

In this video John Berger brings to light an issue that has always interested me and I had simply accepted it as part of history. Women were seen as passive sexual objects for men before the women's liberation movement finally took charge. While I don't agree with many of these actions in history I just accepted them as how things used to be, before women had a voice. In this video, Berger, explores women portrayed as nudes in ancient European art and seeks to bring out the truth as to why women are portrayed a certain way in these nudes.

He begins with explaining what a nude entails; it simply isn't a woman that is naked. In these nude paintings we can always see how the woman/women are being seen or judged. Often times the women are around men that are fully clothed. In order for the naked woman to be seen as a nude in painting, she has to be seen as an object. So for a woman to be depicted as simply naked would be for her to be portrayed without a disguise. When she is naked and on display, she is having her own skin, hair, and body turned into a disguise, one that can't be discarded. This nudity becomes the woman's form of dress, by being depicted as a nude she is condemned to never be naked. For a woman to be depicted as naked and not a nude, she would have to be revealed as herself. Out of the the tens of thousands of oil paintings in European history only 20 or 30 naked women have been painted compared to the rest which are nudes. Most nudes are arranged by the painter for the pleasure of the male spectator, the owner.

Further objectifying these women in the paintings; they are always painted as passive, and relaxed. Women were never painted dancing or with any body hair because a female represented with body hair would be associated with the woman's sexual passion. The spectator has to have the complete power of sexual passion so anything that competes has to be eliminated. In addition to this women were often painted holding up a mirror, which is a symbol for the vanity of women. This is hypocritical because the painter usually a man paints a nude of a woman because he enjoys looking at her, however he puts a mirror in her hand to show that she is vain. The painter is condemning a woman who HE has painted nude for his and other males entertainment.

John showed this video to several women and asked them what they thought of the video in relation to the questions brought up. The majority of them found it hard to think of themselves in comparison to the nudes depicted because they were simply too far fetched. The bodies and poses were so exaggerated and idealized that they didn't feel real in connection with any deep image the women had of themselves or any deep connection they might have in looking at another female body.

John asked the women if men or women are narcissistic to which one woman replied that both men and women are but just in different ways. A woman's image of herself is derived from other people, she refers to the mirror. A man's image of himself, however, is derived from the world, it's the world that gives him back his image because he acts in the world, and it's through this that women are drawn to him as a source of activity or a source of worth. She further explains this by saying that women envy what men have, the fact that they have a sense of their own identity, something in them that is important to them aside from just what other people think

of them. Men don't rely on the mirror, they at all times have stored up a sense of worth of themselves which is constant and can't be lost. Because of the fact that women don't go out and act they don't create this store, women only wait for the present interaction with a man, and that can end at any moment.

Another woman said that we as women are conditioned by society that women are supposed to be beauty personified. So as a woman you think the female body is beautiful, I am a beautiful object and if I don't happen to be beautiful then I have to do something to fix it. So she says that this is the painful part of narcissism which is the feeling of inadequacy. Anytime a woman is in front of a mirror you are naturally posing in front of it, so when you catch a glimpse of yourself for example in a shop window, you suddenly see yourself as you are (not posing). So you see yourself: wind-blown, untidy, badly dressed, tired, etc. you don't see your posed self at all. So she explains that this is what's truly wrong with women, they are always trying to measure up to these erotic images that are projected and it's impossible to always be perfect.