

Woodman and Woodman: Chains of Signifiers

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This paper examines the relationship between the images in Francesca Woodman's photographic Books and the independent and serial images in her overall body of work.

The paper forms Chapter 9 of my thesis “*Almost A Square: The Photographic Books of Francesca Woodman and Their Relationship to Surrealism*”, University of Essex, 2012.¹ This thesis investigates Francesca Woodman's work within the framework of surrealist ideas materialised, though not exclusively, in photography.

I argue in this thesis, sustained by my parallel and comparative investigations of André Breton's *Nadja* (1928, revised 1963) and Woodman's Books, that it is in her five found object Books that Woodman comes closest to demonstrating her deep comprehension of the activating position of images to words in *Nadja*, thereby contributing to the extension of first wave surrealist ethic into her own era.

The thesis includes what is to date the only full descriptive and interpretative analysis of all six of the photographic Books that Woodman made in her lifetime.

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*The stairway branches off indefinitely
It leads to a haystack door it broadens suddenly onto a public square
It is made of swans' backs with one wing outstretched as a railing*²

This chapter will offer an analysis of the relationship of images in Woodman's Books to those of her images developed as independent or serial prints in silver

¹ See <http://serlib0.essex.ac.uk:80/record=b1805431~S5>

² André Breton, extract from *Facteur Cheval* ('Cheval the Mailman') in *Young Cherry Trees Secured Against Hares/Jeunes cerisiers garantis contre les lièvres*, bilingual edition, trans. Edouard Roditi, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press/Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1969, 23 (unnumbered page).

gelatine/nitrate or in the more experimental blueprint format. These are now, and especially since 1986, being exhibited in galleries worldwide. The Woodman archive in New York consists of approximately 800 images from which to date only around 140 have been made publicly accessible in catalogue, monograph or exhibition. The artist printed all her own images and kept most careful control over these processes. It is because of this that her so-named *vintage* prints, the ones printed by her in her lifetime have become rare and extremely sought after. Each new edition of prints when permitted released by the Woodman Estate is usually limited to 40 which will include one vintage print.³

Reconsidering Peggy Phelan's argument regarding the function of the Books within Woodman's working practice and particularly in the relation of the images to their own past, present and future, I will try to assess their position within the artist's wider practice.⁴

In the process of tracing the connections between the images in Woodman's Books and those she pulled out for development as gallery prints or those images contained in series form or those made in the experimental blueprint form, perhaps also in series, I hope to enrich my understanding of the relationship between her different methods and their purpose in her whole field of practice. Experimentalism is core to it. This implies no existent hierarchy amongst images.

³ This information was gained from a personal communication with Anna Mustonen at the Victoria Miro Gallery on 8th December 2010.

⁴ Phelan, 'Francesca Woodman's Photography', 2002, 987, 991.

Making, reflecting, cropping, repeating, re-printing and re-thinking through re-making are key to the working process of a photographer who gave supreme value to the print development stage of that process.

The variables and variations within Woodman's practice construct an open-ended, activated and activating form. In the relation of themes explored in her Books both to the rest of her corpus and to the other Books, a *weave of signifiers* is constructed. This constitutes an example of the Barthesian text.⁵

If, in Arrouye's assessment of text and image relations, the *series* contains *complémentarité, concurrence ... and successivité*, we can apply these useful terms for image to image relations in Woodman's work, for the moment excluding her practice of adding caption text.⁶

Of her six photographic Books two of them, *Portrait of a Reputation* and *Quaderno Raffaello*, contain no exact image replication in the main corpus of her work. Although this section will look at similarities between images when these are strong, with variations occurring at the printing stage, it will mainly focus on that intrinsic element of Woodman's practice, the development of themes, in whichever way these may occur. These themes are often crystallised in the series format, leading possibly to the contention that the form of the autonomous print, so attractive and accessible to the public and the curator, might be counteractive to or atypical of her essential practice.

⁵ Barthes, 'From Work to Text', 1977, 159.

⁶ Arrouye, 'La photographie dans "Nadja"', 1982, 149. I have omitted Arrouye's category of *redondance*.

