

# Women's Caucus for College Art Association Annual Conference

New York, NY, February 1999

"We've Come A Long Way [From Being A] Baby! The Performativity of Women in the Arts and the Academy," session organized by Dr. Irene D. Costache

Margaret Morgan:

*Twelve Steps to Success for Women Artists*

Irony of title: You've come a Long Way (from being a) Baby!

Instead of 'being', can we now 'have' our baby?

Can we have our baby and eat it too?

Wasn't it always the boy artists who did that? Weren't they the ones who were the babies?

Weren't they the ones who never did their syllabi, who didn't attend the meetings, who were so sensitive to your comments? Who were always feeling threatened? Who never took the minutes?

Whose vague and wired behaviors were tolerated in the name of artistic genius? Weren't the

same behaviors by artists who were women reasons not to rehire them? Wasn't it virtually

always the boy artists who couldn't help themselves from fucking their students, who took their

students to cool places where you could get drunk and stoned and scagged? Weren't they the

ones who were the babies?

Over the years we have come a long way and we have learnt from our baby-faced male

colleagues some of the tricks of performing the artist:

Here are 12 steps from the artist's studio about performing the artist with propriety and impunity:

1. Profess ignorance.
2. Don't speak authoritatively about your work; it makes curators and collectors and gallery directors feel inadequate.
3. Similarly, don't be too analytical – of anything. You would be seen to be too worldly.
4. Never write about your work. But if you write about other people's work then at least gallery directors will be polite to you.
5. Never curate shows lest you start a demarcation boycott. If you curate your work into shows no-body else will until you and your friends are determined to be next hot thing.
6. Never sell your work from the studio – unless you're desperate because addicted to something expensive. It would be a crass thing to do; fancy making all the money for most of the work.
7. Have friends, lovers and relatives in places of influence.
8. The Marilyn affect: Be pretty and young and, if possible, but just a little messed up.
9. Make work that collectors can feel comfortable looking at. Comfort is a very important thing.
10. Remember men still have most of the discretionary funds in our culture and this makes them most likely to be collectors, or for that matter, powerful in any part of the art world.
11. Never forget that the art-world is in a double bind: profoundly classed, raced and gendered while still wanting to be for everyone, so long as they are of the same race, class and gender.
12. Never articulate these guidelines.