The Reemergence of the Goddess Image in Contemporary Art

Tara E. Patrick
Western Michigan University, taramccrackin@ferris.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors_theses
Part of the Contemporary Art Commons

Recommended Citation
Tara E. Patrick, having been admitted to the Carl and Winifred Lee Honors College in 1988, has satisfactorily completed the senior oral examination for the Lee Honors College on December 10, 1993.

The title of the paper is:

"The Goddess Image in Contemporary Art"

Prof. Eve Reid
Art

Prof. Paul Mergen
Art

Ms. Ann Meade
Professional Artist
The Reemergence of the Goddess Image in Contemporary Art

Tara E. Patrick

Fall 1993
The goddess image, and its use in art and life, has a long history. The goddess has had many uses throughout history that are being expanded and converted through the art of many contemporary artists. The historical uses will be explored through a brief history, followed by an expansion and discussion of the contemporary uses of the goddess image in the art of three Michigan artists; Ann Burian, Katheryn Trenshaw, and Ruth Zachary.

Spirituality and religion affect every aspect of civilization and culture. Religious differences have been the cause of many wars. The goddess image in art reflects a change in the spirituality of contemporary times. There is a move toward a more individualized, earth based religion. People are recognizing the power inherent in themselves and this is parallel to ancient goddess worship. Within the goddess religion there is no distinct division between what is considered to be sacred and what is considered to be profane, as in Christian history. William Irving Thompson defines the terms, "The sacred is the emotional bond force which connects the part to the whole; the profane or secular is that which has been broken off from, or has fallen from, its emotional bond to the universe". (1981, p.102-
103). This echoes Christian views from contemporary society.

The goddess religion recognizes the individual divinity as an echo of the supreme goddess; being that of the earth mother. Religion can be viewed as essentially a myth of creation. The goddess religion celebrates that which can produce and sustain life; the female cycles of menstruation, pregnancy, birth, and lactation. These parts of the feminine experience are paralleled to the great womb of the earth bearing the fruits of life. There is an understanding and celebration of the sexual element involved in the life cycle, and a reverence for the acts involved creating, birthing, nurturing, and nourishing life.

In Christianity, there is a division between the sacred nurturing and the profane act of conceiving life. This can plainly be observed in the myth of the Immaculate Conception. The Virgin Mary, Holy Mother of Jesus, is separated from the sex act that is so sinful. Mary is kept sacred to the Christian belief. Whores, like the Mary Magdalene, are the women that embody sexuality and sin, they are the profane to the Christian belief. There is a distinct division drawn between what is considered sacred and profane in the Christian religion. The goddess religion encompasses a more holistic view and includes humankind's needs and desires and does not view the sacred and the profane as being mutually exclusive.

This retroactive trend toward goddess spirituality is evident in contemporary art being produced. Michigan artists Ann Burian, Katheryn Trenshaw, and Ruth Zachary are using the goddess
image within their art. Ann Burian uses recycled garments and other textiles to create her goddess images. Katheryn Trenshaw is a prolific artist who uses printmaking, watercolor, and ceramic sculpture to create her goddess images. Ruth Zachary uses printmaking to create her goddess images. They are also incorporating goddess spirituality within their philosophies. Their art is a reflection of their involvement with feminine power. Ann Burian, Katheryn Trenshaw, and Ruth Zachary are presenting their growth, realizations, celebrations, and reflections of life through the use of the goddess image. There are many recent sociopolitical efforts that are addressing the empowerment of women. Issues such as health care, child care, abortion, aging, divorce, single parent families, welfare, and environmental concerns are sociopolitical issues that concern women and their involvement in society. These movements are reflected in the art of Ann Burian, Katheryn Trenshaw, and Ruth Zachary.

The Women's Movement of the 1960's through the present times has reaffirmed women's presence in art. Many social changes have been influenced by the Women's Movement, and the advances have become evident in contemporary art. These changes and reaffirmations have influenced the imagery used in art, and become apparent in the reemergence of the goddess image from prehistory into contemporary times.

