

**FEMINIST
PERSPECTIVES
IN ARTISTIC PRODUCTIONS
AND THEORIES OF ART**

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Pop, Blue Collar, and Feminist Aesthetics



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INTRODUCTION

In 1966, Nancy Marmer published her essay “Pop Art in California” in Lucy Lippard’s landmark book on the subject. This was the first attempt to come to terms with an indigenous California movement in a widely circulated publication and Marmer mixed Sunshine-state stereotypes with pertinent observation. Her genealogy asserts that “Aside from the backdrop influence of Hollywood and the hypertrophied ‘neon-fruit supermarket,’ there has also existed in California an idiosyncratic welding of sub-cultures and a body of small but curiously prophetic art, whose influence is at least in an askew relation to contemporary Pop Art.

However, demonstrating that the definition of Pop had solidified in only the first few years of the movement, Marmer pursues the argument that an art must have certain inherent properties to be properly identified as Pop. For her, what distinguishes Pop art from a long modernist tradition of incorporating popular imagery is Pop’s appropriation of the modes and processes of advertising, illustration, and commercial design in a high-art context and its depiction of mass-produced consumer products. In other words, for Marmer, true Pop art must harness both the matter and manner of commercial culture. That this formulation was drawn from the work of artists like Warhol and Rosenquist and might better encapsulate East rather than West Coast artwork is something that Marmer intuits but is unable to adequately pursue. She is able to locate only one true Pop artist in Los Angeles, Ed Ruscha, and so admits that California Pop “cannot be characterized solely on the puristic basis of these novelties of style” because many West Coast artists are using common objects without any discernible trace of commercial conventions. At the same time, she conversely states that “there are a number of artists on the West Coast (and this may include some of the most advanced work now being done in California) whose style, rather than subject, has been influenced by what might be called a Pop stance.” In the first category, Marmer places what she calls the proto-Pop Art of Ed Kienholz. In the second, she places artists like Billy Al Bengston and Judy Chicago, about whom she says, “one of the major significances of the Pop temper on the West Coast is in the way it has permitted the evolution of an ascetic, mechanistic, and highly polished formalism—a style which may have learned its ironic distance and commercial sheen from Pop, but not its abstract iconography.” I agree with Marmer that there is an interesting relationship between Judy Chicago and Billy Al Bengston’s work and Pop, but I disagree with Marmer that these artists’ work is ascetic or abstract. Instead, Chicago’s and Bengston’s methods and imagery are distinct from Pop in the class position their work signals and in the audience they seek to address.

The Pop art that Marmer describes, which coalesced around Warhol, Ruscha, Lichtenstein, Rosenquist, and Oldenburg, is the one that has come down to us in the present day. This is true even for authors whose claims are revisionist, such as Hal Foster. In his recent book, *The First Pop Age*, Foster proposes that instead of the usual association of Pop art with the easy iconicity of media celebrities and brand-name products, Pop signaled a shift in the status of both the image and subjectivity beginning in the late 1950s. However, both his choice of artists—Richard Hamilton, Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, Gerhard Richter, and Ed Ruscha—and his emphasis on Pop art as the manipulation of images leave untroubled Marmer’s mid-1960s definition.

In order to demonstrate that Madison Avenue represented a type of expertise, rather than a purely geographic location, I am going to focus this morning on what Warhol and Ruscha learned from their experiences in advertising, and then the radically different expertises that Chicago and Bengston developed through their engagements with technologies such as car customizing, shipbuilding, and pyrotechnics.. The first thing would be that their choice of subjects were not as matter-of-fact or ubiquitous as we now think and that the global success of brands such as Coca-Cola, Campbell’s Soup, or Spam was far less certain than it seems today. As art historian Anthony Grudin points out, national brands were actually losing to private label or store brands during the late 1950s and early 1960s, and as the *New York Times* explained, the fate of these national brands was a verdict on the effectiveness of advertising itself. Both the brands and their advertisers responded in a number of ways. The first was to reject the universal truths of modernism in design and marketing and to differentiate individual segments of the public.



