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THE NATIONAL GALLERY
WOMEN AND THE ARTS FORUM
THE ANNUAL ANNA JAMESON LECTURE

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ABOUT THIS LECTURE SERIES

The National Gallery Anna Jameson Lecture series, established in 2021, takes place annually and invites a guest speaker to give a lecture focused on women in the arts, past and present. The lecture series and related publication series are supported by Professor Diane Apostolos-Cappadona. The Anna Jameson Lectures form part of the lively research and events programme associated with the National Gallery's Women and the Arts Forum, also supported by The Diane Apostolos-Cappadona Trust, in honour of her mother, Stacia Apostolos. The lecture series is named in recognition of Anna Jameson (née Murphy, 1794–1860), who is often identified as the UK's first female art historian. An early scholar of Italian Renaissance art, she was also the author of the first systematic study of Christian iconography in English.

SPEAKER'S BIOGRAPHY



Paris A. Spies-Gans

Paris A. Spies-Gans holds a PhD in History from Princeton University, an MA in Art History from the Courtauld Institute of Art and a BA from Harvard University. Her research has been supported by fellowships from the Harvard Society of Fellows and the J. Paul Getty Trust, among other institutions. Her first book, *A Revolution on Canvas: The Rise of Women Artists in Britain and France, 1760–1830* (PMC/YUP 2022), won several prizes in the fields of British art history and eighteenth-century studies and was named one of the top art books

of 2022 by *The Art Newspaper* and *The Conversation*. She is currently working on her second book, *A New Story of Art* (US/Doubleday and UK/Viking).

SYNOPSIS OF THE LECTURE

Women artists are having a moment – featuring in exhibitions, headlines and auctions. Art historians have, however, long known of their existence. Why do we continue to treat these creators as rare, exciting discoveries? This article considers the complicated legacies surrounding women artists and notions of historical truth. Taking Anna Jameson's concept of the 'spirit of a particular age' as a jumping-off point, it explores the tensions that often accompany studies of women in their own places and times and suggests a path towards a more integrated – and hopefully lasting – narrative of art: one that includes women as the prominent historical players they regularly were. Sometimes this entails uncomfortable work, such as questioning canonical narratives about women and art. However, embracing such complexities can ultimately lead to a deeper, fuller understanding of the cultural and gender dynamics that shaped the past – and continue to influence the present.

THE LECTURE

I would like to begin by thanking the National Gallery and Diane Apostolos-Cappadona for creating this lecture series, and Susanna Avery-Quash and Jon King for their tireless work in bringing this lecture, and now article, to its fruition. It has truly been an honour.

I spent a lot of time pondering what to discuss here, and kept coming back to a particular refrain. After years studying women artists, one of the main things I have learned is how perilous it is to seek any sort of clean or clear narrative about the ways that women artists existed or worked, in almost any historical place or time. Given the chance to think about women in the broad context of the National Gallery's collection, what story did I want to share? How ambiguous a narrative would you – audience or reader – accept? I ended up taking inspiration from Anna Jameson herself. Recently, the National Gallery installed her bust in its downstairs vestibule (Figure 1). As a result of a campaign organised by her friend Susan Homer, the sculptor John Gibson (1790 – 1866) accepted a reduced fee – and unusual commission, as busts were rare for him – to commemorate this woman who changed the history of the history of art.¹

In her essay 'The House of Titian', penned in 1845 and published the following year, Jameson wrote, 'The real value, the real immortality of the beautiful productions of old art lies in their truth, as embodying the spirit of a particular age'.² She captured a sense of transcendence that many of us feel when looking at our favourite artworks or coming across objects anew.

But what *is* art historical truth? Some might say it has to do with facts – names, dates, cities, identifying the subjects artists immortalised on paper and canvas, in metal and stone. For Jameson, this truth included a 'moral efficacy' – a positive ethical message.³ For others, the concept evokes feelings of magnificence that eclipse all of this.

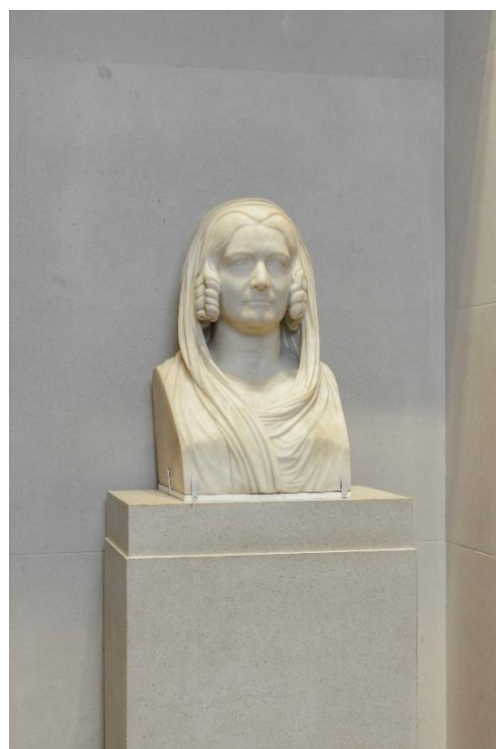


Fig. 1 John Gibson, *Anna Brownell Jameson (née Murphy)*, 1862, marble, 57 x 33.5 cm, displayed in the National Gallery, London (L1339) and lent by the National Portrait Gallery, London. Photo © The National Gallery, London

A sense of truth in art, the notion of there being a spirit of an art historical age, gets immensely more complex when we look to the legacies of women artists. This is because their truth is *not* straightforward – it has been tampered with and manipulated in countless ways. Dismissed, buried, warped, edited, expunged from paper trails and sometimes outright denied. In turn, recognising the fact and dominance of this

trajectory for many women's legacies hints at the fallibility and partiality of the corpus of art historical truths, shaped around *men*, that we have inherited.

My question for us today is: how can we untangle the complex legacies we have inherited, feminist *and* otherwise, to integrate fully these artists into our understanding of the past? How can we do this in a manner that is academically rigorous and historically responsible? What would, or could, an integrated art history look like? I want to explore the tensions that surround *any* efforts to neatly understand women's historical experiences as artists, and the central roles they have regularly played, from the Renaissance to more recent times.

First, I will take an artist who overlapped in time with Jameson as a case study: the French painter Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun (1755–1842). I want to explore what changes when we view Vigée Le Brun not as a remarkable exception who proves the male artist rule, but as part of a cultural sphere shaped by artists across gender lines. Second, I will take this approach further back in time, highlighting a few moments where women contributed to artistic innovations that defined their eras; many of these happen to include women in the National Gallery's collection or explicitly discussed by Jameson. Third, I will look at how one of these women took advantage of gender constructs, wielding them in her favour. Fourth, I will reflect on what can happen when new discoveries uncomfortably challenge powerful feminist readings. And, finally, I will ask how we got into this situation in the first place, with women artists being so isolated from our key narratives. I will end by suggesting a few ways we can consider moving forward from here.

Let us begin.

CHALLENGING CONVENTIONAL AND FEMINIST NARRATIVES: VIGÉE LE BRUN AND THE INTEGRATED WORLD OF HER TIME

From 1835 to 1837, ten years before Jameson wrote 'The House of Titian', Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun released her three-volume *Souvenirs*, the first published memoir by a female artist. Born in 1755 in *ancien régime* Paris, she was now 80 years old and nearing the end of her long life. In her memoir, Vigée Le Brun styled herself as an exceptional woman who lived in exceptional times – and has largely been treated as such ever since. Reflecting on her career and early fame, she mused, '[I]t is very difficult to convey an idea today of the urbanity, the graceful ease ... the affability of manner which made the charm of Parisian society forty years ago. The women reigned then; the Revolution dethroned them.'⁴ Vigée Le Brun expressed the plight that she and other women who had been the 'charm of Parisian society' experienced in the wake of the French Revolution. And, although Vigée Le Brun wove many myths into her account, the notion that the Revolution was bad for women artists is one that was absorbed by the mainstream canon, cementing Vigée Le Brun's own importance in the process. Ironically, it has also clouded the accomplishments of hundreds of her female peers. In this tension lies her significance for us.

Vigée Le Brun's *Self Portrait in a Straw Hat*, one of her most famous paintings, has been in the National Gallery's collection since 1897 (Figure 2).⁵ Unlike most works by women held by the National Gallery, it was purchased, not gifted or

bequeathed.⁶ And for good reason: Vigée Le Brun's reputation never really ebbed with time.