Many of these changes are reflected in the thinking of today. Women have achieved renewed importance in society. There
has been a movement toward a more earth centered spirituality, and recognition of the power of the individual, which relates to many contemporary political movements. As Elinor W. Gadon points out, "Goddess spirituality is political because it transforms our relation to society, the arts are its meaning of communication." (1989, p.370). The goddess image has become iconographic of the self empowerment of modern women. The goddess religion recognizes the need to find the divine within and to celebrate the magic and power of women. There is a spiritual connection to everyday life and a celebration of the life cycle of the female.

The Goddess religion holds a holistic view of life. The sacred and the profane are not antithetical, but a part of a whole that cannot be judged in parts. There is an interconnection with the earth and its life giving process. The power of women to bear life reflects the sacredness of the Earth Mother who first gave life and continued to sustain that life. The goddess also embodies the taker of life in the cycle of death. The goddess religion celebrates the ongoing rhythm of life, death, and regeneration. (Pettigrew). Seasonal changes and life cycles were marked by rituals that continually recharge the human connections to their communities and to the cosmos. The female menses are marked through the cycles of the moon, and thus calendar the seasons. The earliest rituals known were connected to a women’s monthly bleeding. These were rites of passage, and marked time and events that were important. Menstrual blood was believed to have magical power that nourished the unborn child.
It was a mystical happening that sanctified the female. In fact, the word "ritual" is derived from the word "rtu" which is Sanskrit for the word menses. (Gadon, p.2).

From the beginning of known human history, the goddess has been worshipped for her powers of fertility and her connections to the life cycle. Paleolithic people, aware of female menstruation, pregnancy, birth, and lactation, related this to their understanding that the earth was the womb from which all life was created. (Sjoo and Mor, p.84)

The Paleolithic societies (ca. 35,000 - 9,000 B.C.E.) were nomadic, hunting and gathering peoples who left behind small female figures that celebrated fertility and the power of the life giving force. There are certain symbols from this time period that have been interpreted to exemplify the female/goddess image. The flower represented the vulva, the sacred triangle represented the female genitalia, and the cave or hollow represented the womb of the great Earth Mother. (Walker, 1988, p.312-313, 325).

Approximately 200 stone figures of women have been found from the Paleolithic era. These figures accentuate the female body parts associated with the giving of life, the breasts,
vulvae, and buttocks; and deemphasize characteristics of the individual. These female figures were not viewed as erotic, in the modern sense of the word, but were connected with the life force, and thus worshipped as such. (Gadon, p.14).

In Neolithic society (ca. 9,000 - 6,500 B.C.E.) there was a change from nomadic life to agricultural life and animal husbandry. There was a realization of the changing relationship between humankind and the environment. During previous times the people were at the mercy of nature, but during the Neolithic time people began to actively manipulate the environment to enable them to create their own food supply. (Gadon, p.21). This centralized the goddess image to everyday life. The connection of the goddess to fertility was expanded to include the harvest, as well as the nourishing and care giving of the domesticated animals. (Sjoo and Mor, p. 89). The goddess was now worshipped in shrines designed and built for her purposes. In Catal Huyuk, in Anatolia, the shrines were built one to every four or five homes. Not only was the goddess worshipped in the shrines but also through the landscape and natural elements which were considered sacred. Hills, stones, rivers, and mountains represented the energy of the life that began inside the earth. (Sjoo and Mor, p. 73). The life cycle of the female; as a young maiden, a birth-giving matron, and the death crone, paralleled the three phases of the moon; the waxing, the full, and the waning. (Sjoo and Mor, p.90). They also paralleled the three worlds; the heaven, the earth, and the underworld. (Gadon,
There was an emphasis on the goddess as life giver and the life taker. Life had been born from the earth. In death, burial in the great womb of the earth meant rebirth. (Walker, 1988, p.331).

