Not for the Uncommitted: The Alliance of Figurative Artists, 1969–1975

By

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Certification of Approval

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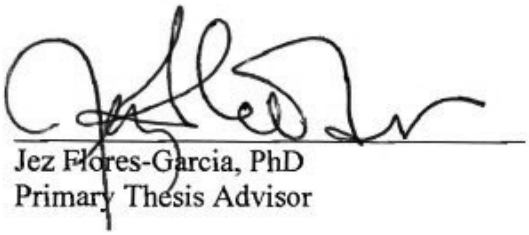

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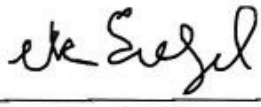

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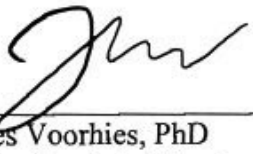

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From 1969 through the early 1980s, hundreds of working artists gathered on Manhattan's Lower East Side every Friday at meetings of the Alliance of Figurative Artists. The art historical canon overlooks figurative art from this period by focusing on a linear progression of modernism towards medium specificity. However, figurative painters persisted on the periphery of the New York art world. The size and scope of the Alliance and the interests of the artists involved expose the popular narrative of these generative decades in American art history to be a partial one promulgated by a few powerful art critics and curators. This exploration of the early years of the Alliance is divided into three parts: examining the group's structure and the varied yet cohesive interests of eleven key artists; situating the Alliance within the contemporary New York arts landscape; and highlighting the contributions women artists made to the Alliance.

Keywords: Post-war American art, figurative painting, realism, artist-run galleries, exhibitions history, feminist art history, second-wave feminism

Acknowledgments and Dedication

I would foremost like to thank the members of my thesis committee for their support and guidance. I am grateful to Jez Flores-García, my thesis advisor, for encouraging rigorous and thoughtful research and for always making time to discuss my ideas and questions. Thank you to Katy Siegel, my external thesis mentor, for believing in this project from the beginning and for giving me great confidence in my writing. Thank you also to Associate Professor Christina Linden, who served as the interim Chair of the Curatorial Practice Program in Fall 2020 and who provided valuable feedback on my initial topic proposal and first draft. Finally, thank you to James Voorhies, the Program Chair, for supporting this project in its final stages in 2021.

This paper is the product of ten months of research conducted during an unprecedented pandemic that rendered archives, libraries, and museums inaccessible. My research would not have been possible without the assistance of staff at the Smithsonian Archives of American Art and the Getty Institute who provided me with remote access to essential archival materials. I am especially grateful to the Curatorial Practice Program for generously facilitating this access.

I am also indebted to the many artists who spoke with me via phone and video chat to share stories about the Alliance: Marjorie Kramer, Samuel Thurston, Sharyn Finnegan, Juan Rodriguez, Philip Pearlstein, Lois Dodd, and Nancy Grilikhes. I wish to express special thanks to Marjorie and Sam, whose vivid memories of the Alliance formed the foundation of this paper, and who provided me with key written and archival materials from their personal collection.

Thank you to Shaelyn Hanes for serving as a partner and friend in this thesis-writing project and throughout my time at CCA. Although we could rarely work together in person due to Covid-19, pursuing research into the same time-period and going through this process in tandem made the work all the more manageable.

My deepest thanks go to my partner, Gabriel Rodriguez, whose enthusiastic support of my research empowered me throughout this process, even when we were 3,000 miles apart. This paper is dedicated to the memory of Gabe's mother, Wendy Sussman, an Alliance artist. Learning of Wendy's involvement in the group planted the seed for this entire project 3 years ago. It has been a privilege to delve into this community of which she was a valued part.

I also wish to thank my parents, Richard and Heather Markert, with whom I was fortunate enough to be with for much of the past year, and who thus nurtured me and, by extension, my writing in countless ways. I am especially grateful to my father, the only editor I have ever trusted, who read and provided feedback on this paper in his limited free time, and who has long believed I would have loved New York in the 1970s. After completing this research, I have never agreed with him more.

My final thanks go to New York City, for its history is never finished being written.

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Not for the Uncommitted: The Alliance of Figurative Artists, 1969–1975[1]

Beginning in 1969 and continuing until the early 1980s, dozens of working artists convened on Friday nights on Manhattan's Lower East Side at meetings of the Alliance of Figurative Artists.[2] This community of painters and sculptors, now nearly forgotten, supported one another at a time when major museums, galleries, and art critics deemed figurative art increasingly passé.[3] The modernist canon presents a singular narrative of this period based on a linear progression towards medium specificity.[4] By the 1970s, the prevalence of this narrow perspective among art historians and critics, and the emergence of movements such as minimalism and conceptualism, had pushed figurative painting to the sidelines. However, despite

[1] This title derives the description of the Alliance contained in this document, which states, "All working artists are welcome to attend. We ask only that they be serious about their art. (Hobbyists, curiosity seekers, and the uncommitted are not encouraged.) But we have no actual restrictions on attendance." "The Alliance of Figurative Artists, Invitation to Open House," October 1971, Alliance of Figurative Artists materials including clippings, programs, and association history, 1969–1970. Lawrence Alloway Papers, 1935–2003. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA.

[2] In this paper I address the late 1960s through 1975, focusing on the first six years of the Alliance. The group gradually ceased to convene between 1983 and 1985.

[3] Henceforth I shorten the Alliance of Figurative Artists to the Alliance. Artists involved in the group are described as participants, affiliates, or "Alliance artists," rather than members.

[4] For painting, medium specificity meant flatness. See Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," *Art and Literature* 4 (Spring 1965): 193–201.

the prevailing idea that painting had "died" altogether, figurative painters actively persisted on the margins of the New York art world. An examination of the interests and goals of the men and women of the Alliance, and the apparatuses they constructed together, reveals the size and scope of this important but overlooked art community, exposing the popular history of these fertile decades to be but a partial one. The art historical significance of the Alliance emerges out of the artists' varied yet cohesive commitment to figuration as they grappled with the onset of postmodernism.[5]

Rather than a tight-knit stylistic movement, the Alliance consisted of a community of artists practicing a variety of figurative styles who recognized how mutual support could aid each of their individual practices. The founders wanted "to dispel the sense of isolation so often felt

[5] Postmodern art is not characterized by a specific technical approach or ideology, but rather draws from any range of sources simultaneously. In this paper I use the term to allude to this trend toward pluralism, which took root in the 1970s but came to prominence in the early 1980s. The democratizing nature of postmodern aesthetics also fostered a reexamination of the predominant idea of the male genius artist during this time, creating space for additional artistic voices to emerge. For more on postmodernism as an artistic movement, see Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991); Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism," *October* 12 (Spring 1980): 67–86.

by representational artists."[6] Alliance meetings were premised on openness and inclusion, as well as fostering meaningful discussions among like-minded artists.[7] The group adhered to a structured seasonal meeting schedule featuring open discussions and invited speakers.[8] Despite their organization, however, discussions frequently evolved into chaotic arguments. Artists unofficially divided along stylistic lines. Other sources of friction within the Alliance included generational disagreements and sexism that prompted women Alliance artists to fight for respect from their male peers. The arguments at Alliance meetings symptomatized figurative artists' collective sense of exclusion from New York's shifting arts landscape and reflected the political atmosphere of the time. Thus, the impulse to gather as a community and the passion that fueled these debates made the Alliance exemplary of the rebellious, do-it-yourself ethos that characterized creative communities of the 1970s. As such, the Alliance stands in direct opposition to the notion of the singular genius artist that modernist art history champions.[9]

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[6] Richard A. Miller, "Recollection of the Origin of the Alliance of Figurative Artists," November 12, 1970, Alliance of Figurative Artists Lectures and Panel Discussions, 1969–1970, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

[7] "The Alliance of Figurative Artists, Invitation to Open House."

[8] The Alliance's lack of a formal member roster is one of the many ways in which it differed from the Club of the Abstract Expressionists, which I discuss in Part I.

[9] The notion of the individual genius artist can be traced back to Giorgio Vasari's *Le Vite de' più eccellenti Architetti, Pittori, et Scultori Italiani* (The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects), first published in 1550. The book consists of chronologically organized biographies of Renaissance Florentine artists coupled with evaluations of their work

No scholar has undertaken a detailed exploration of the structure and interests of the Alliance, nor how it can enrich our understanding of New York's art scene during this period. Since the 1980s, a handful of art historians, including Judith E. Stein, Paul Schimmel, Katy Siegel, Jennifer Samet, and Karen Wilkin, have reassessed the position painting occupied in relation to minimalist sculpture and performance and conceptual art.[10] However, no one has specifically focused on figurative painters in the 1970s. The limited literature on post-war figurative painting either predates the Alliance, focusing on the 1950s and 1960s, or skirts it, even if the artists in question participated in the group.[11] By taking the Alliance itself as my key focus, I build upon this scholarship, examining artists and institutions through the lens of their affiliation with the group.

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based primarily on ideas of progress and influence. See Nanette Salomon, "The Art Historical Canon: Sins of Omission," in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Donald Preziosi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 344–55.

[10] See Paul Schimmel and Judith E. Stein, eds., *The Figurative Fifties: New York Figurative Expressionism* (Newport Beach, CA: Newport Harbor Art Museum, 1988); Katy Siegel, *High Times, Hard Times: New York Painting, 1967–1975* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2006); Karen Wilkin, *Figuration Never Died: New York Painterly Painting, 1950–1970* (Suffolk, UK: The Artist Book Foundation, 2020).

[11] See for example Bruce Weber, *See It Loud: Seven Post-War American Painters* (New York: National Academy Museum, 2013); Jennifer Sachs Samet, "Painterly Representation in New York, 1954–1975" (Dissertation, New York, 2010); Mark Strand, *Art of the Real: Nine American Figurative Painters* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1983).

Due to the lack of literature on the Alliance, my argument crucially builds on a foundation of information obtained from primary sources. Archival materials include recordings and transcriptions of early Alliance meetings, exhibition and administrative ephemera, and personal photographs. These reveal the inner workings of the Alliance's early operations and the cooperative galleries the artists founded. Interviews I conducted with artists who actively participated provide first-hand details of the atmosphere of the Alliance, as well as the interests and attitudes of the participants. I also reference contemporaneous exhibition catalogues and periodicals to illustrate the popular ideas and prominent voices in the New York art world at the time. These essays and reviews elucidate the differences between the concerns of the Alliance and those of the artists, critics, and curators commonly associated with the period.

I assess the Alliance by applying several methodologies to these myriad sources. Primarily, I undertake a narrative history of the group coupled with formal analysis of works by Alliance artists. I also consider the Alliance and the New York art world through a social history lens to examine the influence of interpersonal relationships and institutional structures on and within the group. Additionally, I apply feminist theory as a framework for analyzing works by women artists and their role in the Alliance. As a methodology, feminist art history supplements and reimagines the singular, patriarchal art historical narrative. Applying this to the Alliance as a whole, I argue for a reframing of this linear narrative up until the late-1970s, which overlooked artist groups like the Alliance based on a narrow definition of progress centered on individual male artists.[12]

[12] In her essay "The Art Historical Canon: Sins of Omission," Nanette Salomon suggests that in *Le Vite*, Giorgio Vasari "inaugurates the idea that what is worth knowing about a work of art is

Although the Alliance included painters and sculptors, I concentrate on painters to examine their work within the context of the dominant theory and criticism concerning painting at the time. I focus specifically on eleven artists whose work emblematizes the group's formal and conceptual concerns. Lois Dodd (b. 1927), Paul Georges (1923–2002), Gabriel Laderman (1930–2011), Alice Neel (1900–1984), Philip Pearlstein (b. 1924), and Paul Resika (b. 1928) represent the group's older generation.[13] Lawrence Faden (b. 1942), Marjorie Anne Kramer (b.

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explained only through knowledge of the artist," reinforcing the value of a biographical system, which is inherently linear. Salomon argues that the "incessant repetition" of this discursive mode over the past five centuries has "produced and perpetuated the dominance of a particular gender, class, and race as the purveyors of art and culture"—namely, the white upper-class male. This idea informs my analysis of the loss of the Alliance to art history. See Nanette Salomon, "The Art Historical Canon: Sins of Omission," in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, Donald Preziosi, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998): 344. I also draw on Griselda Pollock and Rozsika Parker's feminist writings on the canon of art history. See Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminism and the Writing of Art's Histories* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Griselda Pollock and Rozsika Parker, *Old Mistresses* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).

[13] The artists defined the "older generation" as comprising artists over thirty years old. "Open Discussion: Future of the Group," November 12, 1970, Alliance of Figurative Artists Lectures and Panel Discussions, 1969–1970, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. However, the artists identified here were all over age forty when the Alliance first formed, except Laderman.

1943), Juanita McNeely (b. 1936), Samuel Thurston (b. 1943), and Anthony Siani (1939–1995) represent the younger generation. These eleven artists include some of the Alliance's most active participants, a few of whom achieved significant success while remaining committed to figuration. In this paper, success is defined as mainstream market success, such as attaining established gallery representation, sustaining oneself solely by selling work, or receiving solo museum exhibitions.[14] Although at least 200 artists participated in the Alliance in its first six years, these eleven comprise an exemplary cross-section of the group's interests. Nevertheless, other artists from both generations appear throughout the paper. Appendix A contains a complete list of all known Alliance participants.

Throughout this paper, I use particular terms that reflect an Alliance-specific context. Firstly, the name "Alliance of Figurative Artists" is a misnomer: the artists who participated painted the human figure as well as landscapes and still lifes. Therefore, I define figurative to mean painting done from life, and use it synonymously with representational, as the Alliance artists did. However, neither figurative nor representational are tantamount to the term realist in this context. Multiple definitions of realism exist, originating from mid-nineteenth century French realism, which is frequently compared to naturalism. The term has also come to reference

[14] Access to these eleven artists via existing literature and personal interviews also informed my decision to concentrate on them. For example, the success of Dodd, Pearlstein, and Neel has resulted in comparably widespread availability of information about their lives and work.

a style of painting that centers on fidelity to the source material.[15] As I discuss in Part II, some Alliance artists painted in the latter realist style, while others worked in a painterly style. Heinrich Wölfflin describes painterly painting as focused less on controlled lines and more on expressive, loose brushstrokes.[16]

My examination of the Alliance proceeds in three parts. In Part I, I establish the origin and structure of the Alliance, as well as the interests of key artists affiliated with it. In Part II, I explore the Alliance within the context of the wider New York art world. Specifically, I contend that while the Alliance artists were aware of the artistic and conceptual concerns of their contemporaries, they saw possibilities for innovation within the traditional medium of figurative painting. I also discuss how the Alliance's ethos of self-sufficiency led participating artists to create their own exhibition infrastructures in response to the omission of figurative art from museums and galleries. In Part III, I consider the Alliance through the lens of second-wave feminism, examining the work of women figurative artists and their influence on the group. To conclude, I outline the Alliance's achievements after 1975 and address why the group's efforts to self-historicize ultimately failed with the rise of postmodernism in the early 1980s. Through an exploration of the mission and unsung legacy of the Alliance, I complicate the dominant art

[15] Richard Shiff, "Art History and the Nineteenth Century: Realism and Resistance," *The Art Bulletin* 70, no. 1 (March 1988): 25–48. In this essay Shiff traces the roots of and explores the implications of varied definitions of realism.

[16] Heinrich Wölfflin, *Renaissance and Baroque*, trans. Kathrin Simon (Basel: Benno Schwabe & Co., Verlag, 1961), 29–30.

historical narrative and add important texture to our understanding of American art during this generative period.

Part I: The Artists and Their Goals

Faden, Kalish, Siani, and Thurston founded the Alliance with a simple idea: to gather like-minded artists to discuss the prospects for figurative art in New York.[17] In February 1969 they extended invitations to their mentors, such as Georges and Richard Miller (1922–2004), who in turn invited artists from their networks.[18] Within days, so many artists expressed interest that the founders needed to find a larger meeting venue. The first assembly of what would become the Alliance took place on February 14 at Charles Mashwitz's (b. c.1940) loft.[19] With nearly 200 people in attendance, the gathering refuted the common belief that figurative art was

[17] Miller, "Recollection of the Origin of the Alliance of Figurative Artists."

[18] Miller, "Recollection of the Origin of the Alliance of Figurative Artists"; Samuel Thurston, in conversation with the author, October 2020.

[19] Although multiple sources state that the first Alliance meeting took place at Mashwitz's loft on Broome Street near Broadway, the precise spelling of this artist's name is unknown. Miller writes "I'm not sure the spelling of that name and I wasn't able to find out the spelling," and another source includes "(sp?)" beside "Mashwitz." See Miller, "Recollection of the Origin of the Alliance of Figurative Artists"; "Some Notes on the First Season," March 1970, Alliance of Figurative Artists materials including clippings, programs, and association history, 1969–1970. Lawrence Alloway Papers, 1935–2003. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA. As a result, information about his life and career, including his birth year, remain uncertain. This is a common symptom of the Alliance's lack of historicization.

outdated or insipid.[20] These artists had, until then, felt isolated in their pursuit of figuration, but they were clearly not alone.