Like many male artists who were later mythologised, Vigée Le Brun showed rare talent at a young age, courting clients and exhibiting at small Parisian venues as a teenager. Then, in 1778, she earned the prized opportunity to try her hand at rendering the French queen Marie Antoinette's features in paint for the queen's mother, Holy Roman Empress Maria Theresa of Austria – a task at which numerous others had failed. Vigée Le Brun succeeded, creating an image that was appropriately regal while adequately softening the tricky Habsburg chin. She became Marie Antoinette's court painter. Her reputation grew, as did demand for portraits by her hand.⁷

In 1781, on a trip to Flanders, Vigée Le Brun found herself deeply affected by the work of Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) – especially his treatment of light.⁸ That is the context for the National Gallery's painting, with its famous homage to Rubens's possible portrait of his sister-in-law (Figure 3). By the 1780s, Rubens's portrait had become known as '*Le Chapeau de Paille*' – '*paille*' meaning straw in French, even though the hat is felt. This may be an error of transcription, '*paille*' instead of '*poil*', which is French for hair or bristle, as the hat is made of beaver felt.⁹ Vigée Le Brun winked to this misnomer by donning a straw hat herself. Within a year, she exhibited her version at a popular Paris venue called the Salon de la Correspondance.¹⁰ The National Gallery canvas



Fig. 2 Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, *Self Portrait in a Straw Hat*, 1782, oil on canvas, 97.8 x 70.5 cm, replica of the work exh. Salon de la Correspondance 1782; and Louvre Salon 1783, no. 119 © The National Gallery, London



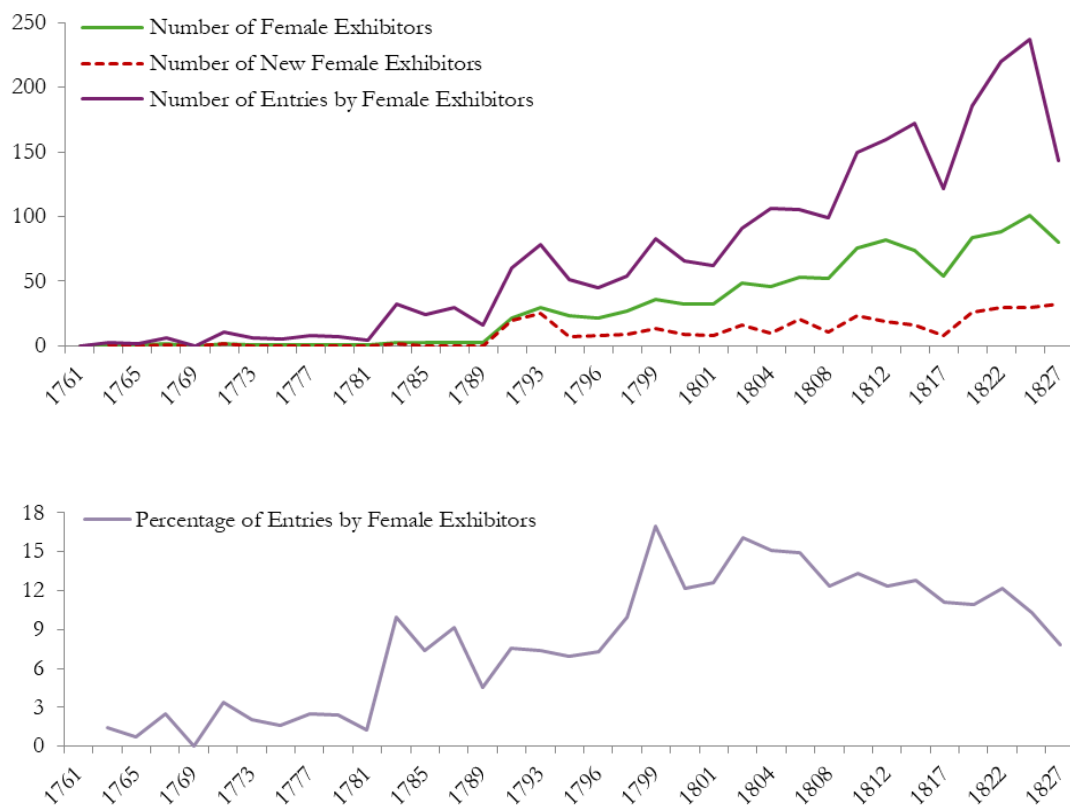
Fig. 3 Peter Paul Rubens, *Portrait of Susanna Lunden(?)* ('*Le Chapeau de Paille*'), probably 1622–25, oil on wood, 79 x 54.6 cm © The National Gallery, London

is Vigée Le Brun's own replica of this painting – a declaration of her personal prowess, softened by her reverence for tradition.

The following year, despite fierce internal resistance, and with the queen and king's help, Vigée Le Brun gained election to France's Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture, becoming one of only 15 women elected in the Academy's entire history – alongside more than 450 men.¹¹ These female Academicians were banned from the Academy's schools, which did not admit women until 1897 (incidentally, the year the Gallery bought Vigée Le Brun's *Self Portrait*). Still, election was a feat and allowed these women to display their work in the Louvre

Salon, the most prestigious, restrictive exhibition in Europe.¹²

In 1783, Vigée Le Brun again exhibited her *Self Portrait in a Straw Hat* as part of her Salon debut, alongside several portraits (including one of Marie Antoinette) and three classical works, announcing herself to the public as an artist of multiple genres. Six years later, she fled Paris with an early wave of émigrés. A staunch royalist, she returned in 1802, still exhibiting. But she never regained her pre-Revolution status – a loss she felt acutely and believed, as she wrote, affected women more broadly. Her description of women's fall in these years offers one, deeply felt historical truth, which was



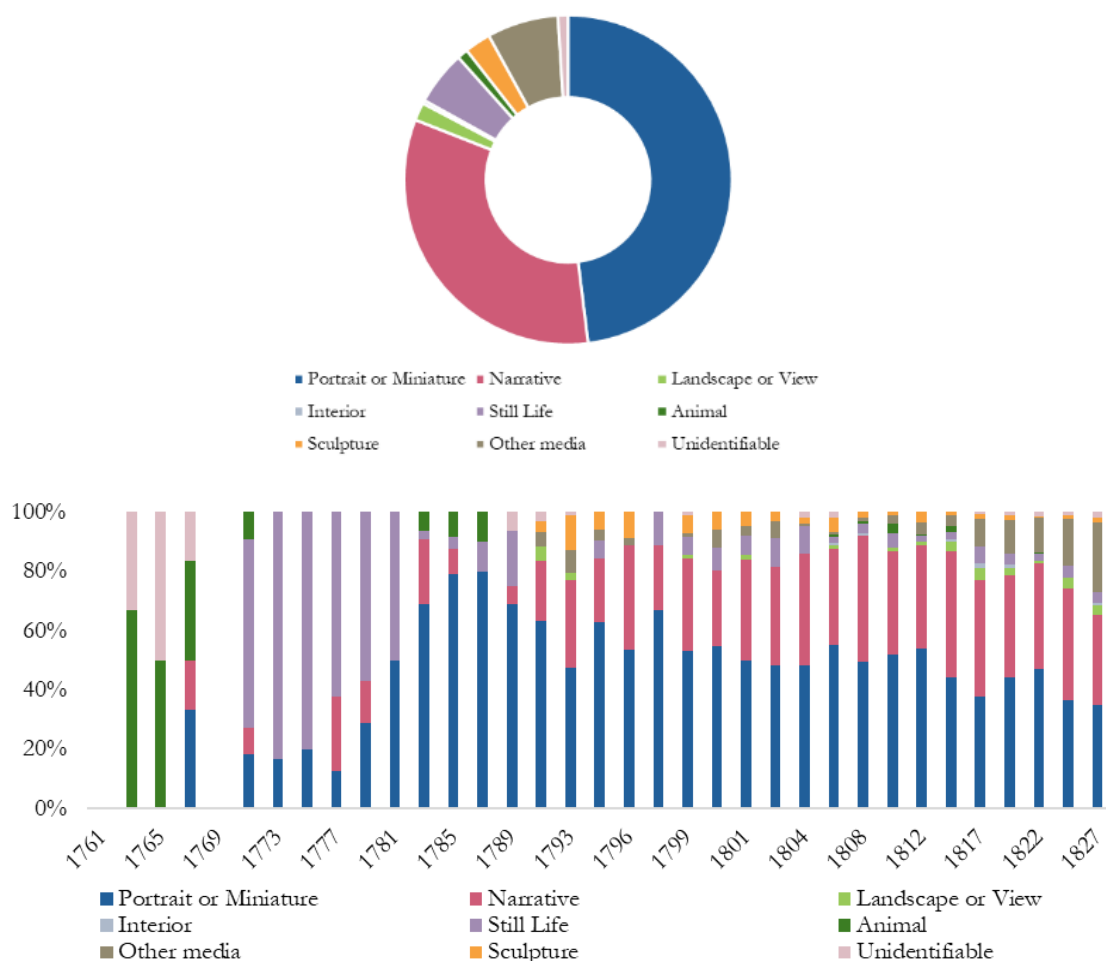
The Paris Salon, 1760–1830: Female Exhibition Statistics

accepted and extended by numerous accounts that followed, well into the twenty-first century.¹³ It has been considered the 'spirit of [this] particular age.'

However, the documented experiences of her peers across these same years offer another such truth. In my first book, *A Revolution on Canvas*, I found that more than a thousand women entered the public exhibiting world in London and Paris in Vigée Le Brun's lifetime, from 1760 to 1830.¹⁴ At the Louvre Salon, their activity grew with the very Revolution that Vigée

Le Brun claimed dethroned them (see the two graphs on page 4).

