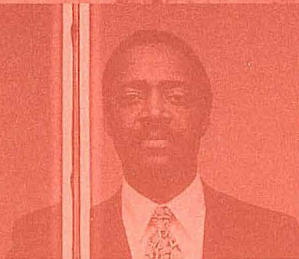


*"Age has its compensations. It is less apt to be  
browbeaten by discretion."*

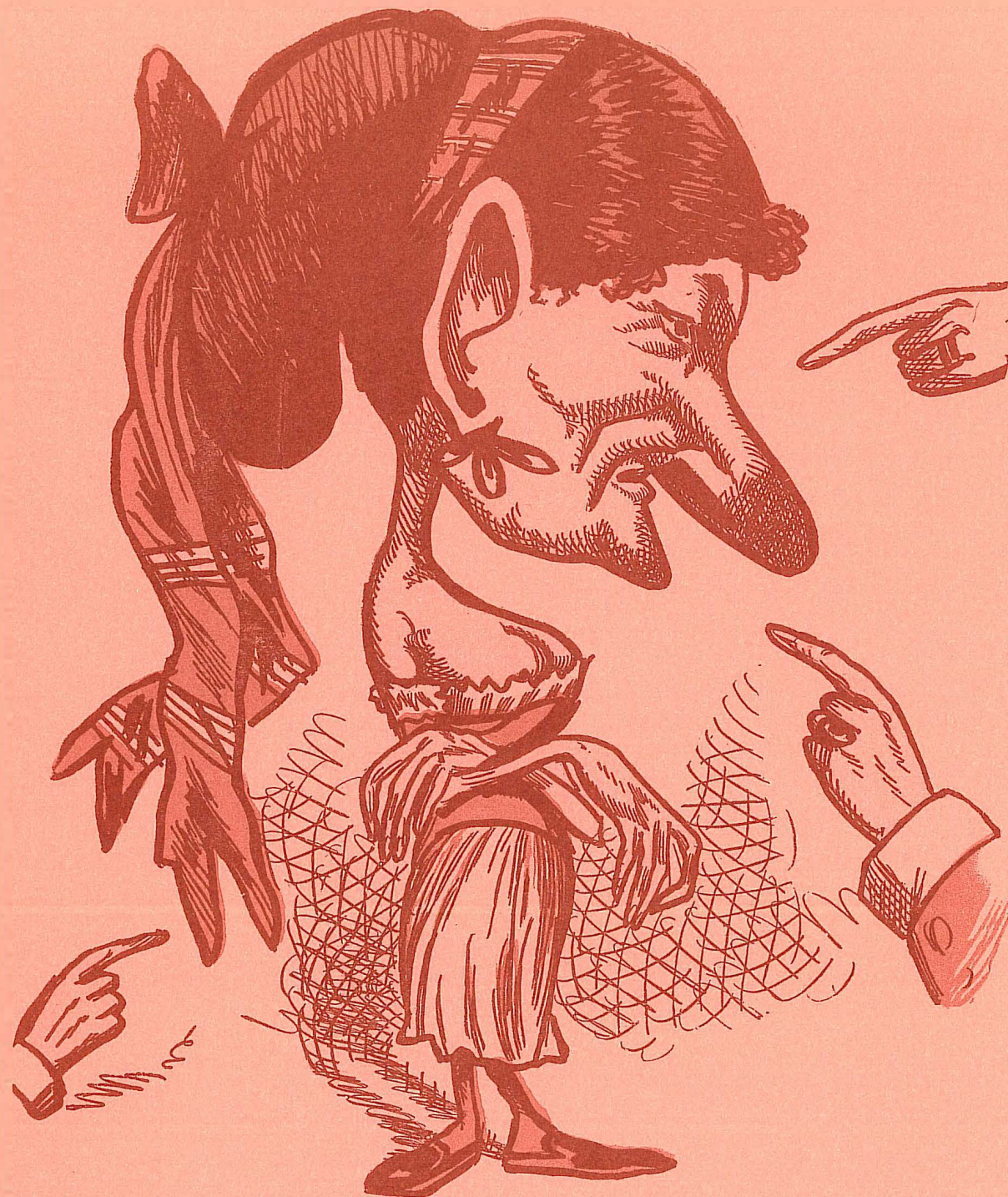
—Charlie Chaplin



*the Time of Our Lives*







AN OLD MAID.

LONG years ago, your charms decayed,  
You'll never get them back—Old Maid.  
And when you show what now remains,  
You're only laughed at for your pains;  
Your neck so scraggy, legs so thin,  
Are shapeless as a rolling-pin;  
While such a frightful chin and nose  
Are only fit to frighten crows.

New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York

*the Time of Our Lives*

Exhibition organized by Marcia Tucker  
with Anne Ellegood

Essays by Marcia Tucker, Anja Zimmermann, Philip Koplin,  
Anne Ellegood, Anne Barlow and Xochitl Dorsey



The Time of Our Lives  
New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York  
July 15–October 17, 1999  
Organized by Marcia Tucker with Anne Ellegood

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*The Time of Our Lives* is made possible by generous grants from  
The Leonard and Susan Bay Nimoy Family Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation,  
and the Penny McCall Foundation.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 99-70492  
ISBN 0-915557-83-5

The individual views expressed in the exhibition and publication  
are not necessarily those of the Museum.

New Museum of Contemporary Art  
583 Broadway  
New York, NY 10012  
www.newmuseum.org

Catalogue Production Manager: Melanie Franklin  
Editor: Tim Yohn  
Catalogue Design: Susan Evans and Brian Sisco, Sisco & Evans, New York  
Printer: The Stinehour Press

Cover details: Leonardo Da Vinci,  
*Age Confronting Youth*, Collection of  
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy.  
Courtesy of Ministero per i beni e le  
Attività Culturali; Susan Unterberg,  
*Untitled* from Father/Son series,  
1990, Collection of the New School  
for Social Research, New York.  
Courtesy of the artist; Yoshiko  
Kanai, *In a Mirror*, 1996, Courtesy of  
the artist and M.Y. Art Prospects,  
Brooklyn; and Yvonne Rainer, *Still*  
from *Privilege*, 1990, Courtesy of  
Zeitgeist Films, New York.

Back cover: Alice Stone, *She Lives  
to Ride*, 1994, Courtesy of Women  
Make Movies, New York.

Inside covers, front and back:  
Charles J. Howard, "An Old Maid"  
and "An Old Cock" from *Penny  
Dreadful Valentines* published by  
McLoughlin Bros., New York.  
Courtesy Marcia Richards, Pitman,  
New Jersey.

## Contents

4	Preface and Acknowledgments MARCIA TUCKER
10	"A Land Where We'll Never Grow Old" MARCIA TUCKER
36	"What's Wrong with Your Mother?": Representations of Menopausal Women in Television and Film ANJA ZIMMERMANN
50	Signs of Age: Representing the Older Body PHILIP KOPLIN
58	Old Dogs, New Tricks ANNE ELLEGOOD
72	Catalogue of Works
97	Older and Wiser? ANNE BARLOW AND XOCHITL DORSEY
104	Exhibition Checklist
107	Artists' Statements
112	Selected Bibliography: Partial, Unfinished, and Only Slightly Biased
116	Contributors
119	Trustees, Artists Advisory Board, and Staff



## Preface and Acknowledgments

DISCLAIMER: The fact that I decided to organize an exhibition on the topic of age has nothing to do with me personally. All artistic decisions are purely objective, and this one, I assure you, is equally so. I was, however, influenced by the fact that the *only* truly great body of artists—those born, like me, in the 1940s—are now starting to look their age.

Yvonne Rainer's film, *Privilege*, is what started it all. It came out in 1990—along with what seemed like half the audience—and premiered at New York's Film Forum. The film was shocking, not because it was Yvonne's (the art world had come to associate her work with the thoroughly unconventional), but because the word "menopause" just wasn't spoken out loud—at least, not outside the doctor's office. It's hard to believe that even as recently as 1990 the subject was still pretty much under wraps.

At that time I was not yet "past my prime," as it's so delicately put, so I had no personal experience of the subject. Of course, once enlightened, I began to see increasing numbers of works that addressed the subject of the postmenopausal body. I also saw works which dealt with the aging male body, with intergenerational issues, and with the ways that AIDS has altered the concept of age. Through all this I became painfully aware of the ageism in the visual images that surround us.

But as I looked further, it was clear that the fine arts had begun to enter into a dialogue with age theory. In academia and the social sciences, the ideas of radical gerontologists, cultural studies critics, and feminist theoreticians were upsetting the ways that age had been addressed in the past, analyzing images and offering new contexts that provided alternative ways of looking at the subject altogether.

Because works of art—in all media—are rarely literal, and because artists tend to tear stereotypes apart with their bare hands, their work can make us think about age in ways that sharply contrast with the content of standard media images. Since there was no way of covering all the issues in the field, or of even showing a "representative sampling" of the art works which address issues of age, we simply tried to include work of all kinds that turned age upside-down, contained images that were thought-provoking rather than doctrinaire, and provided a sense of what age might be like from many different perspectives.

I'd like to thank the following people, who have been instrumental in helping with the exhibition and with my sanity throughout the project:

Kathleen Woodward (54), a pioneer in the field of age studies, offered assistance, manuscripts, connections, and support from the onset. In 1996 she organized a symposium entitled "Women and Aging: Bodies, Cultures, Generations" for the Center for Twentieth-Century Studies at the University of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which broke new ground in its exploration of issues across the fields of feminism, the visual arts, and age studies. I'm grateful to Kathleen and to Patricia Mellencamp, also at the Center, for their encouraging and enthusiastic response to this project. Through them I met Anne Davis Basting (33), who was extremely helpful with suggestions, contacts, and information about the field, and whose documentation of her work with Alzheimer's patients is included in the show. Stephen Katz (47), sociologist and author, was also gracious in providing materials and suggestions.

Cheryl Amato (49), Diana Meyers (52), and Sari Eckler Cooper (37) each generously offered their help and suggestions. Although ultimately we weren't able to incorporate their specific proposals into the exhibition, their enthusiasm and knowledge were integral to the show as it finally evolved. Other friends and cohorts, among them Estelle Berruyer, Ann Doran (42), Alison Gingerais, Melissa Goldstein (37), and Amy Fusselman (32) gave advice, made suggestions, and/or facilitated loans that were invaluable in shaping the exhibition.

My colleagues in the field, among them Carolina Ponce de Leon (43), former curator at El Museo del Barrio; Lydia Yee (32), curator at the Bronx Museum; Daniel Veneciano, former curator at The Studio Museum of Harlem; Katy Kline, Director of the Bowdoin College Museum of Art in Maine; Nancy Doll (50), Director of the Weatherspoon Art Gallery at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro; independent curator Marcia Tanner (57); Christine Taverna Reich (25), Assistant Exhibit Planner at the Museum of Science, Boston; and artist and writer Philip Koplin (56) all offered advice and suggestions that altered the final shape of the show for the better.

DISCLAIMER #2: The ages of everyone involved with the exhibition and the Museum are listed wherever possible. Where no age is indicated, we were either unable to contact the person, or there was no response. All resemblance to persons living or dead is purely coincidental.



Anita Roddick, founder of The Body Shop, Inc., has gone where no one else dared ever tread, and her enthusiasm and courage in breaking stereotypes right and left—especially those involving age and beauty—have been inspiring. Susan Bay Nimoy (56) and Leonard Nimoy (68), whose friendship can best be described as an emotional, intellectual, and artistic life-support system, not only provided funds for this exhibition but opened doors that made a crucial difference to what, how, when, and why the project came to be. I am indebted to Richard Masur at the Screen Actor's Guild and to Norman Lear for their assistance in the lengthy process of obtaining permission to use television programs. At the Rockefeller Foundation, Tomas Ybarra-Frausto's enthusiasm for the project gave it momentum and, with the help of Joan Shigekawa and Mikki Shepard, Director of the Arts Program, brought about welcome financial support. Robert Shiffler of Shastar, Inc., with the help of Kay Riffle, generously donated the furniture in the exhibition. Many dealers were extremely helpful in locating work and facilitating loans, without which there would be no show. The lenders who parted with their pieces have been particularly generous; their (temporary) loss is our—and the public's—gain.

My friends Connie Beckley (47), Kinshasha Conwill (48), Lynne Darcy (58), Ellen Diamond (59), Nancy Dwyer ("44 going on 45"), Mimi Gaudieri (58), Betty Harris (46), Maxine Hayt (62), Susana Torruella Leval (55), Patrizia Levi (60), Barbara Niblock (65), Cheryl Morrison (52), "Suzy Q." (57) and Janine Reiman (50) in New York were the linchpins that held me—and the project—together during a difficult year and a half prior to its opening. My west coast friends Marla Berns (46), Elizabeth Brown (42), Linda Cathcart (51), Arlene Dunlap (59), Meg Linton (32), Liza Lou (30), and Cissy Ross (50), were my anchors on the other side of the country; Rick (50 and 7 mos.) and Ro (47 and 5 mos.) Sanders once again provided a peaceful haven in which to research, write and relax. The wisdom of Gene Fairly (73), Martha Gallahue (60), Barry Grundlein (67), Rebecca Klinger (48), Yvonne Rand, and Dick Rifkind (69) helped me find focus and strength. My husband Dean (42) and my daughter Ruby (15) gave me themselves, which was just what I needed to see the project—and everything else—through.

At the New Museum, Greg Sholette (43), former Curator of Education, helped shape the educational component of the project in its earliest stages. Stephen Yaffe (50), who organized the professional development training series for artist instructors and high school teachers in our Visible Knowledge Program, was the catalyst for the successful collaboration which resulted in the student projects

included in the exhibition. Claudia Hernandez (30), former Assistant Educator, was instrumental in conceptualizing, spearheading, and implementing the projects in 1997 and 1998. Sarah Farsad (33), Education Assistant, worked closely with Claudia and with Anne Barlow (34), Curator of Education, on just about everything. Meryl Meisler (47), an artist and multimedia teacher who was part of the collaboration, was extremely generous with ideas and suggestions for the show. It was an incredible pleasure to work with the artists, teachers, and students who contributed to the exhibition, and the results prove that high school students can produce amazing works of art in every medium.

