

How Women Are Portrayed Through Different Art Mediums

WAYS OF PERCIEVING

LIBBY TURNER

WORD COUNT: 1,433

Women have been portrayed as a helpless victim in many horror movies, this led into the investigation on how women are perceived through different art mediums including, film, paintings, photographs, and sculptures. These perspectives of women come from different time periods showing how time has changed the use of women in art. The use of different time periods within the exhibit will give a wide view upon the perspectives and what demographics of women were used at the time. It will aim to change the audience's viewpoints on how they look at artwork of women and look at the differences within how each medium of art would perceive women. This exhibit will look at mediums taken from many different artists including Nereo Costantini, Viv Collis, Helen Chadwick, Eugene von Blass, Lee Jeffries, and Dorothea Lange.

When reading the book *Return of the Monstrous- Feminine* by Barbara Creed (Creed, 2022) it states the following sentence '...the experiences and emotions which the female protagonist encounters on her journey into the dark night of abjection where she must face her worst nightmares- the rapist, murderous father, violent patriarchy, impersonal and cruel bureaucracies, heterosexist legal systems, and racist and sexist authorities.' This sentence alone makes me wonder how many films, books and other mediums bring this across to the audience. As it is true. This is the real world that women face. I wanted to explore how truthful mediums can be with expressing a women's life including their fears, demographics, bodies, all things that women get judged and become vulnerable for.

Many films and art pieces show women in a view designed for men with a perfect body, sex and other features that would take a man's interest. This shows a theory of feminism in which advocates for social equality of the sexes and tries to rectify the unfairness faced by women. This is due to the male perspectives being prioritized over women. An example for this is a bronze statue of Juliet located in Verona; Italy made by Nereo Costantini back in 1905-1969.

This statue has become a tourist attraction as its stated that touching Juliet's right breast will bring good luck however this brought much controversy along with it. For instance, an article by *Stars And Stripes* (Montgomery, 2018) released statements about people's views upon this action including a Boston doctor Jon Einarsson who is the president of a medical board of gynaecological surgeons who lined up to take a picture with the statue holding the breast and grinning to the camera. After showing this at a medical conference 'more than 100 surgeons petitioned the medical group's governing board to say that female surgeons had been sexually harassed and assaulted, intimidated and objectified by male colleagues.' They then went to say how the photo was 'unprofessional and disrespectful.' Although there have been women to perform this act the majority of people have been males who not only have grabbed the breast but also rubbed and handled it disrespectfully showing their true behaviour toward women's bodies which



(Costantini, 1905- 1969.)

also lead into the added fear in women against males as seen in the example above. Due to this statue playing a part within the research of this exhibit I will be including it within the display to see how the audience will view it within the context of the rest of the exhibit. To link within this

the book *Dismantling the patriarchy, bit by bit: art, feminism and digital technology* by Judith K Brodsky (Brodsky, 2022, pp.105–116) talks about how female artists ‘attempted to disrupt the male gaze by such devices as inverting the gaze and depicting the male nude in the same manner as a traditional female nudes.’ This took place back in 1970 which led to it being rejected in the 1980s as it was seen as only ‘reinforcing the male gaze’ and instead the ‘Representation of the female body had to be abandoned altogether.’

To link within feminism, we can also use the theory Marxism where he believed that everyone should be equal no matter the background, demographic, or gender of the person. Using the website: easysociology (MrSociology, 2024) I researched Marxist’s views upon the gender equality in which states ‘1. Gender is a product of the division of labour within a capitalist society... 3. The capitalist class benefits from maintaining gender roles and stereotypes.’ Using this quote from the page and comparing it with



(Merched, 2025) 2

mediums of art presented in the world, we can see that many pieces of art and photography produced contain the stereotypes within the gender roles and how overtime these stereotypes have changed and have been forgotten in some cases. An example of this is Viv Collis’s project called *Women’s Work* in 2025 which shows women doing jobs associated with being a stereotypical man’s job. This breaks the capitalist view upon gender roles and shows the Marxist theory in action.



(Merched, 2025) 1

Another book that reads into the how women are perceived is *Provocation in Womens Film Making* by Janice Loreck (Loreck, 2023, p.Paragraph 10), in which she studies others work and writes about her perspective on them. One of them being *Kent’s and Ekof’s* work. In her book she states ‘Loreck links Kent’s and Eklof’s “unblinking” depictions of rape to “an ethics of authenticity and witnessing” (p.54) and the common contention that presenting sexual violence from a women’s perspective as victim encourages an empathic response within the viewer.’ I believe in this being true as it will allow women to relate to the feeling of fear and emotions running through the scene and allows the truth of the event to be seen both ways. As instead of it being seen through the pleasure that the males get it would be seen through the trauma and pain of the women giving a more truthful sight into the event giving a more emotional two sides of the scene happening.



