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**“ALL I WANT: PORTUGUESE WOMEN ARTISTS
FROM 1900 TO 2020” - A CASE STUDY**

Internship Report submitted to Universidade Católica Portuguesa to obtain a Master’s Degree in Culture Studies with specialization in Management of the Arts and Culture

By

Maria de Brito Matias

Universidade Católica Portuguesa: Faculty of Human Sciences

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Under the supervision of Professor Luísa Santos and Professor
Carles Guerra

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List of Figures

- Figure 1:** Installation Photograph of *Women Artists 1550-1950*, at the Brooklyn Museum from October 1, 1977 through November 27, 1977. ©Brooklyn Museum _____ 47
- Figure 2:** The Guerrilla Girls, 1987. Screenprint on paper, 1988. TATE Modern _____ 52
- Figure 3:** The Guerrilla Girls: Poster translated to Portuguese _____ 52
- Figure 4:** Harmony Hammond. *Durango*, 1979. Fabric, wood, foam, latex rubber, gesso, and rhoplex. 78.7 × 180.3 × 45.7 cm. 1986.985 The Art Institute of Chicago _____ 54
- Figure 5:** Installation view of “Bad Girls (Part 1),” 1994, at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York. ©New Museum. FRED SCRUTON/COURTESY NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, NEW YORK. _____ 57
- Figure 6:** Installation view of *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, March 4 – July 16, 2007 at The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, ©The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, photo by Brian Forrest _____ 64
- Figure 7:** Installation view of *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, March 4 – July 16, 2007 at The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, ©The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, photo by Brian Forrest _____ 67
- Figure 8:** We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85, April 21, 2017 through September 17, 2017. ©Brooklyn Museum, 2017. _____ 70
- Figure 9:** We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85, April 21, 2017 through September 17, 2017. ©Brooklyn Museum, 2017. _____ 70
- Figure 10:** National Plan for the Arts Strategic Action Plan, in *National Plan for the Arts: a strategy, a manifest, 2019-2024*, 2019 _____ 76
- Figure 11:** Aurélia de Sousa (1866-1922) Oil on canvas; 45,6 x 36,4 cm. Museu Nacional de Soares dos Reis, inv. 878 Pin MNSR _____ 85
- Figure 12:** Maria Helena Vieira da Silva (1908- 1992). *La Scala ou Les Yeux*, 1937. Óleo sobre tela, 60 x 92 cm. Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris, inv. CR 224 _____ 85
- Figure 13:** The Starting Point: *All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020* at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, Portugal. From June 2nd until August 23th 2021 _____ 88

Figure 14: Plural Feminine: *All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020* at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, Portugal. From June 2nd until August 23th 2021 _____ 89

Figure 15: Le Vivant: *All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020* at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, Portugal. From June 2nd until August 23th 2021 _____ 91

Figure 16: Collective Memories: *All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020* at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, Portugal. From June 2nd until August 23th 2021 _____ 92

Figure 17: *A World of Illusions* (2019) by Grada Kilomba. Presented at *All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020* at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, Portugal. From June 2nd until August 23th 2021 _____ 99

List of Acronyms

- **BNP:** Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (National Library of Portugal)
- **BOZAR:** Centre for Fine Arts, Belgium
- **CAM:** Centro de Arte Moderna (Center for Modern Art)
- **EU:** European Union
- **FCG:** Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation)
- **GAC:** Google Arts and Culture
- **GALAS:** *Great American Lesbian Art Show*
- **GG:** The Guerrilla Girls
- **LGBTQI+:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Two-Spirit, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Ally, Pansexual, Agender, Gender Queer, Bigender, Gender Variant and Pangender community
- **PNA:** Plano Nacional das Artes (National Plan for the Arts)
- **UN:** United Nations
- **USA:** United States of America

Abstract (English)

The current report refers to a curricular internship experience at the Plano Nacional das Artes (National Plan for the Arts or PNA), between September 2020 and March 2021, focused on the assistance to the production of the exhibition *All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020*, curated by Helena de Freitas and Bruno Marchand, planned to open at the BOZAR: Palais des Beaux-Arts (Brussels, Belgium) beginning of 2021. Following the roof fire that took place during the month of January 2021 at the BOZAR, the exhibition was canceled. Since the show was adapted to the Gulbenkian Museum, in Lisbon, from June 2nd to August 23th 2021, most of the initially planned activities (the production of the exhibition and its accompanying publication) were conducted and, as its production was the main focus of the internship, this report presents an analysis of the exhibition. The research emerges from this analysis and wishes to understand the ways in which women artists exhibitions may contribute to how cultural institutions advocate gender equality in the art world, and in particular if women artists' shows are the way to fight for this equal representation within contemporary art institutions. The primary case study is the previously mentioned exhibition, although further examples that may be read as smaller case studies throughout the history of feminist-based shows, in the North American and European contexts, will be applied. The theoretical framework for the research rests on culture studies, gender studies and curatorial studies and the current report aims to analyse the positioning of Western cultural institutions, in regard to gender equality, focusing particularly on the role of art and curatorial practices in producing knowledge and, as such, acting upon social phenomena.

KeyWords: *Women Artists; Curatorial Activism; Cultural Institutions; Visual Arts Exhibitions; Culture Studies.*

Abstract (Portuguese)

O presente relatório refere-se a uma experiência de estágio curricular no Plano Nacional das Artes, entre Setembro de 2020 e Março de 2021, centrada na assistência à produção da exposição *Tudo o que eu quero: Artistas Portuguesas de 1900 a 2020*, com curadoria de Helena de Freitas e Bruno Marchand, prevista para inaugurar no BOZAR: Palais des Beaux-Arts (Bruxelas, Bélgica) no início de 2021. Após o incêndio que teve lugar durante o mês de Janeiro de 2021 no BOZAR, a exposição foi cancelada. Uma vez que a exposição foi adaptada ao Museu Gulbenkian, em Lisboa, de 2 de Junho a 23 de Agosto de 2021, as actividades inicialmente planeadas (a produção da exposição e a publicação que a acompanhou) foram realizadas e, como a sua produção foi o foco principal do estágio, este relatório apresenta uma análise da exposição. A investigação que surge da análise da exposição pretende compreender as formas como as exposições de mulheres artistas contribuem para como as instituições culturais advogam a igualdade de género no mundo da arte, e em particular se as exposições de mulheres artistas são a forma de lutar por esta representação igualitária no seio das instituições de arte contemporânea. O principal caso de estudo é a exposição anteriormente mencionada, embora outros exemplos que podem ser lidos como menores casos de estudo ao longo da história de exposições feministas, nos contextos norte-americano e europeu, serão aplicados. O quadro teórico da investigação assenta em estudos culturais, estudos de género e estudos curatoriais, e o presente relatório visa analisar o posicionamento das instituições culturais ocidentais, no que diz respeito à igualdade de género, centrando-se particularmente no papel da arte e das práticas curatoriais na produção de conhecimento e, como tal, na actuação sobre os fenómenos sociais.

Palavras-chave: *Mulheres Artistas; Activismo Curatorial; Instituições Culturais; Exposições de Artes Visuais; Estudos de Cultura.*

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	2
List of Figures	3
List of Acronyms	5
Abstract (English)	6
Abstract (Portuguese)	7
Table of Contents	8
Chapter 1: Introduction	9
Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework	14
2.1. The Art History Canon and its (Grand)-Narratives	14
2.2. Women and/in the Museum	24
2.3. Feminist Curatorial Narratives	30
2.4. Intersecting Narratives of Silence	37
Chapter 3: Feminist and Women Artists' Shows - from the 1970s to 2020	44
3.1. The 1970s : Second Wave of Feminism and Women Artists	45
3.2. The 1980s : The Guerrilla Girls and GALAS	51
3.3. The 1990s : Third Wave of Feminism and Bad Girls	57
3.4. 2000 - 2010 : WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution	64
3.5. 2010 - 2020 : Fourth Wave Feminism and Radical Black Women	69
Chapter 4: All I Want	74
4.1. The National Plan for the Arts	74
4.2. All I Want – Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020	84
Chapter 5: Conclusions	103
Bibliography	108
Annex	120

Chapter 1: Introduction

In light of recent social movements such as the #MeToo, the Women's March against the Trump administration in the USA, and the Portuguese #VermelhoEmBelem, it is possible to observe that the fight for gender equality is still prevalent across the different realms of society today, such as the political and the cultural. In fact, the recent Gender Equality Index, produced by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), claims that the EU is at least 60 years away from reaching full equality between the genders if we continue at the current pace, not including the relevant factor of general violence, such as physical, verbal and sexual, against women (Barbieri, et al. 2020). According to the same report, the COVID-19 pandemic "was a wake-up call for gender equality in Europe. It reminded us about everyday gender inequalities in our society that often go unnoticed – from the shortage of men working in the care sector to the reality of violence facing women in abusive relationships" (Scheele, 2020: 3). In fact, not only did the current pandemic remind us of the issue of gender inequality as, according to Boesch and Phadke, "the pandemic-induced recession is the first to cost women more jobs than men" (2021: 3). Furthermore "we should go ahead and call this a 'shecession.'" according to C. Nicole Mason (Gupta, Alisha Haridasani. "Why Some Women Call This Recession a 'Shecession'." *The New York Times*. May 9, 2020. Updated June 18 2021.), president and chief executive of the Institute for Women's Policy Research. It is now, therefore, an extremely relevant time to discuss, think, and rethink gender-related issues within our own individual practices and areas.

The art world is not immune to this undeniable and general gender inequality and this incorrect notion is "one of the most compelling narratives to have emerged within the art world in recent years: that of progressive change, with once-marginalized artists being granted more equitable representation within art institutions.", according to a 2019 article by Julia Halperin and Charlotte Burns ("Museums Claim They're Paying More Attention to Female Artists. That's an Illusion." *Artnet News*. September 19, 2019). In fact, numbers show that between the years 2008 and 2018, museum acquisitions of work by women artists were a mere 11% and that the share of museum exhibitions of women artists was

14% in the United States of America (Lozano, Beatriz. “Visualizing the Numbers: See Infographics Tracing the Representation of Women Artists in Museums and the Market.” *Artnet News*. September 19, 2019), information which was gathered on acquisitions and exhibitions regarding 26 American Museums. Furthermore, “according to the Artnet and Maastricht study, only 13.7 percent of living artists represented by galleries in Europe and North America are female” (Halperin, Julia. “The 4 Glass Ceilings: How Women Artists Get Stuffed at Every Stage of Their Careers.” *Artnet News*. December, 15, 2017). A poster by the Guerrilla Girls produced in 1989 reads as follows: “Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum? Less than 5% of the artists in the Modern Art sections are women, but 85% of the nudes are female”. An identical poster produced by the same activist group in 2012 showed that the notion which many of us share of progress in terms of equality of representation within cultural institutions is not as true as we believed, with the same phrase with more recent statistics: “Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum? Less than 4% of the artists in the Modern Art sections are women, but 76% of the nudes are female”. As these posters show, women are represented in the museum as naked subjects more than as creative ones. Yet, despite this disparity in representation, in most fine-arts schools, there are significantly more female students than male. In fact, “(...) even though 51% of visual artists working today are women, just 5% of artwork featured in major U.S. museums is made by women; only 25-35% of women artists have gallery representation; and women (...) make an average of \$20,000 less per year than men.” (Baldwin, Malado. “Curators Debate the Pros and Cons of All-Women’s Art Shows.” *Hyperallergic*. September 20, 2018). The statistics presented above reflect a systemic concern, as after years of feminist, postcolonial, and queer activism and theory, the majority of contemporary artists who have visibility continue to be Euro-American, white, heterosexual, and, especially, male, according to art world statistics. Sexism is so deeply ingrained in the mainstream art world that it sometimes can go undetected.

Cultural institutions and professionals are said to be working in order to respond to the lack of representation and recognition of women artists. A strategy planned to help mend the gap between female and male artists, commonly applied since the 1970s, is the creation of exhibitions highlighting one marginalized group, as in shows which “(...) added

Others to the dominant narrative, but as separate categories of either gender, race, or sexuality” (Reilly, 2018: 26). Still according to Maura Reilly, “this is why many postcolonial and feminist theorists have argued against them, claiming that they are ghettoizing, segregating, and culturally and/or biologically essentialist (...)” (2018: 26) as they propose the selection of artists based on, for example, their gender and design separate spaces for the exhibition of their work. At the same time that many argue against this kind of show, many see these exhibitions as playing catch-up after centuries of invisibility, marginalization and overall silencing of female voices, amongst others.

For the last 50 years, the curatorial activist strategy of women artists’ shows has been recurrently applied, producing some progress but not yet enough, as pointed by the numbers mentioned above. The present research wishes to understand in which forms women artists’ exhibitions contribute to the way in which cultural institutions promote and advocate gender equality in their own institutions and in the art world, and in particular if women artist’s shows are the best way to fight for this equal representation. The report aims to join the discussion, to expectantly add to it and to defy the mentioned long-lasting strategy. To do so, the framing of this research is within the European and North American contexts, because of the context of the internship at the National Plan for the Arts (Plano Nacional das Artes or PNA), in Lisbon, Portugal, and also due to the acknowledgment that “the joining of feminism and curating has a long history, at least since the beginning of the feminist art movement in the late 1960s in the US and UK (the dominant sites for the early articulation of the movement)” (Jones, 2016: 5). The methodology selected for the research rests on the analysis of case studies, on literature review and on interviews with Portuguese and international curators. Furthermore, the research is mainly concerned with curatorial and institutional practices rather than forms of artistic activism.

The main case study derives from a curricular internship at the PNA, in Lisbon, Portugal, which was focused on the production of a women artists’ exhibit planned for the BOZAR: Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, Belgium. Following the roof fire that took place on the afternoon of January 18th of 2021 at the BOZAR, the exhibition was unfortunately canceled. However, as the assistance to the production of *All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020* was the main focus of the internship to

which this report refers to, the analysis of the show will focus on the curatorial texts and on the catalogue, as “exhibition catalogues play a crucial role as documents of the reception of modern art as the discourse developed largely in the wake of exhibitions. They provide information about which artists were exhibited and which were ignored (...)” (Langfeld, 2018: 15). Adding to the materials mentioned, the exhibition was consequently adapted for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian) in Lisbon, Portugal, allowing for the materialization of the show, for visiting and for the adding of a layer of analysis. At a practical level, given the opportunity to work closely with the PNA, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation’s team and the curators of the show, and making the internship as part of the MA’s programme in Culture Studies with specialization in Management of the Arts and Culture, an MA with a strong curriculum in theoretical seminars, it became clear that a research on art exhibitions by women artists could be successfully conducted, grounding the practice on sound theory. Conceptually, for the reasons stated in the first lines of this introductory chapter, debate and action on gender representativeness are (still) urgently needed. The research is focused on cultural institutions, particularly on the museum, for its ability to produce and transmit narratives and knowledge. In order to further analyse the exhibition which the internship revolved around, and, in particular, the way in which it aimed to raise awareness to Portuguese female artists and the inequalities of the art world, interviews with the curators of the show Helena de Freitas and Bruno Marchand will help to better understand the role of the curator in tackling this particular issue, alongside interviews with curators not involved in the show, which can present different perspectives on the current situation. Following this brief introduction and mentioned methodology, a conceptual framework chapter follows, which is divided into four sub-chapters. The first of which focuses on the concepts of the canon of art history and on the narratives which surround it, while the second sub-chapter, titled *Women and/in the Museum*, focuses on institutional practices. Point 2.3. of the report dives into curatorial practices and feminist exhibitions while 2.4. thinks about grand-narratives and their relation to Other artists, in particular women artists of color. Following the conceptual framework, a selection of five key women artists’ exhibitions will be analysed. This chapter glances at the history of female-only exhibitions from the

1970s until today, starting with what can be considered the first major institutional women artist show with *Women Artists: 1550-1950* in 1976, and with the *Great American Lesbian Art Show* or *GALAS*, a show which highlighted lesbian artists' invisibility in 1980. Furthermore, this chapter analyses *Bad Girls* (1993 and 1994) and *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* (2007) as more contemporary examples of exhibitions curated in the frame of research and ends with the overview of *We Wanted a Revolution: Radical Black Women, 1965-85* (2017) and a further reflection on the erasure of black female voices in the art world. Mentions of the second, third and fourth wave of feminism are as well part of this chapter, in terms of their impact on the art world. The relevance of this chapter is to provide a context, to better understand the many forms of gendered exhibitions, and to lay the foundation for the research and critique, which follows. In the fourth chapter, an introduction to the curricular internship experience at the PNA will be presented, followed by the analysis of the exhibition *All I Want – Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020*, focusing on the ways it can be found successful and less successful within the overall frame of research, with conclusions in the fifth chapter. This final chapter aims to combine the findings in the theory, case-studies and the internship experience's portions of the report.

While the present report is being produced, in 2021, there have been over fifty years of thinking and rethinking about gender equality and representativeness in the art world. More than fifty years into feminine presence in cultural institutions, and therefore: “now it is time for us to work together to change what is an abhorrent situation for Other artists. (...) With a little more energy and action, the creation of a just art world does not have to be a pipe dream” (Reilly, 2018: 225). It is, therefore, now the time to further think about these questions and about the impediments that have distanced women from contributing in a more present and valued way to the arts and culture and to propose changes that will foster a more just, equal and inclusive art world.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

2.1. The Art History Canon and its (Grand)-Narratives

“To learn about Art, through the canonical discourse, is to know masculinity as power and meaning, and all three as identical with Truth and Beauty” (Pollock, 1999: 9).

The term canon, according to Langfeld, refers to a “(...) process in which specific aspects of culture are established as crucial, of the utmost importance or exemplary” (Langfeld, 2018: 1). Commonly, the term is associated with literature and, as stated by Locher, “(...) is usually understood as a group of works, objects or, more often, texts, recognized within a defined social group as being exemplary and thus embodying a set of binding provisions.” (Locher, 2012: 31). To canonize an artwork, a text, a piece of music, amongst others, generally means to regard them as of the highest and timeless relevance. As author Griselda Pollock notes, the concept of the canon can be understood as a discursive formation which strengthens the legitimation of white masculinity's identification with creativity and culture, constituting the objects it selects as products of artistic mastery (Pollock, 1999: 9). It is in this frame that the concept of the canon will be understood in the research: as a necessary puzzle piece to the understanding of the current situation female identified artists find themselves in within the art world. Being such a complex process and broad term, the objective of this portion of the research is to shine some light on some of the reasoning behind this prevalent gender inequality in the art world. Thanks to authors such as Griselda Pollock and Linda Nochlin, we now understand that it is necessary to question the mechanisms held in place which prevent women artists from equal opportunity, opposed to solely inserting female names in art movements and periods and wish for structural change. The groundbreaking 1971 essay “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” by Nochlin aimed to showcase precisely that the art world perpetuates systemically notions of patriarchy and of exclusion. The author claims that “there are no women equivalents for Michelangelo or Rembrandt, Delacroix or Cézanne, Picasso or Matisse, or even, in very recent times, for de Kooning or Warhol, any

more than there are black American equivalents for the same” (Nochlin, 1971: 348) and the reason for this discrepancy in representation is not connected to biological differences or is neither a question of quality, but due to the social conditions systemically imposed. The difficulties were, and are, therefore institutional and not individual, and the art history canon, as a structural part of the art world, is a mechanism which is in need to be questioned.

To perhaps make this point more apparent, examples could be of use such as that of an art historical canonical process as in the list of Italian artists and works introduced by Giorgio Vasari in *Lives of the Artists* (1550). “According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, the canon of Italian Renaissance artists Vasari established in his book endures as the standard to this day” (Langfeld, 2018: 1). In essence, Vasari selected, amongst a volume of artists, whom he believed were of great importance and whom he understood as producing works of great artistic quality. This body of selected artworks and artists is relevant until this day as it is passed down in literature, cultural institutions, the educational system, amongst others, for generations. The canon is therefore made of choices, usually made by white male individuals, and its condition is practically irreversible as it is possible to observe in the present relevance of Vasari’s 1550’s selection. According to Sela-Sheffy, “the formation of the canon is (...) a long-term process occurring in addition to the short-term process of shifting trends and legging behind it” (2002: 1). Arising from Vasari’s influential text and many others, a series of concepts became “intrinsic to the discipline itself: quality, originality, genius, the chronological succession of styles and movements, hierarchies of formats and materials, or artistic geographies” (Vicente, 2012: 22). To this end, the condition of the canon is difficult to question and to change, as it has snowballed in and into the art world for generations.

The art history canon formation is as well a product of the context in which it was established, and in most cases, again, produced from a male white Western perspective. As Langfeld claimed “(...) it must be acknowledged that even the connoisseur’s or professional’s eye is the product of social and historical developments (...)” (Langfeld, 2018: 5). The canon formation process is therefore conditioned by who makes the choices and by when and where these choices are made. Another example of canonization in art

history is how “Barr’s (MoMA’s) “story” of modern art has achieved iconic status, one that other museum collections have sought to mimic.” (Reilly, 2018: 14). As Maura Reilly notes, “it is a story that forms the basis of most art-history textbooks and curricula in the West - and it has become so deeply entrenched and naturalized that it exists, largely unquestioned, as *the* history of modern art.” (Reilly, 2018: 14). Again, this factor of indisputability is highly associated with the idea of a canon, which creates a recycling of the same voices and figures throughout time and can serve as a legitimizing factor of exclusion. The canon can therefore be understood as “a narrative that is structured by the exclusion and/or subordination of those outside the established norm, a narrative that perpetuates” (Reilly, 2018: 14). And this is the danger of the canon: that it is established as a grand narrative which silences other counter-narratives. According to Mora, the term “counter-narrative refers to the narratives that arise from the vantage point of those who have been historically marginalized” (2014: 1). This approach to art history would be essential, going beyond having narratives created for Others by those in a position of power, but involving the marginalized voices by having them telling their own story. One of the positives of including counter-narratives into the discipline of art history is the ability “to empower and give agency to those communities. By choosing their own words and telling their own stories, members of marginalized communities provide alternative points of view, helping to create complex narratives truly presenting their realities” (Mora, 2014: 1). To move from an unquestioned grand narrative to a universe of complex stories told from different angles should be the objective of such a broad discipline. Marginalized artists, such as women artists, LGBTQI+ artists and artists of color, amid others, need the space and opportunity to (re)tell history from their perspective, to showcase their narratives through art and curatorial practices, in order to overcome this perpetual erasure. As products of the context in which they are created, grand narratives, such as the art history canon, are incapable of presenting a comprehensive and fair view of the art world and of artists.

Therefore, the notion of canon, understood as a discursive formation amongst others discourses, makes it “(...) important to remain conscious of the canonisation processes that led and still lead to some artists being included in the canon and entering history and others

being excluded” (Langfeld, 2018: 1). Going back to Barr’s story of modern art, we can observe “a synchronic, linear progression of “isms” in which one (heterosexual white) male “genius” from Europe of the USA influences another, younger version who inevitably must trump or subvert the previous master, thereby producing an avant-garde progression” (Reilly, 2018: 14). We therefore encounter a canon, a list of influential names and works, which is dominated by Euro-American, white, heterosexual male figures with rare confrontations with Other artists such as women artists, artists of colour or those outside of the so-called Western World. And this canon progression, as noted above by Reilly, is silencing of, and excludes, Other voices, as these grand narratives silence and erase Other micro or counter-narratives. To break this cycle should be the goal and, therefore, the usage of counter-narratives in all the places where art history canons are composed would be vital. To that end, Other voices should be present in the museum, in collections, in schools and universities, in gallery spaces, in libraries, in publishing houses, in the press, in auctions, etc. The present scenario observes discrimination against, as it relates to the report, women artists existing in all of those venues, as it “invades every aspect of the art world, from gallery representation, auction-price differentials, and press coverage to inclusion in permanent collections and solo exhibition programs” (Reilly, 2018: 17).

As an example, when speaking of the canon being created in publishing houses and universities, is important to note that “the majority of art historians (...) focused on works or artists from canonical periods and places, with a view to a socially connoted aristocratic connoisseurship, and a documentalist or conservative approach necessary for the functioning of public collections” (Joyeux-Prunel, 2019: 420). To this end, if the introduction of Others to the system is not pushed for, the risk of recycling the same voice is concrete. As professor and historian Dr. Filipa Lowndes Vicente¹ noted, during an interview conducted as part of this research, while in past centuries the obstacles were written and formal, we now face informal difficulties which makes it more challenging to denounce or to identify. We now encounter difficulties with those who build the story, who make the choices: the art critics, the gallery owners, the collectors, the curators, the art historians, the teachers making the bibliography to give to their students, amidst others.

¹ Read full interview with historian Doctor Filipa Lowndes Vicente on pages 130-138 of the Annex.

What tends to happen, in all areas of knowledge, is that, as we live in a world which is still patriarchal, we tend to attribute more merit, more recognition, more quality, even if at an unconscious level, to what is produced by men. The previous notion of art historians' recycling of names is not a formal impediment to women artists, but an informal one, and one which affects and infiltrates every aspect of the art world and also, for example, female art students. It influences future generations of artists as it creates a division between those who see "themselves" in history and those who do not. As "in the field of art history, the white Western male viewpoint, unconsciously accepted as the viewpoint of the art historian, may— and does—prove to be inadequate not merely on moral and ethical grounds, or because it is elitist, but on purely intellectual ones" (Nochlin, 1971: 344). The canon can therefore be understood as a hegemonic process which supports the exclusion of women as creatives.

"Canonicity exists in many forms, the better to produce, at the cultural and ideological level, the single standard of the greatest and the best for all times. 'Tradition' is the canon's 'natural' face, and in this form cultural regulation participates in what Raymond Williams names social and political hegemony." (Pollock, 1999: 10).

It is essential to understand the mechanisms which silenced female voices in the past and that continue to do so today as women artists outside the canon can cease to exist, as their work fails to be discussed, critiqued, showned, etc. The current art history canon needs to be understood and transmitted as "a" story amongst possible and important others, rather than "the" art hi(story). A narrative which consequently occluded many other counter-narratives and figures such as female artists, queer artists, artists of color, artists outside of Europe's and North America's borders, amongst others, or, in other words, most Other artists. According, again, to Pollock,

"the canon is held in place by the power of the stories it tells about artists. (...) Some call upon images of personal suffering that have an almost religious aura; others stress a secular, overtly sexual character. Both the sacrificial and the virile are elements of a construction of modernist masculinity." (Pollock, 1999: 39).

The art history canon can be understood as a grand narrative amongst possible others and the notion of the art history canon as a grand story about masculinity leads to the questioning of other narratives which are involved in processes of exclusion, around gendered exhibitions in particular, and how this concept can be useful to the research. According to Barthes and Duisit, “there are countless forms of narrative in the world. First of all, there is a prodigious variety of genres, each of which branches out into a variety of media, as if all substances could be relied upon to accommodate man's stories” (1975: 237). Still noted by Roland Barthes, there are multiple vehicles for narrative: articulated language (oral or written), images (still or moving), gestures and an ordered combination of all mentioned above. From these combinations, narratives are practically infinite and “(...) narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society ... (...) narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself” (Barthes, 1977: 79). This does not mean that narrative exists everywhere, but that narrative exists as a way to communicate every part of human life. In its most raw form, narrative “(...) is a use of signs – language, image, perhaps music, and their various combinations – that evoke in the mind of the receiver a certain type of representation known as ‘story’” (Ryan, 2017: 518).

Drifting away from the more traditional and raw concept of narrative, the term can transform itself into a concept useful for the problem at hand, as it can also be understood as Marie-Laure Ryan did when the author affirmed that “(...) the label “narrative” can now apply to invisible, elusive representations that exist only in the mind. These expansions make narrative into a highly versatile tool that can be applied to many disciplines and problems (...)” (2017: 526). Furthermore, within this more broad use of the term, we can as well understand narrative as “based on emotional, learning, educational, interactive, individual or social, imaginative, fictive or non-fictive, digital or non-digital, subjective or objective engagements. It gains attention by evoking feelings, memories and curiosity” (Nielsen, 2017: 446). This concept of narrative can be relevant to address when speaking of curatorial and artistic practices, as, as noted by Jones (2016: 5), “curating constructs certain kinds of historical narratives, or in some cases intervenes in existing narratives”. In

accordance with Barthes, curatorial practice usually makes use of both image and language, and, in compliance with Nielson, most times, it makes use of concepts such as that of memory and/or wishes to prompt feelings on the viewers. To that end, curatorial practices are the telling of a story, or the creation of a narrative. This relates to exhibitions of women artists as “museums use sexual identity and difference as a firm and persistent referent on which to build the narratives of exhibitions” (Porter, 1995: 110). Circling back to the concept of the art history canon, museums, curatorial practices and other culture dissemination institutions and places, follow the canonical processes and therefore gender, as a common sign of discrimination within the canon, plays a relevant part on the narrative created by exhibitions and institutional practices.

Besides the narratives constructed by curatorial practices, the issue of gendered exhibitions is surrounded by other kinds of stories or narratives. One which is relevant to address is the narrative of genius and its relation to gender, as the preservation of the notion of the male artistic genius can serve as justification for inclusion and exclusion. As an example, in *The Story of Art* (1950), Gombrich aimed to record art history from antiquity until modernity. In this influential text, the author failed to include a single female name. When once asked about this occlusion, Gombrich told *Independent* "Not everyone can do what a genius can, and not everyone can produce a masterpiece even after long training" (Gombrich, "Writing on the wall." Interview by Blake Morrison. May 4, 1996). As the understanding of genius is gendered, highly associated with traditionally masculine traits, women are recurrently unable to reach that status. Therefore, as the notions of quality and genius, which are gendered, are important metrics in the canonical process, women suffer from erasure in the places where canons are consecutively continued. As Linda Nochlin notes, when asking “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?”:

“the question tolls reproachfully in the background of most discussions of the so-called woman problem. But like so many other so-called questions involved in the feminist “controversy,” it falsifies the nature of the issue at the same time that it insidiously supplies its own answer: “There are no great women artists because women are incapable of greatness”” (Nochlin, 1971: 345).

The myth of the male genius, which exists as well beyond the art world, perpetuates the devaluation of female produced art. Women were as well, and sometimes still are, seen as objects of creativity but not creators. Women could be paintings but not painters, sculptures but not sculptors. Women were seen as artisans but hardly ever artists. And the list goes on. This narrative in conjunction with the male dominated canon created a gender hierarchy within the art world. “The museum’s production of gendered space is further enhanced by the practice of fetishizing male ‘masters’” (Skrubbe and Hayden, 2013: 69), which, again, is in connection with the art history canon’s grand narrative. Art made by women was for the longest time, and in some cases still is, seen as inferior: as craft more than art. Or, if an artistic inclined woman was deemed good, there was a need to say she painted or sculpted like a man, as Filipa Lowndes Vicente (2021) noted in the interview. This particular narrative surrounding women artists, led to the questioning of the quality of works produced by women, which can be found as one of the reasons why less women have reached a fulfilling and sustainable career as artists as their male counterparts. As mentioned by Parker and Pollock, “women’s practice in art has never been absolutely forbidden, (...) but rather contained and limited to its function as the means by which masculinity gains and sustains its supremacy in the important sphere of cultural production” (1981: 170). Again, the difficulties are informal which in turn makes it harder for us to identify and denounce them, which keep them connected to all aspects of the art world. The very expression “women artists”, and not just “artists” showcases exactly this. Artists born female or female identifying are marked by this expression, with a present connotation of inferiority by the addition of “women”. As if female artists cannot stand alone with the title of artists. To that end,

“just as Mill saw male domination as one of a long series of social injustices that had to be overcome if a truly just social order were to be created, so we may see the unstated domination of white male subjectivity as one in a series of intellectual distortions which must be corrected in order to achieve a more adequate and accurate view of historical situations” (Nochlin, 1971: 344).

If familiarity with art history comes from canonical grand narratives, the escape from fallacies such as that of the male artistic genius are impossible, as “to learn about Art, through the canonical discourse, is to know masculinity as power and meaning, and all three as identical with Truth and Beauty” (Pollock, 1999: 9). To escape this, counter-narratives should be applied so as to not reproduce this recurrent cycle. To that end, as “(...) long as feminism also tries to be a discourse about art, truth and beauty, it can only confirm the structure of the canon, and by doing so corroborate masculine mastery and power, however many women's names it tries to add (...)” (Pollock, 1999: 9). Therefore, the canon and the narratives surrounding it need to be questioned in all the places where this same grand narrative is made and reproduced.

