Title in progress: “Art and Feminism: New Perspectives on This World”

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Abstract

Many women do not perceive themselves as feminists since the meaning of this term in society is sometimes perceived only as hatred of men. However, this is a big misconception. Feminism combines many concepts that support the equality of both sexes. Feminism raises ideas such as social equality, reproductive rights, issues of heteronormativity, sexuality, ending sexual abuse, and many others.

As an artist, it is easier for me to convey many of my ideas through creativity. However, despite my idea in the works, each of the viewers will respond with their idea since everyone has a different life experience. Thus, in my essay, I will combine various aspects of feminism with the versatility of art. I will try to compare the experience of artists, critics, psychologists, and many other specialists of the past time with more modern views of people and with my own experience.

Bibliography

Alcott, Louisa May. 2009. “*Little Women*.” [Waiheke Island]: The Floating Press. https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.tru.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=314178&site=eds-live&scope=site.

Louisa May Alcott's most well-known novel, Little Women combines wholesome life lessons with more radical viewpoints on women's roles in 19th-century America. The author was able to convey truthful scenes from the domestic life of families of that time and showed realistic images of women that are not usually found in modern fiction. She used her memories and stories from her mother’s childhood.

Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy grew up with their mother because their father left to fight in the Civil War. The author talks about a friendly family that handles all the difficulties together and how these little women grow up and find love and their place in this world. I think this book will be a great source for my essay writing, because of the feminist views of a woman as a person. Jo said: “Women—they have minds, and they have souls, as well as just hearts. And they’ve got ambition, and they’ve got talent, as well as just beauty. I’m so sick of people saying that love is all a woman is fit for.”

Art in context. 2022. *“Jenny Saville - Exploring Jenny Saville's Paintings and Contribution to Art.”* artincontext.org. https://artincontext.org/jenny-saville/.

Jenny Saville shows a realistic portrayal of the feminine form. Her works are opposed to the male gaze and the concept of the "ideal body". In her newer works, Jenny Saville began to refer to important facts about motherhood and began to study ancient myths and art history.

The author discussed the significance and relevance of Jenny Saville's works in this article. For example, in the “Plan” painting, the artist depicted a naked woman. A woman has lines drawn all over her body that indicate areas for liposuction. Saville comments that "the contours in the body were not down onto the painting, but rather cut into the thick layers of paint, as a surgeon would cut into a body".

I use the works of this artist as references for some of my works because I admire how Jenny Saville plausibly paints women's bodies and at the same time retains impressionism in brushstrokes.

Austen, Jane. 1998. “*Pride and Prejudice*.” Project Gutenberg. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1342/1342-h/1342-h.htm.

Jane Austen in her novel "Pride and Prejudice" talks about the complicated relationship between a girl from a simple rural family - Elizabeth Bennet and a rich aristocrat Fitzwilliam Darcy. Darcy's pride and Elizabeth's prejudice are the characters' two worst flaws, and to get over their relationship's challenges, they will have to compromise their principles. The author shows that love can radically change the views and behavior of any person.

Elizabeth is a smart woman, she has many opinions on various topics. At the beginning of the book, Elizabeth Bennet does not strongly demonstrate herself as a feminist. However, in the middle of the book, new forces appear in her and she puts herself on an equal footing with Darcy. It is because of this growth of the heroine that I believe this book will be an educational resource for me.

Beard, Mary. 2017. “*Mary Beard: Women in Power.”* London Review of Books. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGDJIlUCjA0&t=3661s.

Mary Beard explores how ingrained gendered violence is in our culture and how idioms from ancient Greece are still being used to normalize it. She is perhaps best known for "Women and Power," a scathing examination of both ancient and contemporary attitudes about female speech, and "SPQR," a comprehensive history of Rome.

In this 2017 talk at the British Museum, Beard argues that this antipathy for female authority in Ancient Greece still permeates language and attitudes in less overt but no less harmful ways. Beard makes the argument that female authority requires a new paradigm centered on outcomes and dissociated from status to genuinely transcend stereotypes of successful women as reckless, dangerous, and cunning. She uses the example of an altered photo of Hillary Clinton as an image of the well-known Gorgon Medusa, freshly beheaded by a Trumpified Perseus, that made the rounds in the US presidential election in 2016.

Georgopulos, Nicole. 2022. *“‘The Sunflower's Bloom of Women's Equality’: New Contexts for Mary Cassatt's La Femme Au Tournesol.”* Panorama. https://journalpanorama.org/article/the-sunflowers-bloom/.

In this article, the author examines in detail the works of Mary Cassatt, especially for painting La Femme au tournesol (Woman with a Sunflower). At first glance, we can see a domestic scene in which there is nothing political or propagandizing, but the author notices many details that play a huge role. For example, a sunflower was adopted as the official symbol of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. The author mentions: "pin hosts a simplified rendering of a sunflower at center, ringed by the clarion call, “WE WANT TO VOTE FOR PRESIDENT IN 1904”—just one year before Cassatt painted La Femme au tournesol."

