



Fall 1994

Gloria Patri, Gender, and the Gulf War: A Conversation with Mary Kelly

James Castonguay

Sacred Heart University, castonguayj@sacredheart.edu

Amelie Hastie

Lynne Joyrich

Christopher Lane

Kathleen Woodward

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/media_fac

 Part of the [American Popular Culture Commons](#), [Fine Arts Commons](#), [Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Ethnicity in Communication Commons](#), and the [Interdisciplinary Arts and Media Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Castonguay, James et al. "Gloria Patri, Gender, and the Gulf War: A Conversation with Mary Kelly." *Discourse* 17.1 (1994): 147-168.

This Peer-Reviewed Article is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Communication, Media & the Arts at DigitalCommons@SHU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Communication and Media Arts Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@SHU. For more information, please contact ferribyp@sacredheart.edu, lysobeyb@sacredheart.edu.

Gloria Patri, Gender, and the Gulf War: A Conversation with Mary Kelly

**James Castonguay, Amelie Hastie, Lynne Joyrich,
Christopher Lane, Kathleen Woodward**

Mary Kelly's most recent gallery size installation, entitled Gloria Patri, was first shown at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Cornell University 1992. Gloria Patri focuses on the issues of heroism, mastery, and war within the context of a pathologized masculinity; that is, on the identification by both men and women with masculine ideals of mastery, domination, and control, and their simultaneous physical and psychological collapse. This crisis of masculine mastery is set against the backdrop of the Persian Gulf War.

Gloria Patri is comprised of three series of metal sculptures. The first group consists of five large aluminum shields. Each shield displays a short narrative, written by Kelly and etched into the surface of the plaque. The stories or episodes are almost satirical accounts of such gendered, yet everyday, events as a baseball game, a day spent fishing, a meal and discussion between mother and son, a childbirth, and finally — in the one narrative told in a female voice — a weightlifting session. Thus, each story engages in a discourse of socialized masculinity.

Six aluminum trophies — flat, like the shields below them — constitute the second series of objects. Atop each individual trophy rests a three-dimensional, semi-clad male figurine; the small male figures are pitched forward, each carrying one of the letters that spells G-L-O-R-I-A. On the base of the trophies, Kelly has etched fragments of quotes

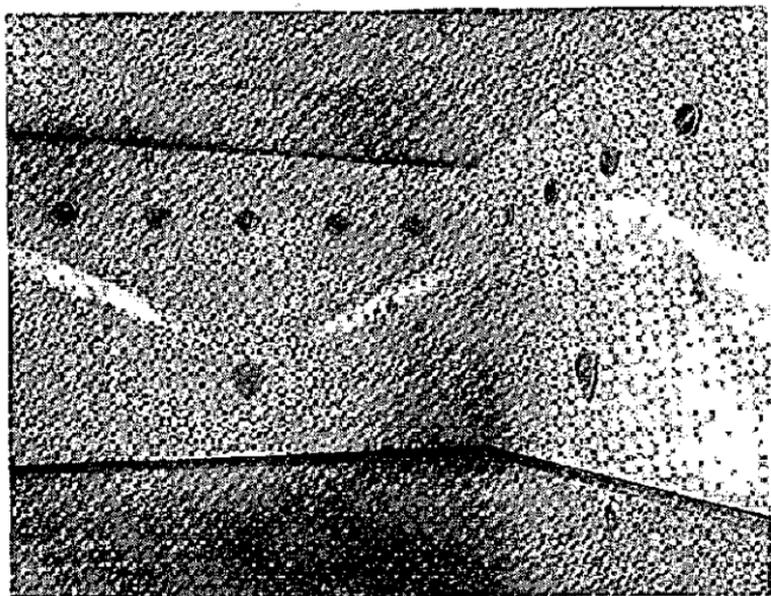


Figure 1. Mary Kelly, *Gloria Patri*, 1992. Installation View. Photo: © Emil Ghinger.

from members of the armed forces which the artist recorded from the television news during the Gulf War.

The third and final series consists of twenty aluminum discs onto which Kelly has screened hybrids of various military insignia taken from the ROTC, the Air Force, and the Officer's Candidate School — each image is split in half and abutted against another half. In these latter pieces, Kelly directly addresses militarism and its particular colonization of the masculine ideal. The sentence fragments on the trophies are testaments to the collapse of a certain discourse of mastery, and the iconographic montages inscribed on the discs undo the visual imagery employed by the military to codify and reward virility, aggression, and domination.

Gloria Patri was exhibited at the UWM Art Museum from November 1993 through January 1994. At the opening of the installation in November, Kelly gave a formal lecture and slide presentation which was cosponsored by the Center for Twentieth Century Studies and the UWM Art Museum, with support from the Layton Lecture Foundation, the Department of Art and Art History, and the Center for Women's Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. While in Milwaukee, Kelly recorded this interview with a group of UWM faculty and graduate students.



Figure 2. Mary Kelly. *Gloria Patri*, 1992. Detail: 4 of 20 Discs. Courtesy Postmasters Gallery. Photo: Ray Barrie.

Lane: Would you begin by addressing the relation — or perhaps the non-relation — between the texts inscribed on the shields of *Gloria Patri* and what we might call the presentation of the shields themselves, their "face," if you will?

Kelly: The shield is a metaphor for a defense: it is literally a facade that invokes the military, and at another level it suggests a defensive strategy of the ego — not revealing weakness or putting its inside on the outside. As a spectator, when you get up close to the shields and enter into the stories, the scenario of mastery and control fails. So the relation between the face of the shields themselves and the texts inscribed on their surface works to reveal vulnerability, a vulnerability that is represented

both by the very fact of the texts themselves and by the scenes they actually depict.

Lane: So you see the stories — the narratives — as being an exposure of vulnerability; as representing something that's missing, or lacking?

