

Agnès Thurnauer

Celebrating the Female Artist at the Pompidou

By MARGUERITE SUOZZI

Marguerite Suozzi "Crucifixion," left, and "La Mariée" (both 1963) by Niki de St. Phalle, at the "elles@centrepompidou" exhibit in Paris.

PARIS | While an exhibition dedicated purely to female artists may not seem particularly innovative or revolutionary, the sheer scope of "elles@centrepompidou," a vast exhibit — over 500 works by 200 artists are on display — at the Centre Pompidou (Place Georges Pompidou, Rue Beaubourg; 33-44-78-12-33; www.centrepompidou.fr) makes it noteworthy.

The exhibit is also a reminder of the social progress that has been made since the days when female artists and writers adopted male pseudonyms to gain recognition for their work. It was only a lifetime ago, in 1937, when Hans Hoffman said of a painting by one of his students, Lee Krasner, "This is so good, you would not know it was painted by a woman."

"It's a very un-French thing to do," Camile Morineau, the exhibit's curator, told the *Los Angeles Times*; she believes that the feminist movement has had a larger impact in the United States and other parts of Europe than in France.

Ms. Morineau and her colleagues have chosen to open the exhibition with the theme of gender transference. In Agnès Thurnauer's installation, "Portraits grandeur nature," giant badges with the names of well-known male artists are mounted on the large wall in front of the entrance. These artists, though, have all undergone a sex change of sorts: Andy Warhol is rechristened Annie Warhol; Jackson Pollack becomes Jacqueline, and Marcel Duchamp in the feminine diminutive, is Marcelle. And in a twist, Louise Bourgeois, the French artist and sculptor famous for her enormous spider sculpture entitled "Maman," whose pin is mounted at the top left-hand corner of the installation, is re-named "Louis."

The exhibit moves on to include prominent works by female artists who retain their names (some of them household): Sonia Delaunay's "Philomène" (1907); a self-portrait by Frida Kahlo (1938) entitled "The Frame"; Diane Arbus's "A Young Man in Curlers at Home on West 20th Street" (1966); an untitled portrait (1986) by Barbara Kruger, which depicts a woman's face with the words "Your body is a battleground" superimposed above, and three subheadings impelling viewers to "Support Legal Abortion," "Birth Control" and "Women's Rights."

A particularly striking installation, in the section inspired by Virginia Wolfe's essay "A