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Messy History vs. Neat History: Toward an Expanded View of Women in Graphic Design

For the contributions of women in graphic design to be discovered and understood, their different experiences and roles within the patriarchal and capitalist framework they share with men, and their choices and experiences within a female framework, must be acknowledged and explored. Neat history is conventional history: a focus on the mainstream activities and work of individual, usually male, designers. Messy history seeks to discover, study and include the variety of alternative approaches and activities that are often part of women designers' professional lives. To start the expansion, a typology of roles played by women in graphic design is proposed for further research.

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In contemporary graphic design practice, women and men designers participate in the same business and institutional structures; previously they have been part of the same educational systems. However, the experiences for each group within these structures has been different, in large part due to gender and the way it has been socially constructed through identity, roles and expectations. In the past, such gendered experiences were even more divergent, as these began earlier in life and were more tradition-bound and pervasive in professional life. For the study of women and men in graphic design, remaining cognizant of the double truth that women and men in graphic design are the same and that women and men in graphic design are different will result in a more inclusive understanding of past and contemporary graphic design production.

The focus of this paper is on women graphic designers. I do not forget the other axes of race and class by which to study historical players. The problematic areas discussed will often be shared by designers of color and other marginalized designers of both genders; however, attempting to avoid the extremes of essentialism, may I suggest that the problems will more frequently be those of women in graphic design. The historiographical methods used to recover their participation and accomplishments will be beneficial to all previously unacknowledged designers.[1]

Cheryl Buckley has brought feminist theory and feminist history to design history, though she does not discuss graphic design history specifically.[2] Buckley allows that women have filled a variety of roles in design (practitioner, theorist, consumer, historian, object of representation), but asserts that each of these is circumscribed by patriarchy. Buckley discusses patriarchy within the capitalist economic system of industrialized societies. Her working definition of patriarchy comes from Griselda Pollock: "patriarchy does not refer to the static, oppressive domination of one sex over another, but a web of psycho-social relationships which institute a socially significant difference on the axis of sex, which is so deeply located in our very sense of lived, sexual identity that it appears to us as

1
Lasky, Julie. 1994. "The Search for Georg Olden." *Print*, XLVIII:2, 21-29, 126-129. See this, finally, for information about an African-American pioneer.

2
Buckley, Cheryl. 1986. "Made in Patriarchy: Toward a Feminist Analysis of Women and Design." *Design Issues*, 3:2, 3-14. This is one of the best feminist analyses so far of the problems of design history. Buckley is writing from the context of British design history which is more fully developed than in this country, and that uses a broader definition of design, which includes the decorative arts and crafts.

natural and unalterable."[3] This paper is an attempt to extend some of Buckley's ideas into graphic design history.

Buckley posits that the silence of history about women designers is a "direct consequence of specific historiographical methods. These methods, which involve the selection, classification and prioritization of types of design, categories of designers, distinct styles and movements, and different modes of production, are inherently biased against women and, in effect, serve to exclude them from history."[4] In her review of design literature she discovers that when women do make it into the literature they are too often limited by their association with products for women or by their association with male designers who are family members. In many ways, the case of women in design history parallels the discussion of Linda Nochlin on women artists in her article, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?"[5]

Graphic design history has proceeded, for the most part, along well-established art historical lines. Canons of designers and design works have been established and accepted through publication and exhibition. The prevailing approach has concentrated on individuals and individual effort, institutions and business, the active client/reactive designer relationship, the synchronic analysis establishing stylistic "periods," and the diachronic presentation of innovation and influence. This approach is problematic for reasons of exclusion. While it purports to be the responsible application of established standards, it turns out to be arbitrary as well as unfair.[6]

The conventional graphic design history literature of the past decade has had a difficult time with women designers. Take, for example, the most widely distributed book, Philip Meggs' *A History of Graphic Design*, used as the textbook in most college courses.[7] First published in 1983 and substantially revised in 1992, the author still finds the inclusion of women graphic designers problematic. The first edition mentioned fifteen women and reproduced the work of nine; the second edition mentions thirty-one women designers, photographers and illustrators and reproduces the work of twenty-three, to

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Buckley. "Made in Patriarchy." Quoted from Pollock, Griselda. 1982. "Vision, Voice and Power: Feminist Art History and Marxism," *Block*, 6.

4
Buckley, "Made in Patriarchy,"3.

5
Nochlin, Linda.1971. "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" in *Art and Sexual Politics*, Thomas B. Hess and Elizabeth C. Baker, editors. New York: Collier Books.

