





# PerspectiveS

# PerspectiveP

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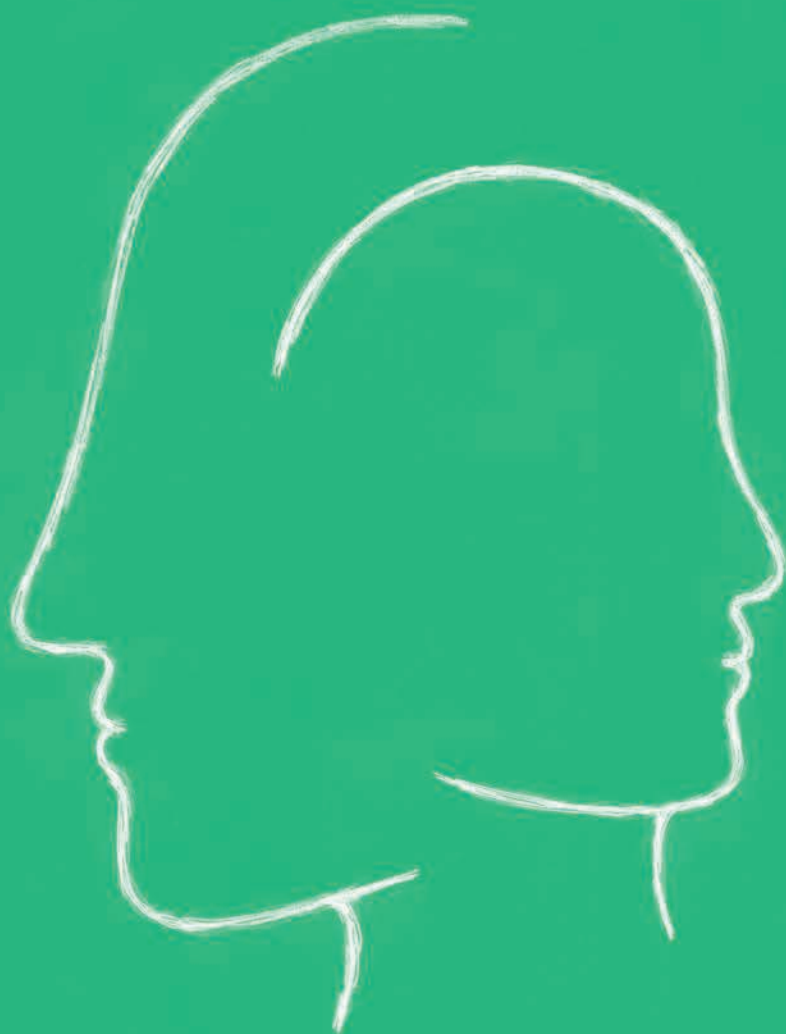
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# SHIFTS IN MINDSET: AN EXPLORATION OF ART IN THE PALEOLITHIC AND NEOLITHIC PERIODS

The dramatic shift in prehistoric lifestyles, from hunting and gathering in the Paleolithic Period (c. 2,000,000-10,000 BCE) to sedentism in the Neolithic Period in the Near East (c. 15,000-5,200 BCE), considerably affected different aspects of life. Unlike people in the Paleolithic Period, Neolithic Period communities improved upon previous stone tools to produce more complex tools. This shift in subsistence strategies and lifestyles also influenced the iconography in art. At major cave sites, Lascaux and Çatalhöyük, we can use a discrete number of images to investigate the hypothesis that changes in art between the Paleolithic and Neolithic Periods involved not only the evolution of hand skill but also demonstrates the human desire to show and celebrate a developing sense of power over nature, as well as other new factors in human psychology.

Given the scarcity of surviving visual materials from the periods under examination, we have an incomplete picture. The best way to learn about these paintings is by comparing them to similar ones. The six images in this

paper all have historical significance of their own but they also shed light on one another. By looking at them through a comparative lens we can learn something about each painting that we could not learn studying them in isolation. The following analysis draws on previous scholarship as well as close readings of the images. Relationships and power dynamics in these images are evinced via the figures' positions, relative scales, and coloration. These formal traits largely inform the claims in this paper.

During the Paleolithic Period, human societies did not live in permanent settlements. Their survival depended on their ability to search for and find food. The Upper Paleolithic Period, which started around 40,000 BCE,<sup>1</sup> was defined by the appearance of a species of early humans who would eventually evolve into the modern human or *Homo sapiens sapiens*.<sup>2</sup> The Upper Paleolithic Period, the last sub period within the umbrella term of the Paleolithic Period, came just before the time when humans started to domesticate plants and animals. During this

period of human history, humans also started to paint images on the walls of caves. Despite the momentousness of this development, it is extremely difficult to be certain of the reason for emergence of this new medium and form of human expression.

Because of the nomadic lifestyles of the people in the Upper Paleolithic Period, the archaeological evidence about them is limited. Aspects of the lifestyles of the period's societies are reflected by their artifacts, and archaeologists identify and categorize such artifacts based on their similar characteristics. These artifacts reveal that Upper Paleolithic humans were able to use their intelligence, coupled with their imaginations, to create stone tools that gradually made their daily activities easier and more effective. To ensure their survival, they would have had to discover how to use their environment to their advantage. As archaeologist Henri Breuil explains, "Very early man must have learned from animals the protective advantages of open rock-shelters in fine weather and dark caves in winter. Such retreats can be found in various types of terrain."<sup>3</sup> The nomadic lifestyle, which required humans to live off the land, was precarious due to the extreme uncertainties in nature. The resulting anxieties would have been heightened by the randomness of weather events and the threat posed by wild animals.

The hunter-gatherer period of human evolution involved tools made from stones, bones, or antlers. These were used to hunt down, kill, and cut up animals so that their meat, bones, and skins could be used as resources. Early Paleolithic Period tools would be surpassed by the improved tools of the Neolithic Period. The Paleolithic Period societies had different needs and less sophisticated

tool-making techniques, leading them to produce simpler tools compared to those of Neolithic communities. Hunting served more purposes than just to provide food for the community. It also yielded the raw material for manufacturing other life essentials such as clothing. This explains the motivation to invent new and better techniques that enable humans to hunt more successfully.<sup>4</sup> The tools produced by humans in the Paleolithic Period included not just blades, flakes, and hand axes but also projectiles such as arrowheads, which were improved by novel techniques to retouch and sharpen their edges. Although such tools aided humans in their quest for survival, they did not by themselves ensure complete success in the hunt. Hunting was still a dangerous pursuit. Humans were not at the top of the food chain, and their strength was inferior relative to many animals.<sup>5</sup> The fears and anxieties that human communities faced every day in the Paleolithic Period ultimately became part of their art.

During the Upper Paleolithic Period, humans started to create parietal art on cave walls. An example is the painting in the Lascaux Cave located in southern France. This site, which was accidentally discovered by a group of teenagers in 1940, was the first Paleolithic Period painting to be found. Shortly after the discovery, the world was fascinated with the mystery of the paintings and who created them. The cave was opened to the public. Unfortunately, as thousands of people visited the cave, the resulting rise in humidity and carbon dioxide in the cave caused the growth of fungi, and lichen damaged the quality of the painting. In 1963, the French government decided to close the cave to the public. In 1983, *Lascaux II*, a museum with exact copies of the paintings, opened

and thereby enabled the public once again to be in a state of wonder and awe at these early paintings.

In examining three paintings, *A Man in the Well* [fig. 1], *The Two Bison* [fig. 2], and *Large Black Cow* [fig. 3], one can see the expression of fear due to human's inferior strength and power compared to the animals that surround them. The paintings also demonstrate the human desire to pass down information to future generations to ensure their survival. *A Man in the Well*, which is also referred as the *Man in the Shaft* because of its location within the cave, can be found on the wall above the well or shaft. This sixteen-foot drop requires individuals to undertake a descent with the aid of a rope or ladder.<sup>6</sup> The painting itself is forty-four inches in length.<sup>7</sup> This painting is unique, not only due to the location, but also because it contains the only depiction of a human figure within the Lascaux Cave.

In this painting, the artist or artists depicted a human figure killed by an animal. On the right-hand side, a bison is shown wounded and in pain. There is a line that most likely is meant to represent a spear that crosses through the bison's body. The spear is going through the body and therefore is clearly wounding the bison, as entrails appear to be falling out of the bison's body. It is also evident that the bison is in pain because the artist depicted the bison's hair as standing on end. The bison's head is turned down, which draws the viewer's eye to the main action of the painting. The bison's horn is pointed toward the human, who is shown on his heels, indicating that he is falling backward. This human figure is male, as evident by his erect penis. His body is shown with extended arms, hands, and fingers, which, like the

bison's hair, shows that he is in pain. It also appears that the man is screaming. Because of the angles of the body, he seems to be falling backward, although whether he is dead or injured is unclear. This painting of a human figure is also distinct because instead of having a human head, the artist gave him a bird head. The zoomorphic nature of the man has led many researchers to believe that this painting served as part of a religious or shamanic practice.<sup>8</sup>

The bird imagery does not stop with the man's head. The man is falling on another bird, which has longer legs. Many scholars such as David Bertrand and Jean Jacques Le-frere have proposed that the bird represents a totem, an image of an animal that has spiritual significance to a specific society.<sup>9</sup> Since this painting is the only one that shows this possible totem and no other evidence exists of this society having totems, others dispute this theory. Another hypothesis holds that this second bird is the actual spear thrower who has successfully injured the bison. However, due to a lack of consistency between the two figures, others doubt this theory. It seems that, given the way the artist or artists depicted the male body, he would have replicated it for the second figure if he wished to make this point.<sup>10</sup> While looking at this painting, one could question whether the bison is truly the victor, especially if he is injured and could die. But the bison appears to be in the superior position because the action of the scene shows it is still able to kill or at least injure the human figure despite its own injuries. This effectively shows the viewer that animals have much greater strength, power, and toughness when compared to humans.

The second painting, entitled *The Two Bison*,

does not show violence between animals and humans but, instead, aggression between animals. This painting is located on the left wall of the nave and is eight feet in length.<sup>11</sup> The artist or artists chose to depict two large bison in an aggressive fight with each other. It appears that they have just finished charging, with the result that their hindquarters are locked together. The force of the collision is apparent by looking at these bison's feet: their front two legs and feet are outstretched. The violence of this collision can be seen by looking at the front legs of the bison. It appears that they are being thrust forward – in a sense, the bison are bouncing off each other. The force of these bison is also reflected in their faces: both maws appear open, suggesting that they were sounding out in an aggressive way or are in pain. Like the bison depicted in *A Man in the Well*, these bison's hair is standing on end. Also, it appears that these two bison are kicking at each other with their hind legs. Both bison are shown in a black-brown color. However, the bison on the left has a large red section on its back, suggesting that the other bison succeeded in injuring it. The painting, with the powerful collision between the beasts, suggests they are powerful creatures.

The third painting under examination from Lascaux is *Large Black Cow*. This painting is located on the left wall of the nave and is seven feet and two inches in length.<sup>12</sup> This painting is different from the previous two because it does not appear to have a narrative. The artist or artists depicted, as the title implies, a large black cow. But what is unusual about this painting is not the animal itself but what is under its feet. This cow seems to be in motion, but like all the other paintings in Lascaux, this scene lacks a foreground and background. As a result, the

animal looks as if it is floating instead of walking or running. Yet, in this painting, the artist or artists seems to have attempted to add in elements that help to ground the action of the cow. Under the back two legs and feet of the cow, there are two obscure, colorful squares that cause it to stand out from the composition. This is important to note because the artists of the Lascaux Cave painted in an agglutinated way, which means the artists added onto scenes and in some cases even painted directly over older paintings. Through his research, Georges Bataille proposed the idea that these grid-like, colorful squares depict the society's coat of arms under the feet of the large black cow, though there is no physical or written evidence to support this claim.<sup>13</sup> In any event, the creature itself is massive.

In the Neolithic site of Çatalhöyük, Turkey, the wall paintings show quite a different picture, likely due to the fact that this site's people were confronted with different challenges. The Neolithic Period is defined by the start of the human ability to domesticate plants and animals. As a lifestyle, this new subsistence strategy not only gave people more control of food and raw materials, but it also required them to settle down on the land. For a society to employ the survival mechanism of farming, it must create a permanent residence. Agriculture and domestication required a workforce based on the members of a family and the growth of a community's population. These dynamics eventually would transform enduring residences into towns and cities.

Çatalhöyük is a Neolithic Period site that is located in the modern city of Konya, on a plain within the Southern Anatolian Plateau of Turkey. This urban center would have

been inhabited and active during the time period of 7,400 to 6,000 BCE. The site is significant not because of its date since Çatalhöyük is not the oldest Neolithic site. Rather, it is one of the largest sites. At any given time, this urban site could have had up to 9,000 people living and working within it. Like Lascaux, Çatalhöyük was originally discovered accidentally, by a group of British archaeologists in 1958. The group included David French, Alan Hall, and James Mellaart. From 1961 to 1965, Mellaart undertook thirty-nine days of excavations, during which forty houses were discovered. Through the years, many researchers and archaeologists have used his original work to find more houses and artifacts as well as to develop other hypotheses about the sites. The sites are so large and artifacts so rich that the excavations are still ongoing.

Çatalhöyük is a good example of how the housing and tools of the people who lived there were affected by the needs inherent in a culture based on agriculture and domestication of animals. The construction in this site can be categorized as agglutinated, which means that the structural parts of the buildings were often rebuilt and were semi-permanent. This pattern of building not only reflects the need to address the changing problems that arise out of daily life but indicates that the society desired to stay in one place. This desire is a direct consequence of the farming lifestyles. People within a farming society must be able to work in the same place day after day, which means the societies lose the ability to move around. Also, since farming provided the society with food and resources, people no longer had to be nomadic, following herds of animals to hunt their food.

The housing within this site also reflects the sense of community of this society. All the housing is extremely close together so that walls are shared between residences. The inhabitants of these houses would have had to enter through the roofs of the structures. Among the objects that they used in their houses were cupboards set in the walls, along with basins and bins. Some buildings were large enough to have secondary rooms attached to the main room. The functions of these secondary side rooms seem to be to provide extra storage, as evident by the rooms containing more bins.<sup>14</sup> In contrast to those of Paleolithic societies, the families of this period became larger, and these houses in the Çatalhöyük could have provided for about four and five people each.<sup>15</sup> The houses, however, are all relatively similar in size and have the same features, which suggested that this community was not socially stratified. Everyone would have had similar amounts of wealth and influence within the community.<sup>16</sup>

Even though the houses are, in general, very similar, there are slight differences that might suggest that some buildings had greater importance to the society as a whole. The differences include the presence of molded or molding features, which is defined as material added to hide transition places within the architecture; wall paintings; and possible ritual sites such as burial grounds.<sup>17</sup> In some buildings, human remains have been discovered under the flooring. The fact that only some buildings have remains led archaeologist Bleda Düring to the following conclusion: "Some buildings were appropriate burial sites for groups of people larger than the inhabitants of that specific house. These houses were certainly domestic units, yet they were also of a ritual significance beyond



the household level.”<sup>18</sup> Even though this might be evidence of social stratification, the lack of specific evidence indicating authority figures suggests that any stratification would have been limited.

As the Neolithic Period saw the evolution from hunting and gathering to sedentarism, this entailed a revolution in subsistence strategies. It also affected the production of tools. The people living in Çatalhöyük were able to improve previous stone tools to serve their new needs. One of the defining characteristics of the Neolithic Period is the appearance of polished and ground-stone tools (e.g., mortars and axes).<sup>19</sup> These tools were evidence of the new process of agriculture because these tools were “ground-stone implements such as grinding/pounding tools and mortars...used for the processing of vegetal material.”<sup>20</sup> These changes in tool production would have given the people living in Çatalhöyük tangible means to enhance their use and control their environment to enable their survival. At the same time, the people of this period still had some contact with wild animals through hunting.

These changes were reflected in the society’s art. Most human societies have used art and crafts to create visual imagery to promote their agendas. Art is often used as a teaching tool to pass on information and lessons from the past to future generations. This use of art would have had a heightened importance in the prehistoric periods because written language had not yet been invented; therefore, the art of one generation would have been the only way for it to leave its mark for the next. Visual imagery facilitated the opportunity to transmit its message. Through examination of the three wall paintings from Çatalhöyük, *Deer Hunting (Men Taunting a*

*Deer)* [fig. 4], *The Hunting Scene* [fig. 5], and *Hasan Dağ* [fig. 6], I will hypothesize the lessons artists were trying to pass on to younger generations.

*Deer Hunting or Men Taunting a Deer* shows a group of humans surrounding and dominating a deer. The given title, *Deer Hunting*, is somewhat misleading because the humans do not have any weapons in their hands. Their apparent actions also do not indicate that any kind of attack on the deer has occurred or will occur. Within this composition, the artist or artists depicted a deer as larger than life and painted it using a red color. The size of the deer and the color immediately draw the viewer to the deer. There are several human figures painted in black who surround the deer. However, there is one main actor in the scene, shown under the deer’s head. This figure is shown holding and pulling on the deer’s tongue. The viewer can see that this action is distressing to the deer because of the position and articulation of the deer’s legs and feet. The deer feet are outstretched, and the viewer can see the strain of the animal’s two toes on its hooves. More importantly, the angles at which the deer’s legs are depicted suggest that it is trying to pull away from the human. For these reasons, the title *Men Taunting a Deer* is more appropriate and underscores the fact that the humans in the painting are in a superior position.

*The Hunting Scene* depicts humans pursuing a bull. Similar to *Men Taunting a Deer*, the bull is shown in red color and is larger than life. But in this painting, some of the humans are clearly hunting the animal because they are holding weapons, such as spears. The positions of the weapons and the humans also indicate movement toward the bull. The

bull itself, like the deer in the previous painting, has its tongue sticking out, and one human is kneeling under its mouth with one arm reaching out toward the tongue. It is difficult to tell whether the human figure is just about to get hold of the tongue or whether the bull, unlike the deer, has succeeded in shaking free. Like the deer, the bull is upset. This emotion can be seen by looking at the feet and legs of the animal, which are depicted in exactly the same way as those of the deer. These commonalities, as well as similar ways that the artist or artists of Çatalhöyük depicted the ability to dominate an animal, also raise the question of whether pulling an animal's tongue was part of a ritual. In *The Hunting Scene*, one can see that most of the human figures are painted in the same red color as the bull, though other humans are shown in black. There are even a couple of humans who the artist painted with the left sides of their bodies black and the right sides red.

The final painting from Çatalhöyük under analysis, *Hasan Dağ*, depicts a volcano by the same name. This painting is believed to be the first map in human history. As archaeologist Stephanie Meece explains, "The Çatalhöyük painting stands alone: there is no evidence of the development of cartography from this point, as the next oldest maps were created in the literate, urban societies of Mesopotamia about 4,000 years later."<sup>21</sup> In *Hasan Dağ*, the black geometric squares could be artistic representations of impermanent living structures, or it could also be a map of the cave or something nearby in the environment. Based on the depiction of the top of the volcano, many believe that the artist or artists wished to show the volcano erupting over Çatalhöyük. In the bottom register of the painting, there are many black

squares that have been interpreted as the houses of Çatalhöyük.<sup>22</sup> This volcano was important to the people of Çatalhöyük because it would have provided them with large amounts of obsidian. This was a critical element to this society because most of their stone tools would have been made of this material due to its strength and resilience.<sup>23</sup> Even though Meece ultimately argued that the black squares are meant to be representative of a leopard's skin instead of the city of Çatalhöyük, her research still provides important insights into the cartographic theory.

The process of making mural paintings in the sites of Lascaux Cave and Çatalhöyük involved similar materials, challenges, and artistic techniques. The paints were made from grinding certain minerals: manganese oxide made the color black; iron oxide created the reds and yellows; and white was produced from porcelain clay. All these materials can be found in proximity to the Lascaux Cave. Within the cave itself, archaeologists found the remains of lamps made from stone. Depressions where the residue of ash was found suggested that they were used as a light source. Scaffolding was also present. Both appeared to allow the artists to produce their works effectively.<sup>24</sup> At the Çatalhöyük site, the artist or artists seemed to have fewer options for colors, limited to orche, lime, and charcoal. Also, there is far less archaeological evidence about the painting process found in the site of Çatalhöyük.<sup>25</sup>

These six distinct paintings from the two sites of Lascaux Cave and Çatalhöyük can help give insights into the creative process in these two societies. Despite differences, mostly notably in the locations and chronology of the sites, there are important similarities. These similarities involve iconography



and the lack of artistic elements such as grounding lines, perspective, and relative scales. These two societies, independently of each other, decided to devote time, energy, and material to create artwork, indicating how fundamental the urge to make artistic creations has been to human consciousness. Certainly, a part of this urge can be attributed to the desire of the members of these societies to teach and pass on information to future generations. This seems to be the case especially because of the larger-than-life scale of the images at these two sites and because the works are designed to elicit an emotional reaction. This may be particularly true for Lascaux Cave because the lack of light in the cave would make a viewer struggle to see the whole scene at once. This lack of visibility would have caused the animals to be seen as particularly mysterious creatures and would have heightened the sense of their unpredictable natures. At Çatalhöyük, the effect of this lack of light would have been less significant because the work is smaller in length and thus more easily perceived as a whole. Moreover, the implication of the huge size of the animals relative to that of the humans is undercut by the fact that humans are shown to be in control of the animals.

Unlike the images in Lascaux Cave, the Çatalhöyük paintings frequently depict human figures. When the artist or artists chose to show humans, they are often shown not as individuals but in a group. The Çatalhöyük painter did not give the humans faces or, in other words, individuality. The only characterization of the individual is seen through the actions that he is performing and any objects he is either holding or wearing. Perhaps the people of Çatalhöyük believed that all the actions performed in the painting were

possible for all humans, perhaps reflecting the idea of equal ability or attitudes of an egalitarian society. In the Lascaux Cave, the one and only depiction of a human in *A Man in the Well* seems to suggest that the artist or artists were less interested in human achievement and superiority. Similarly, the fact that the Lascaux artist or artists could paint with different colors did not deter them from showing both the human and the bison with the same black color. It is tempting to infer that perhaps the people of this society regarded both as existing on the same plane. Their society was able to hunt and defeat animals, but they also understood that the animals could do the same to humans. In contrast, in Çatalhöyük, *Men Taunting a Deer* shows the deer colored red while human figures are primarily in black. This differentiates the humans and the animals. Combined with the nature of their interactions in the painting, this might seek to emphasize the control that humans could have over animals.

