

ARTWORKS AT QUESTION:

**REFLECTING ON GENDER, POWER AND
EMPOWERMENT THROUGH ART.
AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**



Exploring Gender and
Power through/in Art

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Reflecting On Gender, Power and Empowerment Through Art. An Educational Tool for Young People

These educational material has been made by POWER project (POWER – WHO NEEDS EMPOWERMENT? EXPLORING GENDER AND POWER THROUGH/IN ART, 2020-2-FR02-KA205-017944) through a collaborative action and it has been coordinated by EARTDI, UCM, Spain.

Each of the partners (CoW, DADAU, EARTDI, Elan Interculturel and MOH) made a 9 hours workshop with young people using Artworks inviting participants to raise questions related to gender, power and empowerment. We would like to thank all the young participants who contributed to the different workshops that took place in Paris, Ljubljana, Bari and Madrid. Without them this material would not exist.

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- ELAN: Morgane Boidin, Anna Balsamo, Lola Clarini
- MOH: Isabella Mileti, Eleonora Schulze-Battmann

The content of the visual narratives (relatograms) in the book is the result of a cooperative action among participants during the Art workshops. Ana Cebrián (EARTDI, UCM) made a visual interpretation from all this rich material.

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Introduction

On gender, power and patriarchy

Patriarchy is a social system that codifies relationships in relation to gender and power distribution. It transforms “men” into people with a fragile identity that must be continually reasserted through an armour associated with violence, strength, competitiveness, unlimited sexual potency, or dangerous game of law and rule-breaking. This continuous demand leads them to flirt with danger and aggression, coupled with self-assertion through the denial and subjugation of others, be they women or other groups they identify as rivals or objects of use. Similarly, women grow up attached to what a “woman” should and should not be. Physical appearance, acceptance by the partner, impossible union of seduction and modesty, sexual availability but responsibility in the face of external aggression, obligatory motherhood in order to be a “complete woman”, immolation for the partner and children, continuous and unpaid responsibility of family burdens and care, dependence..., all this associated with a devalued social image of what is considered “feminine”: private vs. public, irrationality vs. rationality, minority of age, systematic elimination in history of all feminine traces related to culture, science, economics, politics or education, association of women as a body/sexual object for male consumption, lower incomes and social respect, unequal and unfair economic distribution, lack of dignified social representation and a general lack of recognition beyond the family.

This guide is structured around artistic images, chosen by young people during several workshops, all of which can raise debates about how masculinity and femininity are constructed, how binary gender mandates can plague the mind and identity construction of women and men and generate emotional tension, and provoke emotional pain. Above all, this guide wants to offer tools so that young people can build themselves in freedom and respect for others, developing a critical, diverse and multicultural thinking.

How to use this guide

This book of artworks and questions you have in your hands is a collection of classical and contemporary artworks with questions to trigger debate and identify main gender and power issues. It also contains tips and guidelines to create a space of trust and confidence where young people can question artworks from a gender perspective and also open debates on gender, power relationships and empowerment related to gender tensions in society.

This book is addressed to facilitators, art mediators, social workers and social educators working with youngsters, but not essentially. It can be used by anyone who wants to trigger debate and arise questions related to gender and power relationships. Images and artwork in general have the possibility to open new perspectives and, as mirrors, make us wonder what we see and what others see when looking at it. Questions such as 'Who has the power to look?' 'Who looks and who is looked at?' 'Who is the object of contemplation?' will be part of this book and it will lead us to rethink not only the canon of Art History and museums but also our own gaze and the images we unconsciously produce.

The guide is designed so that the images we present can be used to provoke debate. In each image the reader will find basic information on place, time and authorship, accompanied by a narrative for the facilitator that can help to guide some discussion. Each work then poses questions that may challenge the work or, through them, prompt dialogue and reflection.

This selection has been made by young people from different parts of Europe in a participatory way, so that it has been the young people who have found these images to be the enablers of debate, deconstruction and analysis. We are aware of the Eurocentric perspective it may have and we invite readers to expand the selection with works from other origins that will undoubtedly enrich our selection by making it more diverse and inclusive.

NOTE: The workshop was designed for both youngsters, men and women, so that gender could be thought of in feminine but also in masculine terms, trying to deconstruct both. But, as most of the people in the workshops were women, most of the questions and reflections have been related to the deconstruction of the concept of gender from the point of view of women, specifically centered in deconstruction of the female gender. Similarly, both power and empowerment issues have revolved around the tensions and power dynamics that have prevented women from achieving social, economic and political equality, as well as mechanisms of empowerment.

We know that patriarchy limits all beings, male and female, binary and non-binary. It is necessary to deconstruct masculinity associated with individuality, violence and competitiveness and to reclaim the capacity for care and horizontal relationships.

This educational tool has been developed by the five members of the POWER strategic partnership project: DADAU De l'art et D'autre (France), MOH (Italy), COW, City of Women (Slovenia), Elan Interculturel (France), EARTDI, Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Spain). It has been coordinated by EARTDI, Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Spain).

Objectives

1. Offer young people creative and appealing ways to understand the concepts related to gender.
2. Raise awareness about how gender is connected to power: how people today still live discrimination and oppression because of their gender identity.
3. Empower young people to develop their gender identity in safe and creative ways, to face challenges and oppressions related to their gender identity.
4. Develop understanding, empathy and solidarity towards others with different types of gender identities and sexual orientations to step up against oppressions that others suffer. Gain tools to communicate about gender-related inequalities and challenges.
5. Offer youth workers and youth leaders comprehensive tools to address issues of gender and power with young people in safe and appealing ways.

Methodology

We've designed this booklet by using a threefold art-based, non-formal, participatory method. Artworks are polyvalent and equivocal, allow for multiple meanings and approaches to emerge, and thus can help to visualize messages and tackle problems with detachment. The non-formal and participatory approach emphasises experience and active participation of young people in order to imprint new seeking alternative solutions for gender-related conflicts and discrimination.

The intervention methodology will be based on active listening, giving value to the participation of young people, to what they see and do not see in the images, how they relate it to gender, power and empowerment, seeking a visual and artistic response that tries to propose new images and narratives made by young people.

First step: creating a safe space with introductory games

As part of the intervention methodology, we recommend creating a safe space through introductory games and body awareness. We also propose World Café Dynamic as a good tool to stimulate participation.

Some tips to create a safe space

- Start the workshop with a theatrical play circle of trust. The group can feel relaxed through movement. Everyone's opinion should be respected and their stories will stay in the place of the workshop.
- Start working with introductory body dynamics, making aware of and relaxing the body, which can make the group feel closer. After that, give some time to have a look at the images and let spontaneous comments rise up so that the conversation becomes fluent. Then, the facilitator can explain the methodology. Conversation, listening, respect and empathy, trying to be open to others' proposals and always making an agreement about the decision are important items to have in mind. Everybody is equal.
- It is also possible to draw up a safety charter before the workshop. And of course ask the participants if they want to add anything to the charter. Here are some examples of rules to follow:
 - Speech: watch the flow / don't cut it off.
 - Confidentiality: the first rule of the club is: you do not talk about the club.
 - Allow yourself to ask questions, make "mistakes", be aware of them.
 - Talk about your own experience.
 - Active listening, without judging the other person's feelings or your own.
 - Do not reverse the guilt if you say something offensive.
 - Remain benevolent in the face of awkward comments.
 - We have biases, if we feel that we are carrying stereotypes, warn the group.

Introductory games

It is important to start a workshop or laboratory with introductory games, small presentations or warming-up activities that allow participants to relax, feel comfortable and confident. Start with some presentations and warming-up activities. Some examples:

- In a circle, each member of the group presents themselves with a movement/corporal position.

- Each member of the group says their name and decides how it will be repeated by the other members of the group: shouted, sung or whispered.

- Another way can be to start the workshop with a theatrical play circle of trust. The group can be relaxed through movement, asking for simple relaxing exercises and breathing activities in order to calm down for the workshop.

- Body awareness through free stretching in a circle with and without sound can be another option. Free movements around the room changing direction and speed can be a good exercise, stop and make visual contact with the people who are near or far from us in an alternative way. We can keep moving and stop, close our eyes and take three deep breaths, and each person in turn opens their eyes and stands around the nearest table and then the workshop starts.

- Three tables with artistic images can be already set up in the classroom to work on the concepts of Gender, Power and Empowerment. In this random way, the groups sitting at each table have been formed to work. Groups of 2-3 people choose one of the images to represent it with their bodies and the rest of the participants have to discover which image it is. This dynamic can be the preliminary step for the immersion in the workshop. The presentation of the 12 starting images of the workshop can be done in an interactive and playful way with the participants.

World Café Dynamic (*)

The World Café conversation is an intentional way of creating a living network of conversation around issues that matter. It is a creative process that leads to a collaborative dialogue, where knowledge is shared and possibilities for action are created.

The World Café methodology is a process of human, warm and meaningful conversation that allows a group of people to discuss powerful questions, to generate ideas, agreements and creative and innovative paths of action, in a welcoming and friendly environment, similar to that of a coffee shop.

The World Café is developed through conversations at tables of four to six people, who simultaneously analyse a topic or question for a certain amount of time. At the end of each question, the participants change tables and continue the discussion with other participants and so on until all the proposed topics have been addressed.

