



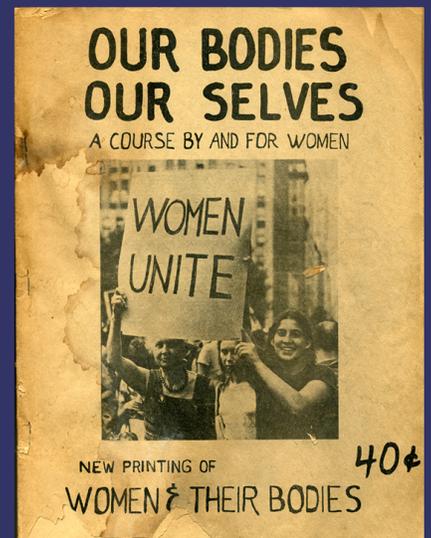
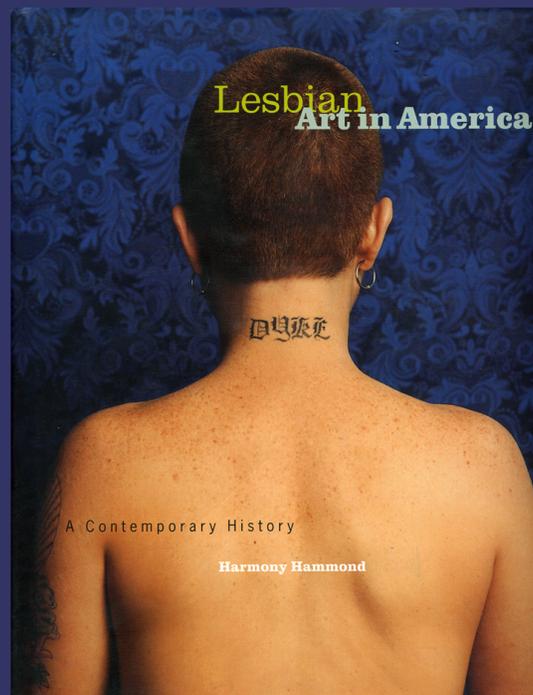
It's been half a century since the fateful Saturday of June 28, 1969, when members of New York's gay community retaliated against an early-morning police raid at Greenwich Village hangout the Stonewall Inn. A spontaneous series of demonstrations continued throughout the summer months. The Stonewall Riots, as they have come to be known, sparked the Gay Liberation Movement and brought the fight for LGBTQ civil rights to national attention.

On Stonewall's 50th anniversary, we asked artists, writers, and activists to share their reflections on how that moment affected queer life in New York City, as well as their own creative practices. Artist Tommy Lanigan-Schmidt, the only surviving person featured in Fred W. McDarrah's iconic 1969 photograph *Celebration After Riots Outside Stonewall Inn*, recounts the insular ways gay communities operated before the riots. Photographer Arthur Tress observes that drag performers' camp theatrics opened him up to surrealistic and homoerotic themes in his own work. Artist and writer Harmony Hammond conveys the necessity of recording the history of lesbian art to prevent its erasure.

All of the figures who have gone on the record here describe an opening up of gay life in the years after Stonewall. Their insistence on living authentically—and on fighting for the right to do so—reflects the urgent issues of identity that we continue to grapple with today.

Harmony Hammond

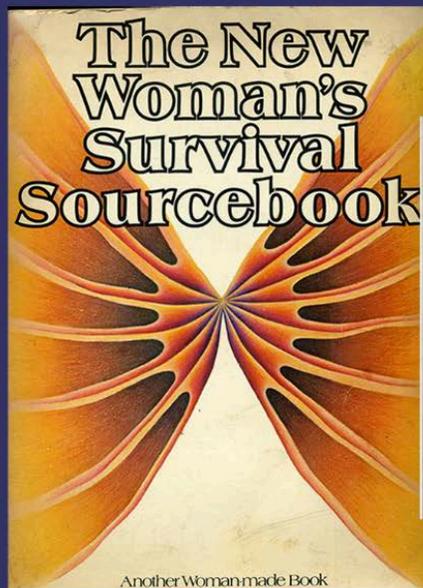
The feminist artist, activist, curator, and writer recalls curating her first lesbian art show and taking on the task of recording the history of lesbian art.



Stonewall was a momentous event which of course impacted my life, but I didn't have that "moon-landing moment." Generally speaking, the Women's Liberation Movement affected my life more than the Gay Liberation Movement. In 1970, I joined a consciousness-raising group with primarily women artists (both straight and lesbian identified).

Until the Women's Movement, women artists didn't talk to each other because women's lives, feelings, and experiences were not valued. With consciousness raising, we began to understand that women as a class were oppressed, and began to take women's work seriously. Within my group, there was a lot of support for experimenting and speaking from a gendered voice.

While there were a lot of gay and lesbian artists in the downtown art scene, sexual preference—much less sexual identity—often went unnamed, and in being unnamed, remained apolitical. Even gay men, many of whom were curators, dealers, and art writers, discriminated against women artists. Just as we needed exhibitions that focused on historical and contemporary women artists, we needed shows of work by lesbian-identified artists who were absent in the historical narrative of Western art.



“It’s not only about making our work; we have to document and preserve it and insist on a place in history or it too will be erased. ”

In 1978, I curated “A Lesbian Show” at 112 Greene Street. A few lesbian artists I knew didn’t want to be in such a show as they feared labels would limit how their work would be viewed or that their careers would suffer. Most welcomed the opportunity to put the words “lesbian” and “artist” together, as scary as it was. I don’t have trouble claiming labels—they are only limiting if you let them be.

Biographies on lesbian and bisexual artists like Betty Parsons, Louise Nevelson, Agnes Martin, and Nell Blaine weren’t published yet. The history of lesbian art and artists was missing. That’s why I curated “A Lesbian Show” and wrote *Lesbian Art in America: A Contemporary History* (2000). It’s not only about making our work; we have to document and preserve it and insist on a place in history or it too will be erased.

Image one from left: Harmony Hammond and daughter Tanya at Christopher Street Liberation Day Gay Pride March, NYC, 1974. Photo by Cidne Hart for Liberation News Service. Printed in Majority Report. Getty Research Institute, LA. Cover of Harmony Hammond, Lesbian Art in America; A Contemporary History (Rizzoli, NYC, 2000). Cover image: Dyke, 1993 by Catherine Opie. Cover of Our Bodies, Ourselves, 1970. Image two from left: Cover of The New Woman’s Survival Sourcebook, 1975. Harmony Hammond, Self Portrait with Black Hat, 1973. Getty Research Institute, LA. All images courtesy of Harmony Hammond.