

Sherman, Cindy, "Passages (1947-2013)", ARTFORUM, 19 November 2013.

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Sarah Charlesworth in Rome in 1989.

Photo: Cindy Sherman.

I **FIRST KNEW** of Sarah Charlesworth through reproductions of her hauntingly beautiful series "Stills," the large black-and-white photos of people jumping to their death. (The title's coincidence with my own series escaped me at the time.) I'm sure if I'd seen them in person I would have been doubly impressed by their large format, unheard of in 1980.

And I had seen Sarah around, here and there at art events, but she completely terrified and intimidated me, with her white gloves, cigarette holder, black vested suit, and crisp white shirt. My one interaction up until then had been at a party for Troy Brauntuch, after his opening at Metro Pictures. I went over to congratulate Troy and told him how much I liked his show, but apologized for not making it to the opening. Sarah, who was sitting nearby, glared at me and asked, "How do you know you liked the work if you weren't at the opening?" I instantly felt reduced to nothing, as if caught in a lie, and murmured, "Because I was at the gallery earlier in the day." And then stayed away.

But in the fall of 1982, Joseph Kosuth, who I'd recently met, insisted that I connect with Sarah—I called her and it was instantly clear that we'd be friends. In those days, there wasn't the network of female artists that there is today because there wasn't a support structure. I guess we were beginning it—for those of us who used different mediums like photography, whenever we met someone whose work related to ours, the bonds came naturally. The more women we bonded with, the greater our network of friendships grew.

It was just a short few months after meeting Sarah that this early iteration of our girl group decided to throw a dance party, I guess to celebrate our mutual support. We had meetings to organize it, and since I was going to cover the costs, we called it "Cindy Sherman & her Girlfriends Invite you to a Dance Party..." and listed these fabulous women's names: Sarah, Laurie Simmons, Nancy Dwyer, Gretchen Bender, etc.

Sarah was also part of a smaller group that splintered off to get together to watch and study film. It became our own master class in film. We borrowed a projector and screened films right in my studio. It was sort of like a book club for film. We used it as an excuse to get together perhaps about six to ten times a year, and it really was a lot like a class in those days. But of course it was also an excuse to reinforce our bonds, to support one another. Then the group disbanded for a number of years while marriages, families, and careers took precedence, until about ten years ago when we revived our "club."

It's different now. Our meetings are excuses to catch up, films are not always the main topic, and we're all so busy, it's ridiculous how many emails it takes to schedule anything. We lost Gretchen eight years ago, and now without Sarah, a major force of our dialogues and repartees is lost.

Sarah was that rare artist who unconditionally supported her friends. There was no competition, only good will and enthusiasm. We will miss the art that she never got to make, we will miss her counterpoints to our film discussions, but most of all we will miss the love that Sarah gave to us.

Cindy Sherman is an artist based in New York.