So, after a brief explanation of the dynamic. (What are we going to do?), the facilitators can organize the participants in three groups of five people and assign each group one of the three concepts to explore (power, gender and empowerment). Previously the facilitators have put 10 printed images of artworks accompanied by a description (the same in each table). The idea is:

a) At each table, trigger debate around the Artworks and concepts, following the questions to raise debate:

- What do the pictures suggest to you?
- What image/question do you connect the picture with?
- Discussion about the topic (10 minutes)

Rotation: one person stays at the table; the others will move to another table.
Repeat the dynamic two more times.

b) Reflection time

-Summary of the main ideas. If you have time you can represent the main ideas that emerged from the workshop on a collective visual diagram using Jamboard for online workshops or a big paper at in-person workshops. (optional)

(*)This methodology was developed by two Mexican consultants: Juanita Brown and David Isaacs and has been used since 2005 in the most varied settings, with different age groups, with different cultures, for different purposes in different parts of the world. World Café has been used by hundreds of groups, including large corporations, NGOs, public entities, community and educational organisations around the world (De la Mata, 2012. Metodologías para la innovación social: el World Café Por Guadalupe de la Mata. 8 febrero 2012. <https://innovationforsocialchange.org/metodologias-para-la-innovacion-social-el-world-cafe/>)

Closing the workshop

We should never close a workshop abruptly because time is running out. Never should we leave participants with words unsaid if they have become emotionally overwhelmed or in a moment of shared intimacy. Workshops should be brought to a close gently, allowing participants to give feedback to the group and the facilitators, and connect again with “exterior” and daily life. We can use, for example, the following exercises:

-Close the workshop with the “circle of feelings”. All the participants throw in the circle all the bad words that stayed with them for the whole life. And try to lose the bad feelings in a symbolic way.

-After the full round of the three tables, one volunteer from each group can stand up and expose the way the group have been choosing the images and making the questions.

-We can also end the workshop with the presentations of the panel discussions, and give enough space and time for exchanges and comments.

ARTWORKS at question

The selection of Artworks presented in this book has been the result of collaborative work with groups of 15-20 young people, from 18 to 30 years old, from Madrid, Paris, Bari and Ljubljana. In total, around 100 young people chose these images, which could raise aspects related to gender, how it is constructed - or deconstructed - and what it means.

During three workshops of nine hours in total, the young people reflected in groups on how the concept of gender had changed in relation to sex, on the binary and non-binary, on gender mandates and learned roles and, above all, on the discomfort this caused them and prevented them from being truly free. The images they chose helped them to reflect on how the gaze is constructed towards the masculine and the feminine, how we can learn to deconstruct it and how we can also construct liberating and empowering images. As could not be otherwise, and within the polysemy of images, some of them serve for different concepts, such as “Black Woman at the Opera” by Mary Cassat -selected in the three categories- or “Woman Enraged” by Pieter Huys. In order not to repeat images, we have added questions to some pieces that may refer to gender, power and empowerment at the same time. We hope they will be of interest to you and serve as triggers for participatory reflection in further workshops.

The guide presents a common structure with:

1. The image.
2. General information about the Artwork.
3. A narrative that can be used in the dynamic, or after it, but which may provide useful elements for thought or broaden the debate.
4. Questions that can open up the debate among the young people based on the work of art and provoke different points of view, discussion and reflections.

ARTWORKS TO TRIGGER DEBATE ON GENDER ROLES







Image Information

ATitle: Le sorcier d'Hiva-Oa (The sorcerer of Hiva-Oa)

Author: Paul Gauguin (1848-1903)

Date: 1902

Museum: Modern and Contemporary Art Museum of Liège



Image narrative

This work is a mix of different motifs symbolising predation and extinction: On the right, peaceful nature - wild and ideal - with a dog that has captured a bird - a species that is now extinct.

In the centre, the sorcerer has an enigmatic look, with androgynous features accentuated by long hair and flowers. It is Happuani, a renowned sorcerer on the island of Hiva Oa in the Marquesas, and identified as a “Māhū”: a person of the third gender, they have been born a boy and take on a female role in the community as well as a very important spiritual role. In 1902 the “Māhū” were threatened by the colonisation of the Catholic clergy who demonised them and wanted to erase their spiritual and cultural functions.

On the left, two women with veiled heads look at the sorcerer and seem frightened but also fascinated by the sorcerer.

Paul Gauguin can be considered an artist in search of “exotic” territories -that can be linked to colonialism- and a precursor of the Primitivist movement: some Western artists reject the Realism in vogue, which represents the industrialisation of society, and prefer to draw inspiration from the cultural productions of colonised countries. They emphasised the so-called “simplicity” of forms, the contrasts of bright colours, judged as more “instinctive” or “authentic”. The racist themes of the “good savage” are often treated. Gauguin depicts the traditional Marquesan society that is being destroyed by Western colonisation.



Questions for debate

- Why can't we stop gendering the people we look at? Is it that disturbing not to do it?
- How can we make visible the diversity of gender identities and sexual orientations that exist (or have existed) in the world without going through domination and/or exoticization?
- How has the Western view on non-white societies shaped the current norms and identity expression of non-white people?





Image Information

Title: Saint Sébastien

Author: Le Pérugin (1448-1523)

Date: 1495

Museum: Musée du Louvre, Paris



Image narrative

It is a religious scene, the martyrdom of Saint Sebastian. The inscription in Latin means: “The arrows have fallen into me”. During the persecution of the Christians by the Roman Empire, the protagonist is denounced and thus condemned to be tied to a post on the March field before being pierced with arrows. Here the body is naked, muscular and relaxed. The hips are noticeable. A light veil hides his sex and suggests it at the same time. The gentle gaze is directed towards Heaven as a prayer to God. Common representations of St Sebastian show the pain of his martyrdom in the guise of a mature, bearded and flayed man. Here, however, he appears calm and the body is delicate, adolescent and almost untouched by the arrows. One would perceive an expression of pleasure in the pain. Perugino is known for his religious paintings. In the painter’s time, it was believed that the plague and other diseases were spread through the air at the speed of arrows (carriers of these various diseases). Saint Sebastian is one of the fourteen auxiliary saints, i.e. the ones who provide help. The martyr is the protector against the plague. Here he is a kind of shield that protects the people, pierced by arrows.

From the 19th to the 20th century, Saint Sebastian became a gay icon in literature (Oscar Wilde or Walter Pater, for example) but also in photography, notably with Frederick Holland Day. By extension, in the 1980s, he was seen as the intercessor against the AIDS epidemic, particularly within the homosexual community. St. Sebastian can be seen as a gay icon because he had to conceal something important for him, his faith, but metaphorically he has been seen as someone who had to conceal his homosexuality.



Questions for debate

- What is this person’s gender?
- How do physical attributes determine gender in our mindsets?
- How can a religious icon turn into a gay icon?
- How can you deal with your faith and sexual orientation when your religion is homophobic?
- Other people’s gaze assigns an identity to us. How is it possible to overcome such a gaze and the identity it provides us with?



Image 3



Image Information

Title: Milk, Expiration Date 3 Days

Author: Adrijana Maraž

Date: 1971

Location: Art Gallery Artes, Nova Gorica



Image narrative

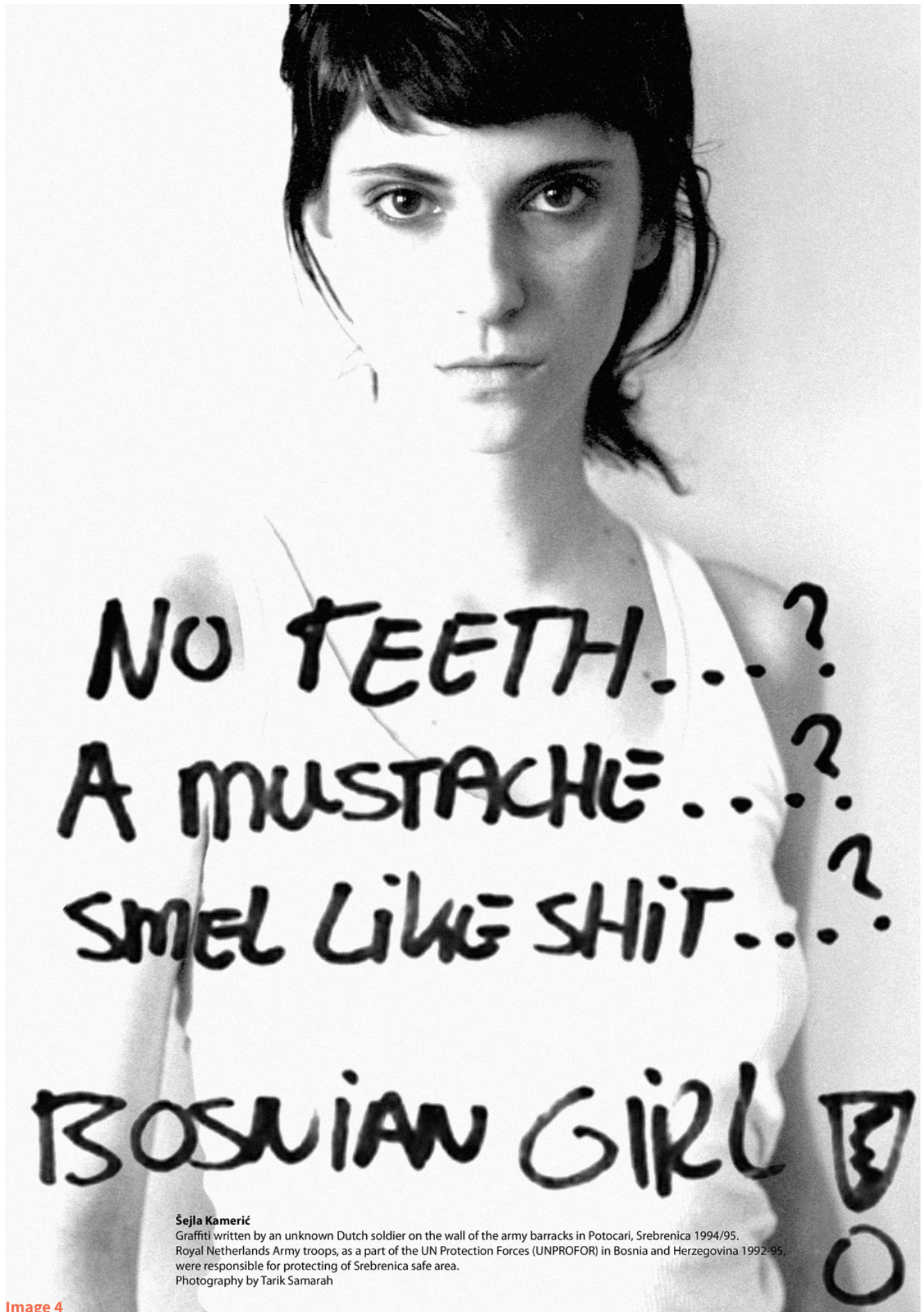
ICONOGRAPHY: Adrijana Maraž (1931–2015) was a member of the Ljubljana School of Graphic Art and wife to the acclaimed Yugoslavian artist at the time when graphic art was in full bloom due to curator Zoran Kržišnik's contributions. Within this group, Maraž very subtly presented the world of women's perception of the world. Although throughout her life, she remained in the shadow of her very astute husband (similarly to Lee Krasner, who was in Pollock's shadow, Camille Claudel in Rodin's, Frida Khalo in Diego Rivera's, etc.), her work is still interesting today due to the concealed symbolics unveiling the feelings of a woman in a patriarchal society. She represents women's bodies as furniture elements, bags of meat or milk with a short expiration date.