Sefa Saglam (29), Assistant Registrar, called our attention to several unusual items that have been included in our public resource materials; she also lent her considerable skills to the installation and maintenance of the show. I am fortunate to have been able to work on this exhibition with an extraordinary group of colleagues: Melanie Franklin (32), catalogue and exhibition guru, can balance more details on the head of a pin than dancing angels, and she put it all together perfectly; John Hatfield (35) masterminded the exhibition's loans, shipping, budget, installation, and was responsible for maintaining my mental health during the process; Tom Brumley (34) juggled hammer, glue gun, paintbrush, installation crew, and harmonica with alacrity and grace; Kim Boatner (42) kept me from throwing my laptop out of the window on at least a half-dozen occasions; Dennis Szakacs capably relieved me of enormous responsibilities so that I could actually *do* the show; David Tweet's (35) fertile imagination dreamed up and commissioned age-related products for the Bookstore that would make anyone want to age instantly; Maureen Sullivan's enthusiasm and marketing mania just kept going and going and going; Anne Barlow arrived from Glasgow just in time to add fire, expertise, and the diplomatic skills of twenty to our collaborative education components; and Victoria Brown (32), cheerer-upper of the directorially distressed, resident wit, research maven, inventrix, and Genie in a Bottle™ (with unlimited wishes) also read, copy-edited, and proofed the essays, and retrieved many bits of arcane information from her secret sources.

I'm grateful to interns Danielle Jankow (24), Lara Kohl (27), Cat Marshall and Rachel Moses (35), who provided me with many pleasurable exchanges as well as the 48 pounds of invaluable Xeroxed research material that I carried with me at all times. Without the help of Anja Zimmermann (30) and Xochitl Dorsey (25) I'm not sure that I wouldn't have collapsed under the weight of such a complex undertaking—or at the very least suffered permanent eye and back strain.



Andrée Hymel (29) read the essay and offered editorial suggestions and long conversations on this and other subjects that were a breath of fresh air, as she is; Tim Yohn (59), my lifetime editor and pal, swept up the verbal debris in all of our catalogue essays, again editing with his unique combination of skill, compassion, and critical acumen. And the superb design team of Susan Evans (38) and Brian Sisco (40) once again put their talents to work to make the catalogue a genuine reflection of the show, not to mention readable. Penny McCall (1941–1999), who so generously underwrote the catalogue, was a shining example of what it means to live life to the fullest, inspiring me to write my essay in the same spirit. This exhibition is a tribute to her memory.

Above all my thanks go to Anne Ellegood (32), my partner in crime, who began to work with me on the exhibition in June 1997 and has collaborated on every aspect of it since—first as an intern studying at The Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, and now as a member of the Museum’s curatorial staff. I’m grateful for her eye, her ear, her hand, and her heart in a project that she couldn’t possibly have any interest in, given her age.

Marcia Tucker (59)  
*Founding Director*

The Body Shop advertisement.  
First published in *Mother Jones*,  
April 1999. Courtesy of The  
Body Shop International PLC.



## “A Land Where We’ll Never Grow Old”<sup>1</sup>

MARCIA TUCKER

Age is a terminal disease. First you get decrepit. Your face looks like a road map with no “scenic views.” Your body parts have all headed south, where it’s anything but sunny. Your teeth live in a glass, except when they visit you for dinner. You’ve given up sex decades ago because you wouldn’t want anyone to see your body; even if your parts did function you’d be asking for a heart attack or a stroke just by trying.

You can’t sleep, except during dinner parties. Your hip hurts; the next thing you know, you can’t walk at all. Your life is full of doctor’s visits, medical bills, and insurance forms that you don’t understand and can’t see well enough to read anyhow. You can’t remember where you put your glasses, and even if you could you wouldn’t be able to see them. If someone *told* you where they were, your response would most likely be “WHAT DID YOU SAY?!!”

You’re absent-minded and forgetful, which is why you put your glasses in the refrigerator in the first place. You drive very, very slowly, and badly. No one is interested in your stories except your grandchildren, and they’re not all *that* interested. You go broke because Social Security has been sold to a consortium of Gen X money managers who want to use the funds as venture capital to finance a computer-controlled biological weapons center on Mars.<sup>2</sup> You’re forced to move from your wonderful cozy apartment in Greenwich Village to a communal “retirement” complex in California, where you play bridge and Mahjong until your children send you to a nursing home, where you die.<sup>3</sup>

If you believe the above, you’re

- a) under twenty-five
- b) the only child of a parent who is over sixty-five
- c) a person of any age in industrialized Western culture who reads newspapers, watches TV, goes to the movies, or buys a magazine from time to time

Science proved decades ago that people don’t have to lose their cognitive skills, physical or mental health, or their ability to change and grow throughout an entire lifetime.<sup>4</sup> So why is this picture of age still so pervasive when the facts are otherwise?

In Western culture, it’s not the older person but the idea of “old age” that’s stuck in the mud. The “elderly”—whatever that word actually means—experience more stereotypic and prejudicial notions about themselves than any other group.<sup>5</sup> Age prejudice cuts across race, class, and gender, and everyone, at some point, is its target. This morning my fifteen-year-old daughter pointed out that it’s the only form of prejudice that society still finds acceptable; age prejudice is not only tolerated, people don’t even bother to hide their negative feelings. She also pointed out people don’t seem to be fighting back; she doesn’t see organized marches of old people battling for their civil liberties, carrying signs demanding the right to fair housing, benefits, medical care, employment and accurate representation in the media. (This is doubtless because they’re all so sick or debilitated that they couldn’t manage to get to Washington on their own, right? Tell *that* to the Gray Panthers!)

It’s no wonder that we internalize the myths and stereotypes of age. People worry constantly about getting old. (Of course they also worry about being considered too young—jobs and status are denied to people on both ends of the age spectrum.<sup>6</sup>) But you don’t find yourself bombarded daily with images that tell you that you’re too young. On the other hand, the flurry of messages saying that the only role of an older person is one of increasing uselessness and incompetence will eventually get you to start thinking of yourself that way, too.<sup>7</sup> It’s amazing to me how many “senior moments” I’ve experienced now that someone put a cute name to the ordinary acts of forgetfulness that everyone has. My daughter’s personal conspiracy theory is that it’s the great body of powerful middle-aged people who are controlling and taking advantage of those younger *and* older than themselves because, as she puts it, “they always think they know what’s best.”

She certainly has a point. Betty Friedan, in *The Fountain of Age*, cites recent studies showing that “midlife, rather than childhood or adolescence, represents the pivotal time of individuation, autonomous self-definition and conscious choice.”<sup>8</sup> An article in the *New York Times* “Health and Fitness” section entitled “New Study Finds Middle Age Is Prime of Life” confirms this.<sup>9</sup> Despite this note of optimism, however, the article concludes, “Yet if the MacArthur study reveals mid-life as a time of relative well-being for both men and women, it also points out the risks of old age. . . . The message for people in midlife, Dr. Ryff said, is to ‘be mindful of what’s ahead.’” (I personally am grateful to have these risks pointed out, so I can avoid them—by suicide, say, or by catching a terminal disease, or simply by calling 1–800-GET-LOST, the Euthanasia Hotline.)

5. See *The Gerontologist* 28, no. 5, (October 1988).

6. Screenwriters in Hollywood are being denied jobs because if they’re over twenty-something they’re too old. Riley Weston, a writer for the Warner Brothers TV show *Felicity*, told the producers who hired her that she was nineteen. When they found out that she was actually thirty-two, they fired her as being untrustworthy. She said she lied because they simply wouldn’t have hired her if they knew her true age.

7. “. . . the self-perceptions of old people are formed as responses to cultural or social definitions of age . . . [T]he human elderly, like all social beings, are embodiments of the role expectations assigned to them by their culture. In this case, the prophecy of old age as a time of uselessness and incompetence is self-fulfilling. Television does much to perpetuate this cycle.” Adella Harris and Jonathan Feinberg, “Television and Aging: What You See is What You Get,” *The Gerontologist* 17, no. 5 (October 1977): 467.

8. Friedan, *The Fountain of Age*, p. 113.

9. *The New York Times* (Tuesday, 16 February 1999): F6.



10. My informed source tells me that things get better once you're dead. There's a show called *Mummies Alive* wherein the embalmed dead, male and female, come to life to help fight crime.

11. See Patricia Mellencamp, *High Anxiety: Catastrophe, Scandal, Age & Comedy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 286–287, for a numerical analysis of the representations of older men and women in television.

12. "The areas of business and politics are rarely selected as the stage for dramatic representations. Therefore, older people who are in true life eminently successful in these fields are not portrayed in such roles in the simulated world of television entertainment. . . . Television has chosen to dramatize subject matter where old people fail (health) rather than subject matter where they succeed (business and politics)." Harris and Feinberg, "Television and Aging: What You See is What You Get," *The Gerontologist*: 466.

13. Both *Cybill* and *All in the Family* are dealt with in depth in Anja Zimmermann's essay in this catalogue.

14. *The Golden Girls* aired on NBC from September 14, 1985 to May 9, 1992, starring Bea Arthur, Betty White, Rue McClanahan, Estelle Getty, Herb Edelman, and Harold Gould.

We figure out what "old" is from the images that surround us, and we adopt those attitudes at an early age. Try tuning in to Saturday morning cartoons sometime if you think they feature old people in a wide variety of roles; a random sampling produces the bad witch, the wicked old crone, and the evil, ancient Dr. X whose only purpose is to destroy the world.<sup>10</sup> So much for the broad spectrum. On prime-time TV, where the minuscule over-sixty set consists mostly of newscasters and the public figures they talk about and interview, the picture isn't much brighter. They're pretty much all guys, although there is an occasional "ageless" woman like Barbara Walters, who gets mysteriously—or not so mysteriously—younger as years go by.<sup>11</sup>

Sitcoms express their own particular forms of prejudice. With rare exception older people, especially female ones, tend to be the butt of jokes whenever they're shoved center stage for a moment. Business and politics, where older people are more likely to be effective and successful, aren't the stuff of which prime-time drama is made. Much more lively dramas, according to television programming, occur when people are old and sick.<sup>12</sup> (Of course, young and sick is even more dramatic; witness the success of *E. R.*, *Chicago Hope*, and *L.A. Doctors*.)

Several programs, however, have dealt openly with issues of age, although they were mostly comedies rather than drama. Edith's "problem," in a 1971 episode of *All in the Family*, turns out to be menopause, which precipitates a change of personality in her that is only slightly less startling than Linda Blair's in *The Exorcist*. Edith, that extraordinary embodiment of pre-feminist, cowed housewifery, precipitously flies off the handle, refusing to accept her contemptuous, impatient husband Archie's demands. A year later, when *Maude*'s title character became pregnant at forty-seven, viewers gaped, gasped, groaned, and giggled. The second episode of "Maude's Dilemma," in which she decides *not* to have the baby, became a major topic of conversation among my friends, fresh from the trenches of first wave feminism and still torn about the reality (although not the politics) of abortion. An episode of *Cybill* entitled "When You're Hot, You're Hot" (1996) showed how much things had changed by the mid-1990s. *Cybill*'s hot flashes unleashed a roar of appreciative laughter from men and women of all ages who admired her outspoken, unselfconscious, and hysterically funny response to the "symptoms" of menopause.<sup>13</sup> The long-lived (1985–92) and popular *Golden Girls* was also an exception to the rule because its lead characters were all older women, and it made age and aging a central issue, showing that older women have lives that include romance, sex, good food, meaningful conversation, and above all, friendship.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, the

jokes tended to enforce rather than explode stereotypes of deterioration and loss. Here's an example:

ROSE: I don't drink before bed time. I stop all liquids at noon and I still wake up.

SOPHIA: I never have that problem, never. I sleep like a log. I never get up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom. I go in the morning. Every morning like clockwork at 7 A.M. I pee. Unfortunately, I don't wake up till 8.<sup>15</sup>

As for age in advertising, on television everyone seems to be in a perpetual state of twenty-something grace, their lives motivated solely by the thought of a cold beer. The few commercials that aren't devoted to selling cars are promoting products for women that guarantee that they'll stay twenty-something, and products for men that will keep them in an eternal state of good old boyism—no matter how unattractive it is in real life. OK, there are exceptions. Sometimes a mother—never looking much over thirty-five—will give her adult daughter advice, usually about a feminine deodorant spray which no woman I know would ever mention in conversation, much less think of using. There's an occasional grandma who, acting like the live wire viewers know she's not, will leap, cavort, and turn super-speed cartwheels in the living room, ostensibly as proof that a battery will give new life to a dying object. Or when an older person is visible, he or she is reduced to an icon of that oft-touted "second childhood," the one in which our elders are seen doing the mambo across the living room in step with diapered babies and dogs, or seated at the table next to an adorable child, drooling together over the merits of a new breakfast cereal.

Occasionally, though, a commercial will so break with convention on the age-depleted screen as to appear totally shocking. An ad for IBM computers shows that older men (in this case French men who are touted as sexy at any age, unlike their American counterparts) are hardly neo-Luddites, but use the latest technology with alacrity. A McDonald's commercial shows that an older man, looking to be in his mid-seventies, is not only capable of holding down a job, but does it so well that his younger co-workers are eager to learn a thing or two from him. A while back, a Levi Strauss commercial for jeans showed a man and woman also seeming to be in their seventies. To judge by the man's interest in the jukebox-like condom machine in the corner of a seriously "rad" club, the two were about to engage in sex—yes, sex! The ad elicited some startled comments from others who saw it, like "That's just unrealistic." "They'll never sell jeans *that* way!" And perhaps most curious of all: "They're so *old*, why do they still need condoms?"

15. From a "Golden Girls" website.



16. See Margaret Morganroth Gullette, "Midlife Discourses," in *Welcome to Middle Age! (And Other Cultural Fictions)*, ed. Richard A. Shweder (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 18–19. She has a great point to make about *Peter Pan*, which was a huge commercial success in 1904—and still is, for that matter. Wendy grows up but Peter doesn't, because she has to have babies, but he can fantasize with impunity.

17. Mellencamp, *High Anxiety*, p. 281.

18. See Gullette, "Midlife Discourses," pp. 19–22.

Last year, when a group of colleagues at the New Museum were discussing cultural differences in aging, Rika Yihua Feng commented that in China, where she comes from, if you want to sell a product you put an image of an elder with a long beard on the ad, because it implies maturity, judgment, and wisdom. In the Western world, we use a picture of a gorgeous young model in a skimpy bathing suit. What does this tell us?