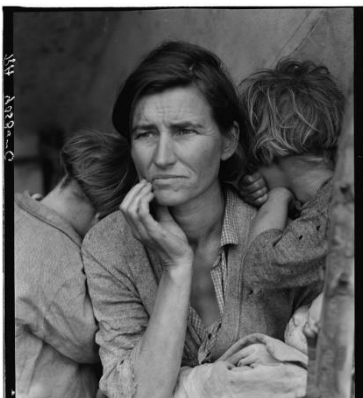
(Chadwick, 1977) 1

The image to the left shows a photograph created by Helen Chadwick in 1977. The project itself was named *In the Kitchen* in which is considered seminal in the history of feminist art. Creating this project involved having three performers wear costumes that Chadwick had made herself. These were to represent gendered kitchen appliances as shown in the image. The use of the stove rings is placed to resemble breast plate. As well as a stove she also created an oven, sink and washing machine. Using these costumes and images, Helen wanted to confront the stereotype of women being housewives. This links into the theory of Marxism due to the stereotypical housewife job for women which are viewed by capitalists as being correct.

The image to the right shows a painting done by Eugene de Blass (Eugene von Blass) who was an Italian painter. It was made in 1889 and was named *Girl at the Window*. The reasoning behind choosing this photo for the gallery is due to the fact that the girl is dressed stereotypically in female clothing along with make-up and hair. In the male gaze, females are seen with clear delicate skin, which can be seen in the image. This links towards the feminism theory I talked about due to the stereotypical presentation of the girl in the painting.



(Blass, 1889) 1



(Lange, 1936) 1

My 6th image in the exhibit is called *Migrant Mother*. This was created by Dorothea Lange in 1936, California. I felt that it was important to include this image within the exhibit due to how contrasting it is to the older artworks such as the *Girl in the Window*. This is due to the painting showing perfect imagery of a female whereas this photograph shows the opposite. This image works toward the theory of feminism as the view of the women would not be presented for a male's gaze but instead for a mother's gaze due to the kids in the image as well as the mother herself.

My final two images are by Lee Jefferies in his project of portraits (Jefferies, 2023). The images show two homeless women, both in which are the opposite of the stereotypical presentation of a woman. These images show the theory of feminism in which women should be equal no matter what. The fact that the women's faces aren't perfect and that they



(Jefferies, 2023) 2

are presented very close to the camera allowing the audience to see the imperfections of the ladies shows how the photographer



(Jefferies, 2023) 1

didn't take the images for the male gaze but instead to create a powerful message about different lives.

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Artwork Bibliology



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Size: Height of the wall



(Costantini, 1905- 1969.) 1

Costantini, N. (1905- 1969.). *Bronze Statue of Juliet*. [Statue].

Size: 6ft tall, life size



(Merched, 2025) 1



(Merched, 2025) 2

Merched, G. (2025). *Women's Work*. [Photography] Available at: <https://www.vivcollisphotography.com/gwaith-merched-women-s-work>.

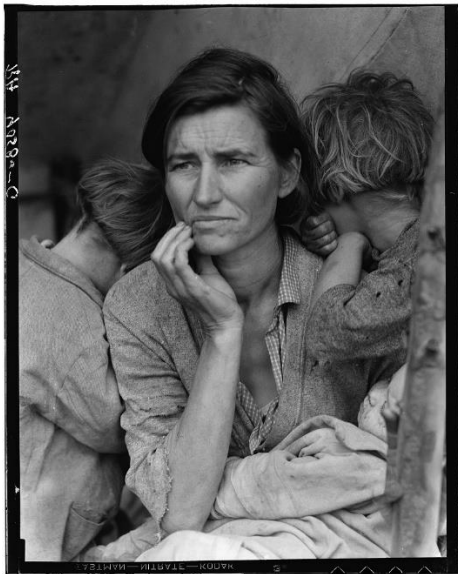
Size: Height of the wall



(Blass, 1889) 1

Blass, E. von (1889). *Girl at the Window*. [Painting] Available at: <https://artvee.com/dl/girl-at-the-window/>.

Size: Height of the wall



(Lange, 1936) 1

Lange, D. (1936). *Migrant Mother*. [Photograph].

(Lange, 1936)

Size: Height of the wall



(Jeffries, 2023) 1



(Jeffries, 2023) 2

Jeffries, L. (2023). [Photograph].

(Jeffries, 2023)

Size: Height of wall