How might this phenomenon be explained? Before the Revolution, exhibiting at the Salon was restricted to elected Academicians. In 1791, the French National Assembly declared this coveted space open to all artists, regardless of their sex or status within the Academy. Women were ready: already in 1791, with only two weeks' notice, 22 women exhibited 60 works. From 1791 through 1827, 344 women exhibited 2,290 works at the Salon, averaging 11.5



Paris Salon, 1760–1830, Genres Exhibited by Women

percent of all pieces on display – more than double their presence in most museums today.¹⁵

These painters, sculptors and other types of artists defied gender stereotypes we have long applied to women's art. For instance, a common refrain claims that historically women painters mainly produced floral or still-life works, and that they did not and could not paint historical scenes because they lacked access to spaces where one could study the nude. However, in the first 40 years of the open Salon, and even from the 1780s, women exhibited mostly portraits and narrative works (see the two graphs on page 5: blue indicating portraits, red indicating narrative works); nude figure drawings by several of their hands survive. Floral or still-life pieces only comprised 4.1 percent of women's entries (see purple part of both graphs).¹⁶



Fig. 4 Marie-Guillemine Benoist, *Self Portrait*, 1786, oil on canvas, 95.7 x 78.5 cm, exh. Exposition de la Jeunesse 1786, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, 3029. Public Domain

Vigée Le Brun intersected with these forces. She too exhibited portraits and narrative scenes from 1783, throughout the time of her exile and return to Paris. Eventually, she gave lessons to her niece, who exhibited in the 1820s. But she largely disliked teaching. Indeed, in the mid-1780s, she sent a promising group of female students to join the studio of Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825) instead.

David has long been celebrated as the leader of a highly competitive French studio system that was homosocially male. Feminist scholars have, however, emphasised that his first students were women.¹⁷ Ultimately, David trained more than twenty women, 14 of whom exhibited at the Salon.¹⁸ In fact, David's female students exhibited works in every Salon from at least 1791 through 1831.

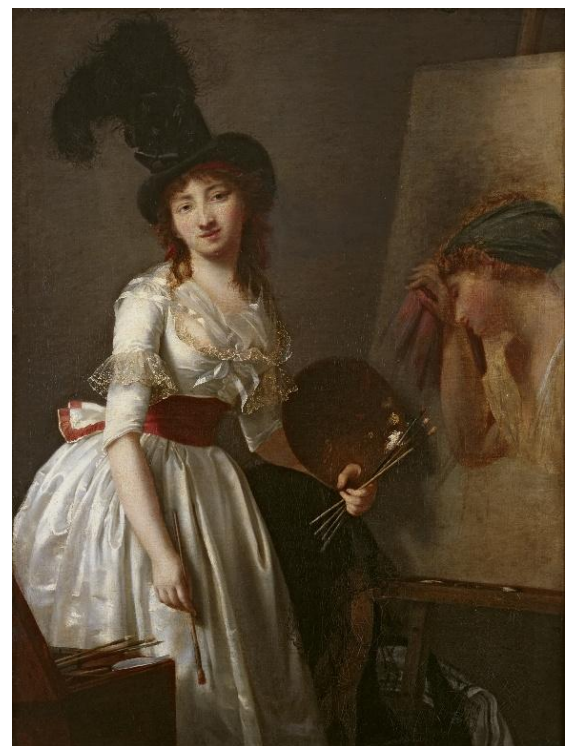


Fig. 5 Unknown artist, *Portrait of a Female Painter*, n.d., oil on canvas, 127 x 96 cm, exh. Louvre Salon 1791, no. 156, Musée Marmottan Monet, Inv. 175. Photo © Musée Marmottan Monet

One of the pupils Vigée Le Brun sent his way was Marie-Guillemine Benoist (born Leroulx-Delaville, 1768–1826). In 1786, Benoist exhibited an informative self portrait at another local venue, known as the Exposition de la Jeunesse (Figure 4). Here, Benoist advertised her skill as a portraitist and her training, as she depicts herself copying a study for David's *Belisarius*, signalling her ability to execute history paintings.¹⁹ This is one of two canvases in which we see women studying from David's works, learning his specialty. In the other (Figure 5), a well-dressed painter copies from the *Oath of the Horatii*.²⁰ David's student Alexandre Lenoir (1761–1839) later described how David guided students across gender lines in mastering 'the historic and heroic genre'.²¹

It worked – several of David's female students exhibited history paintings. In 1791, at her Louvre Salon debut, Benoist exhibited two classical scenes and one vignette from contemporary literature. In an homage published in 1835, that same Alexandre Lenoir even recalled how one day, in the 1780s, Benoist, who 'worked with her companions in a workshop close to that of David ... entered the painter's studio, and taking the pencil which he had abandoned, she finished by tracing the head which David had left imperfect'.²²

These porous studio and genre boundaries reflected broader forces in the French art world. In 1796, Marie-Geneviève Bouliar (1763–1825), exhibited pendant portraits of Lenoir and his wife, Adélaïde Lenoir (b. Binart; about 1771–1832), also an artist, at the Louvre Salon (Figure 6 shows Bouliar's portrait of Adélaïde). Bouliar had studied with Joseph-Siffred Duplessis (1725–1802). Adélaïde Lenoir had other teachers: Jean-Baptiste Regnault (1754–1829) and Gabriel-François Doyen (1726–1806). Alongside his wife, Sophie Regnault (born

Meyer; 1763–1825), Jean-Baptiste Regnault ran a studio that trained at least thirty-four exhibiting women artists, the highest number of any teacher.²³ These artists were all navigating a cultural sphere in which gender played *many* different roles. Their activity offers a model for a more integrated art world, one that challenges both conventional and feminist accounts.

Conceptually, this is our first step, a baseline. What, then, does it actually *do* to add women in? Where do narratives shift, and where do they remain?



Fig. 6 Marie-Geneviève Bouliar, *Adélaïde Lenoir*, b. Binart, about 1796, oil on canvas, 82 x 62 cm, exh. Salon 1796, no. 62, Musée Carnavalet, P1709. Public Domain

QUESTIONING A FEMININE AESTHETIC

Since the birth of feminist art history a half-century ago, there has been significant debate about the idea of a feminine aesthetic in art – whether works by women have innate

femininity or are identifiable as such. I want to introduce this concept to shift the conversation a bit, to look at areas where women simply did things differently, and impactfully, at key moments.

I will begin with the Renaissance. What happens when we put women back into the 'spirit of [this] particular age', a celebrated era of firsts? The Netherlandish painter Jan van Eyck (active 1422; died 1441) is widely assumed to have made the first self portrait in oil in 1433 with his exquisite *Portrait of a Man in a Red Turban* (Figure 7).²⁴ But we know nothing of van Eyck's appearance. This interpretation owes to the fact that van Eyck painted his name and the phrase 'As I can', trompe l'oeil on the frame. Twenty years later, we find the first undisputed painted self portrait: a small medallion by Jean Fouquet (about 1420–1481). It is 7.5 cm in diameter and made of gold painted onto black enamel.²⁵ Unlike van Eyck's, this was not an autonomous work: it was part of a diptych frame, originally featuring alongside other, now lost medallions.²⁶ Van Eyck's tenuous self portrait and Fouquet's embedded one are long fêted firsts.

However, the first *known* self portrait of *any* artist as an artist, at an easel, emerged a century later, in the hands of 20-year-old Catharina van Hemessen (1527/8–after 1566?), in Antwerp (Figure 8). She left no doubt, painting in crisp Latin letters, 'I Caterina van Hemessen have painted myself / 1548 / her age 20'.²⁷ Remarkably, it seems to have been a marketable subject – at least two other versions survive, one certainly by her hand. She went on to establish a reputation as a portraitist, one who continually claimed her relationship to her art. On van Hemessen's *Portrait of a Woman* in the National Gallery (Figure 9), in which the subject wears extremely similar attire to the artist, we



Fig. 7 Jan van Eyck, *Portrait of a Man (Self Portrait?)*, 1433, oil on oak, 26 x 19 cm © The National Gallery, London



Fig. 8 Catharina van Hemessen, *Self Portrait at the Easel*, 1548, oil on oak, 32.2 x 25.2 cm, Kunstmuseum Basel, 1361. Public Domain



Fig. 9 Catharina van Hemessen, *Portrait of a Woman*, 1551, oil on oak, 22.8 x 17.6 cm © The National Gallery, London



Fig. 10 Catharina van Hemessen, *Portrait of a Man*, possibly 1552, oil on oak, 36.2 x 29.2 cm © The National Gallery, London

find a comparable inscription: 'Catharina de Hemessen was painting [this] 1551.'²⁸ On her *Portrait of a Man* (Figure 10), his wealth signalled by the sword and gold rings, we again find: 'Catharina, daughter of Johannes de Hemessen was painting [this]. 1552.'²⁹ She did not want her name to be forgotten.

