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JANETTE BECKMAN'S GUIDE TO DOCUMENTARY PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY

Lessons from the legendary punk rock and hip-hop photographer

by Calley Nelson

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SVA ARTIST RESIDENCY ALUMNI COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT

by Catherine Guzman

For this year's SVA Artist Residency Alumni Exhibition open call, we were delighted to receive an overwhelming number of artwork submissions from our community and to read thoughtful testimonials on how the Artist Residency program has encouraged creativity beyond the residents' time at SVACE.

We are excited to highlight some of these Residency alumni and feature artwork by Jose Diaz '23, Felipe Góes '21, Julia Justo '23, Samues Leung '23, Xinchun Li '23 and Clara Jeanne Reed '23.

The selected works display a wide range of media and artistic practices, including painting, photography, sculpture, mixed media, fiber art and new media technologies. For example, Julia Justo's textile-based works features embroidered imagery of immigrant workers that uses the act of repetition to represent the nature of manual labor. Another example is Xinchun Li's 3D printed furniture drawn from personal and fragile memories of home. We're grateful to these artists for continuing to engage with the SVACE community, and are very excited to see what lies ahead for them!

SVACE Artist Residencies offer artists, designers and creative thinkers time, space and a supportive community in which to develop ideas and focus on their artistic direction, with summer programs on campus in New York City as well as year-round in online formats.

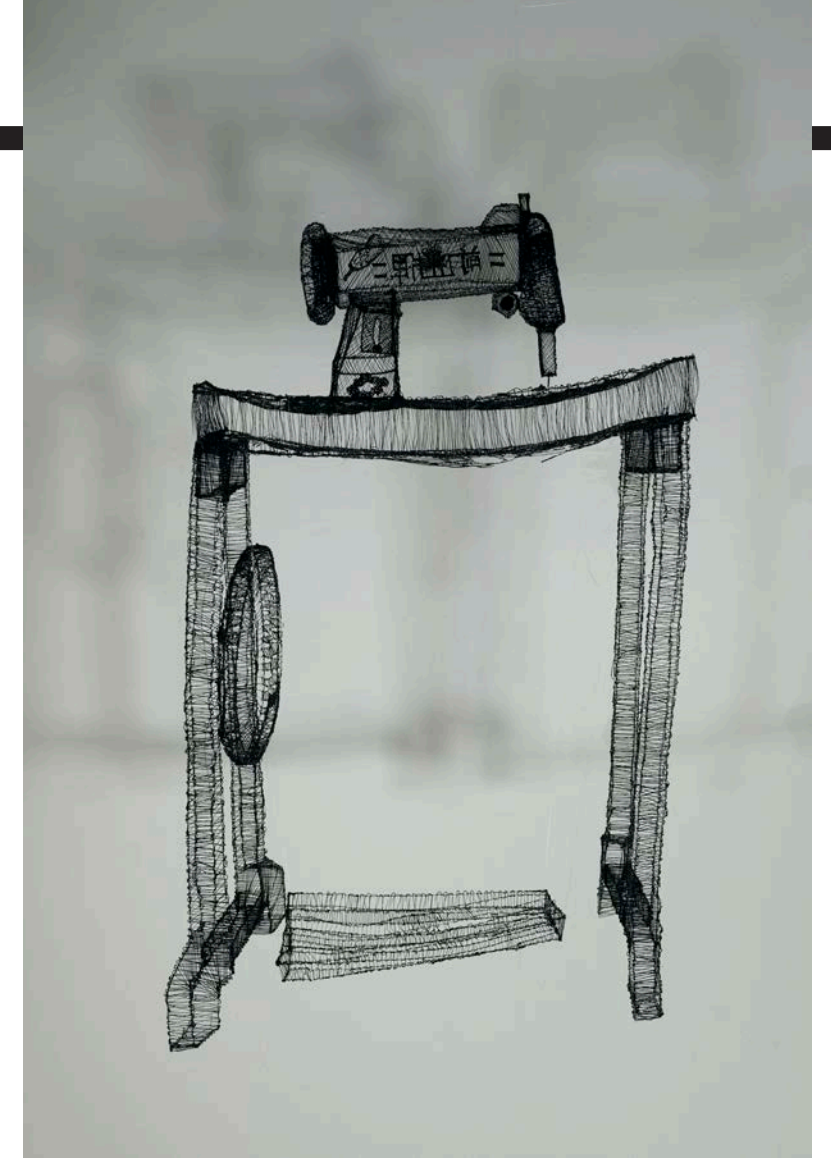
"It was an experience that not only pushed my work to a new level but provided me with a safe and inspiring environment to promote my creative thinking. During my time with SVA, I made lasting connections with other artists and faculty who inspire my work daily."

