

MATILDE PIU¹

Judith K. Brodsky

DISMANTLING
THE PATRIARCHY,
BIT BY BIT:
ART, FEMINISM,
AND DIGITAL
TECHNOLOGY

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Judith K. Brodsky's *Dismantling the Patriarchy, Bit by Bit: Art, Feminism, and Digital Technology* offers a pioneering examination of the intersection between feminist theory and digital art. Emerging from a session Brodsky chaired at the 2014 College Art Association Annual Conference, the book is the first to rigorously connect the Feminist Art Movement with the development of digital art. Brodsky spent two years researching and writing this work, striving to capture the evolution of feminist digital art through a broad, comprehensive framework that engages both theoretical concepts and artistic practices.

¹ Matilde Piu is a prospective PhD candidate. She holds an MA in Comparative Literature (University of Pisa, 2023) and a BA in Literary Criticism (University of Siena, 2020). Her research interests lie primarily in twentieth-century Italian and Polish literature, psychoanalysis, women's writing, postcolonial literature and ecocriticism.

The book is structured into fourteen chapters, each examining different ways in which feminist digital artists are reimagining digital technology as an art practice that challenges masculinist systems of knowledge while advocating for a more inclusive and non-hierarchical approach. The chapters are supplemented with extensive notes, references, and a detailed bibliography, while 39 high-quality plates showcase the key works. Despite its valuable contributions, Brodsky's work is not without limitations, particularly in terms of its geographical focus and its representation of diverse voices within the feminist digital art scene.

The primary aim of *Dismantling the Patriarchy* is to illustrate how feminist digital artists are reshaping technology through feminist theory, offering an intersectional critique of patriarchal and masculinist societal structures. By documenting the practices and contributions of feminist artists, both synchronically and diachronically, Brodsky attempts to integrate these often-overlooked figures into the mainstream art history and to promote the legitimacy of technology-based art. This ambitious project aims to highlight the role of feminist, queer, and postcolonial perspectives in dismantling patriarchal structures and creating new artistic and social possibilities—as suggested by the title.

Brodsky's work presents a broad conceptual framework that weaves together historical, theoretical, and technological threads to offer a rich and multifaceted argument about the transformative potential of feminist digital art. For instance, in Chapters One and Two, she revisits the history of digital technology and art, reclaiming the often-overlooked contributions of women in its early days. Chapter Three, on cyberfeminism, critiques the binary foundations of digital technology, while Chapter Six explores the intersection of feminist digital art with issues of race, queerness, and identity. These chapters are linked by a series of recurring arguments that connect digital technology, gender, and feminist theory.

A central theme of the book is the reclamation of women's contributions to digital art history. Brodsky emphasizes how women have been historically marginalized in both the tech and art industries, and feminist digital practices are framed as a means of challenging patriarchal systems. Another key argument is social justice through digital art. Brodsky links feminist digital practices to larger political and societal critiques, from gender binaries (Chapter 3) to surveillance (Chapter 10), and highlights how digital platforms serve as tools for activism and resistance (Chapters 4, 5, 9). A third major theme explores the disruption of gender binaries, with feminist artists using digital media—especially avatars (Chapter 7)—to subvert traditional gender norms and reimagine identity. This extends to the erasure of the female body in digital spaces (Chapter 8) as a way to resist the male gaze. Brodsky also examines the intersection of queerness, race, and digital media (Chapters 6 and 11), exploring how transgender and queer artists use digital platforms to challenge heteronormative and racialized structures. The final chapters (13 and 14) focus on how emerging technologies like AI, VR, and AR offer feminist artists opportunities to create utopian digital worlds that challenge the status quo. Finally, Chapter 12 expands the discussion by exploring how cultural context, particularly in Japan,

shapes feminist digital art practices and activism.

This survey of pre-digital and digital art as practiced by artists influenced by feminist theory serves as a valuable starting point for future research. *Dismantling the Patriarchy, Bit by Bit* is indeed a timely and important contribution to the study of feminist art and digital technology. However, while the book presents valid and engaging findings, it suffers from a narrow geographical focus. Brodsky's primary attention is given to the feminist digital artists from the United States, England, and Japan, which, while significant, limits the book's scope. Brodsky acknowledges this limitation, noting that feminist digital art has flourished in many other regions, and attempts to document some artists from other regions—primarily those connected to the United States and Western Europe. These voices, which are largely absent in Brodsky's work, would enrich the broader conversation about feminist digital art and its potential for social change. By excluding a broader range of international perspectives, the book risks presenting a limited, Western-centric view of feminist digital art, which does not fully capture the global dynamics at play. The absence of voices from underrepresented groups also diminishes the intersectional critique of art history that Brodsky seeks to build. Her call for further research into feminist digital art beyond the Western and Japanese context is crucial, as it would help to create a more inclusive, global framework for understanding how digital technologies are being leveraged by feminist artists worldwide. ▣