

Amanda Nordmann  
Professor Adams  
Art History  
7 December 2005

### Women Artists Deserve More Attention

What is the woman's place in the world? Are they here just to cook, clean, and raise children, or is it possible that men and women have equal significance? In the arts are they just objects of representation or can they be producers of art themselves?

Women could never be artists themselves, because they need to get supper ready and make sure the laundry is done? Or could they? Why have and why do so many people feel that women cannot become great artists because they have domestic responsibilities to tend to, not to mention the emotional baggage they carry. Even if they did, is it possible for them to create artwork that is not decorative or cute? Women throughout the centuries have proven otherwise. They are just as capable as men and have been producing great art with exceptional skill that holds significant meaning for centuries and are worthy of receiving equal attention.

The Renaissance was the first time biographies of women artists were being written. Many women artists had widespread fame in their native countries and they attracted many patrons and writers (Heller 15). Sofonsiba Anguissola was the first well-known artist during the Renaissance. She was one of six daughters that became a painter. She sisters and her were well educated in Latin, music, and painting. She was invited to join the court of Phillip II in Madrid. She has even been critiqued throughout the centuries and in 1546 Giorgi Vasari, a noted Italian painter, was extremely impressed by her work. Filipp Badinucci also compared her to Titian and said their work was equal (Chadwick 77). However, in the early 1900's her work was considered too sentimental.

Nevertheless, she was an innovative Late Renaissance painter, whose international success inspired many young women (Heller 16-19). At the time it was important for women to fit into a ladylike mold (Borzello 23), which prohibited her from selling her work due to her social status. Her paintings were only allowed to circulate among the upper class as gifts. It is unfortunate that the first woman to achieve fame and respect as a painter could not compete with males for commissioned works because of such restraints (Chadwick 79).

Properzia de' Rossi was a well-known Renaissance sculptor. In her youth, she was able to render complex sculptures such as an entire crucifixion scene in apricot, peach, or cherry pits (Borzello 17). Her work attracted the attention of many including Vasari. Her work was not limited to miniatures though; she made large portrait busts, which changed peoples' impression of her to that of a serious artist. One of her most impressive accomplishments was winning a competition to produce a marble sculpture that would hang on the west side of the Bolognese Church of San Petri (Heller 23). Many felt that she was overstepping the bounds of femininity, which led to a low commission in order to discourage her from continuing the production of public works (Chadwick 92).

During the Renaissance, a new emphasis was placed on education for women because of the Protestant Reformation. Both Italian and Northern European women gained a lot of ground towards becoming professional artists. Greater level of skill and sophistication was shown in their work. They began to gain international reputations and traveled to serve rulers of other countries. Even though there was still an emphasis on

portraits, it broadened to include religious and mythological subjects as well as a new genre, the still life (Heller 27).

Women's achievements began to expand even more as they entered the seventeenth century. All artists began to focus on how things actually looked instead of idealizing how they thought things should look. Work began to have energy instead of being static, and there was a new emphasis on the contrast between light and dark. One female painter that used this new style extremely well was Artemisia Gentileschi. She used the Caravaggesque style in her full-scale religious paintings. She had a sophisticated understanding of anatomy and perspective and a flair for drama in her paintings. Many of her most intriguing works were of Old Testament heroines. *Susanna and the Elders*, was a painting of Judith who had seduced the general of an Assyrian army and then cut his head off. The painting was said to be extremely convincing unlike Caravaggio's which was unconvincing, because it had a thin weak and girlish woman portrayed as Judith (Heller 32). Gentileschi was the first woman to become a member of the Florence Academy of Design (Borzello 52).

Another great painter from the seventeenth century was Elisabetta Sirani. She was able to paint extremely fast and many people did not believe that she actually did the paintings herself. She began to invite skeptics to come and watch as she painted to prove that she did not receive help from her father or others. When her father became crippled she was able to support her entire family by selling her paintings. Later on she set up a painting school for women and taught many classes. She was also highly inspiring among her colleagues, but in the last century she has received little attention (Heller 33-34). Many of her works, such as *Portia Wounding her Thigh*, depicted women hurting

themselves. Some believe that it was a way of depicting the inferiority many women felt based on their gender (Chadwick 101). Women artists like Rossi, Gentileschi, and Sirani achieved an unbelievable level of attention in their lifetimes. It was said to be evidence of what women could be, but they were supposedly endowed with the skills that normal women did not possess (Chadwick 87).