—Clara Jeanne Reed



"This collaborative effort created a sense of community and camaraderie among us, forging friendships and deep connections. It was evident that each artist was dedicated to pushing their artistic boundaries."

—Samues Leung



"This virtual experience became a catalyst of critical insights, forever altering the course of my artistic journey."

—Felipe Góes

Captions:

1. Samues Leung, *Juxtapositions of New York*, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 24".
2. Julia Justo, *Maria and Dora, The Cleaners*, 2023, textile-based installation, 17 x 11 x 14".
3. Felipe Góes, *Painting 425*, 2022, acrylic on canvas, 35 x 40 cm.
4. Jose Diaz, *Resistencia*, 2023, embroidery, 45 x 45 cm.
5. Clara Jeanne Reed, *In the Meadows of Asphodel*, 2022, digital photograph, 11 x 14".
6. Xinchun Li, *Sewing Machine*, 2023, PLA, 3' x 1' x 5' x 1'.



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VISUAL ARTS PRESS, LTD.
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Mark Maltais, art director
Anthony Carhuayo, senior designer
Laura Valenza, editor

CONTRIBUTORS
Catherine Guzman
Nivia Hernandez
Stephanie McGovern
Calley Nelson

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SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS
David Rhodes
President

Anthony P. Rhodes
Executive Vice President

Facebook: facebook.com/SVACE
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Website: sva.edu/ce

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Captions:

Cover

- 1. NWA, Los Angeles, 1990.
- 2. Slick Rick, NYC, 1989.
- 3. Punks, London, 1979.
- 4. MIA, London, 2007.
- 5. Public Enemy, outside Def Jam, Elizabeth Street, 1989.
- 6. Janette Beckman, NYC, 2021. Photography by Gudrun Georges.



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In 1983, after working with The Police and The Clash, punk rock photographer Janette Beckman moved to New York City from Britain to document the unfolding hip-hop scene, photographing soon-to-be icons like Public Enemy, Salt-N-Pepa and N.W.A. for music magazines like *The Face* and *Melody Maker*.

• Story continued from page 1



Following Janette's presentation at Art & Activism: Celebrating the Art & Design of Hip-Hop, I had the pleasure of asking her a few questions on behalf of SVACE about her life as a photographer and her new Continuing Education course, *Documentary Portrait Photography: Portrait of New York City*.

What's your earliest memory of taking photos? How did you learn to take them?

My mom gave me Kodak Instamatic when I was a kid, a "point and shoot" with black and white film. I knew I wanted to be an artist from an early age. I was always drawing at home or in the art room at school. I went to a lot of museums like the National Portrait Gallery and tried to learn how to see.

How did you find your footing as a professional photographer in the music industry?

I went to college to study photography. When I came out, the punk movement was just beginning. I went to work for a weekly music newspaper called *Melody Maker* and was photographing two to three new punk bands every week. Bands like The Clash, Boy George and The Specials were all happy to be featured in our weekly music paper to help sell their records.

A lot of the artists you've photographed were just starting their careers as musicians. How did you come to photograph artists like Salt-N-Pepa, The Police and Slick Rick, and what was your reaction to them becoming famous?

I was working for *Melody Maker* and taking my portfolio of photos to show art directors at record companies. One day I got a call from A&M Records asking if I wanted to photograph a new punk band called The Police. It was their first album and my first album cover. I bought a Hasselblad square format camera and we did the shoot in a tunnel in South London—no hair or makeup or stylist—just me, the band and the art director. The band became huge, and I shot two more covers for them.

Moving to NYC, I was commissioned to photograph a new group called Salt-N-Pepa for a British teen magazine. They were working on their first record; we spent a hot summer day taking photos on the street in Alphabet City. They asked me if I would like to be their photographer for their upcoming album. After that, I started working for their record label photographing all their new artists. My photograph of Slick Rick was commissioned by a then small record label called Def Jam for press. It has since become an iconic hip-hop photo. Most of the artists that

I photographed were really at the start of their careers, it was exciting to see my photos used on album covers and billboards.

