

WOMEN IN THE ARTS



George Eliot

OSHER AT JHU

INGLESIDE AT KING FARM

FALL 2024, MONDAY MORNINGS

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Creative people have been producing music, poetry, plays and art for centuries. Until the last few decades, the vast majority of the art produced by women has been dismissed, discounted, or suppressed from conception by a society that starved women of support for their creative work. Today, the work of artists who are women is published, performed, and exhibited as it never has been before. In the last few decades, scholars have shed light on many creative women from the 19th century, for example the composers Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel and Clara Schumann, both of whom stood in the shadow of male composers. And one could go back earlier still with figures such as the 17th-century painter Artemisia Gentileschi, the 15th-century poet Christine de Pizan, or the 12th-century polymath Hildegard von Bingen.

Against the emergence of these and numerous other CREATORS, there is also the traditional categorization of women as GODDESS or MUSE, both of which we shall dismiss quickly. The first refers to the ways in which women have been extolled by male artists as ideals of beauty and virtue, a pedestal which may be less an honor than a limitation. The term “muse,” though also a male construct, leads to an interesting discussion of how art can be inspired and shaped by the women who became its subjects. We shall also look at the dynamic of female creative artists in largely male groups such as the Impressionists, *Les Six*, or Bloomsbury. And we shall absolutely consider the role of women as patrons, from royal figures such as Elizabeth I and Catherine the Great to collectors such as the Cone Sisters and Gertrude Stein. *rb.*



1. It's Your Pedestal... (September 16)

...so Stay There! A quick overview of how women have been presented over the centuries in the arts as exemplars of beauty and virtue, yet have seldom been permitted agency in their own right.

2. Behind the Veil (September 23)

Much of the music, poetry, and painting in earlier centuries was created by nuns in convents—work which shows not only an assured technique but often a surprising intensity of passion.





3. The First Professionals (September 30)

A secular pendant to the previous class: female sculptors, painters, poets, and composers who made a name for themselves in a world largely dominated by the work of men.

4. At Her Majesty's Command (October 7)

The role of female potentates in commissioning works of art (albeit mainly from men): Elizabeth I, Catherine de Medici, Mme. de Pompadour, or (pictured) Isabella d'Este and Catherine the Great.



5. Necessarily Domestic? (October 14)

Do women artists necessarily specialize in domestic subjects? Does the generally smaller scale of their work (e.g. songs rather than symphonies) reflect the limitations imposed by household duties?

6. Intimate Relations (October 21)

Sisters, lovers, wives: women in close relationships who have aided or inspired a man's career. Is there always conflict when the muse is a creative artist in herself?



7. Primadonna Assoluta (October 28)

Nowhere is the star more extravagantly worshipped as a goddess, yet more insistently depicted as a victim, than in ballet and opera. But female composers and choreographers are few.

8. Authors and Heroines (November 4)

Women came to the fore as novelists earlier than in the other arts, perhaps because writing did not require admission to male academies. But are their heroines necessarily more nuanced and deeper?

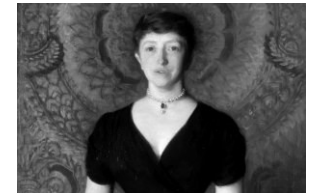


9. Group Dynamics (November 11)

The special case of female creators in groups consisting largely of men, such as the Impressionists, the Abstract Expressionists, *Les Six*, Bloomsbury, and the Algonquin Round Table.

10. Patrons and Collectors (November 18)

How the modern art world has been shaped by collectors such as the Cone sisters, Gertrude Stein, and Peggy Guggenheim, and museum founders such as Isabella Stewart Gardner (right).



11. Fighting for Her Place (December 4)

In the words of Helen Reddy, "I am Woman, hear me roar!" A survey of female artists and writers whose explicit subjects are womanhood, creative freedom, and respect.

12. Made in Our Century (December 9)

The content of the final class will be announced at the time, since the intent is to present a selection of women's art as up-to-the-moment as possible, and ranging over all media.



For more detail, color illustrations, artist bios, and suggestions for further reading, see the class website:

www.brunyate.com/WomenArts/

- Thumbnails** (mostly details): 1. Gérôme: *Artist and Model*; 2. Hildegard von Bingen; 3. Properzia de' Rossi; 4. Titian/*Antropov*; 5. Mary Lightbody Gow; 6. Elaine & Willem De Kooning; 7. Fanny Elssler; 8. Lady Edna Clarke-Hall: *Wuthering Heights*; 9. Mary Cassatt; 10. Isabella Stewart Gardner; 11. Judy Chicago; 12. Amanda Gorman