Kelly: Well, I think I mean to emphasize the impossibility of completely playing out that part. I'm following Lacan here with his notion of the fraud of the phallus, that everyone — both the man and the woman — desires to be loved for what they are not, whether that takes the form of masquerading the lack of the lack or of pretending to have the phallus. No one has the phallus, so the social imposition for the man to live out this ideal is as problematic (perhaps more so) as it is for the woman. This is the first stage. The second is the recognition that these positions — both masculine and feminine — are psychic positions that are always available to all subjects and aren't exactly equivalent to active and passive. But they have a social dimension which contains them. So there is the problem of that ideal — the masculine ideal — being assumed by a woman as well as by a man. The story on the fifth and final shield is important in this regard — it throws you off. The woman begins out of control and then has a fantasy of mastery.

Woodward: I'd like to explore this further. One of the psychoanalytic concepts I've found so useful over the last decade or so is that of masquerade as an *unconscious* display — and I use the word "display" advisedly here. In feminist film theory, though, masquerade has been taken up and celebrated as a *conscious* subversive strategy. For me that excises the explanatory power of psychoanalysis which lies precisely in the notion of the unconscious itself. The final story depicts a woman who seems to consciously adopt the strategy of assuming the facade of masculinity through exercise and bodybuilding. Where, then, does the unconscious lie in that story?

Kelly: It lies in fact in the answer to the question "Why is she doing that?" Does she know why she is doing that? The unconscious dimension lies, I would say, in the accumulation of the stories that have come before, coded in the narratives inscribed on the previous shields — in, for example, the story on the third shield about birth, about a man repelled by the production of abject stuff from a woman's body ("the curdled contents," "a crumpled tulip"); or in the fourth narrative about adolescence, a boy made "queasy" by the sight of his mother's aging body ("the soft skin, frail and translucent, loosely draped over her prominent veins, studded with drab patches and scored with tiny creases"). By the fifth narrative "she" doesn't

want to be a woman, she despises "the woman-thing." But we can't say, can we, that we are really conscious of this, although perhaps the work we are doing now on the cultural codes of femininity and masculinity makes us more so. In the past our generation (I'm referring to Kathleen and myself) had to make explicit, bring to consciousness — the precocious femininity we were locked into. We had to make it "representable," an object of conscious representation, in order to be able to distance ourselves from it. Now, twenty years later, I am asking what it means to have rejected essentialism. One of the effects, I do think, is that many women have identified unconsciously with the masculine ideal — and this we have not sufficiently examined. The pathology of this is clear when we look at the Gulf War — there was all this publicity about women being able to fight, being able to go to the front and kill.

I've always thought about this in terms of myself. In the art world I had to pretend I was a man, even though I did *Post-Partum Document*. In the art world to have a child was absolutely anathema. You were supposed to do all the things Margaret Thatcher was advised to do — to lower your voice, for example, to present a certain kind of authority in the guise of invisibility. (Even to wear earrings was considered a big thing! I am on the Board of Advisors of a New Museum, and one of the younger people who is also on the board said to me at a recent meeting, "Oh, you wear earrings!" It was as though, being associated with a certain kind of authority in the art world, I couldn't adopt these insignia of femininity.) This is what I mean by display as opposed to masquerade — a social as well as psychic structure that defines your place within a coded hierarchy. It's about making the body, in a sense, invisible.

Joyrich: I think masquerade is an interesting strategy because it straddles the unconscious and the conscious or, rather, is on the border of the conscious and the unconscious. How do you conceptualize this relationship? Is the "border" between subject positions and social places also a contested one?

Kelly: "Masquerade" and "display" are of course only theoretical terms that are convenient as a way of describing psychic structures, with masquerade being associated with femininity and display with masculinity. But everything doesn't fit into one category or another. As subject positions both are constantly available and are constantly being taken up and used. But, I wonder, how useful do you think it was for me to have taken the Lacanian notion of display and set it up against the notion of masquerade? When, for example, the art historian Norman Bryson discusses the paintings of Géricault (I'm think-

ing in particular of his "Mounted Officers of the Imperial Guard"), he still uses the term "masquerade," arguing that they represent the failure of masquerade for the man, the undoing of a situation of mastery. I thought it was important to come at things from a different direction, even though it is ultimately circuitous. My understanding is that if a man is masquerading (even though the performance is macho, like that of a body-builder), he is taking up the feminine position, making the body visible. It is about the objectification and desirability of the body. Often the genitals aren't even important. I'm thinking also of rock stars, or of the heavy metal scene — that's masquerade.

Lane: I find that very interesting because the way that the concept of a female masquerade has been taken up has ignored in large part the anxiety that was attached to Joan Riviere's original use of the term — that the woman produces a masquerade in order to efface her fear of retribution by or violence from men, to ward off the armed sadism that is circulating. Perhaps in an analogous way, masculine "parade" or "display" works similarly to efface violence.

Kelly: Riviere's definition of masquerade treated a woman's performance of femininity as a symptom, as something that covered up her lack of womanliness, her desire to be like a man. This is very different from Lacan's use of masquerade where sexuality is the outcome of the symbolic process: all there is is masquerade, or the fraud of the phallus, or the display of male virility. There is nothing else — there is no sexual relation. Lacan's "Signification of the Phallus" points this out. After you've read it, no sexual relationship you have can ever be the same.

Lane: Shouldn't we therefore discuss further the anxiety that is produced in the process of trying to live up to the representation of the phallus and of simultaneously recognizing one's own deficiencies?

Kelly: I'm not sure if this is what you mean but where I was headed in referring to the difference between Riviere and Lacan's notions of masquerade is toward Michele Montrelay's use of the term. She follows Riviere but mixes in Lacan, so you get both: masquerade functions symptomatically to cover the anxiety of both proximity to the mother's body and not being able to represent this as loss, and masquerade represents a kind of resolution possible as the final goal of analysis (this is probably putting it much too confidently), the ability to handle loss symbolically — or as Montrelay describes it, through the phallogocentric organization or representation of the drives in

terms other than their archaic organizational structure (the oral, anal, vaginal). I'm simplifying here of course — Montrelay requires careful exposition. But the important point is that by combining both of these schemas of masquerade, she can account for both the symptom and the anxiety, and can also underline the necessity for a woman — the woman — to have access to a kind of sublimated pleasure, one dependent on phallogocentricity.