It is also in a Renaissance woman's hands that we get the first so-called genre scene – a narrative image taking an everyday occurrence as its entire subject. In 1555, in Cremona, the 23-year-old Sofonisba Anguissola (about 1532–1625) painted three of her sisters with their maidservant, playing chess (Figure 11). Gazes guide us through the composition: Lucia, on the left, has just made the winning move, inviting us to join her in celebration; Minerva, on the right, holds up her hand in

defeat while Europa, in between, watches, amused.³⁰

There are also women from this time who did things that *were not* different, and that is just as significant. In mid-sixteenth-century Florence, the nun Suor (Sister) Plautilla Nelli (1524–1588) consciously modelled her craft on the work and imagery of the San Marco school from earlier in the century.³¹ In her *Annunciation* now in the Uffizi (Figure 12), we might even think we are viewing a *quattrocento* altarpiece – look at the central column, the pale colours, the stress on single-point perspective and the sharp contours. In one of her drawings to survive, she explores the nuances of draped fabric, as featured in her painted scene.³² Nelli's altarpieces were devotional *and* commercial. In the second edition of his *Lives of the Artists* (1568), Giorgio



Fig. 11 (above) Sofonisba Anguissola, *The Chess Game*, about 1555, oil on canvas, 72 x 97 cm, National Museum Poznań © The Raczyński Foundation at the National Museum in Poznań



Fig. 12 (right) Plautilla Nelli, *Annunciation*, about 1537–88, oil on wood, 97 x 72 cm, Uffizi, Florence. © Gabinetto Fotografico delle Gallerie degli Uffizi. By concession of the Ministry of Culture. Not for further reproduction or duplication by any means.



Fig. 13 Artemisia Gentileschi, *Judith beheading Holofernes*, 1611–12, oil on canvas, 159 x 126 cm, Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples © By concession of the MiC – Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte

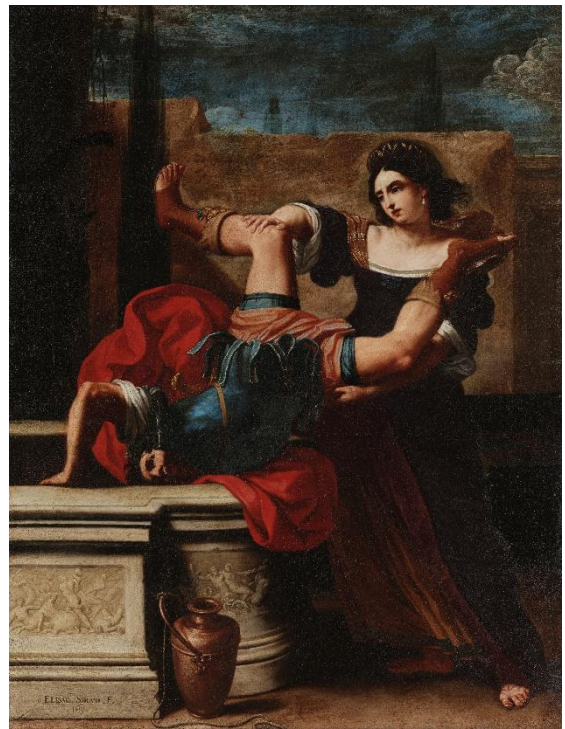


Fig. 14 Elisabetta Sirani, *Timoclea kills the Captain of Alexander the Great*, 1659, oil on canvas, 228 x 174.5 cm, Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples © By concession of the MiC – Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte

Vasari (1511–1574) writes that Nelli painted two such works for female clients in Florence – this may be one of them – and other paintings of hers travelled as far as Rome.³³

Let's move on in time. A product of the ever-theatrical Baroque, Artemisia Gentileschi's (1593–after about 1654) *Judith beheading Holofernes* has probably become the most recognisable pre-modern feminist icon (Figure 13). She painted two versions of the scene, the first showing Judith in blue; scholars still debate the exact dating.³⁴ Now, artists had long depicted moments from Judith's story. Around 1599, Caravaggio (1571–1610) even pre-empted Gentileschi in depicting the actual beheading.³⁵ But Gentileschi's works feel different to us – both because of the more realistic rendering of splattering blood, and because she decided to emphasise the strength and grit required for Judith and Abra's task, rather than Caravaggio's dainty heroine and older companion, one step (both psychologically and physically) removed from the action. Gentileschi's Uffizi version was temporarily misattributed to Caravaggio in the mid-eighteenth century.³⁶ So much, one might say, for a feminine aesthetic.

Another Baroque icon has become the Bologna-based painter Elisabetta Sirani's (1638–1665) *Timoclea kills the Captain of Alexander the Great* of 1659, a subject taken from Plutarch, showing a Theban woman pushing her rapist into a well (Figure 14). Angela Modesti has detailed the 'formal similarities' between this and Gentileschi's Naples *Judith*, a copy of which 'was in the collection of Sirani's patrons'. Note, she writes, 'the positioning of the female hero to the right, the male victim in the middle, with the architectural props (well/bed) at the lower left, and the interlocking limbs at centre', as well as the diagonal movement.³⁷ Both women also

appear eerily resolute. But the *Timoclea* has mainly been celebrated as the only known depiction of this unusual Petrarchan moment – one of a woman successfully, even humorously, punishing her rapist.

As we go forward in time, we continue to find women 'Making their Mark'.³⁸ With the birth of pastel portraiture in the early eighteenth century, the Venetian Rosalba Carriera (1673–1757) led the way (Figure 15), becoming a pan-European phenomenon and sparking an entire market of imitations.³⁹ Most forgeries were in pastel, but sometimes artists copied her works in oil, as in one work in the National Gallery, after her self portrait in old age in the Royal Collection.⁴⁰ Exactly when in the eighteenth century the oil was created remains unknown.



Fig. 15 Rosalba Carriera, *Portrait of a Man*, 1720s, pastel on paper, 57.8 x 47 cm, National Gallery, London © The National Gallery, London

We often describe the Swiss-born Angelica Kauffman (1741–1807), one of the two female founders of London's Royal Academy of Arts, as a painter of Neoclassical scenes. But she was also the first artist to exhibit scenes from British history in London, many of which are lost or in dire need of conservation. As early as 1838, the National Gallery came to possess one of her more unusual works, an allegorical painting titled *Religion Attended by the Virtues*, now only surviving in print (Figure 16). We can easily spot the Neoclassical clarity and graceful forms characteristic of Kauffman's oeuvre; but the religious subject matter and elaborate group of life-size figures are unique. At 7 by 9 feet, the original painting would have been her largest canvas. It also held another unique feature, what I think was a self portrait in the woman donning a laurel wreath – the only individual with a classical attribute. By 1913, Kauffman's canvas was on display in Plymouth, where it was likely destroyed in a bombing raid in March 1941.⁴¹ I invite you to imagine the effect this enormous painting would have if hung on the National Gallery's walls today.

Sometimes, we do not even have clear reproductions of works that had a traceable impact. In 1804, for instance, as Napoleon Bonaparte became Emperor of France, he implemented a new prize system at the Louvre Salon. Now, the state purchased art directly from the show and awarded medals for the best works. That year, Angélique Mongez (1755–1855), a classical history painter and a student of both David and Regnault, earned the sole first-prize medal and 600 francs, for a large painting of Alexander the Great. Her name appears on a list of payments in the French National Archives. This document also reveals that women won three of the eighteen



Fig. 16 William Henry Worthington after Angelica Kauffman, *Fair Religion with her Lovely Train*, 1812, etching and engraving, 57.1 x 68.2 cm, British Museum, London © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Fig. 17 Angélique Mongez, *Theseus and Pirithous, cleansing the Land of Brigands, deliver Two Women from the Clutches of these Abductors*, 1806, oil on canvas, 340 x 449 cm, exh. Salon 1806, no. 386, Arkhangelskoye Estate Museum, Moscow area. Public Domain.



Fig. 18 Rosa Bonheur, *The Horse Fair*, 1855, oil on canvas, 120 x 254.6 cm © The National Gallery, London

second-prize medals, each receiving 500 francs, the same amount as each male recipient.⁴²

We do not know what Mongez's winning canvas looked like, because it has long been lost – all we have is a sketch for a never-published print of the show.⁴³ I like to think that her massive, 11 by 14 foot *Theseus and Pirithous*, which she exhibited the following year, might give us a general sense (Figure 17). In a sale mediated by David, it was purchased by the leading Russian collector Prince Nikolai Borisovich Yusupov for the significant sum of 6,000 francs. It remains today in a museum devoted to Yusupov's collection.

Finally, doing things differently, as women, did not necessarily mean doing things the same as other women. For this we need only look to Rosa Bonheur (1822–1899), an animal painter and the first woman artist to receive France's exalted Légion d'honneur. Bonheur took inspiration from the Parthenon friezes for her most famous work, *The Horse Fair* (1852–1855), which went on a two-year tour of Britain after appearing at the 1853 Louvre Salon, where some critics could not believe it was painted by a woman.⁴⁴ She had spent more than a year studying the Parisian horse market at the Boulevard de l'Hôpital, purportedly receiving special police permission to dress in men's clothing and, it seems, avoid harassment.⁴⁵ The version now in the National Gallery (Figure 18) is roughly half the size of the original: Bonheur painted it to expedite printed reproductions.⁴⁶

TAKING THE REINS OF GENDER CONSTRUCT: GENTILESCHI AND SELF-REPRESENTATION

The more we learn about, compile and compare knowledge about women who became painters, it becomes increasingly clear that these artists

were not simply marginalised figures finding ways to produce art against all odds.

