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Feminism and 20th Century Art

Introduction

The twentieth century became the critical period for the development of the feminist movements and the change of the perceptions of art and gender. Under the context of historical exclusion, an attempt to critically and personally confront patriarchal power structures that excluded women artists and their works (1). This literature review concerns the trajectory of the Feminist movements and their implications for art and new discourses of gender and identity. By critically analyzing significant feminist artworks and movements, this review aims to illuminate feminism's ongoing impact in the art world, addressing the research question: How did the feminist movements contribute to the art of the 20th century, and how did they gender?

Theoretical Framework

Feminist Theory

In assessing feminist art, feminist theory is applied as the starting point to assess the historical marginalization of women artists from historical art collections and survey how gender impacts the creation and experience of art (2). She defines that, according to feminist theory, it is crucial to realize women's roles in artwork history, rejecting the dominant patriarchal discourses in this field (3). The feminist theory, therefore, makes it possible to scrutinize how the existing systems of power oppress women artists and impact the creation and reception of artworks (4). That is why Lauter found earlier kinds of feminism critiques due to the lack of intersectionality within their theories, indicating a necessity to improve these approaches (5).

Gender Theory

Gender theory completes the concept of feminist theory by arguing that the notion of gender is not just male/female but a function of culture, society, and politics (6). This approach enables one to have a consistent point of view concerning how different Feminist artists work with and around the constructs of the female gender (7). For example, Brown and Mitchell are confident that gender theory helps to address digital feminism in art and explains how artists can use new media to subvert gender norms (8). This theoretical framework pushes the theoretical discourse of a feminist art critique forward and into the present, integrating new developments and practices (9).

Social Constructivism

Social constructivism also supplements feminist art critique because of its focus on the contexts within which people construct their identities and create artworks (10). Brown and Mitchell explain how social constructivism promotes consideration of emerging cultural text regarding gender and art within feminist movements (11). This approach highlights how society and artworks relate and the ability of Feminist artists to shape and disintegrate society (12). According to these theoretical paradigms, scholars and artists come to a clear understanding of feminist art and its role in the gender forum; this shows us that there are always multiple factors involved in establishing the art and feminism relations, which are not easily solved (13).

Review of Literature

An Analysis of Feminist Art Movements

The women's art movement was initiated in the later years of the 1960s and earlier 1970s as a reaction to discrimination faced by women artists inside and outside the art world (14). This movement redressed and subverted the traditional doctrines of art historiography that excluded women from its sphere for so long and redirected the representations of masculinity that dominated art (15). Horne and Tobin explain how liberated and radical feminists affected art movements by aiming to demand equal rights and challenging patriarchy, respectively (16). Furthermore, more recent developments in intersectional feminism have attempted to expand the range of concerns not just about gender but also about race, class, and sexuality (17). Lukyantseva wants the readers to know that this perspective has resulted in more input in the discourse of feminist art since it accepts the multiplicity of women and their experiences (18).

Contributions of Key Artists

Judy Chicago

Judy Chicago is a critical art activist of the feminist art movement and is best known for her work, *The Dinner Party*. This work comprises a triangular table for 39 historical and mythical women to restore all the forgotten stories of women who contributed much to history (19). By doing so, Chicago raises issues of female self-sufficiency and unified individuality, which are crucial in the context of the male-centered art tradition of the past (20). Her work not only raises the curtain to the accomplishments of women but also to the elimination of feminine artists in the overall history of art and places them right in the center (21). Secondly, Chicago has expressed concern with educational schemes in Chicago to improve the image of women artists within the art world, as noted by McKinney (22). These programs have made it possible to transform the concept of what counts as essential art, as well as the need to give voice to the aspects of women's experiences (22).