The brands and their advertisers demonstrated their expertise by inventing market segmentation by the social-class identification of consumers. As early as 1958, business journalist Pierre Martineau wrote, “While income has generally been the most widely used behavioral indicator in marketing, social-class membership provides a richer dimension of meaning. The individual’s consumption patterns actually symbolize his class position, a more significant determinant of his buying behavior than just income.” In a follow-up article, Martineau explained that “Formerly it was easy for the economist to grade people on an income basis and assume that the white-collar people and business and professional people were the best—often the only—market for many products. Now surveys indicate that the income of the average skilled blue-collar worker is equal to that of the average white-collar worker. What’s more the elite of the skilled blue-collar groups earn considerably more family income than the average white-collar worker and the intelligentsia.” The case that the future of national brands lay in marketing to a blue-collar, working class consumer was made most forcefully by Macfadden Publications, the publisher of mass market magazines like the celebrity-driven *Photoplay* and the gritty *True Detective*, which began an advertising campaign in 1961. As Grudin explains, the basic thrust of Macfadden’s theory of working-class buying habits was straightforward: “Working-class customers...could be relied upon to value national brands, where their middle and upper class counterparts could not.” Macfadden justified this hypothesis with two interrelated arguments: working-class consumers were willing to pay more for national brands both because they valued the status accrued thereby, and because they were not sufficiently educated to recognize that advertising was deceptive, since nationally branded and privately branded products were qualitatively indistinguishable. The tag line of Macfadden’s full-page advertisements in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and other publications was “the battle of the national brands will be won or lost depending on the attitudes of mass, not middle-class, consumers.”

Visually, the advertisements targeting blue-collar buyers turned away from the drab black-and-white advertisements upon which Warhol based his earliest pop artworks, to full-color pages touting national brands. Almost all followed the same basic pattern: a large, vivid photograph of the advertised item in use, accompanied by a textual description, and a picture of the item in its branded package in the lower-right hand corner. In each case, the model and her enjoyment of the product were intended to draw the viewer’s attention, but the branded image in the lower right-hand corner was the page’s last word, the mnemonic device meant to be retained until the consumer had reached the proper aisle in the grocery store. Many of Warhol’s key brand images of the early 1960s were borrowed from this style of advertisement and were taken exclusively from supermarket products, which is the primary shared feature of the Brillo boxes, soup cans, cola bottles, and coffee labels.

In taking exactly the same images that the advertising industry used to manipulate the working class, I leave it to you to decide whether Warhol’s appropriation of consumer imagery is an example of critical negativity as Benjamin Buchloh would have us believe, or a far more nihilistic appropriation of consumer culture, a complicity with the class and industry pulling the strings. Even when Warhol’s and Ruscha’s works seem most at odds with reverence for the commercial object, seen in the “slurs and gaps and mottling and tics” in Warhol and the humor and puns in Ruscha, the lessons of Madison Avenue are not far removed. As Douglas Holt argues, “Advertisers in the 1960s, led by Doyle Dane Bernbach, aggressively experimented with new branding techniques that meshed with the emerging consumer culture. Journalists and academics routinely characterize the output of Doyle Dane and other renegade agencies as a creative revolution, suggesting that artistry took precedence over strategy. But it was quite the opposite. These seemingly wild-eyed creative treatments were actually a flurry of strategic experiments to locate a new branding model that would work in the shifting consumer culture.” The most spectacular case of this was Doyle Dane’s campaign for Volkswagen, a car that because of its WW II associations had almost no American market before Doyle Dane acquired the account in 1959. Doyle Dane changed this negative perception dramatically, not by utilizing the manner of blue-collar advertising and stressing VW’s unappreciated assets, but by capitalizing on the car’s obvious



limitations and liabilities. Moreover, the agency set itself apart from the advertising industry's usual visual conventions: using color layouts and placing cars in attractive settings such as affluent suburbia or glamorous cities. Early VW magazine advertisements, by contrast, stuck to a Spartan black-and-white scheme that showed little more than the photograph of a Volkswagen in front of a neutral backdrop. In tandem with these simple images were brief, derogatory headlines such as "Ugly," "Lemon," and "Think Small." Although the campaign was launched at the end of the 1950s, Advertising Age saw the Volkswagen ads as emblematic of the creative, ironic approach of the 1960s, and later named the effort the top campaign of the 20th century. One key goal of the advertising was to win over young, white collar consumers and the intelligentsia, who were seen as disaffected and distrustful of corporate messages. The work of Doyle Dane and others had a revolutionary effect on advertising, and as early as 1962, at nearly the same moment as the McFadden blue-collar campaign, Peter Bart, the New York Time's advertising reporter, would declare: "Right now, the magic word on Madison Avenue is 'creativity.' Many firms, whose advertising for years has been rather obvious and pedestrian, are now turning to agencies that offer vastly more original and eye-catching advertisements. Humorous commercials or artistic soft-sell ads were once regarded by many advertisers as anathema to sales, but they now are being fairly widely embraced."

