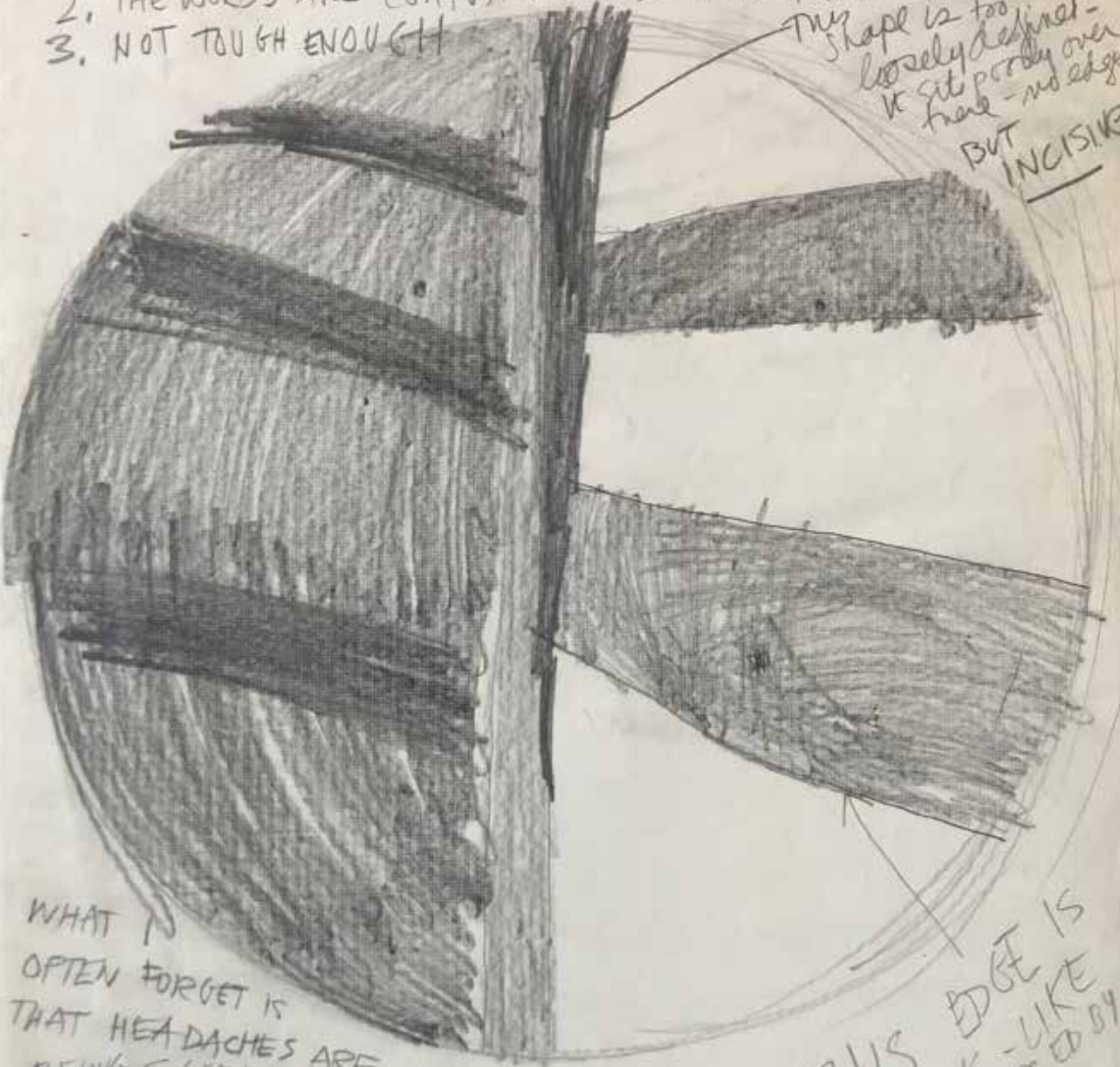


THIS IS WORKING CLASS JEWISH LESBIAN ART.
IN CASE YOU DIDN'T ALREADY KNOW.

1. IT'S NOT TIGHT ENOUGH
2. THE WORDS ARE CONFUSING - DEFINITELY NOT INTEGRATED.
3. NOT TOUGH ENOUGH



THIS shape is too
loosely defined -
it sits poorly over
the face - no edges
BUT
INCISIVE

WHAT I
OFTEN FORGET IS
THAT HEADACHES ARE
BEING SCARED -

THESE 3 DRAWINGS ARE
BEING SCARED /

THIS EDGE IS
WEAK-LIKE
A CHIN COVERED BY
A BEARD

Queer Expressivity; or, the Art of How to Do It with Louise Fishman

Jill H. Casid

The charged form and sheer force of Louise Fishman's art is tough to disentangle from the relational forcefield of the claiming power of her exes. And yet, rather than extricate Fishman from that field, what happens, if, instead, we take the risk of exploring what she does with the exes who claim her? We might start with the amorous declarations of those powerhouse book dedications to Fishman.

