

# North American Women Artists of the Twentieth Century



A Biographical  
Dictionary

Edited by  
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and  
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# Introduction

It is entirely appropriate to ask, “Why another work on women artists?” More specifically, “Why this North American Free Trade Agreement, this NAFTA-like approach which embraces women artists from Canada, Mexico, and the United States?”

Both questions have the same, relatively straightforward, set of answers. We decided to produce *North American Women Artists of the Twentieth Century: A Biographical Dictionary* because, to the best of our knowledge, there is no comprehensive reference work like this available, even though the bibliography in English on various aspects of the history of women artists has grown exponentially during the past ten years. As researchers, we both have been frustrated many times by being unable to locate basic information about many of the artists included in this volume—especially those working outside the United States. This leads directly to another reason for producing this particular kind of reference book—to try and create a better understanding between and among the artists and art audiences in these three countries.

Although the curricula of both the Canadian and Mexican public school systems routinely include units on the social, political, and cultural history of the United States, the reverse is not true. The Heller family has spent several years living in both our neighbor nations, to the north and south. Based on this experience we can state with certainty that, while the visual art of the United States is familiar to the members of the Mexican and Canadian art worlds, very few United States art students, or professionals, know anything about Canada’s “Group of Seven” painters, or the “Great Four” of Mexico. Indeed, information about the art produced in these countries is notoriously difficult to obtain in the United States. We fervently hope that, sometime in the near future, the citizens of the United States will have learned so much about women artists—from Canada, Mexico, Lebanon, Ireland, Ethiopia, New Zealand, and the rest of the world—that there will no longer be any need for a book such as this.

Meanwhile, another question arises: how did we select these artists? Lists of names were drawn up by the editors and shared with colleagues, curators, research librarians, artists, art historians, consultants, and state or provincial arts councils; they are acknowledged elsewhere. In making these lists we tried to be as comprehensive as possible, given our self-imposed criteria: every artist included had to be a woman born before 1960, who lived and worked primarily in one or more of the three designated countries, and who had made a serious professional commitment to the visual arts—indicated by such factors as solo exhibitions and/or major gallery shows; the acceptance of her work in juried regional, national, or international exhibitions; and a “paper trail” of reviews, articles, monographs, histories, repeated mentions in journals, etc. Inevitably, certain quandaries arose—how much time could one spend, for example, in the nineteenth century, or in Asia, and still be eligible for inclusion in this book? After considerable cogitation, we decided that such matters would simply have to be decided on a case-by-case basis. And, though we tried our very best to be consistent, it goes without saying that some worthy individuals may have been inadvertently omitted from our master list; for this we apologize.

Another difficulty presented itself in the preparation of this volume, regarding the matter of artistic “categories”—drawing, painting, sculpture, and the like. More and more, in recent years, persons who had considered themselves “painters,” for example, have suddenly

started producing lithographs, or even sculpture. How, then, does one categorize these artists? More significantly, what does one call an artwork that is neither a painting nor a sculpture, in the traditional sense? Does it even matter, unless one is running an art competition which involves prize money specifically designated for one category or the other? Clearly, the old labels are no longer adequate at the end of the twentieth century. But, since we felt obligated to make some sort of designation that might prove useful to the reader, we have tried to choose the term that most clearly describes the sort of work for which each artist is best known. It's an imperfect solution, but the best we could devise.

The careful reader will note that many of the entries in this encyclopedia are signed by the individual contributors, while many others are not. All unsigned entries were written by the editors. It will also be apparent that the entries included here vary considerably in length. The length of a given artist's entry in no way suggests any greater, or lesser, accomplishment or reputation on her part. Moreover, the proportion of professional versus biographical information is quite different from one entry to another. In preparing this book we found that some artists wished us to present only their professional backgrounds; in other cases, we decided not to dwell on the lives of artists who have already been the subject of innumerable biographical studies.

Over one hundred illustrations of artworks, one apiece by a selection of the artists discussed here, are reproduced in three sections of this book. Since budgetary considerations precluded including more illustration, or reproducing them in color, once again we had to make some difficult decisions. Our primary concern was to present a cross-section of work by twentieth-century Canadian, Mexican, and United States women artists, working in as many different media and styles as possible. Of course, relatively little can be deduced about an artist's *oeuvre* from a single black-and-white reproduction, but we think that illustrations are a valuable part of any art reference book, and we thank Garland for agreeing to include these.

For any and all omissions and commissions that may appear in this volume, we take full responsibility and hope we will have an opportunity to correct them in the future. Meanwhile, let us simply add that for a long time, both of us have wanted to *use* a book like this. Finally, we can do so—and we hope that many other readers will find it useful, as well.

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exotic image. By this time, Kahlo had undergone numerous surgical procedures on her back and leg, and she was confined to bed or a wheelchair for extended periods. The intense concentration on her own image may have come from an increased awareness of her body as it progressively failed her.