At the first meeting, Georges delivered an impassioned speech urging figurative artists to overcome an "awe of the art of the past" that he believed prevented them from working freely.[21] Despite his critical tone, however, Georges held an optimistic view of the prospects for figurative painting, as evidenced in his large-scale painting *The Return of the Mus*e (fig. 1), completed in 1968.[22] The work depicts an allegorical female nude on a Manhattan street corner, shrouded in haze. To her left, more than thirty of Georges's contemporaries, many of whom attended the first Alliance meeting, stand shoulder to shoulder. In this prescient painting, the artists look towards the Muse as she steps into the street, guiding them forward; it is an image of a community united

[20] Samuel Thurston, conversation. The exact number of attendees at this first meeting is unknown. Richard Miller estimated 125 to 150 people attended. The most common estimate is 200. The largest reported group meeting comprised 250 people. The Associated Press, "Appeals Court Upsets Verdict That Painting Was Libel," *The New York Times,* December 12, 1982, sec. 1. See Appendix A for a list of 175 known attendees and panelists from 1969 to 1975.

[21] Miller, "Recollection of the Origin of the Alliance of Figurative Artists." Georges described figurative artists as "crippled" by this awe. Although the term "cripple" bears a greater connotation of derision now than it did in the 1970s, Georges espoused this deliberately inflammatory idea throughout his career. Miller, "Recollection of the Origin of the Alliance of Figurative Artists." See also Rhonda Lieberman, "Sing, O Muse…of Paul Georges," in *Paul Georges: Last Paintings* (New York: Salander O'Reilly Galleries, 2003), 2.

[22] Thurston, "Notes for Alliance Panel Talk at National Academy."

by a mutual vision. Georges's provocative comments at the first meeting foreshadowed his frequent contributions to the Alliance over the next decade.

Faden, Kalish, Siani, and Thurston never imagined that their spontaneous meeting would persist into the 1980s, much less cultivate an organized community, but as Thurston recalls, "Georges's optimism was shared by many of the artists in the room" at the first meeting.[23] Recognizing the group's potential, the Alliance took root organically as the artists continued to gather in the following weeks.[24] By the third meeting, it became clear that due to its size, the group needed to convene somewhere other than artists' studios. Laderman arranged to use a room at the Educational Alliance, a Jewish community center, for free on Friday nights.[25] The

[23] Thurston.

[24] Miller, "Recollection of the Origin of the Alliance of Figurative Artists." See Appendix B for a complete list of the first meeting dates and locations.

[25] Miller, "Recollection." The partnership between the Educational Alliance and the Alliance of Figurative Artists was stewarded by Abe Eisenfield, Director of the Educational Alliance's Art School. Eisenfeld generously organized coffee service for the group and printed mailers about forthcoming meetings (fig. 2). Abe and his wife, Esther, loved art and took personal interest in the group, often attending meetings and even occasionally modeling for Alliance artists' paintings. Kramer, conversation.

Alliance charged a meeting entry fee of twenty-five cents to offset the Educational Alliance's costs.[26] Alliance meetings took place at the Educational Alliance for its entire duration.

Although all Alliance artists painted from life, their styles and methods varied. They generally classified themselves into two camps: the heads and the guts.[27] Both groups painted scenes inspired by canonical Western art, but the heads gravitated towards still lifes and narrative painting, while the guts generally painted landscapes and portraits. The guts worked in an expressionistic style, featuring visible brushstrokes and privileging gesture over verisimilitude. Resika's landscapes from the 1970s, such as *The Great Rocks* (1970, fig. 3), epitomize the approach of the guts painters.[28] In *The Great Rocks*, Resika evokes French naturalism, but he

[26] "Open Discussion: Future of the Group." Some sources state that the price of admission rose from twenty-five cents to fifty cents around 1971. Artists variably remember the cost as twenty-five and fifty cents at any given time.

[27] Samuel Thurston, "Notes for Alliance Panel Talk at National Academy," December 11, 2013. These two camps were also known to some as the "wets" and "drys" or "brushy" and "non-brushy" painters. There were also categories of the "conceptuals" and the "perceptuals," but whether these were synonymous with the heads and the guts remains unclear. Nancy Grilikhes (b.1941) describes them as such, but Pearlstein considered the "conceptualists" a sub-division of the heads. Nancy Grilikhes, in conversation with the author, April 2021; Philip Pearlstein, "Why I Paint the Way I Do," *The New York Times*, August 22, 1971, sec. D.

[28] By the mid-1970s, Resika began using more vibrant colors to create recognizable yet increasingly abstracted forms with fewer details. However, even as his forms became more

applies his paint loosely. Shades of gray and green vibrate across the canvas. Bright highlights streak across a mountainous form in the upper left of the canvas while dark, dense shadows occupy the foreground. Another example by a younger guts painter, Siani, is *Bathers* (1969, fig. 4).[29] In *Bathers*, a horizontally oriented painting the same size as *The Great Rocks*, the artist creates dimension using thick layers of paint and energetic brushstrokes. The work shows a group of men and women huddled closely, all nude, whom Siani paints freely using a series of warm pinks and reds. As a result, and owing to their expressive poses, their bodies seem to blend into one another, giving the work an almost impressionistic quality.[30] The background features a tree-spotted hillside receding to meet a cloud-filled sky, all depicted in painterly, abstracted forms.

The heads, by contrast, were primarily concerned with the legibility of their subject. For example, in Faden's *Untitled (Artist in the Studio)* (1972, fig. 5), he documents his home and studio in relentless detail. Faden demonstrates his mastery of geometric perspective by depicting

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simplified, he retained his expressionistic approach to painting. For more information, see Karen Wilkin et al., *Paul Resika: Eight Decades of Painting* (New York: Rizzoli, 2020).

[29] Although Siani was a younger artist in the group, most of the guts were of the older generation. These artists' heavy handling of paint and use of abstracted or gestural forms allude to their early explorations as students at the height of the popularity of Abstract Expressionism—a point to which I will return in Part II.

[30] Based on my research, none of the Alliance artists were specifically inspired by or attempting to imitate the Impressionists. However, like the Impressionists, the heads were concerned with depicting light using energetic, visible brushstrokes.

himself surrounded by precariously stacked objects, layered and foreshortened. By including himself in the composition, Faden nods to the historical trope of the artist at work in his studio. Kramer also painted realistic portraits reminiscent of historical works, such as *Wedding Self Portrait* (1973, fig. 6). This diptych shows Kramer and Thurston side by side, separated by the canvases' borders. They turn towards each other, evoking Piero della Francesca's *The Duke and Duchess of Urbino Federico da Montefeltro and Battista Sforza* (c. 1473–1475, fig. 7a). Kramer employs great detail to render the figures' immediate surroundings and a glimpse of the city that lies beyond their apartment through a distant window, in contrast to the rambling countryside behind della Francesca's subjects. Additionally, Kramer clearly depicts her pregnant belly, alluding to Jan van Eyck's *The Arnolfini Portrait* (1434, fig. 7b). Although Kramer is seated and van Eyck's subject stands, both women's rotund midsections are prominently placed in the middle of the canvases. Like van Eyck, Kramer carefully articulates the drapes of her dress to accentuate her protruding belly.

The Alliance bore a superficial resemblance to the Club of the Abstract Expressionists that convened on Friday nights from 1949 through the early 1960s. Valerie Hellstein describes the Club as a "physical instantiation of the idea that equal, autonomous individuals could come together and create a community without hierarchy, without a mandated style, and without a set agenda."[31] Similarly, those who attended Alliance meetings became enmeshed in a broad network of artists who shared common interests and mutually supported one another. However, the founders of the Alliance deliberately structured the group in opposition to what they viewed

[31] Valerie Hellstein, "Abstract Expressionism's Counterculture: The Club, the Cold War, and the New Sensibility" (Lecture, The Museum of Modern Art, February 25, 2011).

as a failure of the Club—namely, its exclusivity.[32] For example, membership in the Club was by invitation, and members paid annual dues. The Club hosted social events and salon discussions—often on topics unrelated to art—partially funded by wealthy patrons.[33] Moreover, according to its charter, "no women, communists, or homosexuals" were allowed.[34] By contrast, the Alliance welcomed artists of all backgrounds, identities, and skill levels.[35] The Alliance

[32] Thurston, conversation; Lois Dodd, in conversation with the author, January 2021. Some Alliance artists attended Club meetings as guests. These first-hand experiences informed their decision to structure the Alliance as "deliberately fluid." "The Alliance of Figurative Artists, Invitation to Open House." From 1949 to 1951, the Club was not orderly, bearing a much closer resemblance to the Alliance, but member rosters and dues were systemized thereafter and for its duration. See Valerie Hellstein, "Grounding the Social Aesthetics of Abstract Expressionism: A New Intellectual History of The Club" (Dissertation, Stony Brook University, 2010).

[33] Hellstein, "Abstract Expressionism's Counterculture: The Club, the Cold War, and the New Sensibility." Patrons of the Club included dealers like Leo Castelli.

[34] The Club did not adhere to these rules absolutely—for example, Elaine de Kooning and Mercedes Matter were admitted as members in the early 1950s—but the charter was never revised, rooting the organization firmly in exclusionary practices. See Celia S. Stahr, "Elaine de Kooning, Portraiture, and the Politics of Sexuality," *University of Colorado, Boulder,* September 1, 2003, https://www.colorado.edu/gendersarchive1998-2013/2003/09/01/elaine-de-kooning-portraiture-and-politics-sexuality.

[35] Although predominantly white, men and women of color were admitted to Alliance meetings and occasionally spoke on panels. For example, Faith Ringgold (b. 1930) spoke on an all-women

charged no dues and maintained no "member" roster, and its meetings always centered on serious discussions of art.[36] While the Club was exclusive, Alliance meetings were "expressly open" to anyone, accounting for its democratic and animated atmosphere.[37]

To ensure meetings focused on art and to "avoid repetitious hang-ups," a rotating organizational committee created the Alliance's meeting agendas.[38] However, audience comments frequently derailed conversations. By the Alliance's second "season" in 1970, the committee established a sequence of meeting formats to better maintain order.[39] The first Friday of each month typically featured a lecture by an invited artist. On second Fridays, two or more

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panel on "Political Art" in 1972. Based on the limited accounts of such occurrences, artists of color did not experience discrimination at the Alliance, but certainly comprised a minority. Kramer, conversation; Juan Rodriguez, conversation with the author, January 2021.

[36] The Alliance discussed charging dues in 1970, but ultimately renounced ideas for formal memberships because they did not want to "politicize" the group by making it formally part of the Educational Alliance. See "Open Discussion: Future of the Group."

[37] "The Alliance of Figurative Artists, Invitation to Open House."

[38] Katharine Kuh, "Of, by, and for Artists," *Saturday Review*, January 23, 1971, 88. This committee was not a governing body, and hence "[limited] its function to maintaining the schedule of programs."

[39] Miller, "Recollection of the Origin of the Alliance of Figurative Artists." After 1969, the Alliance meeting schedule followed the academic calendar, with a new "season" beginning each autumn. Although the meetings did not always follow the same sequence established in 1970, the group adhered to the types of meetings established that year through at least 1976.

artists spoke on a pre-determined topic (see Appendix B). Any Alliance artist could suggest speakers or subjects.[40] There were also meetings centered on discussions of current exhibitions. Lecturers and panelists often showed artworks or slides at the meetings, and on "Show Your Work Night," every fourth Friday, anyone could bring work instead of paying the entry fee.[41] The lectures and panels cultivated insightful—and historically important—presentations by and dialogues between artists who played crucial roles in the Alliance.

The impact of the meeting discussions can be seen in the progression of certain artists' work during this period. For example, in the late 1960s and 1970s, Laderman primarily painted realist still lifes and landscapes in muted colors. *Still Life #2, Homage to David* (1969, fig. 8) serves as a key example, painted so accurately that it borders on Photorealism. By the early 1980s, he had transitioned to creating multi-panel paintings depicting dramatic storylines, such as *The House of Death and Life* (1984–1985, fig. 9). These later works feature bold hues and often multiple figures, as well as a clear contemporary setting and narrative. Laderman's paintings from the 1980s and later reflect the impact his participation in Alliance discussions on

[40] "The Alliance of Figurative Artists, Invitation to Open House."

[41] Miller, "Recollection of the Origin of the Alliance of Figurative Artists." Occasionally "Show Your Work Night," also known as "Bring Work Night," had a theme, requiring all artists to bring examples of a specific type of work for a moderated discussion. See "Calendar for the Third (1970–71) Season," November 1970, Alliance of Figurative Artists materials including clippings, programs, and association history, 1969–1970. Lawrence Alloway Papers, 1935–2003. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA.

narrative painting had on his practice.[42] His Alliance peers' staunch disapproval of Photorealism may have also influenced him to move away from ultra-realistic painting.[43]

One can see a shift in Dodd's work, too. Like many Alliance artists of her generation, Dodd studied under Hans Hofmann (1880–1966). Hence, her paintings from the 1950s and 1960s read as abstractions based loosely on perception. In works such as *Pond* (1962, fig. 10), swathes of mauve and gray bleed into golds, creating pools of color divided by loose, expressive lines. The composition of *Pond* calls to mind large-scale abstract works by artists such as Joan Mitchell (1925–1992). Dodd began incorporating more detail and blunter lines into her work in the late-1960s. For example, in *Shadow Patterns* (1967, fig. 11), a stark shadow cuts across a white house, and Dodd indicates the house's siding with subtle, repeating lines. Her works from the 1970s and later include even more detail. *View Through Elliot's Shack, Looking South* (1971, fig. 12) is a key example of her masterfully realistic window paintings. Participating in the Alliance, where many artists shared her subject-matter interests, may have given Dodd the confidence to move ever farther from the tropes of abstraction toward clearly articulated forms.

Meanwhile, Pearlstein appears to have been impacted by the discussion that followed his lecture to the Alliance on December 5, 1969. During his talk—one of the Alliance's first

[42] Alliance of Figurative Artists Lectures and Panel Discussions. See also Thurston, "Notes for Alliance Panel Talk at National Academy."

[43] Laderman's proximity to and consideration of this topic is evidenced by the fact he moderated a panel discussion titled "Implications of the Photograph" on March 13, 1970. "Implications of the Photograph," March 13, 1970, Alliance of Figurative Artists Lectures and Panel Discussions, 1969–1970, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

lectures—Pearlstein spoke of his recent explorations of fragmentation and scale, pointing to an incomplete canvas on view during the meeting (which likely became *Standing Male, Sitting Female Nudes* (1969, fig. 13)).[44] Pearlstein also highlighted the stark contrast between this work and the paintings for which he had achieved acclaim a decade earlier, such as *Superman* (1952, fig. 14).[45] Discussing and defending his work at the Alliance likely helped him refine his perspectives on figurative art, about which he later wrote and lectured.[46] Pearlstein's work also exemplifies the gray area between the heads and guts. His early works, including *Superman*, closely resemble the work of the guts. While he continued to describe his painting as energetic as his practice evolved, his use of detail in works from the 1960s and 1970s places him among the

[44] The first four artists to give lectures at the Alliance were Pearlstein, Resika, John Koch (1909–1978) and Alex Katz (b. 1927). Miller, "Recollection of the Origin of the Alliance of Figurative Artists."

[45] Philip Pearlstein, Lecture, December 5, 1969, transcript and tape recording, Alliance of Figurative Artists Lectures and Panel Discussions, 1969–1970, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

[46] Philip Pearlstein, in conversation with the author, February 2021. Pearlstein frequently contributed to *Art in America*, *Artnews*, and *Art Journal* in the 1970s through the 1990s, and continues to occasionally write for *Artnews* today. See for example Philip Pearlstein, "Critics and Artists," *Art Journal*, Winter 1977. He also delivered lectures around the country. See for example Philip Pearlstein, "'A Conceptualization of Realism,' College Art Association Meeting," 1977, Philip Pearlstein papers, circa 1940–2008, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

heads. However, Pearlstein saw himself as part of a subset of the heads, which he termed the "Conceptualists." In 1971, he wrote that the Alliance was divided "into those who wanted their perceptual experiences hot and full of the meaning of 'life,' or with cool detachment; brushy, painterly and coloristic, or smooth paint and silvery color ('leaden,' according to detractors)."[47]

As Pearlstein's descriptions of the heads and guts suggest, despite its communal nature, disagreements were extremely common at the Alliance. In fact, some artists stopped attending meetings because of the frequent derision.[48] Stylistic differences were the primary cause of

[47] Pearlstein, "Why I Paint the Way I Do."