Never content to settle for the norm-conserving powers of mimesis or the plaintive notes of lyric address, Bertha Harris, in her 1993 introduction to the re-publication of her experimental novel *Lover* (1976), returns to the novel's dedicatory address to Fishman: "*Lover* is for Louise Fishman."¹ Recasting the "for" into an active to, Harris flexes the volatile powers of art not merely to address or describe interdicted bodies, worlds, and loves, but also to materialize and affect them: "I wrote *Lover* to seduce Louise Fishman."² As we are given to understand, which is to say, to feel it, *Lover* was not just based on Louise but did Louise. For, as Harris concludes with the daring condensation of a two-word boast: "It worked."³

That the work of art might work is no small claim. With that stroke of wild condensation, we are made to reckon with what I would like to call a certain mad expressivity that we could also name *queer* in its pressing of the limits of what art can do when produced by those structurally barred from its genius ranks and consigned only to being done by it. We are made to face the not-at-all trivial question of what such art can make us feel beyond the limits of a patriarchal and heterosexist real — such as tremble the here and now with the palpable sense of another world and other ways to come.

A certain mad expressivity professes no less with the dedication of anthropologist Esther Newton's *My Butch Career*, a memoir of what it takes to turn the gender and sexual outlawry of becoming, as she puts it, a "girl refusenik" into an academic vocation: "FOR LOUISE FISHMAN: my first great love."⁴ As Newton recounts it, her "love for Louise" was an essential part of the "ferment" of the "lesbian world" cracking open in 1969 and 1970 into a world-quaking movement: "You could feel it on the streets, at GLF [the Gay Liberation Front], and in the bars."⁵ From watching Trisha Brown and Steve Paxton perform to seeing Andy Warhol films and having tea with painter Elizabeth Murray, it was Fishman who "opened the world of downtown art" to Newton. Through the mundane tremors of downtown art and lesbian worlds colliding and altering the world that arrogates to itself the status of real, Newton relays that she and Fishman talked "endlessly" about the question of feminist writing and art, which Newton re-articulates with a transposition that replaces the *ex* in expressionist with a variant of *in*: "Should it be realist, abstract impressionist [*sic*], protest, or could it be anything by a woman?"⁶

In or out? This is a relational spatio-temporal and political problem of form in formation and deformation at the center of the push-pull energetics of Fishman's working of the work of art. And yet, whether modified by the draw of the *in* or press of the *ex*, it is abstraction that has come to characterize Fishman's articulated refusal of the demand to play the role of native informant who represents

Fig. 2.1. No title (This is working class Jewish lesbian art. In case you didn't already know), 1973. Graphite on paper, 24 × 18 inches.

their unrebuffed marginality in recognizable terms. In a 2017 conversation in *Interview* magazine on the occasion of her first comprehensive museum survey (*Louise Fishman: A Retrospective* at the Neuberger Museum of Art in Purchase, New York), the then-77-year-old artist threw down the critical gauntlet while bringing into frictional relation the terms — queer, lesbian, woman, abstraction, and let us not forget “old” — that have come to define the uneasy critical frame for Fishman’s work: “It has always been a problem for my career that I am one, queer, two, a woman, and three, doing plain old abstract paintings. There’s not the subject matter that you see in other lesbian work — subject matter makes things more accessible and easy to write about. Abstract painting is not easy to write about.”⁷ Easy or not, the interview’s title, “Louise Fishman’s Abstract Activism,” is its own demonstration of a major surge of investment in attending to the political work of what has come to be known as queer abstraction.⁸ And yet, what if abstraction, with or without qualification, were not exactly the main problem at the heart of Fishman’s experiments in what art can do when not dutifully staying in the lanes of representation and the prescribed givens that condition legibility?

Let’s confront directly that other claiming ex: the ex of Ab-Ex, the ex that positions Fishman as if a queer, feminist inflection of a derivative inheritance — that is, as one reviewer puts it on the way to an ostensible defense: “Louise Fishman aptly describes herself as a ‘third generation Abstract Expressionist.’”⁹ In his 1946 *New Yorker* review on “Assorted Abstractions,” critic Robert M. Coates asserted that Hans Hoffman “is certainly one of the most uncompromising representatives of what some people call the spatter-and-daub school of painting and I, more politely, have christened abstract Expressionism.”¹⁰ Coates’s claim to the name was preceded by Alfred Barr’s deployment of the phrase “Abstract Expressionism” to map the “Blue Rider Group of Munich Expressionists” (with particular emphasis on Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, Lyonel Feininger, Paul Klee, and Hans Arp) in the catalogue to the 1936 Museum of Modern Art exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art*. Despite the effort exerted to find a fitting name, for neither Barr nor Coates is the expression in and of Abstract Expressionism at issue. Indeed, it almost goes without articulation. With the exception, that is, of two moments in Barr’s discussion of Kandinsky’s method. In approaching the problem of the potential power of form to not just affect but also animate the spectator, Barr declaims: “Kandinsky’s method was the logical expression of his theory.”¹¹ This method for making the spectator vibrate may be apprehended, Barr specifies, in the way that Kandinsky’s 1913 *Improvisation no. 30* (now in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago) takes affecting form “as an expression of lyrical spontaneous excitement.”¹² Expression, as an unproblematic delivery mechanism (the method carries the theory while the form conveys the excitement) and radically truncated mapping of sources (method comes from theory and form from excitement), would here seem to do the work of making

