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(Front cover)  
Dorothy Dehner,  
*Prelude and Fugue* (1989),  
painted black steel,  
99" x 103" x 33".  
Photo: Berry Campbell  
Gallery, New York.  
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**W**oman's Art Journal was honored to receive many longtime and new friends at the annual College Art Association's onsite book and trade fair in New York. We recently launched our newly revamped website and social media campaign, where readers and contributors can find our updated editorial policies, at <https://womansartjournal.org>. For WAJ's Spring/Summer issue, the editors have assembled articles that retrieve the histories of fiercely ambitious, dedicated women artists. Two contributions probe the epic personal narratives of postwar twentieth-century artists pushing the boundaries of three-dimensional space, an excellent pendant to two incisive, thought-provoking essays on the unorthodox practices of modern and contemporary portraitists.

Our feature article by Sophie Lachowsky explores the connections among women sculptors of the Abstract Expressionist era. Recent publications have granted attention to women painters of the 1950s, however, this generation of women sculptors was relegated primarily to monographic studies. Only a few scholars have proposed the social and artistic interactions of Dorothy Dehner and Louise Nevelson, or the related works, in wood, by Louise Bourgeois. Lachowsky carefully considers the interrelated sculptural experimentations by Dehner, Nevelson, and Bourgeois, three women whose pioneering approaches to art in three dimensions—propelled by the utilization of innovative materials—established original methods and dramatic displays. Nevelson's stacked wood installations, culled from recycled materials, strongly parallel the interior scenes of Bourgeois's *Personages*. Dehner's surprising update to the traditional lost wax process, via the creation of openwork constructions, explains her success in the 1950s and thereafter. All three artists were at the forefront of postwar sculptural installations, but only in recent decades have they received international recognition.

Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarman is presented by Donna Stein as one of the most accomplished multidisciplinary artists of her generation in Iran and the US. An expert on Iranian art, Stein retrieves from her archives an important interview with Monir from 1985, a fascinating recollection that explores the artist's enterprising and ambitious travels to Indigenous communities throughout Iran. Monir developed important relationships with the artisans from nomadic and settled tribes, and she acquired traditional paintings, jewelry, ceramics, textiles, and carpets. Some of these exquisite historical examples impacted the direction of her contemporary work. "In Her Words" is a revelatory encounter that illustrates Monir's indebtedness to the Iranian craftspeople whom she met throughout her singular career, many influencing her technical development of bas-relief constructions, tapestries, and Persian *ayeneh-kari* (mirror work).

A graduate of Rutgers University's Douglass College and MFA program, Frances Kuehn studied with Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Watts, and Geoffrey Hendricks. The progressive curriculum of Black Mountain College was favored by the great artists and teachers then making up the faculty at Rutgers, and Kuehn's exposure to this nonconventional arts education inspired her freedom to explore many new directions. Like George Segal, also then on the Rutgers campus, Kuehn pursued a deeply personal response to the study of the figure. Heather Cammarata-Seale's article begins with Kuehn's images of family members. Her paintings take a different course by 2003. Fabrics

and garments, arranged in grid-like configurations, dominate the canvas and elicit natural, mimetic, and animated bodily and nonhuman forms. Cammarata-Seale calls them *nature vivante* paintings—still lifes-cum-portraits—fabricating a "thing power" from their compositional vitality. Kuehn says "all our possessions speak about us in silent ways."

The portraits of early-twentieth-century painter Romaine Brooks offer sibylline representations of decadent queerness. Drawn to Whistler's subdued color palette and dandy iconography, Brooks utilized an anachronistic Decadent style associated with Symbolism and Aestheticism. Elizabeth Richards Rivenbark argues that Brooks' aesthetic and ideological tendencies align more comfortably with the later postmodern era, a position that advances how the radical gender slippage portrayed by Brooks' portrait sitters transformed the visual and sexual tropes of modern lesbianism.

