NYFAI
Interview: Catherine Morris interviewed by Dena Muller
Date: Sept. 4th, 2008

D.M. O.K. It's September 4th and this is the NYFAI Oral History interview with Catherine Morris. When did you first become involved with NYFAI?

C.M. Right when I moved to New York. I moved to Manhattan in the summer of 1987 to go to graduate school.

D.M. Where did you go to graduate school?

C.M. Hunter. I came to do my master's, Roslyn Krauss was still teaching there then. I moved to the East Village that summer and one of the first thing I did was start looking for a job, for a part-time job, and there was an ad in the Village Voice which is how I found out about NYFAI. It appealed to me for a number of reasons. Philosophically, I had never worked for a feminist organization before but I had an ongoing interest in feminism and I had worked at other non-profits. I'm originally from Washington D.C. and I had had an internship in college at the WPA (Washington Project for the Arts). I was interested in working for non-profits in the arts and I needed the money . . . the money was good and the hours were good and it worked really well with my life so I felt very lucky to have gotten it. I think I worked maybe 2 or 3 days a week and I remember it paid 80 dollars a day, which at that point seemed very good. It was certainly much more then I could have expected to have gotten. And that was something that Nancy and Darla and people were aware of, trying to give women a living wage.

D.M. You feel like there was a feminist position on that?

C.M. Absolutely. And the other benefit (that I have mentioned in the past - and I continue to think about it, and it is phenomenal to me) is that they also gave me health insurance. And that was an extraordinary thing for a part-time employee. Of course I was a graduate student, I had no money, I was living with my boyfriend in some horrible apartment on 7th between C and D, which in the mid-80s was very tough.

D.M. We've seen the show on Broadway.

C.M. Of course I loved it, but to also get health insurance was really amazing. To this day I think of that as an extraordinary gesture on their part.

D.M. It was offered, or you asked for it?

C.M. It was part of the package. That was part of the deal. This is what you get if you work here.
D.M. And you were hired to teach courses . . .
C.M. No, I was hired as the Assistant Director. So I worked with Regina Tierney basically doing office administration, planning the courses and getting the class brochure together each semester. Regina worked on the course listings, flyers and organizing of the classes. I was really in the office 2-3 days a week doing more administrative stuff, taking calls, troubleshooting, dealing with the building. The offices were in the front of the second floor loft on Franklin Street and in the back were artist studios. So, dealing with the artist studios, the registration of courses and whatever the needs were for the courses and getting people to write descriptions of courses and all that kind of stuff. And then I also met Cassandra Langer at NYFAI, who also helped me a lot. She had also just moved up to New York. She had been a professor of Art History in South or North Caroline and left a tenured position there to move to New York. I worked with her on a show at Ceres Gallery. That was really good experience for me. We got NYFA funding for that. We did a catalog.
D.M. So you worked there starting in '87.
C.M. The summer of '87.
D.M. So the school had been open for several years.
C.M. I think the better part of a decade at that point, right?
D.M. You weren't there for the opening gala.
C.M. I wasn't there. No, in fact I think, there may have been an anniversary gala when I was there. It had a history at that point. I remember feeling that when I got there, it was some place that had a long history. You know, when you're in your early twenties and you go to an institution that's been around for ten years, that seems like a long time.
D.M. Especially as an experimental project.
C.M. Exactly. Also, I guess there was that moment in 1987 where the 70s weren't that far away but to somebody in their early twenties it seemed like a long way off. I remember Lucy Lippard used to send boxes of her announcements, I think she saved all of them, and then she would send them with duplicate items from her library. So we would get these boxes, and I remember it feeling like a sort of treasure trove. So there

was really a sense of history there which I remember enjoying. And even at that point, I have to say; it definitely felt like something from the 70s. At that point, in 1987 in the East Village it was more of a post-punk moment. But at NYFAI there was a different vibe and it definitely felt like a bit of a throw back. It was a different approach. It was very much an organization that was based on ideas of social interaction and community consensus and operational sort of behaviors that were very much from an earlier period, and it felt like it at that point.

D.M. And did you feel like it was effective within the constituency at the time? Did you feel like the students and the community . . .

