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My curatorial practice will explore art practices that helped inspire and support the Women's Rights Movement and feminist theory that emerged in the late nineteen-sixties to early seventies. The exhibition will have a powerful statement by exploring five puissant feminist artists. This concept is inspired by the rebellious nature of the Guerilla Girls exposing discrimination and corruption due to the underrepresentation of women and female artists. Before this rebellion, the superiority of female artists were imperceptible to the public eye that refused exhibitions and gallery representations based on gender and suppression. There are still very few 'female artists' only exhibitions and by holding five of the most monumental artworks from the time of the Women's Rights Movement and after, it will create an intergenerational perspective set up for debate.

Many people question the continuous needs for women's institutions like A.I.R (the first women's artists cooperative gallery in New York) where 'there is danger of ghettoizing female art and artists or of feeling that women-only galleries are second rate' (Susan Bee). However, 'museums claim they are paying more attention to female artists' yet we have to take into consideration that 'female artists represent just two percent of the market' showing that it is all just an illusion. This supports the fact that feminism is still marginalised and why it is important for female artists only exhibitions to become a mainstream and popular institution as 'feminism at the same time is both naturalised into popular culture and invisible', (Amelia Jones).

Therefore, the overall concept of the exhibition is to normalise having more female artists only institutions in order to educate and maintain an open feminist space to charge this challenge in a participatory democracy. Due to personal experiences and a recent rise in the number of sexual harassments in the area that I currently live in, it has inspired me to focus

on women empowerment and liberation; to bring these strong, inspirational female artists together because we are still suppressed in a patriarchal system.

I will be exploring John Berger's, *Ways of Seeing*, (1972), with the concept of idealisation through the use of models. Laura Mulvey's theory and publication, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, (1999) will also be of interest and Loreck's theory of the 'Male Gaze', (2016).

My curatorial practice will focus on these five female artists:

- Judy Chicago- '*The Dinner Party*', (1974-79)
- Lynda Benglis- '*Artforum Advertisement*', (1974)
- Barbara Kruger- '*Your Body is a Battleground*', (1989)
- Carolee Schneeman- '*Up To and Including Her Limits*', (1973-76)
- Guerrilla Girls- '*Birth of Feminism Poster*', (2001)

I chose these five female artists as I feel they have had the most impact on society and feminism through art during and after the Women's Rights Movement took place. The exhibition itself will be called 'The Feminist District.' I came up with this title as the exhibition will be held in a Red-light district where the artwork will be displayed in the window for walkers to react, just like they do to the women posing and selling themselves in the window. The concept of this is to question whether in order for female artists to sell art, they have to sell themselves; their bodies, to potentially 'attract' or be noticed in the art world. The artwork will be displayed and organised from the past and present.

