

Helen Molesworth: What is it like to navigate the art world while caring for a child? How do you build your own career as an artist when your husband is more famous than you? And how have women artists negotiated their desire to be judged as equals to their male peers while acknowledging their unequal status in society?

In this season of Recording Artists, a new podcast series from the Getty, we explore these questions through the words of six women artists whose lives span the 20th century.

Alice Neel: My mother used to say to me, “I don’t know what you expect to do, you’re only a girl.”

Molesworth: Alice Neel, the oldest artist in this series, was born in 1900. Eva Hesse, the youngest, in 1936. Two of the artists, Betye Saar and Yoko Ono, are still making art.

Yoko Ono: I don’t make plans So much. So my plan now is to do this show, and then something will inspire me.

Molesworth: And two others, Lee Krasner and Helen Frankenthaler, have been the subject of large-scale international exhibitions in the last year, showing us that this art is still with us in surprising and important ways.

Helen Frankenthaler: You know, you made that and it’s great, you bastard. Now I’m going to run home, make one and bring it and show you.

Molesworth: This series features audio recordings drawn from the archives of the Getty Research Institute, giving us the opportunity to hear these artists speaking for themselves. The recordings were made by the New York-based art critic Cindy Nemser and art historian Barbara Rose.

Betye Saar: It took a long time even for me to say I am an artist.

Cindy Nemser: Do you have any idea why that was?

Saar: Because I was really insecure about that, you know?

Molesworth: Most of these interviews took place in the 1960s and ’70s, in the midst of the civil rights movement and feminist revolution. The interviews are poignant, thought provoking, and fierce.

Lee Krasner: Now I haven’t the patience or time to deal with knuckleheads who are some I don’t know how many years behind me and that’s true as of today.

Molesworth: In each episode, we’ll also hear contemporary artists and art historians unpack the archival interviews.

Catherine Lord: She says consistently that it was very difficult and it was her toughness that got her to that position to be taken seriously enough to even be in that show.

Molesworth: Through it all, we try to make sense of what it meant—and still means—to be a woman and an artist.

Eva Hesse: All I wanted was to find my own scene, my own world, my own inner peace or inner turmoil, but I wanted it to be mine.

Molesworth: Join me, Helen Molesworth, for Recording Artists.