Our meticulous WAJ book reviews editor, Alison Poe, has brought to fruition an exceptional corpus of criticism. Examining the "place-based strategies of transnational sisterhood and solidarity," Maria Constantino's review on global women artists explores the collective strategies of "belonging" and "unbelonging" that operate from the "in-between" spaces, borders, and geographies of nation states, political structures, and patriarchal institutions. Charlotte Kent's intertwined narratives of art and technology chart the feminist and gender-fluid histories of new media and digital projects, including AI, VR, and AR. Lisa Farrington surveys two book projects: on Bina Butler's exhibition catalogue of quilted portraits, Farrington sumptuously harnesses the artist's capacity to guide, by way of fabric, the viewer's focus beyond race with the "seeming ease of wielding a paintbrush"; and in a separate volume, Faith Ringgold, renowned for her story quilts, is showcased by a lesser-known decade of her political agendas and activities. Joan Marter chronicled the leading women's postwar arts program and exhibition series at Douglass College, reviewed in depth by Heather Cammarata-Seale.

Contextualizing the rich histories of feminism, eroticism, and sexuality in the interwar period, Ashley Busby uncovers the mysterious persona and art of the avant-garde Czech surrealist, Toyen. Andrea Gremels's review likewise unsilences the histories of Germanophone women artists and trauma theory, extending the "palimpsestic" character of surrealism's feminist landscape beyond World War II. Sigourney Schultz unveils the intimate truths and human experiences of Gillian Wearing, a British multidisciplinary artist who "exhorts her audience to be who they would like to be, not what others want them to be." Brigitte Keslinke sheds light on the perpetually marginalized status of ancient Roman women and other communities in the scholarship of the ancient Mediterranean, recuperating the deep silences from the rich archeological bounty of textual and material evidence in the Bay of Naples, and turning an extraordinary volume of female-centric narratives and proposals into an "inclusive toolbox" for examining the Roman world.

WAJ is immensely grateful for the continued support of Guy Griffiths and Ed Farnsworth at Old City Publishing.

**Joan Marter and Aliza Rachel Edelman**  
Editors, *Woman's Art Journal*



## Transnational Belonging and Female Agency in the Arts

Edited by Basia Sliwinska and Catherine Dormor  
Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2023

Reviewed by Maria Costantino

This book brings together thirteen essays in which the contributors—artists, curators, writers, academics, and activists—variously examine place-based strategies of transnational sisterhood and solidarity employed by women artists, showing how, in confronting globalization, feminist artists can operate in the “in-between” spaces (1), reach across differences, be acknowledged, and empower the vulnerable. Each contributor takes their own reference points and contextual positions in contributing to what Marsha Meskimmon calls “dialogues in difference.”<sup>1</sup> Co-edited by Basia Sliwinska and Catherine Dormor, the volume presents transnational belonging as an expression of feminist agency that poses material and metaphorical challenges to nation-state structures and to the concepts of borders and marginalization that these structures promote. By exploring these themes through artists’ works, the contributors make visible the global processes that affect and limit the embodied self.

While scholarly, *Transnational Belonging and Female Agency in the Arts* is highly accessible. Using interdisciplinary methods, the authors synthesize key theorists (although not all make it into the index) and theoretical concepts in ways a student-reader will find familiar and useful in informing their own related practices, including research, writing, and art-making. Keeping biographical details succinct and focusing instead on wider historical, social, cultural, and political contextualization does much to situate the artists and their works locally and across various types of borders. The essays address examples of female agency in works of art that explore the notions of transnationalism, belonging/un-belonging, and displacement, sometimes of the artists, sometimes of their works’ subjects. The contributors



Fig. 1. Zina Katz, *164 Nights* (2018), detail, installation of hand-stitching on found fabrics, dimensions variable. Image: Artist.

demonstrate how “belonging” is a fluid concept: it can mean the emotional or ontological sense of attachment or of being at home, but since it is also situated and socially constructed, the term must be redefined in each new context. Belonging is politicized, too, such as when the patriarchal institutions that seek to construct it (and patrol/control its borders) are challenged through women’s embodied agency, either singularly or collectively.

The inclusion of a wide range of textiles, paintings, prints, performances, installations, videos, and curated

exhibitions does much to advance understanding of women’s position in art history. The book draws attention to an array of feminist contributions to modern and contemporary aesthetics and art practices that have been relegated to the margins of art-historical discourse, just as mending operates at the edges of fabrics and on the periphery of the textile production system, a similarity Dormor notes in her chapter. The volume encourages the reader—as it did for this review author—to consider their own embodied experience, knowledge, and subject position as a lens

through which understanding and creative practice can be developed.

