



A Free Course on the History of Western Art

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- Welcome. Those of you that have watched my videos will know that my aim is to see if it is possible to automate the production of lectures using AI systems. In this talk I have used a system called ElevenLabs to clone my voice. The first two slides and the last are my voice and the other slides use a cloned version of my voice. It is quite good but a little flat so I will be waiting for a better version that allows more emotion to be added.

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60-07 FEMINIST ART

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Judy Chicago,
The Dinner Party,
detail, 1974–1979,

- This talk is from Section 60 on recent art movements. and this talk is about Feminist Art. Feminist art emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s alongside second-wave feminism, as women artists challenged male-dominated institutions and art history. It used painting, performance, photography, video, and installation to explore women's experiences, gender roles, and power, while demanding greater visibility, equality, and representation for female artists.
- OK, so let's switch to my cloned voice...

Notes

The work shown is Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party*.

REFERENCES

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Feminist Art Movement (c. 1960s–present),
The Personal Is Political: An Introduction,
c. 1960s–present,
Various media,
International



The Personal Is Political

The Women's Liberation Movement classic
with a new explanatory introduction

by Carol Hanisch

Feminist Art Movement (c. 1960s–present), *The Personal Is Political: An Introduction*,
Various media, International

- Feminist art is not a style but a **political stance**. Emerging from the Women's Liberation Movement of the late 1960s, it challenged the art world's systematic exclusion of women from galleries, museums, and art history textbooks. Artists asked a deceptively simple question: why were almost all the famous artists men, when women had always made art?
- In 1971, art historian **Linda Nochlin** published her landmark essay "**Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?**" in ARTnews. She argued the problem was not talent but institutional barriers: "**The fault lies not in our stars, our hormones, our menstrual cycles, or our empty internal spaces, but in our institutions and our education.**"
- The movement coincided with second-wave feminism, the contraceptive pill, and seismic shifts in women's legal rights. In America, **Title IX** was passed in 1972. In Britain, the Equal Pay Act arrived in 1970. Women artists began organising cooperatives, founding journals, and storming the gates of institutions that had ignored them for centuries.
- A little-known fact: in 1970, only 5% of artists shown in New York commercial galleries were women, yet women comprised roughly half of all art school graduates. The **Guerrilla Girls** would later make this disparity famous with their gorilla masks and billboard campaigns. This movement did not merely add women to the canon. It questioned the canon itself.

Notes

Title IX part of the Education Amendments of 1972 says "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

Pronunciation Guide

Linda Nochlin — LIN-duh NOCK-lin

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https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/feminist_art_base



Judy Chicago (b. 1939),
The Dinner Party,
 1974–1979,
 Ceramic, porcelain,
 textile,
 1463 × 1463 cm
 (triangular),
 Brooklyn Museum, New
 York

Judy Chicago (b. 1939), *The Dinner Party*, 1974–1979, Ceramic, porcelain, textile, 1463 × 1463 cm (triangular), Brooklyn Museum, New York

- **The Dinner Party** is a monumental triangular banquet table with 39 place settings, each honouring a significant woman from history, from the primordial goddess to **Georgia O'Keeffe**.
- (CLICK) Each setting features hand-painted porcelain plates with designs derived from butterfly and vulvar imagery, embroidered runners, and gold-lustre chalices. These are the place settings for Boadaseia, Aspasia, the lover of Pericles, and the poet Sappho. Each plate has a unique design.
- There are a further 999 names are inscribed on the white tile **Heritage Floor**.
- Critical reception was ferocious. **Hilton Kramer** of the New York Times dismissed it as "**very bad art... failed art... art so mired in the pieties of a cause that it quite forgets that the cause of art has its own imperatives.**" Feminist critics were divided too: some felt the vaginal imagery was essentialist. Yet the public queued for hours to see it.
- Chicago produced the work with over **400 volunteers** across five years, learning china-painting and needlework techniques traditionally dismissed as mere 'craft'. She deliberately chose media associated with women's domestic labour. During production, she was dropped by her gallery, her marriage ended, and funding was precarious throughout.
- After its premiere tour drew over a million visitors, no museum would permanently house it for two decades. It was finally installed at the **Brooklyn Museum** in 2007. Chicago's birth name was Judith Sylvia Cohen; she renamed herself after her hometown

as a deliberate rejection of patrilineal naming conventions.

