



# The "New Woman" Revised: Painting and Gender Politics on Fourteenth Street

*Ellen Wiley Todd*

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In the years between the world wars, Manhattan's Fourteenth Street-Union Square district became a center for commercial, cultural, and political activities, and hence a sensitive barometer of the dramatic social changes of the period. It was here that four urban realist painters—Kenneth Hayes Miller, Reginald Marsh, Raphael Soyer, and Isabel Bishop—placed their images of modern "new women." Bargain stores, cheap movie theaters, pinball arcades, and radical political organizations were the backdrop for the women shoppers, office and store workers, and consumers of mass culture portrayed by these artists. Ellen Wiley Todd deftly interprets the painters' complex images as they were refracted through the gender ideology of the period.

This is a work of skillful interdisciplinary scholarship, combining recent insights from feminist art history, gender studies, and social and cultural theory. Drawing on a range of visual and verbal representations as well as biographical and critical texts, Todd balances the historical context surrounding the painters with nuanced analyses of how each artist's image of womanhood contributed to the continual redefining of the "new woman's" relationships to men, family, work, feminism, and sexuality.



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