While Warhol's ironic representations of his objects, the mis-registrations that so frequently spread across his silk-screened canvases, are well documented, Ruscha's are less often discussed. Ruscha explains the process by which an object makes its way into his painting: "when I choose an object, generally a small object, I can't render this object unless it is somehow faithful. I even go to the extent of measuring the object, and measuring the canvas almost. I have almost a duty to myself to represent that thing as closely as possible." One of the first works that utilized this process employed a title that announced Ruscha's commitment to the object: *Actual Size* depicts a can of Spam flying through space with flames coming out the back. Inscribed faintly in the tail of the Hormel comet are the words "Actual Size." Ruscha traced the can of Spam directly on the canvas, an intervention that he sees as treating an object "right": "I like attention and time given to a subject that doesn't need attention and time." This overvaluation of the object is a frequent strategy of Ruscha's, and while in direct contrast to Doyle Dane's belittling of Volkswagen, both artist and advertising agency share an ironic, humorous relationship to the consumer object. For instance, the monumental painting *Standard Station, Amarillo, Texas*, started off as a small photo of an unassuming gas station for Ruscha's book *26 Gasoline Stations*. From this black-and-white 'amateur' snapshot, and without using any artificial or optical aids, Ruscha drew and then developed his subject into a dramatic, brightly colored interpretation. The cropping he refused to do in the photograph occurs in the drawings, and, thereafter, in the painting, so that the station motif is brought to the sheets' or canvases' edges and flattened to the surface plane. The accentuated diagonals, brilliant palette, and roving searchlights have transformed the modest refueling stop into an icon of Hollywood glamour, with proportions taking from the panoramic movie screen. The Standard station has been 'Hollywoodized.' As Ruscha says, 'Hollywood is like a verb to me. It's something you can do to any subject or any thing.'

Like the Doyle Dane campaign, Ruscha's and Warhol's ironic treatment of the object can be seen to emit clear class signals. If the aspirational presentation of the object was a means to reach the working-class, then irony and humor were a way to signal that things were not intended for a blue-collar audience, that sophistication was required to get the meaning. This was precisely what Pierre Martineau recommended in 1960 as a way to most effectively leverage market segmentation, and this was also the strategy Warhol used in his own presentation of art and commerce. In Warhol's 1961 collaboration with the window dresser Gene Moore for Bonwit Teller, they recreated the interior of an art gallery complete with five of Warhol's paintings and female mannequins in elegant summer dresses. As Cecile Whiting describes it, the window display worked on two levels. The first was aspirational, success depending on the window-shopper's willingness to absorb herself into a theatrical space and to identify with the mannequins on view, to imagine herself wearing the summer dresses on display while visiting art galleries. The second, however, was critical, the display precluding the complete absorption of its audience into the dramatic spectacle by not fully maintaining the fiction of an art gallery, but instead by itself being an art installation



that is a representation of an art gallery. Whiting concludes, “By providing two modes of viewing, by presenting itself as either theater or as art, the Warhol display thus allowed the sophisticated viewer to distinguish herself from the absorbed dupe. Where the gullible shopper ostensibly fell for the ploy of the stage set and identified with the mannequins on view, the refined window-shopper judged the display, compared it to modern art, and assessed both the aesthetic qualities of the display and its varied contents. The cultured privilege of the sophisticated shopper, in short, depended both on the possession of a set of refined skills of perception that seemed to lift the viewer out of the mundane activities of commerce into the ostensibly higher realm of art and the purported existence of an audience incapable of such perception and distance.” It is impossible to imagine a better description of the relationship of the Pop painting and its buyer than this.

On the West Coast, outside of Ruscha, artists did not seek out extensive training within the world of advertising, but this did not mean that their work did not entail commercial expertise. For most of the artists whose work emerged in the 1960s, a mature style also entailed a fundamental and considered reskilling, which consisted of an intensive engagement with industrial techniques and technology. Billy Al Bengston began the decade by turning from oil on canvas to painting on masonite and aluminum, using dazzling, multihued fields of spray-gunned industrial polymer paint applied in dozens of layers. The materials and techniques of Bengston’s works of the 1960s were those used to custom-detail the gas tanks of the motorcycles he raced at a semiprofessional level on the Ascot Park dirt track in Gardena. Judy Chicago went so far as to become trained in three industrial fields—auto body mechanics to create her sprayed pieces, ship building for her fiberglass and other plastic works, and pyrotechnics for her Atmospheres. As opposed to Warhol and Ruscha’s upper-middle class world of advertising, the skills that Bengston and Chicago developed were very much a working man’s or working woman’s set of expertises.