Once Montrelay has arrived at this theoretical juncture the metaphor of masquerade spirals off into an account of creativity — in terms of work and writing, for example — which suggests that such play works also on the level of sexuality itself, as in playing out the part of difference. This makes sense in terms of Lacan's insistence on the fact that the problem of sexuality is not difference but sameness; the problem is that love, or idealization, or wanting to be like the other, will move you away from the axis of desire or wanting to have the object, toward being the same. Part of the impossibility of the sexual relation is this collapse of difference. Thus on the one hand, the symbolic reinstating of difference sounds reactionary: now we have "man" and "woman" — fine, it's settled. But on the other hand, *these are not fixed identities of course. You are aware of what is at stake* (well, can we say "unconsciously aware"); you are not displaying the anxiety that would result from your expecting to actually *be* the cause of the other's desire, or to be the same, to be bound in oneness with this other. You're able to be separate, to be in a relationship, and to play out the part. What I mean is that if you're a woman, you can play the part of a man; and if you're a man, you can play out the part of the woman. (Judith Butler also emphasizes this in her work.) Montrelay's combination of Riviere and Lacan allows us to account for the range of conscious and unconscious . . . experience.

Joyrich: What you have just said helps answer the question I raised before about the way in which you are combining an analysis of both subject positions and social positions in *Gloria Patri*. Your work is heavily informed by psychoanalysis but at the same time you are reflecting on the institution of the military — in terms of the Gulf War. Where do you see psychoanalytic critique and institutional critique coming together? How do you think about the intersection of the two in terms of your critique of the media? Yesterday in your talk about *Gloria Patri* you referred to recent and important changes in the military — specifically, to women entering the military in certain self-conscious ways, to gay men and lesbians in the military, with the

result that questions of gender and sexuality become more visible because they have become political issues. Yet at the same time you are relating this to unconscious structures.

Castonguay: To this I would like to add, what is your theory of the televisual spectator? At one point you said yesterday that film theory has informed much of your own thought. Yet most of us, at least in the US, experienced the Gulf War through television — and the position of the spectator of television is very different from that of film. *Gloria Patri* structures both positions brilliantly, I think. Yesterday when I walked into the room in the UWM Art Museum in which your piece was displayed, my first reaction was “widescreen!,” as if I were in the midst of a kind of filmic spectacle as a Bazinian spectator. As this kind of spectator you can explore the frame of the piece itself and experience moments of contemplation whereas the shields are like smaller TV screens.

Kelly: I’m very glad you came back to the art work because that is how I practice, how I do the work, how I think. You asked me about the relation I’m trying to articulate between institutional contexts and unconscious structures, and I’ve been sitting here thinking that there is an incredible divide between the way I’ve been talking about psychoanalysis and the way I make an art work. The fact is that the difference between the second wave of feminism and the first was precisely the question of sexuality. It wasn’t the case that if you achieved equality on paper that necessarily relations or situations would be better in psychic or subjective terms. The point is that sexual difference had to be explored in terms of its subjective dimension. That work has set the stage for exploration in other areas — importantly, for example, in relation to homosexuality, which is also a social issue. We could never have begun to approach this without having first addressed the interface of the psychic and the social, an interface where we are not saying that the psychic is the truth of the social, nor that the psychic is outside the social, but that it is another level of inscription of the subject. Considered as a discrete object, sexuality had a theoretical discourse — psychoanalysis — that was appropriate to it at that particular historical moment. Similarly, in terms of race there remains the necessity to understand the subjectivity of oppression long after the civil rights movement; people do not cease being racist just because a government has passed legislation. I was, first of all, politically motivated to look at the conjunction between the psychic dimensions of sexual difference, or gender, and their institutional contexts.

This, in turn, relates to what I call the debate-specific nature of my work: my desire to engage with people, to construct an audience (which is, I know, something extremely difficult to track down). If an artist can keep the work in some way related to a movement or political context, then the work itself continues the more general project of a public art, and I think that's critical. If you start desiring to do the work as if it were destined for a collector, then, as Craig Owens said before he died, that's the end, there is no more public art. Now, to get specifically to your point about spectatorship: I chose the exhibition (of an installation) as the form of presentation for my work — not film, not video — precisely because it has that self-reflexive quality you mentioned earlier. The piece is not laid out for you in a temporal dimension that you have to sit through, as with film. Nor, as with television, does it present you with a kind of insidious, intimate presence. Instead the spectator is both a physical and emotional participant in the art work. He comes into its space. I was very pleased that you associated the work of the piece with the experience of television, as if you could walk inside of the spectacle itself and see these absurdities for what they are, see both the facade and the nothing that is behind it — there is only this shallow relief.

Lane: What particularly interests me about the shields lies in the fact that because they are so clearly a kind of mirror, they obstruct some of the spectacle. Since they insist on the ruined relation to watching, to looking, they are also an endless reminder of the spectators themselves.

Hastie: This relates back to what you said about an art work constructing its audience. In *Gloria Patri* the audience is itself literally one of the materials of the piece. The audience becomes part of the display. It enters into the text by the act of reading the narratives on the shields. It also enters the text by being reflected in the highly polished aluminum surfaces of the shields. So in the very material you have used, you have brought together the two institutions — psychoanalysis and the military. *Gloria Patri* constructs the subject position of spectator, the members of its audience, so that the viewing subject is joined with the military subject. In addition I see in *Gloria Patri* the accumulation not only of the stories on the shields but also an accumulation of affect — I would specify it as actual longings — from the trophies to the shields.

I want to add something here about the temporality of viewing. You said earlier that for film there is a certainly linear temporality of viewing because one is stuck in the theater. But my experience is that I view films in the way you propose that a

spectator views an exhibition; thus I use the experience of the exhibition hall as a strategy for viewing a film. I think, too, that this is what happens in memory: when a film is over, you replay it in your mind, which picks up different parts of the film in different sequences. Do you see ways in which the exhibition hall might make different strategies of viewing films possible?

