



**WOMEN
DESIGNERS
IN THE USA
1900-2000**

**DIVERSITY AND
DIFFERENCE**

PAT KIRKHAM EDITOR




Women Designers
in the USA

1900 | 2000

DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE

Pat Kirkham | EDITOR

PUBLISHED FOR THE
BARD GRADUATE CENTER FOR STUDIES IN THE DECORATIVE ARTS
NEW YORK
BY YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS
NEW HAVEN AND LONDON



This catalogue has been published in conjunction with the exhibition "Women Designers in the USA, 1900–2000: Diversity and Difference" held at The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture, from November 15, 2000 to February 25, 2001.

Project director: Pat Kirkham
Curator: Pat Kirkham
Project assistants: Ella Howard and Ronald Labaco
Catalogue editors: Martina D'Alton, New York, and Sally Salvesen, London
Design director: Ellen Lupton; designer: Patrick Seymour, Tsang Seymour Design, Inc.
Catalogue production: Tsang Seymour Design, Inc.

Director of Exhibitions: Nina Stritzler-Levine

Copyright © 2000 The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design and Culture. Individual essay copyright is held by the author and The Bard Graduate Center. All rights reserved. This book may not be reproduced in whole or in part, in any form (beyond that copying permitted by Sections 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law and except by reviewers for the public press), without written permission from the publishers.

Second printing 2002
ISBN 0-300-09331-4 (paper)
ISBN 0-300-08734-9 (cloth)

Library of Congress Card Number: 00-108610

Printed in Italy

On the front cover: Paula Scher. Poster (detail) for *Dancing on Her Knees* at the Public Theater, New York, 1996. Private collection. *Checklist no. 201*

On the back cover: Claire McCardell. Dress, 1993. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Claire McCardell, 1949 (CL49.37.41).

Eva Zeisel. "Museum" teapot, ca. 1942–43. Collection of Bernarda and Felicísimo Labaco. *Checklist no. 79*

Dorothy Torivio. Vase (Acoma Pueblo), 1995. Collection of Andrea Fisher Fine Pottery, Santa Fe, New Mexico. *Checklist no. 195*.

On the half-title page: Claire Falkenstein. Brooch, ca. 1955. Collection of Sheryl Gorman. *Checklist no. 103*

CONTENTS

DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD.....	10
<i>Susan Weber Soros</i>	
PREFACE.....	14
<i>Pat Kirkham</i>	
PROLOGUE: <i>American Women in the Twentieth Century</i>	
CONTEXT LINE	
<i>Compiled by Pat Kirkham and Sarah A. Lichtman</i>	
.....	25
SOCIAL CHANGE AND CHANGING EXPERIENCE	
<i>Eileen Boris</i>	
.....	36
1. <i>Women Designers in the USA, 1900–2000: DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE</i>	
<i>Pat Kirkham and Lynne Walker</i>	
.....	49
2. WOMEN DESIGNERS AND THE ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENT	
<i>Wendy Kaplan</i>	
.....	85
3. <i>The Sacred Hoop: NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN DESIGNERS</i>	
<i>Pamela Kladzyk</i>	
.....	101
4. <i>"Three Strikes Against Me": AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN DESIGNERS</i>	
<i>Pat Kirkham and Shauna Stallworth</i>	
.....	123
5. <i>"Wellpaying Self Support": WOMEN TEXTILE DESIGNERS IN THE USA</i>	
<i>Mary Schoeser and Whitney Blausen</i>	
.....	145
6. <i>Tradition and Transformation: WOMEN QUILT DESIGNERS</i>	
<i>Jacqueline M. Atkins</i>	
.....	167
7. WOMEN FASHIONING AMERICAN FASHION	
<i>Valerie Steele</i>	
.....	185

8. WOMEN JEWELRY DESIGNERS	
<i>Toni Greenbaum and Pat Kirkham</i>	
.....	201
9. WOMEN METALSMITHS	
<i>Jeannine Falino</i>	
.....	223
10. <i>Designing Hollywood</i> : WOMEN COSTUME AND PRODUCTION DESIGNERS	
<i>Deborah Nadoolman Landis and Pat Kirkham</i>	
.....	247
11. <i>In "A Man's World"</i> : WOMEN INDUSTRIAL DESIGNERS	
<i>Ella Howard and Eric Setliff</i>	
.....	269
12. <i>Women Furniture Makers</i> : FROM DECORATIVE DESIGNERS TO STUDIO MAKERS	
<i>Edward S. Cooke Jr.</i>	
.....	291
13. "A Woman's Place. . ."?: WOMEN INTERIOR DESIGNERS	
1900–1950	
<i>Pat Kirkham and Penny Sparke</i>	
.....	305
1950–2000	
<i>Judith B. Gura</i>	
.....	317
14. WOMEN LANDSCAPE DESIGNERS	
<i>Leslie Rose Close</i>	
.....	329
15. "Quietly Fine" / <i>Quietly Subversive</i> : WOMEN CERAMIC DESIGNERS	
<i>Cheryl Buckley</i>	
.....	347
16. <i>Colophon</i> : WOMEN GRAPHIC DESIGNERS	
<i>Ellen Lupton</i>	
.....	363
CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION.....	381
ENDNOTES.....	400
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	434
INDEX.....	449

I

PAT KIRKHAM AND LYNNE WALKER

CONTEXT AND ISSUES

THERE WERE AS MANY WAYS FOR WOMEN TO BECOME DESIGNERS during the course of the twentieth century in America as there were ways for them to practice design. In considering women's identities as designers, *Women Designers in the USA, 1900–2000: Diversity and Difference* concentrates on professional designers, while recognizing the permeable line between amateur and professional, especially at the beginning of the century.¹ This essay serves to contextualize the chapters that follow and presents an overview of them. The chapters discuss a diversity of design types and media, as well as differences between women in terms of cultural identities, training and education, and practice. They also consider the broad prescriptions on women's design activities alongside new opportunities. Included, where appropriate, are the contributions of women designers to the teaching of design and thereby to the shaping of new generations of designers—men as well as women.

The gendered nature of work is a common thread running through the chapters, as are the shifting conceptions of what was and was not thought appropriate

for women to design. The richly textured history resides in the multifaceted ways in which gender intersected with many other factors, including "race," ethnicity, class, training, employment, experience, and individual talents. Given the paucity of prior research on minority ethnic women designers in the United States—with the exception of Native Americans—and the brief to consider a whole century across a range of media, two discrete studies were selected for closer attention. Native American women designers (mostly designer-makers) were chosen largely because of the wide range of existing

Women Designers in the USA, 1900–2000:

DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE

publications, archives, and collections that represent the tangled, often troubled, relationships between Native Americans, private collectors, institutions, and the federal government throughout the century. African American women designers were chosen not only because documentation is lamentably patchy and many African American design traditions were marginalized, if not denigrated, for most of the century, but also because there was a substantial body of “contextual” material on other areas of African American cultural production.²

This publication contributes to the ongoing efforts, which began with the Women’s Movement in the late 1960s, to recover women previously “hidden from history” and to reevaluate their roles and contributions.³ It is easy to caricature such studies as little more than adding token women to “male” narratives. However, the best feminist scholarship has always gone beyond that—to the broad social context of political and personal issues—and has been at the center of reshaping and rethinking the telling of history. *Women Designers in the USA* seeks a place in those traditions of feminist scholarship, informed by theory and qualified by women’s lived experience. It embraces difference and attempts to explain women’s absences from certain activities as well as their participation in others. The intellectual framework within which this publication falls is discussed further in the second part of the essay.

DESIGN EDUCATION

In the twentieth century, a vital enabler of women’s access to design in America was systematic design education, available from a broad base of public and private institutions that trained designers for both industrial and hand manufacture. By 1900 design education in America had achieved the basic shape it would hold throughout the century, although it would develop in new, distinctive directions—in the 1930s, for example, through government-funded training programs and “progressive” new art and design institutions; or in the 1970s in feminist art and design programs. In addition to women-only schools of landscape architecture, which flourished earlier in the century, programs in nascent design areas were introduced: industrial design in the 1930s; studio furniture design and making, from the 1960s; and computer graphics in the 1980s and 1990s.⁴

In the nineteenth century, the expense of importing foreign designs and the understanding that well-designed goods were essential to successful competition in international markets had prioritized industry’s and government’s goals for a well-trained design workforce.⁵ Art classes—especially in drawing (a traditional part of a “lady’s” education)—were often open to women in such institutions as the National Academy of Design, New York, which accepted women in 1831.⁶ Design education for women, which began in 1848, the year of the first women’s rights convention at Seneca Falls, New York, was initially perceived as providing access to respectable employment

for single middle-class women, a goal of philanthropists and feminists alike. While the Centennial Exhibition of 1876 in Philadelphia promoted the applied arts to a national audience, it inspired higher standards of artistic production in design, craft, and industry, and stimulated and regvanized design education for women.⁷

When schools of design were established in America (mainly in the last quarter of the nineteenth century) educators and philanthropists looked to Britain, a leader in international trade, for prototypes.⁸ The influential Philadelphia School of Design for Women (founded 1848) and the Massachusetts Normal School of Art (founded 1873) adapted British models of curriculum and teaching materials to American purposes, and key staff were recruited from the Normal School of Design in London.⁹ American design schools developed in the climate of struggles for women's rights, which included education, training, and employment, as well as suffrage. Women's involvement with art and design in the late nineteenth century helped them develop organizational skills and confidence that could then be used for suffrage work. However, at least one influential proponent of education for women, Walter Smith, director of the Massachusetts Normal Art School, proposed design education to distract women from political activities:

We have a fancy that our lack of art schools and other institutions where women can learn to employ themselves usefully and profitably at work which is in itself interesting and beautiful, is one of the causes which drives them to so unsex themselves as to seek to engage in men's affairs. Give our American women the same facilities as their European sisters, and they will flock to the studios and let the ballot-box alone.¹⁰

In the early 1900s to about 1920, when suffrage activity was heating up, women were again encouraged to become involved with the arts as "safe activities."¹¹

Although conceptions of design education for women varied, women's schools of design and philanthropic training programs had at least one thing in common: they were mainly founded by women for women. The first school of design for women, the Philadelphia School of Design for Women, was started by Sarah Worthington Peter in her own drawing room as a philanthropic project—but one that recognized the hard economic facts of single middle-class women's need of training for employment.¹² The New York School of Design for Women was founded by Susan Carter in 1852 and merged in 1859 with the Cooper Institute (now Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art); it became a major design school.¹³ The Western Reserve School of Design for Women in Cleveland (founded 1882), which began in the home of Sarah M. Kimball, was established to train designers for industry and flourishes today as an independent coeducational school of art and design (renamed Cleveland School of Art, 1891–1948; now the Cleveland Institute of Art).¹⁴



Fig. 1-1. Agnes F. Northrop. Design for stained-glass window for Sarah Cochran, Linden Hall, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Designed for Tiffany Studios, New York, ca. 1913. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Purchase, Walter Hoving and Julia T. Weld Gifts, and Dodge Fund, 1967 (67.654.229). Checklist no. 20

The Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, which promoted American interests, included a separate Woman's Building.¹⁵ The catalogue indicates the scope and success of design training for women to that point. Virtually all areas of the applied arts were represented, and most were referred to as "modern" in style: stained glass and glass mosaics, woodcarving, wallpaper, textiles, embroidery, designs for jewelry and metalwork, bookbinding, illustration and cover design, china painting, lace, and applied and decorative painting. The catalogue also revealed women's own ambitions in design: the "main object" of applied arts exhibitions from the contributor's point of view "was to obtain rightful recognition of her work."¹⁶ Women's increasing access to training and their professionalism are evidenced by the many women designers represented in exhibits mounted by individual firms. Tiffany's Glass and Decorating Company, for example, showed thirty-nine pieces by women designers, including twenty sketches for glass windows by Grace deLuze, Lydia F. Emmet, and Agnes Northrop (fig. 1-1). Emmet also designed the seal of the Board of Women Managers of New York, which was used on official stationery and display caption cards.¹⁷

The Woman's Building itself was designed by a young woman architect, Sophia Hayden. Candace Wheeler, a leader of the Arts and Crafts movement and head of the design and interior decoration firm, Associated Artists (figs. 1-2 and 1-3), received the plum commission of designing the library (fig. 1-4), which was marked as a "feminine" space not only by its type (a Ladies' Reading Room) and the design language of its furnishings and interior decoration, but by its contents—including portrait busts of notable women by women sculptors and a grand allegorical ceiling painted by Wheeler's daughter, Dora Wheeler Keith. The alcovelike side rooms contained statistics relating to women's employment, thus emphasizing the social and economic importance of design work for women.¹⁸

At the Chicago exposition generally and in the Woman's Building specifically, design exhibits were separated by "race" as well as by gender and viewed from a perspective that remained current well into the twentieth century and combined liberal reform, paternalism, and social Darwinism with assumptions of white supremacy. Native American basket makers Kittie Coates and Emma Reeves were present at the fair's "Iroquois Camp"¹⁹; in the Woman's Building, an "Afro-American Exhibit" was organized by the sole black woman on New York State's Board of Women Managers, the tireless J. Imogen Howard. While featuring the craft skills of African American women, especially in needlework and other handmade textiles,²⁰ the exhibits forcefully demonstrated the exclusion of African American women from professional and commercial design and from formal design training. Unlike their more privileged, white middle-class counterparts, they generally lacked academic credentials. There were no firms exhibiting their work or hiring them as name designers (see chapter 4). In contrast, today one in



Fig. 1-2. Candace Wheeler, 1893.

eight female university graduates is African American—many from art and design programs. Nevertheless, although education and training have been among the best tools for women’s advancement, that alone did not guarantee progress or acceptance in the design world for women of color.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Arts and Crafts movement, then at its peak, emphasized the importance of everyday “commonplace” objects. It extolled the unity and equality of all arts and challenged the inferior status of design (and designers) in the hierarchy of the arts. Design and the decorative arts were depicted as suitable work for respectable women, and the Arts and Crafts movement both constituted and stimulated educational programs. Specialist schools of design for women, private women’s colleges, and philanthropic classes and facilities for working-class women and girls all taught art and design, often along Arts and Crafts lines. In the early twentieth century, the most design-oriented women’s liberal arts college was the H. Sophie Newcomb College in New Orleans (founded 1886), which taught undergraduate and graduate courses in design, and operated a commercial pottery—the Newcomb Pottery. Newcomb students exercised their skills in ceramic decoration and sold their pots. In other workshops they aspired to professional standards in bookbinding from 1913, jewelry, and metalwork in the 1920s and 1930s—products that represented the rethinking of women’s roles as well as the renewal of southern cultural and regional identity in the protracted post-Civil War period.²¹

Philanthropic organizations and their training facilities were by nature less highly structured and less comprehensive in their programs than design schools and design courses at colleges. However, they were capable of providing training and opportunities for work and sales in craft-based industries, which offered an economic lifeline to many women. Organizations such as the Saturday Evening Girls Club (1906-42) in Boston provided paid employment and training as well as leisure pursuits for immigrant working-class girls and women. The traditionally “feminine” crafts of embroidery and lace-making became vehicles for social amelioration and assimilation through some of these groups, such as the Sybil Carter Indian Lace Association (founded in 1890, the same year as the infamous massacre of Native Americans by United States troops near Wounded Knee Creek), which, unlike similar organizations for Native Americans, prioritized the production of marketable goods over craft preservation.²²

After 1900, new women-only design schools resulted in response to women’s exclusion from professional training in the fiercely contested male-



Fig 1-3. The “Designing-Room,” Associated Artists (1883–1907). From *Harper’s Bazaar*, August 1884.



Fig. 1-4. Candace Wheeler. Interior design for the Library of the Woman’s Building, World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, ca. 1893.



Fig. 1-5. Students of the Lowthorpe School of Landscape Gardening for Women, Groton, Massachusetts, 1916. From *House Beautiful*, March 1916.

dominated areas of architecture and landscape architecture. The Lowthorpe School of Landscape Gardening for Women (founded 1901; fig. 1-5) and the Pennsylvania School of Horticulture for Women (founded 1910) reflected the growing importance of this field for women, as well as their problematic access to professional training. The door to women's admission to education in landscape architecture had been pried open only to be slammed shut at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, but it was the exclusion of women from Harvard's School of Landscape Architecture that directly led to setting up the Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture for Women (1915-42). At the same time, the Philadelphia School of Design for Women, under the direction of Harriet Sartain (fig. 1-6), had strong links to industry and continued to prepare designers for commercial employment. By 1925 its graduates occupied a wide range of jobs thought appropriate to women, from fashion design and illustration to interior decoration.²³ Today, as Moore College of Art and Design, it maintains its high standards, while remaining the only all-female school of art and design to grant degrees in the United States.

Although women-only design schools preceded coeducational ones, the direction of twentieth-century design education soon became strongly coeducational. By 1925, the overwhelming majority of "over sixty art schools and more than a hundred colleges and universities and countless other and less reliable organizations offering courses of all sorts in one or more of the [art and design] subjects" were coeducational.²⁴ Boston, Providence, New York, and Chicago were (and are) home to a group of remarkably robust coeducational art and design schools: the Massachusetts Normal Art School in Boston (founded 1873; from 1959, the Massachusetts College of Art; fig. 1-7); Rhode Island School of Design in Providence (founded 1877); Pratt Institute, Brooklyn (founded 1887); and Parsons School of Design, New York (founded 1896). Leading museum-linked institutions include the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (founded 1869); Art Academy of Cincinnati (1869-present; a museum school 1887-1998); and the School of



Fig. 1-6. Harriet Sartain, dean of the Philadelphia School of Design for Women, 1920s.

the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, which offered classes in the decorative arts from 1884. Design schools on the West Coast were mainly a twentieth-century phenomenon. In the 1970s, the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) was a prime site of feminist art and design education (see pp. 77-78), but in its earlier years as the Chouinard School of Art, founded by Mrs. Nelbert Chouinard in 1921, some of Hollywood's most prominent costume designers studied there, including Edith Head, Elois Jenson, and Irene Conley (known as Renie).²⁵

Universities that offered "mechanical" or "industrial arts" in addition to liberal arts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century set the stage for the major role universities would play in later twentieth century design education, producing a wide range of specialist design students at undergraduate and graduate level. The Land Grant Acts (1862 and 1890) endowed institutions of higher education in order to establish programs in design-related subjects.²⁶ Julia Morgan (architect-designer), Bertha Stenge (quilter), Dorothy Liebes (textile designer), and Gail Fredell (furniture maker and architect-designer) were among those who studied at the University of California, Berkeley, a leading Land Grant institution. Universities particularly "responded to the need for professionally trained ceramicists."²⁷ Potters Mary Chase Perry (Stratton), Elizabeth Overbeck, and Adelaide Alsop Robineau (fig. 1-7a) all studied and worked at the New York School for Clay-Working and Ceramics (now New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University), which also includes Betty Woodman and many other of today's leading ceramists among its graduates.