The distinct difference in the attitudes of the peoples of Lascaux and Çatalhöyük can be supported by the fact that the diets of each differed. The evidence in their paintings suggests that the people of Lascaux were not able to hunt the animals that were depicted, or at least not able to hunt them successfully, in order to consume their meat as a part of their diet. However, as archaeologist Erik Hansen highlights, “the artists of *Lascaux* most commonly hunted and ate reindeer, but of the over 900 animal images depicted at Lascaux only one is that of a reindeer.”<sup>26</sup> These differences between the animals depicted and those that were eaten shows how this society venerated and valued these animals. The artist or artists would have seen the animals in nature, but the society’s

inability to hunt them underscores their mystery and the people's inability to establish their superiority over them.

In the paintings found in Çatalhöyük, the percentage of images that were animals is far lower than that found in Lascaux Cave. Instead of showing mainly animals, the artist or artists in Çatalhöyük chose to depict some animals, but also humans and even abstracted geometric patterns. The people of the society in Çatalhöyük were able to use their new tools and knowledge of the animals to domesticate some of them.<sup>27</sup> Through domestication, these societies would have direct access to the food and raw materials provided by the animals. Although some of the mystery of these animals may have been lost, their importance to society might have increased. Evidence provided through this artwork suggests that animals played a part in rituals and possibly religious behavior. As seen in the wall painting *Men Taunting a Deer*, it is clear the artist or artists wanted to show the human ability to dominate animals whether domesticated or not. The specific meaning of this ritualized action is unclear, however.

Though the people of Çatalhöyük had relatively more control over certain animals and aspects of their environment, this society, like any human society, had its fears and anxieties. The Çatalhöyük community used their art to show the fear of natural disaster in the *Hasan Dağ*. Moreover, as archaeologist Ian Hodder explains, there are also examples of images of "water birds and vultures taking human flesh and perhaps heads from corpses."<sup>28</sup> Throughout human history, as one anxiety is conquered, another one will appear to take its place due to the imperfect and unexpected nature of the world in any

period.

I recognize that there are inherent limitations to my findings due to the difference in the location, chronology, and the human mind over time. The locations of southern France and Turkey affect the climate and environment that the people of these societies would have experienced. The chronological differences changed the production of everything humans needed as well as the knowledge of the world around them. Nonetheless, examining and exploring the artwork found at the sites of Lascaux Cave and Çatalhöyük can lead to a deeper understanding of the shifting mindset that occurred between the Paleolithic and Neolithic Periods. While looking at the Lascaux Cave paintings, the lack human experience in having superiority over animals reveals a society overwhelmingly interested in and respectful of the wild animals within their environment. While this is partially true in the context of Çatalhöyük, the earlier humans appear to be fearful of direct contact. As a result of subsequent dramatic shifts in social structure and resources by the Neolithic Period, the images of humans appear to show that the mindset of humans has changed: this is a people who have begun to figure out how to use their own capabilities to control and take advantage of their environment.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Gregory Curtis, *The Cave Painters Probing the Mysteries of the World's First Artists* (Anchor Books, 2008).

<sup>2</sup>Curtis, *The Cave Painters Probing the Mysteries of the World's First Artists*.

<sup>3</sup>Henri Breuil and Raymond Lantier, *The Men of the Old Stone Age (Paleolithic & Mesolithic)* (St. Martin Press, 1980), 79.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 90-95.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 68-69.

<sup>6</sup>Curtis, *The Cave Painters Probing the Mysteries of the World's First Artists*.

<sup>7</sup>George Bataille, *The Great Centuries of Painting Prehistoric Painting Lascaux of the Birth of Art*, Translated by Austryn Wainhouse (Lausanne: Skira, 1955), 111.

<sup>8</sup>Jean Clottes, *What is Paleolithic Art? Cave Painting and the Dawn of Human Creativity*, Translated by Oliver Y. Martin and Robert D. Martin (Chicago: The University of Chicago), 201.

<sup>9</sup>Bertrand David and Jean Jacques Lefrère, *The Oldest Enigma of Humanity—The Key to the Mystery of the Paleolithic Cave Paintings*, Trans. Molly Grogan Lynch (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2014).

<sup>10</sup>Curtis, *The Cave Painters Probing the Mysteries of the World's First Artists*, 115.

<sup>11</sup>Bataille, *The Great Centuries of Painting: Prehistoric Painting Lascaux of the Birth of Art*, 105.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Bleda During, *The Articulating of Houses at Neolithic Çatalhöyük, Turkey* (The Durable House: House Society Models in Archaeology, 2007).

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ian Kuijt, ed., *Life in the Neolithic Farming Communities: Social Organization, Identity, and Differentiation* (Berlin: Springer Science & Business Media, 2006).

<sup>17</sup>During, *The Articulating of Houses at Neolithic Çatalhöyük, Turkey*.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Verhoeven, Marc. "The birth of a Concept and the Origins of the Neolithic: A History of Prehistoric Farmers in the Near East." *Paléorient* 37, no.1 (2011): 75-87. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41496922>.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Stephanie Meece, "A bird's eye view- of a leopard's spot of Çatalhöyük 'map' and the development of cartographic representation in prehistory" *Anatolian Studies* 56 (2006), 1-16.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Verhoeven, "The Birth of a Concept and the Origins of the Neolithic: A History of Prehistoric Farmers in the Near East," *Paléorient* 37, no.1 (2011): 75-87.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Meece, "A Bird's Eye View- of a Leopard's Spot of Çatalhöyük 'Map' and the Development of Cartographic Representation in Prehistory," 1-16.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Arlette Leroi- Gourhan, "The Archaeology of Lascaux Cave," *Scientific American* 246, no. 6 (1982): 104-13.

<sup>25</sup>Duygu Seçil Çamurcuoğlu, *The Wall Painting of Çatalhöyük (Turkey): Materials, Technologies, and Artists* (Institute of Archaeology University College London, September 2015).

<sup>26</sup>Mario Ruspoli, "The Cave of Lascaux: The Final Photographic Records" in *Lascaux- An Insight into the Early Art of Man*, written by Erik Hansen, (WPB, 2016).

<sup>27</sup>Hodder, Ian, and Lynn Meskell. "Symbolism, Feasting, and Power at Çatalhöyük: A Response to Sutliff and to Hayden." *Current Anthropology* 53, no 1. (2012): 128-29.

<sup>28</sup>Mario Ruspoli, "The Cave of Lascaux: The Final Photographic Records" in *Lascaux- An Insight into the Early Art of Man*.

## Images



Figure 1: *Man in the Well*



Figure 2: *The Two Bison*



Figure 3: *Large Black Cow*



## Images



Figure 4: *Deer Hunting*



Figure 5: *The Hunting Scene*



Figure 6: *Hasan Dağ*

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# LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL?: FEMALE PORTRAITURE IN THE AGE OF THE EARLY AMERICAN REPUBLIC

Although the Revolutionary War era and the following years were characterized by change and development based in the ideal of “liberty and justice for all,” the women of the new American Republic saw little improvement in their social status. Women were economically dependent on men, with their property and earnings belonging to their male counterparts, unless they were single and over eighteen or widowed.<sup>1</sup> Equal educational opportunities for women were rare. Schools specifically for women were created, but the scope of subjects covered were gendered in the extreme. Institutions of higher education were not open to women, thus those women who were privileged enough to pursue an intellectual life were constrained by the limits of patriarchal society. The role dictated by the gender dynamics of the age stipulated that the proper and primary place in society for women was in the home raising children, overseeing the household, and participating in gender appropriate activities, such as gardening. Despite this, the era was not without exceptional women who broke from these

gender norms to express talents and interests that may have been considered masculine.

Individual women voiced their dissatisfaction with the lack of equality both publicly through published literature and privately through letters. Abigail Adams is today one of the most well-known early American supporters of women’s rights. However, she did so only in her correspondence. American writer Judith Sargent Murray publicly wrote her thoughts on the subject, placing particular emphasis on the lack of equality in education. Internationally, Mary Wollstonecraft published a reasoned plea for equality in the context of the revolutionary movements throughout the West in the 18th century, initiating the modern feminist movement. Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication on the Rights of Women* quickly made its way to America and initiated a public discourse on the topic.

While these new Anglo-American concepts regarding the role of women in society were very much present on an international scale, is it evident in the portraiture of the age in



the most politically forward-thinking nation, America? An examination of several portraits by the two leading American portraitists of the period, John Singleton Copley and Gilbert Stuart, will demonstrate the status of women in the early Republic, or at least its representation. While these portraits represent the male conception of ideal womanhood during this era, they are nonetheless affected by the contemporaneous gender dynamics. Not incidentally, the portraits under discussion are of women with unique political consciousness. An inspection of these images against the backdrop of literature and discussion of the age regarding the role and status of women in society will show how male painter's representations of gender were out of sync with contemporary attitudes regarding women, particularly women's attitudes concerning themselves.

In the early eighteenth century, there was little large-scale public discussion of the concept of the rights of women. Judith Sargent Murray seems to have been the first American to write on this subject, publishing *On the Equality of the Sexes* in 1791. However, the first piece of literature that initiated an international public discussion of the rights of women was Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, published in 1792. First lady Abigail Adams in her letters to her husband, president John Adams, indicated that the subject permeated even private realms of life. Though there is no specific record indicating that Adams read Wollstonecraft's essay, given its prevalence in American magazines and its impact on the discourse surrounding women's rights, it is doubtful that she would have been unaware of the piece. Adams communicated many of the same ideas put forth by the author in her letters to John. Thus, Wollstonecraft's essay

played an important role in creating a dialogue on women's rights in America. A line from a poem from 1795 published both in New York and Philadelphia stated, "Let Woman have a share, / Nor yield to slavish fear. / Her equal rights declare."<sup>2</sup> In another poem, a female character stated, "We have rights, of which you know a draught . . . [were] sketch'd by one Miss Mary Wolstonecraft."<sup>3</sup>

Many scholars date the birth of early feminist consciousness to the writing of Wollstonecraft. Her 1792 essay was written in response to the events of the French Revolution and as a counter reaction to the philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau's ideas regarding natural virtues and gender complementarity, which permeated much of British society at the time.<sup>4</sup> In this work, Wollstonecraft addressed the existence of universal human rights and confronted the exclusion of women from these rights on the basis of sex alone. She wrote that "The rights of humanity have been . . . confined to the male line from Adam downwards..."<sup>5</sup> She argued that both men and women possess the ability to reason and thus women should have access to the same level of education and socio-economic influence. She stated that women should be offered the same access to classical education not only because they had an equal ability to reason, but also because women held an inherently important role in the social fabric of the nation: providing education to children. Wollstonecraft also stated that women should function as partners to their husbands, rather than being simply relegated to the domestic sphere of life as a wife.<sup>4</sup> Her discussion of the rights of women made no explicit demands of specific rights for women, nor did she address the political rights of women. Rather, Wollstonecraft

crafted an image of woman as an entity that, independent of man, is entitled to universal human rights.<sup>6</sup>

Excerpts of the essay reached magazines in Philadelphia and Boston as early as 1792, with three American editions of the work being published in 1795. The work was initially met with praise from critics. However, this was swiftly followed by a range of reactions, some of which were outright hostile. The rising popularity of the literary periodical in Post-Revolutionary America and the fact that many of these magazines marketed themselves to a female audience easily facilitated this debate. Countless pieces published in American women's magazines such as, *The Lady's Magazine*, *The Gentleman and Lady's Town and Country Magazine*, and the *Massachusetts Magazine*, referenced *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*.<sup>7</sup> While there was little concrete change in the status of women as a result of this piece of literature, it aided in shifting the dialogue from a micro to a macro scale. Wollstonecraft introduced the terminology and language to discuss the rights of women in a way accessible to the American public.

While Wollstonecraft's essay ignited public debate, the discussion of women's rights in Post-Revolutionary America was characterized by individual voices rather than any one cohesive movement. Two of the most significant and outspoken supporters of women's rights were Abigail Adams and Judith Sargent Murray.

Abigail Adams was the daughter of a wealthy parson and as a member of the well-established and politically connected Quincy family, Abigail knew well the inequality women faced when it came to education

even among the upper classes. In one of her letters from 1778 she wrote, "Every assistance and advantage which can be procured is afforded to the Sons, Whilst the daughters are wholly neglected in point of Literature."<sup>8</sup> While Abigail had no qualms about privately attempting to use any influence she had over her husband to advance the status of women, she did not publicly protest many of the conventions women were held to at the time.<sup>9</sup> Her letters to John, however, show that she was not unconcerned with the status of women's rights in the new nation and made attempts to convince her husband of the importance of including women in the adage "liberty and justice for all." This is particularly evident in her letter from March of 1776, in which she urges John to "Remember the ladies" while aiding in the construction of the new government. In the same letter, she continued, writing, "be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power in the hands of the Husbands. ... If perticular care and attention is not paid to the Laidies we are determined to foment a Rebellion and will not hold ourselves bounds by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation."<sup>10</sup> John's responses to such letters seem to deflect her suggestions with humor, though with an underlying sense of discomfort. He wrote in reply, "As to your extraordinary Code of Laws, I cannot but laugh. ... Depend upon it, We know better than to repeal our Masculine systems. Altho they are in full Force, you know they are little more than Theory. We dare not exert our Power in its full Latitude."<sup>11</sup> Despite this, little tension in their relationship occurred as a result of Abigail's pleas. Nonetheless, John was well aware of Abigail's beliefs to the extent that in one letter, he refers to her as a "Disciple of Woolstoncroft."<sup>12</sup>

In August of 1776 Abigail raised the issue of the lack of education for women, writing to John, "If you complain of neglect of Education in sons, What shall I say with regard to daughters, who every day experience the want of it. With regard to Education of my own children, I find myself soon out of my depth, and destitute and deficient in every part of Education."<sup>13</sup> She goes on to state that, "If we mean to have Heros, Statesmen and Philosophers, we should have learned women. ... If much depends as is allowed upon the early Education of youth and the first principles which are instilled take the deepest root, great benefit must arise from literary accomplishments in women."<sup>14</sup>

This concern brought on by the lack of access to education was echoed by Judith Sargent Murray. Like Adams, Murray enjoyed the advantages of life as a member of a wealthy merchant class family. While the social status of her family provided many comforts and opportunities to become proficient in those activities then considered appropriate for a woman, Murray was not satisfied with the limitations placed on her. Though she asserted that men and women were intellectually equal, Murray was less generous on the subject of class and was exceptionally proud of her family's elite status. (She, herself, made two marriages that were both socially and financially disadvantageous.) Her belief in the validity of a hierarchical class-based system would have theoretically excluded women of a lower social class from enjoying the benefits of a society that held women as intellectually equal to men. Nonetheless, she expressed her frustration regarding gender limitations in her essay, *On the Equality of the Sexes*, published in 1791, a year before Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women*.<sup>15</sup>

Published in two separate issues of *Massachusetts Magazine*, *On the Equality of the Sexes* did not spark debate as Wollstonecraft's piece did. Examining this issue through four different areas of intellect -- imagination, reason, memory, and judgement -- Murray provides arguments for why women are equal, if not superior, to men. For example, she flipped the typically negative perception of women's strong proclivity for imagination and curiosity on its head by arguing that these perceived weaknesses were a product of inferior education; with proper training, these traits in women would rival those of men. Murray also initially concedes that men are superior to women in reason and judgement. However, she states that this is due to the fact that women can only reason and judge from what they know, and thus the lack of access to an equivalent education hinders in these faculties. While Murray's evaluation of the current state of women's rights, particularly women's lack of equal access to education, was bleak, she held out hope for a future in America when women would have the same academic opportunities as men.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the discussion sparked by Wollstonecraft's essay and the contributions of women such as Abigail Adams and Judith Sargent Murray, little if any concrete change regarding the state of women's rights occurred during this era. Women could only attend schools specifically designed for their sex, and these schools offered basic academic education in arithmetic, reading and writing. Education in areas such as music, dancing, drawing, and social skills, were considered more appropriate for women and dominated the curricula. Thus "educated" women were confined to roles that served the patriarchy, through reinforcing predetermined roles in

social and domestic spheres.<sup>17</sup>

While the discussion regarding equality for women in the new nation was quite prevalent, this does not seem to be evidenced in the portraiture of the age. Artists typically tended to follow convention, adhering to the same iconographic language used in Britain. Men and women were portrayed differently, following this prescribed language, with subtle and not so subtle distinctions between them. For example, it is rare to see a woman holding a book or ink pen, while images of men are littered with such objects, affirming their high level of education. For women, fruit was symbolic in a fashion similar to that of flowers, meant to be perceived as an example of the female subject's discipline and skilled handiwork.<sup>18</sup> The additional symbolism of fruit as objects pertaining to fecundity reinforces the importance placed on reproduction at this time. Men were shown with objects associated with business, politics, and trade, such as ledgers, documents, and transatlantic ships.<sup>19</sup>

The leading artist of the period was John Singleton Copley, born in 1738 into a family of Irish immigrants living in Boston. A self-taught artist, Copley's only exposure to art while growing up was in his stepfather's engraving business. Despite his lack of training, Copley's skill when it came to rendering images of individuals and objects from life, coupled with the lack of competition, aided him in quickly becoming quite successful. His marriage to Susannah Clarke, the daughter of a wealthy Tory merchant, raised his social status and he was inundated with commissions from this same class.<sup>20</sup> Copley's style is characterized by its extraordinary realism and tactility. His penchant for depicting his sitters with an almost unforgiving

accuracy, never editing out warts or imperfections, contributed to their richness and humanity.<sup>21</sup>

Copley's talent for capturing the likeness of an individual while simultaneously projecting a sense of the sitter's personality and individuality holds true for his images of women and men. However, Copley did not completely stray from the tropes historically favored in depictions of women. His portraits often contain iconographical objects that inscribe a wealth of "feminized" meaning onto the sitter, especially pertaining to moral or virtuous qualities. As a result, he frequently captured the tenacity of some of the early champions of women's rights while still portraying them in the context of traditional roles of femininity. This dichotomy can be seen in his depiction of Mercy Otis [fig.1].

Mercy Otis was a dedicated supporter of the Patriot cause and one of the first to document the period. She published numerous satirical pieces lambasting the Loyalist cause, initially under a pseudonym, and also kept regular correspondence with key political players in the Revolutionary War, such as John Hancock, John Adams, and George Washington.<sup>22</sup> She used her writing as a vehicle for the colonies' complaints regarding British rule. This is clear in a poem titled *A Political Reverie*, which was published in the *Boston Gazette* in 1775. In this piece, Otis pits the misconduct of British rule, which she refers to as "Virtue turn'd pale, and freedom left the isle," against the enterprise and integrity of the colonies, writing, "They quitted plenty, luxury, and ease,/ Tempted the dangers of the frozen seas."<sup>23</sup>

Otis was born into a family of avid

supporters of the Patriot cause. Her portrait by Copley was painted in 1763 when she was either thirty-six or thirty-seven and already the mother of three children. Otis was an unusual woman for the age: having been allowed to attend her brother's tutoring sessions, she experienced an atypical level of education. Her marriage to James Warren, also a passionate advocate for the Patriot cause, supported her pursuit of knowledge. Otis became a prolific writer of poetry, parodies, and plays as well as historical tomes. However, this uncommon lifestyle caused much personal conflict for Otis. She wrote to John Adams that she was concerned her active life as an intellectual made her "deficient" when it came to her femininity. Her husband wrote that though she possessed a "Masculine genius" she still had the "Weakness which is the Consequence of the Exquisite delicacy and softness of her Sex."<sup>24</sup> Copley's depiction of her initially reveals none of these misgivings, following the familiar iconographical language that easily dictated feminine roles.

Otis stands with her body in profile, her head turning to face the viewer. She wears a blue satin dress with ruched sleeves and decorated with silver braids. She is also draped in a lace stole in addition to the lace detailing on the sleeves of her dress.<sup>25</sup> This same dress is used in two other paintings by Copley, a portrait of Mrs. Daniel Sargent and a portrait of Mrs. Benjamin Pickman [fig.2]. It is likely that the dress belonged to Otis and that she lent it these two women, who were close friends, as Otis had connections to the Pickman family through her male relatives.<sup>26</sup> These two paintings are wedding portraits and thus the subjects depicted are rather young, both around twenty years old.<sup>27</sup> Notably absent from these images is Otis' shawl,

or any similar type of coverup for that matter. The neckline in the wedding portraits are rather low cut, leaving much of the brides' chests exposed. This places emphasis on their sensuality. As a result of her status as a matron, Otis covers the low neckline by wearing the lace stole.

Otis stands on a hill, as the landscape behind her falls away. Her hand reaches out towards nasturtium vines, drawing attention to the plant. X-rays of this image have revealed that originally comma Copley had painted roses.<sup>28</sup> However, nasturtiums were considered to be a symbol of patriotism, and thus may have been seen as more appropriate for Otis. The depiction of Otis juxtaposed with the natural world speaks to her role as a nurturer. Flowers are also traditionally symbolic of fertility, incidentally relevant here as Otis would give birth to another child only a year after Copley painted this piece.<sup>29</sup>

Otis looks out at the viewer with a set mouth and determined gaze. This type of unwavering gaze is perhaps the strongest element in the painting that attests to her atypical lifestyle. Furthermore, despite a slight smile that plays about her lips, her visage is distinctly defeminized. Nonetheless, there is nothing more to indicate her unusually high level of education or her superior intellect. She is not shown with an ink pen or a book. While Otis's writings were yet to come, Copley does not betray an awareness of this potential, as the typical iconographic objects that would do so were strongly masculine gender markers.

The portrait of Mercy Otis Warren was accompanied by a portrait of her husband, James Warren [fig. 3]. These two images complement each other and play on parallel



imagery through their respective settings.