Female fertility figures found from the Neolithic era celebrated the life giving power of the goddess. These figure were in the archetypical birthing position, in a squat, at the moment of crowning, when life first emerges from the female. These figures were more naturalistic than those from the Paleolithic era, and included facial features. The life giving goddess was often presented as a bird or a snake, which represents cosmic creators; or as a bear, which represents the protector/nurturer; or as a pig, which represents prodigious reproductivity. (Sjoo and Mor, p.91).

The life taker, which was embodied by the crone, was believed to be an awesome force. "Because it was believed that women became very wise when they no longer shed the lunar wise blood but kept it within, the Crone was usually a Goddess of Wisdom." (Gadon, p.29). The life ending goddess was often presented as a vulture, which devoured the flesh of the dead; or as a butterfly, which represented the regenerative powers of the goddess. (Walker, 1983, p.215).
The time period recognized as Old Europe (ca. 6,500 - 3,500 B.C.E.) is a link between the Paleolithic and Greek cultures. The ideas during this time period evolve into classical Greek mythology. This culture was concerned with the religious practices of a fishing community. The bird and snake images represented the creative energies of the waters. The Mistress of the Waters created the world, and the Pregnant Vegetation Goddess was the life giving goddess. (Walker, 1983, p.1066). The goddess created the existence of life.

During the time period ca. 3,000 - 2,000 B.C.E., Avebury and Crete were honoring the Goddess. In Avebury, seasonal connections were drawn to the reproduction cycle of women. There was the planting, the waiting, the birthing, and the hibernation; referring to Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. (Walker, 1988, p.352). These were the reproductive cycles of the Goddess. In Crete there was a glorification of sex for reproductive purposes. Fertility and abundance were desired. The Cretens believed in a supreme divinity that they believed took feminine form. She was portrayed as a woman exactly as themselves, who was "...comfortable with her beauty, her body, and her power". (Gadon, p.87). Cave sanctuaries were paralleled to wombs and dedicated to the Goddess of...
Childbirth. A cave birthed Zeus, the King of the Greek Gods.

The Cult of Demeter, the Goddess of the Hearth, survived until the fall of the Roman Empire (ca. 1.000 B.C.E. - 100 C.E.). Demeter is the Goddess of the Grain, who nourishes, but does not create life. Images of Demeter with her daughter Persephone celebrate the bond between a mother and her children. Demeter was often represented carrying fruit which symbolizes the women’s womb, the abundance of seeds, and its fertility. (Walker, 1988, p.219). The Cult of Demeter, the worshippers of the harvest and the familial bonds, remained strong despite years of Christian resistance. The earth based goddess, Demeter served the spiritual needs of the early agrarian cultures better, than a heavenly god with little earthly connection to these people. (Gadon, p.65).

With the onset of Christianity, the center of religion was challenged and eventually changed. The goddess religion was earth based and honored women for their reproductive and nurturing roles. The traditional Christian religion was heaven based and the sex act, for other than reproductive purposes, was considered sinful. The Virgin Mary conceived the Christ child by Immaculate Conception, thereby remaining "pure". The Christian God is unrelated to the reproductive process, yet the Virgin Mary
is worshipped for her nurturing role. She was the mother of the Savior of Humanity. In the Garden of Eden in Genesis, Eve is cursed to bear children, not to be blessed with motherhood. Carnal knowledge was considered to be closer to the animal world than to that of humans, and women were seen as seductresses. Mary was incapable of sin, and therefore a holy figure. The power of the goddess was not denied. However the Virgin Mary represented the holy nurturer, and the Mary Magdalene represented feminine sexuality. There was a division between what was considered maternal, and what was considered sexual. The patriarchal Christian religion separates the two, considering them to be mutually exclusive. The sacredness of human sexuality that was evident in the goddess religion was shattered by Christianity. (Gadon, p. 206).