Pronunciation Guide

Judy Chicago — JOO-dee shi-KAH-go

Georgia O'Keeffe — JOR-juh oh-KEEF

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Miriam Schapiro (1923–2015),
Anatomy of a Kimono,
1976,
Acrylic, fabric, glitter on canvas,
203 × 762 cm (ten panels),
Bruno David Gallery, St. Louis

Miriam Schapiro (1923–2015), *Anatomy of a Kimono*, 1976, Acrylic, fabric, glitter on canvas, 203 × 762 cm (ten panels), Bruno David Gallery, St. Louis

- ***Anatomy of a Kimono*** is a vast ten-panel work spanning over seven metres. It combines hard-edge geometric abstraction with sewn fabric, lace, sequins, and rickrack braid. Schapiro called this approach "**femmage**" — a fusion of 'femme' and 'collage' — reclaiming women's decorative traditions as high art. The kimono form references the garment as both a container for the female body and a surface for elaborate craft.
- Critics were initially sceptical of mixing fine art with what they considered domestic materials. However, **Lucy Lippard** praised the femmages as "**a collage of historical allusion and personal passion that makes abstraction political.**" The work forced the question: why was oil paint on canvas 'art' but embroidery on fabric 'craft'?
- In 1971, Schapiro co-founded the **Feminist Art Program** at **CalArts** with Judy Chicago, the first feminist art programme at an American art school. Together they organised **Womanhouse** (1972), transforming an abandoned Hollywood mansion into a site-specific feminist installation. Students and artists created rooms that satirised domestic life.
- Schapiro had spent the 1960s as a respected hard-edge painter, exhibiting alongside male peers. She later recalled the personal crisis of realising her abstract paintings unconsciously echoed domestic forms — fans, houses, hearts. Rather than suppress this, she embraced it. She was born in Toronto to a Russian-Jewish family and remained active until **Alzheimer's disease** ended her career around 2000.

Pronunciation Guide

Miriam Schapiro — MEER-ee-um shuh-PEER-oh

femmage — fem-AHJ

CalArts — KAL-arts

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Ana Mendieta (1948–1985),
Silueta Series (Tree of Life),
1976,
Earth, grass, mud on body,
Dimensions variable,
Estate of Ana Mendieta / Galerie
Lelong, New York

Ana Mendieta (1948–1985), *Silueta Series (Tree of Life)*, 1976, Earth, grass, mud on body, Dimensions variable, Estate of Ana Mendieta / Galerie Lelong, New York

- In ***Tree of Life***, Mendieta stands against a tree trunk, her naked body covered in mud and grass, merging with the bark until the boundary between woman and nature dissolves. It is one of over 200 works in her ***Silueta*** series (1973–1980), in which she pressed her silhouette into earth, sand, snow, and fire across sites in Iowa and Mexico. These ephemeral 'earth-body' sculptures were documented only in photographs and film.
- The art world took notice. Critic **Donald Kuspit** described her work as "**a reconciliation of the self with the earth that is also an act of mourning for a lost homeland.**" Her practice bridged Land Art, Body Art, and feminism in ways that were entirely her own.
- Mendieta was born in Havana. In 1961, aged twelve, she and her sister were sent to America through **Operation Peter Pan**, a programme that relocated 14,000 Cuban children during the revolution. She spent years in foster homes and orphanages in Iowa. The trauma of exile — of being severed from her motherland — became the engine of her art.
- In 1985, aged 36, Mendieta fell from the 34th-floor window of the apartment she shared with her husband, the Minimalist sculptor **Carl Andre**. Andre was charged with murder but acquitted. The case remains deeply contested. At protests, feminist artists carried banners reading "**Where is Ana Mendieta?**" — a question that has echoed through the art world for decades.

Pronunciation Guide

Ana Mendieta — AH-nah men-dee-EH-tah

Silueta — see-loo-EH-tah

Carl Andre — karl ANN-dray

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Mary Kelly (b. 1941),
Post-Partum Document,
 1973–1979,
 Mixed media: nappy liners, plaster casts,
 texts,
 Dimensions variable (139 units),
 ICA, London