Unquestionably, they faced significant, gendered barriers. But those who were *able* to navigated these barriers with extreme knowledge and skill, tailoring their art to subject matter, medium and patron, often with a great deal of encouragement and support.

We see this explicitly in one of the National Gallery's more recent purchases, Artemisia Gentileschi's *Self Portrait as Saint Catherine of Alexandria* (about 1615–17), painted while she was living in Florence and cultivating patrons in Medici circles (Figure 19).⁴⁷ Far from the violence of *Judith Beheading Holofernes*, although made in the same period, here we see a Christian heroine calm and still. She holds the wheel that was supposed to kill her on an emperor's orders but instead shattered at her touch. Leaning into the roleplay that was popular at the Medici court, Gentileschi filled the saint's face with her own features. We do not know if this was her own idea, or a patron's request – but, as we saw with van Hemessen, we *do* know it was a marketable move, one she frequently used.⁴⁸

We find similar features on two other paintings from these years: another version of *Saint Catherine*, the saint's eyes looking up, from the Uffizi, and the *Self Portrait as a Lute Player* (Figure 20), from the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, Connecticut.⁴⁹ Gentileschi designed each canvas to function distinctly, and likely to appeal to different buyers. The two images of the saint show a woman who is quietly self-possessed, and quite modest compared to the lute player. For the musician, Gentileschi fashioned a more seductive air, emphasising the very fact of her very female body. To many viewers, that the artist was presenting *herself* in this role would have increased its appeal, creating an additional layer of sensual allure and



Fig. 19 Artemisia Gentileschi, *Self Portrait as Saint Catherine of Alexandria*, about 1615-17, oil on canvas, 71.4 x 69 cm
© The National Gallery, London



Fig. 20 Artemisia Gentileschi, *Self Portrait as a Lute Player*, about 1615-18, oil on canvas, 77.5 x 71.8 cm, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, Charles H. Schwartz Endowment Fund, 2014.4.1. Photo © Allen Phillips/Wadsworth Atheneum

a way for her to capitalise on her growing personal celebrity.⁵⁰

These choices were intentional. Gentileschi likely used tracings to preserve and transfer designs, which became the basis for canvases she individuated in other ways. Recent conservation of the Uffizi *Saint Catherine* has even revealed it originally included a turban.⁵¹ Evidently, Gentileschi experimented with which saintly attributes and aspects of her identity as a woman to play up *and* play down, on a canvas-by-canvas basis.

WHEN CONTRADICTIONS COMPLICATE POWERFUL FEMINIST READINGS

I am not the first person to have many of these insights.⁵² Scholarship on women artists has exploded in the last 50 years and continues to expand at a rapid rate. One slightly unusual,

confusing consequence of this growing corpus is that, sometimes, new discoveries challenge powerful feminist readings. For instance, in her canonical 1971 article, Linda Nochlin famously asserted that to become a woman artist before the late nineteenth century, the moment women were finally admitted to London's and Paris's premier art schools, women artists were almost always, necessarily, the daughters or wives of male artists.⁵³ This is the case for many women we have discussed – Vigée Le Brun, Bonheur and Gentileschi, to name a few. But it is not representative across time.

My research has proven that among the women who exhibited at Paris's Salon between 1760 and 1830, only 19 percent came from families with male artists. Most often, women's educational paths echoed those of their male peers: more than a hundred and eighty women, 73 percent of exhibitors for whom I could find information, studied with more than a hundred male teachers to whom they had no familial

relationship. Markedly, this differs from London, where 52 percent of women exhibitors came from families with male artists – the common background for male artists in Britain as well, which often had an explicitly professional focus for children across gender lines.⁵⁴ We can find these paths immortalised on canvases by women artists themselves.⁵⁵ This is *not* to de-emphasise the difficulties that women faced. It tells us instead that, at times, women artists' experiences mirrored those of their male peers in their own societies more than they reflected broader gender precepts – which challenges us to question why we have so readily assumed it was the other way around.

For me, these dilemmas are encapsulated by another painting by Anguissola. In addition to creating the first known genre scene, Anguissola also painted the most known self portraits between Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) and Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669), rendering her own image at least a dozen times. This number keeps changing, and it is confused by the fact that she and her sisters had very similar features.

Anguissola studied with two male painters to whom she was not related, alongside her sister Elena (about 1532–1584). The first was Bernardino Campi (1522–1591). In 1990, Whitney Chadwick included an image of Campi painting Anguissola in her trailblazing study of women's artistic opportunities across time, *Women, Art, and Society* (Figure 21).⁵⁶ Mary D. Garrard followed in 1994, publishing a brilliant article titled 'Here's Looking at Me: Sofonisba Anguissola and the Problem of the Woman Artist'.⁵⁷ Garrard had already established herself as a leader in the field with a major book on *Gentileschi* in 1989. In her 1994 article, she looked closely at the complex dynamics Anguissola's painting evoked, including the double-standards faced by Renaissance women

artists. Garrard pointed out that Anguissola is larger than Campi, and that she depicts herself much as Baldassare Castiglione (1478–1529) recommended male courtiers dress – in sombre, black clothing, a staple in Anguissola's self portraits. Garrard suggested that Anguissola painted it in 1559, around the time she was invited to join Spain's royal court, inventing a brilliant illusion: Anguissola shows herself as her teacher's creation, but she is the ultimate painter of both figures we see. She subordinates Campi's image to her own to prove that creativity can be feminine, not masculine as Renaissance belief maintained.

In the mid-1990s, the painting was cleaned. The woman's hair became lighter, her dress red with rich gold embellishments. Her hand, apparently, originally fused with Campi's. Owing to the confusion of having two visible hands, another round of restoration left the painting with the hand in its pre-cleaning position (Figure 22). The problem is that now, it does not really look like Anguissola's self portraits. Michael Cole has demonstrated this most strongly, and Garrard, in a review of Cole's 2019 book, agreed that the attribution could now be questioned – that 'a satisfactory explanation has not yet been reached'.⁵⁸ Yet even Cole remained hesitant to change the attribution, categorising it under 'Attributions largely accepted by specialists', as opposed to the fully accepted 'Documented works / works with uncontested signatures' or the more tenuous 'Works with contested or insufficiently discussed attributions'.⁵⁹ I think we largely owe this ambivalence to the appeal of Garrard's interpretation. It would feel like such a loss from Anguissola's oeuvre and feminist studies.

Still, a reattribution does not lessen the novelty of Anguissola's accomplishments. To integrate women into our narratives in a lasting way, we



Fig. 21 Sofonisba Anguissola, Bernardino Campi painting *Sofonisba Anguissola* (before restoration), about 1559, oil on canvas, 108 x 106 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale di Siena © By concession of the Ministry of Culture, National Museums of Siena



Fig. 22 Sofonisba Anguissola, Bernardino Campi painting *Sofonisba Anguissola* (after final intervention in 2002), about 1559, oil on canvas, 108 x 106 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale di Siena © By concession of the Ministry of Culture, National Museums of Siena

need to treat them with the rigor we would anyone else. Sometimes, that entails removing their names from spectacular works. When that helps erect an oeuvre that can more fully stand the test of time, it is indispensable. Scholarship sparked by the Campi painting actually helped build a legacy that can now stand on Anguissola's other merits.

I have one other example of what I have come to consider a situation in which building someone up means taking them slightly down. A common claim to fame for Artemisia Gentileschi has been that in 1615, aged 22, she became the first woman to join Florence's Academy of the Arts – Europe's first art academy, founded by Cosimo I de' Medici (1519 – 1574) at the urging of Vasari. This fact appears throughout the literature on Gentileschi, on collection websites, etc. But Sheila Barker recently stressed that Gentileschi 'never attained the status of an

academician', and at the time, 'her membership would not be construed as a privilege or honor'. Rather, Barker writes, she was 'only ever a fee-paying guild member – and ... a reluctant one at that'.⁶⁰ Barker further found that the Academy's records show that one woman, a doll-maker, joined the Academy earlier, in 1605. In 1603 and 1604, other women also paid the same amount that Gentileschi and several of her male peers paid for memberships – but the records do not specify their occupations or affiliations.⁶¹ Maybe they were painters. Maybe not.

It has taken so long to build up artists like Anguissola and Gentileschi, elevating them to the place of recognition they now have, that removing any achievement seems to undo some of this hard-won progress. It is exciting to add a painting to an oeuvre, an accomplishment to a life. It is disappointing to take one away. But this is part of the complexity of aiming for historical

'truth', or Jameson's 'spirit of a particular age'. Every year, and with growing momentum, we continue to uncover more about women's actual places in their societies. Gentileschi being a fee-paying member hoping to benefit from the Academy's network normalises her, in a way. From one angle, it can even be seen to slightly de-emphasise the stark fact of her gender – which some contemporary sources encourage as well.