6
Lange, Martha Scotford. 1991. "Is There a Canon of Graphic Design?" *AIGA Journal of Graphic Design*, 9:2, 3-5, 13.

7
Meggs, Philip B. 1992 (2nd, Revised edition). *A History of Graphic Design*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

be compared with the discussion and work of hundreds of male designers. Meggs never addresses the issue of women designers (or designers of color) directly. In the index, the entry "women" directs the reader to four very brief discussions of women as representational subject matter. In his preface to the new edition, Meggs states the intent of the book is "to identify and document innovation in semantic and syntactic aspects of visual communications. The graphic designs of each period discussed have been investigated and assessed in an attempt to distinguish works and their creators that influenced the ongoing evolution of the discipline."[8] Meggs goes on to obliquely counteract criticism by preferring the bias of "pivotal individuals" to the bias of a more collective approach, though he claims to attempt to credit all collaborators when appropriate. In the end, "a line of descendancy toward contemporary graphic design in post-industrial culture was a primary determinant."[9] He also points out that reproduction criteria include practical limits of quality and availability. The pluralism of content and voice found in contemporary graphic design is not sufficiently described or assessed by this method. When, to be included in this history, work must "come from somewhere in history," the chances for inclusion of wholly new ideas and new players are few. And are the margins forever fixed? Even "pivotal" social changes like the women's movement are barely mentioned; there is no discussion of new imagery or of the influx of new "voices" of women designers into the profession.[10]

Feminist historians have argued against the primacy of individual agency in creativity. While the study of individual creativity is occasionally required and useful (there are pivotal women in design), and the loss of individual women to history is an example of patriarchy at work, much design is a collaborative and collective effort. It is this process, the dynamics and sets of relationships within and among design groups and between designer and client that needs to be more fully understood. Research on women in design has been focused on women as objects of representation[11] and on women as audience or consumers (in the broadest sense) of graphic

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Meggs, *A History of Graphic Design*, ix.

9
Meggs, *A History of Graphic Design*, x.

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The absence of women in the historical record has been addressed in the three most recent "Modernism and Eclecticism" symposia on graphic design history. Directed by Steven Heller and sponsored by The School of Visual Arts in New York, the symposia have been an annual event since 1988. Karrie Jacobs discussed "lost" women designers and Teal Triggs presented new information on Beatrice Warde. Oral history was served when Estelle Ellis discussed creating magazines for teen-age girls. There have been a few publications: McQuiston, Liz. 1988. *Women in Design*. New York: Rizzoli; Supon Design Group. 1993. *International Women in Design*. Washington, DC: SDG, International Book Division; and an exercise in "self-publishing" following the example of several male designers: Greiman, April. 1990. *Hybrid Imagery: The Fusion of Technology and Graphic Design*. New York: Watson-Guptill Publications. In fairness, Meggs's second edition has increased the exposure of women designers' work by 250 percent.

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design artifacts;[12] to this should be added the breadth of the design activities in which women engage.

Neat history (conventional history) involves the simple packaging of one designer, explicit organizational context, one client, simple statements of intent, one design solution, a clearly defined audience, expected response (in other words, the old Shannon and Weaver communication model of sender, message, channel, receiver, no noise). For a long time such a model involved a white, male, middle-class designer working for a design studio or advertising agency with a client in government or private business requiring a visual message to be sent through one of several discrete and traditional (printed) formats to communicate with a mass audience assumed to resemble, or aspire to resemble, the designer and client. It was easy to answer the questions: Who? What? Why? From whom? For whom? This simplistic history has served the establishment (white, male, business, design and academic worlds) well.

Contrast this with messy history: designers who do not work alone but in changing collaborations; design works which are not produced for national or large institutions but for small enterprises or local causes; design works which are not produced in great numbers and may even be at the scale of a "cottage industry;" design works that may use cultural codes not part of mainstream culture; design work for small and specialized audiences; design work in forms more personal and expressive; design practices organized around family life and personal issues; design that turns its back on mainstream design, etc. I do not mean to suggest that this wholly or exclusively describes womens' design activity (much of which is mainstream), only that it describes alternative conditions, many of which are more true of women's practice and conditions than men's.

As one way to conceptualize the inclusion and significance of women in graphic design, I propose a typology of women's involvement. I will define some of these types, give some concrete examples and suggest some questions about them to encourage further study and discussion. Looking at women in

11
The scholarly work on the representation of women (primarily in advertising, some in general mass media) has been by authors with a variety of approaches. Berger, John. 1972. *Ways of Seeing.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, uses a Marxist approach. Williamson, Judith. 1984. *Decoding Advertisements.* New York: Marion Boyars Publishers Inc., uses semiotics and post-structuralist theory. Goffman, Erving. 1976. *Gender Advertisements.* New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, employs a sociological approach to create a typology of position and gesture in images. Wald, Carol. 1975. *Myth America.* New York: Pantheon, studies the construction of feminine myths. Stein, Sally. 1989. "The Graphic Ordering of Desire: Modernization of a Middle-Class Women's Magazine 1919-1939," in *The Contest of Meaning,* Richard Bolton, editor. Cambridge: MIT Press, analyzes and diagrams the structure of women's magazines in a longitudinal study. There are several useful methodologies here; and the books are historical documents themselves representing specific periods of design criticism.

