

The Feminist Art Exhibition

This is an exhibition show located within Mission Art Gallery based in Wales. This Exhibition will raise awareness of a movement known as the feminist art movement that began when female artists and activists in the late 60s expressed their collective desire to be something more than a “footnote” (IW.A.R, 2011) asking serious questions of the noticeable “lack of access” (Doyle, 2020) to female created art in public spaces that suggested a male dominated Art landscape.

This Exhibition not only relates to the history of the movement but will coincide with the “dispiriting” (Tsjeng, 2018 p.7) statistics that female artists were faced with in their field of work as of the mid-2010s.

My Exhibition will Celebrate to this breakthrough in society that has seen a uplift in female working artists within exhibition spaces.

Female artist Cindy Shermans film untitled stills 1977-80 proved to be effective in its response to the 50s and 60s Hollywood era of “masculine pleasure” (Mulvey, 1990 p. 26) linking her work to the “struggling women” (Public Delivery, 2019) in her series Making her work a key figure for this exhibition.

“Exhibitions can and should go beyond simple illustration or representation” (Obrist, 2014 p.168) this opinion on the exhibition concept perfectly supplementing the reasoning behind the inclusion of contemporary feminist collage. Rozann Le Gall, and Deborah Stevenson will feature within a collective.

Magdalena Abakanowicz’s organic fibres, will serve as a “ambiguous” (Tate, 2023) Depiction of motherhood, Harley Weir as well as Camille Claude will complete the floor as quiet responses.

“Women are Different” (Robinson, 2001 p.98) Ann Marsh on a quote

From the new founding Woman’s Art Movement dissociating themselves from white male manifested representations in the visual arts.

This Movement formerly known as the Women’s Art Group formed in the late 60s amongst a time of uprise among the civil rights movement and queer rights movements, became the first women to revolt against the male “straight mind”. (Witting, 1980 p. 109) In which Witting argues the collective male minds in the visual arts rely on stereotypical female archetypes on an unconscious, that led a rigid depiction within society, but with WAM the shift away from this began.

Modern times suggest victory but only minor for what it should be, the Freelands Foundation reported that only twenty five percent of major solo exhibitions in London where female artists in 2015. Freelands also carried on the report to 2021 that saw a thirty three percent increase to female solo exhibitions that suggests a promising development in the industry, however there is uncertainty in the air of our political landscape, back pedalling on trans women rights as well as hate crime has reached a modern high and has crept into modern western society once again.

“woman’s Silence and men’s voice” (Robinson, 2001 p.178) has raised historic reference to sexual aggression, violence and domination within male culture, this quote was dated in regard modern society, however huge political players remain men, which in these times we must question for evident equality. This is where historic misrepresentation of the feminist originates, “in conversation from the Vancouver art gallery” (Pollock, 1989) states the “disrupting against the grain nature” (Pollock, 1989) of the feminist but this is an exaggerated assumption, it was the creative artists of Guerrilla Girls that used this punchy tone in reference to appropriation but this led to being heard. The strategy of Guerrilla Girls completely flipped the notions of the men’s voice being the only voice in authority. My neutral view on the matter of the female form is that any size, skinny to

oversized and imperfection or anything in between should not be deemed controversial within the visual arts within context of the image. Recent history suggests both genders approach the form in creative ways away from straight male aesthetic especially within the feminist and lesbian feminist movement as Harley Weir demonstrates “I want to make things I would like to see” (Weir, 2019) on her practice when referencing male forms, as this can also be said of her depictions of females alike.

This would loosely with Mapplethorpe’s “perfection in form” (Tate, 2023) , Mapplethorpe got high praise for his experimental gender portraits with Lysa Lyon. The negativity against some art historians for his rumoured fascination with black males seems odd, but that being said Weir breaks those barriers with no fear and is thriving in the modern world as a female artist.

To summarise these key aspects of feminism, I hope to establish a link to the importance of promoting diverse accessible female created art that connects the spectator to the complex idea of creation symbolically through anatomy and through fighting for equal rights.

Magdalena Abakanowicz found strength through personal “family atmosphere” and history as well as analytical deconstruction of her role as a women under strict socialist rule. It was Abakanowicz mothers conscious ambition to see her daughter married with children that saw the inspiration for the “organic world” of the human body to be displayed with such monstrous power. (Abakanowicz, 2022)



Pregnant is made up of the combination of birch branches,

Fig.1:*Pregnant*

wire and fabrics that evoke the breakdown of the body that has been opened up to reveal the insides, the process of weaving and sewing serves as the symbolic of blood ties and growth that Abakanowicz states her pieces as “living things” (Abakanowicz p10 2022) to quote the artist. Pregnant is very much a living biological entity that is brought to life by her process.