In 1620, the Dutch painter Leonard Bramer (1596–1674), working in Rome, sketched a series of comic images of his artist friends, with attributes ranging from glasses of beer to flutes and flowers. Thankfully, each is inscribed – otherwise we would hardly know that the moustached artist holding an object that resembles an apple, mirror or baby's rattle is Gentileschi, disguised as a man (Figure 23).⁶² Here, she is one of the boys.



Fig. 23 Leonaert Bramer, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, 1620, black chalk on paper, 13–14 x 10–11 cm, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, inv. 4060 / 3128. Photo: J. Geleyns

ART HISTORY'S GENDERED FOUNDATIONS

I wonder if *this* is what Anna Jameson was contemplating when she wrote her own brief reflection on women painters. At one point, from 1840–1, Jameson had a book about women in mind, 'Memoirs of celebrated female artists', featuring painters alongside 'engravers, musicians, dancers, and actresses'.⁶³ She proposed to write it in Weimar with her close friend Ottilie von Goethe. When logistics thwarted the collaboration, Jameson seems to have abandoned the project.

She had begun exploring the subject years earlier. In her 1834 *Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad*, largely based on travels in Germany, Jameson devotes 12 pages to the reflections sparked by a room of Rosalba Carriera's art, including a portrait of the poet Metastasio (Figure 24). 'Thinking of Rosalba', Jameson writes, 'reminds me that there are some pretty stories told of women, who have excelled as professed artists'.⁶⁴ She names many, including Kauffman, Sirani and Anguissola, discussing their personal lives alongside their art. Kauffman's portraits, she concludes, have 'exceeding grace; but she wants nerve'.⁶⁵

Jameson dedicates considerable space to Anguissola's *Chess Game*. She mentions Vasari, who, in his *Lives*, cites a letter from the Pope praising Anguissola – a letter 'said by Vasari to be a *sufficient* proof of the genius of Sofonisba – as if the holy Father's infallibility extended to painting! Luckily we have proofs more undeniable in her own most lovely works – glowing with life like those of Titian; and in the testimony of Vandyke, who said of her in her later years, that "he had learned more from one old blind woman in Italy than from all the masters of his art"'.⁶⁶ Anguissola's surviving

works and contemporary artistic heft transcend papal praise.

Still, there are limits to the traits Jameson allows women. She claims that all those she 'mentioned' had 'undoubted genius'. But 'all, except Gentileschi, were *feminine* painters. They succeeded best in feminine portraits, and when they painted history they were only admirable in that class of subjects which came within the province of their sex; beyond that boundary they became ... insipid, or exaggerated.' Most famous, perhaps, is her assertion that 'You must change the physical organization of the race of women before we produce a Rubens or a Michael Angelo. Then, on the other hand,' she adds, 'I fancy, no *man* could paint like Louisa Sharpe' (1798–1843), an artist she praises for having 'no feebleness ... nothing vapid' yet being 'essentially feminine'.⁶⁷ This tension around the role we ascribe to gender in women artists' work has hardly faded. Of course, in many ways, Jameson was ahead of her time. The first books on women artists appeared two decades later: in 1858, the German writer Ernst Guhl's *Women in Art History* and, the following year, the American Elizabeth Ellet's *Women Artists in All Ages and Countries*.

This brings us to a pivotal moment. In the mid-nineteenth century, women artists really begin to be catalogued, labelled and treated as such. In English, use of the term 'woman artist' grows.⁶⁸ And institutional structures start changing as well, launching the process in which women finally gain entry to Academic art schools, long considered a fundamental hurdle to their success.⁶⁹ This is also the moment when women are increasingly written out of mainstream narratives. I think there is a paradox at play: that the cementation of the category of

'woman artist' actually let them be separated as such.



Fig. 24 Rosalba Carriera, *The Poet Abbé Pietro Antonio Trapassi, called Metastasio* (1698–1782), 1730, pastel on paper, 32 x 25.5 cm, Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Dresden © Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Photo: Katrin Jacob/Wolfgang Kreische

Unfortunately, this coincided with the National Gallery's own development; women's place in art's histories was being relegated to the margins just as its collection was starting to grow. One of the Gallery's largest spaces, Room 32, today home to the Italian Baroque, first opened in 1876, its 20 lunettes emblazoned with male artists names from van Eyck and Leonardo to Rubens and Rembrandt – masculinity inscribed into its walls.⁷⁰

It was not alone in excluding women from a newly conceived Victorian vision of greatness, one reflecting heated debates around modesty, suffrage and women's education more than historical accomplishments. Just two years later,



Fig. 25 Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, *Self Portrait with two Pupils, Marie-Gabrielle Capet and Marie-Marguerite Carreaux de Rosemond*, 1785, oil on canvas, 210.8 x 151.1 cm, exh. Salon 1785, no. 101, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 53.225.5. Public Domain.

the owners of Adélaïde Labille-Guiard's *Self Portrait with two Pupils* (1785, Figure 25) offered the 7-foot-tall canvas to the Louvre. Labille-Guiard had earned rare election to France's Academy in 1783, alongside Vigée Le Brun. She was already an established teacher of women. When the Académie would not grant her the customary Louvre studio because it worried about her students' presence, she exhibited this towering self portrait with two of her pupils at the Salon, bringing the work into the building herself.⁷¹ In 1878, the Louvre rejected the work. It passed through the hands of several owners and dealers before being gifted to New York's Metropolitan Museum of



Fig. 26 Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, *Tournelle, called Dublin*, about 1799, oil on canvas, 71.4 x 57.2 cm, Salon 1799, no. 726, Harvard Art Museums, 1943.230. Photo © President and Fellows of Harvard College

Art in 1953, on the condition that it may never be lent.

Ironically, it joined an as-yet-unknown group of works by *other* women from her time purchased or acquired by the Met, Frick and Fogg (now part of the Harvard Art Museums) based on their *misattributions* to Jacques-Louis David. Many of these were intentional – Labille-Guiard's painting of the French actor Dublin-Tournelle still sports David's false, retroactively-added signature (Figure 26). Another example is Marie-Guillemine Benoist's *Madame Philippe Panon Desbassayns de Richemont and her Son, Eugène* (Figure 27).⁷² All of these paintings had

originally been exhibited by their female makers at the Louvre Salon. It took most of the twentieth century to correct the faulty records, and other misattributions unquestionably remain. Again, so much for a female aesthetic.



Fig. 27 Marie-Guillemine Benoist, *Madame Philippe Panon Desbassayns de Richemont and her Son, Eugène*, 1802, oil on canvas, 116.8 x 89.5 cm, Salon 1802, no. 17, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 53.61.4. Public Domain.

MOVING AHEAD IN A NEW SPIRIT

We cannot begin to build an integrated history of art until we dispel any hopes or expectations of a linear narrative. That, I hope, is what this series of examples has shown. Vigée Le Brun was undoubtedly an exceptional artist – but her story exposes how both ‘great man’ and ‘exceptional woman’ narratives can conceal a deeply integrated cultural world in which gender played multiple roles.

Reconstructing such worlds comes with conceptual challenges. In the realm of

innovations, women certainly shaped the history of art by doing things that were different or new. Others had an impact by cultivating excellence while following tradition. Some artists, like Gentileschi, took the reins of gender constructs; others, like Bonheur, shifted them. These inherent frictions invite us to consider that Jameson’s ‘spirit of a particular age’ might mean turning to and welcoming the contradicting truths that have long characterised the uneven experiences and treatment of women artists, from their times to our own.

Why this uneven treatment, when the historical record so easily exposes its flaws? We have seen some of the inherent value systems within modern art historiography that have left women retrospectively sidelined by texts and unfavoured in collections in ways that do not reflect the status they attained in their own lifetimes. One is the concept of quality, often related to notions of a feminine aesthetic. To these, I would simply cite the vast tradition of museums proudly purchasing misattributed works. There is also the mythology of greatness and the misleading conception that it has always been gendered male. Yet across Western art history, we can find women who were considered great by the standards of their eras – at times, even explicitly described as such. Still, the counterbalance is not simply finding ‘great women’ to offset ‘great men’. Instead, it is a model in which great *art* emerges from communities and exchanges that were seldom if ever shaped by members of only one sex. As we start to acknowledge these possibilities and adjust our *own* lenses, our perception of the past begins to change. This is one way we can continue to write new stories of art – stories that are inevitably more complex, but much more complete, correct and, ultimately, satisfying.

NOTES

¹ See the entry on John Gibson's portrait bust of Anna Jameson on the National Gallery website: <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/john-gibson-anna-brownell-jameson-nee-murphy>, accessed 1 May 2025.

² Anna Brownell Jameson, 'The House of Titian', *Memoirs and Essays Illustrative of Art, Literature and Social Morals*, London, 1846, p. 28.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, *Souvenirs de Madame Louise-Élisabeth Vigée LeBrun*, 3 vols, Paris, 1835–7, translated and abridged by Lionel Strachey, *Memoirs of Madame Vigée Le Brun*, New York, 1903, p. 49.

⁵ Humphry Wine, 'NG1653, Self Portrait in a Straw Hat', <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/catalogues/win-e-2018/self-portrait-in-a-straw-hat>, accessed 13 May 2025.