We often perceive our body as worth only as much as it is attractive to others, as others see it, as they respond to it. A feeling of one's own inferiority is often connected precisely with the perception of one's own body. Body control is one of the most frequent and effective practices of the control systems, whether they be national, religious or less formal groups. Women are often victims of such body control, e. g. foot binding in China, mutilations in Africa, hair (or face) covering in Christian and Muslim culture, enforcing an ideal of a slim body to consumers, control of body hair, etc. Maraž expresses the feeling of captivity by depicting the body as a useful object.



Questions for debate

- Besides reproduction, what is the social function of women?
- How can the end of a woman's fertility period be considered as her own "expiration date"?
- How can an old woman be regarded as "expired"?
- Does a woman necessarily have to be a mother in order to count as a "real woman"? What if she cannot or won't bear children?
- As far as the weight of cemented roles of women – especially maternity – goes, are they really impossible to change in society?
- To what extent are we determined by our sex.



Šejla Kamerić

Graffiti written by an unknown Dutch soldier on the wall of the army barracks in Potocari, Srebrenica 1994/95.
Royal Netherlands Army troops, as a part of the UN Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992-95,
were responsible for protecting of Srebrenica safe area.
Photography by Tarik Samarah



Image Information

Title: Bosnian Girl
Author: Šejla Kamerić
Date: 2003
Museum: MSUM, Ljubljana



Image narrative

ICONOGRAPHY: In 2003, Šejla Kamerić began her wider public action of distributing postcards, setting up poster adds and jumbo posters exposing discriminatory content. She took an image of a young woman staring directly into the audience and covered it with graffiti by an anonymous Dutch soldier from 1994/5, a member of the UNPROFOR, with a task to uphold safety in the Srebrenica area. The image marked by offensive words expresses the multi-layered identity when a war (rape, genocide) victim is even further branded by prejudice of those who are supposed to protect her. The artist herself survived the Yugoslavian war in Bosnia, which began when she was sixteen. Her work is very much influenced by anti-war content. One of the copies of Bosnian Girl is on permanent display also in the Memorial Centre Potočari in Srebrenica, Bosnia.

We live in a period when populist exclusive movements and numerous prejudices towards other cultures are on the rise. They have even worsened during the refugee crisis caused by numerous war conflicts. The victims of prejudice are frequently the most vulnerable persons, namely women, children, disabled persons, etc. A horrific example of ballyragging women (mass raping and killings) with a view to humiliate an entire nation took place precisely during the war in Bosnia. It is unacceptable for war victims to be forced to experience additional discrimination in the field where they are meant to find refuge and safety.



Questions for debate

- How does the contrast between the written ugly words and a beautiful woman make us feel?
- How do the relations of power change during wartime?
- What is the fate of the migrant women who decide to attempt the journey to the European Union in spite of all dangers?
- How is a woman who is a victim of violence and abuse supposed to live a normal life?
- What could the state have done to stop the terrors experienced by the people?





Image Information

Title: The Regents of the Spinhuis and Nieuwe Werkhuis.

Author: Karel Dujardin .

Year: 1669.

Location: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Image narrative

Group portrait of the regents of the Spinhuis and the Nieuwe Werkhuis in Amsterdam, 1669. A servant bringing a letter temporarily interrupts a meeting. The other six men are the regents of the female house of correction. They can be seen seated and standing around a table in front of a wall with reliefs of allegorical female figures. The women imprisoned there for theft, prostitution or begging spent most of the day spinning. Well-to-do citizens like these gentlemen administered such institutions. Thus civic peace was maintained.

There are only two female characters in the painting despite the fact that it is an institution for women. There is no female regent. There is a work by another author, Jan de Baen, from 1664, with the same theme, which depicts seven regents: five men and two women. Power is exercised by men, who wear black, the colour linked usually to authority. One of them looks defiantly at the viewer. The women are in the background, symbolising servitude and subordination.



Questions for debate

- Where are the women depicted in this painting?
- The women sculpted behind are partly naked and the men portrayed are clothed. Try to imagine the other way around. Does it shock you? What would you think? Are we used to seeing naked men? Think about how the gaze has been educated in gender terms.
- Who perpetuates gender roles? How?
- Since when and until when?

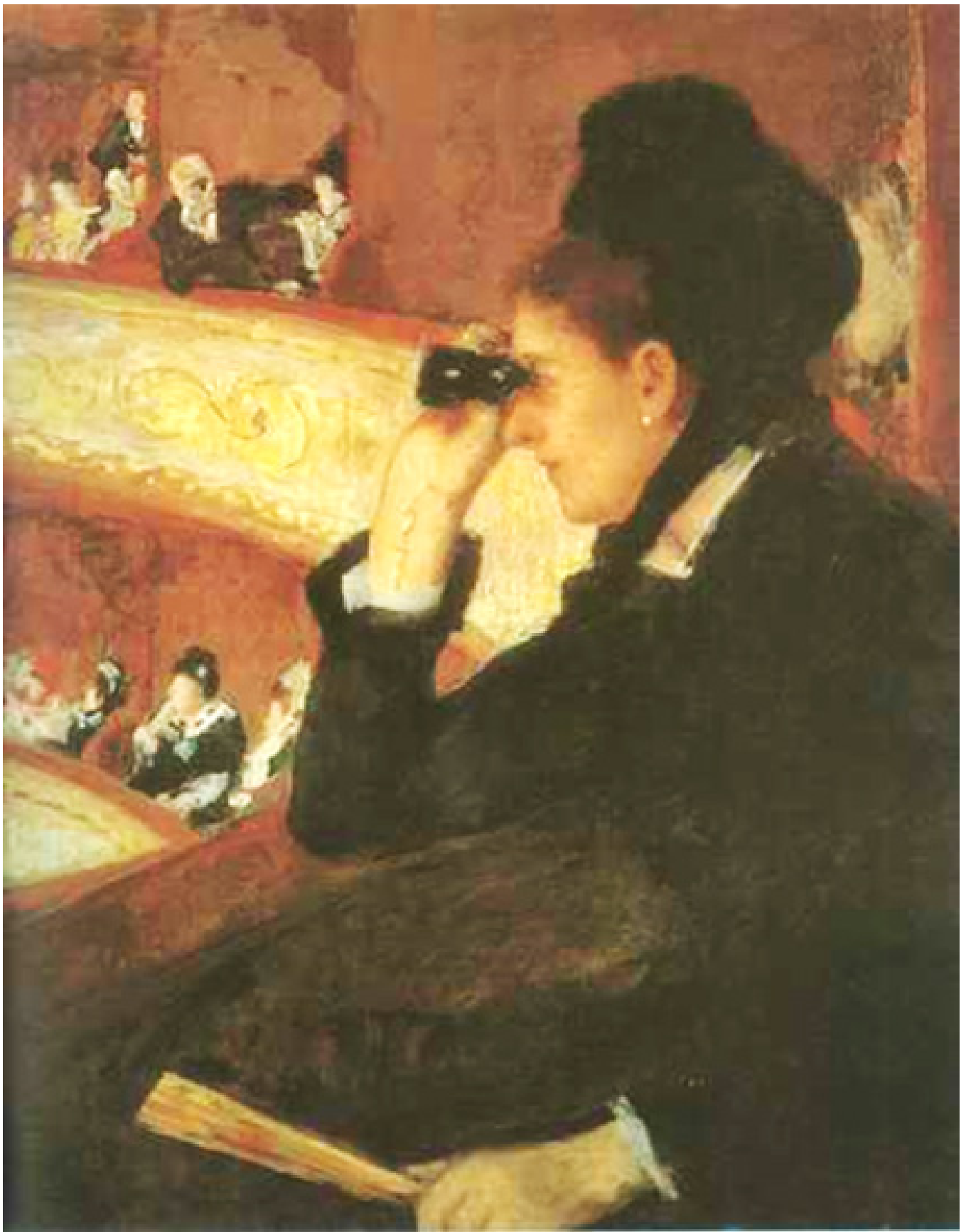


Image 6
20



Image Information

Title: Woman in Black at the Opera

Author: Mary Cassatt.

Year: 1878

Location: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Image narrative

Gaze is a very important medium in Paintings and Art history. Gaze, seeing in general, has always belonged to male property, meanwhile women were supposed “to be seen” (see John Berger, *Ways of seeing*). Here we can see these two gazes, that of the woman who sees the opera, and one of the man who sees the woman. See also Susan Sontag “on photography”, where she reflects on seeing and photographing as a way to own reality.