These grand narratives surrounding the problem are usually incomplete or false, and therefore risk producing what Ngozi Adichie called the single story. Adichie, in her inspiring TedTalk (2009), argues that the danger of a single story is the perpetuation of stereotypes, which aren't exactly always untrue but incomplete. Stereotypes transform that one story into the only story or into a grand narrative. The author argues that this notion of the single story robs that group of dignity, as it reduces people to depthless as it deprives them of their humanity. “The danger of reproducing such uniform narratives, according to Adichie, is that complex human beings are reduced to a “single story” rather than being associated with a heterogeneous compilation of different stories” (Reily, 2018: 103). The perpetuation of the story of difference in quality, or of the male artistic genius, amongst others, allows for exclusion and reduces the role of women artists as artistic contributors. For example, as noted by Helena Reckitt, “ (...) contemporary women artists hesitated to use the colour pink and to depict domestic themes, understanding how such choices stereotyped them” (2013: 141). Furthermore, male artists, when using techniques or colours associated with femininity, “perpetuate the idea that men enacting feminised artistic activities are doing something ground-breaking and exciting that in female hands would seem unremarkable” (Reckitt, 2013: 141). Therefore, the concept of canon reproduces a grand yet incomplete narrative. Moreover, the more common than not lack of diversity in exhibitions produced within feminist frameworks, diminishes the story of the struggle of women artists within the institutions to a white heterosexual cis-gendered one.

Given all the situations and narratives presented above which surround the issue, other “solutions must be found, and they will have effects on the canon” (Langfeld, 2018: 18) and on the narratives which the art world, the academic system and exhibitions produce.

2.2. *Women and/in the Museum*

“(…) They invite us to their spaces where they have absolutely no interest in ceding power”
(Reilly, 2018: 101).

Having established that the canonicity processes occur in multiple places within the art world, the report now wishes to focus on the space of the institution and its collection as it relates to gender equality. In the context of the research, the museum is the cultural institution which will be analysed, as it would not be feasible to allude to all of the different types of dissemination mechanisms and institutions of the cultural world, within the current research. Furthermore, the selection of the museum as the institution analysed was established based on the main case study, which takes place at the Gulbenkian Museum. First and foremost, the museum can be understood as a forum for critical thinking and discussion, as Bruno Marchand, co-curator of *All I Want – Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020*, defended during an interview in the context of the report². The space of the museum has the possibility to be a site for transformation of thought, and not solely instruction. It should be a space for learning, for thinking and for discussing, which sometimes it can fail to be. A broader definition was established by the International Council of Museums (ICOM), when the council understood the museum as a:

“non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment” (International Council of Museums. “Museum Definition.” *International Council of Museums*. August, 24, 2007).

This definitions is in accordance with the one provided by the authors of *Key Concepts of Museology*, which state that the concept of the “‘museum’ may mean either the institution or the establishment or the place generally designed to select, study and

² Read full interview with curator Bruno Marchand on pages 120-126 of the Annex.

display the material and intangible evidence of man and his environment” (Desvallées and Mairesse, 2010: 56). As a place for the selection, study and display of art works as in the case of the contemporary art museum, this space has the competence to create or reinforce narratives, such as the previously mentioned in 2.1. As Hooper-Greenhill notes, “the museum has been constructed as a symbol of Western society since the Renaissance. This symbol is both complex and multi-layered, acting as a sign for domination and liberation, learning and leisure” (2007: ii). The contemporary art museum, which is the one in question here, is a site designed and idealized for learning and leisure as well a place which selects the evidence of the artist and their environment. As a place of choices, it is also a space where canonical processes occur and are reinforced. Furthermore, the museum is understood by Langfeld as an institution which detaches “(...) works of art from their context and strips them of their original political or religious function” (2018: 5). The author claims that when works are showcased in the museum space, “art is reduced more to a specific function as art. It now serves to promote contemplation, which in many cases goes hand in hand with the loss of its previous meaning.” (Langfeld, 2018: 5). To promote this contemplation, the museum can imply and impose universal qualities to these works which in turn reinforces “(...) the idea of an enduring canon of works of art whose quality can ultimately be traced back to their visual appearance” (Langfeld, 2018: 5).

Contemporary art museums are powerful institutions with the influence and capacity to truly make an impact on the cultural system, on the canon and on individual visitors' way of thinking and feeling. This power comes from their capacity to produce and to offer knowledge. Therefore, the contemporary art museum has the responsibility to preserve and study works of art and to allow their visitors to admire them but, most importantly, learn from them, as museums have educational responsibilities when it comes to their audience. Furthermore, these institutions are rooted in theory and should work from and to transmit theories, and as noted by Hein, “however disregarded by their audience and the people who work in museums, the very concept of the museum is theory-laden (...)” (Hein, 2007: 30). The concern is that “museums presuppose, but do not normally profess their theoretical foundations. Assaulted by critics of various persuasions,

they tend to react in ad hoc ways, adopting ill-matched strategies to respond to immediate situations.”(Hein, 2007: 29).

The educational turn concept identifies a recent inclination towards educational methods and programs within artistic and curatorial practices. To this end, the focus is now shifting from contemplation to knowledge production and critical thinking. “The emphasis is not on the object-based artwork. Instead, the focus of these projects is on the process itself, as well as on the use of discursive, pedagogical methods and situations in and outside of the exhibition” (Lázár, 2012: 1). This, if reaching a full state of implementation, would perhaps be the turn necessary for overall change and as Rogoff notes, “(...) I would suggest education to be the site of a shift away from a culture of emergency to one of urgency” (2008: 7). To shift from emergency in this crisis of education to “a notion of urgency presents the possibility of producing an understanding of what the crucial issues are, so that they may become driving forces” (Rogoff, 2008: 7). Furthermore, and in order to improve the present ill-matched responses produced by museum and institutions, Hein suggested that feminist theory can aid in this question, as “(...) women’s efforts have stimulated some art museums to become less about celebrating individual genius and more about exploring the patterns that differently infuse and inspire societies” (2007: 39). It would be essential the process of “reconceptualizing the museum from a theoretical perspective (which) provides coherence and a basis for constructive development and critique. Innovation, in light of feminist theory, is compatible with proposals emanating from alternative sources” (Hein, 2007: 29). To this end, “adopting feminist theory would energize and revitalize museums and broaden the base of their appeal” (Hein, 2007: 29) particularly if combined with this new shift from observation to education and mediation. “New ideas about culture and society and new policy initiatives challenge museums to rethink their purposes, to account for their performance and to redesign their pedagogies” (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007: 1). The feminist presence in the museological and museographic space could and should, therefore, be an influential and important factor in this necessary change and turn.

When speaking on female artists, author Maura Reilly notes that in “most mainstream museums, visitors are still required to actively search out work by them”

(2018: 17). Looking at the example of one of the most influential museums in world, the Tate Modern, it is possible to observe a “dismal representation of women and non-white artists in the re-opening of the Tate Modern, London, in 2016 - of the three hundred artists represented in the re-hang of the permanent collection, less than a third were women and fewer still were non-white” (Reilly, 2018: 17). To this end, we can observe that a shift or turn is necessary in the museum. This lack of representation is the cause of the strained relation between feminism and the museum which produces “(...) the curatorial desire to present their work according to established museological conventions of display and interpretation and, on the other hand, the critical insistence on viewing this work as a category apart—as a visible manifestation of the innate difference of the ‘woman artist’” (Heath, 2008 :37). There are multiple reasons why women fail to be equally represented in the museum space, some of which were discussed previously. One of the main ones is that “their work is often seen as a specialist pursuit running parallel to the canonical story of art history” (Halperin, Julia and Burns, Charlotte. “Museums Claim They’re Paying More Attention to Female Artists. That’s an Illusion.” *Artnet*. September 19, 2019). In order to change this, again, real transformation is necessary which needs to go beyond what “current proponents of a feminist agenda in museums tend to focus (...) on either internal-facing employment issues or external-facing programming.” (Callihan and Feldman, 2018: 180). Not to say that both employment and programming related numbers of women in cultural institutions are not in demand of improvement, which is clear. But this transformation needs to go beyond that and to infiltrate all aspects of the institution, from internal and external issues, to the very concept and purpose of the museum. That being said, if just one of the issues and constraints were to be revised, the effects could be very relevant. According to Helena de Freitas³ in an interview, by looking at the places women reside in the art world, we can observe that they are mostly secondary. “(...) there are the male directors and then there are the female deputies, the female advisors, the female curators, but many times the leader is a man” (Freitas, 2021). Of course, the improvements have been relevant “but it's as if there is a resilience by the patriarchal world (...) so it's necessary to transform these habits and if we don't do this every day, every

³ Read full interview with curator Helena de Freitas on pages 158-168 of the Annex.

moment, we won't succeed only with sporadic actions” (Freitas, 2021). Therefore, women artists exhibitions, as sporadic events, are not sufficient to produce this change which needs to go beyond programming. Similarly, internal action alone is not ample enough, although as male cultural professionals take on the more central roles “it was more likely that all-male or all-white juries would not choose artists who were not also similar to them. (...) when we look at the objective numbers and historical evidence, we see that there are processes that cause many more men to be chosen than women” (Vicente, 2021). Assuming this notion that men tend to choose men, if internal problems were to be revised, a significant change could be possible. Again, resolved alone, the more visible or the more invisible questions which surround museums are insufficient as solutions to the concern at hand, although if there were significant change in numbers of women in the programming or as more prominent decision makers perhaps slowly the situation could progress into a more just and equal one for female artists.

But it is due to both of these questions not being resolved, that women artists fail not only to be presented in the museum as artists or as cultural workers but tend also not to be as represented in collections, which shape the museum, as these institutions are made precisely for the collecting and preserving of artworks, which “whether material or intangible, (...) is at the heart of the museum’s activities” (Desvallées and Mairesse, 2010: 26). Collections play, therefore, an essential role in most museological and museographic activities. Collections can be understood a set of pieces “(...) which an individual or an establishment has assembled, classified, selected, and preserved in a safe setting and usually displays to a smaller or larger audience, according to whether the collection is public or private” (Desvallées and Mairesse, 2010: 26). Unfortunately, according to statistics, in 2012, artworks by women artists constituted solely 3-5% of permanent collections of major institutions in Europe and the United States of America (Chicago, Judy. “We women artists refuse to be written out of history.” *The Guardian*. October 9, 2012), which in turn is reflected on exhibition presence, on critique and publicity, on the market, on every aspect of the cultural world where careers and canons are made. If women are not represented equally in museum collections which preserve and maintain art works, they can fail to exist in the future and to be recognized as important cultural

contributors. According to Filipa Lowndes Vicente in an interview, “museums can do extraordinary things, at that level, but first it has to start being an issue. This has to be a question, they can only do things at any level (...) if they are interested in the subject. And so, they can do a lot if they believe it is relevant” (Vicente, 2021). The artworld and the public in general needs to be vigilant, holding decision-makers accountable for the underrepresentation of this particular group of artists. Strategies are necessary in order to reverse this condition women artists face today, because, as seen above, every mechanism held in place affects canon formation which in turn affects future female artists. A turn and a considerable transformation in terms of institutional practices are in order: from the internal number of women as cultural agents, to the number of women artists in the programming and collection, to the way in which narratives are created within the institution. Furthermore, this shift needs to take in account the educational responsibility of the institution and to make use of feminist theory.

2.3. *Feminist Curatorial Narratives*

“Feminist curating is part of a political movement”

(Richter, 2016: 66).

Besides museums and museum collections and their important role in the canonical process and discourse, exhibitions and curatorial practices play a very relevant part as well. In fact, “exhibitions (particularly group exhibitions, art fairs, temporary perennial shows and large-scale international art exhibitions) are the main means through which contemporary art is now mediated, experienced and historicized” (O’Neill, 2007: 15). Furthermore, “exhibitions have become *the* medium through which most art becomes known. Constantly reshaped by artists and curators, the exhibition has become a prominent and diverse part of contemporary culture” (Greenberg, Ferguson and Nairne, 1996: 2). Accordingly, if exhibitions are the way in which artists and artworks are established and notarized, it is one of the primary sites in which the question of gender inequality should be addressed. Given this notion that exhibitions are a crucial element for the visibility and consecration of artists, it is concerning that “(...) the metrics of gender inequality in the arts remain astounding: 51% of working visual artists identify as women, and yet over a six-year period only 27% of solo shows at major museums in the U.S. and United Kingdom were dedicated to women artists (...)” (Callihan and Feldman, 2018: 179). Confronted with these numbers, we need to be observant of the people making the choices, and due to the importance of exhibitions, the curatorial choices are particularly essential to understand. It is also relevant to define the notions of feminist exhibitions and women artists’ show accompanied by the overall role of curatorial decisions in order to construct the analysis which will follow in later chapters.

Curatorial practices design and enforce narratives and, to this end, the curator is one of the most relevant figures when tackling the issue of equality in gender representation, as the curator makes relevant choices in relation to this topic, such as, amongst others, who is going to be featured in a particular exhibition and through which lense is this story going to be told. “Curating makes arguments about feminist art histories

and strategies concrete” (Jones, 2016: 5). As such, “(...) *curatorial practice* is one of the most important sites for the constitution of both historical narratives about feminist art (the histories of feminist art) and feminist theories of curating and writing histories (the feminist histories and theories of art)” (Jones, 2016: 5). The difference between the two will be later analysed, although what is clear is that the curator has the ability to change history and its future as well as the ability to add and to erase names from the canon, as the consecration of artistic careers, for the relevancy of exhibitions in the process as established, passes through the hands of this figure of the curator. According to curator Sandra Vieira Jürgens⁴ in an interview, “the role of the curator is determinant (in tackling this particular issue) and must be as attentive as possible to diversity and inclusion” (Jürgens, 2021).

The curator creates and enforces narratives as “curating is ‘becoming discourse’ where curators are willing themselves to be the key subject and producer of this discourse” (O’Neill, 2007: 26), which can position the curator as a figure particularly involved with storytelling. It is the role of the curator to create stories, to construct narratives, especially as, according to O’Neill, from the 1990s until today, we tend to observe “an emphasis on individual practice, the first-person narrative and curator self-positioning (...) as they attempted to define and map out a relatively bare field of discourse” (O’Neill, 2007: 14). To this end, curators have as well become essential figures in the art world, as the “ascendancy of the curatorial gesture in the 1990s also began to establish curating as a potential nexus for discussion, critique and debate, where the evacuated role of the critic in parallel cultural discourse was usurped by the neo-critical space of curating” (O’Neill, 2007: 14). Furthermore, “(...) the curator has become one of the most talked about and significant personalities within the cultural and institutional economy of contemporary art (which) is worth reflecting on” (Charlesworth, 2007: 91). As we find ourselves now is in a world where “curators and curatorial practice are now as visible as artists themselves.” (Charlesworth, 2007: 91), curators have a role to play when it comes to reaching equality, and one of the most relevant ones. As a decision maker, the figure of the curator contributes to canon formation, practices of exclusion or inclusion and the overall art

⁴ Read full interview with curator Sandra Vieira Jürgens on pages 127-129 of the Annex.

educational system. It is in this power of selection, of first person voice, of dialogue with audiences that curatorial decisions have an essential part in this fight for equality.

In curatorial and exhibition practices it is possible to observe what Dimitrakaki and Perry called a “(re)production of otherness” through curatorship” (2013: 15), as “curating is a form of knowledge production which means, it is also a gendered form of knowledge production (...)” (Richter, 2016: 64). If, as noted by Maropolous in an interview for a survey on gender ratios in curating programs, “there seem to be many more men in the top museum director and curatorial positions, and most certainly many more men active as successfully independent curators” (2012), and given the prominent role of curator nowadays and the notion that men tend to select men: “(...) what if feminist research turned from women or feminist artists to women or feminist curators, from women’s or feminist art making to women’s or feminist curating? Could such a turn (...) discover a different route into feminism’s art histories? ” (Dimitrakaki and Perry, 2013: 17). Perhaps if the figures making the choices were particularly concerned with a feminist presence in the museum, there could be change in terms of equality in gender representation. As historian Filipa Lowndes Vicente noted in a talk held at the Lisbon Summer School for the Study of Culture (2021), women were and are the ones mostly preoccupied with tackling these topics, in and out of cultural institutions. This relates to the previous sub-chapter, but besides the previously established notion of necessity in increasing the number of women making choices, there are other strategies applied, from a curatorial standpoint, which aim to produce a shift in the situation of women artists.

Author Maura Reilly, in her book titled *Curatorial Activism: Towards an ethics of curating* (2018), mentions what she names strategies of resistance when tackling issues of visibility within certain groups. The three methodologies of curating with activist intentions are, according to the author, *Revisionism*, *Area Studies* and *Relational Studies*. The first, and also the most mentioned in bibliography, is a revisionist strategy, which gained popularity during the 1970s, in which the canon is amended by the retrieval of names lost in history. “A revisionist approach to the canon typically asks questions such as: who were the women artists from the Renaissance-Baroque period?” (Reilly, 2018: 23). It aims to address exclusions and to broaden the history of art by addition. According to

Adrienne Rich, revisionism as “(...) the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction - is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival” (1972: 18). Nevertheless, by adding voices into the previously established canon, it assumes and accepts it, meaning that the Other will remain in that condition. It is an approach which confirms the canon instead of rejecting it, which in turn produces little impactful change.

The second curatorial activist approach, according to Reilly, is an integrative one based on *Area Studies*. In this case, and differing from revisionism, new canons are produced parallel to the traditional debate. This approach, as the name indicates, makes use of different “areas”, and on work based on categories such as geography, race, sexuality or, in this case, gender. It is in this frame that most women artists’ exhibitions insert themselves. According to Reilly, “(...) an area-studies focus is often seen as the most effective way to diversify the historical canon and/or contemporary discourse. These exhibitions are sophisticated and complex studies, but they are viewed as entirely separated from the canon” (2018: 26). Finally, the third method is with the use of *Relational Studies*. “This approach begins with questions such as: what if history was re-conceived as dialogic instead of synchronic?” (Reilly, 2018: 30). This curatorial strategy proposes, alternatively to looking at art history as linear, to approach it as a multivocal dialogue. “A relational approach to curating, then, is interested not in a monologue of sameness, but in a multitude or cacophony of voices speaking simultaneously” (Reilly, 2018: 30). *Global Feminisms* (2007), curated by Linda Nochlin and Maura Reilly is an example of an exhibition which aimed to use this final approach, which is noticeable, for example, in the usage of term feminisms in the plural form in title, implying that there is not an universal form of feminism but a multitude of possible dialogue around it. All of these forms of activism through curatorship can be relevant in showcasing the problem at hand and act as wake up calls for audiences, although, as sporadic events, not sufficient to produce the necessary shift.

Nevertheless, women artists exhibitions are one of the most common strategies applied by institutions and curators that mostly aim to address and combat gender inequality in the art world. Exhibitions composed of solely female artists have been used to

bring awareness and to highlight marginalized women's voices within the art world, but not all women artist exhibitions showcase clear feminist thought and intent. Some shy away from using the word 'feminism' in exhibition materials and showcase a body of works created by female artists without mentioning the concept of equality between genders. Therefore, women artists shows and feminist ones can be understood differently. One can produce a clear feminist show with the presence of male artists, and similarly, a female artists' exhibition can have few assumed feminist intentions. According to O'Neil, "exhibitions (in whatever form they take) are always ideological; as hierarchical structures they produce particular and general forms of communication" (2007: 14). To this end, exhibitions can be understood as ideological forms of knowledge production. Group shows, as, for example, group shows of female artists, "(...) by bringing a greater mix of people into an exhibition, (...) created a space for defining multifarious ways of engaging with disparate interests, often within a more trans-cultural context" (O'Neil, 2007: 14-15). Furthermore, group shows can be understood as "(...) ideological texts which make private intentions public. In particular, it is the temporary art exhibition that has become the principal medium in the distribution and reception of art; thus, being the principal agent in debate and criticism about any aspect of the visual arts" (O'Neil, 2007: 14-15). Particularly within feminist practices, this mixing of different women within the exhibition artist list can be very important, as womanhood and femininity exist in the plural. Furthermore, in accordance with the above quote, the group temporary show should act as a medium for debate and critique, which makes this question of feminist ideology, present or not, relevant. According to Dorothee Richter, within these important group shows, there are four categories a curatorial project must follow in order to be a feminist one. The first is gender equality in curatorial projects. "We as feminists always fought for a multiplicity of sexes, beyond the binary code of a conventional paradigm" (Richter, 2016: 64). This means escaping from the paradigm of the male and female binary narrative, while maintaining the counting and statistics of the number of men and women in the art world *à la* Guerrilla Girls. Therefore, "(...) stealing the subject position by mimicking "male" behaviour or looks, we should be aware of the mimicry and nevertheless still demand from the perspective of lack, from the position of the crossed out subject" (Richter, 2016: 64). The

second category which would need to be met is to correctly cite historical references, “which means, to refer to the movements, not to the singled out artistic geniuses, or stars, a paradigm which the art market prefers” (Richter, 2016: 64). Therefore, to begin to escape from the canonical idea of genius, and present artworks as part of relevant historical moments. Following this point, “the third would be disturbance through the image, through the display. That does not mean, of course, that I see an exhibition as an integrated work of art; it is a specific, very complex narrative. So to disturb an easy narrative would be an important mission” (Richter, 2016: 65). The fourth and final relates to institutional critique. According to the author, this means “(...) calling into question the context of the exhibition, using curatorial methods to unsettle the curatorial authorship of an exhibition’s discourse on truth and the “quality” discourse” (Richter, 2016: 66). There can exist group shows of women artists which do not follow the aforementioned four categories, showcasing that solely because an exhibition is focusing on female production does not make it a feminist show. Due to this nature of the group show, it would be relevant that exhibitions of women artists would strike for the implementation of feminist ideology within the curatorial decisions.

According to Jones, there are “(...) dual projects of feminist curating—either curating from a feminist point of view or curating works of feminist or women’s art (or both)—in order to cast light on what it means to evoke feminism in relation to the curatorial enterprise” (2016: 5). These two different types of curatorial practices can be differential factor for the artists invited, as some wish not to be associated with feminist exhibitions and others wish not to participate on exhibitions solely based on their gender. According to curator Sandra Vieira Jürgens: “if I were an artist I would not like to be invited only because I am a woman. And in curating I feel the same way” (Jürgens, 2021). To this end, both can be more or less appealing to artists, as well as to audiences. As curator Bruno Marchand argued in the interview, “I think that many artists reject taking part in this sort of initiative because they don't want to be framed within a context that singles them out in terms of their gender and not because they are deserving of exactly the same attention their male counterparts tend to have” (2021).

As Amelia Jones proposed, the most productive and persuasive method balances both a political intention, with the curator recognizing the relevancy in utilizing feminism as a central part of all of which surrounds the show, and an openness “(...) to unexpected cultural productions that might promote feminist interests while not being so obviously part of feminist histories and institutions” (2016: 16). To not reflect on the politics involved in the issue at hand, which can occur within women artists exhibitions, can be understood as not the most relevant strategy.

“As Griselda Pollock asks: What is the effect of separating feminist aesthetic interventions from the larger political and cultural revolution that was feminism and feminist theory, and isolating works and artists within a relatively unaltered curatorial approach and exhibitionary model? *We might gain this work for art, but miss its significance in transforming art.* For feminism was never an art movement. Feminism is a *resource* for artistic practices, inflecting them and allying them with equally radical realignments within the art world at the conjunction with which a feminist effect became possible” (Robinson, 2016: 39).

It is in using feminism as a clear resource for tackling the issue of gender representativeness (in the case of research, within temporary group exhibitions of female artists) that the report, in accordance with Jones, Robinson and Pollock, inserts itself. Adding to this notion that the group show of women artists would benefit from including feminist ideology, one can add that this ideology needs to come from a postcolonial standpoint. The following sub-chapter wishes to understand the many reasons why this would be essential.

2.4. *Intersecting Narratives of Silence*

“Without doubt, some of the most important work in postcolonial theory and criticism has considered issues of gender and sexuality as well as those of race, nation, and empire”
(Chambers and Watkins, 2012: 297).

Within both women artists shows or feminist exhibitions, within both the museum space and collections, it is possible to observe a common absence. In fact, according to the New York Times, in the past decade, “just 29,247 works by female artists were acquired by 26 top museums in the United States, out of 260,470 total works. (...) Of the roughly 5,800 female artists whose works were acquired, 190 women — or just 3 percent — were African-American.” (Jacob, Julia. “Female Artists Made Little Progress in Museums Since 2008, Survey Finds.” *The New York Times*. Published September 19, 2019. Updated September 25, 2019). Women artists of colour suffer silencing from all the art world mechanisms, and in order to understand the reasoning for the difference between numbers of white women artists and women artists of colour represented in acquisitions, for example, we can look at the concept of intersectionality. In 1989, Kimberlé Crenshaw developed the theory of intersectionality, which analyzes the way in which systems of oppression overlap, recognizing how perceptions of gender are influenced by culture, social class and race. This double discrimination - for being female and for being african-american - can explain why these numbers are so low. The human world and the human experience is complex in its nature and constructed by multiple components. “When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division (...) but by many axes that work together and influence each other” (Collins and Bilge, 2016: 22). When understanding the experience of women artists of color, the concept of intersectionality explained why that experience is altogether distinct from that of a white

women artist or of a male artist of color. Speaking on women of colour and intersectionality, Tyagi notes that:

“she suffers from “double colonization” as she simultaneously experiences the oppression of colonialism and patriarchy. She has to resist the control of colonial power not only as a colonized subject, but also as a woman. In this oppression, her colonized brother is no longer her accomplice, but her oppressor. In his struggle against the colonizer, he even exploits her by misrepresenting her in the nationalist discourses. Not only that, she also suffers at the hand of Western feminists from the colonizer countries who misrepresent their colonized counterparts by imposing silence on their racial, cultural, social, and political specificities, and in so doing, act as potential oppressors of their “sisters”” (2014: 45).

These biases are clear in every aspects of society, in women artists exhibitions with the common underrepresentation of female artists of color, and also “in the museum sector, despite the fact that white women now dominate many areas of the museum (...), women of colour are not equally represented (...)” (Callihan and Feldman, 2018: 179). Therefore, the issue presents itself as a systemic erasure and “without direct intervention, museums will continue to replicate societal patterns of oppression such as sexism, racism, and ableism” (Callihan and Feldman, 2018: 179). This pattern of oppression influences every aspect of the art world, as, according to Reilly, “the availability of works by non-white and female artists at galleries obviously has a powerful impact on the amount of press coverage and the degree of interest they generate from collectors, museum, and so on;” (2018: 20). To this end, it is not strange that, and according to D’Souza, Crenshaw’s “theory has taken on renewed importance in recent years (...) as a tool for analysing the blind spots that mainstream and radical feminist thinking still retain when it comes to the way that different structural biases overlap and reinforce each other.” (2018: 74). It is also clear that as “minority discourses rarely inhabit the intellectual space of dominant theory (masculinist, Eurocentric, White, heteropatriarchal, able-ist, bourgeois); thus, Black women’s ability to be regarded as significant contributors to knowledge creation is negatively impacted” (Acuff, 2018: 201).

Again, a common strategy to combat the underrepresentation of women artists would be the creation of group shows of female artists, but women of color, transgender women and non-binary artists, amongst Others, are, again, usually under-represented, if represented at all. When they are featured, they can be silenced in other ways, as “in their eagerness to voice the concern of the colonized women, White feminists have overlooked racial, cultural and historical specificities that mark the condition of these women” (Tyagi, 2014: 47). In their want to give voice to marginalized groups, “they have imposed White feminist models on colonized women, and thereby, worked as an oppressor” (Tyagi, 2014: 47). These grand and incomplete narratives in exhibitions featuring women, again, risk producing what Ngozi Adichie called the single story, as discussed previously. “The White feminist concept of “sisterhood” (...) implies a false sense of common experiences and goals; as if all women are oppressed by a monolithic, conspiring sort of patriarchal dominance” (Tyagi, 2014: 49).

The lack of diversity in exhibitions produced within feminist framework and the erasure of different experiences within that group, diminishes the story of the struggle of women artists within the institutions to a white cis-gendered one. An exhibition with feminist intent should involve women from multiple cultures, backgrounds, ethnicities, origins, and so on. Again, counter-narratives, as in women of colour telling and retelling the stories in their own voice, through the lens of their own experience, are essential to combat this permanent silencing. Similarly, a women artists’ show, for their wish to empower creative women, should consist of a broad range of women working within the artistic sector, being women of color, transgender women, gender non-binary people, homosexual women, amongst others. This exclusion and oppression is more recurrent than not in terms of opportunities, exhibitions, sales, literature, etc. And this can be connected with the intersections between colonial grand-narratives, inequality in terms of gender and identity, and racism, and stem from this notion that “canonizers” were, and mainly still are, white male heterosexual eurocentric figures.

Here postcolonial theory, which emerged in the 1980s and is influenced by the work of, amongst others, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha, can be useful as a concept for the report. “Post-colonial criticism was able to identify the attitudes to empire

and colonisation expressed in literature from numerous historical periods as well as, later, looking at travel writing and journals” (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004: 102). Furthermore, “with regard to works of classic Western literature this often involved a radical reinterpretation of the texts and a consideration of the links between artistic expression and colonial political endeavour” (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004: 102). In the same sense, a reinterpretation of the artistic system, from a postcolonial feminist view is necessary. According to Leela Gandhi, both postcolonial and feminist theory offer something to each other and a work of collaboration and integration would be vital. Parashar, when paraphrasing from Gandhi, notes that “it is the encounter with feminism that encourages postcolonialism to ‘produce a more critical and self reflexive account of cultural nationalism’” (Parashar, 2016: 371). On the other hand, “postcolonialism offers feminism the conceptual tool box to see multiple sites of oppression and to reject universalisms around gendered experiences of both men and women” (Parashar, 2016: 371). As both discourses “(...) stand resolutely in support of subversion and change in the political, cultural and social land-scape; not just to bridge the distance between the centre and the margins but also to bring the knowledge of and from the margins to the centre” (Parashar, 2016: 371), a work in tandem is now necessary. Both should work therefore as allies, but, as an example of the divergence between the two, “feminists (...) collide with postcolonials on the understandings of the ‘third world women’ and the overruling of gender hierarchies in racialised spaces” (Parashar, 2016: 371). This concept of third world feminism where divergent views can be observed, refers to, according to D’Souza, theories which “aligned the political goals of black feminists in the United States with a worldwide struggle for decolonization that cut through lines of class, gender and race” (D’Souza, 2018: 74-75). This concept paved the way to forcibly address the limitations of feminism, largely as it has been, and sometimes it is today - from a middle-class and white point of view - as well as to further add to the conversation about the experience of oppression of women of colour as being distant from the rest. We need to be vigilant in regard to “discursive colonialism in the production of the ‘Third World Woman’ as singular monolithic subject in some (Western) feminist texts” (Parashar, 2016: 371) and in exhibitions as well. Furthermore, (...) as we now know, difference is not just *between* the West and non-West

but *within* these geographies and temporalities as well and any universalism is discursive violence that writes out histories and mutes voices” (Parashar, 2016: 371). This point is very relevant and according to Sandoval, “in enacting this new form of historical consciousness, US third-world feminism provides access to a different way of conceptualizing not only US feminist consciousness but oppositional activity in general” (2003 :75).

“Decolonialising is not a mythical endeavour, it is ultimately a politics of recognition. It demands that aesthetics and the politics of practice dismantle singularities and the monolithic (...)” (Mistry and Mabaso, 2021: 8). One of the main concerns is in “the assumption of the category of “‘Third World’ women as a coherent group with identical interests, experiences, and goals prior to their entry in the socio-political and historical field”. This Western feminist discourse which we can encounter in some women artists exhibitions defines Third World women as subjects “outside” social relations instead of looking at the way these women are constituted through these social structures” (Tyagi, 2014: 48-49). This single story view, which views Third World women from a Westernized lense fails to understand the complexity of their experience and reduces it, as “the “typical” Third World woman is thus being defined as religious, family-oriented, legal minors, illiterate and domestic” (Tyagi, 2014: 48-49) while “White Western feminists are discursively representing themselves as being sexually liberated, free-minded, in control of their own lives. (Tyagi, 2014: 48-49).

