

# ANGRY LOUISE FISHMAN (SERIOUS)



AND

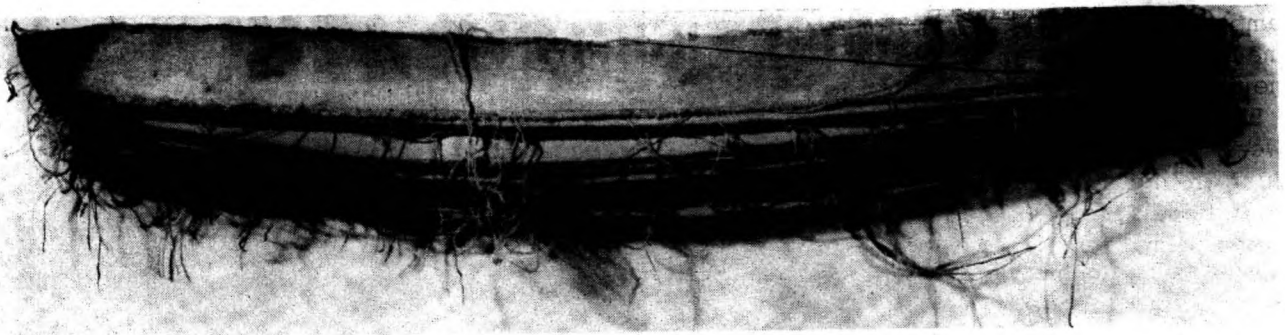
ANGRY ESTHER, ANGRY BERTHA, ANGRY PHYLLIS, ANGRY JENNIFER, ANGRY JENNY, ANGRY HARMONY, ANGRY ELIZABETH, ANGRY PATSY, ANGRY MARILYN, ANGRY PAULA, ANGRY JUDY, ANGRY JILL, ANGRY JANE, ANGRY TI-GRACE, ANGRY AGNES, ANGRY GEORGIA, ANGRY BILLIE, ANGRY DJUNA, ANGRY LUCY, ANGRY SARAH, ANGRY NANCY, ANGRY CHARLENE, ANGRY SUE, ANGRY JOAN, ANGRY RITA MAE, ANGRY RADCLYPFE HALL.

by Sarah Whitworth

Louise Fishman's angry paintings which here begin and will conclude this article are the current crest of work by an artist whose art and personal exploration are coordinated in an almost perfect rhythm. I first met Louise about three years ago when I visited her studio in New York. Her work at that time was in a transitional state and it was difficult to determine where she had been artistically or where she was going. And yet, the visit was revolutionary! I left her studio with a sense of defeat, purge, anger, fatigue, relief and exhilaration. Louise had

an unusual and uncanny ability to strike home, to open my words like two halves of a clam shell and expose the center portion of what I meant within what I had said.

I have talked with Louise on many occasions since and watched her work develop at the same time. I have come to realize that her art in unity with her conversation affords that same sudden opening of the clam shell. Social politesse has simply been cast aside. That which remains is raw and crude because of its honesty but if we will embrace this we are welcome to the fruits of self dis-



covery.

After our first meeting, I did not see Louise for several months; when I did visit her again, I was amazed by the change in her art. Tacked and hung about the studio were several small wall-hanging sculptures made of canvas strips which related directly and consciously to female genital organs. Intimate and tactile, I felt encouraged to respond to them by actual touch. Loose threads frayed wildly at the edges like unshaven hair, unrefined and uncensored. Layers of material overlapped one another echoing at once memories of the vulva and a shifting mesh of emotion and thought.

Contrasted to traditional "museum" sculpture made of glassy marble or glistening metal, protected by barriers of awe and refinement, the approachability, the touchability of Fishman's new wall-hangings was readily apparent. Here was a literal translation of the idea of being in touch with oneself. If the mirror of physical self examination was too forbidding, Louise was offering a bridge. At least these works might be cupped in one's hands without fear of self or social redress. And if one's mirror was an open gate, the memories and fantasies of being a woman (or loving a woman) might be enriched and enlightened by these sculptures just as the viewing of a landscape painting will add to the luxury of remembering some familiar town or place. Louise explained: "The reason I started to change my work was because I wanted to examine what part of it really had to do with being a woman and what part was just something I had accepted. When I started thinking of the idea of using three-dimensional ideas, the immediate thing I thought of was women's genitals. I was trying to consciously change the audience for my art so that women, not just artists, would be able to respond to it."

