

Society and the Public Sphere

Subverting the Myths of Everyday Life

Martha Rosler

For the last thirty years, you have been working in video, performance, photography, critical writing, and theory. In all these areas you have been redefining the traditional categories of art and dismantling the modernist paradigm of pure visuality. What were the major impulses that started this interdisciplinary and highly critical process in your work, and who has made the biggest impact on your decision to ‘interrupt the normal anticipation of the beauty value of art’, as you put it in 1983?

Rather than start with who has influenced my interest in “category smashing”, so to speak, the question is what was the context. For me, the context was the 1960s with its shattering of several artistic and art historical paradigms, the reaction against the stranglehold of Clement Greenberg as a single autocratic critic who promoted Abstract Expressionism in the States and determined for a long time what was acceptable in art and what was not, and, most importantly, the social movements of this period. In addition, pop art offered a tantalizing model of art that refused to see itself as a mystical and transcendental projection, and, instead, promoted a possibility to engage art with the social in an incredibly potent way. Of course, pop art drew back from this engagement in many ways, but it still offered a great chance of taking the social ‘landscape’ as the subject rather than some Hegelian ‘negation of the negation’ kind of idea that was such a powerful Modernist model beforehand. This model was almost a theological idea of what art is to be to be accepted as art, and this true art was to be free of any social or even temporal distractions. In contrast, what the social movements of the 1960s meant for my generation was that we needed to plunge into more complex ideas, including ideas of what art is. Feeling all the strict boundaries and gates being suddenly knocked down in a social arena and philosophy made us question how art practice could survive in its normative compactness.

In your recent interview with Benjamin Buchloh, you claimed that ‘as viewers of Godard, we wanted to parasitize all forms, and foreground the apparatus. As readers of Brecht, we wanted to use... theatrical or dramatized sequences or performance elements together with more traditional documentary strategies, (and) to use text, irony, absurdity, mixed forms of all types.’ Was your experience with this revolutionary and culturally rich period one of the reasons that you became active as a writer and critic? Or, to put it differently, was making art all of a sudden too ‘small’ for you?

Absolutely. I was writing already when I was a ten- or a twelve-year-old girl, but for a long time any notion of interdisciplinary work was unthinkable for me because we were taught that one has to choose just one profession. I started to write together with Allan Sekula while studying at the University of California in San Diego in the early 1970s. I was a member of a group of people including Fred Lonidier and Phil Steinmetz, who were junior faculty, and Allan Sekula and Brian Connell who were students there; we used to meet and talk about art - especially video, film, and photography. Subsequently, a number of younger women artists who worked in video, such as Adele Sholes and Marge Dean, joined us in these discursive practices. The very reason that, specifically, Allan and I started writing - about our art practice, and about art in general - was that nobody else was writing about the things we considered important. It was especially photography that we found extremely engaging for our interventions into the social sphere. Since nobody else seemed to bother back then, we decided to write about the re-conceptualization of photography. Even before I moved to San Diego, a primary influence in expanding my work into critical writing was David Antin, whom I met when he and his wife Eleanor were still in New York City, before they moved to California. Eleanor Antin had an important impact on my art; her ironic challenge of social and cultural absurdities was wonderful and very instructive.

The beginning of your artistic work historically coincides with the beginning of the feminist movement in the U.S.A. You already mentioned Eleanor Antin, but there were other women artists joining the movement whose work was very different, such as Carolee Schneemann, Hannah Wilke or Mary Kelly. When and under what circumstances did you get involved in feminism?

I was a political person before I was a feminist. In 1967, in the earliest moments of the women’s movement, my baby was born, and I was still wondering about feminism and its potential for organizational efforts for women. It was clear to me how black people could organize effectively because they rarely lived with whites, but women lived with men. How could they be mobilized? Thus the idea of ‘war between the sexes’ that I grew up with was puzzling to me for a long time. It took me

a while to realize that feminism provides the possibility of talking about social injustice in a way that was directly about “me” and my “own” life and not about some abstract entity or principle that structured society. And yet, the changes feminism wanted to achieve were not founded on a purely individual basis but on drawing strength from the community of other people in public but also in very intimate situations, such as talking as we are now. The individual problems women had and for which they as individuals were blamed - neuroticism, dissatisfaction, or hysteria (apparently, all this was based on a Freudian model) - could all of a sudden be openly discussed among groups of women. In the 1960s and 1970s this began to be called ‘consciousness raising,’ and even though it might sound a bit didactic now, that was a moment in which we realized that most of the so-called ‘women’s problems’ result from the distribution of social power, within the family and in society at large. So feminism was fascinating to me not only because of the possibility to rethink the relations between sexes in a totally new way, but also because it demanded a redefinition of “all” power relations. ‘Where does the power reside?’ was a question I have been asking ever since. As a person interested in Eastern Europe and post-Soviet style regimes, I have been questioning for a while how these power mechanisms work in places where the ideas of feminism are refracted by experiences in which women are oppressed by *pro forma* equality - which, apparently, is not the same as real equality.