Kelly: What you are saying about memory is intriguing because it subverts the order of the narrative. This is what the dreamer does, of course — condensation. You take various elements of the film and bring them together with your own subjectively overdetermined obsession. But in an exhibition space there are so many different forms of presentation, the most conventional being pictures (I mean pictures with discrete borders).

Lane: Could not a certain difficulty in piecing together different objects be analogous to an experience of war — the difficulty of trying to make coherent a series of disparate violent and technical images? I'm thinking particularly about the narrative of the Gulf War; wasn't it centrally about piecing together diffuse and psychically painful images?

Castonguay: At the same time, I think that a narrative was laid out from the very beginning. George Bush knew it had a beginning, a middle, and an end. Already there were the names — Desert Shield, Desert Sword, and Desert Storm.

Kelly: I found it, however, very difficult to flesh out that narrative because for the most part on TV there was no sound synched to the image track. Primarily there was voice-over. Plus, as Chris Lane was saying, the other side of the war — many of its humanizing details — was not being supplied. It was similar to what happens in film — that fetishistic moment — when you just see the light and are caught up in the spectacle, when the flow of the narrative is arrested and works absolutely against, I suppose, even the voyeuristic impulse to know the abuse and horror of the other.

Castonguay: At one point during the Gulf War there was on CNN an ironic return to what I would call an Edward R. Murrow moment from his World War II radio broadcasts when they only had a telephone and radio line in Baghdad; the reporters kept telling us that there were no images, and the network kept cutting to pictures of their faces. We finally saw the images they were reporting but only later, after we had heard one of them (it was Bernard Shaw) describe the scene as being just like the fireworks on the Fourth of July at the Washington Monument. The cognitive grid he was using at that

moment to explain the war was one of aestheticization and patriotic display.

Joyrich: I actually think, though, that there was in fact a lot of interweaving of narrative in the coverage of the Gulf War. Precisely because there weren't images of the War itself, of combat, the networks broadcast a lot of personalized narratives — of wives and mothers, for example, waiting at home. In your work you bring together a critique of institutions and of subjectivity in great part through personal narratives. How does what you do relate to the way the mass media personalized narratives of the war?

Kelly: I think the mass media mucked it up by personalizing the coverage of the War because it reinforced the contradiction I referred to earlier. On the one hand, the technology was superhuman; this was its strength. On the other hand, the media played out the vulnerability — the humanness, if you will — of the troops. Think of Klaus Theweleit's description in *Male Fantasies* of the German Freikorps. These soldiers were trained to have no involvement with the family or with emotions; they were trained to be "soldier-males," together to form a totality machine which was to be one of the bases for other totalities — like the nation itself. How can a national identity thrive when you've shown it to be split on so many levels?

Joyrich: To some degree the rhetoric we heard during TV coverage of the Gulf War made the state itself a kind of personalized body. The language of the body was omnipresent — Hussein's head, for example, was going to be "cut off." I think your work is particularly incisive in the way you examine how the personal and the institutional — here the militaristic — interpenetrate one another. The way you narrativize the space of *Gloria Patri* shows the personal entering into the military at the highest level: in the top row you've placed the symbols of the military and the nation, the medallions; in the bottom row, the personal stories inscribed on the shields; and in the middle, the trophies, symbols of the moment when an individual is being recognized by an institution, when an award is given for being . . .

Kelly: Complicit. Contributing to the glory of the nation. Yet I wanted to be careful not to make this a criticism of individual men in the service. The quotations which I inscribed on the base of the trophies — "cut it off and kill it," for example, or "kick ass" (I took these quotes from what I heard during TV coverage of the War) — are meant to suggest the role of the state apparatus in forming subjectivity. I don't agree, however, that this bravado functions well to sustain national identity.

