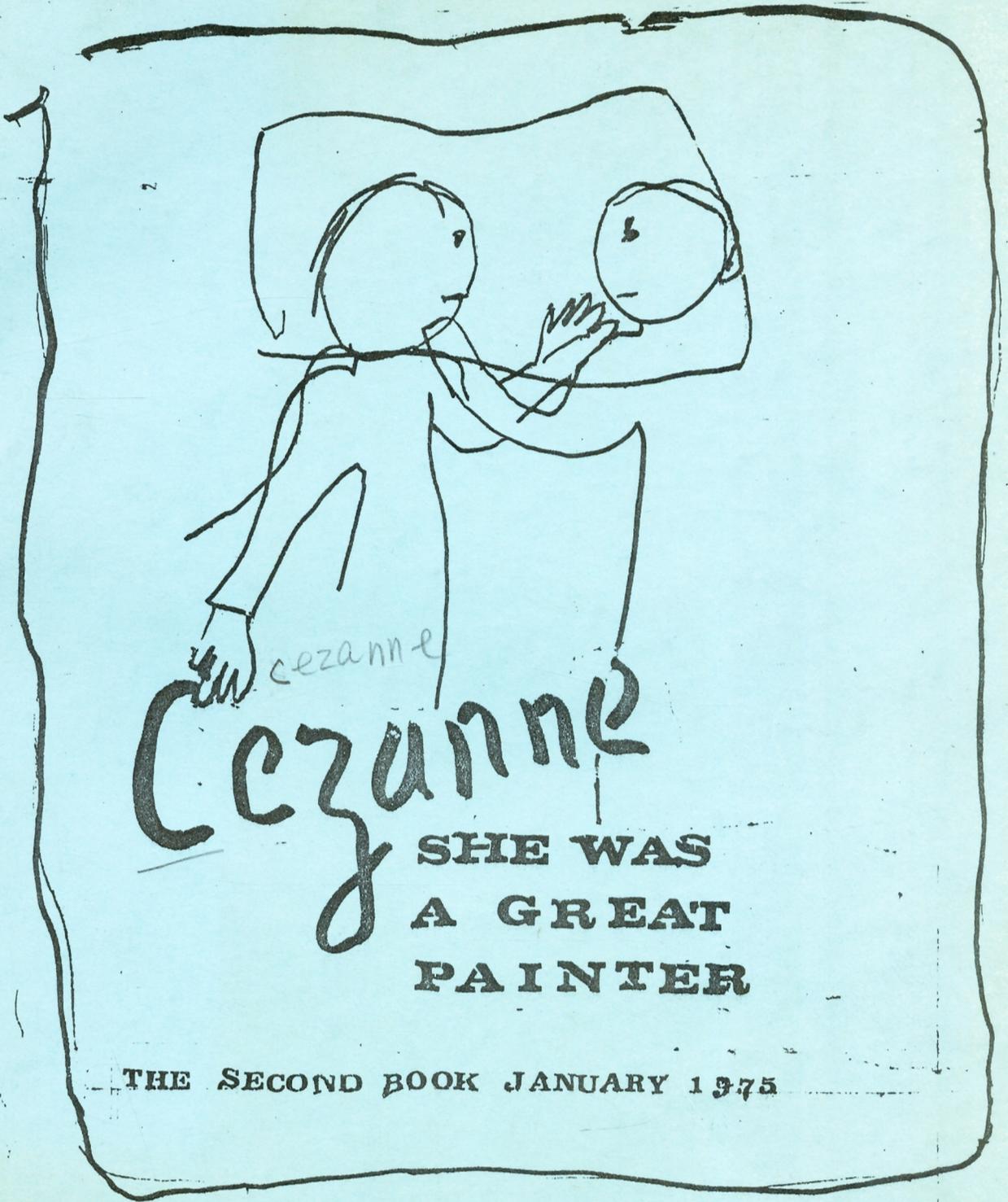


UNBROKEN WORDS TO WOMEN - SEXUALITY CREATIVITY LANGUAGE ART HISTORY

\$3



*Cezanne*  
**Cezanne**

**SHE WAS  
A GREAT  
PAINTER**

THE SECOND BOOK JANUARY 1975

CAROLINE

SCHNEEMANN

Unsent letter to Allan Kaprow San Diego, California  
from Carolee Schneemann Springtown, New York June 1974