Even in my country, any suggestion of feminism was refracted during the socialist period. The official ideology conceived feminism as a bourgeois relic, and, at the same time, the totalitarian regime existed as a “genderless” enemy for both women and men. However, it has already been more than a decade since the democratic changes in Eastern Europe began, but the genderless citizenship still governs in Czech society, even though such genderlessness is evidently a male domain. Women’s equal rights continue to be an illusion, something that I call a ‘false sense of women’s emancipation’ that the Communist ideology quite skillfully managed to convince people was a reality.

Yet, the socialist “emancipationist” tendencies in Eastern Europe could be traced back to the avant-garde movements in the first half of the twentieth century and they promoted the liberation of women’s position in modern society as strongly as the merging of art into life. In 1979, you declared yourself that you wanted to make ‘art about life.’ How do you relate your work to early avant-garde art practices?

My attitude towards them is that they were brilliant and even fun at the time, but they are the practices not only of a different era but also of countries very different from the U. S. A. At the same time, I have a deep suspicion about how these movements have been represented, because the discipline of art history has reified and fetishized them as absolute and unquestionable concepts. For me, the importance of those

movements lay in the fact that they involved process and social intervention. Even though it is difficult for me to understand fully the nuances of those avant-gardes, I still admire its disruptive, subversive, and rowdy elements. I think that my generation has unwittingly repeated the avant-garde strategies some thirty or forty years later. It would be perhaps well taken to note that the historical avant-gardes “failed”, as people from Peter Bürger to Suzi Gablik have put it, meaning that they didn’t succeed in transforming society. Certainly, that’s an interesting thing to proclaim as a goal, but one can hardly truly expect art to bring about social revolution.

To think for instance of Dada only in terms of nonsensical fun is undoubtedly entertaining, but we should understand why and how fun becomes political. The “second avant-garde” of the 1960s, such as the Situationists, was in many ways different from the inter-war cultural movement - but the idea of disruption to make visible the boundaries of life experience remains an ongoing necessity, and I believe that if art is to be innovative and challenging, it should always embody a disruptive element as well.

Political themes can be found in your work since its very beginnings. The Vietnam war, women political prisoners, the Cold War, the exploitation of Mexican women working as domestic workers in Southern California, new forms of colonization, globalization and its impact on local cultures, homelessness and poverty, vicious political repression in Chile, or mass-media disinformation have all been important topics in your work. As you know I am coming from a country where the relationship between art and politics is usually seen as a backlash of socialist ideology, and the so-called political art is understood almost exclusively in terms of propaganda. How do art and politics come together without either didactically politicizing aesthetics, or aestheticizing politics? Can any artist escape from political responsibility while being a citizen as well?

This question is closely linked to Walter Benjamin’s theory as set forth in his famous essay ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,’ in which he argues that fascism aestheticizes politics producing the most seductive and dangerous form of propaganda. This model also certainly works in a similar way within Communist totalitarian regimes, but however obvious this example is, because its background was a violation of human rights, I am nevertheless convinced the two sides of the “iron curtain” were mirror images. The Central Intelligence Agency, or CIA, has admitted to vigorously using abstract art during the Cold War to symbolize the U.S.A.’s political freedom. Thus, abstractness and expressive painterly gestures were considered as the polar opposite of narrative, figurative, and didactic socialist realism; in fact, both of these concepts were “avant-garde” and conservative at the same time, depending on the socio-political context. Using what is now despised as didacticism, I and a number of other American artists in the late 1960s wanted

not only to provoke (even though it was a big part of our intention), but also to multiply artistic and curatorial strategies to address burning social and political issues. Similarly, while “collectivism” was a dirty word for the artists in the East, we were using collaborative and anonymous interventions to dismantle exactly that notion of the authored work as an expression of an artistic genius that was promoted by American cultural politics.