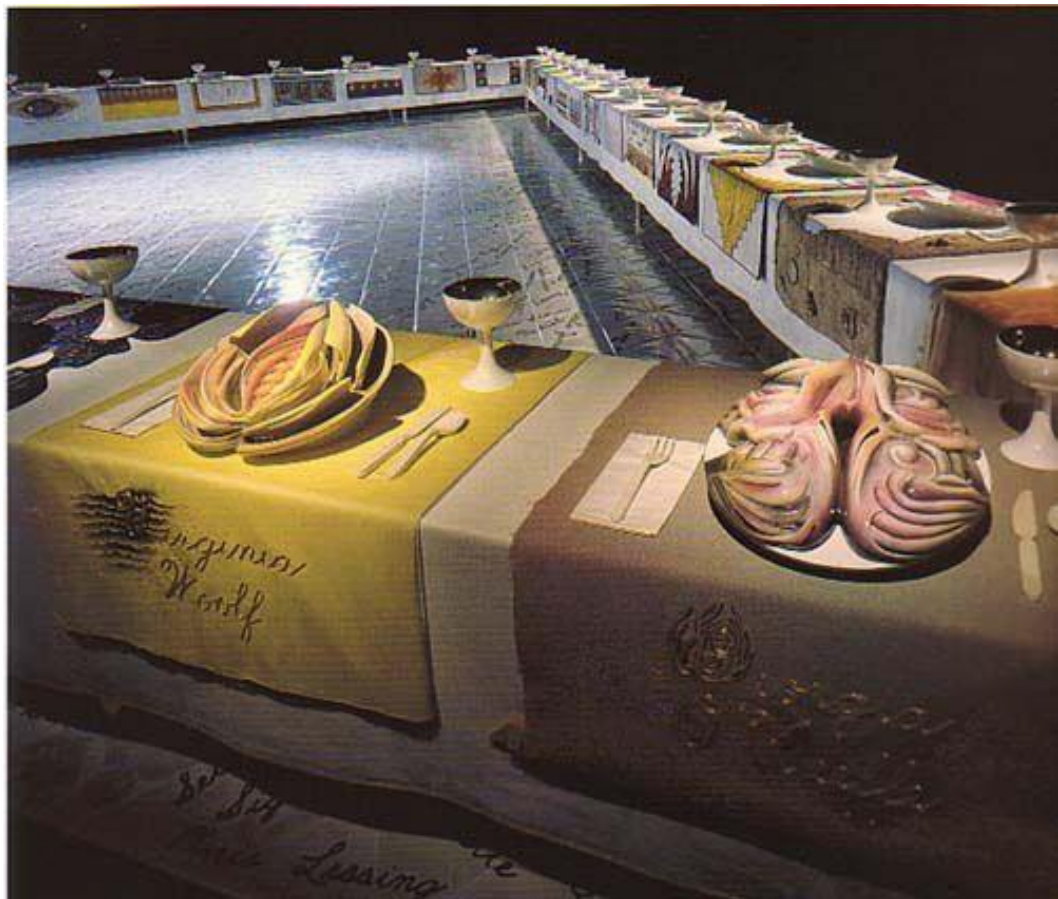


Fig 1. *'The Dinner Party'* (1974-1975)

'The Dinner Party' by Judy Chicago can be observed as the first legendary feminist artwork that symbolises the history of women in civilization. It consists of thirty-nine

elaborate place settings on a triangular table to sit thirty-nine famous, historical women. Each plate depicts an elaborately designed and brightly coloured vulva that rests on embroidered runners. It stands upon triangular tiles, each inscribed in gold scripts with the name of nine hundred and ninety- nine women who had an imprint on history.

Maureen Mullarkey, an art critic, claimed that this piece is disrespectful to the women it depicts. For example, Emily Dickinson's 'multi-tiered pink lace crotch' was opposite the woman it was supposed to represent because of Dickinson's extreme privacy. She was disappointed with critical rejection leading to her mortal privacy. However, I believe that it is a strong, bold statement that Judy is trying to make, criticizing the fact that in history, women had to be completely private, showing the satire through the passage of time. It is almost ironic how women's private parts are still to this day a height of discussion, from renaissance and after. Linda Nochlin's essay '*Why have there been no great women artists?*', is highly relatable to this as she states that 'difficulties and complexities in creating good or great literature... of the existence of an Emily Bronte or an Emily Dickinson and lack of their counterparts, at least until quite recently; in the visual arts.' This faces the reality of history and now.



Fig.2 Lynda Benglis - '*Artforum Advertisement*', (1974)

Lynda Benglis definitely caught the public eye and made the ultimate, controversial statement to the art world at the time, where she posed fully naked only wearing sunglasses and masturbating with a double-ended dildo. Richard Meyer claimed that 'it's refusal to fall comfortably into either a feminist critique of pornography or any pornographic critique of feminism.'



Fig.3 Barbara Kruger 'Your body is a battleground', (1989)

'Your Body is a Battleground' is a depiction of a woman's face divided in two, almost asymmetrical from the use of negative space on one side. This creates a juxtaposition between the text and the image suggesting that the female body is the 'Battleground' that is highlighted by the conventional beautiful woman. Barbara addresses and interprets heated political issues criticising the objectified standard of perfectly lined symmetry that women are adhered to and perpetuated by media and advertising. She intellectually challenges the media and advertising industries which contributes to both the system of social stereotypes and the perpetuation of systems of inclusion and exclusion of society.

