How to do things with pictures in the museum

Photography, montage and political space

Rombout, M.K.

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[fig. 2-1] Hannah Höch and Raoul Hausmann in front of their works at the First International Dada-Fair, Berlin, 1920
The discussion so far has considered Austin’s concept of speech acts as transactional utterances and Heartfield’s production of photography-based montage as an example of political performativity that addresses extra-aesthetic concerns. I have also introduced the consideration of photomontage as a contestatory sub-language that disrupts the purported verisimilitude of camera-based images in order to assert alternative, preposterous or otherwise irreconcilable positions. The example of Heartfield addresses issues that are in the public sphere, namely, the discursive relationship of systemic meta-operations (capitalism, fascism, and labour) and the collective of citizens. Hannah Höch, an originating, albeit sidelined, member of Heartfield’s Berlin Dada group, explored photomontage as a feminist critique of public space and its relationship to the private sphere, in the form of domestic space and the female body. Her acclaimed montage, familiarly known in English as Cut with the Kitchen Knife (1919), presents a Bosch-like kaleidoscope of contemporary life, and her work, like that of fellow Dada artist Sophie Tauber-Arp and others, has become of particular interest in recent decades of feminist art history. In this sense, the visual speech act is an insertion point into the public sphere where there has been no viable space for gender inclusivity or parity. Instead of Heartfield’s scissors, Höch wields her kitchen knife, a weapon emblematic of domestic space, and in particular a gendered sphere.

Höch’s strategy, making space in the public sphere for the utterance from new protagonists, invites linkage to a later artist, Martha Rosler, herself famous for wielding a kitchen knife in her famous video work Semiotics of the Kitchen (1975), which is also discussed in this chapter. Rosler’s series Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful (1967-1972) integrates sumptuous commercial photography of domestic interiors with fragments from traumatic journalistic photography portraying soldiers and civilians caught up in the violence of the Vietnam War. Rosler’s critical perspective, like Höch’s, combines images of public and private worlds: Bringing the War Home forces the collision of ludic simultaneity of the tranquillity and unimpeded consumerism of upper-class American homes (that which is to be displayed) with the savage reality of strife, wounding and death (that which should not be seen). Rosler’s work takes
to task the official discourse of America’s involvement as an imperial force in Southeast Asia and creates a single visual field on which to conflate the trauma of terrorized Vietnamese civilians with the seeming omnipotence of U.S. military force.

Both artists employ montage to create space for feminist utterances, providing a verso voice to the dominant recto systems of representation. Instead of undoing binarism, then, they are inscribing a new polyvocal “and” into the discursive monologue. Both construct assemblages from mass media periodicals and magazines, appropriating not only everyday images directed to a consumer-oriented public sphere, but specifically from illustrated magazines directed to a female readership.

1. Cut with the Kitchen Knife!

One of the most celebrated and iconic images made by the Berlin Dada group is Hannah Höch’s *Schnitt mit dem Kuchenmesser Dada durch die letzte weimarer Bierbauch Kulturepoche Deutschlands* [Cut with the Kitchen Knife through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany] (1919). It is also one of Höch’s earliest photomontage and the largest displayed at the 1920 Dada Fair at Otto Burchard’s gallery.¹ [fig. 2-1]

At the time of this exhibition, Höch was credited with her then-partner artist Raoul Hausmann as one of the inventors of photomontage.² Within the very volatile, male Berlin Dada circle, Höch was marginalized not only because she was one of the very few women associated with the movement, but also her mode of being political was much more open-ended and ambiguous in comparison with the exhortatory outrage of fellow Dadaists who actively marginalized her.³ In part, this can be attributed to her training and practice that was more pro-art

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¹ Höch also exhibited a poster, two handmade Dada dolls, and five other works. Maria Makela, “By Design. The Early Work of Hannah Höch in Context,” in *The Photomontages of Hannah Höch* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, 1996), 49.

² The invention of photocollage has been claimed variously by John Heartfield, Raoul Hausmann, Hannah Höch and George Grosz, and all used the technique from 1919 onward. Certainly, all experimented with photocollage, recycling found images from newspapers and other ephemera into complex *assemblages*, critical narratives and satirical portraits. The inability to credit a single source with the advent of radical cut-and-paste practices also points to the collectivizing nature of the work as a group endeavour. Heartfield eventually came to prefer photomontage over collage, a technique that involved making seamless photographic prints in the darkroom rather than accretions of the more tactile and visibly collage of the cut-and-paste method. For detailed examination of the montage and collage techniques of the Berlin group, see Dawn Ades, *Photomontage* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986) and Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*.

³ Heartfield and Grosz were emphatically against Höch’s participation in the First International Dada Fair and
than the anti-art nihilism of the Dada group. Höch attended the Charlottenburg Kunstgewerbeschule [School of Applied Arts] in Berlin and worked closely with glass designer Harold Bergen. She later enrolled at the National Institute of the Museum of Arts and Crafts throughout the critical Dada years (1918-1920). From 1916 to 1926, she produced handiwork patterns and articles for domestically oriented magazine published by Ullstein Verlag, such as *Die Dame* and *Die Praktische Berlinerin*. Höch, who at various times explored printmaking, textile design, book design and other media, worked in media regarded at the time as belonging to the feminine arts, a lower rung than traditional or even avant-garde so-called fine arts, in itself a heavily gendered system, even in negation. She continued to explore photomontage throughout her career and as embroiderer of images, constructing and reconstructing popular images targeted at women.

As a composition, the visual field of *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* completely negates any sense of naturalistic or illusionistic space: “it is no longer an analogue of a visual experience but of operational processes, layer upon layer.” The joins of the fragments, many derived from newspaper images, are visible and at times roughly carved. The pictorial space is a gathering place picturing a complex public sphere: before discussing the work’s performative operations, it is useful to identify key fragments, reading the work clockwise from the upper

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yielded only when Hausmann threatened to boycott it. See Peter Boswell, “Hannah Höch: Through the Looking Glass,” in *The Photomontages of Hannah Hoch* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, 1996), 7; and Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*, 17.
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5 In her account of Höch’s formative training, Makela notes that the curriculum at the school then integrated fine and applied arts, including “architecture and interior design, decorative sculpture, metal design, set design and scene painting, graphic and book art, decorative painting and pattern design, and glass painting.” Ibid.


7 The consideration of Höch’s abstract pattern montages of the 1920s in the context of the integrative is worthy of its own study considering the potentiality of women’s power (manifest as the unsewn garment, or the pattern as blueprint), and the subversive uses of women’s handcraft. In this regard, I have been inspired by the work of several Canadian artists (Joyce Wieland, Jana Sterbak, Anna Torma) as well as the collection of artist statements and essays reprinted in *Craft. Documents in Contemporary Art* edited by Tanya Harrod (London and Cambridge, MA: Whitechapel Gallery and the MIT Press, 2018), as well as the provocative ways of juxtaposing stitching and photographs in the montage work of Berend Strik (*Thixotrophy*, (Sophie Berrebi et al, *Thixotropy* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2009).


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[fig. 2-2] Hannah Höch, *Schnitt mit dem Kuchenmesser Dada durch die letzte weimarer Bierbauch Kulturepoche Deutschlands* [Cut with the Kitchen Knife through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany], 1919-1920
right quadrant, which sets the stage of political chaos. The Weimar republic, from the fall of the imperial parliament in 1917 to the election of Hitler’s Nationalist Socialist government in 1933, was marked by turbulent economic and political instability. One of the targets of the Berlin Dada activists centered on the hypocrisy of the post-imperial Social Democrat Party government, which had entered into agreement with big business and vestiges of the imperial military. In the name of keeping order, the State encouraged the use of the radical right Freikorps, paramilitary units formed of war veterans. A portrait of the recently deposed Kaiser Wilhelm II with a preposterous moustache made from the upturned figures of two wrestlers dominates this cluster; on his right shoulder perches the body of the exotic modern dancer Sent M’ahesa whose head has been replaced by that of Chief of General Staff (and future German president) Paul von Hindenburg; his right ear is formed from a typographic letter “k”. One of the dancer’s arms seems to tickle the Kaiser under the chin; the other rests on the shoulder of General von Pflazer-Baltin, who himself stands on the heads of two men, German Minister of the Interior Gustav Noske and another general. Above Wilhelm are the helmeted head of a soldier, the slogan Die anti-dadaistische Bewegung [anti-Dada movement] cut from newspaper titles, and over his shoulder, a fragment of a photograph showing a line-up of the unemployed. Additional technological/military references are found in fragments showing an enormous gear, putsch leader Wolfgang Kapp with an unknown man in an airplane cockpit, the heat apron for the muzzle of a gun barrel, the side view of a machine gun, the wheels of a mortar cannon (from which the head of poet Elsa Lasker-Schüler protrudes), a soldier in uniform, and the front end of an airplane.9

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The lower right quadrant represents The Great Dada World. [fig. 2-3] At the right edge is a giant baby body topped by the backward-facing miniature head of poet and critic sympathetic to Dada, Theodor Däubler. At the centre of the section is a 12-cylinder ship’s motor from which extrudes the head of a screaming Raoul Hausmann (Höch’s partner during the Dada years) attached to a miniature body in a deep diver’s suit. To the left, celebrated dancer Nidda (Niddy) Impekoven bathes a “baby” John Heartfield in a washtub, and to the right, a pirouetting two-headed ballet dancer features portraits of George Grosz and Wieland Herzfelde. Above is a strange machine piece, perhaps a boiler or engine, with the “head” of Karl Marx, and to the left of the words Die grosse Dada Welt is the figure of a female acrobat with three heads: Dada artist Johannes Baaders between Soviet revolutionaries Karl Radek and V.I. Lenin. The confident
photographer walking into the composition from the right is in fact a portrait of the film actress Asta Nielsen superimposed onto a male body. The lower right corner features a map of Europe marking the countries where suffrage to women had been or was about to be granted; a tiny portrait of Höch is attached at the left of the map, and a jumping mouse is embedded into the upper right corner of the map. Beyond that is a montaged (interacial) modern couple, with the man holding a mechanical “baby”, perhaps proposing an implied alignment of sexual and racial equality with communism.