In education a distinctive feature of the twentieth century was federal government funding for design teaching and training through the Federal Art Project (FAP, begun in 1935) of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which was part of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal—the wide-ranging response to severe unemployment and social dislocation during the Depression.²⁸ The textile designer and artist Ruth Reeves, with others, established the Design Laboratory, a federally funded school of industrial design in New York City for (re)training designers for industry. She also conceived, piloted, and briefly headed (as National Coordinator) the WPA Index of Design, which recorded American decorative and applied arts from the colonial period to the late nineteenth century.²⁹ Although the images were produced mainly by fine artists rather than designers, the rhetoric of the Index's administrators challenged the distinctions between (useful) handicrafts and (creative) arts and promoted early American material culture as an educa-



Fig. 1-7. Coeducational design studies, Applied Design department, the Massachusetts Normal Art School, ca. 1914-29.



Fig. 1-7a. Adelaide Alsop Robineau working on her award-winning "Scarab" vase, ca. 1910.

tional tool and a source for design practice and national unity. However, the categorization (and dismissal from the Index) of Native American design and artifacts as "ethnography"³⁰ weakened the claims of the Index to represent the design past of all Americans.

Other WPA/FAP programs affected design training, notably in African American institutions such as Howard University, Tuskegee Institute, and the Hampton Institute (now Hampton University),³¹ which set up government-funded ceramics programs, along with other imaginative institutional partnerships. WPA Community Arts Centers were established in African American neighborhoods to provide free instruction for students and work for art and design teachers. The prototype was the highly successful Harlem Community Art Center (1937–42), which offered classes in design and craft, as well as fine arts, to 1,500 students. Although the integrated staff included men and women, at its core were women, mostly African American: Augusta Savage (its first director and a leading art and design educator), Gwendolyn Bennett (painter and Savage's successor), Louise E. Jefferson (textiles), Octavia Clark (costume design), Sarah West (metal crafts), and Selma Burke (sculpture).³²

In spite of the WPA/FAP's unprecedented achievements, full gender equality was not a goal of government policy or programs, and the Federal Art Project did little fundamentally to challenge or alter hierarchies of "race," gender, or the arts. In terms of practice, mural painting, printmaking, and ceramics were developed, but the hierarchy of the arts was left virtually intact. The marginality of women designers in WPA/FAP programs was further compounded by the broader marginalization of women in a period characterized by "a stagnant women's movement, a widespread rejection of feminist claims and a renewed attack on wage-earning women."³³ The undisputed importance of the period, and of the New Deal itself, for positive social change and welfare reform must be set against "the ideology of female dependent and male provider [which] remained strong even as women gained access to paid employment."³⁴ Government patronage of the arts, which the New Deal programs initiated on a large scale, survives most significantly today in the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency established in 1965.

Although throughout the twentieth century Native Americans continued their traditions of passing on craft skills from one generation to another, from 1900 the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs became involved in the preservation of Native American arts and crafts; "for the first time, the government-supported Indian program at the Normal and Agricultural Institute in Hampton, Virginia, included training in beadwork, basketry, and pottery."³⁵ Basketry became part of the curriculum at government schools, while quilting, although introduced by European Americans later became an expressive cultural form for Native Americans.

Having lost much of their traditional lands through wars and acts of Congress, "most Indians were living in extreme poverty on marginal lands. . . in a worse state psychologically, physically, and economically than they had ever been before."³⁶ For many the 1920s were the nadir of Native American experience. In the early 1930s, in the harshest days of the Depression, the federal government looked sanguinely to the applied arts for the economic and social regeneration of Native Americans. Under the Treasury Department's Public Works of Art Project, a New Deal program established in 1933, Native American students of arts and crafts participated in the decoration of new schools, hospitals, and community centers for Native Americans. Although the government failed to develop a freestanding program specifically tailored to Native American conditions, Bureau of Indian Affairs policy during the New Deal recognized the cultural value and richness of Native American arts and crafts and redoubled its efforts to teach the crafts, looking somewhat over-optimistically to a craft revival in its schools.³⁷ Many of today's younger Native American designers, such as Wendy Ponca, acquired their skills by combining cultural experience with formal craft training at a Native American high school and undergraduate and graduate study in American design schools (in Ponca's case, the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, Kansas City Art Institute, and Parsons School of Design, respectively).

Émigré designers from Europe, particularly Germany and Scandinavia, had a profound impact on design education and practice in the United States between the wars, not only by fostering modernism, but also by helping build some of the most influential design institutions in America. Anni Albers, the textile designer and weaver, arrived from Germany in 1933 with her husband, artist Josef Albers, taking their Bauhaus ideas to the "progressive" Black Mountain College in North Carolina, founded around social and pedagogic ideals which involved staff and students living and working together in a radical mixture of the arts. In a similar climate, intense explorations of design and design teaching were fostered at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan around a humane, broad-based Scandinavian approach to design teaching developed under the direction of Eliel Saarinen (from 1932) and other émigré designers: his spouse, the weaver Loja Saarinen; textile designer Marianne Strengell; and potter Maija Grotell.³⁸

The open-minded Cranbrook legacy can more recently be seen in postmodern design education. From the 1980s, Katherine McCoy, the graphic designer and co-chair (with her husband Michael McCoy) of the Cranbrook design program, rejected "the Modernist design paradigms of objective rationalism" as "typical of male sensibility, safely disengaged from emotional involvement."³⁹ Among the first to introduce American design students to French post-structuralist theory, she drew their attention to the interactive relationship of user and object, which was seen as producing



Fig. 1-8. Anna Wagner Keichline, age fourteen, 1903. The [Philadelphia] *Inquirer* announced that she "may devote life to industrial art."

meaning, narrative, and poetic expression, while maintaining an emphasis on the designer as interpreter of technology.⁴⁰

Industrial design programs began in the 1930s; the first course was in 1934 at Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie-Mellon University).⁴¹ One of the finest, at Pratt Institute, pursued modernist preoccupations with mass production and technology. Women were never excluded from such courses, but across the country students were predominately male. In a similar way, in the last thirty years new courses and programs, which featured computer graphics, explored design thinking, teaching, and practice that was animated by (and participated in) the postmodern culture of electronic technology, global capitalism, and volatile international markets. Particularly important were those at the Cranbrook Academy of Arts, at CalArts (under April Greiman), and at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Muriel Cooper's Visible Language Workshop. As chair of graphic design at Yale University since 1990, Sheila Levrant de Bretteville continues the feminist project through a program that encourages an interactive partnership with users and considers the social implications of design practice.

In contrast to formal education, apprenticeships and workshop training became generally less important during the twentieth century. However, individual tuition and training in a workshop, studio, or design office for initial or advanced work remained important for women metalworkers, jewelers, silversmiths, potters, and landscape architects. Other more informal arrangements, including "on-the-job training," were common in interior design, where travel abroad also formed part of the "training" of many women designers, particularly in the first half of the century.⁴²

EARLY EXPERIENCE, SUPPORT, AND MENTORING

In addition to formal education, early childhood activities and the experience of "doing" have been identified as central to design students' personal and professional identities, as well as to their area of study and choice of career. A recent survey found that, in terms of personal biography and experience, "doing"—the "direct, hands-on, visceral, pleasurable experience"—was:

the core identity of the people we interviewed in explaining their attraction to design courses . . . Women mentioned knitting; decorating dollshouses; using plasticine . . . using model kits; and making furniture. For young women coming into design (and particularly into furniture and product design), positive experiences of craft making appears crucial. These experiences from childhood appear to have imbued these women with a pleasurable sense of their own skill.⁴³

The internalization of skills learned in childhood, especially those with parental direction or support, play a powerful and insufficiently recog-



Fig. 1-9. Anna Wagner Keichline. K-Brick for hollow wall construction with predetermined fracture joints for custom fitting at the job. Designed 1926 and patented 1927.

nized part in the formation of women designers— both those who work within areas conventionally defined as “feminine,” such as fashion and interior design, and those gendered “masculine,” such as industrial design. Throughout the century this early “hands-on” experience compensated in part for the effects of specialization and gendering within the United States education system.

Arts and Crafts metalworker and jeweler, Madeline Yale (Wynne), acknowledged the influence of her father Linus Yale Jr., inventor of the Yale lock. In 1906 she recalled that, as a young girl, she “had a training in mechanics and access to shop and machinery . . . became interested in Arts and Crafts [and] developed my own line in metalwork and enamels without instruction.”⁴⁴ By 1903 fourteen-year-old Anna Keichline, who went on to become an architect and industrial designer (figs. 1-8 and 1-9), was already winning prizes for furniture made in the workshop built for her by supportive parents.⁴⁵ Lucia DeRespinis, who worked as an industrial designer in the 1950s, spent a great deal of time in her father’s home workshop making small motors and other items, while Gere Kavanaugh, another industrial designer of the same generation, recalled “at a very early age my father taught me how to use a hammer and saw and nails.”⁴⁶

Within design gendered “feminine,” the practicalities of making and constructing things were also important. The earliest toys of fashion designer Bonnie Cashin were remnants of beautiful textiles by leading major European designers; and like fashion designer Isabel Toledo, she grew up sewing and designing clothes.⁴⁷ Fashion designer Ann Lowe, a third-generation dressmaker-designer, learned from her mother and grandmother, who designed and made clothes, particularly evening gowns (Lowe’s specialty), for the wealthy women of Alabama.⁴⁸ Designers who recall learning by seeing include Maria Martinez (fig. 1-10), who, aged about eleven, watched her aunt, grandmother, and father’s cousin make pottery in the 1890s. Martinez later remarked that “they didn’t teach. Nobody teaches. But in 1932 much later, someone took me to the government Indian school in Santa Fe and told me to teach. I said no, I come and I work, and they can watch.”⁴⁹ Discussing this “observation-instruction,” ceramics historian Susan Peterson commented that Native American daily life “is organized so that it sets up sequences of repetition that become frameworks for a subtle educative process. In this way Maria and Julian [Martinez] continuously showed



Fig. 1-10. Maria Martinez (right) and Julian Martinez, demonstrating various stages in the production of their black-on-black pottery, 1920s.