Dear Allan:

you have written me three letters recently -- one of welcome back from England and an appreciation of Fuses; the other in regard to my coming West, perhaps to perform, show films or teach. I've decided it is interesting to try to say (to myself and you) why your letters, whose tone is of one contemporary-one associate-to another, are so peculiar

essentially I have stood alone for too long, having been methodically repulsed by those with whom I felt affinity

at the time when our gang was getting recognition & help in the 60's I received recognition, and proportionately no help whatsoever

Dick Bellamy was warmly welcoming when I met him in a crowd at a performance last year. I mention that, because in the past he was never warm, welcoming or....having rejected my collages, constructions of the early 60's when I invited him to see them. He looked at them and had to suddenly make a telephone call. I can't recall that he said anything at all about the work. David Herbert at least did say they could be wonderful if the material wasn't so disgusting.

admiration distaste

Kliver could stomach me so long as I was with Jim\*, and I believe was helpful to me for "Snows" very much on the basis of his respect for Jim. He certainly looked at my work often on visits to us. At this time Billy was helping Brecht, de Maria, Claus and Breer to get works done & into the world; he introduced me to these artists. Was I of more interest than what I made? In fact I felt he couldn't stand what I made -- tolerated ....somewhere on a scale with Gloria Graves or Jackie Ferrara for negligible peculiarity. The girls!

Didn't you come to the Meyersville studio in the old stone house as well? You made me a diagram for primitive but effective air conditioning. You see I understand that as men helping me to sustain what I had but not to enlarge its scope or enjoin them in their world.

The clearest example is not so far past. At Cologne (1971) Vostell assured me a publisher was coming who could save the day. I was penniless -- unable to get myself and my co-worker

\*James Tenney, composer, conductor, pianist. Together for more than 10 years.

back to London. I had understood we would have a living stipend once in Koln; but Szeemann reminded me that any stipend I had had was included in funds already spent on materials for my exhibit-process.

My wits (ego) are sufficiently intact (somehow) to know, to assure myself that it is no great affront for me to ask you if there is work for me when I'm in the area on another job. But I couldn't tell anyone of the "old" friends that we had nothing to eat. They already appreciated that we slept on the museum floor when they went off to the hotel.

Yet the artists from Cologne whom we had never met before helped us unstintingly -- with food, with bedding, some high drinking/smoking times and loans of small sums to get us from one day to the next. Strangers bought our meals as we sat among friends. I can only explain this to myself as a strange phobia on my part; I cannot ask for help; but I cannot ask for help because those whom I trusted to respond found that impossible -- with no equivocation. What was my position among you then? My own title private title iron ironical title was "Cunt Mascot". Cunt Mascot on the men's art team. Not that I ever made love with ANY OF YOU NO! I didn't feel perceived by our group -- not even sexually. As a female thing yes, as

(Of course knowingly I would not make love with a contemporary whose ambivalence, intimidation, distaste or patronizing concern

I was a questionable element since I could never play your games your ways, which meant I might stand in judgement as well as need! the treacheries annoyances of slaves children servants witnesses who are not participants

so Vostell each day we asked Vostell when the publisher was coming. He was delayed. On the seventh day I knew indeed "he" must have arrived because when I crawled out of my tent it seemed you were all lined up in front of Wolf: 1. Kaprow 2. Higgins 3. Filliou 4. Hansen 5. Nitsch 6. Schmidt 7. .... Wolf said I still must wait another day while arrangements were being organized....that meant funds, commitments for printing work, advances.....what did you arrange? I was offered 15 marks on receipt of a layout! Nothing at the moment. Did they (I don't even know his name) do a book?

Note: Above refers to the Happening and Fluxus Retrospective at the Kolnischer Kunstverein, Cologne. November 1971 Invited participants from all over the world: I was living in London, came with John Lifton to install my "Electronic Activations Room".

Charlotte\* and I helped each other, called for each other at times of stress, materialized in the wings year in and year out with missing scores, safety pins, tampons, telephone numbers, ambulances, food, dollars....that was the real sisterhood in the stud club. Bici\* was desperate and the tunnel wind men momentum blew us always apart hands extended in some confusion of pain & satisfaction.

