

Underrepresented Women Artists

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Design Crafts

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Julia and Gwen

The theme of my exhibition is to exhibit women artists who were making art at times and in places where the art world was predominantly male. I want to show off their art somewhere where it can't be easily ignored or pushed aside like women often used to be in art. This exhibition will be on display on the outside of *The Louvre, the Cour Napoléon*, in Paris. This is important to be discussed now because women have always been looked over in art, and these women were making art in times and spaces where it wasn't easy to be doing so. The artists that I am going to be including in my exhibition are Artemisia Gentileschi, Judy Chicago and Mary Beale. I will be looking at and discussing theories by Kant and John Berger.

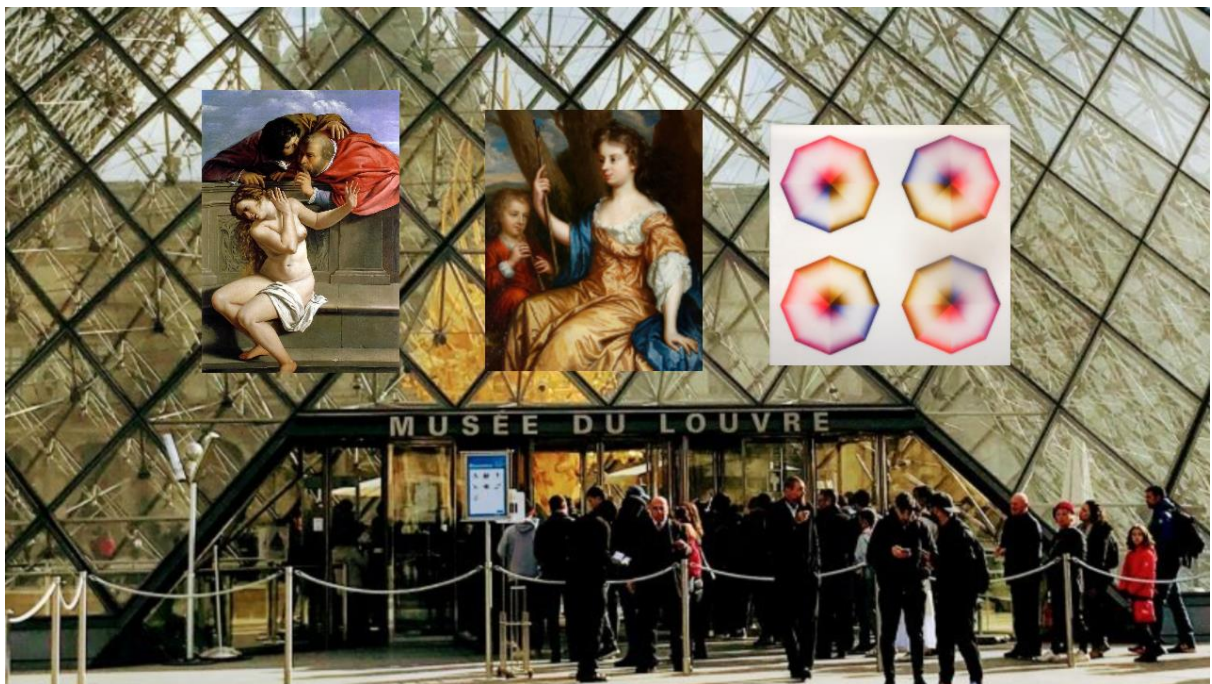
Currently, women artists are being underrepresented in art galleries and museums. Clare McAndrews did a study of Artsy's database and of the 820,000 exhibitions that were recorded there in 2018, only one third of the artists exhibiting were women (The Art Newspaper, 2019). These numbers are the opposite of the number of artists that are studying art in university. In the 2016 to 2017 academic year, the HSEA recorded that 64% of people in higher education studying creative arts were female (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2018). If there was not any discrimination between genders in the art world, it would make sense that the number of women exhibiting art would be a higher than it currently is. Women don't make inherently worse art than men, but it's possible that outside influences are affecting what gets shown in galleries and museums.