In the introduction, the co-editors divide the essays into three thematic groupings that deal with modes of belonging: the spatial, the affective, and the collective. The reasoning that dictated the choice of essays for each grouping may not be entirely apparent to readers of the chapters themselves, as all three themes recur in essays throughout the book; short introductory texts to each thematic group would have helped to put those particular essays into more direct intersectional dialogue. The volume treats spatial belonging as an attachment to the home, the state, or any other physical place imbued with meaning; they also consider it metaphorically, in relation to the centers and edges of sociopolitical structures, with focus especially on people at the margins and on communities built across borders. Affective belonging, as the editors define it, is the “agency between bodies [within] social, familiar and migratory relationships” (11). In hegemonic systems, the book’s essays emphasize, affective belonging can be lost or curtailed when bodies become subject to dispute because of their gender, race, affiliations, and/or citizenship status. The authors consider collective belonging as it is forged through collaborative creative practices and through feminist acts of “friendship, generosity and care” (13) that serve to counter patriarchal oppression, transcend boundaries, and unite individuals and groups.

In the first of the four essays explicitly devoted to spatial belonging, co-editor Dormor’s “Frayed and Fraying: Textile Actions and the Edges of Belonging” discusses the figurative work of Malawi-born South African artist Billie Zangewa (b. 1973) and Argentine-born artist Zina Katz (b. 1956) using found fabrics and stitching. Dormor focuses especially on the frayed edges of these artists’ textiles, noting that the “disorderly behaviour and disruptive alliances” of the fray afford Zangewa and Katz a space “to explore and express human experience at the boundaries of culture” (33). In *164 Nuits*

(*164 Nights*, 2018; Fig. 1), Katz uses embroidery to render passport photographs of artists awaiting asylum decisions, the edges and reverse sides revealing loose, messy threads. Katz not only affirms the concrete existence of her subjects but also, in highlighting the potential of her images to unravel, articulates the migrant’s (and her own) experience of transience, instability, and un-belonging. Dormor notes that repairing and reweaving can make the fray, like societal borders, a site of care. In “Species of Space: Marisol, Marta Minujín and Nicola L on Party-Going, Domestic Mayhem and Nomadism,” Flavia Frigeri examines three artists’ works in relation to Georges Perec’s “species of spaces.” Perec’s formulation focuses on the relationship between people and places, with spaces of every form, size, and function helping define the identity of those moving through them.<sup>2</sup> When artists imbue overlooked ordinary spaces and objects with layers of memories and experiences, Frigeri shows, everyday movements gain new meanings and perspectives. In the performative work *The Red Coat* (1969–70) by French artist Nicola L (1937–2018), a raincoat for eleven people journeyed across Europe, the “mobile vestment” providing its wearers with an alternative, albeit temporary, community and collective identity (40). The sculptural tableau *The Party* (1965–66) by French-born Venezuelan American artist Marisol (1930–2016), with its fifteen life-size female characters constructed from wood and a variety of other media, invokes the coded social space of upper-middle-class New York in the 1960s, its women “solid and static, ... no more than glorified mannequins, acting on society’s fictitious stage” (43). The installation *La Menesunda* (Mayhem, 1965) by the Argentine artist Marta Minujín (b. 1943) subversively represented an urban street and domestic interior as a labyrinthine environment of sixteen disorienting and dysfunctional spaces, critiquing patriarchal norms of conventional behavior within the public and private spheres.

Helena Shaskevich’s “‘With my portapak on my back’: Identity and Belonging in Shigeko Kubota’s Broken