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The effects of design products (more industrial than graphic) on women in the domestic and professional

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graphic design by this method is one example of the effect of women's inclusion on graphic design history; the roles, in their diversity, reveal a more complex interaction with design activity on the part of women than was thought to exist when the (male) focus was on men designers. While there are roles that women and men both play, there are some that seem solely available to women. It must be noted that examples from past and contemporary practice are used to make these types more concrete, but do not in any way exhaust the pool of possible examples. I have chosen examples among better known designers, mostly American, mostly women. The examples range among historical periods; comparisons over time, studying the contextual variables that explain differences will be valuable. Whereas study of broad historiographical methods has prompted much of what I propose, often a specific individual and her particular place in American design history has suggested questions. Current practice and examples also raise issues. While it is a mistake of "presentism" to use the present to interpret the past, the present is a useful model for comparison with the past; through comparison the differ-ences and similarities are discovered and questions raised.[13]

A Typology of Women in Graphic Design

The reconceptualization of historical study through the different and shifting alignments of groups of people has been of primary importance to the study of women in history. For women in design this suggests that while it is important to add individual names and achievements to the historical record, it is also critical to look at group characteristics and group dynamics. Because men, in their public/professional spheres, have defined most of the "roles" of graphic designer, it is necessary to study how women graphic designers have accepted, adapted or rejected these roles, and under what conditions. The study of women designers' experience shows that "design experience," as described by design literature and assumed to be universal, has actually been the male experi-ence. Study of women shows that there is more than one experience. In studying women designers, it is important to

spheres has been studied, written about and exhibited by Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott Miller (Lupton, Ellen and J. Abbott Miller. 1992. *The Bathroom, the Kitchen, and the Aesthetics of Waste.* Cambridge: MIT List Visual Arts Center; and Lupton, Ellen. 1993. *Mechanical Brides: Women and Machines from Home to Office.* New York: Cooper-Hewitt National Museum of Design).

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Throughout all of this discussion, it is important to keep in mind that design is more than the physical presence of artifacts or the connection of people to those artifacts through making. Design is what comes before the artifact and what happens after the artifact is part of the cultural and social world. Design history must be where it is explained how and why each artifact exists and what difference the existence makes. Design history is also about design ideas that have no material presence; it is about design education; it is about audi-ence and societal values. Historians have depended on physical evidence: arti-facts from which to read, literally and figuratively, the texts that provide facts and allow understanding and interpretation. Especially privileged have been verbal/written texts and through them the cultures, groups and individuals they helped to explain.

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compare their experience with male designers' experience of the same period, as well as to understand the private and public roles available to women at each particular time.

Women Practitioners

Beliefs in women's capabilities have changed over time. The primary vocational route of graphic designers in the earlier days was from typesetting and printing, both highly skilled and mechanical trades. Other, lesser, routes were through sign painting (often itinerant) and the fine arts. Typesetting and printing skills were acquired by hard work through the ranks from apprencticeship. The patriarchal construction of roles for women did not allow them business or vocational training. Even more recently when women have had access to practical training (as well as formal education), they were kept out of the typesetting and printing trades because these are mechanical, dirty and physically strenuous and, therefore, "not suitable."[14] With desktop publishing making typesetting electronic and functionally opaque, and as clean and as easy as typing, women (as former typists) are filling the ranks. Are the skills once valued in male typographers equally valued in female computer typesetters? It may be significant that the professional title of "typographer" is no longer used and the general activity less respected because "anyone (read women) can do it."

Design and pre-press production have been partly reunited in the current practice but the distinction between them blurred. Design and pre-press production have experienced a changing relationship since Gutenberg. As design/production configurations change, are women more likely to be involved in roles of technical ("hand-skills") or conceptual ("head-skills") aspects of design? Study cannot continue to concentrate on only the dominant sites of production (i.e., those of the designers' idea-generation), but must investigate the full range of interrelated processes and services. The whole topic could be studied from Johannes and Frau Gutenberg to the husband and wife team at *Emigré*, Rudy VanderLans and Zuzana Licko.[15]

The methodology of collecting and validating historical evidence through oral history has developed, permitting the inclusion of peoples without traditions based in print, or of people not comfortable with written communication. People such as designers? Designers tend to be more visual than verbal; if verbal, more oral than written (though this is changing for the better). As a nod toward future historical work attempting to capture our past, we should be collecting and preserving oral histories about all aspects of designers and design activity, on video and audio tapes. Some exist in archives such as the Graphic Design Archive at Rochester Institute of Technology, while Anne Ghory-Goodman has been making video tapes of design educators. In a field of enlarging media, all resources should be employed for the archiving of information and materials. It would be refreshing, as well, if graphic design history could be based on more egalitarian records and types of distribution than those which currently must depend on publication (and, therefore, on markets and patriarchal power).

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The past aside, even today one of the most frequently reported problems for women in graphic design is demeaning treatment by men representing the necessary technical support services.