It is at this point that a connection can perhaps be established between the previously mentioned notion of the single story and the concept of monocultures, which could be useful for the development of the report. Monoculture is a term which derived from a farming practice which “(...) does not promote the maintenance of farmland biodiversity” (Yahya, et al, 2017: 6314). Monoculture is essentially an agricultural method involving a specific field occupied by a single kind of crop over a significant period of time (Grant, 2006: 103). This kind of farming was implemented around the world during the 1960s, when it was indicated that the world was possibly facing a shortage of food, and the technique is in contrast with notions of polyculture systems, in which two or more different kinds of crops exist at a time in a field, being this last one the most traditional

form of agriculture. This monocultural approach, where there is the repetition of the same kind of crop, is also understood as being more profitable for farmers. In a similar way, institutional practices create monocultures, where there is a recycling of the same voice: the same type of artists within the same type of collection within the same type of museum (Santos and Maurício, 2020).

As Shannan Grant argues, “monoculture is destroying biodiversity and cultural identity, eliminating local economies, and erasing regional differences” (2006: 102). In a similar way, contemporary art institutions can be critiqued for doing the same to Other artists. Monoculture farming practices and artistic ones can correlate in a few aspects, and the concept of monoculture can be borrowed and applied to various circumstances. As Grant notes, monoculture “can be used to describe any instance where a single practice, species, or behavior is favored by a population and exploited to the point where other practices, species, or behaviors are at the risk of extinction” (Grant, 2006: 102). The repetition of the same kind of voice in exhibitions and museum collections opposed to the rotation of different perspectives, realities and narratives has the same effect, as the occlusion of difference and diversity in institutional practice, in art critique, in galleries, in collections, etc, in turn makes it difficult for Other artists to navigate and survive in the art world (Santos and Maurício, 2020). Besides relating to institutional practices and the recurrence of white euro-american heterosexual and male artists, the concept can also be particularly useful when applied to women artists’ exhibitions in terms of repetitiveness of the curatorial strategy. The repetition of identical formats, identical narratives, identical voices arguably produces a similar impact on visitors as monoculture farming produces on land (Santos and Maurício, 2020). It can numb viewers to the problem in hand and frame the problem from solely a Western lens. Furthermore, the repetition of the same voice within gendered exhibitions, as in white, cis-gendered, euro-american female artists, creates again an identical effect, leading Other artists to “extinction”. Therefore, “it is important to note the exclusions within feminist exhibition practices even in the most successful radical moments of establishing a feminist alternative to mainstream institutions” (Jones, 2016: 8). By aiming at combating sexism within the institution, these exhibitions are silencing voices belonging to the ones they try to highlight, such as artists

of color, artists outside the so-called Western world, transgender artists, gender non binary artists, lesbian artists, amongst others. Monoculture approaches to knowledge production are a homogeneous transmission of the culture of a group of people, social or racial, amongst others. As incomplete stories, there is a clear need to create space for different voices, different artistic practices, different narratives, and so on. An “intercultural dialogue must consider the stories and voices of different communities and societies, especially those still marginalized” (Mora, 2014: 1). To this end, according to Mora (2014: 1), “in an increasingly multicultural world, counter-narratives are an essential and necessary component of today’s narratives about world affairs”. It is from this intercultural perspective, with the presence of counter-narratives which were previously discussed in 2.1., that institutions, curators, decision-makers, must act. As noted by curator Grace Samboh⁵ in an interview conducted for the purpose of the report: “(...) people who have the power or position or chance to exhibit simply have to be more mindful”. As we have learned from agriculture, diversity is more sustainable, arguably, in any practice. Furthermore, adding to the established notion that group shows of women artists would benefit from including feminist ideology in all the aspects of an exhibiton, one can add that this ideology needs to come from a postcolonial standpoint.

⁵ Read full interview with curator Grace Samboh on pages 176-180 of the Annex.

Chapter 3: *Feminist and Women Artists' Shows - from the 1970s to 2020*

Having established the main concepts this report makes use of, the following chapter takes a brief look at the history of female-only exhibitions from the 1970s, which is when they started to gain more popularity, until today. Mentions of the second, third and fourth wave of feminism will also be part of this chapter, in terms of their impact on cultural institutions. The relevance of this chapter is to provide a context, to understand the many forms shows curated in this frame can possess and to lay the foundation for the research and critique which will follow. The objects of study for this portion of the research are mainly exhibition catalogues as the report is separated from the case studies by time. “Art Catalogues are arguably the main form of art documentation today, and a cornerstone of the bibliography of the subject. (...) Exhibition catalogues, collection catalogues, *catalogues raisonnés*, (...) are primary and secondary source materials, documenting artworks and their history (...)” (Montero, 2017: 109). Catalogues are unable to translate the full experience of visiting an exhibition, nevertheless, as objects of research, they present themselves as valuable tools in terms of showcasing further information regarding the artists featured in the show. Furthermore, catalogues and exhibition materials allow us to, on the one hand, reflect on the artists selected, and on the other, to register the ones the show skipped over, as they can serve as tools to bury or unbury voices.

3.1. *The 1970s : Second Wave of Feminism and Women Artists*

“(…) no good show can do everything at once”

(Harris and Nochlin, 1976: 12)

The decade of the 1970s is generally linked to the birth of the Women’s Liberation Movement, which had manifestations since the mid-1960s throughout Europe and the United States. Following the civil rights movements of the 1950s and early 1960s, the feminist movement argued mainly against traditional gender roles, norms and the cult of domesticity. The influential text *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) by Betty Friedan was also marked by historians as an object with relevant impact on the second wave of feminism, exactly for challenging the above mentioned. One of the points in Friedan’s book is that women’s overall unhappiness and sense of despair gained from domestic labor was not an individual problem, but societal one, and therefore, a societal movement was in need. “The concept of ‘waves’ of feminism was itself only applied in the late 1960s and early 1970s and therefore its application to a previous era of female activism tells us a great deal about the dawning second wave” (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004: 144). Inasmuch as the first wave advocated women's right to vote, to own property and to enter the professional market, second wave feminism lobbied for full liberation from patriarchal society. First wave feminists used the power to vote as a token. Second wave used amongst its many symbols of injustice, the art world and its unbalance in female representation. “One of the key issues for the nascent feminist art movement in the late 1960s, particularly in the US and UK, was the exclusion of women’s artistic work from exhibitions of modern and contemporary art” (Jones, 2016: 6). Therefore, one of the main focuses was to address the situation either “by founding feminist art venues independent of the dominant cultural and funding situations or by developing exhibitions of women’s art in mainstream institutions” (Jones, 2016: 6). The art world was one of the many battle sites for second wavers as the unbalance in representation and opportunities at the time was extremely noticeable. Feminist artists and cultural professionals aimed to exhibit female names and feminist

ideas in mainstream museums' spaces, which was mainly seen by decision makers with reluctance. More commonly than not, this was denied and women artists started to create their own exhibition spaces. Although successful and interesting exhibitions were produced in independent feminist sites for cultural dissemination, to gain entrance in an institution setting meant further possibilities in terms of loans from multiple museums and collections, and availability for detailed research, amongst other privileges.

When this entrance into museographic space was possible, a commonly applied strategy was to create and produce group exhibitions of women artists. One example of a show curated in this frame, which took place during the decade of the 1970s, is the trailblazing exhibition titled *Women Artists: 1550-1950*, curated by Linda Nochlin and Ann Sutherland Harris in 1976. This historically angled exhibition was first held in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and, in 1977, adapted to the Brooklyn Museum in New York. "The exhibition (...) was the first large-scale museum exhibition in the USA dedicated exclusively to women artists from a historical perspective" (Reilly, 2018: 44), making it a relevant case study for the present research. It is a relevant case of women artists and women curators successfully entering the museum space and producing a show which remained important until today. Although it was not the first time in history that a collective exhibition of women artists was produced, it was impactful as it took place in a mainstream institution, and due to the multitude of artists, more or lesser known, that were featured (although, and relevant to note, solely artists from the so-called Western world) and the broad time period in which the exhibition focused on. According to the curators of the show:

"Our intention in assembling these works by European and American women artists active from 1550 to 1950 is to make more widely known the achievements of some fine artists whose neglect can in part be attributed to their sex and to learn more about why and how women artists first emerged as rare exceptions in the sixteenth century and gradually became more numerous until they were a largely accepted part of the cultural scene" (Harris and Nochlin, 1976: 11).

One of the aims of the show was to develop on Linda Nochlin's famous 1971 text "Why Have There Been no Great Women Artists?", with the main argument of the essay resting on the notion of systemic barriers preventing women from participating more actively in the art world. The survey exhibition had strong academic affiliation and provided an historical perspective on the issue. By focusing on the past, the curators wished to showcase what was in need for, and lacking in, the present and future, and "the issues raised by the art of the past are in many ways different from those raised by that of the present and demand a different approach" (Harris and Nochlin, 1976: 12), but "it is to be hoped that this exhibition will provide an exhilarating sense of expanded perspective for contemporary women artists." (Harris and Nochlin, 1976: 12).



Figure 1: Installation Photograph of *Women Artists 1550-1950*, at the Brooklyn Museum from October 1, 1977 through November 27, 1977. ©Brooklyn Museum

It was an important exhibition for the unburying of artists that history had silenced and as a starting point for feminist presence in the mainstream museum. The focus was solely on western world artists, which can be understood as lacking the necessary scope,

although, according to the curators, “this suggests not so much that the present exhibition is limited but rather that the possibilities for future ones exploring the work of women in the arts are unlimited: we look forward to future developments” (Harris and Nochlin, 1976: 12). Overall the show is composed of 150 works by 86 women artists such as Artemisia Gentileschi and Adrienne Marie Louise Grandpierre-Deverzy, as examples of more obscure artists at the time, “to luminaries on the order of Angelica Kauffmann, Elizabeth Vigée-Lebrun, Rosa Bonheur, Berthe Morisot, Mary Cassatt, Kaethe Kellwitz and Georgia O’Keeffe” (Glueck, Grace. “THE WOMAN AS ARTIST.” *The New York Times*. September 25, 1977: 217). This contrast between artists who history had forgotten, such as Artemisia Gentileschi at the time, and consecrated ones such as O’Keeffe, creates an interesting dialogue and begs the question of why have such names been silenced. It was also particularly relevant as it was held in a big institutional setting, as only in a setting as such was the amount of research necessary possible. Again, the independent spaces created by second wave feminist artists were essential so women had a place to exist in the art world and to showcase their work, but had limited resources for the most part. This was the big advantage of holding such a show in a big museum. Furthermore, and according to Vicente, in organizing the exhibition “from within” an institutional setting, a rupture effect was produced and felt in the art system, both at an academic level but also at a museological one (2012: 36). Such being said, even with further resources than in independent spaces, it is obvious that the show failed to “represent every woman who produced a painting or graphic work of quality between 1550 and 1950” (Harris and Nochlin, 1976: 11) as such would not be feasible. But, ideally, other geographies should have been explored, away from the European and North American contexts, as, again, when history and its canon skip over names, they tend to cease to exist.

“In the case of works dating from 1800 on, problems both of choosing among a multitude of artists and of securing the most significant works by the artist often became acute” (Harris and Nochlin, 1976: 11). Furthermore, the curators mention encountering difficulties in borrowing pieces and, in some cases, “an unwillingness to lend major works to the show” (Harris and Nochlin, 1976: 11) due to the theme and concept of *Women Artists: 1550-1950*. This further manifests the unwillingness to highlight feminine art from

decision makers in the art world, at the time. Therefore, the catalogue of the exhibition serves here as an important tool to display inequality in opportunity and to uncover figures from history. The curators and authors used the object of the catalogue to highlight great pieces by great artists, and “(...) what the exhibition and its catalogue made clear was that, although present-day scholars were largely unaware of these artists’ work, the neglect did not derive from a lack of accomplishment or success during the artists’ lifetimes” (Reilly, 2018: 45).

The challenge to the narrative of gendered quality is what seems to be the most positive aspect of the show and, generally, of others curated in similar frame. By showcasing artists in the shadows with exceptional work, the curators make us question the mechanisms held in place that made history skip over them. The pieces, which consisted of mainly painting with some presence of drawing and graphic arts, showcased immense talent from female artists, aiming to say clearly that the reason for the non-existence of great female artists is not, in any case, due to a difference in ability to produce quality work, but, as claimed in Nochlin’s essay (1971), a systemic one. The exhibition aimed as well to propose a genealogy, to be completed of course, of women artists. It is also an interesting case study as artist Georgia O’Keeffe famously refused to lend her work to *Women Artists*, as, in a wave of women artists’ exhibitions highlighting the best work by female creators, “O’Keeffe, the most famous female artist of her day, saw herself in a different category - “one of the best painters,” period” (Sheets, Hilarie M. “Female Artists Are (Finally) Getting Their Turn.” *The New York Times*. March 29, 2016). There was, and still very much is, a reluctance in participating in shows curated in this frame by some female artists, as this strategy can be seen as ghettoizing. Even though the artist did not agree to participate by lending a piece to *Women Artists*, the curators borrowed an O’Keeffe painting from another leander and featured the artist on the show anyways. “Yet despite these exhibitions, neither O’Keeffe nor any other woman would break into “Janson’s History of Art,” the leading textbook, until 1987, and equality remained elusive” (Sheets, Hilarie M. “Female Artists Are (Finally) Getting Their Turn.” *The New York Times*. March 29, 2016).

Both Nochlin's 1971 essay and *Women Artists: 1550-1950* are relevant to this day (fifty years later) proving the lasting and effective impact the show had at the time and continues to have. When the historical angled and clear example of an area studies (Reilly, 2018: 25) show first opened its doors to critics and public, it was received as an outstanding example of a successful exhibition and of an important effort in a curatorial corrective which aimed to voice silenced artists. Second wave feminism was essential to move the questioning of the art world along, as it highlighted inequality in all spheres of societal life, including the artistic one. An also particularly relevant instrument in shining light on the disadvantages of being female in the male dominated art world were the contributions by activist group The Guerrilla Girls, mentioned in the next sub-chapter dedicated to the decade of the 1980s.

3.2. The 1980s : The Guerrilla Girls and GALAS

“They refer to sensuous times and spaces between women. Making visible what has been hidden” (Hammond, 1980: 11).

As author Vicente (2012) notes, following the exhibition *Women Artists: 1550-1950*, the rediscovering of a past of female creativity was particularly present. The decade of the 1980s saw a number of texts where the previously blank pages started to be filled with multiple female names from history. As the author puts it, art history as a discipline was shaken by feminist theory. Besides this discovery period, the 1980s also saw the appearance of the important feminist activist group: the Guerrilla Girls (GG), a group of women which made use of street posters to shine a light on gender inequality in the art world and to provoke change in institutional and curatorial practices. The group, which is still active today, is composed by anonymous artists, cultural professionals, writers, historians, amongst others, that take on names of deceased female artists as pseudonyms. Anonymatium, which was also obtained by the use of the iconic gorilla masks, was essential as if the identities were revealed it would be probable that they would have experienced backlash and discrimination. The members are “(...) cis, lesbian and transgender; diverse in age, sexual orientation and class; and from many ethnic backgrounds — South Asian, African American, Latinx and European, and so on” (Guerrilla Girls, 2020: 9), all joined by the belief that the art world was, and is, in need of big transformation in terms of representation. The group makes use of multiple objects of study such as exhibitions, museum collections, gallery representation and counts and separates the names of artists by categories of gender, race, sexuality, etc, in order to use the statistics to bring awareness to the level of discrimination which surrounds the cultural field. An example of one of the multiple interventions made by the group is the 1987 poster with the phrase ‘the advantages of being a woman artist’, in which they listed sarcastic ‘benefits’ of being female in a male dominated field such as the lack of pressure

to be successful, not having to be in shows with male artists, knowing your career might pick up after the age of eighty and not having to experience the embarrassment to be called a genius, to name a few. This poster was also translated into multiple languages (as seen below) and presented in museums and festivals all over the world, as the group, which started in New York City, later broadened their geography of intervention.

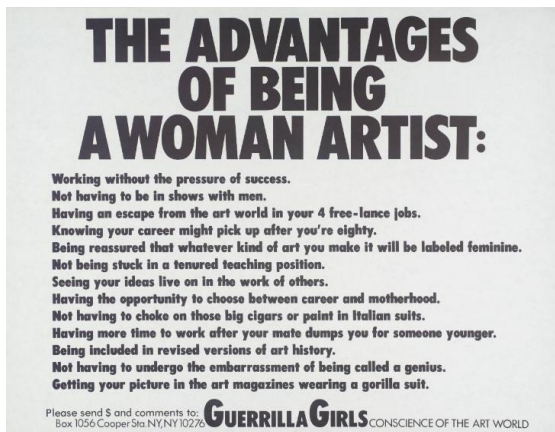


Figure 2: The Guerrilla Girls, 1987. Screenprint on paper, 1988. TATE Modern. **Figure 3:** The Guerrilla Girls' 1987 poster translated to Portuguese.

“Imagine you’re artists pissed off that almost all the opportunities in the art world go to white men. Imagine you go to a protest outside the Museum of Modern Art after it opens an “international” exhibition in 1984 with 169 artists but only 13 women and 8 artists of color. You see immediately no museum goer even cares! Imagine you have an aha moment and realize there HAS to be a better way — an in-your-face, unforgettable way — to break through people’s preconceptions and prove to them that the art system isn’t a meritocracy where museums, galleries, critics and collectors always know best” (Guerrilla Girls, 2020: 8).

The GG made use of the shocking but real statistics, as the above one, to foster critical thinking and to impose action on the part of the decision makers, which, particularly at the time, was essential. Furthermore, they made use of the visual language of advertising to transmit their message in the most accessible way to anyone passing on the street. As Guerrilla Girl “Georgia O’Keeffe” noted, in order to balance the art world,

exhibition should have 99% of women and non-white artists for the next 400 years (Guerrilla Girls, 1995: 28). Therefore, and as the activist group notes in the 2020 book *Guerrilla Girls : the art of behaving badly*, “our work is not finished. We invite you to look through these pages, get mad and keep up the fight. Creative complaining works!” (Guerrilla Girls, 2020: 10).

Besides the relevancy of the Guerrilla Girls in shaking the cultural scene, the 1980s were also marked by a lack of exhibitions curated in the frame of research as, also noted by *The New York Times*, group shows of women artists fell out of favor in the 1980s and 1990s (Sheets, Hilarie M. “Female Artists Are (Finally) Getting Their Turn.” March 29, 2016). Although fewer major feminist shows can be found during this time, which is also possible to observe in “A Chronological List of International Exhibitions on women artists and feminist art practices” (Deepwell, 2015), a three-part initiative took place in 1980 titled *Great American Lesbian Art Show* or *GALAS*. The initiative was created by a collective connected with the Woman’s Building in Los Angeles, California, which was composed of Terry Wolverton, Tyaga, Jody Hoening, Bia Lowe, Louise Moore and Barbara Stopha, and wished to shine light on lesbian artists and to address their invisibility in society and in the creative field. The *Great American Lesbian Art Show*’s first activity was the show *Invitational* which was curated by Bia Lowe and featured ten openly lesbian artists such as Harmony Hammond, Tee Corinne and Kate Millet, amongst others. *GALAS* also held more than 200 sister exhibitions simultaneously in different locations throughout the USA and Canada. “In the second component of the GALAS initiative, the collective called for a celebration of lesbian culture to be organized by women in their own communities, to raise awareness of “the power of lesbian vision and sensibility”” (Reilly, 2018: 169), and the final portion of the project was the creation of an extensive archive of the work showcased on the *GALAS* network. In the present research the focus is placed mostly on *Invitational* (1980) although the fact that this project had multiple endeavours and angles is pleasantly interesting and reflects what work away from mainstream museographic venues can produce.

One of the pieces presented in the show was Harmony Hammond’s 1979 *Durango*, which can be seen below. The skin-like piece makes use of materials and techniques

connected with female domestic labor such as wrapping and braiding of cloth rags. Furthermore, the shape of the piece is somewhat reminiscent of female genitalia and the “coiled form registers and makes visible Hammond’s labor, rendering her physical engagement with its materials an integral part of the work itself” (“Durango.” Art Institute of Chicago. n.d.). Overall the show received mixed critiques, but “in all cases, the critics objected to the selection of artists on the basis of their sexuality and commitment to lesbian visibility, rather than to the quality of their work” (Reilly, 2018: 171). Most importantly, “the GALAS Invitational received mainstream recognition in the press—a first for a lesbian art show in the USA” (Reilly, 2018: 56). The exhibition, although smaller and with few artists, was an important endeavour as “the discipline of art history (and the academy as a whole) still takes gay and lesbian/queer studies as a minor area of expertise, a queer endeavor” (Weinberg, 1996: 12). The fact that the 10 selected artists were openly homosexual is in itself a courageous and political act, particularly during the 1980s with the AIDS pandemic and major stigma against homosexuality.



Figure 4: Harmony Hammond. *Durango*, 1979. Fabric, wood, foam, latex rubber, gesso, and rhexplex. 78.7 × 180.3 × 45.7 cm. 1986.985 The Art Institute of Chicago: <https://www.artic.edu/artworks/64961/durango>.

Even within the LGBTQI+ community, lesbians still suffer major erasure and invisibility in society as whole and in the art world and, as Reilly (2018: 164) notes, lesbian artists are more often than not excluded from group shows, particularly the ones with male curators. “Lesbians in general, and lesbian art in particular, existed almost entirely outside the boundaries of mainstream culture...When lesbian artists began, in the mid 1970s, to seek out predecessors, they did not seem to exist” (Wolverton, 1995: 50). This is translated in the fact that the exhibition was held in an independent feminist space (the Woman’s Building), and not in a mainstream museum (the only case study present in this research as such). To present work by queer artists and to title the exhibition as such, provokes audiences to rethink the binding characteristics of the artists commonly hung at exhibition spaces and, most importantly, to consider the ones that do not. The exhibition raised as well questions on the notion of lesbian sensibility, which can be compared with an idea of feminine sensibility present in group shows of female artists. According to Reilly, “art historians Arlene Raven and Ruth Iskin argued that lesbian sensibility was not based in sexual orientation, but flourished in women-identified communities” (Reilly, 2018: 160). Raven and Iskin “claimed that when an artist was surrounded and inspired by women, she would undergo a “radical transformation of self, her muse would be female, and the sensibility her art embodied would be lesbian” (Reilly, 2018: 160). This notion of an artistic sensibility common to a group of individuals which share one or two identifiers was very present in the show and raises debate. Another aspect of the show relevant to note is “(...) the artists willingness to “come out” publicly. Since sexuality is not generally physically manifest -as is usually the case with sex and race- it requires disclosure, a self-outing. For many this is liberating; for others, terrifying” (Reilly, 2018: 161). Mainly, the show aimed to offer lesbian artists’ names to the discipline of art history, which is important in terms recognition and representation for the future.

The Guerrillas Girls found successful ways to connect with the audience and force change in the art world and *GALAS* as a multidisciplinary project wished to highlight a marginalized group within other marginalized groups (queer women artists). Both projects were activist in their approach and raised attention for their causes. Similarly to the previous case study, the show took on an area studies approach, as “(...) anything outside

the (white, male, Western) center requires “special” attention, and is designated as a separate “area” (Reilly, 2018: 25). Besides *GALAS*, it is also important to highlight the 1984 exhibition *Difference: On Representation and Sexuality* which was presented at the New Museum in New York. The curators, Kate Linker and Jane Weinstock, created a feminist art show in a mainstream space and it was one of the only large-scale exhibitions which took place at the time. The *GALAS* project was selected as a case study over *Difference* as it focused on a group of artists which is commonly underrepresented. Furthermore, as an initiative of a collective, with less possibilities compared to the rest of the case-studies, it was overall successful in bringing awareness to the lesbian community of artists. That being said, the show curated by Linker and Weinstock was essential to allow feminist artists, for the first time, to be featured in the art market of the United States and “(...) the signing of Kruger by the highly successful Mary Boone Gallery in the mid 1980s was a dramatic sign of the perceived commercial viability of feminist art by that time, due in part to exhibitions such as *Difference* (...)” (Jones, 2016: 9), which grants recognition for the positive outcome of that particular show.

3.3. The 1990s : Third Wave of Feminism and Bad Girls

“Everything is up for grabs, especially the rule that serious art can't be funny”

(Marcia Tanner, 1994: 10).



Figure 5: Installation view of “Bad Girls (Part 1),” 1994, at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York.

©New Museum. FRED SCRUTON/COURTESY NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, NEW YORK

<https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/bad-girls-rescue-exhibition-feminist-art-1990s-much-teach-us-today-10326/>

The decade of the 1990s came with third wave feminism and multiple exhibitions titled *Bad Girls* (1993 and 1994) researching the intersections of art, humor and feminism. According to Jones, “in the 1990s there was still a paucity of feminist curatorial work in major institutions” (2016: 9). Similarly to the decade of the 1980s, “there were only a

handful of exhibitions of feminist art (...) across the Anglophone art world, the US and the UK still being the dominant sites for the feminist art movement and for feminist exhibition practices” (Jones, 2016: 9). Also during the decade of the 1990s it was possible to see the rise of third wave feminism, which can be understood in broad terms as:

“The feminism of a younger generation of women who acknowledge the legacy of second wave feminism, but also identify what they see as its limitations. These perceived limitations would include their sense that it remained too exclusively white and middle class, that it became a prescriptive movement which alienated ordinary women by making them feel guilty about enjoying aspects of individual self-expression such as cosmetics and fashion, but also sexuality – especially heterosexuality and its trappings, such as pornography” (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004: 169).

This third wave of the feminist movement had as well an interest in media and popular culture as possible sites for activism, with icons such as the Riot Grrrl movement and musician Courtney Love, as examples. “(...) Being part of feminism’s third wave means realising one’s own politics through the mass media and popular culture” (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004: 171) which is in opposition to the second wave’s wish “to keep its ‘authenticity’ by generally shunning the blandishments of the media for fear of being absorbed by patriarchal power structures” (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004: 171). According to Snyder (2008), this portion of feminist history is concerned with a multiperspectival and intersectional perspective on feminism. A multivocal version is embraced and emphasis on inclusivity and nonjudgment, rejecting the policing of boundaries in terms of the feminist political are as well characterists. Therefore, “(...) third-wave feminism rejects grand narratives for a feminism that operates as hermeneutics of critique within a wide array of discursive locations, and replaces attempts at unity with a dynamic and welcoming politics of coalition” (Snyder, 2008: 176). Furthermore, heterosexuality and men in general are less problematic for this generation of feminism, when compared to the previous wave, and there is an effort to release feminist practice of what can be understood as ideological sternness. “(...) Third wavers pride themselves on their global perspective and there is a

commitment to look at the material conditions of people's lives while embracing some of the key tenets of second wave feminism" (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004: 171). It is in this context that the shows titled *Bad Girls* were created. The title of the multi-part show in itself seems to reflect this attitude of irreverence of the 1990s and popular culture influence as "*Bad Girls* signalled a return to feminism, but through a lens coloured heavily by trends in popular culture" (Jones, 2016: 9). "In entertainment slang, "bad" girls - originally appropriated from Black English to mean really good-describes female performers, musicians, actors and comedians (...) who challenge audiences to see women as they have been, as they are, and as they want to be" (Tucker, 1994: 4).

The European portion of these exhibitions sharing a title was curated by Kate Bush, Emma Dexter and Nicola White and presented in 1993 at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London and was followed by a presentation at the Center for Contemporary Arts in Glasgow. The exhibition featured a total of six artists from the UK and US such as Nan Goldin and Helen Chadwick, and focused on a "new spirit of playfulness, tactility, and perverse humor" (Reilly, 2018: 50). The show aimed to offend, provoke and showcase feminist work of the 1990s, with pieces such as Nan Goldin's photographic portraits of LGBTQI+ friends and drag queens, showcasing a sort of chosen family album preserving therefore the memory of her friends, many of whom passed away in the context of the AIDS pandemic, as an example. It was received with mixed reviews according again to Reilly (2018: 51), as some critics claimed that the show showcased anti-male prejudice and an infantile approach, while others praised it for successfully breaking down the notion that feminism does not have a sense of humor. In 1994, a year later, curator Marcia Tucker organized an independent US version of *Bad Girls*: a two-part show at the New Museum in New York City, while Marcia Tanner curated a sister exhibition at the Wight Art Gallery, at the University of California in Los Angeles, titled *Bad Girls West*. This sub-chapter will mainly focus on the exhibitions taking place in the United States of America which were independently curated, although sharing a catalogue.

Both the New York and Los Angeles shows focused on humor and the power of laughter, as did the UK version, as during the 1990s it was possible to observe artists starting to use sense of humor to convey feminist ideas and concerns as a way to engage

the audiences. The pieces selected for the show were “(...) informed (...) by two decades of critical thinking and artmaking by feminists, gays and lesbians, and people of color. But the art looks seductive and inviting, disarmingly humorous and as sensuously beguiling as a cake with a dagger baked inside” (Tanner, 1994: 10). According to the curator of *Bad Girls*, the New York City version, Marcia Tucker (1994: 6), there were three concerns regarding the curatorship of the show: the first was the importance of self-representation in art made by women and the subsequent altering of the then status of women, with humor as an important aspect of this change, as in works such as “READ MY PUSSY” (1994) by Judith (Weinperson) Braun and Chuck Nanney’s “Dress Code” (1992), a series of self-portraits translating the impotence to escape one’s body. The second concern rested on the analysis of the concepts of carnival and carnivalesque in shedding light on feminist action in the art world, with pieces such as Jacqueline Hayden’s photographic “Figure Model Series (1991 and 1992) with grotesque depictions of female bodies or “Sistah Paradise's Revival Tent” (1993) by artist Xenobia Bailey. Finally, the third concern was the importance of mass media and popular culture in feminist activity, with examples such as works by the Guerrilla Girls and “Jasmine Swami” (1993), “Elmo Swami” (1993) and “Homer Swami” (1993) by Keith Boadwee. When asked about the show, the curator mentioned that one of the main questions posed was if it is a feminist exhibition, to which Tucker answers:

“Bad Girls has its genesis, for me, in an ongoing engagement with feminism, starting way back in 1968 when the Women's Movement hit New York. In recent years I began to see the work of an increasing number of artists who were dealing with feminist issues in new and refreshing ways, and the idea for an exhibition gathered momentum. The work that particularly fascinated me and pushed me to rethink a lot of old issues had two characteristics in common. It was funny, really funny, and it went "too far"” (Tucker, 1994: 4).

In both of the curators’ essays present in the catalogue, laughter is mentioned and understood as “(...) an antidote to being silenced, defined, and objectified; it resists the construction of an "intelligible, consistent, 'unbroken' story" and opts for the

inconsistencies, contradictions and "catch me if you can" elusiveness of multiple narratives" (Tucker, 1994: 42). Both curators were interested in humor although, according to Reilly (2018: 53), Tucker's concept called for art that is funny and that pushes the norm, while Tanner's aim was to showcase irreverent work that follows a non-doctrinaire, anti-ideological and un-ladylike logic. In both shows there were present works created in a multitude of mediums such as sculptures, video, comics, photographs and wall texts and the main issues that addressed were regarding marital life, motherhood, genitalia, gender identity and lesbianism as well as violence, race and class, to name a few. As another example, on the walls of *Bad Girls West* it was possible to read phrases such as: "you're more apt to be a bad girl if: your vibrator is used more than your electric can opener" or if "someone made your hair a primary color and you didn't sue", a wall text piece by Sybil Sage (1994). So, there is a sense of provocation which seems essential for both curators. A collection of art that shocks and humours viewers into action. According to Jones, the shows showcased "(...) work that explicitly refused the niceties of a feminism that recuperated "positive images" of women such as the goddess imagery of the early 1970s" (2016:9) and instead aim to selected works "in favour of provoking the viewer through nasty, aggressive pictures and installations promoting female sexual empowerment" (Jones, 2016: 9).