Diary” addresses two early 1970s video projects by Japan-born artist Shigeko Kubota (1937–2015) along with Kubota’s 1972 “Video Poem,” works that engage with the artist’s transcultural identity as an Asian woman artist traveling in Europe and the United States. *Europe on ½ Inch a Day* (1972), with its intercuts of Vietnamese War protest posters, reminds the viewer that the body of Kubota carrying her portapak camera is, like the Vietnamese mother carrying her child in “Video Poem,” “inherently deemed Asian and, therefore, ... subject to violence from the West” (67). *Video Girls and Video Songs for Navajo Sky* (1973) critiques the social and material inequities experienced by the Navajos of the reservation in Chinle, Arizona, whose bodies, like Kubota’s, are in and of America yet marked as “other.” While fellow video artist Nam June Paik, Kubota’s future husband, embraced theorist Marshall McLuhan’s ideal of an electronically connected “global village,” Kubota avoided totalizing narratives, instead highlighting “far more immediate and local modes of transcultural understanding,” Shaskevich observes (76). Expanding the concept of the citizen-stranger is Jane Chin Davidson’s “Patty Chang: Body, Performance and Transnational Border Crossings,” which focuses on the exhibition *The Wandering Lake 2009–2017*, a retrospective of performative video work by Chinese American artist Patty Chang (b. 1972). For these performances, California-based Chang crossed regional and cultural borders in China to challenge assumptions about ethnicity and nationality and to demonstrate the artificiality of the territorial divisions constructed by the state and global capitalism. For the video project *Shangri-La* (2005), Chang staged a make-believe wedding to a white man (collaborator David Kelley) in a Chinese tourist resort; in *The Product Love (Die Ware Liebe)* (2009), Chang fashioned a screen relationship between Chinese actors playing the French philosopher Walter Benjamin and Chinese American film actress Anna May Wong, who formed the subject of Benjamin’s essay “A Chinoiserie Out of the Old West.” Both works, Davidson explains, question

the patriarchal, heteronormative stereotypes of race and gender that underlie the sexual fetishization and commoditization of Asian women.

The second section of the volume, joined under the rubric of affective belonging in relation to transnationalism, comprises four essays focusing on social and migratory relationships and on ways belonging is constructed and maintained across histories and borders. Cristina Nualart in “*Borderless and Undocumented: Day by Day in Southeast Asia*” considers works by Vietnamese artists Nguyen Thi Thanh Mai (b. 1983) and Lena Bui (b. 1985) that employ personal artefacts metonymically to render visible the precarious, exploited state of undocumented Vietnamese in “floating villages” in Cambodian territory (Mai) and of working-class women in Vietnam (Bui). For *ID Card* (2014), Mai heat-transferred the data of more than three hundred participants onto rectangles cut from their old clothing to fabricate soft, playful signs of identity without government markings. In *Borderless* (2016), Bui unpicked and shredded a working-class woman’s two-piece *do bo* so that it became see-through, thus articulating how women’s work—especially that of the *do bo*’s wearers—is unseen and unremarked upon. The inclusion of the *do bo* in a museum setting challenges the Vietnamese state’s valuations of gender and class. Aliza Edelman’s “*Suspended: Bahar Behbahani’s Displacement and Longing in the Persian Garden*” examines how Iranian artist Bahar Behbahani (b. 1973) maps the complex geopolitical and cultural relationships between herself, Iran, and the West. In her painting series *Persian Gardens* (2013 onward), Behbahani’s textural surfaces unsettle their subjects, such as the Baghe Fin garden in Kashan, as sites of traumatic events in Iranian history and as the basis for often Orientalizing cartographies and art histories. In her video trilogy *Suspended* (2007), *Saffron Tea* (2009), and *Behind the Mirrors* (2015), the artist inserts her body—inverted and suspended, submerged, or upright and revolving in front of mirrors—into a home garden in Tehran, a domestic interior containing Iranian and Western objects, and a bright Cappadocian



Fig. 2. Keren Anavy, *Garden of Living Images* (2018), detail, installation in the Sunroom Project Space, Wave Hill, the Bronx, New York, ink and colored pencils on transparent Mylar, polyethylene ponds, water, vinyl, dimensions variable. Photo: Stefan Hagen. Courtesy of the artist and Wave Hill.

landscape respectively. She thus traverses personal memories of displacement, longing, belonging, and unbelonging in gendered private spaces as well as in places of geopolitical and cultural convergence to imagine new social networks and geographies.

Margarida Brito Alves and Giulia Lamoni’s “Through Walls and Windows” interrogates two mixed-media installations in Lisbon by Brazilian artist Irene Buarque (b. 1943), *As Muralhas de Lisboa* (Lisbon City Walls) (1975) and *Leitura e Contra-Leitura de um Espaço Limite: Janela* (Reading and Counter-Reading of a Space Limit: The Window, 1978), in which the artist used motifs of walls (*muralhas*) and windows (*janelas*) to explore and problematize the relationships between interior and exterior, internal and external, close and far, seeing and being seen. Buarque’s work captures the embodied experience of her own in-betweenness, having migrated in 1973 from one oppressive regime, the military dictatorship in Brazil, to the last moments of another, the Estado Novo in Portugal. Samantha A. Noël’s “Disrupting Subaltern Geographies” argues that the collagraphic prints of Black Cuban artist Belkis Ayón (1967–1999) establish spaces of agency for