[48] "Landscape Panel," February 20, 1970, transcript and tape recording, Alliance of Figurative Artists Lectures and Panel Discussions, 1969–1970, Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C. During this panel, Kramer, who was moderating, interrupted an argument, stating: "We really shouldn't get into fights like this, because a lot of people don't come to these meetings because of all this kind of blood. It's very boring if you're not [the one] shouting." See also Israel Hershberg, "Foreword," in *Prince Street Gallery: Fortieth Anniversary, 1970–2010* (New York: Prince Street Gallery, 2010), 4. Hershberg, Founding Director of Prince Street Gallery, writes, "Anyone who ever attended The Alliance meetings in the late 1960s through the early 70s, must have, at some point, been struck by the complete incongruity of the Alliance nomenclature. These spirited gatherings were many things to artists and art students, but "alliance" was simply not one of them. The fractious, raucous meetings that at times took on even violent overtones were very much a part of what I understood to be a young New York artist's traditional rite-of-passage—a kind of ritualistic initiation into a particular community within New York's art world."

arguments. Lecturers who shared unpopular opinions on controversial topics, such as painting from photographs, were often booed offstage with a shower of beer cans.[49] Generational differences also contributed to the atmosphere of contention. Many younger artists were current or former students of older Alliance artists at schools such as Pratt Institute, Queens College, and Brooklyn College. Unsurprisingly, then, cross-generation loyalties emerged between these students and teachers, predicated mainly on stylistic proclivities.[50] However, these relationships were delicate. Certain artists took allegiances more personally than others—most notably, Georges.[51] For example, after a series of disagreements with one of his longtime followers, Siani, Georges painted *The Mugging of the Muse* (1972–76, fig. 15), which depicts Siani and another painter in a flurry of reds and yellows assaulting a petite, young woman on a street-corner. By showing him attacking this woman, symbolizing the muse, Georges implied Siani lacked authenticity as a painter. Furthermore, Georges depicted the muse as his daughter, intimating the degree to which Siani had affronted him. Importantly, Georges's daughter had also modeled for *Return of the Muse*. *The Mugging of the Muse* ostensibly expunged Siani from that portrait of the figurative artist community. Siani sued Georges for libel over the painting in a case that went to the New York Supreme Court.[52] This extreme example illustrates the degree to which the artists' passions fueled conversations, allyships, and hostilities within the Alliance.

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[49] Pearlstein, conversation.

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[51] Pearlstein, conversation.

[52] The Associated Press, "Appeals Court Upsets Verdict That Painting Was Libel." Siani ultimately lost on appeal after a favorable jury verdict. The court held that Georges' painting was "obviously allegorical" and not libelous. Years later, Georges would allege that the artists in

There also existed a divide between male and female artists in the Alliance, which the women sought to eliminate. Sexism ran rampant through the Alliance, as it did the entire New York art world. Men often openly disrespected women during meetings, which fostered antagonism. Artists like Kramer sought to rectify the gender imbalance by taking on leadership roles and organizing panels with women speakers. Additionally, many younger female Alliance artists created paintings about their experiences as women. At this time, female artists around the city began making art, primarily using new media, that grappled with the tenets of second-wave feminism.[53] They exhibited their work in women-run cooperative galleries, such as A.I.R.

Mugging of the Muse "aim their knives at themselves," as a statement on reducing artists to labels and ideologies, but reading the painting carefully, the figures hold their weapons aloft, hardly suggesting intent of self-harm. Lieberman, "Sing, O Muse…of Paul Georges," 3.

[53] Carey Lovelace, "Optimism and Rage: The Women's Movement in Art in New York, 1969–1975," *Woman's Art Journal* 37, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2016): 4–11. The "second wave" of the feminist movement in the United States took place from the early 1960s through the 1970s. While the "first wave" centered on women's right to vote, the second wave focused on equality for women in the workplace. It is important to note that because of this focus, second-wave feminism is often assumed to be a heterosexual white woman's movement. However, women of color and lesbians were always involved, as the writings of Chela Sandoval and Audre Lorde attest. See Becky Thompson, "Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism," *Feminist Studies* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 336–60. For more on second-wave feminism, see Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Viking Books, 2000).

Gallery, founded in 1972, and SOHO20, founded in 1973.[54] Some of SOHO20's first exhibitions also featured feminist painters, such as Sylvia Sleigh (1916–2010) and Sharon Wybrants (b. 1943)—both of whom worked figuratively.[55] However, most female figurative painters who participated in the Alliance, even those who were feminist activists, eschewed these women-only galleries, seeking discussions centered on figurative painting instead of politics.[56]

Although raucous arguments occurred frequently, they were rooted in a shared passion. As Dodd reflected, "Isn't it wonderful that people could be so upset and moved by painting that they would get into a fist fight with somebody?"[57] Passion also fostered the Alliance's atmosphere of mutual support and community-building. Formed out of a shared sense of isolation, the Alliance filled a necessary artistic and social void, fostering friendships and nurturing the artists' creative and professional development. Many of the artists at the first

[54] For more on women-run cooperative galleries, see Judith E. Brodsky, "Exhibitions, Galleries, and Alternative Spaces," in *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1994), 104–19.

[55] Andrew Hottle, *The Art of the Sister Chapel: Exemplary Women, Visionary Creators, and Feminist Collaboration* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2014), 210–11.

[56] Cynthia Mailman (b. 1942) and Ringgold are among the only known exception to this. Mailman co-founded SOHO20, and Ringgold was a SOHO20 member. "Mission + History," SOHO20, n.d., https://soho20gallery.com/mission-history.

[57] Dodd, conversation.

gathering in 1969 continued to attend weekly until the meetings ceased in the early 1980s.[58] Furthermore, the artists' impulse to gather as a community, the do-it-yourself spirit with which they organized, and the passion that fueled their debates symptomatized the period in which they lived. In this way, the Alliance serves as a vital precursor to artist collectives today, while its size and scope exemplify the type of community organizing characteristic of the period.

Part II: Inventing the World: The Alliance in the New York Arts Landscape[59]

The Alliance was a product of both the political atmosphere of the late 1960s and the wider New York art world.[60] Just as thousands protested unjust socio-economic structures throughout the 1960s, the Alliance rebelled against the arts community from which they were excluded. Rather than silo themselves within an echo chamber of shared opinions, however, Alliance artists sought serious discussions of various types of figurative painting with the widest possible audience. In fact, many of them actively engaged with ideas that also interested their Abstract Expressionist peers. Ultimately, unable to find a mainstream audience for their work,

[58] The circumstances that led to the Alliance to stop meeting are unknown. Most artists describe the group as slowly fizzling out, especially as many of the younger artists grew older, had children, and left New York in search of cheaper rents and more space. This suggests that no single event prompted its definitive culmination on a specific date. Kramer and Thurston, conversation; Sharyn Finnegan, in conversation with the author, October 2020.

[59] This section title derives from artist Marjorie Kramer's description of her experience with the Alliance as, "It was like inventing the world." Kramer, conversation.

[60] Kramer, conversation; Hershberg, "Foreword."

these artists banded together for support and founded their own institutions "to create for [figurative] art, a viable New York scene."[61]

The dominant art historical narrative conveys that with the rise of Abstract Expressionism, painting from life became passé by the 1950s.[62] Although some Abstract Expressionists, such as Jackson Pollock (1912–1956) and Willem de Kooning (1904–1997), explored figuration alongside abstraction, influential art critics such as Clement Greenberg concentrated only on the field qualities of their paintings.[63] Disregarding these artists' subject-matter interests supported Greenberg's thesis of a linear progression of modernism that moved

[61] "The Alliance of Figurative Artists, Invitation to Open House."

[62] Another contributing factor was figurative painting's association with socialism during and after World War II. Socialist Realism was instituted by Joseph Stalin in 1924 as a form of Soviet propaganda. In the 1970s, critics and scholars described Socialist Realism and American Abstract Expressionism as symbols or tools of the opposing sides of the Cold War. See, for example, Max Kozloff, "American Painting During the Cold War," *Artforum,* May 1973; Eva Cockcroft, "Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War," *Artforum,* June 1974. However, today some argue that this binary lacks nuance. See, for example, John J. Curley, *Global Art and the Cold War* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2018). Hence, the association of figurative painting with socialism cannot be considered the sole or key reason for its fall from fashion in the US in the mid-twentieth century.

[63] Judith E. Stein, "Figuring Out the Fifties: Aspects of Figuration in New York, 1950–1964," in *The Figurative Fifties: New York Figurative Expressionism,* ed. Paul Schimmel and Judith E. Stein (Newport Beach, CA: Newport Harbor Art Museum, 1988), 37–48.

away from illusion and towards "pure" painting centered on only those qualities unique to a painting's flat surface.[64] However, more painters were working figuratively in the 1950s through the 1970s than this dominant narrative suggests, as the nearly 200 artists affiliated with the Alliance attest.

Several older members of the Alliance started their careers painting abstractly—notably those who studied under Hofmann. These artists transitioned to figuration in the late 1950s and early 1960s, at the height of Abstract Expressionism's commercial success. Surprisingly, their inspiration to do so stemmed from ideas similar to those that interested their Abstract Expressionist contemporaries. These included the materiality of paint, gestural mark-making, and the juxtaposition of color to create form. Importantly, though, they decided to work from life, applying these techniques to figurative subjects. For example, in Dodd's *Cows in Landscape* (1958, fig. 16), large patches of green push up against off-white forms. Without the work's title, one might not notice that the forms' dark outlines loosely articulate the spots and curves of cows. The subject of the painting plays a role secondary to Dodd's formal experiments. *Cows in Landscape* thus reveals Dodd's interest in abstraction yet her stylistic preference to paint what

[64] One of Greenberg's earliest articulations of this notion is from 1939, wherein he states, "the idea that "the true and most important function of the avant-garde was not to 'experiment' but to find a path along which it would be possible to keep culture *moving*." Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," *The Partisan Review* 6, no. 5 (Fall 1939): 36.

she saw.[65] Unlike many young painters plagued by what Greenberg called the "Tenth Street touch"—an unoriginal attempt to ostensibly copy de Kooning—artists like Dodd paved their own way, despite figuration's unfashionability.[66] As Wilkin explains, by integrating modernist abstracted forms into their paintings of traditional Western art subjects, these artists developed a new kind of painterly figurative painting.[67]

In the mid-1960s, some New York museums presented exhibitions of new figurative art, but without acknowledging the contemporary relevance of the artists' ideas. The first, *Recent Painting USA: The Figure*, took place at The Museum of Modern Art in 1962. The exhibition featured seventy-four artists culled from a national open call to demonstrate what the organizers

[65] Dodd, conversation. Works such as *Cows in Landscape* were painted while Dodd was in residence at Skowhegan in Maine with Katz, where they dedicated themselves to landscape painting for several years.

[66] Clement Greenberg, "Introduction," in *Post-Painterly Abstraction* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1964), 5–8; Wilkin, *Figuration Never Died: New York Painterly Painting, 1950–1970*, 18–19. As a resident of 10th Street, de Kooning frequented the galleries on the block where many of these artists showed their work and actively encouraged them to remain committed to painting representationally. Alex Katz, "Interview with Alex Katz, 1969 October 20," interviewed by Paul Cummings, October 20, 1969, Archives of American Art Oral History Program, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

[67] Wilkin, *Figuration Never Died: New York Painterly Painting, 1950–1970*, 18.

described as a "renewed interest in the human figure."[68] In a review of the exhibition, Alliance artist and critic Fairfield Porter (1907–1975) responded to this sentiment, writing, "Since painters have never stopped painting the figure…[the exhibition] could be said to represent a renewed interest in the figure on the part of the critics and the audience rather than among the painters."[69] As Porter intimates, the exhibition highlighted the prevalence of figurative art in America, even though the Museum rarely showed such work during this period.[70] Later, in 1970, the Whitney Museum of American Art opened *22 Realists*, which featured several Alliance artists, including Pearlstein and Laderman. In the catalogue, curator James Monte backhandedly suggested that many of the artists had simply turned away from abstraction and found that "the door was open

[68] *Recent Painting USA: The Figure* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1962), 2. This exhibition did not have one single curator. MoMA staff Dorothy C. Miller, William S. Lieberman, and Frank O'Hara reviewed the initial pool of nearly 2,000 submissions, from which they picked 150 artists for further consideration. Then, Director Alfred H. Barr Jr. selected one work by each of seventy-four artists from this group.

[69] Fairfield Porter, "Recent Painting USA," *Art in America*, 1962, 78.

[70] Wilkin, *Figuration Never Died: New York Painterly Painting, 1950–1970*, 15–16. Although most of the artists were from New York, many local figurative artists had not submitted their work to MoMA's open call, resenting the Museum's focus on abstraction up until that point. Instead, they showed their work in concurrent exhibitions at several galleries nearby. Valerie Petersen, "U.S. Figure Painting: Continuity and Cliche," *ArtNews*, Summer 1962. Regardless, *Recent Painting USA* demonstrated that figuration interested not only provincial American artists, but also those living in the country's art capitol.

to the past in a particularly bracing way—there was nowhere else to go."[71] Thus, like *Recent Painting USA, 22 Realists* posited a "renewed interest" in figuration that implied the artists were looking backward instead of forward.[72]

Therefore, although these exhibitions took place at major institutions, no resurgence in the popularity of figuration occurred. The most influential critics of the day remained focused on abstract work. Some, such as Hilton Kramer, also seized opportunities to negatively review figurative work.[73] Furthermore, curators and critics struggled to fold Alliance artists' work into contemporary art movements due to the wide range of styles they explored. Attempts were made

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[71] James K. Monte, *22 Realists* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1970), 9.

[72] This opinion was shared by certain contemporary reviewers who typically reviewed figurative painters favorably. For example, in his review of *22 Realists*, James R. Mellow wrote, "But' instead of raising the Lazarus of figurative art by so much as an inch, the Whitney show has succeeded in burying the issue several feet deeper underground." James R. Mellow, "When 'What' Is as Important as 'How,'" *The New York Times*, March 1, 1970.

[73] Hilton Kramer, "A Mandarin Pretending To Be A Stumblebum," *The New York Times*, October 25, 1970.

For example, in this infamous review of Philip Guston (1913–1980) paintings in 1970, Kramer characterized Guston's new figurative work as unimaginative and regressive. In 1974, Kramer eviscerated Neel in a review of her retrospective at the Whitney, writing of her "ineptitudes" as a painter "that are not a matter of style but of basic competence. For the public that has no stake in regarding such paintings as serious art, however, the exhibition certainly has an appeal." Hilton Kramer, "Art: Alice Neel Retrospective," *The New York Times*, February 4, 1974.

to label the artists—curator Scott Burton proposed "Direct Representation," while Linda Nochlin suggested "New Realism"—but their cohesiveness ultimately stemmed from their general interest in painting from perception.[74] The Alliance artists' stylistic nonconformity set them apart from their contemporaries across mediums and movements. Each artist painted exactly as they wished, and they supported each other's individual artistic pursuits.[75]

The impact of critics and curators' preferential treatment of non-figurative artists manifested most plainly in *New York Painting and Sculpture, 1940–1970* at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1969. Despite artists' unsung but widespread interest in figuration and the concerns shared by many figurative and abstract painters, the only figurative artworks curator Henry Geldzahler included in this landmark exhibition were by Abstract Expressionist giants, such as Pollock's *Portrait and a Dream* (1953, fig. 17). The exhibition also featured work from movements championed by many of the city's critics, such as Pop art, Color Field painting, Photorealism, and the emerging practices of minimalism and conceptualism. Unsurprisingly,

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[74] Cindy Nemser, "Representational Painting in 1971: A New Synthesis," *Arts Magazine*, December 1971; Scott Burton, "Direct Representation: Five Younger Realists," in *Scott Burton: Collected Writings on Art and Performance, 1965 – 1975*, David J. Getsy, ed. (Chicago: Soberscove Press, 2012), 195–199, originally printed in 1969; Linda Nochlin, *Realism Now* (New York: Vassar College Art Gallery, 1968). Burton and Nochlin's terms served as titles of exhibitions they curated in 1969 and 1968, respectively.

[75] In 1971, Pearlstein wrote in *The New York Times* that "it must be emphasized that each artist paints his own idea of realism, and the differences among the kinds of realists are as great as among the kinds of abstractionists." Pearlstein, "Why I Paint the Way I Do."

then, *New York Painting and Sculpture* received significant press and quickly entered the canon of influential exhibitions. As further evidence of Geldzahler's authority, critics colloquially referred to the exhibition as "Henry's Show." This demonstrates how the conversations between writers and curators in positions of power directly impacted the omission of mid-century figurative art from the art historical narrative.