Overall, the assumption that Mary Cassatt’s primary subject—the lives of women—is not inherently political hews to retrograde ideas about gender, domesticity, and their interpretative limitations. However, by looking more closely the viewer can consider these topics. With this article, I will be able to convey how I draw standard scenes while putting deep meaning there.

Halifax NVD. 1997. “*Feminist Art Psychotherapy: Contributions from Feminist Theory and Contemporary Art Practice.*” American Journal of Art Therapy 36 (2): 49–55. https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.tru.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ccm&AN=107268757&site=eds-live&scope=site.

Nancy Viva Davis Halifax is a faculty member in the graduate art therapy program at Vermont College of Norwich University. In this article, she describes how feminist psychotherapists began to transpose models of psychological health which were based on masculinist assumptions. They looked beyond the theories of personality that consider intrapsychic development and the past as determinants of health.

Overall, feminist psychotherapy sees our lives lived in a culture and acknowledges the influence of race, gender, class, ability, and so forth, on the way problems are developed and expressed. Gender and the socio-political context within which women are raised were acknowledged as being developmentally important.

The author combines all three themes that I am most interested in: art, feminism and psychology. I will be able to get a lot of useful information from this article, as the author describes many internal processes that not everyone can see from the outside.

Mullin, Amy. 2003. *“Feminist Art and the Political Imagination.” Hypatia* 18 (4): 189–213. https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.tru.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.3810980&site=eds-live&scope=site.

Amy Mullin argues that political and activist works of artists are not taken seriously, and if such works are also feminist, then people completely deny them. She uses various articles on this topic, which she analyses in her article. One of them was by Robert Brustein that wrote: "Culture is not designed to do the work of politics." He claims this because artistic freedom will be impossible to achieve during the transmission of political themes. Amy Mullin, in turn, absolutely does not agree with this, as she believes that the whole point is a misunderstanding of the dynamics of art and narrow views on politics.

I like the positions expressed by Amy Mullin in this article. That is one of the reasons why I think that the examples she considers will be useful for my research. When anyone talks about feminism it is impossible not to mention politics.

Rampton, Martha. 2015. “*Four Waves of Feminism*.” Pacific University. https://www.pacificu.edu/magazine/four-waves-feminism.

The author describes the main events, dates and goals of each wave of feminism that will help understand feminism from the start. The early twentieth century saw the emergence of the first wave of feminism, which was influenced by liberal, socialist politics and urban industrialism. With a focus on suffrage, this wave sought to increase possibilities for women. The 1960s saw the start of the second wave, which lasted into the 1990s. In this stage, sexuality and reproductive rights were the most important topics, and the movement concentrated a lot of its emphasis on getting the Equal Rights Amendment, which guarantees social equality regardless of sex, passed into the Constitution.

In the middle of the 1990s, the third wave of feminism was influenced by postcolonial and postmodern thought. Many constructions, such as the ideas of "universal femininity," body, gender, sexuality, and heteronormativity, were destabilized during this time. The emphasis on women's empowerment, online resources, and intersectionality define the fourth wave of feminism, which emerged around 2012. Main attention to issues that were crucial to the early stages of the women's movement, including sexual abuse, rape, violence against women, unequal pay, and the pressure on women to fit into a single, unrealistic body type.

Schjeldahl, Peter. 2018. “*Berthe Morisot, Woman Impressionist, Emerges from the Margins*.” The New Yorker. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/10/29/berthe-morisot-woman-impressionist-emerges-from-the-margins.

Peter Schjeldahl begins his article with the words: "The most interesting artist of her generation has been not so much underrated in standard art history as not rated at all." I think it is impossible to disagree with this, since Berthe Morisot's works are truly unique and stand on par with other impressionists of that time, such as Renoir or Monet. However, due to her gender, her works did not receive recognition during the years of her life.

The artist painted the image of the girls in such a way that when the woman looks at the picture, she can feel that she is one of these girls. The author believes that "she achieves this effect with intricate and fast brushwork that yields porous, tactile surfaces that absorb the eye and stir sensations of touch. Berthe Morisot's works have long been my references, so I will continue to be inspired by her art in the future.

Serra, Vanina, Monica Enriquez, and Ruby Johnson. 2017. “*Envisioning Change through Art: Funding Feminist Activists for Social Change.*” *Development* 60 (1–2): 108–13. https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.tru.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ecn&AN=1728365&site=eds-live&scope=site.

Artivism is a combination made by a group of feminists from art and activism. The authors talk about the importance of personalities telling a particular story. They say that if you are a woman or belong to lgbtqia2s+, you should not be afraid to express yourself.

One of the examples mentioned in the article is the AWID forum. This forum has created an atmosphere of art and communication between people. Feminists from different continents share their experiences, music, films, art festivals and inspiration in each other's endeavors. Art really unites women, and such an experience gives confidence to their aspirations.

In addition, activism also affects political views. Authors noted that using art for political advocacy may open eyes, hearts, and debate spaces while also reaching new audiences in new directions. This article will be a great source for my research as it shows the experience of different women who have stopped being afraid of self-expression.