



***Female Artists
in
Art History***

A Mini Workshop

Overview:

We will examine two a few paintings painted by women at Metropolitan Museum, learn the intriguing story of them and the artist, and discuss the artists themselves and compare and contrasts contemporary belief and mordern feminist ideas with regards to the arts.

Questions to think about during the Tour:

- ***What do you see in the painting?***
- ***What do you relate to you? /What resounds with you the most?***
- ***Are there any parallels to modern artists that you might see?***
- ***Can you relate the work to your real life experience?***
- ***Do you relate to the artist in some way?***

Introduction: Artemisia Gentileschi, Agostino Tasso, and Judith Slaying Holofernes

This lecture was very much inspired by the early Baroque artist Artemisia Gentileschi and her piece *Judith Slaying Holofernes*. She did two versions of this painting, one in between 1614-20 and another version between 1620-21. Why it resonates with me (and is one of my favorite paintings), is the story behind it.



Artemisia was the daughter of a painter Orazio Gentileschi and was court painter of Marie de Medici and later Charles I of England. She was raised in her father's workshop, and showed more talent than her siblings, which unlike the norms of the time; she was encouraged by her father to continue. He hired another artist, a man he worked with in Rome named Agostino Tassi to tutor his daughter in painting. During the course of his tutoring, Tassi assaulted the then eighteen year old Artemisia and her only female friend ignored her cries for help. (Despite the betrayal she still painted female figures in solidarity in her pictures.)

Tassi promised to marry Artemisia, but nine months after reneged, causing her father to take him to court. Artemisia was called to speak on her behalf, barraged by the highly misogynistic court of the day, forced in to medical examinations, and even put to thumbscrews to prove her innocence in the case. After seven months of deliberation, Tassi was set free, and Orazio arranged for Artemisia to marry another man a month after.

The painting of Judith is surprisingly graphic compared to the other (read: mostly male) interpretations of the scene. Her face is more determined, more wrathful; there is a great depiction of blood spurting from her victim's throat. Even more intriguing, the model for Judith's face is Artemisia's herself, and Holofernes is Tassi's. It is believed that this painting was her way of showing her frustrations over the incident.

And with that, I wish to show several pieces of women in art, created by women in art history, share their stories not often known, and for it to be launching point to discuss women who paint women—or paint in general!

It is not surprising to know that many women painter's main patrons were also women! Lavinia Fontana was a predecessor to Artemisia and is one of the earliest known female painters; her works depict the Bolognese nobility, and the first known woman to paint female nudes. (Unfortunately the Met only has one portrait of Lavinia's, and it is that of a male.)



Previous Page: Artemesia Gentileschi, *Judith Slaying Holofernes*.

The original 1620 version (Left), the 1621 version (Right).

Attributed to Lavinia Fontana, A Portait of a Prelate, 1552–1614. <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436310>

***Adélaïde Labille-Guiard: Court Painter, Miniaturist,
& Champion of Arts Education***



*Self-Portrait with Two Pupils, Marie Gabrielle Capet and
Marie Marguerite Carreaux de Rosemond, 1785*
<http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436840>

She was born to an upper middle class working family, and formally went to school in a time where art was still predominantly a man's world. Her school, Académie de Saint-Luc, was known to have a high number of female students. It was through her tutelage of another famous (and male) painter François-Elie Vincent. Vincent was a family friend and two years after her divorce of her first husband, she married his son, François-André Vincent, who was also a painter as well.

(It's a common theme seeing female painters marry male painters I've noticed.)

After the Academy's Salon that first submitted her paintings was such a success, the Royal Academy forced the monarchy to abolish artist's guilds, leaving her forced to join the Royal Academy—which was still very much a boy's club.

Nonetheless, she was impressive enough to be one of the few women accepted into the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in the day, as well as her contemporary, Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun. The two's works were often displayed next to one another and compared to each other. Critics of the day preferred Le Brun's more 'feminine' strokes and softer style, while remarking Labille-Giurard's as more 'sharp' and 'masculine' in style. Both women however were painted to have a sort of rivalry, although my research has yet to come to any conclusion how the women handled it. (In an odd turn of events, despite Le Brun being more popular in her day, Labille-Giuard's work is more valuable in contemporary times.)

