

THE NATIONAL GALLERY

Women and the Arts Forum Conference 2024 *Widening the Narrative*

Wednesday 26 June 2024
Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House

9:30-10:00 Registration

10:00-10:15 Introductions
Christine Riding (Director of Collections and Research, National Gallery)
Dr Susanna Avery-Quash (Curatorial Lead, National Gallery).

PART 1 ART, GENDER & IDENTITY

10:15-11:30 Panel 1: 'Woman Artist' Reassessed (Chaired by Catherine McCormack, author and lecturer)

The term 'woman artist' can sometimes imply a separate category, suggesting that the gender of the artist is more significant than their artistic merit. It may additionally overshadow the individuality and achievements of women artists by defining them primarily by their gender rather than their artistic talent and creativity. On the other hand, the term 'woman artist' can be helpful in contexts where it is important specifically to acknowledge and highlight the gender diversity within the art world. It can promote visibility and help address issues of gender inequality and discrimination by drawing attention to the unique experiences and perspectives of women. In this panel, speakers delve into the complexities and histories surrounding the term 'woman artist' and its intersection with gender and identity, examining the extent to which it can enrich our understanding of artistic expression and challenge prevailing norms.

- **Dr Paris Spies-Gans** (Writer and Lecturer, author of *A Revolution on Canvas: The Rise of Women Artists in Britain and France, 1760–1830*, 2022) in conversation with **Eliza Goodpasture** (PhD candidate, University of York), 'Collecting and Exhibiting 'Women Artists' in London'
- **Dr Jonathan King** (Bernays Curatorial Fellow of British Paintings, National Gallery) and **Amy Mechowski** (independent art historian) premiere and discuss their new film on Rosa Bonheur's *The Horse Fair* (1855)

11:30 Refreshments

11:45-13:00 Panel 2: Curating 'Women Artists' (Chaired by Letizia Treves, Christie's)

The art world is seeing a timely intervention with more exhibitions centring around 'women artists.' Such exhibitions help address historical imbalances by giving visibility to artists who have been historically overlooked or marginalised. They also challenge traditional narratives in art history that often prioritise male artists and contribute to a more diverse and inclusive art world by showcasing a wider range of perspectives and voices. On the other hand, exhibitions on women artists have been critiqued as tokenistic or solely focused on gender, rather than on the artistic merit of the works themselves. Additionally, some may argue that such exhibitions could inadvertently perpetuate the marginalisation of women artists by segregating them from mainstream art discourse. Presented by expert curators with a range of perspectives, specialisms and experiences, this panel tackles the key questions raised when exhibiting art by women. From ideas of 'greatness' and the discriminatory criticisms of measuring 'quality' to issues of canonicity and visibility, curators delve into each of their respective exhibitions on art by women, and consider the challenges, boundaries and importance of such exhibitions as they begin to appear more in gallery programming.

- Short presentations followed by a roundtable discussion between **Annette Wickham** (Co-Curator of *Angelica Kauffman* at the Royal Academy), **Tabitha Barber** (Curator of *Now You See Us: Women Artists in Britain 1520–1920*, Tate Britain) and **Dr Flavia Frigeri** (Chanel Curator for the Collection, National Portrait Gallery)

13:00 Lunch Break (lunch not provided)

PART 2 WOMEN AND THE NATIONAL GALLERY COLLECTION

14:00-15:00 Panel 3: Copyists and Dealers (Chaired by Maria Alambritis, National Gallery)

Considering the wider roles women have had in the art world, this panel explores the international experiences of women copyists and the activities of Jewish women dealers, particularly in relation to the National Gallery. By understanding the diverse ways in which women have actively engaged with the Gallery and its collection, we gain a more comprehensive understanding of art history and the societal factors that have shaped it. Additionally, examining women's engagement with the Gallery helps identify and address not only their opportunities, but historical and contemporary barriers to their participation in the art world, ultimately fostering a more inclusive cultural landscape.

- **Sarah Herring** (Associate Curator of Post-1800 Paintings, National Gallery), 'The National Gallery Copyist Register for the First Decade of the 20th Century: An International Perspective'
- **Dr Isobel Muir** (PhD, National Gallery and Durham University), 'London's Jewish Women Art Dealers, 1870-1950'

15:00 Refreshments

15:15-16:15 Panel 4: Contemporary Projects (Chaired by Daniel F. Herrmann, National Gallery)

Throughout its history, the National Gallery has provided a platform for celebrated women artists, from Bridget Riley to Maggi Hambling. Since the 1980s, the Gallery has invited artists to take up residency within the museum to develop their work in response to its world-renowned collections. Women have taken up the role of Artist in Residence and Associate Artist since these schemes have been established. This panel focuses on a new oral histories project, which has been set up to capture crucial personal perspectives, experiences and narratives that might otherwise be lost to time. Providing a unique insight into women's experiences at the National Gallery as part of the contemporary programme, oral histories help diversify historical records and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the past, in this instance, also enriching the National Gallery's own institutional history.

- **Annabel Bai Jackson** (Dorset Curatorial Fellow for Modern and Contemporary Projects, National Gallery), 'The National Gallery Oral Histories Project: Women's Narratives'
- **Priyesh Mistry** (Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Projects, National Gallery) and **Céline Condorelli** (Artist in Residence 2023), 'A Machine for Seeing: Céline Condorelli's National Gallery Residency'

16:15 Refreshments

KEYNOTE

16:30-17:45 'Paula Rego and Crivelli's Garden: Women Recast' (working title)

(Introduced by Christine Riding, National Gallery)

As the National Gallery's first Associate Artist from 1990 to 1991, Paula Rego created *Crivelli's Garden*, commissioned for the Sainsbury Wing Dining Room. Rego's residency at the Gallery provided her with the opportunity to delve deeply into Carlo Crivelli's painting, *La Madonna della Rondine (The Madonna of the Swallow)*, and her response comprises a series of reinterpretations and responses to the original artwork. Through her residency, Rego not only engaged with Crivelli's artistic techniques and themes but also injected her own imaginative and contemporary perspectives into the dialogue surrounding the historic masterpiece. In addition to Crivelli's painting, she was inspired by many other works in what she called the Gallery's 'masculine' collection. Seeing an opportunity to engage with this collection in her own way, Rego's work offered a contemporary and nuanced exploration of the female experience, infusing biblical and mythological narratives with her own insights and perspectives. Through her reinterpretations, Rego highlighted the complexities of womanhood, challenging traditional portrayals and inviting viewers to reconsider the roles and representations of women in art and society.

For the keynote, we are thrilled to welcome **Professor Dame Marina Warner** (writer, historian, mythographer and novelist), who will deliver a short presentation on *Crivelli's Garden*, followed by a conversation with **Lauren Elkin**, writer and author of *Art Monsters: Unruly Bodies in Feminist Art* (2023).

17:45 Drinks reception

18.30 Conference finishes