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Women Building History: Public Art at the 1893 Columbian Exposition

Wanda M. Corn

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Women Building History: Public Art at the 1893 Columbian Exposition Wanda M. Corn
This handsomely illustrated book is a welcome addition to the history of women during America's Gilded Age. Wanda M. Corn takes as her topic the grand neo-classical Woman's Building at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, a structure celebrating modern woman's progress in education, arts, and sciences. Looking closely at the paintings and sculptures women artists made to decorate the structure, including the murals by Mary Cassatt and Mary MacMonnies, Corn uncovers an unspoken but consensual program to visualize a history of the female sex and promote an expansion of modern woman's opportunities. Beautifully written, with informative sidebars by Annelise K. Madsen and artist biographies by Charlene G. Garfinkle, this volume illuminates the originality of the public images female artists created in 1893 and inserts them into the complex discourse of *fin de siècle* woman's politics. The Woman's Building offered female artists an unprecedented opportunity to create public art and imagine an historical narrative that put women rather than men at its center.

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