manifest — with, it might seem, an accent on the *man*. And yet, in this circuit of excitement that excites, in which method is also a theory at work, the logistics of expression teeter toward an excess that troubles mapping them back to a man behind the canvas or paint. This excess leads onto the immanent potentials of an unruly expressivity with its own defiant energies that I will designate as *queer* for the way queer expressivity, as an affecting agency and aesthetic force of potential, works and works us.¹³

Queer expressivity troubles the policing of substance and its ostensible inheritance, the biopolitical regimes dedicated to controlling production and reproduction with binary-gendered, antisemitic, and antiblack racializing and heterosexist implications for the fates of bodies and worlds rendered disposable. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that in the 1930s and 40s, just as expressivity became a cornerstone of genetics as a way to describe a gene's materializing manifestation, the term was also introduced by Austrian Jewish refugee philologist and linguist Leo Spitzer's 1948 *Linguistics and Literary History: Essays in Stylistics*, which demonstrated what has come to be known as "expressive stylistics" in action. In Spitzer's anatomization of eighteenth-century polymath and art critic Denis Diderot's affecting mimicry of bodily movement or sensation, which Spitzer diagnoses as a kind of enlightenment nervous system of style, expressive stylistics makes a point of its failure to "disentangle the manner of expression from the manner of thinking."¹⁴ For it is not just the question of who or what does the expressing that haunts the enterprise. It is also that, as Spitzer attributes to Diderot, an expressivity in excess of the subject threatens to not just do but also undo the subject: "The self-destruction brought about by excessive expressivity was seen by Diderot as a danger to which any artistic nature is exposed."¹⁵ What interests me here is not to further ascribe particular afflictions to something called "artistic nature," but to put pressure on the way expressive stylistics raises, however inadvertently, the creatively ontogenetic and autodestructive potentials of a subject-eroding and altering expressivity, an expressivity in excess.

It must be acknowledged that the danger in taking expressivity seriously is that any expressivity, when attributed to those from whom no one wants to hear, risks being marked as excessive. This is especially true when it is understood to come from those barred from the universal or general — that is, from those whose work is ever ascribed to the particular and, thus, to the marginalized minor without generalized public purview. Discounted as nothing but raw and even illegible noise, expressivity can, therefore, only be dismissed as the shamed outpourings of personal experience that does not know its place. The recent revival (in Zoe Leonard's strategically placed signage at the Whitney Museum of American Art and emblazoned across T-shirts by Maria Grazia Chiuri for Dior) of "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" — the interrogative puncture that gives its title to Linda Nochlin's landmark 1971 essay — calls on us to confront the particular problem expressivity poses for those disqualified from the start from what constitutes

the expressible capacity for greatness. As Nochlin puts it: “The problem lies not so much with some feminists’ concept of what femininity is, but rather with their misconception — shared with the public at large — of what art is: with the naïve idea that art is the direct, personal expression of individual emotional experience, a translation of personal life into visual terms. Art is almost never that, great art never is.”¹⁶ Here, Nochlin clears the way for the possibility of “great art” by those structurally barred from it. But she does so by cleaving what art can and should do not just from excess expressivity but also from expression. Period. Expression is designated as abject, that is, as matter out of place, of which we somehow ought to be ashamed.

What is the cost of accepting the terms of this regulatory field dividing real or great art from expression? Must we accept this cleavage that positions expression as the humiliating evidence of ostensibly naïve investment in the direct transmission of emotional experience, as the necessarily *merely* personal? For we could argue that this abjection of expression is still caught within the problem (not at all exclusive to feminist thought and politics) of what is attributed to femininity. Rejecting expression as the communication of a maligned substance or essence associated with emotional experience does not merely relegate the temerity to assert their mattering to ostensibly merely personal life. Consigning expression to the zone of an abjected femininity denies the general condition of living matter: the potential to be reduced to abject nothingness that we all share. We might think here of Andrea Long Chu’s rereading of Valerie Solanas’s 1967 *SCUM Manifesto* and largely forgotten 1965 play *Up Your Ass* to make the provocative claim for the terrifying universal of self-negation, “Everyone is female, and everyone hates it.”¹⁷ Hated or loved or all of the above, expression is hard to excise, for what is abjected always lands somewhere.