Although Pop artists and Photorealists often painted the figure, their conceptual interests differed significantly from those of the Alliance artists. Pop artists used figuration to interrogate images of mass-production and popular culture—subjects in which Alliance artists were unanimously uninterested. Artists such as Tom Wesselman (1931–2004) experimented with new approaches to classic genres such as the nude by working from live models while co-opting the imagery of commercial advertising. These artists' interest in mass media ran in opposition to the interests of Alliance artists who focused on painterly gesture or realism. Similarly, there existed a nuanced if counterintuitive division between Alliance artists and Photorealist painters. Photorealists such as Chuck Close (b. 1940) transformed human subjects from expressive figures into clinical objects. To achieve such detail, they worked from photographs—a practice widely condemned by the Alliance.[76] While Alliance artists sought to reinvigorate historical conventions

[76] Pearlstein recounts that Close was invited to lecture at the Alliance in the mid-1970s and was received politely by the group, but as soon as his lecture ended, the audience pelted him with beer bottles. Pearlstein, conversation. Beyond this anecdote, the Alliance artists' negative opinions on working from photographs is well documented in transcripts of early Alliance meetings and personal stories. Painters such as Georges and Resika promulgated this condemnation. See, for example, "Implications of the Photograph." Only one other Photorealist

with modern approaches, Pop and Photorealist artists explored detachment and artistic anonymity. This difference in opinions estranged Alliance artists even further from minimal and conceptual artists, for whom removing the artist's hand—or the art object itself—was paramount.

Although many Alliance artists sought attention from critics, galleries, and museums, their goals centered on receiving exposure and engaging in meaningful dialogue over competitive careerism, and few had ambitions of living off sales of their work.[77] When faced with the mainstream's lack of interest in figurative art, they declined to embrace the more commercially viable aesthetics of these emerging movements. Instead, they created parallel spaces in which to showcase their work, receive feedback, and develop an audience to inform and empower their individual practices. Three cohorts of participating artists opened cooperative galleries in SoHo "as a direct consequence of the Alliance" within a year of its founding. Bowery

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painter is known to have spoken to the group, Audrey Flack (b. 1931). "Speakers Scheduled for March 1972," March 1972, Alliance of Figurative Artists materials including clippings, programs, and association history, 1969–1970. Lawrence Alloway Papers, 1935–2003. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA.

[77] Finnegan, conversation. The Alliance artists' primary goal was always to advance their practices. Achieving wealth and celebrity status were not common goals amongst those who regularly attended meetings. As Sharyn Finnegan (b.1946) stated, "I was grateful that I had a career in art; that I taught art; that I wrote about art; that I curated art; that I exhibited art; that I made art; that I looked at art; that I could live in that kind of space in my head—honestly, I didn't want or need much more than that."

Gallery and First Street Gallery opened in 1969, and Prince Street Gallery followed in 1970.[78] Alliance artists also exhibited with Green Mountain Gallery, which was founded by Alliance artist Lucien Day (1916–2008) and focused on landscape painting.[79] Green Mountain's model of approachability set it apart from the uptown galleries owned by dealers such as Leo Castelli and Betty Parsons.[80]

These four galleries formed a network of opportunities for Alliance artists. Openings took place on Friday nights before Alliance meetings so that the entire community could see the

[78] Hershberg, "Foreword," 4. See Appendix B for exact opening dates. Some older members of the Alliance had been involved with the 10th Street cooperative galleries of the 1950s, such as Hansa and Tanager galleries, both founded in 1952. These experiences informed their expectations of the Alliance. For more on Hansa and Tanager galleries, see Melissa Rachleff, ed., *Inventing Downtown: Artist-Run Galleries in New York City, 1952–1965* (New York: Grey Art Gallery, New York University, 2017).

[79] Although some Alliance artists showed work in other galleries, such as Brata, Kornblee, and Tibor de Nagy galleries, these four were expressly focused on and founded by Alliance artists.

[80] Green Mountain Gallery closed in 1979 and transitioned to the cooperative gallery model under the name Blue Mountain Gallery the following year with Day's support and participation. See *Evolution of a Gallery: Green Mountain to Blue Mountain, 1968–2010* (New York: Blue Mountain Gallery, 2010); Rachleff, *Inventing Downtown: Artist-Run Galleries in New York City, 1952–1965*.

shows. Discussions often continued afterward, too, at the storied Cedar Tavern.[81] These organic social engagements extended the Alliance beyond the walls of the Educational Alliance. Artists often received invitations to apply to join a co-op after participating in a "Show Your Work Night," and subsequently benefited professionally and creatively from meeting other gallery members.[82] The co-op model served the community of the Alliance especially well because every artist received equal benefits while bearing responsibilities, such as gallery monitoring.[83]

[81] Hershberg, "Foreword." The Cedar Tavern was the second iteration of The Cedar Bar, a pivotal gathering space for The New York School of Abstract Expressionists. The Cedar Bar originally opened in 1866 and relocated several times. In 1933 it moved to Greenwich Village, where its proximity to the artists' lofts and studios made it an ideal meeting place. In 1945 the bar moved again to 24 University Place, where the Club eventually opened a few doors down. In 1963 the building was demolished. The owners subsequently opened The Cedar Tavern at 82 University Place. Lee Siegel, "Bye-Bye Bohemia," *The New York Times*, May 17, 2013, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/18/opinion/bye-bye-bohemia.html.

[82] Finnegan, conversation.

[83] Kuh, "Of, by, and for Artists," 89. Artists on the fringe of the commercial art world in New York had long turned to the co-op model to create such opportunities with and for one another, including some older members of the Alliance. For example, in 1952 Dodd helped co-found the Tanager Gallery, the first cooperative gallery on Tenth Street. Although the Tanager showed more than figurative art, the gallery privileged community and exposure over sales, setting a precedent for the co-ops founded by younger Alliance artists two decades later. Dodd,

Focused on exposure over profits, the co-ops allowed artists to see their work outside of their studios and share it with a wider audience whilst commercial galleries declined to represent them.[84]

The formation of the co-op gallery network did not eradicate figurative artists' desires for attention from arts writers. Critics did occasionally visit the co-ops to see and review exhibitions.[85] Critics also wrote on contemporary figurative painting in general. Such articles ostensibly legitimized the Alliance's downtown art world. However, these critics did not advocate for wider exposure for the work. For example, in a 1970 review of work by three Alliance artists, James R. Mellow states, "The fact is that each of the painters…can match the technical verve of any of their abstractionist colleagues. Yet serious figurative painting—although it has its public—remains out of step with current values."[86] Despite clearly admiring their work, Mellow reinforced the idea espoused by critics that the Alliance artists dwelled outside the mainstream art world, coexisting alongside but separate from it.

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conversation. See also Rachleff, *Inventing Downtown: Artist-Run Galleries in New York City, 1952–1965*.

[84] Finnegan, conversation.

[85] Writers that penned favorable reviews of Alliance artists' work regularly in publications such as *ArtNews* and *Arts Magazine* include Martica Sawin, Lawrence Campbell, James R. Mellow, Lawrence Alloway, Cindy Nemser, and Jed Perl. Alloway was a particularly devoted supporter of Alliance artists' work, hence the plethora of material related to the Alliance in his archive and cited in this paper.

[86] Mellow, "When 'What' Is as Important as 'How,'" 113.

Although some critics and curators acknowledged the presence of figurative art in New York in the 1960s and 1970s, few ventured its contemporary significance. Moreover, with the turn towards postmodernism, those whose opinions were most respected—namely, powerful men—openly decried figuration as provincial and antiquated. Additional prejudices, such as sexism, further limited the potential for Alliance artists to achieve mainstream success. For example, *New York Painting and Sculpture* only included one woman artist, Helen Frankenthaler (1928–2011). As a result, the prevalence of figurative painting was left out of the dominant art historical narrative. Notably, however, all the cooperative galleries founded by Alliance artists still exist today. Although the work of the Alliance was and remains largely under-recognized, the group made significant contributions to the New York arts landscape in the 1970s motivated by mutual support and a spirit of do-it-yourself rebellion.

Part III: Women of the Alliance: The Anti-Oppressionists[87]

Women figurative artists in the Alliance faced twice the barriers to success as their male counterparts. First, they were excluded from the mainstream due to their medium and subject matter. The second barrier was resistance from male members of the Alliance to respect their opinions. Exhibitions and essays that touch upon the Alliance incorrectly intimate that the group was predominantly male. This is due in part to the fact that of the nearly 200 artists affiliated with the Alliance, those who achieved substantial success are almost all men. Only in the last decade have more female Alliance artists received significant recognition, including Dodd and

[87] This section title derives from a review of *Open Show of Feminist Art*, mentioned later. Anthony Burton, "Call These Gal Artists the Anti-Oppressionists," *Daily News*, December 11, 1971.

McNeely.[88] Furthermore, records of early Alliance meetings neglect to identify female speakers by name, so although the meetings typically consisted of almost fifty percent women, we know little about them.[89] Yet their presence was anything but anonymous; several women spoke on and moderated panels, such as McNeely, Neel, and Gretna Campbell (1922–1987), and a few participated in the Alliance organizing committee, including Kramer, Wendy Gittler (b. c.1945), and Nancy Grilikhes (b. 1941).[90] Women also played key roles in the founding and operating of the cooperative galleries and, later, the Artists' Choice Museum, which I discuss in the Epilogue. By so doing, they staked a claim to their place in the Alliance's history and that of Western figurative painting, which had long celebrated the archetype of the male genius artist.[91]

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[88] This represents an emergent trend whereby female artists of the twentieth century with decades-long careers finally receive mainstream attention in their 70s and 80s. The trend extends beyond figurative painting, but the earliest example is Neel. Neel is now considered one of the most important figurative painters of the twentieth century, but she did not receive significant acclaim until around the time of her death in 1984. In another example, James Fuentes Gallery, New York recently began representing McNeely, who is 84, and an exhibition of her work at the gallery in January 2020 was reviewed in almost every major art news outlet. Additionally, numerous articles and books have been written on Lois Dodd, who also has major gallery representation, in the last five years.

[89] Kramer, conversation.

[90] Finnegan, conversation; Grilikhes, conversation.

[91] See Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminism and the Writing of Art's Histories*; Salomon, "The Art Historical Canon: Sins of Omission."

Although it was founded on pillars of openness and community, sexism overtly plagued the Alliance during its early years. Sexism has always pervaded the art world, and second-wave feminism did not change this. Although women are still frequently overlooked for museum exhibitions, gallery representation, and tenured teaching positions today, the disparity between opportunities for male and female artists was especially extreme in New York prior to and during the Alliance's early years. For example, in 1970, women comprised just three percent of commercial galleries' rosters.[92] At Alliance meetings, when women sought to contribute, men regularly ignored or interrupted them. By May 1969, only three women had been invited to speak on meeting panels—one of whom found the atmosphere so hostile that she refused to participate at the last minute. As Miller recounts, "a girl named Marjorie Portnow was scheduled to be on the panel and attended the meeting, but she didn't want to sit on the panel, so she didn't."[93] Miller's dismissive, infantilizing description of Portnow (b. 1942) emblematizes male artists' attitudes towards women in the Alliance's early years.

Unwilling to endure misogyny, the women of the Alliance consistently pointed out inequalities and demanded respect for their female peers. For example, during a February 1970 panel on landscape painting featuring Dodd and Campbell, moderated by Kramer, men in the

[92] Ann Kalmbach, "The Position of Women Artists within the Aesthetic Community" (Rochester Institute of Technology, 1974). Additionally, as of 1972, only five of The Museum of Modern Art's previous 1,000 solo artist exhibitions were of women. These statistics were first gathered and published by Women Artists in Revolution (W.A.R.) in December 1973, a group of which Kramer was a member.

[93] Miller, "Recollection of the Origin of the Alliance of Figurative Artists."

audience spoke over Campbell. When no male panelists defended her right to speak, Kramer intervened.[94] Gittler joined the Alliance organizing committee in 1970 to suggest ways the Alliance could abolish its "boys club" atmosphere, but she was removed from her position after expressing this opinion.[95] As a result of women's continued efforts, such discrimination slowly came into question by 1971.[96] Although certain artists in the Alliance never relinquished their sexist beliefs, more opportunities for women slowly opened thereafter. For example, Kramer successfully campaigned for a panel of female artists speaking on the nude in January 1971, which McNeely moderated (fig. 19a–b). By 1972, each season's schedule typically featured at least two events led by women.[97]

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[94] "Landscape Panel."

[95] Finnegan, conversation; Kramer, conversation.

[96] It is worth noting that in 1971, Kramer published a feature in *Women and Art Quarterly*, of which she was the founding editor, calling attention to fellow Alliance artist Robert Pittenger's (b. 1937) petition "to change the sexist politics of that group" (fig. 18). The ad-like feature stated that "we believe sexism is a man's problem [and] we think it is up to men to straighten each other out." This petition may have also had an impact on the atmosphere shifting in 1971. See *Women and Art*, Winter 1971. See also "Open Discussion: Future of the Group."

[97] "Program Schedule for January and February 1972," January 1972, Alliance of Figurative Artists materials including clippings, programs, and association history, 1969–1970. Lawrence Alloway Papers, 1935–2003. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA. For example, on February 18, 1972, Neel and Isabel Bishop (1902–1988) presented their work. The following week, a group of nine women, including Neel and Ringgold, spoke on a panel.

These women could have skirted such sexism by participating in the women-only cooperative galleries emerging downtown, such as SOHO20 and A.I.R.[98] However, the women of the Alliance wanted to discuss their specific artistic interests irrespective of their gender. Seeking ways to influence decisions within the confines of gender roles, they took on organizational responsibilities within the Alliance and the cooperative gallery network. Although these positions were available to them due to the feminization of secretarial and care-based work, they embraced them as a way to actively support other artists—regardless of gender—and expand the Alliance's network.[99] Thus, these women accomplished some of the same goals set by women-run spaces—namely, offering mutual support and creating opportunities for their peers to exhibit work.[100] Seeking to create a more hospitable environment for discussing

[98] For more on how these galleries featured figurative artists, and SOHO20 in particular, see Sharyn Finnegan, *Better Than Ever: Women Figurative Artists of the 70s SoHo Cooperative Galleries* (Glassboro, NJ: Rowan University Art Gallery, 2009). For more on A.I.R. Gallery, see Meredith A. Brown, "'The Enemies of Women's Liberation in the Arts Will Be Crushed': A.I.R. Gallery's Role in the American Feminist Art Movement," *Archives of American Art*, 2012, https://www.aaa.si.edu/publications/essay-prize/2012-essay-prize-meredith-brown#_ftnref36.

[99] Finnegan, conversation.

[100] Finnegan, conversation. In particular, these opportunities enabled them to support other women artists. Finnegan recalls inviting Frances Siegel (b. c.1945) to apply to be part of Prince Street Gallery after seeing her work at a Show Your Work Night. Siegel protested that she was not, according to Finnegan, "good enough," but Finnegan convinced her to apply, and she joined the gallery within a few months.

figurative painting, the women of the Alliance directly contributed to the group's overall longevity, scope, and sense of community.

Of the women known to have participated in the Alliance, the majority self-identified as feminists. Even women Alliance artists who never expressly aligned themselves with the feminist movement had close ties to it.[101] Second-wave feminism thus informed the spirit with which many of these artists participated in the group. In the 1960s and early 1970s, artists across the United States began engaging with feminist politics in their work, typically gravitating towards new media that was readily accessible, such as performance and video. Artists including Carolee Schneemann (1939–2019) and Joan Jonas (b. 1936) saw potential in these mediums that lacked institutionally ascribed meaning. Meanwhile, feminist critics, art historians, and artists were struggling to agree upon a definition of feminist art. The sub-field of feminist art history rapidly gained traction in the early 1970s, initiated in large part by Nochlin, who published her polemic essay "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" in 1971.[102] Some, such as artist Judy Chicago (b. 1939), believed that feminist art ought to relate to or depict female

[101] Grilikhes, conversation. See also Jamie P. Ross, "Historicizing Subjectivities: Antigone, Rosemarie Beck and a Lesbian New Yorker" (Lyric Truth: Rosemarie Beck, Portland State University, 2015). For example, Alliance artist Rosemarie Beck (1923–2003) did not explicitly identify as a feminist, but her mother was a feminist activist.

[102] Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," *ArtNews* 69 (January 1971): 145–78.

biology.[103] Others, such as Lawrence Alloway, felt any artwork created by a woman could be called feminist art.[104] Meanwhile, Lucy Lippard thought art should raise consciousness and represent experiences specific to women.[105]

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[103] Judy Chicago, "Woman as Artist," *Everywoman*, 1971. The notion that female identity is rooted in biological is known as essentialism. For more on Chicago's views on feminist art, see Nancy McCauley, "No Sexual Perversion in (Judy) Chicago," *Art Documentation: Journal of the Libraries Society of North America* 11, no. 4 (Winter 1992): 177–79. For more on essentialist feminism, see Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 1–21.