Women could go to the opera, although generally, they did not go unescorted. Part of the opera experience was being part of the display--women were as much (or even more) the object of male attention as the opera was. Cassatt’s paintings of women and young girls at the opera present a challenge to the passive role of women, to the tendency to depict them as part of the spectacle for the purposes of male observation. This is perhaps easier to see in *Woman in Black at the Opera*. Responding to a painting by another artist, Cassatt’s subject is austere dressed, in black, unaccompanied, and clearly the spectator as she holds the opera glasses to her eyes--note also the symbolism of the closed fan in her left hand (a fan was a female “instrument,” used as a type of feminine language--more refined than actually speaking). We note a vaguely delineated man in the side who is staring at the woman, even though she does not appear to be dressed in order to attract attention to herself (black was also the colour of mourning). In fact, she looks enough like the woman reading *Le Figaro* to be thought to be a portrait of the artist. What more appropriate way to represent an artist than to show herself peering intently through opera glasses at a work of art in front of her? (Source: <https://www.radford.edu/rbarris/Women%20and%20art/amerwom05/marycassatt.html>)

Cassatt, a New Woman herself, made groundbreaking paintings of women who in certain aspects were also “New Women,” even if they did not fit the stereotype. This becomes evident through an in-depth analysis of Cassatt’s *Reading Le Figaro* (1878), which portrays an autonomous older woman reading the newspaper. The painting gives no indication of the woman’s maternal role. Instead, it emphasizes characteristics which become remarkable when compared with conventional representations of women at the time—namely her engagement in reading as an intellectual pursuit, and specifically reading a newspaper, an activity considered at the time primarily the province of men. Cassatt’s painting of the bespectacled Mrs. Cassatt reading the newspaper resonated with contemporary discourses advocating for women’s rights to knowledge, education, and developing their intellectual abilities (Source: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327684040_Cassatt's_Singular_Women_Reading_Le_Figaro_and_the_Older_New_Woman)



Questions for debate

- Is she aware of the fact that she is being watched?
- How do women feel when they are being watched?
- How do we feel if someone is monitoring us? Do we ever monitor others? If so, why?
- What is more important, to look or to be looked at?
- Did women also watch others, and if so, who?
- How does gender influence the gaze (who watches and who is being watched)?
- What is the role of women in culture?
- The image depicts a woman in a position of power. Why is that, if women were the ones being watched? Does this situation continue even today?
- How do social class and gender relate to each other?
- How does the artist influence the representation of gender?





Image Information

Title: The rape of Europe.

Author: Tiziano.

Year: 1560-1562.

Location: Museum Isabella Stewart Gardner, Boston.



Image narrative

Titian's Rape of Europa, painted in Venice in the 1560s, is inspired by a story from Ovid's Metamorphoses. Infatuated with Europa, Jupiter—king of the gods—transforms himself into a beautiful white bull and joins a herd grazing near the seashore. Europa, close by with her companions, approaches the beautiful creature with hand outstretched. Finding him tame, she plays with the bull in a meadow and entwines flowers around his horns. When she climbs playfully on his back, the mischievous god seizes the opportunity and springs into the sea, spiriting away the target of his affections while she clings to him in terror.

Jupiter races across the ocean and Europa holds on by one horn. Gazing back over her shoulder toward the shoreline, she waves a red silk veil to attract attention. Europa's companions respond with their own frantic signals (note the herd of cows still grazing to their left). Titian dramatizes her immediate danger of drowning by positioning in the foreground a menacing, scaly sea monster bristling with spines. Nearby a cupid chases after Europa on a dolphin. His pose mimics hers, perhaps poking fun at her plight.

(Source: the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. Downloaded from: <https://www.gardner-museum.org/experience/collection/10978>)



Questions for debate

- The representation of abductions in the history of art is very common. So common that most people don't realise that it is a violent act against a woman or women. Why don't we realise it?
- Does the artist focus on the women, on the rapists or on the act itself?
- Could you imagine it the other way around (men raped by women)?
- Does aesthetics legitimize unethical behaviour? Do you think that if an unethical situation is depicted in an esthetic way it can be better integrated in society? Can you relate more examples?
- Is it legitimate to focus only on aesthetic issues or should we also reflect on what a beautiful image represents?
- How could we talk about thi kind of images to teenagers?

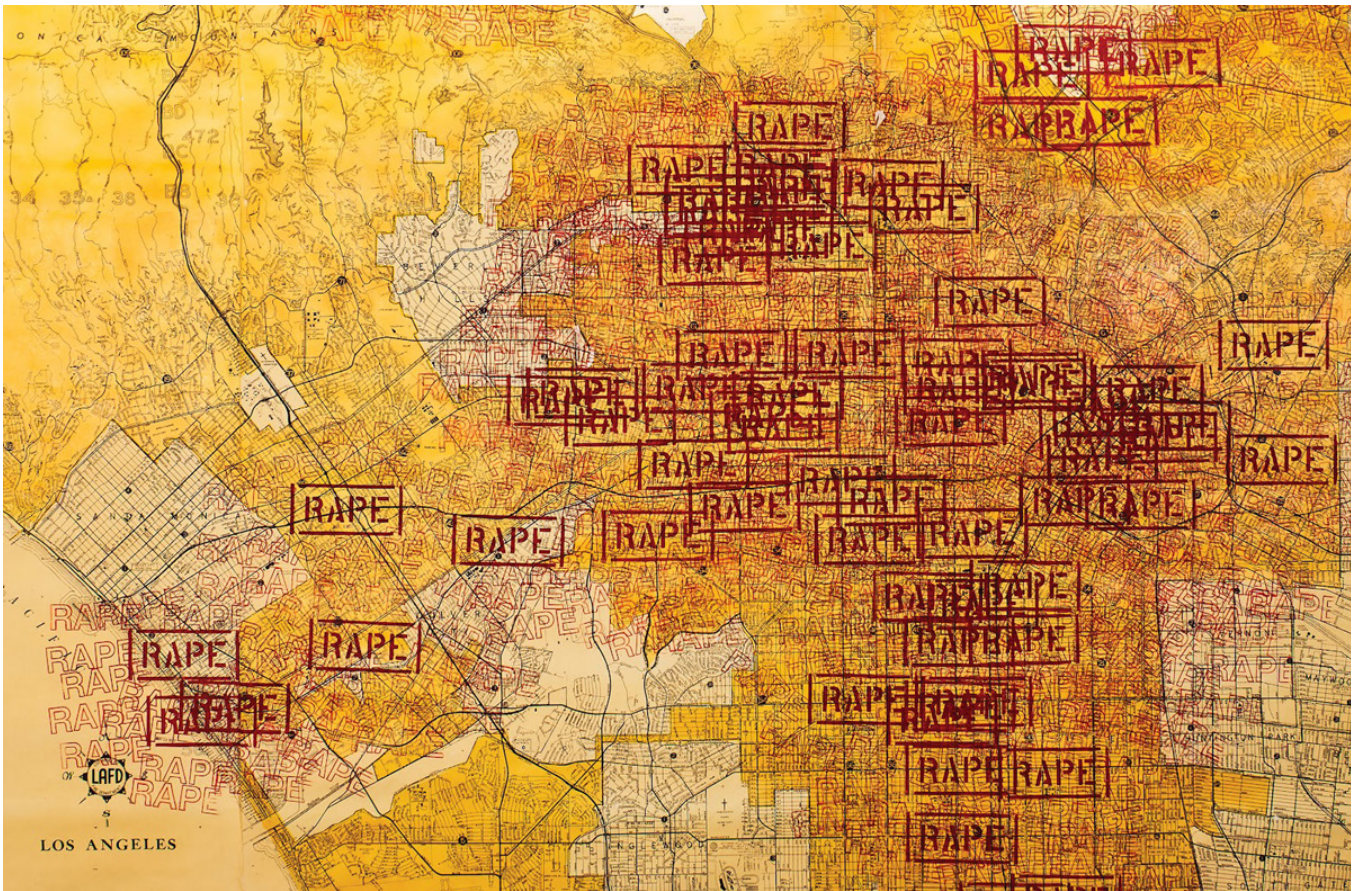




Image Information

Title: Three Weeks in May

Author: Suzanne Lacy

Date: 1977

Museum: Hammer Museum, Los Angeles



Image narrative

In 1977's *Three Weeks in May*, Lacy stenciled RAPE in red on a map of reported rapes in Los Angeles — heavy red print for those officially reported and fainter red stamps for the estimated nine other rapes which, according to statistics, go unreported for every one that is. By the end of three weeks, Lacy's golden map was covered in a red web of RAPE. In January 2012, she created a new version. Both are profoundly disturbing, but aesthetically appealing. "I care about the look of these things more than anybody would realize; I believe in that level of attention to detail," she told the *Los Angeles Times* in 2012. "It's not a strategy — more recognizing that people are moved by visually powerful phenomena."



Questions for debate

- Even though we read and hear about rapes, the image gives us the high proportion in a city. Do you think that activism helps to make certain facts visible?
- This work is part of a performance in the seventies. Which one do you think is still necessary?
- Why are people accustomed to rapes? Should we talk about this as "normality"?
- Is it legitimate to focus only on aesthetic issues or should we also reflect on what a beautiful image represents?
- Does aesthetics legitimize unethical behaviour?
- What if we substitute the rape stamps with the women's' photos?
- What if the representation were about men's rapes?





Image Information

Title: Susana and the elders

Author: Artemisia Gentileschi

Date: 1610

Museum: Schloss Weißenstein, Pommersfelden, Bavaria.



Image narrative

The painting is a representation of a biblical narrative featured in chapter 13 of the Book of Daniel according to the text as maintained by the Catholic and Orthodox churches, though not generally by Protestants.

