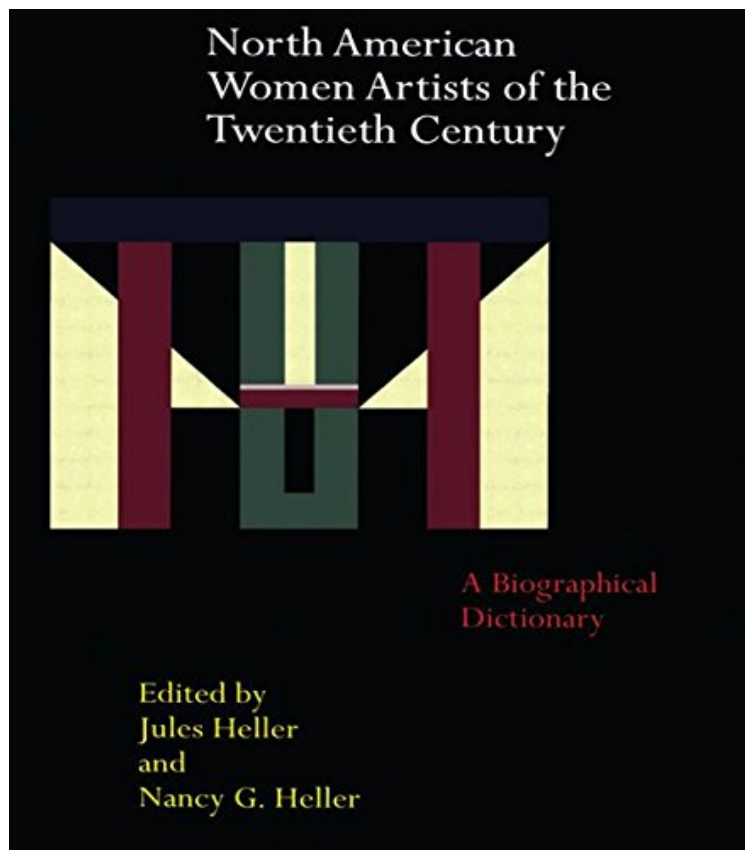


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## North American Women Artists of the Twentieth Century: A Biographical Dictionary (Garland Reference Library of the Humanities)

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**From Brand: Routledge : North American Women Artists of the Twentieth Century: A Biographical Dictionary (Garland Reference Library of the Humanities)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised North American Women Artists of the Twentieth Century: A Biographical Dictionary (Garland Reference Library of the Humanities):

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Four StarsBy M. A. De LucaA good resource.

First Published in 1997. Routledge is an imprint of Taylor Francis, an informa company.

From BooklistIt is often difficult to locate biographical information about modern artists. If the artist is female and not well known, the task is even more difficult. North American Women Artists of the Twentieth Century is the most

comprehensive source to date on women artists in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico during this century. Penny Dunford's *Biographical Dictionary of Women Artists in Europe and America since 1850* (Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1990) is broader in scope geographically but covers approximately 800 artists compared with the 1,500 included here. A comparison of the two dictionaries revealed that few of the artists included in *North American Women Artists* are also listed in Dunford. *Contemporary Artists* (St. James, 1989) includes no artist deceased before 1960, a restriction not shared by *North American Women Artists*. Furthermore, a comparison of artists covered in the two sources indicated that only the best-known artists in *North American Women Artists* were also included in *Contemporary Artists*. Jules Heller is professor emeritus of art at Arizona State University, and Nancy Heller is associate professor of art at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. Articles were contributed by 110 scholars, most of them associated with academic institutions or museum or gallery professionals. Many of the contributors are from Canada; only two are from Mexico. Articles on Mexican artists are among the many that the Hellers wrote themselves. The Hellers state that their "NAFTA-like approach" is intended to create better understanding among artists in these countries. Artists included were born before 1960, lived and worked primarily in North America, and "made serious professional commitment to the visual arts." Among those artists included are paper makers, photographers, potters, fiber artists, illustrators, conceptual artists, performance artists, and installationists as well as sculptors, painters, and printmakers. Included are Frida Kahlo, Georgia O'Keeffe, Louise Nevelson, Laurie Anderson, Cindy Sherman, and Anna Mary Robertson (Grandma) Moses, as well as performance artists Karen Finley and Yoko Ono, environmental artists Helen Mayer Harrison and Mierle Laderman Ukeles, the anonymous group Guerrilla Girls, illustrator Wanda Gag, and quiltmaker Faith Ringgold. *North American Women Artists* is especially notable for its inclusion of Inuit and Native American artists. Entries are arranged alphabetically and include birth and death dates, an article on the artist's life and work, and a bibliography. Entries are uneven in length, in approach (biographical versus professional), and in quality. Curiously, some artists currently in the public eye are allowed very little space. For example, Jenny Holzer and Barbara Kruger are each allotted about half a column. Some articles consist almost exclusively of lists of exhibitions, awards, honors, and grants but include little about the artist's personal background or the nature of her work. For example, the article on Patricia Oleszko consists of such a list, while describing her work only as a "performance artist." There are many thorough, detailed articles with good descriptions of the artists' works. Bibliographies are also uneven. Some appear to be lists of sources consulted, while others seem to be thoughtfully selected sources for further reading. Sources cited include reference works, catalogues raisonnées, museum and gallery publications, government publications, surveys that include information on the artist, and articles in journals, newspapers, and the popular and alternative press. French- and Spanish-language publications are included for Canadian and Mexican artists. Many are not as up-to-date as they should be. The most recent bibliographic entry for Barbara Kruger is eight years old, the most recent item for Laurie Anderson was published in 1989, and the most recent item listed in Louise Nevelson's bibliography was written five years before her death in 1988. The dictionary includes 100 full-page black-and-white plates grouped in three sections. Captions note artists, title, medium, size, and location. No references to the plates are included in the entries. If the purpose of the book is to familiarize readers with the artists covered, it would have been preferable to include more, smaller illustrations close to the entries. The book includes an index by artist's name that just replicates the order in which entries are arranged. Even an imperfect source on women artists is welcome if it is as comprehensive as this one. *North American Women Artists* is recommended for all academic and large public libraries and for all art collections. From the Back Cover It is entirely appropriate to ask, "Why another work on women artists?" More specifically, "Why this North American Free Trade Agreement, this NAFTA-like approach which embraces women artists from Canada, Mexico, and the United States. As researchers, we have been frustrated many times by being unable to locate basic information about many of the artists included in this volume, especially those working outside the United States. Another reason for producing this particular kind of reference book, to try and create a better understanding between and among the artists and art audiences in these three countries.