Both exhibitions received mixed reactions regarding the curatorship and the title of show. The *New York Times* critic Roberta Smith claimed that curator Marcia Tucker "prematurely blends it with the surrounding culture, almost as if she were afraid that art by women could not stand alone" (Smith, Roberta. "Review/Art; A Raucous Caucus Of Feminists Being Bad" *The New York Times*. January, 21, 1994: Section C, Page 5) and warns audiences that "disappointment awaits anyone who approaches "Bad Girls" for a reasonably accurate view of the new, angrily ironic feminist art (...). It's a good time to assess their efforts and consider the issues they raise" (Smith, Roberta. "Review/Art; A Raucous Caucus Of Feminists Being Bad" *The New York Times*. January, 21, 1994: Section C, Page 5). *Bad Girls West*, curated by Marcia Tanner followed a similar intention and path as the sister exhibition and received similar reviews as well, with one of the main critiques being the omission of major feminist artists from the show. That being said, the show

intended not to be a comprehensive survey of all feminist art of the 1990s, as it would have been impossible given the amount of female artists working on the subject at the time, and these omissions seem to offer an opportunity for dialogue. And even though the reception at the time was perhaps not the greatest, the exhibition can now be understood as an important effort and mostly an accurate representation of a third wave feminism's show. Furthermore,“(...) they were not historical shows but exhibited work from the late 1980s and early 1990s—a period notably marked by a dearth of large-scale exhibitions exploring the *histories* of feminist art (...)” (Jones, 2016: 9-10). The exhibitions follow a more relational studies approach with the inclusion of men, although failing to represent Other women besides mostly heterosexual and white ones. “While the curators (particularly of the British versions) included work by artists identified with a “working-class aesthetic” in the UK (including Tracey Emin and Sarah Lucas), the *Bad Girls* shows on the whole were still almost entirely white” (Jones, 2016: 9). This translates the trend, followed by most exhibitions curated in this frame, of translating “feminist issues in the visual arts as exclusively the concern of white women” (Jones, 2016: 9).

Bad girls (New York) is not a women artists exhibition, but a feminist art show, making it an interesting case study precisely for the inclusion of a few male identifying artists while maintaining feminist intentions. According to Tucker, another question the curator was asked regarding the show was why the inclusion of male artists in the exhibition, to which Tucker responds with expressing a wish to “(...) transgress the usual premise for an exhibition about feminist issues - that it contains only the work of women (...)” (1994: 5). Furthermore, the curator was not inclined to “reinforcing a separate category of “women's art,” nor do we insist on women's concerns being inherently different from those of men, no matter how fed up with some of the latter we might be” (Tucker, 1994: 5). The male artists presented in the exhibition were allies, working within the themes intersecting the concerns of the show. Moreover, as “(...) the historic battle for women's rights hasn't become any easier, (...) it seems counterproductive to turn away willing soldiers because of their gender, much less their age, race or class” (Tucker, 1994: 6). While some women artists shows shy away from presenting clear feminist intentions, *Bad Girls* did not. In fact, Marcia Tucker expressed wanting to “(...) frame *Bad Girls*

through my own concerns and a lifelong engagement with feminism” (Tucker, 1994: 4). And it is exactly in this feminist intent that the exhibition maintains its importance and relevancy to this day, as it was provocative effort to raise awareness to gender equality and to feminist concerns. The curators understood the power artistic practices combined with feminist ideas hold in producing change, and choose to highlight (mainly) female creators that produce though provoking work. They saw an expansion of female artists “(...) defying the conventions and properties of traditional femininity to define themselves according to their own terms (...). But (...) doing it by using a delicious and outrageous sense of humor (...). “That's what we mean by "bad girls.”” (Tucker, 1994: 5).

3.4. 2000 - 2010 : *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*

“In the years 2005-2011 something remarkable happened. Feminist art and/or art by women was made the focus of many exhibitions in major museums” (Robinson, 2016 :29).



Figure 6: Installation view of *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, March 4 – July 16, 2007 at The Geffen

Contemporary at MOCA, ©The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, photo by Brian Forrest.
<https://www.moca.org/exhibition/wack-art-and-the-feminist-revolution>

Following the 1980s and 1990s with fewer exhibitions on the subject, the 2000s came, particularly the year 2007, as a particularly important decade for group exhibitions of women artists. This event could perhaps be linked with the birth of the #MeToo movement in 2006, which will be further mentioned in the next sub-chapter, as curatorial and institutional practices tend to respond to social and political events. Multiple exhibitions preoccupied with the inclusion of female voices in the art world appeared during this particular decade and especially in the mentioned year, such as, for example,

Global feminisms: new directions in contemporary art (2007) curated by Linda Nochlin and Maura Reilly and *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* (2007-2009) curated by Cornelia Butler. Both of these exhibitions gained relevant media attention and are considered pertinent efforts until this day, however this particular sub-chapter will focus on the latter, as similarities can be found between this particular show and *All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020*, the main case-study of the research.

WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution opened on March 4th 2007 at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, USA. The show later traveled to the National Museum of Women in the Arts (Washington, DC) in 2007, to the MOMA PS.1 in Long Island City in 2008 and, finally, to the Vancouver Art Gallery (Canada) in 2008/2009. Again, the curator of the show was Cornelia Butler and this particular survey takes on an historical angle focusing on the period from 1965 until 1980. During this time, as previously mentioned, the second wave of the feminist movement was occurring in North America and Europe, and feminist art making came along with it. “The feminist revolution in art was no less radical and transformative than the social movement from which it drew strength.” (Strick, 2007: 7) making this timeframe a particularly interesting one. The survey included more than 400 pieces by 120 different artists coming from countries in Europe, South and North America and Asia, including Portuguese artist Helena Almeida. “The exhibition explored intercontinental connections and themes based on media, geography, formal concerns and collective aesthetics and political impulses” (Reilly, 2018: 82). The curatorial narrative of the show did not follow a geographical or chronological line of thought, instead focusing on different themes present in the artist's works and in grouping them as such. *WACK!* researched on topics such as *Gender Performance* with the work “A Genuine Stimulation of ...” (1973-74) by American-Canadian artist Suzy Lake or *Abstraction* with the 1965 performance “Vagina Painting” by Japanese multimedia artist Shigeko Kubota. *Gendered Space, Body as Medium* and *Knowledge is Power* with Tee Corinne’s “Cunt Coloring Book” (1975) were some of the themes selected as well. Helena Almeida’s 1975 “Pintura Habitada”, series of works in which the artist photographs herself in suspended acts reminiscent of the process of painting and later on intervenes in the pictures in a blue shade of paint, was included in the topic of *Autophotography*. This

narrative division in topics or themes made it possible for consecrated artists to be featured next to lesser known ones as in the case of Louise Bourgeois' work being presented next to Italian-Brazilian artist Anna Maria Maiolino's piece in the space dedicated to *Abstraction*, as noted by Maura Reilly (2018: 82). "The flexibility of these themes demonstrated that the show's logic was suggestive rather than authoritative, and allowed for a mixing and matching of artworks (...)" (Reilly, 2018: 82) which allowed for diversity in terms of the artists and themes selected and in terms of mediums used. As noted by Armstrong, "that there was no chronological order or clear thematic breakdown to this international barrage of wildly multimedia work (...) only enhances the sense of the thrilling (...) chaos of the moment, the all-over-the-place free-for-all that was those two decades" (Armstrong, Carol. "'Global Feminisms' and 'WACK!'" *ARTFORUM*. 2007). That being said, and according to Jones, the show "(...) lacked any historical contextualization, going so far as to show work such as Nengudi's and Suzanne Lacy and Leslie Labowicz's important activist performances (via documentary photographs) with no information about where these pieces were made, took place, or how they were originally contextualized" (2016: 13). Therefore, "*WACK!* (...) simultaneously *presented* a historical and geographical range of feminist work (all by women) and *erased* the political and cultural specificity of each practice" (Jones, 2016: 13). This is perhaps one of the main unsuccessful portions of the show, as providing context to pieces is essential for the full understanding of the art and artists' intentions.

Overall *WACK!* defended that gender is still essential to culture and that we must look at the timeframe of the second wave of feminism - the late 1960s and 1970s - in order to comprehend gender manifestations in art and society. Furthermore, Butler believed that the significance of feminist art and the feminist movement of the 1970s had not yet been sufficiently explored by the museum space. *WACK!* came, therefore, to fill in the blank, with the exclamation point of the title wishing to be an indication of the confidence and idealism present in the movement at the time. The intersection of the feminist movement and art (as the subtitle indicates) is the main concern of the show, claiming that the second wave was one of the most influential social justice movements in history and in art. "During the late 1960s and early 70s, feminism fundamentally changed contemporary art

practice, critiquing its assumptions and radically altering its structures and methodologies.” (Butler, 2007: 15). The curator also offers, in the catalogue text, what she understands as the most useful definition of feminism, by Peggy Phelan, which is: “the conviction that gender has been, and continues to be, a fundamental category for the organization of culture. Moreover, the pattern of that organization usually favours men over women” (Butler, 2007: 15), which showcased the feminist intentions present in this exhibition.



Figure 7: Installation view of *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, March 4 – July 16, 2007 at The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, ©The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, photo by Brian Forrest. <https://www.moca.org/exhibition/wack-art-and-the-feminist-revolution>

Along side the mentioned definition, the catalogue’s introductory text, written by the show’s curator, does not shy away from mentioning feminist terms or ideology. The survey, particularly when considering the timeframe, showcases clear feminist intent while making use of an area studies approach to the subject, similar to previous case studies. The show was received by audiences and press with mostly positive critiques such as ““WACK!” makes us remember what a vibrant and forward-looking time those decades were—how much hope there was for change, how energetic and messy it all was before the categories became hardened and the deconstructionists squared off against the essentialists

(...)” (Armstrong, Carol. ““Global Feminisms” and “WACK!”.” *ARTFORUM*. 2007). That being said, and besides how positive and impactful the show can be understood, it is very relevant to note that out of the 120 artists featured, a mere 6 were African-American. This is a common theme also in regard to the previously analysed exhibitions. The following case-study wishes to contradict this trend and highlight one of the most marginalized groups of artists in art’s history.

3.5. 2010 - 2020 : *Fourth Wave Feminism and Radical Black Women*

“Recognition is powerful, and long overdue” (Morris and Hockley, 2018 : 21).

The final decade here analysed takes place from the year 2010 until 2020, which had as one of its markings the feminist #MeToo movement. #MeToo helped foster communication and community between survivors and to gather allies which stand with the victims of sexual assault and harassment. This latest wave of feminist, of which the movement is part, distances itself from the first, second and third wave as, with the aid of the digital world and social media, is able to share its ideas at a faster pace and to reach individuals spread all over the world. This is possible to observe if we look at the beginning of the #MeToo hashtag, which was created on the social media platform Myspace in 2006 by Tarana Burke. As social media platforms' engagement has been growing exponentially since then, the amount of people reached and community built has been enlarged as well. “As social media platforms grew into the 2010s with the likes of Facebook and Twitter, so did the movement” (Nguyen, Lanlily. “The Decade in Review: Looking Back on the Feminist Evolution and Revolution of the 2010s.” *The Guardian*. December 1, 2019) reaching its peak in 2017 when the hashtag went viral on Twitter thanks to celebrities such as actresses Alyssa Milano, Gwyneth Paltrow and Uma Thurman, to name a few. The viral tweet chain started a long-overdue international conversation regarding sexual assault and violence against women, which is one of the markings of fourth wave feminism. Another reasoning for the exponential growth of the movement was the 2016 presidential election in the US, with candidates Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, as the latter was elected while being accused of inappropriate behaviour towards women. The 2017 Women's March which first took place in Washington D.C. and later spread to other parts of the world, aimed to push for equality, reproductive rights, bodily autonomy, amongst other concerns, and was mainly fuelled by the defunding of Planned Parenthood in the United States of America, as proposed by the Trump administration. “As the #MeToo movement barrels forward, as record numbers of women seek office, and as the Women's March drives the resistance against the Trump

administration, feminism is reaching a level of cultural relevance it hasn't enjoyed in years" (Grady, Constance. "The waves of feminism, and why people keep fighting over them, explained." *Vox*. July 20, 2018). Furthermore, one of the most important aspects for this fourth wave feminism is that the movement strays away from highlighting a solely white middle-class struggle, following the path of the third wave. As noted by Nguyen, "if present-day feminism has become anything, then it is now more inclusive than before, moving past expanding rights for women alone but also tackling sexual violence that affects every identity" (Nguyen, Lanlily. "The Decade in Review: Looking Back on the Feminist Evolution and Revolution of the 2010s." *The Guardian*. December 1, 2019). Women of colour and transgender women are now more involved and are more broadly welcomed to the movement than ever, although it is still not perfectly inclusive. Circling back to chapter 2, one of the most impactful theories to fourth wavers is Crenshaw's concept of intersectional feminism which offered a possibility to better understand previous feminisms' shortcomings. It is then in this context of a mostly globalized digital world, and at the peak of the previously mentioned movement which, again, aims to be more inclusive than ever before, that the show *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85* took place. The exhibition was curated by Catherine Morris and Rujeko Hockley, and presented in 2017 at the Brooklyn Museum, in New York City, United States of America. The exhibition was part of *A Year of Yes: Reimagining Feminism at the Brooklyn Museum*, a year when the 10th anniversary of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art was being celebrated with a series of exhibitions.



Figure 8 and 9: We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85, April 21, 2017 through September 17, 2017. ©Brooklyn Museum, 2017. <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/exhibitions/3347>

We Wanted a Revolution: Radical Black Women, 1965-85 featured works by a diverse group of artists working within different mediums such as performance, video, painting, sculpture, photography and printmaking. Part of the group were artists such as Faith Ringgold, Maren Hassinger, Emma Amos and Ayoka Chenzira, to name a few. Overall the show “showcases art by nearly forty black women, as well as some Latina and Asian women and black men from the period noted” (Bobier, 2017: 1). As the time frame the curators selected as the focus of the show is similar to the one present in *WACK!*, *We Wanted a Revolution* seems to come to fill in the blanks left by Butler’s show which, again, had a very low number of black artists. The 2017 exhibition researches all which involves the social, the cultural, the political, and the artistic priorities of women of colour during the second-wave of the feminist social movement with pieces such as Dindga McCannon “Revolutionary Sister” (1971) or Faith Ringgold’s 1970 poster design titled “Committee to Defend the Panthers”.

“It is the first exhibition to highlight the voices and experiences of women of color—distinct from the primarily white, middle-class mainstream feminist movement—in order to reorient conversations around race, feminism, political action, art production, and art history in this significant historical period” (“We Wanted A Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85.” *Brooklyn Museum*, n.d.).

Therefore, it is a show researching how women artists produced art during the second wave, but from a fourth wave lense aiming at contradicting previous feminist failures, namely the occlusion of black women. The main aim of the show was to showcase the influence and impact African-American artists and activists had on the feminist social movement of the 1970s, even though history may have forgotten some of their names. According to the curators, “(...) these artists and activists did this work for themselves and immediate communities. They founded their own spaces and infiltrated other ones, kept their own archives (...), believing that their work mattered and that they had uniquely

important stories to tell” (Morris and Hockley, 2018: 18). According to the show’s co-curator Rujeko Hockley, one of the most relevant aspects of the exhibition is “(...) the connection between art and activism and the way in which at the same time that these women were thinking about all through their various identities, they also were thinking about art as inextricably linked to politics (...)” (Hockley, 2017: 6’50”). Furthermore, the artists understood that art and activism are “not mutually exclusive and that in fact that is the kind of role and function and necessity of art” (Hockley, 2017: 7’05”). The curatorship of the show, similarly to *WACK!*, does not seem to follow a chronological or historical line of thought, which means “the resulting narrative, in which artists appear and reappear at multiple points, acknowledges the fluidity of their lived experiences and their persistence of purpose as artists and radicals” (Morris and Hockley, 2018: 19).

Another very relevant to note aspect of the show was the production of two publications which accompanied the exhibition. The first one, *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85: A Sourcebook* (2017), gathers historical documents to showcase the impact black women had on the movement. The second published piece, *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85: New Perspectives* (2018), includes academic perspectives on the issues brought forward by the show, with texts by Aruna D’Souza, Uri McMillan, Lisa Jones, to name a few. These authors present us with perspectives on the past and the future of this erasure and silencing of black women’s voices. Therefore the curators took the opportunity not solely to showcase great art from mostly African-American female artists, but also to make available literature which has the power to inspire a younger generation of curators, artists, art historians and so forth. Therefore, the show and the materials become more than a single reference but a source of references for future work, which can be proven to be very relevant. Overall the exhibition was well received by critics and audiences. According to Kim Bobier, “it stages breakthroughs of the contributors’ practices conjointly with the histories of black women’s political organizing that underpin them. Still far from satisfied, these artists’ revolutionary desires are worth making our own” (2017: 8). By keeping a postcolonial feminist area studies approach to the subject, the exhibition is a positive example of an intersectional show curated in the frame of the research.

Hopefully, this third chapter of the report is successful in succinctly showcasing key examples of group exhibitions of women artists, and the ways in which each exhibition brought forward different strategies, formats, as well as concerns. This brief story of the large history of women artists exhibitions wished to showcase some of the motivations behind the popularization of the curatorial strategy in the rise of different waves of feminism, and the different approaches used, such area studies and relational studies. It aimed to display the beginning of the demand for this type of exhibition with the rise of second wave of feminism in the 1970s, and the desire and necessity to showcase lesbian artists of the 1980s, still product of this second wave. The case studies taking place in the 1990s and 2000s are cases of shows connected with the third wave of feminism, with the later also influenced by the birth of the fourth wave, and this last case study, which provided a counter-narrative example of a postcolonial feminist exhibition, borrowed itself perfectly as an example of an exhibition curated in the peak of the fourth wave of the feminist movement. Overall, in a more or less clear fashion, all showcased how the social atmosphere infiltrates into the art world, and, more or less openly feminist, with both positive and negative aspects, the five shows proved to be relevant efforts in the fight for gender equality within the art world.

“For my students, born as many were around about 1990, the pioneering feminist work of the late ‘60s and the ‘70s is like art of the late ‘30s is for me: it is real art history. If today’s young artists are to practice feminist resistance, they can learn from the successes and from the failures of earlier moments and movements of resistance”
(Robinson, 2016: 39).

Moving forward into the present decade, with the knowledge of past endeavours which made use of activism, humor and irreverence to touch and provoke audiences, it is possible to better understand and criticize attempts made today.

Chapter 4: *All I Want*

4.1. *The National Plan for the Arts*

The PNA, developed by the Portuguese Ministries of Culture and Education, aims to make culture more accessible to citizens, with a particular focus on children and young people, through the educational community and the promotion of active citizenship and cultural development. All of this is involved in a context of inclusion and learning within every stage of human life. Opportunities for different children within the same country, city, neighborhood, and school (private or public) are not identical in terms of gaining contact with the arts and culture, and, therefore, the PNA wishes to allow all citizens to participate actively in a cultural life from an early age. Not solely for personal gain and individual development, but as well as it relates to future arts public creation and the transforming social potential of the arts. There can be multiple advantages in fostering contact with the arts from an early age, and “the most powerful effects are found in programs that integrate the arts with subjects in the core curriculum. Researchers suggest that arts integration causes both students and teachers to rethink how they view the arts and generates conditions that are ideal for learning” (Sousa, 2006: 26). And it is exactly in this point of full integration of art in the overall curriculum, and in life in general, that the PNA stands on.

The PNA’s strategy was presented on June 18th 2019 and the reasoning behind its creation was to further connect the areas of culture and education. It was, as well, to inspire groups and organizations to be more culturally committed, and to create networks and collaborations with public and private institutions. Moreover, the aim was to encourage work in tandem with pre-existing public plans, programs, and networks, such as the National Reading Plan⁶ or the National Cinema Plan⁷, as examples. According to article

⁶ The National Reading Plan is a public plan established by the Portuguese Government which wishes to connect the areas of education and culture through advocating reading in schools, universities, libraries, to name a few, all in a logic of understanding reading as a fundamental condition for a democratic society and a democratic access to information.

⁷ The National Cinema Plan is a joint initiative of the governmental areas of Culture and Education which wishes to advocate for cinema literacy, public creation and school involvement, to name a few.

number 73 of the Portuguese Constitution, everyone has the right to education and culture. Furthermore, the article states that the State should promote the democratization of culture, encouraging and ensuring access for all citizens to the enjoyment and creation of culture, in collaboration with the media, cultural associations and foundations, cultural and recreational collectives, cultural heritage associations, amongst other cultural agents (1976). The Plan seeks to create the necessary measures to fulfill the above mentioned during the timeframe of 2019-2029, hopefully leaving a structural legacy for the continuation of this purpose after its designated time has ended. The vision for 2029 is for the cultural commitment proposed by the PNA to be integrated into people and organizations' lives as an assumed factor for their sustainable development. After this point, the existence of the Plan will, hopefully, no longer be necessary, as its mission will be fulfilled.

To reach this point, the PNA works within three main lines of action. The first, titled *Cultural Policy*, aims to create structural conditions and policies which promote the cultural compromise of people, organizations and communities. The second line of action, named *Capacitation*, is concerned with the support, production and dissemination of critical reflection in the different areas surrounding the PNA. It aims to invest in the training of teachers, educators, mediators and artists and to promote questioning, self-discovery, collaboration, and communication. Finally, the third axis of the PNA relates to *Education and Access*. The main aim of this final line is to ensure access to the arts for all citizens while encouraging active participation. To have the arts and culture as a present part of school life as a pedagogical, a creative, and a transversal resource is as well a main concern of this final axis, which, as previously mentioned, is essential. Within these three lines of action there are a total of five programmes and 27 measures, as it is possible to observe in the graph below. There is the *Impact and Sustainability* programme, the *Thought and Training*, and the last three, belonging to the *Education and Access* axis, are titled *Undisciplining School*, *Km2: Art and Community* and *Communicate 360°*. According to Maria Vlachou, less than a year into the PNA's existence, around 65 school districts, all around the country, had accessed the program and were using the arts in multiple disciplines as a vehicle for learning (2021: 192). It is as well in this successful implantation

in multiple areas of the country, areas where perhaps access to the arts and culture is not as available as in the big cities, that the PNA’s work can be very positive and impactful. The team is composed by the commissioner, Paulo Pires do Vale, and deputy commissioner, Sara Barriga Bringhamti, as well as a technical team composed of, amongst cultural professionals, teachers from all over the country. By having teachers as part of the work group, the connections with the schools are established in a more effective and, hopefully, long lasting way. Furthermore, the insight that people working within the field of education can provide can be extremely valuable to better understand the needs of schools, teachers and students all over the country, and how the arts can be of help and integrated in courses such as Mathematics or English, for example.

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN					
AXES	AXIS A CULTURAL POLICY	AXIS B EMPOWERMENT	AXIS C EDUCATION AND ACCESS		
PROGRAMMES	IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY	THOUGHT AND TRAINING	UNDISCIPLINING SCHOOL	KM²: ART AND COMMUNITY	COMMUNICATE 360°
MEASURES	Organisations’ Cultural Impact Index (IICO) Municipal Strategic Plan for Culture-Education (PEM.C-E) Cultural Organisations’ Social Impact Bond Public Funding of Art- Education-Community Cultural ID (IDC) Legislation Business Organisations’ Cultural Commitment Consultancy Monitoring and Evaluation	Porto Santo School NPA Collections Heritage and Arts in Educational Courses NPA Academy NPA Scholarship Conferences	School Cultural Project Artist in Residence Project ¹ (PAR) Citizenship: Do it Teaching resources Diversion: Go Out to Come In Open Creative Tutoring	Project Move: Creative Field Project Create+ NPA Festival/ Biennial NPA Award	Portal and Newsletter Be Present

Figure 10: National Plan for the Arts Strategic Action Plan, in *National Plan for the Arts: a strategy, a manifest, 2019-2024*, 2019. <https://portosantocharter.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/NPA-en.pdf>

Besides the educational community, the PNA and its team are also interested and involved in cultural dissemination within a practice of inclusivity to all citizens. Aligned

with the PNA's mission and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations (UN), and with one particular goal out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals ("THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development " 2021) proposed by the UN, it was solicited that the PNA would aid in the production and mediation of an exhibition concerned with gender equality in the art world. As the Portuguese Minister of Culture notes:

“(...) there is still a great deal to be done to bring the talent and ingenuity of many of these women artists out of the shadows in an structured, lasting manner. With this in mind, we tasked Helena de Freitas with putting together an exhibition of women artists in Portugal as part of the programme for the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union (...)” (Fonseca, 2021: 11).

Curator Helena de Freitas later invited curator Bruno Marchand to co-curate this exhibition that wished, amongst others, to provide an international spotlight to Portuguese women artists. That curator Bruno Marchand was invited by curator Helena de Freitas to collaborate and co-curate the show can be found interesting, as to invite a male curator to work on a women artist exhibition can, perhaps, not be understood as the clearest choice. Possibly, a parallelism can be drawn here between male curators and male artists present in feminist and women artists shows, as in the case of *Bad girls* (New York, 1994) curated by Marcia Tucker and analysed in chapter 3. As in the instance of *Bad girls*, the gender identity of the artist or, in this case, of the curator, should be less relevant than the intention of their work. One of the reasons that made the exhibition in New York successful in leaving a mark on the history of feminist shows was exactly the inclusion of male artists thinking about gender equality. Therefore, the perspective of a male curator can add an interesting viewpoint to the show as long as the curator is concerned with the overall theme and matter of the show. That being said, the overall further inclusion of female curators as decision makers, as pointed out in chapter 2 and by Dimitrakaki and Perry (2013), could perhaps produce the necessary turn, which would allow for a distinctive direction in feminist art histories.

The project was commissioned by the Portuguese Ministry of Culture in light of the year of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union (2021), as the

main cultural project presented. The venture was created to highlight female Portuguese artists within an international context, as the show was planned to first open in Brussels, Belgium, at the Centre for Fine Arts - BOZAR, in February of 2021, and later, in 2022, at the Olivier Debré Contemporary Creation Center in Tours, on the occasion of the Portugal-France Cross Season. The third planned stage of the show would be at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, Portugal, where the totality of the works would be presented, serving, as such, as the final moment of the exhibition. “This cultural project makes an important, ambitious contribution to deepening the European project and the values that are intrinsic to it, helping to reaffirm an even stronger, more cohesive, more inclusive cultural identity” (Fonseca, 2021: 11). The exhibition was then curated by Helena de Freitas and Bruno Marchand, and counted with a team composed of people working within the Ministry of Culture, the PNA and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, amongst others.

It was in this context that the internship and collaboration with the PNA, as production assistant for the exhibition *All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020*, took place. The curricular internship experience began on the first day of September of 2020 and reached completion on the 5th day of March of 2021. During the six months of the full-time curricular internship, due to the Covid-19 global pandemic, the team worked mainly from home with occasional visits to the National Library of Portugal (Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, BNP), where the PNA operated from. Maria Amélia Fernandes was the internship supervisor and the head producer of the exhibition and the PNA was, since the beginning, a partner in the mediation and production of *All I Want*. The curricular internship tasks focused on assisting the production of the show, although other projects in areas surrounding the exhibition were as well involved. A regular day as a curricular intern at the PNA consisted in working with loan forms, creating multiple lists and updating the excel sheet - which was the basis of the production’s work. The show, for its overall size and scope, involved working in conjunction with the artists and the representatives of artists, with 32 institutional lenders and 23 private lenders, excluding the ones who preferred to remain anonymous. One of the most relevant portions of its production was the completion and verification of loan forms, one per borrowed piece. These documents

gave the team most of the necessary information regarding the piece, such as dimensions, materials used, and date of creation, but also addresses for pickup and delivery and overall consent to the lending and display of the work of art. Every time a form was received, its verification and addition of the information to the excel sheet were assignments mostly done by the intern. Writing emails to artists, representatives, museums, galleries and other loaning institutions and individuals were as well a component of everyday tasks.

One of the tasks, which provided some independence and added knowledge, was the gathering and translation of assembly instructions. These instructions, most times than not, had to be solicited to the artist, representative or to institutional or private lenders. After this point, all the information had to be gathered in a document, which then had to be translated into English, in order to be understood by both the team at the BOZAR and the team working from Lisbon. The information had to involve conditions in terms of light, humidity and temperature to which each piece could be exposed to, besides the technical aspects and necessities for the assembly. Furthermore, all the mentioned instructions and materials necessary were organized in the excel sheet and in folders divided by artist and by room of the show. During the few occasions when working in person was possible, dossiers organized by both room and artist were as well an important assignment. In the case anything were to be lost digitally, it was essential to have physical records, in particular when working on a show of this magnitude. In terms of small paintings or drawings, to obtain information regarding security necessities, such as pieces which would need to be attached to the wall so as to avoid them from being stolen or damaged, was as well a task of the internship. Again, it involved emails and the gathering and translation of information.

As some of the pieces were created in media such as audio and video, and some were not particularly recent, the update of the audiovisual equipment was a necessity. Anew, lists, emails and translation of these necessities and of the essential materials to replace the previous ones were an undertaking. Tabulations of everything which was done or information that we had gathered were vital to manage such a big project. The creation of lists regarding the photographic campaign which was elemental in the case of pieces which did not have quality pictures or, for example, records of the contracts and loan forms

which were missing, or incomplete, were exercises which proved to be fundamental for the work, as well as relevant when gaining knowledge on how to produce an exhibition. The production team and the curators would meet every week in order to go over every priority task and endeavour, and the Portuguese and Belgian teams would occasionally meet as well. The team had meetings regarding every aspect of the exhibition, such as news on curatorial decisions, the catalogue development, graphic design materials for the show, the calendar for the assembly of works, amongst other subjects. These on-line meetings were essential to fully understand every aspect, from conceptualization to concretization, of an exhibition. Furthermore, the opportunity to meet one of the private lenders at the BNP, in order to gather the necessary signatures on the respective loan form, proved to be a refreshing and practical experience in terms of knowledge gain.

As the Covid-19 global pandemic struck the world in the end of 2019, and given the uncertainty of the overall situation and of governmental measures during the production months of the exhibition, the Google Arts and Culture portion of the project was fundamental. In the eventual case that the evolution of the pandemic situation made the show infeasible to happen on-site as planned, the Google Arts and Culture project provided a way to still showcase the brilliant artists and works, in a distinct format. The team and curators worked in conjunction with the team at Google in order to curate a page per theme/room of the show and a page for each one of the artists. Therefore it is now possible to “visit” the show from anywhere in the world through the following link: <https://artsandculture.google.com/project/tudo-o-que-eu-quero>, aiding in the initial international aim of the project. Furthermore, as some of the artists had careers more established than others, it offered an opportunity for online audiences everywhere to discover new artists and artworks. To further improve the inclusivity aspect of the project, there are multiple occasions where audio is available for visitors of the platform and the language used in the texts aims to be as accessible as possible. To do so, historian Lígia Afonso, with the aid of the PNA which reviewed and made suggestions, was in charge of producing one text per artist: a short biographical text for each artist with easy to comprehend vocabulary and language, while still providing relevant information for all different types of public, both more or less familiarized with the arts. This question of

accessibility was one of the PNA's main concerns when regarding the exhibition and one which is very aligned with their overall mission. To further allow the audiences to understand the different time periods within the show, there is also a chronology of the pieces available on-line, which can provide further context for the works.

In order to provide additional knowledge regarding the artists and pieces featured on the show, one of the tasks of the curricular internship was to locate and select resources regarding each one of the 40 artists, focusing mainly on audiovisual resources as to continue to develop a practice of approachability and inclusivity. As the selection of artists for the show ranged from highly popular and consecrated to younger and sometimes less known artists, the task proved to be a challenging one. In some cases, video format was not available or did not present the necessary quality. In others, the amount of resources available could be understood as overwhelming. Still within this task, it was necessary the consent by the artists or, in the cases when the artist was deceased, by representatives, which in some instances were multiple. Although arduous, this particular aspect of the Google Arts and Culture (GAC) of the show seems to be very positive as it adds another layer of inclusive and interesting information. Furthermore, as the PNA provides useful resources for educators, artists, cultural mediators, and arts professionals overall, on their website, the GAC project proved to be a valuable tool in aiding this particular aspect of intervention. The GAC project was also very aligned with the mission and values of the host institution, particularly in terms of aiming to reach every citizen, and therefore it was established as another area where the PNA could be valuable. In order to provide direct access to resources on PNA's website, another relevant aspect of the internship was to select, amongst the list of resources presented at the GAC page, one resource per artist, focusing as well on audiovisual materials, in order to, again, create the most inclusive experience possible. This portion of the work produced during the internship is available on: <https://www.pna.gov.pt/tudo-o-que-eu-quero-artistas-portuguesas-1900-2020/>. Therefore, this particular assignment provided some decision-making opportunities and an overall independence in completion, which proved to be an extremely beneficial and a practical learning moment. Furthermore, as it relates to the present study, this particular task, and the majority of the remainder, were impactful in the understanding that much

needs to be done in order to reach equality between genders. The discovery of artists with low visibility in the Portuguese art scene producing important artworks allowed for the awareness of a present difficulty for female artists in reaching careers as well-established as deserved. The lack of information on-line regarding some of the artists featured in the show provided an opportunity to reflect upon gender representativeness in the art world and was a catalyst moment for the development of the present research.