In 1953, Kahlo's left foot became gangrenous and had to be amputated. Shortly after the operation she was honored with a large retrospective exhibition in Mexico City. Rivera and several other friends carried Kahlo to the opening on a stretcher, from which she viewed the exhibit and greeted those in attendance. In July of 1954 Kahlo died in her home in Coyoacán.

During her lifetime Kahlo sold very few of her paintings. She was best known for her flamboyant appearance, political sentiments, and romantic attachments, not just with Rivera but others, including Leon Trotsky. Since the 1970s reassessments of her work have uncovered the extensive process of self-examination Kahlo undertook through her paintings.

Laura J. Crary-Ortega

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#### **Kaida, Tamarra (1946– )**

Born in Lienz, Austria, Tamarra Kaida emigrated with her parents to the United States in 1950, settling in New Jersey. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1974 from Goddard College, Vermont, and her Master of Fine Arts degree from the State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo, and Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester—both in New York (1979). From 1976 to 1979 Kaida was assistant director of the education department at the International Museum of Photography at the George Eastman House, Rochester, New York. She was appointed to the faculty of Arizona State University as a visiting lecturer in 1979 and became a permanent member of the faculty in 1980; she is presently an associate professor. She has lectured extensively throughout the United States at various museums, universities, and photography conferences.

Kaida has received numerous awards and honors, including the Ferguson award from the Friends of Photography (1983); a 1986 National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) visual artist fellowship grant; and an Arizona Commission on the Arts visual arts photography fellowship (1990). While at the George Eastman House, she had additional responsibility for four exhibitions in the three years of her tenure there, and at Arizona State University has been a guest curator or co-curator for three exhibitions at the School of Art's Northlight Gallery. She collaborated with the poet Rita Dove on *The Other Side of the House* in 1988 (published by Pyracantha Press and the Visual Arts Research Studios of the School of Art, Arizona State University), and also produced *Tremors From the Faultline*, an artist's book published by the Visual Studies Workshop Press, Rochester, 1989.

Kaida's reputation was initially based on the inordinate success of her portraits of children in which hidden meanings seemed to abound just below the surface of the pose. She captured in very direct and poetic terms the growing awareness of the curious adolescent being transformed into the young, sexually cognizant adult. Her work has

since embraced narrative considerations, the social landscape, and formal concerns of the classical still life. Implicit to her various subjects is a strong sense of the desert environment, both symbolically and literally. Her interest in photographing children remains very much in the forefront of ideas for future projects as is her need for continuing to challenge the basic photographic format.

Examples of Kaida's work are included in the International Museum of Photography at the George Eastman House, Rochester, New York; the Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona; the Polaroid Corporation; the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) Library, New York City; the Santa Fe Museum of Fine Arts, New Mexico; and other museum and corporate collections. Her exhibition record is extensive and includes participation in group shows throughout the United States, such as "Mothers and Daughters," an invitational travelling exhibition organized by Aperture, and she has had exposure to European audiences through several invited group exhibitions in Salzburg, Munich, Vienna, Rome, and others. She had solo shows at the OPSIS Foundation Gallery in New York in 1990 and at the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, in 1989. Reviews and reproductions of her photographs have appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*; *American Photographer*; *Das AKTFOTO: Artspace*; *Photographing Children, Life Library of Photography*; *Exposure*; *New American Nudes*; *Between Twelve and Twenty*; and others.

Kaida has authored several short stories and essays both as works of literature and as narratives in support of her photographic essays. Most recently Kaida has collaborated with poet Rita Dove, and writer/video artist Fred Viebahn, on an installation entitled "With Hammer and Chisel," which addresses the demise of the Berlin Wall, Germany. This project is the result of her trip to that site in December of 1989.

Leonard Lehrner

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#### **Kaish, Luise (1925– )**

Born in Atlanta, Georgia, the sculptor Luise Kaish earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in visual arts from Syracuse University, New York (1946); worked at the Escuela de Pintura y Escultura (La Esmeralda), Mexico City, Mexico (1946–1947); received a Master of Fine Arts degree in sculpture from Syracuse University, New York, where she worked with Ivan Mestrovic (1951); and studied bronze casting and stone carving at the Instituto d'Arte, Florence, Italy (1951–1952).

Kaish has received honors and awards, including a Tiffany Foundation grant (1951), a Guggenheim Foundation fellowship (1959), and a Rome Prize fellowship from the American Academy in Rome, Italy (1970). She has held solo exhibitions in museums and galleries in the United States and abroad since the mid-1950s, including Staempfli

Gallery and Jewish Museum—both in New York City; Minnesota Museum of Art, St. Paul; American Academy in Rome, Italy; Hopkins Center, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; the University of Haifa, Israel; and others. Her work has been included in many major group shows at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art and Whitney Museum of American Art—both in New York City; Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia; and many others.