As for print materials, I long ago stopped reading fashion and glamour magazines because they invariably made me feel unattractive or angry. An exception was the now-defunct magazine *Lear's*, a plank of self-esteem thrown to older female readers worried about slowly sinking into the bog of age; its pages actually showed gray-haired women, albeit mostly thin, elegant, and airbrushed, with only a few lines left in for "character." I haven't combed through *GQ* or *Esquire* lately, but I daresay that their rare images of older men are also going to be thin, airbrushed, wealthy—and white. (Admittedly, I'm not counting newspaper pictures of Boris Yeltsin, Margaret Thatcher, or Nelson Mandela in my equation, nor am I counting pictures of old folks in nursing homes, or headshots from the obituary section of the *New York Times*—which seems mostly to use pictures taken fifteen or twenty years prior to the person's death, especially if they lived a long time.) That's why a six-minute film like Gail Noonan's very funny animated video, *Your Name in Cellulite*, can blast the youth-driven attitude of mainstream media to smithereens with one good solid laugh. Isn't it odd for a society obsessed with age and aging to have so few images of people who are actually doing it?

One of the most common forms of this obsession is nostalgia, a pervasive desire to return "home" from a place of exile.<sup>16</sup> But alas, as the title of Thomas Wolfe's book says, "You Can't Go Home Again." (I'd love to add the subtitle "... Because You Can't Get There From Here.") The constant yearning for the past, for a "lost" youth, for the "good old days," starts early. My daughter was seven when she first began referring wistfully to that time way back "when I was a kid." We're taught that "young" is happy, carefree, attractive, and good. "Middle age" is the beginning of old, and old is bad. "Old" is boring, ugly, cranky, decrepit, old-fashioned, and smelly. Old is losing it.

According to cultural critic Patricia Mellencamp, in the media—as in society at large—"youth is represented as a lost object rather than a process or passage. One can imagine an acceleration of this with age, portrayed as a series of losses rather than achievements, gains, or successes for women."<sup>17</sup> By the early nineteenth century, men too became subject to midlife crises when they began to internalize ideas of decline and to suffer age-related anxieties,<sup>18</sup> particularly in

Robert Weber. ©The New Yorker Collection 1977 Robert Weber from cartoonbank.com. All Rights Reserved.

relation to earning capacity, the workplace, athletic ability, or sexual performance. Even today, the images of middle-aged masculinity presented in books, plays, and popular media don't help, since most of them are hardly positive. (Witness the popularity of Arthur Miller's 1949 play, "Death of A Salesman," featuring Willy Loman, a down-in-the-mouth, down-at-the-heels Everyman, recently revived on Broadway to huge acclaim. Or the popular film *Falling Down* [1993], in which Michael Douglas [whose license plate reads "D-FENS"] goes berserk with a baseball bat, doubtless as a result of male menopause. Clearly, these guys were better off before they reached their climacteric.)

In one of the exhibition's films, *Why?*, artist Carol Halstead tells us why she went back to art school in her later life. The answer is her personal alternative to becoming a female D-FENS after her husband leaves her and their children because he says she's crazy and everything bad that could possibly happen to her does. She picks herself up, dusts herself off, and starts again. Another film, *Grace*, by Susan Cohen and William Whiteford, is a documentary love story about a woman who has Alzheimer's disease and her extraordinary husband, who cares for her throughout her illness with tenderness, compassion, patience,

"I think your whole life shows in your face and you should be proud of that."  
—Lauren Bacall



19. Anne Davis Basting's workshops are included in the exhibition through handmade books, documentation, and photographs. Working associatively from a variety of visual images, participants generate extraordinary works of fiction and clearly experience enormous satisfaction in doing so.

20. Bryan S. Turner, "Aging and Identity: Some Reflections on the Somatization of the Self," in *Images of Aging: Cultural Representations of Later Life*, ed. Mike Featherstone and Andrew Wernick (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 252.

21. See Jake Harwood and Howard Giles, "'Don't Make Me Laugh': Age Representations in a Humorous Context," *Discourse and Society* 3, no. 4 (October 1992): 419.

and genuine pleasure despite the very real hardships and heartbreak of their situation. And Alain Cavalier's *Portraits*, a seven-part feature-length film about older French women at work—as a mattress-maker, a maker of artificial flowers, and the custodian of the downstairs toilets in a bar-restaurant, among others—goes a long way to dispel the myth that old women can't and don't work, especially in fields that require enormous physical strength, endless tolerance, and lost skills. It's a good example of what mainstream media are so loath to do—show the courage, common sense, hard work, and humor with which so many older people deal with the vagaries of everyday life.

Fortunately, there are other ways of looking at the passage of time than through mass media. Individual and collective memories also define the past, particularly through such oral traditions as storytelling, or narrative songs and ballads. While certainly capable of promoting nostalgia and a sense of loss, storytelling and song can also operate to subvert nostalgia and provide creative alternatives to it. A story doesn't have to be chronological, and often isn't; it weaves in and out of events and memories in an individual's life or in a given period of history. Even when a person's functional memory is eroded, as is the case with those who have Alzheimer's, their storytelling capacity may remain strong. And insofar as their tales also belie traditional chronology, they can become works of art—fictional, fluid, and shifting narratives shaped by the imagination and by personal experience—as Anne Davis Basting's workshops with institutionalized Alzheimer's patients, documented in the exhibition, so clearly prove.<sup>19</sup>

Nostalgia has also been aided and abetted by the advent of photography, which can record memory and measure age. Australian sociologist Bryan Turner says that "the development of the photograph has become an essential feature . . . not only of individual images of aging, but of collective, generational aging. We measure our personal aging, not simply by reference to the recorded transformation of our own image, but collectively by reference to our peers and our generation."<sup>20</sup> As with storytelling, though, any account can be manipulated by selecting images or historical records according to particular needs or perspectives, thereby creating subjective and varied narratives.

Nonetheless, the act of reminiscence is stereotypically considered to be the only way older people communicate,<sup>21</sup> implying that they live in the past rather than in the present. Since museums are the quintessential storehouses for artifacts, then, as Turner puts it, "to become old is, if there were such a verb, to be museumized." He cites Theodor Adorno's observation that the German word *museal* (museumlike) has unpleasant overtones, since it describes objects to

which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying.<sup>22</sup> As Turner astutely observes, aging, in our rapidly changing contemporary society, means that the meaningful cultural artifacts of a past generation are killed off and historicized by making them the subject of documentaries, remakes, and scholarly papers, as is happening with the protest generations of the 1960s and 1970s which, ironically, celebrated youthfulness. (I've experienced this personally, because my daughter considers it a loss to society as well as a personal affront that I didn't save my clothes from the 60s.)

Artists' visual representations of age challenge the assumptions of loss, irretrievability, stasis, and museumification by creating works that resist nostalgia and instead offer layered, uneasy images that defy categorization. We're used to seeing representations of the nude female body, for instance, as sexualized and objectified, but images of naked older people in the photo-based work of such artists as Jeff Wall, Consuelo Castañeda, Harriet Casdin-Silver, Jacqueline Hayden, Manabu Yamanaka, or Cindy Sherman give us embodied images of the female nude that cannot be read in a singular way. These artists have created pictorial situations in which the naked body expresses and produces a gamut of sensations and attitudes—comfortable, proud, aggressive, iconic, tender, provocative, wicked, delicate, arrogant, subversive, invincible—that offer viewers a more complex construction within which to find new dimensions and meanings for the process of aging.

Patricia Mellencamp, writing about how television images shape our feelings about age, says that "chronological age, assessed at a glance like sex, is television's and the nation's gendered obsession."<sup>23</sup> Chronology is pervasive, the result of living in a linear culture. But why are we so locked into this particular teleological structuring of time, when its ultimate end is cessation, or death? Even in the arts, which might have found a way around this regimentation, chronology still rules. As an artist, your life, career, and work are lined up, early to late, and valued accordingly. While chronology is a one-way street, however, value is flexible. If you're a young artist, you may get to be called a "new, hot young talent" for about 4 minutes, 38 seconds, but because your "early"

22. Turner, "Aging and Identity," p. 253.

23. Mellencamp, *High Anxiety*, pp. 280–281.



work is actually quite recent it has about the same value in relation to your entire career as a starter yeast has to the bread it may eventually become. If you're a "mid-career" artist whose work has fallen out of favor with the young dealers and the old art magazines, you're referred to as someone who used to "have it" and then "lost it," expressions which invariably assign positive value to the "new" and negative value to the recent—which in this case is "old." If you're an older artist who's well-known, you may be ready for a major retrospective in which your Early, Middle, Late, and Paleolithic periods can finally be cast in concrete. If you're an older artist whose work *isn't* known, you probably have a large storage facility somewhere out in Queens. (If you're a dead artist, thank goodness, you don't have to worry about any of this.)

But the linear model is locked into almost everything we do, even when it has nothing to do with the way most cultures in the world experience life. Age-grading, which defines people by age category rather than by, say, behavior, temperament, interest, ability, character, or number of baseball cards owned,<sup>24</sup> is a real leader in the disempowerment field. The process starts in elementary school, and can cause long-lasting trauma if you get held back a grade.<sup>25</sup> Nowadays, age-defined categories include not only grades 1 through 12, but "early childhood," "childhood," "early adolescence," "adolescence," "late adolescence," "youth," "thirty-something," "adult," "middle-aged," "young-old," "old-old." For post-mortem age-grading, there's "recently deceased," "deceased," and "long dead" to look forward to. As critic and midlife theoretician Margaret Morganroth Gullette points out, this kind of classification leads to a psychological displacement in which age is blamed for virtually all one's economic, political, or social problems,<sup>26</sup> from joblessness to an inability to be civil to your mother-in-law.

Age isn't an exclusive, gated community of the old; it's relative, and age discrimination is pervasive from the outset. "You're too young to cross the street by yourself." "We don't want you going on dates alone until you're older." "FRESHMAN STUDENTS ARE FORBIDDEN TO HAVE VISITORS OF THE OPPOSITE SEX IN THE DORM ROOMS." "IF YOU APPEAR TO BE UNDER 26, YOU MUST SHOW PROOF OF AGE TO PURCHASE CIGARETTES OR BEER. NO EXCEPTIONS." There are laws which say that you can't drive till you're eighteen, you must be twenty-one to drink alcohol, you're not eligible for Social Security Benefits until you're sixty-two, and so on. No wonder everyone lies about their age! I did it to get into movies where minors weren't allowed, to get a job when I was sixteen, to get served in bars before I was twenty-one, and to be considered eligible by the older men of twenty-five

who frequented those bars. On the other side of the spectrum, it came as a shock a couple of years ago to be waved through the gate at the Ventura County Fair in California without paying. I later discovered that it was "Seniors' Night," free to anyone over sixty. I was only fifty-six at the time, but they let me in without even asking for my ID!

Just as it's said that girl babies are developmentally "ahead" of boy babies, women are considered "old" at an earlier age than men. Women live longer than men—an average of nearly eight years longer—and according to recent studies seem to be more adaptable to change. In fact, the fastest-growing age group in both the United States and in the world consists of women over eighty-five.<sup>27</sup> And contrary to popular belief and early studies, these women do not "deteriorate" with age. The more control a woman has over her life, the less likely she is to experience any decline at all. While men are more likely to die within two years of a spouse's death, women usually go on to make major changes in their lives and to sustain themselves despite the death of their mates.<sup>28</sup> It's interesting to see, though, that there's been a switch in gender roles among older people in recent years.<sup>29</sup> Men who once brought home the bacon, often to the detriment of family life, are now rescuing babies from the bathwater with pleasure and skill, while the women who stayed home to hold down the fort are now selling it and investing the capital to sail around the world, start a new business, or organize a community garden.

Even more evident than the differences between men and women are racial and cultural differences in the conceptualization of age. For instance, what Western society considers to be the devastating, debilitating effects of Alzheimer's disease, generally requiring institutionalization, are seen as signs of an increased spiritual life in other societies. In Sierra Leone, as in Native American tribes, elders who lose the ability to speak coherently are thought to be in close communication with their ancestors—speaking to the gods, in effect—and therefore revered.<sup>30</sup>

For many ethnic and immigrant groups living in America and Europe, the continued role of the extended family has found three and sometimes even four generations living together, with the roles of individuals within this structure in flux, particularly in recent years. In Japan, eight out of ten Japanese over sixty-five are still living with descendants, through duty and/or custom.<sup>31</sup>

27. See Friedan, *The Fountain of Age*, p. 134.

28. See *Ibid.*, p. 149.

29. See *Ibid.*, p. 157.

30. See Jay Sokolovsky, *Growing Old in Different Societies: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (Littleton, Mass: Copley Publishing Group, 1987), p. 166.

31. See *Ibid.*, p. 152.

The Touch of Time. *Cosmetics ad from 1904, reprinted in 1945 edition of Vogue Magazine.*  
©AM Cosmetics, New Jersey.

24. See Gullette, "Midlife Discourses," pp. 22–23.

25. My own experience was somewhat of an exception. Growing up in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn in the 1940s, I went to a junior high school where we were all more or less equal till 8th grade, when we were divided into either "RA" or "RS" classes—"Rapid Advance" or "Reform School."

26. See Gullette, "Midlife Discourses," p. 23.



32. See Elisa Facio, *Understanding Older Chicanas: Sociological and Policy Perspectives* (Thousand Oaks, Cal.: Sage Publications, Inc., 1996), p. 15.

33. See Jenny Hockey and Allison James, "Back to Our Futures: Imaging Second Childhood," in *Images of Aging*, eds. Featherstone and Wernick, p. 144.

Although the assumption is that within this extended family structure older family members are valued, there's continued evidence of the hardship placed on women in particular, especially grandmothers and even great-grandmothers who care for their children's children out of necessity. The tradition of the extended family, portrayed as a panacea for the ills of the elderly, doesn't function well in a world where poverty, crime, changes in family structure, altered life expectancy, and differing levels of education have made for major changes in society.<sup>32</sup> Arlene Bowman's terse film, *Navajo Talking Pictures*, explores the discrepancy between the myth and the reality of intergenerational exchange, as the filmmaker visits her grandmother at her home on the reservation. It's an uncomfortable, brutally honest examination of the lack of understanding and the irresolvable conflicts that can occur when old and new ways clash.