The couple's postures are oriented towards each other. However, while Mercy's body is in profile, James body is wholly frontal. Behind Warren, a large red curtain dominates the upper left-hand portion of the portrait, while to the right of the figure, the sky and trees are visible. This assists in unifying the two images, as a similar arrangement has been placed behind Mercy. Warren's ruddy complexion and his walking stick indicate his role during this period of his life, running his farm, before becoming actively involved in the political sphere.<sup>30</sup> The architectural and landscape elements seen in the background affirm the wealth and status of Warren, while also recalling his connection to the land and hardworking nature. No similarly specific or individuated iconography can be isolated for Mercy, with the exception of her greater bodily orientation toward her husband.

Copley was also commissioned to paint a portrait of Judith Sargent Murray when she was about twenty and newly married to her first husband, John Stevens [fig. 4].<sup>31</sup> Because a financially and socially advantageous marriage was considered to be the culmination of a women's ambitions, portraits were often commissioned to commemorate the event.<sup>32</sup> Copley's portrait of Murray communicates many of the couple's hopes for their union.

A lavender turban decorated with strings of pearls sits atop Murray's head. Under her dark blue over gown, she is uncorseted and her dress falls into folds that highlight the contours of her body. This type of dress is often employed in such portraits depicting women as they garden, and Murray is portrayed in the role of mock gardener, a scene

often employed by Copley. Her basket, which she gracefully rests on her hip, contains freshly picked roses, alluding to hope for a fruitful and loving marriage. In the eighteenth-century, gardening was considered an activity suitable for a refined gentlewoman.<sup>33</sup> Here, Copley uses the imagery of the garden once again to imply the importance of Murray's role as a nurturer, the flowers to symbolize the wish for a fruitful and fertile marriage, and the loose gown to draw attention to her youthful sexuality. The drapery of the fabric of her gown accentuates the curves of her body, and in concert with the lower neckline and the lack of a corset, adds an element of sensuality to the new bride.

While the majority of the portrait does not differ from the numerous gardening images painted by Copley, Murray's style of dress stands out in this particular genre. Her dress in this portrait closely reflects the *turquerie* style that was popular in the first three quarters of the eighteenth century. This style was originally conceived in Britain as a type of costume based on contemporary conceptions of classical garb from the Ottoman empire. Copley emulated this trope, which had been thoroughly westernized in Britain and still more distilled by its journey across the Atlantic to America. Murray's uncorseted dress, turban, pearls intertwined in her hair, and the low neckline of her dress are all characteristics of this style.<sup>34</sup> This style of dress, which was often coupled with a coy, averted gaze, an element absent from the portrait of Murray, contributed to its distinct sensuality. Outside of this, the image makes no potential references to her non-gendered identity, for example, as an intellectual or future advocate for women's rights.

However, Copley was able to convey the

pensive and serious nature of Murray through her gaze. While Copley's depiction of women did not entirely break from convention, as many of his portrayals of women heavily referenced iconographic tropes to reinforce gender roles, these portraits are not without innovation. In both of the examples under analysis here, he is able to communicate a sense of these women's intelligent alertness and resolute attitudes. Later works by Copley demonstrate the evolution of his portrayal of women, particularly in his portraits of couples. While he had initially followed the European tradition of depicting wives in a manner that indicates that they are submissive to their husbands, he later evolves to portray women as entities independent of their husbands. His portrayals of women began to break with convention, as he reacted with sympathy to the rather prevalent discussion of the rights of women in the new nation.<sup>35</sup>

The previous two images by Copley have placed emphasis on the concept of women as nurturers, referencing their role as the caretakers within the family unit and as progenitors of future generations; they largely ignore individual achievements otherwise considered too masculine. Copley also depicted each sitter with an intense realism, but with a sense of detachment and dignity that also reaffirmed their elite roles within society. The paintings of the other leading portraitist of the day, Gilbert Stuart, is a match for Copley's in realism, while appearing more engaged and individualized.

Born in Rhode Island in 1755, Gilbert Stuart, unlike Copley, went to Europe for his training (1775 - 1793). Though he was successful during his tenure in both London and Dublin, Stuart's penchant for extravagance led

him to flee his debts abroad and once again settle in America, this time in New York.<sup>36</sup> His style is strongly influenced by the British artists, Thomas Gainsborough and Joshua Reynolds. Preferring to work quickly, Stuart would regularly forego preliminary sketches, painting directly onto the canvas, often with quick short brush strokes.<sup>37</sup> Gilbert moved from New York to Philadelphia in 1794 to be closer to the new government in hopes of acquiring the opportunity to paint some of the most important politicians of the time. He followed the federal government's move to Washington D.C. in 1803 and achieved his goal, receiving commissions from many of the most highly regarded individuals on the political and social scene.<sup>38</sup> One of these commissions came from John and Abigail Adams in 1800.

Abigail sits in a three-quarters position, like Copley's figures, gazing directly out at the viewer [fig. 5]. Her mauve silk dress, which features a high collar, is draped with a shawl decorated in lace patterns. On her head she wears a bonnet, also decorated with lace details, and secured with a bow. The abundance of frilly lace decoration was considered appropriate stylistically for a matron. Her dress dates from 1800 and her cap and lace shawl date from about 1815.<sup>39</sup> Stuart used fluid strokes that have a sketchy effect, building up the forms using transparent planes of color and adding strokes over them to delineate highlights and shadows. A thicker application of paint designates Adams' shawl in addition to the highlights on the chair and the bonnet.

In this portrait, there is little iconographic symbolism to draw on, other than the particularly feminizing style of her clothing, whose delicacy contrasts with Adams' mature face

and hands. The background is simple and devoid of decoration that would create an identifiable location. This is typical of Stuart, who preferred to focus on the individual in order to produce a precise portrayal of the sitter.<sup>40</sup> Adams is seated with a poise befitting her role as First Lady, as she sits upright, though without conveying a sense of rigidity. Stuart accurately conveys her strength and personality through her penetrating gaze and pinched mouth. He makes no attempts to idealize her face or figure, as her age is apparent since Stuart does not shy away from depicting the loosening of the skin around her neck.

The companion portrait of John Adams was also started in 1800, but completed in 1815, after a multiplicity of letters urging Stuart to complete the two images [fig. 6]. This later finish date is evidenced by the style Stuart used in this piece, as he painted with a looser technique, particularly evident in Adams' shirt, coat, and cravat, typical of his later years. Heavy impasto strokes along the forehead also help to characterize this piece as a work of Stuart's from 1815.<sup>41</sup>

John Adams, like Abigail Adams, is portrayed in a three-quarters position and gazes directly out at the viewer. Again, Stuart makes no attempts to idealize the physical appearance of Adams, leaving his hair somewhat unruly and not editing out the obvious signs of aging in the eighty-year-old sitter. In Stuart's portrayal of John, the light falls onto his head and face, highlighting his expression and perhaps referencing Adams as the great political thinker of the age. His mouth is set in a firm line and his expression is somewhat stern. This element communicates the appropriate amount of *gravitas* for an acting President. Less attention is given to

John's garb when compared to the decorative lace that covers Abigail, a particularly feminizing touch, and the play of light across her dress. Both the attention to detail in the clothing and the highlighted sections of the painting communicate subtle, yet distinctly present gender divisions that seem to be so embedded in the *zeitgeist* of the time that they could not be forgotten, even in depictions of key political figures. While Stuart handles the issue of gender dynamics in an understated manner in these two pieces, he presents a more obvious portrayal of the gender dynamics in his portrait of Catherine Brass Yates [fig. 7].

A native of New York, Catherine Brass Yates, the daughter of a shoemaker, married wealthy merchant Richard Yates in 1747.<sup>42</sup> While it appears that Yates experienced a fairly typical life in regard to the gender roles at the time, her portrait is one of the finest examples in American art. The National Gallery of Art states the painting's significance: "... Stuart's brilliant paint manipulation generates a verve few other artists on either side of the Atlantic could have matched. Every passage contains some technical tour de force... It is little wonder that *Mrs. Richard Yates* has become one of America's most famous paintings, both as an artistic masterpiece and as a visual symbol of the early republic's rectitude."<sup>43</sup> Critic Royal Cortissoz wrote that, "It combines a... firm and weighty statement of fact with a touch equally sure but so light and flowing that the artist seems to be in absolutely effortless command of his instruments."<sup>44</sup> While these observations on style and content are true, it is also a highly gendered image.

Stuart paints Yates in a manner appropriate to her status as a matron in her mid-fifties.



She wears a white silk dress with a scarf around the bodice. Her only jewelry is a gold wedding band. Mrs. Yates sits with her torso sideways and her head turned towards the viewer, as she glances at the viewer. However, this does not divert her from her task, as she continues to sew, pulling the needle and thread taught. Her posture echoes the rigidity of the thread as she sits up straight and alert. Her uplifted hand and elbow form an inverted triangle, creating a balance with her rigid posture. Her tall bonnet emphasizes her features, such as her raised eyebrows and large eyes, pointed chin and nose. The sharpness of her features is left unidealized by Stuart, while he simultaneously imbues the likeness with a sense of individuality through her posture and gaze.<sup>45</sup>

The portrayal of an older woman sewing had many precedents in European and American art.<sup>46</sup> The activity of sewing is an example of domestic work and typically considered a gendered activity. Women were often taught to sew when they were sent to women's schools or were taught by a matriarchal figure. It was also an activity especially focused on by unmarried women, widows, and matrons. Only the elite could afford to hire servants to assist in tasks such as this, and in other cases, women were left to complete the work themselves.<sup>47</sup> While sewing was a gendered activity, it also served numerous vital purposes. Every fabric item, from clothing to bedsheets, required tedious hand sewing. Yates status as the wife of a wealthy merchant would presumably dismiss her from this activity. Therefore, the inclusion of this detail speaks more to its role as an activity considered appropriate for a gentlewoman. It also creates a dynamic relationship between this piece and the accompanying portrait of her husband [fig. 8]. Though his hand rests

on a stack of loose papers, implying that he is a man of worldly affairs and that he intends to move once the viewer has walked away, he is distinctly in a state of rest. Catherine, though she has stopped for a moment, seems ready to continue with the task at hand at any moment. Both paintings establish their identity as wholly gendered works: one is domestic, one is worldly; one's work can be put aside, one's work cannot, and so on. They are operating completely within the gender norms and expectations of their day.

Notably absent from the depictions of Catherine Brass Yates and Abigail Adams is the sensual qualities found in the image of Murray and the references pertaining to fertility. The lack of overt iconography is both a function of the stylistic preference of Stuart and, perhaps, related to their more advanced age. Naturally comma references to sexuality and fertility would have been perceived during this time as more appropriate for younger women. Younger women seeking a marriage would want to communicate their desirability, both through advertisement of their sexuality, fertility, discipline, and handiwork through iconographic symbols such as fruit, flowers, specific animals, and certain activities, such as gardening. Women who were already married, yet still of child-bearing age wish to proclaim possession of the qualities so highly valued by the patriarchal society. Yet while fertility would naturally still be a feature emphasized, the sensuality seen in wedding portraits would be less prevalent. Characteristics that were necessary to raise children and run a household successfully become even more valued at this stage of a women's age. Thus, these aspects are more prominently indicated in the iconography of women who are middle aged. In images of older women, reference to sexuality and

fertility are generally foregone. Rather, importance is placed more on productive and industrious activities that benefited the household, such as sewing. In the two images above that depict older women, there is an undeniable air of dignified authority that emanates from each figure. Youthful sexuality is deftly traded for respect garnered through years of catering to the needs of a household, children, husband, and the various social pressures of the day. While lack of agency would remain an issue, age incontrovertibly accrued some modicum of respect, despite the patriarchal societies perceived insufficiencies of the female sex.

During the period of the early American Republic there were both private discussions of women's rights and international public discourse on the subject. Nonetheless, no cohesive movement devoted to women's equality emerged in the eighteenth century. This lack of concrete development is reflected in female portraiture from the age, even of women of noted political consciousness. These portraits tended to construct images of an ideal woman, not so much through idealization of physical features, but through the use of iconographic language. Symbols that reinforce qualities men valued in women such as flowers, which reflected fertility and the discipline required for regimented care and cultivation, were ubiquitous. Portraits of women with high levels of education and literary accomplishments were depicted according to the prescribed language and with the appropriate gender markers, even as an unusual alertness and intelligence might be conveyed. While John Singleton Copley and Gilbert Stuart demonstrate great skill in depicting both accurate likenesses and what can only be described as a sense of individual personality, they cannot escape the

pervasive nature of gender conventions.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup>Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood : Woman's Sphere in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).
- <sup>2</sup>Rosemarie Zagarri, "The Rights of Man and Woman in Post-Revolutionary America." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (1998) 203-30.
- <sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 210.
- <sup>4</sup>Lisa Dicaprio and Merry E. Wiesner, *Lives and Voices: Sources in European Women's History* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2001).
- <sup>5</sup>Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (South Bend: Infomotions, 2000).
- <sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 188.
- <sup>7</sup>Rosemarie Zagarri, "The Rights of Man and Woman in Post-Revolutionary America." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (1998): 203-30.
- <sup>8</sup>"Abigail Adams to John Thaxter, 15 February 1778," *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified June 13, 2018.
- <sup>9</sup>Abigail Adams, John Adams, L. H Butterfield, Marc Friedlaender, and Mary-Jo Kline, *The Book of Abigail and John : Selected Letters of the Adams Family, 1762-1784* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 5.
- <sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 121.
- <sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 122.
- <sup>12</sup>Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams, January 22, 1794 [electronic edition], *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*, Massachusetts Historical Society.
- <sup>13</sup>Abigail Adams, John Adams, L. H Butterfield, Marc Friedlaender, and Mary-Jo Kline, *The Book of Abigail and John : Selected Letters of the Adams Family*, 153.
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- <sup>15</sup>Sheila L. Skemp, *First Lady of Letters : Judith Sargent Murray and the Struggle for Female Independence* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), xii - xiv.
- <sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 4-7.
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- <sup>18</sup>Carrie Rebora Barratt, and Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.), *John Singleton Copley in America*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995), 61.
- <sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 62.
- <sup>20</sup>Louise Burroughs, "John Singleton Copley," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 31, no. 12 (1936): 252-58.
- <sup>21</sup>Robert Hughes, *American Visions : The Epic History of Art in America*. 1st ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 84.
- <sup>22</sup>Rosemarie Zagarri, *A Woman's Dilemma: Mercy Otis Warren and the American Revolution* (Somerset: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2014), accessed October 29, 2018, ProQuest Ebook Central, xiv.
- <sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 68.
- <sup>24</sup>Barratt and Metropolitan Museum of Art, *John Singleton Copley in America*, 193.
- <sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>26</sup>Betty-Bright P. Low, Josephine Du Pont, and Margaret Manigault, "Of Muslins and Merveilleuses: Excerpts from the Letters of Josephine Du Pont and Margaret Manigault" (*Winterthur Portfolio*, 1974), 29-75, 33-34.
- <sup>27</sup>Barratt and Metropolitan Museum of Art, *John Singleton Copley in America*, 194.
- <sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 193.
- <sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 194.
- <sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 193.
- <sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 229.
- <sup>32</sup>Jennifer Van Horn and Omohundro Institute of Early American History & Culture, *The Power of Objects in Eighteenth-Century British America. Book Collections on Project Muse. Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture* (Williamsburg, Virginia: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).
- <sup>33</sup>Barratt and Metropolitan Museum of Art, *John Singleton Copley in America*, 232.
- <sup>34</sup>Isabel Breskin, "'On the Periphery of a Greater World': John Singleton Copley's 'Turquerie' Portraits,'" *Winterthur Portfolio* 36, no. 2/3 (2001): 99.
- <sup>35</sup>Barratt and Metropolitan Museum of Art, *John Singleton Copley in America*, 87-89.
- <sup>36</sup>Wayne Craven, *American Art : History and Culture* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1994).
- <sup>37</sup>Eleanor Pearson DeLorme, "Gilbert Stuart: Portrait of an Artist," *Winterthur Portfolio* 14, no. 4 (1979), 339-60.
- <sup>38</sup>Wayne Craven, *American Art : History and Culture* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1994), 143.
- <sup>39</sup>Ellen G. Miles, *American Paintings of the Eighteenth Century* (Washington, D.C.: The Collections of the National Gallery of Art Systematic Catalogue, 1995), 214-216, color repro, 215.
- <sup>40</sup>DeLorme, "Gilbert Stuart: Portrait of an Artist," 339-60.
- <sup>41</sup>Miles, *American Paintings of the Eighteenth Century*, 212.
- <sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 215.
- <sup>43</sup>Catherine Brass Yates (Mrs. Richard Yates)," *National Gallery of Art*.
- <sup>44</sup>Carrie Rebora Barratt, Gilbert Stuart, Ellen Gross Miles, Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.), and National Gallery of Art (U.S.), *Gilbert Stuart* (New York, N.Y.: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004).
- <sup>45</sup>Miles, *American Paintings of the Eighteenth Century*, 215.
- <sup>46</sup>Barratt, *Gilbert Stuart*.
- <sup>47</sup>Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood : Woman's Sphere in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

## Images



Figure 1: Mrs. James Warren (Mercy Otis), John Singleton Copley, about 1763, Oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts Boston



Figure 2: Mrs. Benjamin Pickman (Mary Toppan), John Singleton Copley, 1763, Oil on canvas, Yale University Art Gallery



Figure 3: James Warren, John Singleton Copley, about 1761-63, Oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts Boston



Figure 4: Portrait of Mrs. John Stevens (Judith Sargent, later Mrs. John Murray), John Singleton Copley, 1770-72, Oil on canvas, Terra Foundation for American Art



## Images



Figure 5: Abigail Smith Adams (Mrs. John Adams), Gilbert Stuart, 1800/1815, oil on canvas, The National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.)

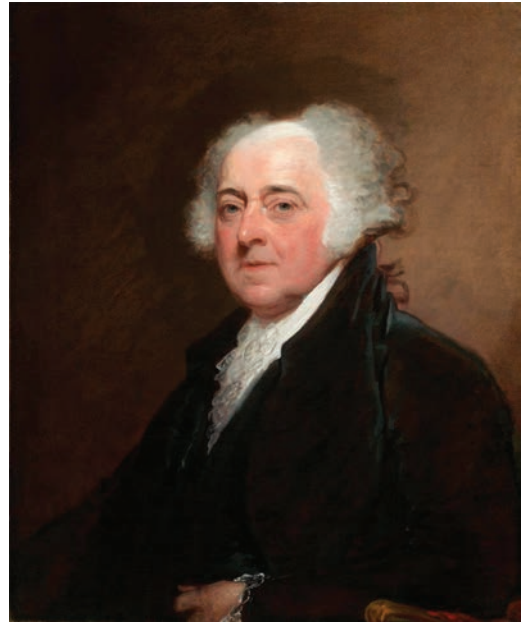


Figure 6: John Adams, Gilbert Stuart, 1800, oil on canvas, The National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.)



Figure 7: Mrs. Richard Yates, Stuart, Gilbert, 1793, Oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art (U.S.)

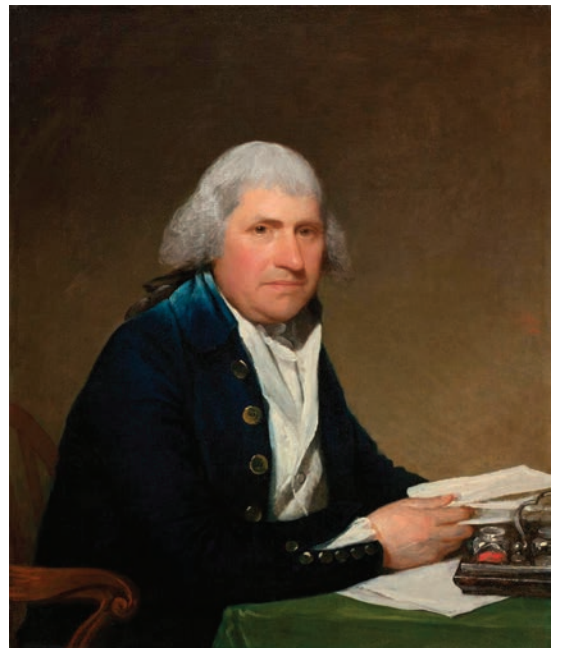


Figure 8: Richard Yates, Gilbert Stuart, 1793, oil on canvas, The National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.)



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# PARADISE FOR THE PIONEER: GEORGIA O'KEEFFE'S TRIP TO HAWAI'I

Georgia Totto O'Keeffe is one of the major figures in American modernism, known primarily for her paintings of the American Southwest; however, she also traveled around to and depicted other diverse areas of the United States, such as New Mexico, Lake George and New York City. Her artwork captured where she was at a given time through her unique and modernized style. O'Keeffe's interest in traveling provided her the chance to escape life's troubles and be inspired by her surroundings. One of her lesser-known, yet influential, trips was to Hawai'i for a commission awarded to her by the Hawaiian Pineapple Company, later named the Dole Food Company, in 1939. She spent nine weeks there in exchange for the promise of producing two paintings that the company would use for advertising purposes. In addition to these advertising pieces, she produced a series of 20 beautiful paintings. Although these pieces wonderfully capture Hawai'i and demonstrate the distinct style she applied to every natural environment she encountered, they are not usually mentioned in the scholarly literature

analyzing her career. Even her autobiography fails to explore this trip deeply, and the series has only appeared in a small number of exhibitions. Despite their lack of fame, this series made a positive impact on O'Keeffe, both personally and professionally. By allowing her to escape harsh critics at home and explore a new natural environment, Hawai'i reinvigorated O'Keeffe's confidence in her practice and herself.

O'Keeffe grew up in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, living on her family's dairy farm.<sup>1</sup> She had a very long career as an artist, living to be 98 years old.<sup>2</sup> As a child, she took painting and drawing lessons with her two younger sisters.<sup>3</sup> O'Keeffe then continued her artistic development, studying with Elizabeth May Willis, when her family moved to Williamsburg, Virginia. In 1907, she enrolled at the Art Institute of Chicago, and, finally, took classes at the Arts Students League in New York. In New York, she was trained by William Merritt Chase in the practice of using oil paint,<sup>4</sup> which she would come to master and for which she would be best known in her career. From 1908-1910, O'Keeffe



became frustrated and felt stunted by the imitative practice she was being taught and felt she could never produce a painting that was better than any that had been made before. She moved back to Chicago and worked on advertising and design projects<sup>5</sup> in order to make a living, until she moved back home and her sisters inspired her to look into the art classes offered at the University of Virginia (UVA).<sup>6</sup> From there, O’Keeffe began to find her own individual style at UVA under the influence of Alon Bement’s instruction, who had embraced Arthur Wesley Dow’s belief “that realism and conventionality were the ‘death of art.’”<sup>7</sup> The abstract representations of natural and manmade forms for which O’Keeffe is known would not have been possible without this introduction to self expression and distinctive style. O’Keeffe expresses that she learned that “art could be a thing of your own”<sup>8</sup> and we see her investigate this theory throughout her experience as an artist.