Fig. 1-11. Mariska Karasz (*left*) and Ilonka Karasz. ca.1917.



Fig 1-12. Mariska Karasz. Day ensemble, ca. 1927. Silk and silk appliqué. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Katherine J. Judson, in memory of Jeanne Wertheimer, 1977 (1977.284.2ab).
Checklist no. 39



Fig. 1-13. Ilonka Karasz. "Java" armchair, ca. 1930. Teak and woven flax. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Purchase, Theodore M. Gamble Jr., Gift, in honor of his mother, Mrs. Theodore Robert Gamble, 1983 (1983.228.5).
Checklist no. 49



Fig. 1-14. Holly Hampton (*left*) and Karen Hampton, 1962.



Fig. 1-15. Karen Hampton. *Memories*, 1992. Dyed and woven cotton.



Fig. 1-16. Holly Hampton (Sussman/Prejza & Company). Custom handwoven carpet runner, New Jersey Performing Arts Center, 1997.

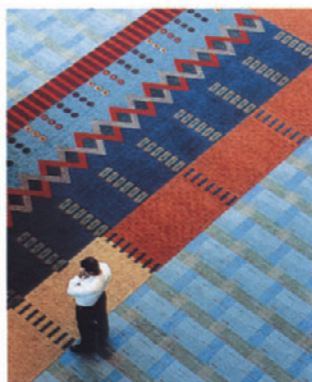




Fig. 1-17. Eva Lisa (Pipsan) Saarinen and Eliel Saarinen in his studio, Hvitträsk, Finland, ca. 1910.

others in the pueblo their method of making black pottery, so that those others could make it for themselves and involve their own family members.”⁵⁰

Siblings can also be teachers, mentors, supporters, critics, collaborators, and sources of inspiration (figs. 1-II to 1-I6).⁵¹ The Overbeck sisters founded a pottery during the early years of the century.⁵² Sisters Verma Nequatewa and Sherian Honhongva worked together in the 1980s, designing and making jewelry, but later went their separate ways, linked by the design aesthetic and craft traditions of their training and culture, as well as by personal bonds.⁵³ Ilonka and Mariska Karasz pursued broadly similar, but by no means identical, careers which each influenced the other, as is the case with Holly and Karen Hampton.⁵⁴

Some designers grew up with both parents actively engaged in design. It is not altogether surprising that Pipsan Saarinen (Swanson) became a designer—patenting a steering wheel and designing textiles, furniture, interiors, glass, and clothing. Her mother was a distinguished handloom weaver; her father a world-renowned architect and designer (fig. 1-17). The Saarinens extended their family through mentoring a fellow Finn, Marianne Strengell (herself the daughter of a designer and an architect) and the orphaned Florence Schust (Knoll), both of whom became internationally known designers. Before being “adopted” by the Saarinens, Schust (Knoll) had been inspired to become an architect by her art teacher, Rachel de Wolfe Raseman, who had a degree in architecture from Cornell University.⁵⁵ Deborah Sussman, the graphic and environmental designer, found mentors in Ray and Charles Eames, whose spirit endures in the firm run by Sussman and her designer husband, Paul Prejza (figs. 1-18 and 1-19).⁵⁶ Mentoring was



Fig. 1-18. Charles Eames and Deborah Sussman, 1961, working on the layout of the timeline/"History Line" for *Mathematica: A World of Numbers . . . and Beyond*, an exhibition held in 1961.

often mentioned by designers interviewed for this publication, but never so consistently as by African American designers, many of whom see this process as crucial to expanding horizons and providing opportunities for young women of color.

DESIGN AS GENDERED WORK

In the twentieth century, design was a site of gendered work (figs. 1-20 to 1-24). Like social relations generally, the different areas categorized as "design" were subject to the organizing principle of the sexual division of labor, whereby tasks were assigned according to gender. The residual strength of the nineteenth-century cult of domesticity and "true womanhood" depicted woman as genteel guardian of the home, taste, and morality. When women worked as designers in the early twentieth century, they did so largely in occupations associated with the "feminine."⁵⁷ By 1900 embroidery and the decoration of china were already deemed suitable for women, while jewelry, metalwork, and interior design were beginning to open up to them. Men had varying reactions to women's entry into areas formerly closed to them. Some, such as educator and interior design "authority" Frank Alvah Parsons, vigorously resisted "feminization,"⁵⁸ while others, such as the Navajo silversmith Grey Moustache, initially felt their masculinity affronted by women doing similar work, but later revised their opinions.⁵⁹ Some male teachers, partners, employers, and mentors welcomed women, offering economic, emotional, and professional support.

Although contemporary conceptions of appropriate occupations for women and men were central to women's access to particular types of design, the conditions and parameters within which women worked were fluid and changed over time. The concepts of "women's work" and "woman designer" were redefined and extended. Women were active participants in the construction of new meanings about themselves—challenging, resisting, and negotiating restrictive ideologies about "suitable" activities. For example, Katherine McCoy decided in high school during the early 1960s that she wanted to be an architect, but a career counselor persuaded her that interior design would be more appropriate for a woman. McCoy thus embarked upon an interior design degree at Michigan State University, only to change to industrial design. After another career shift, she ultimately became one of the most influential graphic designers and design educators of the 1980s and 1990s.⁶⁰

The gendering of design took place not only *between* fields but also *within* them. Even in the infant film industry, women were excluded from art direction and production design and steered toward costume design—a segregation not breached until late in the century. In landscape and interior design, women found it easier to get residential commissions, paralleling practices in architecture, whereby men dominated nonresidential work. In



Fig 1-19. Deborah Sussman, Jennifer Stoller, and Ana Llorente-Thurik, 2000, working on the layout of the timeline/"Context Line" for *Women Designers in the USA, 1900-2000: Diversity and Difference*.



Fig. 1-20. Students studying textile samples, Cooper Union, New York, 1921.



Fig. 1-21. Interior design students studying wallpaper collection at Cooper Union, New York, ca. 1955-59.



Fig. 1-22. Robert Castle with students of interior architecture and decoration, Parsons School of Design, New York, 1955.



Fig. 1-23. Sister Marie preparing a DIESEL sign at Parsons School of Design, New York, 1949.



Fig 1-24. Goldsholl Office staff, 1963. The firm was known for its “progressive” hiring policies in the 1960s. Millie Goldsholl mainly worked on film design, leaving Susan Keig the only woman involved in mainstream graphic design.

furniture and metalwork, women tended to be restricted to small-scale domestic products in the early years of the century.⁶¹ Gendered views and assumptions may have limited the ways in which they worked, but an increasing number of women staked claims to these “male” fields. They did so as designers and designer-makers in their own right, rather than as widows or daughters of furniture makers, silversmiths, or others, continuing family businesses after the death of the male owner, as had previously been the case.⁶²

By contrast, larger-scale furniture, metalwork, and certain aspects of landscape architecture, as well as industrial design, all of which more closely conformed to markers of masculinity (size, strength, being allowed to dirty one’s hands, and working in the public realm), remained male preserves for longer periods of time.⁶³ When women began to be involved in the design of automobiles in the 1930s, they worked almost exclusively on interiors, whereas men designed all aspects of vehicles (“hard” exteriors as well as “soft” interiors). In the 1940s and 1950s, General Motors hoped its women industrial designers might give automobiles “woman appeal” (fig. 1-25). When



Fig. 1-25. Women industrial designers at General Motors, ca. 1955. “Damsels of Design”: (from left) Suzanne Vanderbilt, Ruth Glennie, Marjorie Ford Polham, Harley Earl (vice-president of styling at General Motors), Jeanette Linder, Sandra Longyear, and Peggy Sauer.

women were hired “largely for their ‘feminine’ sensibilities,” the work of women designers was “simultaneously encouraged and circumscribed by a contemporary understanding of gender’s influence on aesthetics.”⁶⁴ Gendered divisions that were based on the size of items and/or the relationship of products to the home continued throughout the century. Since the 1970s, however, some women, such as Gail Fredell and Wendy Maruyama, have worked on large pieces of furniture, although noticeably not in the realm of machine mass production.

The impact of feminism on attitudes toward women working and the fluctuations of the economy also affected women’s place in design. The greatest occupational advances for women generally came during periods of feminist activism—from 1900 to 1920, and from 1960 to the present. However, important developments also occurred in the years between 1920 and 1960, including women’s entry into industrial design (fig. 1-26) and film costume design and their increasingly important role in design education.