Fishman’s working of the work of art offers us a way to grapple with the potentials of excessive expressivity as a queer, feminist creative praxis that draws on and with what is in excess of the regulated subject, including both the abjected aspects of what is consigned to the merely “personal” and “emotional” of experience and also the immanent of the as yet — including what we might yet become. And, in attending to Fishman’s working of the work of art, we can revisit the question or problem of queer abstraction by focusing not on the how and why of its tactics of abstraction, but on what art can do when it is not representing. To do so is to unfold not the abstract in Abstract Expressionism but its embarrassed other side: the queer and problematic powers of expressivity — which Fishman’s experiments with art as an affecting and altering force raise as a timely concern. I turn here to sketch out this art of how to do it with Fishman via an open-ended diagram of thirteen key aspects of Fishman’s experiments in and with the powers of queer expressivity as an unruly force in excess of the individual that, nonetheless, refuses the abjection of the ostensibly merely personal as a condition for making art with an intensity that dares.

SIL



Fig. 2.2. *Untitled*, 1971. Acrylic, chalk, graphite, and thread on canvas, 19 × 5¼ inches.

- 1 *Queer expressivity risks working with the consigning names and identifications that claim the artist's life and work as a means to refuse their possessive confinement.* Fishman shows us how to work it, across a career of negotiating the insistence that the style and content match the assigned substance by defying without disavowal. We could take as exemplary the taking apart of the emphatic all-caps assertion at the top of an untitled 1973 drawing, "THIS IS WORKING CLASS JEWISH LESBIAN ART. IN CASE YOU DIDN'T ALREADY KNOW" (fig. 2.1). Consider it a diagramming how-to with staying power in its energetic redrawing of the conventions not just for dividing (subjects, identities, bodies, worlds) but for setting the parts against one another. It draws with the pain and fear we might wish to deny ("WHAT I OFTEN FORGET IS THAT HEADACHES ARE BEING SCARED—THESE 3 DRAWINGS ARE BEING SCARED!") as a potential resource for the resilient working of ascribed weakness.
- 2 *Queer expressivity risks working with an athletic aesthetics that refuses binary gender consignment, employing tactics for extending the sense of the action of making to make physical process palpable through the work's working as dynamic, still-active material presence.* As Fishman demonstrates in working with an athletic aesthetics also often called "gestural abstraction," the extension of the vital sense of the action of making is not a matter of ableist investment in winning prowess. Nor is it to secure qualification for competition on the turf of an Abstract Expressionism already ceded to binarized gender on the kinaesthetic training grounds of the basketball courts or baseball diamonds to which the dynamized grids across Fishman's work (fig. 2.2.) are so often analogized.¹⁸ It is, rather, to make us feel how the vitality ascribed to virility was never the exclusive property of one form of what is attributed to genetic expression. Or, to put this another way, we could think of the risks of Fishman's working of queer expressivity as the making sensible of Monique Wittig's line that "lesbians are not women" by way of Jill Johnston's incitement that "it's not easy to see."¹⁹
- 3 *Queer expressivity risks working with relations to previous work that commits to lifelong training kept in frictional tension with a practice of undoing mastery.* How to do it with Fishman? It's a muscular practice of the ex and the in. Looking, doing, and undoing form the basis for a queer expressivity that risks excess out of the rhythms of a certain "integrity" of practice that has to be stretched, tested to produce its tensile strength. As Fishman demonstrates with "How I Do It: Cautionary Advice from a Lesbian Painter," which appeared in the 1977 special issue of *Heresies* dedicated to "Lesbian Art and Artists," it's not just a matter of "take what you want and leave the dreck" but relational judgment forged through a practice of looking that refuses identitarian purity: "Don't

stop looking at El Greco because he's not Jewish, or Chardin because he's not an abstract painter or Matisse because he's not a lesbian. By all means look at Agnes Martin and Georgia O'Keefe and Eva Hesse. But don't forget Cézanne, Manet and Giotto."²⁰ And yet it's also about disciplined meditative clearing practices that expel to make space that is also allied with a practice of a certain humility, which ranges in its exercise from the early cut-ups to a persistent refusal, across the work, of a signature look or formula.