The lower left quadrant features Karl Liebknecht who with Rosa Luxemburg was co-founder of the Spartakist League and the Communist Party of Germany, exhorting the masses, pictured as photographic fragments of crowds to Tretet dada bei [Join Dada]. Themes of technology and movement are also presented through the figure of a “flying” woman, the roundness of the lower case letter “e”, a (Soviet) transport truck, and discs with ball bearings. Höch pairs her portrait signature featured in the lower right corner with her white initials “HH” near the lower left corner.

Finally, in the upper left quadrant, an elephant is attended by a spear-carrying South Asian guardian; the animal’s tusks support a sleeping woman, who seems to be racially mixed in the sense that her arms and head are dark-skinned, and whose body and legs are light-skinned. To the upper left of this cluster is a massive pensive Albert Einstein presented as a cyborg by his mechanical eye from which a grasshopper seems to emerge. President Ebert springs from the right side of Einstein’s head. The physicist is “crowned” by a locomotive belching the slogan “Invest your Money in Dada”; the caption below reads “Ha ha, young man … Dada is not an art trend”. Along the top edge, fragments include a winch and pulley, a faceless showgirl, a dancing couple, the miniature head of Prince Wilhelm von Pressen on the body of a woman wearing a checked dress, the high-rise silhouette of New York’s Pennsylvania Hotel, and Asta Nielsen dressed in sailor’s hat and jacket. The spinning figure at the centre of the work is also cut by the

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10 The year that the work was created, 1919, opened with the founding of the KPD, the German Communist party, a Left splinter group led by Liebknecht and Luxemburg. On Monday, January 6, during the Spartakist Week uprisings, President Friedrich Ebert, at the urging of Gustav Noske, Minister of Defense and commander of the Freikorps called out troops to restore order, leading to violence and arrests. By Saturday of that week, the Freikorps marched into Berlin; on Sunday, Liebknecht and Luxemburg were captured, tortured and, finally, killed on January 15. In the aftermath, Ebert continued to mop up resistance and by mid-1919, the social democrats were in control of the republic. A few months before the work—the largest framed work in the exhibition—was displayed at the June 1920 Dada Fair, the National Socialist Party was formed.
knife as a decapitated figure of the dancer Niddy Impekoven whose disconnected head is a portrait of German Expressionist painter Käthe Kollwitz. It is significant that in 1919 Kollwitz had just been named the first female professor at the Prussian Academy of Arts, and that this image comes from the newspaper announcement of this posting.\textsuperscript{11}

The large-scale and densely populated image comprises a gathering place, a “bulletin board universe”\textsuperscript{12} in which the disappointing legacy of the post-Wilhelm republic and the utopian promises of technology, communism and gender equality are entwined. While Lavin reads the work as an allegory with deliberately open-ended free association available for the viewer to participate in the construction of meaning\textsuperscript{13}, I argue that it is also possible to read the work as a complex “history painting”, at that time still identified as the apex of painting genres.\textsuperscript{14} Cut with the Kitchen Knife features identifiable figures of contemporary Germany (politician and artist, capitalist and intellectual, general and entertainer), a populated public sphere that is both reflective of and a repudiation of the postwar political context. Much more directly than her Dada colleagues, with their radical but general exhortations to break away from discredited traditions and systems, Höch’s construction points more directly to the immediate everyday facing contemporary Germans.

2. The Integrative

While the work’s pioneering technique and cultural commentary have been well examined within art historiography\textsuperscript{15}, it is nevertheless useful to consider it again, this time as a redressive political utterance in the context of Austin and speech act theory. I have earlier introduced

\textsuperscript{11} Lavin, \textit{Cut with the Kitchen Knife}, 30.

\textsuperscript{12} Blythe and Powers, \textit{Looking at Dada}, 15.

\textsuperscript{13} Lavin specifically reads the work through the filter of allegory encompassing the Freudian concepts of pleasure principle and reality principle as Höch stakes ground for the New Woman. See Lavin, \textit{Cut with the Kitchen Knife}, 24-26.

\textsuperscript{14} The hierarchy promoted by European art academies was as follows: first, history and allegorical painting; followed by portraiture, genre or everyday scenes, landscape, animal life; and lastly, still life. Höch’s studies at the School of Applied Arts in Berlin under the guidance of glass designer Harold Bergen were interrupted by the onset of the war and her volunteer services with the Red Cross. In 1915 she returned to school, entering the graphics class of Emil Orlik at the National Institute of the Museum of Arts and Crafts. Makela, “By Design,” 50.

\textsuperscript{15} See, for example, Lavin, \textit{Cut with the Kitchen Knife}; Blythe and Powers, \textit{Looking at Dada}. 
Austin’s proposed classification of modes of performative speech into grammatical groups:

Austin’s “starter set” of types of speech or action was arranged into five broad classes: *verdictives* (judicial, legislative), *exercitives* (exercising powers, rights or influence), *commissives* (forms of promising), *behabitives* (attitudes and social behaviour) and *expositives* (expounding of views).\(^\text{16}\) Taking a closer look at Austin’s discussion of these, it is possible to see that verdictives consist of delivering a finding, official or unofficial\(^\text{17}\); exercitives encompass speech acts such as countermanding and interposing points of view\(^\text{18}\); behabitives include the notion of reaction to other people’s behaviour and fortunes, and of attitudes and expressions of attitudes to someone else’s past conduct or imminent conduct, such as apologizing, condoling, congratulating, commending, deprecating, etc.\(^\text{19}\); and expositives pertain to imparting points of views or the conducting of arguments, such as informing, apprising, conjecturing and conceding.\(^\text{20}\) There is no category in Austin’s system for speech that *compels* the apportioning of space for or recognition of the legitimacy of complementary or contestatory perspectives. In Austin’s model, multiple contradictory speech acts cannot occupy the same moment. To do so would be to cause a paradox or “misfire” on the part of the speaker: the christened ship cannot have multiple names; the married couple cannot be bigamists.

Constance Penley, writing on Jean-Luc Godard, notes that speech, like film, is sequential in time, words flow one after the other so that we can’t affirm two words or propositions in the same moment.\(^\text{21}\) By putting them on top of each other, as in the conflation of photomontage, it is possible to communicate two things at once, “this” and “that”. Penley cites Deleuze on Godard: “What counts with him is not two or three, or however many you like, it’s AND, the conjunction


\(^{17}\) Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 152-154.

\(^{18}\) Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 154-156.

\(^{19}\) Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 159-160.

\(^{20}\) Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 160-163.

AND…. The AND is neither one or the other, it is always between the two, it is the boundary…. Godard’s aim is to ‘see the boundaries’ … to make the imperceptible visible.”22 Yet in political discourse, multiple constituents seek to co-exist as empowered agents in the public sphere, Bal’s *endless andness* of inclusivity.23

Photomontage is a fusion of photo + montage, each element in that equation having its own set of problematic issues. For the first part, it is a composition formed from camera-generated fragments, which in themselves it may be construed as mechanical, and lacking the expressive so-called hand of the artist. Herein lies the myth of the photo as a device for recording, not for transforming.24 A rhizomatic arrangement of camera-based images, full of ruptures, breaks, and discontinuities, it is a form of mapping rather than a trace. For the second part, in his close reading of Bernini’s *bel composto* sculptural work as an integrative aesthetic operation, art historian Giovanni Careri draws on Sergei Eisenstein’s work to locate the key dynamics of montage: it is, first of all, a model for unified viewing of disparate elements; it integrates iconography with the sensorial; it is a dynamic, reception-based strategy; and it requires a viewing that takes time, imposing an awareness of that temporality as the beholder recomposes the narrative.25 Here, Hubert Damisch’s concept of the theoretical object is germane: for Damisch, tracing the symbol of the cloud through art history, the work is not a passive mirror but, as animated by the spectator, active and reflexive, inviting discursive participation to awaken its embedded meanings.26 The strategy of montage, Bal observes, 

obeys a paratactic arrangement not syntactic arrangement; juxtaposition, accumulation, even potential clutter; not doing one thing after another, where ‘then’ is not prescriptively fixed—paradoxical time-consuming arrangement […] The eye is compelled to travel even if it chooses its own itinerary, and thus time unfolds in the act of viewing.27

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Here it seems that the practice of montage is a particularly adept strategy to bind polyvocality into the narrative. As Allan Sekula notes, “in a bound volume, every recto has its verso. And as any reader of children’s books knows, every window depicted could be a hole through the other side…” Rather than reinscribing a reductive binarism of conjoined twins, I see this strategy as integrative, pictorially and semantically forcing inclusion. “Integrative” here has not only the standard sense of combining or completing components to produce a larger whole, but also its character of creating a holistic 360° picture from disparate fragments. This term has the advantage of yet another connotation which is more overtly political: “integrate” has also come to mean a synonym of “desegregate”, as in the removal of restrictions against subordinated or subaltern groups and bringing into equal membership.

This is particularly productive in considering positions in the discursive field that have been previously shut out. For the author/artist, critical distance from the dominant narrative produces a new narrative, a connective strategy for the already alienated to see their condition visualized. For the reader/beholder, the pictorial strategy creates a form in which they can see themselves visualized, as part of the literal and discursive field. I would propose that this is how Brechtian distanciation can forge a path to the concept of the affective: the sudden or unfamiliar apparition of the visible from the invisible, the making space for, destabilizing dominant discourse while at the same time producing an empowerment for the oppositional or marginalized constituent.