The two world wars, which drew men away from work and education, contributed to changing ideas about “women’s work”—even though in most cases women’s entry into “male” jobs ceased at war’s end. During World War I, when male students were abroad fighting, female applied arts students, particularly metalworkers and jewelers, were able to acquire greater workshop skills. These included “Vice and Benchwork, Forging, and Machine Tool Practice,” a wide array of techniques for working cast and wrought iron and welding and tempering steel (fig. 1-27), which were normally missing from the education of girls in the United States.⁶⁵

World War II led to even greater acceptance of women doing “men’s work.”⁶⁶ Griswold Raetz, Margaret Harris, and Ray Eames were among the few women designers directly involved with military contracts and working on products usually associated with male industrial designers. From 1942 they were part of a team of men and women, headed by Charles Eames and Ray Eames, working on Naval contracts to design and produce molded plywood aircraft parts as well as splints and body litters for wounded soldiers.⁶⁷ The armed forces provided some opportunities for women in graphic design (then almost exclusively white and male). When Anna Russell (Jones), whose main design expertise lay in textile design, joined the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in 1942, she was given work as a graphic designer at a military camp for African American troops (fig. 1-28).⁶⁸

The war also offered opportunities for women to study drafting, engineering drawing, machine design, and engineering illustration skills (fig. 1-29). Special “war training courses” were established at many schools of design for women and men not eligible for military service, in order to free those men who were eligible.⁶⁹ However, wartime changes in work practices and the cultural endorsement of women’s employment were largely temporary. In postwar America, women’s “traditional” social roles were reasserted,



Fig. 1-26. Ellen Manderfield at the bureau of design, Montgomery Ward, 1950.

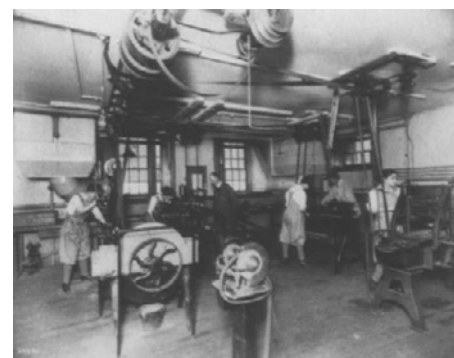


Fig 1-27. Women students working in the machine shop at the Massachusetts Normal Art School, 1918.



Fig. 1-28. Anna Russell Jones, serving in the Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) during World War II.



Fig. 1-29. Class in production illustration for airplane assembly work, Parsons School of Design, 1942.

if not always reassumed in prewar mode, during the late 1940s and 1950s.

WORKING MOTHERS

Sometimes the different aspects of women designers' lives were mutually supportive; at others they tugged in opposite directions. In 1945 Anita Stewart, who worked at engineering drawing during the war, went to Parsons School of Design to study interior design (spending a year in Paris). She built a successful career in New York before marrying the well-known designer and architect Alfons Bach in 1952 and giving up her career to raise a family.⁷⁰

In subordinating her career to that of her husband, she was typical of many women designers at that time.

Figure 1-30 indicates the duality of working wife and mother, but without any hint of the dilemmas featured in pre- and postwar discourses on women's roles. Yet even during World War II, when government and media propaganda encouraged wives and mothers to work, the dilemmas faced by such women, designers included, were acutely felt. Throughout the century, women were the primary child caregivers and housekeepers, and every woman who worked outside the home while raising children invariably juggled work and home (figs. 1-31 and 1-32). Little wonder that, particularly for the first seventy years of the century, in design areas based outside the home, many of the most successful women designers (though by no means all) were unmarried or married but had no children⁷¹; some came to design late in life after their children were grown; others did not work full-time or were dependent upon a variety of types of childcare other than their own.

Ellen Shipman, who became a well-known landscape designer, only sought paid employment after her husband left the family home and she was only able to build a professional career by passing on increasing responsibility for house and childcare to her teenage daughter (fig. 1-33).⁷² Eva Zeisel had a studio in the same building as her apartment (fig. 1-34) and a mother who came to live next door and look after her children. This helped her sustain a career as a ceramic and product designer after she had children in the 1940s.⁷³ Some women changed to another area of design in order to continue working when they had young children. Maud Bowers Rice, for instance, the first graduate in industrial design in America, and Nina Wolf, a costume designer, both turned to jewelry so that they could work from home and more readily combine design with domestic duties.⁷⁴ In a recent interview, product and interior designer Lella Vignelli (fig. 1-35) was candid about how frustrating it had been in the 1960s and 1970s to be a working designer and a wife and mother, commenting on the gap between the idea and the reality of working at home— or rather *not* being able to work because of the children.⁷⁵



Fig. 1-30. John Rawlings. Front cover for *House & Garden*, September 1943.



Fig. 1-31. Detail of first page of "American Woman's Dilemma," 1947. From *Life*, 16 June 1947.



Fig 1-32. "Mrs. Clean," Marjorie McWeeney of Rye, New York, whose husband and three children "keep her busy 100 hours a week," with 35 beds to make, 750 items of glass and china and 400 of silverware to wash, 175 pounds of food to prepare, and 250 pieces of laundry to handle. From *Life*, 16 June 1947.



Fig. 1-33. Ellen Shipman with Ellen, Evan, and Mary at Brook Place, Plainfield, New Hampshire, ca. 1910.



Fig. 1-34. Eva Zeisel and assistants, Riverside Drive studio, New York, ca. 1950.



Fig. 1-35. Lella Vignelli and Massimo Vignelli, 1976, with Heller plastic stacking dinnerware (1964–76) and Heller Glass Bakeware (1975).

Circumstances have changed for many working women, particularly in the last quarter century. A greater acceptance of flexible working hours and patterns, online communications between home and design studios, parental-leave plans, and the greater involvement of some men in childcare, have eased certain aspects of being a working designer-mother. However, childcare and housework remain largely the concern of women. They also consume enormous time and energies, and most women designers with children continue to “juggle” as best they can.

COUPLES, COLLABORATION, AND CREDIT

The wife/husband partnership, which allowed for the combination of home responsibilities with those of work, was one of the ways women designers negotiated the dilemma of work after marriage.⁷⁶ Such partnerships were not restricted to couples with children; some of the most successful were between men and women free from childcare responsibilities. It is notoriously difficult to assess the particular nature of and individual contributions to collaborative work, particularly that between people who both live together and work together, not least because the best collaborations involve dialectic, dynamism, and “telepathy.”⁷⁷ Nevertheless, it is often assumed (incorrectly) that the woman is the less active and less dominant professional partner.⁷⁸ As the partnerships featured in the ensuing chapters show, however, the texture of partnerships and the balance of power and responsibilities within them varied considerably.

By the 1940s such partnerships were a distinctive feature of design practice in the United States.⁷⁹ More traditional forms of courtship and separate spheres within the married home had begun to give way to “partnership and communication” in domestic and personal relationships.⁸⁰ At best these “couple collaborations” were mutually stimulating and extremely supportive; at worst, working relationships suffered the consequences of personal problems (and vice versa) and such working practices often resulted in women being overshadowed in terms of public recognition.⁸¹

In the 1940s and 1950s, women designers married to designers were often viewed as auxiliaries of their husbands and commonly featured as “pretty girls” and “faithful helpmates.”⁸² When Ray and Charles Eames appeared on a television show in 1956, she did not share the limelight equally with him. After Charles and their *joint* work had been introduced, the presenter hailed Ray (hidden behind a screen) as the wife behind the successful man, before announcing: “This is Mrs. Eames and she is going to tell us how she helps Charles design these chairs.”⁸³ Now widely accepted as an equal partner in one of the most exciting design firms of twentieth century America (fig. 1-36), Ray Eames did not receive full credit for her contributions at the time (1941–78). When she died in 1988, most obituaries were less than generous; some were insulting, despite the huge body of work—



Fig. 1-36. Ray Eames and Charles Eames with panel illustrating the work of the Eames Office, 1957.

acknowledged as such by Charles—and despite two decades of feminism and feminist scholarship in the United States.

Despite changing attitudes toward the recognition of women within partnerships, issues of credit and recognition, which go far beyond personal assertiveness, remain endemic.⁸⁴ Architect, urban planner, and designer Denise Scott Brown can testify that neither assertions nor statements by both partners about joint credits guarantee recognition in a world that defines genius as “male” and considers women who ask for recognition as neurotic or self-serving.⁸⁵ In 1967 Scott Brown began working with her husband, Robert Venturi (fig. 1-37), as a partner in the architectural design firm Venturi and Rauch (from 1980, Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown and presently Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates). She is widely recognized as opening new discourses about women’s marginalization within design and architectural partnerships—and the resulting frustrations.⁸⁶ She and Venturi recently revised the credit line for a chair (fig. 1-38) commonly assumed to have been designed solely by him (because the collection of which it is part was named after Venturi by the manufacturer). By 1984, however, that particular issue of credit was but one of many instances of “discrimination... at the rate of about one incident a day.”⁸⁷ Scott Brown recently stated that “the idea of making a chair like a billboard came from both of us, as did the desire for a floral print that was rich in complexity,” adding that “the conception of a piece—the basic idea—is just as important as deciding on pattern details—and I was involved in *both* on this project.”⁸⁸

Throughout her life, Pipsan Saarinen Swanson had to negotiate the shadows cast by the fame of her father and brother—Eliel and Eero Saarinen. Ironically, she found herself in a marriage and design partnership in which her architect husband, Robert Swanson, came to feel overshadowed by her



Fig. 1-37. Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi, 1984.