- **Post-Partum Document** is a six-section, 139-unit conceptual artwork that meticulously records the first six years of Kelly's relationship with her son. It includes used nappy liners preserved behind Perspex, plaster casts of tiny hands, first words transcribed phonetically, and Lacanian psychoanalytic diagrams. The work maps the mother-child bond as both an emotional experience and a socially constructed one.
- (CLICK) This is a wool vest worn by her son on a white card inside a perspective container. It has "Intersubjectivity", a reference and the date written on it.
- When it was first exhibited at the **ICA London** in 1976, the dirty nappy liners caused a tabloid scandal. The **Daily Mirror** ran the headline "**Dirty Nappies on Display.**" Critics called it pretentious, disgusting, or both. Yet Kelly's rigorous intellectual framework drew praise from thinkers like **Griselda Pollock**, who called it a groundbreaking challenge to conventional representations of motherhood.
- Kelly, an American living in London, was deeply immersed in the intellectual ferment of 1970s British feminism. She was involved with the **Women's Liberation Workshop** and the **Berwick Street Film Collective**. The **Post-Partum Document** emerged during the years when feminists hotly debated whether motherhood was a patriarchal trap or a unique female experience worth investigating.
- Kelly deliberately refused to include any images of herself or her child, rejecting the traditional Madonna-and-child format. She applied the theoretical apparatus of **Jacques Lacan** and **Juliet Mitchell** to the mundane realities of nappies, feeding schedules, and

first utterances. The result was one of the most intellectually ambitious artworks of the 1970s — and one of the most controversial.

Pronunciation Guide

Mary Kelly — MAH-ree KEL-ee

Lacan — lah-KAHN

Griselda Pollock — grih-ZEL-duh POL-uk

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Carolee Schneemann (1939–2019),
Interior Scroll,
 1975,
 Performance with paper scroll,
 Dimensions variable,
 Documented in photographs and film

Carolee Schneemann (1939–2019), *Interior Scroll*, 1975, Performance with paper scroll, Dimensions variable, Documented in photographs and film

- In *Interior Scroll*, Schneemann stood naked on a table, slowly extracted a narrow paper scroll from her vagina, and read from it aloud. The text, drawn from her film *Kitch's Last Meal*, recounted a conversation with a "structuralist filmmaker" (widely understood to be **Anthony McCall**) who dismissed her work as too personal, too autobiographical, too feminine. The scroll became a literal symbol of knowledge held within the female body.
- The performance was received with shock and reverence in equal measure. Schneemann later recalled that audience members wept, walked out, or sat in stunned silence. Critic **Kristine Stiles** described it as "**one of the most important performance works of the twentieth century.**" Others accused Schneemann of exhibitionism.
- Schneemann had been a pioneering figure in performance art since *Meat Joy* (1964), a riotous group performance involving half-naked bodies, raw fish, and chickens. By 1975, she was frustrated that the male-dominated art world pigeonholed her as a 'body artist' while celebrating male Conceptualists as cerebral geniuses. The Vietnam War was ending, Watergate had shattered public trust, and feminists were pushing for the Equal Rights Amendment.
- Schneemann initially performed *Interior Scroll* at a women-only event in East Hampton, New York, called "**Women Here and Now**". She repeated it in 1977 at the Telluride Film Festival. She once noted with dry humour that male artists who used their bodies were called visionaries; women who did the same were called narcissists. She received the **Golden Lion** for Lifetime Achievement at the Venice Biennale in 2017, two years before

her death.

Pronunciation Guide

Carolee Schneemann — KAR-oh-lee SHNEE-muhn

Kristine Stiles — kris-TEEN STYLZ

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Hannah Wilke
(1940–1993),
S.O.S.
Starification
Object Series,
1974–1982,
Chewing gum
sculptures on
photographs,
Various dimensions,
Museum of Modern
Art, New York

Hannah Wilke (1940–1993), S.O.S. Starification Object Series, 1974–1982, Chewing gum sculptures on photographs, Various dimensions, Museum of Modern Art, New York

- In **S.O.S. Starification Object Series**, Wilke photographed herself in glamorous poses — topless, pouting, modelling — with small vulvar sculptures made from chewed chewing gum stuck to her face and body. The title puns on 'scarification' and 'starification', linking ritual marking to celebrity culture. Each tiny gum form resembles both a wound and a female sex organ. The work asks: what happens when a beautiful woman uses her own beauty as artistic material?
- Critics were hostile. Many feminists accused her of narcissism and of reinforcing the very objectification she claimed to critique. **Lucy Lippard** questioned whether "**a woman who is attractive can make art about her own body without being dismissed as a narcissist.**" Wilke's defenders argued she was exposing exactly this double standard.
- Wilke came from a middle-class Jewish family in New York. Her mother and sister were both diagnosed with cancer, and she witnessed their physical decline at close range. In the 1970s, she taught sculpture at the **School of Visual Arts** while navigating a male-dominated art scene that found her too attractive to take seriously — a devastating catch-22 she confronted head-on in her work.
- Wilke's final project, **Intra-Venus** (1992–1993), documented her own body ravaged by lymphoma — bloated, bald, covered in surgical marks. She posed in deliberate echoes of Venus and fashion photography. The series, completed just before her death at 52, silenced every critic who had ever called her a narcissist. It remains one of the most

harrowing and courageous works in contemporary art.