Bengston’s reskilling stemmed from his work at the LeBard and Underwood’s motorcycle shop, where he would paint, repair, and race motorcycles. He kept abreast of every new surface coating developed at the time, from nitrocellulose lacquer to a special concoction released by the Defense Department, popularly called “trickshit paint.” He took his industrial engagement seriously enough that he preferred to call his works manufactures rather than paintings. But, despite publicity to the contrary, he never imitated the look of hot rod and custom car painting. Like Warhol and Ruscha, Bengston advocated the use of preexisting images and minimized visible paint handling, but Bengston greatly differed in his philosophy toward his subjects. His choice of motorcycle imagery was neither sarcastic nor ironic. Rather, he painted his bike out of respect and appreciation for the machine’s basic and honest styling. As he forged his own artistic identity, Bengston appropriated a closed, individual portfolio of emblems which included the cross, the heart, the iris, and most familiarly, the stacked chevron. Bengston’s ubiquitous emblem usually occupies a fraction of the entire picture at the center, and is either immersed within lacquered depths, floats decal-like atop the lacquer, or is differentiated from its surroundings by the intrusion of oil paint, contrasting with the polished field. He uses every manner of carefully laid brush strokes in combination with smooth spray-gun washes of color, topped with coats of clear lacquer to produce incredibly rich and lustrous surfaces.

As James Monte, one of Bengston’s most perceptive critics, and the curator of the artists’s first retrospective describes the composition of Bengston’s manufactures: “The emblem motif is often centered in a field which is itself a complex sign. I refer literally to sign in the sense that it applied to advertising goods or services.” For Monte, Bengston uses layers of sign systems within which he places his emblems. For instance, a work such as *Busby*, 1963, is inspired by the type of image created before World War II by manufacturers of pinball machines. *Chaney*, of 1962, seems to be primarily inspired by the theater marquee signs associated with movie palaces and, in their most sumptuous form, with Las Vegas gambling casinos. As is the case with custom car painting, Bengston does not literally copy specific signs, but rather improvises on commercial



design devices. Generally he favors primitive and symmetrical layouts, with the various borders and design motifs repeated with an equalized visual tightness throughout the picture surface. In the 1960s, certain critics did recognize the connection of Bengston's work to Pop art. By including five of Bengston's paintings in the exhibition *Six More*, the Los Angeles pendant to his famous exhibition *Six Painters and the Object*, Lawrence Alloway was indicating that they should be considered Pop art, though some reviewers struggled with the tension between the works' abstract qualities and their movie-star titles and custom-car allusions.

Judy Chicago extended Bengston's engagement with consumer fabrication in a variety of directions. As she said of her practice, "When I wanted to learn how to use a spray gun, I went to autobody school, when I wanted to learn how to lay-up fiberglass, I went to the boat-works, when I wanted to learn how to do fireworks, I went to the fireworks company—I have a long history of apprenticing myself to whomever knows the technique I am interested in." One of Chicago's earliest sprayed pieces, *Car Hood* (1964), demonstrates how incredibly nuanced this new technique could be in the relation between color, surface, and shape. Chicago's valediction from autobody school, *Car Hood*, was painted on the actual hood of an early 1960s Chevrolet Corvair. It is in many ways a three-dimensional hard-edge painting, with a composition that contrasts complementary blues and oranges to striking optical effect. The central design consists of what Chicago calls a combination of her male and female imagery—concentric blue/orange circles bisected by a dark blue arrow—which shows the enormous precision of Chicago's spray technique, while also avoiding the sometimes visually distracting raised ridges of more traditional brushed hard-edge technique. Chicago makes extraordinary use of the undulations of the hood to enhance her imagery, most remarkably in the employment of the elevated centerline to pierce the central concentric design. This work is an early example of the painting/sculpture hybrids that became so identified with Southern California art of the 1960s, but in a nice twist on Pop art, Chicago employs an actual commercial object as the substructure.