[104] Renee Sandell, "Female Aesthetics: The Women's Art Movement and Its Aesthetic Split," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 14, no. 4 (October 1980): 106–10.

[105] Lucy Lippard, "The Pink Glass Swan: Upward and Downward Mobility in the Art World," *Heresies* 1 (Jan. 1977): 85. Specifically, Lippard believed that women and women's art had, until the 1970s, been relegated to a private sphere, while men maintained a monopoly on art in the public sphere. Lippard's stance on feminist art can be characterized as separatist, as she felt that feminist art reflected "aspects of art by women which are inaccessible to men…[that] arise from the fact that a woman's political, biological, and social experience in this society is different from that of a man." She believed that new criteria were needed to judge art by women. Lucy Lippard, "The Women's Art Movement—What's Next?," in *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1976), 139–48. See also Lucy Lippard, "Projecting a Feminist Criticism," *Art Journal* 35, no. 4 (Summer 1976): 337–39; Lucy Lippard, "Why Separate Women's Art?," *Art and Artists* 8 (October 1973).

Female figurative artists did not obviously fit into the evolving framework of feminist art because they adhered to traditional mediums and subjects. However, many female Alliance artists' works can be read through the lens of feminism, revealing their approaches to figurative painting to be both political and timely. In fact, the Alliance itself bears many similarities to consciousness raising, a practice used by women throughout the 1960s and 1970s to share personal experiences and express solidarity with one another.[106] Mirroring this structure, at the Alliance, figurative artists experiencing isolating loneliness communed with artists in similar positions or working in similar ways.[107]

In 1971, Kramer took a stance on defining feminist art, writing, "My position is that not all a woman artist's [sic] paintings are or should be feminist." She went on to say, "I feel that abstract [painting] can communicate, but only abstract ideas such as power, violence…Feminism is not a quality like that. I think the images in a feminist painting have to be socially legible, that is, recognizable. Figurative."[108] Kramer's comments highlight how female figurative artists' aesthetic interests were indeed inextricably linked with the political. Although not recognized as

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[106] Kathie Sarachild, "A Program for Feminist 'Consciousness Raising,'" *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation*, 1970. The first consciousness raising groups were first formed by the New York Radical Women group in 1967. Sarachild then delivered a speech in Chicago at the First National Women's Liberation Conference in November 1968 explaining the concept. She allegedly coined the term after hearing Anne Forer use the phrase at a meeting. See Susan Brownmiller, *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution* (New York: Dial Press, 1999), 21.

[107] Kramer, conversation.

[108] Marjorie Kramer, "Some Thoughts on Feminist Art," *Women and Art* 1 (1971): 3.

feminist art per se, many paintings by female Alliance artists from this period reveal their feminist beliefs. Yet figurative painting, perhaps even more so than new media, allowed these artists to address the art world's longstanding, prejudiced focus on the male genius artist head-on by engaging with traditional subject matters. For example, in Kramer's *Feminist, discovering Women's Movement* (1971, fig. 20), she depicts herself as an androgynous figure holding an apple, nodding to patriarchal tropes ranging from the story of Adam and Eve to the legacy of artists such as Paul Cezanne (1839–1906). On the table in front of her, a hammer alludes to her then-recent decision to work as an art handler—a male-dominated profession. It rests on a hand-written feminist manifesto.[109] Rife with symbolism found in Old Master self-portraiture, *Feminist, discovering Women's Movement* declaratively inserts Kramer into the history of painting alongside or in place of canonical male artists. Kramer represents herself as an artist and feminist simultaneously.

Kramer demonstrated her stance on feminist art in her paintings and through community organizing. In December 1971 she coordinated *Open Show of Feminist Art*, asking "are there women out there trying to make feminist paintings?"[110] Featuring work by approximately 125 artists gathered via an open call, the exhibition revealed myriad ways figurative artists

[109] Kramer, conversation.

[110] Kramer, conversation; Finnegan, *Better Than Ever: Women Figurative Artists of the 70s SoHo Cooperative Galleries*, 40.*Open Show of Feminist Art* took place at MUSEUM: A Project of Living Artists, an exhibition space at 729 Broadway run by the Art Workers Coalition. The show was reviewed in only one paper, the *Daily News*. Anthony Burton, "Call These Gal Artists the Anti-Oppressionists," *Daily News*, December 11, 1971.

identifying as feminists incorporated their politics into their work (fig. 21). A key work in *Open Show* was McNeely's *Woman's Psyche* (1968, fig. 22). In four panels, *Woman's Psyche* reimagines canonical imagery such as the female nude and the pastoral landscape, garishly combining and distorting them. In the center, two women crouch, menstruating amidst animals and phallic foliage, their pale skin juxtaposed with the bright red blood. The women appear trapped, their feet shackled or held, as they writhe either in pain or while attempting to escape. In its abject yet fantastical depiction of aspects of womanhood, the painting subverts the conservative expectations for figurative paintings of and by women.[111] While McNeely's figures are more abstracted than Kramer's, her paintings speak to a shared set of feminist concerns.

These concerns united female Alliance artists across stylistic and generational gaps. For example, *Open Show* featured young Alliance artists like McNeely alongside older artists such as Neel, Campbell, and Nell Blaine (1922–1996). While Blaine and Campbell primarily painted landscapes, they were outspoken in Alliance meetings, and their participation in opportunities such as *Open Show* confirmed their politics. Meanwhile, several of Neel's best-known portraits from the 1970s depict feminist activists, such as Irene Peslikis and Jackie Curtis, in a sympathetic light (fig. 24a–b).[112] Neel's painting *Linda Nochlin and Daisy* (1973, fig. 25) best

[111] Sharyn Finnegan, "Juanita McNeely: Art and Life Entwined," *Woman's Art Journal* 32, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2011): 38–45. Of all the female artists in the Alliance, McNeely's work was among the most overtly political. In 1969 she painted one of the earliest works to address the taboo topic of abortion head-on with a work titled *Is It Real? Yes, It is!* (fig. 23).

[112] Pamela Allara, "Alice Neel's Women from the 1970s: Backlash to Fast Forward" *Woman's Art Journal* 27, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2006): 8–11.

represents her own feminist beliefs. The work presents an intimate portrait of the established art historian with her small daughter. Neel alludes to Nochlin's struggle to occupy the opposing roles of professional woman and mother through subtle artistic choices. For example, Neel depicts Nochlin with sharp forehead wrinkles but a soft smile, giving her a reticent but endearing expression. Nochlin's hand gently rests on Daisy, but she does not embrace her. Despite their rigid poses, Neel's expressive brushwork and the setting of her domestic studio create an atmosphere of familiarity. Neel had personally struggled to balance her desire to be an artist with the responsibilities of motherhood decades prior to the emergence of second-wave feminism.[113] Neel's understanding of Nochlin's struggle, as depicted in the portrait, is thus both political and personal.[114]

Outside of the Alliance, other women artists in New York were painting figuratively, and only those who exhibited with women-only galleries, such as Sleigh, were considered "feminist artists" at the time. This proves the inherent limits of the category, even if some women Alliance artists may not have aspired to be labeled as such. Instead of carving out an entirely new space for their work, by taking part in the Alliance, these women artists inserted themselves into a male-dominated genre of art and demanded a seat at the table to discuss it. By doing so, they helped to disrupt the notion of the singular male genius artist. They accomplished this by reimagining tropes of Western art history from their specific female perspective. Moreover, by

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[113] See Denise Bauer, "Alice Neel's Portraits of Mother Work," *NWSA Journal* 14, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 102–20.

[114] "The personal is political" was a feminist slogan coined in 1968 by activist Carol Hanisch. Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America*, 196.

supporting the operations of the Alliance and its cooperative galleries, these women laid the groundwork for future generations of figurative artists, prioritizing community over individual success. Their work thus set the tone for the Alliance's next decade of generative meetings and successful collaborations.

Epilogue

Examining the Alliance's structure and scope reveals that although little has been written about it, the group set a key precedent for artistic development through collaboration, collective growth, and community organizing. With weekly meetings and a constellation of exhibition venues, Alliance members productively responded to their alienation from mainstream art establishments. Art history suffers from a lack of examples of such perseverance with its loss of the Alliance. The Alliance also enriches our understanding of New York as home to multiple art communities, rather than one singular art world. Without historicization of the group's accomplishments, this narrow view endures, perpetuating barriers to artists' success.

Throughout the 1970s, the artists of the Alliance sought to make their presence in New York known. Following years of discussions around and protests for the inclusion of figurative art in the city's major institutions, the artists eventually founded their own museum c.1979.[115]

[115] As early as May 1970, the Alliance discussed potentially working with one of the city's museums on an exhibition of figurative art. In the years that followed, artists—mainly women—wrote to and established contact with curators at the city's major museums. However, no exhibition ever materialized. In 1976, they ceased their reasonable yet ultimately unreciprocated efforts and organized their own museum-quality exhibition. *Artists' Choice* featured nearly 150 artists shown across the Alliance's cooperative galleries (fig. 26). After several successful

The Artists' Choice Museum served as the ultimate alternative art space for these marginalized artists. The Museum presented thematic exhibitions and artist retrospectives, and it produced catalogues and a magazine.[116] By adopting the formal systems and appearance of established arts institutions, the artists behind the Museum sought to assert the contemporaneity of their work and cement their individual and collective legacies.[117] However, despite their efforts, the Museum remains largely unknown.[118]

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iterations of the exhibition, *Artists' Choice* transformed into a museum by the same name. The artists acquired a permanent gallery space for The Artists' Choice Museum at 394 West Broadway c.1982.

[116] Most of the retrospectives were given to senior artists of the Alliance whom the advisory committees felt deserved career recognition. See for example *Aristodimos Kaldis: A Retrospective. 1899–1979* (New York: Artists' Choice Museum, 1985); *Herbert Katzman: Retrospective of Paintings and Drawings* (New York: Artists' Choice Museum, 1985). Group exhibitions included *Narrative Sculpture* in 1982, *Painted Light* in 1983, and *Realist Antecedents* in 1985. *The Journal of the Artists' Choice Museum* was launched in 1982 and was released twice annually, typically in spring/summer and fall.

[117] Kramer noted that "We thought [the exhibitions] were so historic and that they'd be big time, but they weren't and haven't been." Kramer, conversation.

[118] Although a few copies of the Museum's catalogues are held in museum and university archives, most issues of the *Journal* and the Museum's administrative archive are dispersed among artists' private collections or else lost. Vestiges of the Museum largely survive as personal memories recounted to those who know to ask about it. No recent publications centered on New York artist-

Many factors could have contributed to the loss of the Museum to history. Firstly, some active Alliance artists relocated when New York rents started to rise in the 1980s.[119] The role women played in the founding and sustaining of the Museum may have also affected its historicization, as women's contributions during this period are often lost due to a sexist "amnesia."[120] However, the Museum's focus likely had the greatest influence on its legacy. The onset of postmodernism in the early 1980s poised figurative art to become fashionable once again with the emergence of Neo-Expressionism and the Pictures Generation.[121] Painters such as

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run spaces mention the Museum. See for example Lauren Rosati and Mary Anne Staniszweski, *Alternative Histories: New York Art Spaces, 1960 to 2010* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012). This publication also omits any mention of the Alliance artists' three cooperative galleries, despite their prevalence at the time and their enduring legacy today.

[119] Many younger Alliance artists were in search of larger, more affordable homes at this time as they were starting families. Kramer, conversation; Finnegan, conversation.

[120] Lovelace, "Optimism and Rage: The Women's Movement in Art in New York, 1969–1975," 4. This is a phenomenon Adrienne Rich calls the "Great Silence." See Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs* 5, no. 4 (Summer 1980): 640. This silencing can even be seen in the limited literature on the Artists' Choice Museum, as Weber suggests in *See It Loud* that Georges single-handedly founded *Artists' Choice*, when two women, Kramer and Tomar Levine (b. c.1945), were heavily involved in the project (along with Thurston and Kalish). Weber, *See It Loud: Seven Post-War American Painters*, 20.

[121] Douglas Crimp, "Pictures," *October* 8 (Spring 1979): 75–88. Crimp coined the term "Pictures Generation" when he curated an exhibition titled *Pictures* at Artists Space in Fall 1977.

Julian Schnabel (b. 1951), David Salle (b. 1952), and Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960–1988) achieved rapid commercial success by blending Pop art and abstract expressionist motifs with figuration. However, the Museum rigidly focused on post-war figurative art, declining to engage in the type of dialogue with other mediums and temporalities that postmodernism championed. Moreover, like the Alliance, the Museum shirked Photorealism, despite its increasing popularity.

Today, a new generation of American painters embraces figurative painting, but due to lack of knowledge of the Alliance, the current renaissance of the medium is inaccurately positioned as a sudden trend. These artists take diverse approaches to many of the subjects and techniques that were of interest to the Alliance. Artists such as Amy Sherald (b. 1981) and Dana Schutz (b. 1976) explore the possibilities of portraiture, while others reimagine landscape and still life painting, such as Matthew Wong (1984–2019) and Jonas Wood (b. 1977). However, unlike the Alliance artists, curators and collectors' responses to these artists' work are unanimously positive.[122] While consciously building upon the tradition of figurative painting, these artists—and their supporters—may be wholly unaware of their inherited relationship to Alliance artists.

In the *New York Painting and Sculpture* catalogue, Greenberg writes that contemporary art vacillates between abstraction and figuration.[123] However, he does not consider, let alone

[122] These artists' mainstream success is best demonstrated by their auction records as of February 2021, which are: Sherald, $4.2 million; Schutz, $6.4 million; and Wong and Wood, $4.9 million each.

[123] Clement Greenberg, "After Abstract Expressionism," in *New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940–1970* (New York: Dutton, 1969), 360–71.

acknowledge, how influential critics and curators, such as himself, determine the narrative of such vacillations. Omission of the Alliance from art history highlights the significant responsibility these individuals bear. Greenberg's peer, Rosenberg, wrote in 1953 that "The most radical [artistic] changes have come from personalities who were conservative and even conventional—a powerful recoil from the radical present threw them backward, so to speak, into the future."[124] Alliance artists ultimately became unsung rebels, characteristic of 1970s folkloric attitudes, more so even than the most famous artists associated with the period. Despite the linear progression of modernism promulgated by such writers, painting never "died" and figuration never disappeared. Figurative painters in New York in the 1970s persisted outside of the limelight, creating their own opportunities to uplift their practices and each other.

[124] Harold Rosenberg, "Revolution and the Idea of Beauty," *Encounter* 1, no. 3 (December 1953): 66.

Appendix A: List of Artists

At least 200 artists participated in the Alliance, but no records of meeting attendance survive. The following list contains the names of 175 artists known to have either a) participated in at least one Alliance meeting or b) participated in or been scheduled to participate in at least one panel at the Alliance between 1969 and 1975. This list is culled from a combination of archival documents, articles, and interviews conducted by the author. Birth and death years are noted when known and approximated when possible.