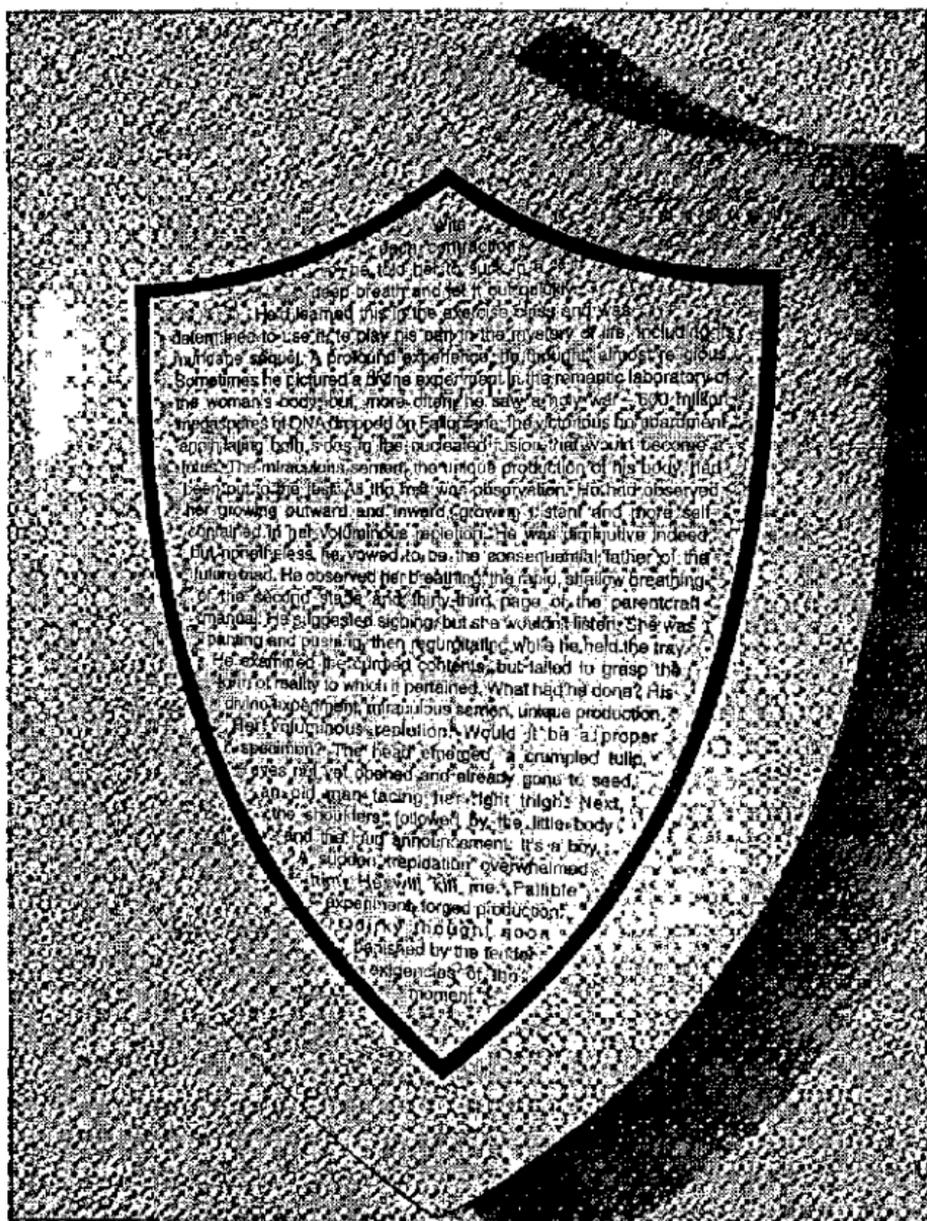


Figure 3. Mary Kelly. *Gloria Patri*, 1992. Detail: Shield. Photo: Ray Barrie.

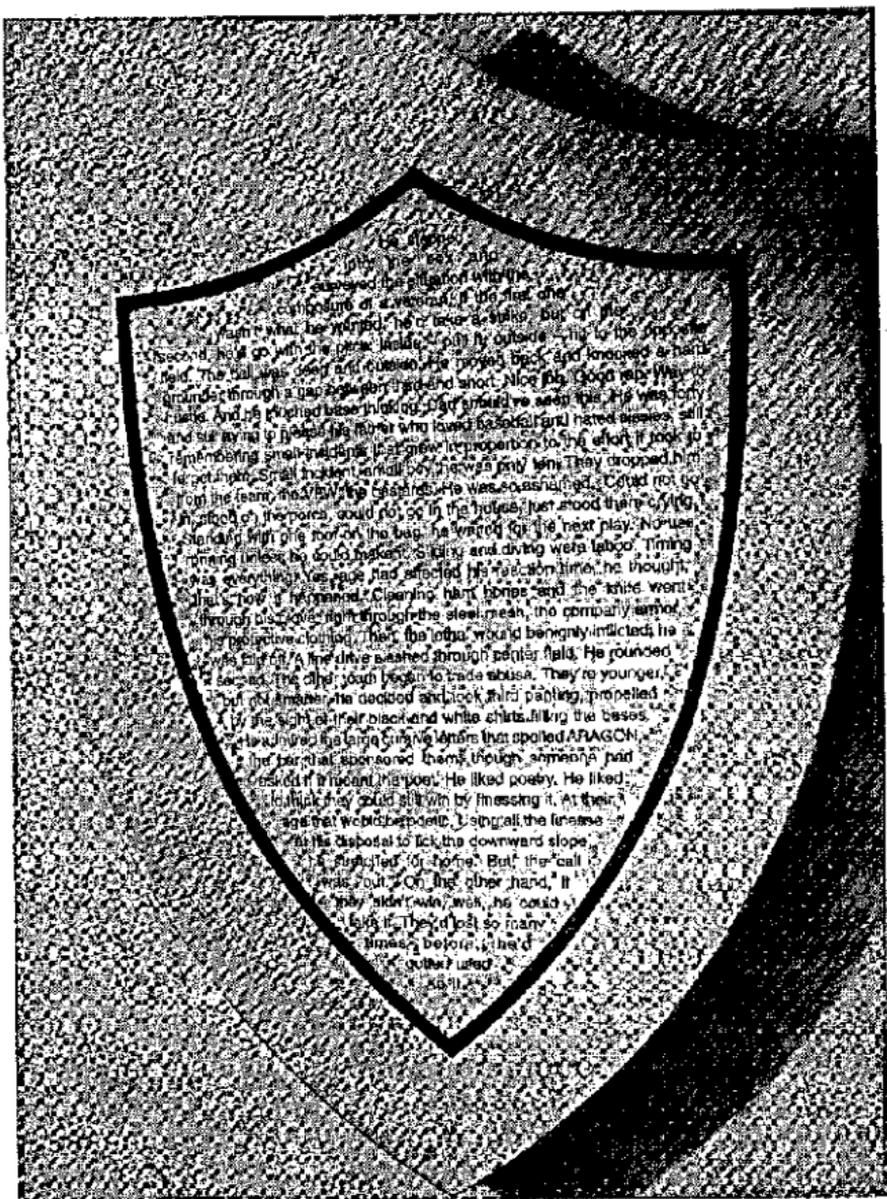


Figure 4. Mary Kelly. *Cloria Putri*, 1992. Detail: Shield. Photo: Ray Barrie.