C.M. Yes, I felt like it was very good at serving its community. I saw a lot of women go through NYFAI that were getting a lot out of it; enjoying the opportunity to take classes and sort of experiment with their own art making in a way that they might not have felt comfortable to anywhere else. It was very much a nurturing environment for people. I think partially because of the people who were involved in the organization there was a real blending of approaches to the fine arts. The studio, the classes, having to do with art making but there was really also a strong sense of personal psychology, and personal exploration and sort of realization or actualization that a lot of people really responded to. It felt like a very different environment then the rest of the art world in the mid 80s. I remember being at NYFAI on Black Monday – in October of 1987 – at that point the East Village was past height as a new gallery scene, but some semblance of that scene, those activities still survived – Gracie Mansion Gallery, for instance, was still on Avenue A. When the market crashed (and it took a little while for the art market to catch up with the actual market crash of '87) there was definitely a change in the air. But the people who came in and out of NYFAI, the women who supported it and continued to come back to give classes and take classes, continued their support. There really was a community.

D.M. So at the time you had already committed to a career in the arts. You were in graduate school studying art history?

C.M. Yes. I had majored in Art History as an undergrad. I had worked in galleries and as I said, I had had an internship at the WPA. I was pretty clear about what I was doing and

as I said, I moved to New York to do my Masters at Hunter so for me, it was a great combination.

D.M. And what was your relationship with feminism at the time? You said Roslyn Krauss attracted you to Hunter.

C.M. She was one of the reasons I wanted to go to Hunter. That and the fact that they offered what was then politely called a terminal masters. I knew I didn’t want to do a Ph.D.

D.M. They still called it that at NYU.

C.M. When I applied to graduate school I obviously applied to PhD programs because those were the options. I was never quite convinced that I wanted to make the commitment to the PhD and Hunter was one of the only decent terminal masters programs around. Plus it was New York; I really wanted to be here. My relationship to feminism had been developing for several years. In college I had been very interested in feminism. I was in college during the first Reagan administration and that had a big impact on me. As with so many of us, I think my formative political experiences took place in high school and college when peers really introduced me to different forms of political thinking, and feminism. In college, a group of women who I know who were my peers or just slightly older than me, really had a profound impact on my thinking. More than classes or teachers, it was the people I hung out with who influenced my identification with progressive politics. So that happened pretty early on. As I mentioned, I grew up outside Washington D.C. I started college at a small school in Southern Maryland and then I graduated from the University of Maryland, where I did an independent study with the feminist art historian Josephine Withers. So it was an ongoing interest. That’s why when I saw this ad for NYFAI I was very intrigued.

D.M. What appealed?

C.M. The combination of feminism and art just felt like . . . I couldn't believe I was opening up a newspaper and reading this. That this is a job I could get it and that it perfectly meshed with my schedule: Its one of those significant breakthrough experiences that makes one think they were meant to be in New York – that somebody’s looking out for you.

D.M. Exactly. You talked earlier about the community sensibility and the decision by consensus and things like that feeling like a throwback to the 70s. How about the framing of feminism itself? If you were thinking about feminism in graduate school and had that in your peer group and in your academic life, was your feminism enhanced, challenged, engaged . . .

C.M. That's a good question and I think there are many answers to it. I come from the generation between real second wave feminist of the 1970s and the one that could be characterized by fanzines – the riot grrl kind of generation . . .

D.M. I like your generation. Let's hear more from you generation.

C.M. The 80s and 90s generation. I had mixed feelings about the 70s aspect because it didn't seem cool to me, I have to say, it seemed sort of dated and too sincere.

D.M. There were popular culture issues around it, for one thing right?

C.M. Yes. So I was torn. . . . as a 23 or 25 year old feeling like on the one hand, this is a great organization, I'm so glad to be able to work here, I'm so glad to have this opportunity, I'm so glad this exists, but then there was also part of me wanting to be working -- oh I don't know, at Metro Pictures or Artist's Space, some place cooler and more in the thick of the cultural production part of the art world. Or museums. NYFAI was on a different track. And now what I see, when I think about those things, is that most of us become aware over the course of our careers of how many parallel universes there are in the art world and how many interesting places intersect later. For instance, the fact that you and I are sitting here is very interesting to me because I didn't work at NYFAI all that long in the scheme of things, but it was at a very important moment for me. It was when I had moved to New York. It gave me the opportunity to live here and be comfortable in a way that I couldn't have been otherwise and to make a place for myself. So it had a very strong impact on my early experience here, which was really important.