Sibylla Merian was an excellent watercolor painter, but was best known for her engraving work. She made large contributions to science with her detailed engravings of moths and butterflies from real life in *The Wonderful Transformation of Caterpillars and Their Singular Plant Nourishment* (Heller 37). Her work helped to lay the foundation for plant and animal species classifications (Chadwick 136). She recorded their appearance and activities at various stages, which provided a wealth of new information to the science community (Heller 37). She was one in a small number of women that were admitted to the French Royale Academy, which proves that women are just as successful as male members of the academy. Women like Merian, who were properly trained in various genres, were also just as capable of producing quality paintings as their male colleagues (Borzello 62).

Sometimes a person's work is often attributed to someone else's work. This is what happened to the English painter Mary Beale. Her works have often been confused with Sir Peter Lely. Although Beale did not study with Lely, she did copy many of his works very accurately, considering they often confused her works with his (Heller 47). Sometimes marriage or children would put an end to a female artist's career, but not for Mary Beale. She was both a wife and a mother while she painted. She was so successful that her husband became her assistant and mixed her paints, primed her canvases, and

became her art dealer (Borzello 52). On top of everything else she also had many pupils who studied under her guidance (Heller 47).

During the seventeenth century, the number of successful women artists increased. They no longer rendered just portraits, but they also painted still lifes and historical events. Women united with the males to bring religious and historical subject matter down to earth to create works that everyone could identify with. As they entered the next century, women began to rise to unprecedented prominence. Their works became quieter and more sentimental than in the previous Baroque period (Heller 51).

With the eighteenth century came the Age of Reason. France at the time was dominating European art. There were many intellectual advances, but a lot of political turmoil persisted. Powerful and wealthy women who reached the height of their influence hosted private salons. Many voices were being raised in the favor of women's rights, but by the end of the eighteenth century women were in a position of even greater inferiority than in the past. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's ideas about the importance of family and the increasing power of the Academy led to increased female inferiority. Many policies were enacted that severely restricted women. For example, the French Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture limited its membership to four women at one time (Heller 53).

Rosalba Carriera, Angelica Kauffman, and Elisabeth Vigee-Lebrun were three eighteenth century women who received unprecedented praise, international fame, and financial success. All three began by doing portraits, but ended up going in separate routes and becoming major influences on young female artists (Heller 55). Carriera created a new type of painting called a pastel portrait, which inspired many others who

followed in her footsteps. Many artists had used pastels as a medium for doing preliminary sketches, but she expanded the use of pastels to render final works. Her skill in the new medium gained her recognition from many important patrons (Borzello 52). Many of her later works were done in the impressionistic style (Heller 55).

Kauffman was trained by her father and many neoclassical artists she met while traveling with him. She excelled in painting historical subjects (Chadwick 160), which challenged the monopoly held by male artists in this genre, due to the fact that it was the most prestigious subject matter at the time (Chadwick 153). She is often criticized for her drawing skills, but due to her inability to receive training she had little control over receiving help to improve them (Chadwick 160). She was a founding member of the London Royal Academy (Bozello 80). She was also a member of four other academies not including the French Academy, which allowed her in even though a law had been passed not allowing the acceptance of any other women (Heller 55-56).

Visgee-Lebrun was another typical painter of the eighteenth century who began to apply herself at a very young age. At the age of fifteen she was earning enough money to support herself. She painted vibrant portraits that preserved the way of life that was fading fast (Heller 56-58), due to the fact that around 1789 the French Revolution was underway (Borzello 53). Visgee-Lebrun was often criticized for her brushstrokes, which changed in order to emphasize gender differences. When she painted male figures they had rough and rigid surfaces and intense eye gazes, whereas, when she painted female figures they had softened contours and misted faces (Chadwick 160-161).

During the eighteenth century, three-dimensional portraits became popular. Anne Seymour Damer was the best-known portrait sculptor of the time, creating bust and full-

length portraits (Heller 64). Since she was not allowed to study the male figure in the flesh, she consulted numerous books and took anatomy courses (Borzello 93). She was often considered eccentric by friends and ridiculed by the press for her confidence in aspiring to carve academic nude figures (Chadwick 151). However, after the French Revolution there was a surge of interest in sentimental domestic paintings. Rousseau's radical notion that the middle class should devote themselves to their children, breast feeding, and education influenced the art world greatly. Many paintings depicted the joys of motherhood and other domestic scenes of mother and child. Marguerite Gerard, Fragonard's sister-in-law, was well known for her domestic subject paintings, similar to Mary Cassatt (Heller 64-66).