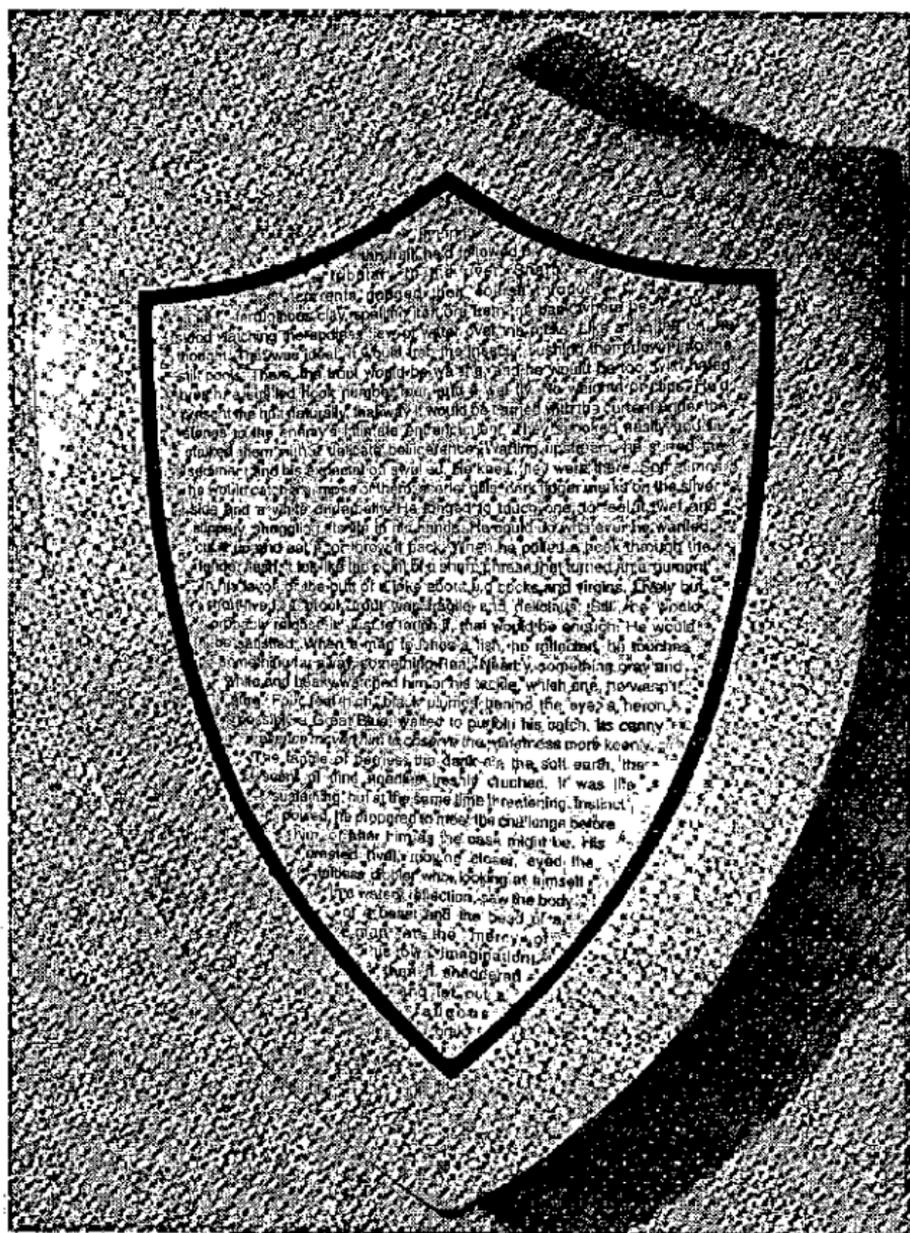


Figure 5. Mary Kelly. *Gloria Patri*, 1992. Detail. Shield. Photo: Ray Barrie.

In the US (this is wild speculation, on my part), the system works in a way that subverts itself. Yesterday Jim Castonguay brought up the notion of the military-media-industrial complex, which I think is perfectly apt in this context: the media does cut across the effectivity of politics in this country. Most people, for example, don't believe in the state; they don't believe in the people who run it. The institution of the media itself has almost created a kind of apathy where people don't think it makes any difference, for instance, whom they vote for. In the US you don't have the kind of loyalty you find in Europe, for instance, to political parties that have long histories and traditions; in the US you don't have a sense that politicians are statesmen the way you might in Britain where — it is essential to remember — there is an incredible amount of censorship of the media, even though you have some form of welfare state. Why does this create an image of the government as one without authority? Lacan's theory that the symbolic father is always the dead father suggests one reason why: you can't humanize the state without undercutting it.

Joyrich: On the other hand, you could argue that in the US, precisely because the political parts are infinitely interchangeable, the authority of the military-media-postindustrial-complex is in fact increased. When you flip on the TV, you know what you will see, just as during the Gulf War "we" all watched TV constantly and rooted for "our guys" because it was just another family story (at least this is what was expected — indeed, demanded — of us as viewers).

Castonguay: Also, there are explicit links on a material, economic level between the different components of the military-media-postindustrial complex. General Electric had a hand in designing and maintaining almost every weapon used in the Gulf War and also owns NBC; so the notion of "objective news coverage" is completely ridiculous, a structural/institutional impossibility. And there are also what might be called implicit links. The executives of the three major networks all sit on the boards of oil companies and so clearly had an investment in the War.

Joyrich: You can see these connections clearly if you analyze the commercials that were aired during the War. I was part of a group that did a videotape about TV coverage of the Gulf. Among other things we looked at the relationship of commercials to the narratives that were being broadcast about the War on the news (of course, a lot of companies pulled their advertising because they didn't want to be associated with news of the War). GE, for example, aired a commercial with its usual

tag, "We bring good things to life." Other ads were clearly making reference to a kind of terrorism, but wouldn't name it explicitly.

Lane: But suppose that there is something about the spectacle of war that is held together by a different psychic register, one that is not simply about the organization of the state but about an investment in sadism, about wanting to participate in war, to observe it. Perhaps that is what grips us as opposed to — or in addition to — the totalizing narrative of the state through the media?

Kelly: Yes, I agree, that psychic disposition is always there, and when it is exploited by the media, it is murderous.

Joyrich: As we were saying before though, in TV coverage of the Gulf War in the US there was the lack of a visual track — and in particular a remarkable lack of images of the body. So in some way the coverage didn't appeal to the viewer in terms of sadism. It is as though the other narratives, the personalized stories, made up for this lack. It is a question of how *vulnerability*, as Mary Kelly would say, was represented: it was conveyed not through images of the body but through personal stories. Can you talk about the place — or lack of place — of the body in *Gloria Patri*? In your previous work, "evidence" of the body (even if not the body itself) was central and visible; in this piece, the body seems to be even more absent — similar, in a way, to its (non)representation in other cultural narratives of the Gulf War.

Castonguay: Exactly. There was a structuring absence of the injured body, even on the level of language: during the Gulf War, for instance, what used to be called "body bags" were referred to in warspeak as "human remains pouches." I would argue that this structuring absence of the body has to be contextualized historically in terms of Vietnam and the television coverage of that war: the cultural psyche of the US was emasculated by losing the last war. The Rambo narratives represent a symbolic rewriting of Vietnam, and the Gulf War was a sinister realization of those fantasies.