D.M. Well and I think that the mainstream and periphery questions of the 80s and early 90s is in some ways a really complex issue for feminism, because at the same time that a lot of the feminist organizations were articulating these alternative strategies, a lot of the artists in particular wanted mainstream success.

C.M. That's interesting, and also true of the young women arriving in New York wanting to be curators, art historians, critics or even dealers – the market boom of the 1980s made a lot of people want, and believe they could get commercial and more main stream sort of success.

D.M. So we're constantly grappling with that question of inside and outside and is the goal really to work for MOMA and to be everywhere in the center.

C.M. I think you're right and that was a very interesting moment in that regard, because within the identity of the non-profit and collective spaces, women's spaces that existed in New York and in some cases still do . . . Ceres, Soho20, A.I.R. . . . all these galleries had existed for a period of time then for very specific reasons had to a large degree lost their luster for a lot of people. And I think there are a variety of reasons for that, reasons having to do with the rapidly expanding art market, a distinctive change in the theoretical constructions that were being developed for creating, criticizing and understanding contemporary art. There's also an interesting moment in terms of the art that was being made. There was that shift from the representational work of the early years of the East Village into a more postmodern, theoretical idea. The male painters associated with the 80s – Keith Haring, Jean Michel Basquiat (who had just died), David Salle, Sandro Chia and Eric Fischl, were making money, but the conceptualism that had its roots in the 60s and 70s was beginning to re-emerge. Bruce Nauman was starting to be re-assessed. Also emerging from the East Village were artists like Jeff Koons, but also Robert Gober and Kiki Smith. So you get the difference between the Keith Harrings of the sort of representational, expressionist generation and then the more coolly conceptual, post-minimal work of the pictures generation folks (remember, that exhibition had happened in 1977). Women artists like Cindy Sherman, Barbra Kruger, Jenny Holzer and Laurie Simmons were becoming an active part of the art world dialogue. But the vast majority of the work being done at places like NYFAI or some of the alternative galleries I mentioned earlier didn't respond to this critical shift immediately.

D.M. Well that's what I've been interested in hearing people talk about in the interviews that we've had: that NYFAI was, in some ways, separate from the gallery projects that you just listed, in that it really was working on a different way of teaching art, a different way of making art. I think of it in some ways as the West Coast comes to New York to

bring this idea of a feminine aesthetic, of consciousness raising as part of the process in art making and having all of that involved. So connected to the earlier question, did you feel that wanting to mainstream your work as an arts professional or artist, women artists making it in the art world was something that NYFAI was concerned about and was talked about within the school or is that a feeling that you had. In the classroom was it being discussed?

C.M. I think it depended on who the people were. I remember Melissa Meyer was a teacher at NYFAI and she was more engaged with what I could call the contemporary art mainstream, so there were different people who had really different attitudes. As I'm thinking about it now, I remember that when I first started working there I had a hard time wrapping my head around what exactly the organization was – what its mission was. It took me awhile to understand how it operated as an educational institution, but then it also offered a sort of studio environment for people to work and several other kinds of activities that added up to – I think what you just said very clearly – a kind of West Coast idea of an inclusive environment where people could both learn and teach and do. And it certainly wasn't a model that I had any experience with, so that was a little bit hard for me to grasp at first. But now when I think about it, it's very interesting because I think that comes from that generational ideal of doing what you need to do and not following some kind of established model. If we need studio space, let's get studio space . . . A much more sort of ad hoc approach to seeing what this organization could do, what needs it could fill, and how these needs could work together. It's interesting to think about that now, because I didn't understand because I was going to graduate school, and I had followed a very clearly proscribed educational path, so I was used to things being structured in a given way, and NYFAI's structure was ad hoc.

D.M. Did you take any of the courses?