I thought my associates didn't care for my aesthetics, kept me among them for those successes tangential to their own efforts....perhaps they liked me as a token of ?

You were unusual -- from time to time you asked what I was doing; you came to some of my Kinetic Theater works at Judson, at St. Marks....I was excessively pleased. None of the other men ever asked me what I was doing, thinking, or spoke about my work. It went in one direction: I asked them about their processes, events. I knew that a mutual exchange was normal! I observed you among yourselves: explaining, writing, introducing, meeting, making projects, plans....placing articles, lining up reviews, dealers, dinners.....

The European artists and I could share our work with great enthusiasm. Was that part of a tradition of accepting exceptional women? Or, that I was only visiting their turf? Or a social-political determination; that there was enough psychic space for all of us? That "capitol gains" would be a vagary & imposition, rather than the heroic prize. We shared food, photos, tales, contacts; enjoyed one another, were even lovers. Different than back home.

Oldenburg helped in certain ways; the magic of being in his performance pieces; his gift of a work which kept us through two dire years; telling me about an exhibit of books made by artists -- late, but my book joined the exhibit. At his Institute of Contemporary Art lecture in London, 1970, he showed the old movies of "Store Days" with a running commentary.....: "there's Carolee Schneemann.....she helped me a lot in the old days.....I don't suppose I've helped her". He didn't know I was in the audience and I yelled "it's not too late". But really I'll never know what it means. Still 150 people heard what Claus said. Was I crazy? They heard it!

The issue of aid, support and concern for one another is real; if my considerations seem peculiar, wrong-headed, that is a measure of my exclusion -- or qualified inclusion -- and its crippling effects. Of course, for all those years Jim & I

\*Charlotte is Charlotte Moorman; Bici is Bici Hendricks Forbes

shared, cared and took energy, direction from one another. There were a few close and carefully attentive friends. It was the poets who really responded, gave me confirmation, made sense of my work as I had hoped it could be...and through those early weavings of construction, expanding materials, the nude, film, establishing my own theater...it was those poets who saw, spoke with me, cared and wherever possible helped the work and my intentions into the world.

(I think that humanly the Art World stinks is rotten sad debilitated mean and sour i love it still the best of the worst -- )

So, again I'm touched by your letter of welcome-back. When I went into a breakdown ('69), I had to leave my own territory.....I could only save myself apart from the people I knew....because the way they related to me was rooted on my strength in persevering from an inner core -- self-sustaining conviction & independence; no matter how small the direct communication with surrounding artists. My culture had frozen me into its image of my effectiveness I could no longer manage so much with so little.....there was no strengthening contact I could hope to find out of my weakness, disorder. (The poet Clayton Eshleman gave me a ticket to France, to Cannes, where Fusas was a special jury selection. I took my 13 year old cat -- now 18 years old! -- and some films. Four years passed before I was able to return.

To persist, to persevere. Now we women reach to each other. Before we were isolated in the wake of the men. Scattered in their drift. I often think of Dorothea (Rockburne), persevering for years, veiled (because "they" couldn't see Her) hierarchic Woman Artist Mother penniless servant -- locked into one position at a time -- never a flicker of estimation, heightening open regard from the successful artists for whom she worked & witnessed, that it SHOULD or COULD be otherwise. So much more satisfying & amazing that her work so dominates our imagination & perceptions now. No man could have done it all! Alone.