After the Royal Academy, Adelaide follows a tradition of court painters for the French Court. While her rival, Le Brun, was patronized by Marie Antoinette; Adelaide was the painter of King Louis XVI's aunt, Marie Adelaide, and later Louis XIII, although many of her paintings were destroyed in the Revolution, fearing they would be evidence of Royalist support. Unlike her rival, she remained in France after the Revolution, but her career as a portrait artist was in decline. Still, she fought for the reintroduction of women in the Academy after it had stopped accepting women after the Revolution and even created a new system for educating girls and women in the arts.

This portrait highlighted is self portrait of Labille-Guirard with two pupils, was highly inspired by Le Brun, which perhaps could be evidence that their so called rivalry was a fabrication of the press. It is also said to be her 'propaganda piece' arguing that more women should be accepted into the Academy.



*Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, Madame Grand
(Noël Catherine Vorlée), 1783.
<http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/437898>*

Questions to think about:

- ***Comparing the works, do you have a sense of rivalry with Vigée Le Brun in Labille-Guirard's painting?***
- ***Do you see a sense of sisterhood of women, not unlike Artemesia?***
- ***Does this painting still evoke its original intention in contemporary times, or is it dated?***

Berthe Morisot: Manet's contemporary and Equal



The Pink Dress (Albertie-Marguerite Carré, later Madame Ferdinand-Henri Himmes), circa 1870
<http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/438009>

Morisot, like Labille-Girard, was of an upper middle class family, but unlike her, in Morisot's day art education was part of the curriculum for a woman of Morisot's standing. She began by copying master studies in the Louvre. She was close to her sister Edma, who also painted, but after marriage focused on her family. She supported Berthe in her choice to continue and still communicated fondly via letters.

Her other sister, Yves, married a civil servant, but was a known subject of one of her contemporaries, Edgar Degas.



Edgar Degas, Madame Théodore Gobillard (Yves Morisot), 1869
<http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436149>

Morisot had started out as a copyist at the Louvre, and befriended many artists. One influenced her in the starting plein air painting, studying landscapes, and even sculpture—though none exist today. After her work was exhibited in the Salon de Paris in 1864, Morisot struck up a friendship with the Impressionist painter Edouard Manet, of which he had painted as a subject many times. The two maintained a very close friendship and although people considered Manet the master and Morisot the student, it was clear the two saw each other as equals. Through Morisot Manet attempted plein air, and was inspired by her style and composition, and tried to reflect that in his work. Morisot was inspired by his brushwork and incorporated into her own work. And so close was their friendship that she married his brother, Eugene.

Like her American contemporary Mary Cassatt, Morisot painted daily life, using her family and friends as models, but Morisot's palette was more airy and light, Cassatt's more contrasted.



Mary Cassatt, *The Cup of Tea*, circa 1880-81.
<http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/10388>

Questions to think about:

- **Comparing the works seen thus far painted by female artists compared to male, do you see a difference of composition with regards with the female form? Similarities?**
- **Have felt like or have known someone in a similar position as Berthe Morisot?**
- **How did it make you feel? Was it resolved?**
- **Was it resolved?**

Notable Mention: Rosa Bonheur

Rosa Bonheur was a Naturalist painter and painted nature more than people, although she is very much an interesting woman. Failing to succeed as a seamstress and known to be so disruptive in primary school that she was expelled many times, Rosa was trained classically as a painter by her father. She was also known to have worn trousers rather than a dress as it was far more practical to work with animals that way.



Rosa Bonheur, The Horse Fair, 1852-55.

<http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/435702>

Activity: A Day in The Life

Students assume the role of painter themselves or either one of the artists contemporary or themselves as a person living in the time of the painter. Write a small piece about the piece shown: it can be a diary entry, newspaper article or review of the piece.

(Or for those who might want to draw, to draw their own piece inspired by one of the women mentioned in the workshop.)