- 4 *Queer expressivity risks its tensile and ductile powers by committing to a practice of painting that, in moving across materials and techniques not necessarily proper to painting, risks not being.* As Fishman demonstrates across a career of paint on paper that persists in unhinging painting from its canvas and wood supports while also continuing to explore what it does with fabric, the undoing of mastery as a queer-feminist praxis is not merely a formative stage of feminist consciousness raising that excises the patriarchal and heterosexist lurking inside with mat knife, stapler, and even needle in hand. It is a lifelong gambit hinged on making loss not content or subject but an aesthetic practice of resilient self-erosion or, as Fishman's shout-out to Elizabeth Bishop puts it, *The Art of Losing* (fig. 2.3), titling a 2003 oil-on-linen painting with black-and-blue gray slashes and drips after Bishop's exclamatory ("Write it!") instructions for doing things with being undone.²¹
- 5 *Queer expressivity risks the further intensification of the knots of not-being by refusing the priorities of developmental order as well as those of size and scale.* That the drawings are not preparatory works on the way to the real thing. That the use of acrylic and oil on paper is not merely a matter of the economic contingencies of a particular life moment without a studio, though it is also a matter of recognizing and working with precarity. That the exploration of not just the extremity of the tiny but the big or just bigger than miniature refuses to give in to the dictates of malignant growth and unhooks the force and intensities of what affects from the presumption that the great equates to the large. These are the lessons across the exhibition *A Question of Emphasis* in exploring how to work with tying, tightening, and loosening into the knots of not-being we don't choose as a way to be with and do an art of losing — as a practice of undoing mastery that, in the process, intensifies its powers to affect (figs. 2.4 and 2.5).



Fig. 2.3. *The Art of Losing*, 2003, oil on linen, 80 × 60 inches.

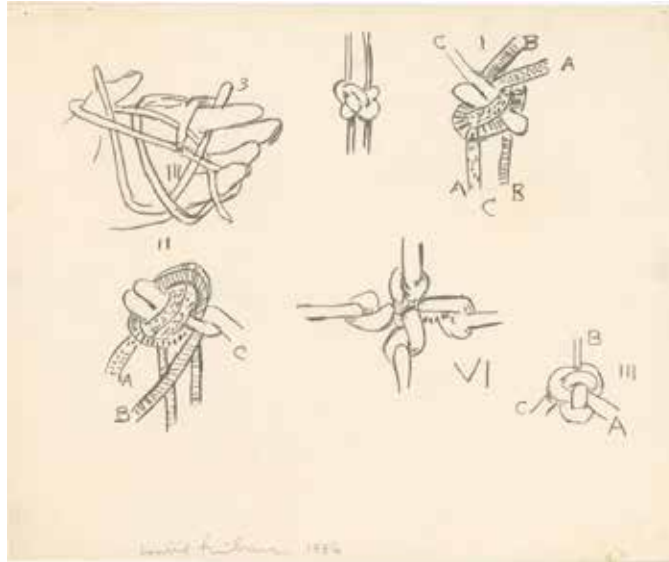


Fig. 2.4. No title (Knots), 1986. Graphite on paper, 13 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 17 inches.

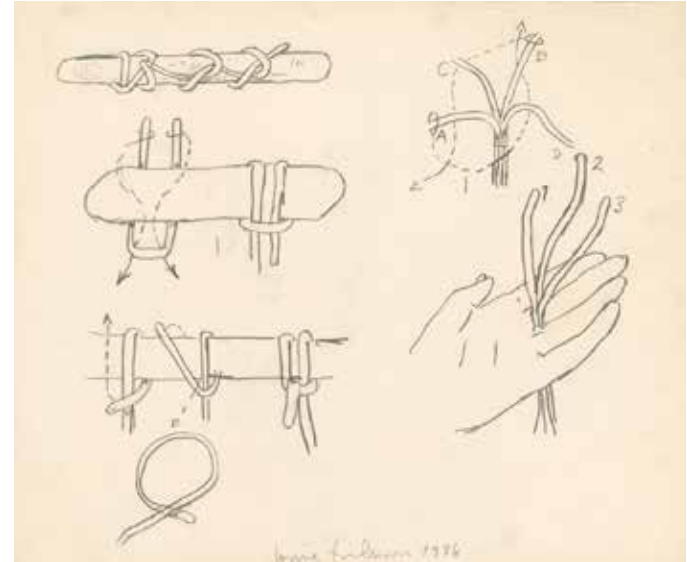


Fig. 2.5. No title (Knots), 1986. Graphite on paper, 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 16 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

- 6 *Queer expressivity risks working with the potentially self-eroding exposure to and relational dependencies on the vagaries of judgment.* Consider a group of circles from 1974 drawn out of “leftover colors” with pencil markings of precarious address (“THINKING ABOUT SOUTINE AT THE BARNES,” “TO PLEASE JENNY AND JEFF,” “THINKING ABOUT THE AUDIENCE,” see fig. 1.7) that expose these exercises to and yet work with relational dependencies on the anticipated and actual ways in which the working of the work of art may also, and even necessarily, work in the mode of the express in that other verb sense of sending by special delivery in the hope of the “letter” always reaching its destination. That they may not exactly reach their intended addressee is also critical to their felt intensification of the power of deflationary exposure as conduit. An “afterword” in penciled capitals to what art can do with what it can’t do puts it this way: “RUSH TO GET ESTHER [Newton] TO SEE CIRCLE DRAWINGS. KNOWING ON THE WAY IT WOULD BE BETTER TO LOOK AT THEM FOR A WHILE MYSELF—BUT TOO INVOLVED ALREADY WITH HER LOOKING AT THEM. BUT ESTHER IS SLEEPING.” And snap. With that doubled stroke of a drawn-out sense of rebuff that intensifies the many ways we miss one another, it’s hard not to be called to attention to what may be left after it’s ostensibly over.
- 7 *Queer expressivity risks intensifying the potentially self-eroding vulnerability of working with not just the ostensibly merely personal of direct address but also the matter of generation and inheritance.* Here we could