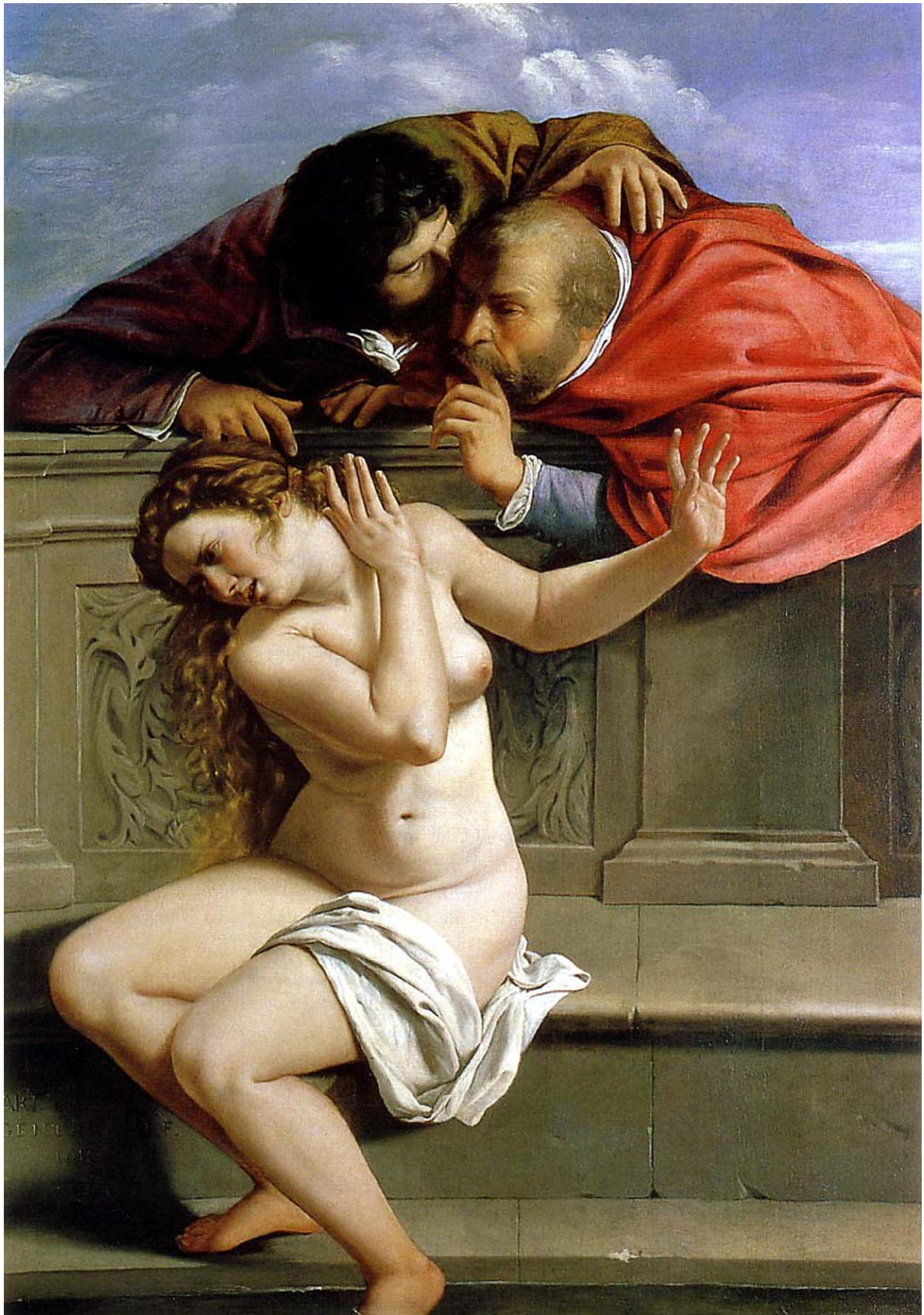
Different people have had different views on how personal experiences affect art, what art means, and how different people see and interpret art. The philosopher Kant believed in an aesthetic theory, that art exists as just itself, the way it looks, its beauty (Adajian, 2018). Therefore, outside influences would not affect what people buy or what gets displayed in

galleries. Following Kant's theory, the reason that fewer women are displayed in galleries and museums is because they are just not as good as men at making art.