Bibliography & Other Reading:

Artemisia Gentileschi:

Christine Parker. The Life and Art of Artemisia Gentileschi.
<http://www.artemisia-gentileschi.com/>

Artemisia Gentileschi. (2017, February 27). Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia.
https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Artemisia_Gentileschi&oldid=767695977

Artemisia Gentileschi - Biography & Art. The Art History Archive
<http://www.arthistoryarchive.com/arthistory/baroque/Artemisia-Gentileschi.html>

Artemisia Gentileschi. (14 May, 2014). Biography.com
<http://www.biography.com/people/artemisia-gentileschi-9308725>

GENTILESCHI, Artemisia. Benezit Dictionary of Artists. Oxford Art Online. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/benezit/B00072384>

The 17th Century Painter and Rape Victim Who Specialized in Revenge Fantasy. (22 December, 2015). Broadly.
https://broadly.vice.com/en_us/article/the-17th-century-painter-and-rape-victim-who-specialized-in-revenge-fantasy

Adélaïde Labille-Guiard:

Baetjer, Katharine. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard (1749–1803). (June 2016) In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–.
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/lagui/hd_lagui.htm

Adélaïde Labille-Guiard. (2016, November 28). In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia.
https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ad%C3%A9la%C3%AFde_Labille-Guiard&oldid=751981459

Ancien Regime Rococo - Labille-Guerard. (n.d.).
http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/his/CoreArt/art/ancien_lab.html

Adélaïde Labille-Guiard. (n.d.). National Museum of Women in the Arts.
<https://nmwa.org/explore/artist-profiles/ad%C3%A9la%C3%AFde-labille-guiard>

The Finest Rivals. ((2014, June 01). Palettes And Pearls.
<http://palettesandpearls.blogspot.com/2014/06/the-finest-rivals.html>

Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun:

Kathleen Nicholson. "Vigée Le Brun, Elisabeth-Louise." Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T089458>

Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun. (n.d.). National Museum of Women in the Arts.
<https://nmwa.org/explore/artist-profiles/%C3%A9lisabeth-louise-vig%C3%A9-lebrun>

Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun. (2014, April 02). Biography.com
<http://www.biography.com/people/elisabeth-vig%C3%A9-le-brun-37280>

Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun. (2017, March 5). In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia.
https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=%C3%89lisabeth_Vig%C3%A9_Le_Brun&oldid=768692483

Smith, R. (2016, February 11). She Painted Marie Antoinette (and Escaped the Guillotine). New York Times.
https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/12/arts/design/review-vigee-le-brun-metropolitan-museum.html?_r=1

Berthe Morisot:

Berthe Morisot Biography. (2015, September 21). Biography.com.
<http://www.biography.com/people/berthe-morisot-9414971>

Berthe Morisot. (2017, March 5). Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia.
https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Berthe_Morisot&oldid=768719026

Tamar Garb. Morisot, Berthe. (N/A) Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T059646>

Mary Cassatt:

Ma Weinberg, A. H. (n.d.). Mary Stevenson Cassatt (1844–1926) | Essay | Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History | The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/cast/hd_cast.htm

Mary Cassatt. (2014, April 02). Biography.com.
<http://www.biography.com/people/mary-cassatt-9240820>

Mary Cassatt. (2017, March 9). In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia.
https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Mary_Cassatt&oldid=769407089

Mary Cassatt Biography, Art, and Analysis of Works. (n.d.).
<http://www.theartstory.org/artist-cassatt-mary.htm>

Rosa Bonheur:

Rosa Bonheur. (n.d.). National Museum of Women in the Arts.
<https://nmwa.org/explore/artist-profiles/rosa-bonheur>

Langdon, Helen. Bonheur, Rosa. The Oxford Companion to Western Art. Ed. Hugh Brigstocke. Oxford Art Online. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t118/e319>

Rosa Bonheur. (2017, February 18). Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia
https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Rosa_Bonheur&oldid=766209301

Other:

Vickery, A. (2014). Television Documentary on Stream. United Kingdom: BBC Two.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tGOrpUFSWE>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_KxWrhHCJw
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfZeJnVMtWU>



Self-Portrait with a Harp, Rose Adélaïde Ducreux, 1791.
<http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436222>