C.M. I didn't. I went to some of the lectures and special events, but I was never an artist, I was studying art history. There were different kinds of intuitive classes that used art making as a healing method or as an approach to self-exploration. I know Nancy taught a couple of those classes.

D.M. Yes, those visual diaries courses, a lot of students talk really positively about . . . as that experience of their first encounter with consciousness raising, their first encounter

with the lack of the traditional critical model of teaching art. Everyone's ideas were open and discussable which is the feminist principle. Everyone has their time to speak and everyone has their . . .

C.M. And I think Nancy was probably really exceptional at that because she had a very clear understanding of . . . I think many women of her generation had a very clear understanding of the ways in which they weren't nurtured as artists, so to give younger artists, or to give – more recently – emerging artists an opportunity to feel that space to explore was very important to her. I think it helped a lot of people…

D.M. To break down the teacher – student hierarchy and neutralize some of those tensions.

C.M. And what's interesting about that too, is that my generation also had a very specific introduction to Art History and to critical thinking and to theory and to philosophy. That was what was taught, that was what was going on at The Whitney program when I came to New York, and at Hunter and at most Universities. That approach to critical theory was really coming into its own and that was not what was going on at NYFAI at all. That's also the period in which I think that so many art schools were becoming so institutionalized and geared toward turning out teachers with MFAs. And its interesting thinking about NYFAI being around at that time and that was not at all what they were about. The sort of professionalization of artists really happened in the 80s, when artists really saw making art as a career choice, one in which one could expect to make a living, have an IRA, travel all over the world, go to glamorous parties and meet rich collectors. I've done a bunch of exhibitions as a curator on alternative practices in the 60s and 70s. The first one I did which remains one of my favorites to this day was on Food Restaurant, Avalanche Magazine, and 112 Greene Street. Part of the reason I did that show was to point out the emergence of Soho as an artist driven endeavor as opposed to the emergence of Chelsea as a gallery or market driven development. It's interesting to think about how much more closely aligned NYFAI was with that initial instinct of community.

D.M. The downtown . . .

C.M. Soho in the 1970s, when artists lived in illegal lots, nobody expected to be able to buy a place in The Hamptons through their art career. People just wanted to make their

art, be with their community, and to talk, and to think and to push each other intellectually.

D.M. Although interestingly enough, because so many of them were in New York at the right time, they do - today - have that lifestyle.

C.M. Exactly.

D.M. In some ways, somehow, feminism and these alternative organizations did yield access to those spaces and ownership of real estate.

C.M. Exactly. I did this show this summer on feminism and land art that – I went to visit all these artists in their studios in Soho and so many of them are still living in those original lofts, which are becoming a very rare thing.

D.M. Amazing lofts.

C.M. yes, but most of them still have that cobbled together vibe. They are not Wallstreet bankers who have moved into a place that was fully renovated and architecturally significant.

D.M. So, are there relationships with people or connections to ideas that you feel were shaped during your time at NYFAI that are still a part of your career today, or sort of lineages to the work that you did later in your career after your time at NYFAI that you can trace back to NYFAI?

C.M. I don't know if I can point so directly. I think that my experience at NYFAI definitely informed me. I went on to do an exhibition called "Gloria, Another Look at Feminism of the 1970s" with Ingrid Shaefner and I'm wondering, since you asked that question, how that might play in . . . that show was about alternative medias and how women artists in the 1970s make them their own. Which was not a big part of what went on at NYFAI. At NYFAI, to a large degree the art making was relatively traditional painting, sculpture maybe some photography or a little video. So I guess I would say that NYFAI taught me a lot about feminist art of the 1970s that I didn't utilize until later, and not in a way that directly referenced NYFAI so much, but rather expanded my understanding of that period in history. A lot of the work that I've done has been about this period and about the downtown New York scene of that time. But I might also add that the general feeling I described earlier, that sense of this place maybe not being cool might also be an early warning sign of the kind of backlash against feminism that did

come into play in the art world later in the 1990s and early in this century, when young women did not feel it necessary to talk about feminism, or define themselves as feminist.

D.M. Why did you leave NYFAI? Do you remember the circumstance around your leaving the position?