Fig.2: *Untitled Film Still #3*



Cindy Sherman, a self-portrait artist that grew up watching 50s Hollywood movies with her father sparked the origin for this breakthrough feminist art.

During university Sherman utilised the uncertain future of the cold war and the 1970s “legitimacy crisis”

(Volscho, 2016) of capitalism that rose unemployment levels and inflation to depict a variety of women within b list Hollywood movies. These women, presented in roles that are carefully fabricated from makeup to clothing to evoke a certain subtext in their environment. Sherman quotes an inner “turmoil” (Sherman, 2019) within her personal view of women at the time making these pieces helped Sherman communicate the juxtaposition of their personality with their environment and garments with each women looking away from the camera. The careful application of the appearance acts as a diversion looking at the expressions of these women that have been frozen in time are “searching” (Sherman, 2019) the act of looking away from the camera a symbolic of this. These women are conscious and alive in a fabricated world.

Claudel who in the time of making this piece was not allowed to enter her own praised art academy due to being a woman, was praised by many for her metallic sculptures that married strength with beauty to the point she was dubbed the “greatest French sculpture alive in 1903” (Reval, 1903).

This statue depicts a male and female dancing, intertwined in an intimate embrace, the clothing that drips from their lower figure presents a sense of movement, this is complimented by the statues bronze sculpture that dramatizes the already muscular torsos, the symbolic of a strong bond between man and woman working in harmony.



Fig.3: *The Waltz*

The Waltz encompasses the unfortunate tale of male power in a male dominated industry in the 19th century. the power that lover and mentor Rodin had on young impressionable Claudel to get the exposure intertwined her fortunes with him, the lovers fallout a decade later would set about the unprepared Claudel into the world alone and unprepared for an independent life that education now prepares us for.

Deborah Stevenson who has been working on paper collage since 2010 thrives upon the “spontaneous” nature of letting collage within her work lead “communication” to create dialogue, this relationship with collage that has developed within Stevenson bounded her with the “workings of the human mind” (Tsjeng, 2018 p. 59) which can only be easily accessible through the vast avenues of creative choices of collage.



Fig.4: *Women's At The Waters Edge*

The three images on show from the Stevenson collection is women's on the water edge, above it all and new moon, these images are “fun and spontaneous” that hint towards a brighter future of equality within humanity.

Rozenn Le Gall who utilises collage to explore the bizarre, “to suggest things”. (Tsjeng, 2018 p183) Le Gall's use of females as the subject is an active choice due to the overuse of the female form within “institutionalized art”. (Tsjeng, 2018 p.184)



Fig.5: *Untitled Collage*

This image is from a 2019, 176 page photobook

Father that explores the nude male figure

in a variety of unseen unconventional ways that

was created by contemporary artist Harley Weir.

Harley weir who captures the images she wants to see seeps into

the work a personal view from weir of masculinity and sexual

ambiguity that opens up the possibilities of how one sees the

male form.