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Earlier in the century, most graphic designers emerged from a background of fine art or training in the trades. Within the fine art route, men studied to become artists, while many women studied to be come "accomplished." Study would discover if these two routes coincide with different class origins. If the trades (except some forms of "commercial art" such as illustration) were not open to women, what were the routes into design for women? And what difference did class make for them?

Hierarchy, and its corollary of ghettoizing, exists among design sectors (publishing, advertising, corporate design, non-profits, government, institutions, etc.). Within the sectors women designers have been represented in changing proportions. Where were the "velvet ghettos" of the '30s, '40s, '50s? What is the meaning of the preponderence of women in publishing: books, magazines especially, fewer in newspapers? Research on the organizational structures of any of these sectors would discover where women were most likely to be found, during what historical time periods. What was their significance for design in these sectors? For example, there were many women who worked with Dr. Agha at Condé Nast. Cipe Pineles went on to art direct several influential magazines; what happened to the other women?

Ghettoizing in design can also be within the practice of design itself. Most design offices, of whatever size, have tended toward the corporate organizational model of pyramidal hierarchy, with power (ideas and money) concentrated at the narrow top. When women are owners or partners, has this been conceived differently? Recently there have been increasing reports of women-derived alternatives that are less structured, non-hierarchical and more collaborative. In business, some examples have described more open and cooperative production groups in factories. In design, female principles are less supervisory and more collaborative, giving equal credit to associates for design projects. As interaction with staff can be alternatively defined, so can that with clients. Reports from both sides of the interaction indicate that women designers are more likely to work with clients toward a solution, rather

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Perhaps it is time to discover "Judith Gutenberg." You will remember the "sister" conceit, "Judith Shakespeare," in Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own.*

than decreeing a solution as their male counterparts do. This distinction shows up in studies of other design disciplines, such as architecture and industrial design.

Questions about the organization of the workplace and the division of labor in graphic design must be more probing. In addition to studying the presence of women in mainstream design practice, and understanding their roles as influenced by patriarchy's sexual division of labor, where else are women active? Women, or any marginalized group, will fill in the empty spaces in a labor market. For example, "artists books" sit in an overlapping area between graphic design and fine art. This is an area of varied production methods and approaches, largely dismissed by professional graphic design. It is also a marginal area inhabited by many women, including Frances Butler and Judy Anderson. Is "marginal" work a strategic choice or a default position? As a choice it may be interpreted as a mode of resistance to the demands and definitions of mainstream graphic design practice. To include these book arts in graphic design, the definition must be enlarged since acceptable methods of reproduction cannot be solely those of mass production. Access to mass production is another limitation imposed by patriarchy.

For graphic design, professional organizations developed out of trade organizations. Have women benefitted from the support of professional organizations? For a long time women were not welcome in the trades nor were they acknowledged by the organizations. The New York Art Directors Club only admitted its first woman member, Cipe Pineles, to its Hall of Fame in 1975. Leadership positions in these organizations were held by men until recently; jurors for competitions were all male, and professional awards of merit were seldom bestowed upon women. What has been the impact on professional organizations of the increasing presence of women in graphic design? Slowly, in the last decade, women are becoming officers, jurors and award winners. They are writing increasingly for professional publications. Less often they are speakers for and to the profession.[16]

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See reports on AIGA Miami 1993 conference that complained of sexist behavior and presentations, as well as very few presentations by women. For example: Scher, Paula. 1994. "The Devaluation of Design by the Design Community." *AIGA Journal of Graphic Design.* 11:4, 4-5; Resnick, Elizabeth. 1994. "Fighting for Recognition." *AIGA Journal of Graphic Design.* 11:4,12; Lasky, Julie and Tod Lippy. 1994. "AigABC's," *Print,* XLVIII:1,112; and Holland, D.K. 1994 "Nero Fiddles While Rome Burns," *Communication Arts,* 36:1, 14-18.

Independent designers and owners

Women practice alone as independent designers or as free-
lance designers; they practice as owner/designers of small
design businesses. Currently, women are more likely to be
free-lance designers (and, therefore, part-time designers) than
men. In a 1992 survey of AIGA members 33 percent of the
women respondents were owners/designers, as compared to
42 percent of the men, with the women tending to have
smaller staffs.[17] In the distant past, independent business opera-
tion was not an option for women, except for those who
came to it through widowhood. A common route to printing
and publishing for women was helping their husbands in the
shop and taking over at their death. (Not a felicitous career
path, nor one to actively pursue.)[18]

Design employees and workers

Women are more likely found as employees of design studios,
agencies, publishing houses, corporate design offices and other
organizations and institutions. We could see them as cultural
workers in the trenches. They may be at all levels of these
organizations: art and creative directors, staff designers,
production managers and freelance artists. How are women
involved in the decisions made about design: the concepts,
images, audiences? This is the largest group of women practic-
ing; how have technical developments in design changed
women's roles and design work? As an antidote to the
conventional focus on "heroes," an important addition to our
knowledge of women in design would be attention to the
not-so-famous, the non-name designers, their conditions, their
experience, their impact on their clients and communities if
not on the "design world."

