and inspiring future conversations.

In Conclusion: Curating with Care

I have emphasised that feminism continually opens the question of what feminism is. I have equally stressed the "better with/because of those who were before us" approach. What does this mean then for feminist art-making and feminist curating responding to the contemporary moment marked by precarisation, neoliberalisation, and technologicalisation of life? Chandra Talpade Mohanty has pointed out "the increasing privatization and corporatization of public life."¹⁰ Adding to this a "neoliberal mindset"¹¹ that effectively erodes solidarity and technologically fractured time that encroaches upon all privacy, sleep included,¹² we see that private life as much as public life is under pressure. Therefore, time

and space for “raising consciousness,”¹³ a strategy very much connected to the time period of the *International Dinner Party*, are ever more needed in the precarious times of the 21st century for “collective political work.”¹⁴ I suggest that contemporary and future feminist curating can seek to contribute to this political work by opening up the exhibition space in order to construct bridges between the aesthetic, the social, and the political.

Feminist curating can try to combine exhibitions and conversations as test spaces of appearance. I see important feminist curatorial contributions to be made toward connectedness as lived and practised “social relationality.”¹⁵ Emancipated spectatresses need to be able to engage in conversation with equal listeners—like the participants of the *Living Archive*, like the visitors to the Zarubyan garden, like the research seminars of *radical practices of collective care*, like the gatherings organised by *Aktion Arkiv*, like the women worldwide in 1979, like the women and men in the Berlin or Vienna homes of Jewish hostesses around 1800, like women and men did in Berlin or Vienna in the homes of Jewish hostesses.

I have analysed the historical binary of the curator-as-carer and the curator-as-author. The curator-as-author is very much in demand by the global art world imperative and the globalised exhibitionary imperative. I argue that in the contemporary moment of accelerated precarity, uneven growth, and clashing fundamentalisms, feminist practices further developing the curator-as-carer model are, in fact, much needed. Bridging the archive, conversation, and exhibition-making is part of such politically conscious work. For my part, I argue that politically conscious feminist curatorial practices need to be developed much further to provide knowledge, enable conversations, and inspire horizontality and relationality in the contemporary moment. Following Joan Tronto, caring is a way of being in/being with the world. Tronto understands caring as “a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web.”¹⁶ Joan Tronto’s “complex interweaving” and Isabell Lorey’s “social relationality” point the way for future feminist curating as caring.¹⁷ Such care work is necessary to sustain oneself and others for (future) feminist work despite “precarity” and “governmental precarization.”¹⁸ Feminist curating has to raise the questions again—What is feminism? What is feminist art? What is feminist curating? Feminist curating needs to find ways of continuing the work of connecting archive, care, and conversation.

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- 1 — Norma Papish, Caroline Dubois, Sue Martin, Phyllis Diness, Faith Gabelnick, Barbara Robb, and Jessie Bernard, telegram, Santa Monica, March 14, 1979. in Suzanne Lacy, *The International Dinner Party Archive*.
 - 2 — Soussloff (1997).
 - 3 — Jones (2012), 51.
 - 4 — On the level of *realpolitik*, binary opposition has never come to an end. The year of 1989, the end of the Cold War period, and the dissolution of the USSR in 1991 produced a contemporary moment in which binarity seemed to be about to disappear. But there soon arose new social, economic, and political oppositions governed by, amongst others, fundamentalisms, neocolonialism, and accelerated uneven urban growth.
 - 5 — Bracke and Puig de la Bellacasa (2004), 309.
 - 6 — Jean-Luc Nancy, “Mit-Sinn (Zurich: März 2010),” in *>Mit-Sein<*, eds. Elke Bippus, Jörg Huber and Dorothee Richter (Zurich: Edition Vol-demeer, Vienna and New York: Springer, 2010), 21–32 as well as Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, ed. Peter Connor, transl. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Sawhney (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).
 - 7 — Trinh T. Minh-Ha writes on the complexities of postcoloniality and feminism: “The understanding of difference is a shared responsibility, which requires a minimum of willingness to reach out to the unknown.” Minh-Ha, Trinh (1989), 246.
 - 8 — Jones (1997), 12.
 - 9 — Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 128.
 - 10 — Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “‘Under Western Eyes’ Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles, in *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham: Duke University Press 2003), 221.
 - 11 — Eichhorn (2013), 9.
 - 12 — Franco “Bifo” Berardi and Jonathan Crary have, from different perspectives, written about the technologically induced fracture and erosion of community, solidarity, and leading one’s life (politically). Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (London and Brooklyn: Verso, 2014); Franco “Bifo” Berardi, *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012).
 - 13 — Sara Ahmed, “Feminist Killjoys (And Other Willful Subjects),” *The Scholar and Feminist Online* Issue 8, no. 3 (Summer 2010), accessed July 2, 2015, www.barnard.edu/sfonline.
 - 14 — Ibid.
 - 15 — Ibid.
 - 16 — Joan Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 103.
 - 17 — See: Tronto (1993), 103 and Isabell Lorrey, *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious* (London and Brooklyn: Verso, 2015), 15.
 - 18 — Lorrey (2015), 12–13.

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What happens when feminist activism turns art making into social practice? What happens when feminist conversations, at once joyful, contentious, conflictual, and generative, are being cared for through curatorial practice that mobilizes the archives of ephemeral, art-enabled conversations? Feminist artists of the 1970s concerned with developing a radical critique of heteropatriarchy used dinner parties and conversations for artistic exploration. *The Dinner Party* by artist Judy Chicago is the best-known example harnessing the representational power of a dinner party. Much less known is *The International Dinner Party* by Suzanne Lacy, who invited “sisters” around the world to hold dinner parties simultaneously on March 14, 1979 to create “a network of women-acknowledging-women”. This exemplar of feminist social practice rooted in activism is the starting point for this book. Feminist curatorial thought connects the archive of *The International Dinner Party* conversations to emerging archives of present-day conversations addressing feminist and queer-feminist politics tied to different histories, ideologies, and geographies. The present-day archives of conversations include Aktion Arkiv (addressing migratory realities in Sweden), radical practices of collective care (addressing caring labour conditions transnationally), Red Min(e)d (addressing the post-Yugoslav context), and Queering Yerevan (addressing local-diasporic Armenian realities).

Elke Krasny, PhD, is Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. She is a cultural theorist, urban researcher, and curator with a focus on issues of justice and emancipatory, transformative practices in architecture, urbanism, and art addressing ecology, economy, labor, memory, and feminisms. *Mapping the Everyday: Neighborhood Claims for the Future* with the Downtown Eastside Women Centre and the Audain Gallery in Vancouver addressed resistance against poverty and sexual violence. *Hands-on Urbanism. The Right to Green*, shown at the 2012 Venice Biennale of Architecture, provided a history of informal urbanization through the lens of subsistence economies. Professor Krasny is the author and editor of numerous essays and books, most recently *Critical Care. Architecture and Urbanism for a Broken Planet* with Angelika Fitz (MIT Press, 2019).



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