This is where we get back to the practice of photomontage as both materially and discursively expressive of the integrative. To return to the example of Cut with the Kitchen Knife, it can be argued that Höch has deployed the integrative in creating a dynamic new world order that includes an emancipated role for women. The work seen in this way presents a “portrait” of a new public discourse in which women will be generative agents: the gyrating

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bodies of female dancers and athletes, the cameos of leading women (Kollwitz, Negri, Impekoven, M’hesa, Nielsen) and the map showing countries where women have full citizenship rights in the democratic process, point to a narrative which celebrates the newly won space for women in the public sphere, for the female pleasures of liberation. In contrast to assertive portrayals of the New Woman, Höch portrays her fellow (male) contemporaries (Hausmann, Grosz, Heartfield, Däubler)—adherents of the newly rationalized man, associated with the machine, the engineer, and the Soviet artist Vladimir Tatlin—as crying or shouting children, recalling the discussion of Heartfield the Engineer as the shattered and seething neurasthenic in the preceding chapter.\(^{31}\) The connectedness to and dependency on nurturing mother figures by Höch’s Dada artists is a far cry from Richard Huelsenbeck’s concept of the “blastocyst of a new type of Man”, an embryonic mutation to (parthenogenetically) deliver a liberated “primitive” and desubjectivized free of the accretion of social conditioning.\(^{32}\) Although Huelsenbeck and his compatriots used the term “mensch” to refer to “human” or “citizen” more broadly\(^{33}\), in no instance does this explicitly also include the emancipation of women. While the Berlin Dada artists derided the contemporary political landscape, Höch does not, in favour of deconstructing all the moving parts of contemporary society and positioning herself as author and as subject of Cut with Kitchen Knife in the context of emergent political power for women. In her photomontage Dada Rundschau [Dada Panorama], (1919) featuring the figures of Ebert and Noske, her “HH” signature is accompanied by a fragment of text in the lower right corner “limitless freedom for H.H.”\(^{34}\) It is possible to also see the “endless andness” of the integrative

\(^{31}\) I refer again to Brigid Doherty’s reading of postwar rage and infantilism in Dada art, rendered pictorially through diminished genitals, child-like scale and puppet-like bodies: “‘See: We are All Neurasthenics!’ or the Trauma of Dada Montage,” Critical Inquiry 24/1 (Autumn 1997):82-132.

\(^{32}\) I note again here that the very term “blastocyst” was itself a newly coined term referring to mammalian biology (1876) to describe a thin-walled structure to support cell clusters that eventually become embryos. See also Maria Makela, “The Misogynist Machine: Images of Technology in the Work of Hannah Höch”, in Women in the Metropolis. Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture, edited by Katharina von Ankum (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 106-127.

\(^{33}\) Huelsenbeck’s 1917 essay “Der neue Mensch” is discussed in Sascha Bru, “Dada as Politics,” Arcadia 41/2 (July 2006):296-312.

\(^{34}\) Brigid Doherty, “Berlin,” in Dada: Zurich, Berlin, Hannover, Cologne, New York, Paris, edited by Leah Dickerman (Washington and New York: The National Gallery of Art/ D.A.P., 2005), 106. Doherty also notes that the composite figures of female delegates with the lithe bodies of dancers (similar to her treatment of Kollwitz as the centre of Cut with the Kitchen Knife) are presented as representatives of a potentially dynamic democracy, in contrast to the heavy bodies of Ebert and Noske dressed in bathing suits.
as a move toward the emancipation from the binary construction of gender: Höch’s photomontage work is also the site for a political imaginary that makes space for androgynous bodies as well as hybrid crossover bodies, such as the feminized representations of Ebert and Noske.\footnote{Michelle D. Sizemore, “The Undefined and the Undefinable: Androgynous Imagery in the Work of Hannah Höch,” Master’s thesis, University of Connecticut, 2013. Accessed March 10, 2019 https://opencommons.uconn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1455&context=gs_theses} Another work by Höch, Staatschaupter [Heads of State] (1918-1920), features the same snapshot of the two politicians in bathing trunks surround by fanciful drawn flowers and butterflies, with an ink cross-stitch overlay. The masculine performativity of the politicians has been abducted and re-presented in the alternate universe of feminized visualization.

The new Dada self also takes the form of integration between the organic and the mechanical: the human/machine hybrid figure, featuring the liberation of the enslaved citizen through technological innovation, seen in photomontage portraits by Raoul Hausmann in works such as Tatlin Lives at Home (1920). None of the portraits depict a new woman, or woman/machine hybrid.\footnote{Matthew Biro argues that although Hausmann never developed explicit statements, it is clear that he believed that human beings could transform themselves further through non-dominant forms of gender identity. “Raoul Hausmann’s Revolutionary Media: Dada Performance, Photomontage and the Cyborg,” Art History 30/1 (February 2007):26-56.} Höch’s Cut with the Kitchen Knife was created as a dense, all-over surface with multiple recognizable public figures; her post-Dada montages moved toward simpler forms of composition featuring one or two human figures, usually female. As Matthew Biro argues, this move from the specific to the allegorical constituted a political imaginary for the idea of the New Woman as an embodiment of new possibilities open to women of the time.\footnote{Biro, “Hannah Höch’s New Woman: Photomontage, Distraction and Visual Literacy in the Weimer Republic,” in The New Woman International: Representations in Photography and Film from the 1870s through the 1960s, edited by Elizabeth Otto and Vanessa Rocco (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press and the University of Michigan Library, 2011), 115-134.}

Höch’s vision has been linked to the concept of anticipatory consciousness developed by contemporary philosopher Ernst Bloch.\footnote{Lavin, Cut with the Kitchen Knife, 29.} Anticipatory consciousness, as outlined in Bloch’s multi-volume work The Principle of Hope, is the utopian conjecture of a future post-
revolutionary world: the social imaginary—composed of daydreams, fairy tales, myths, popular culture, literature, theatre and all forms of art—contains within it emancipatory moments, glimpses of a better life.\(^{39}\) Bloch distinguishes the *what-is* (mimesis) from the *not-yet-become* (*noch-nicht-geworden*) and locates the role of the artist as a “midwife” to enable latent and potential materials to assume their own unique forms, and to awaken consciousness especially in techniques such as distancing and estrangement espoused by his contemporaries, such as Brecht.\(^{40}\)

The concept of anticipatory consciousness of the individual is a strategic move that gets around the *impasse* of the combative stance, wherein competing utterances risk becoming a “shouting match” between factions with no way forward. *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* exemplifies Bloch’s advocacy of dialectical operations such as disruption, fragmentation and recombination: the spectator is the constructor of, and stakeholder in, a forward-looking political imaginary.\(^{41}\) In *The Emancipated Spectator*, Rancière points to this potentiality, arguing that the collective power shared by spectators does not stem from the fact that they are members of a collective body or from some specific form of interactivity: it is the power of emancipating them to translate what they perceive in their own way, to link to the unique intellectual adventure that makes her similar to all the rest in as much as this adventure is not like any other.\(^{42}\) He writes:

> [Aesthetic experience] is a multiplication of connections and disconnections that reframe the relation between bodies, the world they live in and the way in which they are “equipped” to adapt to it. It is a multiplicity of folds and gaps in the fabric of common experience that change the cartography of the perceptible, the thinkable and the feasible.\(^{43}\)

The Weimar constitution gave women the vote and 36 of the 100 Assembly seats were occupied by elected women members\(^{44}\): the nihilism of Berlin Dada is countered by Höch through a

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speculative feminist utopian world of multiple alternatives. Cut with the Kitchen Knife can be regarded as a material instance embodying this dreaming forward philosophy. Höch’s assembly of mass media images shows subjective agency for women already at hand (now) and on the threshold of realization (anticipatory): voting in elections, leading university programs, reporting on world events, domestic partnerships with egalitarian distribution of roles, and unfettered and dynamic participation in public life. She is creating a visual vocabulary that inscribes a speculative feminist world. She also proclaims a new visual vocabulary of the traditional “women’s world” in which she worked as a pattern designer: the kitchen knife is an emblem of private sphere of the domestic realm, in contrast to the bellicose rhetoric of the public sphere (beer tent); her incorporation of stitched-over fabric pattern fragments is both iterative of her economic independence as a professional illustrator, calligrapher and designer for Ullstein’s wallpaper, fabric, dress and embroidery patterns but also to invoke a semiotic system made from the everyday haptic experiences of women knitting, sewing, crocheting, embroidering, the everyday life of women literally sutured into visual speech acts. To “cut with the kitchen knife” then is not only to create the pictorial space of the photomontage as visual utterance of the domain of women, it is to announce the imperative to sever ties with patriarchal systems by engaging in the modern world as political and social space shared with women.

In this discussion, I have endeavoured to link Höch not only to her contemporaries in the Berlin Dada group, such as Heartfield, but also to montage practice as a mode of polysemous inclusion, the conflation of this and that, to make room for emancipated women in the world.

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45 Höch’s works Dada Rundschau [Dada Panorama], 1919 and Und wenn du Denkst, der Mond geht unter [And when you think the Moon is Setting], 1921 are also explicit works addressing the advent of female politicians to the German assembly.

46 Höch’s example of the integrative as anticipatory consciousness brings to mind the migration of photomontage as insertion point for the polyvocal in postwar America. African-American artist Romare Bearden studied art under George Grosz, who taught at the Art Students League in New York in the 1930s. In the early 1960s, Bearden created a series of photomontages as part of the activist art collective Spiral for the struggle for citizenship rights for American blacks. Rather than depicting subjects directly referring to systemic brutality, vigilante “justice”, economic inequality and the armed violence against protesting citizens, the dynamic figures of Bearden’s Harlem street scenes and Southern communities are depicted as busy, already fully realized citizens absorbed in living their lives. I regard Bearden’s work as integrative, not only connecting etymologically to charged process of political desegregation and integration in the United States at this time, but also to the insistence of making visible, inserting space for, the racially marginalized.

47 See Ruth Hemus’ chapter on Höch and the construction of the female body in Dada’s Women (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 91-127.
through the reconfiguration of mass media images. It is hard to think of how Höch could have achieved this kind of speech act except for the use of photomontage as a novel lens-based medium in which it was possible to re-arrange the representation of the volatile political sphere by unmooring its vocabulary from mass media visual references (portraiture, photojournalism, promotional photography) cast a new vision of society, one at once familiar and strange. This strategy is taken up decades later in another context, the work of Martha Rosler in her gender-based critique of the Vietnam War.

3. Bringing the War Home

My interest in Martha Rosler’s series Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful (1967-1972) affords an opportunity to take a fresh look at her photomontage work from the perspective of the integrative—the making space for—that was introduced in my discussion of Höch’s work. Rosler breaks away from the “chaos” composition of Höch, featuring disjunctive scale and impossible creatures to carefully align scale and tonality between her commercial and photojournalist sources to create a smooth, unified composition, a purported “authenticity” that then challenges the originating authenticity and objectivity of her source material.