The goddess image used today is not a virginal, innocent persona. This goddess represents real life, real pain, real suffering, and real joy. She comes into her own, through her life experiences, to be recognized for her own merit. Often times this goddess is autobiographical or universally symbolic to female experiences. Elinor Gadon remarks:

"Re-imaging the Goddess in their own likenesses was a path of self-discovery for many women artists, at times a painful confrontation with the discrepancy between the power inherent in the image, and the powerlessness they felt." (1989, p.260).

Sexuality is a major theme in art throughout history. The reclaiming of female sexuality is presented through the use of the goddess image. Modern women feel an impatience with the
traditional mythological and Christian goddesses. (Updike, p.496). Women have become frustrated with the Madonna v. Whore dichotomy that is a large part of their history. Most Western women have come to believe that erotic and maternal are exclusive and separate feelings. This idea is being challenged by images of the Earth Goddess who created and celebrated life. This idea of power and procreation mixed with pleasure, symbolizes the reclaiming of women’s sexuality. Gloria Orenstein states that:

This art (in which the archetype of the Goddess plays a catalytic role) is not based upon an original creation myth connected with the fertility and birth mysteries. In its modern transformed meaning, it is about the mysteries of women’s rebirth from the womb of historical darkness, in which her powers were so long enshrouded, into a new era where a culture of her own making will come about as a result." (1988, p.72)

There are women artists who, through their use of the goddess image, are addressing many contemporary sociopolitical issues. The work of Ann Burian, Katheryn Trenshaw, and Ruth Zachary uses many sociopolitical themes presented through their use of the goddess image. They begin from historical goddess archetypes and transform the goddess into practical use for the concerns that they are visually communicating and the messages that they are presenting.

Ann Burian approaches the theme of female sexuality with humor. She approaches very serious subjects with a touch of humor that gains her work acceptability. She takes sexual politics and parodies them through the use of such titles as The Great American Dream Quilt, which refers to a quilt made from bra cups, and General Social Lubricants, which refers to a piece made
from gloves that parodies social structures. She subtly asks the viewer to examine sexual relationships and roles in society by using humor that appeals to and intrigues both men and women. (personal communication, Sept. 14, 1993).

Katheryn Trenshaw approaches the theme of female sexuality very freely. The goddesses in her work celebrate the feminine, and do not define their needs through the masculine presence. Pieces, such as her Fertility Goddess altar piece *Mixed Messages*, celebrate the power of creation, yet include references to modern day control of that power, by the presence of birth control methods. Trenshaw communicates the powers of control and choice that have historically been masculine, and only in recent years been considered feminine responsibilities. The goddesses that Trenshaw depicts are in control of their bodies and their needs. They are assertively making decisions about their sexuality.

The art of Ruth Zachary, Katheryn Trenshaw, and Ann Burian celebrates the empowerment of women. This empowerment comes through many channels and is presented in many different ways. Ruth Zachary states that she would like her work to enrich peoples lives by being meaningful to personal experience. She says that her work is about "...rising above oneself to achieve excellence". (personal communication, Oct. 28, 1993). Katheryn Trenshaw says that her work is about finding the divine within oneself. (personal communication, Oct. 14, 1993). She would like people to realize themselves and celebrate in those images. Ann Burian encourages people to examine social roles and why they are
stifling to the individual. She visually communicates that the power to break from traditional roles is in each individual. (personal communication, Sept. 14, 1993). The goddess image to these women artists is one of power and nurture as the great communicator of feminine ideals.