As I am personally interested in “flickering” rather than static strategies of art production, my work is also based on a dialectic between move and countermove. If “my” art world makes some move, I feel provoked to react to it - whether it is a subversive or an agreeable reaction - but in any case I hope that my response is always a challenging countermove. Even though I believe deeply in politically engaged art, we have to distinguish between “bad” and “good” political art strategies. A truly political art is not simply propaganda but an art that contains a permanent challenge to both the outside world and oneself.

In 1989, you organized a big project ‘If You Lived Here...,’ which explored issues of city community, housing, homelessness, and urban planning. In the publication that accompanied the project, you wrote that ‘the city is a site of production of productive signification,’ and also that the ‘percent for art’ is based on beautification maintaining profit in the private sector rather than on critical practices which would explore the ‘production of space’. This project is still very remarkable, especially when we consider that homeless people in New York - and more than half of them are children - recently started to be criminalized by the city’s mayor for having nowhere to stay except the streets. How is the space we live in produced, and what is the difference between public art and art works in public spaces? What can an artist or a curator do for homeless people in the city, and other burning problems in contemporary society?

It is very sad that in our craze for quick and easy solutions, we turn to the authoritarian Father figure who punishes his children, and these days in New York, that’s exactly the case, not only with respect to homeless people but to all poor people. I have been dwelling on these issues as an artist and a curator for so long because I was always intrigued by ideological power and wanted to excavate its very mechanisms. Capitalism’s current phase is redefining the world territory and producing certain kinds of abstract space that are linked to information flow. Those who are lowest down in that “new world order”, and who cannot find an actual physical space for their body, are treated like garbage. What can artists do when they are deeply bothered by situations like these? Artists can try to dispel stereotypical “specters” that inhabit our societies, occupy our minds, and support other people’s suffering. Artists can remove the elements of myth-making from potent images that are signifiers manipulated by political figures, and ruling

ideologies, and integrate them into the larger context of social life. A crucial aspect of my 1989 project - even though it took place in a gallery - was interaction with the general public. Communication with people across genders, classes, ethnic groups, and generations is a necessary element of public art as a relatively new “genre” of visual art, and we shouldn’t shrink from speaking about its educational dimensions. Education needn’t be the same as either propaganda or didacticism; on the contrary it should provoke questions and provide space for diverse answers and reactions. And that’s very similar to how art could operate in public spaces. What artists can do instead of maintaining the system in which they produce their work is to stand in a different social location and call attention to problematic things in all spheres of our lives - public or private, intimate or political. If artists are people of conscience, how could they avoid reacting to problems in the society? It might be different in other countries, but most artists in the States live in neighborhoods where you are more likely to see social “Others” more than an ideal image of ‘American beauty.’ Start from there! Of course, art itself doesn’t create social transformation, but it points toward problems and possible solutions, and artists’ engagement in political activities also help to produce political change.

It is interesting to hear you - and many other American artists - shamelessly using words that are still largely taboo in art discourse in Eastern Europe, such as feminism, political activism, or collectivism. These concepts are important for all art disciplines, but they play a special role in public art. It is clear that truly socially responsive (and responsible) public art is different from the common urban aesthetics which sticks with formal clichés of High Modernism, and yet we cannot deny that the social character of public art often runs a risk of didacticism - that it will turn into an illustration of some social thesis that shuts down all the artistic potential. Moreover, there is a very unclear boundary between interventions into the public sphere by artists and by skilled designers who work for social organizations. Just look at two current social campaigns in New York subway: Barbara Kruger’s poster based on a black and white photography of a group of anonymous men with thick red lines of text that reads: ‘77% of antiabortion activists are men, 100% of them will never be pregnant;’ the second one is a series of photographic portraits of battered women that provides the female victims of domestic violence a number to call. Both of these social “ads” are very effective, they are everywhere, and they could be easily taken as public art by a mistake. Even though Kruger is a well-known artist, in this case her work remains anonymous. What can you say about this issue?