Anderson, Lennart (1928–2015)
Andrejevic, Milet (1925–1989)
Anthony, Ken (–)
Arcilesi, Vincent (1932–)
Badalamenti, Fred (1935–c.2019)
Baen, Noah (–)
Bailey, William (1930–2020)
Beckman, William (1942–)
Beck, Rosemarie (1923–2003)
Beckman, William (c.1942–)
Bell, Leland (1922–1991)
Birmelin, Robert (1933–)
Bishop, Isabel (1902–1988)
Blaine, Nell (1922–1996)
Block, Dorothy (1904–1984)
Bradford, John (1949–)
Bram, Rudolph (1927–)
Brasz, Marc (1948–)
Broderson, Morris (1928–2011)
Brody, Joel (1929–2006)
Brown, Kai (–)
Bruder, Harold Jacob (1930–)
Burckhardt, Rudy (1914–1999)
Button, John (1929–1982)
Campbell, Gretna (1922–1987)
Campbell, David (1936–)
Cato, Eddie Earl (1941–)
Chiriani, Richard (1942–)
Chivitico, Bruno (1942–)
Ciarrochi, Ray (1933–)
Citron, Harvey (–)
Coleo, Nick (–)
Cornell, Thomas (1937–1972)
Cuchiara, Jimmy (1925–2010)
Davidson, Thyra (1925–)
Day, Lucien B. (1916–2008)
Day, Larry (–)
DiLascia, Marjorie (–)
Dodd, Lois (1927–)
Donahue, Bob (c.1945–)
Downes, Rackstraw (1939–)
Eichel, Edward (1932–)
Einhorn, Ben (–)
Elias, Arthur (1925–2018)
Erlebacher, Walter (1933–1991)
Fabricant, Don (1932–1992)
Faden, Lawrence (Larry) Steven (1942–)
Fairchild, Granville (–)
Finkelstein, Louis (1923–2000)
Finnegan, Sharyn (1946–)
Fiore, Joseph A. (1925–2008)
Fiore, Joseph (Joe (1925–2008)
Firschein, Bill (–)
Fish, Janet (1938–)
Flack, Audrey (1931–)
Freilich, Anne (1924–)
Freilicher, Jane (1924–2014)
Friedman, Stanley (1941–)
Galker, Joel (1942–)
Gelber, Samuel (1929–)
Georges, Paul (1923–2002)
Gershowitz, Paul (1929–2017)
Gillespie, Gregory (1936–2000)
Porter, Suzanne Gilliard (1936–)
Gittler, Wendy (c. 1945–)
Glasson, Lloyd (c.1931–)
Goldblatt, Joel (1926–)
Gray, Don (1948–)
Greene, Balcolmb (1904–1990)
Greenberg, Joseph J. (1939–1989)
Gregor, Harold (1929–2018)
Grilikhes, Nancy (1941–)

Grillo, Steve (–)
Groell, Joseph (1928–2018)
Grubb, David (–)
Gussow, Alan (1931–1997)
Hale, Nathan Cabot (1925–)
Harris, Louis (1902–1970)
Heise, Myron (1934–2016)
Helsy, Kate (–)
Henry, Robert (1933–2019)
Hershberg, Israel (1948–)
Howrigan, Roger (1943–1994)
Kaldis, Aristodimos (1899–1979)
Kalish, Howard (Howie) (–)
Katz, Alex (1927–)
Katzman, Herbert (1923–2004)
Klein, Doris (1918–2002)
Koch, John (1909–1978)
Kramer, Marjorie Anne (1943–)
Kresch, Al (1922–)
Kurzen, Aaron (1920–)
Laderman, Gabriel (1929–2011)
LaPresti, Richard (–)
Leiber, Gerson (1922–2018)
Lerman, Ora (1938–1998)
Leslie, Alfred (1927–)
Levine, Arthur (–)
Levine, Tomar (c.1945–)
Levine, Marion Lerner (1931–)
Lieber, Louise (1914–2004)
Lobell, Dan (–)
Mailman, Cynthia (1942–)
Marcus, Andy (c. 1950s–)
Martinez, Peter (1894–1970)
Mashwitz, Charles (–)
Mazur, Michael (1935–2009)
McCall, Frank (–)
McNeely, Juanita (1936–)
Melcarth, Edward (1917–1973)
Middleman, Raoul F. (1935–)
Miller, Richard McDermott (1922–2004)
Milstein, Tom (–)
Neel, Alice (1900–1984)
Parker, Anne (1921–2016)
Pavia, Philip (c.1911–2005)
Pearlstein, Philip (1924–)
Pelicons, Bill (–)
Perlis, Don (1941–)
Peslikis, Irene (1943–2002)
Piccolo, Richard (1943–)
Pittenger, Robert (Bob (c.1928–1993)
Pitts, Richard (Dick (–)
Pollack, Reginald (1924–2001)
Pollet, Joseph C. (1897–1979)
Pollet, Joseph (Joe (1898–1979)
Porter, Fairfield (1907–1975)
Portnow, Marjorie (1942–)
Reiss, Andrew (–)
Repke, Ted (–)
Resika, Paul (1928–)
Reynolds, Marilyn (–)
Ringgold, Faith (1930–)
Rodriguez, Juan (1948–)
Roseman, Ms. (–)
Ross, Alvin (1920–1975)
Samuels, Jerald (1927–2004)
Santoso, Anthony (–)
SanTiago, Anthony (–)
Sawyer, Janet (1942–)
Schecter, Laura (1944–)
Schloss, Edith (1919–2011)
Schneider, Janet (1950–)
Schock, Carolyn (–)
Schorr, Harriet (1939–)
Schumacher, Gary (–)
Shattan, Norma A. (–)
Siani, Anthony (Tony) (1939–1995)
Frances Siegel (c.1945–)
Silberman, Jack (c.1940–)
Sklarski, Bonnie (1943–)
Slack, Dee (1946–)
Smith, David (–)
Smullin, Frank Mayer (1943–1983)
Soyer, Raphael (1899–1987)
Speventa, George (1918–1978)
Stanton, Harriet (1924–)
Stevens, May (1924–2019)
Sullivan, Bill (1942–2010)
Sultan, Altoon (1948–)
Sussman, Wendy (1949–2001)
Thurston, Sam (1943–)
Tillim, Sidney (1925–2001)
Tinkham, A.D. (1943–)

Trieff, Selina (1934–2015)
Turner, Norman (1939–2015)
Tytell, Louis (1913–2001)
Vance, Barry (1946–)
Vodicka, Ruth (1921–1999)
Walsh, Ms. (–)
Wheeler, Steve (c.1912–1992)
White, Willard (–)
Wilson, Jane (1924–2015)
Yarber, Robert (Bob (1948–)
Zimetbaum, Marc (1943–2020)

Appendix B: Historical Timeline, 1969–1975

The following timeline places the formation and early meetings of the Alliance in context with key events in the New York art world and, more broadly, in New York and American history. All Alliance-related events are culled from archival materials held in the Smithsonian Institute Archives of American Art and the Getty Institute. Other dates come from a variety of sources, including notably the cultural timeline written by Ulrike Müller for the 2006 catalogue for the exhibition *High Times, Hard Times*, curated by Katy Siegel, and the historical timeline in Joseph P. Viteritti's *Summer in the City: John Lindsay, New York, and the American Dream* (2014). The amount of information provided per year is proportional to the amount of information available about the Alliance.

1969

January – Art – The Art Workers' Coalition is founded in response to a protest of The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).

January 18 – Art – *"Harlem on My Mind": Cultural Capital of Black America 1900–1968* opens at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Black Emergency Cultural Coalition (BECC) is established in protest of the exhibition.

January 20 – Event – Richard M. Nixon is inaugurated as the 37th president of the United States.

February – Event – Student protests sweep college campuses across the United States, beginning with a strike at U.C. Berkeley.

February 11 – Art – *Earth Art*, the first American museum exhibition dedicated to earthworks, opens at the Andrew Dickson White Museum of Art at Cornell University in Upstate New York.

February 14 – Alliance – The first meeting of the Alliance of Figurative Artists is held at Charles Mashwitz's loft on Broome Street near Broadway.

February 20 – Art – *Helen Frankenthaler* exhibition opens at Whitney Museum of American Art.

February 21 – Alliance – Second meeting takes place at Alfred Leslie's studio at 940 Broadway. Samuel Thurston is the discussion moderator.

February 24 – Alliance – First organizational committee meeting of the Alliance is held at Alfred Leslie's apartment on West 13th Street. Attendees include Paul Georges, Alfred Leslie, Gabriel Laderman, Richard Miller, Sidney Tillim, Paul Resika, Millet Andrejevic, Anthony Siani, Samuel Thurston, and Howard Kalish.

February 28 – Alliance – Third meeting takes place at Alfred Leslie's loft, featuring a panel discussion with Grandville Fairchild, Samuel Thurston, Richard Chiriani, Anthony Santoso.

March 9 – Alliance –First meeting at the Educational Alliance at 197 East Broadway.

March 14 – Alliance – Andrew Reiss lectures on Narrative Painting.

March 21 – Alliance – Panel discussion on Narrative Painting.

March 21 – Event – The Redstockings, founded in January, organize their first abortion speak-out.

March 24 – Alliance – Panel discussion on "The special problems of sculpture." This is the first meeting featuring women speakers, Thyra Davidson and Louise Lieber.

April 4 – Alliance – First Show Your Work Night. Everyone brings a painting or sculpture in order to be admitted.

April 11 – Alliance – Panel discussion on the work seen at Show Your Work Night, moderated by Paul Resika.

April 18 – Alliance – Panel on Landscape Painting.

April 24 – Event – A special Zoning District is enacted for the construction of Lincoln Square.

April 25 – Alliance – Panel on Landscape Painting, Part II.

May 2 – Alliance – Panel on "The Artist's Personal Viewpoint"

May 9 – Alliance – Panel on "Painting in a Political Context"

May 18 – Art – *Number 7*, curated by Lucy Lippard, opens at Paula Cooper Gallery

May 20 – Art – *Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials*, curated by Marcia Tucker and James Monte, opens at the Whitney featuring artwork that is "disordered."

June – Art – El Museo del Barrio is founded.

July 16 – Event – Mayor John Vliet Lindsay kills Robert Moses's plan for the Lower Manhattan Expressway through SoHo.

June 28 – Event – A confrontation between gay rights activists and police outside the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village escalates into a riot.

July 20 – Event – Apollo 11 lands on the moon.

August 9–10 – Event – Sharon Tate and seven others are killed by Charles Manson and members of "Family."

August 15–18 – Event – Nearly 400,000 people attend the Woodstock music festival.

August 24 – Art – Yayoi Kusama stages an unofficial happening at MoMA in protest of the museum's politics.

Autumn – Art – First issue of Avalanche magazine is released.

October 15 – Event – 500,000 protestors assemble outside the White House for the National Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam.

October 17 – Alliance – First meeting of Alliance's 1969–1970 season, during which a new committee is formed.

October 18 – Art – *New York Painting and Sculpture, 1940–1970* curated by Henry Geldzahler opens at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

October 24 – Alliance – Show Your Work Night

October 28 – Alliance – "Current Events" discussion of the Bowery Gallery's current exhibition sand *New York Painting and Sculpture* at The Met.

October 31 – Alliance – Bowery Gallery opens at 299 Bowery.

November 7 – Alliance – Paul Georges lectures on "The necessity of making an image."

November 14 – Alliance – Panel on Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot.

November 21 – Alliance – Show Your Work Night focused on portraits.

November 28 – Alliance – "Discussion Lottery" on the topic of "An Artist's Utopia." The order of the speakers is determined by drawing names from a hat.

December – Art – Cooperative gallery 55 Mercer is founded.

December 5 – Alliance – Philip Pearlstein lectures on his current work and the development of his practice.

December 12 – Alliance – First Street Gallery opens at 307 Bowery.

December 12 – Alliance – Panel on Narrative Painting.

December 16 – Art – The 1969 *Whitney Annual: Contemporary American Painting* opens. It's curated by Robert Doty.

December – Art – Women Artists in Revolution (WAR) forms in response to the Whitney Annual, which comprises only 5% women.

December 19 – Alliance – Show Your Work Night focused on drawings.

1970

Winter – Alliance – Prince Street Gallery opens at Greene and Prince Streets.

January 9 – Alliance – Art historian Ben Rifkin lectures on Rembrandt's studio.

January 16 – Alliance – Panel on "Legends and Myths."

January 23 – Alliance – Show Your Work Night – nudes

January 30 – Alliance – Edward Melcarth and Raoul Middleman on "The Hero and the Epic Today"

February 6 – Alliance – Gabriel Laderman lectures on his latest work.

February 10 – Art – *22 Realists,* curated by James Monte, opens at the Whitney.

February 13 – Alliance – Panel on "Representational Sculpture."

March 24 – Art – *Frank Stella* retrospective opens at MoMA. The artist is the youngest person to receive a retrospective at the museum.

April 13 – Art – The Met holds a Centennial Ball to culminate the year-long celebration of its 100^{th} anniversary.

April 22 – Event – The first Earth Day is recognized.

May 1 – Event – Protests erupt on college campuses in response to President Nixon's authorization of troops to enter Cambodia.

May 4 – Event – Members of the Ohio National Guard opened fire on students protesting the Vietnam War at Kent State University.

May 8 – Event – The Beatles release their final album, "Let It Be."

May 13 – Art – *Using Walls,* curated by Susan Tumarkin Goodman, opens at The Jewish Museum.

May 22 – Art – New York Art Strike Against War, Racism, Fascism, Sexism, and Repression is established. Museums close for the day or suspend admission charges as part of the demonstration.

June 22 – Event – The Voting Rights Act lowers the voting age to 18.

July 2 – Art – The landmark conceptual art exhibition *Information,* curated by Kynaston McShine, opens at MoMA.

August – Event – *Sexual Politics* by Kate Millett is published.

August 26 – Event – 5,000 women join the Women's Strike for Equality in New York, marking the 50th anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment.

September 16 – Art – *Software: Information Technology and Its New Meaning for Art,* curated by Karl Katz, opens at The Jewish Museum.

November 6 – Alliance – The third season of the Alliance opens with a lecture by Alex Katz titled "On Painting."

November 13 – Alliance – The first Show Your Work Night of the season features a new format. The discussion is moderated by Paul Resika.

November 20 – Alliance – Open discussion of "Eakins and other current events."

December 4 – Alliance – Panel on "Exposing the Nude: Young Artists."

December 11 – Alliance – Leland Bell and Rosemarie Beck in dialogue.

December 12 – Art – 1970 *Whitney Annual: Contemporary American Sculpture* opens at the Whitney. It is curated by Robert Doty and James Monte.

December 18 – Alliance – Show Your Work Night focused on cityscapes; Noah Baen moderates.

1971

January – Art – Linda Nochlin publishes *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists*?

January 2 – Event – A ban on advertising cigarettes on television and radio goes into effect.

January 6 – Alliance – Alice Neel lecture.

January 15 – Alliance – Panel on "Formal Art and the Micro-Contribution."

January 22 – Alliance – Open discussion on current events and exhibitions moderated by Milet Andrejevic.

January 28 – Alliance – Show Your Work Night focused on "how female artists relate to the male tradition of the nude." Only women are invited to bring work. Juanita McNeely moderates.

January 28 – Art – New York amends its zoning laws to allow certified artists to live-work in

commercial lofts in SoHo.

February 5 – Alliance – Fairfield Porter lecture.

February 12 – Alliance – Panel on "The uses of the past."

February 19 – Alliance – Open discussion on current events led by Paul Georges on the subject of the state of the art world, called "where are we now."

February 25 – Art – *The Structure of Color*, a color field exhibition curated by Marcia Tucker, opens at the Whitney.

February 26 – Alliance – Show Your Work Night

March 5 – Alliance – Harold Bruder lecture.

March 12 – Alliance – Panel on "Painting the figure."

March 19 – Alliance – Open discussion on current events; Alvin Ross moderates.

March 26 – Alliance – Show Your Work Night; Marjorie Kramer moderates.

April 2 – Alliance – Richard Miller lecture.

April 6 – Art – 15 artists withdraw from *Contemporary Black Artists in America* at the Whitney on its opening day as a demonstration in line with the BECC.

April 20 – Event – The Supreme Court rules that busing students is an appropriate way to promote the integration of schools in Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education.

April 25 – Alliance – Panel on "Object: Form and symbol."

April 30 – Alliance – Show Your Work Night; Edward Melcarth moderates.

May 7 – Alliance – Balcomb Greene lecture.

May 14 – Alliance – Tony Siani and Tom Milstein discuss "Art and Social Vision."

May 21 – Alliance – Show Your Work Night; Joseph Greenberg moderates.

May 29 – Art – *Lyrical Abstraction* opens at the Whitney.

June 13 – Event – *The New York Times* begins publishing The Pentagon Papers.

September 27 – Art – 420 West Broadway Gallery Building opens. Its occupants include Sonnabend, Leo Castelli, Andre Emmerich, and Weber galleries. It marks the latest in a series of

shifts moving the center of the New York gallery scene to SoHo.

October – Art – 112 Workshop opens at 112 Greene Street**.** Food restaurant is founded at 127 Prince Street and quickly becomes an artist hangout. Gordon Matta-Clark is involved in both projects.

October 22 – Alliance – The fourth season of the Alliance kicks off with a lecture on "Radical Realism" by Ivan Karp.

October 21 – Alliance – The first retrospective of Barnett Newman, who died in 1970, opens at MoMA.

November 5 – Leland Bell gives an impromptu lecture based on slides selected by Gabriel Laderman without Bell's knowledge.

November 6 – Event – 20,000 people protest against the Vietnam War in Central Park.

December 10 – Alliance – Marjorie Kramer organizes Open Show of Feminist Art at MUSEUM: A Project of Living Artists at 729 Broadway.

1972
Winter – Art – SOHO20 opens at 99 Spring Street and hosts 20 exhibitions in its first year.

January 23 – Alliance – Michael Mazur lectures on "Present and Past Concerns."

February 4 – Alliance – Raoul Middleman lectures on "The Luxury of Transformations."

February 11 – Alliance – Gabriel Laderman gives an impromptu talk based on slides selected by Leland Bell without Gabriel Laderman's knowledge.

February 18 – Alliance – Alice Neel and Isabel Bishop in dialogue.

February 25 – Alliance – Panel on Political Art features all women speakers. Pat Mainardi moderates.

March 3 – Alliance – Raphael Soyer lecture.