Black Cuban women of the kind denied to them by the power structures in Cuba as well as by the Abakuá Secret Society, a mutual-aid organization open only to men. Ayón’s emphasis is on Princess Sikán, the only—but foundational—female figure in the society’s mostly oral mythology, who was sacrificed for disclosing that she had discovered a sacred fish. Invested with Ayón’s own portrait, the images of Sikán restore to the princess, to Ayón, and to all women Sikán’s silenced voice. In *La Cena* (The Supper, 1988), deliberately reminiscent of Leonardo da Vinci’s *Last Supper* (c. 1495–98), Ayón portrays most of the disciples as women and replaces Jesus with Sikán-Ayón, disrupting not only the male domination of Abakuán myths but also the sexism of contemporary Cuban society.

The final five chapters of the book, grouped together under the theme of belonging as a collective endeavor, open with “Keren Anavy’s *Garden of Living Images: Transnational Landscapes as Spaces of Ecological Order*” by Ketzia Alon and Aliza Edelman (with Alon’s contribution translated from Hebrew by Sivan Raveh). Landscape, water, and light form form the core of an installation by Israeli artist Keren Anavy



(b. 1974) entitled *Garden of Living Images* in New York's Wave Hill, the Bronx (2018), where painted hanging Mylar scrolls took on water and ink from basins below (Fig. 2). As Edelman observes also regarding Behbahani's work (chapter 6), Anavy imbues gardens with concepts of home and homeland that are closely tied to her country of origin yet deeply transnational. Anavy's landscape is a contested paradise where states like Israel impose ecological order in the age of the Anthropocene, seeking to control what cultural historian Irit Rogoff terms "exhausted geographies" and their histories (182);<sup>3</sup> the land can be detoxified, however, through Meskimmon's "worlding ecologies of transnational feminisms" (180).<sup>4</sup> The garden's vitality offers solace to mourners, not least to the artist, who grieved her father's passing in Israel from New York.

In their essay "Collective Agency: Creative Communities in Australian Feminist Art," Rachael Haynes and Courtney Pedersen point out that the Australian feminist art movement suffered from a dearth of Indigenous perspectives and intersectional projects until the early 2010s. They demonstrate how new art-based activism in Australia is fostering both local and transnational collaboration among woman artists of different generations and with emergent communities of artists. The consciousness-raising projects of the feminist art collective LEVEL (2010–18), for example, ranged from public discussions in various formats to picnics and banner-making events and from the operation of an all-women gallery-studio in Brisbane to the installation of a ballot box for visitor surveys about marriage equality in the 2017–18 "femi-buster" exhibition *Unfinished Business* at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne (212). Caroline Stevenson offers an alternative form of collaborative practice in "'Woman Writing' as a Curatorial Method," framing her conversations with Mexican artist Chantal Peñalosa (b. 1987) and British artist Bridget Smith (b. 1966) as rewriting the central authority figure of the curator into a practitioner of what Meskimmon terms "vulnerable listening" (221)<sup>5</sup> who "makes connections and seeks solidarity

and friendship, ... carv[ing] a space for voices to emerge over time and across distances" (234). Stevenson connects Peñalosa's photographic diptychs of clouds from both sides of the Mexico-US border (2017) with Smith's prints and videos relating to, and exhibited in, the beachfront resort town of Southend, England (2015). Both artists, Stevenson notes, make emotionally charged use of the color blue, and both focus on borders in flux, whether marked by the flow of migrants from one country to another or infused with a "feeling of being in two places at once" by the seasonal arrivals and departures—and economic ups and downs—of a seaside town (230).