Unlike public artists, I find those “skilled designers” to be making just another form of advertisement, no matter how vital are the issues they deal with. The two cases you just pointed out offer a good basis for developing my argument a bit further. I admire Kruger’s poster - a very simple but poignant image that is striking and

politically arousing just because it is so straight-forward. But the battered-woman campaign tells us the whole story - it is a narrative that makes us weep, just like any Hollywood movie. Kruger's epigrammatic poster yells at you like a megaphone without accusing you or manipulating your emotions. With an effective visual language, it provides you with facts about patriarchal society, while the second poster series exploits the general population's sentimentality and wants you to feel sorry for those poor women. In reality, however, we like this poster because it makes us feel good about ourselves - about our generous sensitivity and our understanding of all these women's suffering - but I don't see what the political potential of an image like this is. Knowing about this campaign more than most people, what bothers me most is that the whole thing is a fake. The beaten women are just models, and their racial and class diversity is a trick to manipulate people's identification. (I hope it has some effect, though, in reminding the real battered women that there is an agency they can call for help.)

I might have been naive, but I had no doubt about their authenticity...

That's not naive, it's totally human, and the "skilled designers" always work with this presumption. But exploitation is not related only to false victims. It is the whole dilemma of documentary - if you picture the actual victims you may be 'revictimizing' them. Victimization is part of American life; the endless photographic or filmic reproduction of victimization, which is one of the biggest problems of these media, makes you feel sorry - about other people, or about yourself. It makes you voyeuristically or narcissistically implicated in degradation, but it doesn't make you act. In any case, to answer your question, I think that even though public art is sometimes very close to 'social advertisement,' especially when it uses photographic imagery and text, its aim should be to arouse your consciousness, instead of assuring you of what you already know and what you want to hear, or see, or feel. Saying this, I must emphasize, once again, that I deeply believe in the political meaning of art. As both an artist and a citizen, I have always been seriously frightened about the death of the public sphere as a freely accessible site where anybody and everybody can exchange ideas about the political dimension of life. Its potential absence worries me here in the West, but it was a real threat in former Eastern Bloc countries, where there was only a fake public sphere and no civil society for a long time. Since the public sphere existed only on a formal level in these countries, and the very term 'public' was only an empty sign - which I know from my own experiences in that part of the world - all kinds of public engagement, including the public art, are very important there now.

The two social campaigns we just discussed disclose issues that are usually kept behind a closed door. Since the 1960s, you realized a number of projects in which an

encounter of the intimate/domestic/private and the public/political took place: Greetings (1965); Bringing the War Home (1967-72); Diaper Pattern (1975); Kitchen Economics (1977), and others. On one hand you “contaminate” the political and public spheres by inappropriate, disobedient, and uncontrollable femininity. On the other hand, you allow the masculine arrogance and aggressions to enter the secure domestic environment. In 1977 you defined feminism as engagement in ‘a principled criticism of economics and social power relations and... (in) collective action.’ Where are the frontiers between the public and the private, or are there any? And, also, how do you relate activism to feminist art?

There are a few different ways how to bring the private into the public sphere, and we certainly don't have to think about the “private” as something related merely to domesticity or sexuality. There are many issues that are inherently part of the public discourse, but since they are well hidden, or “privatized” in a way, they are not visible, and their meaning is diminished, or ridiculed. Seen from this perspective, questions of both the boundaries between the public and the private and their permeability are much more complex. The feminist art activism of Guerrilla Girls is exemplary for manifesting the complexity and ambiguity of this issue. Without calling attention to themselves as individuals, Guerrilla Girls offer a critical discourse, which - enriched by the power of their humor and laughter - has turned out to be a very effective form of criticism of the continuing patriarchal practices of the art world. Of course, it is propaganda that, on the surface, is full of statistics, but since it involves a lot of laughter, irony, amusement, and silliness it has a capability to challenge its own bias as well. Similarly to Kruger, Guerrilla Girls confront people with facts. On the other hand, this group - and I honestly don't know its members' identities - takes advantage of being anonymous and of not taking responsibility. They criticize but they don't tell you who they are, and their “unmasked” artistic careers thus cannot be harmed by their activism. I love what they do, but it would be hypocritical not to see its shadowy side.

Another route of women artists' activism is to stick with the subjects of power relationship and keep them in the foreground - whether it is a work on “abjection” by Kiki Smith or the potent rhetorical work by Jenny Holzer or any other form that questions gender and sexual stereotypes. This might not be activism in the traditional sense of street demonstrations or riots, but it is as important. Whether we are women or men, problematizing the signifiers in everyday life should remain near the heart of our efforts.

However, many contemporary young women artists in the States become increasingly disinterested in feminism.