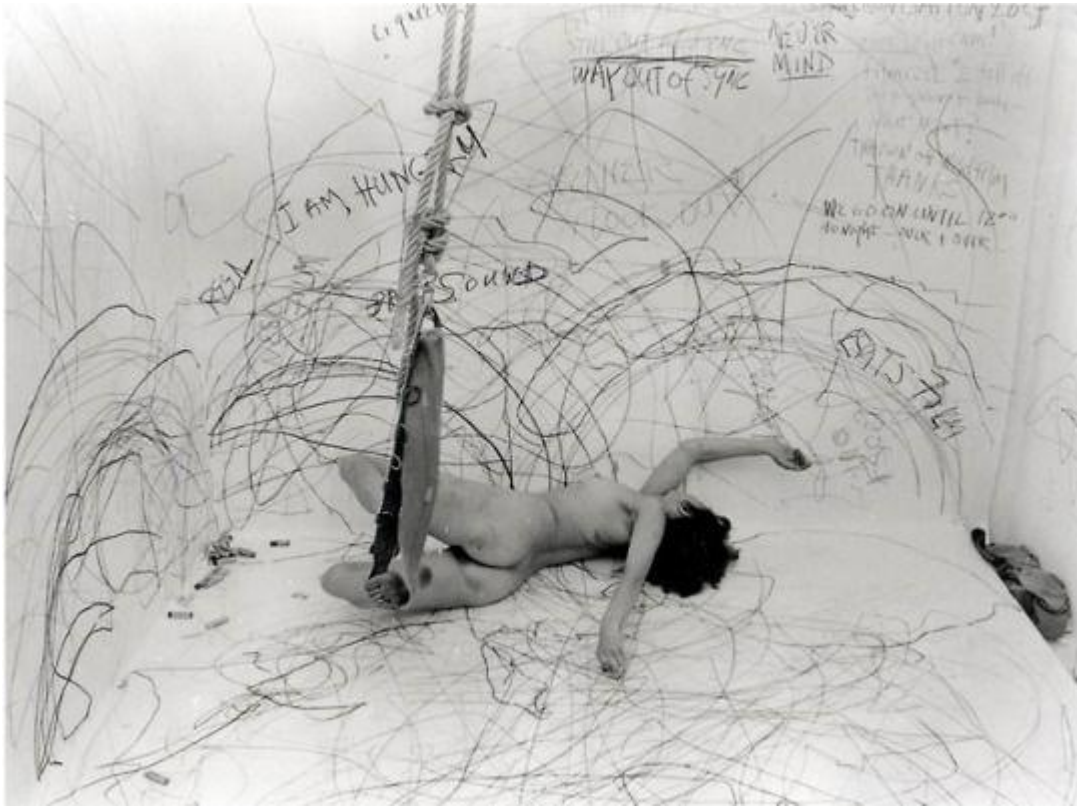


Fig 4. Carolee Schneeman- *'Up to and Including Her Limits'*, (1973-1976)

Carolee Schneeman subverts the concept of women's bodies that exist purely as an object for the acknowledgement of men, however liberates herself from male dominance by using the female body as a symbol of power through being daring, bold and fearless. This piece uses the whole body by strokes and dimensional space. Although the body is trapped to a rope that could imply a metaphorical meaning for the restraint, power and control that men dominate over women, it could also show a sense of freedom in the movement that is subtle and dainty. *'Including Her limits'* suggests that men believe women should have limits and restrictions to what they are confined or allowed to be able to do in society, however, I believe that through the

limitless strokes drawn within the dimensional space, Carolee Schneeman subverts this idea as a form of activism and that women should have endless limits.

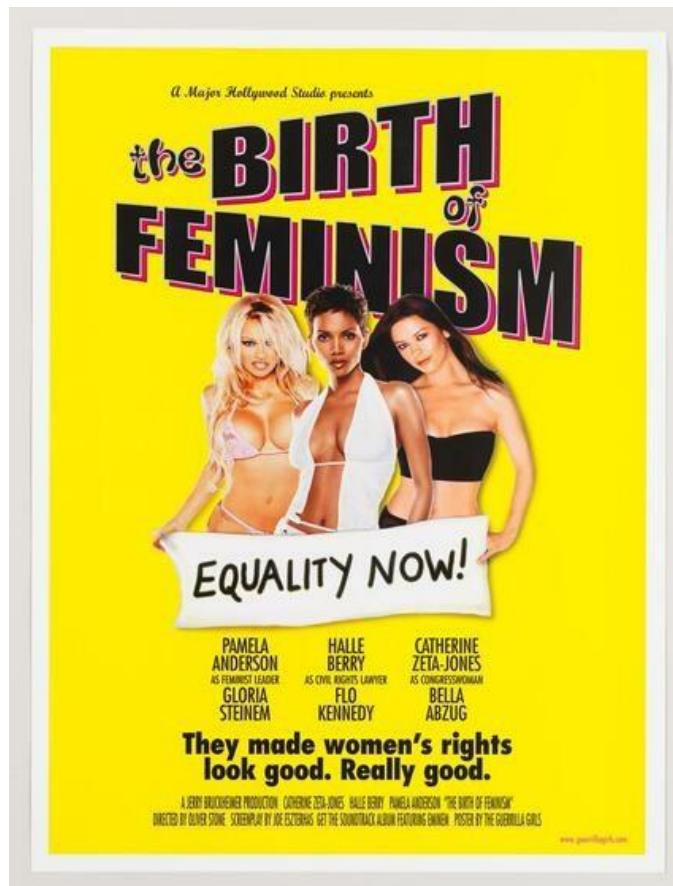


Fig 5. Guerrilla Girls- *'Birth of Feminism Poster'*, (2001)