Pronunciation Guide

Hannah Wilke — HAN-uh WIL-kee

Intra-Venus — IN-truh VEE-nus

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Cindy Sherman (b. 1954),
Untitled Film Still #21,
1978,
Gelatin silver print,
19.1 × 24.1 cm,
Museum of Modern Art, New
York

Cindy Sherman (b. 1954), *Untitled Film Still #21*, 1978, Gelatin silver print, 19.1 × 24.1 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York

- **Untitled Film Still #21** shows Sherman dressed as a young career girl standing amid towering skyscrapers, clutching a hat and gazing upward with an expression of mingled ambition and anxiety. It is one of 69 black-and-white photographs in her **Untitled Film Stills** series (1977–1980). Each image resembles a publicity still from a 1950s or 1960s B-movie, but none corresponds to any actual film. Sherman is simultaneously photographer, director, make-up artist, and actress.
- The series made Sherman famous. Critic **Douglas Crimp** championed the work as a key example of **Pictures Generation** art, arguing that Sherman demonstrated femininity itself was a performance. **Rosalind Krauss** called the series "**a stunning deconstruction of the supposed naturalness of gender.**"
- Sherman was in her mid-twenties, recently moved to New York with her partner, the artist **Robert Longo**. She was working as a receptionist at the gallery **Artists Space**. The Pictures Generation artists around her — including **Richard Prince** and **Sherrie Levine** — were all questioning the originality and authorship of images in an increasingly media-saturated world.
- In 2011, MoMA acquired the complete set of 69 Film Stills for a reported price between **\$5 million and \$10 million**. Sherman has never confirmed which Film Still is a self-portrait and which is a character: "**They're all me but none of them is me,**" she has said. She insists she is not a feminist artist, yet her work has become inseparable from feminist discourse.

Pronunciation Guide

Cindy Sherman — SIN-dee SHER-muhn

Rosalind Krauss — ROZ-uh-lind KROWSS

Robert Longo — ROB-urt LONG-oh

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Barbara Kruger (b. 1945),
Untitled (Your Body Is a Battleground),
1989,
Photographic silkscreen on
vinyl,
284.5 × 284.5 cm,
The Broad, Los Angeles

Barbara Kruger (b. 1945), *Untitled (Your Body Is a Battleground)*, 1989, Photographic silkscreen on vinyl, 284.5 × 284.5 cm, The Broad, Los Angeles

- ***Untitled (Your Body Is a Battleground)*** presents a woman's face split vertically: one half in photographic positive, the other in negative. Across it, bold white text in red bars declares "**Your body is a battleground.**" Kruger designed it as a poster for the 1989 March on Washington for Women's Lives, a massive pro-choice rally responding to the threat to **Roe v. Wade**. The image migrated from the streets into the gallery, becoming one of the most recognisable artworks of the late twentieth century.
- Critics admired its graphic punch. **Kate Linker** described Kruger's method as "**turning the language of advertising and mass media back against itself.**" Kruger's signature style — Futura Bold Oblique text in red and white over black-and-white photographs — drew directly from her years as a graphic designer at Condé Nast magazines.
- In 1989, the US Supreme Court was hearing **Webster v. Reproductive Health Services**, which threatened to restrict abortion access. Half a million women marched on Washington. The Berlin Wall fell. China's Tiananmen Square protests were crushed. It was a year when bodies — their freedoms, their vulnerabilities — were at the centre of global politics.
- Kruger grew up working-class in Newark, New Jersey, and studied at **Parsons School of Design** under **Diane Arbus**. Before becoming an artist, she was a magazine designer at **Mademoiselle**. She has never called herself a feminist artist, but her works have been adopted as feminist icons worldwide. The piece has proved grimly prophetic: reproductive rights remain fiercely contested, making the battleground metaphor as

urgent now as in 1989.