Designer' partners, spouses and significant others

One of the primary points of feminist theory has been the
intersection of private roles and public roles for women.
Working women (especially those with families) have been

17
Scotford, Martha. 1992.
Survey of membership of
American Institute of
Graphic Arts, part of
research on women in
graphic design supported by
a grant from the National
Endowment for the Arts.

18
Higgins, Janet. 1988. "And
the Wife Helped Also."
*Southeastern College Art
Conference Review*, XI:3,
201-206.

unwilling and unable to keep their domestic and professional lives as separate as working men have sought to do. Mary Catherine Bateson[19] and Carolyn Heilbrun[20] have provided examples of famous and/or public women "composing" and creating their productive lives around private necessity. They have discovered that many women do not follow the (male) linear career path, and do not consider women's accretion model aberrant but responsive to different experience. Study incorporating the stages of women's lives, their physical and psychological development, the expectations of society, with women's professional design practice, choice of professional roles and achievement will show differences with male paradigms for achievement. This connection of private and public affects all the decisions they make and, for many women designers, impacts the work they do, how they do it and what it means. There are generational differences in this area as well; the pure increase in the number of women designers in the last twenty years is the result of changes in women's roles and affects the practice of design as well. Study should be made of the impact in many areas of the influx of women into design.[21]

Women raise interesting questions for biography or any writing about them beyond the strictest focus on design artifacts. In any historical period, society has constructed roles for women which include a set of constraints and expectations. In the past there was a clear distinction between the public or male sphere and the private or female sphere. Increasingly the line has become less clear.

In writing about women designers historically, it is obvious that they must and do interact with male designers and other men in business; this communication, cooperation and collaboration and changes within these relationships are worth study. There is a twist on these professional relationships that has not been researched: those professional relationships that are also intimate ones. (Gasp; even I have labeled this "tacky biography" to myself.) Why this response? The response is as interesting as the question. Men and women have been involved in design together for a long time; when the research focus is

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Bateson, Mary Catherine. 1989. *Composing A Life*. New York: The Atlantic Monthy Press.

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Heilbrun, Carolyn G. 1988. *Writing a Woman's Life*. New York: Ballantine Books.

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deForest, Ann. 1988. "Women in Graphic Design: Building a Velvet Ghetto?" *AIGA Journal of Graphic Design*, 6:3, 1,14. Cullen, Moira. 1993. "Beyond Politics and Gender - The Hillary Factor," *Communication Arts*, 35:3, 24-30. Streyer, Stephanie. 1992. "Designer Moms." *Communication Arts*, 34:2, 28-30.

male the model is "unique, independent, creative genius" and all others involved, especially women and especially in private life, are assumed to have no effect on the designer, the production or the work. Sometimes this is so. When the focus changes to women designers, with their intertwined lives, other people are often involved. So questions need to be asked; they needed to be asked of the male designers too, now perhaps they will be. Part of the reticence on this topic undoubtedly relates to a possible double standard; it is acceptable for men to engage in a variety of personal relationships; this has not been considered true for women. Standards change; there have always been exceptions. Another problem is that the imputation of influence has previously been harmful to women, though not to men. Does influence go only one way? The issue of "significant others" has recently been addressed, in the fine arts, in an eponymous book.[22] Critics considered the results mixed and some too close to gossip, but the door is opened on what is, theoretically, a useful area.

The original spouse/partners in design business were the women (and children) who helped out in the shops and learned the businesses: punch-cutting, typesetting, printing, publishing. More recently, Bertha Goudy and Edna Beilenson helped their husbands with typesetting and presswork. Beilenson was also part of a women printers' organization, The Distaff Side.[23] Ray Eames was an equal partner in name and credit, though the exact nature of her contributions is unclear.[24] In our well-intentioned eagerness to have "women designers in history," Ray Eames may have been swept up and set up in a role she did not play. She was important to the work of the office, but most likely not as designer. History needs to record her actual role. Katherine McCoy is a partner with Michael McCoy in both design practice and design education. The partnerships are often between designers in different disciplines: Nancy Skolos (graphic design) and Tom Wedell (photography); Lela Vignelli (industrial design) and Massimo Vignelli (graphic design); and Deborah Sussman (graphic design) and Paul Prezja (architecture).

22
Chadwick, Whitney and Isabelle de Courtivon, editors. 1993. *Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnership.* London and New York: Thames and Hudson.

23
Higgins, Janet. "And the Wife Helped Also." 201.

24
Neuhart, Marilyn and John, and Ray Eames. 1989. *Eames Design.* New York: Harry N. Abrams.

Women in design have also been business partners or collabo-
rators with male and female significant others. Early in this
century, Beatrice Warde separated from her husband and spent
many years working with Stanley Morison, both scholars
promoting fine and practical typography. Over her career
April Greiman has collaborated with her then husband and
other male designers, at each stage marking a significant
change in her work. And there are examples of female design
couples in practice together.