Moreover, the fact that Louise's "vulva" images were abstract and not exact genital

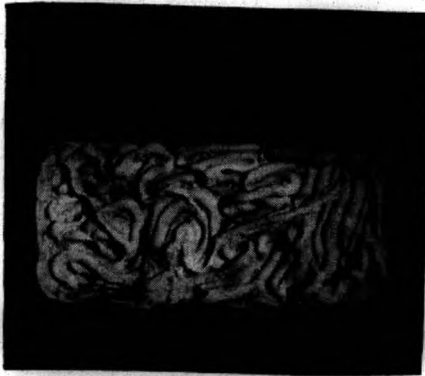
representations demanded a sensitivity on the part of the viewer which precluded any sort of male pornographic reaction. To understand them, it was necessary to know what it meant to physically be a woman, by experience and not just by hearsay. And this was exactly what was so exciting about the wall-hanging pieces. The imagery had within it a uniqueness that pertained to the direct knowledge of womanhood that only women can have of themselves.



The evolution of Louise's art continued to press deeper through many more changes and many different media toward an expanded realization of her female self. She began to essentialize the processes of a woman's internal workings. By example, Fishman's small plaster relief sculpture is a convolution of finger-size curves which push and probe and beg to be interpreted as vaginal, menstrual, or birth canals. The relief is a labyrinth of hollow receiving funnels, channels of germination,

volute and indulgences spewing forth and emptying out. It seeks to reminisce, to remember, to share an almost primeval awareness of female experience.

But the new forays and adventures which were taking place in Louise's art revolved not just around a sense of physical discovery; they began to enter also into a mood of emotional discovery. And the emotion she began to deal with was anger. "I decided to do a painting which would have words in it. It was a series of six panels and each panel had a word on it and it was: LETTER...TO...MY...MOTHER...ABOUT...PAINTING. Then I turned the panels over and on the other side I did a painting which was about a subtle anger, the kind of anger I'm always involved in, sort of low level and clouded over. I noticed that I stopped coming to the studio after I did it because it was so angry and that was hard to deal with. But I started thinking about how angry I am. I began to wonder if everyone is as angry as I am. And as I thought of people I know, I realized that every woman is angry, every woman I know is angry. And they all



deal with their anger in different ways and they all have trouble acknowledging it and integrating it into their lives. And I decided I would make a painting for all my friends so that they could hang it up and be confronted with their anger."

The angry paintings are conceived as a means of confrontation between the artist and herself and we are asked to respond to these paintings by joining in and confronting our own anger. For the letters which are written on these paintings are not calmly and indifferently printed there. The letters not only spell anger they are anger and like the graffiti on the toilet room wall, they are written out of anger. It is impossible to sidestep it or transform the word into a more acceptable or expedient feeling. Louise really is angry and so is Jane

(LOUISE FISHMAN IN 1972)



and so is Djuna and so is Judy and so is every other woman who looks at these works and is willing to expose the conflicts within her.

Each step of Louise Fishman's development has been to confront herself artistically amid the confrontations she feels as a woman. The wall-hangings and plaster relief encourage that we touch ourselves and look anew at our physical being as women, at those things which make us biologically female. The angry paintings speak out to our joint emotions as women, to our frustrations and also to our self-challenges. Each time I have visited Louise's studio, I have felt a new sense of revelation. And I wait excitedly to see what other shells her art will open just as I await again and again the opening of myself and the wonderful opening of the women around me.



The works shown on these three pages are by Louise Fishman and are from the artist's collection.