I will here prioritise occurrences of repetitions of the same image or a slightly altered version of it. This alteration could be from cropping, re-angling or the choice of a different print tone. Movement of an image from the Book form to the wider corpus is just as likely to occur in reverse. I will observe the relative temporal positions of images and the impact on them of contextual placing. The movements occur within a frame of self reference complexly immured in her practice. Woodman's use and re-use of her images, so that they are already-made and nearly-made and re-made, is expressed here by Phelan:

*Each print copies the moment that is both behind her and still waiting to be (re)developed as the series forces new interpretations of past images as additional ones are added.*⁷

In spite of some confusion between Phelan referring to the photographic Books as *diaries*, when in fact Woodman kept separate written *Journals* in which she both wrote and drew plans for her images, for my purpose both practices operate within the term *diary*.⁸ Extracts from these journals were not after all published until four years after Phelan wrote about Woodman. I discuss this further in Chapter 2.

*Soon, however, the diary functioned as a rehearsal space, a book for first drafts for her compositions Some diary entries are like scores for performances that were composed but never developed. The movement from thinking of her diary as a place to reflect on completed work to thinking of it as a place to plan future compositions is a psychically complex one. It is to move from the present as a place to contemplate the past to the present as a way to shape the future.*⁹

⁷ Phelan, 'Francesca Woodman's Photography', 2002, 987.

⁸ Please see George Woodman, ed., 'Seething with ideas' and 'Journal Extracts' in Townsend, *Francesca Woodman*, 2006, 240-248, for more extracts from Woodman's journals.

⁹ Phelan, 'Francesca Woodman's Photography', 2002, 991.

I propose that a continuum of movement between present and past and future is embedded in Woodman's operation; and furthermore that a defiance of the temporal exists in her work.

Within the six photographic Books I have traced no external development of images, nor any direct repetition of them in the innate self-containment of both *Portrait of a Reputation* and *Quaderno Raffaello*. The images in these two short Books function as tightly linked chains only connected to images within that particular Book. In these cases, the Books address a personal narrative that is more than usually self-exposing and perhaps because of that Woodman's interest in the aesthetic of image development is held to be less important.¹⁰

In the remaining four Books, the highest incidence of image repetition within the Book or outside it in the wider corpus occurs in those Books which already address a complex and pervasive layering of themes. Repetition of images or their internal sequence inside a Book is always based on reflection and is usually non-linear.

The so-named *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi* has eight images out of a total of thirty three which have either been developed from pre-made images or are developed into autonomous prints in the wider corpus. *Angels, Calendars* has ten images out of a total of twenty four which are developed from or into autonomous prints. *Portraits Friends Equasions* has a total of seven images out of its total of nineteen which either pre-exist or are developed as independent images. *Some*

¹⁰ However, a tight development of the images in their own series certainly occurs in *Portrait of a Reputation*.

disordered interior Geometries, containing perhaps the most brilliant sequence of responses to its already complex *found object* base, contains three image developments in the wider corpus out of its total of sixteen. This is the lowest number traced in proportion to its total number out of the four Books in question, perhaps explicable as this Book contains such a close thematic relationship of its images inside it.

It is important to remember that Woodman herself would probably only rarely have thought in terms of prints made specifically for exhibiting on a gallery wall or for insertion into any particular Book. All her work was fundamentally experimental and process-based, though never in itself unresolved. Of two important exhibitions in which she participated in her lifetime, one consisted of her ambitious, unfinished *Temple Project* in the format of giant-scale (between 1 and 3 metres) blueprints shown at New York's Alternative Museum's *Beyond Photography* exhibition in 1980. The other was her Rhode Island School of Art and Design Degree show in 1978, *Swan Song*, which contained off-rectangle table-top-sized prints (measuring about 3 feet by 4 feet each) complemented by wainscot-high tiny (two or three inches by 10 or 20 feet wide) horizontal contact strips.¹¹ Townsend reflects on her *Swan Song* exhibition:

*By now, however, Woodman was also using the space as an active part of the work – this was, effectively, installation rather than exhibition.*¹²

¹¹ With extraordinary ingenuity, Woodman had cut a large hole in the ceiling above the setting she used to photograph herself, naked and with various tropes, probably with a shutter-release cable. This knowledge was gained from my conversation with Victoria Miro in summer 2006, who told me about her exciting discovery of these prints, by this time very torn, stored in her parents' New York apartment in huge rolls. Miro organised a comprehensive digitised restoration of the prints for exhibition at her Islington gallery in July 2007. I thank her for giving me the experience of seeing these magnificent works in their full scale and splendidly hung.

¹² Townsend, *Francesca Woodman*, 2006, 49.