With the beginning of the nineteenth century, many more women entered the art profession. There was a wider range of subject matter as well as styles. Women still lacked access to education and were pressured to live traditional domesticated lives. Record numbers of nineteenth century English women participated in public exhibitions. Two even helped found the British Royal Academy, but were not eligible to become members themselves (Heller 74-75).

A new genre of painting surfaced called the Victorian genre. These scenes depicted couples flirting, children playing, family outings, and ladies having tea. Around this time American women began to come into their own as successful painters and sculptors. Lilly Martin Spencer was an American painter who painted in the Victorian genre. She specialized in scenes that depicted a housewife's daily routine while adding humor (Heller 76-82). Many people responded to her work and embraced it, while at the same time almost mocking them silently (Chadwick 214). Many her works only made

sense after reading the title of the work. For example, one particular painting was of a young woman standing in the kitchen crying, but the viewer does not know why until they read the title, *Peeling Onions* (Rubinstein 36).

Many women began to paint subjects that would not have typically been done by men. Rosa Bonheur, for example, was very successful at portraying animals and even visited slaughterhouses to look at the anatomy of various animals (Heller 90). She often dressed in men's clothes when attending horse markets in order to avoid unwanted attention (Borzello 148). Her fame among the British middle-class aligned with the debate on animal rights and abuse. Her work of animals is often paralleled to how men treat women and focuses on the idea of power (Chadwick 194-195). Elizabeth Thompson painted battle scenes and even had people dress in authentic replicas of uniforms when they posed (Heller 92). She was able to paint in a large format with meticulous realism that portrayed weary and injured soldiers. Many commented that she must have been a nurse because she expressed such sympathy in her work (Chadwick 198). Once again women were criticized for portraying emotion in their paintings even though the emotions were appropriate.

Sculpture was the one area of art that women were less inclined to enter. Nude models were inaccessible to women, which made it difficult to render an accurate sculpture. It was also more expensive to get started. Large chunks of marble were not cheap and if the artist was not used to working with it they could easily mess up. A quote from Heller's text highlights this situation very well. "The number of women who have acquired celebrity in the art of painting is large; but half a score would probably include all the names of those who have achieved greatness in sculpture.... The palette, the

pencil, and colors fall naturally to their hands; but mallets and chisels are weighty and painful implements, and masses of wet clay, blocks of marble, and castings of bronze are rude and intractable materials for feminine labors (84). This goes to show that women who worked as sculptors were extremely hard working and loved what they did to be able to undertake such a task.

During the nineteenth century, Impressionism struck the art world. Berthe Morisot was a well-known French Impressionist even though she received negative responses. She produced Impressionist still lifes, landscapes, and scenes of women. Her work, like that of the Impressionistic style, was spontaneous and her brushstrokes created a sense of liveliness (Heller 94-98). She had developed a close relationship with Manet and remained loyal to his style until she died. However, it seems that Morisot even received criticism from male artists of the Impressionist group, especially Renoir. He made the comment that, "The woman artist is merely ridiculous, but I am in favor of the female singer and dance (Chadwick 234)." It appears that working class women are admired for entertaining men, but professional women are considered destroyers of domestic responsibilities.

Mary Cassatt was another well-known Impressionist painter, but she was American. However, she eventually ended up settling in Paris for most of her life. She became close friends with Degas whose style clearly influenced her. Her compositions resembled the typical snapshot style of the Impressionists who often cut their subject matter as well as using loose brushstrokes to capture a fleeting moment. Cassatt has often been ridiculed for the subject matter that she painted extensively. She remained single and therefore used her relatives and their small children as models for her paintings

(Heller 98-99). Since she was limited to the use of the males in the family as models (Chadwick 248), most of her work contains women and children. This is the very subject for which she ended up excelling in and becoming famous for. She has been criticized based on the idea that she only painted what she supposedly knew, which was women and children. These critics were completely wrong. She actually hoped to bring an insightful eye to the ritualistic gestures through which femininity is constructed and signified (Chadwick 238). It is important to mention, however, that Cassatt's subject matter extended beyond women and children. She actually painted many portraits and was influenced greatly by Japanese woodcuts (Heller 98-99).