Many social changes brought about by the Women's Movement were used as themes in art. The goddess image stands as a model for many of these changes. The "...20th century mind, disenchanted with the social dynamics of monotheistic religion and the gospel of science is starved for ritual that reifies connection to the sacred source of being." (Gadon, p.227-228). This source, for many artists including Katheryn Trenshaw and Ruth Zachary, is within oneself. Katheryn Trenshaw remarks that "... in our ritual poor culture...self empowerment is the answer to spiritual need". (personal communication, Oct. 14, 1993). Ruth Zachary refers to the spiritual connection as the need to "...rise above oneself to achieve excellence". (personal communication, Oct. 28, 1993). Both of these artists are using self-actualized goddess imagery. It is difficult to ignore the power of this type of spirituality when considering the recent rise in involvement of women religious leaders. In the Christian religions, feminism has had a great influence. In the last three decades, women have become more and more prominent and are now becoming recognized and accepted members of the clergy. The protest and oppression against this movement is causing a great number of spin off spiritual groups "...separatist 'Women-church'
worship, a New Age blend of feminist, ecological, neopagan, and Christian elements". (Ostling, p.54). Women are taking control of their spiritual needs and desires and creating a spiritual revolution in order to express themselves. This is reflected in the use of the goddess image in contemporary art.

Katheryn Trenshaw uses the goddess as a healed image. She has a large body of work that communicates the pain of child sexual abuse, in her project Breaking the Silence: A Project About and For Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse. Her recent pieces in exhibits like Spiral Dancing with the Moon celebrate the healed images of women. These goddesses have reached a spiritual empowerment within themselves. They are images of real women overcoming challenges that many women face, by exerting the power within oneself to heal.

Images of the healer are apparent in Ruth Zachary’s and Ann Burian’s works. Ruth Zachary’s Medicine Woman, which depicts women using natural herbs and rituals to heal, and Ann Burian’s Cloak of Healing, which is symbolic of healing rituals, are concerned with the healing powers. Historically women have been the caretakers
of the sick. Witches were burned for possessing heretical medicinal knowledge. In the Mexican culture the Shaman are female. In modern medicine, many more women are pursuing careers in the medical field. There are more opportunities for women to study and practice medicine and the healing arts.

There has also been a recent revolt from the mechanization of the birthing process. This is a result of more women in the health field and the demands of contemporary women. Mothers are showing preference toward birthing rooms, natural births, home births, and midwifery in response to the sterile, drugged environment typical in Western society.

Birthing goddesses have been evident throughout history. From the beginnings of recorded history birth has been a mystical experience. Since the Ice Age, the Earth Goddess was believed to have "birthed" life into the world. Katheryn Trenshaw depicts the archetypical image of the ancient birthing goddess in her etching, Birthing. The image is of a woman in the traditional squatted position of birthing. In Trenshaw's image the goddess is isolated and given great importance.
in the composition. This gives the viewer the feeling that this is how the birthing process should be revered. One should honor the physical comfort and stability of the woman and worship the birth of a child. Trenshaw also strongly believes that the Birthing Goddess is symbolic not only of reproductive powers, but also the power of the birth of ideas and creative energies. (personal communication, Oct. 14, 1993). Women have the power to create, not only children, but also futures and lives of their own. Trenshaw’s goddesses do not define themselves through anyone but themselves. They have tapped into their creative energies and are alive and free.

Motherhood is also a powerful image of the goddess. The roles of mothers in contemporary society have changed considerably in the last twenty to twenty five years, though many of the responsibilities of motherhood have remained the same. Nurturing is considered a feminine responsibility that has become virtually inherent in our society. The mother will love and care for her young, she will also provide discipline. Ann Burian has created a very moving piece, Hiroshima: Lullaby for a Childless
Mother. This work explores the emotions of a generation of childless women after the bombing of Hiroshima in World War II. Her treatment of the "mother" is a universal grieving goddess, mourning the loss of a generation wiped out by the hands of another. This goddess image grieves for the destruction of humankind.