Bement further inspired O’Keeffe to become a teacher, due to his instructional style, and offered her a position at UVA which led her to exploring the world of art education in the Amarillo, Texas public schools. She eventually lived in New York throughout 1914-1916 to learn from Dow himself.<sup>9</sup> Throughout these years, she lived and taught at UVA and schools in South Carolina and Texas, but did not produce much in the way of painting. Following her hiatus from art production, she began to explore her individual artist’s touch through charcoal drawings. Pulling her inspiration from all the artists and styles she had studied, she created her own artistic voice. Her creative revelation can also be attributed to her exposure to the Southwestern climate and environment in Texas. It opened her eyes to new nature

experiences. O’Keeffe loved the harsh conditions of Texas, which contrasted greatly with the world she had grown up with in the Midwest. She expressed that “it is the only place I have ever felt that I really belonged—that I really felt at home.”<sup>10</sup> As O’Keeffe continued to move around the country, she was able to feel like she fit in at each place she visited.

For instance, she painted cityscapes and buildings when she lived with Stieglitz in midtown New York.<sup>11</sup> She would also paint the landscape of New Mexico when she would visit each summer, and where she would eventually move after Stieglitz passed away in 1964.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, she would visit Lake George, New York, where Stieglitz’ family owned a house, in the summers, and produce paintings, which, “compared to the Southwest subjects, were inclined to be quiet and sometimes somber, pervaded by a sober Northern mood.”<sup>13</sup> O’Keeffe captures the essence of an environment in her paintings, not just their visual attributes. Although she utilizes similar stylistic techniques at each location, each series embodies its own spirit and serves as a source of creative inspiration for her.

O’Keeffe’s long-term move to New York was a result of her friend Anita Pollitzer, sending, unbeknownst to her, some of O’Keeffe’s drawings along to famous photographer and gallery owner Alfred Stieglitz. He assisted in creating the modern art world in America through his exhibitions at the 291 gallery and he and O’Keeffe quickly bonded over their shared interest in avant-garde works and the American transcendentalist movement. He was very supportive of her work and of female artists in general; however, he thought women and men interpreted the world in divergent ways. Stieglitz was

married for twenty years before meeting O’Keeffe, who was twenty-four years younger than he. He eventually showed her work in April 1917, in what would be the first of many exhibits in his galleries.<sup>14</sup> He would not only become her husband, but he would come to have a large role in defining her career. O’Keeffe’s early canon of work would range from abstract natural watercolor landscapes<sup>15</sup> to nude paintings done exclusively in red, blue-green and black.<sup>16</sup>

O’Keeffe had a lot of expectations placed on her as she came to be known as the breakthrough, female, modern artist. Unfortunately for O’Keeffe, male critics skewed the public’s opinions about her art. Her identity was being defined by her sex and was starting to be seen as art made for the sake of men’s enjoyment.<sup>17</sup> It got to the point where “her art was not described as the vision of someone with real, deeply felt desires, but as the vision of womanhood *tout court* or that depersonalized Woman who obligingly stands for Nature and Truth.”<sup>18</sup> O’Keeffe’s paintings were seen to carry the responsibility of representing female artists and women as a whole. Her painting skills were overlooked and seen merely within the limited abilities under which female artists were expected to perform.

Helen Appleton Read makes clear in her 1928 article, “The Feminine View-Point in Contemporary Art,” that works by O’Keeffe and other women were much more complicated than the “traditional feminine subjects, such as flowers, babies, and delicate colour schemes.”<sup>19</sup> O’Keeffe often painted flowers and landscapes, so it was easy for critics to immediately place her under the constructed category of female art. Read responds to these characterizations, writing that

O’Keeffe’s works show so much more than that and that “she paints flowers and fruits and, occasionally, landscapes extremely well. Her view-point is unique and personal, and her technical equipment extraordinarily competent and individual.”<sup>20</sup> Her talent was unappreciated which produced an underlying challenge for O’Keeffe to surpass what society expected of her.

Not only did her sex define who she was, but it was also used by her husband and critics alike to project an overly sexual tone onto her artwork. Her paintings were often interpreted with sexual connotations, especially by men. Stieglitz benefitted from their reputation since he could get men to come to see her art by promoting it as a kind of pornography.<sup>21</sup> Her early watercolor paintings were interpreted as so erotic that “she decided to change the direction of her work.”<sup>22</sup> O’Keeffe declared that she then would paint “an array of alligator pearls...calla lilies...horrid yellow sunflowers—two red cannas—some white birches with yellow leaves...,”<sup>23</sup> but this shift would not stop her critics’ misinterpretations.

Stieglitz’ sensualized understanding of her art influenced how male critics wrote about her, and Stieglitz perpetuated these views by using these critics’ comments in catalogues promoting O’Keeffe’s shows.<sup>24</sup> “The problem with these accounts of O’Keeffe’s art is not that her pictures are not sexual, but [they] were crudely transposed by critics into a fulsome, clichéd prose.”<sup>25</sup> The sexual theme some found in her works became a widely accepted way of interpreting them, and so their impressiveness and complexity were not fully appreciated.

Some art critics even credited this sexual

breakthrough O’Keeffe was thought to be expressing in her art to Stieglitz himself. He proudly utilized their statements in describing her work despite how upset it made her because he was getting credit for her style.<sup>26</sup> For instance, “in a review of her first major show, [Henry] McBride said flatly that O’Keeffe and her art were Stieglitz’s creations; that he had fomented the sexual liberation that enabled her (however “sub-consciously”) to paint.”<sup>27</sup> It is understandable how such readings of her work could become offensive to O’Keeffe, as her gift of painting was being ascribed to her husband. O’Keeffe had a lot of pressure on her to break out of an unsolicited identity that society, critics, and her husband had imposed upon her.

Although difficult to handle, these harsh constrictions and judgments of her work furthered O’Keeffe’s desire to maintain a sense of freedom in her art, life and practice. She had always been a very independent person and her travels, often alone, exemplified this characteristic trait. In 1938, N.W. Ayer & Son inquired of O’Keeffe to go to Hawai’i and produce two paintings which would be used by the Hawaiian Pineapple Company to promote their pineapple juice. They were one of many advertising agencies at this time that had begun using fine artists’ works in advertisements as a tactic to sell their products.<sup>28</sup> O’Keeffe’s attention to nature, in her modernist style, would provide a way to advertise Hawai’i as an exotic, unknown place. O’Keeffe also had experience with commissions; she had done other commissioned work, including mural projects for New York City’s Radio City Music Hall, a painting for a beauty salon in Manhattan (Elizabeth Arden Beauty Salon), and glass designs for Steuben Glass.<sup>29</sup>

O’Keeffe agreed to the job. When she arrived in Honolulu, she was warmly welcomed by the Atherton Richards family with an afternoon tea at their house. She had been made known by local newspapers as the “famous painter of flowers” before she got there. This would be a nine-week trip beginning on the island of O’ahu, then moving to the island of Kaua’i, where she would meet and stay with Robert Allerton and John Gregg, who showed her around the island. When she later visited Maui, she stayed with the Jennings family and was guided around the island by Patricia Jennings, their 12-year-old daughter. They explored Hāna together in the Jennings family car and drove around the coast as well as through luscious ‘Īao Valley. O’Keeffe then traveled to Hilo on the main island of Hawai’i where she experienced the black sand beach of Kalapana and stayed at the Volcano House hotel which sat on the rim of the volcano.<sup>30</sup> Thus, she was able to see much of the islands and be exposed to their iconic features by residents who knew them well.

That O’Keeffe was selected to complete such a project indicates the level of fame she had achieved at this point in her career. N.W. Ayer & Son hoped to intrigue their consumers with Hawai’i itself, not just the pineapples’ “nutritional and health benefits.”<sup>31</sup> The hope was that the unknown entity of Hawai’i and its products would become much more appealing when O’Keeffe and other artists, including Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Isamu Noguchi and Millard Sheets, presented them in their distinctive styles. For example, A.M. Cassandre [fig. 1] included images of an ukulele, white flowers and a vast, moonlit horizon visible from Hawai’i’s shores which present the consumer with all that they can experience when they drink a glass of pineapple juice.<sup>32</sup> Did N.W. Ayer & Son choose

her because they thought her sexual reputation would attract costumers' attention? The Hawaiian Pineapple Company itself played off this sense of tropical paradise and hoped the artists they hired would capture this feeling in their works in order to sell their products.<sup>33</sup> Future study would benefit from exploring whether O'Keeffe's works perpetuate the sexualized exoticism illustrated in many modern artists' depictions of seemingly primitive societies, or simply present the rare Hawaiian fauna and landscapes.

The original paintings she sent to the ad company were *Heliconia—Crab's Claw Ginger* [fig. 2] and *Papaya Tree—Īao Valley* [fig. 3].<sup>34</sup> She had felt that these two paintings best captured her experience and Hawai'i itself. Her decision to paint a papaya tree may have been a jab at the company for the trouble they had given her following her request for complete control over what she would paint, since their rival company at the time was promoting papaya juice.<sup>35</sup> Dissatisfied with no painting of a pineapple for a pineapple juice advertisement, N.W. Ayer & Son shipped a pineapple to O'Keeffe in New York after her return. She finally fulfilled the commission and painted *Pineapple Bud* [fig. 4]. She was surprisingly pleased with the plant and exclaimed that "it's a beautiful plant....It is made up of long green blades and the pineapples grow on top of it. I never knew that."<sup>36</sup> Although she was stubborn, O'Keeffe was very interested in exploring new things, and that intrigue had led her to take the commission in the first place. *Heliconia—Crab's Claw Ginger* and *Pineapple Bud* were featured in magazine advertisements [fig. 5 and fig. 6] for the Hawaiian Pineapple Company.<sup>37</sup>

*Pineapple Bud* [fig. 4] is definitely not the

idyllic vision of a pineapple that one may picture when considering buying pineapple juice. The bud of the pineapple plant sits toward the bottom left corner of the composition with spikes resembling those found on the full-grown fruit, but are painted in red, white and green hues. The long, spiky green leaves radiate out from the bud in a smooth gradation, as is typical of O'Keeffe's style. The background is the same fiery red-orange found in the bud of the plant, bringing the whole piece together harmoniously. This painting beautifully demonstrates O'Keeffe's known practice of enlarging an object and presenting it from an aerial point of view. It also repeats her characteristic trope of an intimate look into the plant that was seen as gynecological and that later influenced Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party*.

As seen in an earlier characteristic work, *Jimson Weed* of 1936 [fig. 7], her typical technique of using a cropped perspective of an object "enabled her to reveal its structure with complete clarity...Magnification was another kind of abstraction, of separating the object from ordinary reality, and endowing it with a life of its own."<sup>38</sup> From her Hawaiian series, *Hibiscus with Plumeria* [fig. 8] provides an intimate view of the hibiscus plant with a similar perspective as *Jimson Weed* [fig. 7] while embodying a more tropical feel with the bright blue background and pastel pinks and oranges. Viewers are exposed to the inner flower and their eyes follow the strokes making up the smooth petals as they extend from the stem to outside the edges of the canvas.

O'Keeffe's works from this series clearly show her in-depth exploration of Hawai'i as a whole, using similar observational and design techniques she had used in other

locations. When beginning her paintings in Hawai'i, she was "starting with something she knew, 'a flower,'" and more particularly, she honed in on the white bird of paradise and heliconia plants.<sup>39</sup> With such new flora and fauna, as compared to the deserts of the southwest, the high-rise buildings of New York, the plains of the Midwest or the mountains in Lake George, it is understandable that she began with a familiar subject and her practice of the intimate viewpoint.

For instance, *White Bird of Paradise* [fig. 9] further exhibits her characteristic framing of a main object floating in space against a flattened backdrop of color, in this case, purples, blues, and whites. Her smooth brush strokes make up the spikey, upward-reading petals of the plant and illustrate the tension that it seems to encompass. As art historian Theresa Papanikolas wrote, "she captured this flower's structural complexity in a composition consisting of three intricately intertwined blossoms."<sup>40</sup> O'Keeffe does not simply replicate the outward appearance of the flower, but infuses it with character and dynamic, giving an insight into what these islands are like, beyond the travel brochures.

Her *Heliconia—Crab's Claw Ginger* [fig. 2] similarly exemplifies the exotic plant-life of Hawai'i without it becoming a touristy trope. She presents the "plant...prized for its architectural red flowers"<sup>41</sup> in a uniquely straightforward manner, absent her typical viewpoint of looking downward and inward. The vibrant plant reaches toward the right side of the composition with fantastically red spiked blossoms and highlights of bright green and yellow on the top edges of each. Almost as if leaping into the visual field, it is set against a horizon as its background, introducing the infinite horizons O'Keeffe observed and

painted on the shores of Hawai'i. It has been said that "O'Keeffe's lifelong attachment to open landscapes grew directly from an innate response to her Midwestern birthplace,"<sup>42</sup> and she is seen painting many of these here.

Her work *Fishhook from Hawai'i* [fig. 10] also exhibits this endless horizon line between the sky and the Pacific Ocean. This piece, however, plays with illusions of space in an almost Surrealist way; the horizon line is disrupted within the boundaries of the fishhook loop, as if it has become a magnifying glass. The pastel blue and pink hues used by O'Keeffe present this Surrealist-like seascape as an otherwise much more approachable and calm scene. Nonetheless, the image is presented in a genuinely new style of painting for O'Keeffe in which she explores her ability to distort space and manipulate reality. These evocative horizons contrast with the mostly dry, taciturn skylines O'Keeffe painted of the American Southwest and are unique to these works and O'Keeffe's experience of Hawai'i.

When exploring Hāna, a very isolated part of the island of Maui, O'Keeffe enjoyed her drives through the 'Īao valleys. She completed three paintings of views from her drive through the area and in her paintings of the waterfalls and lush greenery, O'Keeffe's investigation of the new environment can be understood. Although she had painted in Lake George before, which has lots of vegetation, the climate and grandiosity of the scenery of the 'Īao valley was very different. In a letter to her friend Ettie Stettheimer, O'Keeffe describes it as "a wonderful green valley—sheer green mountains rising straight up as mountains can—waterfalls when it rains—lots of them and it rains often



but the rain doesn't feel wet as it does in N.Y."<sup>43</sup> In *Waterfall No. 1, 'Īao Valley, Maui* [fig. 11], O'Keeffe illustrates the rushing water of the waterfalls down the center green and sky blue. She presents this new vibrancy in her work through these lush valley depictions.

The compelling aspect of O'Keeffe's works is that she can make unknown worlds accessible to outsiders through her interpretation of the landscape or object. Art historian Papanikolas speaks of how Hawai'i had taken on an idealized, mysterious identity thanks to the fascination European and American artists had with it. Since she was entering into her trip with the mindset of a neophyte, O'Keeffe made a special effort to explore Hawai'i's unique landscape, plants, and people.<sup>44</sup> "From the microcosm of a seashell or botanical specimen to the macrocosm of an endless horizon, O'Keeffe continually gave form to the deep, personal meanings she found in her numerous places, capturing the minutiae to which she was drawn and the infinite space they occupied."<sup>45</sup> Other critics agreed. "The *New York World-Telegram* remarked, 'Her pictures, always brilliant and exciting, admit us to a world that is alien and strange.... Her bird of paradise, her hibiscuses and her fishhooks silhouetted against the blue Hawaiian water are exciting and beautiful.'"<sup>46</sup>

Nonetheless, she also made them comprehensible places through the familiarity, repetition even, of her style. Art critic Elizabeth McCausland commented on the exhibition of O'Keeffe's Hawai'i paintings stating that:

*the greens with which  
O'Keeffe paints the water  
fall of the 'Īao Valley are  
very like the greens with*

*which she paints the  
mountains of New Mexico;  
yet the landscapes for all  
its familiar hues and forms  
is a different scene. The sense  
of expansion, of  
emancipation, produced by  
travel may explain this,  
or a simpler geographic  
truism, that the air, light  
and atmosphere of Hawai'i  
are not the same as those  
of Abiquiu and that the  
artist has been faithful to  
the new world as to the old.*<sup>47</sup>

According to Henry McBride, an art critic and friend of O'Keeffe, "the landscapes, flower pieces and marines in this collection all testify to Miss O'Keeffe's ability to make herself at home anywhere."<sup>48</sup> As O'Keeffe herself writes in the exhibition catalogue:

*'One sees new things rapidly  
everywhere when everything  
seems new and different. It  
has to be a part of one's world,  
a part of what one has to  
speak with—one paints it  
slowly.... Maybe the new  
place enlarges one's world a  
little. Maybe one takes one's  
world along and cannot see  
anything else.'*<sup>49</sup>

O'Keeffe clearly reveals that Hawai'i has given her the opportunity to both maintain her techniques, yet expand her understanding of the world and her paintings.

Though she utilized the same observational and painterly skills throughout her career, this series offers a new sense of fantasy. Although the space is completely filled in *'Īao Valley* [fig. 11], the piece still offers a feeling of open space and a sense of humidity and



energy in the air. In contrast to her paintings of the Southwest and New York, O'Keeffe maintains this unique vibrant energy throughout her Hawai'i series. Perhaps this change in tone is due to the rare fauna and terrain of the islands, or because of the sense of wonder Hawai'i has historically been made to represent. The Hawaiian Pineapple Company itself played off this sense of tropical paradise and hoped the artists they hired to create advertisements would capture this feeling in their works in order to sell their products.<sup>50</sup>

At the time, the commission was somewhat fraught, as O'Keeffe was unhappy with the treatment she received from the company at times. For example, O'Keeffe was displeased when she proposed to N.W. Ayers & Son that she would like to live by the fields of pineapples in order to study them more closely. They denied her request since she was not a field worker and only the field workers could live that close to the pineapple fields. They gave her a pineapple to paint, but she refused to paint the fruit during her stay in Hawai'i.<sup>51</sup> She may have resented the treatment she received from the Hawaiian Pineapple Company and N.W. Ayer & Son and wished to forget the trip altogether. It may also be possible that O'Keeffe produced this large body of work simply to have something to show for her annual exhibition in Stieglitz' gallery.<sup>52</sup>

Ultimately, the series received laudatory reviews and was a success. Stieglitz proclaimed that the show was "creating quite a stir."<sup>53</sup> She did not finish the series in Hawai'i and had become sick shortly after her return to New York,<sup>54</sup> so, according to Stieglitz, "the irony of it all is that everybody feels that her work is better and healthier."<sup>55</sup> It cannot be

distinguished where each work was created, but it is clear that O'Keeffe had been rejuvenated by her solo expedition to Hawai'i.

From an experiential point of view, O'Keeffe openly enjoyed her time in Hawai'i. She was able to gain much inspiration for the 20 paintings she produced and displayed in February 1940 at An American Place, Stieglitz' gallery.<sup>56</sup> In the catalogue for the exhibition, O'Keeffe declared that "if my painting is what I have to give back to the world for what the world gives to me, I may say that these paintings are what I have at present for what these three months in Hawai'i gave to me."<sup>57</sup> As a person looking for joy and growth, O'Keeffe found much of both in her travels, even eating raw fish and wearing thonged sandals in imitation of the locals.<sup>58</sup>

O'Keeffe wrote to many friends saying how much she enjoyed her trip. In a correspondence with friend and photographer Ansel Adams, she admits that "I always intended to return [to Hawai'i]....I often think of that trip at Yosemite [with you] as one of the best things I have done—but Hawai'i was another."<sup>59</sup> She also wrote a letter to Robert Allerton and John Gregg, whom she stayed with in Kaua'i, expressing her gratitude for having been there and said "that I liked it—and that I appreciated it even if I did not write to tell you so."<sup>60</sup> With regard to Maui, she wrote "I enjoy this drifting off into space on an Island—...I like being here and [I'm having] a very good time...I'd soon stay right here for a couple of months but I seem to have to move on."<sup>61</sup>

O'Keeffe's true motive for accepting the commission is unknown. She had taken commissioned and commercial work before,<sup>62</sup> so it seems evident that she did not believe that

taking this job would serve as a detriment to her avant-garde status. Furthermore, O’Keeffe can be seen to have gained much confidence from her excursion in confronting her critics. Although she was distressed by the earlier sexualized interpretations of her flowers, it did not deter her. She loved painting flowers, so O’Keeffe continued with this subject matter in her Hawai’i series. She attempted to break out of the mold that Stieglitz and the male gaze had created for her early on in her career by responding directly to these critics in the catalogue of the exhibition. She wrote, “...you hung all your own associations with flowers on my flower and you write about my flower as if I think and see what you think and see of the flower—and I don’t.”<sup>63</sup> She further makes the point that the places and things she decides to paint do not necessarily resonate with all of her audiences because those particular scenes do not have the same meaning for them as they do for O’Keeffe. For instance, she references a painting of the New Mexican Ghost Ranch Country Bad Lands and admits that “a red hill doesn’t touch everyone’s heart as it touches mine and I suppose there is no reason why it should.”<sup>64</sup> She had experienced so much misinterpretation as to who she was and should be that Hawai’i became an escape to clear her head of others’ opinions and reignite her confidence in her practice.

There is only a handful of exhibitions that have shown O’Keeffe’s Hawaiian pieces, and the question of what this trip and the pieces it inspired really meant to O’Keeffe and her career remains open. While there is extensive scholarship and museum space dedicated to O’Keeffe’s legacy, these 20 Hawaiian paintings are barely spoken about in any depth. In fact, O’Keeffe, herself, only

mentions her trip in her autobiography once when referencing wishing she had taken some red coral from a beach in Hawai’i.<sup>65</sup> She wrote her autobiography later in life in 1976, at the age of 89, so it gives readers more of an insight into her philosophy as a mature artist, looking back, and her personal beliefs and motivations in retrospect.<sup>66</sup> O’Keeffe states in her autobiography that “I write this [autobiography] because such odd things have been done about me with words. I am often amazed at the spoken and written word telling me what I have painted. I make this effort because no one else can know how my paintings happen.”<sup>67</sup> Since she was critical about what was written about her during her lifetime,<sup>68</sup> formulating a highly selective and personal account of her life and works was an ideal way to control her reputation on the eve of her death, especially when her reputation had been so strongly determined by others in the past.