Another way of thinking about how art is made is that art does not exist in a vacuum. The art that people make is influenced by what is happened in their life and their experiences. It would therefore be the same for the art that people would be willing to accept; if you have a preexisting bias towards a group or minority you are not going to be as accepting to that work. John Berger believed that "the way we see things is affected by what we know and what we believe in" (Berger, 1972, p.8). In *Ways of Seeing* (1972) Berger discusses that when an image is presented as an artwork, there are different things that we subconsciously consider and make assumptions about. Socialist feminism was emerging in the 1970's, this second wave of feminism looking at the first waves reluctance to look at issues of class and race (Hansen and Philipson, 1990, p. 3).

The reason I want this exhibition to be displayed on the outside of *The Cour Napoléon* in Paris is because it's the most visited gallery or museum in the world, in 2018 *The Louvre* had 10.2 million visitors (Richman-Abdou, 2019). This way the artwork of these talented and overlooked women artists cannot be ignored. The exhibition would be installed right above the entrance for *The Louvre* so that every single person that enters the museum would have to walk past the artworks.

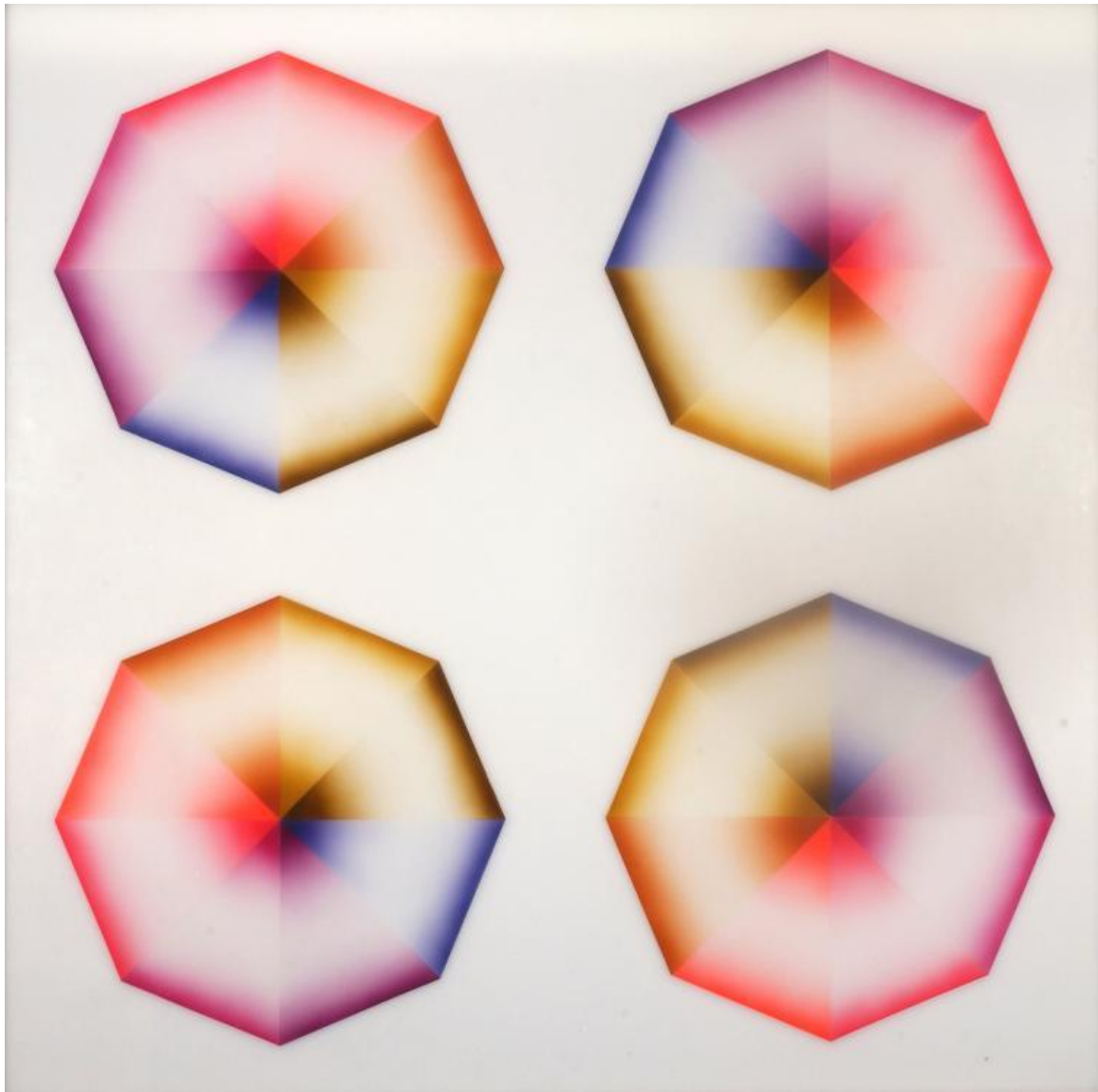




(Gentileschi, 1610)