Pronunciation Guide

Barbara Kruger — BAR-bruh KROO-ger

Futura Bold Oblique — foo-TOOR-uh bohld oh-BLEEK

Diane Arbus — dee-ANN AR-bus

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Guerrilla Girls (founded 1985),
Do Women Have to Be Naked to Get Into the Met. Museum?,
1989, Offset lithograph poster, 28 × 71 cm, Tate, London

Guerrilla Girls (founded 1985), *Do Women Have to Be Naked to Get Into the Met. Museum?*, 1989, Offset lithograph poster, 28 × 71 cm, Tate, London

- This iconic poster features **Ingres'** reclining *Grande Odalisque* wearing a gorilla mask, alongside the statistic: "**Less than 5% of the artists in the Modern Art sections are women, but 85% of the nudes are female.**" The Guerrilla Girls are an anonymous collective of female artists who wear gorilla masks in public to keep the focus on their message rather than their identities. Each member adopts the name of a dead woman artist.
- The poster was originally commissioned as an advertising billboard, but the bus company rejected it as "**too provocative.**" The group then wheat-pasted it across New York's streets. Art critic **Roberta Smith** of the New York Times praised the Guerrilla Girls for "**injecting facts into art-world complacency with the force of an advertising campaign.**"
- The group formed in 1985 after a Museum of Modern Art exhibition called "**An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture**" featured 169 artists, of whom only 13 were women. In 1989, the art market was booming, with works by male artists selling for tens of millions. Women artists were largely absent from auction records and major collections. The gender pay gap extended to the gallery system.
- The Guerrilla Girls have updated their Met Museum statistics several times. By 2012, the percentage of female artists had actually **dropped to 4%**. Their methods — humour, data, guerrilla marketing — have influenced activist groups worldwide. They have produced over 100 posters, stickers, and billboards, and their work is now

collected by the very institutions they originally attacked, including the **Tate**, **MoMA**, and the **V&A**.

Pronunciation Guide

Guerrilla Girls — guh-RIL-uh GURLZ

Ingres — AHN-gruh

Grande Odalisque — grahnd oh-dah-LEESK

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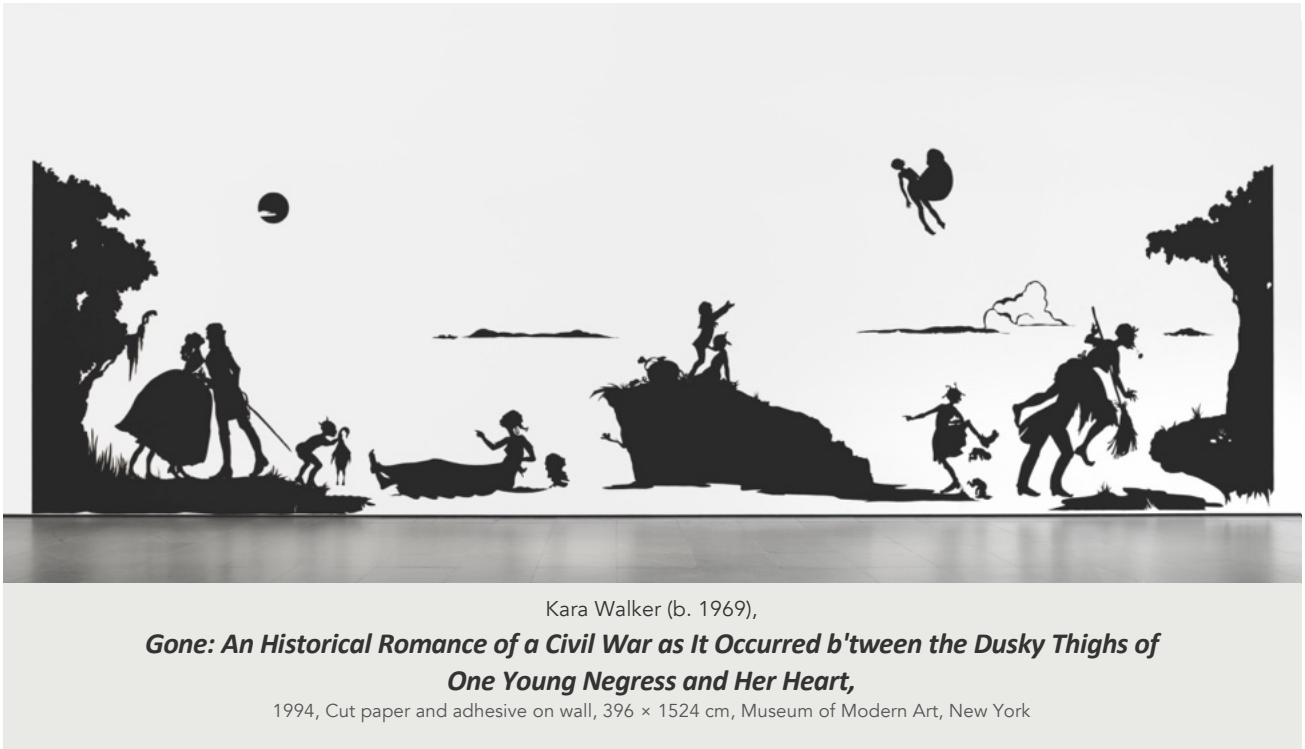
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Kara Walker (b. 1969), *Gone: An Historical Romance of a Civil War as It Occurred b'tween the Dusky Thighs of One Young Negress and Her Heart*, 1994, Cut paper and adhesive on wall, 396 × 1524 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York