Based on her remarks and analyses, there is no denying that the trip was beneficial for O’Keeffe personally and professionally. O’Keeffe returned from Hawai’i with a renewed sense of confidence and of self. She returned to her work and explicitly addressed her critics with a large and spectacular series, complete with written explanations as to their independence from the opinions of others. It is reasonable to conclude that Hawai’i positively impacted O’Keeffe’s inspiration for painting and for life. She brought her adventures to life on canvases and permanently affected the trajectory of modern art and freedom of expression.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Barbara J. Bloemink, *Georgia O'Keeffe Canyon Suite* (New York: George Braziller, 1995), 9.
- <sup>2</sup> Jennifer Saville, Introduction to *Georgia O'Keeffe's Hawai'i* (Kihei, Hawai'i: Koa Books, 2011), 3.
- <sup>3</sup> Georgia O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York: A Studio Book, Viking Press, 1976).
- <sup>4</sup> Bloemink, *Georgia O'Keeffe Canyon Suite*, 10-11.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.
- <sup>6</sup> Lloyd Goodrich and Doris Bry, *Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York: The Whitney Museum of American Art, 1970), 8.
- <sup>7</sup> Bloemink, *Georgia O'Keeffe Canyon Suite*, 12-13.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.
- <sup>9</sup> Goodrich and Bry, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 8.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-10.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.
- <sup>14</sup> Bloemink, *Georgia O'Keeffe Canyon Suite*, 17-19.
- <sup>15</sup> Goodrich and Bry, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 22.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.
- <sup>17</sup> *Reading American Art*, eds. Marianne Doezema and Elizabeth Milroy (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 362.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.
- <sup>19</sup> Read, "Features: The Feminine View-Point in Contemporary Art," *Vogue*, 76.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.
- <sup>21</sup> *Reading American Art*, eds. Marianne Doezema and Elizabeth Milroy, 362.
- <sup>22</sup> Bloemink, *Georgia O'Keeffe Canyon Suite*, 33.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.
- <sup>24</sup> *Reading American Art*, eds. Marianne Doezema and Elizabeth Milroy, 360-361.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 362.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>28</sup> Saville, Introduction to *Georgia O'Keeffe's Hawai'i*, 3.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-18.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20.
- <sup>35</sup> Theresa Papanikolas, Anne Hammond and Amber Ludwig, *Georgia O'Keeffe and Ansel Adams: The Hawai'i Pictures* (Honolulu Museum of Art, 2013), 15.
- <sup>36</sup> Saville, introduction to *Georgia O'Keeffe's Hawai'i*, 19-20.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.
- <sup>38</sup> Goodrich and Bry, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 18.
- <sup>39</sup> Papanikolas, *Georgia O'Keeffe and Ansel Adams*, 14.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>42</sup> Bloemink, *Georgia O'Keeffe Canyon Suite*, 10.
- <sup>43</sup> Saville, introduction to *Georgia O'Keeffe's Hawai'i*, 12-13.
- <sup>44</sup> Joanna L. Groarke and Theresa Papanikolas, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Visions of Hawaii* (London and New York: The New York Botanical Garden and DelMonico Books Prestel, 2018), 12-13.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.
- <sup>46</sup> Saville, introduction to *Georgia O'Keeffe's Hawai'i*, 20-25.
- <sup>47</sup> Papanikolas, *Georgia O'Keeffe and Ansel Adams*, 15.
- <sup>48</sup> Saville, introduction to *Georgia O'Keeffe's Hawai'i*, 25.
- <sup>49</sup> Papanikolas, *Georgia O'Keeffe and Ansel Adams*, 15.
- <sup>50</sup> Saville, introduction to *Georgia O'Keeffe's Hawai'i*, 3.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-25.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>56</sup> Papanikolas, *Georgia O'Keeffe and Ansel Adams*, 15.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.
- <sup>58</sup> Saville, introduction to *Georgia O'Keeffe's Hawai'i*, 12.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.
- <sup>63</sup> Georgia O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Exhibition of Oils and Pastels, January 22-March 17, 1939* (An American Place), 2-3. <https://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/4212776>.
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.
- <sup>65</sup> Saville, introduction to *Georgia O'Keeffe's Hawai'i*, 27.
- <sup>66</sup> Wanda Corn, "Telling Tales Georgia O'Keeffe on Georgia O'Keeffe," *American Art* 23, no.2 (2009), accessed 2018, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lfh&AN=43698988&site=ehost-live>.
- <sup>67</sup> Georgia O'Keeffe, foreword in *Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York: A Studio Book, Viking Press, 1976).
- <sup>68</sup> Corn, "Telling Tales."

## Images

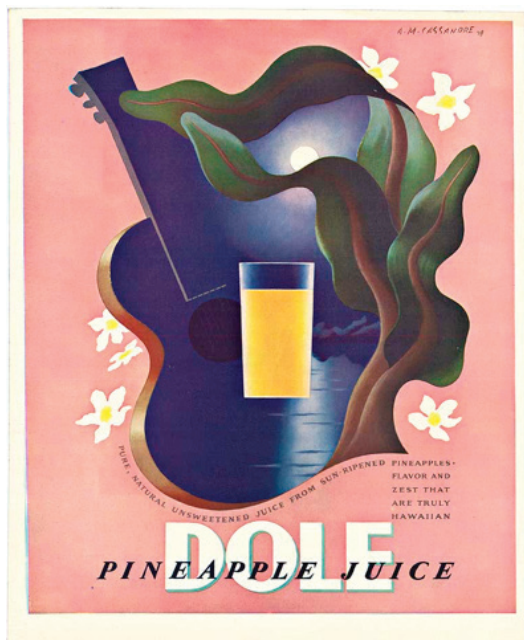


Figure 1: *Dole Ad*, A.M. Cassandre



Figure 2: *Heliconia, Crab's Claw Ginger*, 1939, Oil On Canvas, 19" x 16",  
Collection of Sharon Twigg-Smith



Figure 3: *Papaya Tree, Iao Valley, Maui*, 1939, Oil On Canvas, 19" x 16", Honolulu Museum of Art, Gift of The Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation



## Images



Figure 4: *Pineapple Bud*, 1939, Oil On Canvas, 19" x 16", Private Collection



Figure 5: *Dole Ad*, Georgia O'Keeffe



Figure 6: *Dole Ad*, Georgia O'Keeffe

## Images



Figure 7: *Jimson Weed*, 1936, Oil on Linen, 70" x 83.5", Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis



Figure 8: *Hibiscus with Plumeria*, 1939, Oil On Canvas, 40" x 30", Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Gift of Sam Rose and Julie Walters



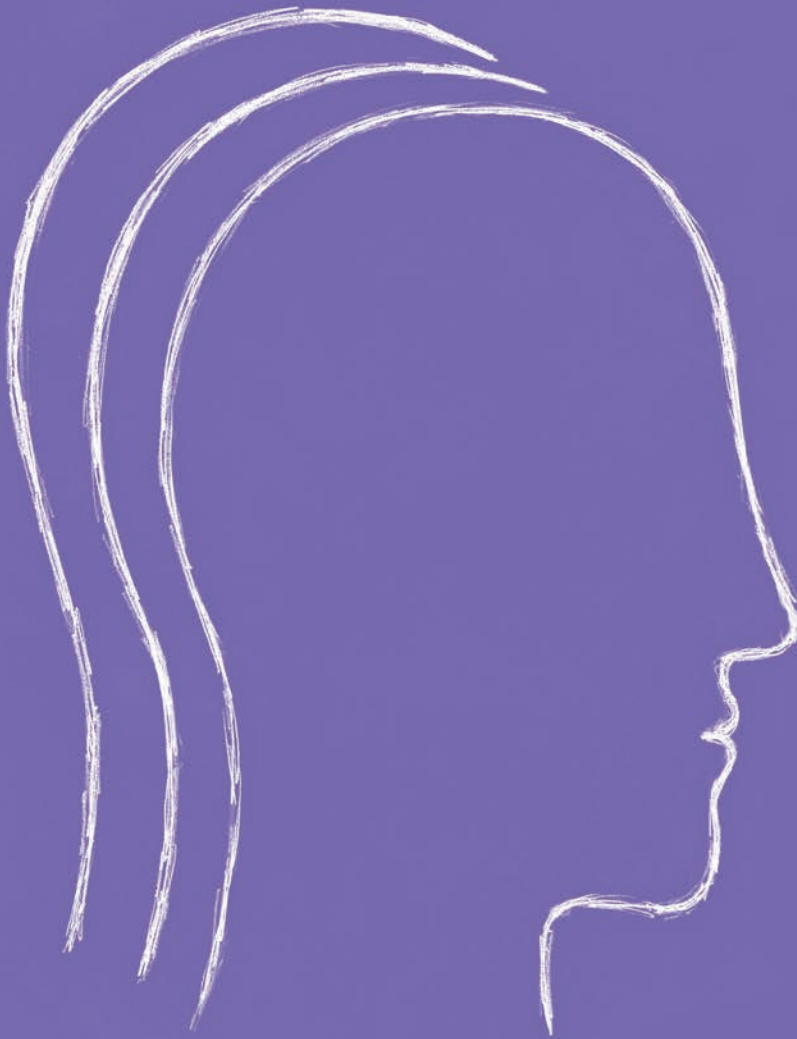
## Images



Figure 9: *White Bird of Paradise*, 1939, Oil On Canvas, 19" x 16", Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, Gift of Jean H. McDonald



Figure 10: *Fishhook from Hawaii, No. 1*, 1939, Oil On Canvas, 18" x 14", Brooklyn Museum, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe



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# JUDY CHICAGO'S DINNER PARTY: CONTEXTUALIZING THE CRITICAL REACTION

*The Dinner Party* [fig. 1], the ground-breaking, feminist, over-life-size installation sculpture, is a monumental fusion of decorative and fine arts, operating as a symbolic tribute to the history of women completed in 1979 by the artist Judy Chicago and her collaborative team. Since its conception, *The Dinner Party* sparked controversy across the nation. It was first exhibited at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (S.F.M.O.M.A) in 1979 and its subsequent history has been chockfull of rejection and condemnation. These sentiments would remain largely unchanged in the critical literature until 2002, when *The Dinner Party* was included in a special exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum of Art. During its re-exhibition, *The Dinner Party* was overwhelmingly embraced by critics and viewers around the globe. This shift in critical reaction experienced by *The Dinner Party* from 1979 and 2002 can be traced and understood through historical contextualization and the reviews of art critics.

Judy Chicago, artist, educator, feminist, and intellectual, was born in Chicago, Illinois on July 20, 1939 under the name Judy Sylvia

Cohen. At the age of five, her passion for the arts was sparked through art classes she took at the Art Institute of Chicago. From then on, she embraced a life devoted to the arts. She would continue her training at the Art Institute of Chicago but would complete her Bachelor of Arts at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1962. She went on to earn her Master of Fine Arts from UCLA in 1964. She married Jerry Gerowitz in 1961, but their marriage was short lived due to a fatal car accident in 1963, resulting in his death. After receiving her masters, she began to establish herself in the art world under her married name, Judy Gerowitz. Her early works consisted of practicing typical styles of the time, which included spray painting and minimalist painting along with various sculpting techniques.

Feeling unfulfilled and underwhelmed by her works and the path her career was taking, she began making changes. By 1969, she joined the faculty at California State University in Fresno where she established the first Feminist Art Education Program. In 1970, she changed her name to Judy Chicago as an overt act against the traditional western naming culture, in which a woman was ex-

pected to take the last name of her husband.<sup>1</sup>

Chicago and, Miriam Schapiro, another artist, elected to relocate the Feminist Art Program to the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, California where they would also join the faculty. The new program launched many interesting projects. *Womanhouse* (1972), the most prominent of all of the projects, was a series of installations that “explored the postwar ideal of feminine domesticity” in fantasy-like environments.<sup>2</sup> A year later, Chicago, along with art historian Arlene Raven and designer Sheila de Bretteville, co-founded the Women’s Building in Los Angeles.<sup>3</sup> She established an organization called Through the Flower in 1978 as a way to help enable the completion of her most ambitious work to that point, *The Dinner Party*. She went on to create several more works of art, including *Birth Project* (1980–1985) and the *Holocaust Project* (1985–1993), which similarly use art to analyze and interrogate history. Furthermore, she has written several books including *Through the Flower* and *The Dinner Party: From Creation to Preservation*. She and her career are still thriving in 2018 and she continues to be a champion of women’s rights.

Chicago began work on *The Dinner Party* in 1974 after attending a real-life dinner party where it occurred to her that women had never had a Last Supper, like the one Jesus and his disciples celebrated.<sup>4</sup> This evolved into a massive multi-media installation consisting of a three-winged, open, triangular-shaped table, set within a dark room, amid six colorful tapestry banners [fig. 2]. Each side spans forty-eight feet in length. The table is resting on top of a raised floor, known as the “Heritage Floor,” [fig. 3] comprised of 2,300 tiles made of hand-cast

porcelain with the names of 999 women from mythology to history inscribed in gold luster. Chicago says that “the floor is the foundation of the piece, a re-creation of the fragmented parts of our heritage, and, like the place settings themselves, a statement about the condition of women.”<sup>5</sup> The names were selected to represent a range of nationalities, experiences, and accomplishments. The floor acts as a structural and metaphorical support for the table.

The three wings of the table form an equilateral triangle, with thirty-nine place settings intended to represent thirty-nine individual women of history evenly distributed across the wings. Each wing includes thirteen place settings as a reference to the thirteen attendees at the Last Supper. The thirty-nine women included were selected based on their actual accomplishments and their spiritual/legendary powers. The place settings are the most significant component of *The Dinner Party*. The tables are covered with linens and meet at each corner with an embroidered cloth. They are all set on an embroidered runner with a ceramic gold chalice, utensils, embroidered napkin, and a china-painted plate. Each wing is separated into three categories based on historical time periods. Wing one encompasses prehistory, starting with the Primordial Goddess, continuing onto the development of Judaism, moving onto the societies of the early Greeks, and ending with the Roman Empire; wing two includes females who existed from early Christianity to the Reformation; and finally, wing three embodies strong figures from the American Revolution through the Women’s Revolution, starting with Anne Hutchinson and ending with Georgia O’Keeffe. Every place setting is executed within the characteristics of the guest’s specific historical

context.

One of the most discussed place settings at the table is the Empress Theodora's, the famous Byzantine empress and advocate of women. She was raised by her father, a trainer of animals, on the fringes of the Byzantine Empire. After his passing, in order to support her family Theodora became an actress, a profession synonymous with prostitution and highly reviled by Byzantine society. Later she found Christianity and abandoned her former career as an actress.<sup>6</sup> She met Justinian I, the nephew of the Emperor Justin I and heir of the Byzantine Empire in 522. Shortly after, they decided they wanted to get married, but the laws prohibited him to marry an actress, even a former one. Justinian had the law repealed and they were married in 525. Theodora was crowned empress alongside Justinian in 527. Historically, it is known that Theodora and Justinian ruled together as political and intellectual equals. Theodora was a champion of women's rights as a result of the humiliation of women she witnessed and experienced first-hand during her career as an actress. As a result, she fought for the rights of all women. A few of her undertakings, intended specifically to improve the lives of prostitutes included closing the brothels, establishing safe houses for protection, and passing laws forbidding forced prostitution. Her other endeavors for all women included passing laws to give women more rights in divorce cases and abolishing the law that allowed women to be killed for adultery.

Her exemplary life and achievements are represented by her place setting. The Byzantine era is known for their intricate mosaic designs, which can be found in Theodora's place setting [fig. 4]. The plate is painted to

resemble the traditional mosaic designs of the Byzantine era, in particular, this design alludes to the famous mosaic of "Theodora and Her Attendants" from 547 CE located in Ravenna, Italy in the Basilica of San Vitale. They both use a gold, green, and purple color scheme, which are traditionally imperial colors. The imagery on the plate "is a symmetrical abstract butterfly form, each wing stretching to the edge of the plate."<sup>7</sup> The wide stretching wings are representative of her wide acceptance of women and all oppressed people. A basilica plan was the traditional architectural plan for churches in the Byzantine era; this plan is reflected in the symmetry of the plate imagery along with the Roman arch colonnade imbedded in the upper wings. The plate rests on a runner embroidered with "a mosaic like halo."<sup>8</sup> A similar halo can be found in "Theodora and Her Attendants" which creates a distinct parallel between the two works. Finally, her name is embroidered in gold and the letter "T" portrays the dome of the Hagia Sophia from 530 CE, one of Theodora's most prominent and celebrated architectural feats.

The cornerstone of each place setting is the painted china plates. Every plate is fourteen inches in diameter and contains a central motif based on the butterfly and/or the vulva. These forms are described by Chicago as central core imagery. This central motif was a critical aspect in the piece itself and contributed directly to the reception of the piece. Chicago explained her intentions for this in her memoir *Through the Flower*: "I wanted to express what it was like to be organized around a central core, my vagina, that which made me a woman."<sup>9</sup> Thus for Chicago, central core imagery is the making of images that depict female sex organs. These motifs were intended to symbolize



pride in female identity.<sup>10</sup> Her objective, at that time, in depicting the vagina was two-fold: first, to show that the one thing uniting these forgotten women of history was their shared genitalia and second, to reclaim and celebrate the vagina. The vagina has been used for centuries by men as a way to enforce an “otherness,” degrade women, and had rarely been represented in imagery outside of pornography. She wanted to change its meaning to be emblematic of female heroines throughout history.<sup>11</sup>

The year 1970 was a crucial turning point of the Women’s Liberation Movement. Second wave feminism had been initiated by Simone de Beauvoir in her 1949 publication, *The Second Sex*, but did not take off until the late 1960s. For women artists, the 1950s and 1960s mark a difficult time, as there was no place for women in the especially macho art narrative of Abstract Expressionism. By 1971, Linda Nochlin had published her famous essay “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” in which she argues that women were undervalued and strategically excluded from the art canon by patriarchal art institutions. In the 1970s, the women’s movement spilled into the art world, igniting a new era of feminist art. Women artists were tired of being isolated from one another and suffering professionally. They had been left out of history long enough, so they began to change the art world by exploring female experience and identity through their art. In the wake of feminism, women also began to redefine their relationships with one another and society. It was an era of “re-branding,” so to speak. Artists began taking traditional women’s crafts like needlepoint, embroidery, and quilting, and incorporated them into their work, as we see Chicago do in *The Dinner Party*.

The concept of *The Dinner Party* was one that evolved over time. It began with the idea of creating one hundred abstract portrait plates. This developed into the thought of creating a series of “Twenty-Five Women Who Were Eaten Alive” in order to symbolize the “women who had been left out of history.”<sup>12</sup> Gradually, the idea evolved into *The Dinner Party*, as it exists today. Chicago describes it as, “a reinterpretation of the Last Supper from the point of view of women, who, throughout history, had prepared the meals and set the table.”<sup>13</sup> Historically, women have been confined solely to the domestic domains of cooking, cleaning, raising children, and pleasing their husbands. The art women could produce had been defined and restricted by their gender. Women were confined to working with “feminine” arts, which in a visual context, include embroidery, china painting, quilting, and pottery.<sup>14</sup> As arts typically produced by women, these media were not considered “high art,” which is why they, along with their female creators, were not included in the canon of art history. The main reason Chicago employed these media in *The Dinner Party* was to use these historically feminine, low-grade media in a way that challenged gender roles and elevated them to the realm of “high art.”

As her ideas grew, Chicago realized she needed to assemble a team to assist her in the creative process. Five years later, with a team of almost five-hundred men and women, most of whom were volunteers, *The Dinner Party* was complete and ready for exhibition. The first opening was on March 15, 1979 at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. It remained there for three months, during which it had over ninety thousand visitors. The attendance for this show broke all of the Museum’s previous attendance

records, including those reached during the shows of the two famous male artists, Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg. Even though, Johns' and Rauschenberg's exhibits were regarded as the Museum's "most popular" shows at that time, *The Dinner Party's* attendance records were double the amount of both of theirs.<sup>15</sup> Following the SFMOMA, *The Dinner Party* was scheduled for a nation-wide tour.

Upon opening in San Francisco, *The Dinner Party* sent shockwaves across America and people were at the ready to share their opinions. Most of the reviews were negative and illustrated how disturbed viewers had been. In particular, one of the most infamous negative reviews of *The Dinner Party* was written by Hilton Kramer, a male American art critic for the *New York Times* described as one of "the most influential critics of his era." In October of 1980, he wrote a review of *The Dinner Party* before it opened at its second stop on its nation-wide tour, the Brooklyn Museum. He wrote, "*The Dinner Party* reiterates its theme- the celebration of women, both real and mythological throughout the ages – with an insistence and vulgarity more appropriate, perhaps, to an advertising campaign than to a work of art."<sup>16</sup> He believed that Chicago exploited and vulgarized imagery of female sexuality with "abysmal taste" arguing that even advertising companies working in "these liberated times" and with no boundaries when marketing a product, would not dare to do what Chicago did in their advertisements. He described her attempt at using "sex organs" to represent women's achievements throughout history as "crass, solemn, and single minded." He concluded his review by saying, "it is very bad art, it is failed art, it is art so mired in the pieties of a political cause that it quite

fails to acquire any independent artistic life of its own. To this male observer, it looks like an outrageous libel on the female imagination."<sup>17</sup>

Kramer's critical reaction to *The Dinner Party* is a clear rejection of the piece in its totality. Kitsch art was a term used to criticize art that was perceived as lacking taste and or attempting to copy high art but failing to do so. He used this term on multiple occasions to describe *The Dinner Party*, which bolstered his conclusion that it is, in fact, not only bad art, but failed art. Many art critics, primarily male, did not understand or accept the fundamental premise of the work. Chicago was using female genitalia to metaphorize female heroines throughout history and their gender-based exclusion from history. The art community refused to except this because it was in their eyes, "pornographic." Chicago was pushing the boundaries of accepted artistic iconography and Kramer, along with many other critics of his time, rejected it.

