

**'Nancy Spero:  
Works Since 1950, Part II'**

*New Museum of Contemporary Art  
583 Broadway (near Prince Street)  
Through Sunday*

The second installment of this survey of Nancy Spero's career is quite different from the first, and in some ways even better. The artist's largest and most ambitious collages of image and text — "Torture of Women" of 1974-76 and "Notes in Time on Women" of 1976-79 — remain on view. But everything around them has changed, and the substitutions give a clearer sense of this ardent feminist's artistic development.

Among the new arrivals are a substantial selection of Ms. Spero's dark, tormented paintings from the late 1950's and early 60's; all but one have never been exhibited in New York. "Homage to New York," painted in 1958 while the artist was still living in Illinois, is especially notable. Evidence that Ms. Spero was always interested in combining words and images, it is an exuberant, somewhat hostile announcement of ambition. Amid slashes of black and orange, the initials of the prominent members of the New York School are grouped with the artist's own name, which is spelled out in full.

Also on view are several examples from Ms. Spero's "War Series," a large group of watercolors from the late 60's in which strangely delicate, sympathetic scenes of violence reflect her opposition to the Vietnam War. Although transitional, they mark both Ms. Spero's abandonment of paint on canvas in favor of paper collage and her commitment to overtly political subject matter, and are thus essential to an understanding of her art.

In all ways, this exhibition is very much worth a visit.

--Roberta Smith