Fig. 1-38. Robert Venturi with Denise Scott Brown; project manager: Maurice Weintraub. “Queen Anne” side chair with “Grandmother” decoration, 1979–84. Manufactured by Knoll International, East Greenville, Pennsylvania (1984–89). For an example of chair with cushion, see Checklist no. 148

reputation and success and had to deal with his bitterness.⁸⁹ The case of Maria and Julian Martinez, who might well qualify as the first American designer couple of the twentieth century, is somewhat different in that he was given recognition during his lifetime but, today, his talents and contributions to the partnership are generally under recognized. Indeed, Maria Martinez always insisted on full credit for him.⁹⁰

"ANONYMITY," VISIBILITY, AND RECOGNITION

Several chapters make the point that many women designers were, and are, "anonymous," in the sense that they worked within firms and in industries where individual designers were rarely acknowledged by name.⁹¹ The term is a useful shorthand for such situations, but further scholarship, particularly that which uses the archives of design studios and manufacturing industries, will reveal more hitherto unknown histories. Art historian Patricia Mainardi pointed out as early as 1971 that many quilts, whose designers and makers

were known, were often labeled as "anonymous" simply because the objects and those involved in their conception and production were not highly valued by those who displayed them or wrote about them.⁹²

Neither "anonymous" nor "named" are fixed concepts and they need to be considered within specific cultural contexts. At any given moment, a particular designer could be both known and unknown. For example, before the prodigious talents of Nampeyo were "discovered" by trader Fred Harvey at the beginning of the twentieth century, she was well-known by name within her community (fig. 1-39). The duality of known and not-known continued when she became known by name to Harvey but not to the tourists who made brief train stops to buy "Indian" wares (fig. 1-40). Apart from the quality of her work, Nampeyo became an increasingly familiar name through her demonstrations of pottery making, rather than by signing her pottery. Photographs of

her at work (including some by the well-known photographers Edward S. Curtis and A. C. Vroman) appeared in advertising material issued by the Santa Fe Railroad.

There was increasing pressure from "museum people" and collectors from the mid-1920s for signatures; anonymous "authenticity" no longer satisfied collectors or scholars who required guarantees of "authorship."⁹³ Maria Martinez, who spent her "honeymoon" demonstrating pottery at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition and went on to become even more famous than Nampeyo, signed work from the mid-1920s.⁹⁴



Fig. 1-39. Nampeyo demonstrating Hopi polychrome pottery, Hano, First Mesa, Arizona, ca. 1900–1908.



Fig. I-40. Native Americans selling handcrafts to European Americans in front of the Indian Building owned by the Fred Harvey Company, Albuquerque, New Mexico, ca. 1912.

Although there was an increasing trend towards recognition of individual designers throughout the century, circumstances differed greatly between design areas as well as between those who headed their own firms and those who were employees. The textile industry, for example, was noted for the lack of recognition given to designers. In the late 1920s Lois Mailou Jones realized that since "only the name of the design, printed on the borders of the fabric, was known, never the name of the artist who created it . . . I would have to think seriously about changing my profession if I were to be known by name."⁹⁵ In the 1960s and 1970s, Rose Ransier was largely invisible as a designer of knitted textiles in an industry that sought her services but rarely named company designers (figs. I-4I). As the painter Rose Piper, she had received reviews, but as a professional textile designer she became resigned to seeing fabrics made to her designs advertised and sold without mention of who designed them.⁹⁶ World War II and the hopes of wresting world fashion leadership from Paris greatly increased the visibility of fashion designers in the United States, as did a buoyant postwar economy. In the film industry heads of costume departments in the larger studios were usually credited onscreen rather than individual designers, but there was still a much greater chance of getting one's name known as a costume designer for films than as a company designer in the textile industry or in industrial design.⁹⁷

Some designers were more bitter than others about customs and practices that worked against them becoming renowned. Ann Lowe, for example, resented that credit for her designs went to the women who



Fig. I-4I. Rose Ransier receiving award for winning the Knitted Textile Association's First Annual Knit Competition, 1973.

employed her and to their companies. The white strapless evening gown that actress Olivia de Havilland wore to receive her Academy Award in 1946, for example, was a Lowe design even though it bore the "Sonia Rosenberg" label.

General office credits or labels avoided squabbles about who was and was not credited for particular designs, but the custom reinforced the high profiling of the owner of the firm. It was extremely difficult for many young designers to make a name for themselves. Industrial designer Lucia DeRespinis recalled: "It was Catch 22—no matter how good you were there was little chance of getting your name known. It is very odd when I see the clock and tiles, designed by me when I worked for George [Nelson], sold as 'designed by George Nelson' rather than as by George Nelson Associates, let alone by me" (see figs. 11-18 and 15-13).⁹⁸ Today, more firms credit individual designers than ever before, but not naming remains endemic in particular areas, such as fashion, textiles, and industrial design.⁹⁹

Credit brought recognition and recognition brought visibility. But visibility had different implications for black designers than for white designers, particularly before the 1960s and 1970s when "color" affected chances of working in the more "visible" areas of design.¹⁰⁰ Visibility remains a central issue today; as the eminent academic Paul Gilroy recently observed, "If you want to make younger black people interested in education and the arts, you need black folks visibly successful outside music and sports."¹⁰¹ The importance of Courtney Sloane's high visibility—not just as an interior designer but as one with whom young women can empathize—is seen in the large number of inquiries about becoming a designer she receives through her "By Design" column in *Essence* magazine.

Over the century, women designers addressed the issue of recognition in different ways (figs. 1-42 to 1-44): opening their own firms; securing high-profile clients and prestigious commissions; gaining publicity in magazines and journals; participating in exhibitions and competitions; and being featured in advertisements. Fashion houses had "shows" and some interior designers contributed to "show houses." Some designers became better known through teaching and others appeared on television.¹⁰² Like Bonnie Cashin and Courtney Sloane, interior designer Dorothy Draper wrote a design advice column; by 1934 she had appeared on the covers of more magazines than Eleanor Roosevelt. The profiles of others were heightened by writing books about design: Candace Wheeler's *Principles of Home Decoration* (1908) and *The Development of Embroidery in America* (1921); Elsie de Wolfe's *The House in Good Taste* (1913); Elizabeth Hawes's *Fashion is Spinach* (1938); Mariska Karasz's *Adventures in Stitches* (1949); Edith Head's *The Dress Doctor* (with Jane Kesner Ardmore, 1959); Anni Albers's *On Designing* (1959) and *On Weaving* (1965); and Carolyn Mazloomi's *Spirits of the Cloth* (1998). These and other publications placed the designer-author's ideas on the content and practice of design before wider audiences than those of fellow designers and clients/users.



Fig. 1-42. Verma Nequatewa, Polacca air strip, near First Mesa, Arizona, with her Piper Turbo Lance and Jaguar XJ6, 1998.



Fig. 1-43. Suzanne Vanderbilt, on "Wide Wide World TV," 1956. Filmed in Cadillac Studio, General Motors Technical Center.



Fig 1-44. Margaret De Patta and Eugene Bielawski co-teaching jewelry design and fabrication at an Oregon University summer class, 1947



Fig. I-44a. Cheryl Riley seated in the public lobby of the Bayview Police Station, Bayview, California, an interior she designed (1991–97).

Diversity and difference were the hallmarks of the backgrounds, training, education, and practices of women designers working between 1900 and 2000 in the United States, a nation that supported an enormous range of design-related crafts and industries. Whether they worked in areas marginalized because of associations with the “feminine” or in those that challenged stereotypes of what it was to be a woman designer, and whether the products were produced by hand, machine, or a combination of both, women designed a rich array of objects. Their work touched the lives of many and inspires new generations of women designers making their own contributions to the material culture of the United States.

Today, the gendered nature of certain areas of design is marked. Fields in which women heavily outnumber men (at least 80 percent of the total), such as textiles, interior design, jewelry, and fashion, are those more readily categorized as “feminine.”¹⁰³ Given that women were barely represented at a professional level in interior design and jewelry in 1900, it would appear that, as in other professions such as education, men gradually looked elsewhere as their occupations “feminized.”¹⁰⁴ The two areas of design in which women are most poorly represented (approximately 20 percent of the total) are film production design and industrial design. The latter is most closely identified as a “masculine” occupation, and a speciality within it, transportation design, has the distinction of having fewer women students than any other design area (less than 10 percent).¹⁰⁵ The biggest changes in terms of the gendering of product design have been in furniture, an area with more “domestic” connotations and less technical associations than the design of aircraft or trains. Women now account for approximately half of undergraduate furniture students, an area of design in which women practitioners currently flourish.¹⁰⁶

Graphic design and landscape design, like furniture design, also fall between the extremes of design occupations associated with the “feminine” (and largely undertaken by women) and those categorized as “masculine” (and dominated by men). All three areas of design have changed radically since the 1970s. At the end of the century, women accounted for approximately half of all landscape designers, and more than half of graphic designers.¹⁰⁷

Some areas of design continue to show “an appalling lack of ethnic diversity.”¹⁰⁸ In textiles, the relative ease of access by women of color throughout the century was related to the prevalence of women in general in that industry, and to the high degree of “anonymity”. In industrial design and film production design their low profile coincided with the low profile of women generally. However, women of color remain few and far between in certain areas in which women have been well-established for many years—for example, interior design (fig. I-44a) and film costume design. By contrast they have fared better within graphic design, an area that did not open up to women on any significant scale until the 1970s when “race” and gender discrimination were simultaneously challenged.