Maureen Mullarkey, an art critic for the American-Catholic magazine, *Commonweal*, also wrote a negative review of *The Dinner Party* in 1981. Her review attacked almost every aspect of *The Dinner Party*. She analogized the imagery of the exhibition to the images found in *Playboy Magazine*. She wrote, "It shares with the air-brushed nudes in center-fold displays a dogged refusal to regard the real thing. Substituting titillation for discernment, *The Dinner Party* distorts the women it pretends to commemorate."<sup>18</sup>

Chicago Tribune critic, Marla Donato, wrote a well-known negative review of *The Dinner Party*, but on decidedly different grounds. She claimed that she understood and agreed

with many of the negative reviews previously put forth, that this was not a work of art, but rather, a platform for Chicago to launch herself to celebrity level status. Donato claims that Chicago used this work as an attempt to play the role of God. She said that “evidence of her massive ego” can be found in her autobiography *Through the Flower*, solidifying the arguments that this entire installation was to boost her ego.<sup>19</sup>

Donato’s review, unlike Kramer’s and Mularkey’s, focuses less on the actual work of art and more on Judy Chicago as a person and artist. Her criticisms promote the idea that Chicago was misrepresenting herself and her intentions in *The Dinner Party* for the sake of fame and in doing so, was not producing art at all. Donato’s argument that this piece is “self-aggrandizement: a giant extravaganza to feed what has been described as the massive ego of Judy Chicago” takes on a distinctly personal standing that seems to have more to do with politics, and identity politics in particular, than it has to do with art.<sup>20</sup> It also coincides with the long-held notion that women are least supportive of other women who are direct, aggressive, and self-confident.

Between 1979 and 1996, *The Dinner Party* toured seven states within the United States and six international cities until it was retired to storage from wear and tear. Throughout those years, the controversy of *The Dinner Party* seemed to skyrocket. Criticism began to grow and was now coming from several fronts. The years between 1980 and 1989 witnessed critical debates around the poles of multiculturalism and essentialism as limiting factors of *The Dinner Party* within the feminist movement.<sup>21</sup> Essentialism, otherwise referred to by Chicago as

“central core” imagery, was no longer an acceptable signifier of the feminist movement. The feminist movement of the 1980s was “committed to multiculturalism” in order to be fully inclusive. As a result, Chicago was attacked with charges of racism by several feminists of color and others due to her supposed lack of inclusivity in *The Dinner Party*. The most outspoken review that became the touchstone of further critiques was by the author of *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker. She was extremely critical of Chicago for not representing the genitals of Sojourner Truth, the only black woman at the table, in the same way she depicted all of the white women. Rather than genitalia, Truth had faces inscribed on her plate<sup>22</sup> [fig. 6]. Feminist scholar, Hortense Spillers, wrote that “the excision of the genitalia here is a symbolic castration. By effacing the genitals, Chicago not only abrogates the disturbing sexuality of her subject, but also hopes to suggest that her sexual being did not exist to be denied in the first place.”<sup>23</sup>

1990 was the year Chicago and her *Dinner Party* would receive the most publicized condemnation. It began when Chicago entered negotiations with the University of the District of Columbia in Washington, D.C. (UDC) regarding her interest in donating *The Dinner Party* to the predominately African-American school. She had been approached by Pat Mathis, a “former assistant secretary of the treasury under President Carter, who had been a longtime supporter of Chicago, and was a current board member of the University of the District of Columbia (UDC).”<sup>24</sup> Mathis wanted to create a permanent exhibition space exclusively for *The Dinner Party*. At the beginning of the Summer, Chicago had decided to donate her work to UDC, a notoriously underfunded

school, to be a part of the University's newly anticipated multicultural center for the arts. However, newspaper articles containing false information regarding the donation were published in local newspapers throughout the Washington D.C. area, igniting the United States government, who funded the school, to intervene.

On July 26, 1990, the debate was brought to the House of Representatives under the pretense of discussing the UDC budget and was centered around an amendment that would deduct \$1.6 million of the UDC budget request. A Republican representative from California, Robert Dornan, gave a three-minute speech regarding his opinion of *The Dinner Party*, using words like "disgusting" and "garbage." He was shocked that it had received partial funding in 1979 from the National Endowment of the Arts because in his opinion, it was "ceramic three-dimensional pornography" and "you would not let your children near it."<sup>25</sup> Representative Stan Parris introduced a bill that would penalize the University and withhold all federal funding if it accepted Chicago's donation. As a result, Chicago had to pull her offer, leaving *The Dinner Party* homeless again.

This is not entirely surprising in the context of the times. The eighties and early nineties were a period of deep conservatism. Ronald Reagan was elected President of the United States in 1980, marking the beginning of an especially conservative era. Within his first year as President, he announced sweeping rollbacks on federal anti-discrimination regulations and endorsed the Human Life Bill that would prohibit all abortions and all contraceptives. He won re-election in 1984, giving him four more years as President. In 1991,

Susan Faludi published her nonfiction book, *Backlash* chronicling the recent losses of the feminist advances of the 1970s.

The tide turned in 2002, when the Elizabeth A. Sackler Foundation, under the guidance of Dr. Elizabeth A. Sackler, chair of the foundation and board member of the Brooklyn Museum, at last purchased *The Dinner Party*. The foundation then gifted it to the Brooklyn Museum for a special exhibition that would take place in 2002. After viewing the exhibition, co-chief art critic of the *New York Times* and art historian, Roberta Smith gave a glowing review of *The Dinner Party*. "As with most works of such prominence, its historical import and social significance may be greater than its aesthetic value, but the three are so intricately and distinctly enmeshed that an altogether different kind of weight results."<sup>26</sup> Smith equated *The Dinner Party* with various aspects within American culture that were equally debated, but still of a distinctly significant importance. They were "Norman Rockwell, Walt Disney, W.P.A. murals and the AIDS quilt."<sup>27</sup> She posed herself the question, "Is *The Dinner Party* good or bad art?" resulting in her response, "it's more than good enough, and getting better all the time."<sup>28</sup>

Art is often determined to be either good or bad based on societal values at a specific moment in time. As a result, opinions of art shift over time. Since society's norms and beliefs are always changing, could this explain Smith's statement that *The Dinner Party* is continuously getting better? She believed that seeing *The Dinner Party* again twenty-three years later was like seeing it for the first time in a new light, and she came to different conclusions accordingly.

Stevenson Swanson, an editor for the Chicago Tribune, also published a review of *The Dinner Party* when it was shown at the Brooklyn Museum in 2002. He wrote, “With the passage of time and the rise of women in politics, business and the arts, it can be difficult to understand why so many people turned out to see a work whose point might seem obvious now—to give women a place at the table by proclaiming their contributions through the ages.”<sup>29</sup> Swanson and Smith shared a similar understanding of how and why the reception of *The Dinner Party* shifted so drastically from 1979. Both feminism and vaginas were no longer as controversial and, in fact, had become popularized in American culture.

*The Dinner Party* is now one of the major cornerstones of the Brooklyn Museum of Art. As of November 7, 2017, 1.5 million people have attended *The Dinner Party*, as it is housed and contextualized in the world’s only center for Feminist Art, the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art in Brooklyn, New York.<sup>30</sup> It is often described as the most pivotal feminist work of art of the century, and the first full articulation of feminist art in history.

For example, the normalization of vaginas in American culture can be tied to Eve Ensler’s *Vagina Monologues*. Published in 1996, *The Vagina Monologues* is a stage show based on numerous interviews Ensler conducted with women around the world regarding their specific relationships with their vaginas. When it was first written and performed, the play sent shockwaves across the world. Ensler covers a wide variety of topics regarding the vagina, demystifying a number of topics, including smell, pubic hair, periods, sex, masturbation, rape, and birth. Like Chicago,

Ensler wanted women to reconnect with their vaginas and mend the fragmented relationship they have as a result of society’s proscriptions.<sup>31</sup> She addressed the societal connotations that have been projected onto vaginas. That the word automatically insinuates pornography, Ensler has attempted to correct by reminding us that the word is a medical term and society has appropriated it into something unspeakably shameful. Like Chicago’s *Dinner Party*, *The Vagina Monologues* is now regarded as an important work of art and socio-politics.

The gradient shift in opinions of *The Dinner Party* can be attributed to several changes within society. In 1979 through 1981, Chicago’s use of vaginal motifs on the plates caused apprehension among countless viewers and institutions, as highlighted in the grand condemnation of the House of Representatives. The Brooklyn Museum’s acquisition of the work allowed for *The Dinner Party* to be revisited in a new social context and receive the praise that is now so freely given.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Deborah Johnson, "The Secularization of the Sacred: Judy Chicago's Dinner Party and Feminist Spirituality (1977-1979)," in *Women Making Art: Women in the Visual, Literary, and Performing Arts since 1960*. New York: Peter Lang, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Laura Meyer, "Constructing a New Paradigm: European American Women Artists in California, 1950-2000" in *Art, Women, California: Parallels and Intersections, 1950-2000* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 103.

<sup>3</sup> Lauren O'Neill-Butler, "Party Line: 30 Years Later, Judy Chicago's Dinner Party Has Enough to Go Around," *Bitch Magazine*, April 2007, 36.

<sup>4</sup> The Attic (online).

<sup>5</sup> Judy Chicago, "The Dinner Party: A Symbol of Our Heritage," in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists Writings* (California: University of California Press, 2012), 410.

<sup>6</sup> The Dinner Party. The Brooklyn Museum. Nov. 4, 2018. [https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/dinner\\_party/place\\_settings/theodora](https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/dinner_party/place_settings/theodora).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Judy Chicago, *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist*. 1st ed. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1975), quoted in Jane F. Gerhard, *Dinner Party: Judy Chicago and the Power of Popular Feminism, 1970-2007* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2013), 13.

<sup>10</sup> Laura Meyer, "Constructing a New Paradigm: European American Women Artists in California, 1950-2000", 103.

<sup>11</sup> Lisa E. Bloom, *Jewish Identities in American Feminist Art: Ghosts of Ethnicity* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 40.

<sup>12</sup> Judith E. Stein, "Collaboration" in *The Power of Feminist Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 1994), 228.

<sup>13</sup> Judith E. Stein, "Collaboration" in *The Power of Feminist Art*, 228.

<sup>14</sup> Phyllis Rosser, "There is No Place Like Home" in *New Feminist Criticism: Art, Identity, Action* (New York: IconEditions, 1994), 64.

<sup>15</sup> Jane F. Gerhard, *Dinner Party: Judy Chicago and the Power of Popular Feminism, 1970-2007* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2013), 137.

<sup>16</sup> Hilton Kramer, "Art: Judy Chicago's 'Dinner Party' Comes to Brooklyn Museum: Review," *New York Times*, October 1980, C.1.

<sup>17</sup> Hilton Kramer, "Art: Judy Chicago's 'Dinner Party' Comes to Brooklyn Museum: Review," *New York Times*, October 1980, C.1.

<sup>18</sup> Maureen Mullarkey, "The Dinner Party is a Church Supper," *Commonweal*, 1981, <http://www.maureenmullarkey.com/essays/dinnerparty.html> (accessed Nov. 4, 2018).

<sup>19</sup> Marla Donato, "Judy Chicago's 'Dinner Party' stirs controversy in art world," *UPI NewsTrack*, Nov. 16, 1981, *NewsBank*.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> *Dinner Party: Judy Chicago and the Power of Popular Feminism, 1970-2007*, 131.

<sup>22</sup> Lorraine O'Grady, "Olympia's Maid: Reclaiming Black Female Subjectivity" in *New Feminist Criticism: Art, Identity, Action* (New York: IconEditions, 1994), 154.

<sup>23</sup> Lorraine O'Grady, "Olympia's Maid: Reclaiming Black Female Subjectivity" in *New Feminist Criticism: Art, Identity, Action* (New York: IconEditions, 1994), 154.

<sup>24</sup> *Dinner Party: Judy Chicago and the Power of Popular Feminism, 1970-2007*, 199.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Dornan. "Congressman Discussing the Dinner Party." C-SPAN video, 4:33. June 14, 2016. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4603955/congressman-discussing-dinner-party>. <sup>26</sup> Roberta Smith, "For a Paean to Heroic Women, a Place at History's Table," *New York Times*, 2002, E.34.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Stevenson Swanson, "Feminist 'Dinner Party' Finds Permanent Setting," *Chicago Tribune*, September 22, 2002.

<sup>30</sup> Sarah Cascone, "How and Why 'The Dinner Party' Became the Most Famous Feminist Artwork of All Time," *Artnet News*, November 7, 2017.

<sup>31</sup> Eve Ensler, *The Vagina Monologues*, New York: Ballantine Books, 2018.



## Images



Figure 1: Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, 1970



Figure 2: *The Dinner Party* Entry Banners



Figure 3: Partial View of "The Heritage Floor"



Figure 4: Detailed Image of Theodora's Place Setting



STUDIO ART  
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STUDIO ART  
STUDIO ART



ISABELLA CHRISTILLES  
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# THE ORDAINED TIME

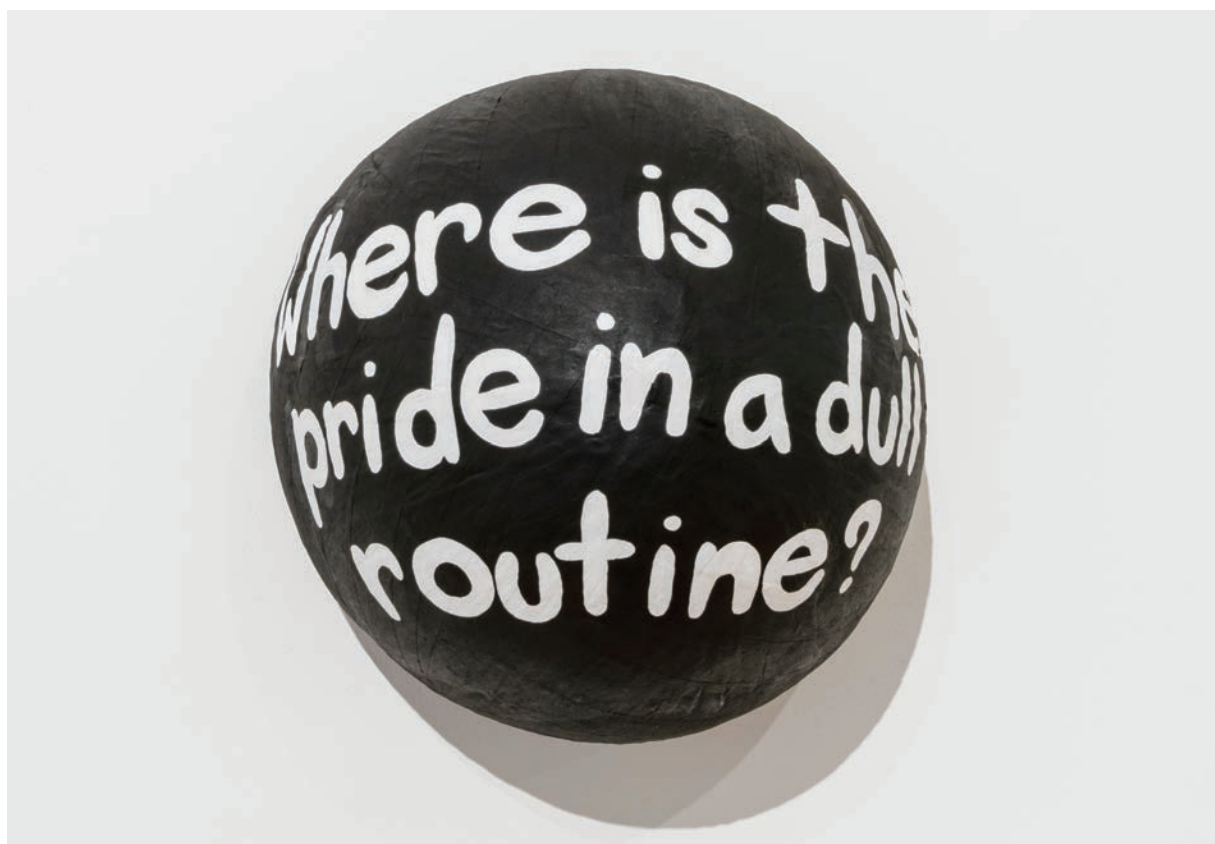
**M**y work is heavily influenced by elements from theater, including stage and costume design. This influence can be seen in both the subject matter and scale. The objects I create are either life-size, allowing someone to actively interact with or wear them, or larger than life-size, providing a more grandiose feel to the object.

For my thesis exhibition, *The Ordained Time*, I have built an interactive installation that invites viewers to a dinner scene. Approaching this work, viewers find a table set for a casual dinner, with a mask at each setting. Word bubbles protruding from the walls surrounding the table serve as dialogue cues prompting conversations from the audience. These dialogue cues and each item on the table (utensils, plates, cups, and masks) are handmade by layering and adhering strips of plastic and paper. This process of building thin strips of plastic or paper over time to construct the object adds a warped quality to each item.

*The Ordained Time* reanimates past moments of human connection through conversation. I want to share all the sentiments of such moments, while simultaneously creating a new moment with its own emotional attachments. By reflecting on the intimacy that occurs during some conversations, the work explores reasons for intimacy's possible absence. I find the dinner table to be an appropriate setting to spark conversation. It is a setting that, within a society increasingly mediated by digital communication, is still prevalent in people's lives. Similar to sculptural installations like Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* (1974-1979) and Camille Henrot's *The Pale Fox* (2014), my work's proposed action of inviting people to interact with others links back to the concept of communion and shared connection.



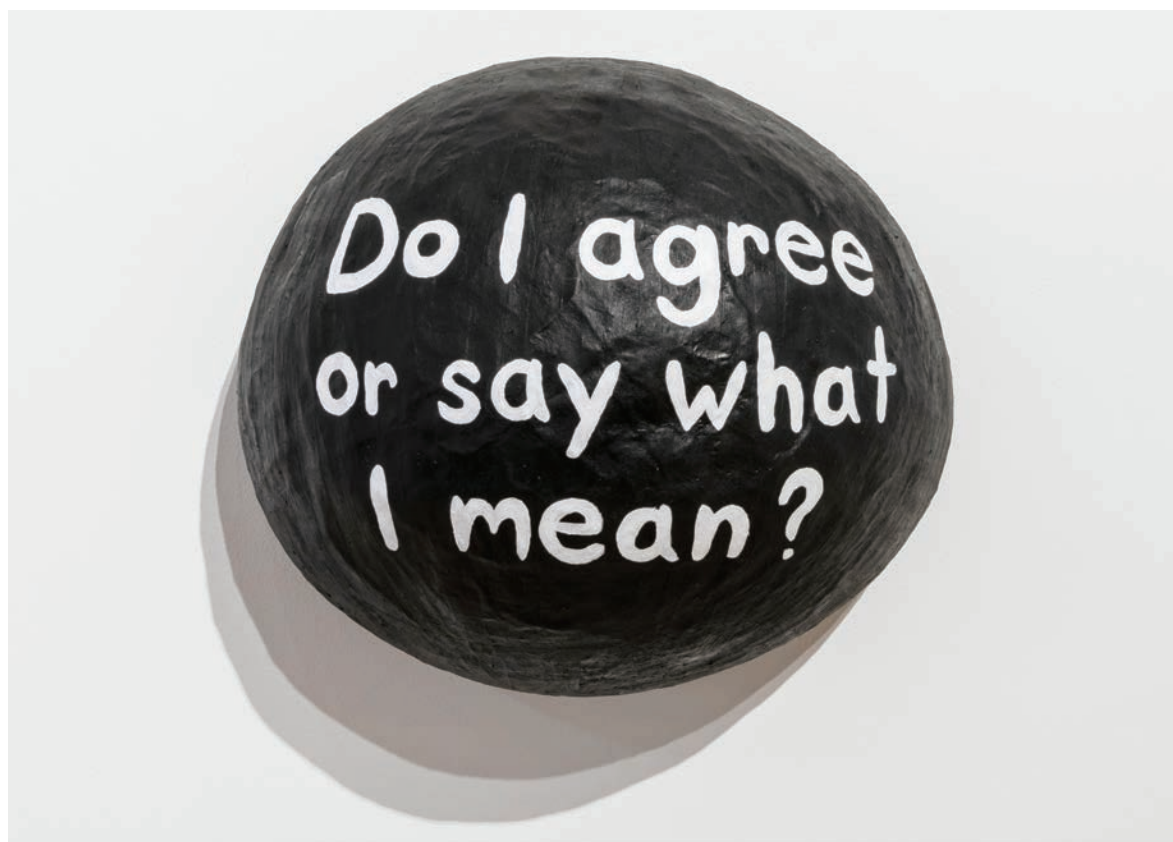
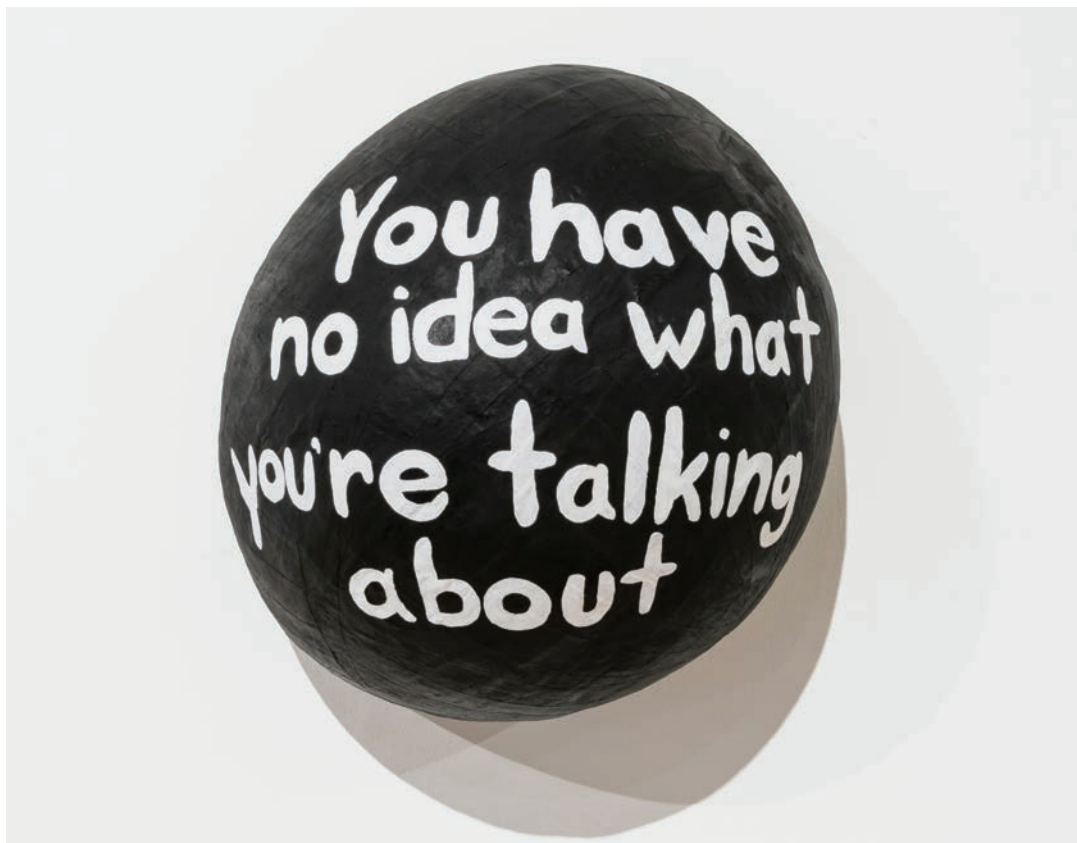


