

Black Womanhood nevertheless provides visual and textual tactics for subversion. One productive route practiced by the contemporary artists in this catalogue is demonstrated in the "exchanges." Not simply artist statements, these brief expressions by about half of the two dozen contemporary artists represented in the book juxtapose words with images and represent a significant value of this catalogue: How to reference the colonial familiar differently? Thompson highlights in her conclusion that "the very same clichés that oppressed, misrepresented,

and objectified black womanhood throughout history now serve as some of their most effective tools in disarming the racist ideologies that they embody" (308). Each exchange corresponds in some way to an image, and as such reinforces the way stereotypes of the past continue their hurt today. For example, Angèle Etoundi Essamba writes that she purposefully uses stereotyped images to re-imagine a different and more humanizing perspective (190). The exchanges do not deny the impact of harmful cultural representations, but tactfully plot an "artistic

defense" in order to decolonize social norms (127). Rather than recycling the colonial approach to power and subjectivity, which defines the self through the ridicule of the other, *Black Womanhood* provides various textual, visual, and personal tactics that can contribute to re-imagining a more humane way forward. •

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Essays on Women's Artistic and Cultural Contributions 1919-1939: Expanded Social Roles for the New Woman Following the First World War

Edited by Paula Birnbaum and Anna Novakov
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Reviewed by Rachel Epp Buller

The New Woman of the interwar period has received much scholarly attention over the last twenty years, particularly in her German context but elsewhere as well. International historians examine the cultural specificities of the New Woman, *neue Frau*, or *garçonne*; sociologists discuss how her traits are shaped by her environs; art historians investigate her divergent representation by male and female artists; while gender historians sometimes debate the mythical qualities of her very identity. A new collection of essays, edited by Paula Birnbaum and Anna Novakov, brings together a diverse group of historians who examine the role, the context, and the identity of the New Woman in the artistic and cultural production of varied global settings. Born out of an interdisciplinary symposium, the anthology exhibits a two-pronged focus: while some essays expand upon the history of women in avant-garde artistic movements, others explore non-canonical forms and media to "re-define

the meaning of cultural production from a gendered perspective" (4).

The interdisciplinary nature of Birnbaum and Novakov's anthology is one of its greatest strengths, as is the way in which this diversity is contextualized. Flavia Marcello's excellent foreword, which functions more like a concise introduction and overview, sets the stage for the fascinating range of expressive forms to be examined. Marcello argues that the goal of scholars should not be to insert more women into an existing canon, instead posing two questions that will be answered by the volume's essayists: "1) how can we re-define art so that it can tell us untold stories of women's lives; and 2) what was peculiar about the socio-political context of the interwar years that allowed women to express themselves in this way?" (i). As such, it ends up seeming perfectly natural to find side-by-side essays on Claude Cahun and Camp Fire Girls. In their expanded introduction, Birnbaum and Novakov position this diversity of production as a form of resistance, as women of the interwar period rejected procreation as their sole means of creation. Further, like other feminist art historians before them, Birnbaum and Novakov assert that the essayists challenge canonical art history's tendency to heroicize the individual (male) artist, raising up instead the power and ability of groups, rather than individual geniuses, to shape history.

Despite the diversity of topics among the essays, Birnbaum and Novakov manage to identify a surprising number

of common themes, which they use as a basis for dividing the writings into five discrete sections: "Reconfiguring Girlhood," "Modernity and Visual Culture," "Re-Imagining Gender and Race," "Craftswomen and National Identity," and "Women in Public Spaces." The first section contains two particularly innovative perspectives on cultural production. Looking at interwar girlhood and body culture in New Zealand, Charlotte Macdonald investigates the competitive sport of girls' marching. In a complexly layered analysis, Macdonald positions the marching girls as rationalized, modern bodies, both martial and feminine, whose aesthetic sporting performances simultaneously signified larger socio-political connections to the "outside" world. Similarly, Jennifer Helgren situates the American Camp Fire Girls club at the center of an interwar political and cultural discourse about women's proper place in society. Despite the connotations of the outdoors that the group's name implies, the founders of Camp Fire Girls emphasized girls' domestic responsibilities (the 'fire' in fact referred to home and hearth) and envisioned the group as a wholesome antidote to what they perceived as the dangerous freedoms of modern girlhood (39). Combined with her socio-political analysis of the Camp Fire Girls, Helgren investigates the club's material culture, such as letters and scrapbooks. Helgren carefully examines the scrapbooks as examples of collaborative, rather than individual, production, commemorating group experiences.