The pandemic not only affected the then future of the show, as it had a felt impact on the internship experience as well. The consequent work from home situation presented some positive aspects, namely the ability to gain independent knowledge and familiarity with programs such as Microsoft Teams and Microsoft Excel, to name a few. It allowed for an overall independence as an intern, which can as well be understood as very positive and rewarding. Admitting there were beneficial aspects to the situation, the lack of contact with colleagues proved to be a disadvantage in order to fully understand all aspects of the PNA's mission and range of interventions. As assisting the production of the exhibition was done mainly from home, it demonstrated not to be feasible the full understanding of the work the PNA is actively doing in schools, for example. That being said, the team's weekly meetings, on the application Microsoft Teams, on Friday or Monday mornings, were a beneficial way of contradicting this physical distance. Overall, pandemic aside, the experience for its complexity and intensity was an extremely valuable learning moment. Furthermore, as the show was framed within a relevant political casing (the Presidency of the Council of the EU), as it was a big institutional show and, particularly, as it was produced during a global pandemic and overcame a fire at the initial venue, the internship offered extended knowledge on how to produce an exhibition in, essentially, any situation. The PNA's team provided guidance and challenges, which made the experience a positive one in terms of relevant contact with the professional world. In terms of future curricular internship opportunities, the PNA is an organization with multiple concerns and projects making it an overall pleasant institution to learn from a range of professionals working within different areas. The work environment, within the PNA and with the general team of the show was as well vastly positive.

During the month of January, the team received the unfortunate news that a fire had occurred at the scheduled venue in Belgium. This meant the last portion of the curricular internship and the last stage of the production of the show were filled with uncertainties. After a short period of deliberation on the feasibility of the show still taking place at the BOZAR, the decision was ultimately reached by the curators, the Portuguese Ministry of Culture and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to move the last stage of the exhibition to June of 2021, making the show at the Gulbenkian Museum the first iteration. The BOZAR portion of the project was cancelled and the new dates of *All I Want* were then from June 2nd until August 23th 2021 at the Gulbenkian Museum and in 2022, the exhibition will be presented at the Olivier Debré Contemporary Creation Center in Tours, France. Further information regarding the exhibition at the Gulbenkian Museum follows in the next sub-chapter titled after the show.

4.2. *All I Want – Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020*

The exhibition and its conception have as a starting point the haunting gaze of Aurélia de Sousa 1900's self-portrait, possible to see below. Similarly to Linda Nochlin in the 1970s, so had the artist question the notion of the male gaze and that of the female viewer.

“As a woman looking at a nude, Nochlin asked what role she was to assume. The role of the male viewer? The female subject? Neither really felt applicable to her. As such, women viewers are often left in a sort of liminal space, oscillating between being the subject and viewer, never being the original cis male viewer for whom the original work was intended” (Cadwell, Ellen C. “Linda Nochlin on “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists”.” *JSTOR Daily*. March 17, 2018).

Having the consciousness that many works of art focus on the representation of female bodies, the exhibition now wishes to ask how have Portuguese women artists represented themselves from 1900 until 2020? Aligned with the notion, previously established in chapter 2, that women were seen as objects of creativity but rarely creatives, the curators of the exhibition now ask what images have the artists created for themselves? In what manners have the artists reversed the gaze back to society?

Across the room from this particular work, we are invited to observe Maria Helena Vieira da Silva's eye filled piece *La Scala ou Les Yeux* (1937), also possible to observe below. This juxtaposition and confrontation of the female figure and what can be interpreted as societies' gaze seems to embody the overall sentiment of the exhibition in a single daring moment, which places the viewer at the center of the dialogue. The show wishes to, according to the co-curator Helena de Freitas in the interview, create a dialogue between artists: not to showcase the works by themselves in an historical or chronological alignment, but in a structure where pieces can openly converse with each other. “So we tried not to hierarchize, to place the work of the artists without hierarchies, but to

potentiate the work with this contamination and make the richness of the exhibition come from that” (Freitas, 2021).

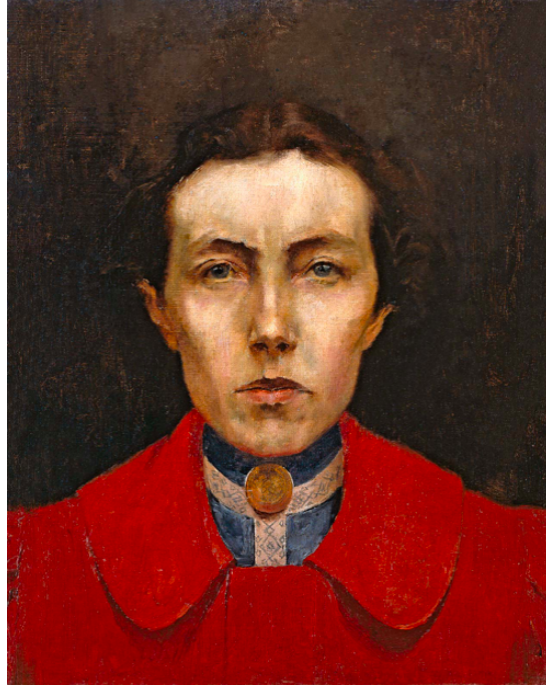


Figure 11: Aurélia de Sousa (1866-1922) Oil on canvas; 45,6 x 36,4 cm. Museu Nacional de Soares dos Reis, inv. 878 Pin MNSR. Accessed August 19 2021: <https://gulbenkian.pt/agenda/tudo-o-que-eu-quero/>



Figure 12: Maria Helena Vieira da Silva (1908- 1992). *La Scala ou Les Yeux*, 1937. Óleo sobre tela, 60 x 92 cm. Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris, inv. CR 224. Accessed August 19 2021: <https://jeannebucherjaeger.com/artist/vieira-da-silva-maria-helena/>

To do so, the exhibition features a total of 40 female Portuguese artists, ranging from more to lesser-known names, and around 270 works of art. The rooms of the Gulbenkian Museum are also graced with works made in multiple types of media such as painting, sculpture, drawing, object, book, installation, film, video and sound pieces. As mentioned before, the first stage of the intenerant show took place between June 2nd and August 23th 2021 at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (FCG). Within the FCG's Lisbon space, the exhibition was divided into two main spaces which presented 14 different nucleus, each of those preoccupied with different grand themes. The themes researched focus on the concepts of the gaze, both societies' and the artists', and the body, being the artists' own body or other bodies. Space in general and how it is occupied by women and artists, with the concept of the studio, of the home and of nature, are also present themes amongst the exhibition. Furthermore, the usage of cross disciplinary mediums and the construction of what encircles the artist and the construction of themselves are as well themes explored. Finally the political, the social, reading and writing were concepts possible to observe in the exhibition. The above mentioned themes fit within the exhibition title, *All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020*, which derives from Lou Andreas-Salomé's (1977) quote: "All I want is one thing: space, nothing but space" (*Je ne veux qu'une chose: de l'espace, rien que de l'espace*) (Freitas and Marchand, 2020: 27). According to Helena de Freitas, "artists don't care if they are women or men, they want to be artists and have their space as artists (...)" (Freitas, 2021). This embodies the sentiment of the show and, as the title also indicates, the exhibition is focused on Portuguese female artistic production which took place between the years 1900 and 2020. The concepts which guide the show were thought around the works selected for the exhibition and not the other way around and both the curators refer not wishing to design or enforce a closed narrative, but to maintain that previously observed notion of dialogue between artists and between pieces.

The artists featured on the show are: Aurélia de Sousa (1866-1922), Mily Possoz (1888-1968), Rosa Ramalho (1888-1977), Maria Lamas (1893-1983), Sarah Affonso (1899-1983), Ofélia Marques (1902-1952), Maria Helena Vieira da Silva (1908-1992), Maria Keil (1914-2012), Salette Tavares (1922-1994), Menez (1926-1995), Ana Hatherly

(1929-2015), Lourdes Castro (1930), Helena Almeida (1934-2018), Paula Rego (1935), Maria Antónia Siza (1940-1973), Ana Vieira (1940-2016), Maria José Oliveira (1943), Clara Menéres (1943-2018), Graça Morais (1948), Maria José Aguiar (1948), Luísa Cunha (1949), Rosa Carvalho (1952), Ana Léon (1957), Ângela Ferreira (1958), Joana Rosa (1959), Ana Vidigal (1960), Armanda Duarte (1961), Fernanda Fragateiro (1962), Patrícia Garrido (1963), Gabriela Albergaria (1965), Susanne Thémlytz (1968), Grada Kilomba (1968), Maria Capelo (1970), Patrícia Almeida (1970-2017), Joana Vasconcelos (1971), Carla Filipe (1973), Filipa César (1975), Inês Botelho (1977), Isabel Carvalho (1977) and Sónia Almeida (1978), ordered by date of birth. *All I Want* is composed of an organic body of works intersected by the previously mentioned concepts and tensions as they lead us through the museum spaces and allow for the expansion of the exhibition. The primary objective of the show is to contribute and to reflect upon the systematic erasure of female voices within the male dominated art world, and, most importantly to the curators, affirming the quality of their work before the canonical system of consecration. “What I hope will happen is the general recognition of quality in the work of female Portuguese artists. Recognition which needs to be followed by a general discussion on the social reasons for the under-representation at stake and how to solve them” (Marchand, 2021).

Again, the exhibition’s conceptualization begins with the self-portrait of Aurélia de Sousa, symbolizing the move from subject to author, which is present in a room titled *The Starting Point*. Besides the previously mentioned piece by Maria Helena Vieira da Silva, the visitors can also observe, within this space, the work of Rosa Ramalho, who produced popular and grotesque pieces of ceramic art, alongside Suzanne Thémlytz and Ana Léon’s film which relates to the concepts of construction, body and identity. Relevant to note that this is not the first room when you enter the Gulbenkian space, but it is the first nucleus of the show as it is intended to function as the central axis of the first part of the exhibition where we can observe the questions common to the remainder of the rooms. Therefore when we first enter the exhibition we are graced with the second nucleus: *The Place of the Artist*. Here, as we enter, we are in the middle of a dialogue between two artists, separated by a century, but both questioning the place of women in art history. Rosa Carvalho subtracts the female model from historical references such as Rembrandt’s “Danae” (1643)

or François Boucher's "L'Odalisque blonde" (1751), therefore erasing the sense of male voyeurism and desire present in the original pieces. On the other hand, Aurélia de Sousa continues to challenge the viewer with her self-portraits, creating a dialogue of presence and absence and offering an opposite strategy to Carvalho's to the theme. Furthermore, Armanda Duarte presents us with a temporary performative installation piece, featuring a vertical balsa line, with the artist's exact height, which is sanded down every day until only dust remains, questioning time, place, identity of the artist and the body which ceases to exist when the show comes to an end. *Plural Feminine* is a confrontation of artists from different generations and serves as the third nucleus. Mily Possoz and Ofélia Marques with delicate and intricate drawings dialogue with the intensity of Maria Antónia Siza's depictions of bodies and the sexual provocations of the sculpture by Patricia Garrido and the painting by Maria José Aguiar. Furthermore, the two pieces by Ana Vidigal on view further point to this relation, thinking about the place of women in society with the usage of collage of old sewing women's magazines. Overall, this room provides a glance at the plurality of timeframes, approaches, concerns and techniques of feminine art. Or, in synthesis, at the plurality of the feminine universe.



Figure 13: The Starting Point: *All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020* at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, Portugal. From June 2nd until August 23th 2021.



Figure 14: Plural Feminine: *All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020* at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, Portugal. From June 2nd until August 23th 2021.

The forth nucleus relates to the concepts of the gaze, which had been previously announced in *The Starting Point*, and introduces the concept of mirror. The mirror is a site for reflection, a passage or portal to a place of fantasy and/or death, which can be observed in the work of Maria Helena Vieira da Silva. The delicate pieces with eyes drawn on pebbles by the same artist further connects us to this idea of gaze, gaze of others or our own. Furthermore, the room features self portraits and portraits of friends and family of Sarah Affonso where this notion of mirror which reflects what surrounds the artist is very present. Maria José Oliveira is also displayed in this room with a piece of her body reimagined as a mass with a heart on top, as a metaphorical conceptualization of self. Succeeding, we arrive at the space dedicated to *The Word*, introduced by a sensitive drawing by Vieira da Silva. This place of the word was another domain denied to women and, therefore, it is a symbolic sign of conquest. Artist Ana Hatherly speaks to us about the relations between the letter, words and the political. Vieira da Silva and Lourdes Castro research on the relations between the gestures of writing and of painting or drawing, while Salette Tavares maintains the meaning of words in linguistic playful games. Finally, artist Inês Botelho fills the center of the room with a large-scale sculpture resembling a spinning top, which marks the floor with a perfect and symbolic gesture of movement in stark white lime. In this room we also encounter a sound piece by Luisa Cunha delicately and repeatedly calling out *Madam!* (Senhora!) until the word loses its meaning. Leaving this

room, we pass through the space in which we first entered and take now a more comprehensive look at Armanda Duarte's piece which features two envelopes, reminding us of the primary way women used to communicate, through intimate letters to family and friends, which can also speak on a sense of sisterhood.

After this point, the visitor is invited to travel to the second space of the exhibition, upstairs, to continue the journey of the show. Arriving, we are presented with *The Space of Writing*, the sixth theme, which creates a conceptual bridge from the previous concept although the rooms are separated by space, preventing them from feeling disconnected. The possibilities which come from conquering a space in which women were silenced as well, as in writing, is the motto for this portion of the show. In this space we encounter other methods of thinking about this concept with Isabel Carvalho questioning signs and structure, and Joana Rosa focusing on unconscious writing with her large-scale *Doodles* (1995). These pieces are connected in a dialogue with an important Portuguese work of concrete poetry *Ourobesouro* (1965) by Salette Tavares and a small sculpture by Suzanne Themlitz sitting on the floor. Leaving writing and reading behind, we are now transposed to the seventh core which regards *Construction*, with a remainder of past concepts with Fernanda Fragateiro's *Measuring E1027* (2011) piece, a composition of books as objects on the wall. The opposite side of the room is dedicated to Ângela Ferreira and both artists reflect on multiple social, formal and political constructions and dimensions in their pieces. From the ideas offered by construction, we now move towards a core which is preoccupied with human relations with nature, with *Le Vivant*. We are presented with different approaches to the subject, with Maria Capelo's imaginary forest paintings and Lourdes Castro's game of organic shadows leading us to think and rethink our relation to the natural world. Gabriela Albergaria forces geometry on to the organic figure of a tree with the piece *Tree cut into cubes and aligned* (2019-2020), which forces us to look at mankind's impact in, and overall disregard with, nature. Furthermore, this particular space at the FCG seems to lend itself perfectly to this theme of the show, as, possible to see below, the pieces not solely dialogue with each other but with the environment outside.



Figure 15: Le Vivant: *All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020* at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, Portugal. From June 2nd until August 23th 2021.

Following this space of nature, we arrive at the space of *The House* with Ana Vieira's intimate and delicate yet sizable installation *Milieu-Dining Room* (1971), which makes use of the sounds and iconography of that division of the house (the dining room) to transport and immerse us there. Furthermore, Patrícia Garrido, through the materiality of the house's inside such as furniture, creates an intimate square box of memories. The house is presented here as a space filled with complex relations for women: as a site of both safety from the outside and inside violence, both a site for dreams and for oppression. The body, both our own and the body of others, can also be perceived as home, with pieces by Ana Vieira, Armanda Duarte and Maria José Oliveira, creating a further discourse and tension between outside and inside, within the room. The tenth group is titled *The Political*, which makes use of pieces using both word and image, through collages and the ripping of collages, of the works of Ana Vidigal and Ana Hatherly, respectively. The emptying of words and logos in the union posters and flags of Carla Filipe further transmit the theme of the space. Filipe's installation is composed of mysterious images and chairs stacked on a long table while traditional Portuguese work chants surround us with the collective and political body and with the questioning of the power of aesthetic models,

which can create both voices in unison and the erasure of voices. Lastly, the paintings of Graça Morais, informed by real social and political conditions, showcase the brutality of humanity's past and present. From this point, we can travel to nucleus eleven with *Collective Memories* which features films by artist Filipa César, focused on the moral landscape of a country with the film *Memograma* (2010) and on lesbian forbidden love with *Insert* (2010). Both artistic films, which are presented next to each other, speak on resilience and on conflict. According to Doris von Drathen⁸ in an interview:

“women are talking differently about their suffering and about their way of being excluded from society. I was so stroke by the film by Filipa César on homosexuality (*Insert*, 2010) and I think of course that this is a video that could have been made also with two men. But it would not be exactly the same because women are more excluded. And it is always like that, women are always more punished, more excluded”.



Figure 16: *Collective Memories: All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020* at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, Portugal. From June 2nd until August 23th 2021.

⁸ Read full interview with art historian Doris von Drathen on pages 169-175 of the Annex.

From *The Political*, we can also visit the room where *A World of Illusions* (2019), a video installation by artist Grada Kilomba, resides. This portion of the show is not framed in a nucleus but as a room solely dedicated to this piece, which is focused on colonial pasts and on practices of racism and sexism still recurrent, through the lenses of Greek mythology. *A World of Illusions* is a three-part video installation piece, from which part two, titled *Oedipus*, is presented. It draws a critical look at Greek mythology as the origin of European identity and the genesis of colonialism, and asks: what if history has not been told correctly? The artist here is looking for answers in regards to a history of violence and oppression of Other bodies. Another portion of the show, which is also not framed within a grand theme, is the presentation of the book *The Women of my Country* (*As Mulheres do meu País*) (1948-1950) written by Maria Lamas. This piece, which reveals the feminine conditions of Portugal in the mid-twentieth century during the period of the authoritarian political regime, showcases a collection of images of the culture and the environment faced by Portuguese women during the time. It can therefore here be established a connection between this work, which sits in the middle of the previous two rooms and the denunciations presented in the works by Filipa César and Grada Kilomba. We take a look at the past with the work by Lamas, and understand with César and Kilomba that there is still more to conquer and fight for in the present and future.

The twelfth theme is titled *Vernacular Quotidian* and focuses on the influence of mass culture in contemporary art. This nucleus counts with two assemblage pieces by Lourdes Castro, which make use of everyday objects, and the works of Sónia Almeida which inhabit between abstraction and figuration. Furthermore, in the center of the room, we encounter a sculptural piece by Joana Vasconcelos, which spins colorful tights in a way which is reminiscent of a car wash. Finally we encounter Patricia Almeida's photographic series *Portobello* (2008-2009), in which the artist portrays how leisure has been standardized to the point that stereotypes become mostly true, and a sculptural piece representing a mushroom by Suzanne Thémilitz, which can dialogue with the title of the aforementioned work. Leaving this collection of photographs, we encounter nucleus number thirteen which brings together three artists' works where the body is an important element to note: Paula Rego, Aurélia de Sousa and Menez, which are in dialogue in *the*

Body 's Theater. Aurélia de Sousa's piece representing the artist dressed as Saint Anthony (*Santo António*) (c. 1902), therefore not solely dressed as another gender but evoking religion, is a courageous act of groundbreaking and provocative art, which is particularly interesting when in relation with Paula Rego's work where the artist paints a priest in a skirt. Furthermore, Paula Rego is represented here with a triptych painting with female figures and bodies as the center: *Vanitas* (2006). The third artist in this group is Menez, exploring concepts such as intimacy and solitude, particularly in the space of the artist's studio. This collection of artists from different generations speaking on similar topics and preoccupied with the idea of the body furthers the notion that the topics are common throughout time for the lack of conquest over them in society. The last theme of the show is titled *Listen to Me*, with Ana Vieira and Helena Almeida. Continuing this overall idea of body, Helena Almeida is both author and model of her work, while Vieira thinks about the individual and the collective body in *Pronomes* (2001). Overall, the sense of this final nucleus is one of erasure of female voices and of desire to make oneself be heard and to receive acknowledgement. When exiting the exhibition we encounter Joana Vasconcelos' *The Bride* (2001-2005), a notorious installation piece consisting of a chandelier shaped object made of tampons, speaking on the mundanity yet power of menstruation as well as on the concept of virginity. Furthermore, the exhibition fills the space, as well, in other areas of the Gulbenkian Museum's building by having a sculptural piece by Fernanda Fragateiro at the entrance of the museum, a tile panel by Maria Keil and sound pieces by Luisa Cunha throughout the space. An example of this is the female and male bathroom's sound installation by Cunha (1994) which asks us: "Are you there? Can you hear me? Hello!", creating an ongoing, surprising and added interest effect for visitors in the space.

After this brief tour, this idea of dialogue is, hopefully, clearer as it perpetuates all throughout the show. As curator Helena de Freitas notes, the curatorship selected a framework where "(...) works of artists dialogue with each other, (...) more established artists with others less known, more discreet, mysterious, less present in the Portuguese artistic dynamics. (...) I don't think an exhibition like this has ever been held before" (Freitas, 2021). Again, the exhibition counts with names such as Paula Rego, Helena Almeida, Maria Helena Vieira da Silva and Joana Vasconcelos, which are examples of

Portuguese women who encountered international success as artists. For example, according to Emily Sharpe and José Silva (“Art’s Most Popular: here are 2018’s most visited shows and museums.” *The Art Newspaper*. March 24, 2019), within the 20 most popular exhibitions of 2018 in the world, Vasconcelos’s show at the Guggenheim in Bilbao was the only one headlined by a female artist that year. And, as another example, Helena Almeida was featured in *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* (2007), an important international exhibition discussed in chapter 3. But for most Portuguese women artists this was not, and this is not, the case. In fact, out of the forty artists featured in *All I Want*, solely six were recognized in the first half of the century, showcasing the difficulties Portuguese women artists faced in order to develop a career in the arts. As suggested by Vicente, “the names Josefa de Óbidos, Maria Helena Vieira da Silva or Paula Rego suggest us some of the paradoxes of the Portuguese case. On the one hand, we could say that they are among the best known Portuguese artists internationally (...)” (2012: 222). Therefore, one can also claim that the case of Portuguese women artists presents itself as opposite to others, as some female artists reached higher levels of success than their male counterparts. But it is also relevant to note that “both Vieira da Silva and Paula Rego are two artists who left Portugal and did so permanently, in a clear contrast to so many other Portuguese artists who went abroad for more or less short periods” (Vicente, 2012: 225). Therefore this success was not exactly found on Portuguese grounds and “the geographies of gender, the ways in which history has made the masculine the center and the feminine the periphery” (Vicente, 2012: 226) are very pertinent here. In chapter 2, the broad adversities for female artists were showcased, but it is relevant to note, as it relates to this particular show, that the Portuguese case of women and art is similar to what was discussed, with a few exceptions. The consecration system of artistic careers in Portugal is a challenging one for female artists, albeit better now than before. While most students of the Faculty of Fine-Arts of the University of Lisbon, for example, are female, this does not translate to the gallery system. Similarly, this tends to occur in terms of representation in museums, noted by professor Isabel Sabino (2012: 198), in, for example, the years 2009, 2010 and 2011, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation organized 40 individual exhibitions and only 5 were by women artists. To perhaps further this point, and as previously mentioned, a

considerable portion of loans were conducted between the team and private collectors, which can perhaps be linked to a lack of women artists' works in museum collections, as it relates to these forty artists, which can serve to illustrate the lack of women in collections as discussed in previous chapters. As also noted by Vicente:

“although this is never said, isn't the fact that they were recognized long after they started working also related to the fact that Portuguese art history and art criticism in the 80's and 90's have been narrated mostly in the masculine sense (the 80's are sometimes only enunciated with male artists)? Wouldn't Vieira da Silva or Paula Rego be doubly limited if they hadn't had the opportunity to leave? Limited by the peripheries of the place and the artistic context, but also limited by other peripheries, more difficult to define, more imperceptible, but equally powerful, which influenced Portuguese women artists of the 20th century” (Vicente, 2012: 228).

In all likelihood, if not presented with the opportunity to leave the country and experience and pursue the art world in other geographies, such names would not be as accomplished as they presently are.

According to curator Bruno Marchand in an interview conducted for the purpose of the report, there were two main concerns in the conceptualization of the exhibition: “first, that the exhibition would, as much and as soon as possible, stop being about the problem of gender under-representation in Portuguese art and started to be, for the visitor, just an exhibition of great works of art” (Marchand, 2021). Secondly, “(...) and stemming from the first point, that the exhibition would make it absolutely undeniable that the quality of Portuguese women artists is equal or even superior to that of Portuguese men artists” (Marchand, 2021). Although this last point was conceivably made clear with the presentation of undeniably great and important works of art, the decision to not focus and dwell on the under-representation of women artists in Portugal was perhaps a missed opportunity when confronted with the overall situation of Portuguese women artists. In the case of *All I Want*, and as noted by curator Filipa Oliveira, in an interview in annex⁹, “there is an avoidance (of the word feminism), because it always seems to be a word that the

⁹ Read full interview with curator Filipa Oliveira on pages 147-157 of the Annex.

Portuguese are afraid of, (...) the exhibition is not very political, which is missing” (2021). Again, according to Oliveira, “women artists who have been born after the 1980s are not included, who are the most activist. You are alienating several generations. In the 1980s and 1990s, we have two generations of women artists missing and that raises questions for me” (2021). To not showcase younger artists was perhaps due to the necessity of a limit in scope and time, which commonly exhibitions require in order to conduct research and restrict the number of works to a feasible one. But one can also argue that this younger generation needed space just as much, if not more, than older ones. In fact, and acknowledging that an exhibition focused on the timeframe of 1900 to 2020 could not skip over the work of Paula Rego for example, Rego is in need of less “space” than most female artists born in the 1980s and 1990s, as simultaneously TATE Britain in London was showcasing “the UK’s largest and most comprehensive retrospective of Paula Rego’s work to date” (“Paula Rego – Exhibition At Tate Britain | Tate”. 2021). And although this idea of a dialogue in the curatorship, which was as well present in *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* analysed in chapter 3, can be understood as an interesting strategy in order to highlight names of less known artists and avoid giving a more prominent voice in the show to already established artists, the show’s lack of assuming feminist intent can be seen as a negative point when confronted with the case of women artists and Portugal. According to Helena de Freitas, “(...) instead of looking for more politicized, more pamphlet issues, we tried to create a good art exhibition (...) and it is made by women, this means something and people felt it, each one in their own way (...)” (Freitas, 2021). To the curator, this approach produces impact in the audience “more than if it brought a message, an ideology, an imposition. The idea was to bypass a little bit and present the strength of the artists, for their work” (Freitas, 2021).

In relation to the four aspects which an exhibition must follow in order to be a feminist project, as proposed by Dorothee Richter and discussed in chapter 2, “to take into account the structural and material side of curating means (...) to think of feminist curating as involved in and part of political and economic struggles” (Richter, 2016: 67). Furthermore, “in thinking of curating as a form of producing knowledge or, in other words, of interpellations, means consciously taking up a position in an ideologically contested

space” (Richter, 2016: 67). This particular exhibition does not seem to make an attempt in discussing feminist ideology, but presents itself as an exhibition which thinks about the plural forms of the feminine world. It does not express a clear wish for gender equality in general or in the art world, but is an exhibition where universes of expression under the female sign are revealed. According to Helena de Freitas, “(...) the question of gender equality was evidently a starting point for the exhibition, it was a political idea, taken up by the Minister of Culture” (2021). To this end, it was not an idea which stemmed from a particular wish from the curators but from “political decision integrated in a fundamental question that was the presence of Portugal in the European Union. So, these issues are very important, and because it has this political issue, it is even more important; it's not just an exhibition that came out of a curator's idea” (Freitas, 2021). *All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020* is a women artists' exhibitions and not a feminist show, and it is exactly as it was framed within this political sphere that the report understand that it would be particularly relevant for it to be avowedly feminist. If the EU, as mentioned in the Introduction of the report, is at least 60 years away from reaching gender equality, in order to shorten this time frame (or at least guarantee that it does not take longer than 60 years) the aim to address this question within this particular type of politically framed exhibition would have been important. “Whereas wishing is unfulfilled desire, wanting is a performative act” (Skrubbe and Hayden, 2013: 68). To make use of the aforementioned quote, of producing a performative act of feminist intentions, doing justice to the title of the exhibition, would have possibly been a more interesting and though provoking approach.

Furthermore, in terms of diversity, artist Grada Kilomba is the only non-white artist, which is a trend possible to observe in previous case studies, with the exception of *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85* which came to contradict this exact tendency. Most of the case studies took time during a period when conversations regarding inclusivity were not as prominent as today, further problematizing this choice, as in the years 2020 and 2021, discussions regarding systemic racism and erasure of voices of colour are very present, particularly with the rise of the Black Lives Matter social movement. Furthermore, Portugal's colonial past and recent hate crimes, such as the murder of Bruno Candé on July 2020 in Lisbon, make it so a further reflection on

inclusivity, racism and on colonial memory would have been particularly pertinent and necessary.



Figure 17: *A World of Illusions* (2019) by Grada Kilomba. Presented at *All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020* at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, Portugal. From June 2nd until August 23th 2021.

According to curator Filipa Oliveira in the interview, “the exhibition has an artist of color, Grada Kilomba, but I think that there is a lack of discussion around the exhibition, a lack of a much more intense public program (...)”. Furthermore, perhaps because of the specificity of the piece, this is one of the few cases where there is not a dialogue present as Grada Kilomba’s piece sits in a room alone. As previously mentioned, perhaps a reflection and connection could be established between Kilomba’s, César’s and Lamas’ works, but this relation seems less worked out and less clear than others. A more intense reflection and public program around the subject and a closer look at more Portuguese women artists of colour seem to be missing. Furthermore, the acknowledgement that Kilomba is the only black artist and a justification for why this is the case, be it due to the educational system, general racism in Portugal, the art system, amongst others, seems to be lacking. Without

discussing the issues which lead to the creation and relevancy of this show, its existence fails to be more than that of a good exhibition, which undoubtedly is.

In comparison with the case studies presented previously, *All I Want* distances itself from *Women Artists: 1550-1950* (1976) for not presenting itself as an historically angled exhibition, although similarly framed within a specific time period. It came closer to *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* (2007), as it assumed an area studies approach and as it was divided into grand themes, with more and less established artists in dialogue. Also similarly to *WACK!*, and to most other exhibitions curated in similar frame, there is a lack of non-white artists. Yet, when confronted with some of the case-studies, in particular the more recent ones, feminism is a word used in some or all of the show's materials, which, again, *All I Want* seems to avoid. According to curator Bruno Marchand, "(...) at heart it is no different from other exhibitions of this kind" (2021). It is the curator's belief that this kind of shows want similar results which is "to make it clear that there are no reasons of artistic quality to sustain the difference of generic representation within the artistic circuit, be it in collections or in exhibitions" (Marchand, 2021). Understanding that in terms of reversing the notion of quality difference this type of exhibition can be very useful, discussing other ways to undertake the underrepresentation could be relevant as well. Furthermore, to contradict the difficulties of establishing a career as an artist in Portugal, particularly as a female, the mixture of younger voices could have been relevant likewise, particularly as in this more recent generation of female artists it is possible to observe the presence of more artists of colour and pieces with clearer activist intent. Returning to the conversation on monocultures introduced in chapter 2, to open the floor to new and different voices and to experiment with distinct approaches to introduce political statements and ideas, is a necessity. The breaking of the cycle of voices created by the canon and the art system should be a goal in this will to achieve gender equality. Curator Helena de Freitas notes that "(...) no two exhibitions are the same from the moment there is a curator, each curator will do a different job (...). I think that the question of claiming an artistic protagonism in this exhibition could make a difference in relation to others that I have seen more recently" (Freitas, 2021). While in agreement that this show departs from others at some points, for the most part it does not deviate enough to have the desired grand impact.