Hindsight reveals the illogicality of arguments against women participating in the design of public parks in the 1910s or designing film sets in the 1930s. And it is also easier today to question earlier assertions that women were “naturally” suited to embroidery and the decoration of china. More recent discrimination is far more difficult to pinpoint. In the last twenty years barriers to women’s participation and advancement in design have been less tangible, and prejudices less openly articulated. The term *glass ceiling* has been used to describe the invisible yet pervasive and continuing discrimination against women designers, especially in terms of access to senior and well-salaried positions in fields such as graphics and landscape design where women have more than shown their competency.¹⁰⁹

There is much in this book to arm those concerned with confronting stereotypes and establishing more complex histories and representations of women. In 1903 Anna Keichline, the young girl in figure 1-8, who declared that she might devote her life to the “industrial arts,” shattered conventional understandings of adolescent female ambitions, and today Eva Zeisel shatters stereotypical expectations about ninety-four-year-old grandmothers by her continuing career as a designer. Zeisel, who was born in Hungary in 1906, eventually moving to the United States in 1938, has been honored many times for her contributions to design, as practitioner and as teacher. The year 2000 sees her as dynamic and inventive a designer as ever (fig. 1-45), still as dedicated to “the playful search for beauty.”¹¹⁰ Zeisel’s life spans the century upon which this publication focuses; “my century” she calls it.



Fig. 1-45. Eva Zeisel in her country studio, New City, New York, 2000.

WOMEN DESIGNERS AND HISTORIES OF DESIGN

Major revisions to histories of women designers and their work took place against not only a growing body of feminist scholarship but also renewed interest in crafts and the questioning of orthodox modernism from the late 1960s. The subsequent collapse of hegemonic modernism, the revalidation of the decorative, and the emergence of new design theories and practices were central to reenvisionings of the history of women designers. A close intertwining of gender and pro-modernist biases has marked much of the writing about design since the 1930s. Within modernist discourse and practice there was much that marginalized “the feminine” in general and women designers in particular. “Postmodern” discourses and sensibilities—which privilege margins over center(s), favor difference, hybridity and multiculturalism, and embrace the crafts and the decorative—have helped open up new spaces and places for women designers within design history.¹¹¹ As noted in chapter 15, feminism’s “reassessment of the value system and practices of the arts and crafts occurred alongside” and was reinforced by considerations of “why crafts, particularly those made and consumed at home, had been devalued by historians.” Postmodern debates about “cultural meaning, value, and consumption,” which examined and revalued the decorative after its long period of suppression by modernism, also contributed to this reassessment.

Until the 1980s one of the topics considered “unworthy” of serious study was African American design. Despite the veritable industry of scholarship relating to African American art since the late 1960s, there are no major, scholarly studies of African American design — although important work has been undertaken on particular areas of design (such as graphics and quilts) and on some individual designers, not least by committed feminist designers interested in their cultural heritage.¹¹² The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s changed the terrain of political life in the United States and helped catalyze a “renaissance” of cultural production by African Americans that was as broad in scope as it was layered and nuanced.¹¹³

The reinvigorated exploration of cultural bonds with Africa engaged in a dialectic with a multiculturalism that recognized rather than suppressed difference, hybridity, the decorative, and craftwork. Pride in African origins and the questioning of “authenticity” as an intellectually valid category led to value being placed on the very things for which African American design and craft traditions had been marginalized. Until the last twenty years, most major museums of design and applied arts in the United States had scandalously low holdings of African American items with the possible exception of quilts and items classified as “folk.” Given this situation, the Cooper-Hewitt National Museum of Design’s African-American Design Archive

(AADA), established in 1991, was particularly important as a symbol of change and as a facilitator of further scholarship.

The study of Native American design was dominated for most of the century by the admiration (often obsession) of collectors and scholars for its supposed “authenticity.” The postmodern denial of the “authentic,” however, affords new opportunities to reassess and rework histories of Native American design and craft. The increasing focus on cultural diversity and hybridity also brought a greater awareness of the rich cultural heritage of Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and other minority ethnic groups. Increased respect for the crafts, and for objects often categorized as “folk” or ethnographic, was evident in many exhibitions and publications since the 1970s. *Revivals! Diverse Traditions 1920–1945*, published in 1995 by the American Craft Museum, promoted a much-needed multicultural approach to craft and design history and helped bring such objects into discourses of the history of design, while addressing the issue of eurocentricity.¹¹⁴

For those interested in design and architecture, two of the most influential texts arising out of the questioning of the universality and rationality, which had dominated Western intellectual thought since the Enlightenment, were *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966) by Robert Venturi and *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form* (1977) by Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour. They argued for the inclusion of popular culture in design thinking and repertoires and also for hybridity, contradiction, and symbolism, rather than “purity” and simplicity, as well as the end of polarities and exclusivity. In 1966 Venturi claimed to prefer “black and white, and sometimes gray, to black or white” (emphasis added), whereas by 1977 the whole riot of color and “messy vitality” was validated.¹¹⁵

Interest in crafts did not die after the Arts and Crafts movement but their lack of status in the Machine Age led to attempts to recategorize them as “art” beginning in the 1940s. Thus, as this book demonstrates, by the time of the so-called Crafts Revival of the 1970s, some of the boundaries between art and craft, on the one hand, and between art and design, on the other, had been broken down — at least in the minds of designer-makers of objects, if not fine artists. Although design and making in certain areas, such as ceramics, were considered by some to be “art” by the 1970s, the hostility expressed at the threatened inclusion of more marginalized crafts, such as needlework, is a measure of the strength of the art/craft divide that feminist artists and designers sought to eliminate.¹¹⁶ Judy Chicago, Miriam Schapiro, and Sheila Levrant de Bretteville were prominent in a movement to radically refocus art and design practice and education by eliminating sexism within the education system and making it more open to the ideas of the Women’s Movement. Revaluing and affirming both “women’s work” and craft, feminist artists and designers linked and reinvigorated art, design, and craft through hybrid work

and politicized aesthetics as well as through antimodern and pluralist discourses.

The rich matrix of postmodern theory, feminist writing on and about women designers and artists, the re-reading of (“feminine”) decoration, and the activism associated with the Women’s Movement produced critically informed designers such as April Greiman, Sheila Levrant de Bretteville, Wendy Maruyama, Cheryl Riley, Anne Krauss, and Joyce Scott, to name but a few. Their work, which also fed the impetus for change, ranged from personal, often densely woven narratives of identity, interiority, sexuality, and oppression to equally multilayered commentaries on patriarchy, stereotypes, the social construction of femininities, and the interplay of gender with “race,” cultural heritage, and other factors.

What little feminist design history there was in the 1970s was written by art historians, which is not surprising given that design history did not emerge as a specific academic discipline until the mid-1970s and that those who wrote about “decorative arts” generally focused on the stylistic analysis and attribution of high culture objects. The two most influential texts of that decade in terms of design history addressed the art/craft divide. Women artists — and, by inference, women designers — were seen to have suffered in terms of reputation not only because women were regarded as “lesser” in patriarchal society but also because the products of their labors were devalued. Despite the Arts and Crafts movement’s call for the unity of the arts, the applied arts, also known as the “lesser arts,” had remained inferior to fine art and architecture in the hierarchy of the arts because they were associated with *making* (as well as designing) and with the domestic and the decorative (i.e., the “feminine”).

Patricia Mainardi’s “Quilts: The Great American Myth” of 1973 argued against the contemporary dismissal of quilts as noncreative, collaborative, repetitive, and anonymous efforts by amateur women in the home, claiming “anonymity” was often little more than sloppy scholarship and a blatant disregard for “women’s work” and women’s culture. She stated that needlework was so important to women’s culture “that a study of the various textile and needlework arts should occupy the same position in Women’s Studies that African art occupies in Black Studies—it is our cultural heritage.”¹¹⁷ At one stroke Mainardi placed at the center of design history “women’s work” and low status craft and design traditions considered old-fashioned by modernists. Her polemic also introduced the issue of “race” through the strong African American presence in quilting.

In 1975 Rozsika Parker used the art/craft divide to explain that, although embroidery was a “craft” with low status in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—not least because it was almost exclusively a women’s amateur pursuit—men had been actively engaged with it when it was a commercially

viable and high status ecclesiastical and secular art between about 900 and 1500. Insisting that art made with thread is not intrinsically different from art made with paint, Parker emphasized that the real differences lay in terms of *where* products were made (inside or outside the home) and *who made them* (women or men).¹¹⁸ In 1986 design historian Cheryl Buckley echoed Parker when she argued, in “Made in Patriarchy: Towards a Feminist Analysis of Women in Design,” that the work of many women designer-makers and designers was marginalized because it was decorative and domestic; made by the “wrong people” in the “wrong place.”¹¹⁹ Buckley went on to take to task the strong faction within design history that emphasized modernist form and practice, machine mass production, and innovation.¹²⁰

The privileging of industrial design practice within design history reflected modernist discourses that claimed parity for “serious” design with architecture and abandoned the decorative, domestic, fashionable, and “feminine”—together with designers associated with them—in the hope of escaping the epithet “lesser.” Nikolaus Pevsner’s *Pioneers of Modern Design* (1936) set the tone for histories of male modernist heroes, and for proto-modernist ones too.¹²¹ Women designers were largely ignored or blamed for holding back “great men” from greater things. Thomas Howarth, whose *Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Modern Movement* (1952) was for long the “definitive” work on the subject, is fairly typical of architectural and design historians blinkered by sexism and modernism. Of the impact of Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh, wife of Charles Rennie Mackintosh (who himself went against conventions of gendering genius as “male,” stating that Margaret had “genius” whereas he had mere “talent”),¹²² Howarth wrote:

It is probable that Margaret Macdonald, however unwittingly, was responsible for limiting her husband’s vision, for tying him more securely to the aesthetic movement, and encouraging him to dissipate his energies on work of comparative unimportance when he might have consolidated his position in the architectural field.¹²³

Not surprisingly, given the admiration for modernist heroes and value systems based on innovation, several feminist architectural historians focused their attentions on women architect/designers who worked in modernist mode. In the case of Lilly Reich, for example, they argued that she not only deserved more recognition for work that had been attributed to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, but also outstripped him in her modernism. Some of this research was published in 1981 in a special issue of *Heresies*, the same year in which the highly influential *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* by Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock argued against the selective celebration of women modernists in art history and in favor of explaining the limitations within which women worked.¹²⁴ Parker and Pollock’s position, particularly

their examination of the historically specific constraints upon the ways women produced art, together with that of Mainardi in "Quilts," is central to the intellectual underpinning of this text.