It's also a fact that there's a difference between being old and rich and old and poor, and the difference can amount to respect and acceptance, or repulsion and disengagement. There are overtones of gentility, refinement, even philanthropic munificence to upper-class aging, while the aged poor are tainted with the specter of the tenement, the shelter, the SRO, and the park bench. Class differences also create differences in whether older people are perceived as being attractive, since being well-dressed goes a long way to obliterating overt age discrimination. As for physical looks, only those who can afford the high costs of elective plastic surgery can be refashioned into younger-looking versions of themselves. Translated into a rock/paper/scissors game, it means that class wins over age, and age wins over race, but health wins over all—that is, depending on the kind of ailment you have and the extent of your personal resources. But outside of the privacy of your own home or the genteel seclusion of a high-end nursing facility or an environment surrounded by people who love and respect you, the not-yet-old are going to see you as the Other.

That's because in Western society, old people *are* their bodies. Defined by such physical features as incontinence, slurred speech, or immobility,<sup>33</sup> they're classified according to disability, rather than personality, intelligence, coping skills, or talents. Feminists who in the late 1960s and early 70s also battled against being defined by our bodies now find ourselves growing into invisibility, our physical selves no longer seen as viable. And just ahead, as all of us continue to age, we're ironically liable to find ourselves defined by our bodies once again.

This time, however, the response on the street is likely to be something other than the wolf-whistles and catcalls most women endured in their twenties and thirties. The older body is simply in bad taste, as anyone with a teenager at home

*The Gray Panthers marching in Washington DC for a single-payer, universal health-care plan, March 1993. Courtesy of the Gray Panthers, Washington DC.*



knows perfectly well. Its flesh is excessive (that's what wrinkles are, after all) and "unaesthetic," since what is aesthetically pleasing in bodily terms is defined by society as fresh, young, unused. Judgments of people—of all ages—on aesthetic grounds are common and usually applied to express approval or disapproval. They parallel the aesthetic judgments or properties ascribed to works of art,<sup>34</sup> which are no less subjective.

Even worse than the bad taste of the aging body is what happens when that body happens to have an active sex life as well. In Liz Cane's short film *Libido* and in Heddy Honigmann's feature film *O Amor Natural*, it's clear that a sex life isn't the sole province of those under thirty-five. In these films, *much* older people are doing it, enjoying it, and talking about it. In Keiko Ibi's Academy Award winning documentary *The Personals: Improvisations on Romance in the Golden Years*, a group of actors in their seventies and older who live on Manhattan's Lower East Side are seen working on a play. Their production, and the process leading to its final form, show what it's really like to look for romance via the personal ads—especially after one is not supposed to care about such things. It seems to be in bad taste to do something about being lonely once you're too old—to be romantic, that is.

34. See David Novitz, *The Boundaries of Art* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), p. 145.



35. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 273.

36. Bryan S. Turner, "Aging and Identity: Some Reflections on the Somatization of the Self," in *Images of Aging*, eds. Featherstone and Wernick, p. 257.

37. Diana Dull and Candace West, "Accounting for Cosmetic Surgery: The Accomplishment of Gender," *Social Problems* 38, no. 1 (February 1991): 64.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

22

39. On the other hand, if you look your age but refuse to dress appropriately, there'll always be someone saying "Isn't that outfit a little too young for her?" or "He's much too old to still be dressing like a hippy."

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, writing about the culture of taste, says:

Bad taste could be said to be bad timing. While the icons of good taste stand the test of time, the emblems of bad taste come and go. . . . These most debased of commodities are also the most fertile for recoding, because they constitute such abundant trash.<sup>35</sup>

She might as well be talking about the increasing numbers of "bad-tasting" older people in our society, who are, indeed, relegated to the status of debased commodity, except that no one seriously considers *them* "fertile for recoding."

No wonder Americans will do anything to avoid aging. Adapting to a pervasive societal norm by "passing" for younger is commonplace because "in a culture in which the surface of the body is seen to be that which carries the signs of one's inner moral condition, aging is something which has to be denied."<sup>36</sup> And there are so many ways to do it. Working out at the gym can produce or maintain a healthy, "younger-looking" body, but liposuction, breast and face lifts, collagen injections, face peels, hair and cheek implants, and dye jobs can do what even the most strenuous exercise can't. Cosmetic surgery is one of the fastest-growing industries in America, an elective that once belonged to women, but now includes rapidly increasing numbers of men.

The assumption is that it's important to look younger than you are in order to get or keep a job, find love, attract a partner, or simply be "the best that you can be." Whether you get that way through surgical alteration or by using the pervasively advertised products that purport to guarantee the look of youth, it's now considered a viable alternative to "just letting yourself go." Most people seeking cosmetic surgery don't express a desire to look younger, but instead reduce themselves to body parts which have "faults" or "defects" that they see as being in need of correction.<sup>37</sup> The desire for a "younger-looking" self in women, however, is accepted as natural and normal, whereas for men, who are not supposed to be anxious about their appearance, the desire for "aesthetic improvement" needs to be justified in terms of job-related or medical concerns.<sup>38</sup>

Pretending that aging isn't happening to you, making a distinction between "us" and "them," or adapting the styles and attitudes of the young in order to "pass," is perfectly acceptable today if you look young enough.<sup>39</sup> To hear people say,

"Oh, but you look so much younger than you actually are!" is considered a compliment. (After all, aren't we all the same age—about twenty-eight—inside? So why not look it?) The only problem is that the more distance you keep from your real age, the less you're able to claim its rewards, or to provide a role model for younger people by helping them to formulate less restrictive and self-destructive concepts of their own aging. Similarly, if you conceal your age because you're afraid people will think you're too young for the responsibilities you have, you lose the chance to show others that age is only one element to be considered in relation to one's abilities, skills, initiative, or commitment—and clearly not the most important one, either.

Just how much of this inevitable "deterioration" is based in biological fact, and how much is due to cultural fiction? According to scientist Leonard Hayflick, there's an enormous difference between the biological and the medical aspects of old age; biological aging considers what is normal, whereas medical aging deals with abnormalities.<sup>40</sup> While the passage of time can be quantifiably measured, biological age can't be easily defined because not enough is known yet about the many biological clocks that regulate the aging process.<sup>41</sup> Hayflick says that only two of them, the chemical clock called melatonin and the cell division that causes the tips of each of our cells' forty-six chromosomes, called telomeres, to shorten, have been studied in enough depth to provide adequate information.<sup>42</sup> According to him you're as old as your oldest cells, the neurons and skeletal muscle cells you were born with and still have because they don't divide or turn over.<sup>43</sup> Under any circumstances, Hayflick and others assure us, *all* aging is normal aging, no matter how "old" you look—or think you do.<sup>44</sup> So, biology may not be destiny after all.

There are, of course, normal physical and psychological changes that occur more often as we age and it's important to acknowledge and address them. Would you, after all, want to give up reading just because your eyesight changes in your forties? By addressing changes in physical aptitude, health, job status, relationships, roles, and interests at every age, we're more likely to discover different aspects of ourselves as we adjust and compensate for those changes.

The film and video pieces in *The Time of Our Lives* deal with age across a broad spectrum of feeling and experience. Many are intergenerational, showing the frustrations of communication between, say, father and son, as in Alan Berliner's *Nobody's Business*, or the enormous pleasures accorded to both parties when older singers are paired with their secondary school counterparts, as is so movingly shown in Nigel Nobel's documentary film *Close Harmony*. Older people are portrayed in every conceivable situation, from the bronco-busting and

40. See Leonard Hayflick, *How and Why We Age* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994, 96), p. xix.

41. See *Ibid.*, p. 13.

42. *Ibid.*, p. xxi. (I was surprised to learn that the only "immortal" cells in our body are cancer cells, which are distinguished by telomerase. Does this put a good spin on a bad disease?)

43. See *Ibid.*, pp. 16–17.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 43. There is a condition called Progeria (Hutchinson-Gilford syndrome), a rare genetic disease that accelerates the aging process from infancy to death by about age 13, but death is usually caused by a stroke or heart attack rather than as a result of aging itself. Nancy Burson's work in the exhibition addresses this painful subject.



Timex advertisement.  
Published in Newsweek,  
November 4, 1991. Photograph  
of Wille Duberry at age 121.  
©1991 Timex Corporation.  
Photo: Hiro.

motorcycle-riding women in Amanda Micheli's *Just for the Ride: Bucking Convention, Cowgirl Style* and Alice Stone's *She Lives to Ride*. The Yiddish folk-singers who gather daily at a park in Miami Beach to teach each other traditional songs, as documented by Joel Saxe; the generations of Swedish women in Kiti Luostarinen's *Gracious Curves*, enjoying their bodies as they swim together; the older lesbians of Lucy Winer's *Golden Threads* honoring a beloved role model; the differences in how younger and older gay men feel about age that are explored in Johnny Symon's *Beauty Before Age*—all show that age is just what it is, as varied as everything else in life.

Betty Friedan challenges the chronological construction of our lives when she speculates that the years after fifty might offer an additional stage of growth and development rather than a steady regression back to the helplessness of infancy:

If one applies to age the new knowledge of the non-linear, dynamic nature of development—of the brain, the biological organism, and of the self—it becomes clear that development can continue, with losses, gains, reorganization, depending on what one's environment permits and what one chooses to do. Indeed, it now appears that the traditional linear model is no longer valid even for studying childhood development. Recent research shows that development in childhood is characterized not just by gain, and does not consist of a mere cumulative layering of stages, but at each stage brings a dynamic reorganization.<sup>45</sup>

Friedan also makes reference to the Jungian concept of age as a paradigm shift, a creative "rebirth" in which "living itself becomes the point."<sup>46</sup> Like Zen practice, in which the idea of a fixed self can dissolve into an infinite concept of being, letting go (of the familiar, of the known, of the defined self) can help us, paradoxically, to become more connected, open, generous, and creative. It would seem, in this model, that the only constant is change. If life is programmed to evolve along a linear path, toward a specific series of goals, it's harder to accept changes, especially those you haven't allowed for. Those who see their lives as open-ended, multiple, and flexible at any age are more apt to focus on the process of living rather than on its product—which, in a way, can only be death.

So it is with artists, whose work may be influenced by, but doesn't depend on, external circumstance. Artists adapt themselves continuously to change, even precipitating it when it's just too calm for comfort. Performance, film, and video artists commonly employ nonlinear narratives using time, space, and language to create open-ended, shifting, and fluid stories whose meaning depends on the

45. Friedan, *The Fountain of Age*, p. 114.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 466.



47. Hayflick, *How and Why We Age*, pp. 57–59.

48. Friedan, *The Fountain of Age*, p. 129.

49. Thomas R. Cole, *The Journey of Life: A Cultural History of Aging in America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. xxi.

relationship of viewers to the work and the context in which they're viewed. Films by Yvonne Rainer, Agnes Varda, or Jacob Young, for example, encourage or create multiple, layered perspectives for viewers, no two of whom seem to have seen the same film, so varied are the viewers' responses.

One could easily show that the process of aging, like the process of art making at its best, involves a sense of risk, adventure, connection, and engagement with the world around us. At least it does for most of the artists I've known and worked with over the past thirty years, and for most of the older people I've known, including myself. It takes courage to live the life of an artist, just as it takes courage to accept and enjoy one's age, whatever it may be.

There are more middle-aged and older Americans today than there are younger citizens. In the year 2000 there will be between 32 and 38 million people over age sixty-five. Of these, more than 6 million will be over eighty-five (barring wars, natural catastrophes, plagues, etc.). The only age group that will experience a significant increase in numbers in the twenty-first century, given present birth rates and immigration patterns, will be people over age fifty-five.<sup>47</sup> The figures are similar in Europe. This is the first time "men and women now alive can expect a vital third to half of life after they have reproduced."<sup>48</sup>

Does this ring your alarm bells? Does it make you feel gleeful? Do you think things are better because the population of those over sixty-five has tripled since 1900? What age do you think is "old," anyhow? The historian Thomas Cole, in *The Journey of Life*, says that gerontology, like so many other scientific fields, has traditionally cut ideas, images, and attitudes loose from the "facts" of aging; it has made age an abstraction by denying that our beliefs and feelings about it have any basis in fact, or any role in determining how we actually do age.<sup>49</sup>

George Booth. ©The New Yorker Collection 1998 George Booth from cartoonbank.com. All Rights Reserved.

But new work in age studies, across many disciplines, has proven otherwise. Experiential, psychological, emotional, and spiritual factors far outweigh the "facts" of scientific aging, which for so many years were based on studies with institutionalized older white men, rather than long-term, broadly based studies of older people of all kinds.<sup>50</sup> Now that we are beginning to see the results of the longitudinal studies, as well as a marked change in the demographic distribution of age, it's time to look again. It may very well be that those giant hordes of elders swarming over the horizon at the century's end will help us to revise our ideas about what aging was, is, and can be.

Maybe it's time to acknowledge the fact that aging won't kill you, that it's not a disease, and that it's a normal process in our lives—all of our lives, *if* we're lucky. When you think about people who are all too happy to get old, they're often those who belong to cultures where chronological age is irrelevant or revered. In the West, it seems that people who are at ease with age are either lifelong Zen practitioners or people who want to experience every aspect of each age of their lives fully. Among those who want to get older are people living with AIDS, cancer, or other life-threatening illnesses, Holocaust

50. Sokolovsky, *Growing Old in Different Societies*, p. 166.



51. Friedan, *The Fountain of Age*, p. 72.

52. See Cole, *The Journey of Life*, p. xxviii.

53. Cited in Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture*, pp. 274–275.

*This essay is dedicated to the memory of my mother and father, Dorothy Wald Silverman and Emmanuel Silverman, who never had the chance to grow old.*

survivors, who are the last living witnesses to an event too terrible to believe on paper alone, or those who, not having been blessed with traditional “good looks” when they were young, gain agency as they age. Clearly, there is enormous range and diversity in how people age, how they feel about it, and how they express those feelings.

For most of our adult lives, we’re valued for what we do; with age, we can move instead toward being valued (and valuing ourselves) for who we are. The concept of age has at last come to a place where we can see it as “a state of becoming and being, not merely as ending.”<sup>51</sup> As the numbers of older people rapidly increase, it’s possible that we’re moving away from the idea that biology is destiny. Age, like culture itself, isn’t the story of progress but is an open-ended development with no end in sight.<sup>52</sup>

Walter Benjamin points out that the outmoded is a source of revolutionary energy because to pick it up again once it has been discarded is a potentially radical gesture.<sup>53</sup> This idea, when applied to aging, is a particularly seductive one. I can see it now—older people joining forces with younger generations as friends and colleagues, offering each other examples of what it’s like to be independent, outspoken, and fearless. The result would be to rebel, to dismantle the definitions, institutions, and practices that keep us from ourselves, and from each other.