Visiting the exhibition with colleagues, friends and family, less familiarized with the pieces and concepts, proved to be valuable as most were aware of around 10 to 20 names present in the show, out of the 40. Meaning that there is value in presenting audiences with pieces by lesser known artists, as it allows for knowledge gain and for reflection on why this was the very first contact with some of the artists' work. However, returning to the previous thought, not enough context was given for the understanding of why visitors were not aware of some/most of the names presented. And, although there are multiple successful Portuguese female visual artists, more than even male artists perhaps, this was one of the few major group exhibitions highlighting multiple women artists of Portuguese nationality in an mainstream institutional setting, which can be perceived as odd when confronted with the success of Portuguese female artists and with the overall success of the show. In fact, on August 18th 2021, just a couple of days before the closing of the show, there had been more than 30.000 visitors, according to Expresso ("“Tudo O Que Eu Quero” É Horário Alargado. Exposição “Artistas Portuguesas De 1900 A 2020” Visitada Por 30 Mil Pessoas." *Expresso*. 2021). This number of visitors, particularly during a global pandemic, appears to indicate that the exhibition was overall successful in gaining the audience's attention, which made the museum extend opening hours during the last couple of days. Furthermore, the overall reception of the show once at the FCG was vastly positive. According to art critic Celso Martins, the exhibition points to the reality that the more than 100 years explored were shaped by the "(...) different political regimes and that an emancipatory leap for women occurs with the arrival of democracy, with the affirmation as a full authorial subject and the consecration of their civic, cultural, sexual, and political legitimacy. And it does so with clarity (...)" ("As mulheres na arte portuguesa dos últimos 120 anos. Uma exposição contra a invisibilidade." *Expresso*. June 12, 2021). Furthermore, in a Portuguese newspaper it is possible to read that "a few major absences (...) do not shake the final result of this excellent exhibition" (Oliveira, Luísa. "Nem *gourmet*, nem salão: uma grande exposição." *Público: Ípsilon*. July 23, 2021). Due to its success and overall good reception by audiences and critics, the lack of framing of the show within feminist postcolonial theory and context further translates a missed opportunity.

The catalogue, which is common to the three planned stages of the exhibition, is composed of institutional texts, curatorial texts, and commissioned texts regarding the work of each artist by 33 different authors/ curators/ historians/ art critics, amongst which 21 are female with the remainder 12 being male. Within the 33 invited authors, only Nkule Mabaso is an author of color, being both black and female. The opportunity to use the catalogue to enhance *Other voices* seems, as well, to be a lost one. The publication opens up more information regarding the 40 artist's presented in the show, but, while *Radical Black Women*, discussed in chapter 3, made use of the shows' catalogues to invite spectators and readers to think and rethink questions related to intersectionality and third world feminism, amongst others, *All I Want's* catalogue seems to not follow a similar path. In fact, it is possible to read the following: "there's very little doubt in anyone's mind that gender equality has yet to be consolidated. The space in which this project will carry out the necessary diagnosis of this situation is, however, not found in this book" (Freitas and Marchand, 2020: 25). In this material, for its particularities and ability to add to the show, it is a place where this discussion regarding feminism, regarding women artists in the museum would be particularly pertinent. *All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020* was an overall firework, in the words of curator Filipa Oliveira in the interview, a firework which drew attention to female artists to whom recognition was overdue. It was a good exhibition of good art made by good artists and, therefore, it may have aided in the debunking of the question of difference in quality in female work, but, by avoiding to create a reflection on the grand systemic shift which is needed, it failed to be more than that. It was also, and overall, an extremely valuable experience, and a project which provided a great sense of professional and personal accomplishment.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

“If there is already this attention in our generation, in yours, you have to be relentless”
(Helena de Freitas, 2021).

The research, which emerged from the analysis of the exhibition *All I Want – Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020* and the curricular internship experience at the PNA, wished to further understand the ways in which women artists' shows may contribute to how cultural institutions advocate gender equality in the art world and, in particular, if and how women artist's shows are the best way to fight for this equal representation within art institutions.

Following the literature review presented, it is possible to place the inequality of women in art as a systemic, not formal, and therefore difficult to detect, concern. It involves many adversities, such as the art history canon and the consequent recycling of western white male names, the educational system and institutional practices, choice-makers and gate-keepers, the creation of monocultures, and the overall frequent erasure of Other voices, amongst others. All the causes explored excluded some, very real, puzzle pieces related to family life, domestic responsibilities, parental leave, amongst others, which all women, including women artists, face, as to augment the feasibility of the research. During the times women artists are allowed entrance into the institution, and, in the case of the focus of the research, the museum, women artists exhibitions are a common form to discuss the above mentioned difficulties and to fight for equality and representativeness. Overall, this curatorial strategy seems to be positive in debunking the question of quality difference between genders as it allows for the presentation of high quality works by female creators. As Vicente (2012) claims, one of the biggest difficulties contemporary art faces is the idea of quality being used to excuse and hide discrimination, particularly as it relates to gender. This “(...) so-called "criterion of artistic quality" is the one that is most frequently evoked as an answer to the absence of women in the various

facets of the art world, both by those who determine it and by those who observe the results of their choices” (Vicente, 2012: 229). To this end, women artists’ shows can open up the necessary conversation in order to slowly start to demystify this factor. However, women artist’s shows seem to fail to achieve their full transforming potential. As established in sub-chapter 2.3., curatorial practices and exhibitions could be, for their relevance in the overall art world and, particularly, in making or breaking artists’ careers, one of the primary sites of battle for gender equality in the artistic field. To do so, and as proposed in sub-chapter 2.1., the inclusion of counter-narratives in exhibition spaces should be one of the ways to fight for equal representation. As narratives which stand from the margins and which have the power to provide agency to marginalized communities, counter-narratives should be applied as to escape from the grand narratives proposed by the art history canon. Furthermore, creatives, such as women artists, LGBTQI+ artists and artists of color, amid others, are in need of the space to retell history from their perspective and to showcase distinct narratives through art and curatorial practices, in order to overcome the perpetuant erasure they face. To that end, as previously mentioned, perhaps feminist research should turn from mainly women artists to look into women curators as well. Furthermore, in order to produce the desired turn, the presence of outspokenly postcolonial feminist thinking in the museological and museographic space should be an influential and important factor. It should be involved in and with all the work associated with the museum, being a way, the present report understands, to move closer to gender equality within the art world. Equal representation should be a part of the more external-facing portions of a museum and institution’s work, such as in exhibitions and public programmes, but also in the more often hidden segments, such as in the hiring practices, for example. The combination of all these factors of increasing visibility and the giving of more power and agency to marginalized groups should be the goal as museums enter the present decade.

As it was hopefully possible to observe in chapter 3, multiple forms of gendered exhibitions have been explored. In accordance with the numbers presented in the report, one can claim that this strategy has not produced the desired outcome in the 50 years it has been applied. To continue to reuse the same strategy without experimenting and adding

further context, could be seen as producing another monoculture which is tiering the field of museographical practices and audiences while producing the same type of result crops over again (Santos and Maurício, 2020). When asked on curatorial practices and activism, curator Bruno Marchand noted that it was his belief that “(...) all curatorial practice, all artistic production, all exhibition experience has a transformative will within it. That said, the idea that art and curators and museums are going to change the world is very perverse to me (...)” (Marchand, 2021). Albeit that a larger systemic change is needed, as aforementioned, and that sexism needs to be addressed in all facets of society, exhibitions can play a part in introducing the necessary questioning for this broader change. To do so, exhibitions which wish to introduce the topic of women artists and the art system’s barriers that prevent consecration should assume the political of the theme. In fact, in the space of the museum, “neutrality, in effect, results in the disenfranchisement of artists or publics that may engage in debate within its walls because the institutions’ very power structures, historically and operationally, nullify concepts of civics to maintain a neutral position” (Raicovich, 2021: 28). To introduce a discussion regarding feminism, particularly from a postcolonial standpoint, should be the clear aim of the curatorship of women artists and feminist exhibitions. If these discussions are presented, perhaps, in part, exhibitions can (or at least should strive to) contribute to a change in society. If not, we might rediscover works of art and artists, but skip changing the context which erased them in the first place. To that end, feminist theory should be understood as an overall resource and material with utility to curatorial and institutional practices.

Another strategy was introduced by some of the different figures of the art world which participated in the interviews in annex: the idea that perhaps the use of universal themes applied to this kind of show would be a more interesting strategy which would call for a distance from framing the exhibitions solely based on the gender of the artists. As art historian Doris von Drathen argues, “(...) another approach would be to maintain the only women aspect but to work on real subjects, like space, or freedom, or love, or death, or hope, or political aspects (...)” (2021). Curator Diana Ali¹⁰ understands the need for universal themes as well, as “it is really important that women artists' exhibitions have a

¹⁰ Read full interview with curator Diana Ali on pages 139-146 of the Annex.

theme, (...) a universal theme, not just male or female (...)” (2021). Again, “Neutrality, in fact, is not at all neutral; rather, to paraphrase the South African anti-apartheid leader Desmond Tutu, it is a position in and of itself that supports the status quo” (Raicovich, 2021: 26).

The lack of politicality framing the exhibition was exactly the main missing point, detected by the report, in the show *All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020*, which the internship at the PNA focused on. As noted in chapter 4, this notion of escaping the political aspects which could possibly give further context to the exhibition, a choice noted by both curators, is what felt necessary given the place which Portuguese women artists inhabit in the artistic field. Overall the experience at the PNA was an intense and useful professional introduction to exhibition production and all that it involves. It allowed for the understanding of all facets of exhibition making, due to close contact with the curatorship, production, editorial and design teams. Furthermore, for the particularities which surrounded this show - a big institutional and overcompansing exhibition, framed within a political context, in the mists of a pandemic, affected by a roof fire, amongst others - the experience provided extended knowledge in the sector of exhibition production. Additionally, the host institution of the curricular internship, the PNA, for its all encompassing projects within the arts and education, provided an interesting context to the experience. As curator Filipa Oliveira noted in the interview, regarding the issues of education and access, “the PNA is an important tool for thinking about this, how do you accompany and work the issue of support and access to education and institutions (...) how do you create another kind of network (...) to reach another kind of relationship with equality” (Oliveira, 2021).

Much has gone unanswered, such as to what connects women artists to the point of women artists' exhibitions being considered a theme show? What are the reasons for the disconnect to feminist theory in the materials of such shows, as possible to observe in some cases? What exact shift needs to occur in order to reach the point when these exhibitions are no longer a necessity? To name a few. While such research must continue, the current report expectantly points to the past and present of feminist women artists exhibitions and wishes to question them in order to rethink this strategy which should aim to prepel us to

readdress the under-representation of female voices in the contemporary art world. After this point, the future of such situations is in need of further questioning. By looking at the present, soon to be past, of women artists' shows, as in the case of *All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020*, we can more consciously prospect the future, and this is the contribution this research expectantly offers. It is our responsibility as audiences of contemporary art exhibitions to question said shows and, in particular, to question the ones in position of making choices. An all encompassing shift, in both the interior and exterior facing aspects of the museum and the art world, is urgent, but while we are presented with few chances of producing programming highlighting female names, let's make the most out of those opportunities and use them as a way for reaching a step closer to equality.

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Annex

Interview with curator Bruno Marchand (Évora, 1978):

Transcribed and translated

Held on the platform Zoom on May 3rd 2021, lasting 42'47''.

Bruno Marchand is a Portuguese curator and one of the curators of the main case study of the report: the show *All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020*, alongside curator Helena de Freitas.

Maria Matias (MM): Having briefly introduced the theme of the report, I would now like to know your opinion on the situation and evolution of the representation of women artists in the art world. In the European and North American contexts, do you believe that equality has been reached for women artists? If not, in what ways is this inequality still prevalent?

Bruno Marchand (BM): I believe that equality has not been achieved yet and that it is still noticeable especially in the difference in terms of presence and opportunities. This difference in presence and opportunities is, however, caused mainly by social conditions. This, for me, is a very complex issue which can't be addressed in a sectorial approach. Looking at it as if it is a problem pertaining exclusively to the visual arts field is missing the point. It is a systemic problem which manifests itself *also* in the artistic field but has its roots in the broader social field.

MM: Thank you very much. I think you have touched on this next question a bit but what do you think are the main factors that make the achievement of equality still a challenge and/or pave the way for women artists, if you consider that there are any.

BM: I think that the role that women play in society and how society does or does not protect equal opportunities for both genders is the determining factor in the

under-representation of women in almost all areas. And, again, I don't think the situation can be solved strictly on the artistic level. Of course, the artistic field needs to take part in the process that will eventually change this state of things. This exhibition has a function in that it can help, but it doesn't solve the situation by itself.

MM: In your opinion, in what ways are women artists' exhibitions relevant?

BM: They are relevant as a call for attention, as an opportunity to discuss the problem. They are not the key to solving the problem, but they have that traction, that ability to make us think together about a problem that has roots and consequences on all sorts of levels. All opportunities that allow us to discuss this issue are welcome.

MM: In the last 50 years, the curatorial strategy of women artists' exhibitions has been applied recurrently in Europe and the United States. Do you believe that the results produced by this strategy have led to greater equality for women artists?

BM: No, not as much as we should expect. I could be wrong because I've never read any studies dealing with the transformations resulting from this type of strategy, but I feel that the desired equality is still far from being achieved. However, I believe that these exhibitions have had the merit of confirming that there is no artistic reason to have a generic under representation of women, as they prove, once and again, the undeniable quality of the work by women artists.

MM: My next question would be do you believe that there is any negative impact that surrounds this type of exhibition?

BM: No, considering the ideological or political level that these exhibitions try to imprint, I don't think so. That said, I think that many artists reject taking part in this sort of initiative because they don't want to be framed within a context that singles them out in terms of their gender and not because they are deserving of exactly the same attention their male counterparts tend to have.

MM: In your opinion, are exhibitions based on the gender of artists sufficient as a curatorial corrective to the occlusion of women artists as cultural contributors?

BM: No, they are not sufficient.

MM: Can you find other strategies applied or possible to apply that aim to achieve the desired equality?

BM: Yes, but they are out of the plane of curatorship and the plane of artistic production and reception. I believe that the decisive attitude to reverse this situation is to change the asymmetries governing gender relations and opportunities in the social field. For instance: the way society deals with issues of maternity and paternity. In my opinion, the licenses and periods for managing the presence of each parent in relation to the birth of a child should be mandatorily equal, that is, it should not be possible for the father or mother to have different maternity or paternity leaves. They would necessarily and mandatorily have to take the same number of days or the same number of weeks off whenever there is a birth. This would mean that, for an employer, to hire a potential father or a potential mother would be exactly the same. The gender of the candidate would not be taken into account as an evaluation element when hiring because it would be irrelevant whether it is a man or a woman as the time allocated to the parental function would be exactly the same. It cannot be left up to the mother or father to decide how much parental leave they take. Parental leave should be one and it should be the same for both the father and the mother. That would most likely have a transformative effect on the way we look at opportunities and equality in all professional areas.

MM: What about curatorial strategies? Do you find any other solutions? I thought about, for example, more solo exhibitions as something that could have a positive impact. Would that be a strategy that you think could be useful?

BM: That comes back a little bit to the question of why there are few exhibitions by women artists. Maybe there are few because within the framework of a purely qualitative evaluation, what often happens is that the number of women who actually manage to have a career fully invested in their artistic production is smaller than that of men. And that doesn't happen because artistic circles are not prepared to receive women, it's because society doesn't give them that role. In order to invest in her career the same amount that a man invests, a woman tends to give up things that are fundamental in all our lives, for example parenthood or supporting the family, whatever. Women still make that option much more often than men. The point is to try to level out the roles men and women play with regard to certain social roles. More solo exhibitions will surely follow. But now let me ask you: what do you think would change if we had more solo exhibitions of women artists?

MM: So knowing that there is a canon of art history where only the biggest names in art history are included, I think that one of the ways to include more female names would be by giving them visibility in an undeniable way. For example, Paula Rego's exhibition at the Tate. It's not that Paula Rego needs visibility exactly, but her name becomes completely mandatory in future art history books.

BM: Yes, I agree with you, but unless you believe there are hundreds of women artists to discover in the history of Portuguese art – which there aren't, not in Portugal, at least – the question is not so much of how to bring visibility to the women artists working nowadays, but how to make sure they don't drop out because of reasons unrelated to their work. Don't get me wrong: it is very important to unearth artists that art history has ignored, but I do believe this is not the problem. The problem is that, in fact, society has not guaranteed the conditions for women to participate in artistic work as it has for men. And that, in my opinion, is still the problem.

MM: Thank you Bruno. Returning a bit to the subject of women's exhibitions is there, in your opinion, a narrative recurrently applied to this particular type of exhibition?

BM: I mean, I don't think there is one narrative. In exhibitions that I've seen of this kind there are very different approaches. The issue, for me, is not even that, it's that an exhibition of this kind is always marked by a generic discussion. Whenever you say that you are going to do an exhibition of only women artists you can put any narrative you want inside but it never stops being an exhibition of women artists and this already determines the logic of its reception. What I think these exhibitions can do, which is what we tried to do with the All I Want show, is to guarantee that the exhibition is made in such a way that halfway through the exhibition you forget that you are seeing an exhibition with works made only by women artists because you are in fact involved in an exhibition with excellent works of art, period.

MM: How do you understand the role of the museum, or the cultural institution, in advocating gender equality?

BM: I think that the museum should in fact be a forum, that is, the museum can be and can use these opportunities to launch the discussion on how we can change this, not merely in artistic terms, but also in social terms.

MM: In your opinion, how do you understand the role of the curator in general and in particular in addressing this issue?

BM: I think the curators' major task is to make absolutely clear that there are no qualitative reasons for under-representation of the female gender in museums and institutional exhibitions. This should be the role of the curator: to guarantee that it is clear and beyond any doubt that quality is not an issue, and that, therefore, the problem has to be dealt with at the social level and not at the artistic level.

MM: In your work as a curator, in what ways is your practice grounded in notions of curatorial activism?

BM: I think that this question is very problematic because I think that it assumes that there are factions within the art world where one of them is involved with activist issues and has a transformative purpose in society. For example, art for art's sake would be a matter of taste and art concerned with issues like gender, identity, modernity, post-colonialism etc would be art with an activist stance. I think that this is not true. I believe that all curatorial practice, all artistic production, all exhibition experience has a transformative will within it. That said, the idea that art and curators and museums are going to change the world is very perverse to me, in the sense that suddenly we're asked to be responsible for changes that are highly complex and need to be addressed on a broader scale, not just artistic. Why should artists be more responsible for changing the world than accountants? I don't see why, but I also don't see why an exhibition that has no activist claims to begin with can't actually make a difference.

MM: Thank you very much. Now I have just 3 questions focused on the exhibition *All I Want - Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020*, the first being: in what way does the exhibition with your co-curatorship wish to participate in the conversation about gender equality in the art world?

BM: Actually we had two concerns. First, that the exhibition would, as much and as soon as possible, stop being about the problem of gender under-representation in Portuguese art and started to be, for the visitor, just an exhibition of great works of art. And, second, and stemming from the first point, that the exhibition would make it absolutely undeniable that the quality of Portuguese women artists is equal or even superior to that of Portuguese men artists.

MM: As co-curator of the exhibition *All I Want - Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020*, is there any particular consequence you wish this exhibition to produce?

BM: What I hope will happen is the general recognition of quality in the work of female Portuguese artists. Recognition which needs to be followed by a general discussion on the social reasons for the under-representation at stake and how to solve them.

MM: What distinguishes this exhibition from other exhibitions of women artists?

BM: Well, as I was saying, I think that at heart it is no different from other exhibitions of this kind. I believe all these exhibitions want the same thing, which is to make it clear that there are no reasons of artistic quality to sustain the difference of generic representation within the artistic circuit, be it in collections or in exhibitions. After that we need to find ways to reverse this underrepresentation and ensure that, whatever the gender, all artists are on an equal footing to be able to compete with their peers, whether they are men or women.

MM: Thank you very much.

Interview with curator Sandra Vieira Jürgens (1969):

Translated.

Via e-mail June 1st 2021.

Maria Matias (MM): Having presented the topic, I would like to have your opinion on the situation and the evolution of women in art. In the case of the European and North American contexts, is it your belief that equality has been reached for women artists?

Sandra Vieira Jürgens (SVJ): No, but I think that important steps are being taken in the critical consideration and resolution of the greater visibility of the professional trajectories of women artists.

MM: If not, in what ways is inequality still prevalent?

SVJ: There are fewer women artists with a professional trajectory in the arts, and the number of solo exhibitions devoted to their work is also scarcer. In private and institutional collections their representation is also very scarce. Today there is an effort to balance and replenish their presence, which will certainly continue in the future, which will contribute to a greater equality of gender representation.

MM: What do you think are the main factors that make achieving equality challenging.

SVJ: There needs to be critical awareness and actions that change the situation. To transform consciences and mentalities in the whole society. In other professions and areas the situation is unfortunately the same.

MM: In your opinion, how are women artists' exhibitions relevant?

SVJ: In Portugal, as a call for attention to the problematic issue of women artists might be good. This strategy was followed by the feminists of the 70's and at that time there was already the discussion about what strategy women should have in order to achieve integration and representativity in the artistic environment. I think there are other more contemporary strategies that do not involve creating ghettos. In fact, we live more and more with performative identities and non-binaries. The same happens with the lack of

representation of the QUEER and black communities. We will have to be aware of this need for greater integration but I believe that the increase of this representativeness should be done with respect for plurality and not by atomization generated by isolated causes.

MM: For the last 50 years, the curatorial strategy of women artists' shows has been recurrently applied in Europe and the United States. Do you believe the results produced from this strategy have led to more equality for women artists?

SVJ: There is in general a greater awareness of the need to move towards greater equality of gender, class...

MM: Do you believe there is a negative impact?

SVJ: I don't think there is a negative impact.

MM: In your opinion, are exhibitions curated in this frame sufficient as a curatorial corrective to the occlusion of women artists as cultural contributors from the larger history of art?

SVJ: I think that, for example, in historical exhibitions one should do more research and recover trajectories of women artists if they have quality. I am not in favor of creating quotas. The demand for quality work should always exist.

MM: Can you find other strategies applied which aim to reach the desired equality? If so, what are they?

SVJ: That there are group exhibitions that have this natural concern of having a balance of representation of all types. The institutions should review the collections and fill possible gaps in these areas.

MM: What would be the most effective one in your opinion?

SVJ: Individual exhibitions of women artists and collective exhibitions with representativeness at all levels, geographical, social, identity, gender...

MM: In your opinion, is there a recurrent narrative applied to this kind of shows? If so, can you identify one commonly used?

MM: How do you see the role of the museum in advocating gender equality?

SVJ: Museums have a determining role in this area. For society they are the mirror of the artistic community.

MM: In your opinion, what is the role of the curator in general and in tackling this particular issue?

SVJ: The role of the curator is determinant and must be as attentive as possible to diversity and inclusion.

MM: In your particular work, in what ways (if any) does your practice rest on notions of curatorship activism? And curatorial activism in terms of gender equality?

SVJ: My orientation in curating has been to make exhibitions that privilege concepts, themes, and issues that I consider relevant to thinking about the present time, art history, and the art system. I have never found the need to make exhibitions only of women artists. In the selection of artists I privilege the works that best fit the narrative I want to develop. If I were an artist I would not like to be invited only because I am a woman. And in curating I feel the same way.

Interview with Doctor Filipa Lowndes Vicente (Lisbon, 1972):

Transcribed and translated

Held on the platform Zoom on May 13th 2021, lasting 47'54''

Maria Matias (MM): Hello good afternoon, and thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this short interview.

Doctor Filipa Lowndes Vicente (FLV): Hello, good afternoon Maria. So tell me more about this internship and about your work.

MM: During the months between September 2020 and March 2021, I participated in a curricular internship at the PNA, very focused on supporting the production of the exhibition curated by Helena de Freitas and Bruno Marchand titled *All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020*. The report which I am now producing, refers to the curricular internship experience and arises from the analysis of the mentioned exhibition, intending to understand how gendered exhibitions contribute to the way cultural institutions advocate for gender equality in the art world and, in particular, whether exhibitions of women artists are the way to fight for this equality in terms of representation and opportunity. To do so, I am framing the report in the European and North American contexts, with methodology focused on the analysis of various case studies including the exhibition, literary review and interviews with national and international curators. I believe that's it, in short, so now I would have just a couple of questions to ask you if that's okay.

FLV: I see. I found it very interesting because in fact the history of exhibitions of women artists is something that interests me a lot and I am even preparing an article for the newspaper Público, a long article about exhibitions of women artists. It was also curious because five years ago I went back to live in the United States, where I had lived for 20 years before, to spend a year and at the time I was thinking of writing on the exhibitions of women artists that were taking place there in that year 2016-2017. Since I was there for a whole academic year I started not only seeing some exhibitions but also collecting a lot of

newspaper articles and it was the New York Times that said it was the year in the history of the United States with the most exhibitions of women artists.

MM: Very interesting, thank you. My first question would then be: in the European and North American contexts do you believe that equality has been achieved for women artists? And if not, in what way is this inequality still prevalent?

FLV: No, it hasn't been reached. And it is still prevalent in all spheres of the art field, all the spheres that entail someone's choices, that entail visibility, that entail public exposure, that entail acquisition, etc. So in all those mechanisms that define what art is. There are still a lot of inequalities for a number of reasons.

MM: Thank you. My second question would then be, what do you think are the main factors that make achieving this inequality still a challenge?

FLV: I think, to simplify because obviously the reasons are multiple and complex, they are also inseparable from all those reasons that are beyond the art world and that lead to equality still being a path, and a very utopian path in some places in the world. I believe you asked me about Europe and the United States, which is important, because it's important to think about specific countries or areas of the world as the inequalities are very different from country to country. The equalities or inequalities are different even within the arts. And even within Europe or the United States, I would say that there are many differences, - therefore I also think that it is not possible to consider the so-called western world as a space where everything would be more or less the same. Even my experience, of having lived in several different countries in Europe and also in the United States, is that these issues are different and are not linear processes either. Now going back to the reasons and simplifying, we could divide them between the subjective reasons in countries where there is no longer a legal inequality or an inequality at the level of access. I don't know what the Portuguese numbers are at the moment regarding for example the number of women entering the fine arts schools or even Portuguese women who are going abroad to

study at other fine arts schools, but I imagine and I wouldn't be at all surprised if the numbers between men and women were equivalent, or even if there were more women. So what happens from the moment formal education ends is that the more subjective mechanisms of everyday life, which can range from things as banal as negotiations between couples, the sharing of domestic chores, the time a person has available to dedicate to a profession that demands a lot of energy and time, as above all it is a profession that depends a lot on the person herself. I know because I also write and I know that these are professions in which people don't have to "punch the clock", they are mainly accountable to themselves, they don't have schedules or structures of external obligation. So it is in this negotiation of daily life that the biggest obstacles for women begin to emerge. There is also a level of these very subjective issues that we could find in education: maybe the way women are still educated, both inside the home and outside the home, to have less expectations regarding their professional career, to give more importance to the family or children, to seek a work-family balance, etc. All these issues that affect all other professions in general, in relation to the creative and artistic professions I believe are made even more acute by the kind of life that is inseparable from artistic practice.

While in the 19th century or in previous centuries the obstacles were written and formal, when the obstacles became informal everything became more difficult to denounce or to identify. Then there is the other side, of who builds the history, of who makes choices: the art critics, the gallery owners, the collectors, the curators, the art historians, the teachers composing a bibliography to give to their students. What tends to happen, in all areas of knowledge – as we live in a world that is still patriarchal –, is that we still attribute more merit, more recognition, more quality, even if at an unconscious level, to what is produced by men, especially white men. And these are things that are studied in many fields of knowledge, whether in psychology, sociology, anthropology, etc. I would even say less so in art history, which has been fooling itself as it was only in the 1970s that it began to deconstruct the mechanisms of its identity as a discipline of knowledge. And therefore, art history, being so centered on this idea of merit or quality, also had more difficulty than

other disciplines in deconstructing that the ones who decide what has merit and what has quality are human beings, and these human beings were, until recently, mostly men. There are processes, which are often unconscious as we know, where men tend to choose men. The discipline of art history has always been very resistant to thinking this way because the criterion of quality is so dominant that it makes all the discriminations hidden, difficult to identify, as it seems as if they were from another sphere, as if the arts were not part of the whole society in which we live, which is a society where the places of power, of visibility and of voice are still mainly male and white. So it is in this network of multiple reasons that makes the differences – between female and male artists - still so great when we would think there would be no reason for them to exist anymore.

MM: Thank you very much, just a comment as you mentioned the Faculty of Fine Arts. I was a student there from 2014 until 2018, and I must say I believe we were around 30/40 women in a class of about 50 students.

FLV: Well, I didn't know it was like that, as I know the world of the humanities and history better. But that's very interesting to know.

MM: Yes, a big disparity. My third question would be, in your opinion, in what ways are exhibitions of women artists relevant?

FLV: I consider them to be very relevant, especially when not afraid to affirm the union of those two words: women and artists. Here we go to a question that I find very interesting, and that has been discussed since the 19th century, and that surely you Maria, in your experience, which must have been very interesting, have already realized. It is that we can observe two positions: often it is the women themselves, both curators and artists, who do not like this idea and do not identify with and even reject this idea of “exhibitions of women artists”. Of course there must be some people who have doubts or who may also change their minds over time; but then there are others who don't fear this idea, who see exhibitions of women artists as a way to affirm an idea, almost as a feminist gesture, that is

still necessary because the idea of the "genderless artist" is what, or *was* what, has always camouflaged precisely this inequality. I find this tension very interesting, but I place myself on the side of the openly feminist gesture, which is not afraid to say "this is an exhibition of women artists and these are women artists, and we're not going to hide their gender," and it's very interesting for me to see how many women, art historians or curators, have felt the need to move away from feminist approaches, or even from identifying a woman artist as a woman. For example, in the 90s it was very common, if someone, male or female, wrote about a woman artist, they didn't even talk about the fact that she was a woman, because to talk about this fact was like subordinating her, making her subaltern in relation to a art of quality where gender issues don't matter. And I almost understand this because, in the 19th and 20th century, all art criticism in relation to women artists identified women's art as a lesser art or if the woman artist was considered very good the critics perhaps needed to say that she didn't even paint like a woman artist, that she painted like a man. And maybe this is why many art historians felt the need to hide gender as a relevant issue, even ignoring it completely. As if it made sense to ignore the fact that Josefa de Óbidos or Aurélia de Sousa or even Helena de Almeida, Vieira da Silva or Paula Rego were women.

I think that when art history was traditionally very focused on the object, the work itself, and less focused on the authorship of the work and the context of production, it more easily moved away from these factors that are, in my opinion, inseparable from the making of history. This is not a new issue, as already in the 19th century there were many women artists discussing these ideas. Some refused to participate in all-female exhibitions, and why? Because for a long time this was associated with, "minor exhibitions" or exhibitions with less quality, amateur or precisely those that could not enter the category of "art", "genderless art", that that was inevitable dominated by male artists. On the other hand, already in the 19th century, there were also women who said: all right, we want to exhibit in the most prestigious places, but if they won't let us in then let's create alternatives. And some women also used both strategies, which were to force their way into the most prestigious exhibition spaces where supposedly gender doesn't matter, but also create their

own spaces. Now I would say that the history of Portuguese art for a long time rejected this idea of a gender approach, even when in other countries it was already being done, and this alone explains why this exhibition is only now being organized, when equivalent exhibitions have already taken place in all European countries, for a long time now. There was a great rejection towards this idea of thinking of artists as women, because that was seen as diminishing them, but this is not only an issue in the arts, it is also an issue in history. There are many women historians who don't want to work on women's issues, because they are issues that have less prestige, or are considered more marginal within the fields of knowledge.

MM: Thank you so much. I am focused on the last 50 years, which is when this curatorial strategy has been applied more recurrently in Europe and the United States. Do you believe that the results produced by this curatorial strategy since the 1970s have led to greater equality for women artists?