⁶ As of May 2025, the time of writing this article, the National Gallery had 27 objects by women in its collection, 12 of which were by artists practicing before the twentieth century. Of these 12, only 4 were purchased – 2 between 1878 and 1897, and 2 in the twenty-first century.

⁷ The preeminent account of this trajectory is Mary D. Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art*, Chicago, 1996; see also Joseph Baillio, Katharine Baetjer and Paul Lang, *Vigée Le Brun*, New York, 2016.

⁸ Vigée Le Brun, *Souvenirs*, vol. 1, p. 83.

⁹ As pointed out in the in-depth overview of the painting on the National Gallery website: <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/elisabeth-louise-vigee-le-brun-self-portrait-in-a-straw-hat>, accessed 1 May 2025. For the full National Gallery catalogue entry on this painting, see: Humphrey Wine, *The Eighteenth Century French Paintings*, London, 2018, pp. 519–33.

¹⁰ Émile Bellier de la Chavignerie, 'Les artistes français du XVIII^e siècle oubliés ou dédaignés. Pahin de la Blancherie et le salon de la Correspondance', *Revue Universelle des Arts*, 19, 1864, pp. 203–24, 249–67, 354–67; 20, 1865, pp. 46–58, 116–27, 189–95, 253–62, 320–9, 402–27; and 21, 1865, pp. 34–48, 87–112, 175–90; Laura Auricchio, 'Pahin de la Blancherie's Commercial Cabinet of Curiosity (1779–87)', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 36, no. 1, 2002, pp. 47–61.

¹¹ For these women see Melissa L. Hyde, 'Académiciennes in the Academy's Collection', in Sofya Dmitrieva, Anne Klammt

and Markus Castor eds, *The Académie Royale Art Collection*, Paris, forthcoming (in press). I am grateful to Melissa Hyde for sharing an advance copy of this piece, and more broadly for her generosity with her immense knowledge and time in our decade-long conversation on the *femme artiste*.

¹² The classic study is Thomas E. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, New Haven and London, 1985; a more recent examination of the artists involved is Hannah Williams, *Académie Royale: A History in Portraits*, Farnham and Burlington, Vt, 2015.

¹³ Notably, this extensive literature even includes works that celebrate the achievements of women artists, such as Laura Auricchio, 'Revolutionary Paradoxes: 1789–94', in *Royalists to Romantics: Women Artists from the Louvre, Versailles, and Other French National Collections*, Washington, D.C., 2012, p. 29; and Marie-Josèphe Bonnet, *Liberté, Égalité, Exclusion: Femmes Peintres en Révolution, 1770–1804*, Paris, 2012.

¹⁴ Paris A. Spies-Gans, *A Revolution on Canvas: The Rise of Women Artists in Britain and France, 1760–1830*, London, 2022.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 17–53.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 171–229.

¹⁷ Vivian P. Cameron, *Woman as Image and Image-Maker in Paris during the French Revolution*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1983; Margaret A. Oppenheimer, *Women Artists in Paris, 1791–1814*, unpublished PhD dissertation, NYU, 1996; Philippe Bordes, 'Consolidating the Canon', *Oxford Art Journal*, 19, no. 2, 1996, pp. 107–14; Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation*, London, 1997, pp. 46–60; Gen Doy, *Women and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century France, 1800–1852*, London, 1998; Mary Vidal, 'The "Other Atelier": Jacques-Louis David's Female Students', in Melissa Hyde and Jennifer Milam, eds., *Women Art and the Politics of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, Burlington, 2003, pp. 237–56; Mary D. Sheriff, 'Jacques-Louis David and the Ladies', in Dorothy Johnson, ed., *Jacques-Louis David: New Perspectives*, Newark, 2006, pp. 90–107; France Nerlich and Alain Bonnet, eds, *Apprendre à Peindre: Les ateliers privés à Paris 1780–1863*, Tours, 2013, esp. essays by Séverine Sofio and Nina Struckmeyer; Philippe Bordes, 'Jacques-Louis David et ses élèves: les stratégies de l'atelier', *Perspective: la revue de l'INHA*, no. 1, 2014, pp. 99–112; and Daniela Boni and Monica Manfrini, *Pittrici della rivoluzione: le allieve di Jacques-Louis David*, Bologna, 2017.

¹⁸ Vidal, "'Other Atelier,'" passim. Jennifer Germann contends that Godefroid also should be considered part of David's school in 'Tracing Marie-Éléonore Godefroid:

Women's Artistic Networks in Early Nineteenth-Century Paris', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 41, 2012, pp. 59–60.

¹⁹ For Benoist, see Marie-Juliette Ballot, *Une Élève de David: La Comtesse Benoist, 'L'Emilie de Demoustier', 1768–1826*, Paris, 1914.

²⁰ This attribution has been a matter of debate. Vidal contended that it could be by Benoist, and/or perhaps depict Mademoiselle Duchosal (fl. 1787–91). Bordes attributed it to Nanine Vallain (1767–1815). It is currently catalogued at the Musée Marmottan Monet as a work by an anonymous artist. See Vidal, "'Other Atelier,'" pp. 242–3; and Bordes, 'Consolidating the Canon', p. 109.

²¹ Daniel Wildenstein and Guy Wildenstein, *Documents complémentaires au catalogue de l'oeuvre de Louis David*, Paris, 1973, no. 2389.

²² Alexandre Lenoir, 'David, souvenirs historiques', *Journal de l'Institut historique*, 3, no. 1, 1835, p. 4. My translation. I discuss this passage further in Paris A. Spies-Gans, 'Why Do We Think There Have Been No Great Women Artists? Revisiting Linda Nochlin and the Archive', *The Art Bulletin*, 104, no. 4, December 2022, pp. 70–94.

²³ My calculations. See also Olivier Merson, 'Les Logements d'artistes au Louvre', *Gazette des beaux-arts*, 23, 2e période, pp. 276–88; and Martine Lacas, 'Des Ateliers aux salons: Les Vertus de l'amitié entre les sexes', in Martine Lacas, ed., *Peintres femmes 1780–1830: Naissance d'un combat*, Paris, 2021, p. 184.

²⁴ See the in-depth overview of the painting on the National Gallery website: <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/jan-van-eyck-portrait-of-a-man-self-portrait>, accessed 13 May 2025.

²⁵ Jean Fouquet, *Self Portrait Medallion*, about 1452–5, inscription 'Joh[ann]es Fouquet', copper with enamel and gold, 7.5 cm, Louvre.

²⁶ Jean Fouquet, *Melun Diptych*, about 1452–5, Staatliche Museen Berlin and Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp.

²⁷ See Céline Talon, 'Catharina Van Hemessen's Self Portrait: The Woman Who Took Saint Luke's Palette', in Elizabeth Sutton ed., *Women Artists and Patrons in the Netherlands, 1500–1700*, Amsterdam, 2019, pp. 27–53.

²⁸ From the inscription 'CATHARINA DE/ HEMESSEN/ PINGEBAT/ 1551', translated on the National Gallery website: <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/catharina-van-hemessen-portrait-of-a-woman>, accessed 1 May 2025. For more on this painting, see Lorne Campbell, *The Sixteenth Century Netherlandish Paintings with French Paintings before 1600*, London, 2014, pp. 408–10.

²⁹ From the inscription 'CATHARINA. FILIA/ IOHANNIS DE HEMES/SEN PINGBAT/ .1552', translated on the National Gallery website:

<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/catharina-van-hemessen-portrait-of-a-man>, accessed 1 May 2025. For more on this painting, see Campbell, *Sixteenth Century Netherlandish*, pp. 402–7.

³⁰ Mary D. Garrard, 'Here's looking at me/ Sofonisba Anguissola and the problem of the woman artist', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 47, no. 3, Autumn 1994, pp. 597, 600–4.

³¹ Fausta Navarro, ed., *Plautilla Nelli: Art and Devotion in Savonarola's Footsteps*, Livorno, 2017; Linda Falcone, ed., *Visible: Plautilla Nelli and the Last Supper Restored*, Florence, 2019; and Mary D. Garrard, 'The Cloister and the Square: Gender Dynamics in Renaissance Florence', *Early Modern Women*, 11, no. 1, Fall 2016, pp. 5–44.

³² Plautilla Nelli, *Study of a Mantle*, black chalk with white lead on paper, 24.3 x 24.9 cm, Uffizi, Florence.

³³ Catherine Turrill Lupi, Cat. 4, *Annunciation*, in Navarro, ed., *Plautilla Nelli*, p. 80.

³⁴ Recent literature includes Sheila Barker, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, London, 2021; and Letizia Treves ed., *Artemisia*, London, 2020.

³⁵ Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Judith beheading Holofernes*, about 1599, oil on canvas, 145 x 195 cm, Palazzo Barberini, Rome.

³⁶ Sheila Barker, 'The muse of history: Artemisia Gentileschi's first four centuries of immortal fame', in Treves ed., *Artemisia*, pp. 85–6.

³⁷ Adelina Modesti, *Elisabetta Sirani*, London, 2023, p. 78.