Guerrilla Girls is an anonymous group whose mission is to shed light on racial and gender inequality within the arts community. This advertisement campaign can be deconstructed by exploring theories of semiotics. Signs and symbols allow us to determine the relationship between the signifier of meaning and the signified meaning from Berger's theory of both language and concept that can be related to Barthes' theories. By 'denoting' and 'conoting' we can identify the difference between literal

and implied meanings in his publication *Image, Music, Text* (1977). Through the use of models in this campaign, there is a concept of idealisation and typically its selling point is the use of a glamour model which relates to John Berger's, *Ways of Seeing*, (1972). This advertisement immediately attracts the male gaze (Laura Mulvey's theory and publication *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*), (1999) with the models posing in very restricted clothing and screams voyeurism. It also links with Laura Mulvey's theory as it highlights feminism on-screen and off-screen. With this campaign, the Guerrilla Girls have also focused on the idea of racism by having a black woman stood in the middle, nonetheless, it creates an allusion to a published racist film '*The Birth of a Nation*'. This is also highlighted in the iconography 'Equality Now!' that is displayed in black and white, with its boastful capital letters and demanding use of punctuation.

Here are my curatorial plans and designs:

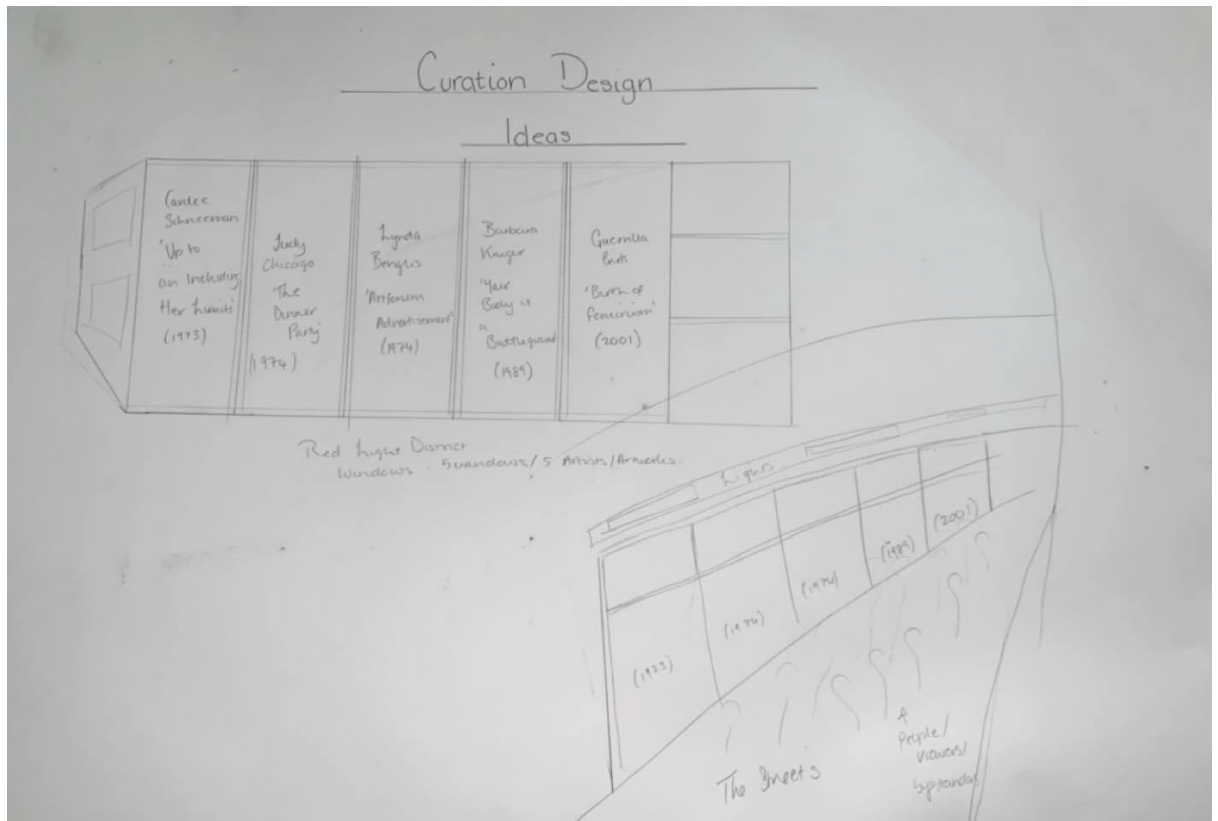


Fig 6. My curatorial design plan

This is a quick design plan of the curation taking place at the red- light district. The artworks will be displayed in order of date from past to most recent.