C.M. There was a change in staff going on a little bit. I got offered – through Sandy Langer who I had mentioned earlier – a research job at a gallery that no longer exists called Grand Central, which dealt with American Art of the 20th Century. At that point I was interested in doing something more art historical than administrative and working on an exhibition and book project up about Modernism in New York City appealed to me. This was one of Sandy's areas of interest and I was also doing some course work on American art at the time. I think that I had been through a couple of cycles with the school that I felt like I had kind of done it. And I think I did feel a little bit like not a part of the community proper, maybe from not being a visual artist myself.

D.M. Did you encounter any generational issues yourself? Did you feel like a younger woman in the staff and on the administration?

C.M. No. If I felt any difference at all, I think it was mostly feeling like . . .

D.M. Its an artist project.

C.M. Its artist driven, most of the art wasn't compelling to me personally, and my world changed. It was a great place to land when I arrived here and it helped me enormously in getting established, but then other things popped up and I sort of followed my nose.

D.M. Do you remember anything about the circumstances of NYFAI closing? Were you still connected to the school?

C.M. I'm trying to remember. When did it close?

D.M. It was '91, I want to say.

C.M. It didn't close when I was there but I think it was cutting back.

D.M. . . . scaling back.

C.M. It was starting to scale back. And the other thing that's interesting to me – when I was working on my show about feminism and land art, I had this conversation with a lot of artists like Mary Miss and Alice Aycock, I was asking them about this idea I had about why their careers didn't go the same way as their male peers did, and it's interesting for me to work on this show and to have a lot of these – in my mind – famous artists . . .

Nancy Holt . . . who didn't have gallery representation . . . specifically Mary and Alice really because they work on large scale public sculpture now. I said, do you think that it had something to do with the fact that at that moment there was a lot of funding in the arts . . . government funding in the arts . . . and that I think women who are interested in collective working would naturally go towards public funding and other systems of support rather than towards the gallery system that a lot of the men went to? And then in the 80s that funding dried up . . . with Mapplethorpe and all of that stuff really started happening and I do think that that had an impact on NYFAI. I do think that the funding that they had been getting through NEA and, primarily, NYSCA and other funding institutions for the arts in this city really changed.

D.M. Exactly. I have heard in these conversations we've been having people articulate that feeling . . . that because it was an artists' project and support of artists directly was under scrutiny as part of the beginning of the culture wars in America. It was harder to get resources and harder to get . . .

C.M. People were afraid to give money. I remember when Sandy and I got the – I think it was the NYSCA grant - to do her exhibition, it was a really big deal because they hadn't gotten a grant in awhile. In the past it had been much more expected. There were a lot of changes going on in the art world then . . . in the late 80s. "Act up" was starting to happen, the AIDS crisis was happening; this whole factor of political activism was shifting. It was based so much on personal experiences and we were obviously in the middle of the Reagan years. There was a change in the air that was happening in a way that drew people and drew money and drew energy. Then a couple of years later, in the early 90s, I was very involved in "WAC!" and that was probably right around the time NYFAI was closing if it was '91 because I got involved in "WAC!" at the very beginning and I was involved for a couple of years. So there was a different kind of energy downtown that was happening around gay rights and AIDS activism.

D.M. It was more activist . . .

C.M. It was certainly more activist, it was more . . .

D.M. More policy, affecting policy.

C.M. Yes, and the more direct action . . . Protests . . . and an interesting interaction with the art world . . . much more involvement of artists like Gran Fury who were doing

different kinds of art that was very politically motivated and very much about getting a message out to the public rather than being more personal.

D.M. So in some ways the lifespan of NYFAI was falling between the flurry of feminist activity between the 60s and 70s and before energy shifted away from . . .

C.M. Yes, it kind of stretches from the personal is political aspect of the 70s which I think is a very strong motivating factor for a lot of that.

D.M. Their opening gala was in 1981. A.I.R. already had a decade under its belt.

C.M. Interesting. So NYFAI lasted a decade.

D.M. Yes. And it's like that decade . .

C.M. That shift from the real 70s to what would be . . .

D.M. The American culture wars.

C.M. I remember being part of this enormous crowd of people outside Artist's Space when it was down on Church Street for the show "Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing" and there was this energy in the air around Act-Up.