Lane: But perhaps sadism operates precisely on the absence of the body. Since there is no element of the grotesque, and the technology is supremely clinical, one can participate in the abstract, generic power of military force without the horrendous realization of what it amounts to.

Kelly: I'd like to focus for a moment on how the body is represented in my work — because it has been notoriously absent in an obvious way. I've thought a lot about the strategy of making the woman's body a figure of representation in physi-

cal terms. But I think there are other ways in the work of making the body central — as a fantasy, as the dispersed body of desire. For example, I used the theme of the mother-child relationship in *Post-Partum Document*. In 1983 I introduced the term "female fetishism," which didn't correspond to the familiar iconography of male pornography. My point was that you should look elsewhere — to a mother's memorabilia.

Woodward: I think one of the most important contributions of your work, of *Post-Partum Document* and *Interim*, is that you comment on the female body but do not represent it figuratively. This is crucial because the *body* has become an obsession in Western culture in general and in contemporary critical discourse in particular. We continue to reproduce images of the body, over and over again, as if the body were the only way that our identity is structured. I find this strategy in your work very exciting — the structuring absence of the figural dimension of the body. But that structuring absence is very different from the structuring absence of the body that we have been talking about in the discourse of the Gulf War.

Kelly: The difference between the two is similar to the difference between the early explorations of the performance of femininity in the masquerade and the question of displaying masculinity. Strategically, power is invisible; typically, it's through absence that you have power. It's like the voice-over. It's why we don't see the penis represented — because then it's no longer the phallus. Whatever has power has to incorporate difference in some way, not be represented as it is. For example, power can be represented as simply a place, or coded as a status, not individuated or made specific. Power, in other words, is at the opposite end of the spectrum from the heterogeneity of the body.

In *Gloria Patri* that strategy of invisibility is made visible. All my earlier work moved against the over-representation of the body and the equation of the woman with the body-image. Hopefully, that didn't erase the affect or trace of the body because the body is in fact always represented in one way or another. How the body figures in fantasy, how we relate to it emotionally, is what is at stake for me rather than the body as a materiality that you can have access to in some unmediated way. In *Post-Partum Document*, for instance, the way I used clothing meant to suggest the difficulty of representing a materiality that is at base fetishistic — because who knows what will become a fetish for someone, what their "piece of reality" will be. And similarly, in *Interim*, the first section, *Corpus*, which consists of fifteen coupled panels (the right half of each pair has a

white handwritten text on a black background, the left half consists of a laminated photograph of different articles of clothing, including a leather jacket and boots), I thought, I can't use a found object the way I had in *Post-Partum Document*, I can't use the clothes themselves because I want to comment on narcissism — and femininity — as it is constructed within the general domain of images and discourses such as fashion, popular medicine, and romantic fiction. So, I used the photo laminates not only for their iconic content, but also they do cast shadows on the background and this retrieves a certain indexical property of the sign.

Lane: So, is part of your project in each of your installations to retrieve something that is otherwise glossed or smoothed over? Do you want to represent something that is ignored, something that is deficient in relation to parade or display or masquerade, something, finally, that is more about individuality?

Kelly: At the time I made *Corpus*, I was very engaged (along with Laura Mulvey) in thinking about pleasure and was under attack for, as some people put it melodramatically, wanting to destroy all pleasure! So, I thought, I'll work with a conventional narrative; I'll use the really seductive first-person indicative and cast the narrative as a kind of fairy tale. I'll also work with the visual pleasure of advertising images. That's why in *Corpus* I used pink and black, as a kind of caricature of "tarting up," as one would say.

Pecunia (which, by the way, means "money"), the second section of *Interim*, takes off on greeting cards, on their one-dimensional discourse of sentimentality. Greeting cards so perfectly display the various categories of woman and how your desire is absolutely contingent on the position that you occupy — "Dear Mom," "Happy Birthday," "Darling Daughter," "My Wife" — what you are supposed to want has to be siphoned through these states. So for *Pecunia* I invented a greeting card that is made out of steel. It comes out of the wall and opens up, without any weld. There are twenty of them, and they have the Latin words for Mother, Daughter, Wife, and narratives inside. But there was still something lost of that look of sentimentality that I wanted to retrieve. I condensed the typefaces: for Mother, I used Times Bold; for Wife, I used Gill; for Sister, Universe — because that's the only genre of the greeting card where any humor or obscenity is at all allowed; for Daughter — the Daughter is absolutely the most sentimentalized — I used Century Schoolbook. To give the steel the look of sentimentality I had it galvanized. When you galvanize steel — it is a special

process that is used to keep it from rusting — it turns a kind of gold. It also has a lot of other colors in it — pinks and greens, depending on the light. When I finally hit on that process I was so excited because in the material of the steel itself there was just that quality that corresponded to the sentimentality of the greeting cards. And, it is also quite seductive.

Woodward: I'd like to pursue the question of sentimentality — affect, really — a bit more. In the last ten years or so in both literary and film studies there has been a recuperation by feminists of the sentimental as a mode of feeling which contributes to cultural and political work. I'm thinking, for example, of work on nineteenth-century American literature (on Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*) or on the twentieth-century maternal melodrama in film. On the one hand, you set yourself in opposition to the sentimental and are suspicious of human interest stories, when some might argue that it is just such stories that might possibly mobilize us to do something about, for example, the Gulf War. On the other hand, you are very interested in affectivity, in the traces of emotion. But yesterday at the opening of *Gloria Patri* I heard someone say, "There's no emotion in this piece."

Kelly: You don't think there is any emotion in it?

Hastie: You might say that the whole project comes out of an affective response to the War — the affect of anger.

Kelly: Yes, it does seem to me a matter of what kind of emotion is at stake. In *Interim* the women's stories are so grounded in the sentimental that I needed a strategy of distancing from it — and yet they are so familiar that it is still easy to recognize that emotion. But with *Gloria Patri* what is at stake is a certain hostility, which some people might not read as emotional but which does, I would say, represent a very emotional response.