Rosler’s images, detached from their sources of origin (commercial illustrated magazines targeted to upper-middle-class households, and photojournalism respectively), insert America’s imperialist conflict (public sphere) into the very personal spaces of a passive privileged class that underwrites the conflict in the face of vociferous opposition. Rosler’s images show two sides of the traumatized: 1) wounded and displaced Vietnamese desperately seeking safety within the previously unoccupied but opulent private homes of well-to-do Americans; and 2) the faceless soldiers, America’s youth forced to serve “at the sharp end” as pawns of American anti-communism policy (and here the word “pawn” is apt since many were forced into service through the draft, and most came from lower or middle class families) and onto a single visual field.

Rosler is best known for her diverse contributions as artist and filmmaker, and through her critical writing, in particular interrogating the production and distribution of contemporary

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48 I have borrowed this term from Tim Cook, At the Sharp End Volume One: Canadians Fighting The Great War 1914 To 1916 (Viking: 2007), which details the day-to-day conditions of combatants during the First World War.
art and photography, in particular her germinal series *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Systems* (1974-1975) and *If You Lived Here* (1989), projects focused on urban advocacy in the New York area.\(^{49}\) Like her contemporaries, Hans Haacke, Allan Sekula, Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge, whose works are discussed in the chapters that follow, Rosler turned toward an avowed political art practice, initially fusing Conceptualist practice with a feminist framework, as well as numerous critical essays.\(^{50}\)

*Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful* (1967-1972) is a series of ten photomontages that bind together two concurrent arenas of everyday life that co-exist as if completely unaware of each other’s existence. Each image populates the serene and tasteful domestic interiors featured in *House Beautiful* magazine with personae drawn from America’s conflict in Vietnam: terrorized Vietnamese civilians attempt to flee plush and graceful suburban residences; American soldiers conduct stealth reconnaissance room by room in full battle gear. As Rosler recalls, the series was produced as an outgrowth of the artist’s other anti-war activities, her “frustration with the images we saw on television and print media, even with the anti-war flyers and posters. The images we saw were always very far away, in a place we couldn’t imagine.”\(^{51}\) Rosler later attributed her interest in photomontage as a practice, not to Heartfield’s *AIZ* work, of whom she has maintained she was unaware at the time, but to the disjunctive character of filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard’s technical style and approach to consumer-capitalism critiques.\(^{52}\)

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\(^{49}\) In this way she is closely linked with Krzysztof Wodiczko’s projection series *Homeless* and his later experimentation with *Homeless Vehicle*. See also Rosler’s foundational essay “Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, and Makers: Thoughts on Audience,” in *Art After Modernism. Rethinking Representation*, edited by Brian Wallis (New York and Boston: The New Museum of Contemporary Art and David R. Godine, 1984), 311-339.


\(^{52}\) Benjamin Buchloh, “Interview with Martha Rosler,” in *Martha Rosler. Positions in the Life World* (Birmingham, England: Ikon Gallery, 1998), 30. In her conversation with Buchloh, Rosler notes that as an emerging artist in the 1960s, she knew of Vertov and Eisenstein, and recalled her impression of Fluxus: it “seemed systematic and anti-institutional and rational, pervaded by a kind of European irony.” Rosler’s awareness of European practices is an indication of the fluid intellectual interchange with Europe.
Balloons [fig. 2-4] features a Vietnamese adult carrying a blood-spattered child, her anxious gaze seeking refuge as she ascends a split-level staircase from the dining room to the upper floor. As Rosler later remarked:

I felt that people did not identify with the violence inflicted on others, so I needed to try to make people see what they already knew: that the “other” world over there, in Vietnam, is as real as ‘our’ world, over here […] I felt that it was important to dispense with the imaginary split between our rights to life and comfort and the Vietnamese’s lack of rights to anything, just because we had designated them as the enemy.

In this significant statement, Rosler is pointing to the investment of mass media (and audiences) to photojournalism and documentary essays as objective evidence revealing truth, a harkening back to the attribution of the camera as a mechanical eye producing knowledge through visual representation of the world. This purported function of photography, if not interrogated, serves corporate interests by assuming the publication of photographs as a naturalized, normative practice, apart from the unseen operations of the photographer’s perspective and access, the selection and sequence of images, the addition of captions and interpretive text. The epistemological examination of what is a photograph, and the production of “knowledge” by creating and consuming images has been taken up by numerous writers, of particular note those who have considered commercial, institutional and corporate practices such as Susan Sontag, John Tagg, Ariella Azoulay, and Abigail Solomon-Godeau. There is also the problem of commodification of photojournalist and documentary images as bodies of work migrate to the art system: the practice of collecting and showing this work as framed prints in an art system:

53 Jacques Rancière identifies this figure as male (The Emancipated Spectator, 27), while Wendy Ann Parker identifies the figure as female in “Political Photomontage,” 102, as does Suzanne Grefenheuis, “Martha Rosler’s Two Series Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful and their Critical Potential in their Contexts” (Master’s thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2015), 26.


gallery/museum setting repositions the focus on the photographer as creative author, rather than on the subject of the photograph. How meaning is presented and derived is context dependent, a journey that returns us to Austin and his concept of the total speech environment, as well as Benjamin’s poignant challenge to interrogate the position of images within various frameworks, rather than what is depicted in the frame.

In returning to the exploration of *Balloons*, the open-concept living room scene is staged for architectural photography: it is remarkably tidy with minimal décor, and pictured from diagonal perspective from the top of the staircase to emphasize the double height ceiling. In this sense, the domestic scene does NOT convey the sense of the everyday; instead, it conveys the composure of private spaces when company comes, and indeed, there is a pile of party balloons to the right of the terrace sliding door. In addition to this conflation of the ordinary with the extra-ordinary, *Balloons* presents a number of other recto/verso positions: us and them, violence and serenity, timelessness (the classic taste displaced in the “show room”) and ephemerality (the condition of the wounded child, the temporary celebration indicated by the balloons).

Rancière criticized this specific work directly in his essay “The Misadventures of Critical Thought”, and points to Rosler’s strategy not only to make known the disjunctive and concurrent socio-political relationships, but also to arouse guilt on the part of the viewer: “here is the obvious reality that you do not want to see, because you know are responsible for it.” This realization of “intolerable reality”, and one’s complicity in it, leads to a kind of paralysis of denial, a cognitive dissonance, rather than empowering the viewer to take an active role in interpretation. In order for Rosler’s *Balloons* to have affect, he argues, the spectator must already be convinced that what the image shows is American imperialism, not the insanity of human beings in general. Additionally, the spectator must feel guilty about standing there and doing nothing. Ultimately, this position is in itself problematic, as it assumes a viewing subject who does not feel directly implicated, and so can be “outside” the systems that are the subject of critique; also, he presumes that the artist assumes that the viewer is a passive spectator, rather than the activator of meaning, and as such, may construct an entirely different narrative and interpretation.

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Chapter 2 The Integrative
In her study of Rosler’s *Bringing the War Home*, Suzanne Greftenhuis considers Rancière’s application of his model of spectatorship to Rosler’s *Balloons*, noting that Rosler, in creating irreconcilable juxtapositions through photomontage, already intends for a spectator to take an active role and to construct an interpretation.\(^{57}\) Greftenhuis disputes Rancière’s assessment by pointing to the “total speech situation” or emplacement of the work in its original context: “during the time that Rosler created these works, when they were distributed to support the Vietnam protest, there was a tendency of social activism. And while it might be so that art does not have the ability to bring about direct political activism, in that time, it functioned as a contribution to this upheaval of social activism.”\(^{58}\)

![Martha Rosler, First Lady, from *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful*, 1967-1972](image)


\(^{58}\) Greftenhuis, 31.
Another image from the series, *First Lady*, presents a published photograph of First Lady Pat Nixon standing amid the tasteful splendour of the White House Oval Office, presenting a welcoming smile as the ultimate American hostess, the ultimate *doyenne* of homemaking set upon the very public stage of statecraft. [fig. 2-5] Pat, her familiar and “relatable” media moniker, poses as decorative hostess and role model for all American women, standing in the very room that is at once part of her “home” (private space) and where agents of real political power, such as President Nixon and his advisers (notably, U.S. Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, ardent architect of the continuing combat)\(^59\), craft the wartime decisions affecting both American troops and Vietnamese civilians caught up in the conflict (public space). Francis Frascina recounts the actions of the Art Works Coalition (AWC) and the Artists and Writers Protest (AWP) responding to an “American way of war” that was particularly devastating for Vietnamese civilian populations through the use of saturation bombing, machine guns, chemical defoliants, such as Agent Orange, and mutilation and sexual assault.\(^60\) The soft buttery yellow of Mrs. Nixon’s full-length eveningwear is echoed in the use of that tone in the wall colours, floral arrangement and soft furnishings throughout the room, even in the lighting. Three gilt-framed pictures are visible, two of them readily identifiable: on the wall at the left of the image, the lower work is possibly *Eastport and Passamaquoddy Bay* by Victor de Grailly\(^61\); above the mantelpiece (and the figure of Mrs. Nixon) Rembrandt Peale’s so-called “porthole” portrait of George Washington as military commander of the Revolutionary Army has been replaced by a film still featuring the bullet-riddled body of Faye Dunaway from Arthur Penn’s 1967 film *Bonnie and Clyde*. [fig. 2-6]


\(^61\) The past and present works of art featured in the Oval Office, and elsewhere in White House are documented at http://www.whitehousereseach.org/assetbank-whha/action/viewHome
[fig. 2-6a] detail from *First Lady*

[fig. 2-6b] film still from *Bonnie and Clyde*, 1967
Here the suture is the substitution of a stylized theatrically posed outlaw death in place of a legendary male battle commander, and both replaced by/standing for an (invisible) unnamed civilian casualty of the Vietnam War. This image appears to “float” above the First Lady’s bouffant coiffure; in fact, it appears to be a perverse “crown”, with the mantelpiece and candlesticks on either side of the figure framing her in a bizarre royal enthronement. The two women (one dead, one looking outward to address our gaze) are literally conjoined and yet unaware of each other; it is we, as viewers, who are empowered to behold the two narratives simultaneously. Rosler’s juxtapositions posit scenarios that go beyond the representation of the war to the literal insertion of the war into the domestic sphere. In this way, Rosler forces the confrontation of the bloodshed of a faraway war with the sanitized everyday life of citizens who do not wish to “see”.