This lack of interest, which comes and goes, reflects a feeling that there is no

discrimination against women artists, which is a fiction. The position of women artists has improved enormously over the past thirty years, at least in this country, but abandoning feminist strategies would be both preliminary and dangerous. Echoing the sentiments of a number of people, a friend of mine - a feminist video-maker - noted recently 'the 1990s equals the 1970s lite', meaning that the art of the 1990s could be seen as a reprise of the artistic approach of the 1970s but without politics. In many ways, it is true. Rejecting the label "feminism" is a strategy for getting into the art world without being dismissed as a potential disturbance. I am afraid that a loss of the collective consciousness that was so powerful among women artists would only reinforce what we intended to subvert: the gender particularity and godly quality of artistic genius. While I invoke the collective, I certainly am not attacking individual imagination. I think that in totalitarian regimes, where official propaganda implied that the interior life is nothing, the notion of genius was necessary and useful. However, the notion of the power of individual imagination should never be taken as the opposite of personally and collectively produced social critique, in all its myriad forms, explicit and wildly oblique.

Feminist art, art history, and also film studies significantly call into question the visual representation of women and femininity, and usually argue against the objectification of women by male artistic subjects. A critique of the "Barbie imperative", so to speak, was an important part of your early work, in which you examined male voyeurism and patriarchal control over the female body. In 1972, for instance, you made a large collage out of female Playboy sex idols. A year later, you put together a performance, Vital Statistics of a Citizen, in which an undressing woman is measured by men in medical uniforms and judged by women in similar clothing. There were a few other pieces dealing with this issue that followed in the 1970s, but - unlike many other women artists - then you stopped dealing with this problem. Why?

In the 1970s, I did two large photomontage series - one of them dealt with the Vietnam War, and the other - which began earlier - with the representation of women. Most of my performances and videotapes from that period were, one way or the other, related to women as well. But I started to wonder how many more "naked ladies" am I going to cut out of magazines and paste onto paper? Seeing the never-ending exploitation of women's bodies I still consider this problem extremely important, but it simply got played out in my own work. Even though my attention moved to issues of gentrification and urban spaces, the body has never vanished from my own work. For the feminist movement, "space" was understood in terms of social relations, and the "physical" disciplines of architecture, urbanism and geography, were only incidental to questions of "social" space. I realized there was immense power encoded into the actual production of space, which controls our

ways of thinking as well as our bodies. I was fascinated by Lefebvre's theory of production of space and disturbed by how space, which is usually conceived in more or less abstract dimensions, is dominated by the distribution and allocation of food, natural resources, pleasure, or entertainment.

What do you think about a revisionist tendency among some feminist scholars who tend to question the rigidity and one-sidedness of reading voyeurism and male visual representation of women as purely objectifying? Some argue that women like to be seen but the question is how - or, to put it differently, that images of women return their look back. Kaja Silverman, for instance, argued during our recent interview in a Heideggerian way that to be seen means to exist.

There is no question that women have suffered from the problem of invisibility, but this is a vicious circle. Women have been allowed to be visible only as objects, which gave them at least a limited pleasure to exist in this world. Moreover, as many feminist film theorists have pointed out, filmic sexual idols often motivated other women to feel potent and powerful themselves because they identified with these idols. However, to exist as an object is an iconic state of being - as an object, you cannot freely move. You are an image without any actual agency, and I wouldn't make a radical difference between static means, such as painting or photography, on the one hand, and moving ones, such as film. Also, there should be a symmetry here, because even men like to be seen, but they have always had a privilege to "act" in real lives as well.

The shift from the critique of representation of female sexuality towards the issues of space didn't happen that suddenly in your work, as it might seem on first sight. You did several remarkable pieces related to food, eating, cooking, starving, or anorexia. I see them as a logical link between the body and the social space.

That's absolutely right. Already the performance and then videotape *Vital Statistics of a Citizen* invokes the social right in the title. *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) is one of the first video-pieces I did, and it was followed by other food- or domesticity-oriented pieces. In 1974-75, I did three postcard novels about food. In the first one, the heroine is a bourgeois housewife who can't dream beyond her very privatized life, because she doesn't know any larger world than her domesticity and tourism. She is an accomplished hostess and wonderful cook, just as her husband wants her to be, experimenting with exotic recipes. This piece was about the channeling of female creativity into an ephemeral form that encodes nurture, consumerism, and a certain kind of American imperialist appropriation of other cultures - in this case through cuisine. In the second novel, a working-class woman who is a vegetarian starts as a hamburger waitress dreaming of bettering the food,

and ends up with a plan to make a social revolution from a hamburger stand. The third one, written in Spanish, was about a Mexican maid. I wanted to show that cooking food, as any kind of other creative activity, is situated in a particular social environment.