The artwork by Artemisia Gentileschi that I have chosen to put in my exhibition is her painting *'Susanna and the Elders'* (1610). Artemisia Gentileschi was born in 1593 in Rome and painted *'Susanna and the Elders'* (1610) when she was 17 years old (Biography, 2014)). After she died, this painting was mistakenly attributed to her father for 300 years, even though her signature is on the painting. It was thought that a woman so young could not depict the female form so accurately and that her father, Orazio Gentileschi who was also a painter, must have painted it (The Independent, 1993).

Out of all of Artemisia Gentileschi's works, I felt this one was the best for my exhibition because of the similarities between the scene depicted and Artemisia Gentileschi's life. Gentileschi was raped when she was 17 by her teacher Agostino Tassi, who was a member of her father's artistic circle (Jones, 2016). Gilje (1998) was a good source of information about the story of the painting, in the Biblical story depicted in her painting, Susanna is rejecting unwanted attention from two older men from her community. The painting of Susanna shows her struggling against the assault, paralleling what happened to Gentileschi. This was painted around the same time that the rape charge was taken to court by Gentileschi's father.



(Chicago, 1970)

This work, titled *'Pasadena Lifesavers Red #5'*, was created by Judy Chicago in 1970 (Artsy). Judy Chicago started to develop her feminist ideas in the 1960's, in an interview with The Guardian Chicago said, "it was the prevailing attitude in the 1960s that women had no history, there were no women's studies, nothing" (Seyej, 2017). The 1970's was a time of "fertile feminist movement" (Grant, 2011, p. 267) and different idea about what it meant to be a woman making art were being explored.

Judy Chicago was part of the art movement in Los Angeles in the 60's, developing the radical art there. This space was predominantly taken up by men, and Chicago carved a space for herself among them (Patterson, 2009). Judy Chicago went to autobody school and learned airbrushing. She used this technique to create *Pasadena Lifesavers Red #5* (National Museum of Women in the Arts, 2020). The four shapes in the painting suggests the female body, but since it's not explicit so I think it can be open to different interpretations.

The reason that it was important to me to include Judy Chicago in this exhibition is because she was one of the few women in a group of men that pioneered the Los Angeles Look. The art style and techniques she used, autobody airbrushing, were ones that were traditionally masculine, and she made a space for herself and helped pioneer an art movement in Los Angeles in the 60's. The work that artists like Judy Chicago had a lasting impact on the work of future artists as well, as said in this article:

Most of the interesting American artists of the last 30 years are as interesting as they are in part because of the feminist art movement of the early 1970's. It changed everything.

(Cotter, 2002)



(Beale, 1664-68)

This is a self-portrait of Mary Beale as a Shepard. Mary Beale was a woman making art in the 17th century, she “was successful at a time when women artists were not yet accepted” (McMaster University, 2015), and was England’s first professional female painter. She was a successful painter when she was alive, with her work being complimented by others as ‘masculine’ (Clayton, 1876, p. 43). Her husband was the overseer of their studio and was the one that recorded her life, he presented her works as experiments of the different painting

methods he developed, and this is what her success was attributed to (Gajewski, 2015). Enlightened ideas about the position's women should have in society were starting to be developed around this time, along with the start of the 'age of enlightenment' (Institute on gender equality and women's history, 2020). The age of enlightenment spanned from the 17th to the 19th century and was where people in Europe "questioned traditional authority and embraced the notion that humanity could be improved through rational change" (history.com editors, 2009).

This painting of Mary Beale's is displayed in Moyes's Hall museum in Suffolk and is part of the largest collection of her works. As shown in *Britain's lost masterpieces* this collection of her paintings is displayed in a stairwell above what used to be the town's workhouse and prison ('Carmarthen', 2018). England's first professional female painter's largest collection of works is displayed without any grandeur or protection, it can be easily overlooked as you walk up the stairs, and easily vandalized.

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