For all of the business partnerships that include private
relationships, questions about roles, organization, work choices
intersect with personal dynamics in ways different from those
of romantically uninvolved partners. What is the nature of
lives so completely involved with design? The benefits are
apparent in the fine work of many designing couples, but there
will be deficits of these public/private combinations as well.
If design couples part, the female designer may be more at risk
for professional fallout. The point is not irrelevant or prurient
interest but rather to understand when and how important such
intimate relationships can be to development and to work.

Independent designers and spouses or significant others in design

Another example of sharing lives in design is that of women
designers who practice independently, but who have or had
spouses or significant others also involved in design. As with
partnerships, the shared information, networks, interests can be
critically important to the work. Cipe Pineles had a career in
magazines independent from her two designer husbands, Bill
Golden and Will Burtin. However, Pineles and Golden are
both noted for their use of fine artists as illustrators, she in
women's magazines and he for CBS promotions. Same idea,
different venues; it makes more sense if you know they were
married. Paula Scher and Seymour Chwast use historical refer-
ence as an important part of their work, and were among the
first revivalists. Louise Fili and Steven Heller share an interest in
graphic design history; she resurrects old typefaces for her book
jackets, he writes and organizes conferences, and they have

recently collaborated on two design history books (on Dutch Moderne and Italian Art Deco). Lorraine Louie and Daniel Pelavin are both noted book jacket designers. When studying the work and its conceptual and stylistic provenance, it is useful to know where a designer studied, with whom, where a designer has worked, with whom and who might be at home.

Female and female working collaborations

A separate category is women designers who are professional partners. Ruth Ansel and Bea Feitler collaborated for several years on *Harpers Bazaar.* Muriel Cooper and Jacqueline Casey spent almost whole careers designing for MIT, much of the time in the same office. Are there special benefits from this interaction? Interactions might differ from female/male ones. Work place organization and working styles may be different. Female collaborators may be able to confront larger institutions more effectively together. Mentoring relationships may be more important for women and different between them. Lorraine Wild and her partners at ReVerb would be a contemporary example for study.

Women designers who leave design

The focus has been on successful designers, their partnerships and how these intersect with personal relationships. What about those design careers that are abandoned because of such conflicts? Women may leave design for many reasons, but one is competition with a spouse in the same or a related field. There were some cases written about in the mid-'70s where women's careers were overshadowed by men's careers.[25] Has there ever been an article titled "Husbands of Artists"? What happens to shared design practices when parenthood is chosen, but one is designated to have the baby?

Defining "design" as mainstream design, leaving design may be a conscious strategic move. There are different kinds of leaving. Designers leave the corporate design world for the freedom of independent practice or for a change of scale in

25
Brooks, Valerie. 1975. "The Wives of the Artists." *Print,* 29:2, 44-49, 86.

problem-solving. There are recent reports that many African-American designers find the corporate world useful for training but not comfortable for the long haul; they are creating their own businesses, businesses that may be out of the mainstream. Another way to move to the margins is to find or invent new territory within the borders of graphic design that is distant from dominant structures. Some current examples are new technical areas and cultural areas. Women and African-Americans are entering the field at the margin through video production and music promotion.[26]

The study of conditions for failure (or leaving) are as important as conditions for success. Nochlin, in discovering the answer to her question, was able to describe the path to success for women artists.[27] What is the route to success for women designers at different periods in graphic design history?

Women in Design Business

Women who run husbands' design businesses

The professional design world is supported by legions of staff who, while they do not directly put pen to paper or mouse to pad, are closely connected with design work and design decisions. The first employee beyond design assistant that any owner/designer hires is a bookkeeper or financial manager. This person is most often female, may ease into this position unsalaried, may be the wife of the designer, and may even be educated as a designer herself. Linda Hinrichs ran Hinrichs et al. through several permutations; Valerie Richardson runs Richardson or Richardson; Dixie Manwaring is the business manager for her husband; Sonia Tscherny runs George's practice. Perhaps this is the more accurate category for Ray Eames. What is the nature of the influence that such women exercise in such positions? There are many historical antecedents; study should be made of how this role has changed; when and how it is acknowledged, in credits, in name, and/or in salary.

26
For discussion of contemporary African-American graphic design practice see: Miller, Cheryl D. 1987. "Black Designers: Missing in Action, "*Print*, XLI:5, 58-65, 138 and Locke, Tonya. 1994. "In the Voices of My Sisters: African-American Women in Graphic Design." Unpublished master's thesis. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina State University.