As she later recalled in conversation with Benjamin Buchloh, both the earlier and later series point to “all the myths of everyday life stitched together form a seamless envelope of ideology, the false accounts of the workings of the world.” In this series, Rosler’s performative operation knits the together (visually fetishized) domestic interiors with the (previously averted) documentation of trauma on foreign soil. The suture is then integrative, presenting two equally true and yet irreconcilable propositions. As Laura Cottingham writes, “Rosler’s Bringing the War Home asks us to consider the real social and economic connections between our comfortable sofas and someone else’s dead body”. This “and/less” address not only conjoins dyads such as us/them, now/then, here/there, and protagonist/victim, but also pointedly questions the false division between them.

62 Rosler created a revival of the series in 2004 in response to American military action combatting Iraqi forces in Kuwait, known as the Gulf War. In this later series, she again employed the domestic interior as the insertion point for images of combat and the role of media as a complicit communication agent. In both instances of the Vietnam War and the Gulf War, the combat action took place far removed from the everyday life of ordinary Americans. Discussing the Gulf War, Paul Rogers reminds us that the strategic use of American technology far from North America did not result in a “clean war” for the Iraqis and Kuwaitis. The myth of the clinically clean air war was conveyed by the media through briefings from Saudi Arabia that it was a precision war against physical targets, and not against people. Tens of thousands military personnel and fleeing civilians were killed by weapons, many of them developed during the Vietnam War, such as the successors to napalm and similar fuel-air explosives and slurry bombs, as well as cluster bombs and the Multiple Rocket Launch System. Paul Rogers, “The Myth of the Clean War,” in Incorporations, edited by Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter, (New York: Urzone, 1992), 622-623.

Rosler was not alone in applying the montage technique to the invocation of American imperialism and media saturation during the 1960s: she was one of many hundreds of artists who mobilized against the Vietnam War, notably Angry Arts Week which took place in New York City from January 26 to February 5, 1967, the largest collective aesthetic endeavour to occur during the war.\(^{64}\) One of the participants of the Angry Arts Week, Carolee Schneeman, is of interest in this discussion because of her interest in montage, mass-circulating images, and the representation of atrocity images. In her 16mm film *Viet-Flakes* (1965), her camera moves continuously over images of atrocities compiled over years from newspapers and magazines. The soundtrack consists of popular songs that abruptly cut off to create a parallel disorienting *bricolage* of structural effects in sound. Years later, Schneeman remarked that this work was borne of her own experience viewing disturbing mass published images that began to produce hallucinations, such as seeing Vietnamese bodies hanging from trees and her kitchen transformed into burned out villages.\(^{65}\)

Other works of the period also address aspects of America’s military-industrial complex and mass culture. Silkscreen works of this period by Robert Rauschenberg, a leading artist of the previous generation, incorporate painted brushstrokes, smudges, smears, scratchings, overlays, pencil drawings and other gestures of the artist with fragments of images culled from mass culture. For instance, *Buffalo II* (1964) features allusive references to power and consumerism through a polysemic “image poem” that combines the large-scale reproduction of the towering figure of President Kennedy pointing his finger during remarks given at a press conference with an image of house keys, an exterior view featuring a sign that reads “cafeteria”, the image of an eagle and behind it, the logo for Coca-Cola, an astronaut with parachute, an isometric drawing of a cube, and a helicopter in flight.\(^{66}\) In James Rosenquist’s monumental multi-panel painting *F-111* (1964–1965), the glittering fuselage of the F-111 bomber seems to fly through the flak of


\(^{65}\) Reported by Matthew Israel, in personal correspondence with Carolee Schneeman (March, 24, 2009) and described in *Kill for Peace*, 70. Israel also discusses Rosler’s *Bringing the War Home* in this chapter.

contemporary life: the grooved tread pattern of a radial tire; the dripping of frosting in the centre of a ring cake; a smiling girl beneath the bonnet of a salon hairdryer, which also recalls the nose cone of an intercontinental ballistic missile; a beach umbrella conflated over the red roiling burst of a nuclear explosion; a bubble of air from a scuba diver’s regulator repeating the archetypal cloud shape of the atomic bomb; the orange and red slithering of spaghetti.

The third example I would cite here is Edward Kienholz’s 1968 mixed-media sculptural installation *The Portable War Memorial*. This work invokes multiple everyday references: a trash can on two legs with a head sticking out on top emits a recorded version of the unofficial national anthem, Irving Berlin’s *God Bless America* performed by patriotic singer Kate Smith; raising the flag at Iwo Jima from the iconic (staged) photograph; a World War I Uncle Sam recruiting poster with his bony finger pointing at you; to the right is a blackboard on which are scrawled the names of 475 nations that no longer exist because of wars; and beyond that, a couple eat their hot dogs next to a Coke machine at a fast food counter.

I regard the works described above as sharing with Rosler’s photomontages a “backwash” of the ubiquitous and incessant cacophony of the everyday. The viewer must still do the work of navigating the familiar and the mundane among the fragments of snapshots, signage, newspapers, television reportage, commercial printing, reproductions of high art, etc., and recognize their own intersubjectivity as participants/consumers in a network of product-making and war-making systems.

4. Performing the Everyday

Höch’s optimistic *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* pictures the New Woman engaged in the convulsive interwar public sphere, a dynamic equal alongside the New Man. Rosler shares with Höch the project of making space for, of creating a perspective to integrate into dominant discourse. In the case of Höch, this is her encompassing and tumultuously populated “bulletin board universe” as a single image, and in the case of Rosler, it is the creation of a series of montages that both portray and disrupt the organization of the private (and gendered) domestic sphere through the fusion of and public reference to the everyday.

The concept of the “everyday” comes from manifold sources, from *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc du Berry* portraying people engaged in typical and cyclical agrarian tasks across the course of a year, to the fastidious (or not) housekeeping of seventeenth-century Dutch genre
painting or to Joyce’s astonishing modern picture of everyday life across twenty-four hours in the life of an ordinary man in *Ulysses*. These portrayals present life as the *aggregation* of tasks and interactions across a linear sequence of (ordinary) days.

Maurice Blanchot writes: “The everyday is what we are first of all, and most often: at work, at leisure, awake, asleep, in the street, in private existence. The everyday, then, is ourselves ordinarily.”\(^{67}\) From the perspective of visual representation, the everyday is present in the consumption of media (fictitiously) *portraying* the everyday: newspaper images, magazine pictorials, Hollywood film stills, and personal snapshots that are agents in normativizing quotidian experience. Depicted in the distilled serenity of Rosler’s compositions are the seemingly incongruous yet simultaneous components of everyday life: militarism and peace, capitalism and communism, the individual and the collective, the rational and the uncanny, etc. Rosler’s conflation of two “everyday” worlds—scenes of comfortable harmony at home with dislocation (here) and carnage in Vietnam violence (there)—also serves to contest the premise of universal human experience presented more than a decade earlier in Edward Steichen’s 1955 photography exhibition and book *The Family of Man*. Featuring 500+ images of people around the world, mostly contributed by photojournalists: “It was conceived as a mirror of the universal elements and emotions in the everydayness of life- as a mirror of the essential oneness of mankind throughout the world.”\(^{68}\)

Henri Lefebvre, in his analysis of space in everyday life, draws attention to the French parallel *la vie quotidienne*, referring to the *repetitive* nature of life and the modern awakening consciousness of it.\(^{69}\) Rosler was particularly interested in Lefebvre’s influential identification of

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68 Edward Steichen, *The Family of Man* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1955), 4. Steichen’s project performed its own rhetoric at the height of Cold War tension a vision of a peaceable human community. While Roland Barthes critiqued the exhibition as a dehistoricized pluralist mythology in which mankind experiences elements of life in the same way everywhere, Ariella Azoulay’s has argued for the recuperation of the project as an anticipatory visual declaration of human rights. Her argument is fascinating, however, in my view, it asks a lot of Steichen, former practitioner of heavily worked pictorialist photography then crisp focus modernism, and lifelong champion of art photography, to have intended this political stance. See Roland Barthes, “The Great Family of Man,” in *Mythologies*, translated by Annette Lavers (London: Grafton, 1973), 100-102; and Ariella Azoulay’s “‘The Family of Man’: A Visual Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” in *The Human Snapshot*, edited by Thomas Keenan and Tirdad Zolghadr (Fedlmeilen, Switzerland: LUMA Foundation, 2013), 19-48.

the potentiality of social space as the site of fresh actions, of everyday life transformed by the theatrical mise-en-scène, and most importantly from the perspective of an integrative image act, creating a transgressive representation of marginalized citizens excluded from a normatizing centre. In her many critical projects, Rosler connects the depiction of social space with an interrogation of the photographic practices that render it, so that both the image and its frame invite interrogation from the viewer. The catalogue for the 1998 retrospective of Rosler’s work is subtitled Positions in the Lifeworld (after Lefebvre’s Everyday Life in the Modern World), recognizing the fusion of the artist’s exploration of everyday life with her sustained critique of the positions (recalling Benjamin’s challenge in “The Author as Producer”) from which her appropriated source materials are derived.70 These positions point to tropes in photographic practice itself, entrenched not only in the practices of originating photographers but also in the genres of image distribution, acquisition and preservation, in sum, the entire phenomenon of mass-produced photography itself as both created and consumed spectacle. Vertov thought of his camera eye (“I”) as an improved human eye, enhancing perception and thereby knowledge, along with related photographic technologies such as the x-ray, the microscope, the telescope. Rosler’s consistent interrogation of modes of photography (documentary, photojournalism, portraiture, the snapshot, and as I will discuss, broadcast television) dismantles the putative objectivity to point to the incommensurate power relations of objectification. The title of Rosler’s most acclaimed work points to the ontological and ethical problems inherent in documentary photography: The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems (1974–1975). Rosler creates a grid formation of photographs of New York City’s Bowery district storefronts and alleyways littered with empty bottles side-by-side with type words referring to inebriation. In this work, Rosler avoids the trope of Sekula’s “look down” from privileged observer to dispossessed victim71, while at the same time pointing to the semiological assumptions and inadequacies inherent in both word and image.