The shiny surfaces of the aluminum — and the lighting of the piece as well — are related to the kind of troubling emotion that I think the piece as a whole conveys. For me there is something kind of creepy about that polished aluminum — and also something attractive. I was reading Genet's *The Thief's Journal* and came across a description of how erotic the badge of the policeman was: he says, if I touched the badge, it would be like opening his fly. And it is like this, isn't it? You find yourself caught up in the shiny bits of the shield with the logos and memories of the trophies you didn't get and wanted to get. By displacing the desire to identify with the personal narratives, the shields are deprived of their authoritative role. Because of their materiality, because of the polished allure of

their finish, they are eroticized and once again become fetishized objects of power and desire — which is, perhaps, exactly the strategy of the masquerade, as I was discussing it earlier. For me, it is the eroticization of the insignia of masculinity which is troubling, even nauseating. Obviously I feel some ambivalence here, an ambivalence which is an emotional response to power: it is seductive, it is erotic, it makes you sick. In other words, it's not a seduction with which you are at ease.

Lane: I agree with your account of Genet; there is a tension in his writing between wanting to eroticize the object and thereby divest it of authority and power, and at the same time wanting to retain the power of the object and the possibility of eroticizing it. This reminds me of what you said earlier today about the core problem of sexuality in the military — whether the introduction of women in the military as well as the coming out of lesbians and gay men is creating a similar conflict between the prevailing assumption of homogeneity and the absence of desire, and the sudden shattering of that fantasy in the understanding that now there are men and women in the military who will find each other attractive and who will thus introduce an erotic dimension into it. The fantasy of the military is, of course, that the erotic is absent.

Joyrich: Or perhaps the presence of lesbians and gay men is simply making visible an erotic dimension that was in fact always there.

Lane: Yes, their presence embodies the *thought* of the erotic. Do you see this as substantially altering the symbolic meaning of the military? Or will these women, gay men, and lesbians simply get swept up in military policies that will erase their individuality?

Kelly: I think both things will happen. But what I am insisting is that in making the demand to participate fully and openly in the military (which makes total sense in terms of equality), women and gay men should not fail to examine what the effects will be. For instance, women, if they mimic men well enough, have been "allowed" to function in a "man's" world but those who don't fit in are still feminized or denigrated as the other term. There is still a hierarchy that is tainted with difference, and so nothing has really changed in fact. The powerful term in the binary is still associated with homogeneity and sameness; it is taken for granted and not defined. Everything else — however bizarre, however commonplace, however visible — can be denigrated as other. This is summed up in advertisements: "Women, minorities, and the disabled are encouraged to apply" — well, I mean, that's almost everyone! Yet I also think

that heterosexual women, gay men, and lesbians cannot be so neatly incorporated in the military, even though that may be their aim. I think their presence is disruptive and will never be able to be fully covered up.

Lane. In other words, their presence is a productive disruption. Similarly, the work of *Gloria Patri* disturbs the fantasies of a clean technology of war — one without pain, without violence, and ultimately, without bodies.

Castonguay. I think difference also needs to be addressed in terms of race, particularly so if we shift the perspective from the air to the ground, from the theoretical or image-body that we in the US could or couldn't see on TV to the real body of the Iraqi. Moreover the coordinates of racism, sexism, and the family were tied together in the rhetoric of the war in the service of the state. In his "Aggression Speech" George Bush said that Saddam Hussein raped and pillaged Kuwait, feminizing Kuwait as the nation we must save from the aggressor (it's like *Birth of a Nation* all over again). Hussein was treated like an adolescent who was running away, kicking and screaming, from the global family of nations. And of course in the US, television is all about the family. As a member of a television family, when you were watching your anchorman in Baghdad or your reporter who was wearing a gas mask on location somewhere in Iraq and the television technology kicked out, that was a powerful moment. CNN had an 800 number for people to call who were upset psychologically about "their" reporters being over there. Many of the personalized stories on TV during the War were about economic hardship to the family, implying that when the provider is taken away, there is economic disaster. But the larger inference was that the "greed of the Arabs" itself (and this was also cast in racist terms) posed an economic threat to the US family, and that that is why the US was in Iraq and Kuwait.

Kelly. This is, I think, an excellent point on which to end. This is what, in fact, I'm thinking about now. It's exactly what is absent in *Gloria Patri* — the other side, the vilification and dehumanization of the other that functions in the time of war and the question this raises concerning the psychic processes of feminization and abjection that may support the desire to sanction such a transgressive social contract. I'm still haunted by the anamorphic image on the TV screen, by a certain hysterical blindness induced in the spectator and, as always, still fascinated by the liminal points of vision. I don't want the work to be either an expose or a memorial. I'm not sure how to avoid this, but I'm working on it.

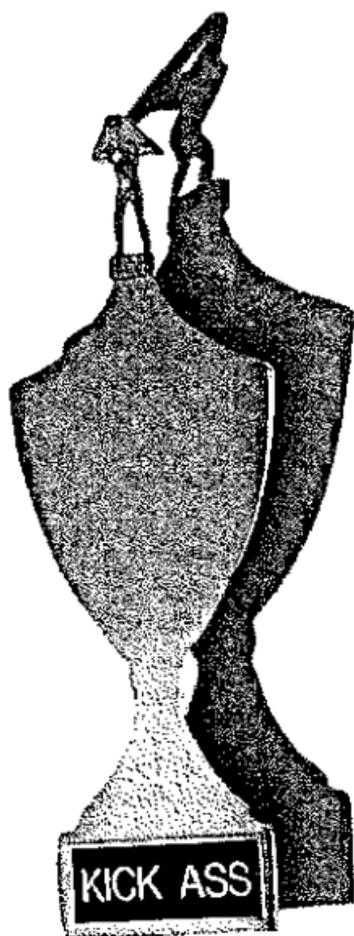


Figure 6. Mary Kelly. *Gloria Patri*, 1992. Detail: Trophy. Photo: Ray Barrie.