Frida Kahlo

Frida Kahlo's works provide another critical viewpoint on gender and identity within the context of postmodern feminism. Kahlo's work is best known for her highly charged and often sensual self-portraits, which deal with suffering, individuality, and women (23). The subjects of her paintings are usually her fight against physical and emotional suffering and her conflict with her Mexican roots (24). Frida Kahlo can rightly be regarded as one of the key pioneers of feminist art, as she has been embodying a viable female image that opposed the stereotypical imagery of female beauty in art (25). This approach encourages the audience to address the issue of gender roles and the solidity of the female persona (26). According to Rani, Jining, and Shah, while Kahlo's work has been reconsidered through critical viewpoints of postmodern feminism, her ideas are better understood in the discourse on gender and subjectivity in art (27). Her work goes beyond the art context, encouraging generations of women to embrace their stories and stake their claims (28).

Reception of Feminist Art

The appreciation of feminist art in the 20th century was not the same in the following decades. The earliest artists who took up the cause of feminism came under immense pressure from conventional art establishments, which might ignore these artists or fail to see their merit (29). According to Horne and Tobin, that did not deter the feminist art movement: over time, it peaked and achieved acceptance and respectability (30). As for the women artists, besides several performances, they gained a breakthrough in the same year with the case of "Woman

House" by the Feminist Art Program at California State University, where women artists were exhibited in a domestic space, which not only subverted viewers' expectations of what form of art should be presented but also presented women's experiences and issues (31). The positive response that such exhibitions received assisted in validating feminist art in the wider world to ensure future generations of feminist artists (32). Brown and Mitchell note, however, that there are still issues to face, which indicate that many feminists still struggle with these issues and their art is still being marginalized (33). This fight continues to show that there is a constant requirement to fight for women's rights in the art industry (34).

Summary and Synthesis

Significant Accomplishments of Feminist Movements

It is suggested that feminists have played an essential role in transforming the subject of modern art in terms of how it is critically analyzed and distinguished in its representation of genders (35). Subject matters include retrieving women's histories and selves: *The Dinner Party* by Judy Chicago about females' achievements and the colonialization of women's art (36). In the same way, Frida Kahlo's self-portraits touch on the concept of multiple selves and realities to give a thorough definition of the essence of a woman (37). These contributions evidence how witnessing women's bodies and shifting the nature of representation had the potential to transform the world through meaning-making (38).

Reception and Continuation of the Problem

Despite the progress of the feminist art movement and the culture's growing appreciation for such work, calls against the art market continue (39). Various and current feminist artists still suffer from the effects of the structure of patriarchy in the art world (40). Furthermore, the request for the intersectionality of approaches means that the authors pay attention not only to the representatives of feminist art and its critical analysis but also to the inclusion of more diverse subjects in the field (41). As Horne and Tobin, as well as Brown and Mitchell, have shown, this fight continues even though strides have been made in bringing gender parity into the art world, thus the need to continue fighting to remove the patriarchal systems (42, 43).

Impact on Gender Discourse

In general, feminist art has contributed much to gender practice, demanding representation of women and fighting tradition. The discussion about gender, identity, and representation will continue in the future, and it suggests that researchers should address feminist art movements more intersectionally (44). This impact is not confined to the art context but affects any progressive discourse on gender and cultural representation for minorities (45).

Conclusion

Thus, feminism influenced the art of the twentieth century in a way that dramatically changed representations of women and called into question the patriarchal paradigm of art (46). Through the works of Judy Chicago and Frida Kahlo, among others, feminists have centered women's issues in their struggles to ensure their contributions are recognized in what was once a male preserve (47). Nevertheless, some research areas have yet to be uncovered in the given field because little to no attention has been given to the diverse group of female artists and their experiences in terms of intersectionality across multicultural contexts (48). As such, future research should be directed toward these intersections to determine how race, class, and sexuality impact feminist art practice (49). However, since digital media is an ever-expanding platform,

exploring its use in the communication of feminist art presents an attractive area to pursue (50). This active exchange will further illuminate the implications existing within feminist art and its continued significance within modern culture (51).

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