In Bringing the War Home, Rosler interrogates genres of photography outside art practice: photojournalism, commercial photography and personal snapshots. This photomontage


series represents the theatre of war set within the American home, and indeed the media coverage of the Vietnam War was referred to as “America’s first living room war”, meaning the transmission of information through television broadcasting. Another sense in which Rosler addresses daily life is her counterpractice against mainstream photojournalism, as she notes “war photography as currently understood, taking pictures of victims, is of course exquisitely voyeuristic. It has become hard to know what to make of war photography since the transit time from the battlefield to the coffee-table book to the gallery wall has shrunk so drastically.” Rosler referred to mass media coverage as way to render passivity, to make viewers into “audience spectators rather than citizen participants.” By integrating photographic fragments from the masculinized public sphere, crossing the sacrosanct threshold into the feminized private domain, Rosler specifically seeks to explore the circumscription of gendered spaces.

Red Stripe Kitchen [fig. 2-7] features le dernier cri in modern kitchen design: white-and-red colour scheme, smooth minimalist cabinet panels, integrated sink and stove with bar-style countertop for entertaining. Like Dutch genre painting, a meal seems to be in progress—a magazine or cookbook is positioned open near the cooking utensils, dishware set up to serve it, but where is the hostess? She is absent. The “guests” are, in fact, intruders, American soldiers in full combat gear visible in the “frames” created by the entranceways to the kitchen. They are, however, oblivious to the chic set up in the kitchen: they are bent over, examining the ground perhaps sweeping for unexploded Vietcong shells or buried landmines. This “sweep” is entirely tactical and entirely at odds with the domestic environment and the gendered homekeeping it

72 Martha Rosler, quoted by Val Williams in Warworks, 52. Rosler points to war photographer Don McCullin in particular as an exemplar of the extreme grotesque school of war imagery.

73 Rosler, quoted in Val Williams, Warworks. Women, Photography and the Iconography of War (London: Virago, 1994), 52. Rosler has commented on the coverage of the war through television news and the LIFE magazine photoessay on the massacre at My Lai (December 5, 1969) as fetishizing victims from a grotesque school of war imagery. Francis Frascina notes the heavy partiality to the pro-war perspective confirmed in later studies that US news media were dependent on information provided by the federal Executive Branch and placed their faith in the moral authority of the White House. Frascina, “My Lai, Guernica, MoMA and the art left, New York 1969-90,” in Art, Politics and Dissent: Aspects of the Art Left in Sixties America, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 165-168.

74 Guy Westwell has analyzed the Super8 amateur movies created by American troops serving in Vietnam: despite their situation on foreign soil, the soldiers create a new “everyday” of personal and private space, featuring shots of relaxing with buddies, playing with nearby children or dogs, and other instances of a pseudo-suburban lifestyle within the institutionalized space of the army. “The Domestic Vision of Vietnamese Home Movies,” in The Image and the Witness. Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture, edited by Frances Guerin and Roger Hallis (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2007), 143-155.

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implies. Rosler specifically identifies the theatre of war as gendered: “increasingly portrayed as a proving ground for men, not against the background of the domestic world, but rather a male-bonded Rambo society.”

Rosler revived the series as a response to George W. Bush’s “War on Terror”, the invasion of Iraq by a United States-led coalition that overthrew the government of Saddam Hussein. In *Bringing the War Home* (2004–2008), Rosler again employed the recombination of disparate images and the domestic interior as the insertion point for images of combat and the role of media as a complicit communication agent, deliberately drawing a connection to conflicted moral positions of the Vietnam War to those of the Iraq War. Themes of the interconnectedness of militarism and consumerism are revisited, as are the social constructions of photojournalism and advertising (visualized as a riff from Bush’s fatuous statement for a “few of us to go to war and the rest of us to go shopping”), and the gendered representation of women by both modes.

What is new in this series is the additional examination of the ubiquity and circulation of images in the age of digital photography. Rosler’s constructions reference both emerging constructs of photography as a medium (selfie culture, soldier trophy shots), and methods of production: instead of the cut-and-paste technique deployed for circulation by grassroots anti-war networks, the updated series is constructed as a series of prints made from digitally constructed compositions.

Like *Red Stripe Kitchen, Election (Lynndie)* is located in a state-of-the-art kitchen. In the centre of the kitchen, American soldier Private Lynndie England stands holding a leash that disappears behind a counter, instantly recognizable as the notorious “trophy” snapshot taken at Abu Ghraib prison, in which the leash terminates around the neck of naked Iraqi detainee lying

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75 The term “homekeeping” itself is identified now as a term associated with entrepreneur and lifestyle maven Martha Stewart, a pseudo-managerial position elevated from “housekeeping”, traditionally associated with doing domestic chores.

76 Rosler, quoted in *Warworks*, 56.


78 Quoted by Greftenhuis, “Martha Rosler’s Two Series *Bringing the War Home*.” 40.
on the floor of the prison block. [fig. 2-8 a,b] According to a leaked copy of an investigation report completed in late February 2004 and obtained by *The New Yorker*, there were numerous instances of “sadistic, blatant and wanton criminal abuses” of Abu Ghraib detainees by American personnel between October and December 2003.\(^79\) Photographic evidence that was gathered during the investigation was not included in it due to its “extremely sensitive nature”, but a selection of images were broadcast on CBS’s 60 Minutes in early May 2004, just prior to the publication of Hersh’s article. Among the images shown during the broadcast were the hooded Iraqi standing on a box with arms outstretched, and the photograph showing Private England giving a jaunty thumbs-up sign and pointing at the genitals of the naked Iraqi prisoner on the floor.

This particular image, when widely circulated was shocking not only as a documentation of torture of Iraqi prisoners in the custody of American soldiers, but *because* it takes the form as a casual trophy image taken by a participating soldier (instead of a “concerned” photojournalism image), *and* because the soldier perpetrating the depicted savagery is female, upending preconceptions about women in the military.\(^80\)

\(^79\) In *The New Yorker* article that exposed the scandal of American soldiers torturing Iraqi prisoners, Seymour M. Hersh described the prison (located twenty miles west of Baghdad) during the era of Saddam Hussein, as “one of the world’s most notorious prisons, with torture, weekly executions, and vile living conditions.” “Torture at Abu Ghraib,” *The New Yorker* (May 10, 2004). Accessed November 16, 2018, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/05/10/torture-at-abu-ghraib

Following the collapse of the Hussein regime, the prison was deserted and stripped, then repaired by American forces to hold several thousand Iraqis detained at checkpoints and picked up in random military sweeps.

\(^80\) England was convicted on September 26, 2005, of one count of conspiracy, four counts of maltreating detainees and one count of committing an indecent act. She was acquitted on a second conspiracy count. England had faced a maximum sentence of ten years. She was sentenced on September 27, 2005, to three years confinement, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, reduction to Private (E-1) and received a dishonourable discharge. England had served her sentence at Naval Consolidated Brig, Miramar. https://www.starwelfare.org/s154-c132/pakistan-abu-ghraib-torture-and-abuse
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[fig. 2-8b] Snapshot Private Lynndie England, the source image for Rosler’s montage

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81 I have selected an augmented published version of the image that protects the identity of the leashed prisoner. Snapshot showing Private Lynndie England at Abu Ghraib, 2003. U.S. Army / Criminal Investigation Command (CID). The full caption reads:
Rosler also inserts photos of abused prisoners that appear on appliances and books throughout the room, conveying the infection of the war in everything.\textsuperscript{82} A closer look at the profusion of imagery that saturates the kitchen space amplifies this reference: at the far left, a magazine rack displays commercial magazines with titles such as \textit{Saveur} and \textit{Food + Wine}, each one featuring a large image derived the cache of soldier-made snapshots of torture and debasement of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib. The topmost image, in particular, reproduces the symbol of this shameful chapter in American military conduct, the hooded man standing on a cardboard box, with wires attached to his outstretched arms. The privileging of bodies, and parts of bodies, on these magazine covers, renders the display as a kind of pornographic sadism produced for the domestic consumption of average consumers, which it, in fact, became through endless circulation. In the center of the work, the figure of hooded man reappears as the design of potholders casually strewn onto the countertops; at far right, a \textit{New York Times} article dated October 11, 2004 reads “Be Part of the Solution” is pasted onto the front of a cupboard next to the cooktop. The citation of Lynndie holding her leash does not include her victim, as the leash continues past the island, obscuring its terminal point. Lynndie’s actual victims are portrayed as photos occupying the windowpanes of the double oven window behind her. The space beyond the boundaries of the residence, the world outside which should appear through the large glass wall corner of the kitchen, features instead a photojournalism-style image featuring an explosion or car fire fills the windows. Like \textit{Red Stripe Kitchen}, this kitchen is up-to-date and sumptuous in its décor and appliances; like the earlier work, the boundaries between here and there, harmony and violence, safety and danger become disoriented.

Two points stand out for me. The first is Judith Butler’s commentary on the concept of precarity, the degrees to which our lives are precarious based on our socio-geographical situation, and the relative value of each human life. In both the early and the later series of

\textsuperscript{82} It is characteristic of this sequel series that the composition is denser in terms of the number of fragmented elements that are introduced into the composition, and brings to mind the theatrical tableaux of works by Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge discussed later in this study.

Bringing the War Home, Rosler activates this critique literally through the juxtaposition of images that present the domestic sphere as both a zone of safety and economic security (illustrated magazines and advertisements), and the locus for violence and chaos into the comfortable safety of American’s homes (photojournalism, personal snapshots). In this sense, the complacency of the everyday and the habitual are shattered, exchanged for the outrage of torture made visible.

The problem of the visual representation of war and violence in the post-9/11 period has been addressed by numerous writers, commenting on the creation, circulation and consumption of images such as the Abu Ghraib “trophy” snapshots. A second key point is the existence of the (thousands of) Abu Ghraib images wherein the very act of photography is itself a component of torture: photos are taken not merely for evidentiary purposes, but the torture is performed so that the image may be created and circulated as a kind of proof and form of shaming.