The last essays in the volume turn to two post-Soviet countries, Latvia and Poland. The authors cast light on women artists' agential, often collective actions in these patriarchal states to reclaim female bodies from the forces of marginalization, hostility, violence, and heteronormativity and to establish interpersonal and intercultural belonging beyond legal-political and ideological borders. Jana Kukaine and Jānis Taurens in their collaboration "A Smuggler, a Butcher and a Fairy: Doing Things with One's Body" explore the works of Latvia-born, Estonia-based Diāna Tamane (b. 1986) and the well-known Latvian feminist artists Rasa Jansone (b. 1973) and Ingrida Pičukāne (b. 1978). Women's agency manifests itself in everyday objects of material culture in the photographs and documents of Tamane's "Flower Smuggler" series (2019), which respond to an attempt by the artist's grandmother to cross into Russia with flowers for her husband's grave, and in the chopping blocks that compose Jansone's *Ritual Place* (2108–19), which are printed with twentieth-century photographs exemplifying Latvian gender norms. Pičukāne's comic book *Three Sisters* (2016), in which three delicate French-speaking women send a naked, foul-mouthed Russian man off to drown, transposes fairy-tale tropes and Chekhov's heroines into art that transcends national, linguistic, and cultural borders. Co-editor Sliwinska's essay draws the volume to a close with an analysis of *Nieme Szaty Królowej*

(Queen's Silent Robes), a collective feminist act of walking staged outside Warsaw's Palace of Culture and Science in November 2020 to protest Poland's criminalization of abortion. Conducted in anonymizing white robes with red spatters evoking blood, the activist walk was reenacted by the association Elles Sans Frontières in Brussels on the 2020 International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the first "budding" of many planned walks in an "iterative ... project [that] develops and grows via dialogic relationships and sharing" (274). Offered as an agentic gift, Queen's Silent Robes epitomizes affective, communally embodied, transnational feminist engagement, the "we" of the project emerging from, and joining together, individual and collective selves.

Some of the insightful observations in this volume about the precarious position of feminist artists and the marginalization of their works within institutional discourses might be applied to publisher Bloomsbury's approach to the book itself. There are too few pictures to accompany the texts, and the images that do appear are generally small and reproduced in black-and-white. The color plates are limited to one example per essay (and are repeats of monochrome reproductions), gathered together on four inserted pages that are spatially and contextually divorced from the chapters that discuss them. While the authors do well to describe the forms, motifs, techniques, and materials of the unillustrated as well as illustrated works, and while each essay's valuable endnotes direct the reader to an array of print and electronic resources that provide further images, the small scale of the monochrome figures and the limited number of color plates do the discussions no favors, especially when the contributors address palette and detail. At over \$100 for the hardback book (despite its being perfect-bound, with the pages glued rather than stitched), and at \$93 for the digital edition, the price is in danger of excluding many individual readers and limiting the number of copies that institutions might purchase. The production shortcuts and high cost are thus at odds with the aims of this important feminist text.

*Transnational Belonging and Female Agency in the Arts* deals with a wide range of women artists who challenge sociopolitical boundaries, borders, edges, and exclusions to open up new spaces for creative, collaborative dialogues. One hopes that Bloomsbury will issue a less expensive soft-cover edition to ensure that this collection of eloquently written essays becomes much more accessible to the wider, strongly interdisciplinary readership it deserves. •

**Maria Costantino** is an associate lecturer in Cultural and Historical Studies at University of the Arts London and the Royal College of Art, London.

#### Notes

1. Marsha Meskimmon, *Transnational Feminisms, Transversal Politics and Art: Entanglements and Intersections* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2020), 1. Meskimmon's volume is reviewed by Julia Skelly in *Woman's Art Journal* 43, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2022), 45–47.
2. Georges Perec, "Species of Spaces/ Espèces d'espaces," in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, trans. J. Sturrock (London: Penguin Classics, 2008 [1974]), 1–95.
3. Irit Rogoff, "Oblique Points of Entry," in *Contemporary Art from the Middle East: Regional Interactions with Global Art Discourses*, ed. Hamid Keshmirshekan (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 38–41.
4. Meskimmon, *Transnational Feminisms*, 73.
5. Meskimmon, *Transnational Feminisms*, 2.

## Bisa Butler—Portraits

Edited by Erica Warren  
Art Institute of Chicago, 2021

Reviewed by Lisa Farrington

Edited by Art Institute of Chicago Associate Curator of Textiles Erica Warren, this volume is the catalogue for an exhibition of works by Bisa Butler (b. 1973) that was on view at the Institute as well as at the Katonah Museum of Art in 2020 and 2021. The ninety-five-page fabric-covered *Bisa Butler—Portraits* is sumptuously printed with nearly forty high-quality color images that permit a surprisingly detailed visual reading of the fabric and stitching in Butler's quilted portraits. Butler is an inheritor of the legacies of the kaleidoscopic collage art of Romare Bearden and the painted quilts of Faith Ringgold (b. 1930). Unlike her predecessors, however, Butler uses neither paper nor paint in her work but instead creates portraits of African American personae exclusively with fabric. She manipulates her medium with the seeming ease of wielding a paintbrush, using vibrantly hued textiles to create volume and modeling as well as flat patterned backgrounds for each figure or figural group.