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take as exemplary the audacious experiment in direct address of *Letter to My Mother* scrawled in oil across six double-sided panels from 1972–73 (fig. 2.6) that risks our taking it only as at once the acting out and the working through of Fishman’s particular charged relation to the matter of her mother, Gertrude Fisher-Fishman, for whose 2011 catalogue of artworks Fishman provided the framing text.²² Such a story of legacies, inheritances, and expectations regarding being or becoming an artist like and/or not like one’s mother may be one that Fishman confesses in acknowledging: “I struggled for years to make sure that my mother didn’t think I was going to be an artist.”²⁵ But this would be to miss the way that the risk of working with the ostensibly merely personal of direct address puts the express in excessive expressivity in another way. That is, such queer expressivity makes the personal of volatile and charged ambivalence a vehicle for a general address that goes not just back, to forge the not-at-all-given bonds of generations by testing them, but also toward the future that gathers wild force in the summons of its errancy, which is crucial to its potential to draw in an expansive and expanding riot of a crowd of dyke, queer, and trans kin beyond its ostensible moment.²⁴

- 8 *Queer expressivity risks working with ostensibly negative affects and the sharing out of the potentially unshareable as a summoning force.* That summoning force of amplifying anger blasts most vehemently across *Angry Louise*, *Angry Bertha*, *Angry Esther*, *Angry Jill*, *Angry Rita Mae* — just five of thirty “Angries” (most from 1973, plates 26–30) painted across the paper of insufficient infrastructures. That making of an “army of lovers” out of what undoes us may be positioned historically as Fishman’s route back to painting. But that force also resists containment in its convoking intensity, which does the trans-temporal work of sharing out the potentially unshareable to make a

Fig. 2.6. *Letter to My Mother about Painting*, 1982.
Oil on canvas, <dims, credit line TK>.



trans-feminist commons across time and space not out of shared substance but out of the bonds of rage as medium.²⁵

- 9 *Queer expressivity risks working with the self-eroding force of the destructively unbidden to do things with being undone.* Doing things with the self-eroding blows of loss after loss after loss takes on an intensified charge with the studio fire that, as Fishman describes it, destroyed what she had gathered as her life and brought chronic fatigue syndrome in its wake. And yet Fishman's turn in the early 1990s to the fanning pleats of Japanese leporello books also comes in the wake of working with the exes that claim Fishman in other ways, from the ex of exile to that of extermination and the visit to Auschwitz — from which a rock, as Fishman recounts it, was one of the few objects to survive the fire. But which Holocaust, which sense of the insensible of *burnt whole*? And it is here where the impersonal, person-exterminating forces that produce denuded, bared life meet what takes hold of us at the level of the personal and at the scale of the handheld that *Book of Abuse* (1993–94, plate 16) shows us — with its wounding work — how to do things with what devastates.²⁶
- 10 *Queer expressivity risks a material erotics of art not as content but as an unruly aesthetic affect that refuses spectacularizing legibility while risking working with the abjected of not just the “dirty” but a certain wash of what might be dismissed as the romantic or even sentimental.* That queer expressivity, in risking a material erotics of art, might be a problem — and not just for critics — is haunted by Susan Sontag's famous challenge: “In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art.”²⁷ If such an erotics is neither visible form nor expressed content, then it might seem that we are reduced to hallucinatory projection, a version of auto-theory in the confessional mode, or following

the directional vectors of the dedication. But consider what Fishman does in working into and through the folds of *Down and Dirty (A Book for Bertha Harris)* (1994, plate 32) to put the unexcised matter of relation to wilding use beyond merely a tit for tat or “*Lover*” does Bertha. *Down and Dirty* does a different version of the vice versa in exciting the page to incite and inciting the surface to excite.