Importantly all the works shown in the two exhibitions were of a nature that challenged both the conventions of the rectangle and that of the gallery wall.

Her first Italian solo show, held most aptly at her favourite Roman haunt *Libreria Maldoror* in March 1978, was, to judge by the invitation cards, experimental too. These postcards each have a unique Woodman print stuck onto their back.¹³ I have seen none of the images printed on the three postcards in the same composition and printing in any published catalogue on Woodman. One, for example (fig 155), connects strongly to the *Angels* series but is neither present in the *Angels, Calendars Book* nor yet in currency as an independent print. Here she has torn the print's edge and stripped off its shiny surface at the top to reveal the white paper under-layer that, perfectly and speedily, constructs another pair of angel's wings, outside the image rectangle, wings that are scattered with spasms of light.

Woodman's methods of trial and reflection equalise her images so that they may be lifted from any point in time during her nine-year period of practice. They form a chain of available sources from which she selects and rearranges in a process based on narrative, theme or aesthetic value, to use in whichever format she deems most apposite.

¹³ Bonito Oliva, *Francesca Woodman* (Palazzo delle Esposizioni catalogue), 2000, 206.

I will try to get closer to an understanding of the process described by looking at the remarkable and well-known image used in both the Books *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi* (fig 105, right-hand image) and *Angels, Calendars* (fig 59). In the latter Book it occurs with the annotation *December* underneath. The image has also been widely exhibited as a gallery and monographic print (fig 106). As the timing coincides, the *Angels, Calendars* Book comprised of an image series first conceived in Providence, developed and augmented in Rome and probably developed further in the US on her return. This image could have been used as just such a *rehearsal space* for a development of the autonomous image later or pulled out and trialled consecutively. Woodman must have wanted to further experiment with the print by placing it into the new context, the *afterwards* of *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi*, where the image in transparency both negates and sustains the under-script. But in that case which print was the rehearsal, which the enquiry and which the result? Probably all three prints explore and contain the three parts of the process and the undulating time span it releases. Woodman's sense of time was decidedly circular, not linear.

In the print used in *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi* we see the image in a soft exposure and in a reverse printing registration to the one in the earlier *Angels, Calendars* Book. Both the printings in the two Books are in a dark tone though this tone is deeper in the *Angels, Calendars* image. Both the compositions achieved are equally striking. The image printed for autonomous publication is of a better quality than those in the Books. In position it corresponds to the print in *Angels, Calendars*. But it has a greater tonal contrast and consequent clarity of detail; in it the marvellous textures of the space's dilapidation are fully brought

out, where in both Books' prints its textures play a subservient role to other visual matters. In the autonomous print Woodman's mud-smear torso enacts its synaesthesia on the interior as she becomes a creature from the wall.

The visual links between the fabric's pattern on Woodman's dress, here rolled down to the waist, and the mottling from the covers' aesthetic are now expressed and extended by the surface textures of the peeling and gouged plaster and paint wall in a superb circumstantial magic camouflage.

This extension of patterning is rendered, in the *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi* image, both more random and wilder by the contrasting regularity of the scripts' lines in their continual delicate horizontal crossing: rendered faint as they cross the transparency at the blurred area in the low skirt folds. Woodman has stuck on her image so that the buttons on her skirt coincide exactly with the position of the script lines, giving the image a different emphasis from that of the gallery print. Another difference is in the underplaying of the gouged marks on the rear upper wall. These become nearly invisible under the script lines which dominate this area in the *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi* image. In it the lines pass across the wall and onto the torso in a musical alignment of two distinct physical masses.

Another image pair used by Woodman in *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi* resonates strongly with images in her wider corpus. In this image pair she uses the trope of a fox fur. I will place my focus on the right-hand image of the Book's pair (fig 124). A fuller description of these Book images can be found in Chapter 5. A difficult image to read in its version in the Book, due to the very faint tone of

its printing, its wider corpus counterpart (fig 126) is a clearer image and a subtly different independent print, as the transparency in *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi* is slightly cropped. I will therefore read the image components primarily from the independent print, which was made in New York in 1979.