27
Nochlin, Linda. "Why Are There No Great Women Artists," 30-37.

Unacknowledged partners and supporters

Some illustrations of the phrase "behind every man (designer) is a woman" are available. These are women who worked along side men and are unsung but crucial to the creative work. Dorothy Abbe was devoted to helping W.A. Dwiggins; Carla Binder assisted Joseph. Dorothy Beall aided Lester playing the common and traditional role for women of the period, hostess to professional clients. However, given the location of Beall's practice in rural Connecticut and the corporate nature of his clients, this was more than occasional dinner parties. She was a partner in the business enterprise, if not in the design.[28] Roles, even if traditional, cannot be dismissed on those grounds, and are important to design success. If conventional history acknowledged male business partners of designers, how would that history and our understanding have been different? We might also be looking for a man managing a woman designer's practice and what this means.

Women in Education

Though the institutions and structures are the same for women and men, their experiences within them are frequently at odds, and their responses different. Among AIGA members, women designers have tended to have more formal education than men. This response could be due to the lack of opportunity through the "trade route" and/or a response to other conditions, such as the perception that a woman has to be "better" to be considered equal. The last decade witnessed the huge increase in the number of women students in design schools; the number of women faculty increased, and at the same time many graphic design programs were and are headed by women (Cranbrook, co-chair Katherine McCoy; CalArts, April Greiman and then Lorraine Wild; Otis-Parsons and Yale, Sheila Levrant de Bretteville; Northeastern, Mary Anne Frye; North Carolina State University, Meredith Davis). General "demographics" may explain some of this; more importantly it is the result of the women's movement and changing roles for women and professional women.

28
Roger Remington. 1992. Conversation with author, based on his research on Lester and Dorothy Beall, manuscript pending publication.

Educational institutions provide a valuable route for women's success. Universities and schools are a platform for women's research and ideas, and may offer opportunities much earlier than less egalitarian private industry.

Women as teachers

It is only in the last ten years that women have significantly joined the ranks of graphic design teaching; there were some earlier pioneers, such as Cipe Pineles at Parsons from 1963 to 1987. Like their male counterparts, women graphic designers have often combined teaching with practice. Teaching careers have been useful for professional women needing flexible time for private responsibilities. With a growing community of female program heads as well as female teachers, more exchange and support occurs. There is greater likelihood that courses will include the work and experiences of women designers.

Are women different as teachers? As design teaching commonly includes more collaborative work than is found in traditional educational paradigms, the presence of women in the classroom may make less difference in graphic design education. However, the conduct of critiques and juries can be a place where differences could be found. It could be expected that given their design experiences, women faculty will prepare students (especially women) differently for the marketplace.[29] The study of AIGA members showed that very few designers currently practicing had been taught by a woman in design school.

As mentors, what have women faculty offered? Mentorships are expected in education. Later, in the professional world, such relationships will encompass broader issues. In what ways have women in design helped younger designers of either gender? Patterns of sponsorship may have developed. When the paths for success for women designers are better known, mentoring will have more solid ground.

29
Comparative studies would be useful. See the different conditions in architecture discussed in: Ahrentzen, Sherry and Linda N. Groat. 1992. "Rethinking Architectural Educations: Patriarchal Conventions and Alternative Visions from the Perspectives of Women Faculty," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, 9:2, 95-111. Kingsley, Karen. 1988. "Gender Issues in Teaching Architectural History." *Journal of Architectural Education*, 41:2, 21-25.

Women as students

The recent influx of women to design schools and then into practice and education will do the most to change the profession. Female students come to design with different expectations, different interests, different strengths and weaknesses. Has this been acknowledged in the past and in the present? How does graphic design education respond to any differences among students, by gender or by race? Based on observation and reading, women students in more technical and mechanical design fields than graphic design (architecture and industrial design) have greater problems: fewer women teachers, more conventional attitudes and prejudices still in place, more hierarchical educational practices in use.[30]

Women as Critics, Historians and Theoreticians

Are communication ideas gendered? In the 1970s, having read feminist and literary theory, Sheila Levrant de Bretteville developed a strategy she called "feminist design" that was also an implicit critique of the hegemony of modernist (male) design. Based on the principles of "bringing more of the human attributes associated with women... into the public and professional sphere," she described four design methods: the inclusion of several perspectives on a subject; the posing of questions without providing answers; the use of evocative rather than explicit views of subject matter; and the provision of a contradictory gap between word and image. Such a strategy was to encourage an exchange of ideas rather than a purely objective transmission of information.[31] Why was there so little response to these ideas?

Interestingly, at about the same time, other American designers were also reading French literary criticism and applying linguistic and semiotic research and analysis to design. There evolved design strategies based on the same philosophies and bearing visual similarities to "feminist design," but without the association with feminism. Cranbrook Academy of Art, where much of this activity took place, and its 1980s graduates, became influential in design and design education.[32] Was

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Ahrentzen, Sherry and Kathryn H. Anthony. 1993. "Sex. Stars and Studios: A Look at Gendered Educational Practices in Architecture." *Journal of Architectural Education*, 47:1, 11-29. Fredrickson, Mark Paul. 1993. "Gender and Racial Bias in Design Juries." *Journal of Architectural Education*, 47:1. 38-48.