- ***Gone*** is a room-size panorama of black cut-paper silhouettes installed directly on white gallery walls. It references the antebellum South, ***Gone with the Wind***, and plantation romances, but the scenes are violent, sexual, and grotesque. Figures enact scenarios of slavery, rape, murder, and complicity that refuse the polite historical amnesia of American culture. Walker's silhouettes use the genteel 18th-century craft of the silhouette portrait to depict ungentle truths.
- The work divided the art world fiercely. **Betye Saar**, the elder African American artist, mounted a letter-writing campaign against Walker, arguing her imagery recycled degrading racial stereotypes. Others, like curator **Thelma Golden**, defended the work as "**a fearless confrontation with the psychosexual dimensions of racism.**"
- Walker was just 25 when she made ***Gone***. She had recently completed her MFA at the **Rhode Island School of Design**. Growing up in Atlanta, Georgia, she experienced a racist South very different from her parents' California. She has spoken of being called racial slurs at school. In 1997, aged 27, she became one of the youngest recipients of a **MacArthur Fellowship** — the so-called 'genius grant'.
- Walker's work expanded feminist art to confront the intersection of gender and race. She showed that feminism could not discuss the female body without also discussing the Black body. Her silhouette technique is deceptively simple — just black paper and an X-Acto knife — yet the forms are so psychologically charged that viewers often

struggle to look and struggle to look away. In 2007, she represented the United States at the **Venice Biennale**.

Pronunciation Guide

Kara Walker — KAR-uh WAW-ker

Betye Saar — BET-ee SAR

Thelma Golden — THEL-muh GOHL-den

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Tracey Emin (b. 1963),
My Bed,
1998,
Mattress, linens, pillows, objects,
79 × 211 × 234 cm,
Tate, London

Tracey Emin (b. 1963), *My Bed*, 1998, Mattress, linens, pillows, objects, 79 × 211 × 234 cm, Tate, London

- ***My Bed*** is Emin's actual unmade bed, displayed with its surrounding detritus: stained sheets, empty vodka bottles, cigarette packets, used condoms, knickers with menstrual stains, pregnancy tests, and bedroom slippers. It is a raw document of a period of severe depression following a relationship breakdown, during which Emin spent several days in bed without eating or washing. She has said that when she finally got up and saw the state of the bed, she recognised it as art.
- Shortlisted for the **Turner Prize** in 1999, the work ignited a media frenzy. The **Daily Mail** was appalled. Two performance artists, **Yuan Chai and Jian Jun Xi**, jumped on the bed during the exhibition. Critic **Jonathan Jones** of *The Guardian* called it "**one of the definitive artworks of the 1990s, a self-portrait as brutally honest as anything by Rembrandt.**"
- Emin grew up in Margate, Kent, in poverty. She was raped at 13, had an abortion at 18, and has spoken about these experiences with extraordinary candour in her art. In 1998, the **Young British Artists** were at the height of their notoriety. **Charles Saatchi** was their patron and impresario. Cool Britannia was in full swing. Emin's confessional approach was both celebrated and reviled.
- In 2014, ***My Bed*** was sold at Christie's for **£2.5 million** to the collector **Count Christian Duerckheim**, who loaned it to Tate. Emin was appointed **Royal Academician** in 2007 and made a CBE. She was later diagnosed with bladder cancer in 2020 and has continued working through treatment. The bed remains perhaps the most divisive

artwork of the YBA generation.