Kaish's commissioned work encompasses arks and ark doors, menorahs, memorials to the Holocaust, and Christ figures, for a variety of sponsors, including Export Khleb, Moscow, Russia; Hebrew Union College, Jerusalem, Israel; Jewish Museum, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Whitney Museum of American Art—all in New York City; Container Corporation of America; Temple Beth Shalom, Wilmington, Delaware; Holy Trinity Mission Seminary, Silver Spring, Maryland; among many others.

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#### **Kalvak, Helen (1901–1984)**

Born on Victoria Island in the northwest portion of Canada's Northwest Territories, graphic artist Helen Kalvak lived the traditional migratory life of most early twentieth-century Inuits (Eskimos) for most of her life. Soon after she moved into the settlement of Holman Island in 1960 Kalvak was given the opportunity to draw by Father Henri Tardy, an Oblate missionary who introduced graphic arts to the community. Kalvak made more than 1,800 drawings between 1962 and 1978, of which 154 were made into stencil prints and lithographs issued in the annual Holman Island print editions from 1965 to 1985.

Kalvak's childhood training as a shaman informed the artwork she made in her old age, long after her conversion to Christianity. More than most Inuit graphics, her work depicts women in the roles of healer, sorcerer, and transformational figure. "Bird Tracks," "Enchantress," and "Dream"—all from 1973—represent this theme. Through her prints Kalvak became a well-known Inuit artist. She was elected to membership in the Canadian Royal Academy of Arts in 1975 and was made a member of the Order of Canada in 1979.

Kalvak's first print retrospective was held at the Canadian guild of Crafts, Montréal, in 1968, followed by an exhibition of her drawings held there in 1970. Her work appeared in many group exhibits of Inuit art, including "The Coming and Going of the Shaman," Winnipeg Art Gallery (1978) and "The Inuit *Amautik*," Winnipeg Art Gallery (1980). Kalvak's prints are in the permanent collections of the Toronto Dominion Bank, the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the Amon Carter Museum, and the Winnipeg Art Gallery—all in Canada.

Janet Catherine Berlo

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#### **Kamen, Rebecca (1950– )**

In addition to creating powerful, sensual, and evocative mixed-media sculptures, for the past half-dozen years Rebecca Kamen has been working on an ambitious cross-cultural project involving artists, educators, and young children in both the United States and the People's Republic of China.

Kamen was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and trained in three different states—receiving a Bachelor of Science degree in art education from the Pennsylvania State University, University Park (1972), a Master of Arts degree in art education from the University of Illinois, Urbana (1973), and a Master of Fine Arts degree in sculpture from the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence (1978). Since 1978, she has been an associate professor of art at Northern Virginia Community College, Alexandria.

In 1980 Kamen began participating in group exhibitions; her resumé lists numerous shows of collages and sculptures in ten states in the United States, and Sheffield, England. She had her first one-person show in 1980 at the University of Richmond, Virginia. Subsequent solo shows were held at: Gallery 10, Washington, D.C. (1982); Washington & Lee University, Lexington, Virginia (1984); the law firm of Arnold & Porter, Washington, D.C. (1985); the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency, New York City (1986); Brody's Gallery, Washington, D.C. (1986); the Leslie Cecil Gallery, New York City (1987); Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro (1988); the Winston Gallery, Washington, D.C. (1988); FOTA Gallery, Alexandria, Virginia (1987); the Jones Troyer Fitzpatrick Gallery, Washington, D.C. (1990 and 1992); and the Cortland Jessup Gallery, Provincetown, Massachusetts (1993).

Kamen has won several honors, including third prize at "Artery '89," Strathmore Halls Arts Center, Rockville, Maryland; cash awards at "Sculpture '84," Public Art Trust, Washington, D.C.; and "Artscape 1983," Baltimore, Maryland; and honorable mention at the Alexandria Sculpture Festival, Virginia (1983). Her work is represented in the collections of many organizations, including the First National Bank of Jackson, Tennessee; Binion & Butler, Washington, D.C.; the Gannett Corporation, Rosslyn, and Advisors Financial, Inc., Arlington—both in Virginia; IBM, Baltimore, Maryland, and Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina; the Tower Construction Company, Bethesda, Maryland; and the Levy Organization, Chicago, Illinois. Kamen has also served as a panelist at many symposia and given guest lectures from Tennessee to Alaska, Hong Kong, and China.

After half a decade exhibiting her boldly-colored sculptures all across the eastern United States, Kamen's professional focus underwent a profound change with her first trip to the People's Republic of China in 1985. There she delivered a series of lectures, got to know local artists, and became intrigued with many aspects of traditional Asian art. On another trip to China in 1987 Kamen met the noted sculptor Zhao Shu Tong, with whom she began a six-year collaboration, culminating in "The China Project," a three-part cultural exchange program that will