In the 1960s, critical reaction to Bengston's and Chicago's art was often quite harsh. Reviewing Bengston's first one-artist show in New York in 1962, Brian O'Doherty wrote: "Although this work is technically efficient, at times thoughtful and no doubt sincere, as symbolism it is ineffective and a little inane. The visual quality of the color is insipid and does not engage the eye." Barbara Rose in one of the first major articles on the Los Angeles art scene had this to say about Bengston and his peers: "The most striking aspect of Los Angeles art is its pervasive eroticism...One cannot call this element sensual, and one hesitates even to qualify it as sensuous....On the contrary, the eroticism of the art only appears to reflect the charged, generalized sexuality of the ambience, with its nearby beaches crowded by acres of tanning flesh and colonies of body builders." Judy Chicago's early career took a similar trajectory to Bengston's. Her first published review [from when her name was still Judith Gerowitz] announced that "Gerowitz's concern is a preoccupation with an organic sexuality rendered in painted plaster..." The reaction to her *Car Hood* was even more extreme, with the critic associating the work with a popular book on the auto industry and how its advertising manipulated buyers: "Judith Gerowitz's painted car hood also eschews any connotations of motorized power in order to play with the decorative surface and erotic symbolism of the automobile. Hood might be a cover design for 'The Insolent Chariots.'" Chicago herself admits that partially due to the negative reaction for these early pieces, she intentionally sublimated her art, producing works such as *Rainbow Picketts*, and *Ten Part Cylinders*. Yet, even in their sublimation, there was often something that critics found discordant in Chicago's work. Peter Plagens, for instance, called Chicago's colors "fruity," while another critic pronounced them pure "Disneyland," and a third referred to their "excess of world's fair zeal."

What the critics are implying, none too subtly, is that there is something in bad taste about Bengston's and Chicago's art, that their blue-collar expertise produces an art that is inane and overtly sexual. I, of course, disagree and would argue



that a more apt description of their work might be found through a very specific meaning of the word “vulgar.” T.J. Clark argues in his justifiably famous essay “In Defense of Abstract Expressionism” that we could better describe Abstract Expressionist paintings if we took them to be vulgar. Clark’s definition of the term is that “it points two ways: to the object itself, to some abjectness or absurdity in its very make-up (some tell-tale blemish, some atrociously visual quality which the object will never stop betraying however hard it tries); and to the object’s existence in a particular social world, for a set of tastes and styles of individuality...” Both aesthetically and socially, vulgarity for Clark represents a betrayal by those who should be at the vanguard of good taste. Under the guise of vulgarity, artists such as Adolph Gottlieb and Hans Hofmann rise to the forefront of Abstract Expressionism and the usual terms of avant-garde approbation like authenticity are jettisoned. This Abstract Expressionism is at its best for Clark when “it seems in search of the false underlying the vehement; where the point is that cheap vehemence, or easy delectation, are what painting now is—the only values, the only forms of individuality, that it can stage without faking.” The social world corresponding to this aesthetic world of “cheap vehemence” is one in which the petty bourgeoisie aspires to aristocracy because the bourgeoisie itself has abandoned all of its revolutionary ideals in order to maintain its grasp on power.

The proper inheritors of Abstract Expressionist vulgarity in Southern California were not those artists who continued to paint in an expressionist manner, nor those who engaged with upper-middle-class strategies of wordplay and irony, but Bengston and Chicago. Of course, Bengston’s participation in the surf and motorcycle subcultures of Los Angeles and his melding of his enthusiasms with his art can simply been taken as instances of machismo and heterosexual male privilege, but his rejection of irony, and the paintings’ refusal to emit class signals that only sophisticated viewers might comprehend, is I believe a large factor in their supposed inanity or bad taste, and in his low prices.