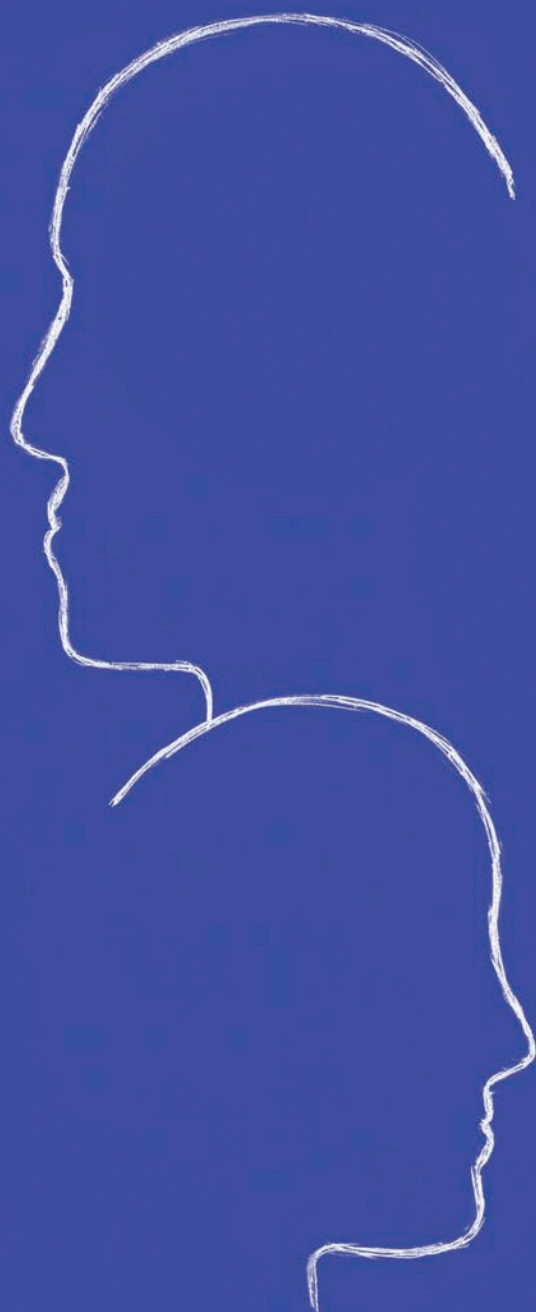












CATHERINE DAY  
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CATHERINE DAY

# BUT FIRST: LET ME TAKE A SELFIE

My Exhibition *But First: Let me take a Selfie* features multiple series of documentary style photographs in medium and large scale prints. These are installed in modern metal frames that echo the theme of my work which comments on our technologically obsessed culture. In this exhibition I attempt to directly confront the changing dynamic of the relationship between art and viewer. These works are characterized by a clean, bright, commercialized motif that highlights the movements and activities of my subjects. My works were taken all around Europe during my time abroad. I was able to see how tourists and locals alike interacted with their environment and what was deemed socially significant. Because of this I was able to emphasize how this phenomenon is not localized to a specific location, but takes place in practically every society that is overrun with technology and social media.

Through these photographs, I inquired how people now relate to art and the world around us in the context of technology and social media. By capturing how the viewer interacts with art, I tried to emphasize how the function of art may have changed from being the sole focus of the experience to a backdrop for selfies. Why is a viewer driven to include themselves in an image with a piece of art? What is lost or gained by viewing art through the filter of a cell phone? Is the viewer still able to be truly touched or affected by a piece of art in the way the artist intended? I inquire into these aspects of the viewers experience, remarking on how the individual assigns significance to objects and places, in age of technology and social media.







*#Instagram Husbands*, 2018

Inkjet print  
13 x 20 inches



*"Did I Blink?"*, 2018

Inkjet print  
13 x 20 inches



*#Twinning*, 2018  
Inkjet print  
13 x 20 inches

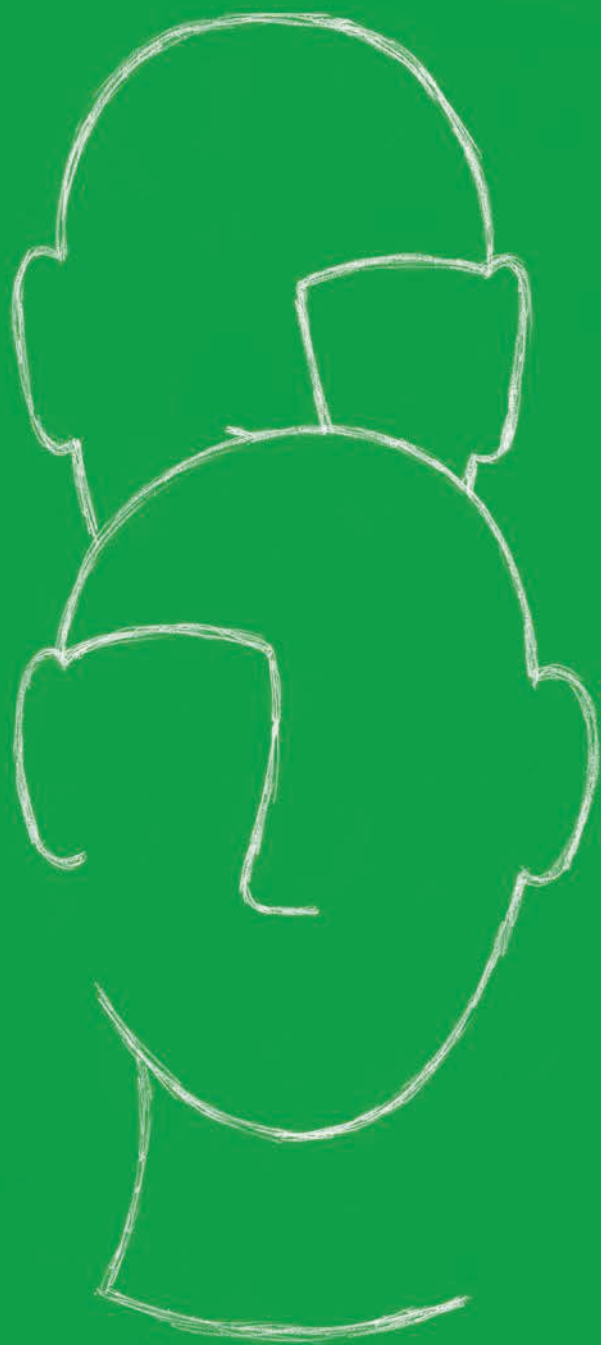


*Viva La Vida*, 2018  
Inkjet print  
13 x 20 inches











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# ANACHRONISTS

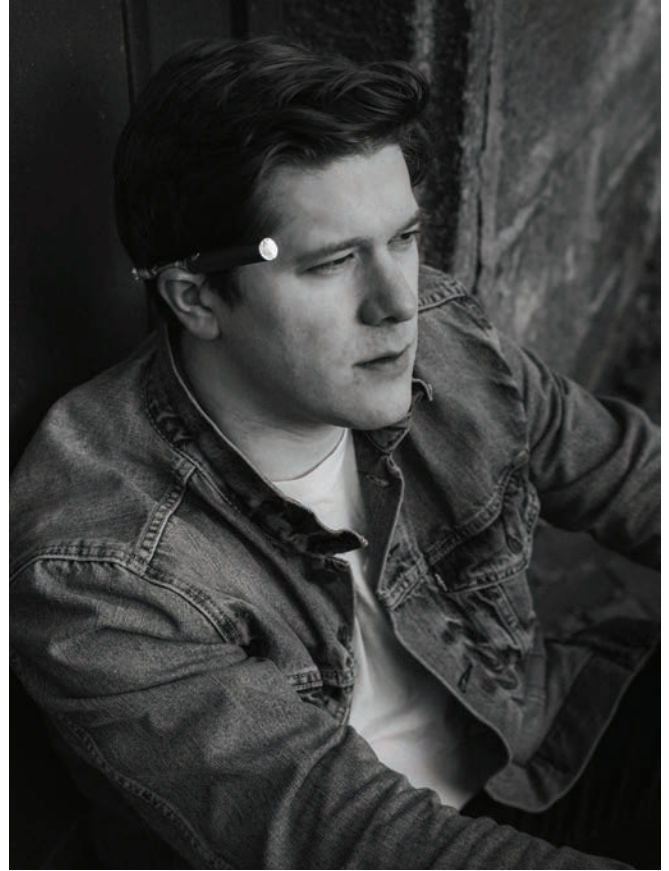
In my series, *Anachronists*, I attempt to replicate classic entertainment figures from the 20th century by borrowing the aesthetics of clothing, hair and beauty that best represent each person. I then apply the aesthetics to friends that I believe best portray each figure. Next, I modernize these figures by giving the model technology that either replaces an object from an old photograph or adds an object that the figure might use if they were still alive. I use old photographs of these figures as an inspiration for my own visual ideas. The photographs are taken on a digital camera and then edited on Lightroom and Photoshop to create black and white images. I play with contrast, grain and clarity to replicate the noisy quality of the old photographs I am inspired by. Through these images, I attempt to offer a juxtaposition between the past and the present, by having modern technology placed out of time.

*Anachronists* is inspired by the famous photographs that inspired me to begin this project. I have always been drawn to entertainment in the 20th century, specifically to music in the Jazz Era and the 50's-90's. Another major influence came from Annu Palakunnathu Matthew and Will Wilson, both photographers who attempted through different photographic methods and dual portraits, to represent the way that their identities as minorities in the U.S. are viewed. I am also highly influenced by my family roots and old artifacts that tell the story of my family's history. When I was in high school, my parents gave me my Nonno's brownie box camera. The tangibility of this foreign object caught my attention, and ever since then I have had a fascination for vintage items, specifically from entertainment. This fascination brought me to my curiosity of the lives and cultures of these figures.

I am intrigued by the impact that photography has on our knowledge of these figures. Without the images created by photographers such as Milton Greene, Irving Penn, Alfred Wertheimer, Annie Leibovitz, and Richard E. Aarons, we would not have a record of who they are, what they did and how they looked. Would Marilyn Monroe be so famous if Sam Shaw did not take the photo of her when her skirt was flying? How would Audrey be represented if the many photos from Breakfast at Tiffany's did not exist? What about Elvis' famous Jailhouse Rock photographs? One may say that photography is the reason for their sustained fame. Without them, I would not have been inspired to create *Anachronists*.



*Flappers*, 2018  
Inkjet print on Premium Luster photo paper  
24 x 30 inches



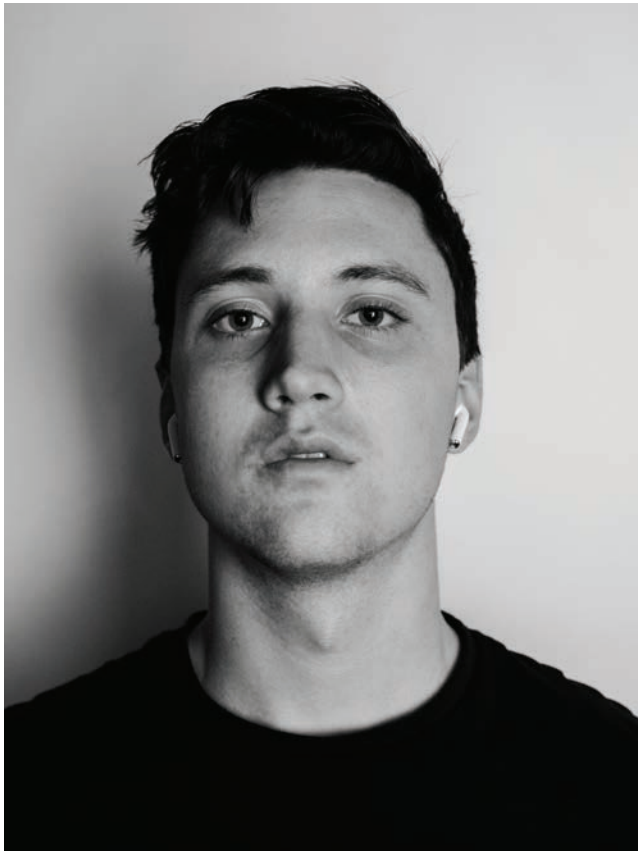
*James Dean*, 2019  
Inkjet print on Premium Luster photo paper  
24 x 30 inches



*Marilyn Monroe, 2019*  
Inkjet print on Premium Luster photo paper  
24 x 30 inches



*Audrey Hepburn, 2019*  
Inkjet print on Premium Luster photo paper  
24 x 30 inches



*Elvis Presley, 2019*  
Inkjet print on Premium Luster photo paper  
24 x 30 inches



*Stevie Nicks, 2019*  
Inkjet print on Premium Luster photo paper  
24 x 30 inches









MARCUS KARAMANOLIS  
MARCUS KARAMANOLIS  
MARCUS KARAMANOLIS  
MARCUS KARAMANOLIS  
MARCUS KARAMANOLIS

# SPELUNKING: THE EXPLORATION OF A NEW WORLD

**M**y artwork combines an interest in fantasy lands, and a curiosity about inanimate forms becoming conscious. I create imagined environments inspired by dreams or memories, especially those regarding my homeland, New Zealand. I search for endless possibilities to imagine these environments, and by creating new environments, no matter how strange or unrealistic, I represent a part of my subconscious mind and its idea of illustrating home.

I start to create this work in Z-Brush, a three dimensional modeling software that allows me to sculpt plant life and other life forms. I take these renders into Photoshop to create a unified collage with photos and sketches. After printing the work I place it onto a surface, or project the image itself through virtual reality. Collage is a useful way to recreate or reimagine these landscapes by being able to take away or add as many renders as I wish in the environment. Virtual reality on the other hand, allows one to look at all possible perspectives of the environment.

I am heavily influenced by Domenico Tiepolo who creates imaginary scenarios that highlight strange interactions between figures. Likewise, Gregory Crewdson is an artist that I am interested in for his photography, and Weta Workshop who create props and digital effects for films. Both Crewdson and Weta create imaginative and surreal experiences for their viewer.

The subject of my own work is imagined worlds that contain alien like forms. My intentions are that the viewer may find curiosity, especially in how the figures interact with each other. Depicting multiple alien figures allows me to suggest their growth and the way they may be actively changing with time. This implies movement and, most importantly, consciousness. The possibility of these figures having thought stimulates a viewer's imagination but also suggest an analogy for human behavior, and a playful comparison to human relationships.

The work that I construct is entirely digital. This allows for even more freedom and opportunity for creativity and imagination in the search of an eventual discovery of the imagined environments. Being made digitally allows for adjustments and additions to become far more attainable helping to make various versions of a single world. It also allows me to acknowledge and play with the way my homeland is portrayed in popular films as an idealized, sublime fantasy world. I want to invest my constructed environments with a mix of surrealism and visual pleasure which viewers perceive as a quality of aliveness in these landscapes.

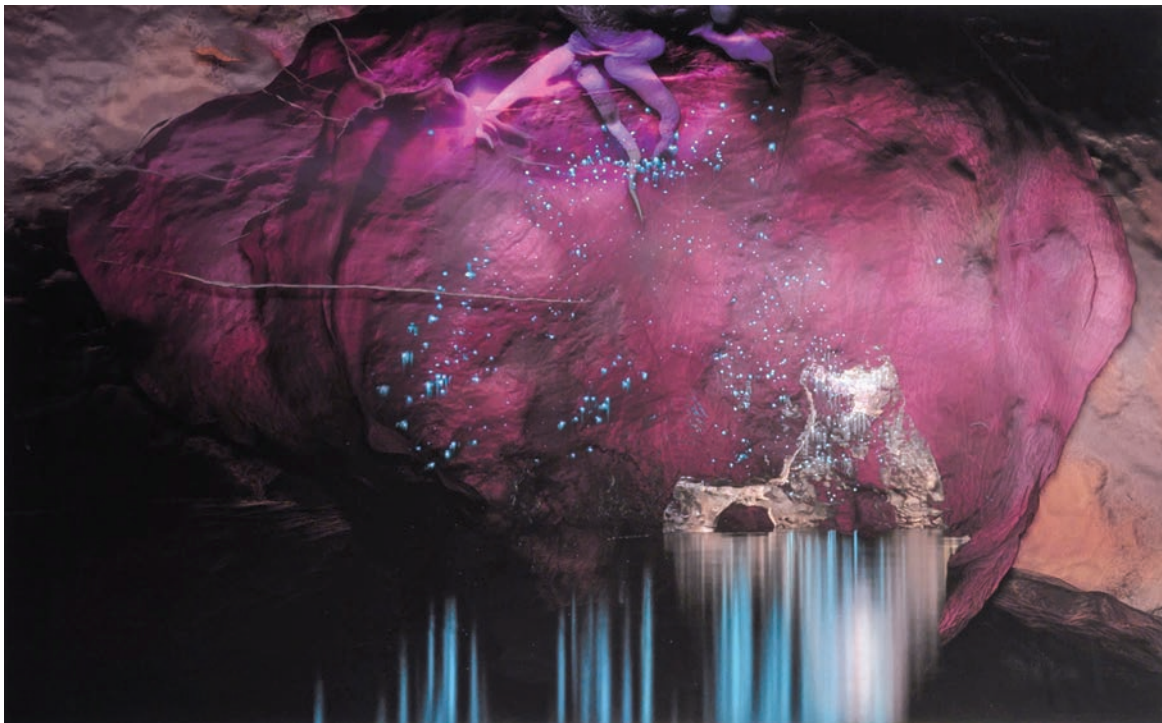




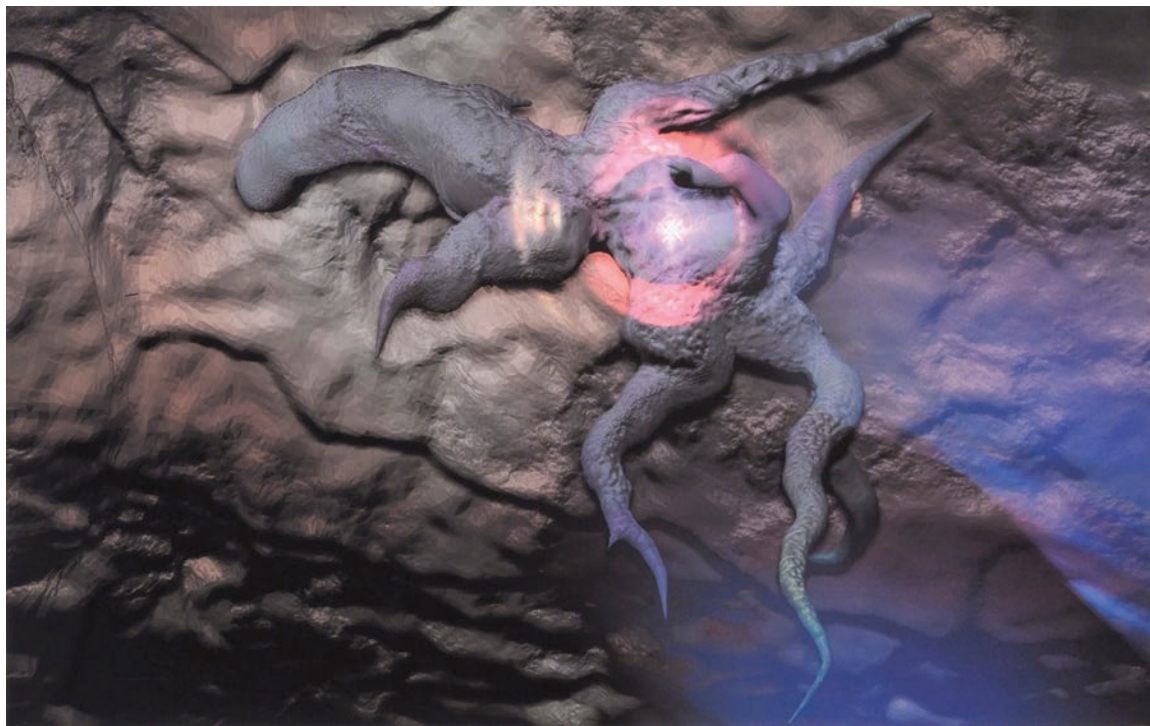
*Enter the Cave*, 2019  
Inkjet print on Rewall  
84 x 96 inches







*Groundwater*, 2019  
Inkjet print on Rewall  
40 x 64 inches



*Inhabitants*, 2019  
Inkjet print on Rewall  
40 x 64 inches



*The Passage*, 2019  
Inkjet print on Rewall  
40 x 64 inches







AMY PINEDA  
AMY PINEDA  
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AMY PINEDA

# MÍMICA

I make images of figures and abstract textures that tracks what is going on in my head for the duration of the drawing. I look at videos and performances of bodies in motion, and record them with my brush to create movement in my artwork. My own body's movement is evident in the form of gestural and immediate mark-making. In my abstract work, I try to observe and capture the movement of my own mind.