Two elderly men are shown spying on a young married woman named Susana. Susana had gone out to the garden one day for a bath when her housekeeper let the two elders in. The elders spied on Susanna and then demanded sexual favours from her, which she refused. The men threatened to ruin her reputation, but Susanna held fast. The two elders then falsely accused Susanna of adultery - a crime which was punishable by death. It is only when a young Hebrew wise man named Daniel questioned them separately that he observed that the details in the two elders' stories did not match up. Their conflicting stories revealed the falsehood of their testimony, thus clearing Susanna's name.



Questions for debate

- Which of the characters in the artwork do you identify with (the woman or the men)? Try to compare with other versions of Susana and the elders (made by Alessandro Allori, for example). Do you identify yourself with the same character?
- Does our view change when we know the gender of the artist?
- Do you think that the gender of the artist influences her understanding of a sexual assault?
- Can a female artist represent a woman with a neutral gaze? Can a male artist do the same with men and women? What does "neutral" mean for you? How does the male/female experience influence the way of seeing and representing reality? And nudity?
- Are we used to female nudity in Art linked to objects of observation? What about male nudity?
- Do you know the terms "nude" and "naked"? Can you explain the difference? Is it linked to sexuality?
- Clothing and nudity/nakedness: are they seen as extenuating circumstances for the aggressors?

ARTWORKS RELATED TO POWER

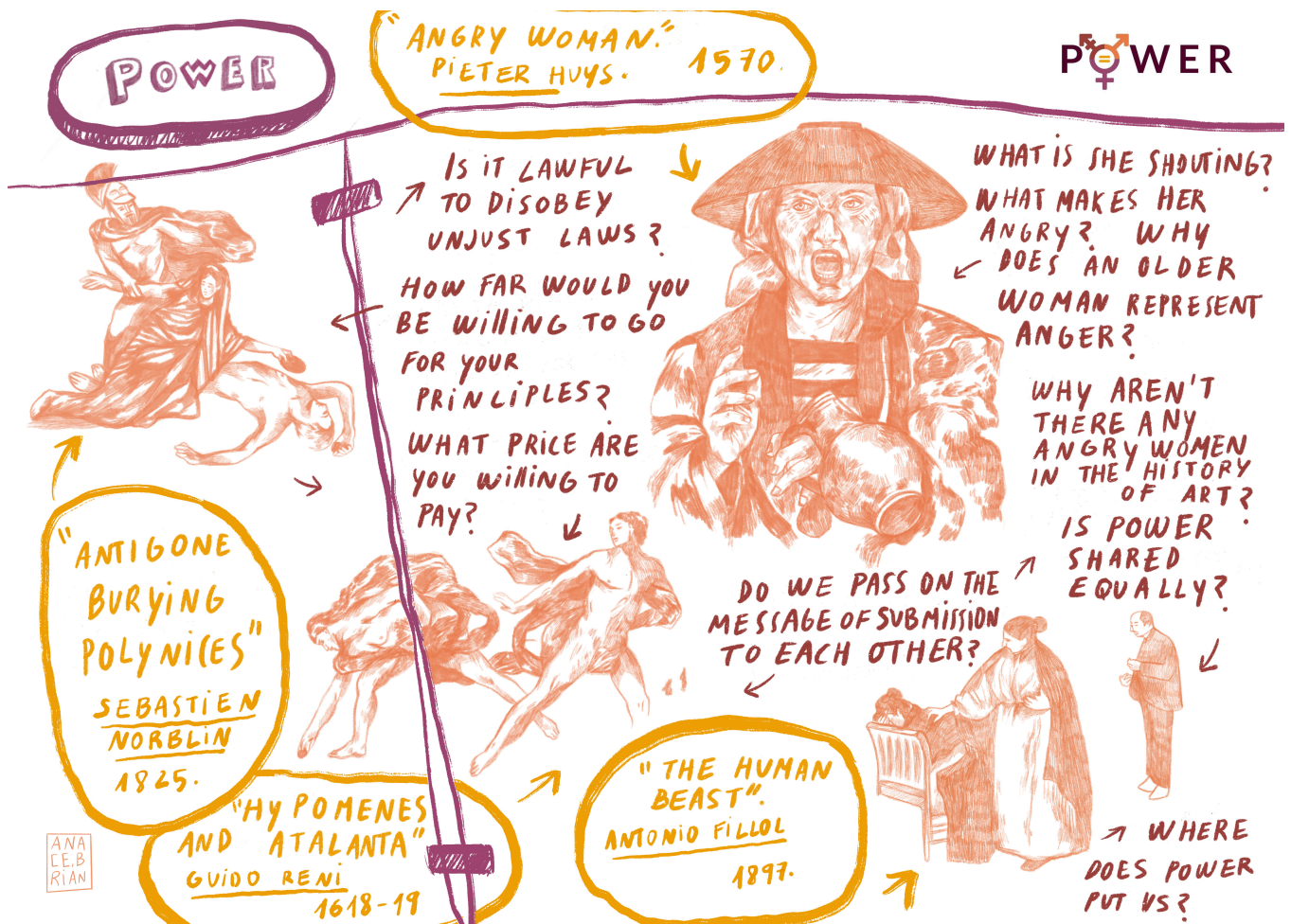






Image Information

Title: Rape of the Black woman.

Author: Christiaan van Couwenbergh (1604-1667)

Date: 1623

Museum: Beaux Arts museum of Strasbourg



Image narrative

The artist stages a rape scene with four characters. A man on the left laughs at the woman who is struggling, manipulated by the man she is forced to sit on. A third man is shown dressed and appears horrified. The black woman is depicted as hairy and desperate. This figure is indistinct, but the woman's gaze is pregnant with meaning. At the time, this scene was shocking because it depicts a relationship between a black slave woman and a white man.

The Netherlands, like many other European countries, was a country where slavery was on the increase. Colonialism and slavery have contributed to the representation of the “other”, the one dominated, as a dehumanised being. The bodies of racialized people have been constructed to legitimise domination, violence, exploitation and the eroticization of bodies. This subject was frequently treated in paintings at the time, but in the nineteenth century the works were destroyed.

Systemically, enslaved people have been violated, deprived of their freedom and humanity. Thus, as can be seen here, African and Afro-descendant women were raped. On the one hand, this made it possible to increase the “workforce” and on the other hand, these rapes were committed in groups so that no man could be recognised as the father of a potential child (fraternity in violence).



Questions for debate

- Do you find any dehumanization in the picture?
- Do you think that the fetishisation and exoticization of racialized women is still acceptable today?
- What would it change in your interpretation if the men were black and the woman white?
- How do you interpret the attitude of the clothed man as an outraged observer who does not act?
- How do you interpret the picture as a whole?





Image Information

Title: Rape of the Black woman.

Title: The Human Beast

Author: Antonio Fillol Granell (1880-1930)

Date: 1897

Museum: Prado Museum, Madrid



Image narrative

It is a prostitution scene. It shows a madam asking a prostitute to go to bed with a client. The young girl looks desperate, while the old bourgeois man is passively waiting for her while smoking his pipe. None of her emotions are apparent. In the centre the character of the madam is enigmatic: she seems to have quite some power, and she seems both supportive and pressing and assertive towards the girl.

The painter denounces the exploitation of the woman and takes a position in favour of the young woman.

The work is inspired by the 19th century social realist painting movement - which depicts society in the midst of the industrial revolution. The work questions prostitution, the age of the prostitutes/clients and class relations.

This work was presented during the National Fine Arts Exhibition of 1897 in Madrid and caused a scandal, as the client is depicted wearing bourgeois clothes - which was a taboo, socially reprehensible and devaluing for this social group.



Questions for debate

- According to you, who/what is the human beast (the title of the picture) here?
- What is the place of men in this relationship? Is there a relationship of support and mutual aid between women? What is the role of money? What prevents sorority?
- What do you think of the age difference between the characters?
- Can we consider this as a rape?



Image 3



Image Information

Title: Reading Le Figaro.

Author: Mary Cassatt.

Date: 1878

Museum: Collection Mrs. Eric de Spoelberch, Pennsylvania.



Image narrative

Cassatt, a New Woman herself, made groundbreaking paintings of women who in certain aspects were also “New Women,” even if they did not fit the stereotype. This becomes evident through an in-depth analysis of Cassatt’s *Reading Le Figaro* (1878), which portrays an autonomous older woman reading the newspaper. The painting gives no indication of the woman’s maternal role. Instead, it emphasizes characteristics which become remarkable when compared with conventional representations of women at the time—namely her engagement in reading as an intellectual pursuit, and specifically reading a newspaper, an activity considered at the time primarily the province of men. Cassatt’s painting of the bespectacled Mrs. Cassatt reading the newspaper resonated with contemporary discourses advocating for women’s rights to knowledge, education, and developing their intellectual abilities.

(source: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327684040_Cassatt's_Singular_Women_Reading_Le_Figaro_and_the_Older_New_Woman)



Questions for debate

- Do you think that such images can have a strong impact on the viewer?
- Does a woman in this image change her traditional social role being intellectual?
- What kind of power does education represent for a woman? Try to give some characteristics to this woman.
- What kind of power do you need to resist in order to be empowered? Does it have to do with social status?
- Do you think that an educated woman constitutes a threat to a man?
- Have you seen or experienced a situation where a man was afraid of a woman’s intelligence?
- Can you recall/tell a situation when a woman’s power depended on the power of a man?
- What women manage to have time to read and educate herself?