March 10 – Alliance – Gretna Campbell lecture.

March 17 – Alliance – Philip Pavia lectures on "Heads and Abstractions."

March 22 – Event – The Equal Rights Amendment is passed by the US Senate.

March 24 – Alliance – Alan Gussow lectures on "The Artist and a Sense of Place."

April 7 – Alliance – Show Your Work Night.

April 14 – Alliance – Paul Georges leads a discussion on composition.

April 21 – Alliance – Audrey Flack lectures on "Baroque Realism."

April 28 – Alliance – Panel discussion on "10 Down Town: how it works and what it's about" moderated by Vincent Arcilesi.

May 5 – Alliance – John Button lectures on "Naked Figures."

June 17 – Event – Police arrest burglars at the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate complex in Washington, D.C.

September 16 – Art – A.I.R. Gallery opens at 97 Wooster Street.

Winter – Art – Artists Space is founded by Irving Sandler and Trudie Grace at 155 Wooster Street.

December 7 – Art – *Eva Hesse: A Memorial Exhibition* opens at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

1973

January 10 – Art – The first Whitney Biennial opens, marking a shift from the Annual model to the Biennial.

January 12 – Art – *Women Choose Women* opens at the New York Cultural Center.

January 22 – Event – The US Supreme Court rules that the Constitution protects a woman's right to abortion access in Roe v. Wade.

January 27 – Event – The Paris Peace Accords end US combat involvement in the Vietnam War.

February 1 – Alliance – Panel on still lifes; Wendy Gittler moderates.

February 22 – Alliance – Show Your Work Night, titled "Bring Work and Bring a Bottle"

March 1 – Alliance – Panel on "Painting and Place." Lois Dodd moderates.

March 8 – Alliance – Harold Gregory lectures on "The Constant Character of Realist Content."

April 4 – Event – The North Tower of World Trade Center is completed, making it the tallest building in the world.

April 15 – Art – The first issue of *Art-Rite* magazine is published.

Summer – Event – The Watergate Hearings in Washington, D.C. are broadcast live on television.

July 20 – Art – Robert Smithson dies in a plane crash at age 35.

August – Art – The National Gallery of Australia purchases Jackson Pollock's *Blue Poles* for $2 million, a record price for a work by an American artist.

October – Alliance – Fifth season of the Alliance commences.

December 10 – Event – CBGB opens.

December 28 – Art – The first New York retrospective of Marcel Duchamp opens at MoMA.

1974

February 7 – Art – *Alice Neel* retrospective opens at the Whitney. The exhibition came about in part because of a petition organized and signed by Alliance members.

Spring – Alliance – The fifth season of the Alliance continues with no major changes to its structure.

August 9 – Event – Richard Nixon resigns as President of the United States. He is succeeded by Gerald Ford.

October – Alliance – The sixth season of the Alliance commences.

1975

Spring – Art – *Art-Rite* releases a special painting edition.

April 30 – Event – The fall of Saigon to the North Vietnamese effectively marks the end of the Vietnam War.

Spring – Alliance – The sixth season of the Alliance ends.

Autumn – Art – Joe Overstreet founds Kenkeleba House gallery on the Bowery.

October – Alliance –The seventh season of the Alliance commences.

September – Art – *Artforum* releases a special painting edition.

September 24 – Art – *Report from SoHo* opens at NYU Grey Art Gallery. Curated by Joy Gordon, the exhibition features several Alliance artists.

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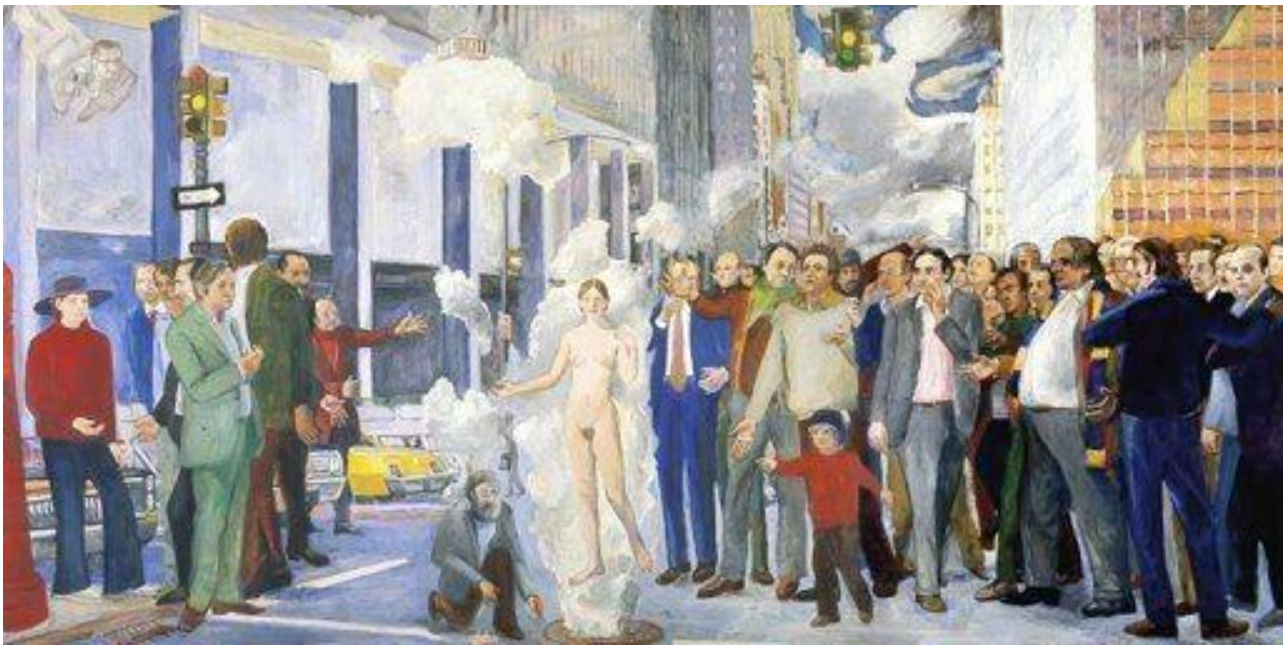
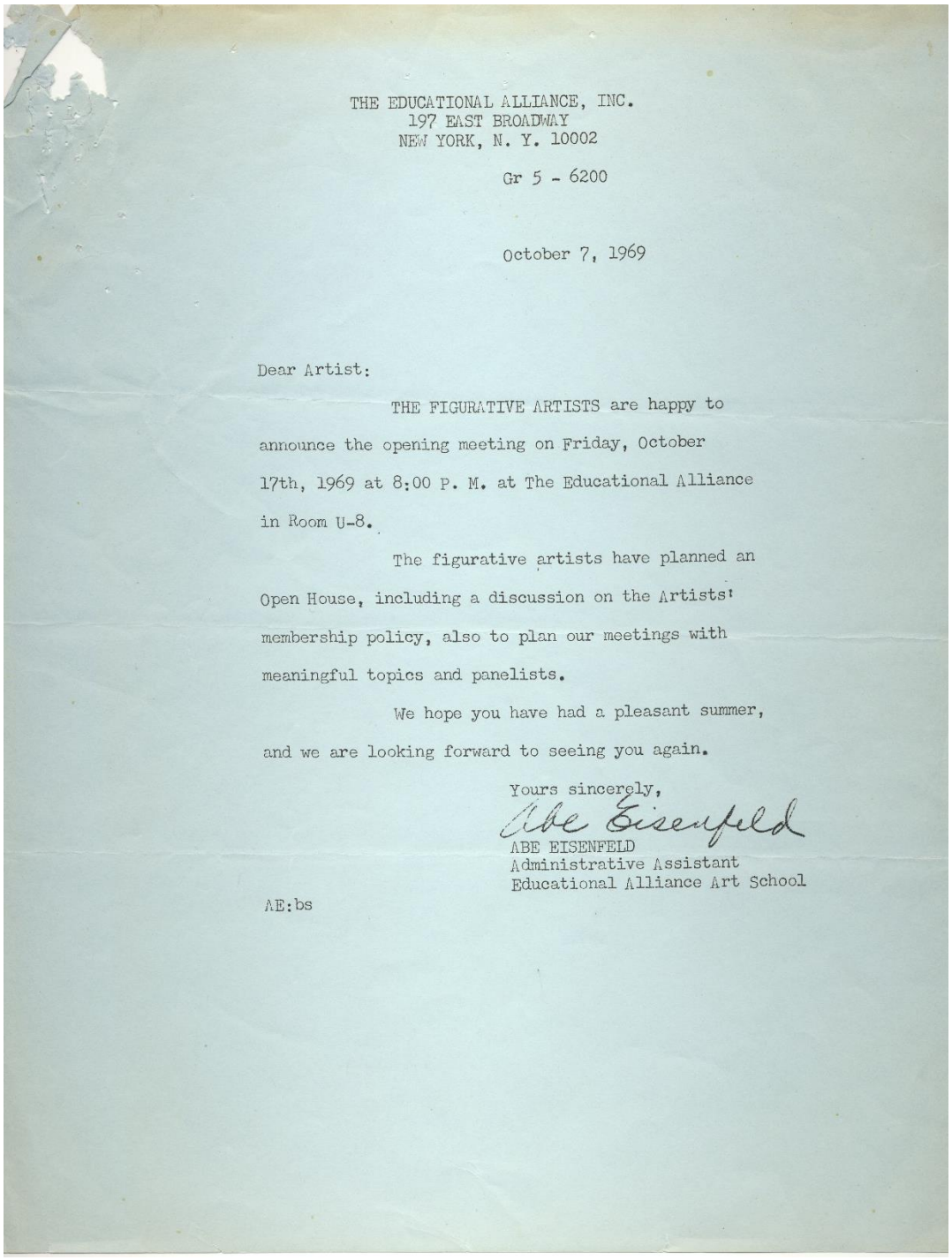


Figure 1. Paul Georges, *The Return of the Muse,* 1968–1969, oil on canvas, 119 3/4 x 240 in. Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art.



THE EDUCATIONAL ALLIANCE, INC.
197 EAST BROADWAY
NEW YORK, N. Y. 10002

Gr 5 - 6200

October 7, 1969

Dear Artist:

THE FIGURATIVE ARTISTS are happy to announce the opening meeting on Friday, October 17th, 1969 at 8:00 P. M. at The Educational Alliance in Room U-8.

The figurative artists have planned an Open House, including a discussion on the Artists' membership policy, also to plan our meetings with meaningful topics and panelists.

We hope you have had a pleasant summer, and we are looking forward to seeing you again.

Yours sincerely,
Abe Eisenfeld
ABE EISENFELD
Administrative Assistant
Educational Alliance Art School

AE:bs

Figure 2. Alliance of Figurative Artists Meeting Announcement, October 7, 1969. Courtesy Nancy Grilikhes.

Figure 3. Paul Resika, *The Great Rocks*, 1970, oil on canvas, 24 1⁄8 x 30 1⁄8 in. Collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.

Figure 4. Anthony Siani, *Bathers,* 1969, oil on canvas, 20 x 36 in. Courtesy Bowery Gallery.

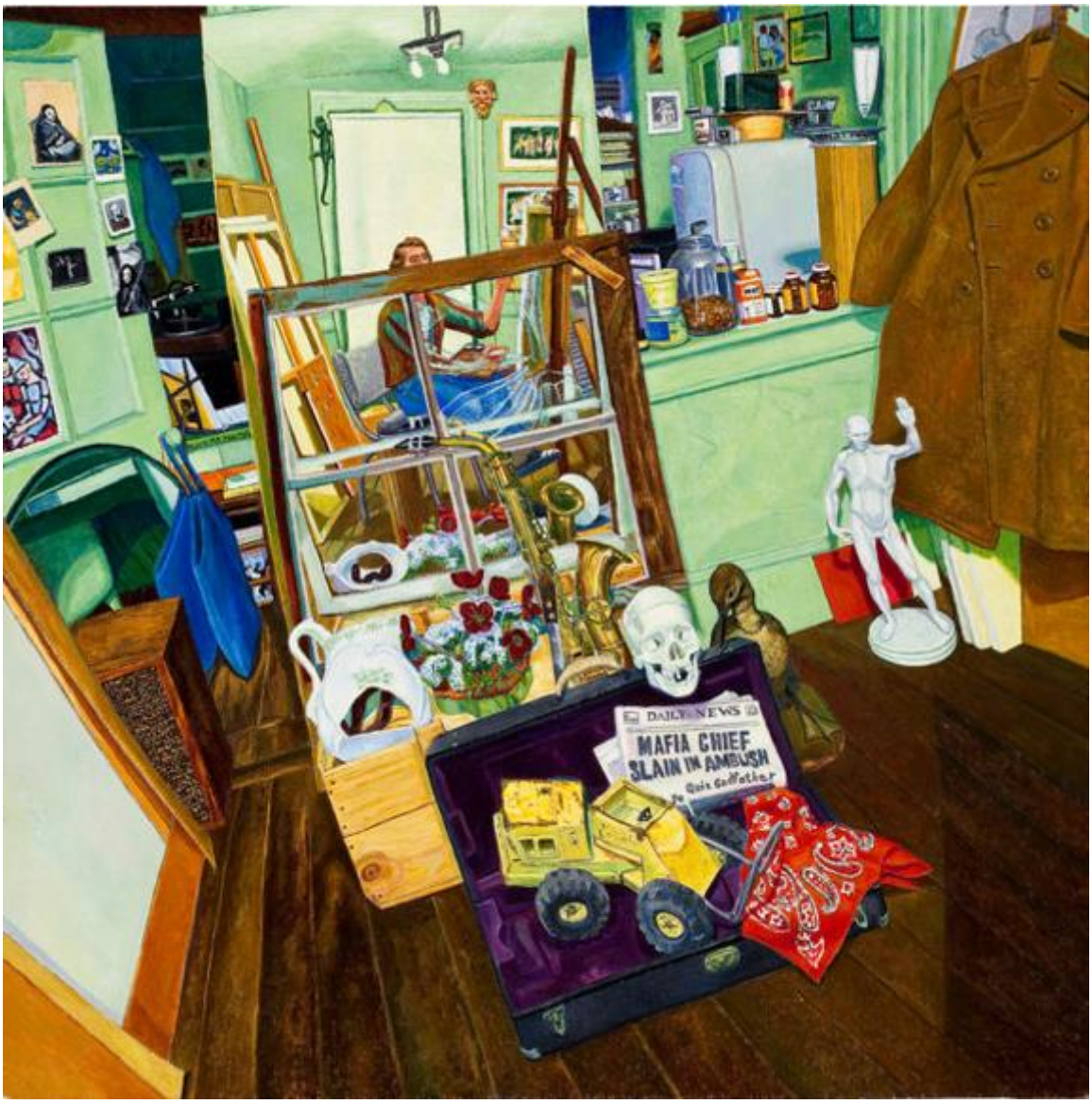


Figure 5. Lawrence Faden, Untitled (Artist in the Studio), 1972, oil on canvas, 30 x 30 in. Estate of Dr. Edmund P. Pillsbury.

Figure 6. Marjorie Kramer, *Wedding Portrait, Sam* and *Wedding Portrait, Self*, 1973, oil on canvas, 21 x 26 in. each. Collection of the artist.

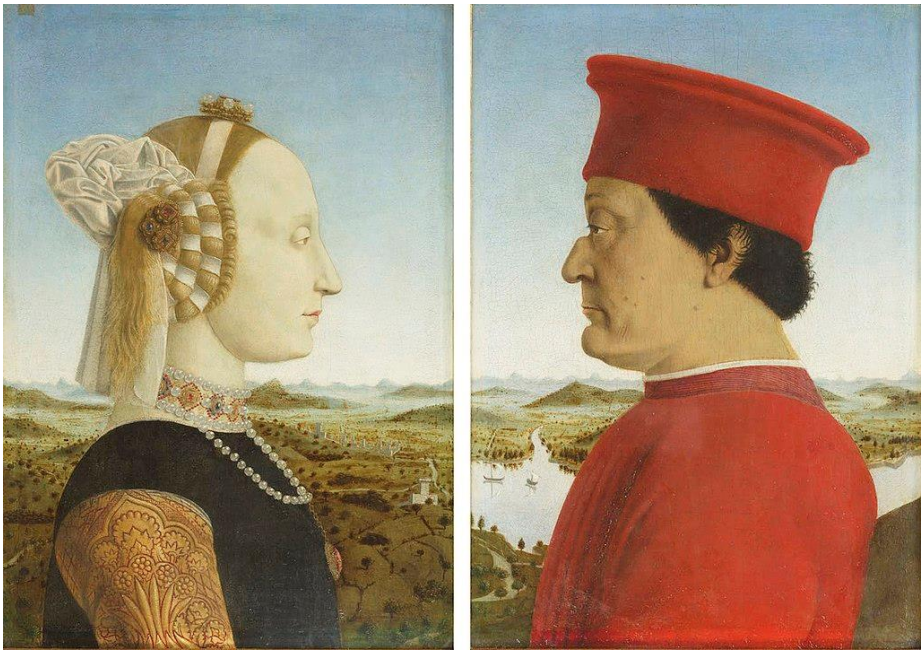


Figure 7a. Piero della Francesca, *The Duke and Duchess of Urbino Federico da Montefeltro and Battista Sforza*, c. 1473–1475, oil on wood, 18.5 x 12.9 in. each. Collection of the Uffizi Gallery.

