

Ways of Perceiving

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"Is art stolen by man?"

The arts no matter the medium are a place for freedom of expression and creativity, a place for everybody to create. Yet historically woman have faced misogyny and go uncreated for their work within the art world while being the backbone and make most of the percentage of the art community. Women's artwork is constantly, undervalued and undermined by male creations. For years Andy Warhol was taught in school about how much of genuine and innovator but recently I had found out some of his artworks were borderline and straight up plagiarism of some talented female artist's artwork, such as Patrica Caulfield's 1964 "Flowers". This had led to me to ask the question, is art stolen by man?

I aware that is a bold statement and question, but sexism is important to confront. According to a study by the Freeland Foundation, despite woman dominating the arts in with education with over 70% choosing of women choosing to peruse arts in high education an only under 40% of living women get their work shown while deceased women only have 20% compared to men. Yet this is not something new, Leonardo da Vinci's Salvator Mundi was sold for roughly £332.72 million in pounds, the highest sold painting in the world, while the highest selling painting by a woman is Frida Kahlo with only £40.42 million, a major gap between major to the artwork, both taught in school.

A more direct take on my question is straight up art theft women have faced. Women not getting correctly credited is a constant within history, having its own term for this being the "Matilda Effect," originated by Margaret Rossiter which is the tendency for women's achievements to credited to men within history. There are many documented cases of this happened and there are probably so many more undocumented. What we can do about this is simply addressing and talking about these works, bringing the true painter to the forefront to utterly understand these pieces. There is a different between inspiration and plagiarism and Andy Warhol had crossed that line many times but the one I wish to focus on is with Yayoi Kasuma's 1964 piece "Aggregation" and Andy Warhol's "Cow Wallpaper". Andy Warhol's carries striking similarities to Yayoi's piece which could of just be coincides if it weren't for the fact he had visited the show it was displayed, saying "he liked it so much" Yayoi directly, proceeding to create his piece two year later, refusing it was inspired by

Yayoi's work. Yayoi's work fell into obscurity for a while to quote Kusama Infinity documentary film, "she was making a work of equal importance, but was not getting the same kind of backing. Sexism plays a role in this. And maybe racism as well." Yayoi's "Aggregation" piece and work at the time explores Yayoi's fear relating to her childhood, with her experiencing hallucinations as a child and trauma regarding sex, confronting, comedising, and visualising her pain in a boat sculpture with facillizes, printing them all over the walls and floor. While Andy Warhol's choice cows were because someone suggest it to him. I personally find Yayoi's work more impactful and meaning, simply more visually interesting despite Andy's use of bright colours. Yayoi Kasuma's other pieces with the polka dots and sculptors are extremely interesting visually to look at and furthermore explore her mind, having more original ideas.

An example where someone straight up presented a woman's work as their own is with the painting, "Portrait of Charlotte du Val d'Ognes" (1917). Jacques-Louis David a French painter presented this work as his own and was praised, "a masterpiece" for a whole mid-centaury till it was correctly discovered to be painted by Marie-Denise Villers. The painting itself carries the aura of mystery, having a woman staring up the viewer as she is drawing, with two people together in the background framed by a broken window. The lighting and simplistic nature of the room create this uncomfortable feeling. Once it was discovered a woman painted the portrait, suddenly the painting was imperfect and had too much of "feminine spirit" which just furthers my point about the misogyny in art. Another example of the Matilda Effect in the 20s century would be Margaret Keane, famous for her "Big Eyes" painting. Her own husband at the time stole and took credit for her paintings, she ended up suing him and winning in court. Margeret's paintings embody that line of weird, creepy, and cute with her "big eyes" painting, typically being of children. There are many others within history such Patrica Caufeild, Marie Denise Villers, a common tragedy of the Matilda effect.

Without women in the art world, we would not have a lot of art movements and pieces created by men. Georgia O'Keeffe and Frida Kahlo are some of the most significate figures when it comes to their contribution within the art world, their influences still effecting Morden art today. An art movement that still effects art today is in the 1960s there was a second wave of the feminist art movement which simply fights for equal footing within art, furthermore, fighting against the male gaze within art, wanting women to be seen as equals. The movement is still going strong with art groups such as the Guerrilla Girls who still fight for women's rights using art today. A personally favourite piece of their which is their 2025 piece, "DO WOMEN HAVE TO BE NAKED TO GET INTO THE MET. MUSEUM?" stating that 67% of the Morden art included in the met depicted naked women with only 8% being female artists. Woman in history are typically the muses for art, so many famous historical art pieces depict women such as "The Mona Lisa" 1506 or Girl with a Pearl Earring 1665. Yet it was not till the 20 centuries where women could display their art with less trouble. It was like they were only allowed to be the muse, never the painter. There can be said something

about the male gaze and misogyny, drawing the nude figures of women all throughout history for *The Birth of Venus* 1480s, these famous image of a nude woman. It can be interperated due to the values and view of the time that the piece depicts women are these sexual objects, always poised, pretty and pale, a prop piece for the artist. Another example is Édouard Manet, *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, 1863 where one woman again nude, the other crying, suggesting they are emotional, Misogyny baked into the canvas' of the pieces for viewers to internalize. Where that was the artist intention or not, it does come off that way.

Misogyny within the art carries through forms of creating art, one of the biggest ones being textiles. Textiles as an artform has always been dominated by women, something ingrained into society but because it is seen as this feminine thing Textiles a lot of them time is less appreciated than for examples paintings. Despite fashion a high earning industry, the craftsmanship and artform are taken for granted and seen as not as valuable unless it is a big named designer product. Furthermore, within the animation industry there is a huge misogyny problem with female creatives, from harassment to limited job opportunities despite the same jobs being open for men. Gender does affect the intention and meaning behind art pieces. There are pieces that explore what it means to be a woman such as mentioned feminist art but also art that explores gender identity such as Drag and queer art, Artist like RuPaul, Claude Cahun or Mickalene Thomas. The way someone identities or is born should not make someone is worth. Gender is social construct, not the biological sex. Gender roles we still uphold today are based around religious and outdated beliefs despite most people having those mindsets, it has been proven time and time again that women are as and sometimes more cable than men when it comes stuff.

To conclude I believe that art has been stolen by man in the sense women go uncredited and overlooked despite the innovations and concept of their fellow female artist. I believe if we educate, tell their stories and to treat all art with the worth it deserves. The art world to progress and grow needs to look back and reflect on its mistakes and push for the change so new and interesting concepts and be brought forward today. We are currently stuck in a cycle of not letting women succeed in the artworld as much as they could, within the marketing side we have these big male names which get bigger by the day, making them more worth something in sellers' eyes. The art market is scared to make a change, according to MyArtBroker, "In 2024, female artists accounted for just 9% of total auction sales among the top 200 artists at fine art auctions." We just got to keep supporting and lifting women up, make our voices heard so we can break away from the constraints of the system to have an equal playing field in the art world. Women deserve to be in the art world just as much as men. To quote Eva Hesse "Excellence has no Sex."

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