



# Identity Unknown: Portraits of American Women Artists

*Donna Seaman*

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Who hasn't wondered where--aside from Georgia O'Keeffe and Frida Kahlo--all the women artists are? In most art books, women artists are marginalized with cold efficiency. In the captions of group photographs, each male is clearly identified while all too often the lone woman is summarily dismissed with the note: "Identity unknown."

In seven provocative portraits, Seaman brings to dazzling life forgotten twentieth-century American women artists, including Gertrude Abercrombie, with her dark, surreal, sly paintings and friendships with Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker; Lois Mailou Jones of the Harlem Renaissance; Christina Ramberg, whose shrewd, unsettling works drew on pop culture and advertising; and Louise Nevelson, an art-world superstar in her heyday but omitted from most recent surveys of her era. These women fought to be treated the same as male artists, to be judged by their work, not their gender or appearance, and Seaman reveals what drove them, how they worked, and how they were perceived by others in a world where women were subjects--not makers--of art.

With writing both brilliant and compassionate, this handsome volume features stunning examples of the artists' work, cementing their stature among the best artists of their day. *Identity Unknown* speaks to all women about their neglected place in history and the challenges they face to be taken as seriously as men no matter what their chosen field.

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