Pronunciation Guide

Tracey Emin — TRAY-see EM-in

Yuan Chai — yoo-AHN CHAI

Jian Jun Xi — jee-AHN JOON SHEE

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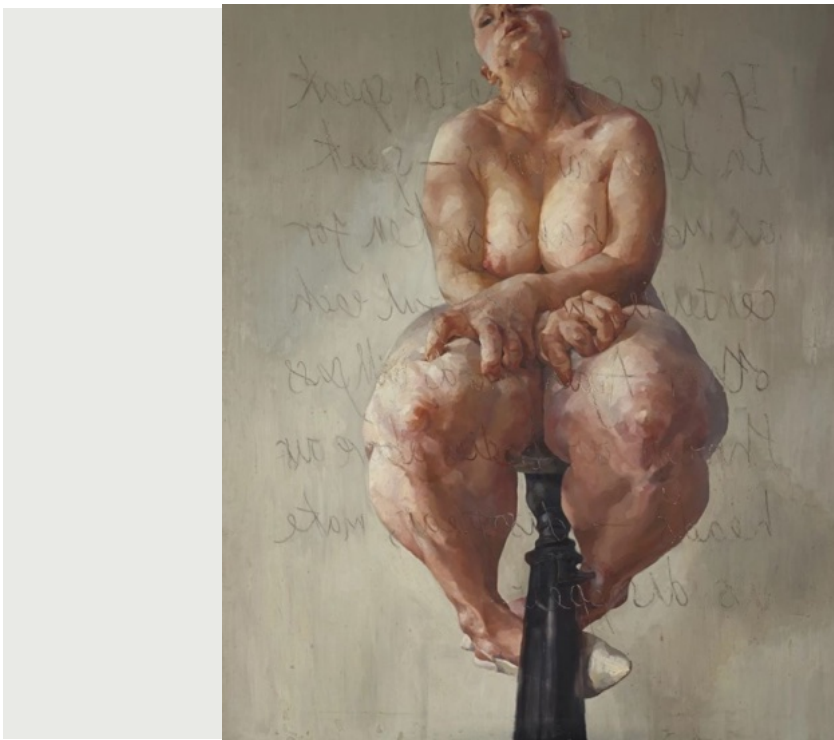
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Jenny Saville (b. 1970),
Propped,
1992,
Oil on canvas,
213.4 × 182.9 cm,
Private collection

Jenny Saville (b. 1970), *Propped*, 1992, Oil on canvas, 213.4 × 182.9 cm, Private collection

- **Propped** shows a massive female nude perched on a stool, viewed from below so that her fleshy thighs and belly loom over the viewer. Inscribed backwards across her skin in mirror-writing is a passage from **Luce Irigaray's** feminist text: **"If we continue to speak in this sameness, if we speak to each other as men have been doing for centuries, we will fail each other."** The figure's gaze is direct, unflinching, and utterly unapologetic.
- **Charles Saatchi** saw the painting while Saville was still a student at the **Glasgow School of Art** and reportedly bought her entire degree show. Critics were divided between admiration for her painterly skill and discomfort at the unflinching flesh. Saville was quickly grouped with the YBAs, though her commitment to figurative painting set her apart. In 2018, **Propped** sold at Sotheby's for **£9.5 million**, a record for a living female artist at auction.
- Saville made **Propped** as her graduation piece in 1992. She was 22 years old, working in a cramped studio. She has described watching cosmetic surgery procedures and visiting morgues to study flesh in extremis. Her fascination was with the gap between the idealised female body in art history — Rubens, Titian — and the real bodies of living women.
- Saville's monumental nudes challenged both the male gaze tradition in painting and the super-slim beauty standards of 1990s culture. She was painting enormous, powerful, heavy female bodies at the exact moment when 'heroin chic' dominated fashion. She has credited **Lucian Freud** and **Willem de Kooning** as influences, but insisted the perspective was entirely different: **"I paint women as most women experience being a**

woman — from the inside of their bodies, not from the outside looking in."

Pronunciation Guide

Jenny Saville — JEN-ee SAV-il

Luce Irigaray — LOOS ee-ree-gah-RAY

Lucian Freud — LOO-shun FROYD

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Wangechi Mutu (b. 1972), *The New Ones, will free Us*, 2019, Bronze, Each approx. 290 cm height, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (façade commission)