The image shows a naked Woodman standing tightly against a room corner on tiptoe, with her arms stretched upwards, in a similar pose to that in her double portraits of two women with maypole ribbons in *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi*. Her torso is slightly slanted but one fox fur hangs from a thin line in front of her, in a contrasting clean vertical, down the exact centre of her body, from just above her lowered eyes to just above her knees. Another fox fur, no, two other combined fox furs, are strung as one vertical in front of the other fur. Woodman has created another practically invisible perspective from the line on which they hang. As this object is nearer our vision we can see details such as its furry top, in line with Woodman's hair. A sharp part-rectangle of sunlight cuts into the floor's rectangle and a glittering pattern of diffused sunlight is spread over the wall and door at the back, in a diagonal angle towards the figure.

In the *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi* transparency the reversal of composition, the consequences of the cropping, and a printing so faint that many tonal variations disappear, give the image a very different quality from that of the independent print. The sun and shade diagonals of that print become, in the Book image, dark soft-edged pointers to the corner figure who is faded out to near-obliteration behind a fox fur and a floor and door corner area where much definition has been lost. But the foreground fox fur, here appearing near the

physical centre of the composition, gains a central significance, as it is both the darkest and the most clearly defined object in the Book image. Rather than reading this as her being subsumed by that old trope of fetishism, the fur, I think Woodman desires the power of the creature, in its dead-object form of adornment and fetishism, to be paramount.

The next image I want to discuss (fig 156) was, according to Townsend, also made in the same year, 1979, in Washington or while Woodman was artist-in-residence at the MacDowell in 1980.¹⁴ Without wanting to delve too deeply into precise dating, I have to say that it relates most strongly for me to the image with the fox fur prop which is part of the formidable *Swan Song* series (fig 125), made in Providence in 1978 for her Degree show at Rhode Island School of Art and Design that year. It is in part a tribute to her unswerving self-confidence that she uses and re-uses images from all years of her practice with such conviction.

Woodman wears the fox fur triumphantly in this striking and majestic independent image (fig 156). Its fur has a rough-edged, ruffled quality that forms a visual *double entendre* with a feather boa. No interior details or tropic accoutrements are present. Her naked torso, placed very close to centrally, has one arm holding the fur straight down her right side and the other held up so straight it looks as if it is being pulled from above. The three verticals of arm and fur and torso are superbly counteracted by an apparently last-minute twist of her head in an extreme *contrapposto* revealing a profile concentrated in blurred movement.

¹⁴ Townsend, *Francesca Woodman*, 2006, 215. Knowing too that Townsend worked closely with the Woodman Estate over dating and placing matters for his 2006 book, I treat his suppositions with respect. However, the archive catalogues the image as from her New York period.

The angle down, at which her turned head is directed, is echoed by the half-diamond form of her bent arm. As she has done on many occasions, Woodman here presents the fur as the unchallenged object of fetish, including herself as sexual object, for the full view of her audience. We have gone beyond the *male gaze* phenomenon and the vehement waves of feminist reaction to it. In this image, as in so many others, Woodman avoids a presentation as *desirable woman*. She retracts the position as she simultaneously reclaims it, succeeding in making an image that is full-bloodedly beautiful within the soon-to-be-past genre of late-modernism.

In the *Swan Song* series image (the series referred to by Townsend as *sculptural* photography) from 1978, Woodman wears two fox furs round her neck.¹⁵ In this image, measuring of 3 by 4 feet, we can distinguish two small fox heads and a fox leg, placed in a way which resembles the central torso placing of the image just discussed.¹⁶ Here the dramatic loop upwards, as one fur misses her neck and blocks the chin-base of her thrown-back head, sees the object lead a movement accentuated by the gentle downward angle of Woodman's left arm (as seen). Another white fur piece loops beneath the artist's figure. This reflects and increases the light toned area of Woodman's body as both forms intersect the dark-toned floorboards in a diagonal that is in counterpart to the dramatic overlay of a large piece of torn white paper, on the top left of the image. In all the twelve *Swan Song* images, seven of which she exhibited in 1978, a large strip of white paper divides the giant rectangle. It acts as a motif of extreme tonal contrast to the

¹⁵ Townsend, *Francesca Woodman*, 2006, 49.

¹⁶ The series was restored in 2006 by London's Victoria Miro Gallery, which used the digital C-printing method to re-photograph the series to include all accumulated tears and creases in the originals which had been stored rolled up.

dark-toned floor and as a lightest tone backdrop for the sequence of tones created by the props. It is particularly extended, as in this case, by her use of large untidily torn sections of the same white paper. These are readable in a narrative sense (of course as they were too in the *Angels* section of the *Angels, Calendars Book*) as wings.¹⁷ In this image Woodman's interest in textile design is again in evidence, demonstrated by her careful folding of a quilt to show both its mottled side and geometric diamond pattern patchwork at the top of the image.