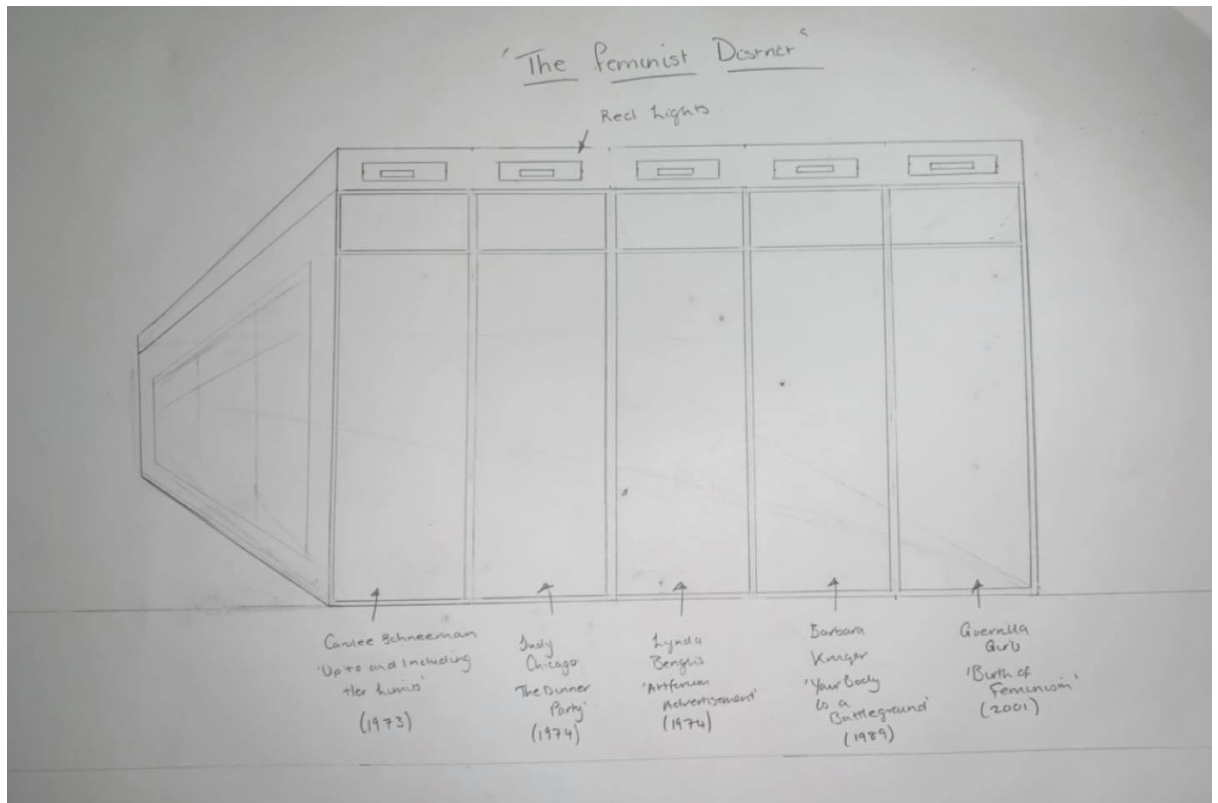


Fig 7. Final curatorial design

This is my final curatorial design where artworks will be presented through the window onto the street through the red light district. Having it at the red light district will set up a debate and its links with the artworks I have chosen which are very sexualised and almost pornographic.

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“Fig 2. Lynda Benglis 'Artforum Advertisement.'”

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“Fig 3. Barbara Kruger 'Your body is a battleground.’”

<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/86412886589750420/>.

“Fig 4. Carolee Schneeman 'Up to and Including Her Limits.’”

<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/138485757382295645/>.

“Fig 5. Guerrilla Girls 'Birth of Feminism.’”

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