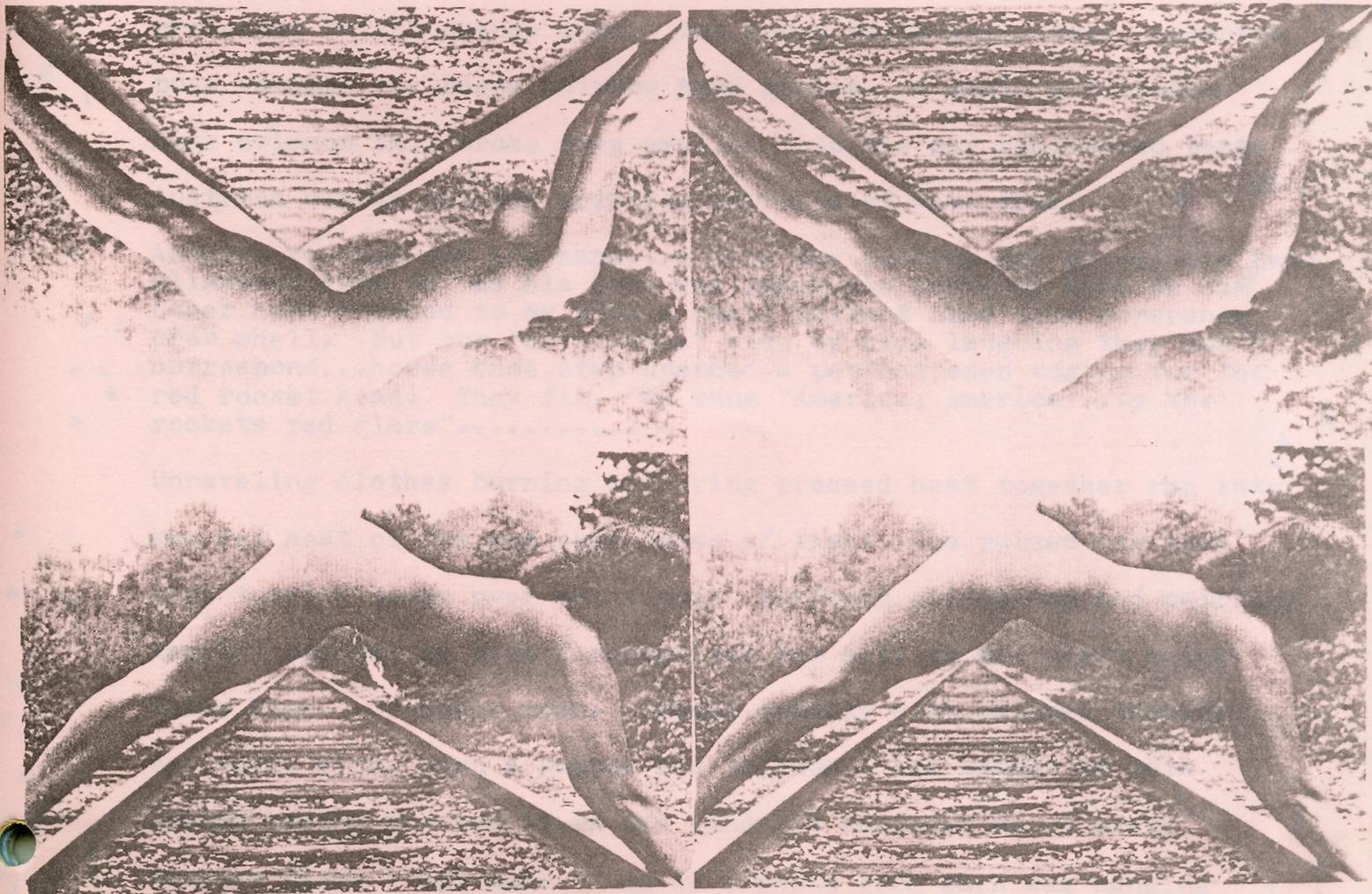
Or as Jill (Johnson) had to go so utterly bananas/tipping the scales, carts, we projected as her own weights & balances for our threatened borders. Speeding Greek dance, all eyes on us, her short dress, black boots, Vast smile another mad girl mother fatherless buried alive burning into the clarity of female orphan madness. WE WERE THE GUESTS IN OUR OWN WORLDS! Flattered that Rauschenberg & Paxton phoned me in the country summer 65? saying Jill has really gone over the edge...thinks she is Freud's daughter...can you suggest anything? Alas...it was too soon to recognize each other.....

or Give Praise to Each Other Mother Cunt Art Maker. We have come through together! (And lost many on the way -- which was the patriarchal tradition.)

(Yes but Jill didn't appreciate my claiming my body from the dead claws of my culture; streaming eroticism...she didn't like it, couldn't see its formal structures. Yvonne didn't enjoy it. The Judson group assimilated my ideas, principles and gradually excluded me. Currently many authoratative women critics/writers avoid, disparage certain works with particular female slants.....so.....)

What do you think of it all? I will send this to both you and Vaughan -- now that makes sense. with love,

*Carolee*



*from photo by Shelley Farkas*