FLV: I think so, yes they have led to a greater awareness, and not only in relation to the arts. I sometimes think of this as the “glasses of feminism”, when we put on these glasses, we start to become aware and think about things that we didn't think about before, and our gestures also change. Sometimes we might say that they are not changing for the good reasons, they are changing because there is social pressure for them to change. Things don't always come from inside or outside, but the truth is that we all also change over time, we change our ideas, and I clearly think that when a person is confronted with certain ideas, when he or she then has the opportunity to decide, this idea is going to be there. I have no doubt that many curators, gallerists, historians, etc, when they start preparing their program or when they go to see an exhibition or when they award an art prize, they will be more aware of how their choices are also symbolic, representative and meaningful, and how important it is in an exhibition or in a list of prizes that there are not only male artists. These issues are always very important, both in terms of who is chosen and who chooses. That's why it started to be discussed and to be very relevant that juries were not composed only by men, which was what often happened. When only men chose, it was more likely

that all-male or all-white juries would not choose artists who were not also similar to them. This has also to do with psychoanalytic processes that are difficult to identify, but then when we look at the objective numbers and historical evidence, we see that there are processes that cause many more men to be chosen than women. So I think these exhibitions are important, no doubt; by talking more about these issues there is an impact on the level of choices that we start making.

MM: Thank you. In your opinion, are exhibitions based on the artists' gender sufficient as a curatorial corrective?

FLV: I think exhibitions are one way to do that, but not the only way. Exhibitions of women artists are very relevant but the artistic canons are made in many other places, as in the purchase for example. The fact that an institution, as many have done in the world, have thought that what they buy must include x amount of women, x amount artists from outside Europe or the United States, etc, is important. So I think work has to be done on many other levels, like in education, in publishing houses, in the multiple ways of creating canons.

MM: I believe you touched a bit on my next question which would be, what are other possible strategies in order to achieve the desired equality. The following question would then be, is there a narrative that is recurrently applied to this particular type of show?

FLV: I would say that there are some that are more traditional than others in the sense of the mechanisms of art history itself. We can even think that when Linda Nochlin and Anne Sutherland Harris organize the 1976 exhibition in Los Angeles, their strategy is of a rather traditional art history, in the sense that it is intelligible to all those who have a little or a lot of knowledge about art history, in the sense that it respects the acknowledges artistic genealogies, the chronologies, the styles, etc. What they did was to place “women artists” into a structure that was already consolidated. And then we see many other approaches, as early as the 1980s, such as the critique of these narratives of replacing men with women:

this critique said that, in a way, they were doing the same thing that all art history has always done, which is to create this idea of the geniuses, this idea of the heroines. While what we should be doing is deconstructing this need to create canons as if they emerged from nothing. What the feminist approaches to art history came to do in the 1980s was more to deconstruct this idea.

So I would say that there is a multiplicity of ways of exhibiting and thinking about exhibitions of women artists. Maybe those that are more historical, more focused on the 17th or 18th century, tend to be more traditional from that point of view, of an art history where we are doing what we have already done but now thinking about women. But even so, I think that art history is much more self-aware, and that's where I think museums have sometimes done a more interesting, creative and daring job than academia. I think that some of the most interesting things that have ever been done have been at an exhibition level and not in books or universities. I think that we can find this genealogy of silence, of oblivion, of the invisible, this narrative, let's say, that is perhaps the guiding line of some exhibitions of women artists.

MM: Thank you very much, I have just two more questions. How do you understand the role of the museum in the defense of gender equality?

FLV: I really like museums and I think museums can do extraordinary things, at that level, but first it has to start being an issue. This has to be a question, they can only do things at any level, whether in what they exhibit, or in the leaflets they share, or in what they publish and organize, if they are interested in the subject. And so, they can do a lot if they believe it is relevant. I believe it is, but not all people who work in museums think so.

MM: Thank you. My final question would be: how do you understand the role of a curator, in general and in particular when addressing this particular issue?

FLV: I think curators are fundamental. They are some of the most interesting constructors and producers of knowledge. The most interesting things that have been done in the last 40 or 30 years have been exhibitions. And I'm not just thinking about issues of gender or feminism. I believe that curators have an obligation in the sense of being in tune with the world they live in, not only with their collections, but with the neighborhood of the institution, with the city, town, country, continent, world, past and present. And, on the other hand, I also think that it's very important not to lose the critical sense and the sense of self-questioning and "self reflection" in relation to the institution itself. It is important for institutions and curators to have the awareness that what they are showing is a possible narrative among all narratives, and therefore I also think that is essential this idea of a curator who takes on a role, who is not hidden, who has a name, who has a voice and an identity, and that affirms its choice and its narrative, that exposes the weaknesses of that narrative, or the doubts they had, or how that narrative is one of so many others that would be possible. A continuous reflection and an awareness of the power of institutions, the power of these narratives, should mean not to abuse that power. And in order not to, one way of doing this is not to present these narratives as the only narratives. There are creative ways of using a museum and thinking about a museum and they can become such important places. In relation to colonial issues, one of the big political discussions in the postcolonial worlds we live in today is what museums represent and contain. And in fact many of the objects that are in museums were appropriated in situations of inequality, imperialism and violence. So museums have an obligation to reflect on their history and to take it on and to debate it and to deconstruct it.

MM: Exactly, thank you very much!

Interview with curator Diana Ali (Rusholme, 1979):

Transcribed.

Held on the platform Zoom on June 15th 2021, lasting 34'58''

Maria Matias (MM): Hello Diana, I hope you are doing well. Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this short interview.

Diana Ali (DA): No problem!

MM: Perhaps I will start by contextualising the report I am now producing, if you don't mind. I participated in a curricular internship at the PNA that was very focused on supporting the production of the exhibition curated by Helena de Freitas and Bruno Marchand titled "All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020". The report I am now producing refers to the curricular internship experience and arises from the analysis of the mentioned exhibition, intending to understand how gendered exhibitions contribute to the way cultural institutions advocate for gender equality in the art world and, in particular, whether exhibitions of women artists are the way to fight for this equality in terms of representation and opportunity. To do so, I am framing the report in the European and North American contexts, with methodology focused on the analysis of various case-studies including the exhibition, literary review and interviews with national and international curators. I believe that's all, in short. Now I would have a couple of quick questions to ask you if that's okay.

DA: Sure, ask away.

MM: Thank you so much. My first question would then be, in the European and North American contexts do you believe that equality has been achieved for women artists? And if not, in what way is this inequality still prevalent?

DA: Well, working in the art world for almost 20 years, I never really had a problem with gender equality because I think in the art world, whether you are male or female, art helps each other. Everyone seems quite supportive as human beings, rather than a division between male or female. I know historically, and when I first started out, this was perhaps true. But men are all talk, while women can do things, put things into practice. I am practical, I am pragmatic, why put people in boxes of male or female? I have not really had that much of a problem with gender equality, because I think artists are artists, in a humanist aspect. That does depend on the country I am curating at, because that is when the cultural factors come in. For example, curating in South Korea, it was a male who directed everything, but the female managers that actually made things happen, in terms of how to do things practically, how we get the funding, etc. So, yes, there is a hierarchy, but it depends on where you are in the world.

MM: Thank you, but do you believe that women artists have the same opportunities as their male counterparts, within institutions or collections, for example?

DA: No, but I think it is getting much better, especially in the Western world. For example you have Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner, who was the women behind his success. I work at the Nottingham Women's Center which is an organisation, I am on the board of trustees, and we just filed a bill with the government and it has gone through about misogyny. And misogyny, does not matter where you come from, is always there and in circumstances where you go: Oh I feel like, as a woman, I need to work twice as hard to prove myself. So, yes there's always a need to say I can do this, believe me. And why should I say this as a female when men do not need to? When men walk into something it is just there, and women have to say those extra words or extra actions. But I think it is getting much better, especially in the UK, there's a lot of CEOs in charge of big arts councils who are not men, and not because of their gender, but because of their skill set. The problem, for me, is do you get employed as a woman, because you are deserving or because the institution has to tick something? Don't choose me because you are looking for

your organisation, choose me because of my skills. So yes, there is that battle there, but it is happening.

MM: In your opinion, in what ways are exhibitions of women artists relevant?

DA: Really, really relevant, especially with the #MeToo movement. I do a lot of work for intersectional feminism which, in that whole world, there's feminist but also intersectional feminists, as in Black Lives Matter. So, we have a white privileged woman with an African American woman, or myself for example, from Bangladesh. So we don't have the same privileges because it is cultural, so I think it is really important for women artists to exhibit together. Not necessarily because of women's issues, but also because of class, cultural identity, financial circumstances, so I think women need to be together, not because they are against men or the male dominated art world, but because we need to work together before we even think about male dominated society. So intersectional feminism is not just looking at the female, because you can't just have male and female, there's so many different factors of being a female. And I think it is really important that women artists' exhibitions have a theme, as you know my exhibitions are always around a theme, a universal theme, not just male or female, and I think that is happening now. Sometimes it really annoys me when there's a call out and it is only females, when actually there's male artists out there that can do this sort of work as well. We almost put ourselves in a corner that way. For example, I was in an exhibition called *Women Artists at Home*, but there's a lot of men at home as well looking after the baby. So I like to explore themes that are much more universal than putting ourselves in a corner.

MM: Of course, yes I understand. Thank you. So, my next question would be regarding the curatorial strategy of female art exhibitions being recurrently applied for the last 50 years in the Western world. Do you believe the results produced by this strategy have led to more equality for women artists and do you believe that there could be any negative impact surrounding this kind of show?

DA: I think it has been absolutely positive, like I said, women have been very forthright and practical and yes we are mothers, we are sisters, we are this, but also, let's put that to one side. It has had a very positive impact, in, again, being pragmatic. Like I said, in the art world, we don't see that much division, again I am just talking about the UK, but also the other side is, if you want to be a female with a female show you are almost discriminating against males. And that's not a good thing because the art world is for everyone. And I think because of that, there's been more collective voices with females. When I curate I don't look at gender, I look at how the work fits the theme, and I don't look at how many men and how many women I have, because art is a universal language. But I think it is being really positive, but again I don't feel a lot of discriminatory voices against me because I am female, but there are certain female artists, Tracy Hamer for example, that said that men are the best artists because they don't need to have babies. And that was so controversial, and in a sense female artists are better because they can balance everything. So, do we go to a point where we deprive ourselves as women, because we are mothers or this or that? But I think there's a lot of respect for women out there in the art world now. And a lot of vision. And I think we have come a long long way because 50 years ago this was not the case. So many females that were artists, like Lee Krasner, supported the husband, but we have moved on from that now, and times are moving very quickly.

MM: I sure do hope so.

DA: I feel it.

MM: Do you believe that exhibitions curated in this frame are sufficient as correctives for the occlusion of women from the grand narrative of art history? For all the voices that were lost in time?

DA: It is much more accepted now because it comes down to the artwork and not whether you are female or male, and when callouts come out it is about the theme, that universal theme. I just think it is so much more accepted now especially in the Western world.

Wherever you are, it is much deeper than gender equality, it is about culture. For example, I am from Bangladesh, and if I go back to my capital I won't be allowed to be an artist because of culture and religion. I wouldn't get that freedom, as women are supposed to be indoors, putting it very bluntly. Even though art does exist, here you are as a woman. With post colonialism, it is becoming much better but again it depends on the country or the cultural identity you come from. Personally, I had to fight because I came from Bangladesh to the UK to be an artist, and a lot of my relatives did not understand that. Whereas if I was an English woman it would be fine. So I think you can't just think of gender but also in terms of background

MM: So, in terms of reaching more equal numbers in collections, or representation in institutions, can you find other strategies, other than female only exhibitions, that would produce the desired outcome?

DA: Yes, as you know, in the exhibition *Loss and Lucidity* (Fábrica Braço de Prata, 2019, Lisbon, Portugal), everyone loses someone or something, so the theme is universal. That wasn't about trying to prove your identity, which I think is such an overused word. It is about human emotion, so when it comes to strategies, it is in the title of the show, it's about how you resonate a particular topic with yourself. I know so many artists, and they look at this theme, for example in this callout, wondering if this resonates with them as human beings. I have been in women's shows, but I always think: I know a man that could do that show as well, that could talk about that because they had the experience of that theme. So, sometimes, as women we block a little bit. I know men have been doing this for a long time, but what we want now is equality, so I think it is about more universal themes, part of a universal language. Art is for everyone. You know, males, females, cultural identity, yes there are certain specifics, especially with disability and EDI (Equality, Diversity, Inclusion), but I don't want to be labelled as someone that only has an exhibition because of their skin colour or because they are from a certain part of the world. That annoys me. Why can't we have more universal themes? I think that is the way forward.

MM: Thank you. Now I was wondering, while visiting this kind of exhibition of just women artists, if you came across any recurrent curatorial narrative?

DA: Yes, solidarity I would say. A sense of community, a sense of being equal with women that may have a MA or PhD or someone who is an emerging artist, there's been that solidarity. If you go to an opening with female artists, like the one that was here which was called Home, how women see home whether that's domesticity or a sense of belonging because a lot of us came from different countries. And in that particular show we just hugged and went: we are here, without having to prove ourselves. So there was that solidarity, that comfort. So, it was a nice environment. But once you have that solidarity and that community is like: ok, I am not going to go home and cook for the husband. I want to stay out for a drink, why not? So, it can be freeing. We have had to prove a lot historically, but I think now the bridges are gaping and also women are having so many more voices now. It also depends on the age you talk to. I remember speaking to a guy in the opening and he went "oh well done" and I went, what do mean "well done"? This is what I do. I think we have a hell of a lot more power now and voice. We have to be progressive and remain positive.

MM: Yes, thank you. How do you see the role of the museum in advocating for gender equality?

DA: I'm gonna talk from the UK, that is very tricky because museums have a status, so you have to be a renowned artist, whether you are male or female. It depends what gallery you are represented by, how much money you can bring to your agent. So in terms of gender equality, it's not so much about the gender, but about your fame and that can be a really tricky thing. But, at the moment, I work for the Artists Council as well, and there's almost a balance of male and female artists so it is more about the artwork and what sells in the market, which is quite interesting. It is going towards equality, really. I am on the council board for the Artists Council and it is equal, men, women, black people, white people, gay people, everyone. There is loads of representation. But I think museums, historically, have

been male dominated, but, again, we can just go back in history and let's look at all the female artists that are here now and it is huge, it is massive. Women are doing just as well as men. And we should not have to say that, we should not have to prove ourselves, we are there as artists.

MM: What is the role of the curator, in general, and particularly in tackling this issue?

DA: I see the word curator as a manager and I don't like that at all. So, as an artist, curating is an extension of my practice, of my research. So, when I get stuck, or when I have problems with my own research, rather than reading lots of theory, which I do anyway, I open that call to the people. So when I did *Loss and Lucidity* it was because my dad passed away and I didn't know how to talk about it, so I opened it up to other artists thinking I am not the only person that have been through something like this. So, again, it is about building that community and hearing other voices, but also allowing different cultures to be in one space with that universal theme of humanity and loss. So I think curating is about sharing, is about collaborating, is about exposing artists and allowing them to have that voice. Gender equality does not even go into my head when I select artists. Because we can all lose a father, whether you are male or female. The themes I usually do can be political, but it is more of a worldwide political stance. And gender equality is one thing but then you have so many different subjects. I love curating because it allows every other subject to come into art. You don't have that in academic subjects, there is always a right answer.

MM: That is interesting, thank you. My last question would be, in your particular work, in what ways, if any, does your practice rest on notions of curatorial activism?

DA: I think of myself as a curatorial activist, yes, because I do go into countries where I am contested, where I want to make a difference. For example, when I went to Israel and Palestine I was detained. I think as a curator you have to tell stories, not just for yourself, but about artists and how they made a shift in the world. Again, let voices be heard. More than my artwork, the curatorial aspect of my practice, because I expose other artists within

that theme and challenge myself, it has to be universal and it has to be activism. I have a voice and I am representing 60 other voices here. And it is scary. Like I said, in Israel I was detained in 2016 because I had a muslim surname, and they asked what kind of artwork did I do, and I looked at the picture of pretty flowers on the police officers wall and I said "oh, pretty things" and they let me through. So you almost have to re-explain why you are an artist and why you are a curator, but that is not going to stop me. Being a curator is not a manager, we do not manage, it is about having that space to share other voices.

MM: Thank you so much for your help Diana.

Interview with curator Filipa Oliveira:

Transcribed and translated.

Held on the platform Zoom on June 27th 2021, lasting 38'21''

Maria Matias (MM): I would have just a couple of questions to ask you if that's okay, the first being: I would like to know your opinion about the situation and evolution of the representation of women artists in the art world. In the European and North American contexts, do you believe that equality has been achieved for women artists and, if not, in what way does inequality still prevail?

Curator Filipa Oliveira (FO): I believe it has not been achieved. I think we are much better, but we still have a huge path to take. This path starts by understanding who is in charge of the institutions, and I am talking from an institutional point of view, according to what you asked me. Whoever is in charge of the institutions has to be aware that programming an institution is a political act and it is an act of power, a place of power. Power in the sense that whoever is in those places has the possibility and the opportunity to either strengthen the system, change it, or contribute to some change, therefore it is a very important place that curators and museum directors have, as they have always had, but in particular today, and at this moment. We are seeing a path for change or an attempt at a path for change, maybe more this, because I think there is still a huge way to go, even though it is obvious that we already see women being bought more into collections, we already see more contemporary art galleries having women in the artists that are represented, a lot more women being programmed, but there is still a huge way to go and there are several institutions that I could name you whose programming is still only male, and this in Lisbon. One thing is Lisbon and Porto, speaking only in a Portuguese context, where there is a greater awareness of these issues, but when you go outside the country, this theme is not a theme. And I still have a lot of people asking me questions about quotas, if these are important and that they don't make sense because women are equal to men, but in fact it's not like that, and we still see a big difference, either in programming, or in market prices, in a series of other things, like the integration of collections, where there is

no equality. But this equality also has to be thought of beyond man and woman, because if we think of, for example, black feminism or other feminisms, then the work is very backward, so I think it is important to realize that feminism is not just women or men, because, for me, feminism is about the fight for rights and equality, very transversal rights, and I think this issue is very outdated. If we think about black women and the representation of black women in exhibitions, in collections, in galleries, it is absolutely tiny, because men are already few, let alone the representation of women, and so I think there is really a lot of work to be done. And I also talk about people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+, all these issues of representation and identity that are important and that, for me, feminism advocates. I have a much broader view of feminism and as a way of being, as a way of programming. Obviously I am a feminist, but I am a feminist programmer and this issue for me has to do with invisibility, with access, a number of other things, which are very backward, in my view, that need a lot of work, because these issues are very much unworked in Portuguese institutions.

MM: Thank you very much. I believe you ended up touching on my next question which would be: what are the main factors that make achieving equality still a challenge?

FO: I believe that there is also a huge effort that needs to be made by the institutions. I was just talking about this yesterday and, perhaps, one should look at the American and British contexts, in which there are really the question of quotas. We must be aware that we have to have quotas until we have a certain equality or an approximation to equality; this question, to me, must be really thought through and reflected upon. But there is also the issue of education and access, how do you facilitate and I think the PNA is an important tool for thinking about this, how do you accompany, work, the issue of support and access to education and institutions for those who don't get there, how do you create another kind of network and the institutions have to create another kind of network, to reach another kind of relationship with equality. But this is a super complex topic, the causes of inequality, but obviously, those who are in a place of power have an obligation to try to

contribute and do something, so that this is questioned and thought about, in fact, started to talk about, because I think there are many places that this doesn't even happen.

MM: Thank you so much. My third question would be: in what way do you see exhibitions of only women artists as relevant?

FO: I did, many years ago, in 2006, an exhibition of only women artists, in a context of reaction to several all-male exhibitions and several all-male awards and that wasn't questioned at the time. I thought it was interesting to do an all-female exhibition and was super questioned why, and if I was a feminist, and I answered "yes, I am". But we thought a lot about what feminism was, and this was in 2006, so it had been a while, and at that time in fact there were no exhibitions only for women and I thought, we all thought, because it was very collaborative, that it was important to think together. Of course, an institution like Gulbenkian, and with the power it has, of communication, of reaching a great diversity of people, causes this subject to be discussed, in the newspapers, people are paying attention, my mother wants to go and see the exhibition, which I would never think of, I mean, my mother sees exhibitions, but she wouldn't think about this issue, and in I'm talking about my mother, I'm talking about a number of other people who wouldn't be a normal target to think about this issue and who suddenly "ah I'm going to see this exhibition about women". So yes, they have an important power to raise the issue and question it. I have several questions about the exhibition itself, for example, there's a black woman in the exhibition, you don't have a lot of other things, women artists who have been born after the 80's are not included, who are the most activist. You are alienating several generations, in the 80s and 90s, we have two generations of women artists and that raises questions for me. The exhibition has an artist of color, Grada Kilomba, but I think that there is a lack of discussion around the exhibition, a lack of a much more intense public program, I have other conceptual problems with the exhibition, but at the outset, not wanting to be ungrateful, I think it is an important effort. I think it is important to put the question on the table, in an open way, and to think, being that they don't talk much about feminism, there is an avoidance, because it always seems to be a word that the Portuguese

are afraid of, because they always talk about the burning of bras, as if feminism were talking about witches' things, which I think is a shame, but the exhibition is not very political, which is missing. At the same time if you do an all-male exhibit no one is going to question it, no one is going to raise a question, make it a theme, because it's the norm, which makes it interesting to see why doing an all-female exhibit raises so many questions and is a theme, i.e. an all-female exhibit being a theme and an all-male exhibit is not, it's not even questioned, it's not even talked about, just here you see the difference in treatment and it's ambiguous to me, because it makes you think, but at the same time I have a lot of questions, even moral, political questions about this kind of exhibitions, because, for example, you don't do exhibitions of transgender women or transgender men, it doesn't raise those questions, so we are really still in the beginning.

MM: I share a similar opinion, but this thesis is me trying to figure out my thoughts regarding this kind of exhibitions and I think you ended up also touching my next question, which would be: In the last fifty years, at least, since the 70s, this curatorial strategy has been recurrently applied in Europe and North America. Do you believe that the results produced by this strategy have led to greater equality for women artists and do you believe that there are any negative impacts that might surround this type of exhibition?

FO: Of course the curatorial strategy of the last fifty years was fundamental, otherwise we wouldn't be here today and, therefore, there are many men and women who have defended the place and importance of women in the art world and these pioneers, these people, were all, more visible or less visible, fundamental for us to reach today. And I think that, although not equal, it is a very important theme today and, perhaps, there will be places where it is unthinkable to hold an exhibition that does not have women or a program in which there are no women, in which this is not thought of as a theme, so, yes, this has been fundamental. I am just remembering the English word "advocacy", the defense of the place of women has been fundamental for women to be felt as serious artists and to realize that there are many women artists who are absolutely extraordinary and who deserve to be where they are. There's a podcast that I really like, which is called "bow down," which is

about 20th century women artists by Jennifer Higgle, who is the editor of Frieze, and in that podcast she asks various people to talk about a 20th century woman artist and she starts the introduction by saying that most people are not able to name, mind you, we're talking about Frieze in London, so in this Anglo-Saxon system, and most people are not able to name a 20th century woman artist. And artists before 1950, most people, in fact, can't, so it's not just about making exhibitions, it's also about rewriting history, education being done differently, books being thought about differently, there's a lot of work to do in that direction. History is made of great women artists, who are still completely invisible and, in fact, this invisibility, this non-existence, is still very present and the main problem of these exhibitions is that these giant exhibitions of women artists or only Portuguese artists produce a ghetto of "what is it", they are unfair because they will always leave a lot of people out who are fundamental and will always leave invisible a series of people who are essential to this history. Therefore, of course these exhibitions are important, but they are inherently unfair because it is impossible to make a giant exhibition, because it is impossible to name every relevant name, they will always be unfair. For example, I don't know, I haven't seen the catalog, if the catalog opens up more, because the catalog can be a way to tell the story, to redo it, to talk about other people who have been forgotten, but there you go, I think there's a lot of university work to be done, of history, of education, of access, there's still a lot of work. I think I've strayed a lot from your question now, please remind me because I don't think I'm answering what you've asked me.

MM: No problem. My question was if you believe this strategy has led to a more equal art world and if there is any negative impact?

FO: Of course there is a negative impact, because at the same time, when you do an all-women exhibition, you are placing them as a separate group, as if they are not integrated within the mainstream and if you continue to do programming where women are not, in fact the impact is not there. And if consciences don't change of how necessary it really is to talk about this, it's of little use that you have done these big exhibitions, which are very mediatic and bring people and I hope they bring a lot of people, that people

discover this work, because there are incredible works and little known artists and how good that they are seen. I did my master thesis on three women from the 70's/80's, Helena Almeida, Ana Vieira and Lourdes Castro and we talked about this issue of feminism and, for them, for example, for many women of the 70's, Portuguese, not so much outside women, but the idea of you being put in this feminine place is putting you in a ghetto where they don't want to be, because if they never had visibility by being in this place, they are not part of the mainstream either. It seems like they are women artists and not artists and for many of these artists, they are artists, who happen to be women but first of all, they are artists, incredible artists. But because they are women they don't have the same opportunities, the same access as men or they have to fight much harder for it. It's ambiguous because at the same time you're creating a ghetto, for example LGBTQI+ artists, first of all they're artists, or black artists, first of all they're artists and then they have the particularity of colour or sexuality, but the fact is that these artists have less access, or are less integrated into the space. It's quite ambiguous and difficult to solve, you don't just solve it that way, but you solve it by being aware that there has to be an integration in the programming that you must do.

MM: In your opinion are exhibitions based on the gender of the artist sufficient as a curatorial corrective to the exclusion of women artists as valuable contributors to the large history of art?

FO: That is what we were talking about now, no, they're not enough, in fact, I think it's just a small moment of calling attention. They can serve as a small firework, I think it's a good metaphor, and this Gulbenkian exhibition is a big firework that makes you look, that makes you think "oh what a show," but after five minutes it disappeared and it's gone. So it is important that the fireworks make you wonder, that it calls attention and that's all very important, but the work has to be much deeper and much more serious than that. The Gulbenkian, for example, has been doing work in that sense, Rita Fabiana has been doing a work of small exhibitions of women throughout the time that Penelope Curtis started. Also they continue to do exhibitions of women artists, so the Gulbenkian has been doing this

work, although now it has fewer exhibitions and the CAM (Modern Art Center) is closed, but there was this concern, this work, this questioning, therefore it is an interesting place to do this, because, in fact, it has had this concern. Like me, in Almada, I have the great concern of having a program where women are always present, because it is a fundamental theme. As I was telling you earlier, the issue of invisibility for me is essential, it is not only white women, it is beyond that. I think group exhibitions are fireworks that allow you to produce wake up calls, but that's all they are, it disappears after, so then it takes a lot of work on education, on programming, on policies, that allow that to be solidified, so that those fireworks don't fall and disappear, so that everything is solidified and rooted in the system, which right now it's not.

MM: Thank you very much. Can you find other curatorial strategies applied or possible to apply that aim to achieve equality, strategies that perhaps can be understood as more effective than all-female artist exhibitions?

FO: I think it all starts in programming, the place where you are as a programmer is a political place, so it's a place where you have to think about these issues. That is, it's not the exhibition of women, it's the place where you sit and think about the programming for next year or years, and realize that that's when it has to click. Because, unfortunately, we live very much in a show culture, but what we want is to go beyond the show. Of course the show is important for a certain audience and to give visibility, but for me it has to be deeper than that, and so the moment of programming is fundamental. However, we women have a duty to support, for example, young curators, young artists, to give an opportunity to those people who are starting out and who have a voice, and to give an opportunity for that voice to be heard, at the level of curating, writing, a lot of aspects, all of which need collective support, i.e. partnerships between institutions for women's rights or others and internship institutions, a number of other things that allow you to open your programming to other voices, other looks and that is not just centered on what one person or that a group of people think, but that opens to difference, that opens to another thought that is not only yours, as a white woman, European woman, middle class, thinking beyond my own

thinking, and Helena de Freitas, who I like a lot, always says that an exhibition is always a subjective moment, a subjective choice, programming is always deeply subjective, but one has to think alone about what I am going to propose, and this has to be on the table, and curatorial strategies of partnerships, and supporting those who are doing the work in other ways are very important strategies.

MM: Thank you very much.

FO: But Maria, at the same time I don't know, I don't have the key.

MM: Yes of course, I don't think anybody does.

FO: This ends up being just an opinion, I might be wrong, it's a strategy, one amongst others. But I end up continuing to search, because this is a process of searching, trying to find, but there is no certainty, I have no certainty. In fact, there is one certainty that I do have, that one has to think about it, that I am sure of, but the strategy, or what is right or wrong, we keep finding out.

MM: Yes yes, that's it. I'm not planning to find any concrete answers to my question, but I'm trying to think about it and the various discussions that exist and I think that's what we have to do now. The next question is: Is there, in your opinion, a narrative recurrently applied to this kind of exhibition?

FO: It turns out that there aren't that many exhibitions about women like this one that give you a chance to think about that, about whether the narrative repeats itself. The only thing I can tell you about this particular exhibition is that I found it not very political, and I think it repeats the fear of the word feminism and there is a huge prejudice about it and so you repeat this dance to try not to say the word feminism and you walk around it dancing to try to avoid the word. But there's not so much history of this kind of gender exhibition, at least

in Portugal, outside there's more, but there's not so much of that tradition here, but I do think there is a fear of this word.

MM: Thank you very much. There are only two questions left, the next one being: How do you understand the role of a museum in advocating gender equality?

FO: A museum, an art center or a gallery are fundamental in this process, they are central pieces, because they provide institutional support. I remember, because I worked several times and with some frequency with Fernanda Fragateiro and, at a certain point, Fernanda for many years didn't have an institutional exhibition in Portugal, she had one at Culturgest, a small individual exhibition, but then for many years she didn't have individual exhibitions. She had and has a gallery in Madrid and her gallery owner tells her "If your country doesn't support you, if the institutions don't support you as an artist, it's very difficult for other institutions to recognize you". And this shows that it is fundamental for an artist, artists in general, this institutional recognition, which serves to give visibility, in whatever way, be it with a screening, a performance, but the fact that you don't receive that place of visibility, this makes you invisible in your environment and, therefore, the role of a museum, of an art center, of a small institution, of a gallery is fundamental for the acceptance and sedimentation of careers and for the construction of a career and in Portugal, which is a minimal place, which has few institutions, access is fundamental. And it's obvious, thinking from the institution's side, that there are many artists, that we have little programming space and management is difficult, but the role of museums and institutions is access, being fundamental stones in the process of radical change of thought. The ICOM theme for this year or next year, I think it will be next year, is the radical "reimagining" of museums, how do you radically "reimagine" museums and it goes through this, it goes through deep narrative changes, changes in the relationship with the public, changes in how the teams relate to each other, with the space, this radical "reimagining" I think is very necessary and museums need this at several levels, but mainly in the issues of accessibility and visibility to several groups that are still invisible. And this doesn't just mean programming, this means teams, access, a series of other things that

remain invisible, that is, this issue of representativeness is not just in the exhibitions, it doesn't just go through how many exhibitions of women you've done, it's not just that, it's a whole much deeper discourse within the structure of what a cultural institution is. I think, for example, that theater, the performing arts have done a much more interesting, much more radical work than the visual arts, at least in Portugal.

MM: Thank you. How do you understand the role of the curator in general and in particular in addressing this issue?

FO: As a curator you are a gatekeeper. Of course I think that there is an important creative dimension to the curator, a discourse and thought that you will develop in a program. Being that the program is a development of a thought that you are putting into the world and defending and, therefore, in these issues of inequality, of climate justice, of sustainability, of many fundamental themes, the curator has a very important role in the discussion of these themes. As we were talking about earlier and you yourself, Maria, were saying in relation to your work, for me, more than presenting theories about this or that, I am interested in raising questions, questions that are thought out and discussed publicly from an exhibition. As a matter of fact, for me an exhibition always serves to raise questions and thoughts and to make certain themes be reflected upon in a public way. Therefore, a curator must have this gatekeeper function and must be a great defender of artists in museums and institutions. That is, for me, the curator's work with an artist is the job, I myself work to defend the artists' work, otherwise my work wouldn't make sense by itself, it's not an empty thought, but a thought that is done with and from the creation and from what the artists do. And so, a curator is always between worlds, the institutional world and the artist's world bridging this gap between the two and making them both stronger and able to flourish in a deeper and more intense and more beautiful way. So the curator is a very important stone in the construction of these discourses, because he/she is the one who decides what is put on, the curator is a fundamental element in the decision of what is visible or not.