To make my figurative artworks, I watch videos on Youtube, pausing them every few seconds to capture the essence of the body in motion. I typically use two different types of video sources: rap videos featuring more sexualized, expressive dance, and mimica, a type of spiritual dance that is performed in a church. I use a loose approach that shows the drawing process unfolding. The final piece reveals erasures and corrections; we see how the drawing has changed over time.

My abstract drawings are based on intuitive patterns and experimentation with different media. I am using watercolors, acrylic, ink, and oil paint on papers and canvas to explore a range of techniques. These gestural drawings allow the most freedom and range for me, allowing my creative work to emerge in a number of different ways. I want my audience to follow the fluidity and witness the moment I capture in my artwork, noticing the movement of the brush strokes, the explosion of colors, and my own enjoyment creating these figural and abstract drawings.





*Composition 1*, 2019  
Oil paint and yarn on canvas  
30 x 52 inches





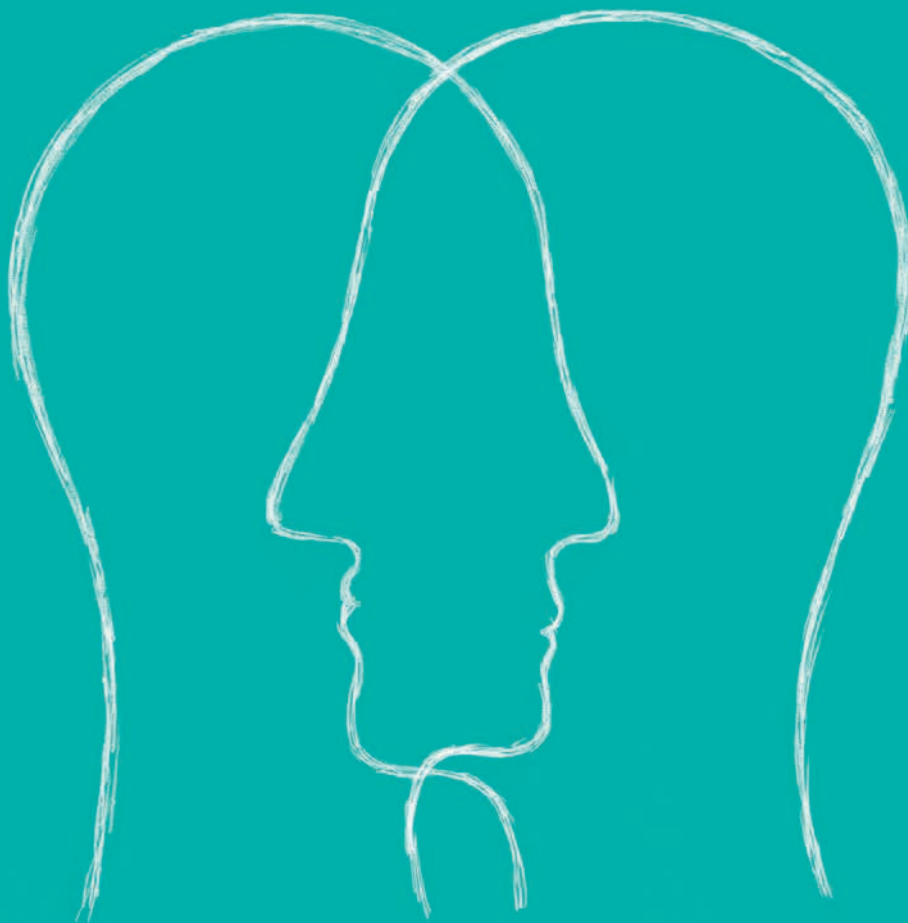
*Untitled #3, 2018*  
Acrylic paint and ink on paper  
14 x 11 inches



*Hangman*, 2019  
Oil paint with yarn on canvas  
30 x 24 inches



*Stringing Along*, 2019  
Oil and acrylic paint with yarn on unstretched canvas  
72 x 49.5 inches



JESSICA ROGERS  
JESSICA ROGERS  
JESSICA ROGERS  
JESSICA ROGERS  
JESSICA ROGERS



## ANTITHESIS

**M**y work focuses primarily on pattern and ornamentation, and the psychological responses and implications that go along with them. My art serves as a visual representation of the qualities I desire in my daily life.

My process and work highlight the discrepancy between how I actually am and how I wish to be. My anxious and quick movement from thought to thought is met by my obsessive rumination over my decisions and behaviors; my mind never seems to be still. I am drawn to the order and decisiveness of patterns. Patterns can be viewed in a purely optical manner, but they also come with psychological analogues: we can experience ease or serenity in response to geometric order, or restlessness in response to a syncopated repetition.

References in my work vary widely. I sample from many moments and cultures in the history of decorative art and gather threads from contemporary visual culture. All of the works I pull from exude perfection and certainty in their precision. In traditional textiles and decorative art, distinctive geometric arrangements, ornamental symbols and elements, and particular color choice seem to methodically join together in a seamless and serene manner. There is also a sustained nature present in traditional textile and pottery-making that mimics my own durational processes of coil-building, painting, and glazing.

My work visualizes the tension I feel between my constant desire for perfection and order, and my more chaotic internal state. The asymmetrical, organic, and fluid forms of my ceramic pieces juxtapose the order I attempt to impart through careful ornamentation and geometric motifs. Even in the meticulous glazing and painting of these motifs, my hand remains evident in shaky edges and the imprint of my fingers in the surface of the clay; in this way my materials embody my constant striving for an unreachable state of perfection.



Jessica Rogers  
*Antidromes*  
March 23 - 29, 2018  
Studio Art Thesis EX1  
Reddy Gallery



*Off Switch*, 2019  
Acrylic on canvas  
18 x 24 inches



*Overloaded*, 2019  
Acrylic on canvas  
18 x 24 inches



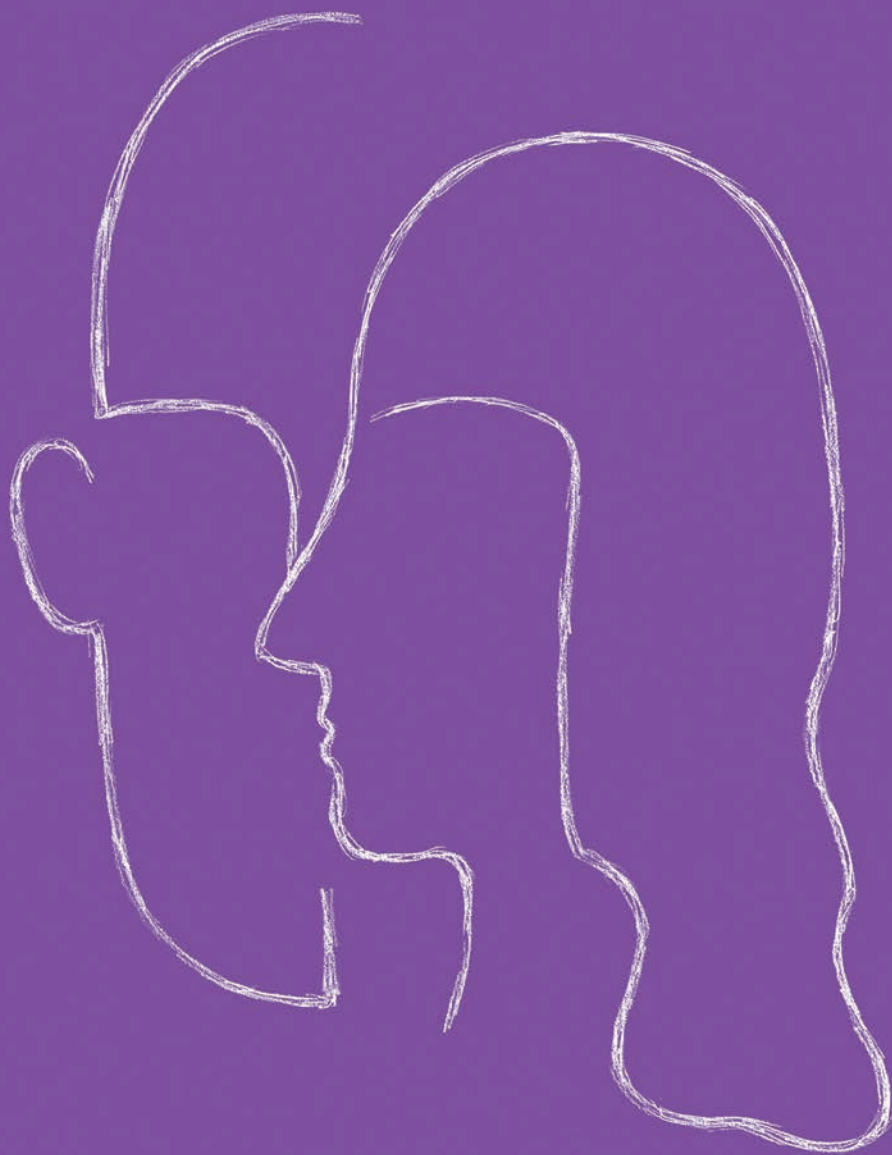








*Trespassing Temperament*, 2019  
Stoneware with underglaze and glaze  
38 x 30 x 27 inches



GRACE SNEESBY  
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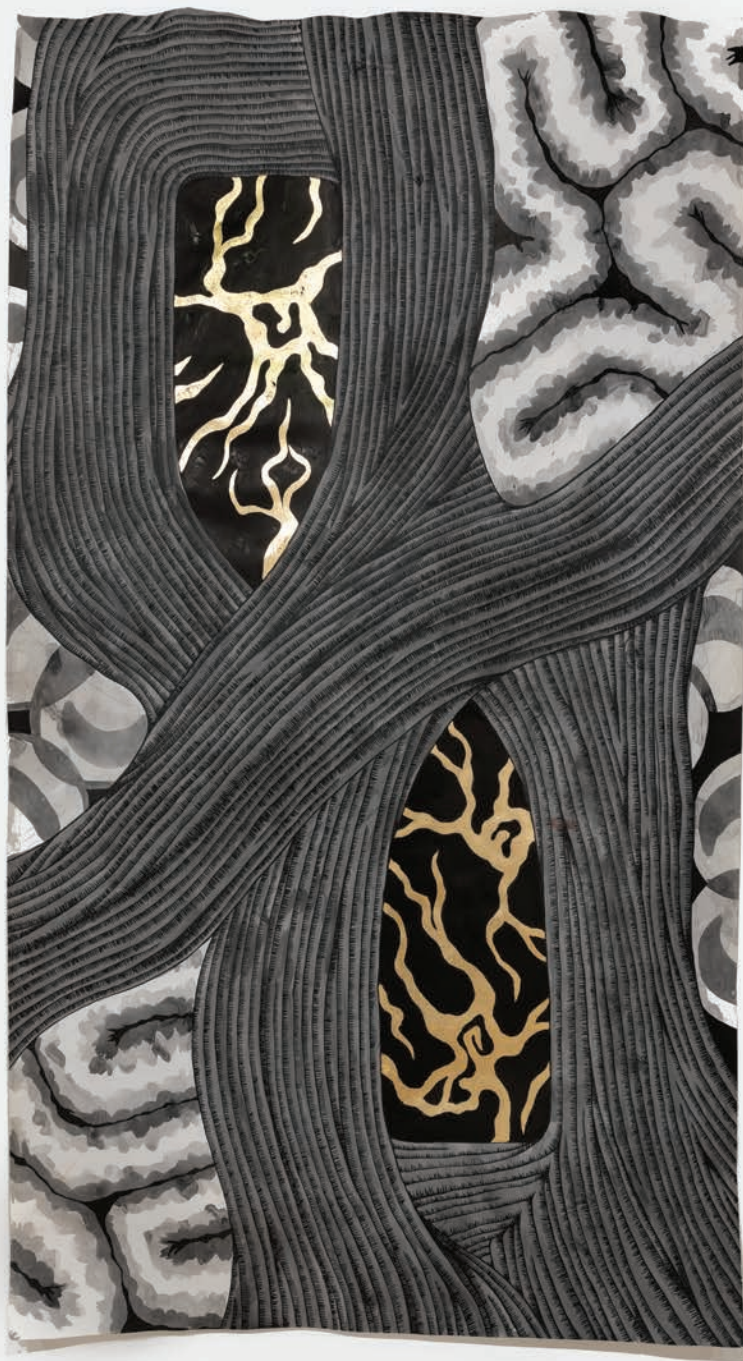
# REFLECTIONS ON THE NUMBER SEVEN

I am invested in the exploration of mental processes, mental health, and art as an expression of the two. Using ink, graphite, plaster, and organic materials, I create graphic illustrations and gestural sculptures. My work uses bodily imagery and textures, as well as the visual and symbolic language of religious art and illuminated manuscripts, to talk about ritualized behavior and the sensations of mental and emotional states.

The art-making processes I participate in are meditative, repetitive, and often meticulous. I also seek to cultivate a playful space for myself while I am working, where repetition and gestural movements can be soothing. Every project and material I use must allow for spontaneity within sets of predetermined confines. I work within the temporal and spatial boundaries of plaster pours, the borders of a frame or pool of ink, and the representational limitations of pictorial and diaristic depiction. My subject matter examines the tension between rationally justified rule-making and the emotional, bodily responses to the mental states induced by ritualized behavior. Often seriously, though sometimes humorously, I embrace anxious restriction and the gradual onset of weariness from repetition. Boundaries can both soothe and exhaust.

My work draws from my own experiences living with obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety, and depression. One of the obsessions which often motivated my compulsive behavior was an imagined perception of some contaminant in my body. I imagined a harmful residue which coated parts of my body and environment and which posed potential harm if I could not purify myself using the ritualized behavior. In reference to this experience, parts of my process include textural organic materials, like seeds and pumpkins, as well as inorganic materials which come into contact with the body, such as contact lenses, bandaids, or ointment. Symbolic associations with medicine and health reflect on the pathologizing of “disordered” mental behavior, as well as the impulse to cleanse which manifests aggressively in OCD. Religious imagery and shapes also recall the urgent fixations common for many with OCD, including myself, which seek instead a spiritual purification. The combination of these associations is intended to represent the futile and emotionally compromising quest for control over the uncontrollable. This instinct is universal, appearing wherever the border between the rational and irrational becomes blurred.





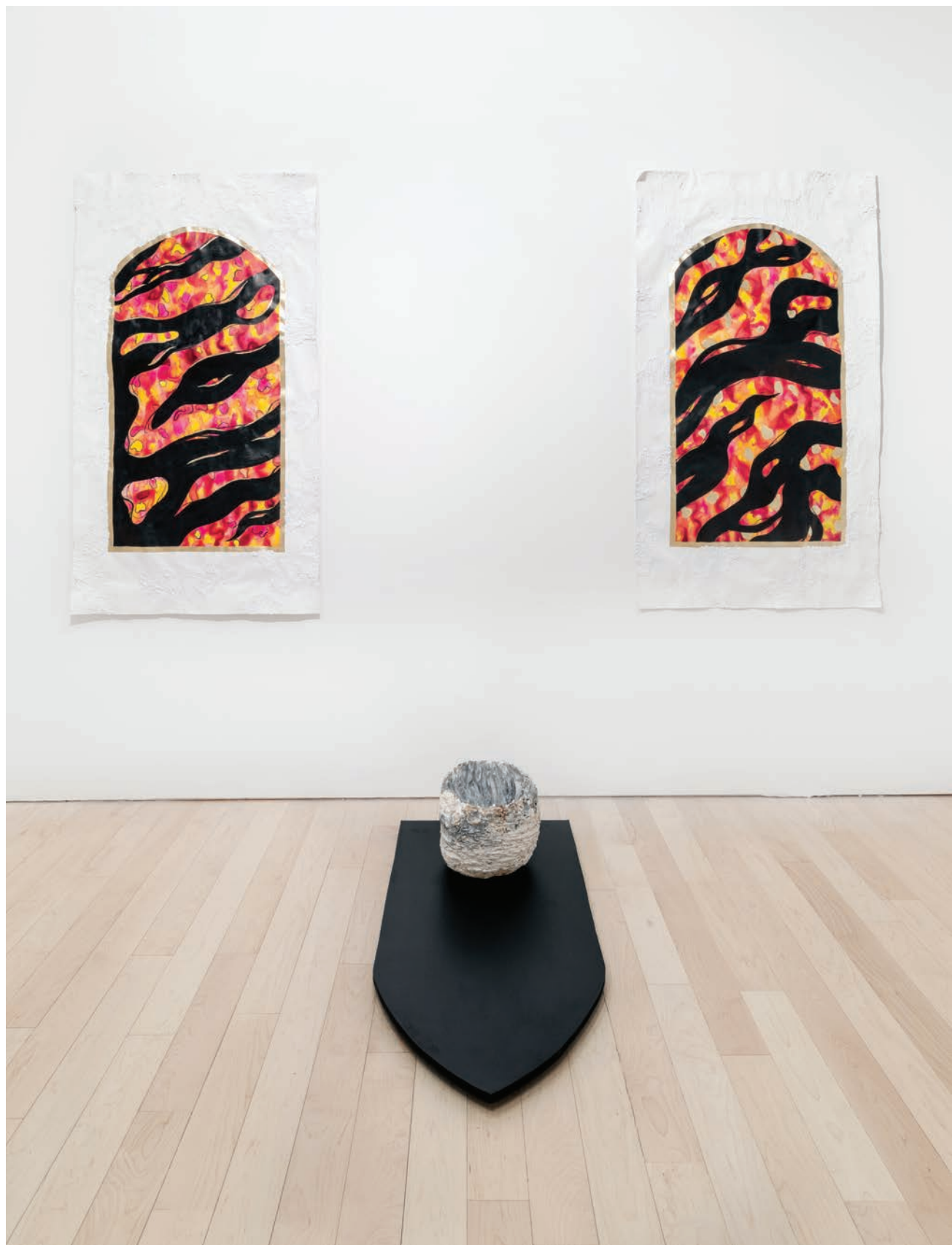
*Passage*, 2019  
Ink and gold leaf on paper  
65 x 36 inches



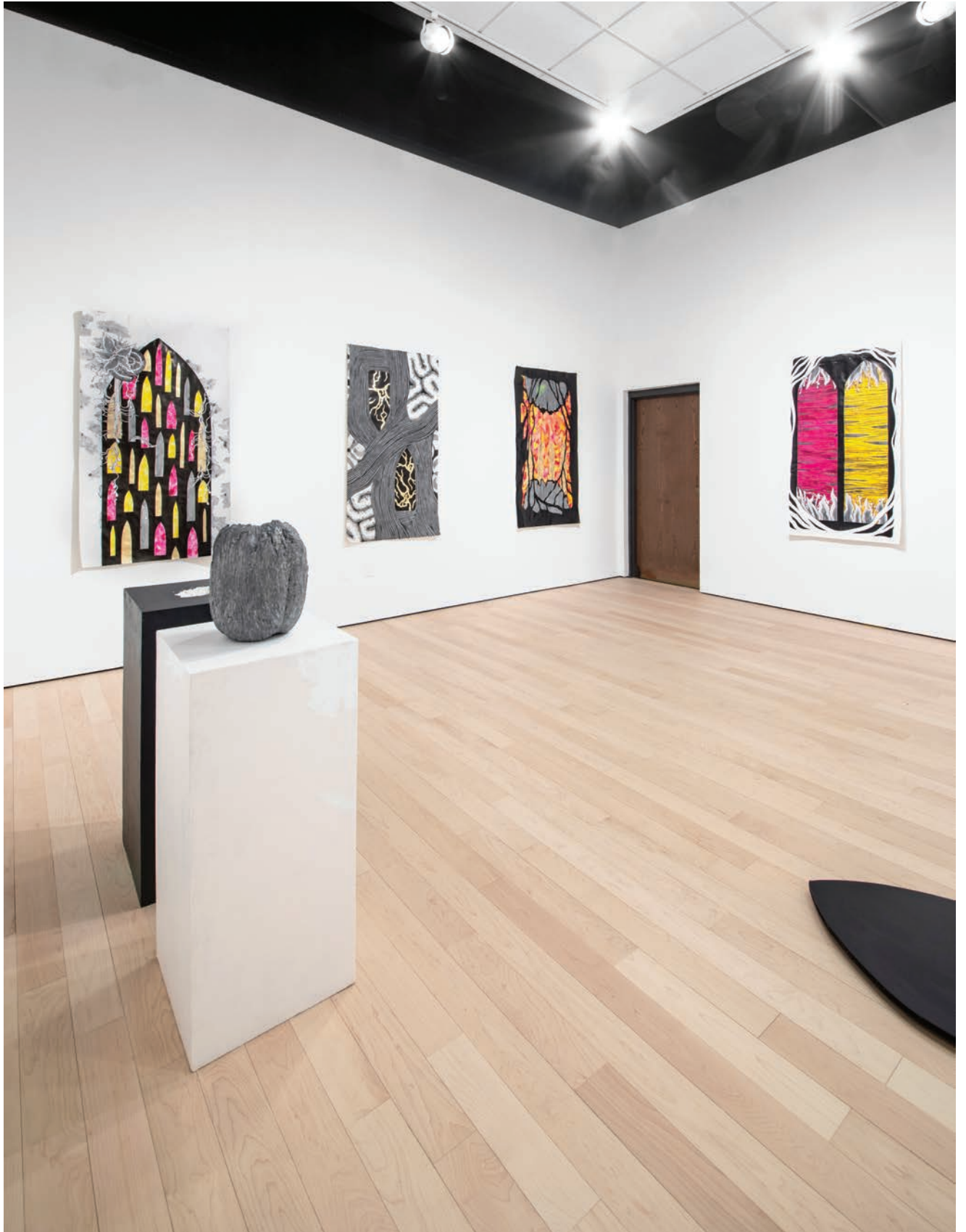




*Subalternate*, 2019  
Ink and gold leaf on paper  
65 x 36 inches













PERSPECTIVES

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