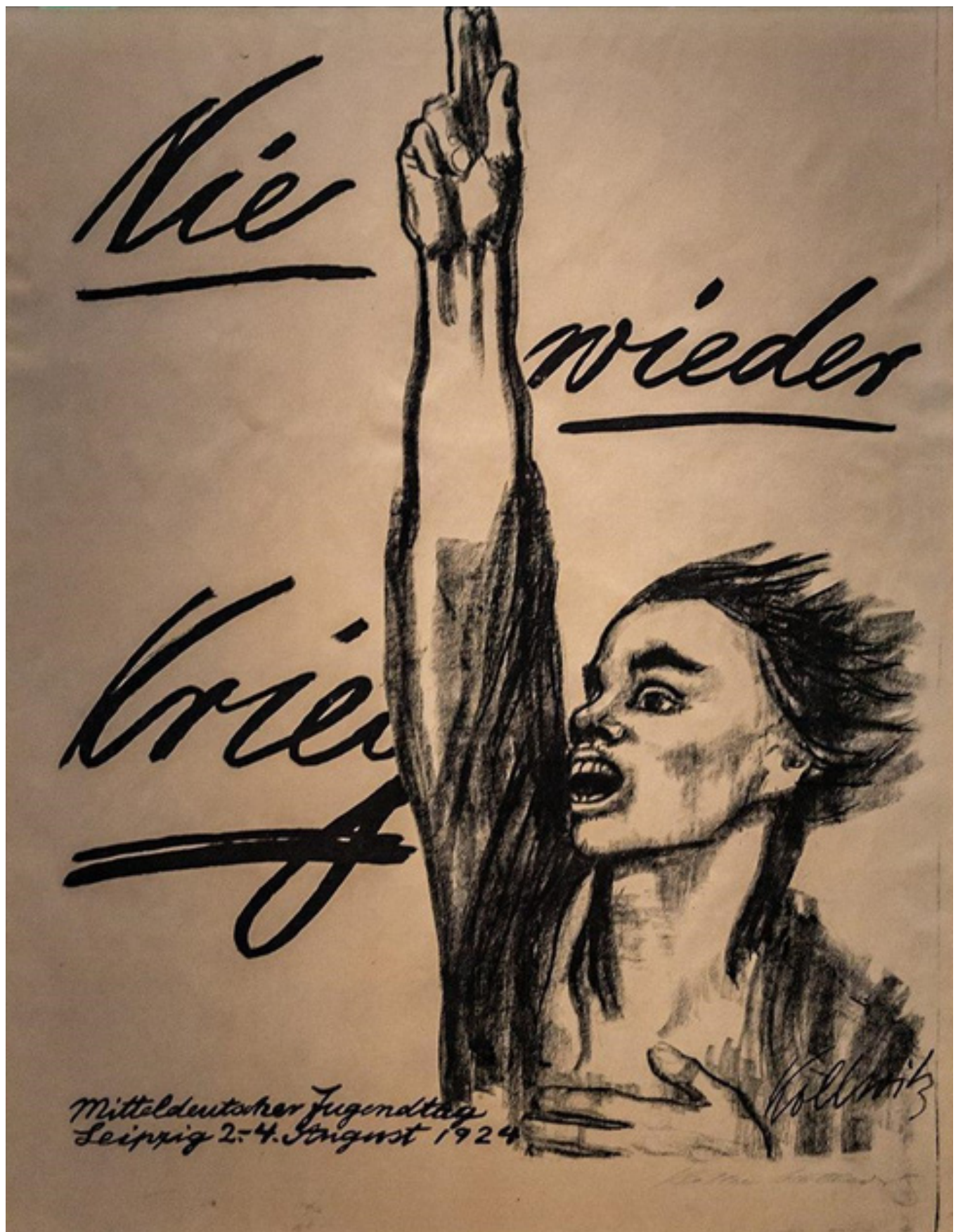




Image Information

Title: Nie wieder krieg (never War again)

Author: Käthe Kollwitz

Date: 1924

Front page of Freie Jugend, Week 3, Volume 8 (c. 21 January 1926)



Image narrative

Kollwitz's work is a testimony to those who have been excluded from written history. That history which has not yet been written and of which those who, day after day, try to oppose and resist, who cultivate ideas of solidarity and participation, and who fall under the heading of "non-biographical", are part of it. Kollwitz shows those characteristics that history excludes. And in her work, the beings depicted take on the consciousness of full-fledged subjects. They are not a homogeneous mass, they are not a mere example, they are portraits of subjects who live a life and try to build it through a struggle against their situation of poverty and economic humiliation. They are not poor, they are beings impoverished by life. And it is not war in the abstract that she describes, it is a war with a name and protagonists. And the peace that she defends in her writings and in her images stands as an attitude and an action in the face of barbarism. It is not the mere absence of war, it is the awareness of the possible understanding of being through being. And this is an action of resistance in the face of a power that she has to live with.

This is why expressionism beats in it as a mode of representation, as a cry. But it is no longer Munch's scream, that individual and solitary scream, which marked a line to be followed within the avant-garde movements. Kollwitz's cry is not one of individual anguish, it is a call to collective solidarity, to participation, to rebellion in the face of social injustice, to common action in the face of exploitation. It is art that rises and looks above pettiness, horror and death. So if Munch has so far been considered the father of Expressionism, we cannot fail to consider Kollwitz at least its mother. For it will be Kollwitz who will open up the supportive vision of art in war from the awareness of plural beings in the face of destruction, and the need to rise up and resist imposed death. And it will be Kollwitz who recovers the dignity of being in the midst of destruction.



Questions for debate

- What role did women play in Wars?
- Do you know the movement of more than 1500 Women in 1915 against the First World War?
- Which is the role of women shown in history books?
- What role did the war play in the emancipation of women?
- What role does motherhood play in political/feminist engagement? Can motherhood be represented as anything other than an emotional affliction or does it allow for political engagement?
- Do women derive their power from their motherhood? (cf. regency)
- Who writes history: women or men? If history were written by women, would it have been different?
- Are women still treated as the second sex? What can we do to fight this and inscribe ourselves into history?
- To what extent do women have to fight in order to be accepted as equals?
- Has enough attention been paid to the suffering of women?





Image Information

Title: Antigone giving the burial of Polynices.

Author: Sébastien Norblin.

Year: 1825

Location: Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris.



Image narrative

Antigone's brothers, Eteocles and Polynices face death to control the city of Thebes. The first is buried with honor for his fidelity to said city, however the corpse of Polinices remains without burial as a punishment inflicted by King Creon, his uncle, King of Thebes. Antigone decides to bury her brother, disobeying her uncle and human laws. Upon learning Creonte, Antígona is locked up alive in a tomb and then she decides to end her life.

The central theme of this work is disobedience, from here we can diversify axes of reflection: disobey parental, social or legal powers, for example. Reflect on representations of historical civil disobedience and think about how we understand it today and the value of conflict as a necessary place to point out abuses of power, even going so far as to think about how the norms affect our subjectivities and singularities.

If we consider how far to go with disobedience, we could talk about the limits, the use of violence, on what occasions it could be justified or not. The question of rebellion can also be raised as an act that carries a certain idea of treason.



Questions for debate

- Is it permissible to disobey unjust laws?
- Should a law be respected if it is unjust? / Does an unjust law make sense?
- Can we go beyond the law to do what we think is right? How far are you willing to go for your principles? What price are you willing to pay for disobedience?
- Have you ever needed to disobey official powers?
- Do we pass on the message of submission to each other?
- Is Antigone portrayed to her full potential?
- Do you have to be pure to be committed / does a committed woman have to be pure?
- Are committed/determined women/resistance figures in art history necessarily figures of purity or renunciation?
- Can a resistance figure be represented in an entirely feminine way?



Image 6
40



Image Information

Title: Woman Enraged.

Author: Pieter Huys.

Year: 1570.

Location: Worcester Art Museum.

Image narrative



In *Woman Enraged* we are confronted by a bizarrely attired, screaming female. Although clearly an unusual character, the woman cannot be identified with any known literary or historical figure. The painting appears to be an allegory with moralistic overtones related to two of the deadly sins. Although it bears no inscription, *Woman Enraged* also conveys a message through the use of symbols. The woman's expression clearly indicates anger. Through the door behind her, we catch a glimpse of a fireplace, which may well be an allusion to anger, for fire is the element traditionally associated with the choleric temperament. In addition to Anger, the figure personifies Avarice, as seen from her eclectic attire and possessions. Image of an enraged woman associated with anger and greed, whose expression conveys lack of control and serenity.

Questions for debate



- Why do you think is she angry?
- What do you think makes her angry?
- Do you think that angry men and angry women are depicted equally?
- Why do you think there are no angry women depicted in art?
- Are the criteria associated with femininity (hair, jewellery) incompatible with the representation of age?
- Are eroticism and old age incompatible?
- Is the non-eroticised woman necessarily a monster? (Witch or Medusa?)
- Is the representation of anger gendered in the 16th century?
- How are old women depicted in Art History? What characteristics are they linked to?
- Do you think that the representation of anger is related to age?
- Why do you think an old woman is used to represent anger?
- What do you think she is shouting?



Image 7



Image Information

Title: Le portrait de la marquise de Pompadour

Author: Maurice-Quentin Delatour

Date: 1755

Museum: Musée du Louvre, Paris



Image narrative

Madame de Pompadour was a member of the French court. The first woman to remain with the king even after she ceased to be his mistress, Madame de Pompadour became not only a friend of King Louis XV, but also his political advisor and was entrusted with important negotiations on the international scene.

The Marquise de Pompadour played an important role in the artistic, intellectual and political life of the 18th century. Mme de Pompadour created a complex public image for herself. Through the works of art representing her, she appears not only as the King's favourite, but also as an enlightened and refined woman, endowed with many artistic and musical talents.



Questions for debate

- How can a woman's private power be represented?
- How can the representation of femininity and power be reconciled?
- Is the figure of the intellectual the only possible figure of a powerful woman until the contemporary period?
- Can a female commissioner control her representation?
- Are there more powerful women in the arts and culture?