³⁸ Andaleeb Badiee Banta, Alexa Greist and Theresa Kutasz Christensen, eds, *Making Her Mark: A History of Women Artists in Europe, 1400–1800*, Baltimore and Ontario, 2023.

³⁹ Angela Oberer, *Rosalba Carriera*, London, 2023. See also the in-depth overview of the work on the National Gallery website: <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/rosalba-carriera-portrait-of-a-man>, accessed 13 May 2025.

⁴⁰ After Rosalba Carriera, *Portrait of Rosalba Carriera*, 18th century, oil on canvas, 57.6 x 39.4 cm, National Gallery, NG3127; Rosalba Carriera, *Self Portrait*, about 1745, pastel on paper, 56.7 x 45.8 cm, Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 452375. For the former work, see the in-depth overview on the National Gallery website:

<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/after-rosalba-carriera-rosalba-carriera>, accessed 13 May 2025.

⁴¹ See 'Inventory of Pictures acquired by the National Gallery', National Gallery Archive, London, NG2, no. 139. Also see Vanessa Thorpe, 'Hunt on for the lost masterpiece by one of greatest female artists', *Guardian*, 30 September 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/sep/30/tate-hunt-for-angelica-kauffman-artwork-nazi-air-raid-plymouth>, accessed 1 May 2025.

⁴² Salon of 1804 prize distribution, O/2/847, Archives nationales, Paris.

⁴³ Antoine Maxime Monsaldy after Angélique Mongez, *Alexandre pleurant la mort de la femme de Darius* (Salon 1804 no. 324), counter-proof of a sketch by Monsaldy, about 1804, reproduced in the original direction, 9.6 x 10.7 cm, Bibliothèque nationale de France, from Damien Richter, 'Les croquis de Rieul Monsaldy pour un projet de vue gravée du Salon de 1804,' *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de l'art français* vol. année 2004 (2005), p. 219.

⁴⁴ I thank Jon King for his knowledge of Bonheur's work, and his suggestions of Théophile Gautier, 'Salon de 1853', *La presse*, 17 (July 22, 1853), p. 3; 'French Exhibition', *Times* (July 18, 1855), p. 11; and Whitney Chadwick, 'The Fine Art of Gentling: Horses, Women and Rosa Bonheur in Victorian England', in Kathleen Adler and Marcia Pointon eds., *The Body Imaged: The Human Form and Visual Culture Since the Renaissance*, Cambridge and New York, 1993, pp. 89–107.

⁴⁵ James M. Saslow, "'Disagreeably Hidden": Construction and Constriction of the Lesbian Body in Rosa Bonheur's Horse Fair', in Norma Broude and Mary Garrard eds., *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, New York, 1992, pp. 186–205; Anna Klumpke, *Rosa Bonheur: Sa Vie, son oeuvre*, Paris, 1908, pp. 203, 256–65, 308–11, 338; Theodore Stanton, *Reminiscences of Rosa Bonheur*, New York, 1910, pp. 16, 23–4, 36, 63, 105–10, 195, 362–7. Again, I thank Jon King for these suggestions.

⁴⁶ See the in-depth overview of the work on the National Gallery website: <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/rosa-bonheur-the-horse-fair>, accessed 13 May 2025.

⁴⁷ See Letizia Treves, 'NG6671, *Self Portrait as Saint Catherine of Alexandria*', <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/catalogues/national-gallery-2024/self-portrait-as-saint-catherine-of-alexandria>, accessed 27 May 2025.

⁴⁸ Letizia Treves, Cat. 11, in Treves ed., *Artemisia*, p. 140; Oliver Tostmann, Cats. 24–6 in *By Her Hand: Artemisia*

Gentileschi and Women Artists in Italy, 1500–1800, Wadsworth and Detroit / New Haven, 2021, pp. 101–06.

⁴⁹ Artemisia Gentileschi, *Saint Catherine of Alexandria*, 1615–17, oil on canvas, 78 x 61.5 cm, Uffizi; Artemisia Gentileschi, *Self Portrait as a Lute Player*, about 1615–18, oil on canvas, 77.5 x 71.8 cm, Wadsworth Athenaeum. The face on the Uffizi canvas is different enough that some think this was modelled on a contemporary, but not Artemisia herself.

⁵⁰ Christopher R. Marshall, *Artemisia Gentileschi and the Business of Art*, Princeton, 2024, esp. Ch 5, 'Selling the Self: Self portraiture and the Invention of "Artemisia"', pp. 68–91; and Tostmann, Cat. 24, pp. 101–3.

⁵¹ Nancy Kenney, 'X-ray of Uffizi's Artemisia Gentileschi reveals a tantalising underpainting', *The Art Newspaper*, 11 April 2019, <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2019/04/11/x-ray-of-uffizis-artemisia-gentileschi-reveals-a-tantalising-underpainting>; Letizia Treves, Larry Keith and Marta Melchiorre, 'NG6671, *Self Portrait as Saint Catherine of Alexandria*', <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/catalogues/national-gallery-2024/self-portrait-as-saint-catherine-of-alexandria>, accessed 1 May 2025.

⁵² More than five decades of feminist scholarship and discoveries – more than can be possibly listed in any one place – has led enabled the knowledge we have and questions we are able to pose at our current moment. Early leaders include (but are hardly limited to) Linda Nochlin, Griselda Pollock, Rozsika Parker, Germaine Greer, Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard; their work opened the field to countless others and their influence remains vital and strong.

⁵³ Linda Nochlin, 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?', *Art News*, 69, no. 9, January 1971, pp. 22–39, 67–71.

⁵⁴ For this data, see Spies-Gans, *A Revolution on Canvas*, pp. 55–109.

⁵⁵ Such as Rolinda Sharples, *The Artist and her Mother*, 1816, oil on panel, 36.8 x 29.2 cm, Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, Bristol; and Marie-Gabrielle Capet, *The Atelier of Mme. Vincent*, 1808, oil on canvas, 84 x 69 cm, Salon 1808, no. 89, Neue Pinakothek, Munich.

⁵⁶ Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society*, London, 1990; in the fourth edition of Chadwick, from 2007, the painting is fig. 39, p. 98.

⁵⁷ Mary D. Garrard, 'Here's Looking at Me: Sofonisba Anguissola and the Problem of the Woman Artist',

Renaissance Quarterly, 47, no. 3, Autumn 1994, pp. 556–622.

⁵⁸ Michael W. Cole, *Sofonisba's Lesson: A Renaissance Artist and Her Work*, Princeton, 2019, pp. 50–67; Mary D. Garrard, Review of Michael W. Cole, *Sofonisba's Lesson: A Renaissance Artist and Her Work*, *Early Modern Women*, 15, no. 2, Spring 2021, p. 168.

⁵⁹ Cole, *Sofonisba's Lesson*, pp. 156, 180.

⁶⁰ Barker, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, p. 53, citing Roberto Contini, 'L'indotto fiorentino di Artemisia Gentileschi', in Keith Christiansen and Judith W. Mann, eds, *Orazio e Artemisia Gentileschi*, New Haven and London, 2001, p. 314.

⁶¹ Barker, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, p. 56.

⁶² Christopher R. Marshall, *Artemisia Gentileschi and the Business of Art*, Princeton, 2024, pp. 110–11.

⁶³ Letter of August 30 [1841], VIII, 6, in the correspondence of Ottilie von Goethe, Goethe-und Schiller-Archiv, Weimar, cited by Adele M. Holcomb, 'Anna Jameson on Women Artists', *Woman's Art Journal*, 8, no. 2, Autumn 1987–Winter 1988, p. 16.

⁶⁴ Anna Brownell Jameson, [Thoughts on Female Artists] 'Dresden', in *Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad*, vol. II, 2nd ed., London, 1835, p. 173.

⁶⁵ Jameson, [Thoughts on Female Artists] p. 178.

⁶⁶ Jameson, [Thoughts on Female Artists] p. 176.

⁶⁷ Jameson, [Thoughts on Female Artists] pp. 177, 178–9.

⁶⁸ Lynn Hunt, 'The Woman Artist and the Uncovering of the Social World', in Mechthild Fend, Jennifer Germann and Melissa Hyde, *Thinking Women and Art in the Long Eighteenth Century: Strategic Reinterpretations*, Amsterdam, 2025, p. 101.

⁶⁹ Women were first admitted (temporarily) into the school of London's Royal Academy in 1860; they gained permission to join its live figure drawing classes in the 1890s. In Paris, women gained access to the École des beaux-arts in 1897; beforehand, from the 1870s, they could attend live figure drawing classes at the Académie Julian.

⁷⁰ I thank Jon King for sharing this connection.

⁷¹ Laura Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard: Artist in the Age of Revolution*, Los Angeles, 2009, pp. 37–50.

⁷² Others include Nisa Villers, *Charlotte du Val d'Ognes*, 1801, oil on canvas, 161.3 x 128.6 cm, Salon 1801, no. 338, Metropolitan Museum of Art; and Césarine Davin-Mirvault, *Antonio Bartolomeo Bruni*, about 1804, oil on canvas, 129.2 x 95.9 cm, Salon 1804, no. 114, The Frick Collection.