Relationships have changed with the onset of the Women's Movement and the reevaluation of the feminine role. The Goddess religion has explored relationships of humans to earth, and humans to each other. Sexual, familial, and racial relationships have changed in contemporary times. Women have come into a power to make choices that had previously been denied or unrecognized. The double income family has become the norm in our society, thus women have become career oriented. Women are learning about their earning power in society, and society is beginning to realize the valuable services that woman provide; in the home and in the work place. There are changing needs of welfare, child care, and time management. There is a high divorce rate and an incidence of the single parent family. Many women are finding themselves to be the only parent in the home.
and are having to adjust their behavior accordingly. There is a trend toward counseling and therapy to realize the dynamics of relationships and how to make them work. The goddess image embraces this in the images of the free nurturer who has taken control of her life and the relationships that she has to others. Katheryn Trenshaw’s images are inspired by relationships. The goddesses that Katheryn Trenshaw depicts have a relationship to their personal history and a confidence in their future. These goddesses are celebrating their relationships to people, the earth, the stars, the moon, and even to their pets.

Ann Burian uses humor to capture the tension of relationships between the sexes and the social pressures placed upon women. Her titles such as The Great American Dream Quilt and General Social Lubricants humorously relate to relationships. They use body parts and elements that are typically female to embody the goddess and how she interprets the importance placed upon certain body parts to represent the whole woman. Historically such pieces as the Venus of Willendorf have emphasized feminine body parts to refer universally to the female identity. In Ann Burian’s The Great American Dream Quilt, she uses bra cups to question the importance of the cup size placed on contemporary female identity.

The rise in environmental consciousness is reflected in art through the use of goddess imagery. Ruth Zachary embodies this relationship in pieces such as Earth Woman. The female portrait is encased in a planet or moon that is interconnected to
other planets or moons. This assumes a relationship of the Mother Earth to her galaxy. This is a comment on the need for human involvement in the preservation of our environment. Historically the goddess has represented the relationship of humankind to the earth, and women have embodied that relationship through their power to give birth and sustain life. The use of animal elements and natural landscapes give importance to the preservation of natural resources and wildlife. The Goddess, by virtue of her relationship to natural processes, embodies the environmental concern of contemporary society. As Ruth Zachary remarks it is her goal to communicate "...spiritual equality of all things, human and wild". (personal communication, Oct. 28, 1993).

"Women fly when men aren't watching." This contemporary proverb has much meaning in our society. It implies that women, when successfully breaking traditional sex roles, prosper. It also implies that there is strength in women as a group. the word "fly" is carefully chosen. Throughout the history of the Goddess, she has been represented as a creature of flight. In Old Europe the bird image embodied the creative energies of the
waters, and the waterways were considered to be the veins of the Earth Mother. As the Death Crone in Neolithic history, the goddess was represented as a vulture. In the Christian religion angels have wings, and they are often the messengers of God. Images of flying women represent a power of self actualization.

Images of flying women have great significance in the works of many artists. Ann Burian describes her floating women, in pieces such as It's Hell Keeping Your Feet on the Ground and Beyond Bondage, as being unplanted. (personal communication, Sept. 14, 1993). These floating women are breaking from their traditional roles and freeing themselves. These floating women are realizing their power and becoming free goddess images.

The flying or floating women in Katheryn Trenshaw's works, such as Contemplating Voids, are dreamlike visions. Trenshaw describes these images as being healed goddesses that come to her in dreams. (personal communication, Oct. 14, 1993). They are free from earthly responsibilities. They are spiritually empowered and full of themselves and their dreams. They are not "grounded" to traditional female roles.

Winged images have a strong connection to freedom. Ruth
Zachary includes many winged women in her work. The winged women in pieces like Eirene, Guardian of Peace and Phoenix are representative of Zachary's theory of becoming more than you are and recognizing individual potential. These images, like those in Katheryn Trenshaw's work, are spiritually actualized. The women/goddesses in these images have achieved a nirvana within themselves that is communicated through the work of Ruth Zachary, Ann Burian, and Katheryn Trenshaw.

