

In 2012, the first collection of scholarly essays on women and art in Canadian history came forth from the Canadian Women Artists History Initiative, in the form of a book edited by two CWAHI founders, Kristina Huneault and Janice Anderson. By any yardstick (as fields used to be measured), *Rethinking Professionalism: Women and Art in Canada, 1850–1970* was a monument to Canadian women’s agency and achievement, and, I must insist, a celebration of women’s contributions to the fields of art and art history. The project had drawn on the palpable excitement created by CWAHI’s inaugural conference, held in 2008 at Concordia University. *Rethinking Professionalism* was launched at the second CWAHI conference, “Imagining History,” and as I write, a call for papers for the third CWAHI conference, “THE ARTIST HERSELF: Broadening Ideas of Self-Portraiture in Canada” (Queen’s University, 2015), is stirring excitement and confirming, as though it were needed, the communal desire to better understand women’s art practices in Canada and Canadian women’s art practices abroad.

There is yet more to say about CWAHI as an institution, and this under the heading of ‘generosity’, for its initial impetus was the expansion and consolidation of a documentation centre and open access resource, projects organized by Janice Anderson and Melinda Reinhart, and still thriving in a way that engages emergent scholars in the importance of primary documents – archival research – and opens the possibility to anyone with access to a computer. This ongoing project is both a gift and a challenge to contribute to the database, to *own it*, as the expression goes. The fruits of CWAHI’s labour are found not only in this issue of *JCAH/AHAC*, but in books, articles, and artists’ files.

In this issue, which its guest editors will introduce, we find not only the dissemination of research, but as we have now grown to expect, its organization along a methodological axis that enriches every individual contribution. Kristina Huneault and Janice Anderson guide us to think through a particular framework that emerged in the papers and discussions of the 2012 conference, Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of the “artistic field.” The work of these editors and contributors thereby illuminates the intersection between social and relational questions in art, and women’s histories, thereby implicitly showing their entanglement, their mutual dependencies.

Once again, women are afield, as transformative agents in the field of art history, some afield in another sense of the word, which is operating effectively, but at a distance.

*Martha Langford*