31
A general critical discussion and early expression of her ideas is found in: de Bretteville, Sheila Levrant. 1974. "A Reexamination of Some Aspects of the Design Arts from the Perspective of a Woman Designer." *Arts in Society*, 11:1,115-123. The strategy is outlined in: de Bretteville, Sheila Levrant. 1983. "Feminist Design." *Space and Society*, 6:22, 98-103.

32
Wild, Lorraine. 1990. "Graphic Design." *Cranbrook Design: The New Discourse*. New York: Rizzoli.

de Bretteville's label limiting or damaging? Was it important that a woman was co-head of design at Cranbrook? The answer to this latter question is "no." The theory and criticism studied was largely by male philosophers and the students, coming from art and film criticism, art history and literature were mostly male as well. What may be more significant is the multidisciplinary, research-oriented atmosphere of the graduate program that welcomed the broad synthesis of ideas; an atmosphere created by the co-chairs, Katherine and Michael McCoy. Perhaps it was more important for their dissemination that these ideas had the validation of an educational institution. Of added significance is that these same ideas are now a very useful component of multicultural design.

The critic of today is the historian of tomorrow. Women have operated as writers, critics and theoreticians since the early modern era of graphic design. Beatrice Warde was commenting on typefaces and contemporary typography in the '20s, when she also put forth her theory of typographic form in "The Crystal Goblet." De Bretteville's writing, design and teaching have acted as criticism, and "feminist design" was theory as strategy. The curatorial work of Ellen Lupton (often with her husband J. Abbott Miller) for Cooper Union and now the Cooper-Hewitt Museum has been directed by critical theory. Frances Butler, always on the margins and usually between design disciplines, has written frequently in all these areas with great erudition.[33] Lorraine Wild was among the first graphic design historians of modernism in America and has written extensively about design practice and education. Karrie Jacobs, writing for *Metropolis*, is one of the few women in design journalism and has maintained a high profile. She is joined by Chee Perlman of *I.D.*, and Carol Stevens and Julie Lasky of *Print*. Maud Lavin has been an independent scholar and curator, producing an exhibition on montage and recently an excellent critical study of Hannah Höch.[34] Artist and critic, Barbara Kruger qualifies as a woman designer who has "left" the field of design for the fine arts, contributing extensively to cultural criticism.[35] Educators have been responsible for much early writing and publishing. All of these women have been

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Butler, Frances. 1985. *Light and Heavy Light: Contemporary Shadow Use in the Visual Arts*. Berkeley: Poltroon Press. This is one example; there are others, including "The New Demotics" in this volume.

34
Lavin, Maud. 1993. *Cut with the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

35
Kruger, Barbara. 1993. *Remote Control: Power, Culture and the World of Appearances*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

important contributors to the discourse of graphic design history and criticism, and most have brought a distinctly different perspective.

As stated, the focus of this paper has been on women graphic designers, with "designer" defined broadly. Closely related, but not possible to discuss here for reasons of space, are several categories of "women in design" that would also benefit from further research. With the growing presence of women in leadership positions in business and institutions, they will increasingly become design clients. How they approach a project, the selection of a designer, the client/designer relationship, are worthy of study. Closely related to making is consuming. Women have been targeted as consumers through the reception of images and visual messages. The impact has been well-documented.[36] Beyond this, more can be discovered about female audiences. What has been the history of critical response on the part of women, especially on women of different classes and races? Perhaps the most obvious category missing is the one most extensively explored, but hardly exhausted, women as representational subject. There appears to be an unending supply of representations to discuss, connections to be made with other image-making disciplines and new theories to supply the discourse. Work in feminist theory, feminist art history, film criticism, reception theory and literary theory have all affected positively the critical climate.[37]

So, where is the design, the artifact? Design is a social, economic and cultural activity. The proposal here is to study design activity, to study design roles, to study response to design, rather than to concentrate on individual designers and their artifacts and use these as the sole filter for graphic design history. By using a typology such as the one suggested here, graphic design history can be enlarged by the inclusion of women and their particular experiences. Historians must discover the conditions under which design and designers flourish, and the reasons either may wither. This is the social history of graphic design, a perspective that demands the inclusion of a broad range of activities, people and objects,

36
Forty, Adrian. 1986. *Objects of Desire*. New York: Pantheon Books, also, Wald, Carol. *Myth America*, and others, including Lupton and Miller, previously cited.

37
To name only a few: Attfield, Judy and Pat Kirkham, editors. 1989. *A View from the Interior: Feminism, Women and Design*. London: The Women's Press. Broude, Norma and Mary D. Garrard, editors. 1982. *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers. Mulvey, Laura. 1989. *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Pollock, Griselda. 1988. *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*. London: Routledge. Suleiman, Susan Rubin. 1990. *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics and the Avant-Garde*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

and the application of ideas and methods from many areas of historical and cultural study. It is complex, it is undefined, it is messy, but the rewards will be great.