At this stage in your career, how do you decide what to work on and who to work with?

I think creative directors and artists come to me for my "authentic" style. I am curious and have worked on many projects because they interest me, from rodeos, a Harlem dirt bike gang, protests, street portraits, and music projects like the Amazon series *Women Who Rock*, photographing artists like Chaka Khan, St. Vincent and Mavis Staples.

What techniques do you employ most often to capture the essence of the people you photograph?

I think making a good portrait is a collaboration between me and the subject. Kindness and respect are important, you have to gain the subject's trust and start a conversation that will lead to understanding who the person is.

Tell us more about your course Documentary Portrait Photography: Portrait of New York City. I understand that students are meeting you at different locations throughout the five boroughs. How does the course unfold over the semester?

The course will aim to have students document NYC to tell the story of its people, cultures and neighborhoods. We will be exploring a different neighborhood each week, from Chinatown to Harlem, Jackson Heights to Coney Island and the Lower East Side. Students will learn how to approach a subject on the street, how to take a portrait and capture a moment in time. As a final project, we will be collaborating, as a group, to produce a zine/newspaper that tells the story of NYC.



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Captions:

1. Roxanne Shanté, NYC, 1986.
2. Salt-N-Pepa, NYC, 1987.



Captions:
1. The Police, London 1978.
2. The Clash with Jimmy Pursey and Steve Jones, London 1978.



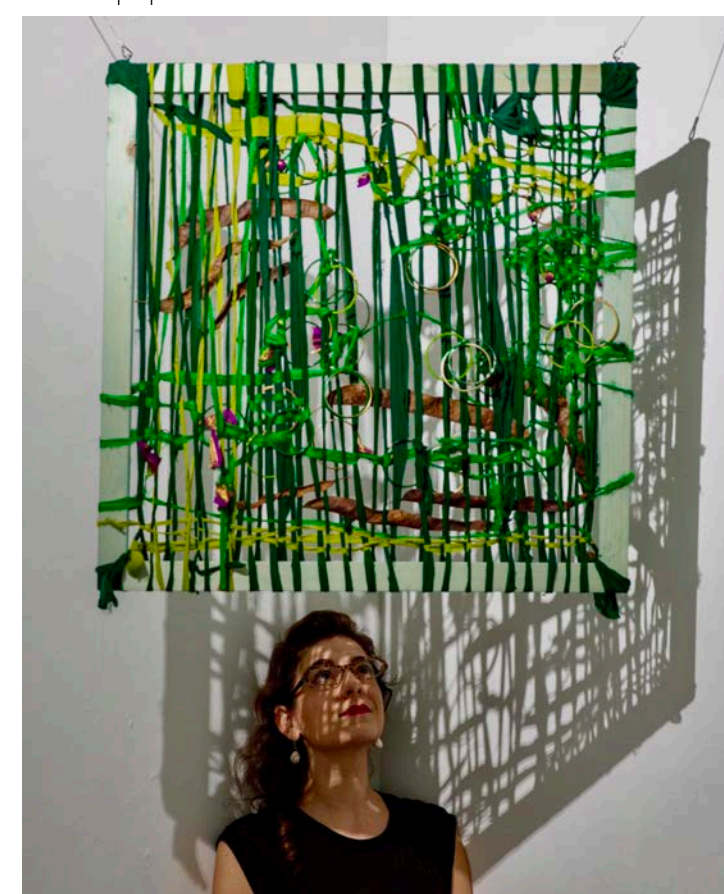
SOFT SCULPTURE

WITH JUDITH SOLODKIN

by Nivia Hernandez



Captions:
1. Work by Shae Nadine.
2. Soft Sculpture, CE course, Summer 2023.
3. Work by Akiko Yamamoto.
4. Work by Jaiqi Mao.



Judith Solodkin shares with us what she loves about teaching and where to start if you are interested in learning about soft sculpture.

How long have you been teaching at SVA?
 I started teaching lithography at SVA in 1975 and have been teaching a few courses a semester since then. My specialties are fine art lithography, digital embroidery, art, fashion and soft sculpture.

Can you describe your course, Soft Sculpture? Tell us what you love about teaching it?
 Besides being a master printer

in lithography and having my own print studio, SOLO Impression Inc., I am also a milliner. Hat making is so sculptural in nature. I work with many soft materials and transform them into sculptural shapes that are wearable. I also specialize in digital embroidery, working with artists to actualize their ideas using a high-end embroidery machine.