- 11 *Queer expressivity risks working with the potential of the work of art to work, a vital version of a kind of animacy attributed to the naive that, at best, goes by the inadequate name of the spiritual.* Here we move from the pleats of the matter of the fold-in and fold-out books to the paintings Fishman activates with the dirt laden with charred remains that she collected from the disposal site at the Auschwitz II–Birkenau death camp, which Fishman reminds us to call the “*Pond of Living Ashes*,” as well as to paintings such as *Golem* (1981, [fig. 2.7](#)) that force us to confront the active, vital potential of presumptively dead matter not merely as subject or even process of making (as in the way the form and facture of Fishman’s painting resembles that of fabricating a figure out of earth and activating it by encircling incantations).²⁸ To put this another way, what is also at stake in the question of the working of the work of art is no less than the potential that life rendered disposable as life reduced to dead matter might yet act to contest the logics of a necropolitical *ex* without terminus.



Fig. 2.7. *Golem*, 1981. Oil on linen, 52 × 48 inches. The Jewish Museum, New York, Gift of Francine and Samuel Klagsbrun, 1991–56.

- 12 *Queer expressivity risks the openness of the fan in the sense of both devoted enthusiasm and the accordion pleats that unfold.* Fanning back, let us return to those concertina-fold books that go by the name of Leporello, the servant in Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* whose reveal of the libertine's liaisons unfolds a seemingly endless list of exes. Here we meet that inseparable other side of the vitalities of matter at stake in the working of the working of art so often dismissed as the spiritual, and this is the radical joy that goes by the no-less-inadequate name of seduction.
- 13 *Queer expressivity risks not belonging to the moment of its making, which is also to risk an openness to the as yet.* Fishman has avowed a relation not just to expression but also to Expressionism: "I've always thought of myself as an Expressionist painter. I associate it with a certain kind of passion and a certain kind of marking. A kind of immediacy."²⁹ But this is not to bury the lede at the end. It is, rather, to refuse the relegation of Fishman's work to Abstract Expressionist style with a queer-feminist content or another turn on the question posed by Helaine Posner, "What's left for an artist to express after the triumph of Abstract Expressionism?"³⁰ And this is not just because Fishman's exploration of the embarrassed potentials of potentially excessive expressivity troubles temporal progression with both an intensified relation to a past that is not over and an unforeclosed futurity. Rather, to revisit the beginning, Fishman's working of the risks of queer expressivity hazards not the confidence of "it worked" but an aesthetics of seduction without assurances that, nonetheless, moves with a mad sense of the immanence of other possible ways of being and doing — an as yet with the palpable immediacy of an urgent here and now.

Notes

1. Bertha Harris, "Introduction," in *Lover*, with a foreword by Karla Jay and new introduction by Bertha Harris (1976; New York: NYU Press, 1993), viii.
2. Harris, "Introduction," lxxviii.
3. Harris, lxxviii.
4. Esther Newton, *My Butch Career: A Memoir* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), v.
5. Newton, *My Butch Career*, 146.
6. Newton, 146.
7. William J. Simmons, "Louise Fishman's Abstract Activism," *Interview* (May 2, 2016). Not just a queer feminist defense but a robust re-theorization of abstraction in praxis had, by this time, already been mounted. See Barbara Hammer, "The Politics of Abstraction," in *Queer Looks: Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Film and Video*, ed. Martha Gever, John Greyson, and Pratibha Parmar (New York: Routledge, 1993), 70–75; Linda Besemer, "Abstraction: Politics and Possibilities," *X-TRA* 7, no. 3 (2005): 14–23; Amy Sillman, "Ab-Ex and Disco Balls: In Defense of Abstract Expressionism II," *Artforum* 49, no. 10 (Summer 2011): 321–25; and Harmony Hammond, "A Manifesto (Personal) of Monochrome (Sort of)," reprinted in *Harmony Hammond: Becoming/Unbecoming Monochrome*, Tirza True Latimer (Denver: Redline Art Space, 2014), 4.
8. I am particularly indebted here to ongoing conversation with Lex Morgan Lancaster and their articulation of queer abstraction as not a style or look but, rather, a set of tactics for dragging away from the normative constraints on the domain of appearance. See particularly their dissertation, "Dragging Away: Queer Abstraction in Contemporary Art," University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2017; their articles "The Wipe: Sadie Benning's Queer Abstraction" *Discourse* 39, no. 1 (Winter 2017): 92–116, and "Feeling the Grid: Lorna Simpson's Concrete Abstraction," *ASAP/Journal* 2, no. 1 (2017); and their review of Jared Ledesma's exhibition "Queer Abstraction," *ASAP* (July 16, 2019), <http://asapjournal.com/queer-abstraction-lex-morgan-lancaster/>. For a speculative overview that places particular emphasis on the question of resistance to surveillance and an embrace of the impurity of abstraction, see David J. Getsy, "Ten Queer Theses on Abstraction," in *Queer Abstraction*, ed. Jared Ledesma (Des Moines: Des Moines Art Center, 2019), 65–75. That abstraction might rather be understood best as an impure tendency and, thus, even figuration by other means, see Charles Bernstein, "Disfiguring Abstraction," *Critical Inquiry* 39, no. 3 (Spring 2013): 488.
9. Daniel Kunitz, "Exhibition Note: On Louise Fishman: New Paintings," at the Cheim & Read Gallery, New York," *The New Criterion* 38, no. 7 (November 2000), <http://newcriterion.com/issues/2000/11/exhibition-note-2315>.
10. Robert M. Coates, "The Art Galleries: Assorted Abstractions," *New Yorker*, 30 March 1946, 83.
11. Alfred Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1936), 66.
12. Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, 66.
13. This essay's formulation of the concept of queer expressivity thinks with the foundational work on queer performativity by Eve Sedgwick and Judith Butler at the beginnings of what has come to be known as queer theory. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Queer Performativity: Henry James's *The Art of the Novel*," *GLQ* 1, no. 1 (1993): 1–16; and Judith Butler, "Critically Queer," *GLQ* 1, no. 1 (1993): 17–32. It also extends my thinking on the "deformative" (a term used in both of these early essays yet never quite taken up) as the negative aspect and potential within the performative, which I developed in "Doing Things with Being Undone," *Journal of Visual Culture* 18, no. 1 (2019): 30–52, and "Queer Deformativity," *The Conditions of Being Art: Pat Hearn Gallery & American Fine Arts, Co. (1983–2004)*, ed. Jeannine Tang, Lia Gangitano, and Ann Butler (New York: Dancing Foxes Press, 2018), 213–37.
14. Leo Spitzer, *Linguistics and Literary History: Essays in Stylistics* (1948; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 168.
15. Spitzer, *Linguistics and Literary History*, 155.
16. Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," *ARTnews* 69, no. 1 (1971): 23–39; 67–71.
17. Andrea Long Chu, *Females* (New York: Verso, 2019), 11.
18. For the most recent narration of Fishman's athletic aesthetics and, in this case, through the device of live-action ballgame commentary, see Amy Sillman, "9 Innings: Notes of a Color Commentator," *Louise Fishman: 9 Works on Paper*, Karma Gallery website, April 28, 2020, <https://karmakarma.org/viewingroom/louise-fishman-9-works-on-paper/>.
19. Monique Wittig, "The Straight Mind" (1978), trans. Mary Jo Lakeland and Susan Ellis Wolf, in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Cornel West (New York: New Museum; and Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990),