Butler's aesthetic was nurtured at the HBCU<sup>1</sup> Howard University (alma mater of Vice President Kamala Harris, among hundreds of renowned African Americans) under the mentorship of founders of the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s. Among these mentors was Jeff Donaldson, who served as

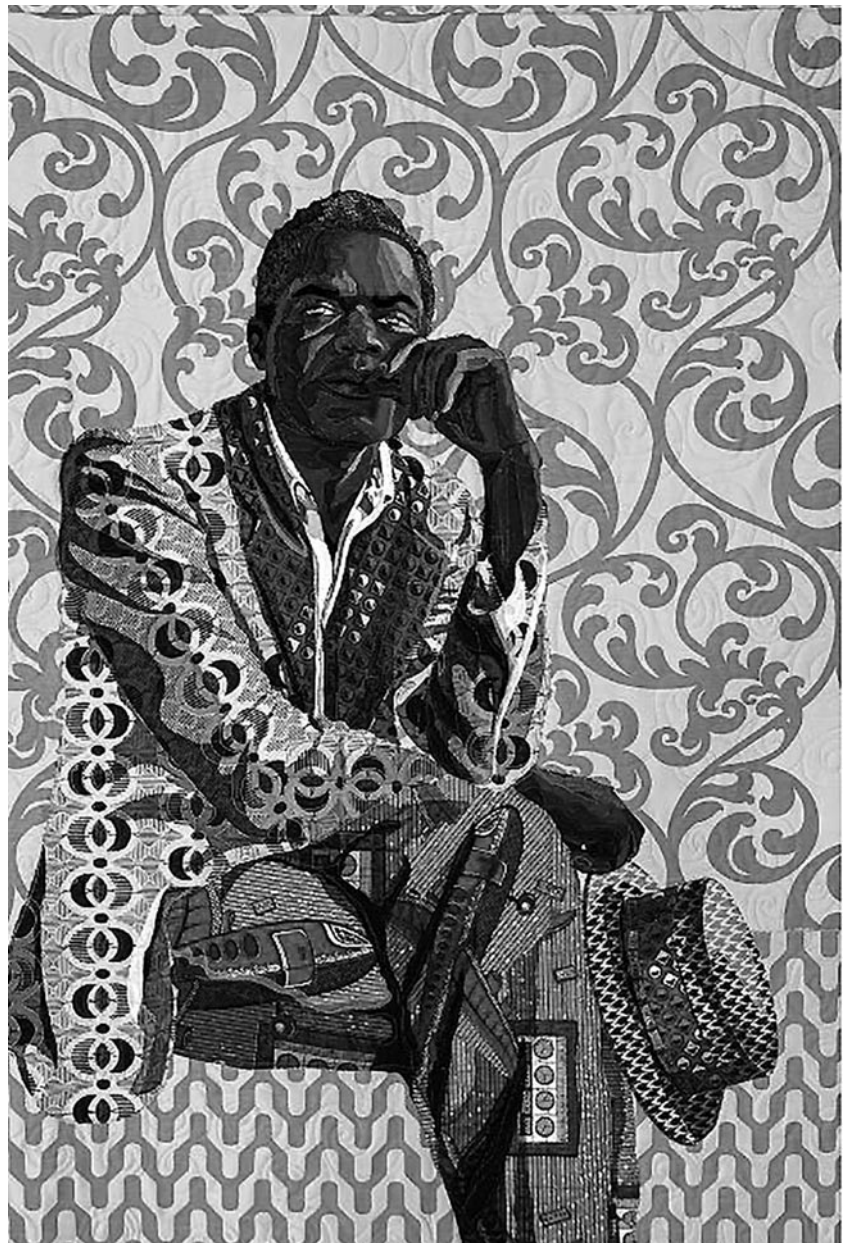


Fig. 1. Bisa Butler, *I Am Not Your Negro* (2019), cotton, wool, and chiffon, appliquéd and quilted, 79" x 60". Private collection.