The twentieth century brought many new technological and scientific discoveries. There was the telegraph, the airplane's first successful flight, and Henry Ford's mass automobile production. Many of these ideas and inventions led to the questioning of a new way of life, which was only heightened by World War I. This time became the age of the "isms" that followed each other with great speed. There was Fauvism, Cubism, Dadaism, and Surrealism (Heller 113).

Women artists were an active a part of all of the movements in the art world. Women from countries not traditionally known began to emerge. For women still studying in Paris, they were allowed to study alongside men and be able to draw from the nude model. Women were overcoming the pressure to lead more conventional domestic lives and establishing themselves as professional artists, except in the United States where resistance was still strong (Chadwick 256).

Susanne Valadon's work tended to combine both the Fauvist and Expressionist styles that had their roots in Post-Impressionism. She had started out by modeling for

well-known male artists such as Chavannes, Renoir, and Toulouse-Lautrec. She soon found out that she liked being on the other side of the easel and began producing landscapes, still-lives, portraits, and her specialty, the nude female (Heller 114-116). Due to her extensive work with the female body, she is often considered an unrespectable middle-class woman (Chadwick 282). Valadon often used bold outlines as well as vibrant juxtaposed hues to add an emotional level to her work (Heller 114-116). Many of the females' positions in her paintings were awkward, which is based on the idea that they were allowed to choose their own positions. This idea is often compared to Renoir's belief that women are "beautiful fruit," which can be arranged any way the artist likes (Chadwick 285-286). It seems that men often felt that they were able to control women however they liked, what careers they were allowed to have and even their body positions.

The next modernist style to come about after Fauvism and Expressionism was Cubism. Cubism challenged the very core of Western art. It fractured the works and often left subjects distorted and at times illegible. Even though Cubism was short-lived it had a tremendous impact on the art world in many countries. Natalya Goncharova was a Russian sculptor who fled during the Russian Revolution and headed to Europe. She had attended the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture, where she studied with a pupil of Rodin's. Her early work resembled that of the French Impressionists and Post-Impressionists. Later on her works resembled Cubism and were based on the colors and shapes of Russian folk art. She felt that in order to express and convey ideas of importance, they needed to make reference to her culture (Chadwick 263-264). She was eventually part of developing Rayonism, a Cubist-based optical technique that

emphasized the rays of light that objects reflected. This group of advanced thinkers actually treated women as equals of the male population (Chadwick 264).

During the twentieth century, abstraction was less common and definitely less welcome in the United States. Nevertheless, a group of American artists led by Georgia O'Keefe began to explore all that abstraction offered. Georgia O'Keefe is the best-known artist of our time and is known for her paintings of large flowers and desert scenes and bones (Heller 126-128). O'Keefe's works, which were based on natural objects transformed into abstractions (Rubinstein 81), were produced with flat colors, eccentric compositions, and simplicity. She has been plagued with what the underlying meaning of her flowers are. Many suggest that her flower blossoms tend to resemble certain parts of the female anatomy. However, O'Keefe denies any symbolism, whether it is sexual or otherwise, behind her flower paintings. Her work is abstract in the sense that she does not paint objects but rather the shapes that she sees when looking at them (Heller 126-128).

Another remarkable and extremely well-known women was Louise Nevelson. She was a Russian native, but moved to Maine where she decided to become a professional sculptor. In the 1930's and 1940's Nevelson did primarily small wood and terra-cotta sculptures in the Cubist style. She created a method to putting her sculptures together. She would gather discarded and recycled materials, such as railroad ties, milk crates, and scrap metals and combine them to create large-scale constructions (Heller 133-134). Due to the following blatant sexual critical response from her first major exhibition she did not show her work in a single gallery for almost ten years: "We learned the artist was a woman, in time to check our enthusiasm. Had it been otherwise,

we might have hailed the sculptural expression as surely by a great figure among moderns (Chadwick 331).” This statement proves that artworks were not judged based on the skill with which they produced or the statements they made, but rather on the sex of the artist.

