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History of the Woman's Building, circa 1975-1979

Extracted on Apr-17-2024 04:41:17

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The first artist was not he who "stayed by the tents with the women" neither Cleanthes, nor Telephanes, but rather was it some happy mother, dreaming dreams by a river, watching the shadows of leaves and flowers come and go making garments for her man-child, her desire being to her lord. The shadows of the leaves and flowers fell upon the garments and the artist soul was born and designed quaint patterns from them to beautify the robe.

S.T. Hallowell *

It will be shown that women, among all the primitive peoples, were the originators of most of the industrial arts, that it was not until these became lucrative that they were appropriated by men and women pushed aside. While man, the protector, was engaged in fighting or the chase, woman constructed the rude semblance of a home. She dressed and cooked the game and later ground the grain between the stones and prepared it for bread. She cured and dressed the skins of animals and fashioned them awkwardly into garments. Impelled by necessity for its use. She invented the needle and twisted the fibre of plants into thread. She invented the shuttles and used it in weaving textile fabrics in which were often mingled feathers, wool and down, which contributed to the beauty and warmth of the fabric. She was first potter and molded clay into jars and other utensils for domestic purposes drying them in the sun.

[[Image]]

Wall hanging representing the Goddess Bonomia.

I read the already yellowed newspaper, the first documentation of a feminist art program I had seen. I sat down on the orange Chenille bedspread and cried because it sounded so wonderful. Ten months later, I moved all my possessions to Los Angeles to be involved in the Feminist Studio Workshop and the Woman's Building. It is the first place I have remained for longer than a year. I have no plans to leave.

Susan King

Since I came to Los Angeles and the Woman's Building in September of 1973, I have gone through many changes myself. I came here to develop as an artist and to put my images out to the world. The first thing I experienced was my own lack of personal commitment to women; my own self-doubt, and my own poor self image. Through my experiences seeing strong women putting themselves out there; feeling support of my sisters also reaching for growth and strength, my commitment and self-image began to change. Today, I have no doubt that we can do what we want. I have quit struggling in the sexist world and begun putting all my energy into building a new world which is the woman's community I am in.

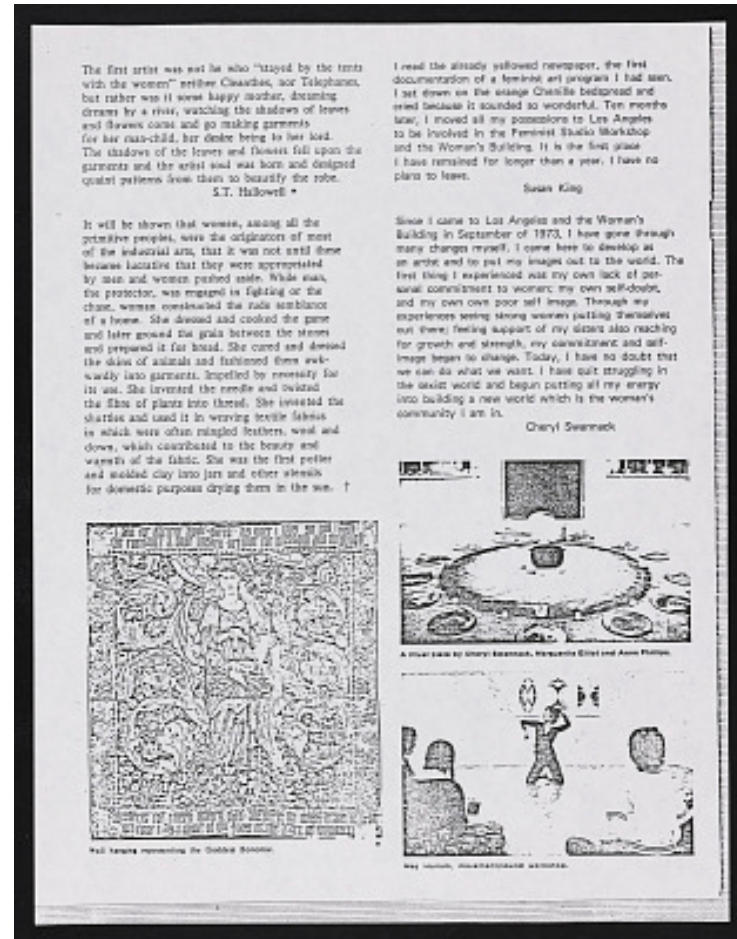
Cheryl Swannack

[[Image]]

A ritual piece by Cheryl Swannack, Marguerite Elliot and Anna Phillips.

[[Image]]

Meg Harlam, movement/sound workshop.



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