



Between Union and Liberation: Women Artists in South Africa 1910-1994

Brenda Schmahmann

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The essays collected here investigate art made by women in South Africa between 1910, the year of Union, and 1994, the year of the first democratic election. During this period, complex political circumstances and the impact of modernism in South Africa affected the production of images and objects. The essays explore the ways in which the socio-political circumstances associated with twentieth-century modernity had a paradoxical impact on women. If some were empowered, others were disadvantaged: while some were able to further their social and cultural development and expression, the advancement of others was impeded. The contributors study the lives and achievements of women - named and un-named, black and white, and from different cultural groups and social contexts - and consider objects and images that are historically associated with both 'art' and 'craft'. In all the essays, gender theory is related to South African circumstances. The volume explores gender theory in relation to twentieth-century visual culture and discusses economic conditions and regional geographies as well as notions of identity. It investigates the influence of educational and cultural institutions, the role of theory on art practice, debates about material culture, the power of nationalist ideologies and the role of feminist theories in a changing country. A wide range of visual images and objects provide the touchstone for debate and analysis - paintings, sculptures, photography, baskets, tapestries, embroideries and ceramics - so that the book is richly visual and celebrates the diversity of South African art made by women.

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