Frida Kahlo was an artist whose work was shaped by ongoing physical trauma. At the age of fifteen she was in a car accident that left her with a crushed spine and pelvis, which left her in constant pain. The accident left her unable to have children that she so desperately wanted, and became an underlying theme of her work (Heller 147-148). A dual nature occurred in her work between the interior and exterior subject. For example, she was often wearing costumes and was highly ornamented in her portraits, but she also depicted the pain of being crippled (Chadwick 315). Her work often showed the braces, which she had to wear and made reference to her physical and psychic pain (Heller 147-148).

During the 1940's and 1950's, people began to look at the United States for the first time for new ideas in the production of art. It was the period of Abstract Expressionism, which has been linked to the effects of World War II. It was a way for people to express themselves in a world that they no longer understood. Even after women had proven themselves as being capable of handling things while the men were fighting overseas, the men still did not feel a women could become a professional artist. Nevertheless, women became Abstract Expressionists and are still known today (Heller 150-153).

Lee Krasner, who was married to Jackson Pollock, belonged to the first group of Abstract Expressionists. She was interested in combining surrealism and abstraction and

did so by developing her spontaneous gestural techniques (Heller 164). It was as if her approach to painting had become a meditative exercise (Chadwick 322). Her work was filled with high energy and obvious rhythm. It was hard for her to make a name for herself due to the fact that her husband was extremely well known and their work tended to resemble each others (Heller 164-166). She struggled to find a place for herself independent of her husband and separated from the subjection of masculine influence (Chadwick 322).

Helen Frankenthaler was another big name during this time. Her work often focused around the effects of light and transparency in a technique called stain painting. She often allowed the oil paints to soak through to canvases underneath, which allowed a sense of depth to appear in her work. Along with layered patches of paint, she had drips and swirls of color that added texture and movement to her paintings (Heller 169). She was the only women painter at the time to dismiss gender issues. However, her work has been placed in a constructed category along with Georgia O'Keeffe and other previous artists as being based on color and touch, which automatically makes it feminine. Many critics stopped examining their work and its link to historical context, but rather considered them to be traditional of artwork created by women (Chadwick 328).

Once the spontaneous brushwork of Abstract Expressionism had been around for a while, Op art came and went quickly. Instead of the previous style, which showed every brushstroke and was done quickly, there was a shift towards work that had smooth invisible brushstrokes and defined edges (Heller 176). Bridget Riley has been accepted as one of the masters of Op Art. She often used juxtaposed colors in various patterns that caused the viewers eye to react and appear as though her work had a sense of depth.

After graduating from both the Goldsmith's College of Art and the Royal College of Art, she was able to support herself as a teacher and commercial artist. When she began, she used mostly black, white, and gray to paint simple repeated forms. Later on she began using various complimentary hues of blue, orange, red, and green. All of her work consisted of interlocking shapes that created a subtle sense of motion (Heller 176-179).

During this time, a group of women began to extend the realm of sculpture to include both interior and exterior sculptures that were made of a variety of materials. Many works of this time were often designed with a specific location in mind. The Polish sculptor Magdalena Abkanowicz worked with fiber materials and bronze. She began as a weaver, but later concentrated on nonfunctional organic forms. She was interested in material that allowed her to shape the objects with only her hands and without the aid of any tools. Many of her pieces were abstract, but a few of her works resembled various parts of the human body (Heller 188-189). Even though she received international attention, many critics rejected the dichotomy of art and craft (Chadwick 263).

By the 1980's it was not uncommon for women painters and sculptors to attend college, have their work displayed in museums, receive high prices for their work, or attract media attention and be widely known. More women began to enter the field and became more visible than ever before. Even though they faced some of the old obstacles on a smaller scale many new possibilities were open to them (Chadwick 289).

In 1998, Jenny Holzer created quite a stir in the art world. In the ninety-third year of the prestigious Venice Biennale, she was the first female artist to represent the United States. Her artwork is hard to ignore and she has been featured on the cover of multiple

major art magazines. She is best known for her computerized light-emitting signs that have appeared on city streets and in art galleries. These works include statements that some find to be profound and others tend to dismiss. She says that her messages are intended to gain the strongest possible response out of her viewers. She had these messages placed on t-shirts, billboards, posters, and carved into benches and walls in an attempt to cause a stir among the readers (Heller 210-212).