It's also ironic that when women cook it is considered a necessity, but when men finally start cooking it is admired as art. By the way, do you like to cook?

I enjoy cooking a lot, and I used to cook a lot. However, at some point I virtually stopped, because it is not fun to cook just for myself.

The closer the end of our millenium comes, the more travelers, refugees, squatters, TV addicts, and homeless people seem to appear in your projects. No matter if they sleep in shelters, in hotels temporarily turned into refugee camps, in front of the running TV, or on airplanes, these subjects are global nomads. You put together an extensive airport series In the Place of the Public (1993), which explores the process of both domestication and commercialization of air travel, and I wonder how are you reflecting upon this nomadic subjectivity that seems to take over in these days?

This is a very important issue not only for my work, but for the whole era we live in, and besides more traditional nomadisms, there is a new form - cyber-nomadism. However, I am allergic to the romanticization of nomadism, or global citizenship, which is particularly popular among artists. Traveling is a crucial part of my life as an artist, but it is not only exciting, it is very exhausting and sometimes even traumatic as well. Moreover, transnationalism is not only about traveling, but is inherently related to global commerce that increases the wealth dichotomy and establishes new colonial mechanisms.

Nomadic subjectivity is also a bitter consequence of war for many people. Wars and their representation have been frequent themes in your work since the end of the 1960s through the 1990s. The more global the world becomes the more local wars seem to be. Even though information systems and mass-media let the whole world "see" what's happening in Kuwait, in Bosnia, or in Kosovo, and even though the multinational organizations such as NATO or the United Nations decide how the "world" (= the West) will react to these wars, these conflicts remain strictly localized. They are focused on identity politics which, if we realize the importance of such politics for the self-definition of minorities, is rather paradoxical and sad. Why do you work with such traumatic topics, and how do you see the representation of wars being transformed?

To demand new identities always goes hand in hand with fracturing other, already

existing identities. For every movement that appears to be positive and liberatory, there is its dark side that turns to be destructive. The question of identity is related to the question of victimization which we already touched upon, and these are two vexed agendas of the postmodern era. Many wars that seem to depend on identity amount to the manipulation of nationalism by authoritarian rulers, and then again some theorists hold that all definitions of identity arise from situations of conflict. The fate of women in war is often neglected, even in the worst cases, such as the systematic use of rape as a military strategy.

War, as I understand it, is the most ultimate form of deterritorialization. I started to address this problem during the Vietnam War, but the initial reason for reflecting war conflicts in my work was certainly my Jewishness. I grew up with a precarious sense that the Holocaust - which is not the term we used in my family - could happen again, and this was reinforced by an actual danger of nuclear conflict during the Cold War. It was a total paranoia. The rhetoric of war was applied by the U.S.A. to every single element of social life during the 1950s, but, as you can see, wars continue to be declared against parts of American population even today: homeless people, taxi drivers, or artists showing “improper” images.

Martha Rosler is an artist who works primarily with photography, video, and installation. Since the 1970s, she has also been active as an art critic, writer, and curator. A retrospective of her work was touring in Europe between 1998 and 2000, and its last venue was the New Museum of Contemporary Art and the International Center of Photography in New York City. A catalogue accompanying the exhibition is entitled *Martha Rosler: Positions in the Life World*, Catherine de Zegher, ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), and was also published in Spanish and German versions. Rosler’s other recent publications include *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism / A Project by Martha Rosler*, Brian Wallis, ed. (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991), *Rights of Passage* (New York: New York Foundation for the Arts, 1997), *In the Place of the Public: Observations of a Frequent Flyer* (Osfieldern-Ruit: Cantz, 1998), and *Passionate Signals* (in conjunction with the 5th International Spectrum Prize in Photography; Hatje/Cantz, 2005). Her notable essay on feminism and contemporary art in the former Soviet Union, “Some Observations on Women As Subjects in Russia,” was published in the exhibition catalogue, *After Perestroika: Kitchenmaids or Stateswomen* (New York: Independent Curators, 1993). Recently, Rosler’s selected writings were published under the title *Decoys and Disruptions* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004).