There is an importance in our society placed on youth. The Goddess image historically included older women as well as younger women. Aging and death are a part of the life cycle. "Because it was believed that women became very wise when they..."
no longer shed the lunar wise blood but kept it within, the Crone was usually a Goddess of Wisdom" (Gadon, p. 29). Katheryn Trenshaw expresses the idea of "...walking through life with death as a midwife". (personal communication). Aging and a respect for the beauty inherent in that process, is celebrated through the goddess image. Ruth Zachary presents the cycles of life in her image Woman in the Hour Glass. She depicts a young woman preening on the banks of a river. In the hand mirror that she holds, is the reflection of a old woman. Zachary is celebrating the aging process and commenting on society's pressure to be young and beautiful. Aging is a natural part of life and should be considered important. In contemporary American society the old are treated with much disrespect and dishonor through government programs, the media, health care programs, insurance programs, and most especially, the younger generations. The media stresses the desire for youthful appearances. Though recently with the reemergence of models such as Lauren Hutton there is a trend toward the reality of aging as a beautiful and powerful process. Artists such as Ruth Zachary are recognizing the importance of
aging in the life cycle and are glorifying these images through the use of the goddess image.

The goddess image stood as a model for many social changes influenced by the Women’s Movement, because of her spiritual empowerment and her emphasis on relationships. There is a correlation with the goddess image in art and with the recent occurrence of women religious leaders and the recognition of female spiritual power. The feminist theory that gender is a social construct and is culturally learned is also presented in goddess imagery, in images of the strong, fierce goddess who is powerful in stereotypically masculine, physical ways. These goddesses were not always what could be acceptably recognized as "feminine". The recent revolt from the mechanization of the birthing process, with the advent of birthing rooms and the recent popularization of midwifery, are also evident in goddess imagery, in the peaceful images of natural birth that are separate from the clinical view of birth that is typical in contemporary society. A major change in family structures, including the acceptance of divorce and single parenthood, as well as the double income standard have been represented in goddess imagery. All of these changes became possible through the efforts of the Women’s Movement and recognition of feminine power.

The goddess images used by the artists, Ann Burian, Katheryn Trenshaw, and Ruth Zachary reflect the social changes in contemporary society brought about by the Women’s Movement. The
goddesses that they present are women who exude confidence and stability within themselves. These images reflect freedoms and responsibilities gained through the Women’s Movement. Spiritual, sexual, political, and environmental influences can be seen through the work of Ann Burian, Katheryn Trenshaw, and Ruth Zachary in their representations of goddesses.

Social advances through the Women’s Movement have influenced contemporary art. Women are realizing their feminine powers and this is being conveyed visually through the use of the goddess image. This goddess with its historical basis, is evolving to meet the needs of contemporary society. Issues that effect humankind are being visually explored and communicated through the arts. The changing spiritual needs of our society have been an impetus for a trend toward an earth based, holistic view of life and natural needs and desires. The holistic view of the sacred and the profane has had a powerful effect on the feminine. Society is beginning to realize the power and influence women demand and deserve; and to respect and revere the feminine powers. The reemergence of the goddess image in contemporary art is influenced by the realization of feminine powers.
Addendum

While researching this subject and writing this paper, I realized the extent to which this topic affects my own life and work. I have a very earth centered philosophy of life and have begun to become aware of how cyclical things are. What seems so important some days, is not so important other days, and then some days it seems even more important. While researching the subject of the goddess in contemporary art, I began to find her in my own art. The concepts of relationships, familial and sexual, are very central to my art. The people and events in my life subtly and sometimes obviously influence my art. The issues discussed in this paper have infinitely influenced my choice of imagery. The goddess image has become a strong direction in my art. "Women fly when men aren't watching."

... Dec. 15, 1993
References


Pettigrew, Margaret (Producer), and Read, Donna (Director). (1992). *Goddess remembered*. (Film). Canada: National Film Board.