Marcia Tucker's fortune cookie, 1997.

## Diary and Journal Excerpts

1955–1999

January 8, 1955: *“Today I went to Grandma’s with the family—she’s 88, and we had a birthday party at the nursing home. I don’t enjoy going there very much, because it’s so morbid. And I don’t like Aunt S. She’s getting old—wrinkles and bags and an old crank.”*

January 10, 1956: *“I went to see the Rabbi this afternoon. He answered my questions about my purpose in life and whether or not there was an afterlife. He says we should live this life and work toward making others happy, and when we fulfill our purpose then we won’t be afraid to die. That seems like logical reasoning, and I don’t have to believe in an afterlife if I don’t want to.”*

April 10, 1958: *“What I want:*

1. *Want to be loved*
2. *Want to be famous*
3. *Want to travel*
4. *Afraid of death*

*Remember, dear world, I am still a child of seventeen, at least until Friday. Then I stop being jail bait, can drink in the city. Amen.”*

July 2, 1958: *“I read over my 11th grade diary and almost cried, it was so pitiful. Every page began with ‘met a really cute boy today.’ And as I read it over I thought about how young and silly and fickle it was.”*

April 10, 1959: *“this is the last time i’ll be a teenager. now i am tired and hungry and beer-sogged, my hair is falling in my eyes and god i want to sleep. but no, first i must reflect upon being 19, first i must add tears to the stale beer and lament my friendless condition. i am lonely and itchy and nothing in the world satisfies me because i am such a fool in my uniquely obnoxious way. i am not really lost although i like to think i am. b. tells me that living is just a little piece of all living, that suffering is just a little piece of all suffering, that dying is just a little piece of all dying, and that i have not learned my lesson. i think i’ll go to bed.”*

May 1, 1959: *“I talked to Dad when I came home, and he understood what I was trying to say. He started to cry. He bought me a pack of cigarettes. He said that it was as if he were reliving his childhood again.”*

January 19, 1963: *“Wedding is over and done with. Had three swift martinis upon entering reception and felt much better. Things are tranquil now, but they are bound*



to change—as I get older I become more moralistic (remembering that I am an ancient 22 years old) but have the erstwhile title of ‘Mrs.,’ something I never really wanted in the first place.”

December 28, 1964: “I am a grown woman and I have nothing but mediocrity behind me, and probably in front of me. The horrible thing is that I will cease to be tortured by this fact as I grow older, and the tides of complacency will wash me out to sea.”

October 20, 1965: “Feelings that I cannot possibly do anything but die—what other possibility is there? I can’t envision myself as an old woman, because the only way I could bear it would be to have a family and the things which not only comfort one when age creeps up, but which in a sense give one a reason for growing old.”

January 1, 1967: “Moments of growing older—usual feminine narcissism—lines, flab . . . probably a manifestation of self-hatred in its most elementary form.”

August 26, 1967: “I’m frightened of getting old—I would very much like to change that into curiosity. Therefore from now on I’ll try to record (like a movie of a plant blossoming, ripening and dying) the change in features as I age, by taking pictures every month.”

October 4, 1968: “Had a party tonight because I’ve just become a museum curator. All of a sudden, everyone listens to you, which makes it harder to keep working, changing, growing. I don’t ever want to try to maintain the status quo in my life or my head or my actions. Instant middle age and atrophy.”

December 28, 1973: “Fear of living alone, fear of the dark, fear of growing old, of not being able to write well, of having no one to talk to.”

April 13, 1975: “Just had my 35th birthday, and who ever thought I’d ever be 35? Certainly not me. Look older—have short hair. Haven’t grown up at all. My body betrays me. It ages, I don’t.”

April 15, 1975: “My mother began to die when she was 38; I realize that I am waiting for that time, since I too will begin to die then.”

September 20, 1976: “I’m obsessed with growing old, becoming middle-aged, ill, eccentric, unloved, unwanted, frightened, in pain. And I’m 36, at my best personally and professionally (sounds like a letter of recommendation) and consumed by uncertainty and self-doubt.”

July 12, 1979: “Yesterday, in the canoe by the lily pads, I felt an incredible, overwhelming sense of the ephemeral—how nothing could ever be maintained, preserved, captured.”

April 11, 1980: “Big day. I’m forty. Never thought I’d live this long. I feel very much my age; I keep thinking of a ‘ruined’ face. I look so old. Even though I never thought I’d live this long, I wonder exactly how I’m living.”

December 27, 1981: “The willingness to—no, the intense and addictive pleasure resulting from—changing one’s mind is sometimes all that counts.”

March 18, 1982: “I’m going to be 43 next month, and even if I could have a kid now, would I want to? How much more can I do?”

July 18, 1983: “We got married yesterday . . . Here I am, more than halfway through my life, and I’m having fun—who would have thought?”

January 18, 1984: “I can’t believe I’m a Mom!!! This is the BEST!!! . . .”

September 22, 1986: “For 25 years, I’ve tried to understand others and to ‘interpret’ through their eyes. Suddenly it strikes me—that makes 25 years of trying to avoid the painful process of looking into myself.”

August 26, 1989: “My life is going by very, very fast, and I’m afraid of being so busy/worried/frustrated/overworked that I don’t live it. Next year I’ll be fifty, and as far as I’m concerned, I haven’t grown up yet. And probably won’t ever.”

April 15, 1990: “Well, I’ve finally made it to the big one! And except for seeing my face and body age, I’ve never felt better, more productive, more effective, stronger, happier, or more loved.”

July 20, 1993: “Aging—real aging—is a painful process. It’s hard not to note that I’ve always been aware of it (or at least since I saw that first wrinkle in the mirror when I was, what? 30?). The advantage to visible age, on the other hand, is what I call the *Unedited Mouth*. It means that you can go anywhere and be as outspoken, outrageous, funny and/or controversial as you want to be, and people will actually pay attention.”

June 19, 1995: “I really am zooming down the path of age, more of my life behind me than ahead. It’s maddening because you can’t control it. I realize that all the other things I was going to do or be someday when I grew up I probably won’t do or be.”

March 11, 1996: “Yvonne Rand, the Zen master, says that we have to take care of our relationship with ourselves, because our capacity for our relationship with others is dependent on it.”

October 25, 1998: “This is going to be an extraordinary time, if I let it be. Trying to come to terms with who I am isn’t easy after a lifetime of trying to be whoever and whatever anyone else needs me to be.”



## Old Dogs, New Tricks

ANNE ELLEGOOD

We've all heard the clichés "you can't teach an old dog new tricks," "over the hill," "old maid," "dirty old man," and numerous others. Familiar images and impressions of the "elderly" spring to mind—frail, wrinkled, stubborn, needy, demanding, old-fashioned, miserly, prudish. When confronted with a non-derogatory image of an older person, we're apt to realize how rare it is to see depictions of elders in general, and even more so those that deliberately challenge the idea that aging is an unfortunate disease to be avoided.

This visual absence and bias extends into the canon of Western art history where representations of elders, particularly as the *subject* of an artwork, are rare. In contemporary art, artists such as John Coplans, Lucien Freud, and Alice Neel have chosen the middle-aged and elder figure as their subject, although these portrayals are not necessarily emblematic of a concern with the aging process itself. The lack of images of the aged in art may find its roots in past centuries, when forty was considered old. Depictions of aging have changed dramatically over time and reflect the predominant beliefs of each period, but nonetheless childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood have remained the favored stages of life in visual culture. In his book *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, Philippe Ariès claims that every period of history privileged a particular stage of the human life. He argues that "youth" was the preferred age in the seventeenth century and childhood in the nineteenth. As is easily assessed through our daily experiences of media coverage, product marketing, fashion, and popular culture, adolescence and young adulthood are the favored ages of the late twentieth century.

The emphasis on youth did not always exist, however. Medieval art until the twelfth century rarely included images of childhood. This was not because of the artists' inability to portray children, but was rather a reflection of the socio-cultural climate. The Medieval period did not place a great value on children; dependency in childhood was short-lived, and adulthood was the stage of life that was considered to represent the majority of the populace. When images of children did grace artworks of the time, there was little attempt to depict them as they actually looked. Rather, children were simply portrayed as very small adults—the scale of the human figure was reduced, and the physical details that differentiate children from adults were essentially ignored. One can find numerous images of the Christ child in paintings up until the fourteenth century in

which he looks like a very small adult male.<sup>1</sup> In the context of this historical framework, it becomes apparent that the lack of representations of the elderly in recent years similarly reflects the social order—one that clearly delineates the stages of life and places greater value, and subsequently greater attention, on particular times of life.

However, more complex images of elders that attempt to break down the conventional narrow representations we are so used to seeing are on the rise. As the average life expectancy continues to increase and the public's interest in the issues surrounding aging grows, visual images of the aging process and of elders likewise increase. Using a remarkable variety of media and artistic strategies, the works in *The Time of Our Lives* examine such pertinent topics as the invisibility of the aging body, sexuality among the elderly, important stages in the life cycle, medical technology's impact upon reproduction and longevity, attempts to mask the physical signs of aging, fear of dying, the passage of time and the methods and markers employed to track it, the differences in attitudes toward the elderly across cultures, and intergenerational relationships. From figurative painting to a minimalist cube to performance documentary to conceptual installation, the work in the exhibition offers multiple interpretations and representations of age and aging.

Jacqueline Hayden's photographs address the tendency to present youthful beauty at the expense of images of the middle-aged and older, particularly in that venerable tradition in Western painting, the nude. Elderly subjects may be portrayed as the attendants to youthful nudes, but are rarely seen disrobed themselves. In response, Hayden has created a series of silver gelatin photographic prints titled *Figure Model*. Hayden places middle-aged and older models in the familiar poses of the figures of well-known old master works, altering them when appropriate to underscore her reformulation of these historical images. In the piece seen here, Hayden refers to the Mannerist painter Bronzino's allegorical painting *Venus, Cupid, Folly, and Time*, circa 1546. In the Bronzino, the nude, young, and beautiful Cupid is depicted embracing his equally nude, young, and beautiful mother Venus, cupping her breast and allowing her nipple to protrude from between his fingers. The canvas is filled with several other figures, including personifications of Folly and Time, and a number of objects symbolizing concerns of the day. Cupid and Venus are seen in the foreground against a backdrop of busy imagery embodying many painterly preoccupations of the time. The overall impression is of a cramped, ambiguous space with twisted and distorted figures and no particular context or focal point.

1. See Ariès, Philippe. *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), pp. 32–33.



In Hayden's version, the context of the action is also ambiguous because the artist has eliminated all imagery in the background, thereby emphasizing the figures themselves, which are nude, seated, and facing front. Bronzino's characters are completely self-absorbed, whereas Hayden's Cupid is an older man who stares out at the viewer while he awkwardly pinches the nipple of a middle-aged Venus between his thumb and index finger. Hayden's Venus gazes to the side, her expression completely affectless. She rests one hand on Cupid's knee, while the other hand is delicately posed in mid-air in front of her body in a configuration not unlike that in the Bronzino. Hayden's figures are unabashed and at ease in their nudity, in defiance of Western culture's distaste for the wrinkles and added girth of the aging body. The artist's use of large format prints makes the figures nearly life-sized, forcing the viewer to confront images of "elderly" nude bodies as perfectly natural, graceful, and elegant rather than as something hidden, deemed unworthy of consideration, and therefore banished as the subject matter of art.

There are few examples of self-portraiture by artists as they enter their later years, the best known of which is perhaps Rembrandt's profoundly honest and realistic depiction of himself in his old age. Among the various examples of contemporary self-portraiture in *The Time of Our Lives* is Harriet Casdin-Silver's three-paneled life-sized holographic work 70 + 1. In the portrait, Casdin-Silver is nude. She stands balancing on one foot, the other resting on the interior calf muscle of her standing leg. She lovingly cups her breasts in her hands and tilts her head to one side, her eyes closed as if in deep contemplation. Her beauty and the calm that seems to envelop her are striking. 70 + 1 is a subjective examination of the artist's aging body as well as an offering of herself to viewers, both as a physical vessel which has undergone the aging process and as a unique individual with a conscience, a personal history, and an emotional makeup. The artist's use of the hologram, which creates the illusion of three-dimensionality on a two-dimensional surface, allows Casdin-Silver to visually traverse the gap between materiality and ephemerality, body and mind, reality and the fantastic, and to actively engage viewers by requiring that they move through time and space to view the work.

In Yoshiko Kanai's self-portrait drawing *In a Mirror*, the artist represents herself in the act of creating her own image. She is nude and seated in a child-sized chair in a room cluttered with her artistic tools. A pad of paper rests on her lap and she holds a pencil in one hand. She sits in front of a tall mirror and gazes directly at the viewer. Kanai has created an unsettling environment with several disjunctive points of view; reflections appear in surprising places, multiple planes divide

the space, and the exact placement of the mirror(s) is elusive. In her work, Kanai explores her role in a society in which women are expected to put the needs of others ahead of their own. Japanese women are taught to present a demeanor of calmness and contentment; to express emotions openly in public is considered inappropriate. Here, Kanai's face has the disembodied look of a mask; her expression is controlled, and she is represented as the idealized middle-aged Japanese woman—quiet, calm, beautiful, neutral. At the same time, she holds one hand up to her chin as if at any moment she may remove the mask and reveal the truth beneath. Seated in a child's chair, she looks awkwardly large, in notable contrast to the diminutive, doll-like quality found in most representations of Japanese women. In Japan, public nudity is taboo; although young women are experiencing some loosening of social mores, middle-aged women are made to feel ashamed if they display any degree of sexuality. With courageous honesty, Kanai draws the curves of her figure, the landscape of her skin, and the true proportions of her body, rejecting an idealization of the body while simultaneously portraying herself as a sexual being.