57. Jill Johnston, "Cunningham in Connecticut" (1961), in *The Disintegration of a Critic*, ed. Fiona McGovern, Francis Sullivan, Axel Wieder (Bergen: Bergen Kunsthall, and Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2019), 15.
20. Louise Fishman, "How I Do It: Cautionary Advice from a Lesbian Painter," *Heresies* 1, no. 3 (Fall 1977): 74.
21. Elizabeth Bishop, "One Art," in *Geography III* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976), 41. Bishop's poem begins, "The art of losing isn't hard to master," and concludes, "the art of losing's not too hard to master/ though it may look like (*Write it!*) like disaster."
22. Louise Fishman, untitled essay, in *Gertrude Fisher-Fishman: A Catalogue of Selected Work* (New York: Ink, Inc., 2011).
23. Ingrid Schaffner, "Getting Small with Louise Fishman," in *Louise Fishman*, ed. Helaine Posner (Purchase, NY: Neuberger Museum of Art, and Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, 2016), 190.
24. Fishman's *Letter to My Mother* was installed in the 2011 exhibition *Readykeulous: The Hurtful Healer: The Correspondence Issue*, organized by Ridykeulous (Nicole Eisenman and A.L. Steiner) at Invisible Exports, New York, with the wall text, "How's My Painting: Call 1-800-EAT SHIT." For a review and installation shot, see Rachel Wetzler, "Angry Art Letters on the Lower East Side," *Hyperallergic* (February 3, 2011), <http://hyperallergic.com/17693/angry-letters-exhibition/>.
25. On the angry paintings, see especially Catherine Lord, "Their Memory is Playing Tricks on Her: Notes toward a Calligraphy of Rage," in *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, ed. Cornelia Butler (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 440–57. For the call that "an army of lovers shall not fall," see Rita Mae Brown, "Sappho's Reply," in *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle* (New York: New York University Press, 1971).
26. See particularly Carrie Moyer, "Zero at the Bone: Louise Fishman Speaks with Carrie Moyer," *Art Journal* 71, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 36–53.
27. Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation," in *Against Interpretation, and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966), 10.
28. Emily D. Bilski, "Louise Fishman's Paint Golem," in *GOLEM* (Bielefeld: Jewish Museum, and Berlin: Kerber Verlag, 2016).
29. Louise Fishman, quoted in Carter Ratcliff, Hayden Herrera, Sarah McFadden, and Joan Simon, "Expressionism Today: An Artists' Symposium," *Art in America* 70, no. 11 (December 1982): 66.
30. Helaine Posner, "Louise Fishman: The Energy in the Rectangle," in Posner, *Louise Fishman*, 11.