I love acquainting my students with armatures and under-structure, a range of fibers, thread, and rope, stretch and woven fabric, felt, thermoplastics, crochet and knitting, weaving, dying, and decoration using beads, sequins, crystals

and found materials. I make many references to artists who have incorporated various materials in their work.

You recently had a show—congratulations! Can you tell us about the theme of the show and your pieces that were included?
Transformations: Contemporary Artists at Winterthur, on exhibition from June 8 to January 5, 2024, draws inspiration from the Winterthur Museum's collections. My wood veneer hat is one of three hats I am showing in the Hatbox/Bandbox Collective inspired by their bandbox collection, which used historical printed papers, block prints, wallpa-

per, etc., as decoration. Contemporary artists created new bandboxes, which I then responded to.

What would you tell students who are interested in soft sculpture but don't know where to start?
 We start gently by learning hand stitches for stretch and woven fabrics and either structure the piece with stiffeners or wire and either stuff them or allow draping to define their shapes. I also introduce them to basic sewing machine stitches. An important feature for the course is the downloadable material detailing resources for all the different skills. Each week we

learn a new skill and make small samples. The student can then choose materials they are drawn to and invest more time in pursuing it. It all adds up to a final project at the semester end.

What do you hope your students take away from taking your course?
 I hope the students continue to be inspired by other artists, see art exhibitions and continue to explore the materials to which they are most attracted. Since sculpture is three-dimensional, I hope they have a new appreciation for volume and expressing their ideas in soft materials.

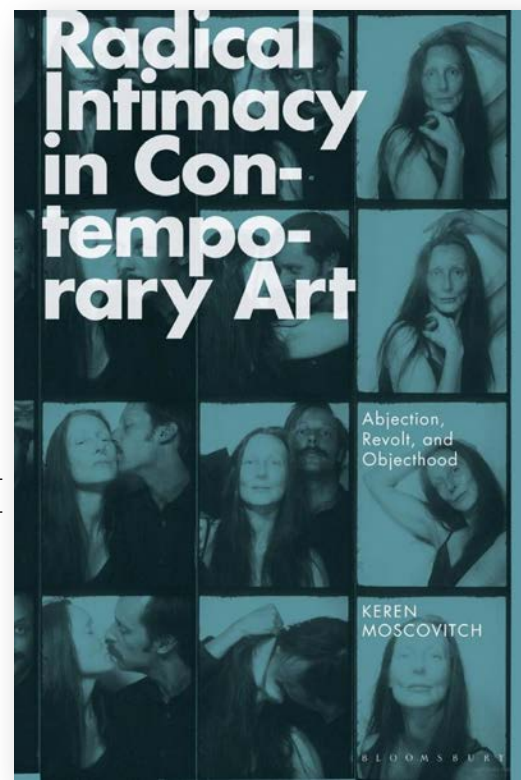
CHARTING RADICAL INTIMACY



8

WITH ARTIST AND SCHOLAR KEREN MOSCOVITCH

By Stephanie McGovern



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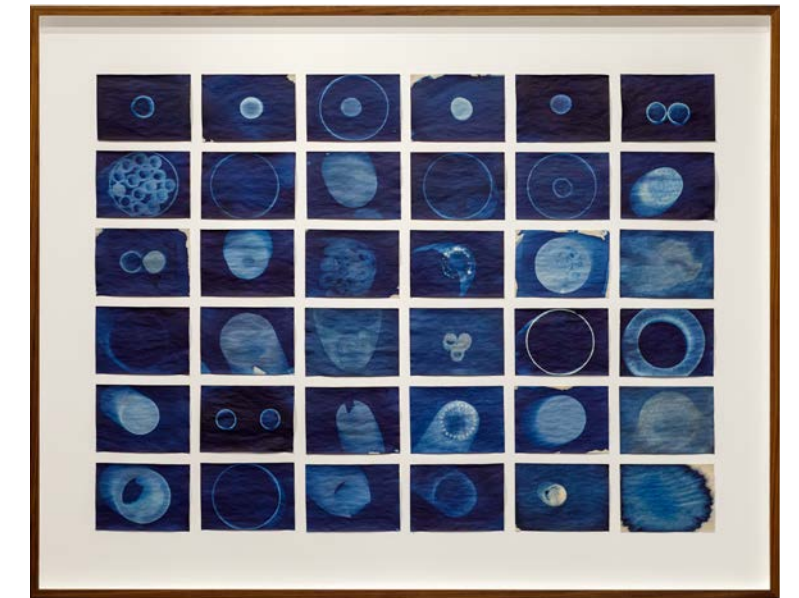
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Captions:

- 1. Cover of *Radical Intimacy in Contemporary Art*. Cover image: Leigh Ledare, *Me and Mom in Photobooth*, 2008. Cover design: Ben Anslow. Published by Bloomsbury Academic.
- 2. *Clay Body 1*, 2021, extracted clay from the earth.
- 3. Keren Moscovitch. Promo still for the video installation *One More Way*: REVOLT. Performers: Yehuda Hyman and Dawn Akemi Saito.
- 4. Still from the film *One More Way to Sink Into My Heart*.
- 5. *Fertility Sculpture 3*, 2021, extracted clay from the earth.
- 6. *The Space Between Us*, performance, Judson Memorial Church, 2016. Performance still by Ken Lavey.
- 7. *Astral Phases*, 36 cyanotypes, 40 x 50". Photography by Lisa Di Donato.
- 8. Keren Moscovitch.



In this issue of *ContinuEd*, we are highlighting one of our longtime faculty members, Keren Moscovitch, whose exceptional artistic and scholarly pursuits have led to the release of her first academic book titled *Radical Intimacy in Contemporary Art*. As Moscovitch writes in her book, this text traverses the questions: “How does intimacy operate as radical activism, and how can we understand the employment of radical intimacy in contemporary art practice?”¹ Moscovitch’s own practice as an artist is as prolific and boundless as the concepts explored in her book, taking the form of photographs, films, performances, sculptures and cyanotypes. We reached out to Moscovitch to gain her insights on the catalyst behind her book and practice as an artist:

What drives you as an artist and scholar?

I am interested in the human experience of intimacy, in its various forms and complications. Often, my artistic practice is driven by tensions in my own life. My work has followed a lot of life’s ups and downs, like death, sexuality and childbirth. These days I’m very interested in the relationship between human and earth cycles and juxtaposing human time with ecological time.

Are there any intersections between the concepts of radical intimacy outlined in your book and your artistic practice?

My book is an outgrowth of both my education in philosophy and art theory and my own curiosities as an artist and curator. The project was an opportunity to contextualize and “make sense” of the work of several contemporary artists whose art I really love and respect and who take such a radical approach to intimacy and sexuality that they have operated on the fringes of the art world. I can relate to their position as artists on the edge, as my own work has sometimes generated responses as varied as shock, repulsion and even objectification of both the work itself and myself as a person. It is fascinating to me how sexuality is so often repressed and censored, despite being such a shared construct across humanity. Sexuality is also highly political as it both reflects and challenges ideological constructs. So, despite its shared nature, its specific manifestations are diverse and contingent on context. In some ways, the writing and research I embarked upon was a way to understand and situate my own obsessions through a scholarly lens. The intersections include an interest in nonnormative bodies and relationships, as well as looking directly at the sexual body, rather than burying it in innuendo. Metaphor and poetics play a huge role in both my work and the works of the artists I detail in the book—but never at the expense of clear seeing.

¹ Keren Moscovitch, *Radical Intimacy in Contemporary Art* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 2.

For the full story on Keren Moscovitch and her work, visit our blog: sva.edu/blog/continuing-education



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**Student
Gallery**

ARTIST
Pilar Lagos

CONTINUED PROJECT SPACE

Lagos's work explores the lasting impacts of feeling estranged from culture and body. She paints in response to the inner conversations between alienation and longing.

Through printmaking, she also explores themes of social masking as a coping mechanism for individuals navigating life while dealing with chronic conditions.

COURSE

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Captions:

1. Pilar Lagos, *Stable marks*, 2024, collagraph plate (cold sealed blisters, paper clips), monotype and chine collé on Somerset paper, 13 x 21".
2. Pilar Lagos, *Sculpture of thoughts*, 2024, collagraph plate (cold sealed blisters, string, wood and sponge) mounted on mat board on Somerset paper, 14.8 x 21".
3. Pilar Lagos, *Known Windows*, 2024, monotype, collagraph and chine collé on Somerset paper, 14 x 22".