**Image Information**

Title: Judith and the Head of Holofernes

Author: Victor Ségoﬀin

Date: 1896

Museum: Musée des Augustins, Toulouse.

**Image narrative**

In Victor Ségoﬀin's sculpture, Judith is depicted holding up Holofernes' head and the sword she used to execute him. Her theatrical and dynamic gesture is accentuated by her oriental-style dress with wide sleeves.

The character of Judith was revived in Orientalist circles at the end of the 19th century because it offers a type of seductive and dangerous heroine who knows how to play on her charms to conquer men, an image of the *femme fatale*.

Judith is a woman who is not under the guardianship of a man because she is a widow. The status of widow offered women a certain freedom. Judith is an ambivalent figure. She delivers her people and shows courage and strength by slaying general Holofernes. But she is also described as a temptress by artists, often associated with the image of a *femme fatale*. Both pious and seductive, she is also an independent woman. Artemisia Gentileschi depicted Judith in a very different way, as a powerful, wise, and strong Woman. It is interesting to compare the different versions of Judith, to understand the stereotypes linked to strong women in history.

**Questions for debate**

- Does a woman's power lie in her body, in her appearance?
- Does Judith's power lie in the violence of her act?
- Without Holofernes' head, would she still be a powerful woman?
- Would Judith the peacemaker still be a woman of power?
- Can you compare this image with that depicted by Artemisia Gentileschi? Do you see seduction? Which are the differences and similarities?

ARTWORKS RELATED TO EMPOWERMENT

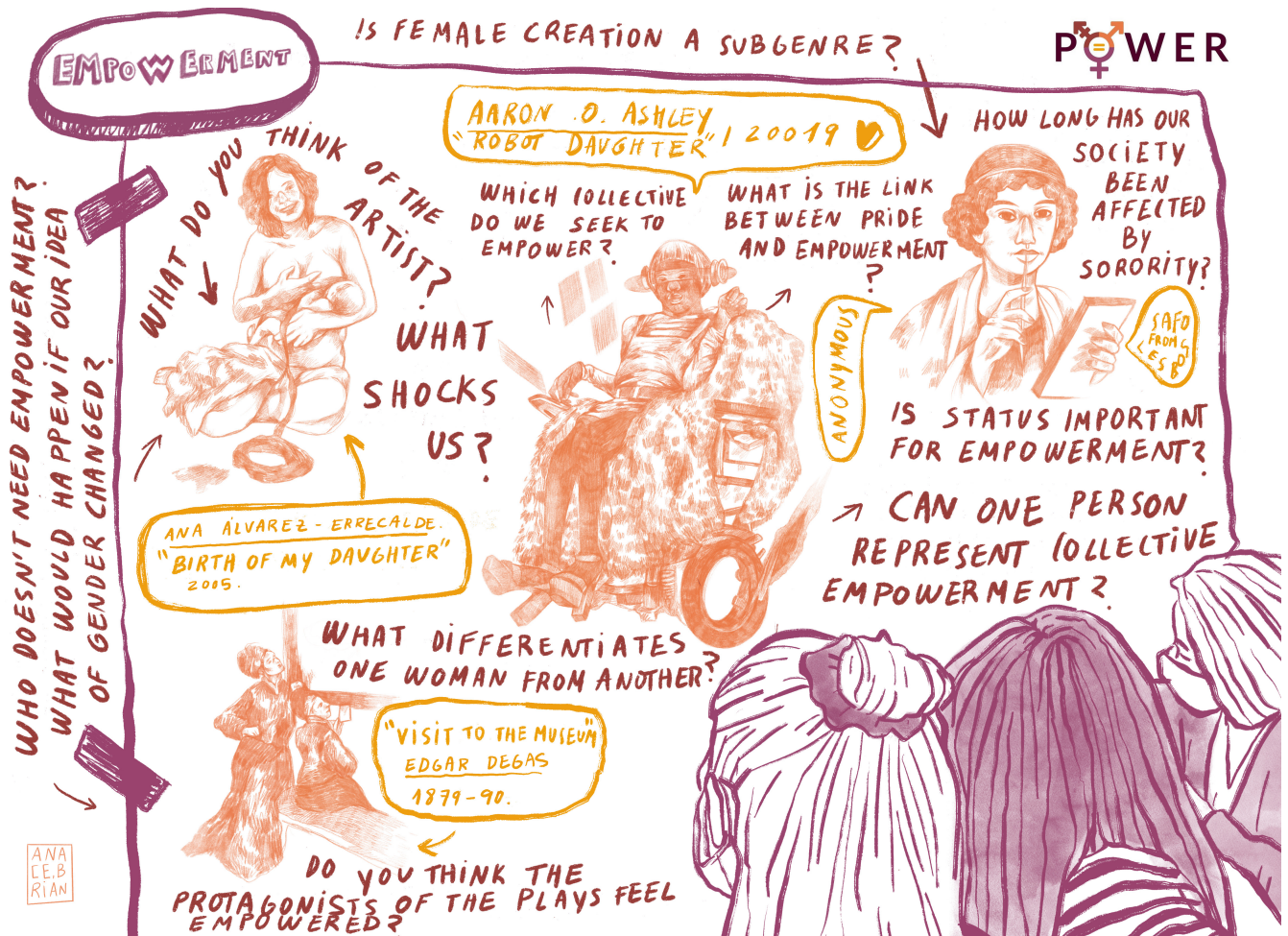






Image Information

Title: The Bearded Woman or Magdalena Ventura with her husband

Author: José de Ribera (1592-1652)

Date: 1631

Museum: Prado Museum, Madrid



Image narrative

The painting shows a bearded woman and her husband; she is breastfeeding their child. A shell (right) symbolised hermaphroditism.

On the stones, a long inscription written in Latin entitled “The Great Miracle of Nature”, gives us details of the history of the woman depicted. At the age of 37, Magdalena Ventura began growing a beard and hair and is developing baldness and a deep voice, associated with masculinisation. This would almost certainly be a case of what is now called “hirsutism”. The work questions the attributes of the feminine and the masculine, how the genders are defined, and the characterisation of the ‘non-normative’ as monstrous.

This painting was commissioned by the Viceroy of Naples. He was one of the “humanist” patrons who created their “cabinets of curiosities” in Europe in the 16th-17th centuries, driven by the desire to decipher and classify the mysteries of the universe, by accumulating the “wonders” of art and nature: shells, fossils, portraits of dwarfs and giants, etc. He personally invited the “bearded woman” to his palace in Naples to be represented by José de Ribera in a Caravaggio style. The intense play of light and shadow creates a dramatic atmosphere.



Questions for debate

- Do we feel strange at the sight of this painting?
- Why are facial and body hair so unthinkable for women? Think of the relationship between hair-strength-masculinity and absence of hair-weakness-femininity. Is it still in our times?
- Is the representation and visibility of (gender/sexual) minorities sufficient to empower them or it is seen as “curiosity”?
- Do we make the same judgement towards a drag queen who keeps a beard (Conchita Wurst) as towards a woman with a beard (Harnaam Kaur)?
- Can a man breastfeed?
- Why is it so taboo to consider parenthood by two men or two women? How about transgender parents?
- Are there communities where men raise children together - without falling into masculinist debacles?





Image Information

Title: Les Trois Grâces

Author: Niki de Saint Phalle (1930-2002)

Date: 1999

Museum: National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington.



Image narrative

The Graces or Charities from the ancient Greek / *khairô* ("to rejoice, to be joyful"). They are three goddesses, Euphrosine, Talia, Aglaé, and each personifies gladness, abundance and splendour, respectively. They are eternally young, beautiful and between 15 and 20 years of age, the age of fulfilment according to the Greeks. They embody life and desire. They were in charge of presiding over all those events in which pleasure was the main ingredient: good meals and banquets, dance shows, among many others. The Three Graces provided as much joy as possible to gods and mortals alike, but they also provided eloquence and wisdom. The man blessed by one of the Three Graces, would become a great philosopher, orator, artist ...

The artist proposes here a representation of the Graces which is quite different from the others: they are free, spontaneous, strong and different from each other. The sculptures are imposing because of their size, eccentricity and symbolic power (freedom, women's rights, arts and culture). Therefore the sculptures are installed in the public space in full view of everyone, outside the museum institutions.



Questions for debate

- Why do we see so little diversity in women's bodies exhibited in public spaces/art/media?
- Do you think there is a stereotype in women's bodies regarding weight, age, etc.?
- What is the power of a moving body to claim its existence and strength?
- Why do you think she used different colors for the skin?
- How do social identities intersect to create diverse social power relations?
- Where are the works of women artists in the public and political space?





Image Information

Title: Women's Taxi, Violence-Free Zone

Author: Aprilia Lužar

Date: 1997

Museum: DIVA Station, digital video archive - SCCA



Image narrative

Aprilia Lužar is an artist and lesbian activist. Her contribution is above all important in the field of accomplishments of the LGBTQ+ aware and feminist art. Among her most known works is the performance Women's Taxi, Violence-Free Zone, implemented by the artist since 1997. Women's Taxi is an artistic transport therapeutical action, establishing communication among art, public, the media and women in a common attempt to overcome violence. The project consists of street action in which the author drives around town and has an open mobile telephone line to offer anonymous and free rides for female passengers victims of violence: rape, incest, lesbo- and homophobia and human trafficking. The taxi ride showcasing the author as a taxi-driver works as a therapy, given that the passengers are free to share their traumas. The author has recorded their narratives, documented them and created videoportraits out of the collected testimonies. She thus managed to take the taboo stories of marginalized victims to the elite gallery facilities. Moreover, the artist is taking this project as an opportunity to raise awareness of the presence of violence against women in urban centres, as well as the need to (self)organize safe zones without violence. The multimedia mobile project Women's Taxi won the 2002 international contest V-Day Stop Rape, promoting original strategies to prevent violence against women, held by American activist and author of the cult work Vagina Monologues, Eve Ensler.