This is a good point to introduce archival practice as a recurrent element to several of the montage artists that I did discuss in this study. Rosler selects components of her images not only from an archive of published commercial photography (in the form of back issues of magazines), but also from what W.J.T. Mitchell refers to as “the Abu Ghraib archive”, a body of texts and images, recordings and remembrances that is centrally constituted by, but not limited to, the 279 photographs and nineteen video clips gathered by the Army’s Criminal Investigation Command (CID). This archive not only provides the images that become visual evidence of the largely


84 I refer here to proof and humiliation in the context of political domination of an enemy, and also in the context of sexual shaming through related acts at Abu Ghraib involving naked prisoners, and prisoners forced to undertake sexual acts. Although she does not discussed Abu Ghraib images, Martha C. Nussbaum’s analysis of forms of sexual objectification in literary (and pseudo-literary) texts, and her consideration of earlier work on this subject by Andrea Dworkin, Audrey Lorde and Catherine MacKinnon, are helpful: “Objectification,” Philosophy and Public Affairs 24/4 (Autumn 1995):219-291.

85 W.J.T. Mitchell, Cloning Terror, 112. Mitchell discusses the concept of archive as both a repository and as a source for circulation (cloning), “a reservoir of power like storage batteries that can be tapped at will.” (122) Mitchell also cites additional critical studies: Stephen Eisenman, The Abu Ghraib Effect (London: Reaktion Books, 2007); Abu Ghraib: The Politics of Torture, a collection of essay by Meron Benvenisti, Mark Danner, Barbara
invisible operations, the “dark labyrinth”\textsuperscript{86} in the War on Terror. The visual depiction of traumatic debasement of prisoners by Americans in Iraq added intensity not only to the political rhetoric of the controversial military intervention, but also as iconic mass culture memes. This circulation of memes through “the \textit{mille plateaux} of tweets, blogs, and Instagram and Facebook postings,” Geert Lovink argues, fosters a spectacularized and fragmented culture of deep confusion, rather than the promise of emancipation of marginal voices: in his view, we risk remaining “encapsulated, captured, inside cybernetic loops that go nowhere, in which meaningless cycles of events, series, and seasons pass by.”\textsuperscript{87}

The images were also incorporated into artistic production. Within five months of their shocking publication, seventeen of the Abu Ghraib photographs had been integrated into the exhibition \textit{Inconvenient Evidence} (International Center of Photography, New York, 2004). Critic Michael Kimmelman, writing about the exhibition, noted the problem of re-representing these mutable images in a “white cube” gallery, of including images showing humiliated or helpless prisoners, of adding to the perpetual circulation of memes.\textsuperscript{88} The public revelation of the soldiers’ trophy images also prompted Colombia artist Fernando Botero to create a series of large scale paintings, imaginary gruesome scenes of prison abuse, this time based on narrative accounts published in newspapers.\textsuperscript{89} This series debuted in an exhibition in Rome at the Palazzo Venezia in 2005. Rosler recuperated the archive/meme images by juxtaposing the mass-circulated representation of torture with other kinds of pictorial representation: the illusionism of

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\textsuperscript{86} Ibid, 127.


The expanding accumulation of the Abu Ghraib archive and its applications was complemented by the accelerating transmission of war images via internet: “Inspired by a steady rise over the last 18 months in the number of people with high-speed Internet access, now more than 70 million in the United States, the Web sites of many of the major news organizations have hastily assembled a novel collage of live video, audio reports, photography collections, animated weaponry displays, interactive maps and other new digital reportage.” David D. Kirkpatrick, “War Images Give New Purpose to High-Speed Web,” \textit{New York Times} (March 24, 2003). Accessed May 18, 2018 https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/24/business/media-war-images-give-new-purpose-to-high-speed-web.html


commercial photographic practices, the memorializing function of snapshots, and the evidentiary value of witness/perpetrator testimony. Her second *House Beautiful* series forms a globalist proposition critiquing how all aspects of contemporary private life become permeated by the violence of a public policy dependent on imperialistic intervention.

5. C is for Chopper

The gendering of the kitchen environment and its role in performing normative codes were also explored by Rosler around the time of the first *House Beautiful* series. In her germinal video production *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1973-1974), the camera is focussed tight on Rosler, a young woman wearing an apron standing in a kitchen in front of a refrigerator. Rosler performs before a table with various implements, suggesting her role as an instructor, consciously referencing popular cooking show presenters of the day, such as Julia Child, not to mention an apparent satire of home economics classes then held in American high schools as mandatory courses for girls and young women. The 11-minute “class” spools out an abecedary demonstrating hand tools used in the kitchen (chopper, eggbeater, ice pick, juicer, knife, nutcracker, tenderizer, etc.), replacing their domesticated “meaning” as gender-specific implements to prepare and serve food with abrupt gestures of rage and frustration; looking deadpan at the camera, Rosler recites “C … chopper” and makes loud chopping motions in a metal bowl. [fig. 2-9]

Rosler’s critique, which unfolds as both ludic and threatening, is aimed at two powerful discourses. The first vector is the interrogation of the oppressive relationship between woman and language being explored during this period. In foundational works such as Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1949; 1953 first English translation), Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* (1970), powerful analyses placed historical and contemporary contexts pointing to the many ways in which women were disenfranchised not only from social power but language itself. In addition, the writing of women such as American

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90 On a personal note, these books, as well as the first issues of *Ms Magazine* and other feminist publications, were part of my mother’s emancipation in the early 1970s, which also included leaving her marriage, going to graduate school, and canvassing for Canada’s left-wing political parties. I think my mother ventured in this direction in part as a revolt against the association of her small-town name, Mary Kay, with the women’s cosmetics firm of the same name, in which top sellers drive flashy pink Cadillacs. As a teenager, I read the books on her shelf, a form of empowerment that balanced the otherwise regressive sexual politics of most rock music, and trying (unsuccessfully) to be skinny enough to fit coveted Howick “ballroom dancer” flared jeans.
poets Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton were giving voice to the stifling insularity of private space and bringing it forward into the public sphere. In her dismantling of the model homes of the *Bringing the War Home* series, and the kitchen of *C is for Chopper*, Rosler repudiates the gendering of spaces that creates the disconnection between private and public spheres.

The second vector for Rosler’s critique is the promulgation of gendered roles through mainstream network television news and entertainment, and her choices as video artists shares qualities of many early feminist videos as a medium to “speak back”. Molesworth notes that disruptive techniques such as theatrical performance, wrenched pacing, unexpected edits, and long shots rather than close ups, all served to point to the mediation of the medium itself, and dismantle “naturalized” television production.91

Political philosopher Carole Pateman contends, “the public sphere is always assumed to throw light onto the private sphere, rather than vice versa.”92 In this way, the integrative is a connective strategy and Rosler herself directly discusses the role of integrative perspectives: “It was feminism that underlined for me that it is life on the ground, in its quotidian, thoroughly familiar details, that makes up life as lived and understood but that bears a deeper scrutiny.”93 As Molesworth interprets Pateman’s statement, “one legacy of feminist criticism is to establish that it is utterances from the private sphere that can help to rearticulate the public sphere, as opposed to the other way around.”94

In their complex compositions, Höch and Rosler invoke manifestations of the domestic environment (the home, the kitchen, making clothes, childcare) as a way of forcing the everyday of women into public discourse. Their challenge to the representation of women in their respective

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91 See Helen Molesworth, “House Work and Art Work,” *October* 92 (Spring 2000):71-97. In this article, she considers the relative essentialist and social constructionist readings of work by Rosler, Judy Chicago, Mary Kelly, and Mierle Laderman Ukeles.

92 Quoted by Molesworth, 83.

93 Martha Rosler, “For an Art Against the Mythology of Everyday Life,” in *Decoys and Disruptions. Selected Writings, 1975-2001*, an *October* Book (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press in association with the International Center of Photography, 2004), ix. See also Rosler’s essay “The Figure of the Artist, the Figure of the Woman” detailing the emergence of feminist art practice in the 1960s and 1970s, published in the same volume.

94 Molesworth, 83.
[fig. 2-9] Martha Rosler, stills from *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, 1975
times exceeds the boundaries of content only. I would argue further that the works discussed here (including other works by these artists that I have not included in the discussion here) incorporate the “women’s work” of stitching as both a means of technical production (suture) and as a metaphor for the insertion of women into public discourse (the scar).

Can we regard montage as a specifically feminist strategy? In the late nineteenth century, in England and certain colonies of the British Empire, it was common for genteel girls and women to create scrapbook albums as a leisure activity augmenting other accomplishments such as fine needlework, watercolour painting or playing an instrument: these might include formal studio portraits, informal snapshots, dried flowers, clippings from newspapers, postcards, poetry, and so on, commemorating one’s close relations or perhaps an exotic trip. During the First World War, care packages were sent to the front by female volunteers from both sides of the conflict that would include newspapers, magazine clippings, postcards and reproductions of works of art. In these activities, like Höch and Rosler’s radical practices to follow, women become the authors of new narratives, torn and cut, glued and stitched, shot and spliced, made from mass media sources of dominant culture.

6. Emplacement

It is important to comment on the circumstances of the original display of the works by Höch and Rosler in their respective times. I see the integrative as inherently problematic as a political speech act: as a strategy to make space for new protagonists in the discursive space, it depends on both access (to circulation channels) and on accessibility (getting beyond the sphere of the already converted). Here, Lucy Lippard’s phrase “the housework of art” is apt referring to the curatorial work of emplacement, which is in itself, implicitly gendered as the ordering and tidying of museal spaces.

95 Examples that come to mind are the snapshot albums of the Edwardian socialite, Lady Ottoline Morell, preserved by the National Portrait Gallery in London, as well as by Victorian ladies residing in Canada, for instance, the scrapbook albums of Carolyn Little, preserved by Library and Archives Canada.