MM: Those were my questions, thank you so much for your help and it was a pleasure talking with you.

Interview with curator Helena de Freitas (Lisbon, 1958):

Transcribed and Translated.

Held on the platform Zoom on August 12th 2021, lasting 41'47''.

Helena de Freitas is a Portuguese curator, art critic and historian. She was one of the curators of the main case study of the report: the show *All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020*, alongside curator Bruno Marchand.

Maria Matias (MM): Having briefly introduced the theme of the report, I would now like to know your opinion on the situation and evolution of the representation of women artists in the art world. In the European and North American contexts, do you believe that equality has been reached for women artists? If not, in what ways is this inequality still prevalent?

Helena de Freitas (HF): Good morning Maria, of course. Do you mean in regards to Portugal or to the world in general?

MM: I am looking into the European and North American contexts.

HF: So, western culture? Because the Eastern world is all very different, and it's a whole other story. I think nothing is guaranteed in that respect. We are moving in the direction of repairing that invisibility that was, basically, the presence of women artists in the history of art, from the point of view of their artistic expression and from the point of view of their critical reception. So, we know that history has always had this asymmetry. Nowadays, since the 70's, in a more systematic way the question has been: there is a growing awareness, there are movements to counteract this feminine condition that is not only an artistic issue, but also a social issue, a family and cultural one, and it is, in fact, being corrected. We can't look at this issue as a trend issue, although sometimes it seems to be, but it is a fact that, especially from the experience I had in this work and from everything I've been reading, these kinds of experiences, exhibitions, and events related to women in

the art world, are calls for attention and awareness that help all the protagonists and the public to rethink the issue. It's even in the primary questions like: are we going to do programming, how many artists do we have in programming, women and men with gender representation, at a conference. This, for example, in Paris where I was, was almost automatic, we didn't hold a conference without knowing that there was this balance between men, women, in short, all the genders, because now there are more than that but it's another conversation. So, regarding this piece of history, I think we are making progress. In fact there are movements and we see exhibitions of women artists everywhere, not only in Portugal, and these events are important to allow us to rethink, to make ourselves aware and to give others the possibility to think about the subject. Even in the constitution of juries, in the presence of artists in national representations, no meeting starts without having the question of how the gender balance is. So I think it makes sense to keep thinking about it, although art has no gender, as far as I'm concerned, it's not because you're a woman or a man that you're better or worse, that's not an issue for me. The issue of representativeness and presence is that you have to signal and be aware.

MM: Exactly. I also wanted to ask you what you think are the main factors that make achieving this equality still a challenge?

HF: Education, culture, information, school, you have to start small. No matter how much we, as artistic agents, do our work and have this awareness, the family life of many women, artists or non-artists, is conditioned by culture, by education, by information, and I, that am a mother, know that I was able to have a professional life because I shared family life with the father of my children, who are now grown up. And this is fundamental, it is basic, it all starts at home. There is work to be done by schools, universities, all the work of surveying, of reviewing the history of art, of recovering figures, of women artists who are recognized and who have been erased by history. It is necessary to go to the archives and see what is going on. We were not able to do this in this exhibition, or we did very little because there was also no time and the conditions were precarious, as you know, but this work remains very much to be done. But parallel to this work, there is a backlog. Political

decisions are needed and also transformations in the school, in the family, that is, it is a work of permanent attention in our lives. If there is already this attention in our generation, in yours, you have to be relentless. There is a line that is drawn, and it is this line that cannot be crossed, which is respect and sharing. I know that's very important. This is in addition to our work as critics, historians, directors, museum curators, academics, all that has to be a continuous action because the ideal is, in fact, not to have to make exhibitions about women, that is the ideal. When we reach that level it's fantastic, things will be fine, we don't need to be focused on this issue of quotas for example... Now, unfortunately it is necessary, I don't like the quotas but they are necessary, they are still necessary.

MM: Exactly.

HF: And if we look at the places that women occupy in the art world and in other areas, many times they take secondary places, there are the male directors and then there are the female deputies, the female advisors, the female curators, but many times the leader is a man, this still happens and sometimes there are setbacks, there are advances but it's as if there is a resilience by the patriarchal world because there are centuries of existence of this world and they are acquired habits so it's necessary to transform these habits and if we don't do this every day, every moment, we won't succeed only with sporadic actions. I don't know if I was clear.

MM: Yes, you were, thank you, and I believe you've touched on my next question which would be: in what ways are exhibitions of only women artists relevant? So, as reminders ...

HF: I happened to get my hands on an important article to read, I can get it to you.

MM: Yes, thank you.

HF: It's in L'Hebdo du Quotidien de l'Art¹¹, it has a series of interviews and the question is about exhibitions that there are of women in this western world. And the question is "Do we still need exhibitions of 100% women artists?" and all the interviewees, in fact, say that it would be good if it wasn't necessary but yes, it is still necessary and it makes perfect sense and we have to realize that, for example, very recently these proposals for exhibitions were projected, for example the exhibition was made at the Pompidou, Camille Morineau, who is currently the president of AWARE, at the time was the curator of the Pompidou, she proposed an international exhibition of women artists and it was not accepted, what was accepted was an idea derived from that proposal, with fear and trepidation, and this was in 2000, we are in 2021, so it is very recent. Then she ended up doing a presentation of artists from the collection and it was a success. The story is outrageously recent and from the 1970s on, as these exhibitions are happening, I think people are becoming aware, are progressing in this awareness that not only do we need to pay attention to the places and the presence of women in the arts but in our lives, in everyday life, we need an affirmation, a conquest. We are still in the conquest phase and this is not a war but it is a tension.

MM: Exactly. So my next question would be: in the last 50 years, since the 1970s, the curatorial strategy of exhibitions of women artists has been applied more or less recurrently in Europe and the United States of America. Do you believe that the results produced by this strategy have led to greater equality for women artists?

HF: I don't know if they led to greater equality but at least they led to many discoveries, even discoveries by artists that are not known, that in parallel stirred up the university world a little in that sense. So, there is here a common action that has to be done between universities and museums and just the fact that these exhibitions happen, the public in general will be more aware of this issue and scientific knowledge will broaden and, therefore, I think that it is worthwhile and that it has changed because of this. I'm not saying that there aren't other strategies to develop, certainly there will be other strategies,

¹¹ <https://www.lequotidiendelart.com/articles/19939-faut-il-encore-des-expositions-100-artistes-femmes.html>

especially on the political level and on the social level, there are many things to do, but in the artistic field, artists are great anticipators of emerging issues. In fact, there were many artists who triggered many movements that gave rise to these exhibitions. They basically shook up a museum ancestry and began to shake up this world that was installed in this numerical superiority of men, numerical and otherwise.

MM: I also would like to know if you could find other strategies, as you've talked about, that could be applied, that aim to achieve this equality that I think we want, in the artistic field and beyond.

HF: In the artistic field, yes, I think that it is above all to pay attention, it is not necessary to have exhibitions all the time but the fact of giving space to the presence of women in all the decision making concerning the world of museums or universities, calling attention towards research and university work, I think that these are fundamental issues. This cultural corridor between universities and museums seems to me to be very important, this friction between these two worlds, if it works well, can bring great advances in this conquest of equality. I think that the world of universities alone cannot do it and the world of museums alone cannot do it either, and so it is this common action that can stir consciences and awareness. Besides the cultural actions that I think are very important. If we do all of this, for example, as we did with the PNA, with other solutions, I think that the issue of diffusing the knowledge that is being acquired is an essential way for us to progress. Therefore, the issue of education is fundamental, the diffusion, that which I spoke about from the beginning, has to start from a very young age, in our schools, in our homes, with our children, with our partners, with our family, with our grandparents; in other words, it has to be a very broad action, we can't just focus on making an exhibition and the issue will be solved, it won't be. So, action in education, and here I always talk about bodies like the PNA, are fundamental to be able to spread this information and this acquisition of knowledge.

MM: Exactly. Do you think there is a curatorial narrative recurrently applied to this type of exhibition?

HF: I don't want to lock anything into narratives, I don't really like that idea of alignments. Are you talking in relation to exhibitions or to narrative in general, an ideological narrative?

MM: I was wondering on the level of the exhibitions, if there was a point where some of them touched or if they didn't.

HF: I think it's hard to pinpoint and even when the artists' works expand beyond issues of the feminine, of gender, I think they're just as effective. It seems like a pamphleteering issue to me and sometimes it's even counterproductive. What's important is that we realize that with equal working conditions, women do such important work regardless of gender, they are artists, without having to have that issue of gender judgment. I think that closing in those narrative squares is not the way to go, as far as I'm concerned.

MM: Thank you. How do you understand the role of the museum in advocating for gender equality?

HF: I think we have already talked about this. I think it is this role of awareness, of permanent attention that makes you consider this balance in a program. Even the curators' proposals, if there is a balance in the presence of gender, I think it is an important point. I say that and I will not stay the rest of my life working on women artists. The next exhibition I will curate is with two men, but I will evaluate my work in that spirit.

MM: How do you understand the role of the curator in general and in particular in addressing this issue?

HF: It's just like that, it's being aware of it and making your proposals ...

MM: With that lense ...

HF: With that lense, yes. Which doesn't preclude doing other kinds of exhibitions, that is, we have to have some sensitivity to the reception of the public. We can't start doing, by system, exhibitions of women now because it fatigues, it tires. We need other kinds of strategies, other themes, but within other themes, we have to pay attention to this equality, because if we study a little bit the statistics of the presence of women in the history of art, or in exhibitions or in collections, it's not just because there are less women working, it's because many times men have been given a place just because.

MM: Yes and I studied at the Fine Arts Faculty and there were a lot more female students, which, it seems to be, doesn't translate to gallery representation or exhibition opportunities.

HF: But often not just because of the decision or the museums, curators, whatever, often it's because of your own family life, everything is a knot that gets very tight and it's very hard to untie. I know many artists who have great difficulty in progressing in their affirmation as authors and artists precisely because they are limited, and there are some artists who choose their family life according to their career, there are some who do that but there are fewer of them, and there is the connection between mothers and their children that is more physical. But from the legal point of view it is also possible to help to do this, if the museum world can do something about this, politics can also be a very important transforming agent, giving more benefits, in short, some path in this sense of progress, of maternity assistance, etc. The presence of men in this area is increasingly assiduous but it is a small percentage.

MM: When I started this work I think I was a little naive because it is an issue with so many factors, so many difficulties and challenges that it is really hard to say why this is still happening.

HF: It's many centuries of installation, it's a weight of history and it's very difficult to move and when you move forward there's a resistance, that is, it's like a rubber band, we pull the rubber band but then there's a force pulling us back. That's why this exercise needs to be done with permanent attention. It is very important that it is so that afterwards there's no backing out.

MM: Exactly. Now I just had a few quick questions focused specifically on the exhibition. So how does the exhibition *All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020* intend to participate in this conversation about gender equality in the art world?

HF: How does it want to participate? I think that the question of gender equality was evidently a starting point for the exhibition, it was a political idea, taken up by the Minister of Culture. The idea did not come from the curators but it was, in fact, an important position taken and a political decision integrated in a fundamental question that was the presence of Portugal in the European Union. So, these issues are very important, and because it has this political issue, it is even more important; it's not just an exhibition that came out of a curator's idea. Of course we accepted the challenge, Bruno and I, first me and then I called Bruno, and it was also fun working with a man in this project, it was very challenging and it went very well. I think that in relation to your question, it is one more step, a passage point in a movement that has a past and will have a future and we obviously want to be part of this wave but consciously moving away from the idea of an exhibition about the feminine or about what is Portuguese, in Portuguese art, or a closing on gender issues, no, our idea within this program, this wave of movement for women's equality, is in the sense that we can have affirmed the strength of these women artists, against many difficulties, have reached this level. This is a little of what we wanted to demonstrate instead of looking for more politicized, more pamphlet issues, we tried to create a good art exhibition, I think we all agree, and it is made by women, this means something and people felt it, each one in their own way, but this critical reception of a very good exhibition I think has a lot of impact with the public, more than if it brought a message, an ideology, an

imposition. The idea was to bypass a little bit and present the strength of the artists, for their work.

MM: Bruno, when I talked to him, put it in a very interesting way which is that the goal would be to go into the exhibition knowing that it was an all women exhibition but to come out thinking: I just saw a good exhibition, period.

HF: Exactly. It's a good exhibition and then we remember that it's an all-female exhibition but it could not be, I mean, when I say that it was not at all our idea to create an exhibition about what is feminine, or about what is Portuguese in Portuguese art. The two of us were completely in tune from the beginning regarding this orientation, not a pamphletary one. Artists don't care if they are women or men, they want to be artists and have their space as artists, that is what they don't get, when they get it is fantastic, but they get it because they fight hard. In fact, I talked to many of them and there is a permanent affirmation space, it's not acquired, it doesn't fall from the sky. What was your experience in school? Did you study Fine Arts?

MM: I studied painting, yes.

HF: Many of your colleagues that I talked to still today feel, as students, that there was a difference in treatment. It seems that formally everything is right but then things are not the same as for the boys. I confess that in my generation, in my course, I didn't feel any of this but when I did it was after the 25th of April and there was a fantastic political force there, I know that I am privileged and I always say so, I have never been prejudiced or undermined by the fact that I am a woman in my professional life, neither in college nor in the professional world but I know that there are many other women that feel this way. What amazes me is that you in a later generation continue to feel that, I didn't feel that.

MM: It's not formal but it exists. I remember talking to Dr. Filipa Lowndes Vicente in one of these interviews and we were talking about the bibliography that teachers give to

students and how I remember looking and it was all men and I remember Dr. Filipa said to me, "At least you realized it, I didn't even realize it." That makes a difference, when all the references we are given are men, we feel a little bit more invisible.

HF: Yes, in the end it replicates the idea of the artist and his model, it is the artist that looks at the woman, it is the historian that looks at the artists, it is the man, always, he is the one that presents and signs the books, that is a condition, that is why it is good to have these works written by women. This is going on, it is advancing, but it is advancing slowly. I, in my experience, have not felt this very much, I have always had room to publish, room to work, my course has produced people of all kinds, from all professional areas, but I think that things have changed and that they move forward and then backwards, the elastic metaphor that resists, and it is a strong elastic. Our actions as critics and historians are very important indeed.

MM: I think you touched on my other questions. Just to finish, I would ask what distinguishes this exhibition from other exhibitions of women artists and I guess I would finish like this.

HF: I think that no two exhibitions are the same from the moment there is a curator, each curator will do a different job, even if I had done this exhibition alone it wouldn't be the same, it would always be different, I think that the question of claiming an artistic protagonism in this exhibition could make a difference in relation to others that I have seen more recently. And also the idea of dialogue between artists, that is, we could not present the work of artists by themselves, in a historical, chronological alignment, but we have opted for a structure in which the works of artists dialogue with each other, this is very important for us, more known, more established artists with others less known, more discreet, mysterious, less present in the Portuguese artistic dynamics. So we tried not to hierarchize, to place the work of the artists without hierarchies, but to potentiate the work with this contamination and make the richness of the exhibition come from that. I don't think an exhibition like this has ever been held before.

MM: I would like to thank you, first of all, for the interview and also say that it was a pleasure working with you and the whole team. Many congratulations on the exhibition, which I have visited about seven times. I became very familiar with the works and artists in a digital format and the exhibition in the excel but it is of course totally different in person and I discover, everytime I visit, a new relation between pieces. Congratulations.

HF: Maria, for me it was also a pleasure to work with you and to discover you, always very discreet. I am very sorry that we couldn't have had a more normal life, the exchange of energies is very important. I had some periods when I went down, it was very difficult for me to do all this but Bruno always knew how to lift me up and I did the same for him. We were a good team and your participation was fundamental, so I would also like to thank you.

MM: Thank you so much again and I wish you and the team all the luck in this next stage of the exhibition.

Interview with art historian Doris Von Drather (Hamburg):

Transcribed.

Held over phone call on August 15th 2021, lasting 45'58".

Maria Matias (MM): Hello, I hope you are doing well. Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this short interview. Perhaps I will start by contextualising the report I am now producing, if you don't mind. I participated in a curricular internship at PNA that was very focused on supporting the production of the exhibition curated by Helena de Freitas and Bruno Marchand titled "All I Want: Portuguese Women Artists from 1900 to 2020". The report I am now producing refers to the curricular internship experience and arises from the analysis of the mentioned exhibition, intending to understand how gendered exhibitions contribute to the way cultural institutions advocate for gender equality in the art world and, in particular, whether exhibitions of women artists are the way to fight for this equality in terms of representation and opportunity. To do so, I am framing the report in the European and North American contexts, with methodology focused on the analysis of various case-studies including the exhibition, literary review and interviews with national and international curators. Now I would have a couple of quick questions to ask you if that's okay, starting with: in the European and North American contexts is it your belief that equality has been achieved for women artists? And if not, in what way is this inequality still prevalent?

Doris von Drathen (DvD): That is a very intriguing question, because it was due to my friendship with Helena (de Freitas) that I got more conscious about this topic. I am from a generation when we discussed women topics, in the 1970s and in the 1980s. I was born in the 1950s, just to provide some background for you, so when I went to school it was our honor not to talk about the question. We wanted to do our studies and we wanted to just be equal, so the "woman question" shouldn't be a discussion. We just didn't want to discuss it. This in Northern Germany, where I was born, in Hamburg. And all my studies were really marked by that position. It was only in my professional life, after I finished a certain amount of experiences in television and radio, that I understood. Also with the help of

other women, who told me: "do you know what you just lived here at the radio and television station? That is a pure case of discrimination against women". What I had experienced was just people criticising my work, which, after ten years and all of a sudden, I discovered that it started to happen after I refused to go to dinner with a certain colleague. So, I was always very suspicious about these "women questions" but then I had the first consciousness about that. And also, during that time, in the 1980s, I had to do some transmissions on the subject of women and the topic of emancipation and I was always immensely bored by that. When it comes to your question, I always thought women are as equal as they are able to be and that there is no topic to discuss, this during a couple of years of unconsciousness. Since I am teaching in academies and universities, in a context with many men colleagues, I changed my mind a bit. Because I really saw that there is a different kind of discussion out there between women when they are alone and when there are men showing up. And also, it is a different position if you are alone as a woman. You have another way of speaking when in the company of men, and they expect you also to have a different way of behaving. So I definitely think that for the current generation of women that it is a topic, and a big one. And I do think that every generation has its own discussion about it and its own work to do. I think it will never stop. I see this with my students and for generations to come. The subjects are always the same. The expectations for women to lose time with everything, whether with the house, the kitchen, the children, are still the same. It is considered normal that women lose time in those areas, with those tasks. And this is not only the situation of women artists, I think it is all women, it is in academia, it is in architecture, it is in all sectors.

MM: Thank you. I believe you touch on the answer to my next question, which was: What are the main factors that make equality still a challenge? So I would jump to the third question which would be: In your opinion, in what ways are exhibitions of women artists relevant?

DvD: That is an interesting question and I thought about it when I was in your exhibition, because I think this is a very typical case for it. I think they are very relevant, really.

Because what is coming up in this, let's say, protected territory, when women are depicting themselves, it is a completely different discussion. It is as if, all of the sudden, there is a consciousness which normally would not be there. Women are talking differently about their suffering and about their way of being excluded from society. I was so struck by the film by Filipa César on homosexuality (*Insert*, 2010), and I think of course that this is a video that could have been made also with two men. But it would not be exactly the same because women are more excluded. And it is always like that, women are always more punished, more excluded. If you say something to a man, he will clap back, sometimes stronger than you. Those are just the rules. But I think what is so wonderful about women exhibitions is exactly this, this kind of confidence, the showing of intimate work and intimate suffering and intimate discussions. It is not about general positions. Here, women don't have to show that they are as strong as men. They can just show what is there. What I think is interesting is this intimate view of the work and also this intimate courage to show your work. For instance, this piece by Armanda Duarte, the two envelopes (*two exhibitions*, 2010). For me that was about women's art and literature. Women's literature before was focused on letters and journals, this was the big tradition. So again it is an intimate world. This is what is so clear in the exhibition. The first painting of Maria Helena Vieira da Silva (*Moi, réfléchissant sur la peinture*, 1936-1937), where she is sitting and opening her lap to receive ideas for paintings. This way of being so much with yourself and into yourself and this receptive philosophy. That was what touched me so much. Because this is a statement that women don't do so much when they are surrounded by men. And for example the work of Ângela Ferreira, I know her work from the Biennale so in a totally different context, her work there was much more architectural. But here, in this context, the work is much more intimate. Of course there are all the other positions that could be found in exhibitions with men, but I think that the context to be just with women opens up a freedom which we don't use, or that we think that we don't have when we are surrounded by men. This is what I think these exhibitions can show.

MM: Thank you. My next question would be regarding the curatorial strategy of female art exhibitions being recurrently applied for the last 50 years in the Western world. Do you

believe the results produced by this strategy have led to more equality for women artists and do you believe that there could be any negative impact surrounding this kind of show?

DvD: I honestly don't know a lot about curatorial strategies, because I am a writer. I think that to create a territory where there are only women, this creates a special freedom. And, in fact, and I talked with Helena about this, the exhibition title "All I Want", comes from "all I want is space" but the word "Space" disappeared. I think it would make so much sense to say space because what is so interesting here is the approach between space and freedom. And to create a space where women can express themselves freely, which they don't do when men are around. That is very special, a very precious freedom. Every approach in that sense is wonderful. What I don't like a lot is this national exclusion, Portuguese women for instance. I also understand that an institution like Gulbenkian would want that. But, on the other hand, especially because it is Gulbenkian, it could be an approach which is not national. I think this is the less interesting aspect of it, this monocultural position. But I think only women, or only men why not, contexts can be very liberating. To have freedom to talk about these topics, which are everybody's topics, that is what it is. We all know what they are talking about.

MM: Yes, thank you.

DvD: I think that another approach would be to maintain the only women aspect but to work on real subjects, like space, or freedom, or love, or death, or hope, or political aspects. We can imagine all kinds of topics. But not to go with this combination of women and national. I think this is very important. One could also compare male and female approaches to different arguments, let's say on political, scientific or futurologistic arguments.

MM: Thank you. Another question I had was if there is a recurrent narrative in the particular kind of show?

DvD: If I could compare, I didn't see that many women shows, but I think a recurrent narrative is really that: that women open up for narratives on intimate suffering. In so many aspects and in so many approaches, but it is always on this very human level. It is not so much on an international or political level, it is very much the heart of a woman which is what we very often have to hide. In our fields, we often put on a jacket, a kind of uniform. When I am going to lecture in a class I put my jacket on because I feel more official and more recognised like that. But on the other hand, I hide as a woman. Of course I do, and I am very conscious about that, but I also know that I need to, so I do it, like everybody else. So, maybe, women's exhibitions can create contexts where we don't need a jacket. We can just be who we are. And that is freedom, to not play the role of someone else, while being recognised by men at the same time, in the same way. It is alarming, I see that in everyday situations, I sometimes have to hide all my power to get through and take my position. Even in love and family contexts, and so much more when you are surrounded by men. I work in an architecture school, and I am very often surrounded by men. When men are speaking, they have a completely different approach to how they position their speech. They make an introduction, they ensure the territory of speech and then they start to speak. My female colleagues do the same, we are all trying to play a reflection. I just copy men. They position their words, and women don't do that normally. So, there is so much that we can learn from men, we don't do that enough and sometimes we do that too much. Did I answer your question?

MM: Yes, yes, thank you. My next question would be, what is the role of the museum in advocating for gender equality?

DvD: Museums are already very much in feminine hands. And I think it should go on like that. We would invite men, so it would be very equal. Put women there. We always want to go on with them, so, as we are more clever than they are, we should take those roles. I wouldn't talk about gender, I would talk about feminine politics, because we would organize the roles in much more intelligent ways, and I am very convinced about that. We have a more direct approach to things, we do not need someone to do it for us, we can do it

ourselves, in roles such as a director of a museum or a president of a country, we would do it. Men feel that they have to prove everyday that they are the strongest and they are the heroes. If they could renounce that, the world would be so much easier for everyone.

MM: Yes, thank you.

DvD: We didn't talk about the different artists, and I was so impressed by the position of Ana Hatherly. When you see the work of Ana Hatherly, do you think this was made by a woman or by a man?

MM: No, i don't.

DvD: I just see a wonderful work, and only after, I would think about who made it. This question of: is it a woman or is it a man, here and there makes sense, but also I don't think this is the most interesting question, don't you think?

MM: Yes, I agree.

DvD: I think there are so many more interesting questions about how we can get along in this world which is broken. Who has the capacity of weaving and healing, instead of cutting? This capacity is needed, and both men and women can do this. I do think the position in the philosophy we need is the position of receptivity, introduced by Ernst Cassirer and Emmanuel Levinas and further on by Hannah Arendt. Which means to think of grammar in the opposite way: The subject is the one who receives the gaze and the voice of the Other. The object is the one who acts and encounters me. The Ego is the receiver and would be written in lowercase; the "I" would be a receptive "me". In opposite of Heidegger and his school. Of course everyone of us is the Other. I am convinced, that a Being rooted in the consciousness of coming to life in the moment when called by the Other, which means a consciousness of responsibility as a starting point of being, would change the word. That is the point. To just understand that our century finally has to get out

of this primacy of the subject. That is the biggest task of our century, and maybe women are stronger in that task. That is what I really think. I hope this will help you.

MM: Thank you so much for your help and for taking the time for this talk. It was a pleasure talking to you and I really appreciate all your insightful answers.

DvD: Thank you so much to you.

Interview with curator Grace Samboh (Jakarta, 1984):

Transcribed.

Held on the platform Zoom on August 21st 2021, lasting 30'56''

Maria Matias (MM): I would have a couple of quick questions, that you have received by email, to ask you if that's okay. I would start by asking, particularly in the European and North American contexts but feel free to relate the question to any context, if it is your belief that equality has been achieved for women artists? And if not, in what way is this inequality still prevalent?

Grace Samboh (GS): Sure, I can answer your questions, but from a very different context. Certainly a lot of the questions can resonate even though the region might not. Maybe a little bit of background first, one of the researches I am working on now is about Kustiyah. She was a painter and one of the very few women in the early days of the art school. In the first decade of the art school there were probably only around 15 to 20 women. In the first bachelor there was only one and she is still alive. Kustiyah was in the third batch, so you see her mingling with different artists' groups and communities within the town, from the 1950s until the genocide in 1965, the obliteration of the communist party and everything in relation to that. She wasn't necessarily a communist but because her husband worked for the government, she is assumed to be affiliated to the left. But basically is a cool girl that hangs out with everyone, I think. It is very interesting to see that the different historically important male artists of the time would most likely have a portrait of her. So she is defined by these other males, but no one knows anything about her. Interestingly, of course, the work exists as she kept painting all her life. She died in 2006, and the latest painting that I could find, so far, is from 2003, which means she never stopped painting. Just that she stopped exhibiting with this male dominated group of artists. Because there were no theme shows at the time, either you exhibited in a group or association to which you were affiliated, or as art school students or alumni. After the genocide, and the change of the government to the dictatorship afterwards, she never exhibited, except in all women shows. It is really interesting to see it that way because here you are thinking about

equality. I don't think that that kind of exhibition is just because in that environment, at least until the 1990s when internationalism infiltrated the nature of exhibition settings, people were making shows based on who they were hanging out with. Up until now you can't imagine women hanging out, they would meet based on appointments, women just don't hang out because they have a bunch of responsibilities. Once you graduate school you want to be able to afford your own place, for example, because you need your independence and you need to feel safe, and you can't do that being an artist because you don't know who you can sell your artworks to. So definitely, after art school, women have to work. And because of this you don't hang out. And because you don't hang out, you don't get invited to artist initiated exhibitions. Because your face is not there, they don't think of you. This is why, I think, at the time, the exhibitions were always either all male, or all female. And in the case of all female, you can see the driving figures behind it, mainly foreign culture institutions, most likely teaching languages which build exhibition spaces. These were the kind of spaces in which these women were showing. Which also made their work accessible to diplomats therefore being bought by these diplomats and then existing in other places. It gives them a different kind of life. But you don't see them written in mainstream art history. All women exhibitions always have this sort of notch down aspect to them, people don't look at them as equal to male exhibitions because they always happen in a conditioned situation. They do not happen as naturally as all the other exhibitions, let's say. In these other exhibitions, some women would show up because they were the ones who hang out. It is not that they are non-existing but it is a very different pathway to all these all women exhibitions. By far, if you look back to even the late 1950s, women artists' shows are always related to these foreign institutions, which was almost always the setting. So, no, it is not just and if people do it now, or after the 1990s when more research on women began, it is segregating exhibitions by gender. It is in a way using the same strategy as this dominant strategy. You simply exclude all the others and work with those that you want to see. I don't attest to that strategy. Trying to beat someone with their own weapons. So you are just repeating the violence. That strategy is not interesting in my opinion, and it is getting further from equality. I don't think equality will ever be reached but you can at least strive for it.

MM: Yes, thank you.

GS: I think my answer can also relate to the second question, right?

MM: Yes, I believe you answer it, as well as my third question, so perhaps I would ask what other curatorial strategies do you believe could be more positive in striving for this equality?

GS: Yes, so in a contemporary way. I think people who have the power or position or chance to exhibit simply have to be more mindful. You can think of it in terms of percentage, and it may sound boring but that is how institutions function anyway. And you do have to strive a bit harder to find more women artists for example, more queer artists, that is just the start. And once you see this, you can't simply fulfil the necessity of percentage while not thinking about the quality of work and practices that are being presented. That, in a way, I would say that it is simply repeating the violence. You have to strive more, as an organiser as a curator, you do have to strive more working with women, and give women artists more time because who do you think takes care of the kids? And a lot of people don't want to go there, "whatever she can give us is ok " because they only need the name. I guess this attitude from curators, institutions, whatever, it is what we all need to slowly change. If more people are aware of this, life would be easier.

MM: Thank you, I now would ask if you find in shows featuring only women a recurrent narrative, curatorial wise?

GS: Yes, especially those who are done by the women artists groups themselves. Mostly the works and the exhibition become sites to express the domestics. Because they are only grouped amongst works that are similar in that sense. It almost always feels disconnected from what is happening socially or politically. Simply because it is always limited to just these women showing. If you would pose different questions towards the domestic, you

would see why the domestic decision is there. But in order to do that, you need to work with other women or even male artists. You need to look at the content of the work rather than the general of the artist. I understand the need to bring more women artists out but there's this slight mindset. Do you just want them out as names and numbers, or do you want to give them space where they can explore what they are doing? Or if it is something looking at the past, would you take a longer look at their work and not just say that they were doing decorative work because they were depicting flowers? I mean, there must be reasons why it is that flower instead of another and why it is depicted in that way and not another. It just needs more work.

MM: Thank you. How do you see the role of the museum in advocating for gender equality in the art world?

GS: Which museum? I mean, where? Because they function differently in different settings. In the context of where I live, a lot of people would say that there are no art institutions here. To a certain extent I understand, we have museums, I just came back from the National Museum, but it is a museum which is not collecting. Fine-Arts and Ceramic museums in Jakarta are not actively collecting, although there are things in their collections from different pasts and different individuals that were collecting. But they don't function the same here, I guess. After 1998 when the dictatorship ended, since then you see more people driven to exhibitions or art and cultural events that are initiated by cultural practitioners. And the museum as an institution, I am talking about state museums here, they sort of changed roles into facilitators, so they would allow ideas to happen there, but they are very careful on how they would move afterwards. So, from 1999 to now, the amount of new acquisitions done, for example by the Gallery National Indonesia, only 120 works in 20 years. But they have a collection of 6.000 works, there is no balance in that sense. They are too scared to make decisions now, because they say that the people are in power but in practice it is the same people making the same decisions for the 120 works that they have. It suctions really differently. It is really people that allow these small

changes to happen in the institutions. I mean, let's not talk about the private ones, because it depends on the pace of the owner of the institution.

MM: Thank you, yes. Just to end the interview, I would ask: what is the role of the curator in this strive for gender equality in the art world?

GS: They just have to be mindful. Just do fewer exhibitions so you actually have the head space and time to really care about what you are showing. What is there to curate if groundwork research is not done?

MM: Thank you very much for your time and for your perspective which was very valuable.