Bengston’s art is seen as vulgar through its engagement with hyper-masculine, blue-collar pastimes, but Chicago claimed vulgarity for a previously excluded social group. One of the crucial stages in the development of an alternative imagery was the color theory Chicago diagrammed in the catalogue for her one-artist exhibition at the Pasadena Art Museum in 1969 and made manifest in her dome sculptures of 1968 to 1970. The domes are quite intimately-scaled—the larger domes being only 4 x 10 inches—clear acrylic semi-spheres that are blown into shape. Chicago colored the domes by spraying and air-brushing them from behind in shades ranging from opalescent white to dark bronze and they are always displayed in groups of three on clear or mirrored acrylic tabletops. The coloring of the domes is systematized, and in the catalogue she explains that: “The three forms provide a framework for the color relationships. I’ve used different systems. In all of these pieces there is a 3–6 rhythm, which is a primary color/secondary color module.” To make this statement clearer, Chicago offers diagrams and accompanying descriptions of different series of domes, as in this example for a series that combines green, purple, and blue: “Color in dome diagrammed above is transparent from one view — opaque from other view. Numerous thin layers of pigment dissolved in clear lacquer produces an iridescent quality [.] Purple goes to rose, blue goes to aqua, green goes to chartreuse at edges.” She is extremely clear as to the formal qualities her color system achieves — “Color has become sculptural in domes — i.e. instead of being on the surface of the piece like a skin, it is integrated totally with the shape and inseparable from it. ... It is not a sculpture that is painted, but a colored sculpture that is atmospheric and an entity in and of itself. The color glows, reflects light, and is indeterminate in position. These qualities align her with a number of practitioners who are usually described as Finish Fetish or Light and Space artists, but her work was rarely accepted within this context. Instead, it was rejected as too vulgar for the sublimity of Light and Space art largely because Chicago insisted that “color is directly emotive and sensate, demanding a non-intellectual, feeling response.” Unpacking the nature of those emotions, sensations, and feelings and their relation to Feminism requires looking at her sprayed, plastic paintings of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Chicago produced her plastic paintings mostly in series, some of the most important being the Pasadena Lifesavers, the Fresno Fans, and the Flesh Gardens. These series comprise large paintings, ranging from 5' x 5' to 8' x 8' squares and 5' x 10' rectangles, made from sprayed acrylic lacquer on acrylic sheeting that is framed and supported by the same plastic material. To work on plastic paintings of this size, Chicago had to invent specialized studio equipment and build an outsized spray booth. Extending from the system of the domes, Chicago developed three systems of color for the plastic paintings, as she explained in an artist's statement: "The first system is based on color opposites, primarily red/blue-green; the second system uses spectral color and changes from warm to cool; the third system relies upon consecutive color of close value, such as blue/green/chartreuse and is essentially cool." The earliest series, the Pasadena Lifesavers, employ a central white square around which float four shapes with octagonal centers and circular outer rims. The colors create mutable and varied spatial relations in which some of the shapes seem to spin, while others peak at the center or fluctuate in a manner that makes the shapes pulse in and out of space. The white centers do not maintain themselves as a consistent negative space, but at times grasp the edges of the partial grid, opening and closing and taking on a paler version of the palette of the surrounding rings. In the Fresno Fans that follow, Chicago makes the spatial/color relation even more complex by placing square shapes on a square grid in a way that destabilizes both elements. Through subtle changes in color, the squares, sometimes individually and sometimes as larger boxes, separate from the grid, literally fanning out. This movement draws attention to the bars or slits at the center of the paintings, which expand and contract amidst the changing location and position of the fans. The Flesh Gardens replace the whirring motion of the Fresno Fans with subtle, graduated color transformations that continuously return to whiteness, now diffused throughout the entire surface, before shading to pastels and more intense blues, pinks, greens, and oranges.

It is now possible to locate some of the emotions, sensations, and feelings Chicago associated with her color systems. Two years after her Pasadena catalogue, Chicago herself established a more precise definition: "They allow me to deal with three different feeling states, to establish and then break down form, and to manifest a wide range of direct sensations based on a central or female core image" This and similar statements, and the fact that Chicago gave some works titles such as Click Cunts, have caused many critics to reduce the paintings to cunt art. However, Chicago has always taken a more expansive view that the paintings and her color system in general embody a wide range of lived female experience. Returning to the extraordinarily dynamic color relations of the paintings, at different times they seem to breathe, blush, flush, aggressively reach out, assertively take in, and yes, explode in pleasure, or bask in afterglow. They did so in a manner that was so radical that many of Chicago's mostly male contemporaries could not or would not see them, such as this response to an exhibition that included fifteen of the paintings by the hapless critic of the Los Angeles Times: "Despite feminist statements in the catalog, Judy Chicago's art bears no relationship to names or Women's lib."

At the same time, second-generation Feminists have found her work to be entirely unsubtle, dismissing it as exhibiting an essentializing and vulgar Feminism. Bengston's work has suffered a similar critical fate, his pushing of blue-collar taste into advanced art seen by some as expressing "excessiveness" and "unpalatability" and by others as merely vulgar Color Field painting. I would agree with these accusations of vulgarity, but only in Clark's sense. In developing and deploying expertise outside the middle-class conventions of East Coast Pop, Chicago and Bengston created one of the postwar world's last arts with a bigness and generality capable of embracing aspirations outside a small elite. One might even call them Another Pop Art.