Fig.6: *Father*

This image on display depicts the unique yet, authentic

representation of the unfiltered middle aged male figure

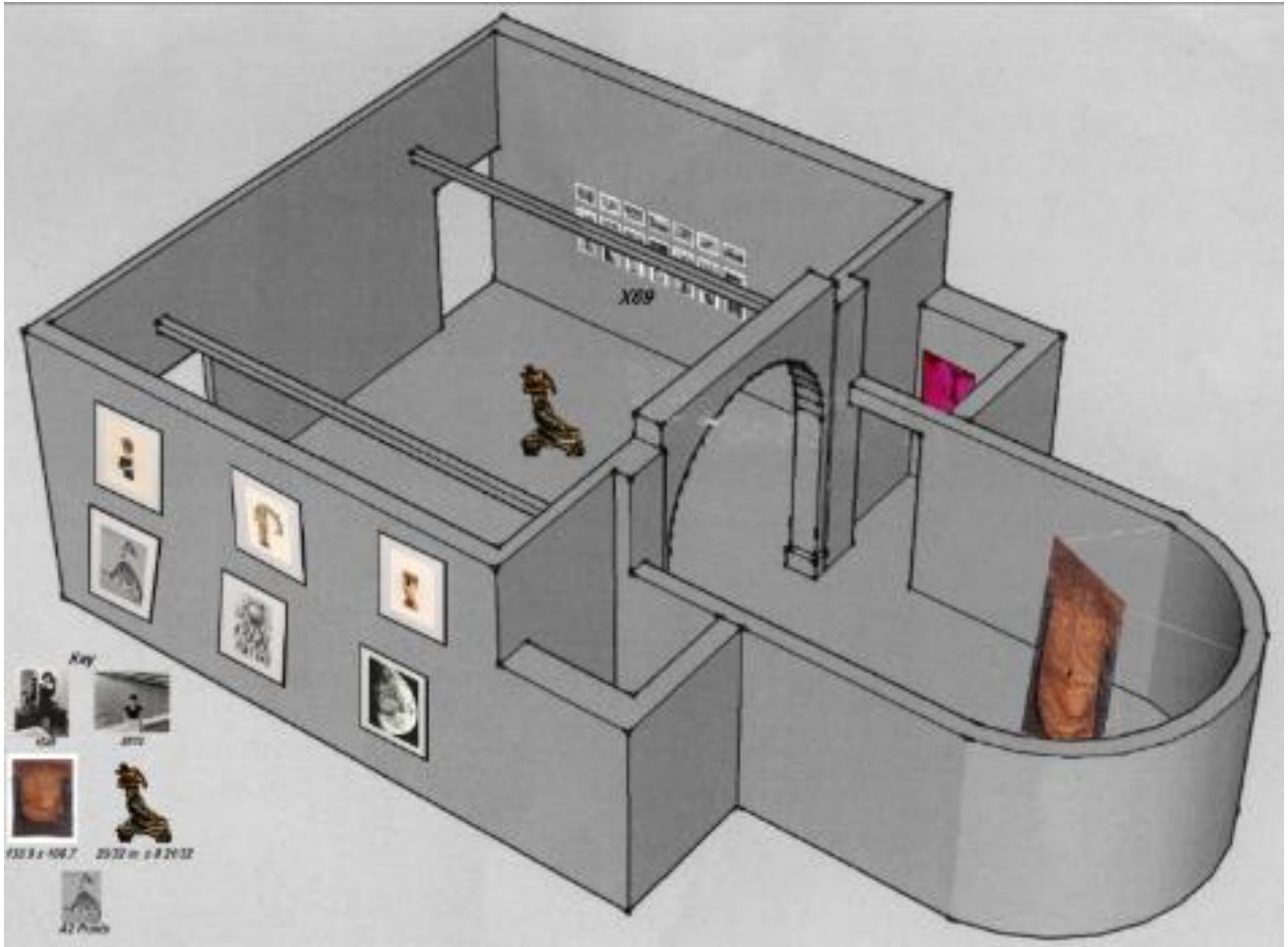
stereotype, referred to as “dad bod”, that playfully echoes to that of a maternity,

FATHER was made at a time where the male representation of the twenty first

century focuses on the redefining of the male role, self-acceptance, nurturing and

embracing that is presented within this image.

Mission Gallery Floor Plan



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List Of Illustrations



Figure 1 : Abakanowicz, M. (1970-1980) *Pregnant* [Textile]. Available at: <https://www.artnet.com/artists/magdalena-abakanowicz/pregnant-HpNntMIgKSuo6OxomlZYKA2> (Accessed: 26th April 2023).



Figure 2: Sherman, C. (1977) *Untitled Film Still #3* [Photograph] Available at: <https://magazine.artland.com/portraits-of-america-cindy-shermans-untitled-film-stills/> (Accessed: 26th April 2023).



Figure 3: Claude, C. (1893) *The Waltz* [Sculpture] Available at: <https://awarewomenartists.com/en/artiste/camille-claudel/> (Accessed: 26th April 2023).



Figure 4: Stevenson, D (2015) *Women's At The Waters Edge* [Collage]. Available at: <https://www.artspan.com/art/2607103-150/prints/women-at-the-water's-edge> (Accessed: 26th April 2023).



Figure 5: Le Gall, R. (2017) *Untitled Collage* [Collage]. Available at: [Rozenn Le Gall's ambiguous collages \(collater.al\)](https://rozennle Gall's ambiguous collages (collater.al)) (Accessed: 26th April 2023).



Figure 6: Weir, H. (2019) *Father* [Photograph]. Available at:
<https://www.dazeddigital.com/beauty/gallery/27511/8/father-by-harley-weir>
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