



## 11 Female Artists Who Left Their Mark on Pop Art

**BY RACHEL LEBOWITZ** Dec 2, 2016 1:36 PM

From its inception in the early 1960s, Pop Art was a boys' club. Huge names like Andy Warhol and Tom Wesselmann perpetuated the myth of the (male) artist-as-genius. The movement emerged amid the post-World War II explosions of capitalist consumerism and mass media, as artists explored new modes of mechanical production, often by taking commonplace consumer goods and pop-cultural icons as their subject matter. Associated with an unemotional, distanced attitude toward artmaking, Pop Art's codified characteristics are, in turn, stereotypically male.

For female artists participating in the movement, cultivating a persona as a so-called serious artist seemed like the only way to succeed. An alternative strategy was to (often cheekily) critique Pop Art and its workings from the inside out. In many cases, though, these strategies were interpreted as playing by the rules rather than challenging them, and, more often than not, these routes failed to reward female artists with a lasting place in the mainstream. Now, however, with the nuances of their practices better understood, female artists from around the globe are gaining more recognition for their contributions and challenges to Pop Art.

Associated with the Pop movement to varying extents, the following 11 women artists (by no means an exhaustive list) all engaged with its motivations and defining characteristics, some by expanding the genre through feminist inflection, others by working along its margins.

## Kiki Kogelnik



Untitled (Woman's Lib), ca. 1971  
Simone Subal



Sunkist, 1981  
RoGallery

At first involved with Viennese gestural abstract painting, Austrian artist Kogelnik moved to the U.S. in the early 1960s and quickly found herself among the likes of Warhol, Lichtenstein, Joan Mitchell, and Claes Oldenburg, in an era characterized by the space race and the sexual revolution. While her later works resemble (and critique) fashion advertisements, her output from the '60s explores gender, eroticism, and the human figure in relation to postwar scientific and technological development. In *Fly Me to the Moon* (1963), a stylized rocket speaks to Kogelnik's particular interest in space travel, while the female and male figures in the scene ambiguously either cruise through the cosmos or engage in sex.

Distancing herself from her Pop contemporaries, Kogelnik said she decided to focus on rockets instead of Coca-Cola cans. Yet, in these works, floating outlines of humans-cum-robots, spliced body parts, and a strategic, often-

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sparing use of color tell of the dissolution of the individual and personal agency in the consumerist society that Pop critiqued.