# AMAZON QUARTERLY



## SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE

*in which*  
*THE EDITORS*  
*TRAVERSE*  
*THE CONTINENT*  
**INTERVIEWING**  
**OUR READERS**

**PLUS**

volume 1 #4

volume 2 #1

**STUPENDOUS**

**WOMEN'S RESOURCE DIRECTORY**

\$1.50

# LESBIAN LIFESTYLES 1973

## SUBSCRIBERS:

THIS SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE COUNTS AS VOLUME 1, ISSUE 4 AND VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1.

IF YOUR ADDRESS LABEL SAYS:

EXP SUM 73-----EXP VOL 1 #4-----OR EXP VOL 2 #1

THIS IS THE LAST ISSUE OF AMAZON QUARTERLY YOU WILL RECEIVE UNTIL YOU RESUBSCRIBE.

**If You Move** THE POST OFFICE WILL NOT FORWARD AMAZON QUARTERLY  
-----NOR WILL THEY RETURN UNDELIVERABLE COPIES TO US.  
PLEASE NOTIFY US IMMEDIATELY OF CHANGES IN YOUR ADDRESS (and please  
include your old address, and note whether your sub. is a plain wrapper one).

# AMAZON QUARTERLY

VOLUME ONE & VOLUME TWO  
ISSUE FOUR                      ISSUE ONE



Editors: Laurel and Gina  
Poetry Editor: Jennie Orvino

Please send poetry (but no  
other correspondence) to:  
Jennie Orvino  
3046 N. Farwell  
Milwaukee, WI 53211

Send all correspondence  
(except poetry) to:  
AMAZON QUARTERLY  
554 Valle Vista  
Oakland, CA 94610

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:  
\$4./One Year Subscription  
\$5./Plain Brown Wrapper  
or Outside the U. S.  
\$25/Sustaining Subscribers  
\$6./one year to Institutions

SINGLE COPY PRICES:  
This Special Issue: \$1.50  
Volume 1, Issue 1 and  
Volume 1, Issue 2: \$1. each  
Volume 1, Issue 3 is no  
longer available.  
Bulk prices apply for orders  
of five or more.

BULK RATES:  
This Special Issue: \$1./per issue  
Back & Future Issues: 80¢/issue  
Consignment orders accepted from  
bookstores and women's centers.

# AMAZON QUARTERLY

## EXPLORATION

### Lesbians Around the Continent — Interviews

flo	4	shelley	14	adrienne	22	terry	38	laura	52
IMPRESSIONS		Laurel	18	AN ANALYSIS		Deborah Wolf			30
CHANGES -- AQ		THE FIRST YEAR				Gina			50

## VISUAL ART

ANGRY LOUISE FISHMAN (SERIOUS)		Sarah Whitworth							57
		DRAWINGS						PHOTOGRAPHS	
Gina	23, 28, 38, 39, 42, 45, 49			Ruth of Mountain Grove					35, 53
Carson Byers			46	Joyce Finkelwoman					36, 56

## POETRY

SILVERMARIE, FANTASY									35
----------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	----

## TOOLS

WOMEN'S RESOURCE DIRECTORY									60
WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP AQ									12
PUBLICATIONS AQ RECOMMENDS									72

## CONNECTIONS

If you would like to contact women who share your interests we will try to help. Send us a brief description of yourself, your name, address, phone number, and your age (we can not accept anyone under legal age). Let us know if you want to meet women in your area, women anywhere living in communes, women with children, etc.--make up your own categories. Include \$1.00 plus a self-addressed stamped envelope. We'll send you the names and addresses of other sisters with similar wishes. (Allow time for us to gather them.)

Names and some details of place and time have been changed in the interviews.

The paintings by Leonor Fini on pages 5, 7, 11, and 15 are from: Leonor Fini, The Olympia Press, N.Y., N.Y., 1968.

Copyright © AMAZON QUARTERLY 1973

The Women's Resource Directory printed in this issue may be reprinted under certain conditions (see page 60). No other part of this publication may be reproduced without written consent of the author or artist. No part of the interviews published in this issue may be reproduced under any circumstance.

AMAZON QUARTERLY is published quarterly by Amazon Press of Oakland, Ca. This is the October 1973 issue. Application to mail at second class postage rates is pending at Oakland Post Office, Oakland, Ca., 94610.