- ***The New Ones, will free Us*** comprises four monumental bronze caryatids — female figures that serve as architectural columns — installed in the empty niches of the Met's Fifth Avenue façade. These niches had stood vacant since the building was completed in 1902. Mutu's figures are hybrid beings: part human, part plant, part otherworldly, their surfaces textured with organic protuberances, disc-like ornaments, and coiled forms drawn from African sculptural traditions and science fiction.
- The commission was widely praised. **Holland Cotter** of the New York Times wrote that Mutu had placed "**powerful, visionary images of Black womanhood at the front door of a museum that has historically marginalised both.**" The work reclaimed the caryatid — a form rooted in ancient Greek architecture where women's bodies bear the weight of buildings — as a symbol of Black female strength and endurance.
- Mutu was born in Nairobi, Kenya, and studied at the **Royal College of Art** in London before settling in New York, later returning to live between both Nairobi and Brooklyn. Her earlier work — intricate collages of magazine clippings, medical illustrations, and pornography — explored the exoticisation and commodification of the Black female body. The Met commission came at a moment when museums worldwide were reckoning with their colonial histories.
- The caryatids were the first artworks ever commissioned for the Met's façade niches. The fact that a **Kenyan-born woman** was chosen to fill a space that one of America's grandest cultural institutions had left empty for over a century was itself a powerful

statement. Mutu's work extends feminist art into the **Afrofuturist** realm, imagining female bodies that are neither idealised nor victimised but mythic, powerful, and utterly alien to Western conventions of beauty.

Pronunciation Guide

Wangechi Mutu — wahn-GEH-chee MOO-too

caryatid — kah-ree-AT-id

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Tala Madani (b. 1981),
Stoneman Skinning Man,
 2011,
 45.8 × 40.6 cm,
 Tate

Tala Madani (b. 1981), ***Stoneman Skinning Man***, 2011, 45.8 × 40.6 cm, Tate

Feminist Art Movement (c. 1960s–present), Legacy and Continuing Influence, Various media, International

- *Stoneman Skinning Man* is a small-scale oil painting on canvas by the Iranian-born artist Tala Madani.
- The characters in Madani's paintings are always male, and often take the form of a cartoon-like, dark haired, possibly Middle Eastern figure. These men are usually engaged in actions of base behaviour.
- It depicts two men, one of whom is apparently made from stone. This figure peels the skin of the second man, who stands in front of him with his arms raised. The second man has a strange bulge protruding from the front of his body, with a cave-like opening exposing the inside of his torso.
- Just to sum up.
- **Feminist art did not end.** It mutated. The movement's legacy is visible everywhere, from the **#MeToo** movement to the global proliferation of women's art festivals, from intersectional identity politics to the current boom in prices for work by women artists. In 2024, women represented approximately 40% of gallery rosters in major Western capitals — still unequal, but unrecognisable compared to the 5% of the early 1970s.
- The movement fundamentally changed art history as a discipline. Scholars like **Griselda Pollock** and **Linda Nochlin** rewrote the textbooks to include women. Museums launched major retrospectives of previously ignored artists: **Hilma af Klint** at the Guggenheim in 2018 drew over 600,000 visitors. **Artemisia Gentileschi's** 2020 show at

the National Gallery, London, was the first monographic exhibition of a female artist in the institution's history.

- Critics have noted, however, that market success does not equal structural equality. Curator **Helen Molesworth** has argued that "**institutions have become very good at performing inclusion without actually redistributing power.**" The glass ceiling in museum directorships, board membership, and auction prices remains stubbornly in place for many women, and especially for women of colour.
- Third-wave and fourth-wave feminists have expanded the conversation to include **trans rights, disability art, decolonisation, and ecological feminism**. Artists like **Zanele Muholi, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, and Lubaina Himid** (Turner Prize winner 2017) continue to push boundaries.

Pronunciation Guide

Hilma af Klint — HIL-mah ahf KLINT

Artemisia Gentileschi — ar-teh-MEE-zee-ah jen-tee-LESS-kee

Zanele Muholi — zah-NEH-leh moo-HO-lee

Njideka Akunyili Crosby — nn-jee-DEH-kah ah-KOON-yee-lee KROZ-bee

Lubaina Himid — loo-BAY-nuh HIM-id

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60-07 FEMINIST ART

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Tala
Madani
**Stoneman
Skinning
Man,**
2011,



- This is me again.
- Let us remind ourselves of the question Linda Nochlin asked in 1971 "**Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?**", has been answered — not by finding 'great women artists' but by dismantling the idea of 'greatness' and showing that the words connotations make it almost exclusively a masculine attribute. Although it is now becoming recognized as a more inclusive concept its historical baggage often still tips its connotation toward masculine-coded behaviours in many contexts. If 'greatness' is something automatically associates with men, then it is impossible for there to be 'great women artists'. We need to continue working on the subtle associations of such words.
- That brings me to the end of this talk by me and my clone on Feminist Art. Thank you for your time and attention and I look forward to recording the next talk in the series.



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