The Japanese photographer Manabu Yamanaka confronts the same taboo, but unlike Kanai, he is the viewer, and the older Japanese women (who look to be in their eighties) he photographs are the objects being viewed. In *Gyahtei*, his series of black and white prints, the women are nude, shown frontally, standing in a blank white space and gazing directly into the camera. The photographs are apt to make us aware of how infrequently visual culture offers such realistic portrayals. Young viewers in particular may realize that they know very little about the bodily manifestations of aging. Because of this, the images can appear shocking, but the trust in the eyes of Yamanaka's subjects and the vulnerability of their exposure also give these photographs a special poignancy. The artist isn't simply a voyeur interested in shocking audiences; rather, he establishes enduring relationships with his subjects and participates actively in their lives. Yamanaka has created uncomfortable but moving portraits in which the humanity of the women offsets the discomfort of seeing their bodies and faces so intimately.

The intensity of Jeffrey Saldinger's figurative paintings is created through another means altogether. His portraits are the result of precisely rendered studies of line, color, and shadow. Self-taught, Saldinger is a rigorous painter, endlessly exploring the qualities of his chosen materials, oil on linen, to achieve a seductively luminescent paint surface and an uncompromising depiction of every detail, no matter how small. By making only portraits using live models—first himself, then others (his wife, a neighbor, a friend) in a predominantly



*grisaille* palette, he is able to explore the endless possibilities of painting within a self-limited framework. He varies his own representation by subtly changing his appearance—wearing a different pair of eyeglasses, adding a hat, a new t-shirt, and so on. But it is the manipulation of his expression from canvas to canvas that is most provocative. In one work he squeezes his eyes shut, in another he puckers his lips, and furrows his brow. These changing facial expressions allow Saldinger to push himself technically as an artist, seeing if he can, for example, portray every wrinkle that appears around his mouth when he purses his lips. This practice also allows different aspects of his character to emerge, and the viewer takes note of his humor, curiosity, skepticism, and passion. Despite Saldinger's rigorous, almost scientific immersion in the process of painting, a range of emotions seeps out of these intimate portraits. Because he paints from live models, each work can take several months, a fact recorded in many of the titles. Thus, in *Self-Portrait, July–November, 1995*, the work becomes an encapsulation or a composite of a particular time span. Given that Saldinger's subjects are few, he is actually documenting the aging process itself.

Contemporary western society's fear of aging is manifest in its emphasis on youthfulness and its attempts to slow down or mask the aging process by means of medicine, cosmetics, and physical fitness, giving rise to vast industries. In a century noted for an increasing faith in science and the secular rather than in intuition and the spiritual, our belief in the capacity of science to solve our so-called problems has perpetuated the hope for increased longevity and ultimately, immortality. The cosmetics and skin care industries have cashed in on our cultural obsession with hiding the signs of aging. In her sculpture, Rachel Lachowicz innovatively mocks the role cosmetics plays in the relationship of women to aging. In 1992, working with special effects and forensics experts, Lachowicz cast three self-portrait heads in face powder and hydrocal—one at her age at the time and the others at thirty-year intervals. Thus, in *Forensic Project (28, 58, 88 years)* Lachowicz visualized her own aging process through a plastic, three-dimensional medium. The use of face powder reflected her ongoing interest in referencing gender roles through the choice of artistic materials—in this case Chanel's *poudre douce rose tendre* pink face powder, the brand she uses. The result not only points up art history's masculinist perspective, but also dramatizes the role of cosmetics in women's attempts to mask or erase the signs of aging. At once funny and frightening, *Forensic Project* prompts us to examine the cultural assumption that women can never be young or beautiful enough, and turns the predominant strategy of the cosmetics industry on its head.

In an untitled work from a 1998 series, *Speed-Split*, the Cuban artist Consuelo Castañeda uses photography to address generational relationships. In her earlier *A History in Seventy Pages*, Castañeda made seventy photographs of her seventy-year-old mother, documenting her mother's body in a detailed, almost clinical fashion. In this newer work, Castañeda inserts herself into the image. By so doing, she moves away from a strictly analytic examination to tap into the emotional connection between mother and daughter. The work is a large digital photograph consisting of four similar images of the two figures, both nude and lying together on their sides on a white background. The artist's mother wraps herself around her daughter in a spoon formation—belly to back, her hand resting on her daughter's shoulder. Both of their knees are curled into a fetal position and their eyes are closed as if in sleep. This is the comfortable, familiar embrace of lovers or of a mother with her infant, a reprise by the two women of an earlier intimacy. In the left image, the figures are nearly upright, their heads pointing toward the top of the picture frame. As the images move sequentially across the page from left to right the figures rotate slightly, like the hands of a clock, until in the final image, their heads are near the bottom of the picture frame. The manipulation of the figures' placement suggests the passage of time and the fierce bond that exists between a mother and daughter. Whereas Castañeda's earlier work involved the artistic strategy of appropriation, here she brings the act of appropriation into the psychological realm. The passing down of experiences from one generation to the next and the process by which a parent's experiences become a key component of a child's makeup are poignantly conveyed through the simple physical interaction shown in Castañeda's photograph.

Susan Unterberg, also interested in the bond that exists between parent and child, has created a series of diptych Polaroids of fathers and sons. The portraits are highly formalized and posed, having been taken in the studio with no background or setting. Yet through their choice of clothing, pose, and expression, a great deal is revealed about the subjects and their relationships to one another. In one work from this *Father/Son* series, the patriarch of a black American family stands slightly off center, his figure split between the two panels of the diptych. He faces the camera dressed conservatively in a dark suit, crisp white shirt, and tie, with a handkerchief protruding from his left breast pocket. His two sons stand slightly off to the side facing him. They, too, are dressed in suits and ties, yet they appear more relaxed—their coats slightly disheveled, their stances less rigid. The siblings stand close together, but a physical gap exists between the father and his sons, a visual metaphor for the "generation gap" that many family members struggle to bridge.



The generations of a family both mark and embody the passage of time. Korean artist Cho Duck Hyun has created a new work for *The Time of Our Lives* that is part of a larger project entitled *Genealogy*. Cho creates enormous conté and pencil drawings on canvas, representing several generations of a family. Based on vintage photographs (some as old as a hundred years) from a variety of sources, including his own family albums, the artist reconfigures the characters into the format of a traditional family portrait. The result is a “family” with little or no biological or marital ties, made up of Koreans, Japanese, and Chinese who have lived during different eras and within separate sociocultural systems. The format, however, leads the viewer to assume they are related. By representing these figures from the past, Cho revitalizes their memory and pays homage to their lives. By creating fictional genealogies, Cho refers to the traditional importance of the family in Korea, where an average of three generations live under one roof, producing strong intergenerational bonds. At the same time, he acknowledges the changing status of the family in contemporary Korean culture with a fabrication that questions the importance of chronological order and biological relationships. In a land that’s been divided into two countries, North and South, and a culture in which conflict between generations is growing, Cho creates a harmonious, albeit fictive world.

Geneviève Cadieux uses the body to represent generalized experience within a cultural system. In several photographic works from the 1990s, Cadieux explores changes to the maturing body by using images of gray hair and wrinkles around the eyes. Defying conventional notions of what is acceptable or palatable for public view, Cadieux amplifies parts of the body to intimidating scale and documents the effects of time and conflict on it, particularly focusing on violations to the surface of the skin. *Le Corps du Ciel* (The Body of the Sky), a large photographic diptych mounted on plexiglass, is a close-up of a deep, dark gray and blue bruise fading into surrounding pale skin. Approximately 9½ feet wide, this disfigurement, commonplace but enlarged so many times that it becomes overwhelming, derives from an intensely personal image normally reserved for the private and/or medical domain. The *process* of bruising and healing becomes the image—the gradually changing colors of the skin, the effects of time on the shape and depth of the bruise. The photograph takes on a painterly quality in which variations in color, light, and tone become primary elements. The adjacent image of is of a dark gray and blue cloudy twilight sky, with the last of the day’s light seeping through the clouds to reveal a cerulean sky mixed with the orange hues of sunset. The juxtaposition of these two images underlines their aesthetic similarities, which are all the more astonishing given the disparity of their origins. Both images embody the ephemerality of these events,

capturing a single moment of their existence. Yet clouds can be a metaphor for timelessness and spirituality, while the body, particularly the bruised body, is grounded in the earthly passage of time.

Not only are representations of the aging body generally excluded from visual culture, but people face a social invisibility that begins in middle age and grows thereafter. Increasingly marginalized in western society, older people must struggle to have their experiences acknowledged and their needs addressed in a public forum. In a culture preoccupied with youth and beauty, those who are neither young nor beautiful are like ghosts haunting a world in which their presence was perhaps relevant at one time. In *The Giant*, Jeff Wall dramatically confronts this phenomenon by digitally altering a photograph of the interior of a large library. The architecture is dominated by an open, sprawling staircase in the center of the building, a perspective from which the viewer can peer into three floors of the space, taking in the activities of the numerous people within. Standing erect yet at ease on the central landing of the staircase is a giant elderly woman, nude and holding a piece of paper in her right hand as if she is about to make a speech or recite a poem. She stands proudly in the most visible spot in the building and seems determined to be heard. Her height equals two floors of the library’s interior. Several times larger than the other figures, her size alone should prevent her from being ignored, yet the others are going about their business, completely oblivious to the exalted figure in their presence. Like a statue, present yet grounded in the past, she is near-mythic. Through these visual contradictions, Wall brilliantly captures the tension between visibility and invisibility as it is played out among the elders in our society.

A direct challenge to the invisibility of elders and the loss of power that accompanies aging is Cindy Sherman’s *Untitled* (#250), part of her “Sex” series. This cibachrome print shows a very elderly woman lying on her back with her hands behind her head, her bare and very pregnant belly protruding into the center of the picture frame. Every part of her is obviously prosthetic. Between her two amputated legs, the woman’s vagina is a wide, red opening from which protrude ambiguous phallic objects that resemble links of large brown sausages. Although no partner is in evidence, this completely fake, constructed woman is engaged in a sexual act. The mask which is her head wears an expression not of erotic arousal but of smug satisfaction, challenging the viewer to attempt to control or condemn her.

Historically, women have lost power when they can no longer reproduce. Lacking this central purpose, they can be considered superfluous or even a social burden. Sherman’s image brings to mind the recent medical advances that permit



postmenopausal women to become pregnant and bear children. The public's predominant reaction of disgust and condemnation to a California woman in 1997 who lied about her age in a fertility study and gave birth at the age of sixty-three is a measure of the threat that a woman's ability to bear children well into her later years poses to the status quo. Furthermore, elders are typically and falsely characterized as nonsexual beings, a strategy to keep them marginalized. In Sherman's depiction of a grotesque, hypersexualized older woman, the prostheses stand in as symbols of the artificiality of the visual representations found in our culture and the failure to take into account the ongoing sexuality of people well into their later years.

Since the mid-1970s, Suzanne Lacy has created a number of major performances related to the subject of aging. Included in the exhibition is video footage of her 1984 project *Whisper, the Waves, the Wind*. For this project, Lacy organized a large public performance on the beach in La Jolla, California that featured the participation of 154 women, ranging in age from sixty-nine to ninety-nine. The performance allowed their previously silenced voices to be heard and their presence to be publicly acknowledged. Dressed in white, the women progressed slowly past spectators and descended a cliff onto the beach where they sat four to a table. Drawing on their personal experiences, the women discussed numerous topics relevant to their lives—aging, the future, their independence, death—while tapes from previous conversations on the same subjects were played for the spectators above. Lacy's work has changed public perceptions and attitudes about aging by organizing large-scale public pieces that require the participation and contribution of many individuals and organizations, making the voices of aging women available so that they can be heard and understood.

Lisa Yuskavage's virtuosic, fantastic paintings of women capture another stage in the lifelong aging process—the ambiguous and oftentimes overwhelming transition between adolescence and young adulthood. In a time of life marked by struggles to reconcile societal expectations with a growing understanding of their own needs and desires, Yuskavage's women are virtually bursting with emotions ranging from indifference to unmitigated lust. The figure in *Surrender* seems to emerge from the predominantly dark gray background, almost a figment of one's imagination. She is nude except for a pair of sexy black thigh-high boots, while her hair is done in childish ponytails tied on one side with a pink ribbon. A delicate strand of pink beads hangs around her neck. She stands, ripe for the picking, among colorful, artificial-looking flowers, her breasts awkwardly full and round with large, pink nipples, her hips exaggeratedly wide as if designed specifically to bear children, her belly still rounded with childhood

padding. She is beautiful and repellent, demure and overly sexual, innocent and manipulative, managing to encapsulate the many guises of a woman as she enters the wonderful and painful world of womanhood.

Yuskavage's "*Manifest Destiny*" presents two opposing sides of the female self and body in two separate "figures." The central image in the painting is a large stone column rising vertically into a hazy lavender background. The column represents a character that has repeatedly surfaced in Yuskavage's past paintings, her therapist, taken to an absolute extreme. She is dauntingly powerful, with a stiff, long neck covered by a starched collar that reaches up to hide her chin. As seen in Yuskavage's other characters, her psychology is manifested in physical deformity, resulting in an armless body that has turned from flesh to stone. Juxtaposed to the therapist is a sexual creature at the bottom left of the painting. She leans against the side of the column, one arm above her head holding a bouquet of flowers, her knees bent and her back arched, causing her breasts to protrude and her backside to rest in the grooves of the column. Using images from *Penthouse* magazine as her source, Yuskavage set out to paint a truly beautiful woman; the result is a figure lacking the disproportions or deformities of the women in her other recent works. The two figures—therapist and patient—are inseparable, each being wholly dependent upon the other, two halves of a whole. Yuskavage's work confronts the viewer with the mixed messages of a culture that sells products through sex and encourages young women to be sexual while simultaneously condemning them for "promiscuous" behavior.

In his work, Joseph Grigely explores the nature of communication by creating installations that draw upon his own experience as a deaf person. Since people frequently rely on writing on scraps of available paper in order to converse with him, he is intensely aware of the difference between writing *per se* and writing as conversation. For his works, Grigely culls an enormous archive of conversational scraps for those that comment on a particular aspect of the everyday, such as food, art, sex, money, or, in this case, age. He often creates a domestic setting with a table and chairs as a context for viewing the work, and spends time periodically throughout the run of the exhibition having conversations with visitors. *Untitled Conversation* explores the ways in which discussions about age and aging parallel those around deafness or difference. Grigely's work is, among other things, about overcoming obstacles to communication to move toward more complex modes of interaction, particularly in relation to familiar issues.