Most poignantly throughout the *Swan Song* series the image or object of a small bird occurs. If the large bird of the title is addressed it is conceivably present in Woodman's own form. In a conceptualist mode, addressing the sign and its multiplicity of signifiers, Woodman uses various small bird corpses, displayed feathers and vintage bird prints, even transfers and stencils as well as negative space, abstract, 'wings', in the range of her investigation. In the *Swan Song* image under discussion, she cleverly forms the lines of a small flying bird from a combination of the negative space in between the calf of her left leg, the top straight edge of the large paper strip and a torn corner point of the irregular paper segment. On the left of Woodman's figure, just beneath the bird form, is an area of black cable. This is probably her shutter-release cable. It also provides a visual connecting device in most images of the series. But it may also (and if so very movingly) evoke electrocution (the song title *High Flying Electric Bird* comes to mind), her empathy for the killed bird and a visual enactment of just such a

¹⁷ This series was constructed at most a year after the *Angels* series and the *Angels, Calendars Book* were started.

dramatic death as Peggy Phelan argues Woodman had performed in her almost contemporaneous *Angel* series.¹⁸

The technical prowess she sustains in the *Swan Song* series, as for example in her acute understanding of exactly how tonal areas will intersect, overlap and cancel each other and in the construction of such complex tableaux, pushing boundaries in their original display, even including the suspension of the figure, is breathtaking. Townsend describes the original display of the series at the Woods Gerry Gallery within the Rhode Island School of Art and Design.

*Woodman took the photograph away from its format as a flat print upon the wall and deliberately introduced a third dimension, whilst exaggerating scale. The grouping of large prints within a room at the Woods Gerry Gallery used familiar ideas of rhythm and patterning, both within the individual work and in the play of forms between them. ... The large prints were placed in the corners of the room, so that their rotation on to each other, the hinging of representational space that was an effect solicited by the images, was simultaneously a rotation of one wall onto another, a hinging of haptic surfaces that defined a space.*¹⁹

This same technical prowess, coupled here with an outstanding mastery of category-jumping visual resemblance, is apparent again in two large-scale blueprint works of the year 1980. In that year she worked on the unfinished masterpiece the *Temple project* (exhibited in May of that year in New York), a fine example of which is fig 157; the courageous conceptual *Treepiece* (fig 158 is an example); and her Book *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi*.

¹⁸ Please see Chapter 2 for a fuller discussion of Phelan's hypothesis.

¹⁹ Townsend, *Francesca Woodman*, 2006, 49.

The superb analysis of the texture and patterns of dress materials made within *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi* is one of the Book's themes that has been and is continued and advanced in works drawn out or repositioned as independent or serial images. For example, we might cite the composite image of fig 159 (*Untitled*) and the sepia blueprint *Dress* (fig 160), both of which were made in 1980 during her summer residency at the MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire, in the same period as *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi*.

The two large-scale blueprint works I want first to look at are *Bridges and Tiaras* (fig 161), a work measuring 93 x 431 cm (around 3 feet by 14 feet), printed on sepia-coloured paper and *Zig Zag* (fig 162), measuring 19.5 x 133 cm (around 7 ½ inches by 5 feet), also printed on sepia paper.²⁰ I see these works on the one hand as extensions of themes present and explored in the *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi* Book and on the other hand as autonomous, highly experimental works concerned with the poetry of objects and suffused with metaphors of mutual delimitation between the organic, the artefact, human form and the architectural.

The term blueprint, originally and still an architectural term, does not imply confinement of the process to the colour blue, as clarified by George Woodman, writing in Italian for publication in the Palazzo delle Esposizioni catalogue:

Il termine blueprint è forse usato impropriamente. In realtà le carte sono disponibili in una vasta gamma cromatica che va dal blu-ghiaccio al viola

²⁰ Regrettably the large size of these two images and those in figs 163 and 164 compromises the quality of my reproductions.

*intenso. Ci sono anche carte color seppia, nelle variazioni del marrone-arancio e del miele-chiaro. Francesca ha impiegato tutte le colorazioni.*²¹

Bridges and Tiaras and *Zig Zag* are both works which use the technique initiated by Woodman in 1980, whereby she applied existing positive photographic images onto clear, light-sensitive architects' paper and then printed the image composite through a cyanographic machine used for printing large scale architects' drawings.²² The rolls of cyanographic paper measured 1 metre by 25 metres.