D.M. More international too, right?

C.M. Somewhat international, but very focused on direct action and with a strong sense of media savvy. And "WAC!" definitely used that as a model. I mean, that was the focus of "WAC!"

D.M. You've answered a lot of the questions that we had talked about in advance just in the natural course of our discussion. In closing, is there anything you could say about what you think was the most affective or most important piece about NYFAI and then also the question we keep discussing about longer range impact of feminism or what relevance NYFAI's articulation then might have for us today? Sort of two separate questions, sorry to stack them on top of each other.

C.M. You'll have to repeat the second one.

D.M. The sort of summing up.

C.M. Yes. You know, the most interesting thing to me personally through my experience at NYFAI was to have that intergenerational experience. And as I said, just the fact that – that old Horatio Algiers story . . . not that I'm aligning myself with Horatio Algiers . . . . but just the experience of coming to New York and finding that a place like NYFAI exists was just sort of like "Wow. Only in New York."

D.M. And they were good to you.

C.M. The fact that it existed and the fact that it straddled that period in a way is really interesting to think about . . . and empowering. You and I had this conversation before we turned on the tape recorder about one of the most difficult questions for me with feminism right now . . . or has been for years now . . . is how you strike a balance with feminism's relevancy with the negative associations that somehow continue to dog it . . . which I don't understand. And I don't know if that's a lack of my own creative thinking or if it's my own generational experience, but it's so interesting to me to be between those two generations . . . because for me feminism was an accepted norm. It was not something that I ever questioned and not something that I thought of as negative, and not something that I thought of as threatening. So, it continues to interest me to try to understand another generation's view of it. And I was that age when I think about NYFAI and there's always that generational experience of wanting to point out what your elders' missed. That's just part of the growing up process. So, maybe for me thinking about NYFAI 10 years after that, I think I have a more balanced impression of it and think I can see the role it played culturally that I really probably didn't get at the time so clearly. Like you said, I think it's really interesting to think about in relationship to Woman House and to what it grew out of.

D.M. Because a lot of the people that were involved in Woman House were actually involved in founding NYFAI too. Miriam Schapiro relocating to New York and encouraging . . . working with Nancy and establishing the initial idea . . . that Judy Chicago was involved at one point teaching courses . . . and so it really had a lot of the same key players in its formative years.

C.M. So NYFAI falls into a particular cultural moment. And as we discusses, I think my own interest and the kind of art that I liked and the things that I wanted to pursue were different.

D.M. So, the looking forward question . . . Is there anything about NYFAI's framing of feminism or the use of consciousness raising or decision by consensus, community based focus of it, the lack of orientation towards the market and all of those kinds of things . . . . have any relevance for today? We talked about it earlier as being a throw back and I think

there's been a lot of conversation in the last couple of years about how sometimes throw backs are healthy to revisit because they had it right.

C.M. Yes. It's interesting to me to have this whole emergence in the art world of younger people in their 20s who are interested in working collectively. I certainly think that what happens in the next couple of years around elections and around the economy will force a shift in the art world as well. Ultimately, NYFAI probably served a relatively discreet community so I think that letting people know about NYFAI is really important. Another thing that is interests me in a lot of the projects that I have worked on is that many kinds of ideas, or events, or places that happened or developed out of the avant-garde of the 1960s and 70s were perhaps not so appreciated, or the implications of certain activities were not understood, but over time the value of these events, or happens, or whatever you'd like to call them, has become more clear. I think NYFAI is a very good example of that. Not even necessarily as a model for some future pursuit, so much as understanding historically that it existed and how it existed and what its own history was and the part it played in that history and in the larger history of the downtown culture of New York, or the history of alternative practices of the 1970s. I find that fascinating and I think it's reassuring. I always have this feeling – and maybe you do to – that a lot of art that is being made, that you see now, has historical precedence that it's not necessarily even aware of . . . and not that its deliberately ignoring precedence, but that really there is just this level at which we come to ideas and images subconsciously. It is a roundup, it's a part of our culture, especially in the world we live in, ideas get fed into our brains and we may not be fully conscious of its point of entry, but it can come out in things like art.