The concept of emplacement in the context of this discussion refers to the consequences of the placing of photographs onto various kinds of public stages, both in that moment as well as the resulting implications for historiography. As introduced by Roger Hull in his essay “Emplacement, Displacement and the Fate of Photographs,” emplacement concerns the codification around how works are presented (connecting back to Austin’s total speech environment), and his particular discussion concerns the decisions made by Alfred Stieglitz and by his contemporary, Rudolph Eickemeyer, Jr., now largely forgotten. Hull writes:

Whether a photograph is exhibited in gallery or club rooms, published as halftone or photogravure, on newsprint or fine paper, as illustration or artistic image, or as a component in advertising layout or in a folio of fine prints—all of these are encoding factors which provide clues to the viewer on how to read the image, what to make of it, how to value it in relationship to others like it, and ultimately whether to receive it (and perceive it) with respect or disdain.98

I think of emplacement as a kind of Venn diagram “shared” zone between artist’s intentionality and the audience’s meaning-making by mapping established codes, or as Austin would say, conventions.

Unlike the prolific publication opportunities that Heartfield secured through Malik Verlag and AIZ publishing channels, Höch did not mass circulate her photomontages during the 1920s. Lavin comments that Höch’s preoccupation with the New Woman and modern political, societal and sexual freedoms set her apart as a different kind of radical from her male colleagues and as a consequence, her photomontages were little known except among her immediate contemporaries.99 Her work was included in the prestigious 1929 exhibition, Film und Foto, in Stuttgart, and thereafter her work was included in several exhibitions featuring photomontage.100 Höch remained in Berlin throughout the Second World War in a small home she purchased in Heiligensee, a town on the northwest outskirts of Berlin. She later credited the survival of her entire art output—to this wartime relocation, which put her beyond the air raids of Berlin.101

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99 Lavin, Cut with the Kitchen Knife, 17.

100 Peter Boswell, “Hannah Höch: Through the Looking Glass”, 15. The largest exhibition of her photomontages was hosted in 1934 in Brno, Czechoslovakia.

She continued to accrue an archive of photographs clipped from periodicals, and to create photomontages for the rest of her life. Her work was increasingly exhibited internationally and the largest retrospective was organized by the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris and the Berlin Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen PreuBischer in 1976. She took avid interest in the October 1957 launching of Sputnik, the first space capsule sent into orbit around the earth, and in space exploration in general. With the advent of Pop Art in the early 1960s and revived interest in Dada, Höch was interviewed about her Berlin colleagues, such as the 1973 radio series *Jene zwanziger Jahre* [Those 1920s], as well as the subject for study by feminist art historians seeking to recover the careers of artists overshadowed by their male counterparts.

In the 1970s, at the height of American tension around the Vietnam War, Rosler made a choice NOT to let images from the *Bringing the War Home* series circulate in museum settings, which she felt would be a commodification of the sufferings caused by the war, in America and in Vietnam. Images from the series were published in the alternative press that supported resistance to the war, and this was part of Rosler’s intentional strategy to reach beyond a high-art audience to engage a more general audience. Her foundational essay, “Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, and Makers: Thoughts on Audience,” discusses her resistance to the commodification and absorption of her message by art institutions.

What is art? If one is to believe, as I do, that art provides a different frame for interpreting experience (although clobbered in its reach by corporate media) and offers the possibility of intelligible political engagement, then the flattening of political art by trendiness or vital but short-term political exigencies is a missed opportunity.

Rosler did eventually allow the works to be featured at MOMA as part of retrospective along with other works with reference to domestic environment. Rosler’s later series was placed directly into a fine art context, arguably to use joint civic space to engage a more diverse contemporary art-going audience. 2004 was not 1972, and Rosler envisioned the

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102 Makholm, “Chronology,” 206-207.

103 Ibid.


museum/gallery as a space for women as speaking subjects, an application of the integrative into the operations of art and its institutional systems in seeking gender parity for artists.

This discussion of Höch and Rosler—of their works and of their choices regarding emplacement—points to the integrative as a distinct strategy apart from Heartfield’s combative image acts discussed in the previous chapter. Their technical and semantic choices do not extend the antagonism that typified Dada negation. The point I am developing here has to do with the decisions made by/made for Höch and Rosler in showing their works to spectators/audiences: Höch is largely overshadowed by male contemporaries in her own time, and then swept away with a Nazi entartete kunst broom; Rosler restricts reproduction to her Bringing the War Home series to small circulation anti-war newsletters and pamphlets, and intentionally withholds sending the works into the art market/art gallery domain, until the Gulf War series is created, in part so as not to invoke the vulgarity of a benefit based on the rising death count of American soldiers and Vietnamese civilians alike. This ties back to the idea of utterance as event rather than object.

Christine Filippone references the practices of both Höch and Rosler in the context of systems theory, departing from the work of influential Austrian-American biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy.106 Von Bertalanffy studied the flow of energy and information within and across environments: he distinguished between closed systems, characterized as compartmentalized, monologic and repetitive, referring to the sciences of engineering and automation, and open systems which emphasize flexibility, pluralism and transformation. Filippone links the latter to the aspirational speculative feminist utopias envisaged by Höch. Photomontage as a medium, is an open system, centred on detaching and recycling fragments from their own closed systems to create entirely novel propositions. In a discussion about placing works of art in environments for viewing, it is relevant that the art world (and modernism generally) is identified by Filippone as a closed system, accessible only to select members.

The operation of this closed system as an inherently masculine domain has been the central focus of the activist group, the Guerrilla Girls, a group of New York-based artists, curators and educators, to bring attention to and redress the marked disproportionality of women artists represented in gallery exhibitions and museum collections. The Guerrilla Girls formed in 1985 in response to the Museum of Modern Art’s international survey of painting and sculpture, which featured thirteen women artists of a total of 169. Even fewer artists of colour were chosen and none of these were women. Drawing from the framework of conceptual art practice, they sustained an institutional critique campaign over the next decade, which continues today, as the “conscience of the art world”. Their manifold activities have spread across multiple platforms, from hosting agitprop street theatre and panel discussions, to disruptive interventions at art events to publishing posters, magazine advertisements, and the newsletter *Hot Flashes*, to a comprehensive website with resources and merchandise.

At their public events, the members appear *en masque*, all wearing gorilla masks, in part to detach their individual identities from the collective project, and on a more practical level, to safeguard against retribution by their art world colleagues. They have also adopted code names honouring previous women artists, such as Georgia O’Keeffe, Frida Kahlo, Lee Krasner, Käthe Kollwitz, etc. The performance of the Guerrilla Girls was to elide the (potentially menacing) animal (gorilla) with the transgressive role of guerrilla warfare, and also to play with the conflation of passive “girls” with aggressive animals/warriors.

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108 A more recent action has been the Guerrilla Girls “takeover” of over twenty arts and cultural organizations in Minneapolis/St. Paul and surrounding cities from January to March 2016. From small non-profit art centers to major cultural institutions in the region, these partners highlighted gender and race inequalities, taking on stereotypes and hypocrisies, and promoting artistic expression by the often overlooked and underrepresented. ([https://www.guerrillagirls.com/exhibitions](https://www.guerrillagirls.com/exhibitions)) For a history of the group, see Elizabeth Hess, “Guerrilla Girl Power: Why the Art World Needs a Conscience,” in *But Is It Art? The Spirit of Art as Activism*, edited by Nina Felshin (Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1995), 309-332.

109 It is entirely possible that Martha Rosler is one of the founding members of this group.
One of their first works, *Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?*, became a signature poster [fig. 2-10] and featured the head of a “guerrilla girl” superimposed onto the supine body of Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres’ *Grande Odalisque* (1814), with the printed information “Less than 5% of the artists in the Modern Art Section are women, but 85% of the nudes are female.” This poster was affixed on the surfaces of walls, kiosks, and construction hoardings around lower Manhattan, and then moved into the magazine world as paid ads printed in *Artforum*, *Mirabella* and *Ms.*, as well as the subject of notice in articles published by *Vogue* and *The New York Times*.

The Guerrilla Girls’ strategy, like Rosler’s *Bringing the War Home*, does more than dream about a more just future world: it also uses a rhetorical question, the interrogative, to shame those who promulgate the inequalities identified in the image. The integrative, in this sense, is charged not only with creating space for the excluded, it must also assist in dismantling the operations of the status quo. In response to their attack on the exclusionary practices by museums and galleries, one Museum of Modern Art curator noted that while posters against war could be considered art, posters against museum ethics were politics.\(^\text{110}\) As an emplacement strategy, the manifold platforms for distribution used by the Guerrilla Girls address the art world in the form of institutional critique, but as incognito artists collaborating to create a public awareness campaign, they are also kept apart from absorption into its canon.

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Like the Guerrilla Girls, Höch and Rosler take on, I argue, the role of *interrogators* questioning both the construction and positioning of women, each in their respective eras. They are also *integrators* who compel a new emancipatory framework. Through their appropriation of image fragments extracted from the modern “languages” of photojournalism and illustrated magazines, they are both consumers of visual representation and producers of it. By drawing upon widely disseminated and recognizable photographs of their time, their “re-arrangement” of iconic images assumes a legibility of both original and new contexts by contemporary viewers. In the era of the internet, this citation of fragments torn from their originating sites also constitutes a perpetual unspooling of viral, visual icons. Mitchell notes that the disturbing Abu Ghraib photographs not only belong to the original soldier-made photographic collection—most of which remains classified by the American government, and may be made public only in a distant future point in time—but are also perpetuated by their ongoing distribution by the press and display in exhibitions, as are responses to the photographs in written essays and visual artworks, and circulating memes made from “iconic” images (e.g. Hooded Man).\(^\text{111}\) This constellation of an unspooling visual currency creates in its wake the accrual of a meta-archive, a phenomenon that I will discuss in reference to works by Hans Haacke, and Condé and Beveridge.

The museum has played, and continues to play, many roles, but invariably these all hinge on the provision of a space for individual sanctuary and reflective intersubjectivity. In the next chapter, I will address the museum as a performative stage through a close reading of the installation of Hans Haacke’s installation *Voici Alcan* at the National Gallery Canada and propose the operation of the *contemplative* as a disruptive strategy.

\(^{111}\) See W.J.T. Mitchell’s *Cloning Terror*, 112-127.