Figure 7b. Jan van Eyck, *The Arnolfini Portrait*, 1434, oil on oak panel, 32.4 in x 23.6 in. Collection of The National Gallery, London.

Figure 8. Gabriel Laderman, *Still Life #2, Homage to David*, 1969, oil on canvas, 40 x 50 in. Courtesy of Museum of Art, University of New Hampshire.

Figure 9. Gabriel Laderman, *The House of Death and Life*, 1984–1985, oil on canvas, 93 x 135 in. Estate of Gabriel Laderman. Photo: James Dee.

Figure 10. Lois Dodd, *Pond*, 1962, oil on linen, 58 x 64 in. Courtesy Alexandre Gallery, New York.

Figure 11. Lois Dodd, *Shadow Patterns*, 1967, oil on linen, 24 1/4 x 24. Courtesy Alexandre Gallery, New York.

Figure 12. Lois Dodd, *View Through Elliot's Shack, Looking South*, 1971, oil on canvas, 53 x 36 in. Collection of The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

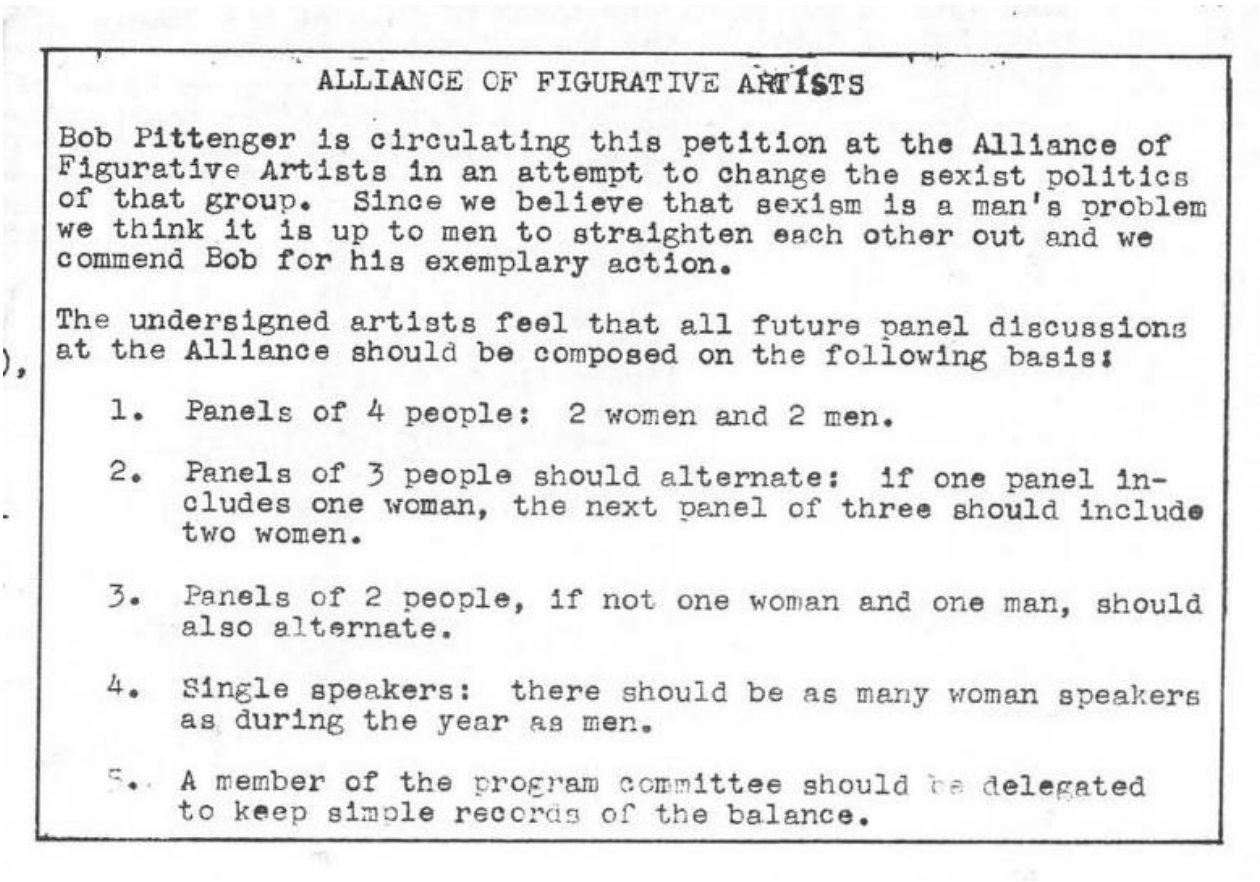
Figure 13. Philip Pearlstein, *Standing Male, Sitting Female Nudes*, 1969, oil on canvas, 74 x 62 in. Courtesy of Galerie Templon.

Figure 14. Philip Pearlstein, *Superman*, 1952, oil on canvas, 40 1/2 x 35 7/8 in. Collection of The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Figure 15. Paul Georges, *The Mugging of the Muse*, 1972–1976, oil on linen, 80 x 103 in. Collection of the Center for Figurative Painting, New York.

Figure 16. Lois Dodd, *Cows in Landscape*, 1958, oil on linen, 44 x 51 in. Courtesy Alexandre Gallery, New York.

Figure 17. Jackson Pollock, *Portrait and a Dream*, 1953, oil and enamel on canvas, 58 1/2 x 134 3/4 in. Collection of the Dallas Museum of Art.



ALLIANCE OF FIGURATIVE ARTISTS

Bob Pittenger is circulating this petition at the Alliance of Figurative Artists in an attempt to change the sexist politics of that group. Since we believe that sexism is a man's problem we think it is up to men to straighten each other out and we commend Bob for his exemplary action.

The undersigned artists feel that all future panel discussions at the Alliance should be composed on the following basis:

1. Panels of 4 people: 2 women and 2 men.

2. Panels of 3 people should alternate: if one panel includes one woman, the next panel of three should include two women.

3. Panels of 2 people, if not one woman and one man, should also alternate.

4. Single speakers: there should be as many woman speakers as during the year as men.

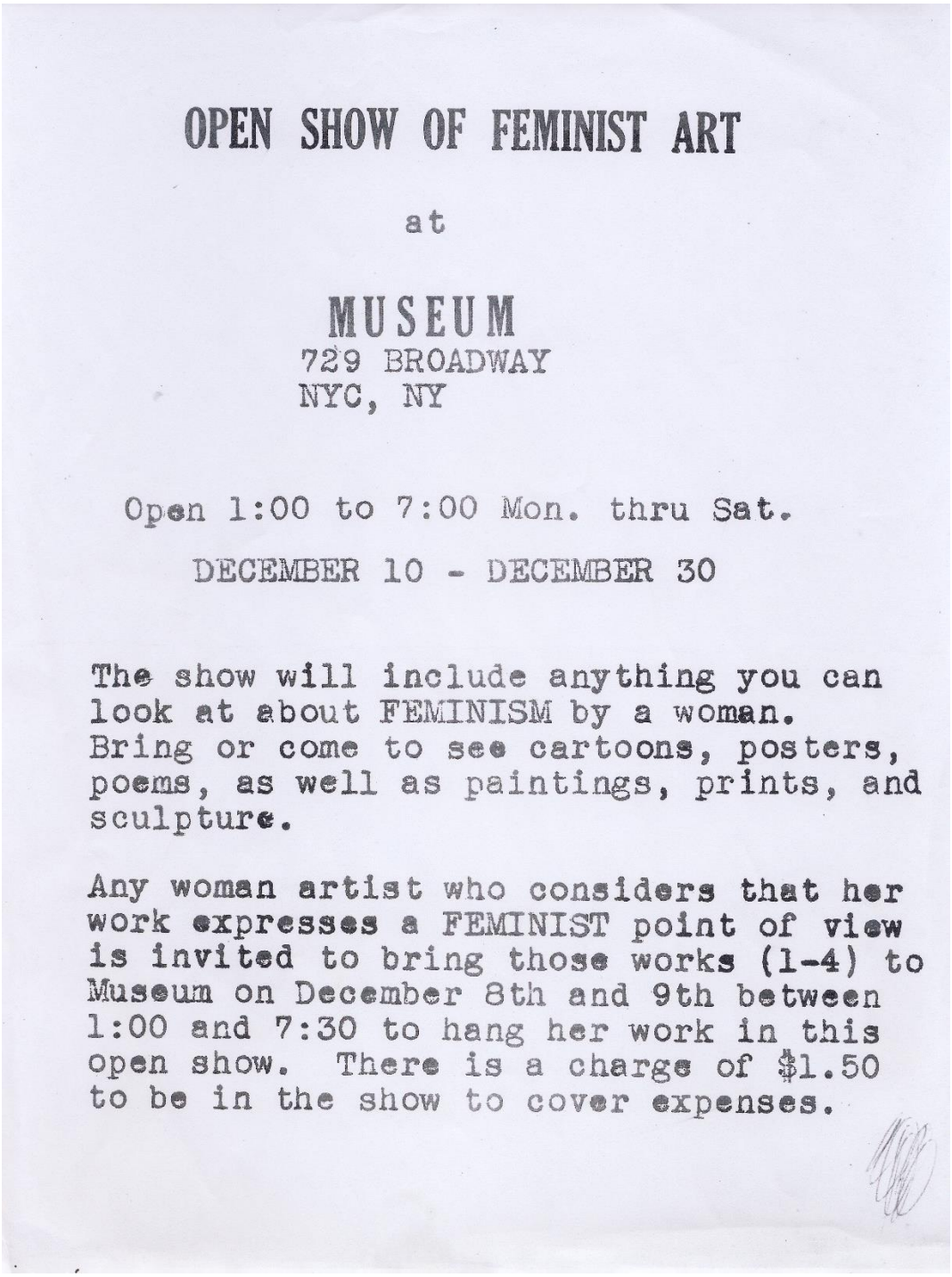
5. A member of the program committee should be delegated to keep simple records of the balance.

Figure 18. Petition to change the sexist policies of the Alliance of Figurative Artists. Printed in *Women and Art*, January 1971, Vol. 1, Pg. 17. Courtesy Marjorie Kramer.

Figure 19a. (Left to right) Irene Peslikis, Janet Sawyer, Alice Neel, Dee Slack, and Lucia Vernarelli at an Alliance of Figurative Artists meeting on how female artists relate to the tradition of painting the nude. January 28, 1971. Courtesy of Marjorie Kramer.

Figure 19b. Marjorie Kramer and Juanita McNeely at an Alliance of Figurative Artists meeting on how female artists relate to the tradition of painting the nude. January 28, 1971. Courtesy of Marjorie Kramer.

Figure 20. Marjorie Kramer, *Feminist, discovering Women's Movement*, 1971, oil on panel, 24 x 28 in. Collection of the artist.



OPEN SHOW OF FEMINIST ART

at

MUSEUM
729 BROADWAY
NYC, NY

Open 1:00 to 7:00 Mon. thru Sat.

DECEMBER 10 - DECEMBER 30

The show will include anything you can look at about FEMINISM by a woman. Bring or come to see cartoons, posters, poems, as well as paintings, prints, and sculpture.

Any woman artist who considers that her work expresses a FEMINIST point of view is invited to bring those works (1-4) to Museum on December 8th and 9th between 1:00 and 7:30 to hang her work in this open show. There is a charge of $1.50 to be in the show to cover expenses.

Figure 21. Open Show of Feminist Art Poster, December 1971. Photocopy. Courtesy of Marjorie Kramer.

Figure 22. Juanita McNeely, *Woman's Psyche*, 1968, oil on linen, 146 x 126 in. Courtesy of James Fuentes Gallery, New York.

Figure 23. Juanita McNeely, *Is It Real? Yes, It Is*, 1969, oil on linen, 144 x 144 in. Courtesy of James Fuentes Gallery, New York.

Figure 24a. Alice Neel, *Marxist Girl (Irene Peslikis)*, 1972, oil on canvas, 59 x 42 in. Estate of Alice Neel.

Figure 24b. Alice Neel, *Jackie Curtis and Ritta Redd*, 1970, oil on canvas, 60 x 41 7/8 in. Collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Figure 25. Alice Neel, *Linda Nochlin and Daisy*, 1973, oil on canvas, 55 7/8 x 44 in. Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

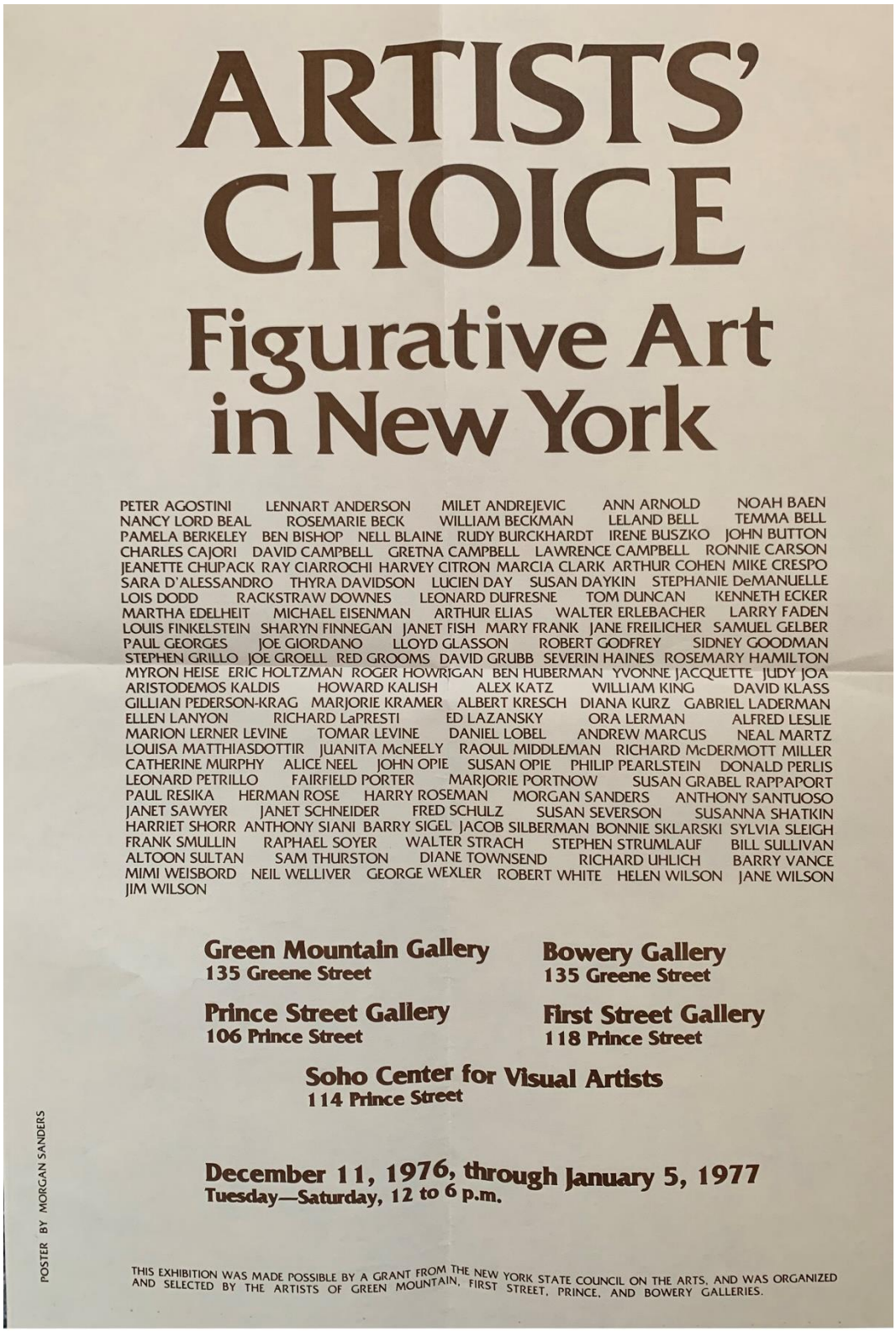


Figure 26. Artists' Choice exhibition poster, September 1976. Courtesy of Samuel Thurston and Marjorie Kramer.