D.M. I'm sure there's a common consciousness about it that we're all tapping into in some way. I think that was a big piece of the confusion, controversy, discussions around "Global Feminisms." One of the hard to understand pieces of that show – the opening of The Sackler Center – that so many of those artists would have said exactly that. Everyone steeped in America 70s feminism is saying, "This is all the stuff that we did! We made this. We did this. This is all connected to stuff we were doing 30 years ago." But many of those young women from all over the world didn't know the precise pieces that everyone saw the direct reference to.

C.M. They didn't even see it as a history experience for someone else, it was just part of the culture for them.

D.M. Right. The independent invention because we're all tapping into shared experiences.

C.M. The flipside of that that I've been thinking about – this is a really mundane example – but I was with a friend recently who is in her mid-40s and she said, with some amount of distain, "We wore scarves back like that in the 70s" . . . and I was thinking to myself "Yes, we did. And because we did they shouldn't?" It's sort of proprietary, like we thought of it but they're doing it.

D.M. So as long as we keep documenting and reminding ourselves of these different projects where it keeps it all connected.

C.M. I curated an exhibition on a series of performances called "9 Evenings" and I was inspired to do the show by the obituary of Billy Kluver, the founder of EAT (Experiments in Art and Technology) who instigated the development of a series of collaborative performances between artists and engineers. When I read Kluver's obituary in The New York Times, I thought "Oh it's 40 years since '9 Evenings' and I thought "Oh, '9 Evenings' I know that – it's important!" and then I thought "What the hell was '9 Evenings?' really? I didn't know" I thought I knew what it was because I've heard about it, maybe seen one or two Peter Moore images of it but when push came to shove, I really didn't know what it looked like, how it operated or how it was received at the time. And I've had that experience a lot and usually when I've had that experience I think, that's a good reason to do a show. And that's my experience of thinking I know something about something. It's the way we think we know "Spiral Jetty" from one image. How many people have actually been to "Sprial Jetty"?

D.M. We constantly reference it; do we actually know what we're referencing?

C.M. Right. That's why I wanted to do that show. If I don't really know what that was about, probably a lot of people didn't. And that's also one of the motivating factors that Ingrid and I had for doing the "Gloria" show; this sense of wanting to reintroduce the vitality of feminism in the 70s that people thought of as maybe old and hokey or warn out or not so interesting and that's not the case. The influence that a lot of these women had had on subsequent art making practices has been enormous.

D.M. And I think, if I may say so, that that show started this several years conversation that we've been having because it was pushing it out there when nobody wanted to talk about it. Now people are much more comfortable. Obviously all across America smaller arts institutions are putting shows of women artists together.

C.M. Connie was working on her show when we did that show. We didn't know it when we started but . . . there was definitely a ground swell.

D.M. I mean to say, from where I was sitting as the director of A.I.R., scouring the press for any references in the press to feminism in the arts and women artists. It was one of the first. Everyone was talking about it. The New York art community responded to it coming into the dialogue again after sort of a 10-year hiatus.

C.M. That was a great show too because I had that experience at that show, which I've had at several shows, which is . . . it just came together.

D.M. It had to happen.

C.M. It had to happen, the art that was in the show fell into place, people were supportive of it . . . they got it immediately, it was like everybody wanted to do that and participate in it. That was extraordinary.

D.M. You articulated what is exactly the goal of this project which is to make sure that as many versions, as many perspectives on what NYFAI was about and the impact it had on the individuals involved or on the broader dialogue is documented in some way because we forget quickly and we don't keep it for easy research and use in future projects.

C.M. It's amazing. I know from my own art historical projects – I had this immense love of The Archives of American Art and they've had this long history of doing oral history projects or they did for a while, while they had funding for it and then quit for a while but there are amazing interviews in those archives. We got a tape for the "9 Evenings" Show of John Cage being interviewed over the phone and there's something about hearing John Cage's voice...

D.M. Right. And just the voice. There's something about audio.

C.M. Exactly. And hearing his voice, it's very 60s. The whole thing . . . it's like vintage photographs. There's an aura to that stuff that really gets lost. And that seems like a good note to end on.

D.M. Got it . . . documented for posterity. Thank you. C.M. Thank you.