The passage of time is intimately wrapped up in concepts of age and aging. The ticking of a clock is both a metaphor for the aging body (i.e. "biological clock")



and a symbol of the metaphysical essence of the universe. Time is reliable. It is consistent. It is also fleeting, confining, and arbitrary. The Canadian artist Micah Lexier works with a variety of indicators of time, such as the minute, actuarial tables of life expectancy, and generations of a family, in order to create objects that concretize the temporal. In *David Grid* (a variation on an earlier work titled *Portrait of David*), Lexier investigates the life cycle. The artist placed an ad with the heading “Is Your Name David?” in a Winnipeg newspaper, asking for volunteers named David, aged one to seventy-five—the average male life expectancy in North America—to have their pictures taken. He worked with the first volunteer of each age and photographed each one in black and white in the same frontal pose. The original work consisted of life-sized prints installed chronologically in a linear format. In *David Grid*, the prints are smaller and laid out chronologically in a grid. Highlighting this banal commonality between his subjects has a surprising result: bringing together all these Davids creates one life out of the lives of many. At the same time, it is obvious that each David is distinct. Lexier literally gives many faces to the scientific calculation of life expectancy, underscoring the absurdity of our fixation with where we stand in our own life span. Since Lexier is a North American male with a life expectancy of seventy-five years (albeit *not* named David) the work also functions as a self-portrait. It encourages viewers, no matter what their age, to accept the passage of time as a fact of life and to consider the multiple ways with which we document and track it.

Bruce Cannon’s sculptural piece, coincidentally entitled *The Time of Your Life*, is a humorous yet dark approach to the issue of life expectancy. Inside a cast-iron antique clock Cannon has installed a complicated technological system consisting of a computer, a battery-backed clock, a digital speech system, a numerical LED display, key switch, and a skeleton key. When an individual buys the work, Cannon feeds the owner’s date of birth into the computer. The owner then uses the skeleton key to activate the clock. Once activated, the computer uses actuarial data to predict the owner’s life expectancy. In a computerized female voice, the clock functions as a daily reminder, announcing, “You have x-number of days to live.” At the same time, the owner can watch time slipping away as the LED display shows the seconds passing. If the owner lives longer than statistically expected, the clock announces, “Congratulations, you’ve cheated death by x-number of days.” Cannon’s work playfully addresses our preoccupation with death and our desire to beat the odds by continually seeking the “secret” to longevity and attempting to stave off the inevitable. Another piece by Cannon, *Reflection*, uses technology to photographically document the owner’s changing features, amassing a life-long flip book of changing features.

In a poetic depiction of the passage of time, Yoshiko Kanai’s sculpture *Time Grabber* consists of multiple pairs of ceramic hands mounted vertically on the wall. The hands are cupped, with palms facing up, the gesture of one who holds something valuable, delicate, yet ephemeral. Kanai’s piece also calls attention to the inevitability of the passage of time and the futility of any attempt to stop or slow it down. At the same time that the work alludes to the ephemeral and fleeting essence of time, it reminds us to embrace each moment rather than rushing frantically from one thing to the next.

J Mandle Performance, an innovative, Brooklyn-based performance group, was commissioned by the New Museum to create a site-specific performance in the Museum’s Broadway window. The group uses its self-described “costume-designed choreography” to make the progression of time through space tangible. The costumes are intimately integrated with the setting so that every movement, however gradual, results in identifiable changes to both, ultimately transforming the space entirely. The performance, entitled *When*, embraces the one consistent and undeniable result of the passage of time—change. The performance acknowledges light as the universal indicator of the passage of time by referencing the sundial, an outmoded yet basic tool to mark and track time. Performance is a particularly suitable media with which to explore aging, as it embodies duration. In *When*, two dancers are bound to the interior space of the window, their costumes attached to large white panels. As they move slowly clockwise through the space, there is an increasing awareness of the characters as physical beings who change over time as they separate themselves from the panels. Interested in children’s sense of time, which stems from an internal clock that monitors metabolic changes, the creators of *When* attempt to recapture a state of being that precedes the more widely understood sense of time as controlled by outside social influences.

Made of dried fruit, Chakaia Booker’s *Latent Prescription (Neck Fetter)* is an object that physically changes and decays over time. Formed into a thick, round collar and attached to a metal buckle, the piece suggests the neck fetters used to confine slaves in eighteenth and nineteenth century America. Booker compares the fetters of the slavery era to the youth worship of today, which she feels bridles the spirit by perpetuating myths of old age as decrepitude, decline, and a continual state of near death. With this vivid reference to society’s shameful legacy of slavery, Booker urges us to acknowledge the ways in which persistent racism drains specific groups of their faith in the future; today’s truth is that many black people in urban environments, particularly young black men, do not expect to live to see their own old age. Booker’s work is an unsettling



reminder that we do not all share the same perceptions or expectations of the aging process.

In her work *Marginalia* (*Mauthausen Notebook*), Ida Applebroog also confronts the tragedy of those who were not given the opportunity to grow old. An insightful social critic, Applebroog often depicts human behavior at its worst and most extreme. Unlike her usual figurative paintings, *Marginalia* (*Mauthausen Notebook*) consists simply of text on a yellow background. The text, written in longhand and in columns, is taken from a page of the notebook kept at the Mauthausen concentration camp. The text runs off the canvas on all sides, making clear that this is only a small representation of the numbers of people who lost their lives to the Nazi genocide. These words and numbers alone are capable of instilling an overwhelming sense of loss and disbelief in the viewer. From this perspective, our culture's characterization of old age as something to be avoided or hidden appears shallow and callous.

Aging has been a central element in Nancy Burson's work for many years, from her aging machine to her more recent series on children with Progeria, an extremely rare genetic disorder characterized by premature aging. Progerian children rarely live into their adult years, and their bodies age so rapidly that even as children they look old. Although all people age differently, most aging is considered normal, whereas Progerian children offer a unique example of abnormal aging. Their physical bodies share the characteristics of both young and old; they have the height and body weight of children combined with the wrinkled skin, hair loss, and acute osteoporosis associated with old age. A black-and-white photographic portrait of Lee Ann, who became a close friend of Burson, is included here. Lee Ann lived well beyond the life-expectancy for those who have the disease, and celebrated her twenty-first birthday. Burson's image of her captures her zeal for life, which likely played a large part in her ability to live as long as she did. Because there are usually fewer than twenty children with Progeria in the world at any given time, it is a disease that fails to receive much public notice. Burson's portraits return to her subjects some sense of control in the process of being seen, while simultaneously calling attention to this little known phenomenon.

The work of Richard Yarde is also a testament to the human capacity to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles; in this case it is the artist who has suffered and triumphed. In 1991, Yarde experienced complete kidney failure after years of being treated for high blood pressure. As a result, his speech was slurred and his movement was severely impaired. Losing nearly all the feeling in his hands, he was unable to make art for over a year. When he was able to

return to his studio, his work changed dramatically, reflecting his encounters with both the controlled world of medicine and the inexplicable realm of the spiritual. *MOJO Hand* is an enormous watercolor whose varied images offer insights into Yarde's experiences: an x-ray of his torso reflects the probing and documenting of his body for diagnosis and treatment; the precise pattern of dots spells out the Twenty-third Psalm in Braille, underscoring the artist's ability to face his fear of death; and the six pairs of hands are a visual "laying on of hands"—the healing power of touch, or the Mojo hand. Yarde's work addresses the fear of illness, disability, and death associated with advancing age. Though illness changed his art permanently, his work is not only about illness, but about inspiration, faith, vulnerability, and mortality.

For many years Marina Abramović has used her own body, through acts of repetition and endurance, to explore states of the mind. While doing extensive research into the concepts and rituals of death in various cultures, she came across the Zen Buddhist metaphor of "cleaning the mirror" for the process of enlightenment, an essential component of successfully preparing for one's own death. *Cleaning the Mirror I* consists of five video monitors, stacked vertically to approximate the human body. Each monitor shows a part of a skeleton—beginning at the top with the head, then the chest, the hands, pelvis, and feet—being meticulously scrubbed with soap and water by Abramović's hands. *Cleaning the Mirror II*, included in the exhibition, shows Abramović lying down with a skeleton on top of her, shot in extreme close-up. We hear the artist's rhythmic breathing and watch the skeleton move up and down with each breath. The two figures, one quintessentially living and the other quintessentially dead, seem to meld together into one, creating a harmony between these often polarized phenomena. Through her commitment to these ritual acts, Abramović probes deeply into her own mortality and fear of dying. The images and sounds have a meditative quality, which encourages viewers to come to terms with their ultimate deaths.

The works in *The Time of Our Lives* explore a number of topics related to age, aging, and ageism—from the aging process as it affects the physical body, to perceptions of aging in different cultures, to illness and death. Given the continually increasing elder population, it is inevitable that artists, perpetually fostering awareness of issues of profound private and public concern, will provide a jumping off place for new explorations of this multifaceted, complex, and fascinating subject.



## Exhibition Checklist

### PAINTINGS, DRAWINGS, INSTALLATIONS, PHOTOGRAPHS

#### Marina Abramović

*Cleaning the Mirror II*, 1995  
Performance on 12-inch laser disk  
edition of 3, 2 AP's (1/3)  
90:00 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist and Sean  
Kelly Gallery, New York

#### Ida Applebroog

*Marginalia (Mauthausen  
Notebook)*, 1991  
Oil on canvas, wood strut  
43 1/4 x 48 x 3 1/8 inches  
Courtesy of Ronald Feldman  
Fine Arts, New York

#### Chakaia Booker

*Latent Prescription (Neck Fetter)*,  
1994  
Fiber, fruit, metal  
6 inch diameter  
Courtesy of Archibald Arts,  
New York

#### Nancy Burson

*Untitled*, 1995  
Black-and-white photograph  
26 1/2 x 26 1/2 inches  
Courtesy of the artist

*Untitled*, 1991  
Black-and-white photograph  
15 1/4 x 15 1/4 inches  
Courtesy of the artist

*Untitled*, 1992  
Black-and-white photograph  
15 1/4 x 15 1/4 inches  
Courtesy of the artist

#### Geneviève Cadieux

*Le Corps du Ciel [The Body of the  
Sky]*, 1992  
Colored photographic enlarge-  
ments mounted on plexiglass  
with aluminum frame  
72 x 228 inches

Collection of the Musée d'Art  
Contemporain de Montréal  
Courtesy of René Blouin  
Gallery, Montréal

#### Bruce Cannon

*The Time of Your Life*, 1997-98  
Cast iron, computer, battery-  
operated clock, digital speech  
system, numerical LED display,  
key switch, brass key  
8 x 6 x 3 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Gallery Paule Anglim, San  
Francisco

*Reflection*, 1999  
Picture frame, video display,  
video camera, microcontroller  
16 x 12 x 4 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Gallery Paule Anglim, San  
Francisco

#### Harriet Casdin-Silver

*70 + 1*, 1998  
Holograms and metal  
72 x 41 inches  
Courtesy of the artist

#### Consuelo Castañeda

*Untitled* from Speed-Split series,  
1998  
Digital photograph  
48 x 162 inches  
Courtesy of Frederic Snitzer  
Gallery, Miami Beach

#### Cho Duck Hyun

*Hoe-Wha 4*, 1999  
Graphite, charcoal, and acrylic  
on canvas, fabric  
130 x 103 1/2 x 39 1/2 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and Kukje  
Gallery, Seoul

#### Joseph Grigely

*Untitled Conversation*, 1997-99  
Mixed media installation  
Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist and  
Galerie Air de Paris, Paris

#### Jacqueline Hayden

*Untitled* from Figure Model  
series, 1996  
Unique silver gelatin print  
82 x 52 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Howard Yezerski Gallery,  
Boston

#### Yoshiko Kanai

*Time Grabber*, 1998  
Ceramic  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the artist  
Supported by Ruth Kohler

#### In a Mirror, 1996

Pencil on paper  
16 x 12 1/2 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and M.Y.  
Art Prospects, Brooklyn

#### Wild Woman, 1997

Pencil on paper  
14 x 17 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and M.Y.  
Art Prospects, Brooklyn

#### Touch (Dress), 1997

Pencil on paper  
12 1/2 x 16 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and M.Y.  
Art Prospects, Brooklyn

#### Rachel Lachowicz

*Forensic Projection (28, 58, 88  
Years)*, 1992  
Face powder (Chanel's *poudre  
douce rose tendre* pink) and  
hydrocal, edition of 3  
9 x 11 x 13 inches each  
Collection of Linda Bernstein  
and Tony Rubin, Los Angeles.  
Courtesy of Shoshana Wayne  
Gallery, Santa Monica

#### Micah Lexier

*David Grid*, 1995  
75 framed black-and-white pho-  
tographs, edition of 3  
89 x 70 inches  
Collection of Bruce Mau and Bisi  
Williams, Toronto. Courtesy of  
Jack Shainman Gallery, New  
York

*Self-portrait as a Lucite cube  
divided proportionally between a  
(red) volume representing life lived  
and a (clear) volume representing  
life to come, based on statistical life  
expectancy*, 1995  
Lucite  
6 x 6 x 6 inches  
Collection of Bradley J. Currie,  
Toronto. Courtesy of Jack  
Shainman Gallery, New York

#### Jeffrey Saldinger

*Self-Portrait, April-June, 1997*,  
1997  
Oil on linen  
14 x 16 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and CRG  
Gallery, New York

*Self-Portrait, November 1994-  
January 1995*, 1994-95  
Oil on linen  
16 x 14 inches  
Collection of Wheelock  
Whitney III, New York.  
Courtesy of CRG Gallery, New  
York

#### Portrait of Paul, 1995

Oil on linen  
16 x 14 inches  
Collection of Ellyn and Saul  
Dennison, Bernardsville, N.J.  
Courtesy of CRG Gallery, New  
York

#### Cindy Sherman

*Untitled, #250*, 1992  
Color photograph  
50 x 75 inches

The Museum of Modern Art,  
New York. Gift of Werner and  
Elaine Dannheiser. Courtesy of  
the artist and Metro Pictures,  
New York

#### Susan Unterberg

*Untitled* from Father/Son series,  
1990  
Color Polaroids  
24 x 20 inches each (two panels)  
Collection of the New School for  
Social Research, New York.  
Courtesy of the artist

*Untitled* from Father/Son series,  
1990  
Color Polaroids  
24 x 20 inches each (two panels)  
Courtesy of the artist

#### Jeff Wall

*The Giant*, 1992  
Cibachrome transparency, fluo-  
rescent light, display case, edition  
1 AP  
19 1/2 x 23 x 4 1/4 inches  
Courtesy of Marian Goodman  
Gallery, New York