Sexual violence victims are very vulnerable and feel more exposed than others due to their experience. We do not invest enough in the question of how to enable the victims to feel safe in coexisting in a world of prejudice where gender-related violence is still a taboo topic. Until this very day, the victims are not protected either by the judiciary system or by the responsible authorities. Sexual violence takes place at home, in the workplace, as well as in the streets.



Questions for debate

- Why is sexual violence still shameful to the victim instead of the aggressor?
- Why do women in such situations feel shame? What other feelings may they experience?
- Why can't we talk about this publicly?
- Why is Women's Taxi not simply a taxi? Are women the only victims of violence?
- Why are men mostly overlooked when they become victims of violence?





Image Information

Title: Aaron O-Ashley Ó s (Robot daughter).

Author: Aaron Phillip-Ashley O (for Miley Cyrus).

Year: 2019

Location: Instagram @aaronphillip

Miley Cyrus' 'Mother's Daughter' Video



Image narrative

This image is part of the new social construction of gender built by marginalised subjects through their virtual diaries on Instagram, using social networks as a platform for empowerment and visibility, thus fighting the algorithms that inside and outside social networks situate normative subjects as the only possible reference.

Starting from the circumstances of privilege/oppression, making use of the intersectional perspective, Aaron-Ashley O exposes her femininity as a trans, black, and disabled woman in a powerful, futuristic, robotic and beautiful fashion, an image that aims to deconstruct stereotypes and shuns vulnerability.

This image was taken as a model to represent and include trans women and non-binary genders in a video of the artist Miley Cyrus to vindicate the queer world.



Questions for debate

- Do you feel shocked? Why? Try to find prejudices behind this feeling.
- Do you think this image tries to empower some people? Who?
- What is the link between pride and empowerment?
- Can a single person represent collective empowerment? How? Why?
- Is empowerment vindictive?

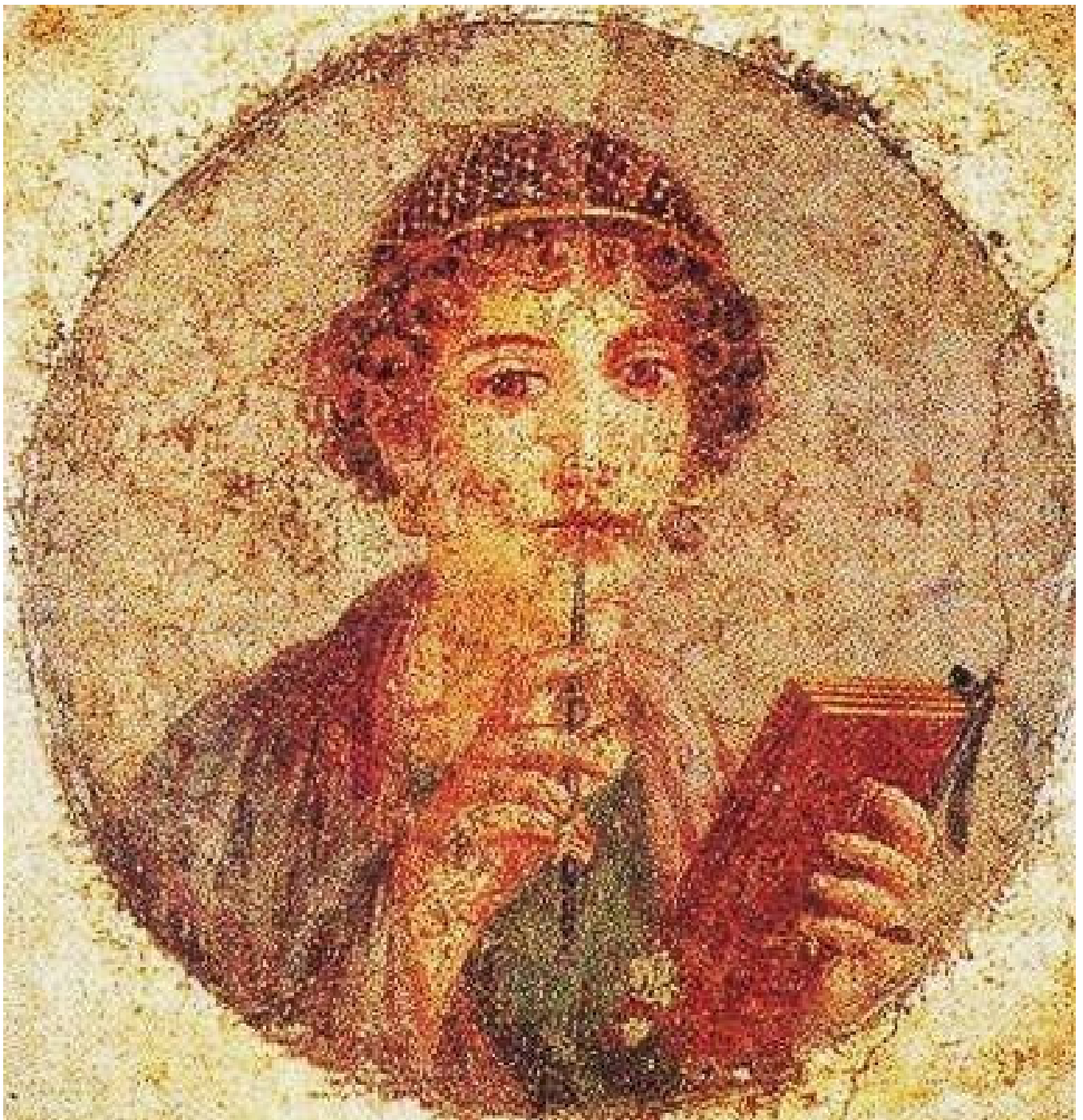




Image Information

Title: Woman with wax tablets and stylus (so-called “Sappho”).

Author: Unknown.

Year: 50-79 AD.

Location: Naples National Archaeological Museum.



Image narrative

Sappho was an ancient Greek poetess who wrote lyric poetry, famous for its intense passion and description of love. As she was born on the island of Lesbos, she is also known as the first female poet. She was born around 620 BC and died approximately 50 years later. She wrote nine books of odes, epithalamiums or wedding songs, elegies and hymns. Of these only a few fragments and two complete poems remain: the Ode to the Beloved Woman, collected by Longinus in his book *Treatise on the Sublime*, and the Ode to Aphrodite, collected by Dionysius of Halicarnassus. In 1703, the Catholic Church ordered the burning of all copies of Sappho's poems, of which only a third were recovered.

Some poems have been carefully reconstructed from surviving fragments.

Details of her life are difficult to reconstruct as there are few reliable sources. For example, historians are unsure whether to take her poetry as reliable autobiographical evidence.

In 2004 new fragments of Sappho's poems were found, substantially extending and improving one of those already existent.

Some more information available here: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:-Sappho_fresco_\(from_Pompeii\)](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:-Sappho_fresco_(from_Pompeii))



Questions for debate

- Is status important for empowerment?
- Since when has sisterhood had an effect on society?
- Can you describe a woman like Sappho? Is she representing one way to be a woman? Which would it be?
- Does the woman as a creator have the same importance as the man as a creator?
- Is female creation a sub-genre? Is it a genre on its own? Should we distinguish between female and male creation?





Image Information

Title: Untitled Anthropometry (ANT 110)

Author: Yves Klein.

Year: 1960

Location: Louvre Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates



Image narrative

The work is the result of a process in which the artist ordered the models to move, like brushes, across the surface impregnated with blue. The naked bodies of the women were thus an instrument of the artist, who controlled the order and movement of the painting. Here you have some comments by Yves Klein, the author, and Elena Palumbo-Mosca, the model, about the Artwork.

Yves Klein:

I threw a large white canvas on the ground. I poured some twenty kilos of blue paint in the middle of it and the model literally jumped into it. She painted the painting by rolling her body over the surface of the canvas in every direction. I directed the operation standing up, moving quickly around the entire perimeter of that fantastic surface on the ground, guiding the model's every movement, and repositioning her. The young woman, so inebriated by the action and by the close contact of her flesh with the blue, ended up no longer hearing me shouting at her: "Again a little more to the right, there, come back by rolling on that side, the other corner is not yet covered, come over here and apply your right breast, etc. (Yves Klein. Excerpt from "Chelsea Hotel Manifesto", 1961. <http://www.yvesklein.com/en/textes-choisis/view/29/living-brushes>)

Yves Klein's model, Elena Palumbo-Mosca:

He knew me well, knew that I liked using my body and my energy, and also that I would strive to understand his purpose. And now what can I add? Perhaps, simply, thanks to Yves' genius and his intrepidity, I lived a happy and intense experience of reality, having even managed to leave the trace of my fugitive presence in the uninterrupted stream of life, a sign of cosmic beauty and energy passing through my body. (...) the creation of the "Anthropometries" was a kind of ritual: once we had started, the physical impregnation of my body by the blue of Yves (IKB) silently in a very intense atmosphere: Yves - like an ancient priest - just told me where to apply blue. My body impregnated with blue then became a clear symbol of vital energy. (...) Of course, I was quite young then, and more superficial, and most of the philosophical significance so important to Yves certainly escaped me: however, I felt that I was partaking in a sort of initiatory rite. (Yves Klein's model. Excerpt from "Testimonial of Elena Palumbo-Mosca", 2006.

Source: <http://www.yvesklein.com/en/textes-choisis/view/8/testimonial-of-elena-palumbo-mosca>)



Questions for debate

- What do you think about female bodies used as brushes?
- Can you imagine it with men's bodies?
- What does the image suggest, what does it communicate?
- Who has the power? What kind of power? How is it recognized?
- How would you describe the painter?

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