Another American artist who emphasized words in her work was Jenny Holzer. She created statements based on inflammatory situations and combined them with images. She had no formal training, but developed a knack for arranging items to catch viewers' attentions. She was interested in the works by Abakonowicz and created sculpture for awhile, however she is best known for her black and white posters with images from magazines, movies, and other various media sources and combines them with pithy phrases. The images are usually fragmented and the phrases appear to be pasted on (Heller 212-215).

Both Holzer and Kruger use humor as a means to get their disturbing messages to the public. Often times their work is censored and even removed by people who object to the message they are trying to convey. The main difference between the two is that Holzer writes her own messages, which allow for more open interpretation, while Kruger uses pre-existing texts that leave little room for interpretation (Heller 212-215).

It is easy to see from all of the female artists mentioned in the previous pages that they are worthy of recognition and need to receive more attention. They have all created work equal to that of their male colleagues, if not better at times, and deserve to be widely known. When I first became interested in this very topic, I found it frustrating at

the little information available. When I visited the library there were shelves lined with books on male artists that I had never heard of or even come across in my numerous art textbooks. Finding texts on individual female artists became a nightmare. Only six of the women I have mentioned had books of their own and only one or two books at that.

Women artists have always been around, struggling to prove themselves. They have included medieval nuns who made manuscripts, they have been celebrities in their own times, and they were involved in all the movements throughout the art world. However, today women artists are still plagued with some of the same things that their predecessors dealt with. Women continue to face the conflicting demands of a professional career and domestic responsibilities. They deal with insufficient incomes well below that of their male counterparts. However, one thing that needs to be remembered is that these problems face women beyond just the art world. It is important for women to remember that through the struggle of women artists they forced people to open up their minds and acknowledge the fact that women can be artists and have been part of our culture for centuries.

Works Cited

Chadwick, Whitney. *Women, Art, and Society*. Thames and Hudson Ltd, London. 2002

Heller, Nancy G. *Women Artists 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. Abbeville Press Publications, NY. 1997

Rubinstein, Charlotte S. *American Women Artists: from Early Indian Times to the Present*. G.K. Hall and Co., Boston. 2001

Women and Art History in Oxford Art Online. Griselda Pollock - Differencing the Canon\_ Feminism and the Writing of Art's Histories- Routledge (2013).pdf. Finn\_Jacobson\_Just Practice\_Steps Toward a New Social Work Paradigm. WORLD OF ART This famous series provides the widest available range of illustrated books on art in all its aspects. If you would like to receive a complete list. It also directed attention to the categories "art" and "artist" through which the discipline of art history has structured knowledge. Originating in the description and classification of objects, and the identifying of a class of individuals known as "artists," art history has emphasized style, attribution, dating, authenticity, and the rediscovery of forgotten artists. Music artists. Authors. Directors. WWE NXT Women's Championship History 11 item list by jordanwiles94 3 votes. The Most Beautiful Women Of All Time 620 item list by G... Fictional Characters with ADHD 10 item list by Nusch 2 votes 1 comment. Official Civilization series 29 item list by Prelude 15 votes 2 comments. And here is another feature of artists who deserve more attention and if you like their work, then fav their work or even watch them and support them. They all answered with thumbnails at my forum thread, and some were so nice and suggested other people work, so I gave them feature. Unfortunately I couldn't feature them all If you like this article and features then please support it by faving it. Or if you would like a feature, I make "Do you want a feature ?!" journal every month, so you're always welcome to post thumbs in it. Older news articles with this kind of features you can see bel Art | Art history. Ten female artists you should know about. Share using Email. In the spirit of her work, we've put together a selection of female artists from around the world that deserve more attention. Amrita Sher-Gil (1913 - 1941). Three Girls by Amrita Sher-Gil, 1935 (Credit: Getty Images). An artist of Indian and Hungarian descent, Sher-Gil's work was only just becoming popular in India and Europe when she died aged 28. Art history is saturated with images of beautiful women painted by men, but Japanese artist Uemura Shoen turned the male gaze on its head all the way back in the 19th Century with her famous bijinga paintings; studies of women made from woodblock prints. Henriette Browne (1829 - 1901). A North African Fellah by Henriette Browne, 1867 (Credit: Alamy). Women were professionally active in the academic discipline of art history in the nineteenth century and participated in the important shift early in the century that began involving an "emphatically corporeal visual subject", with Vernon Lee as a notable example. It is argued that in the twentieth century women art historians (and curators), by choosing to study women artists, "dramatically" "increased their visibility".