

# PORTFOLIO

*a celebration of women artists*



*Above: Murray's Traveler's Dream.*

*Right: Barth's Colors.*

*Below: Winsor's Rope #1.*



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If you listen closely, you may hear the sound of a last bastion falling. For the first time in recent memory, the Museum of Modern Art, that guardian of modernist, largely male achievement, is holding a major exhibition, complete with an extensive catalog, for a young, living, *woman* artist, 38-year-old sculptress Jacqueline Winsor. The show is a slightly belated indication (an arbiter of taste can't move too fast) of what

PHOTOGRAPHED BY ED BAYNARD

has become unavoidably apparent: interesting women artists are by now more the rule than the exception. Gone are the days when the women in a book on 20th-century art could be counted on the fingers of one raised fist, and were known as much for their exotic lifestyles (O'Keeffe in the desert, Nevelson in furs and false eyelashes) as for their art.

This decade has witnessed a geometric

increase in the quantity and quality of art by women. Their achievements and attitudes are responsible to an unprecedented degree for the flexibility and diversity of '70s art, with its inclination to primitivize, recomplicate, and imbue with new (often figurative) meaning and psychological mystery the simpler, more completely abstract forms that dominated '60s art.

Pictured here with

Winsor, to mark the occasion of her MOMA debut, are five other younger women artists and their work, a sampling of the best and most energetic new art created today by women or anyone else. Their art, which has been—or will be—particularly visible this season, reflects in various ways those tendencies that are unique to the late 1970s; their development in the 1980s will bear watching.

## Night Rides



Susan Rothenberg's horse silhouettes lead a double life. They're flat, abstract elements that enable the artist to get on with the business of color, brushwork, and the shallow space of modern painting.

But they're also mysterious apparitions: faceless, riderless beasts caught in eerie suspended animation on the painted surface. This doubleness succeeds because it is indivisible: the horses' facelessness also

contributes to their abstraction, their flatness is also part of their disembodied emotional strangeness. Rothenberg's new paintings—and some new subjects—will be on view at Willard Gallery during April.



Lane simplifies the objects she paints. Things in the world—dresses, fans, birds, fans, fans—are reduced to a sketchily-drawn, near-abstract elegance and positioned on the canvas in creative arrangements. She creates what she calls a "certain sense of tension" in the way her

decal-thin shapes sit nervously on surfaces that seem both flat and infinite, and finally give way to a dark, resonant emptiness. Lane's drawings can be seen this month at New York's Willard Gallery. Above left: A small animal ("an unborn thing," Lane calls it) is the handle of a huge fan shape.



PHOTOGRAPHED BY DUANE MICHALS

## Black on Black

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Jennifer Bartlett's unusual painting surface—12-inch-square white enameled steel plates—is an active and adjustable part of her work, which the pileup at the center of 392 *Broadway* (below) suggests. Bartlett integrates abstraction and representation: "I don't see the difference," she says. Over the years, she has moved from abstract dot-

systems to a more freely-painted representational imagery in which subject, line, color, and brushwork are still determined by her set of rules. She's interested in the way "the product of logic often looks quite bizarre." In Bartlett's newest work, seen in January at L.A.'s Margo Leavin Gallery, that product has a raw, lively awkwardness.

## Back to Square One



## Art of Animation



Elizabeth Murray wants her abstract shapes to be "real animated, almost figurative," and she's getting what she wants. The biomorphs in her latest work (seen at New York's Paula Cooper Gallery last October) might jump right off the canvas and strike up a conversation, were they not already locked into such strange spatial contortions with each other. (Check out the whirling dervish/pink tornado at the center of *Traveler's Dream*, right.) Such zany, hyped-up visual pop is made all the more muscular because Murray lays her bright colors on in smooth, thickly-laced slabs.

Frances Barth's most recent work (seen at SoHo's Susan Caldwell Gallery in January), evolved out of her attraction to the exotic visuality of the Russian alphabet—"the shapes looked like my painting shapes." And so she based a series of drawings on both the look and meaning of particular art-related Russian nouns

and verbs. Reproduced here is Barth's laconic word image, *Colors*. In all, there are 28 (one for each letter in the Russian alphabet) energetic visual dialogues between the written words and the abstract forms—circles, wedges, and shards of rich color—each has inspired. The series, titled "A Russian Abecedyary," will begin a tour this spring.

## Take a Letter



“The debate about an artistic “feminine sensibility” has ceased to be relevant. Art by women isn't so easily categorized; but its impact has been all-pervasive.”

Roberta Smith is an art critic and senior editor of *Art in America*.

## It All Adds Up



Jacqueline Winsor infuses the blunt, industrially manufactured forms of Minimalism with a personal, primitive force. How? By going back to more natural materials (logs, wood, rope, string), and by making each structure clearly the sum of its delicately repeating parts. Like a physical representation of a mantra, the repetition of these incessant details, and the monumental shapes they add up to, can cast a mesmerizing spell. These serene but obsessive objects pull your eye and mind into the process and the energy of their own making. After closing at MOMA March 6, Winsor's exhibition, which covers a decade's work, will travel to the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto (May 5-June 24), the Fort Worth Art Museum (October), and other U.S. museums.