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Nancy Spero: Pain and Politics, 1966-1976.

The ten-year period that started with Nancy Spero's *War Series* (1966-70) and ended with the completion of *Torture of Women* (1974-6) were of vital importance to the development of this key figure of feminist art. This was the moment when Spero turned her focus to politics, departing from a practice that was concerned with personal disaffection, instead focusing on profoundly social concerns. Essential to this evolution is a focus on pain. From the *War Series* through the *Artaud Paintings* (1970-71), *Codex Artaud* (1971-2), and *Torture of Women*, pain, both internal and external, was imagined in multiple forms. In Spero's explorations of the theme, pain becomes metaphoric of the experience of women living under patriarchy, an amorphous but still profoundly disabling sensation that attacks both body and mind. This thesis explores Spero's use of physical pain during moment of feminist art's emergence, seeing it as a political metaphor for the way in which patriarchy invisibly controls and undermines women. Framed broadly by the question of art's relationship with politics during this turbulent period of anti-war and feminist activism, this thesis closely examines the way in which an analogy to pain figures the body in the work in complex terms, pursuing an ideological ambition through recourse to feeling.