The sexual division of labor was first explored in design history by Anthea Callen in *Angel in the Studio: Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement* (1979). Callen, like Mainardi, Parker, and Pollack, drew on the concept of the hierarchy of the arts. Her study of the gendered nature of work within the Arts and Crafts movement remains the point of reference for all subsequent studies of women in the movement.¹²⁵ In 1985 and 1989 Cheryl Buckley looked at the sexual division of labor in the British ceramics industry, later publishing a comprehensive study (1990), in which she related contemporary notions of femininity to the types of work undertaken by women.¹²⁶

The 1980s and 1990s were marked by further attempts to rethink women's diverse histories within wider parameters. The existing interdisciplinary nature of design history increased as other disciplines—women's studies, cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, and the history of technology—had an impact on the new discipline, which was from the start influenced by the history of art and architecture and social history. Feminist architectural historians proved particularly influential, especially Dolores Hayden. Her *Grand Domestic Revolution* (1982) offered new accounts of women's lives and cultural work and historical alternatives to contemporary gendered ways of living, while *Power of Place* (1995) suggested new ways of considering "grass roots" public memory and the use of public landscape.¹²⁷ Essays in Ellen Perry Berkeley and Matilda McQuaid's *Architecture: A Place for Women* (1989) addressed women's position in the profession, a topic also scrutinized in Abby Bussel's "Women in Architecture: Leveling the Playing Field" (1995), which commented upon "glass ceilings" and low salaries.¹²⁸ Although the idea of women as a homogenous whole was never as all-embracing within the Women's Movement as is sometimes now suggested, Lynne Walker's *Drawing on Diversity: Women, Architecture and Practice* (1997) was the first study to focus specifically on diversity in historical as well as contemporary architectural practice, training, and identities.¹²⁹

Historian of technology Ruth Schwartz Cowan's 1976 essay, "The 'Industrial Revolution' in the Home: Household Technology and Social Change in the Twentieth Century,"¹³⁰ and two anthologies edited by the historian of technology and the designed environment, Joan Rothschild—*Women, Technology and Innovation* (1982) and *Machina Ex Dea: Feminist Perspectives on Technology* (1983)—rendered problematic the relationships between technology, design, and gender. They worked against a modernist view of "progress" through "good design" and applied technology.¹³¹ Although the 1983 Rothschild anthology touched upon "women as designers of technologies," it was Autumn Stanley's *Mothers and Daughters of Invention* (1995) which brought to the attention of a wider audience the historical and cultural specificity of

women's engagement with "inventing." Little has been written on women product designers or the gendering of that occupation, but the small exhibition and catalogue, *Goddess in the Detail: Product Design by Women* (1994), at the Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, had an influence way beyond its size.¹³²

Binary oppositions, such as masculine/feminine, public/private, amateur/professional, formal/intuitive, modernist/traditional, decorative/unadorned, which structured much feminist scholarship in the 1970s and 1980s, were increasingly rethought. "Masculine" and "feminine" and public and private, for instance, were seen as the polarities of broad spectrums of shifting categories constructed through cultural discourse.¹³³ Design historians increasingly brought to the fore designers who did not fit neatly into the previously favored binaries, "unpicking" categories which contained and circumscribed women. Binaries came to be used as markers of extremes or indicators of generalizations in need of qualification in the light of scholarly investigation and the particularities of women's subjectivities and lived experience.¹³⁴

Lynne Walker's *Women Architects: Their Work* (1984), Whitney Chadwick and Isabelle De Courtivron's *Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnership* (1993), Pat Kirkham's *Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century* (1995), and Janice Helland's "Critics and the Arts and Crafts" (1994, on the collaboration of Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh and Charles Rennie Mackintosh) helped reshape analyses of "designer couples," as did Helland's study of the Macdonald sisters.¹³⁵ Deliberately eschewing the "great name" approach to design history, *Glasgow Girls: Women in Art and Design 1880-1920* (1990), edited by Jude Burkhauser, located women designers within the context of a particular city. They were set against Glasgow's commercial and economic development, wider cultural, educational, and artistic developments, the sexual division of labor, and the gendered nature of design education and practice.¹³⁶

When anthropologist Jean Hess wrote "Domestic Interiors in Northern New Mexico" (1981), she based her conclusion that the interior design practices of her Los Adobes neighbors should be regarded as "art" on a study in which she was situated as an engaged observer. The agency of women amateur interior designers did not surface in design historical studies until 1989 when Judy Attfield, herself influenced by anthropology, examined the ways in which the female occupants of houses subverted the intentions of the modernist architects in terms of interior design. Picking up on this theme, Penny Sparke chose the misery of a woman whose modernist architect husband policed the contents of their home and banished the "decorative" and the "feminine," to open *As Long as It's Pink: The Sexual Politics of Taste*, her 1995 study of the gendering of "taste" in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the "survival" of "feminine taste" during the hegemony of modernism.

Attfield's essay appeared in *A View From the Interior: Feminism, Women, and Design* (1989), an anthology that represented plural approaches by design his-

torians working within various feminist frameworks—from Marxist to post-modernist. Several sought to establish new places and spaces for women designers within historical analyses—absences included—while others reflected the influence of cultural studies in their focus on consumption and pleasure and the different meanings of objects for designer(s) and user(s).¹³⁷ Two more recent anthologies offer a combination of material culture studies and cultural studies filtered through gender theory as a way forward for the writing of design histories. *The Gendered Object* (1996) addressed the gendering of objects of everyday life—from clothes to cartoons and from bicycles to hearing aids—in terms of design, use, advertising, language, absence and presence, power, sexuality, and “beliefs about gendered acts, gendered behaviour, [and] gendered bodies.”¹³⁸

The work of many design historians was influenced by the study of material culture, an approach/discipline developed mainly in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s. The sensitivity to gender within material culture studies, displayed by writers such as Cheryl Robertson (the Arts and Crafts movement), Katherine Grier (nineteenth-century interiors), and Beverly Gordon (“women’s culture”) was most recently evidenced in a collection of papers presented in 1989 but only published in 1997—*The Material Culture of Gender, the Gender of Material Culture*, edited by Katharine Martinez and Kenneth L. Ames.¹³⁹ Although not focused on design, the essays emphasize the complex interplays between gender, design, and the material world in which we live. *Winterthur Portfolio* has contributed new perspectives on gender and design. Particularly germane is a special issue edited by Katherine Grier—*Gendered Spaces and Aesthetics* (Winter 1996)—the focus of which parallels that of Juliet Kinchin’s essay on gendered interiors in *The Gendered Object*.¹⁴⁰

Although fashion is a central part of material culture, and one of the most obviously gendered, it has been largely ignored by historians of material culture. Having been regarded by modernists and traditionalists alike as epitomizing the false consciousness of the frivolous, fashion—like crafts, the decorative, and the domestic—came in from the academic margins in the 1980s and 1990s, decades that saw pop stars such as Madonna use clothes and makeup to deconstruct femininity. In *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (1985), sociologist Elizabeth Wilson challenged then-current feminist critiques of the “fashion system” as duping women and argued for fashion to be considered central to reevaluations of women’s culture. Wilson’s refusal to dismiss fashion and her theorization of the field of study brought a new type of intellectual rigor to the subject. Fashion was an obvious area of focus for the new scholarly interest in sexuality and sexual orientation, and books such as Valerie Steele’s *Fashion and Eroticism: Ideals of Feminine Beauty from the Victorian Era to the Jazz Age* (1985) and Marjorie Garber’s *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (1992) resulted.¹⁴¹ At the same time, architectural and design theorist

and historian Beatriz Colomina focused on sexuality, while Mark Wigley brought fashion to the forefront of reappraisals of modernism.¹⁴²

Elizabeth Wilson's summary of the main developments within feminist fashion history to the early 1990s applied to design history in general. She saw hope in the convergence of feminism and postmodernism, writing "the postmodern breaking down of aesthetic divisions has opened a space for the reappraisal of what was traditionally seen as the feminine, and postmodern culture criticism has provided a forum that has been used by feminist writers to explore subjects once considered unworthy of serious attention, while insisting on the validity and seriousness of a feminine/feminist point of view."¹⁴³ *Women Designers in the USA, 1900-2000: Diversity and Difference* continues the reappraisal of subjects formerly regarded as "unworthy" of serious attention—"the lesser arts," "women's work," the decorative, the hybrid, the traditional—without losing sight of the many contributions of women designers who worked in areas deemed "worthy" by those who defined "good design" within more narrow modernist parameters.