#### Manabu Yamanaka

*Gyahtei #6*, 1995  
Black-and-white photograph,  
edition of 9  
68 x 31 1/2 inches framed  
Courtesy of Stefan Stux Gallery,  
New York

*Gyahtei #7*, 1995  
Black-and-white photograph,  
edition of 9  
68 x 31 1/2 inches framed  
Courtesy of Stefan Stux Gallery,  
New York

#### Richard Yarde

*Coming and Going*, 1996-97  
Transparent and opaque water-  
color  
67 1/2 x 180 inches  
Courtesy of the artist

*MOJO Hand*, 1996-97  
Transparent and opaque water-  
color  
76 x 148 inches  
Courtesy of the artist

#### Lisa Yuskavage

*"Manifest Destiny,"* 1998  
Oil on linen  
110 x 55 inches  
Collection Museum of  
Contemporary Art, San Diego.  
Museum purchase,  
Contemporary Collectors Fund.  
Courtesy of Marianne Boesky  
Gallery, New York

*Surrender*, 1998  
Oil on linen  
36 x 36 inches  
Courtesy of Marianne Boesky  
Gallery, New York

### FILM AND VIDEO

#### Alan Berliner

*Nobody's Business*, 1996  
16 mm film, 60:00 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist

#### Arlene Bowman

*Navajo Talking Pictures*, 1986  
16 mm film, 40:00 minutes  
Courtesy of Women Make  
Movies, New York

#### Jean-François Brunet and Peter Friedman

*The Life and Times of Life and  
Times*, 1998  
Betacam SP, 59:00 minutes  
Courtesy of Emmanuel Laurent,  
producer, Films à Trois, Paris  
and Science TV Distribution,  
Canada

#### Liz Cane

*Libido*, 1989  
16 mm film, 4:30 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist

#### Alain Cavalier

*Portraits*, 1988-92  
Video, 90:00 minutes  
Courtesy of Douce Productions,  
Paris and Margaret Mead Film  
and Video Festival, American  
Museum of Natural History,  
New York

#### Susan Hadary Cohen and William Whiteford

*Grace*, 1991  
Video, 58:00 minutes  
Courtesy of UMAB Video Press,  
Baltimore

#### Sandi DuBowski

*Tomboychik*, 1994  
8 mm video, 15:00 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist and Video  
Data Bank, Chicago

#### Rebecca Feig

*Bye-Bye Babushka*, 1997  
16 mm film, 80:00 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist

#### Neil Goldberg

*Untitled*, 1999  
Video, 2:30 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist

#### Carol Halstead

*Why?*, 1994  
16 mm film, 12:00 minutes  
Courtesy of Moving Images  
Distribution, Inc., Vancouver,  
B.C.

#### Heddy Honigmann

*O Amor Natural*, 1997  
35 mm film, 76:00 minutes  
Courtesy of First Run Features,  
New York

#### Keiko Ibi

*The Personals: Improvisations on  
Romance in the Golden Years*, 1998  
16 mm film, 37:00 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist

#### Suzanne Lacy

*Whisper, the Waves, the Wind*,  
1984  
16 mm film documentation of  
performance on the beach in La  
Jolla, California, 28:00 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist and Terra  
Nova Films, Inc., Chicago

#### Lisa Lewenz

*A Letter Without Words*, 1998  
16 mm film, 62:00 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist

#### Brad Lichtenstein

*André's Lives*, 1999  
16 mm film, 55:00 minutes  
Courtesy of Lumiere  
Productions, Inc., New York

#### Kiti Luostarinen

*Gracious Curves*, 1997  
Video, 52:23 minutes  
Courtesy of Epidem Oy,  
Helsinki and Margaret Mead  
Film and Video Festival,  
American Museum of Natural  
History, New York

#### Amanda Micheli

*Just for the Ride: Bucking  
Convention, Cowgirl Style*, 1996  
16 mm film, 53:00 minutes  
Courtesy of Runaway  
Productions, San Francisco

#### Tracey Moffatt

*Night Cries*, 1990  
Film, 19:00 minutes  
Courtesy of Women Make  
Movies, New York

#### Nigel Nobel

*Close Harmony*, 1981  
16 mm film, 30:00 minutes  
Courtesy of Filmmakers Library,  
New York

#### Gail Noonan

*Your Name in Cellulite*, 1995  
35 mm film, 6:00 minutes  
Courtesy of Women Make  
Movies, New York

*Older, Stronger, Wiser*, 1990  
16 mm film, 28:00 minutes  
Produced by the Film Board of  
Canada. Courtesy of Indiana  
University Instructional Support  
Services, Bloomington

#### Jennifer Paige

*Grandma's Hands*, 1998  
DV Cam, 27:57 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist



**Yvonne Rainer**  
*Privilege*, 1990  
16 mm film, 103:00 minutes  
Courtesy of Zeitgeist Films,  
New York

**Joel Saxe**  
*Yiddish Folksingers of Miami  
Beach*, 1991  
8 mm video and Super 8 film,  
30:00 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist

**Cynthia Scott**  
*Strangers in Good Company*, 1990  
35 mm film, 105:00 minutes  
Courtesy of First Run Features,  
New York

**Alice Stone**  
*She Lives to Ride*, 1994  
16 mm film, 78:00 minutes (17:00  
minutes, exhibition excerpt)  
Courtesy of Women Make  
Movies, New York

**Johnny Symons**  
*Beauty Before Age*, 1997  
Betacam SP, 22:00 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist

**Agnes Varda**  
*Sept Pieces, Cuisines, Salle de  
Bains [Seven Rooms, Kitchens,  
Bathrooms]*, 1984  
35 mm film, 27:00 minutes  
Courtesy of Ciné Tamaris, Paris

**Lucy Winer and Karen Eaton**  
*Golden Threads*, 1999  
Video, 56:00 minutes  
Courtesy of Women Make  
Movies, New York

**Jacob Young**  
*Dancing Outlaw*, 1992  
Video, 30:00 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist

TELEVISION PROGRAMS

**All in the Family**  
*Edith's Problem*, 1971  
Courtesy of Columbia TriStar  
Television

**Cybill**  
*When You're Hot, You're Hot*,  
1996  
Courtesy of The Carsey-Werner  
Company

**Daria**  
*Write Where it Hurts*, 1998  
Courtesy of MTV Networks

**Maude**  
*Maude's Dilemma, Pt. 1*, 1972  
*Maude's Dilemma, Pt. 2*, 1972  
Courtesy of Columbia TriStar  
Television

**Sanford and Son**  
*Happy Birthday, Pop*, 1972  
Courtesy of Columbia TriStar  
Television

**The Simpsons**  
*Lisa vs. Malibu Stacy*, 1994  
(excerpt)  
Courtesy of Twentieth Century  
Fox Film Corporation

TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENTS

**IBM**  
*French Guys*, 1994  
Courtesy of IBM and Ogilvy &  
Mather, New York

**McDonald's**  
*The New Kid*, 1987  
Courtesy of McDonald's  
Corporation

**Nike**  
*Hijack Footwear*, 1984  
Courtesy of Nike, Inc. and  
Wieden & Kennedy, Portland

**Volvo**  
*Sauna*, 1973  
Courtesy of Volvo Cars of  
North America, Inc. and  
Messner, Vetere, Berger,  
McNamee, Schmetterer/Euro  
RSCG, New York

**Wendy's**  
*Fluffy Bun*, 1983  
Courtesy of Wendy's  
International

INTERACTIVE PROJECTS THROUGH  
THE VISUAL KNOWLEDGE  
PROGRAM (VKP)

**Lynne Yamamoto with Pam Simon,  
Dara Winkler, and Kathryn  
McCarthy**  
*The Struggle for Civil Rights: An  
Intergenerational Fable*, 1998-98  
American Social History Project  
class, IAT  
Video and photographs

**Juan Jose Robles with Marijke  
Hecht and Meryl Meisler**  
*Senescence of Ca<sub>10</sub>(PO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>6</sub>  
(OH)<sub>2</sub>*, 1998-99  
Chemistry class, ICE  
Mixed media installation

**Todd Ayoung with Diane Varano**  
*Time Machine*, 1998-99  
Environmental Studies class, IAT  
Mixed media installation

OTHER PROJECTS

*Time Slips*  
Installation of photographs and  
handmade books relating to an  
interactive, intergenerational  
storytelling project with people  
with Alzheimer's  
Ten photographs, 20 x 24 inches  
each unframed  
Two books, 16 x 42 x 10 inches  
each  
Project Director: Anne Davis  
Basting  
Project Associate: Nichole  
Griffith  
Photographer: Dick Blau  
Book Artist: Beth Thielen  
Web Designer: Chad Anderson  
Videographer/Sound Designer:  
Xavier LePlae

PERFORMANCES

**Tim Erikson**  
Singer/Musician

**Kim Irwin and Max Below Toledo-  
Paris**  
*On My Honor I Will Do My Best*  
Performance

**J Mandle Performance**  
*When*  
Broadway window performances

**Helen Schneyer**  
Singer/Musician



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## Contributors

ANNE BARLOW joined the New Museum of Contemporary Art as Curator of Education in January 1999. From 1994 to 1998 she was Curator of Modern Art and Design at Glasgow Museums in Scotland, where she played a key role in the development of the city's Gallery of Modern Art. She initiated and managed a wide range of commissions, artist residencies, new technology projects, outreach programs and exhibitions including *Pierre et Gilles: Grit and Glitter* and *Out of the Blue: Faisal Abdu'Allah, Sher Rajah and Zineb Sedira*. From 1989 to 1994 she worked as Curator of the Scottish Arts Council's collection of contemporary art, acting as chair of the purchasing committee and managing the collection's outreach scheme. Her first post after graduating with a Masters in the History of Art from Glasgow University in 1986 was with Fischer Fine Art Ltd., London.

XOCHITL DORSEY received her Master of Arts in 1999 from New York University in Latin American/ Caribbean Studies and Museum Studies. She worked as an intern at the New Museum from 1998–99 assisting in the coordination of the Visible Knowledge Program projects and their integration into the exhibition. She is the recipient of a 1998–99 Foreign Language Area Studies grant and a graduate assistantship in NYU's Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies program. She co-coordinated *Istorias*, a contemporary Latin American film series at NYU. She has worked as a co-editor for various university organization newsletters and has participated actively in a variety of student organizations.

ANNE ELLEGOOD joined the New Museum of Contemporary Art as a Curatorial Associate in June of 1998. From 1993 to 1997, she worked on a variety of exhibitions as a curatorial assistant and registrar for McDaris Exhibit Group, an independent traveling exhibition group. She graduated from Bard College's Center for Curatorial Studies in May of 1997 where her thesis exhibition, *Unbearable Laughter*, included the work of Nicole Eisenman, Kara Walker, and Sue Williams. Most recently, she organized a section of the 1999 David Wojnarowicz retrospective at the New Museum on the artist's activism and installed a selection of his works in the windows of Saks Fifth Avenue as part of their "Project Art" series.

PHILIP KOPLIN is a freelance science editor and self-taught artist who has had solo shows in New York and Santa Barbara. He was a co-curator of *Signs of Age: Representing the Older Body* which was presented at the Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum from November 8, 1997 to January 18, 1998. He is presently working on an exhibition exploring mourning, particularly in regard to its function in defining the self-identity of the survivor(s).

MARCIA TUCKER is Founding Director of the New Museum of Contemporary Art, an institution devoted to the advancement of innovative art and artistic practice as a vital social force. Prior to founding the New Museum, Ms. Tucker was Curator of Painting and Sculpture at the Whitney Museum of American Art from 1969 to 1977. As Director of the New Museum, which was established in 1977, Ms. Tucker organized such major exhibitions as *"Bad" Painting* (1978), *Choices: Making an Art of Everyday Life* (1986), *Pat Steir* (1987), *Markus Raetz* (1988), *Bad Girls* (1994), and *A Labor of Love* (1996), among others. Abroad, she organized *The 1970s: New American Painting* for the U.S.I.A., an exhibition that toured Eastern and Western Europe in 1980 and co-curated a retrospective exhibition by the Catalan artist Perejaume at Barcelona's Museum of Contemporary Art (1999). She was chosen as United States Commissioner for the Forty-first Venice Biennale, *Paradise Lost/ Paradise Regained: American Visions of the New Decade* (1984), and she organized *Twentieth-Century American Sculpture: A Northeast Region Exhibition* for The First Lady's Garden at The White House (1996).

She is the series editor of *Documentary Sources in Contemporary Art*, five books of theory and criticism published by the New Museum. She received an M.A. in Art History from the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University, honorary doctorate degrees from the San Francisco Art Institute (1983), and the Atlanta College of Art (1997), and was named a *Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* by the French Ministry of Culture (1997). Ms. Tucker is the 1999 recipient of Bard College's Center for Curatorial Studies Award for Curatorial Achievement and has taught, written, lectured and published widely in America and abroad.

ANJA ZIMMERMANN is an art historian and co-organizer of the *VI. Deutsche Kunsthistorikerinnentagung (6th German Conference of Feminist Art History)* in Tübingen, Germany in 1996. She has published articles on Cindy Sherman, Zöe Leonard and Cheryl Dunye in the German journal *Frauen Kunst Wissenschaft* and an essay on deconstruction and feminism in the collection *Mythen von Autorschaft und Weiblichkeit in 20. Jahrhundert/Myths of Authorship and Femininity in the 20th Century* (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 1997). Dividing her time between Germany and New York, she is currently completing a dissertation entitled "Scandalous Bodies—Scandalous Images: Controversies on Abject Art in the United States" at Tübingen University, Germany.



All in the Family, still from television program, published in The New York Times, January 20, 1974. In this episode, the couple reveals that they find it cheaper to live together unmarried rather than married. Burt Mustin and Ruth McDevitt, actors. With permission of Columbia TriStar Television, Los Angeles.

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AN OLD COCK.

OLD chappy, when a man has reached  
Your age, he surely ought to know  
Folks think that he some slight regard  
For common decency should show,  
Could you but once see how absurd  
Your prankishness to all appears,  
A line of conduct you'd adopt  
That better would become your years.



*"Age has its compensations. It is less apt to be  
browbeaten by discretion."*

—Charlie Chaplin



*the Time of Our Lives*