Bridges and Tiaras seems to combine one real photograph, in the left image, with what I read as two photographs of prints or drawings (in the centre and on the right). The massive scale of this work, at 3 feet by 14 feet it is as wide as the whole wall of an average room, can only emphasise its outrageous category bursting. It is a delicate and acutely accurate visual linking of semantically distant artefacts. Though not exemplifying any of Breton's three components of the marvellous directly, it is a pure surrealist work, convulsively beautiful. Woodman has observed the kinship of the extremely close visual elements which form the disparate scales of structures and their design. This is the kinship of strangers so monstrously separate, as of monuments and head decoration, that no existing category or social function could contain them both; tiny and precious jewels for a

²¹ Bonito Oliva, *Francesca Woodman* (Palazzo delle Esposizioni catalogue), 2000, 189: 'The term *blueprint* is perhaps used incorrectly. In reality the card (architect's paper) was available in a large chromatic range which varied from ice-blue to intense violet. A sepia coloured card was also available, which varied from orange-brown to light honey. Francesca used all the colours.'

²² From Wikipedia: *The blueprint process is essentially the cyanotype process developed by the British astronomer John Herschel in 1842. The photosensitive compound, a solution of ferric ammonium citrate and potassium ferricyanide, is coated onto paper. Areas of the compound exposed to strong light are converted to insoluble blue ferric ferrocyanide, or Prussian blue. The soluble chemicals are washed off with water leaving a light-stable print.* Online at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blueprint>, accessed 24/6/2010.

princess shrunk to fit next to a vast engineering structure over miles of river unified within the scale change Woodman enacts through the *photographic real*.

Zig Zag is about one quarter the size of *Bridges and Tiaras*. It measures 19 cms by 133 cms (approximately 7 ½ inches by almost 5 foot) and therefore proportionately it has a far narrower depth in proportion to its width than *Bridges and Tiaras*. It is printed on a blue architect's paper. Again in this work Woodman subsumes the materialisation of objects in her focus on their formal connections. These connections are of a less dramatic nature here than they were in *Bridges and Tiaras* but they are a no less remarkable collection. Her fascination with the patterns of textiles, as evidenced in particular in *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi* and throughout her corpus, continues here in inventive interceptions in the wearing, draping, rolling and spreading of mottled, flowery, leafy and dog-toothed-check cloth. The ribbon motif from the same Book is used again, or before, here too, laid in relaxed loops in the motif of the first section.

The zig-zag is created from the space between splayed human feet, two wide, high straight-legged jumps (Woodman and her friends were dancers), the stark black V-neck of a sweater, a family photograph between two reflective cone forms, a bent arm 'triangle', two bent arms behind a head which conceals their hands, a bent knee with half an arm, an arm and the stalk of a flower. In each separate image the motif of the zig-zag is caught and then continues its rhythm of differences which gel energetically into a formally galvanised whole.

She continued this theme in the appendiary series *Schizzo per Zig Zag* (fig 163) and another *Zig Zag* (fig 164). This *Zig Zag* is printed on a blue architect's paper and is a similar very large size and proportion as its named counterpart and to *Bridges and Tiaras*. In the image a juxtaposition of an image of a woman in a Victorian triangle-ruffed shoulder dress with an image of three shadows of houses in zig-zag-rhythm falling on another building, is particularly ingenious and successful.

The art world's reception of Woodman's work, mostly posthumously, often takes it back to a point of 'high' modernism because of the stunning beauty of many of her images seen in *auratic* isolation. In spite of the embedded 'series' or what Rosalind Krauss calls *problem sets*, modus operandi of her practice many curators have understandably prioritised her independent images. This is of course encouraged by the practical strictures of the (white cube) gallery wall during exhibition and of the fitting of the image to the white page- rectangles of the monographic catalogue.

As the democracy of her images within the restless and probing field of enquiry she enacts becomes increasingly acknowledged by her audiences, their dissemination and reception will change. Her Books constitute a fecund area of research which not only fertilises her whole practice but expands beyond the purely visual into the inter-disciplinary. In what I contend is her last Book, *Quaderno dei Dettati e dei Temi*, it is a powerful address of the photographic dialectic through the silence of images within the photographic medium.

As unique objects of precision and unity, Woodman's Books should be valued in the critical field as equal to her well-known corpus of unitary prints.